

THE CANTERBURY TALES
And other Poems
by
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Freeditorial 

CHAUCER'S TALE OF SIR THOPAS.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN said was this miracle, every man
As sober* was, that wonder was to see, *serious
Till that our Host to jape* he began, *talk lightly
And then *at erst* he looked upon me, *for the first time*
And saide thus; "What man art thou?" quoth he;
"Thou lookest as thou wouldest find an hare,
For ever on the ground I see thee stare.

"Approache near, and look up merrily.
Now ware you, Sirs, and let this man have place.
He in the waist is shapen as well as I;
This were a puppet in an arm t'embrace
For any woman small and fair of face.
He seemeth elvish* by his countenance, *surly, morose
For unto no wight doth he dalliance.

"Say now somewhat, since other folk have said;
Tell us a tale of mirth, and that anon."
"Hoste," quoth I, "be not evil apaid,* *dissatisfied
For other tale certes can* I none, *know
Eut of a rhyme I learned yore* agone." *long
"Yea, that is good," quoth he; "now shall we hear
Some dainty thing, me thinketh by thy cheer."* *expression, mien

THE TALE

The First Fit* *part

Listen, lordings, in good intent,
And I will tell you verrament* *truly
Of mirth and of solas,* *delight, solace
All of a knight was fair and gent,* *gentle
In battle and in tournament,
His name was Sir Thopas.

*Y-born he was in far country,
In Flanders, all beyond the sea,
At Popering in the place;
His father was a man full free,
And lord he was of that country,
As it was Godde's grace.*

*Sir Thopas was a doughty swain,
White was his face as paindemain,
His lippes red as rose.
His rode* is like scarlet in grain, *complexion
And I you tell in good certain
He had a seemly nose.*

*His hair, his beard, was like saffroun,
That to his girdle reach'd adown,
His shoes of cordewane:
Of Bruges were his hosen brown;
His robe was of ciclatoun,
That coste many a jane.*

*He coulde hunt at the wild deer,
And ride on hawking *for rivere* *by the river*
With gray goshawk on hand:
Thereto he was a good archere,
Of wrestling was there none his peer,
Where any ram should stand.*

*Full many a maiden bright in bow'r
They mourned for him par amour,
When them were better sleep;
But he was chaste, and no lechour,
And sweet as is the bramble flow'r
That beareth the red heep.* *hip*

*And so it fell upon a day,
For sooth as I you telle may,
Sir Thopas would out ride;
He worth* upon his steede gray, *mounted
And in his hand a launcegay,* *spear
A long sword by his side.*

He pricked through a fair forest,
Wherein is many a wilde beast,
Yea, bothe buck and hare;
And as he pricked north and east,
I tell it you, him had almest *almost
Betid* a sorry care. *befallen

There sprange herbes great and small,
The liquorice and the setewall,* *valerian
And many a clove-gilofre,
And nutemeg to put in ale,
Whether it be moist* or stale, *new
Or for to lay in coffer.

The birdes sang, it is no nay,
The sperhawk* and the popinjay,** *sparrowhawk **parrot
That joy it was to hear;
The throstle-cock made eke his lay,
The woode-dove upon the spray
She sang full loud and clear.

Sir Thopas fell in love-longing
All when he heard the throstle sing,
And *prick'd as he were wood;* *rode as if he
His faire steed in his pricking were mad*
So sweated, that men might him wring,
His sides were all blood.

Sir Thopas eke so weary was
For pricking on the softe grass,
So fierce was his corage,* *inclination, spirit
That down he laid him in that place,
To make his steed some solace,
And gave him good forage.

"Ah, Saint Mary, ben'dicite,
What aileth thilke* love at me *this
To binde me so sore?
Me dreamed all this night, pardie,
An elf-queen shall my leman* be, *mistress
And sleep under my gore.* *shirt

An elf-queen will I love, y-wis, *assuredly
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make* *mate
In town;
All other women I forsake,
And to an elf-queen I me take
By dale and eke by down."*

*Into his saddle he clomb anon,
And pricked over stile and stone
An elf-queen for to spy,
Till he so long had ridden and gone,
That he found in a privy wonne* *haunt
The country of Faery,
So wild;
For in that country was there none
That to him durste ride or gon,
Neither wife nor child.*

*Till that there came a great giaunt,
His name was Sir Oliphaunt,
A perilous man of deed;
He saide, "Child,* by Termagaunt, *young man
But if thou prick out of mine haunt, *unless
Anon I slay thy steed
With mace.
Here is the Queen of Faery,
With harp, and pipe, and symphony,
Dwelling in this place."*

The Child said, "All so may I the, *thrive
To-morrow will I meete thee,
When I have mine armor;
And yet I hope, *par ma fay,* *by my faith*
That thou shalt with this launcegay
Abyen* it full sore; *suffer for
Thy maw* *belly
Shall I pierce, if I may,
Ere it be fully prime of day,
For here thou shalt be slaw."* *slain*

*Sir Thopas drew aback full fast;
This giant at him stones cast*

*Out of a fell staff sling:
But fair escaped Child Thopas,
And all it was through Godde's grace,
And through his fair bearing.*

*Yet listen, lordings, to my tale,
Merrier than the nightingale,
For now I will you rown,* *whisper
How Sir Thopas, with sides smale,* *small
Pricking over hill and dale,
Is come again to town.*

*His merry men commanded he
To make him both game and glee;
For needes must he fight
With a giant with heades three,
For paramour and jollity
Of one that shone full bright.*

*"*Do come,*" he saide, "my minstrales *summon*
And gestours* for to telle tales. *story-tellers
Anon in mine arming,
Of romances that be royales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eke of love-longing."*

*They fetch'd him first the sweete wine,
And mead eke in a maseline,* *drinking-bowl
And royal spicery; of maple wood
Of ginger-bread that was full fine,
And liquorice and eke cumin,
With sugar that is trie.* *refined*

He didde, next his white lere,** *put on **skin
Of cloth of lake* fine and clear, *fine linen
A breech and eke a shirt;
And next his shirt an haketon,* *cassock
And over that an habergeon,* *coat of mail
For piercing of his heart;*

And over that a fine hauberk, *plate-armour
Was all y-wrought of Jewes'* werk, *magicians'
Full strong it was of plate;*

And over that his coat-armour, *knight's surcoat
As white as is the lily flow'r,
In which he would debate.* *fight*

*His shield was all of gold so red
And therein was a boare's head,
A charboucle* beside; *carbuncle
And there he swore on ale and bread,
How that the giant should be dead,
Betide whatso betide.*

His jambeaux were of cuirbouly, *boots
His sworde's sheath of ivory,
His helm of latoun* bright, *brass
His saddle was of rewel bone,
His bridle as the sunne shone,
Or as the moonelight.*

*His speare was of fine cypress,
That bodeth war, and nothing peace;
The head full sharp y-ground.
His steede was all dapple gray,
It went an amble in the way
Full softely and round
In land.*

*Lo, Lordes mine, here is a fytt;
If ye will any more of it,
To tell it will I fand.* *try*

The Second Fit

*Now hold your mouth for charity,
Bothe knight and lady free,
And hearken to my spell;* *tale
Of battle and of chivalry,
Of ladies' love and druerie,* *gallantry
Anon I will you tell.*

Men speak of romances of price *worth, esteem
Of Horn Child, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sir Guy,*

*Of Sir Libeux, and Pleindamour,
But Sir Thopas, he bears the flow'r
Of royal chivalry.*

*His goode steed he all bestrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,* *shone
As sparkle out of brand,* *torch
Upon his crest he bare a tow'r,
And therein stick'd a lily flow'r;
God shield his corse* from shand!** *body **harm*

And, for he was a knight auntrous, *adventurous
He woulde sleepe in none house,
But liggen* in his hood, *lie
His brighte helm was his wanger,* *pillow
And by him baited* his destrer** *fed **horse
Of herbes fine and good.*

*Himself drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sir Percivel,
So worthy under weed;
Till on a day - . . .*

CHAUCER'S TALE OF MELIBOEUS.

THE PROLOGUE.

"No more of this, for Godde's dignity!"
Quoth oure Hoste; "for thou makest me
So weary of thy very lewedness,* *stupidity, ignorance
That, all so wisly* God my soule bless, *surely
Mine eares ache for thy drafty* speech. *worthless
Now such a rhyme the devil I beteche:* *commend to
This may well be rhyme doggerel," quoth he.
"Why so?" quoth I; "why wilt thou lette* me *prevent
More of my tale than any other man,
Since that it is the best rhyme that I can?"* *know
"By God!" quoth he, "for, plainly at one word,
Thy drafty rhyming is not worth a tord:
Thou dost naught elles but dispendest* time. *wastest
Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer rhyme.
Let see whether thou canst tellen aught *in gest,* *by way of
Or tell in prose somewhat, at the least, narrative*
In which there be some mirth or some doctrine."
"Gladly," quoth I, "by Godde's sweete pine,* *suffering
I will you tell a little thing in prose,
That oughte like* you, as I suppose, *please
Or else certes ye be too dangerous.* *fastidious
It is a moral tale virtuous,
All be it told sometimes in sundry wise *although it be*
By sundry folk, as I shall you devise.
As thus, ye wot that ev'ry Evangelist,
That telleth us the pain* of Jesus Christ, *passion
He saith not all thing as his fellow doth;
But natheless their sentence is all soth,* *true
And all accorden as in their sentence,* *meaning
All be there in their telling difference;
For some of them say more, and some say less,
When they his piteous passion express;
I mean of Mark and Matthew, Luke and John;
But doubteless their sentence is all one.
Therefore, lordinges all, I you beseech,
If that ye think I vary in my speech,
As thus, though that I telle somedeal more

*Of proverbes, than ye have heard before
Comprehended in this little treatise here,
T'enforce with the effect of my mattere, *with which to
And though I not the same wordes say enforce*
As ye have heard, yet to you all I pray
Blame me not; for as in my sentence
Shall ye nowhere finde no difference
From the sentence of thilke* treatise lite,** *this **little
After the which this merry tale I write.
And therefore hearken to what I shall say,
And let me tellen all my tale, I pray."*

THE TALE.

A young man called Meliboeus, mighty and rich, begat upon his wife, that called was Prudence, a daughter which that called was Sophia. Upon a day befell, that he for his disport went into the fields him to play. His wife and eke his daughter hath he left within his house, of which the doors were fast shut. Three of his old foes have it espied, and set ladders to the walls of his house, and by the windows be entered, and beaten his wife, and wounded his daughter with five mortal wounds, in five sundry places; that is to say, in her feet, in her hands, in her ears, in her nose, and in her mouth; and left her for dead, and went away. When Meliboeus returned was into his house, and saw all this mischief, he, like a man mad, rending his clothes, gan weep and cry. Prudence his wife, as farforth as she durst, besought him of his weeping for to stint: but not forthy [notwithstanding] he gan to weep and cry ever longer the more.

This noble wife Prudence remembered her upon the sentence of Ovid, in his book that called is the "Remedy of Love," where he saith: He is a fool that disturbeth the mother to weep in the death of her child, till she have wept her fill, as for a certain time; and then shall a man do his diligence with amiable words her to recomfort and pray her of her weeping for to stint [cease]. For which reason this noble wife Prudence suffered her husband for to weep and cry, as for a certain space; and when she saw her time, she said to him in this wise: "Alas! my lord," quoth she, "why make

ye yourself for to be like a fool? For sooth it appertaineth not to a wise man to make such a sorrow. Your daughter, with the grace of God, shall warish [be cured] and escape. And all [although] were it so that she right now were dead, ye ought not for her death yourself to destroy. Seneca saith, 'The wise man shall not take too great discomfort for the death of his children, but certes he should suffer it in patience, as well as he abideth the death of his own proper person.'

Meliboeus answered anon and said: "What man," quoth he, "should of his weeping stint, that hath so great a cause to weep? Jesus Christ, our Lord, himself wept for the death of Lazarus his friend." Prudence answered, "Certes, well I wot, attempered [moderate] weeping is nothing defended [forbidden] to him that sorrowful is, among folk in sorrow but it is rather granted him to weep. The Apostle Paul unto the Romans writeth, 'Man shall rejoice with them that make joy, and weep with such folk as weep.' But though temperate weeping be granted, outrageous weeping certes is defended. Measure of weeping should be conserved, after the lore [doctrine] that teacheth us Seneca. 'When that thy friend is dead,' quoth he, 'let not thine eyes too moist be of tears, nor too much dry: although the tears come to thine eyes, let them not fall. And when thou hast forgone [lost] thy friend, do diligence to get again another friend: and this is more wisdom than to weep for thy friend which that thou hast lorn [lost] for therein is no boot [advantage]. And therefore if ye govern you by sapience, put away sorrow out of your heart. Remember you that Jesus Sirach saith, 'A man that is joyous and glad in heart, it him conserveth flourishing in his age: but soothly a sorrowful heart maketh his bones dry.' He said eke thus, 'that sorrow in heart slayth full many a man.' Solomon saith 'that right as moths in the sheep's fleece annoy [do injury] to the clothes, and the small worms to the tree, right so annoyeth sorrow to the heart of man.' Wherefore us ought as well in the death of our children, as in the loss of our goods temporal, have patience. Remember you upon the patient Job, when he had lost his children and his temporal substance, and in his body endured and received full many a grievous tribulation, yet said he thus: 'Our Lord hath given it to me, our Lord hath bereft it me; right as our Lord would, right so be it done; blessed be the name of our Lord.'"

To these foresaid things answered Meliboeus unto his wife Prudence: "All thy words," quoth he, "be true, and thereto [also]

profitable, but truly mine heart is troubled with this sorrow so grievously, that I know not what to do." "Let call," quoth Prudence, "thy true friends all, and thy lineage, which be wise, and tell to them your case, and hearken what they say in counselling, and govern you after their sentence [opinion]. Solomon saith, 'Work all things by counsel, and thou shall never repent.'" Then, by counsel of his wife Prudence, this Meliboeus let call [sent for] a great congregation of folk, as surgeons, physicians, old folk and young, and some of his old enemies reconciled (as by their semblance) to his love and to his grace; and therewithal there come some of his neighbours, that did him reverence more for dread than for love, as happeneth oft. There come also full many subtle flatterers, and wise advocates learned in the law. And when these folk together assembled were, this Meliboeus in sorrowful wise showed them his case, and by the manner of his speech it seemed that in heart he bare a cruel ire, ready to do vengeance upon his foes, and suddenly desired that the war should begin, but nevertheless yet asked he their counsel in this matter. A surgeon, by licence and assent of such as were wise, up rose, and to Meliboeus said as ye may hear. "Sir," quoth he, "as to us surgeons appertaineth, that we do to every wight the best that we can, where as we be withholden, [employed] and to our patient that we do no damage; wherefore it happeneth many a time and oft, that when two men have wounded each other, one same surgeon healeth them both; wherefore unto our art it is not pertinent to nurse war, nor parties to support [take sides]. But certes, as to the warishing [healing] of your daughter, albeit so that perilously she be wounded, we shall do so attentive business from day to night, that, with the grace of God, she shall be whole and sound, as soon as is possible." Almost right in the same wise the physicians answered, save that they said a few words more: that right as maladies be cured by their contraries, right so shall man warish war (by peace). His neighbours full of envy, his feigned friends that seemed reconciled, and his flatterers, made semblance of weeping, and impaired and aggregated [aggravated] much of this matter, in praising greatly Meliboeus of might, of power, of riches, and of friends, despising the power of his adversaries: and said utterly, that he anon should wreak him on his foes, and begin war.

Up rose then an advocate that was wise, by leave and by counsel of other that were wise, and said, "Lordings, the need [business] for which we be assembled in this place, is a full heavy thing, and an high matter, because of the wrong and of the wickedness that hath

been done, and eke by reason of the great damages that in time coming be possible to fall for the same cause, and eke by reason of the great riches and power of the parties both; for which reasons, it were a full great peril to err in this matter. Wherefore, Meliboeus, this is our sentence [opinion]; we counsel you, above all things, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keeping of thy body, in such a wise that thou want no espy nor watch thy body to save. And after that, we counsel that in thine house thou set sufficient garrison, so that they may as well thy body as thy house defend. But, certes, to move war or suddenly to do vengeance, we may not deem [judge] in so little time that it were profitable. Wherefore we ask leisure and space to have deliberation in this case to deem; for the common proverb saith thus; 'He that soon deemeth soon shall repent.' And eke men say, that that judge is wise, that soon understandeth a matter, and judgeth by leisure. For albeit so that all tarrying be annoying, algates [nevertheless] it is no reproof [subject for reproach] in giving of judgement, nor in vengeance taking, when it is sufficient and, reasonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesus Christ by example; for when that the woman that was taken in adultery was brought in his presence to know what should be done with her person, albeit that he wist well himself what he would answer, yet would he not answer suddenly, but he would have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twice. And by these causes we ask deliberation and we shall then by the grace of God counsel the thing that shall be profitable."

Up started then the young folk anon at once, and the most part of that company have scorned these old wise men and begun to make noise and said, "Right as while that iron is hot men should smite, right so men should wreak their wrongs while that they be fresh and new:" and with loud voice they cried. "War! War!" Up rose then one of these old wise, and with his hand made countenance [a sign, gesture] that men should hold them still, and give him audience. "Lordings," quoth he, "there is full many a man that crieth, 'War! war!' that wot full little what war amounteth. War at his beginning hath so great an entering and so large, that every wight may enter when him liketh, and lightly [easily] find war: but certes what end shall fall thereof it is not light to know. For soothly when war is once begun, there is full many a child unborn of his mother, that shall sterve [die] young by cause of that war, or else live in sorrow and die in wretchedness; and therefore, ere that any war be begun, men must have great counsel and great deliberation." And when this old man weened

[thought, intended] to enforce his tale by reasons, well-nigh all at once began they to rise for to break his tale, and bid him full oft his words abridge. For soothly he that preacheth to them that list not hear his words, his sermon them annoyeth. For Jesus Sirach saith, that music in weeping is a noyous [troublesome] thing. This is to say, as much availeth to speak before folk to whom his speech annoyeth, as to sing before him that weepeth. And when this wise man saw that him wanted audience, all shamefast he sat him down again. For Solomon saith, 'Where as thou mayest have no audience, enforce thee not to speak.' "I see well," quoth this wise man, "that the common proverb is sooth, that good counsel wanteth, when it is most need." Yet [besides, further] had this Meliboeus in his council many folk, that privily in his ear counselled him certain thing, and counselled him the contrary in general audience. When Meliboeus had heard that the greatest part of his council were accorded [in agreement] that he should make war, anon he consented to their counselling, and fully affirmed their sentence [opinion, judgement].

(Dame Prudence, seeing her husband's resolution thus taken, in full humble wise, when she saw her time, begins to counsel him against war, by a warning against haste in requital of either good or evil. Meliboeus tells her that he will not work by her counsel, because he should be held a fool if he rejected for her advice the opinion of so many wise men; because all women are bad; because it would seem that he had given her the mastery over him; and because she could not keep his secret, if he resolved to follow her advice. To these reasons Prudence answers that it is no folly to change counsel when things, or men's judgements of them, change — especially to alter a resolution taken on the impulse of a great multitude of folk, where every man crieth and clattereth what him liketh; that if all women had been wicked, Jesus Christ would never have descended to be born of a woman, nor have showed himself first to a woman after his resurrection and that when Solomon said he had found no good woman, he meant that God alone was supremely good; that her husband would not seem to give her the mastery by following her counsel, for he had his own free choice in following or rejecting it; and that he knew well and had often tested her great silence, patience, and secrecy. And whereas he had quoted a saying, that in wicked counsel women vanquish men, she reminds him that she would counsel him against doing a wickedness on which he had set his mind, and cites instances to show that many women have been and yet are

full good, and their counsel wholesome and profitable. Lastly, she quotes the words of God himself, when he was about to make woman as an help meet for man; and promises that, if her husband will trust her counsel, she will restore to him his daughter whole and sound, and make him have honour in this case. Meliboeus answers that because of his wife's sweet words, and also because he has proved and assayed her great wisdom and her great truth, he will govern him by her counsel in all things. Thus encouraged, Prudence enters on a long discourse, full of learned citations, regarding the manner in which counsellors should be chosen and consulted, and the times and reasons for changing a counsel. First, God must be besought for guidance. Then a man must well examine his own thoughts, of such things as he holds to be best for his own profit; driving out of his heart anger, covetousness, and hastiness, which perturb and pervert the judgement. Then he must keep his counsel secret, unless confiding it to another shall be more profitable; but, in so confiding it, he shall say nothing to bias the mind of the counsellor toward flattery or subserviency. After that he should consider his friends and his enemies, choosing of the former such as be most faithful and wise, and eldest and most approved in counselling; and even of these only a few. Then he must eschew the counselling of fools, of flatterers, of his old enemies that be reconciled, of servants who bear him great reverence and fear, of folk that be drunken and can hide no counsel, of such as counsel one thing privily and the contrary openly; and of young folk, for their counselling is not ripe. Then, in examining his counsel, he must truly tell his tale; he must consider whether the thing he proposes to do be reasonable, within his power, and acceptable to the more part and the better part of his counsellors; he must look at the things that may follow from that counselling, choosing the best and waiving all besides; he must consider the root whence the matter of his counsel is engendered, what fruits it may bear, and from what causes they be sprung. And having thus examined his counsel and approved it by many wise folk and old, he shall consider if he may perform it and make of it a good end; if he be in doubt, he shall choose rather to suffer than to begin; but otherwise he shall prosecute his resolution steadfastly till the enterprize be at an end. As to changing his counsel, a man may do so without reproach, if the cause cease, or when a new case betides, or if he find that by error or otherwise harm or damage may result, or if his counsel be dishonest or come of dishonest cause, or if it be impossible or may

not properly be kept; and he must take it for a general rule, that every counsel which is affirmed so strongly, that it may not be changed for any condition that may betide, that counsel is wicked. Meliboeus, admitting that his wife had spoken well and suitably as to counsellors and counsel in general, prays her to tell him in especial what she thinks of the counsellors whom they have chosen in their present need. Prudence replies that his counsel in this case could not properly be called a counselling, but a movement of folly; and points out that he has erred in sundry wise against the rules which he had just laid down. Granting that he has erred, Meliboeus says that he is all ready to change his counsel right as she will devise; for, as the proverb runs, to do sin is human, but to persevere long in sin is work of the Devil. Prudence then minutely recites, analyses, and criticises the counsel given to her husband in the assembly of his friends. She commends the advice of the physicians and surgeons, and urges that they should be well rewarded for their noble speech and their services in healing Sophia; and she asks Meliboeus how he understands their proposition that one contrary must be cured by another contrary. Meliboeus answers, that he should do vengeance on his enemies, who had done him wrong. Prudence, however, insists that vengeance is not the contrary of vengeance, nor wrong of wrong, but the like; and that wickedness should be healed by goodness, discord by accord, war by peace. She proceeds to deal with the counsel of the lawyers and wise folk that advised Meliboeus to take prudent measures for the security of his body and of his house. First, she would have her husband pray for the protection and aid of Christ; then commit the keeping of his person to his true friends; then suspect and avoid all strange folk, and liars, and such people as she had already warned him against; then beware of presuming on his strength, or the weakness of his adversary, and neglecting to guard his person — for every wise man dreadeth his enemy; then he should evermore be on the watch against ambush and all espial, even in what seems a place of safety; though he should not be so cowardly, as to fear where is no cause for dread; yet he should dread to be poisoned, and therefore shun scorners, and fly their words as venom. As to the fortification of his house, she points out that towers and great edifices are costly and laborious, yet useless unless defended by true friends that be old and wise; and the greatest and strongest garrison that a rich man may have, as well to keep his person as his goods, is, that he be beloved by his subjects and by his

neighbours. Warmly approving the counsel that in all this business Meliboeus should proceed with great diligence and deliberation, Prudence goes on to examine the advice given by his neighbours that do him reverence without love, his old enemies reconciled, his flatterers that counselled him certain things privily and openly counselled him the contrary, and the young folk that counselled him to avenge himself and make war at once. She reminds him that he stands alone against three powerful enemies, whose kindred are numerous and close, while his are fewer and remote in relationship; that only the judge who has jurisdiction in a case may take sudden vengeance on any man; that her husband's power does not accord with his desire; and that, if he did take vengeance, it would only breed fresh wrongs and contests. As to the causes of the wrong done to him, she holds that God, the causer of all things, has permitted him to suffer because he has drunk so much honey of sweet temporal riches, and delights, and honours of this world, that he is drunken, and has forgotten Jesus Christ his Saviour; the three enemies of mankind, the flesh, the fiend, and the world, have entered his heart by the windows of his body, and wounded his soul in five places — that is to say, the deadly sins that have entered into his heart by the five senses; and in the same manner Christ has suffered his three enemies to enter his house by the windows, and wound his daughter in the five places before specified. Meliboeus demurs, that if his wife's objections prevailed, vengeance would never be taken, and thence great mischiefs would arise; but Prudence replies that the taking of vengeance lies with the judges, to whom the private individual must have recourse. Meliboeus declares that such vengeance does not please him, and that, as Fortune has nourished and helped him from his childhood, he will now assay her, trusting, with God's help, that she will aid him to avenge his shame. Prudence warns him against trusting to Fortune, all the less because she has hitherto favoured him, for just on that account she is the more likely to fail him; and she calls on him to leave his vengeance with the Sovereign Judge, that avengeth all villainies and wrongs. Meliboeus argues that if he refrains from taking vengeance he will invite his enemies to do him further wrong, and he will be put and held over low; but Prudence contends that such a result can be brought about only by the neglect of the judges, not by the patience of the individual. Supposing that he had leave to avenge himself, she repeats that he is not strong enough, and quotes the common saw, that it is

madness for a man to strive with a stronger than himself, peril to strive with one of equal strength, and folly to strive with a weaker. But, considering his own defaults and demerits, — remembering the patience of Christ and the undeserved tribulations of the saints, the brevity of this life with all its trouble and sorrow, the discredit thrown on the wisdom and training of a man who cannot bear wrong with patience — he should refrain wholly from taking vengeance. Meliboeus submits that he is not at all a perfect man, and his heart will never be at peace until he is avenged; and that as his enemies disregarded the peril when they attacked him, so he might, without reproach, incur some peril in attacking them in return, even though he did a great excess in avenging one wrong by another. Prudence strongly deprecates all outrage or excess; but Meliboeus insists that he cannot see that it might greatly harm him though he took a vengeance, for he is richer and mightier than his enemies, and all things obey money. Prudence thereupon launches into a long dissertation on the advantages of riches, the evils of poverty, the means by which wealth should be gathered, and the manner in which it should be used; and concludes by counselling her husband not to move war and battle through trust in his riches, for they suffice not to maintain war, the battle is not always to the strong or the numerous, and the perils of conflict are many. Meliboeus then curtly asks her for her counsel how he shall do in this need; and she answers that certainly she counsels him to agree with his adversaries and have peace with them. Meliboeus on this cries out that plainly she loves not his honour or his worship, in counselling him to go and humble himself before his enemies, crying mercy to them that, having done him so grievous wrong, ask him not to be reconciled. Then Prudence, making semblance of wrath, retorts that she loves his honour and profit as she loves her own, and ever has done; she cites the Scriptures in support of her counsel to seek peace; and says she will leave him to his own courses, for she knows well he is so stubborn, that he will do nothing for her. Meliboeus then relents; admits that he is angry and cannot judge aright; and puts himself wholly in her hands, promising to do just as she desires, and admitting that he is the more held to love and praise her, if she reproves him of his folly)

Then Dame Prudence discovered all her counsel and her will unto him, and said: "I counsel you," quoth she, "above all things, that ye make peace between God and you, and be reconciled unto Him and to his grace; for, as I have said to you herebefore, God hath

suffered you to have this tribulation and disease [distress, trouble] for your sins; and if ye do as I say you, God will send your adversaries unto you, and make them fall at your feet, ready to do your will and your commandment. For Solomon saith, 'When the condition of man is pleasant and liking to God, he changeth the hearts of the man's adversaries, and constraineth them to beseech him of peace of grace.' And I pray you let me speak with your adversaries in privy place, for they shall not know it is by your will or your assent; and then, when I know their will and their intent, I may counsel you the more surely." "Dame," quoth Meliboeus, "do your will and your liking, for I put me wholly in your disposition and ordinance."

Then Dame Prudence, when she saw the goodwill of her husband, deliberated and took advice in herself, thinking how she might bring this need [affair, emergency] unto a good end. And when she saw her time, she sent for these adversaries to come into her into a privy place, and showed wisely into them the great goods that come of peace, and the great harms and perils that be in war; and said to them, in goodly manner, how that they ought have great repentance of the injuries and wrongs that they had done to Meliboeus her Lord, and unto her and her daughter. And when they heard the goodly words of Dame Prudence, then they were surprised and ravished, and had so great joy of her, that wonder was to tell. "Ah lady!" quoth they, "ye have showed unto us the blessing of sweetness, after the saying of David the prophet; for the reconciling which we be not worthy to have in no manner, but we ought require it with great contrition and humility, ye of your great goodness have presented unto us. Now see we well, that the science and conning [knowledge] of Solomon is full true; for he saith, that sweet words multiply and increase friends, and make shrews [the ill-natured or angry] to be debonair [gentle, courteous] and meek. Certes we put our deed, and all our matter and cause, all wholly in your goodwill, and be ready to obey unto the speech and commandment of my lord Meliboeus. And therefore, dear and benign lady, we pray you and beseech you as meekly as we can and may, that it like unto your great goodness to fulfil in deed your goodly words. For we consider and acknowledge that we have offended and grieved my lord Meliboeus out of measure, so far forth that we be not of power to make him amends; and therefore we oblige and bind us and our friends to do all his will and his commandment. But peradventure he hath such heaviness and such wrath to usward, [towards us] because of our offence,

that he will enjoin us such a pain [penalty] as we may not bear nor sustain; and therefore, noble lady, we beseech to your womanly pity to take such advisement [consideration] in this need, that we, nor our friends, be not disinherited and destroyed through our folly."

"Certes," quoth Prudence, "it is an hard thing, and right perilous, that a man put him all utterly in the arbitration and judgement and in the might and power of his enemy. For Solomon saith, 'Believe me, and give credence to that that I shall say: to thy son, to thy wife, to thy friend, nor to thy brother, give thou never might nor mastery over thy body, while thou livest.' Now, since he defendeth [forbiddeth] that a man should not give to his brother, nor to his friend, the might of his body, by a stronger reason he defendeth and forbiddeth a man to give himself to his enemy. And nevertheless, I counsel you that ye mistrust not my lord: for I wot well and know verily, that he is debonair and meek, large, courteous and nothing desirous nor envious of good nor riches: for there is nothing in this world that he desireth save only worship and honour. Furthermore I know well, and am right sure, that he shall nothing do in this need without counsel of me; and I shall so work in this case, that by the grace of our Lord God ye shall be reconciled unto us."

Then said they with one voice, "'Worshipful lady, we put us and our goods all fully in your will and disposition, and be ready to come, what day that it like unto your nobleness to limit us or assign us, for to make our obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto your goodness, that we may fulfil the will of you and of my lord Meliboeus."

When Dame Prudence had heard the answer of these men, she bade them go again privily, and she returned to her lord Meliboeus, and told him how she found his adversaries full repentant, acknowledging full lowly their sins and trespasses, and how they were ready to suffer all pain, requiring and praying him of mercy and pity. Then said Meliboeus, "He is well worthy to have pardon and forgiveness of his sin, that excuseth not his sin, but acknowledgeth, and repenteth him, asking indulgence. For Seneca saith, 'There is the remission and forgiveness, where the confession is; for confession is neighbour to innocence.' And therefore I assent and confirm me to have peace, but it is good that we do naught without the assent and will of our friends."

Then was Prudence right glad and joyful, and said, "Certes, Sir, ye be well and goodly advised; for right as by the counsel, assent, and help of your friends ye have been stirred to avenge you and make war, right so without their counsel shall ye not accord you, nor have peace with your adversaries. For the law saith, 'There is nothing so good by way of kind, [nature] as a thing to be unbound by him that it was bound.'"

And then Dame Prudence, without delay or tarrying, sent anon her messengers for their kin and for their old friends, which were true and wise; and told them by order, in the presence of Meliboeus, all this matter, as it is above expressed and declared; and prayed them that they would give their advice and counsel what were best to do in this need. And when Meliboeus' friends had taken their advice and deliberation of the foresaid matter, and had examined it by great business and great diligence, they gave full counsel for to have peace and rest, and that Meliboeus should with good heart receive his adversaries to forgiveness and mercy. And when Dame Prudence had heard the assent of her lord Meliboeus, and the counsel of his friends, accord with her will and her intention, she was wondrous glad in her heart, and said: "There is an old proverb that saith, 'The goodness that thou mayest do this day, do it, and abide not nor delay it not till tomorrow:' and therefore I counsel you that ye send your messengers, such as be discreet and wise, unto your adversaries, telling them on your behalf, that if they will treat of peace and of accord, that they shape [prepare] them, without delay or tarrying, to come unto us." Which thing performed was indeed. And when these trespassers and repenting folk of their follies, that is to say, the adversaries of Meliboeus, had heard what these messengers said unto them, they were right glad and joyful, and answered full meekly and benignly, yielding graces and thanks to their lord Meliboeus, and to all his company; and shaped them without delay to go with the messengers, and obey to the commandment of their lord Meliboeus. And right anon they took their way to the court of Meliboeus, and took with them some of their true friends, to make faith for them, and for to be their borrows [sureties].

And when they were come to the presence of Meliboeus, he said to them these words; "It stands thus," quoth Meliboeus, "and sooth it is, that ye causeless, and without skill and reason, have done great injuries and wrongs to me, and to my wife Prudence, and to my

daughter also; for ye have entered into my house by violence, and have done such outrage, that all men know well that ye have deserved the death: and therefore will I know and weet of you, whether ye will put the punishing and chastising, and the vengeance of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wife, or ye will not?" Then the wisest of them three answered for them all, and said; "Sir," quoth he, "we know well, that we be I unworthy to come to the court of so great a lord and so worthy as ye be, for we have so greatly mistaken us, and have offended and aguilt [incurred guilt] in such wise against your high lordship, that truly we have deserved the death. But yet for the great goodness and debonairte [courtesy, gentleness] that all the world witnesseth of your person, we submit us to the excellence and benignity of your gracious lordship, and be ready to obey to all your commandments, beseeching you, that of your merciable [merciful] pity ye will consider our great repentance and low submission, and grant us forgiveness of our outrageous trespass and offence; for well we know, that your liberal grace and mercy stretch them farther into goodness, than do our outrageous guilt and trespass into wickedness; albeit that cursedly [wickedly] and damnably we have aguilt [incurred guilt] against your high lordship." Then Meliboeus took them up from the ground full benignly, and received their obligations and their bonds, by their oaths upon their pledges and borrows, [sureties] and assigned them a certain day to return unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and judgement, that Meliboeus would command to be done on them, by the causes aforesaid; which things ordained, every man returned home to his house.

And when that Dame Prudence saw her time she freined [inquired] and asked her lord Meliboeus, what vengeance he thought to take of his adversaries. To which Meliboeus answered, and said; "Certes," quoth he, "I think and purpose me fully to disinherit them of all that ever they have, and for to put them in exile for evermore." "Certes," quoth Dame Prudence, "this were a cruel sentence, and much against reason. For ye be rich enough, and have no need of other men's goods; and ye might lightly [easily] in this wise get you a covetous name, which is a vicious thing, and ought to be eschewed of every good man: for, after the saying of the Apostle, covetousness is root of all harms. And therefore it were better for you to lose much good of your own, than for to take of their good in this manner. For better it is to lose good with worship [honour], than to win good with villainy

and shame. And every man ought to do his diligence and his business to get him a good name. And yet [further] shall he not only busy him in keeping his good name, but he shall also enforce him alway to do some thing by which he may renew his good name; for it is written, that the old good los [reputation] of a man is soon gone and passed, when it is not renewed. And as touching that ye say, that ye will exile your adversaries, that thinketh ye much against reason, and out of measure, [moderation] considered the power that they have given you upon themselves. And it is written, that he is worthy to lose his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is given him. And I set case [if I assume] ye might enjoin them that pain by right and by law (which I trow ye may not do), I say, ye might not put it to execution peradventure, and then it were like to return to the war, as it was before. And therefore if ye will that men do you obeisance, ye must deem [decide] more courteously, that is to say, ye must give more easy sentences and judgements. For it is written, 'He that most courteously commandeth, to him men most obey.' And therefore I pray you, that in this necessity and in this need ye cast you [endeavour, devise a way] to overcome your heart. For Seneca saith, that he that overcometh his heart, overcometh twice. And Tullius saith, 'There is nothing so commendable in a great lord, as when he is debonair and meek, and appeaseth him lightly [easily].' And I pray you, that ye will now forbear to do vengeance, in such a manner, that your good name may be kept and conserved, and that men may have cause and matter to praise you of pity and of mercy; and that ye have no cause to repent you of thing that ye do. For Seneca saith, 'He overcometh in an evil manner, that repenteth him of his victory.' Wherefore I pray you let mercy be in your heart, to the effect and intent that God Almighty have mercy upon you in his last judgement; for Saint James saith in his Epistle, 'Judgement without mercy shall be done to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.'"

When Meliboeus had heard the great skills [arguments, reasons] and reasons of Dame Prudence, and her wise information and teaching, his heart gan incline to the will of his wife, considering her true intent, he conformed him anon and assented fully to work after her counsel, and thanked God, of whom proceedeth all goodness and all virtue, that him sent a wife of so great discretion. And when the day came that his adversaries should appear in his presence, he spake to them full goodly, and said in this wise; "Albeit so, that of your pride and high presumption and folly, an

of your negligence and unconning, [ignorance] ye have misborne [misbehaved] you, and trespassed [done injury] unto me, yet forasmuch as I see and behold your great humility, and that ye be sorry and repentant of your guilts, it constraineth me to do you grace and mercy. Wherefore I receive you into my grace, and forgive you utterly all the offences, injuries, and wrongs, that ye have done against me and mine, to this effect and to this end, that God of his endless mercy will at the time of our dying forgive us our guilts, that we have trespassed to him in this wretched world; for doubtless, if we be sorry and repentant of the sins and guilts which we have trespassed in the sight of our Lord God, he is so free and so merciable [merciful], that he will forgive us our guilts, and bring us to the bliss that never hath end." Amen.

THE MONK'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE

WHEN ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence and her benignity,
Our Hoste said, "As I am faithful man,
And by the precious corpus Madrian,
I had lever* than a barrel of ale, *rather
That goode lefe* my wife had heard this tale; *dear
For she is no thing of such patience
As was this Meliboeus' wife Prudence.
By Godde's bones! when I beat my knaves
She bringeth me the greate clubbed staves,
And crieth, 'Slay the dogges every one,
And break of them both back and ev'ry bone.'
And if that any neighebour of mine
Will not in church unto my wife incline,
Or be so hardy to her to trespace,* *offend
When she comes home she rampeth* in my face, *springs
And crieth, 'False coward, wreak* thy wife *avenge
By corpus Domini, I will have thy knife,
And thou shalt have my distaff, and go spin.'
From day till night right thus she will begin.
'Alas!' she saith, 'that ever I was shape* *destined
To wed a milksop, or a coward ape,
That will be overlad* with every wight! *imposed on
Thou darrest not stand by thy wife's right.'

"This is my life, *but if* that I will fight; *unless
And out at door anon I must me dight,* *betake myself
Or elles I am lost, but if that I
Be, like a wilde lion, fool-hardy.
I wot well she will do* me slay some day *make
Some neighebour and thenne *go my way,* *take to flight*
For I am perilous with knife in hand,
Albeit that I dare not her withstand;
For she is big in armes, by my faith!
That shall he find, that her misdoth or saith.
But let us pass away from this mattere.
My lord the Monk," quoth he, "be merry of cheer,
For ye shall tell a tale truely.

*Lo, Rochester stands here faste by.
 Ride forth, mine owen lord, break not our game.
 But by my troth I cannot tell your name;
 Whether shall I call you my lord Dan John,
 Or Dan Thomas, or elles Dan Albon?
 Of what house be ye, by your father's kin?
 I vow to God, thou hast a full fair skin;
 It is a gentle pasture where thou go'st;
 Thou art not like a penant* or a ghost. *penitent
 Upon my faith thou art some officer,
 Some worthy sexton, or some cellarer.
 For by my father's soul, *as to my dome,* *in my judgement*
 Thou art a master when thou art at home;
 No poore cloisterer, nor no novice,
 But a governor, both wily and wise,
 And therewithal, of brawnes* and of bones, *sinews
 A right well-faring person for the nonce.
 I pray to God give him confusion
 That first thee brought into religion.
 Thou would'st have been a treade-fowl* aright; *cock
 Hadst thou as greate leave, as thou hast might,
 To perform all thy lust in engendrure,* *generation, begettting
 Thou hadst begotten many a creature.
 Alas! why wearest thou so wide a cope?
 God give me sorrow, but, an* I were pope, *if
 Not only thou, but every mighty man,
 Though he were shorn full high upon his pan,* *crown
 Should have a wife; for all this world is lorn;* *undone, ruined
 Religion hath ta'en up all the corn
 Of treading, and we borel* men be shrimps: *lay
 Of feeble trees there come wretchedimps.* *shoots
 This maketh that our heires be so slender
 And feeble, that they may not well engender.
 This maketh that our wives will assay
 Religious folk, for they may better pay
 Of Venus' payementes than may we:
 God wot, no lusheburghes paye ye.
 But be not wroth, my lord, though that I play;
 Full oft in game a sooth have I heard say."*

*This worthy Monk took all in patience,
 And said, "I will do all my diligence,
 As far as *souneth unto honesty,* *agrees with good manners**

To telle you a tale, or two or three.
And if you list to hearken hitherward,
I will you say the life of Saint Edward;
Or elles first tragedies I will tell,
Of which I have an hundred in my cell.
Tragedy **is to say** a certain story, **means**
As olde bookes maken us memory,
Of him that stood in great prosperity,
And is y-fallen out of high degree
In misery, and endeth wretchedly.
And they be versified commonly
Of six feet, which men call hexametron;
In prose eke **be indited many a one, *also**
And eke in metre, in many a sundry wise.
Lo, this declaring ought enough suffice.
Now hearken, if ye like for to hear.
But first I you beseech in this mattere,
Though I by order telle not these things,
Be it of popes, emperors, or kings,
After their ages,* as men written find, *in chronological order
But tell them some before and some behind,
As it now cometh to my remembrance,
Have me excused of mine ignorance."

THE TALE.

I will bewail, in manner of tragedy,
The harm of them that stood in high degree,
And felle so, that there was no remedy
To bring them out of their adversity.
For, certain, when that Fortune list to flee,
There may no man the course of her wheel hold:
Let no man trust in blind prosperity;
Beware by these examples true and old.

At *LUCIFER*, though he an angel were,
And not a man, at him I will begin.
For though Fortune may no angel dere,* *hurt
From high degree yet fell he for his sin
Down into hell, where as he yet is in.
O Lucifer! brightest of angels all,
Now art thou Satanas, that may'st not twin* *depart
Out of the misery in which thou art fall.

Lo *ADAM*, in the field of Damascene
With Godde's owen finger wrought was he,
And not begotten of man's sperm unclean;
And welt* all Paradise saving one tree: *commanded
Had never worldly man so high degree
As Adam, till he for misgovernance* *misbehaviour
Was driven out of his prosperity
To labour, and to hell, and to mischance.

Lo *SAMPSON*, which that was annunciate
By the angel, long ere his nativity;
And was to God Almighty consecrate,
And stood in nobless while that he might see;
Was never such another as was he,
To speak of strength, and thereto hardiness;* *courage
But to his wives told he his secre,
Through which he slew himself for wretchedness.

Sampson, this noble and mighty champion,
Withoute weapon, save his handes tway,
He slew and all to-rente* the lion, *tore to pieces
Toward his wedding walking by the way.
His false wife could him so please, and pray,
Till she his counsel knew; and she, untrue,
Unto his foes his counsel gan bewray,
And him forsook, and took another new.

Three hundred foxes Sampson took for ire,
And all their tailes he together band,
And set the foxes' tailes all on fire,
For he in every tail had knit a brand,
And they burnt all the combs of that lend,
And all their oliveres* and vines eke. *olive trees

*A thousand men he slew eke with his hand,
And had no weapon but an ass's cheek.*

*When they were slain, so thirsted him, that he
Was *well-nigh lorn,* for which he gan to pray *near to perishing*
That God would on his pain have some pity,
And send him drink, or elles must he die;
And of this ass's cheek, that was so dry,
Out of a wang-tooth* sprang anon a well, *cheek-tooth
Of which, he drank enough, shortly to say.
Thus help'd him God, as Judicum can tell.*

*By very force, at Gaza, on a night,
Maugre* the Philistines of that city, *in spite of
The gates of the town he hath up plight,* *plucked, wrenched
And on his back y-carried them hath he
High on an hill, where as men might them see.
O noble mighty Sampson, lefe* and dear, *loved
Hadst thou not told to women thy secre,
In all this world there had not been thy peer.*

*This Sampson never cider drank nor wine,
Nor on his head came razor none nor shear,
By precept of the messenger divine;
For all his strengthes in his haïres were;
And fully twenty winters, year by year,
He had of Israel the governance;
But soone shall he weepe many a tear,
For women shall him bringe to mischance.*

Unto his leman Dalila he told, *mistress
That in his haïres all his strengthe lay;
And falsely to his foemen she him sold,
And sleeping in her barme* upon a day *lap
She made to clip or shear his hair away,
And made his foemen all his craft espïen.
And when they founde him in this array,
They bound him fast, and put out both his eyen.*

*But, ere his hair was clipped or y-shave,
There was no bond with which men might him bind;
But now is he in prison in a cave,
Where as they made him at the querne* grind. *mill*

O noble Sampson, strongest of mankind!
O whilom judge in glory and richness!
Now may'st thou weepe with thine eyen blind,
Since thou from weal art fall'n to wretchedness.

Th'end of this caitiff* was as I shall say; *wretched man
His foemen made a feast upon a day,
And made him as their fool before them play;
And this was in a temple of great array.
But at the last he made a foul affray,
For he two pillars shook, and made them fall,
And down fell temple and all, and there it lay,
And slew himself and eke his foemen all;

This is to say, the princes every one;
And eke three thousand bodies were there slain
With falling of the great temple of stone.
Of Sampson now will I no more sayn;
Beware by this example old and plain,
That no man tell his counsel to his wife
Of such thing as he would *have secret fain,* *wish to be secret*
If that it touch his limbes or his life.

Of HERCULES the sov'reign conquerour
Singe his workes' land and high renown;
For in his time of strength he bare the flow'r.
He slew and reft the skin of the lion
He of the Centaurs laid the boast adown;
He Harpies slew, the cruel birdes fell;
He golden apples reft from the dragon
He drew out Cerberus the hound of hell.

He slew the cruel tyrant Busirus.
And made his horse to fret* him flesh and bone; *devour
He slew the fiery serpent venomous;
Of Achelous' two hornes brake he one.
And he slew Cacus in a cave of stone;
He slew the giant Antaeus the strong;
He slew the grisly boar, and that anon;
And bare the heav'n upon his necke long.

Was never wight, since that the world began,
That slew so many monsters as did he;
Throughout the wide world his name ran,
What for his strength, and for his high bounte;
And every realme went he for to see;
He was so strong that no man might him let,* *withstand
At both the worlde's ends, as saith Trophee,
Instead of boundes he a pillar set.

A leman had this noble champion,
That highte Dejanira, fresh as May;
And, as these clerkes make mention,
She hath him sent a shirte fresh and gay;
Alas! this shirt, alas and well-away!
Envenomed was subtilly withal,
That ere that he had worn it half a day,
It made his flesh all from his bones fall.

But natheless some clerkes her excuse
By one, that highte Nessus, that it maked;
Be as he may, I will not her accuse;
But on his back this shirt he wore all naked,
Till that his flesh was for the venom blaked.* *blackened
And when he saw none other remedy,
In hote coals he hath himselfe raked,
For with no venom deigned he to die.

Thus sterf* this worthy mighty Hercules. *died
Lo, who may trust on Fortune *any throw?* *for a moment*
For him that followeth all this world of pres,* *near
Ere he be ware, is often laid full low;
Full wise is he that can himselfe know.
Beware, for when that Fortune list to glose
Then waiteth she her man to overthrow,
By such a way as he would least suppose.

The mighty throne, the precious treasure,
The glorious sceptre, and royal majesty,
That had the king NABUCHODONOSOR
With tongue unnethes* may described be. *scarcely
He twice won Jerusalem the city,
The vessels of the temple he with him lad;* *took away

At Babylone was his sov'reign see, *seat
In which his glory and delight he had.*

*The fairest children of the blood royal
Of Israel he *did do geld* anon, *caused to be castrated*
And maked each of them to be his thrall.* *slave
Amonges others Daniel was one,
That was the wisest child of every one;
For he the dreames of the king expounded,
Where in Chaldaea clerkes was there none
That wiste to what fine* his dreames sounded. *end*

*This proude king let make a statue of gold
Sixty cubites long, and seven in bread',
To which image hathe young and old
Commanded he to lout,* and have in dread, *bow down to
Or in a furnace, full of flames red,
He should be burnt that woulde not obey:
But never would assente to that deed
Daniel, nor his younge fellows tway.*

This king of kinges proud was and elate, *lofty
He ween'd* that God, that sits in majesty, *thought
Mighte him not bereave of his estate;
But suddenly he lost his dignity,
And like a beast he seemed for to be,
And ate hay as an ox, and lay thereout
In rain, with wilde beastes walked he,
Till certain time was y-come about.*

*And like an eagle's feathers wax'd his hairs,
His nailes like a birde's clawes were,
Till God released him at certain years,
And gave him wit; and then with many a tear
He thanked God, and ever his life in fear
Was he to do amiss, or more trespace:
And till that time he laid was on his bier,
He knew that God was full of might and grace.*

*His sone, which that highte BALTHASAR,
That *held the regne* after his father's day, *possessed the
kingdom**

*He by his father could not beware,
For proud he was of heart and of array;
And eke an idolaster was he aye.
His high estate assured* him in pride; *confirmed
But Fortune cast him down, and there he lay,
And suddenly his regne gan divide.*

*A feast he made unto his lordes all
Upon a time, and made them blithe be,
And then his officeres gan he call;
"Go, bringe forth the vessels," saide he,
"Which that my father in his prosperity
Out of the temple of Jerusalem reft,
And to our highe goddes thanks we
Of honour, that our elders* with us left." *forefathers*

*His wife, his lordes, and his concubines
Aye dranke, while their appetites did last,
Out of these noble vessels sundry wines.
And on a wall this king his eyen cast,
And saw an hand, armless, that wrote full fast;
For fear of which he quaked, and sighed sore.
This hand, that Balthasar so sore aghast,* *dismayed
Wrote Mane, tekem, phares, and no more.*

*In all that land magician was there none
That could expounde what this letter meant.
But Daniel expounded it anon,
And said, "O King, God to thy father lent
Glory and honour, regne, treasure, rent,* *revenue
And he was proud, and nothing God he drad;* *dreaded
And therefore God great wreche* upon him sent, *vengeance
And him bereft the regne that he had.*

*"He was cast out of manne's company;
With asses was his habitation
And ate hay, as a beast, in wet and dry,
Till that he knew by grace and by reason
That God of heaven hath domination
O'er every regne, and every creature;
And then had God of him compassion,
And him restor'd his regne and his figure.*

"Eke thou, that art his son, art proud also,
And knowest all these things verily;
And art rebel to God, and art his foe.
Thou drankest of his vessels boldely;
Thy wife eke, and thy wenches, sinfully
Drank of the same vessels sundry wines,
And heried* false goddes cursedly; *praised
Therefore *to thee y-shapen full great pine is.* *great punishment
is
prepared for thee*

"This hand was sent from God, that on the wall
Wrote Mane, tekel, phares, truste me;
Thy reign is done; thou weighest naught at all;
Divided is thy regne, and it shall be
To Medes and to Persians giv'n," quoth he.
And thilke same night this king was slaw* *slain
And Darius occupied his degree,
Though he thereto had neither right nor law.

Lordings, example hereby may ye take,
How that in lordship is no sickerness,* *security
For when that Fortune will a man forsake,
She bears away his regne and his riches,
And eke his friendes bothe more and less,
For what man that hath friendes through fortune,
Mishap will make them enemies, I guess;
This proverb is full sooth, and full commune.

ZENOBIA, of Palmyrie the queen,
As write Persians of her nobless,
So worthy was in armes, and so keen,
That no wight passed her in hardiness,
Nor in lineage, nor other gentleness.* *noble qualities
Of the king's blood of Perse* is she descended; *Persia
I say not that she hadde most fairness,
But of her shape she might not be amended.

From her childhood I finde that she fled
Office of woman, and to woods she went,
And many a wilde harte's blood she shed
With arrows broad that she against them sent;
She was so swift, that she anon them hent.* *caught

*And when that she was older, she would kill
Lions, leopards, and beares all to-rent,* *torn to pieces
And in her armes wield them at her will.*

*She durst the wilde beastes' dennes seek,
And runnen in the mountains all the night,
And sleep under a bush; and she could eke
Wrestle by very force and very might
With any young man, were he ne'er so wight;* *active, nimble
There mighte nothing in her armes stonde.
She kept her maidenhood from every wight,
To no man deigned she for to be bond.*

*But at the last her friendes have her married
To Odenate, a prince of that country;
All were it so, that she them longe tarried.
And ye shall understande how that he
Haddé such fantasies as hadde she;
But natheless, when they were knit in fere,* *together
They liv'd in joy, and in felicity,
For each of them had other lefe* and dear. *loved*

*Save one thing, that she never would assent,
By no way, that he shoulde by her lie
But ones, for it was her plain intent
To have a child, the world to multiply;
And all so soon as that she might espy
That she was not with childe by that deed,
Then would she suffer him do his fantasy
Eftsoon,* and not but ones, *out of dread.* *again *without doubt**

And if she were with child at thilke cast, *that
No more should he playe thilke game
Till fully forty dayes were past;
Then would she once suffer him do the same.
All* were this Odenatus wild or tame, *whether
He got no more of her; for thus she said,
It was to wives lechery and shame
In other case* if that men with them play'd. on other terms*

*Two sones, by this Odenate had she,
The which she kept in virtue and lettrure.* *learning
But now unto our tale turne we;*

*I say, so worshipful a creature,
And wise therewith, and large* with measure,** *bountiful
**moderation*

So penible in the war, and courteous eke, *laborious
Nor more labour might in war endure,
Was none, though all this worlde men should seek.*

*Her rich array it mighte not be told,
As well in vessel as in her clothing:
She was all clad in pierrie* and in gold, *jewellery
And eke she *lefte not,* for no hunting, *did not neglect*
To have of sundry tongues full knowing,
When that she leisure had, and for t'intend* *apply
To learne bookes was all her liking,
How she in virtue might her life dispend.*

*And, shortly of this story for to treat,
So doughty was her husband and eke she,
That they conquered many regnes great
In th'Orient, with many a fair city
Appertinent unto the majesty
Of Rome, and with strong hande held them fast,
Nor ever might their foemen do* them flee, *make
Aye while that Odenatus' dayes last'.*

*Her battles, whoso list them for to read,
Against Sapor the king, and other mo',
And how that all this process fell in deed,
Why she conquer'd, and what title thereto,
And after of her mischief* and her woe, *misfortune
How that she was besieged and y-take,
Let him unto my master Petrarch go,
That writes enough of this, I undertake.*

*When Odenate was dead, she mightily
The regne held, and with her proper hand
Against her foes she fought so cruelly,
That there n'as* king nor prince in all that land, *was not
That was not glad, if be that grace fand
That she would not upon his land warray;* *make war
With her they maden alliance by bond,
To be in peace, and let her ride and play.*

*The emperor of Rome, Claudius,
Nor, him before, the Roman Gallien,
Durst never be so courageous,
Nor no Armenian, nor Egyptien,
Nor Syrian, nor no Arabien,
Within the fielde durste with her fight,
Lest that she would them with her handes slen,* *slay
Or with her meinie* putte them to flight. *troops*

*In kinges' habit went her sones two,
As heires of their father's regnes all;
And Heremanno and Timolao
Their names were, as Persians them call
But aye Fortune hath in her honey gall;
This mighty queene may no while endure;
Fortune out of her regne made her fall
To wretchedness and to misadventure.*

*Aurelian, when that the governance
Of Rome came into his handes tway,
He shope* upon this queen to do vengeance; *prepared
And with his legions he took his way
Toward Zenobie, and, shortly for to say,
He made her flee, and at the last her hent,* *took
And fetter'd her, and eke her children tway,
And won the land, and home to Rome he went.*

*Amonges other thinges that he wan,
Her car, that was with gold wrought and pierrie,* *jewels
This greate Roman, this Aurelian
Hath with him led, for that men should it see.
Before in his triumphhe walked she
With gilte chains upon her neck hanging;
Crowned she was, as after* her degree, *according to
And full of pierrie her clothing.*

*Alas, Fortune! she that whilom was
Dreadful to kinges and to emperours,
Now galet* all the people on her, alas! *yelleth
And she that *helmed was in starke stowres,* *wore a helmet in
And won by force townes strong and tow'rs, obstinate battles*
Shall on her head now wear a vitremite;*

*And she that bare the sceptre full of flow'rs
Shall bear a distaff, *her cost for to quite.* * to make her living**

*Although that NERO were so vicious
As any fiend that lies full low adown,
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,
This wide world had in subjection,
Both East and West, South and Septentrion.
Of rubies, sapphires, and of pearles white
Were all his clothes embroider'd up and down,
For he in gemmes greatly gan delight.*

*More delicate, more pompous of array,
More proud, was never emperor than he;
That *ilke cloth* that he had worn one day, *same robe*
After that time he would it never see;
Nettes of gold thread had he great plenty,
To fish in Tiber, when him list to play;
His lustes* were as law, in his degree, *pleasures
For Fortune as his friend would him obey.*

He Rome burnt for his delicacy; *pleasure
The senators he slew upon a day,
To heare how that men would weep and cry;
And slew his brother, and by his sister lay.
His mother made he in piteous array;
For he her wombe slitte, to behold
Where he conceived was; so well-away!
That he so little of his mother told.* *valued*

*No tear out of his eyen for that sight
Came; but he said, a fair woman was she.
Great wonder is, how that he could or might
Be doomesman* of her deade beauty: *judge
The wine to bringe him commanded he,
And drank anon; none other woe he made,
When might is joined unto cruelty,
Alas! too deepe will the venom wade.*

*In youth a master had this emperour,
To teache him lettrure* and courtesy; *literature, learning
For of morality he was the flow'r,*

As in his time, **but if* bookes lie. *unless*
And while this master had of him mast'ry,
He made him so conning and so souple, ** *subtle*
That longe time it was ere tyranny,
Or any vice, durst in him uncouple. ** *be let loose*

This Seneca, of which that I devise, ** *tell*
Because Nero had of him suche dread,
For he from vices would him aye chastise
Discreetly, as by word, and not by deed;
"Sir," he would say, "an emperor must need
Be virtuous, and hate tyranny."
For which he made him in a bath to bleed
On both his armes, till he muste die.

This Nero had eke of a custumance ** *habit*
In youth against his master for to rise; ** *stand in his presence*
Which afterward he thought a great grievance;
Therefore he made him dien in this wise.
But natheless this Seneca the wise
Chose in a bath to die in this mannere,
Rather than have another tormentise, ** *torture*
And thus hath Nero slain his master dear.

Now fell it so, that Fortune list no longer
The highe pride of Nero to cherice, ** *cherish*
For though he were strong, yet was she stronger.
She thoughte thus; "By God, I am too nice ** *foolish*
To set a man, that is full fill'd of vice,
In high degree, and emperor him call!
By God, out of his seat I will him trice! ** *thrust*
When he least weeneth, ** soonest shall he fall.* ** *expecteth*

The people rose upon him on a night,
For his default; and when he it espied,
Out of his doors anon he hath him dight ** *betaken himself*
Alone, and where he ween'd t'have been allied, ** *regarded with*
He knocked fast, and aye the more he cried friendship
The faster shutte they their doores all;
Then wist he well he had himself misgied, ** *mised*
And went his way, no longer durst he call.

*The people cried and rumbled up and down,
That with his eares heard he how they said;
"Where is this false tyrant, this Neroun?"
For fear almost out of his wit he braid,* *went
And to his goddes piteously he pray'd
For succour, but it mighte not betide
For dread of this he thoughte that died,
And ran into a garden him to hide.*

*And in this garden found he churles tway,
That satte by a fire great and red;
And to these churles two he gan to pray
To slay him, and to girdeon* off his head, *strike
That to his body, when that he were dead,
Were no despite done for his defame.* *infamy
Himself he slew, *he could no better rede;* *he knew no better
Of which Fortune laugh'd and hadde game. counsel**

*Was never capitain under a king,
That regnes more put in subjection,
Nor stronger was in field of alle thing
As in his time, nor greater of renown,
Nor more pompous in high presumptioun,
Than HOLOFERNES, whom Fortune aye kiss'd
So lik'rously, and led him up and down,
Till that his head was off ere that he wist.* *before he knew it**

*Not only that this world had of him awe,
For losing of riches and liberty;
But he made every man *reny his law.* *renounce his religion
Nabuchodonosor was God, said he;
None other Godde should honoured be.
Against his hest* there dare no wight trespase, *command
Save in Bethulia, a strong city,
Where Eliachim priest was of that place.*

But take keep of the death of Holofern; *notice
Amid his host he drunken lay at night
Within his tente, large as is a bern;* *barn
And yet, for all his pomp and all his might,
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright
Sleeping, his head off smote, and from his tent*

*Full privily she stole from every wight,
And with his head unto her town she went.*

*What needeth it of king ANTIOC'HUS
To tell his high and royal majesty,
His great pride, and his workes venomous?
For such another was there none as he;
Reade what that he was in Maccabee.
And read the proude wordes that he said,
And why he fell from his prosperity,
And in an hill how wretchedly he died.*

*Fortune him had enhanced so in pride,
That verily he ween'd he might attain
Unto the starres upon every side,
And in a balance weighen each mountain,
And all the floodes of the sea restrain.
And Godde's people had he most in hate
Them would he slay in torment and in pain,
Weening that God might not his pride abate.*

*And for that Nicanor and Timothee
With Jewes were vanquish'd mightily,
Unto the Jewes such an hate had he,
That he bade *graith his car* full hastily, *prepare his chariot*
And swore and saide full dispiteously,
Unto Jerusalem he would eftsoon,* *immediately
To wreak his ire on it full cruelly
But of his purpose was he let* full soon. *prevented*

*God for his menace him so sore smote,
With invisible wound incurable,
That in his guttes carf* it so and bote,** *cut **gnawed
Till that his paines were importable;* *unendurable
And certainly the wreche* was reasonable, *vengeance
For many a manne's guttes did he pain;
But from his purpose, curs'd* and damnable, *impious
For all his smart he would him not restrain;
But bade anon apparaile* his host. *prepare*

*And suddenly, ere he was of it ware,
God daunted all his pride, and all his boast*

For he so sore fell out of his chare, *chariot
That it his limbes and his skin to-tare,
So that he neither mighte go nor ride
But in a chaire men about him bare,
Alle forbruised bothe back and side.*

The wreche of God him smote so cruelly, *vengeance
That through his body wicked wormes crept,
And therewithal he stank so horribly
That none of all his meinie* that him kept, *servants
Whether so that he woke or elles slept,
Ne mighte not of him the stink endure.
In this mischief he wailed and eke wept,
And knew God Lord of every creature.*

*To all his host, and to himself also,
Full wlatsem* was the stink of his carrain;** *loathsome **body
No manne might him beare to and fro.
And in this stink, and this horrible pain,
He starf* full wretchedly in a mountain. *dies
Thus hath this robber, and this homicide,
That many a manne made to weep and plain,
Such guerdon* as belongeth unto pride. *reward*

*The story of ALEXANDER is so commune,
That ev'ry wight that hath discretion
Hath heard somewhat or all of his fortune.
This wide world, as in conclusion,
He won by strength; or, for his high renown,
They were glad for peace to him to send.
The pride and boast of man he laid adown,
Whereso he came, unto the worlde's end.*

*Comparison yet never might be maked
Between him and another conqueror;
For all this world for dread of him had quaked
He was of knighthood and of freedom flow'r:
Fortune him made the heir of her honour.
Save wine and women, nothing might assuage
His high intent in arms and labour,
So was he full of leonine courage.*

What praise were it to him, though I you told
Of Darius, and a hundred thousand mo',
Of kings, princes, dukes, and earles bold,
Which he conquer'd, and brought them into woe?
I say, as far as man may ride or go,
The world was his, why should I more devise?* *tell
For, though I wrote or told you evermo',
Of his knighthood it mighte not suffice.

Twelve years he reigned, as saith Maccabee
Philippe's son of Macedon he was,
That first was king in Greece the country.
O worthy gentle* Alexander, alas *noble
That ever should thee falle such a case!
Empoison'd of thine owen folk thou were;
Thy six fortune hath turn'd into an ace,
And yet for thee she wepte never a tear.

Who shall me give teares to complain
The death of gentiles, and of franchise,* *generosity
That all this worlde had in his demaine,* *dominion
And yet he thought it mighte not suffice,
So full was his corage* of high emprise? *spirit
Alas! who shall me helpe to indite
False Fortune, and poison to despise?
The whiche two of all this woe I wite.* *blame

By wisdom, manhood, and by great labour,
From humbleness to royal majesty
Up rose he, JULIUS the Conquerour,
That won all th' Occident,* by land and sea, *West
By strength of hand or elles by treaty,
And unto Rome made them tributary;
And since* of Rome the emperor was he, *afterwards
Till that Fortune wax'd his adversary.

O mighty Caesar, that in Thessaly
Against POMPEIUS, father thine in law,
That of th' Orient had all the chivalry,
As far as that the day begins to daw,
That through thy knighthood hast them take and slaw,* slain*
Save fewe folk that with Pompeius fled;

*Through which thou put all th' Orient in awe;
Thanke Fortune that so well thee sped.*

*But now a little while I will bewail
This Pompeius, this noble governor
Of Rome, which that fled at this battaile
I say, one of his men, a false traitor,
His head off smote, to winne him favor
Of Julius, and him the head he brought;
Alas! Pompey, of th' Orient conqueror,
That Fortune unto such a fine* thee brought! *end*

*To Rome again repaired Julius,
With his triumphe laureate full high;
But on a time Brutus and Cassius,
That ever had of his estate envy,
Full privily have made conspiracy
Against this Julius in subtle wise
And cast* the place in which he shoulde die, *arranged
With bodekins,* as I shall you devise.** *daggers **tell*

*This Julius to the Capitole went
Upon a day, as he was wont to gon;
And in the Capitol anon him hent* *seized
This false Brutus, and his other fone,* *foes
And sticked him with bodekins anon
With many a wound, and thus they let him lie.
But never groan'd he at no stroke but one,
Or else at two, *but if* the story lie. *unless*

*So manly was this Julius of heart,
And so well loved *estately honesty *dignified propriety*
That, though his deadly woundes sore smart,* *pained him
His mantle o'er his hippes caste he,
That ne man shoulde see his privity
And as he lay a-dying in a trance,
And wiste verily that dead was he,
Of honesty yet had he remembrance.*

*Lucan, to thee this story I recommend,
And to Sueton', and Valerie also,
That of this story write *word and end* *the whole*
How that to these great conquerores two*

Fortune was first a friend, and since* a foe. *afterwards
No manne trust upon her favour long,
But *have her in await for evermo!;* *ever be watchful against
her*
Witness on all these conquerores strong.

The riche CROESUS, whilom king of Lyde, —
Of which Croesus Cyrus him sore drad,* — *dreaded
Yet was he caught amidde all his pride,
And to be burnt men to the fire him lad;
But such a rain down *from the welkin shad,* *poured from the
sky*
That slew the fire, and made him to escape:
But to beware no grace yet he had,
Till fortune on the gallows made him gape.

When he escaped was, he could not stint* *refrain
For to begin a newe war again;
He weened well, for that Fortune him sent
Such hap, that he escaped through the rain,
That of his foes he mighte not be slain.
And eke a sweven* on a night he mette,** *dream **dreamed
Of which he was so proud, and eke so fain,* *glad
That he in vengeance all his hearte set.

Upon a tree he was set, as he thought,
Where Jupiter him wash'd, both back and side,
And Phoebus eke a fair towel him brought
To dry him with; and therefore wax'd his pride.
And to his daughter that stood him beside,
Which he knew in high science to abound,
He bade her tell him what it signified;
And she his dream began right thus expound.

"The tree," quoth she, "the gallows is to mean,
And Jupiter betokens snow and rain,
And Phoebus, with his towel clear and clean,
These be the sunne's streames* sooth to sayn; *rays
Thou shalt y-hangeth be, father, certain;
Rain shall thee wash, and sunne shall thee dry."
Thus warned him full plat and eke full plain
His daughter, which that called was Phanie.

*And hanged was Croesus the proude king;
His royal throne might him not avail.
Tragedy is none other manner thing,
Nor can in singing crie nor bewail,
But for that Fortune all day will assail
With unware stroke the regnes* that be proud: *kingdoms
For when men truste her, then will she fail,
And cover her bright face with a cloud.*

*O noble, O worthy PEDRO, glory OF SPAIN,
Whem Fortune held so high in majesty,
Well oughte men thy piteous death complain.
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,
And after, at a siege, by subtlety,
Thou wert betray'd, and led unto his tent,
Where as he with his owen hand slew thee,
Succeeding in thy regne* and in thy rent.** *kingdom *revenues*

*The field of snow, with th' eagle of black therein,
Caught with the lion, red-colour'd as the glède,* *burning coal
He brew'd this cursedness,* and all this sin; *wickedness, villainy
The wicked nest was worker of this deed;
Not Charles' Oliver, that took aye heed
Of truth and honour, but of Armorike
Ganilien Oliver, corrupt for meed,* *reward, bribe
Broughte this worthy king in such a brike.* *breach, ruin*

*O worthy PETRO, King of CYPRE also,
That Alexandre won by high mast'ry,
Full many a heathnen wroughtest thou full woe,
Of which thine owen lieges had envy;
And, for no thing but for thy chivalry,
They in thy bed have slain thee by the morrow;
Thus can Fortune her wheel govern and gie,* *guide
And out of joy bringe men into sorrow.*

*Of Milan greate BARNABO VISCOUNT,
God of delight, and scourge of Lombardy,
Why should I not thine clomben* wert so high? *climbed
Thy brother's son, that was thy double ally,
For he thy nephew was and son-in-law,*

*Within his prison made thee to die,
But why, nor how, *n'ot I* that thou were slaw.* *I know not*
*slain**

Of th' Earl HUGOLIN OF PISE the languour *agony
There may no tongue telle for pity.
But little out of Pisa stands a tow'r,
In whiche tow'r in prison put was he,
Aud with him be his little children three;
The eldest scarcely five years was of age;
Alas! Fortune, it was great cruelty
Such birdes for to put in such a cage.*

*Damned was he to die in that prison;
For Roger, which that bishop was of Pise,
Had on him made a false suggestion,
Through which the people gan upon him rise,
And put him in prison, in such a wise
As ye have heard; and meat and drink he had
So small, that well unneth* it might suffice, *scarcely
And therewithal it was full poor and bad.*

*And on a day befell, that in that hour
When that his meate wont was to be brought,
The jailor shut the doores of the tow'r;
He heard it right well, but he spake nought.
And in his heart anon there fell a thought,
That they for hunger woulde *do him dien;* *cause him to die*
"Alas!" quoth he, "alas that I was wrought!"* *made, born
Therewith the teares fell from his eyen.*

*His youngest son, that three years was of age,
Unto him said, "Father, why do ye weep?
When will the jailor bringen our pottage?
Is there no morsel bread that ye do keep?
I am so hungry, that I may not sleep.
Now woulde God that I might sleepen ever!
Then should not hunger in my wombe* creep; *stomach
There is no thing, save bread, that one were lever."* *dearer*

*Thus day by day this child begun to cry,
Till in his father's barme* adown he lay, *lap*

*And saide, "Farewell, father, I must die;"
And kiss'd his father, and died the same day.
And when the woeful father did it sey,* *see
For woe his armes two he gan to bite,
And said, "Alas! Fortune, and well-away!
To thy false wheel my woe all may I wite."* *blame*

*His children ween'd that it for hunger was
That he his armes gnaw'd, and not for woe,
And saide, "Father, do not so, alas!
But rather eat the flesh upon us two.
Our flesh thou gave us, our flesh take us fro',
And eat enough;" right thus they to him said.
And after that, within a day or two,
They laid them in his lap adown, and died.*

Himself, despaired, eke for hunger starf. *died
Thus ended is this Earl of Pise;
From high estate Fortune away him carf.* *cut off
Of this tragedy it ought enough suffice
Whoso will hear it *in a longer wise,* *at greater length*
Reade the greate poet of Itale,
That Dante hight, for he can it devise
From point to point, not one word will he fail.*

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"Ho!" quoth the Knight, "good sir, no more of this;
That ye have said is right enough, y-wis,* *of a surety
And muche more; for little heaviness
Is right enough to muche folk, I guess.
I say for me, it is a great disease,* *source of distress, annoyance
Where as men have been in great wealth and ease,
To hearken of their sudden fall, alas!
And the contrary is joy and great solas,* *delight, comfort
As when a man hath been in poor estate,
And climbeth up, and waxeth fortunate,
And there abideth in prosperity;
Such thing is gladsome, as it thinketh me,
And of such thing were goodly for to tell."

"Yea," quoth our Hoste, "by Saint Paule's bell.
Ye say right sooth; this monk hath clapped* loud; *talked
He spake how Fortune cover'd with a cloud
I wot not what, and als' of a tragedy
Right now ye heard: and pardie no remedy
It is for to bewaile, nor complain
That that is done, and also it is pain,
As ye have said, to hear of heaviness.
Sir Monk, no more of this, so God you bless;
Your tale annoyeth all this company;
Such talking is not worth a butterfly,
For therein is there no sport nor game;
Therefore, Sir Monke, Dan Piers by your name,
I pray you heart'ly, tell us somewhat else,
For sickerly, n'ere* clinking of your bells, *were it not for the
That on your bridle hang on every side,
By heaven's king, that for us alle died,
I should ere this have fallen down for sleep,
Although the slough had been never so deep;
Then had your tale been all told in vain.
For certainly, as these clerkes sayn,
Where as a man may have no audience,
Nought helpeth it to telle his sentence.
And well I wot the substance is in me,

*If anything shall well reported be.
Sir, say somewhat of hunting, I you pray."*

*"Nay," quoth the Monk, "I have *no lust to play;* *no fondness for
Now let another tell, as I have told." jesting*
Then spake our Host with rude speech and bold,
And said unto the Nunne's Priest anon,
"Come near, thou Priest, come hither, thou Sir John,
Tell us such thing as may our heartes glade.* *gladden
Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.
What though thine horse be bothe foul and lean?
If he will serve thee, reck thou not a bean;
Look that thine heart be merry evermo'."*

*"Yes, Host," quoth he, "so may I ride or go,
But* I be merry, y-wis I will be blamed." *unless
And right anon his tale he hath attamed* *commenced
And thus he said unto us every one,
This sweete priest, this goodly man, Sir John.*

THE TALE.

*A poor widow, *somedeaſ y-stept* in age, *ſomewhat advanced*
Was whilom dwelling in a poor cottage,
Beside a grove, standing in a dale.
This widow, of which I telle you my tale,
Since thilke day that she was last a wife,
In patience led a full simple life,
For little was *her chattel and her rent.* *her goods and her
income*
By husbandry* of such as God her sent, *thrifty management
She found* herself, and eke her daughters two. *maintained
Three large sowes had she, and no mo';
Three kine, and eke a sheep that highte Mall.
Full sooty was her bow'r,* and eke her hall, *chamber
In which she ate full many a slender meal.
Of poignant sauce knew she never a deal.* *whit*

No dainty morsel passed through her throat;
 Her diet was **accordant to her cote.** **in keeping with her*
*cottage**
 Repletion her made never sick;
 Attemper^{*} diet was all her ph^hysic, **moderate*
 And exercise, and **hearte's suffisance.** **contentment of heart**
 The goute **let her nothing for to dance,** **did not prevent her*
 Nor apoplexy shente^{*} not her head. from dancing^{*} **hurt*
 No wine drank she, neither white nor red:
 Her board was served most with white and black,
 Milk and brown bread, in which she found no lack,
 Seind^{*} bacon, and sometimes an egg or tway; **singed*
 For she was as it were **a manner dey.** **kind of day labourer**
 A yard she had, enclosed all about
 With stickes, and a drye ditch without,
 In which she had a cock, hight Chanticleer;
 In all the land of crowing **n'as his peer.** **was not his equal**
 His voice was merrier than the merry orgon,^{*} **organ*
 On masse days that in the churches gon.
 Well sickerer^{*} was his crowing in his lodge, **more punctual**
 Than is a clock, or an abbay horloge.^{*} **clock*
 By nature he knew each ascension
 Of th' equinoctial in thilke town;
 For when degrees fiftene were ascended,
 Then crew he, that it might not be amended.
 His comb was redder than the fine coral,
 Embattell'd as it were a castle wall.
 His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
 Like azure were his legges and his tone;^{*} **toes*
 His nailes whiter than the lily flow'r,
 And like the burnish'd gold was his colour,
 This gentle cock had in his governance
 Sev'n hennes, for to do all his pleasance,
 Which were his sisters and his paramours,
 And wondrous like to him as of colours.
 Of which the fairest-hued in the throat
 Was called Damoselle Partelote,
 Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,
 And companiable,^{*} and bare herself so fair, **sociable*
 Since the day that she sev'n night was old,
 That truely she had the heart in hold
 Of Chanticleer, locked in every lith;^{*} **limb*

He lov'd her so, that well was him therewith,
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,
When that the brighte sunne gan to spring,
In sweet accord, **"My lefe is fare in land."* **my love is*
For, at that time, as I have understand, gone abroad*
Beastes and birdes coulde speak and sing.

And so befell, that in a dawening,
As Chanticleer among his wives all
Sat on his perche, that was in the hall,
And next him sat this faire Partelote,
This Chanticleer gan groanen in his throat,
As man that in his dream is dretched* sore, *oppressed
And when that Partelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast,* and saide, "Hearte dear, *afraid
What aileth you to groan in this mannere?
Ye be a very sleeper, fy for shame!"
And he answer'd and saide thus; "Madame,
I pray you that ye take it not agrief;* *amiss, in umbrage
By God, *me mette* I was in such mischief,** *I dreamed*
**trouble
Right now, that yet mine heart is sore affright'.
Now God," quoth he, "my sweven* read aright *dream, vision.
And keep my body out of foul prisoun.
Me mette, how that I roamed up and down *I dreamed*
Within our yard, where as I saw a beast
Was like an hound, and would have *made arrest* *siezed*
Upon my body, and would have had me dead.
His colour was betwixt yellow and red;
And tipped was his tail, and both his ears,
With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs.
His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;
Yet of his look almost for fear I dey;* *died
This caused me my groaning, doubtless."

"Away," quoth she, "fy on you, hearteless!* *coward
Alas!" quoth she, "for, by that God above!
Now have ye lost my heart and all my love;
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For certes, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mighte be,
To have husbandes hardy, wise, and free,
And secret,* and no niggard nor no fool, *discreet

Nor him that is aghast* of every tool,** *afraid **rag, trifle
 Nor no avantour,* by that God above! *braggart
 How durste ye for shame say to your love
 That anything might make you afear'd?
 Have ye no manne's heart, and have a beard?
 Alas! and can ye be aghast of swevenes?* *dreams
 Nothing but vanity, God wot, in sweven is,
 Swevens *engender of repletions,* *are caused by over-eating*
 And oft of fume,* and of complexions, *drunkenness
 When humours be too abundant in a wight.
 Certes this dream, which ye have mette tonight,
 Cometh of the great supefluity
 Of youre rede cholera,* pardie, *bile
 Which causeth folk to dreaden in their dreams
 Of arrows, and of fire with redde beams,
 Of redde beastes, that they will them bite,
 Of conteke,* and of whelpes great and lite;** *contention **little
 Right as the humour of melancholy
 Causeth full many a man in sleep to cry,
 For fear of bulles, or of beares blake,
 Or elles that black devils will them take,
 Of other humours could I tell also,
 That worke many a man in sleep much woe;
 That I will pass as lightly as I can.
 Lo, Cato, which that was so wise a man,
 Said he not thus, *'Ne do no force of* dreams,' *attach no weight
 to*
 Now, Sir," quoth she, "when we fly from these beams,
 For Godde's love, as take some laxatife;
 On peril of my soul, and of my life,
 I counsel you the best, I will not lie,
 That both of choler, and melancholy,
 Ye purge you; and, for ye shall not tarry,
 Though in this town is no apothecary,
 I shall myself two herbes teache you,
 That shall be for your health, and for your prow;* *profit
 And in our yard the herbes shall I find,
 The which have of their property by kind* *nature
 To purge you beneath, and eke above.
 Sire, forget not this for Godde's love;
 Ye be full choleric of complexion;
 Ware that the sun, in his ascension,

You finde not replete of humours hot;
And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,
That ye shall have a fever tertiane,
Or else an ague, that may be your bane,
A day or two ye shall have digestives
Of wormes, ere ye take your laxatives,
Of laurel, centaury, and fumeterere,
Or else of elder-berry, that groweth there,
Of catapuce, or of the gaitre-berries,
Or herb ivy growing in our yard, that merry is:
Pick them right as they grow, and eat them in,
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin;
Dreade no dream; I can say you no more."

"Madame," quoth he, "grand mercy of your lore,
But natheless, as touching *Dan Catoun,* *Cato
That hath of wisdom such a great renown,
Though that he bade no dreames for to dread,
By God, men may in olde bookes read
Of many a man more of authority
Than ever Cato was, so may I the,* *thrive
That all the reverse say of his sentence,* *opinion
And have well founden by experience
That dreames be significations
As well of joy, as tribulations
That folk endure in this life present.
There needeth make of this no argument;
The very preve* sheweth it indeed. *trial, experience
One of the greatest authors that men read
Saith thus, that whilom two fellowes went
On pilgrimage in a full good intent;
And happen'd so, they came into a town
Where there was such a congregatioun
Of people, and eke so *strait of herbergage,* *without lodging*
That they found not as much as one cottage
In which they bothe might y-lodged be:
Wherefore they musten of necessity,
As for that night, departe company;
And each of them went to his hostelry,* *inn
And took his lodging as it woulde fall.
The one of them was lodged in a stall,
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was lodged well enow,

As was his aventure, or his fortune,
That us governeth all, as in commune.
And so befell, that, long ere it were day,
This man mette* in his bed, there: as he lay, *dreamed
How that his fellow gan upon him call,
And said, 'Alas! for in an ox's stall
This night shall I be murder'd, where I lie
Now help me, deare brother, or I die;
In alle haste come to me,' he said.
This man out of his sleep for fear abraid;* *started
But when that he was wak'd out of his sleep,
He turned him, and *took of this no keep;* *paid this no attention*
He thought his dream was but a vanity.
Thus twies* in his sleeping dreamed he, *twice
And at the thirde time yet his fellow again
Came, as he thought, and said, 'I am now slaw;* *slain
Behold my bloody woundes, deep and wide.
Arise up early, in the morning, tide,
And at the west gate of the town,' quoth he,
'A carte full of dung there shalt: thou see,
In which my body is hid privily.
Do thilke cart arroste* boldely. *stop
My gold caused my murder, sooth to sayn.'
And told him every point how he was slain,
With a full piteous face, and pale of hue.

"And, truste well, his dream he found full true;
For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,
To his fellowes inn he took his way;
And when that he came to this ox's stall,
After his fellow he began to call.
The hostelere answered him anon,
And saide, 'Sir, your fellow is y-gone,
As soon as day he went out of the town.'
This man gan fallen in suspicioun,
Rememb'ring on his dreames that he mette,* *dreamed
And forth he went, no longer would he let,* *delay
Unto the west gate of the town, and fand* *found
A dung cart, as it went for to dung land,
That was arrayed in the same wise
As ye have heard the deade man devise;* *describe
And with an hardy heart he gan to cry,
'Vengeance and justice of this felony:

*My fellow murder'd in this same night
And in this cart he lies, gaping upright.
I cry out on the ministers,' quoth he.
'That shoulde keep and rule this city;
Harow! alas! here lies my fellow slain.'
What should I more unto this tale sayn?
The people out start, and cast the cart to ground
And in the middle of the dung they found
The deade man, that murder'd was all new.
O blissful God! that art so good and true,
Lo, how that thou bewray'st murder alway.
Murder will out, that see we day by day.
Murder is so wlatson* and abominable *loathsome
To God, that is so just and reasonable,
That he will not suffer it heled* be; *concealed
Though it abide a year, or two, or three,
Murder will out, this is my conclusioun,
And right anon, the ministers of the town
Have hent* the carter, and so sore him pined,** *seized **tortured
And eke the hostelere so sore engined,* *racked
That they beknew* their wickedness anon, *confessed
And were hanged by the necke bone.*

*"Here may ye see that dreames be to dread.
And certes in the same book I read,
Right in the nexte chapter after this
(I gabbe* not, so have I joy and bliss), *talk idly
Two men that would, have passed over sea,
For certain cause, into a far country,
If that the wind not haddé been contrary,
That made them in a city for to tarry,
That stood full merry upon an haven side;
But on a day, against the even-tide,
The wind gan change, and blew right *as them lest.* *as they
wished*
Jolly and glad they wente to their rest,
And caste* them full early for to sail. *resolved
But to the one man fell a great marvail
That one of them, in sleeping as he lay,
He mette* a wondrous dream, against the day: *dreamed
He thought a man stood by his bedde's side,
And him commanded that he should abide;
And said him thus; 'If thou to-morrow wend,*

Thou shalt be drown'd; my tale is at an end.
 He woke, and told his fellow what he mette,
 And prayed him his voyage for to let;* *delay
 As for that day, he pray'd him to abide.
 His fellow, that lay by his bedde's side,
 Gan for to laugh, and scorned him full fast.
 'No dream,' quoth he, 'may so my heart aghast,* *frighten
 That I will lette* for to do my things.* *delay
 I sette not a straw by thy dreamings,
 For swevens* be but vanities and japes.** *dreams **jokes,deceits
 Men dream all day of owles and of apes,
 And eke of many a maze* therewithal; *wild imagining
 Men dream of thing that never was, nor shall.
 But since I see, that thou wilt here abide,
 And thus forslothe* wilfully thy tide,** *idle away **time
 God wot, *it rueth me;* and have good day.' *I am sorry for it*
 And thus he took his leave, and went his way.
 But, ere that he had half his course sail'd,
 I know not why, nor what mischance it ail'd,
 But casually* the ship's bottom rent, *by accident
 And ship and man under the water went,
 In sight of other shippes there beside
 That with him sailed at the same tide.

"And therefore, faire Partelote so dear,
 By such examples olde may'st thou lear,* *learn
 That no man shoulde be too reckeless
 Of dreames, for I say thee doubteless,
 That many a dream full sore is for to dread.
 Lo, in the life of Saint Kenelm I read,
 That was Kenulphus' son, the noble king
 Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thing.
 A little ere he was murder'd on a day,
 His murder in his vision he say.* *saw
 His norice* him expounded every deal** *nurse **part
 His sweven, and bade him to keep* him well *guard
 For treason; but he was but seven years old,
 And therefore *little tale hath he told* *he attached little
 Of any dream, so holy was his heart. significance to*
 By God, I hadde lever than my shirt
 That ye had read his legend, as have I.
 Dame Partelote, I say you truefy,
 Macrobius, that wrote the vision

In Afric' of the worthy Scipion,
 Affirmeth dreames, and saith that they be
 'Warnings of thinges that men after see.
 And furthermore, I pray you looke well
 In the Old Testament, of Daniel,
 If he held dreames any vanity.
 Read eke of Joseph, and there shall ye see
 Whether dreams be sometimes (I say not all)
 Warnings of thinges that shall after fall.
 Look of Egypt the king, Dan Pharaoh,
 His baker and his buteler also,
 Whether they felte none effect* in dreams. *significance
 Whoso will seek the acts of sundry remes* *realms
 May read of dreames many a wondrous thing.
 Lo Croesus, which that was of Lydia king,
 Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,
 Which signified he should be hanged be?
 Lo here, Andromache, Hectore's wife,
 That day that Hector should lose his life,
 She dreamed on the same night beforne,
 How that the life of Hector should be lorn,* *lost
 If thilke day he went into battaile;
 She warned him, but it might not avail;
 He wente forth to fighte natheless,
 And was y-slain anon of Achilles.
 But thilke tale is all too long to tell;
 And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwell.
 Shortly I say, as for conclusion,
 That I shall have of this avision
 Adversity; and I say furthermore,
 That I ne *tell of laxatives no store,* *hold laxatives
 For they be venomous, I wot it well; of no value*
 I them defy,* I love them never a del.** *distrust **whit

"But let us speak of mirth, and stint* all this; *cease
 Madame Partelote, so have I bliss,
 Of one thing God hath sent me large* grace; liberal
 For when I see the beauty of your face,
 Ye be so scarlet-hued about your eyen,
 I maketh all my dreade for to dien,
 For, all so sicker* as In principio, *certain
 Mulier est hominis confusio.
 Madam, the sentence* of of this Latin is, *meaning

Woman is manne's joy and manne's bliss.
For when I feel at night your softe side, —
Albeit that I may not on you ride,
For that our perch is made so narrow, Alas!
I am so full of joy and of solas,* *delight
That I defy both sweven and eke dream."
And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day, and eke his hennes all;
And with a chuck he gan them for to call,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.
Royal he was, he was no more afear'd;
He feather'd Partelote twenty time,
And as oft trode her, ere that it was prime.
He looked as it were a grim lion,
And on his toes he roamed up and down;
He deigned not to set his feet to ground;
He chucked, when he had a corn y-found,
And to him ranne then his wives all.
Thus royal, as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticleer in his pasture;
And after will I tell his aventure.

When that the month in which the world began,
That highte March, when God first maked man,
Was complete, and y-passed were also,
Since March ended, thirty days and two,
Befell that Chanticleer in all his pride,
His seven wives walking him beside,
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sun,
That in the sign of Taurus had y-run
Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more;
He knew by kind,* and by none other lore,** *nature **learning
That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.* *voice
"The sun," he said, "is clomben up in heaven
Twenty degrees and one, and more y-wis.* *assuredly
Madame Partelote, my worlde's bliss,
Hearken these blissful birdes how they sing,
And see the freshe flowers how they spring;
Full is mine heart of revel and solace."
But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case;* *casualty
For ever the latter end of joy is woe:
God wot that worldly joy is soon y-go:
And, if a rhetor* couldé fair indite, *orator

*He in a chronicle might it safely write,
As for *a sov'reign notability* *a thing supremely notable*
Now every wise man, let him hearken me;
This story is all as true, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot du Lake,
That women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn again to my sentence.*

*A col-fox, full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had wonned* yeares three, *dwelt
By high imagination forecast,
The same night thorough the hedges brast* *burst
Into the yard, where Chanticleer the fair
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repair;
And in a bed of wortes* still he lay, *cabbages
Till it was passed undern of the day,
Waiting his time on Chanticleer to fall:
As gladly do these homicides all,
That in awaite lie to murder men.
O false murd'rer! Rouking* in thy den! *crouching, lurking
O new Iscariot, new Ganilion!
O false dissimuler, O Greek Sinon,
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow!
O Chanticleer! accursed be the morrow
That thou into thy yard flew from the beams;* *rafters
Thou wert full well y-warned by thy dreams
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewot* must needes be, *foreknows
After th' opinion of certain clerkes.
Witness on him that any perfect clerk is,
That in school is great altercation
In this matter, and great disputation,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne cannot *boul't it to the bren,* *examine it thoroughly*
As can the holy doctor Augustine,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardine,
Whether that Godde's worthy foreweeting* *foreknowledge
Straineth me needly for to do a thing *forces me*
(Needly call I simple necessity),
Or elles if free choice be granted me
To do that same thing, or do it not,
Though God forewot* it ere that it was wrought; *knew in
advance*

Or if *his weeting straineth never a deal,* *his knowing constrains
But by necessity conditionel. not at all*
I will not have to do of such mattere;
My tale is of a cock, as ye may hear,
That took his counsel of his wife, with sorrow,
To walken in the yard upon the morrow
That he had mette the dream, as I you told.
Womane's counsels be full often cold;* *mischievous, unwise
Womane's counsel brought us first to woe,
And made Adam from Paradise to go,
There as he was full merry and well at case.
But, for I n'ot* to whom I might displease *know not
If I counsel of women woulde blame,
Pass over, for I said it in my game.* *jest
Read authors, where they treat of such mattere
And what they say of women ye may hear.
These be the cocke's wordes, and not mine;
I can no harm of no woman divine.* *conjecture, imagine
Fair in the sand, to bathe* her merrily, *bask
Lies Partelote, and all her sisters by,
Against the sun, and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;
For Physiologus saith sickerly,* *certainly
How that they singe well and merrily.
And so befell that, as he cast his eye
Among the wortes,* on a butterfly, *cabbages
He was ware of this fox that lay full low.
Nothing *ne list him thenne* for to crow, *he had no inclination*
But cried anon "Cock! cock!" and up he start,
As man that was affrayed in his heart.
For naturally a beast desireth flee
From his contrary,* if be may it see, *enemy
Though he *ne'er erst* had soon it with his eye *never before*
This Chanticleer, when he gan him espy,
He would have fled, but that the fox anon
Said, "Gentle Sir, alas! why will ye gon?
Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?
Now, certes, I were worse than any fiend,
If I to you would harm or villainy.
I am not come your counsel to espy.
But truely the cause of my coming
Was only for to hearken how ye sing;

For trueely ye have as merry a steven,* *voice
As any angel hath that is in heaven;
Therewith ye have of music more feeling,
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
My lord your father (God his soule bless)
And eke your mother of her gentleness,
Have in mnine house been, to my great ease:* *satisfaction
And certes, Sir, full fain would I you please.
But, for men speak of singing, I will say,
So may I brooke* well mine eyen tway, *enjoy, possess, or use
Save you, I hearde never man so sing
As did your father in the morrowning.
Certes it was of heart all that he sung.
And, for to make his voice the more strong,
He would *so pain him,* that with both his eyen *make such an
exertion*
He muste wink, so loud he woulde cryen,
And standen on his tiptoes therewithal,
And stretche forth his necke long and small.
And eke he was of such discretion,
That there was no man, in no region,
That him in song or wisdom mighte pass.
I have well read in Dan Burnel the Ass,
Among his verse, how that there was a cock
That, for* a prieste's son gave him a knock *because
Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,* *foolish
He made him for to lose his benefice.
But certain there is no comparison
Betwixt the wisdom and discretion
Of youre father, and his subtilty.
Now singe, Sir, for sainte charity,
Let see, can ye your father counterfeit?"

This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,
As man that could not his treason espy,
So was he ravish'd with his flattery.
Alas! ye lordes, many a false flattour* *flatterer
Is in your court, and many a losengeour, * *deceiver
That please you well more, by my faith,
Than he that soothfastness* unto you saith. *truth
Read in 'Ecclesiast' of flattery;
Beware, ye lordes, of their treachery.
This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,

Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,
 And gan to crowe loude for the nonce
 And Dan Russel the fox start up at once,
 And *by the gorge hente* Chanticleer, *seized by the throat*
 And on his back toward the wood him bare.
 For yet was there no man that him pursu'd.
 O destiny, that may'st not be eschew'd!* *escaped
 Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
 Alas, his wife raughte* nought of dreams! *regarded
 And on a Friday fell all this mischance.
 O Venus, that art goddess of pleasance,
 Since that thy servant was this Chanticleer
 And in thy service did all his powere,
 More for delight, than the world to multiply,
 Why wilt thou suffer him on thy day to die?
 O Gaufrid, deare master sovereign,
 That, when thy worthy king Richard was slain
 With shot, complainedest his death so sore,
 Why n'had I now thy sentence and thy lore,
 The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
 (For on a Friday, soothly, slain was he),
 Then would I shew you how that I could plain* *lament
 For Chanticleere's dread, and for his pain.

Certes such cry nor lamentation
 Was ne'er of ladies made, when Ilion
 Was won, and Pyrrhus with his straighte sword,
 When he had hent* king Priam by the beard, *seized
 And slain him (as saith us Eneidos*), *The Aeneid
 As maden all the hennes in the close,* *yard
 When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.
 But sov'reignly* Dame Partelote shrigh, ** *above all others
 Full louder than did Hasdrubale's wife, **shrieked
 When that her husband hadde lost his life,
 And that the Romans had y-burnt Carthage;
 She was so full of torment and of rage,
 That wilfully into the fire she start,
 And burnt herselfe with a steadfast heart.
 O woeful hennes! right so cried ye,
 As, when that Nero burned the city
 Of Rome, cried the senatores' wives,
 For that their husbands losten all their lives;

*Withoute guilt this Nero hath them slain.
Now will I turn unto my tale again;*

The sely widow, and her daughters two, *simple, honest
Hearde these hennes cry and make woe,
And at the doors out started they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wood is gone,
And bare upon his back the cock away:
They cried, "Out! harow! and well-away!
Aha! the fox!" and after him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot, and Garland;
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogges
So fear'd they were for barking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke.
They ranne so, them thought their hearts would break.
They yelled as the fiendes do in hell;
The duckes cried as men would them quell;* *kill, destroy
The geese for feare flewen o'er the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarm of bees,
So hideous was the noise, ben'dicite!
Certes he, Jacke Straw, and his meinie,* *followers
Ne made never shoutes half so shrill
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilke day was made upon the fox.
Of brass they broughte beames* and of box, *trumpets
Of horn and bone, in which they blew and pooped,* **tooted
And therewithal they shrieked and they hooped;
It seemed as the heaven shoulde fall*

*Now, goode men, I pray you hearken all;
Lo, how Fortune turneth suddenly
The hope and pride eke of her enemy.
This cock, that lay upon the fox's back,
In all his dread unto the fox he spake,
And saide, "Sir, if that I were as ye,
Yet would I say (as wisly* God help me), *surely
'Turn ye again, ye proude churles all;
A very pestilence upon you fall.
Now am I come unto the woode's side,
Maugre your head, the cock shall here abide;
I will him eat, in faith, and that anon.'"*

The fox answer'd, "In faith it shall be done:"
And, as he spake the word, all suddenly
The cock brake from his mouth deliverly,* *nimblly
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw that the cock was gone,
"Alas!" quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
I have," quoth he, "y-done to you trespass,* *offence
Inasmuch as I maked you afear'd,
When I you hent,* and brought out of your yard; *took
But, Sir, I did it in no wick' intent;
Come down, and I shall tell you what I meant.
I shall say sooth to you, God help me so."
"Nay then," quoth he, "I shrew* us both the two, *curse
And first I shrew myself, both blood and bones,
If thou beguile me oftener than once.
Thou shalt no more through thy flattery
Do* me to sing and winke with mine eye; *cause
For he that winketh when he shoulde see,
All wilfully, God let him never the."* *thrive
"Nay," quoth the fox; "but God give him mischance
That is so indiscreet of governance,
That jangleth* when that he should hold his peace." *chatters

Lo, what it is for to be reckeless
And negligent, and trust on flattery.
But ye that holde this tale a folly,
As of a fox, or of a cock or hen,
Take the morality thereof, good men.
For Saint Paul saith, That all that written is,
To our doctrine it written is y-wis. *is surely written for
Take the fruit, and let the chaff be still. our instruction*

Now goode God, if that it be thy will,
As saith my Lord, so make us all good men;
And bring us all to thy high bliss. Amen.

THE EPILOGUE

"Sir Nunne's Priest," our hoste said anon,
"Y-blessed be thy breech, and every stone;
This was a merry tale of Chanticleer.
But by my truth, if thou wert seculere,* *a layman

Thou wouldst be a treadefowl aright; *cock
For if thou have courage as thou hast might,
Thee were need of hennes, as I ween,
Yea more than seven times seventeen.
See, whate brawnes* hath this gentle priest, *muscles, sinews
So great a neck, and such a large breast
He looketh as a sperhawk with his eyen
Him needeth not his colour for to dyen
With Brazil, nor with grain of Portugale.
But, Sir, faire fall you for your tale'.
And, after that, he with full merry cheer
Said to another, as ye shall hear.*

THE SECOND NUNS TALE

The minister and norice unto vices, *nurse
Which that men call in English idleness,
The porter at the gate is of delices;* *delights
T'eschew, and by her contrar' her oppress, —
That is to say, by lawful business,* — *occupation, activity
Well oughte we to *do our all intent* *apply ourselves*
Lest that the fiend through idleness us hent.* *seize*

*For he, that with his thousand cordes sly
Continually us waiteth to beclap,* *entangle, bind
When he may man in idleness espy,
He can so lightly catch him in his trap,
Till that a man be hent* right by the lappe,** *seize **hem
He is not ware the fiend hath him in hand;
Well ought we work, and idleness withstand.*

*And though men dreaded never for to die,
Yet see men well by reason, doubtless,
That idleness is root of sluggardy,
Of which there cometh never good increase;
And see that sloth them holdeth in a leas,* *leash
Only to sleep, and for to eat and drink,
And to devouren all that others swink.* *labour*

*And, for to put us from such idleness,
That cause is of so great confusion,
I have here done my faithful business,
After the Legend, in translation
Right of thy glorious life and passion, —
Thou with thy garland wrought of rose and lily,
Thee mean I, maid and martyr, Saint Cecílie.*

*And thou, thou art the flow'r of virgins all,
Of whom that Bernard list so well to write,
To thee at my beginning first I call;
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me indite
Thy maiden's death, that won through her merite
Th' eternal life, and o'er the fiend victory,
As man may after readen in her story.*

Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy Son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules' cure,
In whom that God of bounte chose to won;* *dwell
Thou humble and high o'er every creature,
Thou nobilist, *so far forth our nature,* *as far as our nature
admits*
That no disdain the Maker had of kind,* *nature
His Son in blood and flesh to clothe and wind.* *wrap

Within the cloister of thy blissful sides
Took manne's shape th' eternal love and peace,
That of *the trine compass* Lord and guide is *the trinity*
Whom earth, and sea, and heav'n, *out of release,* *unceasingly
Aye hery; and thou, Virgin wemmeless,* *forever praise*
*immaculate
Bare of thy body, and dweltest maiden pure,
The Creator of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodness, and with such pity,
That thou, that art the sun of excellence,
Not only helpest them that pray to thee,
But oftentime, of thy benignity,
Full freely, ere that men thine help beseech,
Thou go'st before, and art their lives' leech.* *healer, saviour.

Now help, thou meek and blissful faire maid,
Me, flemed* wretch, in this desert of gall; *banished, outcast
Think on the woman Cananee that said
That whelpes eat some of the crumbes all
That from their Lorde's table be y-fall;
And though that I, unworthy son of Eve,
Be sinful, yet accepte my believe.* *faith

And, for that faith is dead withoute werkes,
For to worke give me wit and space,
That I be *quit from thennes that most derk is;* *freed from the
most
O thou, that art so fair and full of grace, dark place (Hell)*
Be thou mine advocate in that high place,
Where as withouten end is sung Osanne,
Thou Christe's mother, daughter dear of Anne.

*And of thy light my soul in prison light,
That troubled is by the contagion
Of my body, and also by the weight
Of earthly lust and false affection;
O hav'n of refuge, O salvation
Of them that be in sorrow and distress,
Now help, for to my work I will me dress.*

*Yet pray I you, that reade what I write,
Forgive me that I do no diligence
This ilke* story subtilly t' indite. *same
For both have I the wordes and sentence
Of him that at the sainte's reverence
The story wrote, and follow her legend;
And pray you that you will my work amend.*

*First will I you the name of Saint Cecílie
Expound, as men may in her story see.
It is to say in English, Heaven's lily,
For pure chasteness of virginity;
Or, for she whiteness had of honesty,* *purity
And green of conscience, and of good fame
The sweete savour, Lílíe was her name.*

*Or Cecílie is to say, the way of blind;
For she example was by good teaching;
Or else Cecílie, as I written find,
Is joined by a manner conjoining
Of heaven and Lia, and herein figuring
The heaven is set for thought of holiness,
And Lia for her lasting business.*

*Cecílie may eke be said in this mannere,
Wanting of blindness, for her greate light
Of sapience, and for her thewes* clear. *qualities
Or elles, lo, this maiden's name bright
Of heaven and Leos comes, for which by right
Men might her well the heaven of people call,
Example of good and wise workes all;*

*For Leos people in English is to say;
And right as men may in the heaven see
The sun and moon, and starres every way,*

Right so men ghostly,* in this maiden free, *spiritually
Sawen of faith the magnanimity,
And eke the clearness whole of sapience,
And sundry workes bright of excellence.

And right so as these philosophers write,
That heav'n is swift and round, and eke burning,
Right so was faire Cecilie the white
Full swift and busy in every good working,
And round and whole in good persevering,
And burning ever in charity full bright;
Now have I you declared *what she hight.* *why she had her
name*

This maiden bright Cecile, as her life saith,
Was come of Romans, and of noble kind,
And from her cradle foster'd in the faith
Of Christ, and bare his Gospel in her mind:
She never ceased, as I written find,
Of her prayere, and God to love and dread,
Beseeching him to keep her maidenhead.

And when this maiden should unto a man
Y-wedded be, that was full young of age,
Which that y-called was Valerian,
And come was the day of marriage,
She, full devout and humble in her corage,* *heart
Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,
Had next her flesh y-clad her in an hair.* *garment of hair-cloth

And while the organs made melody,
To God alone thus in her heart sang she;
"O Lord, my soul and eke my body gie* *guide
Unwemmed,* lest that I confounded be." *unblemished
And, for his love that died upon the tree,
Every second or third day she fast',
Aye bidding* in her orisons full fast. *praying

The night came, and to bedde must she gon
With her husband, as it is the mannere;
And privily she said to him anon;
"O sweet and well-beloved spouse dear,
There is a counsel,* an'* ye will it hear, *secret **if

*Which that right fain I would unto you say,
So that ye swear ye will it not bewray."* *betray*

*Valerian gan fast unto her swear
That for no case nor thing that mighte be,
He never should to none bewrayen her;
And then at erst* thus to him saide she; *for the first time
"I have an angel which that loveth me,
That with great love, whether I wake or sleep,
Is ready aye my body for to keep;*

*"And if that he may feelen, *out of dread,* *without doubt*
That ye me touch or love in villainy,
He right anon will slay you with the deed,
And in your youthe thus ye shoulde die.
And if that ye in cleane love me gie,"* *guide
He will you love as me, for your cleanness,
And shew to you his joy and his brightness."*

*Valerian, corrected as God wo'ld,
Answer'd again, "If I shall truste thee,
Let me that angel see, and him behold;
And if that it a very angel be,
Then will I do as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, forsooth
Right with this sword then will I slay you both."*

*Cecile answer'd anon right in this wise;
"If that you list, the angel shall ye see,
So that ye trow* Of Christ, and you baptise; *know
Go forth to Via Appia," quoth she,
That from this towne stands but miles three,
And to the poore folkes that there dwell
Say them right thus, as that I shall you tell,*

*"Tell them, that I, Cecile, you to them sent
To shewe you the good Urban the old,
For secret needes,* and for good intent; *business
And when that ye Saint Urban have behold,
Tell him the wordes which I to you told
And when that he hath purged you from sin,
Then shall ye see that angel ere ye twin* *depart*

Valerian is to the place gone;
And, right as he was taught by her learning
He found this holy old Urban anon
Among the saintes' burials louting;* *lying concealed
And he anon, withoute tarrying,
Did his message, and when that he it told,
Urban for joy his handes gan uphold.

The teares from his eyen let he fall;
"Almighty Lord, O Jesus Christ,"
Quoth he, "Sower of chaste counsel, herd* of us all; *shepherd
The fruit of thilke* seed of chastity *that
That thou hast sown in Cecile, take to thee
Lo, like a busy bee, withoute guile,
Thee serveth aye thine owen thrall* Cicile, *servant

"For thilke spouse, that she took *but now,* *lately*
Full like a fierce lion, she sendeth here,
As meek as e'er was any lamb to owe."
And with that word anon there gan appear
An old man, clad in white clothes clear,
That had a book with letters of gold in hand,
And gan before Valerian to stand.

Valerian, as dead, fell down for dread,
When he him saw; and he up hent* him tho,** *took **there
And on his book right thus he gan to read;
"One Lord, one faith, one God withoute mo',
One Christendom, one Father of all also,
Aboven all, and over all everywhere."
These wordes all with gold y-written were.

When this was read, then said this olde man,
"Believ'st thou this or no? say yea or nay."
"I believe all this," quoth Valerian,
"For soother* thing than this, I dare well say, *truer
Under the Heaven no wight thinke may."
Then vanish'd the old man, he wist not where
And Pope Urban him christened right there.

Valerian went home, and found Cecilie
Within his chamber with an angel stand;
This angel had of roses and of lily

Corones* two, the which he bare in hand, *crowns
And first to Cecile, as I understand,
He gave the one, and after gan he take
The other to Valerian her make.* *mate, husband

"With body clean, and with unwemmed* thought, *unspotted,
blameless
Keep aye well these coronas two," quoth he;
"From Paradise to you I have them brought,
Nor ever more shall they rotten be,
Nor lose their sweet savour, truste me,
Nor ever wight shall see them with his eye,
But he be chaste, and hate villainy.

"And thou, Valerian, for thou so soon
Assented hast to good counsel, also
Say what thee list,* and thou shalt have thy boon.** *wish
**desire

"I have a brother," quoth Valerian tho,* *then
"That in this world I love no man so;
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the truth, as I do in this place."

The angel said, "God liketh thy request,
And bothe, with the palm of martyrdom,
Ye shalle come unto this blissful rest."
And, with that word, Tiburce his brother came.
And when that he the savour undernome* *perceived
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,
Within his heart he gan to wonder fast;

And said; "I wonder, this time of the year,
Whence that sweete savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies, that I smelle here;
For though I had them in mine handes two,
The savour might in me no deeper go;
The sweete smell, that in my heart I find,
Hath changed me all in another kind."

Valerian said, "Two crownes here have we,
Snow-white and rose-red, that shine clear,
Which that thine eyen have no might to see;
And, as thou smellst them through my prayere,

So shalt thou see them, leve* brother dear, *beloved
If it so be thou wilt withoute sloth
Believe aright, and know the very troth. "

Tiburce answered, "Say'st thou this to me
In soothness, or in dreame hear I this?"
"In dreames," quoth Valorian, "have we be
Unto this time, brother mine, y-wis
But now *at erst* in truth our dwelling is." *for the first time*
How know'st thou this," quoth Tiburce; "in what wise?"
Quoth Valerian, "That shall I thee devise* *describe

"The angel of God hath me the truth y-taught,
Which thou shalt see, if that thou wilt reny* *renounce
The idols, and be clean, and elles nought."
[And of the miracle of these crownes tway
Saint Ambrose in his preface list to say;
Solemnely this noble doctor dear
Commendeth it, and saith in this mannere

"The palm of martyrdom for to receive,
Saint Cecílie, full filled of God's gift,
The world and eke her chamber gan to weive;* *forsake
Witness Tiburce's and Cecílie's shrift,* *confession
To which God of his bounty woulde shift
Corones two, of flowers well smelling,
And made his angel them the crownes bring.

"The maid hath brought these men to bliss above;
The world hath wist what it is worth, certain,
Devotion of chastity to love.]"
Then showed him Cecílie all open and plain,
That idols all are but a thing in vain,
For they be dumb, and thereto* they be deave;** *therefore **deaf
And charged him his idols for to leave.

"Whoso that troweth* not this, a beast he is," *believeth
Quoth this Tiburce, "if that I shall not lie."
And she gan kiss his breast when she heard this,
And was full glad he could the truth espy:
"This day I take thee for mine ally."* *chosen friend
Saide this blissful faire maiden dear;
And after that she said as ye may hear.

"Lo, right so as the love of Christ," quoth she,
"Made me thy brother's wife, right in that wise
Anon for mine ally here take I thee,
Since that thou wilt thine idoles despise.
Go with thy brother now and thee baptise,
And make thee clean, so that thou may'st behold
The angel's face, of which thy brother told."

Tiburce answer'd, and saide, "Brother dear,
First tell me whither I shall, and to what man?"
"To whom?" quoth he, "come forth with goode cheer,
I will thee lead unto the Pope Urban."
"To Urban? brother mine Valerian,"
Quoth then Tiburce; "wilt thou me thither lead?
Me thinketh that it were a wondrous deed."

"Meanest thou not that Urban," quoth he tho,* *then
"That is so often damned to be dead,
And wons* in halkes** always to and fro, *dwells **corners
And dare not ones putte forth his head?
Men should him brennen* in a fire so red, *burn
If he were found, or if men might him spy:
And us also, to bear him company."

"And while we seeke that Divinity
That is y-hid in heaven privily,
Algate* burnt in this world should we be." *nevertheless
To whom Cecilie answer'd boldely;
"Men mighte dreade well and skilfully* *reasonably
This life to lose, mine owen deare brother,
If this were living only, and none other."

"But there is better life in other place,
That never shall be loste, dread thee nought;
Which Godde's Son us tolde through his grace
That Father's Son which alle thinges wrought;
And all that wrought is with a skilful* thought, *reasonable
The Ghost,* that from the Father gan proceed, *Holy Spirit
Hath souled* them, withouten any drede.** *endowed them with a
soul
**doubt
By word and by miracle, high God's Son,
When he was in this world, declared here."

That there is other life where men may won. *dwell
To whom answer'd Tiburce, "O sister dear,
Saidest thou not right now in this mannere,
There was but one God, Lord in soothfastness,* *truth
And now of three how may'st thou bear witness?"*

*"That shall I tell," quoth she, "ere that I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences* three, *mental faculties
Memory, engine,* and intellect also, *wit
So in one being of divinity
Three persones there maye right well be."
Then gan she him full busily to preach
Of Christe's coming, and his paines teach,*

*And many pointes of his passion;
How Godde's Son in this world was withhold* *employed
To do mankinde plein* remission, *full
That was y-bound in sin and cares cold.* *wretched
All this thing she unto Tiburce told,
And after that Tiburce, in good intent,
With Valerian to Pope Urban he went.*

*That thanked God, and with glad heart and light
He christen'd him, and made him in that place
Perfect in his learning, and Godde's knight.
And after this Tiburce got such grace,
That every day he saw in time and space
Th' angel of God, and every manner boon* *request, favour
That be God asked, it was sped* full anon. *granted, successful*

*It were full hard by order for to sayn
How many wonders Jesus for them wrought,
But at the last, to telle short and plain,
The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,
And them before Almach the Prefect brought,
Which them apposed,* and knew all their intent, *questioned
And to th'image of Jupiter them sent.*

*And said, "Whoso will not do sacrifice,
Swap* off his head, this is my sentence here." *strike
Anon these martyrs, *that I you devise,* *of whom I tell you*
One Maximus, that was an officere
Of the prefect's, and his corniculere*

Them hent, and when he forth the saintes lad,** *seized **led
Himself he wept for pity that he had.*

When Maximus had heard the saintes lore, *doctrine, teaching
He got him of the tormentores* leave, *torturers
And led them to his house withoute more;
And with their preaching, ere that it were eve,
They gonnen* from the tormentors to reave,** *began **wrest,
root out
And from Maxim', and from his folk each one,
The false faith, to trow* in God alone. *believe*

*Cecilia came, when it was waxen night,
With priestes, that them christen'd *all in fere;* *in a company*
And afterward, when day was waxen light,
Cecile them said with a full steadfast cheer,* *mien
"Now, Christe's owen knightes lefe* and dear, *beloved
Cast all away the workes of darkness,
And arme you in armour of brightness.*

*Ye have forsooth y-done a great battaile,
Your course is done, your faith have ye conserved;
O to the crown of life that may not fail;
The rightful Judge, which that ye have served
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved."
And when this thing was said, as I devise,* relate
Men led them forth to do the sacrifice.*

*But when they were unto the place brought
To telle shortly the conclusion,
They would incense nor sacrifice right nought
But on their knees they sette them adown,
With humble heart and sad* devotion, *steadfast
And loste both their heades in the place;
Their soules wente to the King of grace.*

*This Maximus, that saw this thing betide,
With piteous teares told it anon right,
That he their soules saw to heaven glide
With angels, full of clearness and of light
Andt with his word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius *did him to-beat*
With whip of lead, till he his life gan lete.* *quit*

Cecile him took, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softly,
Within their burying-place, under the stone.
And after this Almachius hastily
Badé his ministers fetchen openly
Cecile, so that she might in his presence
Do sacrifice, and Jupiter incense.* *burn incense to

But they, converted at her wise lore,* *teaching
Wepte full sore, and gave full credence
Unto her word, and cried more and more;
"Christ, Godde's Son, withoute difference,
Is very God, this is all our sentence,* *opinion
That hath so good a servant him to serve
Thus with one voice we trowe,* though we sterve.** *believe **die

Almachius, that heard of this doing,
Badé fetch Cecilie, that he might her see;
And alderfirst,* lo, this was his asking; *first of all
"What manner woman arte thou?" quoth he,
"I am a gentle woman born," quoth she.
"I aske thee," quoth he, "though it thee grieve,
Of thy religion and of thy believe."

"Ye have begun your question foolishly,"
Quoth she, "that wouldest two answers conclude
In one demand? ye aske lewedly."* *ignorantly
Almach answer'd to that similitude,
"Of whence comes thine answering so rude?"
"Of whence?" quoth she, when that she was freined,* *asked
"Of conscience, and of good faith unfeigned."

Almachius saide; "Takest thou no heed
Of my power?" and she him answer'd this;
"Your might," quoth she, "full little is to dread;
For every mortal manne's power is
But like a bladder full of wind, y-wis;* *certainly
For with a needle's point, when it is blow',
May all the boast of it be laid full low."

"Full wrongfully begunnest thou," quoth he,
"And yet in wrong is thy perseverance.
Know'st thou not how our mighty princes free

Have thus commanded and made ordinance,
That every Christian wight shall have penance,* *punishment
But if that he his Christendom withsay,* *deny
And go all quit, if he will it renay?"* *renounce

"Your princes erren, as your nobley* doth," *nobility
Quoth then Cecile, "and with a *wood sentence* *mad judgment*
Ye make us guilty, and it is not sooth:* *true
For ye that knowe well our innocence,
Forasmuch as we do aye reverence
To Christ, and for we bear a Christian name,
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

"But we that knowe thilke name so
For virtuous, we may it not withsay."
Almach answered, "Choose one of these two,
Do sacrifice, or Christendom renay,
That thou may'st now escape by that way."
At which the holy blissful faire maid
Gan for to laugh, and to the judge said;

"O judge, *confused in thy nicety,* *confounded in thy folly*
Wouldest thou that I reny innocence?
To make me a wicked wight," quoth she,
"Lo, he dissimuleth* here in audience; *dissembles
He stareth and woodeth* in his advertence."** *grows furious
**thought
To whom Almachius said, "Unselvy* wretch, *unhappy
Knowest thou not how far my might may stretch?"

"Have not our mighty princes to me given
Yea bothe power and eke authority
To make folk to dien or to liven?
Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?"
"I speake not but steadfastly," quoth she,
Not proudly, for I say, as for my side,
We hate deadly* thilke vice of pride. *mortally

"And, if thou dreade not a sooth* to hear, *truth
Then will I shew all openly by right,
That thou hast made a full great leasing* here. *falsehood
Thou say'st thy princes have thee given might
Both for to slay and for to quick* a wight, — *give life to

*Thou that may'st not but only life bereave;
Thou hast none other power nor no leave.*

*"But thou may'st say, thy princes have thee maked
Minister of death; for if thou speak of mo',
Thou liest; for thy power is full naked."
"Do away thy boldness," said Almachius tho,* *then
"And sacrifice to our gods, ere thou go.
I recke not what wrong that thou me proffer,
For I can suffer it as a philosopher.*

*"But those wronges may I not endure,
That thou speak'st of our goddes here," quoth he.
Cecile answer'd, "O nice* creature, *foolish
Thou saidest no word, since thou spake to me,
That I knew not therewith thy nicety,* *folly
And that thou wert in *every manner wise* *every sort of way*
A lewed* officer, a vain justice. *ignorant*

*"There lacketh nothing to thine outward eyen
That thou art blind; for thing that we see all
That it is stone, that men may well espyen,
That ilke* stone a god thou wilt it call. *very, selfsame
I rede* thee let thine hand upon it fall, *advise
And taste* it well, and stone thou shalt it find; *examine, test
Since that thou see'st not with thine eyen blind.*

*"It is a shame that the people shall
So scorne thee, and laugh at thy folly;
For commonly men *wot it well over all,* *know it everywhere*
That mighty God is in his heaven high;
And these images, well may'st thou espy,
To thee nor to themselves may not profite,
For in effect they be not worth a mite."*

*These wordes and such others saide she,
And he wax'd wroth, and bade men should her lead
Home to her house; "And in her house," quoth he,
"Burn her right in a bath, with flames red."
And as he bade, right so was done the deed;
For in a bath they gan her faste shetten,* *shut, confine
And night and day great fire they under betten.* *kindled,
applied*

The longe night, and eke a day also,
For all the fire, and eke the bathe's heat,
She sat all cold, and felt of it no woe,
It made her not one droppe for to sweat;
But in that bath her life she must lete.* *leave
For he, Almachius, with full wick' intent,
To slay her in the bath his sonde* sent. *message, order

Three strokes in the neck he smote her tho,* *there
The tormentor,* but for no manner chance *executioner
He might not smite her faire neck in two:
And, for there was that time an ordinance
That no man should do man such penance,* *severity, torture
The fourth stroke to smite, soft or sore,
This tormentor he durste do no more;

But half dead, with her necke carven* there *gashed
He let her lie, and on his way is went.
The Christian folk, which that about her were,
With sheetes have the blood full fair y-hent; *taken up
Three dayes lived she in this torment,
And never ceased them the faith to teach,
That she had foster'd them, she gan to preach.

And them she gave her mebles* and her thing, *goods
And to the Pope Urban betook* them tho;** *commended **then
And said, "I aske this of heaven's king,
To have respite three dayes and no mo',
To recommend to you, ere that I go,
These soules, lo; and that *I might do wirch* *cause to be made*
Here of mine house perpetually a church."

Saint Urban, with his deacons, privily
The body fetch'd, and buried it by night
Among his other saintes honestly;
Her house the church of Saint Cecilie hight;* *is called
Saint Urban hallow'd it, as he well might;
In which unto this day, in noble wise,
Men do to Christ and to his saint service.