

THE CANTERBURY TALES
And other Poems
by
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THE FRIAR'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

*This worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made always a manner louring cheer* *countenance
Upon the Sompnour; but for honesty* *courtesy
No villain word as yet to him spake he:
But at the last he said unto the Wife:
"Dame," quoth he, "God give you right good life,
Ye have here touched, all so may I the,* *thrive
In school matter a greete difficulty.
Ye have said muche thing right well, I say;
But, Dame, here as we ride by the way,
Us needeth not but for to speak of game,
And leave authorities, in Godde's name,
To preaching, and to school eke of clergy.
But if it like unto this company,
I will you of a Sompnour tell a game;
Pardie, ye may well knowe by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be said;
I pray that none of you be *evil paid;* *dissatisfied*
A Sompnour is a runner up and down
With mandements* for fornicatioun, *mandates, summonses*
And is y-beat at every towne's end."
Then spake our Host; "Ah, sir, ye should be hend* *civil, gentle
And courteous, as a man of your estate;
In company we will have no debate:
Tell us your tale, and let the Sompnour be."
"Nay," quoth the Sompnour, "let him say by me
What so him list; when it comes to my lot,
By God, I shall him quiten* every groat! *pay him off
I shall him telle what a great honour
It is to be a flattering limitour
And his office I shall him tell y-wis".
Our Host answered, "Peace, no more of this."
And afterward he said unto the frere,
"Tell forth your tale, mine owen master dear."*

The Tale.

Whilom* there was dwelling in my country *once on a time
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,
That boldly did execution,
In punishing of fornication,
Of witchecraft, and eke of bawdery,
Of defamation, and adultery,
Of churche-reeves,* and of testaments, *churchwardens
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
And eke of many another manner* crime, *sort of
Which needeth not rehearse at this time,
Of usury, and simony also;
But, certes, lechours did he greatest woe;
They shoulde singen, if that they were hent;* *caught
And smale tithers were foul y-shent,* *troubled, put to shame
If any person would on them complain;
There might astert them no pecunial pain.
For smalle tithes, and small offering,
He made the people piteously to sing;
For ere the bishop caught them with his crook,
They weren in the archdeacon's book;
Then had he, through his jurisdiction,
Power to do on them correction.

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

"Peter; so be the women of the stives,"* *stews
Quoth this Sompnour, "y-put out of our cure."* *care

"Peace, with mischance and with misaventure,"
Our Hoste said, "and let him tell his tale.

Now telle forth, and let the Sompnour gale, *whistle; bawl
Nor spare not, mine owen master dear."*

*This false thief, the Sompnour (quoth the Frere),
Had always bawdes ready to his hand,
As any hawk to lure in Engleland,
That told him all the secrets that they knew, —
For their acquaintance was not come of new;
They were his approvers* privily. *informers
He took himself at great profit thereby:
His master knew not always what he wan.* *won
Withoute mandement, a lewed* man *ignorant
He could summon, on pain of Christe's curse,
And they were inly glad to fill his purse,
And make him greate feastes at the nale.* *alehouse
And right as Judas hadde purses smale,* *small
And was a thief, right such a thief was he,
His master had but half *his duety.* *what was owing him*
He was (if I shall give him his laud)
A thief, and eke a Sompnour, and a bawd.
And he had wenches at his retinue,
That whether that Sir Robert or Sir Hugh,
Or Jack, or Ralph, or whoso that it were
That lay by them, they told it in his ear.
Thus were the wench and he of one assent;
And he would fetch a feigned mandement,
And to the chapter summon them both two,
And pill* the man, and let the wench go. *plunder, pluck
Then would he say, "Friend, I shall for thy sake
Do strike thee out of oure letters blake;* *black
Thee thar* no more as in this case travail; *need
I am thy friend where I may thee avail."
Certain he knew of bribers many mo'
Than possible is to tell in yeare's two:
For in this world is no dog for the bow,
That can a hurt deer from a whole know,
Bet* than this Sompnour knew a sly lechour, *better
Or an adult'rer, or a paramour:
And, for that was the fruit of all his rent,
Therefore on it he set all his intent.*

*And so befell, that once upon a day.
This Sompnour, waiting ever on his prey,*

Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,
Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.
And happen'd that he saw before him ride
A gay yeoman under a forest side:
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen,
He had upon a courtepy* of green, *short doublet
A hat upon his head with fringes blake.* *black
"Sir," quoth this Sompnour, "hail, and well o'ertake."
"Welcome," quoth he, "and every good fellow;
Whither ridest thou under this green shaw?"* shade
Saide this yeoman; "wilt thou far to-day?"
This Sompnour answer'd him, and saide, "Nay.
Here faste by," quoth he, "is mine intent
To ride, for to raisen up a rent,
That longeth to my lorde's duety."
"Ah! art thou then a bailiff?" "Yea," quoth he.
He durste not for very filth and shame
Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.
"De par dieux," quoth this yeoman, "leve* brother, *dear
Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.
I am unknownen, as in this country.
Of thine acquaintance I will praye thee,
And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list.* *please
I have gold and silver lying in my chest;
If that thee hap to come into our shire,
All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire."
"Grand mercy,"* quoth this Sompnour, "by my faith." *great thanks
Each in the other's hand his trothe lay'th,
For to be sworne brethren till they dey.* *die
In dalliance they ride forth and play.

This Sompnour, which that was as full of jangles,* *chattering
As full of venom be those wariangles,* *butcher-birds
And ev'r inquiring upon every thing,
"Brother," quoth he, "where is now your dwelling,
Another day if that I should you seech?"* *seek, visit
This yeoman him answered in soft speech;
Brother," quoth he, "far in the North country,
Where as I hope some time I shall thee see
Ere we depart I shall thee so well wiss,* *inform
That of mine house shalt thou never miss."
Now, brother," quoth this Sompnour, "I you pray,
Teach me, while that we ride by the way,

(Since that ye be a bailiff as am I,
Some subtilty, and tell me faithfully
For mine office how that I most may win.
And *spare not* for conscience or for sin, *conceal nothing*
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye."
Now by my trothe, brother mine," said he,
As I shall tell to thee a faithful tale:
My wages be full strait and eke full smale;
My lord is hard to me and dangerous, *niggardly
And mine office is full laborious;
And therefore by extortion I live,
Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
Algate* by sleighte, or by violence, *whether
From year to year I win all my dispenche;
I can no better tell thee faithfully."
Now certes," quoth this Sompnour, "so fare* I; *do
I spare not to take, God it wot,
But if it be too heavy or too hot. *unless*
What I may get in counsel privily,
No manner conscience of that have I.
Nere* mine extortion, I might not live, *were it not for
For of such japes* will I not be shrive.** *tricks **confessed
Stomach nor conscience know I none;
I shrew* these shrifte-fathers** every one. *curse **confessors
Well be we met, by God and by St Jame.
But, leve brother, tell me then thy name,"
Quoth this Sompnour. Right in this meane while
This yeoman gan a little for to smile.

"Brother," quoth he, "wilt thou that I thee tell?
I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,
And here I ride about my purchasing,
To know where men will give me any thing.
My purchase is th' effect of all my rent *what I can gain is my
Look how thou ridest for the same intent sole revenue*
To winne good, thou reckest never how,
Right so fare I, for ride will I now
Into the worlde's ende for a prey."

"Ah," quoth this Sompnour, "benedicite! what say y'?
I weened ye were a yeoman truly. *thought
Ye have a manne's shape as well as I
Have ye then a figure determinate

In helle, where ye be in your estate?" *at home*
"Nay, certainly," quoth he, there have we none,
But when us liketh we can take us one,
Or elles make you seem that we be shape *believe*
Sometime like a man, or like an ape;
Or like an angel can I ride or go;
It is no wondrous thing though it be so,
A lousy juggler can deceive thee.
And pardie, yet can I more craft than he." *skill, cunning*
"Why," quoth the Sompnour, "ride ye then or gon
In sundry shapes and not always in one?"
"For we," quoth he, "will us in such form make.
As most is able our prey for to take."
"What maketh you to have all this labour?"
"Full many a cause, leve Sir Sompnour,"
Saide this fiend. "But all thing hath a time;
The day is short and it is passed prime,
And yet have I won nothing in this day;
I will intend to winning, if I may, *apply myself*
And not intend our thinges to declare:
For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
To understand, although I told them thee.
But for* thou askest why laboure we: *because
For sometimes we be Godde's instruments
And meanes to do his commandements,
When that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers acts and in divers figures:
Withoute him we have no might certain,
If that him list to stande thereagain. *against it*
And sometimes, at our prayer have we leave
Only the body, not the soul, to grieve:
Witness on Job, whom that we did full woe,
And sometimes have we might on both the two, —
This is to say, on soul and body eke,
And sometimes be we suffer'd for to seek
Upon a man and do his soul unrest
And not his body, and all is for the best,
When he withstandeth our temptation,
It is a cause of his salvation,
Albeit that it was not our intent
He should be safe, but that we would him hent. *catch*
And sometimes be we servants unto man,

As to the archbishop Saint Dunstan,
 And to th'apostle servant eke was I."
 "Yet tell me," quoth this Sompnour, "faithfully,
 Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
 Of th' elements?" The fiend answered, "Nay:
 Sometimes we feign, and sometimes we arise
 With deade bodies, in full sundry wise,
 And speak as reas'nably, and fair, and well,
 As to the Pythoness did Samuel:
 And yet will some men say it was not he.
 I *do no force of* your divinity. *set no value upon*
 But one thing warn I thee, I will not jape,* jest
 Thou wilt *algates weet* how we be shape: *assuredly know*
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,
 Come, where thee needeth not of me to lear.* *learn
 For thou shalt by thine own experience
 Conne in a chair to rede of this sentence, *learn to understand
 Better than Virgil, while he was alive, what I have said*
 Or Dante also. Now let us ride blive,* *briskly
 For I will holde company with thee,
 Till it be so that thou forsake me."
 "Nay," quoth this Sompnour, "that shall ne'er betide.
 I am a yeoman, that is known full wide;
 My trothe will I hold, as in this case;
 For though thou wert the devil Satanas,
 My trothe will I hold to thee, my brother,
 As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
 For to be true brethren in this case,
 And both we go *abouten our purchase.* *seeking what we
 Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give, may pick up*
 And I shall mine, thus may we bothe live.
 And if that any of us have more than other,
 Let him be true, and part it with his brother."
 "I grante," quoth the devil, "by my fay."
 And with that word they rode forth their way,
 And right at th'ent'ring of the towne's end,
 To which this Sompnour shope* him for to wend,** *shaped **go
 They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,
 Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood:
 The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,* *mad
 "Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?

The fiend (quoth he) you fetch body and bones,
As farforthly* as ever ye were foal'd, *sure
So much woe as I have with you tholed.* *endured
The devil have all, horses, and cart, and hay."
The Sompnour said, "Here shall we have a prey,"
And near the fiend he drew, *as nought ne were,* *as if nothing
Full privily, and rownded* in his ear: were the matter*
"Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith, *whispered
Hearest thou not, how that the carter saith?
Hent* it anon, for he hath giv'n it thee, *seize
Both hay and cart, and eke his capels* three." *horses
"Nay," quoth the devil, "God wot, never a deal,* whit
It is not his intent, trust thou me well;
Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest* me, *believest
Or elles stint* a while and thou shalt see." *stop
The carter thwack'd his horses on the croup,
And they began to drawen and to stoop.
"Heit now," quoth he; "there, Jesus Christ you bless,
And all his handiwork, both more and less!
That was well twight,* mine owen liart,** boy, *pulled **grey
I pray God save thy body, and Saint Loy!
Now is my cart out of the slough, pardie."
"Lo, brother," quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?
Here may ye see, mine owen deare brother,
The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our voyage;
Here win I nothing upon this carriage."

When that they came somewhat out of the town,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to rown;
"Brother," quoth he, "here wons* an old rebeck, *dwells
That had almost as lief to lose her neck.
As for to give a penny of her good.
I will have twelvenpence, though that she be wood,* *mad
Or I will summon her to our office;
And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this country,
Winne thy cost, take here example of me."
This Sompnour clapped at the widow's gate:
"Come out," he said, "thou olde very trate;* *trot
I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee."
"Who clappeth?" said this wife; "benedicite,
God save you, Sir, what is your sweete will?"

"I have," quoth he, "of summons here a bill.
Up* pain of cursing, looke that thou be *upon
To-morrow before our archdeacon's knee,
To answer to the court of certain things."
"Now Lord," quoth she, "Christ Jesus, king of kings,
So wisy helpe me, *as I not may. surely *as I cannot
I have been sick, and that full many a day.
I may not go so far," quoth she, "nor ride,
But I be dead, so pricketh it my side.
May I not ask a libel, Sir Sompnour,
And answer there by my procuratour
To such thing as men would appose* me?" *accuse
"Yes," quoth this Sompnour, "pay anon, let see,
Twelvepence to me, and I will thee acquit.
I shall no profit have thereby but lit:* *little
My master hath the profit and not I.
Come off, and let me ride hastily;
Give me twelvepence, I may no longer tarry."

"Twelvepence!" quoth she; "now lady Sainte Mary
So wisly* help me out of care and sin, *surely
This wide world though that I should it win,
No have I not twelvepence within my hold.
Ye know full well that I am poor and old;
Kithe your almes upon me poor wretch." *show your charity*
"Nay then," quoth he, "the foule fiend me fetch,
If I excuse thee, though thou should'st be spilt."* *ruined
"Alas!" quoth she, "God wot, I have no guilt."
"Pay me," quoth he, "or, by the sweet Saint Anne,
As I will bear away thy newe pan
For debte, which thou owest me of old, —
When that thou madest thine husband cuckold, —
I paid at home for thy correction."
"Thou liest," quoth she, "by my salvation;
Never was I ere now, widow or wife,
Summon'd unto your court in all my life;
Nor never I was but of my body true.
Unto the devil rough and black of hue
Give I thy body and my pan also."
And when the devil heard her curse so
Upon her knees, he said in this mannere;
"Now, Mabily, mine owen mother dear,
Is this your will in earnest that ye say?"

"The devil," quoth she, "so fetch him ere he dey,* *die
And pan and all, but* he will him repent." *unless
"Nay, olde stoat,* that is not mine intent," *polecat
Quoth this Sompnour, "for to repente me
For any thing that I have had of thee;
I would I had thy smock and every cloth."
"Now, brother," quoth the devil, "be not wroth;
Thy body and this pan be mine by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight,
Where thou shalt knownen of our privy* *secrets
More than a master of divinity."

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

THE SOMPNOUR'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

The Sompnour in his stirrups high he stood,
Upon this Friar his hearte was so wood,* *furious
That like an aspen leaf he quoke* for ire: *quaked, trembled
"Lordings," quoth he, "but one thing I desire;
I you beseech, that of your courtesy,
Since ye have heard this false Friar lie,
As suffer me I may my tale tell
This Friar boasteth that he knoweth hell,
And, God it wot, that is but little wonder,
Friars and fiends be but little asunder.
For, pardie, ye have often time heard tell,
How that a friar ravish'd was to hell
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And, as an angel led him up and down,
To shew him all the paines that there were,
In all the place saw he not a frere;
Of other folk he saw enough in woe.
Unto the angel spake the friar tho;* *then
'Now, Sir,' quoth he, 'have friars such a grace,
That none of them shall come into this place.'
'Yes' quoth the angel; 'many a millioun.'
And unto Satanas he led him down.
'And now hath Satanas,' said he, 'a tail
Broader than of a carrack is the sail.
Hold up thy tail, thou Satanas,' quoth he,
'Shew forth thine erse, and let the friar see
Where is the nest of friars in this place.'
And *less than half a furlong way of space* *immediately*
Right so as bees swarmen out of a hive,
Out of the devil's erse there gan to drive
A twenty thousand friars *on a rout.* *in a crowd*
And throughout hell they swarmed all about,
And came again, as fast as they may gon,
And in his erse they creeped every one:
He clapt his tail again, and lay full still.
This friar, when he looked had his fill
Upon the torments of that sorry place,

*His spirit God restored of his grace
Into his body again, and he awoke;
But natheless for feare yet he quoke,
So was the devil's erse aye in his mind;
That is his heritage, *of very kind* *by his very nature*
God save you alle, save this cursed Frere;
My prologue will I end in this mannere.*

THE TALE.

*Lordings, there is in Yorkshire, as I guess,
A marshy country called Holderness,
In which there went a limitour about
To preach, and eke to beg, it is no doubt.
And so befell that on a day this frere
Had preached at a church in his mannere,
And specially, above every thing,
Excited he the people in his preaching
To trentals, and to give, for Godde's sake,
Wherewith men mighte holy houses make,
There as divine service is honour'd,
Not there as it is wasted and devour'd,
Nor where it needeth not for to be given,
As to possessioners, that may liven,
Thanked be God, in wealth and abundance.
"Trentals," said he, "deliver from penance
Their friendes' soules, as well old as young,
Yea, when that they be hastily y-sung, —
Not for to hold a priest jolly and gay,
He singeth not but one mass in a day.
"Deliver out," quoth he, "anon the souls.
Full hard it is, with flesh-hook or with owls* *awls
To be y-clawed, or to burn or bake:
Now speed you hastily, for Christe's sake."
And when this friar had said all his intent,
With qui cum patre forth his way he went,
When folk in church had giv'n him what them lest;* *pleased
He went his way, no longer would he rest,
With scrip and tipped staff, *y-tucked high:* *with his robe tucked
In every house he gan to pore* and pry, up high* *peer
And begged meal and cheese, or elles corn.*

*His fellow had a staff tipped with horn,
 A pair of tables* all of ivory, *writing tablets
 And a pointel* y-polish'd fetisly,** *pencil **daintily
 And wrote alway the names, as he stood;
 Of all the folk that gave them any good,
 Askaunce* that he woulde for them pray.
 "Give us a bushel wheat, or malt, or rey,* *rye
 A Godde's kichel,* or a trip** of cheese, *little cake **scrap
 Or elles what you list, we may not chese;* *choose
 A Godde's halfpenny, or a mass penny;
 Or give us of your brawn, if ye have any;
 A dagon* of your blanket, leve dame, *remnant
 Our sister dear, — lo, here I write your name,—
 Bacon or beef, or such thing as ye find."
 A sturdy harlot* went them aye behind, *manservant
 That was their hoste's man, and bare a sack,
 And what men gave them, laid it on his back
 And when that he was out at door, anon
 He *planed away* the names every one, *rubbed out*
 That he before had written in his tables:
 He served them with nifles* and with fables. — *silly tales*

*"Nay, there thou liest, thou Sompnour," quoth the Frere.
 "Peace," quoth our Host, "for Christe's mother dear;
 Tell forth thy tale, and spare it not at all."
 "So thrive I," quoth this Sompnour, "so I shall." —*

*So long he went from house to house, till he
 Came to a house, where he was wont to be
 Refreshed more than in a hundred places
 Sick lay the husband man, whose that the place is,
 Bed-rid upon a couche low he lay:
 "Deus hic," quoth he; "O Thomas friend, good day," *God be here*
 Said this friar, all courteously and soft.
 "Thomas," quoth he, "God *yield it you,* full oft *reward you for*
 Have I upon this bench fared full well,
 Here have I eaten many a merry meal."
 And from the bench he drove away the cat,
 And laid adown his potent* and his hat, *staff
 And eke his scrip, and sat himself adown:
 His fellow was y-walked into town
 Forth with his knave,* into that hostelry *servant
 Where as he shope* him that night to lie. *shaped, purposed*

"O deare master," quoth this sicke man,
"How have ye fared since that March began?
I saw you not this fortynight and more."
"God wot," quoth he, "labour'd have I full sore;
And specially for thy salvation
Have I said many a precious orison,
And for mine other friendes, God them bless.
I have this day been at your church at mess,* *mass
And said sermon after my simple wit,
Not all after the text of Holy Writ;
For it is hard to you, as I suppose,
And therefore will I teach you aye the glose.* *gloss, comment
Glosing is a full glorious thing certain,
For letter slayeth, as we clerkes* sayn. *scholars
There have I taught them to be charitable,
And spend their good where it is reasonable.
And there I saw our dame; where is she?"
"Yonder I trow that in the yard she be,"
Saide this man; "and she will come anon."
"Hey master, welcome be ye by Saint John,"
Saide this wife; "how fare ye heartily?"

This friar riseth up full courteously,
And her embraceth *in his armes narrow,* *closely
And kiss'th her sweet, and chirketh as a sparrow
With his lippes: "Dame," quoth he, "right well,
As he that is your servant every deal.* *whit
Thanked be God, that gave you soul and life,
Yet saw I not this day so fair a wife
In all the churche, God so save me,"
"Yea, God amend defaultes, Sir," quoth she;
"Al gates* welcome be ye, by my fay." *always
"Grand mercy, Dame; that have I found alway.
But of your greates goodness, by your leave,
I woulde pray you that ye not you grieve,
I will with Thomas speak *a little throw:* *a little while*
These curates be so negligent and slow
To grope tenderly a conscience.
In shrift* and preaching is my diligence *confession
And study in Peter's wordes and in Paul's;
I walk and fishe Christian menne's souls,
To yield our Lord Jesus his proper rent;
To spread his word is alle mine intent."

*"Now by your faith, O deare Sir," quoth she,
 "Chide him right well, for sainte charity.
 He is aye angry as is a pismire,* *ant
 Though that he have all that he can desire,
 Though I him wrie* at night, and make him warm, *cover
 And ov'r him lay my leg and eke mine arm,
 He groaneth as our boar that lies in sty:
 Other disport of him right none have I,
 I may not please him in no manner case."
 "O Thomas, *je vous dis,* Thomas, Thomas, *I tell you*
 This *maketh the fiend,* this must be amended. *is the devil's work*
 Ire is a thing that high God hath defended,* *forbidden
 And thereof will I speak a word or two."
 "Now, master," quoth the wife, "ere that I go,
 What will ye dine? I will go thereabout."
 "Now, Dame," quoth he, "je vous dis sans doute,
 Had I not of a capon but the liver,
 And of your white bread not but a shiver,* *thin slice
 And after that a roasted pigge's head,
 (But I would that for me no beast were dead,)
 Then had I with you homely suffisance.
 I am a man of little sustenance.
 My spirit hath its fust'ring in the Bible.
 My body is aye so ready and penible* *painstaking
 To wake,* that my stomach is destroy'd. *watch
 I pray you, Dame, that ye be not annoy'd,
 Though I so friendly you my counsel shew;
 By God, I would have told it but to few."
 "Now, Sir," quoth she, "but one word ere I go;
 My child is dead within these weeke's two,
 Soon after that ye went out of this town."*

*"His death saw I by revelatioun,"
 Said this friar, "at home in our dortour.* *dormitory
 I dare well say, that less than half an hour
 Mter his death, I saw him borne to bliss
 In mine vision, so God me wiss.* *direct
 So did our sexton, and our fermerere,* *infirmery-keeper
 That have been true friars fifty year, —
 They may now, God be thanked of his love,
 Make their jubilee, and walk above.
 And up I rose, and all our convent eke,
 With many a teare trilling on my cheek,*

Withoute noise or clattering of bells,
Te Deum was our song, and nothing else,
Save that to Christ I bade an orison,
Thanking him of my revelation.
For, Sir and Dame, truste me right well,
Our orisons be more effectuel,
And more we see of Christe's secret things,
Than *borel folk,* although that they be kings. *laymen
We live in povert', and in abstinence,
And borel folk in riches and dispence
Of meat and drink, and in their foul delight.
We have this worlde's lust* all in despight** *pleasure **contempt
Lazar and Dives lived diversely,
And diverse guerdon* hadde they thereby. *reward
Whoso will pray, he must fast and be clean,
And fat his soul, and keep his body lean
We fare as saith th' apostle; cloth* and food *clothing
Suffice us, although they be not full good.
The cleanness and the fasting of us freres
Maketh that Christ accepteth our prayeres.
Lo, Moses forty days and forty night
Fasted, ere that the high God full of might
Spake with him in the mountain of Sinai:
With empty womb* of fasting many a day *stomach
Received he the lawe, that was writ
With Godde's finger; and Eli, well ye wit,* *know
In Mount Horeb, ere he had any speech
With highe God, that is our live's leech,* *physician, healer
He fasted long, and was in contemplance.
Aaron, that had the temple in governance,
And eke the other priestes every one,
Into the temple when they shoulde gon
To praye for the people, and do service,
They woulde drinke in no manner wise
No drinke, which that might them drunken make,
But there in abstinence pray and wake,
Lest that they died: take heed what I say —
But* they be sober that for the people pray — *unless
Ware that, I say — no more: for it sufficeth.
Our Lord Jesus, as Holy Writ deviseth,* *narrates
Gave us example of fasting and prayeres:
Therefore we mendicants, we sely* freres, *simple, lowly

*Be wedded to povert' and continence,
 To charity, humbless, and abstinence,
 To persecution for righteousness,
 To weeping, misericorde,* and to cleanness. *compassion
 And therefore may ye see that our prayeres
 (I speak of us, we mendicants, we freres),
 Be to the highe God more acceptable
 Than youres, with your feastes at your table.
 From Paradise first, if I shall not lie,
 Was man out chased for his gluttony,
 And chaste was man in Paradise certain.
 But hark now, Thomas, what I shall thee sayn;
 I have no text of it, as I suppose,
 But I shall find it in *a manner glose;* *a kind of comment*
 That specially our sweet Lord Jesus
 Spake this of friars, when he saide thus,
 'Blessed be they that poor in spirit be'
 And so forth all the gospel may ye see,
 Whether it be liker our profession,
 Or theirs that swimmen in possession;
 Fy on their pomp, and on their gluttony,
 And on their lewedness! I them defy.
 Me thinketh they be like Jovinian,
 Fat as a whale, and walking as a swan;
 All vinolent* as bottle in the spence;** *full of wine **store-room
 Their prayer is of full great reverence;
 When they for soules say the Psalm of David,
 Lo, 'Buf' they say, Cor meum eructavit.
 Who follow Christe's gospel and his lore* *doctrine
 But we, that humble be, and chaste, and pore,* *poor
 Workers of Godde's word, not auditours?* *hearers
 Therefore right as a hawk *upon a sours* *rising*
 Up springs into the air, right so prayeres
 Of charitable and chaste busy freres
 Make their sours to Godde's eares two. *rise*
 Thomas, Thomas, so may I ride or go,
 And by that lord that called is Saint Ive,
 Nere thou our brother, shouldest thou not thrive;,
 In our chapiter pray we day and night
 To Christ, that he thee sende health and might,
 Thy body for to *wielde hastily.* *soon be able to move freely**

"God wot," quoth he, "nothing thereof feel I;
 So help me Christ, as I in fewe years
 Have spended upon *divers manner freres* *friars of various sorts*
 Full many a pound, yet fare I ne'er the bet;* *better
 Certain my good have I almost beset;* *spent
 Farewell my gold, for it is all ago."* *gone
 The friar answer'd, "O Thomas, dost thou so?
 What needest thou diverse friars to seech?* *seek
 What needeth him that hath a perfect leech,* *healer
 To seeken other leeches in the town?
 Your inconstance is your confusioun.
 Hold ye then me, or elles our convent,
 To praye for you insufficient?
 Thomas, that jape* it is not worth a mite; *jest
 Your malady is *for we have too lite.* *because we have
 Ah, give that convent half a quarter oats; too little*
 And give that convent four and twenty groats;
 And give that friar a penny, and let him go!
 Nay, nay, Thomas, it may no thing be so.
 What is a farthing worth parted on twelve?
 Lo, each thing that is oned* in himselve *made one, united
 Is more strong than when it is y-scatter'd.
 Thomas, of me thou shalt not be y-flatter'd,
 Thou wouldest have our labour all for nought.
 The highe God, that all this world hath wrought,
 Saith, that the workman worthy is his hire
 Thomas, nought of your treasure I desire
 As for myself, but that all our convent
 To pray for you is aye so diligent:
 And for to builde Christe's owen church.
 Thomas, if ye will learne for to wirch,* *work
 Of building up of churches may ye find
 If it be good, in Thomas' life of Ind.
 Ye lie here full of anger and of ire,
 With which the devil sets your heart on fire,
 And chide here this holy innocent
 Your wife, that is so meek and patient.
 And therefore trow* me, Thomas, if thee lest,** *believe **please
 Ne strive not with thy wife, as for the best.
 And bear this word away now, by thy faith,
 Touching such thing, lo, what the wise man saith:
 'Within thy house be thou no lion;

To thy subjects do none oppression;
 Nor make thou thine acquaintance for to flee.'
 And yet, Thomas, eftsoones* charge I thee, *again
 Beware from ire that in thy bosom sleeps,
 Ware from the serpent, that so slily creeps
 Under the grass, and stingeth subtilly.
 Beware, my son, and hearken patiently,
 That twenty thousand men have lost their lives
 For striving with their lemans* and their wives. *mistresses
 Now since ye have so holy and meek a wife,
 What needeth you, Thomas, to make strife?
 There is, y-wis,* no serpent so cruel, *certainly
 When men tread on his tail nor half so fell,* *fierce
 As woman is, when she hath caught an ire;
 Very* vengeance is then all her desire. *pure, only
 Ire is a sin, one of the greates seven,
 Abominable to the God of heaven,
 And to himself it is destruction.
 This every lewed* vicar and parson *ignorant
 Can say, how ire engenders homicide;
 Ire is in sooth th' executor* of pride. *executioner
 I could of ire you say so much sorrow,
 My tale shoulde last until to-morrow.
 And therefore pray I God both day and ight,
 An irous* man God send him little might. *passionate
 It is great harm, and certes great pity
 To set an irous man in high degree.

"Whilom* there was an irous potestate,** *once **judge
 As saith Senec, that during his estate* *term of office
 Upon a day out rode knightes two;
 And, as fortune would that it were so,
 The one of them came home, the other not.
 Anon the knight before the judge is brought,
 That saide thus; 'Thou hast thy fellow slain,
 For which I doom thee to the death certain.'
 And to another knight commanded he;
 'Go, lead him to the death, I charge thee.'
 And happened, as they went by the way
 Toward the place where as he shoulde dey,* *die
 The knight came, which men weened* had been dead *thought
 Then thoughte they it was the beste rede* *counsel
 To lead them both unto the judge again.

*They saide, 'Lord, the knight hath not y-slain
 His fellow; here he standeth whole alive.'
 'Ye shall be dead,' quoth he, 'so may I thrive,
 That is to say, both one, and two, and three.'
 And to the firste knight right thus spake he:
 'I damned thee, thou must algate* be dead: *at all events
 And thou also must needes lose thine head,
 For thou the cause art why thy fellow dieth.'
 And to the thirde knight right thus he sayeth,
 'Thou hast not done that I commanded thee.'
 And thus he did do slay them alle three.*

Irous Cambyses was eke dronkelew, *a drunkard
 And aye delighted him to be a shrew.* *vicious, ill-tempered
 And so befell, a lord of his meinie,* *suite
 That loved virtuous morality,
 Said on a day betwixt them two right thus:
 'A lord is lost, if he be vicious.
 [An irous man is like a frantic beast,
 In which there is of wisdom *none arrest*:] *no control*
 And drunkenness is eke a foul record
 Of any man, and namely* of a lord. *especially
 There is full many an eye and many an ear
 Awaiting on a lord, he knows not where. *watching
 For Godde's love, drink more attemperly:* *temperately
 Wine maketh man to lose wretchedly
 His mind, and eke his limbes every one.'
 'The reverse shalt thou see,' quoth he, 'anon,
 And prove it by thine own experience,
 That wine doth to folk no such offence.
 There is no wine bereaveth me my might
 Of hand, nor foot, nor of mine eyen sight.'
 And for despite he dranke muche more
 A hundred part* than he had done before, *times
 And right anon this cursed irous wretch
 This knichte's sone let* before him fetch, *caused
 Commanding him he should before him stand:
 And suddenly he took his bow in hand,
 And up the string he pulled to his ear,
 And with an arrow slew the child right there.
 'Now whether have I a sicker* hand or non?*** *sure **not
 Quoth he; 'Is all my might and mind agone?
 Hath wine bereaved me mine eyen sight?'*

Why should I tell the answer of the knight?
His son was slain, there is no more to say.
Beware therefore with lordes how ye play,* *use freedom
Sing placebo; and I shall if I can,
But if it be unto a poore man: *unless
To a poor man men should his vices tell,
But not t' a lord, though he should go to hell.
Lo, irous Cyrus, thilke* Persian, *that
How he destroy'd the river of Gisen,
For that a horse of his was drowned therein,
When that he wente Babylon to win:
He made that the river was so small,
That women mighte wade it *over all.* *everywhere
Lo, what said he, that so well teache can,
'Be thou no fellow to an irous man,
Nor with no wood* man walke by the way, *furious
Lest thee repent;' I will no farther say.

"Now, Thomas, leve* brother, leave thine ire, *dear
Thou shalt me find as just as is as squire;
Hold not the devil's knife aye at thine heaat;
Thine anger doth thee all too sore smart;* *pain
But shew to me all thy confession."
"Nay," quoth the sicke man, "by Saint Simon
I have been shriven* this day of my curate; *confessed
I have him told all wholly mine estate.
Needeth no more to speak of it, saith he,
But if me list of mine humility."
"Give me then of thy good to make our cloister,"
Quoth he, "for many a mussel and many an oyster,
When other men have been full well at ease,
Hath been our food, our cloister for to rese:* *raise, build
And yet, God wot, unneth* the foundement** *scarcely **foundation
Performed is, nor of our pavement
Is not a tile yet within our wones:* *habitation
By God, we owe forty pound for stones.
Now help, Thomas, for *him that harrow'd hell,* *Christ
For elles must we oure bookes sell,
And if ye lack our predication,
Then goes this world all to destruction.
For whoso from this world would us bereave,
So God me save, Thomas, by your leave,
He would bereave out of this world the sun

For who can teach and worken as we conne?* *know how to do
 And that is not of little time (quoth he),
 But since Elijah was, and Elisee,* *Elisha
 Have friars been, that find I of record,
 In charity, y-thanked be our Lord.
 Now, Thomas, help for sainte charity."
 And down anon he set him on his knee,
 The sick man waxed well-nigh wood* for ire, *mad
 He woulde that the friar had been a-fire
 With his false dissimulation.
 "Such thing as is in my possession,"
 Quoth he, "that may I give you and none other:
 Ye say me thus, how that I am your brother."
 "Yea, certes," quoth this friar, "yea, truste well;
 I took our Dame the letter of our seal"
 "Now well," quoth he, "and somewhat shall I give
 Unto your holy convent while I live;
 And in thine hand thou shalt it have anon,
 On this condition, and other none,
 That thou depart* it so, my deare brother, *divide
 That every friar have as much as other:
 This shalt thou swear on thy profession,
 Withoute fraud or cavillation."* *quibbling
 "I swear it," quoth the friar, "upon my faith."
 And therewithal his hand in his he lay'th;
 "Lo here my faith, in me shall be no lack."
 "Then put thine hand adown right by my back,"
 Saide this man, "and grope well behind,
 Beneath my buttock, there thou shalt find
 A thing, that I have hid in privy."
 "Ah," thought this friar, "that shall go with me."
 And down his hand he launched to the clift,* *cleft
 In hope for to finde there a gift.
 And when this sicke man felte this frere
 About his taile groping there and here,
 Amid his hand he let the friar a fart;
 There is no capel* drawing in a cart, *horse
 That might have let a fart of such a soun'.
 The friar up start, as doth a wood* lioun: *fierce
 "Ah, false churl," quoth he, "for Godde's bones,
 This hast thou in despite done for the nones:* *on purpose
 Thou shalt abie* this fart, if that I may." *suffer for

His meinie, which that heard of this affray, *servants
Came leaping in, and chased out the frere,
And forth he went with a full angry cheer* *countenance
And fetch'd his fellow, there as lay his store:
He looked as it were a wilde boar,
And grounde with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A sturdy pace down to the court he go'th,
Where as there wonn'd* a man of great honour, *dwelt
To whom that he was always confessour:
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This friar came, as he were in a rage,
Where as this lord sat eating at his board:
Unnethes* might the friar speak one word, *with difficulty
Till at the last he saide, "God you see."* *save*

*This lord gan look, and said, "Ben'dicite!
What? Friar John, what manner world is this?
I see well that there something is amiss;
Ye look as though the wood were full of thieves.
Sit down anon, and tell me what your grieve* is, *grievance, grief
And it shall be amended, if I may."
"I have," quoth he, "had a despite to-day,
God *yielde you,* adown in your village, *reward you
That in this world is none so poor a page,
That would not have abominatioun
Of that I have received in your town:
And yet ne grieveth me nothing so sore,
As that the olde churl, with lockes hoar,
Blasphemed hath our holy convent eke."
"Now, master," quoth this lord, "I you beseek" —
"No master, Sir," quoth he, "but servitour,
Though I have had in schoole that honour.
God liketh not, that men us Rabbi call
Neither in market, nor in your large hall."
"No force," quoth he; "but tell me all your grief." *no matter*
Sir," quoth this friar, "an odious mischief
This day betid* is to mine order and me, *befallen
And so par consequence to each degree
Of holy churche, God amend it soon."
"Sir," quoth the lord, "ye know what is to doon:* *do
Distemp'r you not, ye be my confessour. *be not impatient*
Ye be the salt of th' earth, and the savour;
For Godde's love your patience now hold;*

Tell me your grief." And he anon him told
 As ye have heard before, ye know well what.
 The lady of the house aye stiller sat,
 Till she had hearde what the friar said,
 "Hey, Godde's mother;" quoth she, "blissful maid,
 Is there ought elles? tell me faithfully."
 "Madame," quoth he, "how thinketh you thereby?"
 "How thinketh me?" quoth she; "so God me speed,
 I say, a churl hath done a churlish deed,
 What should I say? God let him never the;* *thrive
 His sicke head is full of vanity;
 I hold him in *a manner phrenesy."* *a sort of frenzy*
 "Madame," quoth he, "by God, I shall not lie,
 But I in other wise may be awreke,* *revenged
 I shall defame him *ov'r all there* I speak; *wherever
 This false blasphemour, that charged me
 To parte that will not departed be,
 To every man alike, with mischance."

The lord sat still, as he were in a trance,
 And in his heart he rolled up and down,
 "How had this churl imaginatioun
 To shewe such a problem to the frere.
 Never ere now heard I of such mattere;
 I trow* the Devil put it in his mind. *believe
 In all arsmetrik* shall there no man find, *arithmetic
 Before this day, of such a question.
 Who shoulde make a demonstration,
 That every man should have alike his part
 As of the sound and savour of a fart?
 O nice* proude churl, I shrew** his face. *foolish **curse
 Lo, Sires," quoth the lord, "with harde grace,
 Who ever heard of such a thing ere now?
 To every man alike? tell me how.
 It is impossible, it may not be.
 Hey nice* churl, God let him never the.** *foolish **thrive
 The rumbling of a fart, and every soun',
 Is but of air reverberatioun,
 And ever wasteth lite* and lite* away; *little
 There is no man can deemen,* by my fay, *judge, decide
 If that it were departed* equally. *divided
 What? lo, my churl, lo yet how shrewedly* *impiously, wickedly
 Unto my confessour to-day he spake;

*I hold him certain a demoniac.
Now eat your meat, and let the churl go play,
Let him go hang himself a devil way!"*

*Now stood the lorde's squier at the board,
That carv'd his meat, and hearde word by word
Of all this thing, which that I have you said.
"My lord," quoth he, "be ye not *evil paid,* *displeased*
I coulde telle, for a gowne-cloth,* *cloth for a gown*
To you, Sir Friar, so that ye be not wrot,
How that this fart should even* dealed be *equally
Among your convent, if it liked thee."
"Tell," quoth the lord, "and thou shalt have anon
A gowne-cloth, by God and by Saint John."
"My lord," quoth he, "when that the weather is fair,
Withoute wind, or perturbing of air,
Let* bring a cart-wheel here into this hall, cause*
But looke that it have its spokes all;
Twelve spokes hath a cart-wheel commonly;
And bring me then twelve friars, know ye why?
For thirteen is a convent as I guess;
Your confessor here, for his worthiness,
Shall *perform up* the number of his convent. *complete*
Then shall they kneel adown by one assent,
And to each spoke's end, in this mannere,
Full sadly* lay his nose shall a frere; *carefully, steadily
Your noble confessor there, God him save,
Shall hold his nose upright under the nave.
Then shall this churl, with belly stiff and tought* *tight
As any tabour,* hither be y-brought; *drum
And set him on the wheel right of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him let a fart,
And ye shall see, on peril of my life,
By very proof that is demonstrative,
That equally the sound of it will wend,* *go
And eke the stink, unto the spokes' end,
Save that this worthy man, your confessour'
(Because he is a man of great honour),
Shall have the firste fruit, as reason is;
The noble usage of friars yet it is,
The worthy men of them shall first be served,
And certainly he hath it well deserved;
He hath to-day taught us so much good*

*With preaching in the pulpit where he stood,
That I may vouchesafe, I say for me,
He had the firste smell of fartes three;
And so would all his brethren hardily;
He beareth him so fair and holily."*

*The lord, the lady, and each man, save the frere,
Saide, that Jankin spake in this matter
As well as Euclid, or as Ptolemy.
Touching the churl, they said that subtilty
And high wit made him speaken as he spake;
He is no fool, nor no demoniac.
And Jankin hath y-won a newe gown;
My tale is done, we are almost at town.*

THE CLERK'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"SIR Clerk of Oxenford," our Hoste said,
"Ye ride as still and coy, as doth a maid
That were new spoused, sitting at the board:
This day I heard not of your tongue a word.
I trow ye study about some sophime:* *sophism
But Solomon saith, every thing hath time.
For Godde's sake, be of *better cheer,* *livelier mien*
It is no time for to study here.
Tell us some merry tale, by your fay;* *faith
For what man that is entered in a play,
He needes must unto that play assent.
But preache not, as friars do in Lent,
To make us for our olde sinnes weep,
Nor that thy tale make us not to sleep.
Tell us some merry thing of adventures.
Your terms, your coloures, and your figures,
Keep them in store, till so be ye indite
High style, as when that men to kinges write.
Speake so plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may understande what ye say."

This worthy Clerk benignely answer'd;
"Hoste," quoth he, "I am under your yerd,* *rod
Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therefore would I do you obeisance,
As far as reason asketh, hardily.* *boldly, truly
I will you tell a tale, which that I
Learn'd at Padova of a worthy clerk,
As proved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now dead, and nailed in his chest,
I pray to God to give his soul good rest.
Francis Petrarc', the laureate poet,
Highte* this clerk, whose rhetoric so sweet *was called
Illumin'd all Itale of poetry,
As Linian did of philosophy,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But death, that will not suffer us dwell here

*But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Them both hath slain, and alle we shall die.*

*"But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I began,
I say that first he with high style inditeth
(Ere he the body of his tale writeth)
A proem, in the which describeth he
Piedmont, and of Saluces the country,
And speaketh of the Pennine hilles high,
That be the bounds of all West Lombardy:
And of Mount Vesulus in special,
Where as the Po out of a welle small
Taketh his firste springing and his source,
That eastward aye increaseth in his course
T'Emilia-ward, to Ferraro, and Venice,
The which a long thing were to devise.* *narrate
And truely, as to my judgement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,* *irrelevant
Save that he would conveye his matter:
But this is the tale, which that ye shall hear."*

THE TALE.

Pars Prima.* *First Part

*There is, right at the west side of Itale,
Down at the root of Vesulus the cold,
A lusty* plain, abundant of vitaille;* *pleasant **victuals
There many a town and tow'r thou may'st behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another delectable sight;
And Saluces this noble country hight.*

*A marquis whilom lord was of that land,
As were his worthy elders* him before, *ancestors
And obedient, aye ready to his hand,
Were all his lieges, bothe less and more:
Thus in delight he liv'd, and had done yore,* *long
Belov'd and drad,* through favour of fortune, *held in reverence
Both of his lordes and of his commune.* *commonalty*

*Therewith he was, to speak of lineage,
The gentilest y-born of Lombardy,
A fair person, and strong, and young of age,
And full of honour and of courtesy:
Discreet enough his country for to gie,* *guide, rule
Saving in some things that he was to blame;
And Walter was this younge lordes name.*

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

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

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

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

*"For certes, Lord, so well us like you
And all your work, and ev'r have done, that we
Ne could not ourselves devise how*

*We mighte live in more felicity:
Save one thing, Lord, if that your will it be,
That for to be a wedded man you lest;
Then were your people *in sovereign heartes rest.* *completely*

*"Bowe your neck under the blisful yoke
Of sovereignty, and not of service,
Which that men call espousal or wedlock:
And thinke, Lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes pass in sundry wise;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Aye fleeth time, it will no man abide.*

*"And though your greene youthe flow'r as yet,
In creepeth age alwayes as still as stone,
And death menaceth every age, and smit* *smiteth
In each estate, for there escapeth none:
And all so certain as we know each one
That we shall die, as uncertain we all
Be of that day when death shall on us fall.*

"Accepte then of us the true intent, *mind, desire
That never yet refused youre hest,* *command
And we will, Lord, if that ye will assent,
Choose you a wife, in short time at the lest,* *least
Born of the gentilest and of the best
Of all this land, so that it ought to seem
Honour to God and you, as we can deem.*

"Deliver us out of all this busy dread, *doubt
And take a wife, for highe Godde's sake:
For if it so befell, as God forbid,
That through your death your lineage should slake,* *become extinct
And that a strange successor should take
Your heritage, oh! woe were us on live:* *alive
Wherefore we pray you hastily to wive."*

*Their meeke prayer and their piteous cheer
Made the marquis for to have pity.
"Ye will," quoth he, "mine owen people dear,
To that I ne'er ere* thought constraine me. *before
I me rejoiced of my liberty,*

*That seldom time is found in rnarriage;
Where I was free, I must be in servage!* *servitude*

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

*"For God it wot, that children often been
Unlike their worthy elders them before,
Bounte* comes all of God, not of the strene** *goodness
Of which they be engender'd and y-bore: **stock, race
I trust in Godde's bounte, and therefore
My marriage, and mine estate and rest,
I *him betake,* he may do as him lest. *commend to him*

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

*"And farthermore this shall ye swear, that ye
Against my choice shall never grudge* nor strive. *murmur
For since I shall forego my liberty
At your request, as ever may I thrive,
Where as mine heart is set, there will I live
And but* ye will assent in such mannere, *unless
I pray you speak no more of this mattere."*

*With heartly will they sworn and assent
To all this thing, there said not one wight nay:
Beseeching him of grace, ere that they went,
That he would grante them a certain day
Of his espousal, soon as e'er he rmay,
For yet always the people somewhat dread* *were in fear or doubt
Lest that the marquis woulde no wife wed.*

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

*And hereupon he to his officers
Commanded for the feaste to purvey.* *provide
And to his privy knightes and squiers
Such charge he gave, as him list on them lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And each of them doth all his diligence
To do unto the feast all reverence.*

Pars Secunda* *Second Part

Not far from thilke palace honourable, *that
Where as this marquis shope* his marriage, *prepared; resolved on
There stood a thorp,* of sighte delectable, *hamlet
In which the poore folk of that village
Hadde their beastes and their harbourage,* *dwelling
And of their labour took their sustenance,
After the earthe gave them abundance.*

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

*But for to speak of virtuous beauty,
Then was she one the fairest under sun:
Full poorely y-foster'd up was she;
No *likerous lust* was in her heart y-run; *luxurious pleasure*
Well ofter of the well than of the tun
She drank, and, for* she woulde virtue please *because
She knew well labour, but no idle ease.*

*But though this maiden tender were of age;
Yet in the breast of her virginity
There was inclos'd a *sad and ripe corage;* *steadfast and mature
And in great reverence and charity spirit*
Her olde poore father foster'd she.
A few sheep, spinning, on the field she kept,
She woulde not be idle till she slept.*

*And when she homeward came, she would bring
Wortes,* and other herbes, times oft, *plants, cabbages
The which she shred and seeth'd for her living,
And made her bed full hard, and nothing soft:
And aye she kept her father's life on loft* *up, aloft
With ev'ry obeisance and diligence,
That child may do to father's reverence.*

*Upon Griselda, this poor creature,
Full often sithes* this marquis set his eye, *times
As he on hunting rode, paraventure:* *by chance
And when it fell that he might her espy,
He not with wanton looking of folly
His eyen cast on her, but in sad* wise *serious
Upon her cheer* he would him oft advise;** *countenance **consider*

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

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

*But natheless this marquis had *done make* *caused to be made*
Of gemmes, set in gold and in azure,
Brooches and ringes, for Griselda's sake,*

*And of her clothing took he the measure
Of a maiden like unto her stature,
And eke of other ornamentes all
That unto such a wedding shoulde fall.* *befit*

The time of undern of the same day *evening
Approached, that this wedding shoulde be,
And all the palace put was in array,
Both hall and chamber, each in its degree,
Houses of office stuffed with plenty
There may'st thou see of dainteous vitaille,* *victuals, provisions
That may be found, as far as lasts Itale.*

*This royal marquis, richely array'd,
Lords and ladies in his company,
The which unto the feaste were pray'd,
And of his retinue the bach'lery,
With many a sound of sundry melody,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the right way did they hold.*

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

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

*And as she would over the threshold gon,
The marquis came and gan for her to call,
And she set down her water-pot anon
Beside the threshold, in an ox's stall,
And down upon her knees she gan to fall,*

And with sad countenance kneeled still, *steady
Till she had heard what was the lorde's will.*

*The thoughtful marquis spake unto the maid
Full soberly, and said in this mannere:
"Where is your father, Griseldis?" he said.
And she with reverence, *in humble cheer,* *with humble air*
Answered, "Lord, he is all ready here."
And in she went withoute longer let* *delay
And to the marquis she her father fet.* *fetched*

*He by the hand then took the poore man,
And saide thus, when he him had aside:
"Janicola, I neither may nor can
Longer the pleasance of mine hearte hide;
If that thou vouchesafe, whatso betide,
Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend,* *go
As for my wife, unto her life's end.*

*"Thou lovest me, that know I well certain,
And art my faithful liegeman y-bore,* *born
And all that liketh me, I dare well sayn
It liketh thee; and specially therefore
Tell me that point, that I have said before, —
If that thou wilt unto this purpose draw,
To take me as for thy son-in-law."*

This sudden case the man astonied so, *event
That red he wax'd, abash'd,* and all quaking *amazed
He stood; unnethes* said he wordes mo', *scarcely
But only thus; "Lord," quoth he, "my willing
Is as ye will, nor against your liking
I will no thing, mine owen lord so dear;
Right as you list governe this mattere."*

*"Then will I," quoth the marquis softly,
"That in thy chamber I, and thou, and she,
Have a collation;* and know'st thou why? *conference
For I will ask her, if her will it be
To be my wife, and rule her after me:
And all this shall be done in thy presence,
I will not speak out of thine audience."* *hearing*

*And in the chamber while they were about
The treaty, which ye shall hereafter hear,
The people came into the house without,
And wonder'd them in how honest mannere
And tenderly she kept her father dear;
But utterly Griseldis wonder might,
For never erst* ne saw she such a sight. *before*

No wonder is though that she be astoned, *astonished
To see so great a guest come in that place,
She never was to no such guestes woned;* *accustomed, wont
For which she looked with full pale face.
But shortly forth this matter for to chase,* *push on, pursue
These are the wordes that the marquis said
To this benigne, very,* faithful maid. *true*

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

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

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

*"This is enough, Griselda mine," quoth he.
And forth he went with a full sober cheer,
Out at the door, and after then came she,*

*And to the people he said in this mannere:
"This is my wife," quoth he, "that standeth here.
Honoure her, and love her, I you pray,
Whoso me loves; there is no more to say."*

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

Her haïres have they comb'd that lay untress'd *loose
Full rudely, and with their fingers small
A crown upon her head they have dress'd,
And set her full of nouches great and small:
Of her array why should I make a tale?
Unneth* the people her knew for her fairness, *scarcely
When she transmuted was in such richness.*

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

*And, shortly forth this tale for to chase,
I say, that to this newe marchioness
God hath such favour sent her of his grace,
That it ne seemed not by likeness
That she was born and fed in rudeness, —
As in a cot, or in an ox's stall, —
But nourish'd in an emperore's hall.*

To every wight she waxen is so dear *grown
And worshipful, that folk where she was born,
That from her birthe knew her year by year,
Unnethes trowed they, but durst have sworn, *scarcely believed*
That to Janicol' of whom I spake before,*

*She was not daughter, for by conjecture
Them thought she was another creature.*

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

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

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

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

Though that her husband absent were or non, *not
If gentlemen or other of that country,
Were wroth,* she woulde bringe them at one, *at feud
So wise and ripe wordes hadde she,
And judgement of so great equity,
That she from heaven sent was, as men wend,* *weened, imagined
People to save, and every wrong t'amend*

Not longe time after that this Griseld'
Was wedded, she a daughter had y-bore;
All she had lever* borne a knave** child, *rather **boy
Glad was the marquis and his folk therefore;
For, though a maiden child came all before,
She may unto a knave child attain
By likelihood, since she is not barren.

Pars Tertia.* *Third Part

There fell, as falleth many times mo',
When that his child had sucked but a throw,* little while
This marquis in his hearte longed so
To tempt his wife, her sadness* for to know, *steadfastness
That he might not out of his hearte throw
This marvellous desire his wife t'assay;* *try
Needless,* God wot, he thought her to affray.** *without cause
**alarm, disturb
He had assayed her anough before,
And found her ever good; what needed it
Her for to tempt, and always more and more?
Though some men praise it for a subtle wit,
But as for me, I say that *evil it sit* *it ill became him*
T'assay a wife when that it is no need,
And putte her in anguish and in dread.

For which this marquis wrought in this mannere:
He came at night alone there as she lay,
With sterne face and with full troubled cheer,
And saide thus; "Griseld'," quoth he "that day
That I you took out of your poor array,
And put you in estate of high nobless,
Ye have it not forgotten, as I guess.

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

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

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

"And yet, God wot, this is full loth* to me: *odious
But natheless withoute your weeting* *knowing
I will nought do; but this will I," quoth he,
"That ye to me assenten in this thing.
Shew now your patience in your working,
That ye me hight* and swore in your village *promised
The day that maked was our marriage."

When she had heard all this, she not amev'd* *changed
Neither in word, in cheer, nor countenance
(For, as it seemed, she was not aggriev'd);
She saide; "Lord, all lies in your pleasance,
My child and I, with hearty obeisance
Be youres all, and ye may save or spill* *destroy
Your owen thing: work then after your will.

"There may no thing, so God my soule save,
Like to you, that may displease me: *be pleasing*
Nor I desire nothing for to have,
Nor dreade for to lose, save only ye:
This will is in mine heart, and aye shall be,
No length of time, nor death, may this deface,
Nor change my corage* to another place." *spirit, heart

Glad was the marquis for her answering,
But yet he feigned as he were not so;
All dreary was his cheer and his looking

When that he should out of the chamber go.
Soon after this, a furlong way or two,
He privily hath told all his intent
Unto a man, and to his wife him sent.

A **manner sergeant** was this private* man, **kind of squire**
The which he faithful often founden had **discreet**
In thinges great, and eke such folk well can
Do execution in thinges bad:
The lord knew well, that he him loved and drad.* **dreaded**
And when this sergeant knew his lorde's will,
Into the chamber stalked he full still.

"Madam," he said, "ye must forgive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constrain'd;
Ye be so wise, that right well knowe ye
**That lordes' hestes may not be y-feign'd;*
They may well be bewailed and complain'd,
But men must needs unto their lust* obey; **pleasure**
And so will I, there is no more to say.

"This child I am commanded for to take."
And spake no more, but out the child he hent* **seized**
Despiteously,* and gan a cheer** to make **unpityingly **show, aspect**
As though he would have slain it ere he went.
Griseldis must all suffer and consent:
And as a lamb she sat there meek and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will

Suspicious* was the diffame** of this man, **ominous **evil reputation**
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the time in which he this began:
Alas! her daughter, that she loved so,
She weened* he would have it slain right tho,** **thought **then**
But natheless she neither wept nor siked,* **sighed**
Conforming her to what the marquis liked.

But at the last to speake she began,
And meekly she unto the sergeant pray'd,
So as he was a worthy gentle man,
That she might kiss her child, ere that it died:
And in her barme* this little child she laid, **lap, bosom**

With full sad face, and gan the child to bless, *cross
And lulled it, and after gan it kiss.*

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

I trow that to a norice** in this case *believe **nurse
It had been hard this ruthe* for to see: *pitiful sight
Well might a mother then have cried, "Alas!"
But natheless so sad steadfast was she,
That she endured all adversity,
And to the sergeant meekely she said,
"Have here again your little younge maid.*

*"Go now," quoth she, "and do my lord's behest.
And one thing would I pray you of your grace,
But if my lord forbade you at the least, *unless*
Bury this little body in some place,
That neither beasts nor birdes it arace."* *tear
But he no word would to that purpose say,
But took the child and went upon his way.*

*The sergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Griselda's words and of her cheer* *demeanour
He told him point for point, in short and plain,
And him presented with his daughter dear.
Somewhat this lord had ruth in his mannere,
But natheless his purpose held he still,
As lordes do, when they will have their will;*

*And bade this sergeant that he privily
Shoulde the child full softly wind and wrap,
With alle circumstances tenderly,
And carry it in a coffer, or in lap;
But, upon pain his head off for to swap,* *strike
That no man shoulde know of his intent,
Nor whence he came, nor whither that he went;*

*But at Bologna, to his sister dear,
That at that time of Panic* was Countess, *Panico
He should it take, and shew her this mattere,
Beseeching her to do her business
This child to foster in all gentleness,
And whose child it was he bade her hide
From every wight, for aught that might betide.*

*The sergeant went, and hath fulfill'd this thing.
But to the marquis now returne we;
For now went he full fast imagining
If by his wife's cheer he mighte see,
Or by her wordes apperceive, that she
Were changed; but he never could her find,
But ever-in-one* alike sad** and kind. *constantly **steadfast*

*As glad, as humble, as busy in service,
And eke in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to him, in every *manner wise;* *sort of way*
And of her daughter not a word spake she;
No accident for no adversity *no change of humour resulting
Was seen in her, nor e'er her daughter's name from her affliction*
She named, or in earnest or in game.*

Pars Quarta* *Fourth Part

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

*When it was two year old, and from the breast
Departed* of the norice, on a day *taken, weaned
This marquis *caughte yet another lest* *was seized by yet
To tempt his wife yet farther, if he may. another desire*
Oh! needless was she tempted in as say;* *trial
But wedded men *not connen no measure,* *know no moderation*
When that they find a patient creature.*

"Wife," quoth the marquis, "ye have heard ere this
My people *sickly bear* our marriage; *regard with displeasure*
And namely* since my son y-boren is, *especially
Now is it worse than ever in all our age:
The murmur slays mine heart and my corage,
For to mine ears cometh the voice so smart,* *painfully
That it well nigh destroyed hath mine heart.

"Now say they thus, 'When Walter is y-gone,
Then shall the blood of Janicol' succeed,
And be our lord, for other have we none:'
Such wordes say my people, out of drede.* *doubt
Well ought I of such murmur take heed,
For certainly I dread all such sentence,* *expression of opinion
Though they not *plainen in mine audience.* *complain in my hearing*

"I woulde live in peace, if that I might;
Wherefore I am disposed utterly,
As I his sister served ere* by night, *before
Right so think I to serve him privily.
This warn I you, that ye not suddenly
Out of yourself for no woe should outraie;* *become outrageous, rave
Be patient, and thereof I you pray."

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

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

"And, certes, if I hadde prescience
Your will to know, ere ye your lust* me told, *will
I would it do withoute negligence:

*But, now I know your lust, and what ye wo'ld,
All your pleasance firm and stable I hold;
For, wist I that my death might do you ease,
Right gladly would I dien you to please.*

*"Death may not make no comparisoun
Unto your love." And when this marquis say* *saw
The constance of his wife, he cast adown
His eyen two, and wonder'd how she may
In patience suffer all this array;
And forth he went with dreary countenance;
But to his heart it was full great pleasance.*

*This ugly sergeant, in the same wise
That he her daughter caught, right so hath he
(Or worse, if men can any worse devise,
Y-hent* her son, that full was of beauty: *seized
And ever-in-one* so patient was she, *unvaryingly
That she no cheere made of heaviness,
But kiss'd her son, and after gan him bless.*

*Save this she prayed him, if that he might,
Her little son he would in earthe grave,* *bury
His tender limbes, delicate to sight,
From fowles and from beastes for to save.
But she none answer of him mighte have;
He went his way, as him nothing ne raught,* *cared
But to Bologna tenderly it brought.*

*The marquis wonder'd ever longer more
Upon her patience; and, if that he
Not hadde soothly knowen therebefore
That perfectly her children loved she,
He would have ween'd* that of some subtilty, *thought
And of malice, or for cruel corage,* *disposition
She hadde suffer'd this with sad* visage. *steadfast, unmoved*

*But well he knew, that, next himself, certain
She lov'd her children best in every wise.
But now of women would I aske fain,
If these assayes mighte not suffice?
What could a sturdy* husband more devise *stern*

*To prove her wifehood and her steadfastness,
And he continuing ev'r in sturdiness?*

*But there be folk of such condition,
That, when they have a certain purpose take,
Thiey cannot stint* of their intention, *cease
But, right as they were bound unto a stake,
They will not of their firste purpose slake:* *slacken, abate
Right so this marquis fully hath purpos'd
To tempt his wife, as he was first dispos'd.*

*He waited, if by word or countenance
That she to him was changed of corage:* *spirit
But never could he finde variance,
She was aye one in heart and in visage,
And aye the farther that she was in age,
The more true (if that it were possible)
She was to him in love, and more penible.* *painstaking in devotion*

*For which it seemed thus, that of them two
There was but one will; for, as Walter lest,* *pleased
The same pleasance was her lust* also; *pleasure
And, God be thanked, all fell for the best.
She shewed well, for no worldly unrest,
A wife as of herself no thinge should
Will, in effect, but as her husbaud would.*

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

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

When that his daughter twelve year was of age,
He to the Court of Rome, in subtle wise
Informed of his will, sent his message,* *messenger
Commanding him such bulles to devise
As to his cruel purpose may suffice,
How that the Pope, for his people's rest,
Bade him to wed another, if him lest.* *wished

I say he bade they shoulde counterfeit
The Pope's bulles, making mention
That he had leave his firste wife to lete,* *leave
To stinte* rancour and dissension *put an end to
Betwixt his people and him: thus spake the bull,
The which they have published at full.

The rude people, as no wonder is,
Weened* full well that it had been right so: *thought, believed
But, when these tidings came to Griseldis.
I deeme that her heart was full of woe;
But she, alike sad* for evermo', *steadfast
Disposed was, this humble creature,
Th' adversity of fortune all t' endure;

Abiding ever his lust and his pleasance,
To whom that she was given, heart and all,
As *to her very worldly suffisance.* *to the utmost extent
But, shortly if this story tell I shall, of her power*
The marquis written hath in special
A letter, in which he shewed his intent,
And secretly it to Bologna sent.

To th' earl of Panico, which hadde tho* *there
Wedded his sister, pray'd he specially
To bringe home again his children two
In honourable estate all openly:
But one thing he him prayed utterly,
That he to no wight, though men would inquire,
Shoulde not tell whose children that they were,

But say, the maiden should y-wedded be
Unto the marquis of Saluce anon.
And as this earl was prayed, so did he,
For, at day set, he on his way is gone

*Toward Saluce, and lorde's many a one
In rich array, this maiden for to guide, —
Her younge brother riding her beside.*

Arrayed was toward her marriage *as if for
This freshe maiden, full of gemmes clear;
Her brother, which that seven year was of age,
Arrayed eke full fresh in his mannere:
And thus, in great nobless, and with glad cheer,
Toward Saluces shaping their journey,
From day to day they rode upon their way.*

Pars Quinta.* *Fifth Part

**Among all this,* after his wick' usage, *while all this was
The marquis, yet his wife to tempte more going on*
To the uttermost proof of her corage,
Fully to have experience and lore* *knowledge
If that she were as steadfast as before,
He on a day, in open audience,
Full boisterously said her this sentence:*

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

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

*"Be strong of heart, and *void anon* her place; *immediately vacate*
And thilke* dower that ye brought to me, *that
Take it again, I grant it of my grace.
Returne to your father's house," quoth he;*

"No man may always have prosperity;
With even heart I rede* you to endure *counsel
The stroke of fortune or of aventure."

And she again answer'd in patience:
"My Lord," quoth she, "I know, and knew alway,
How that betwixte your magnificence
And my povert' no wight nor can nor may
Make comparison, it *is no nay,* *cannot be denied*
I held me never digne* in no mannere *worthy
To be your wife, nor yet your chamberere.* *chamber-maid

"And in this house, where ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witness,
And all so wisly* he my soule glade),** *surely **gladdened
I never held me lady nor mistress,
But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall, while that my life may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

"That ye so long, of your benignity,
Have holden me in honour and nobley,* *nobility
Where as I was not worthy for to be,
That thank I God and you, to whom I pray
Foryield* it you; there is no more to say: *reward
Unto my father gladly will I wend,* *go
And with him dwell, unto my lifes end,

"Where I was foster'd as a child full small,
Till I be dead my life there will I lead,
A widow clean in body, heart, and all.
For since I gave to you my maidenhead,
And am your true wife, it is no dread,* *doubt
God shielde* such a lordes wife to take *forbid
Another man to husband or to make.* *mate

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

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

"But sooth is said, — algate I find it true, *at all events
For in effect it proved is on me, —
Love is not old as when that it is new.
But certes, Lord, for no adversity,
To dien in this case, it shall not be
That e'er in word or work I shall repent
That I you gave mine heart in whole intent.*

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

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

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

"Wherefore, in guerdon of my maidenhead, *reward
Which that I brought and not again I bear,
As vouchesafe to give me to my meed* *reward*

*But such a smock as I was wont to wear,
That I therewith may wrie* the womb of her *cover
That was your wife: and here I take my leave
Of you, mine owen Lord, lest I you grieve."*

*"The smock," quoth he, "that thou hast on thy back,
Let it be still, and bear it forth with thee."
But well unnethes* thilke word he spake, *with difficulty
But went his way for ruth and for pity.
Before the folk herselfe stripped she,
And in her smock, with foot and head all bare,
Toward her father's house forth is she fare.* *gone*

*The folk her follow'd weeping on her way,
And fortune aye they cursed as they gon:* *go
But she from weeping kept her eyen drey,* *dry
Nor in this time worde spake she none.
Her father, that this tidings heard anon,
Cursed the day and time, that nature
Shope* him to be a living creature. *formed, ordained*

*For, out of doubt, this olde poore man
Was ever in suspect of her marriage:
For ever deem'd he, since it first began,
That when the lord *fulfill'd had his corage,* *had gratified his whim*
He would think it were a disparage* *disparagement
To his estate, so low for to alight,
And voide* her as soon as e'er he might. *dismiss*

Against his daughter hastily went he *to meet
(For he by noise of folk knew her coming),
And with her olde coat, as it might be,
He cover'd her, full sorrowfully weeping:
But on her body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By dayes fele* than at her marriage. *many*

*Thus with her father for a certain space
Dwelled this flow'r of wifely patience,
That neither by her words nor by her face,
Before the folk nor eke in their absence,
Ne shewed she that her was done offence,*

Nor of her high estate no remembrance
Ne hadde she, *as by* her countenance. *to judge from*

No wonder is, for in her great estate
Her ghost* was ever in plein** humility; *spirit **full
No tender mouth, no hearte delicate,
No pomp, and no semblant of royalty;
But full of patient benignity,
Discreet and prideless, aye honourable,
And to her husband ever meek and stable.

Men speak of Job, and most for his humbless,
As clerkes, when them list, can well indite,
Namely* of men; but, as in soothfastness, *particularly
Though clerkes praise women but a lite,* *little
There can no man in humbless him acquite
As women can, nor can be half so true
As women be, *but it be fall of new.* *unless it has lately
come to pass*

Pars Sexta* *Sixth Part

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

The marquis, which that shope* and knew all this, *arranged
Ere that the earl was come, sent his message* *messenger
For thilke poore sely* Griseldis; *innocent
And she, with humble heart and glad visage,
Nor with no swelling thought in her corage,* *mind
Came at his hest,* and on her knees her set, *command
And rev'rently and wisely she him gret.* *greeted

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

*Have *his estate* in sitting and service, *what befits his
And in high pleasance, as I can devise. condition**

*"I have no women sufficient, certain,
The chambers to array in ordinance
After my lust;* and therefore would I fain *pleasure
That thine were all such manner governance:
Thou knowest eke of old all my pleasance;
Though thine array be bad, and ill besey,* *poor to look on
Do thou thy devoir at the leaste way." * do your duty in the
quickest manner*
"Not only, Lord, that I am glad," quoth she,
"To do your lust, but I desire also
You for to serve and please in my degree,
Withoute fainting, and shall evermo':
Nor ever for no weal, nor for no woe,
Ne shall the ghost* within mine hearte stent** *spirit **cease
To love you best with all my true intent."*

And with that word she gan the house to dight, *arrange
And tables for to set, and beds to make,
And *pained her* to do all that she might, *she took pains*
Praying the chambereres* for Godde's sake *chamber-maids
To hasten them, and faste sweep and shake,
And she the most serviceable of all
Hath ev'ry chamber arrayed, and his hall.*

Aboute undern gan the earl alight, *afternoon
That with him brought these noble children tway;
For which the people ran to see the sight
Of their array, so *richely besey,* *rich to behold*
And then *at erst* amonges them they say, *for the first time*
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest* *pleased
To change his wife; for it was for the best.*

For she is fairer, as they deemen all, *think
Than is Griseld', and more tender of age,
And fairer fruit between them shoulde fall,
And more pleasant, for her high lineage:
Her brother eke so fair was of visage,
That them to see the people hath caught pleasance,
Commending now the marquis' governance.*

"O stormy people, unsad* and ev'r untrue, *variable
And undiscreeet, and changing as a vane,
Delighting ev'r in rumour that is new,
For like the moon so waxe ye and wane:
Aye full of clapping, *dear enough a jane,* *worth nothing
Your doom* is false, your constance evil preveth,** *judgment **proveth
A full great fool is he that you believeth."

Thus saide the sad* folk in that city, *sedate
When that the people gazed up and down;
For they were glad, right for the novelty,
To have a newe lady of their town.
No more of this now make I mentioun,
But to Griseld' again I will me dress,
And tell her constancy and business.

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

With so glad cheer* his gwestes she receiv'd *expression
And so conningly* each in his degree, *cleverly, skilfully
That no defaulte no man apperceiv'd,
But aye they wonder'd what she mighte be
That in so poor array was for to see,
And coude* such honour and reverence; *knew, understood
And worthily they praise her prudence.

In all this meane while she not stent* *ceased
This maid, and eke her brother, to commend
With all her heart in full benign intent,
So well, that no man could her praise amend:
But at the last, when that these lordes wend* *go
To sitte down to meat, he gan to call
Griseld', as she was busy in the hall.

"Griseld'," quoth he, as it were in his play,
"How liketh thee my wife, and her beauty?"
"Right well, my Lord," quoth she, "for, in good fay,* *faith

*A fairer saw I never none than she:
I pray to God give you prosperity;
And so I hope, that he will to you send
Pleasance enough unto your lives end.*

*"One thing beseech I you, and warn also,
That ye not pricke with no tormenting
This tender maiden, as ye have done mo:* *me
For she is foster'd in her nourishing
More tenderly, and, to my supposing,
She mighte not adversity endure
As could a poore foster'd creature."*

*And when this Walter saw her patience,
Her gladde cheer, and no malice at all,
And* he so often had her done offence, *although
And she aye sad* and constant as a wall, *steadfast
Continuing ev'r her innocence o'er all,
The sturdy marquis gan his hearte dress* *prepare
To rue upon her wifely steadfastness.*

*"This is enough, Griselda mine," quoth he,
"Be now no more *aghast, nor evil paid,* *afraid, nor displeased*
I have thy faith and thy benignity
As well as ever woman was, assay'd,
In great estate and poorely array'd:
Now know I, deare wife, thy steadfastness;"
And her in arms he took, and gan to kiss.*

And she for wonder took of it no keep; *notice
She heard not what thing he to her said:
She far'd as she had start out of a sleep,
Till she out of her mazedness abraid.* *awoke
"Griseld'," quoth he, "by God that for us died,
Thou art my wife, none other I have,
Nor ever had, as God my soule save.*

*"This is thy daughter, which thou hast suppos'd
To be my wife; that other faithfully
Shall be mine heir, as I have aye dispos'd;
Thou bare them of thy body truly:
At Bologna kept I them privily:*

*Take them again, for now may'st thou not say
That thou hast lorn* none of thy children tway. *lost*

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

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

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

*"O tender, O dear, O young children mine,
Your woeful mother *weened steadfastly* *believed firmly*
That cruel houndes, or some foul vermine,
Had eaten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne father tenderly
Have *done you keep:"* and in that same stound* *caused you to
All suddenly she swapt** down to the ground. be preserved*
*hour **fell
And in her swoon so sadly* holdeth she *firmly
Her children two, when she gan them embrace,
That with great sleight* and great difficulty *art
The children from her arm they can arace,* *pull away
O! many a tear on many a piteous face
Down ran of them that stode her beside,
Unneth* aboute her might they abide. *scarcely*

Walter her gladdeth, and her sorrow slaketh:* *assuages
She riseth up abashed* from her trance, *astonished
And every wight her joy and feaste maketh,
Till she hath caught again her countenance.
Walter her doth so faithfully pleasance,
That it was dainty for to see the cheer
Betwixt them two, since they be met in fere.* *together

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

Thus had this piteous day a blissful end;
For every man and woman did his might
This day in mirth and revel to dispend,
Till on the welkin* shone the starres bright: *firmament
For more solemn in every mannes sight
This feaste was, and greater of costage,* *expense
Than was the revel of her marriage.

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

His son succeeded in his heritage,
In rest and peace, after his father's day:
And fortunate was eke in marriage,
All* he put not his wife in great assay: *although
This world is not so strong, it *is no nay,* *not to be denied*
As it hath been in olde times yore;
And hearken what this author saith, therefore;

This story is said, not for that wives should
Follow Griselda in humility,
For it were importable* though they would; *not to be borne

*But for that every wight in his degree
Shoulde be constant in adversity,
As was Griselda; therefore Petrarch writeth
This story, which with high style he inditeth.*

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

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

*But one word, lordings, hearken, ere I go:
It were full hard to finde now-a-days
In all a town Griseldas thre or two:
For, if that they were put to such assays,
The gold of them hath now so bad allays* *alloys
With brass, that though the coin be fair *at eye,* *to see*
It woulde rather break in two than ply.* *bend*

*For which here, for the Wife's love of Bath, —
Whose life and all her sex may God maintain
In high mast'ry, and elles were it scath,* — *damage, pity
I will, with lusty hearte fresh and green,
Say you a song to gladden you, I ween:
And let us stint of earnestful mattere.
Hearken my song, that saith in this mannere.*

L'Envoy of Chaucer.

*"Griseld' is dead, and eke her patience,
And both at once are buried in Itale:
For which I cry in open audience,*

*No wedded man so hardy be t' assail
His wife's patience, in trust to find
Griselda's, for in certain he shall fail.*

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

*"Follow Echo, that holdeth no silence,
But ever answereth at the countertail;* *counter-tally
Be not bedaffed* for your innocence, *befooled
But sharply take on you the governail;* *helm
Imprunte well this lesson in your mind,
For common profit, since it may avail.*

"Ye archiwives, stand aye at defence, *wives of rank
Since ye be strong as is a great camail,* *camel
Nor suffer not that men do you offence.
And slender wives, feeble in battail,
Be eager as a tiger yond in Ind;
Aye clapping as a mill, I you counsail.*

*"Nor dread them not, nor do them reverence;
For though thine husband armed be in mail,
The arrows of thy crabbed eloquence
Shall pierce his breast, and eke his aventail;
In jealousy I rede* eke thou him bind, *advise
And thou shalt make him couch* as doth a quail. *submit, shrink*

*"If thou be fair, where folk be in presence
Shew thou thy visage and thine apparail:
If thou be foul, be free of thy dispence;
To get thee friendes aye do thy travail:
Be aye of cheer as light as leaf on lind,* *linden, lime-tree
And let him care, and weep, and wring, and wail."*

THE MERCHANT'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.<[>

*"Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,
I have enough, on even and on morrow,"
Quoth the Merchant, "and so have other mo',
That wedded be; I trow* that it be so; *believe
For well I wot it fareth so by me.
I have a wife, the worste that may be,
For though the fiend to her y-coupled were,
She would him overmatch, I dare well swear.
Why should I you rehearse in special
Her high malice? she is *a shrew at all.* *thoroughly, in
There is a long and large difference everything wicked*
Betwixt Griselda's greates patience,
And of my wife the passing cruelty.
Were I unbounden, all so may I the,* *thrive
I woulde never eft* come in the snare. *again
We wedded men live in sorrow and care;
Assay it whoso will, and he shall find
That I say sooth, by Saint Thomas of Ind,
As for the more part; I say not all, —
God shielde* that it shoulde so befall. *forbid
Ah! good Sir Host, I have y-wedded be
These moneths two, and more not, pardie;
And yet I trow* that he that all his life *believe
Wifeless hath been, though that men would him rive* *wound
Into the heart, could in no mannere
Telle so much sorrow, as I you here
Could tellen of my wife's cursedness."* *wickedness*

*"Now," quoth our Host, "Merchant, so God you bless,
Since ye so much knowen of that art,
Full heartily I pray you tell us part."
"Gladly," quoth he; "but of mine owen sore,
For sorry heart, I telle may no more."*

THE TALE.<l>

*Whilom there was dwelling in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he liv'd in great prosperity;
And forty years a wifeless man was he,
And follow'd aye his bodily delight
On women, where as was his appetite,
As do these fooles that be seculeres.
And, when that he was passed sixty years,
Were it for holiness, or for dotage,
I cannot say, but such a great corage* *inclination
Hadde this knight to be a wedded man,
That day and night he did all that he can
To espy where that he might wedded be;
Praying our Lord to grante him, that he
Mighte once knowen of that blissful life
That is betwixt a husband and his wife,
And for to live under that holy bond
With which God firste man and woman bond.
"None other life," said he, "is worth a bean;
For wedlock is so easy, and so clean,
That in this world it is a paradise."
Thus said this olde knight, that was so wise.
And certainly, as sooth* as God is king, *true
To take a wife it is a glorious thing,
And namely* when a man is old and hoar, *especially
Then is a wife the fruit of his treasure;
Then should he take a young wife and a fair,
On which he might engender him an heir,
And lead his life in joy and in solace;* *mirth, delight
Whereas these bachelors singen "Alas!"
When that they find any adversity
In love, which is but childish vanity.
And truely it sits* well to be so, *becomes, befits
That bachelors have often pain and woe:
On brittle ground they build, and brittleness
They finde when they *weene sickness:* *think that there
They live but as a bird or as a beast, is security*
In liberty, and under no arrest;* *check, control
Whereas a wedded man in his estate
Liveth a life blissful and ordinate,*

Under the yoke of marriage y-bound;
Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound.
For who can be so buxom* as a wife? *obedient
Who is so true, and eke so attentive
To keep* him, sick and whole, as is his make? ** *care for **mate
For weal or woe she will him not forsake:
She is not weary him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrid until he sterue.* *die
And yet some clerkes say it is not so;
Of which he, Theophrast, is one of tho:* *those
What force though Theophrast list for to lie? *what matter*

"Take no wife," quoth he, "for husbandry,* *thrift
As for to spare in household thy dispencc;
A true servant doth more diligence
Thy good to keep, than doth thine owen wife,
For she will claim a half part all her life.
And if that thou be sick, so God me save,
Thy very friendes, or a true knave,* *servant
Will keep thee bet than she, that *waiteth aye *ahways waits to
After thy good,* and hath done many a day." inherit your property*
This sentence, and a hundred times worse,
Writeth this man, there God his bones curse.
But take no keep* of all such vanity, *notice
Defy* Theophrast, and hearken to me. *distrust

A wife is Godde's gifte verily;
All other manner giftes hardily,* *truly
As handes, rentes, pasture, or commune,* *common land
Or mebles,* all be giftes of fortune, *furniture
That passen as a shadow on the wall:
But dread* thou not, if plainly speak I shall, *doubt
A wife will last, and in thine house endure,
Well longer than thee list, paraventure.* *perhaps
Marriage is a full great sacrament;
He which that hath no wife, I hold him shent;* *ruined
He liveth helpless, and all desolate
(I speak of folk *in secular estate*): *who are not
And hearken why, I say not this for nought, — of the clergy*
That woman is for manne's help y-wrought.
The highe God, when he had Adam maked,
And saw him all alone belly naked,
God of his greate goodness saide then,

*Let us now make a help unto this man
Like to himself; and then he made him Eve.
Here may ye see, and hereby may ye prove,* *prove
That a wife is man's help and his comfort,
His paradise terrestre and his disport.
So buxom* and so virtuous is she, *obedient, complying
They muste needes live in unity;
One flesh they be, and one blood, as I guess,
With but one heart in weal and in distress.
A wife? Ah! Saint Mary, ben'dicite,
How might a man have any adversity
That hath a wife? certes I cannot say
The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway,
There may no tongue it tell, or hearte think.
If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;* *labour
She keeps his good, and wasteth never a deal;* *whit
All that her husband list, her liketh* well; *pleaseth
She saith not ones Nay, when he saith Yea;
"Do this," saith he; "All ready, Sir," saith she.
O blissful order, wedlock precious!
Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
And so commended and approved eke,
That every man that holds him worth a leek
Upon his bare knees ought all his life
To thank his God, that him hath sent a wife;
Or elles pray to God him for to send
A wife, to last unto his life's end.
For then his life is set in sickness,* *security
He may not be deceived, as I guess,
So that he work after his wife's rede;* *counsel
Then may he boldly bear up his head,
They be so true, and therewithal so wise.
For which, if thou wilt worken as the wise,
Do alway so as women will thee rede. * *counsel
Lo how that Jacob, as these clerkes read,
By good counsel of his mother Rebecc'
Bounde the kiddes skin about his neck;
For which his father's benison* he wan. *benediction
Lo Judith, as the story telle can,
By good counsel she Godde's people kept,
And slew him, Holofernes, while he slept.
Lo Abigail, by good counsel, how she*

Saved her husband Nabal, when that he
 Should have been slain. And lo, Esther also
 By counsel good deliver'd out of woe
 The people of God, and made him, Mardoche,
 Of Assuere enhanced* for to be. *advanced in dignity
 There is nothing *in gree superlative* *of higher esteem*
 (As saith Senec) above a humble wife.
 Suffer thy wife's tongue, as Cato bit;* *bid
 She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it,
 And yet she will obey of courtesy.
 A wife is keeper of thine husbandry:
 Well may the sicke man bewail and weep,
 There as there is no wife the house to keep.
 I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt wirch,* *work
 Love well thy wife, as Christ loveth his church:
 Thou lov'st thyself, if thou lovest thy wife.
 No man hateth his flesh, but in his life
 He fost'reth it; and therefore bid I thee
 Cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never the.* *thrive
 Husband and wife, what *so men jape or play,* *although men joke
 Of worldly folk holde the sicker* way; and jeer* *certain
 They be so knit there may no harm betide,
 And namely* upon the wife's side. *especially

For which this January, of whom I told,
 Consider'd hath within his dayes old,
 The lusty life, the virtuous quiet,
 That is in marriage honey-sweet.
 And for his friends upon a day he sent
 To tell them the effect of his intent.
 With face sad,* his tale he hath them told: *grave, earnest
 He saide, "Friendes, I am hoar and old,
 And almost (God wot) on my pitte's* brink, *grave's
 Upon my soule somewhat must I think.
 I have my body foolishly dispended,
 Blessed be God that it shall be amended;
 For I will be certain a wedded man,
 And that anon in all the haste I can,
 Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age;
 I pray you shape* for my marriage *arrange, contrive
 All suddenly, for I will not abide:
 And I will fond* to espy, on my side, *try
 To whom I may be wedded hastily.

But forasmuch as ye be more than,
Ye shalle rather* such a thing espy
Than I, and where me best were to ally.
But one thing warn I you, my friendes dear,
I will none old wife have in no mannere:
She shall not passe sixteen year certain.
Old fish and younge flesh would I have fain.
Better," quoth he, "a pike than a pickerele,* *young pike
And better than old beef is tender veal.
I will no woman thirty year of age,
It is but beanestraw and great forage.
And eke these olde widows (God it wot)
They conne* so much craft on Wade's boat, *know
So muche brooke harm when that them lest, *they can do so much
That with them should I never live in rest. harm when they wish*
For sundry schooles make subtle clerkes;
Woman of many schooles half a clerk is.
But certainly a young thing men may guy,* *guide
Right as men may warm wax with handes ply.* *bend,mould
Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,
I will none old wife have, right for this cause.
For if so were I hadde such mischance,
That I in her could have no pleasance,
Then should I lead my life in avoutrie,* *adultery
And go straight to the devil when I die.
Nor children should I none upon her gotten:
Yet *were me lever* houndes had me eaten *I would rather*
Than that mine heritage shoulde fall
In strange hands: and this I tell you all.
I doubt not I know the cause why
Men shoulde wed: and farthermore know I
There speaketh many a man of marriage
That knows no more of it than doth my page,
For what causes a man should take a wife.
If he ne may not live chaste his life,
Take him a wife with great devotion,
Because of lawful procreation
Of children, to th' honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they shoulde lechery eschew,
And yield their debte when that it is due:
Or for that each of them should help the other

In mischief, as a sister shall the brother, *trouble
And live in chastity full holily.
But, Sires, by your leave, that am not I,
For, God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,* *boast
I feel my limbes stark* and suffisant *strong
To do all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myselſe best what I may do.
Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossoms ere the fruit y-waxen* be; *grown
The blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead;
I feel me now here hoar but on my head.
Mine heart and all my limbes are as green
As laurel through the year is for to seen.* *see
And, since that ye have heard all mine intent,
I pray you to my will ye would assent."*

*Diverse men diversely him told
Of marriage many examples old;
Some blamed it, some praised it, certain;
But at the haste, shortly for to sayn
(As all day* falleth altercation *constantly, every day
Betwixte friends in disputation),
There fell a strife betwixt his brethren two,
Of which that one was called Placebo,
Justinus soothly called was that other.*

*Placebo said; "O January, brother,
Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
Counsel to ask of any that is here:
But that ye be so full of sapience,
That you not liketh, for your high prudence,
To waive* from the word of Solomon. *depart, deviate
This word said he unto us every one;
Work alle thing by counsel, — thus said he, —
And thenne shalt thou not repente thee
But though that Solomon spake such a word,
Mine owen deare brother and my lord,
So wisly* God my soule bring at rest, *surely
I hold your owen counsel is the best.
For, brother mine, take of me this motive; * *advice, encouragement
I have now been a court-man all my life,
And, God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have standen in full great degree*

Aboute lordes of full high estate;
Yet had I ne'er with none of them debate;
I never them contraried truely.
I know well that my lord can* more than I; *knows
What that he saith I hold it firm and stable,
I say the same, or else a thing semblable.
A full great fool is any counsellor
That serveth any lord of high honour
That dare presume, or ones thinke it;
That his counsel should pass his lorde's wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye have yourselfe shewed here to day
So high sentence,* so holily and well *judgment, sentiment
That I consent, and confirm *every deal* *in every point*
Your wordes all, and your opinioun
By God, there is no man in all this town
Nor in Itale, could better have y-said.
Christ holds him of this counsel well apaid.* *satisfied
And truely it is a high courage
Of any man that stopen* is in age, *advanced
To take a young wife, by my father's kin;
Your hearte hangeth on a jolly pin.
Do now in this matter right as you lest,
For finally I hold it for the best."

Justinus, that aye stille sat and heard,
Right in this wise to Placebo answer'd.
"Now, brother mine, be patient I pray,
Since ye have said, and hearken what I say.
Senec, among his other wordes wise,
Saith, that a man ought him right well advise,* *consider
To whom he gives his hand or his chattel.
And since I ought advise me right well
To whom I give my good away from me,
Well more I ought advise me, pardie,
To whom I give my body: for alway
I warn you well it is no childe's play
To take a wife without advisement.
Men must inquire (this is mine assent)
Whe'er she be wise, or sober, or dronkelew,* *given to drink
Or proud, or any other ways a shrew,
A chidester,* or a waster of thy good, *a scold
Or rich or poor; or else a man is wood.* *mad

*Albeit so, that no man finde shall
 None in this world, that *trotteth whole in all,* *is sound in
 No man, nor beast, such as men can devise,* every point* *describe
 But natheless it ought enough suffice
 With any wife, if so were that she had
 More goode thewes* than her vices bad: * qualities
 And all this asketh leisure to inquire.
 For, God it wot, I have wept many a tear
 Full privily, since I have had a wife.
 Praise whoso will a wedded manne's life,
 Certes, I find in it but cost and care,
 And observances of all blisses bare.
 And yet, God wot, my neighebours about,
 And namely* of women many a rout,** *especially **company
 Say that I have the moste steadfast wife,
 And eke the meekest one, that beareth life.
 But I know best where wringeth* me my shoe, *pinches
 Ye may for me right as you like do
 Advise you, ye be a man of age,
 How that ye enter into marriage;
 And namely* with a young wife and a fair, * especially
 By him that made water, fire, earth, air,
 The youngest man that is in all this rout* *company
 Is busy enough to bringen it about
 To have his wife alone, truste me:
 Ye shall not please her fully yeares three,
 This is to say, to do her full pleasance.
 A wife asketh full many an observance.
 I pray you that ye be not *evil apaid.*" *displeased**

*"Well," quoth this January, "and hast thou said?
 Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbs,
 I counte not a pannier full of herbs
 Of schoole termes; wiser men than thou,
 As thou hast heard, assented here right now
 To my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?"
 "I say it is a cursed* man," quoth he, *ill-natured, wicked
 "That letteth* matrimony, sickerly." *hindereth
 And with that word they rise up suddenly,
 And be assented fully, that he should
 Be wedded when him list, and where he would.*

High fantasy and curious business
From day to day gan in the soul impress* *imprint themselves
Of January about his marriage
Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage
There passed through his heart night by night.
As whoso took a mirror polish'd bright,
And set it in a common market-place,
Then should he see many a figure pace
By his mirror; and in the same wise
Gan January in his thought devise
Of maidens, which that dwelte him beside:
He wiste not where that he might abide.* *stay, fix his choice
For if that one had beauty in her face,
Another stood so in the people's grace
For her sadness* and her benignity, *sedateness
That of the people greatest voice had she:
And some were rich and had a badde name.
But natheless, betwixt earnest and game,
He at the last appointed him on one,
And let all others from his heart gon,
And chose her of his own authority;
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And when that he was into bed y-brought,
He pourtray'd in his heart and in his thought
Her freshe beauty, and her age tender,
Her middle small, her armes long and slender,
Her wise governance, her gentleness,
Her womanly bearing, and her sadness.* *sedateness
And when that he *on her was condescended,* *had selected her*
He thought his choice might not be amended;
For when that he himself concluded had,
He thought each other manne's wit so bad,
That impossible it were to reply
Against his choice; this was his fantasy.
His friendes sent he to, at his instance,
And prayed them to do him that pleasance,
That hastily they would unto him come;
He would abridge their labour all and some:
Needed no more for them to go nor ride,
He was appointed where he would abide. *he had definitively
Placebo came, and eke his friendes soon, made his choice*
And *alderfirst he bade them all a boon,* *first of all he asked

That none of them no arguments would make a favour of them*
 Against the purpose that he had y-take:
 Which purpose was pleasant to God, said he,
 And very ground of his prosperity.
 He said, there was a maiden in the town,
 Which that of beauty hadde great renown;
 All* were it so she were of small degree, *although
 Sufficed him her youth and her beauty;
 Which maid, he said, he would have to his wife,
 To lead in ease and holiness his life;
 And thanked God, that he might have her all,
 That no wight with his blisse parte* shall; *have a share
 And prayed them to labour in this need,
 And shape that he faile not to speed:
 For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.
 "Then is," quoth he, "nothing may me displease,
 Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
 The which I will rehearse in your presence.
 I have," quoth he, "heard said, full yore* ago, *long
 There may no man have perfect blisses two,
 This is to say, on earth and eke in heaven.
 For though he keep him from the sinne's seven,
 And eke from every branch of thilke tree,
 Yet is there so perfect felicity,
 And so great *ease and lust,* in marriage, *comfort and pleasure*
 That ev'r I am aghast,* now in mine age *ashamed, afraid
 That I shall had now so merry a life,
 So delicate, withoute woe or strife,
 That I shall have mine heav'n on earth here.
 For since that very heav'n is bought so dear,
 With tribulation and great penance,
 How should I then, living in such pleasance
 As alle wedded men do with their wives,
 Come to the bliss where Christ *etern on live is?* *lives eternally*
 This is my dread;* and ye, my brethren tway, *doubt
 Assoile* me this question, I you pray." *resolve, answer

Justinus, which that hated his folly,
 Answer'd anon right in his japery,* *mockery, jesting way
 And, for he would his longe tale abridge,
 He woulde no authority* allege, *written texts
 But saide; "Sir, so there be none obstacle
 Other than this, God of his high miracle,

And of his mercy, may so for you wirch, *work
 That, ere ye have your rights of holy church,
 Ye may repent of wedded manne's life,
 In which ye say there is no woe nor strife:
 And elles God forbid, *but if* he sent *unless
 A wedded man his grace him to repent
 Well often, rather than a single man.
 And therefore, Sir, *the beste rede I can,* *this is the best counsel
 Despair you not, but have in your memory, that I know*
 Paraventure she may be your purgatory;
 She may be Godde's means, and Godde's whip;
 And then your soul shall up to heaven skip
 Swifter than doth an arrow from a bow.
 I hope to God hereafter ye shall know
 That there is none so great felicity
 In marriage, nor ever more shall be,
 That you shall let* of your salvation; *hinder
 So that ye use, as skill is and reason,
 The lustes* of your wife attemperly,** *pleasures **moderately
 And that ye please her not too amorously,
 And that ye keep you eke from other sin.
 My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.
 Be not aghast* hereof, my brother dear, *aharmed, afraid
 But let us waden out of this mattere,
 The Wife of Bath, if ye have understand,
 Of marriage, which ye have now in hand,
 Declared hath full well in little space;
 Fare ye now well, God have you in his grace."*

*And with this word this Justin' and his brother
 Have ta'en their leave, and each of them of other.
 And when they saw that it must needes be,
 They wroughte so, by sleight and wise treaty,
 That she, this maiden, which that *Maius hight,* *was named May*
 As hastily as ever that she might,
 Shall wedded be unto this January.
 I trow it were too longe you to tarry,
 If I told you of every *script and band* *written bond*
 By which she was feoffed in his hand;
 Or for to reckon of her rich array
 But finally y-comen is the day
 That to the churche bothe be they went,
 For to receive the holy sacrament,*

*Forth came the priest, with stole about his neck,
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebecc'
In wisdom and in truth of marriage;
And said his orisons, as is usage,
And crouched* them, and prayed God should them bless, *crossed
And made all sicker* enough with holiness. *certain*

*Thus be they wedded with solemnity;
And at the feaste sat both he and she,
With other worthy folk, upon the daïs.
All full of joy and bliss is the palace,
And full of instruments, and of vitaille, * *victuals, food
The moste dainteous* of all Itale. *delicate
Before them stood such instruments of soun',
That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphioun,
Ne made never such a melody.
At every course came in loud minstrelsy,
That never Joab trumped for to hear,
Nor he, Theodomas, yet half so clear
At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.
Bacchus the wine them skinked* all about. *poured
And Venus laughed upon every wight
(For January was become her knight,
And woulde both assaye his courage
In liberty, and eke in marriage),
And with her firebrand in her hand about
Danced before the bride and all the rout.
And certainly I dare right well say this,
Hymeneus, that god of wedding is,
Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.
Hold thou thy peace, thou poet Marcian,
That writest us that ilke* wedding merry *same
Of her Philology and him Mercury,
And of the songes that the Muses sung;
Too small is both thy pen, and eke thy tongue
For to describen of this marriage.
When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,
There is such mirth that it may not be writ;
Assay it youreself, then may ye wit* *know
If that I lie or no in this matter.*

Maius, that sat with so benign a cheer, *countenance
Her to behold it seemed faerie;*

Queen Esther never look'd with such an eye
On Assuere, so meek a look had she;
I may you not devise all her beauty;
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
That she was like the bright morrow of May
Full filled of all beauty and pleasance.
This January is ravish'd in a trance,
At every time he looked in her face;
But in his heart he gan her to menace,
That he that night in armes would her strain
Harder than ever Paris did Helene.
But natheless yet had he great pity
That thilke night offende her must he,
And thought, "Alas, O tender creature,
Now would God ye mighte well endure
All my courage, it is so sharp and keen;
I am aghast* ye shall it not sustene. *afraid
But God forbid that I did all my might.
Now would God that it were waxen night,
And that the night would lasten evermo'.
I would that all this people were y-go."* *gone away
And finally he did all his labour,
As he best mighte, saving his honour,
To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.

The time came that reason was to rise;
And after that men dance, and drinke fast,
And spices all about the house they cast,
And full of joy and bliss is every man,
All but a squire, that highte Damian,
Who carv'd before the knight full many a day;
He was so ravish'd on his lady May,
That for the very pain he was nigh wood;* *mad
Almost he swelt* and swooned where he stood, *fainted
So sore had Venus hurt him with her brand,
As that she bare it dancing in her hand.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this time speak I;
But there I let him weep enough and plain,* *bewail
Till freshe May will rue upon his pain.
O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!
O foe familiar,* that his service bedeth!** *domestic **offers
O servant traitor, O false homely hewe,* *servant

*Like to the adder in bosom shy untrue,
God shield us alle from your acquaintance!
O January, drunken in pleasance
Of marriage, see how thy Damian,
Thine owen squier and thy boren* man, *born
Intendeth for to do thee villainy:* *dishonour, outrage
God grante thee thine *homehy foe* t' espy. *enemy in the household*
For in this world is no worse pestilence
Than homely foe, all day in thy presence.*

Performed hath the sun his arc diurn, *daily
No longer may the body of him sojourn
On the horizon, in that latitude:
Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,
Gan overspread the hemisphere about:
For which departed is this *lusty rout* *pleasant company*
From January, with thank on every side.
Home to their houses lustily they ride,
Where as they do their thinges as them lest,
And when they see their time they go to rest.
Soon after that this hasty* January *eager
Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry.
He dranke hippocras, clarre, and vernage
Of spices hot, to increase his courage;
And many a lectuary* had he full fine, *potion
Such as the cursed monk Dan Constantine
Hath written in his book *de Coitu;* *of sexual intercourse*
To eat them all he would nothing eschew:
And to his privy friendes thus said he:
"For Godde's love, as soon as it may be,
Let *voiden all* this house in courteous wise." *everyone leave*
And they have done right as he will devise.
Men drinken, and the travers* draw anon; *curtains
The bride is brought to bed as still as stone;
And when the bed was with the priest y-bless'd,
Out of the chamber every wight him dress'd,
And January hath fast in arms y-take
His freshe May, his paradise, his make.* *mate
He lulled her, he kissed her full oft;
With thicke bristles of his beard unsoft,
Like to the skin of houndfish,* sharp as brere** *dogfish **briar
(For he was shav'n all new in his mannere),
He rubbed her upon her tender face,*

*And saide thus; "Alas! I must trespase
To you, my spouse, and you greatly offend,
Ere time come that I will down descend.
But natheless consider this," quoth he,
"There is no workman, whatsoe'er he be,
That may both worke well and hastily:
This will be done at leisure perfectly.
It is *no force* how longe that we play; *no matter*
In true wedlock coupled be we tway;
And blessed be the yoke that we be in,
For in our actes may there be no sin.
A man may do no sinne with his wife,
Nor hurt himselfe with his owen knife;
For we have leave to play us by the law."*

*Thus labour'd he, till that the day gan daw,
And then he took a sop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bedde then sat he.
And after that he sang full loud and clear,
And kiss'd his wife, and made wanton cheer.
He was all coltish, full of ragerie * *wantonness
And full of jargon as a flecked pie.
The slacke skin about his necke shaken,
While that he sang, so chanted he and craked.* *quavered
But God wot what that May thought in her heart,
When she him saw up sitting in his shirt
In his night-cap, and with his necke lean:
She praised not his playing worth a bean.
Then said he thus; "My reste will I take
Now day is come, I may no longer wake;
And down he laid his head and slept till prime.
And afterward, when that he saw his time,
Up rose January, but freshe May
Helde her chamber till the fourthe day,
As usage is of wives for the best.
For every labour some time must have rest,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to say, no life of creature,
Be it of fish, or bird, or beast, or man.*

*Now will I speak of woeful Damian,
That languisheth for love, as ye shall hear;
Therefore I speak to him in this manneare.*

*I say. "O silly Damian, alas!
Answer to this demand, as in this case,
How shalt thou to thy lady, freshe May,
Telle thy woe? She will alway say nay;
Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe bewray; * *betray
God be thine help, I can no better say.
This sicke Damian in Venus' fire
So burned that he died for desire;
For which he put his life *in aventure,* *at risk*
No longer might he in this wise endure;
But privily a penner* gan he borrow, *writing-case
And in a letter wrote he all his sorrow,
In manner of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freshe lady May.
And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.*

The moone, that at noon was thilke day *that
That January had wedded freshe May,
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer glided;
So long had Maius in her chamber abided,
As custom is unto these nobles all.
A bride shall not eaten in the ball
Till dayes four, or three days at the least,
Y-passed be; then let her go to feast.
The fourthe day complete from noon to noon,
When that the highe masse was y-done,
In halle sat this January, and May,
As fresh as is the brighte summer's day.
And so befell, how that this goode man
Remember'd him upon this Damian.
And saide; "Saint Mary, how may this be,
That Damian attendeth not to me?
Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?"
His squiers, which that stoode there beside,
Excused him, because of his sickness,
Which letted* him to do his business: *hindered
None other cause mighte make him tarry.
"That me forthinketh,"* quoth this January *grieves, causes
"He is a gentle squier, by my truth; uneasiness
If that he died, it were great harm and ruth.
He is as wise, as discreet, and secre',"* *secret, trusty
As any man I know of his degree,*

*And thereto manly and eke serviceble,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after meat, as soon as ever I may
I will myself visit him, and eke May,
To do him all the comfort that I can."
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounty and his gentleness
He woulde so comforten in sickness
His squier, for it was a gentle deed.*

*"Dame," quoth this January, "take good heed,
At after meat, ye with your women all
(When that ye be in chamb'r out of this hall),
That all ye go to see this Damian:
Do him disport, he is a gentle man;
And telle him that I will him visite,
Have I nothing but rested me a lite: *when only I have rested
And speed you faste, for I will abide me a little*
Till that ye sleepe faste by my side."
And with that word he gan unto him call
A squier, that was marshal of his hall,
And told him certain thinges that he wo'ld.
This freshe May hath straight her way y-hold,
With all her women, unto Damian.
Down by his beddes side sat she than,* *then
Comforting him as goodly as she may.
This Damian, when that his time he say,* *saw
In secret wise his purse, and eke his bill,
In which that he y-written had his will,
Hath put into her hand withoute more,
Save that he sighed wondrous deep and sore,
And softly to her right thus said he:
"Mercy, and that ye not discover me:
For I am dead if that this thing be kid."* *discovered
The purse hath she in her bosom hid,
And went her way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January come is she,
That on his bedde's side sat full soft.
He took her, and he kissed her full oft,
And laid him down to sleep, and that anon.
She feigned her as that she muste gon
There as ye know that every wight must need;
And when she of this bill had taken heed,*

She rent it all to cloutes at the last, *fragments
And in the privy softly it cast.
Who studieth* now but faire freshe May? *is thoughtful
Adown by olde January she lay,
That slepte, till the cough had him awaked:
Anon he pray'd her strippe her all naked,
He would of her, he said, have some pleasance;
And said her clothes did him incumbrance.
And she obey'd him, be her *lefe or loth.* *willing or unwilling*
But, lest that precious* folk be with me wroth, *over-nice
How that he wrought I dare not to you tell,
Or whether she thought it paradise or hell;
But there I let them worken in their wise
Till evensong ring, and they must arise.*

Were it by destiny, or aventure, * chance
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or constellation, that in such estate
The heaven stood at that time fortunate
As for to put a bill of Venus' works
(For alle thing hath time, as say these clerks),
To any woman for to get her love,
I cannot say; but greate God above,
That knoweth that none act is causeless,
He deem of all, for I will hold my peace. *let him judge*
But sooth is this, how that this freshe May
Hath taken such impression that day
Of pity on this sicke Damian,
That from her hearte she not drive can
The remembrance for *to do him ease.* *to satisfy
"Certain," thought she, "whom that this thing displease his desire*
I recke not, for here I him assure,
To love him best of any creature,
Though he no more haddee than his shirt."
Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart.
Here may ye see, how excellent franchise* *generosity
In women is when they them *narrow advise.* *closely consider*
Some tyrant is, — as there be many a one, —
That hath a heart as hard as any stone,
Which would have let him sterven* in the place *die
Well rather than have granted him her grace;
And then rejoicen in her cruel pride.
And reckon not to be a homicide.*

This gentle May, full filled of pity,
 Right of her hand a letter maked she,
 In which she granted him her very grace;
 There lacked nought, but only day and place,
 Where that she might unto his lust suffice:
 For it shall be right as he will devise.
 And when she saw her time upon a day
 To visit this Damian went this May,
 And subtilly this letter down she thrust
 Under his pillow, read it if him lust.* *pleased
 She took him by the hand, and hard him twist
 So secretly, that no wight of it wist,
 And bade him be all whole; and forth she went
 To January, when he for her sent.
 Up rose Damian the nexte morrow,
 All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.
 He combed him, he proined him and picked,
 He did all that unto his lady liked;
 And eke to January he went as low
 As ever did a dogge for the bow.
 He is so pleasant unto every man
 (For craft is all, whoso that do it can),
 Every wight is fain to speak him good;
 And fully in his lady's grace he stood.
 Thus leave I Damian about his need,
 And in my tale forth I will proceed.

Some clerke* holde that felicity *writers, scholars
 Stands in delight; and therefore certain he,
 This noble January, with all his might
 In honest wise as longeth* to a knight, *belongeth
 Shope* him to live full deliciously: *prepared, arranged
 His housing, his array, as honestly* *honourably, suitably
 To his degree was maked as a king's.
 Amonges other of his honest things
 He had a garden walled all with stone;
 So fair a garden wot I nowhere none.
 For out of doubt I verily suppose
 That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose
 Could not of it the beauty well devise;* *describe
 Nor Priapus mighte not well suffice,
 Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
 The beauty of the garden, and the well* *fountain

*That stood under a laurel always green.
Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen
Proserpina, and all their faerie,
Disported them and made melody
About that well, and danced, as men told.
This noble knight, this January old
Such dainty* had in it to walk and play, *pleasure
That he would suffer no wight to bear the key,
Save he himself, for of the small wicket
He bare always of silver a cliket,* *key
With which, when that him list, he it unshet.* *opened
And when that he would pay his wife's debt,
In summer season, thither would he go,
And May his wife, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not done in bed,
He in the garden them perform'd and sped.
And in this wise many a merry day
Lived this January and fresh May,
But worldly joy may not always endure
To January, nor to no creatucere.*

*O sudden hap! O thou fortune unstable!
Like to the scorpion so deceivable,* *deceitful
That fhatt'rest with thy head when thou wilt sting;
Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming.
O brittle joy! O sweete poison quaint!* *strange
O monster, that so subtilly canst paint
Thy giftes, under hue of steadfastness,
That thou deceivest bothe *more and less!* *great and small*
Why hast thou January thus deceiv'd,
That haddest him for thy full friend receiv'd?
And now thou hast bereft him both his eyen,
For sorrow of which desireth he to dien.
Alas! this noble January free,
Amid his lust* and his prosperity *pleasure
Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.
He weeped and he wailed piteously;
And therewithal the fire of jealousy
(Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)
So burnt his heart, that he would faine,
That some man bothe him and her had slain;
For neither after his death, nor in his life,
Ne would he that she were no love nor wife,*

But ever live as widow in clothes black,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.* *mate
But at the last, after a month or tway,
His sorrow gan assuage, soothe to say.
For, when he wist it might none other be,
He patiently took his adversity:
Save out of doubt he may not foregon
That he was jealous evermore-in-one:* *continually
Which jealousy was so outrageous,
That neither in hall, nor in none other house,
Nor in none other place never the mo'
He would suffer her to ride or go,
But if that he had hand on her alway. *unless
For which full often wepte freshe May,
That loved Damian so burningly
That she must either dien suddenly,
Or elles she must have him as her lest:* *pleased
She waited* when her hearte would brest.** *expected **burst
Upon that other side Damian
Becomen is the sorrowfullest man
That ever was; for neither night nor day
He mighte speak a word to freshe May,
As to his purpose, of no such mattere,
But if that January must it hear, *unless*
That had a hand upon her evermo'.
But natheless, by writing to and fro,
And privy signes, wist he what she meant,
And she knew eke the fine* of his intent. *end, aim

O January, what might it thee avail,
Though thou might see as far as shippes sail?
For as good is it blind deceiv'd to be,
As be deceived when a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had a hundred eyen,
For all that ever he could pore or pryen,
Yet was he blent;* and, God wot, so be mo', *deceived
That *weene wisly* that it be not so: *think confidently*
Pass over is an ease, I say no more.
This freshe May, of which I spake yore,* *previously
In warm wax hath *imprinted the cliket* *taken an impression
That January bare of the small wicket of the key*
By which into his garden oft he went;
And Damian, that knew all her intent,

*The cliket counterfeited privily;
There is no more to say, but hastily
Some wonder by this cliket shall betide,
Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide.*

*O noble Ovid, sooth say'st thou, God wot,
What sleight is it, if love be long and hot,
That he'll not find it out in some mannere?
By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lear;* *learn
Though they were kept full long and strait o'er all,
They be accorded,* rowning** through a wall, *agreed **whispering
Where no wight could have found out such a sleight.
But now to purpose; ere that dayes eight
Were passed of the month of July, fill* *it befell
That January caught so great a will,
Through egging* of his wife, him for to play *inciting
In his garden, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morning to this May said he:
"Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free;
The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet;
The winter is gone, with all his raines weet.* *wet
Come forth now with thine *eyen columbine* *eyes like the doves*
Well fairer be thy breasts than any wine.
The garden is enclosed all about;
Come forth, my white spouse; for, out of doubt,
Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife:
No spot in thee was e'er in all thy life.
Come forth, and let us taken our disport;
I choose thee for my wife and my comfort."
Such olde lewed* wordes used he. *foolish, ignorant
On Damian a signe made she,
That he should go before with his cliket.
This Damian then hath opened the wicket,
And in he start, and that in such mannere
That no wight might him either see or hear;
And still he sat under a bush. Anon
This January, as blind as is a stone,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',
Into this freshe garden is y-go,
And clapped to the wicket suddenly.
"Now, wife," quoth he, "here is but thou and I;
Thou art the creature that I beste love:
For, by that Lord that sits in heav'n above,*

Lever I had to dien on a knife, *rather
 Than thee offende, deare true wife.
 For Godde's sake, think how I thee chees,* *chose
 Not for no covetise* doubtless, * covetousness
 But only for the love I had to thee.
 And though that I be old, and may not see,
 Be to me true, and I will tell you why.
 Certes three thinges shall ye win thereby:
 First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour,
 And all mine heritage, town and tow'r.
 I give it you, make charters as you lest;
 This shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest,
 So wisly* God my soule bring to bliss! *surely
 I pray you, on this covenant me kiss.
 And though that I be jealous, wite* me not; *blame
 Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,
 That when that I consider your beauty,
 And therewithal *th'unlikely eld* of me, *dissimilar age*
 I may not, certes, though I shoulde die,
 Forbear to be out of your company,
 For very love; this is withoute doubt:
 Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about."*

*This freshe May, when she these wordes heard,
 Benignely to January answer'd;
 But first and forward she began to weep:
 "I have," quoth she, "a soule for to keep
 As well as ye, and also mine honour,
 And of my wifehood thilke* tender flow'r *that same
 Which that I have assured in your hond,
 When that the priest to you my body bond:
 Wherefore I will answer in this mannere,
 With leave of you mine owen lord so dear.
 I pray to God, that never dawn the day
 That I *no sterve,* as foul as woman may, *do not die*
 If e'er I do unto my kin that shame,
 Or elles I impaire so my name,
 That I bee false; and if I do that lack,
 Do strippe me, and put me in a sack,
 And in the nexte river do me drench:* *drown
 I am a gentle woman, and no wench.
 Why speak ye thus? but men be e'er untrue,
 And women have reproof of you aye new.*

*Ye know none other dalliance, I believe,
But speak to us of untrust and reprove.* *reproof*

*And with that word she saw where Damian
Sat in the bush, and coughe she began;
And with her finger signe made she,
That Damian should climb upon a tree
That charged was with fruit; and up he went:
For verily he knew all her intent,
And every signe that she coulde make,
Better than January her own make.* *mate
For in a letter she had told him all
Of this matter, how that he worke shall.
And thus I leave him sitting in the perry,* *pear-tree
And January and May roaming full merry.*

*Bright was the day, and blue the firmament;
Phoebus of gold his streames down had sent
To gladden every flow'r with his warmness;
He was that time in Geminis, I guess,
But little from his declination
Of Cancer, Jove's exaltation.
And so befell, in that bright morning-tide,
That in the garden, on the farther side,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a lady in his company
Following his wife, the queen Proserpina, —
Which that he ravished out of Ethna,
While that she gather'd flowers in the mead
(In Claudian ye may the story read,
How in his grisly chariot he her fet*), — *fetched
This king of Faerie adown him set
Upon a bank of turfes fresh and green,
And right anon thus said he to his queen.
"My wife," quoth he, "there may no wight say nay, —
Experience so proves it every day, —
The treason which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notable of your untruth and brittleness * *inconstancy
O Solomon, richest of all richness,
Full fill'd of sapience and worldly glory,
Full worthy be thy wordes of memory
To every wight that wit and reason can. * *knows*

Thus praised he yet the bounte of man: *goodness
'Among a thousand men yet found I one,
But of all women found I never none.'
Thus said this king, that knew your wickedness;
And Jesus, Filius Sirach, as I guess,
He spake of you but seldom reverence.
A wilde fire and corrupt pestilence
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night!
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shall make him cuckold.
Lo, where he sits, the lechour, in the tree.
Now will I granten, of my majesty,
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he shall have again his eyen sight,
When that his wife will do him villainy;
Then shall be knowen all her harlotry,
Both in reproof of her and other mo'."
"Yea, Sir," quoth Proserpine," and will ye so?
Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear
That I shall give her suffisant answer,
And alle women after, for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt y-take,
With face bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that woulde them accuse.
For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.*

All had ye seen a thing with both your eyen, *although
Yet shall *we visage it* so hardily, *confront it*
And weep, and swear, and chide subtilly,
That ye shall be as lewed* as be geese. *ignorant, confounded
What recketh me of your authorities?
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
Found of us women fooles many one:
But though that he founde no good woman,
Yet there hath found many another man
Women full good, and true, and virtuous;
Witness on them that dwelt in Christes house;
With martyrdom they proved their constance.
The Roman gestes make remembrance
Of many a very true wife also.
But, Sire, be not wroth, albeit so,
Though that he said he found no good woman,*

I pray you take the sentence of the man: *opinion, real meaning*
*He meant thus, that in *sovereign bounte* *perfect goodness*
*Is none but God, no, neither *he nor she.* *man nor woman**
Hey, for the very God that is but one,
Why make ye so much of Solomon?
What though he made a temple, Godde's house?
What though he were rich and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of false goddes;
How might he do a thing that more forbode is? *forbidden*
Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplaster, *plaster over, "whitewash"*
He was a lechour, and an idolaster, *idohater*
And in his eld he very God forsook. *the true*
And if that God had not (as saith the book)
Spared him for his father's sake, he should
Have lost his regne rather** than he would. *kingdom **sooner*
*I *sette not of* all the villainy *value not**
That he of women wrote, a butterfly.
I am a woman, needes must I speak,
Or elles swell until mine hearte break.
For since he said that we be jangleresses, *chatterers*
As ever may I brooke whole my tresses, *preserve*
I shall not spare for no courtesy
To speak him harm, that said us villainy."
"Dame," quoth this Pluto, "be no longer wroth;
I give it up: but, since I swore mine oath
That I would grant to him his sight again,
My word shall stand, that warn I you certain:
I am a king; it sits me not to lie." *becomes, befits*
"And I," quoth she, "am queen of Faerie.
Her answer she shall have, I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forsooth, I will no longer you contrary."

Now let us turn again to January,
That in the garden with his faire May
Singeth well merrier than the popinjay: *parrot*
"You love I best, and shall, and other none."
So long about the alleys is he gone,
*Till he was come to *that ilke perry,* *the same pear-tree**
Where as this Damian satte full merry
On high, among the freshe leaves green.
This freshe May, that is so bright and sheen,
Gan for to sigh, and said, "Alas my side!

Now, Sir," quoth she, "for aught that may betide,
 I must have of the peares that I see,
 Or I must die, so sore longeth me
 To eaten of the smalle peares green;
 Help, for her love that is of heaven queen!
 I tell you well, a woman in my plight
 May have to fruit so great an appetite,
 That she may dien, but* she of it have. " *unless
 "Alas!" quoth he, "that I had here a knave* *servant
 That coulde climb; alas! alas!" quoth he,
 "For I am blind." "Yea, Sir, *no force,"* quoth she; *no matter*
 "But would ye vouchesafe, for Godde's sake,
 The perry in your armes for to take
 (For well I wot that ye mistruste me),
 Then would I climbe well enough," quoth she,
 "So I my foot might set upon your back."
 "Certes," said he, "therein shall be no lack,
 Might I you helpe with mine heartes blood."
 He stooped down, and on his back she stood,
 And caught her by a twist,* and up she go'th. *twig, bough
 (Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
 I cannot glose,* I am a rude man): *mince matters
 And suddenly anon this Damian
 Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.* *rushed
 And when that Pluto saw this greates wrong,
 To January he gave again his sight,
 And made him see as well as ever he might.
 And when he thus had caught his sight again,
 Was never man of anything so fain:
 But on his wife his thought was evermo'.
 Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,
 And saw how Damian his wife had dress'd,
 In such mannere, it may not be express'd,
 But if I woulde speak uncourteously. *unless*
 And up he gave a roaring and a cry,
 As doth the mother when the child shall die;
 "Out! help! alas! harow!" he gan to cry;
 "O stronge, lady, stowre! what doest thou?"

And she answered: "Sir, what aileth you?
 Have patience and reason in your mind,
 I have you help'd on both your eyen blind.
 On peril of my soul, I shall not lien,

As me was taught to helpe with your eyen,
 Was nothing better for to make you see,
 Than struggle with a man upon a tree:
 God wot, I did it in full good intent."
 "Struggle!" quoth he, "yea, algate* in it went. *whatever way
 God give you both one shame's death to dien!
 He swived* thee; I saw it with mine eyen; *enjoyed carnally
 And elles be I hanged by the halse."* *neck
 "Then is," quoth she, "my medicine all false;
 For certainly, if that ye mighte see,
 Ye would not say these wordes unto me.
 Ye have some glimpsing,* and no perfect sight." *glimmering
 "I see," quoth he, "as well as ever I might,
 (Thanked be God!) with both mine eyen two,
 And by my faith me thought he did thee so."
 "Ye maze,* ye maze, goode Sir," quoth she; *rave, are confused
 "This thank have I for I have made you see:
 Alas!" quoth she, "that e'er I was so kind."
 "Now, Dame," quoth he, "let all pass out of mind;
 Come down, my lefe,* and if I have missaid, *love
 God help me so, as I am *evil apaid.* *dissatisfied*
 But, by my father's soul, I ween'd have seen
 How that this Damian had by thee lain,
 And that thy smock had lain upon his breast."
 "Yea, Sir," quoth she, "ye may *ween as ye lest:* *think as you
 But, Sir, a man that wakes out of his sleep, please*
 He may not suddenly well take keep* *notice
 Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly,
 Till that he be adawed* verily. *awakened
 Right so a man, that long hath blind y-be,
 He may not suddenly so well y-see,
 First when his sight is newe come again,
 As he that hath a day or two y-seen.
 Till that your sight establish'd be a while,
 There may full many a sighte you beguile.
 Beware, I pray you, for, by heaven's king,
 Full many a man weeneth to see a thing,
 And it is all another than it seemeth;
 He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth."
 And with that word she leapt down from the tree.
 This January, who is glad but he?
 He kissed her, and clipped* her full oft, *embraced

*And on her womb he stroked her full soft;
And to his palace home he hath her lad.* *led
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of January,
God bless us, and his mother, Sainte Mary.*

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"HEY! Godde's mercy!" said our Hoste tho,* *then
"Now such a wife I pray God keep me fro'.
Lo, suche sleighthes and subtilities
In women be; for aye as busy as bees
Are they us silly men for to deceive,
And from the soothe* will they ever weive,** *truth **swerve, depart
As this Merchante's tale it proveth well.
But natheless, as true as any steel,
I have a wife, though that she poore be;
But of her tongue a labbing* shrew is she; *chattering
And yet* she hath a heap of vices mo'. *moreover
Thereof *no force,* let all such thinges go. *no matter*
But wit* ye what? in counsel** be it said, *know **secret, confidence
Me rueth sore I am unto her tied;
For, an'* I shoulde reckon every vice *if
Which that she hath, y-wis* I were too nice;** *certainly **foolish
And cause why, it should reported be
And told her by some of this company
(By whom, it needeth not for to declare,
Since women connen utter such chaffare),
And eke my wit sufficeth not thereto
To tellen all; wherefore my tale is do.* *done
Squier, come near, if it your wille be,
And say somewhat of love, for certes ye
Conne thereon as much as any man." *know about it*
"Nay, Sir," quoth he; "but such thing as I can,
With hearty will, — for I will not rebel
Against your lust,* — a tale will I tell. *pleasure
Have me excused if I speak amiss;
My will is good; and lo, my tale is this."

THE TALE.

Pars Prima.* *First part

At Sarra, in the land of Tartary,
There dwelt a king that warrayed* Russie, *made war on

Through which there died many a doughty man;
 This noble king was called Cambuscan,
 Which in his time was of so great renown,
 That there was nowhere in no regioun
 So excellent a lord in alle thing:
 Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
 As of the sect of which that he was born.
 He kept his law to which he was y-sworn,
 And thereto* he was hardy, wise, and rich, *moreover, besides
 And piteous and just, always y-lich;* *alike, even-tempered
 True of his word, benign and honourable;
 Of his corage as any centre stable; *firm, immovable of spirit*
 Young, fresh, and strong, in armes desirous
 As any bachelor of all his house.
 A fair person he was, and fortunate,
 And kept alway so well his royal estate,
 That there was nowhere such another man.
 This noble king, this Tartar Cambuscan,
 Hadde two sons by Elfeta his wife,
 Of which the eldest highte Algarsife,
 The other was y-called Camballo.
 A daughter had this worthy king also,
 That youngest was, and highte Canace:
 But for to telle you all her beauty,
 It lies not in my tongue, nor my conning,* *skill
 I dare not undertake so high a thing:
 Mine English eke is insufficient,
 It muste be a rhetor* excellent, *orator
 *That couth his colours longing for that art,
 If he should her describen any part;
 I am none such, I must speak as I can.

And so befell, that when this Cambuscan
 Had twenty winters borne his diadem,
 As he was wont from year to year, I deem,
 He let *the feast of his nativity* *his birthday party*
 Do crye, throughout Sarra his city, *be proclaimed*
 The last Idus of March, after the year.
 Phoebus the sun full jolly was and clear,
 For he was nigh his exaltation
 In Marte's face, and in his mansion
 In Aries, the choleric hot sign:
 Full lusty* was the weather and benign; *pleasant

For which the fowls against the sunne sheen,* *bright
What for the season and the younge green,
Full loude sange their affections:
Them seemed to have got protections
Against the sword of winter keen and cold.
This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In royal vesture, sat upon his daïs,
With diadem, full high in his palace;
And held his feast so solemn and so rich,
That in this worlde was there none it lich.* *like
Of which if I should tell all the array,
Then would it occupy a summer's day;
And eke it needeth not for to devise* *describe
At every course the order of service.
I will not tellen of their strange sewes,* *dishes
Nor of their swannes, nor their heronsews.* *young herons
Eke in that land, as telle knightes old,
There is some meat that is full dainty hold,
That in this land men *reck of* it full small: *care for*
There is no man that may reporten all.
I will not tarry you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but loss of time;
Unto my purpose* I will have recourse. *story
And so befell that, after the third course,
While that this king sat thus in his nobley,* *noble array
Hearing his ministreles their thinges play
Before him at his board deliciously,
In at the halle door all suddenly
There came a knight upon a steed of brass,
And in his hand a broad mirror of glass;
Upon his thumb he had of gold a ring,
And by his side a naked sword hanging:
And up he rode unto the highe board.
In all the hall was there not spoke a word,
For marvel of this knight; him to behold
Full busily they waited,* young and old. *watched

This strange knight, that came thus suddenly,
All armed, save his head, full richely,
Saluted king, and queen, and lordes all,
By order as they satten in the hall,
With so high reverence and observance,
As well in speech as in his countenance,

That Gawain with his olde courtesy,
Though he were come again out of Faerie,
Him *coude not amende with a word.* *could not better him
And after this, before the highe board, by one word*
He with a manly voice said his message,
After the form used in his language,
Withoute vice* of syllable or letter. *fault
And, for his tale shoulde seem the better,
Accordant to his worde's was his cheer,* *demeanour
As teacheth art of speech them that it lear.* *learn
Albeit that I cannot sound his style,
Nor cannot climb over so high a stile,
Yet say I this, as to *commune intent,* *general sense or meaning*
Thus much amounteth all that ever he meant, *this is the sum of*
If it so be that I have it in mind.
He said; "The king of Araby and Ind,
My liege lord, on this solemne day
Saluteth you as he best can and may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feast,
By me, that am all ready at your hest,* *command
This steed of brass, that easily and well
Can in the space of one day naturel
(This is to say, in four-and-twenty hours),
Whereso you list, in drought or else in show'rs,
Beare your body into every place
To which your hearte willethe for to pace,* *pass, go
Withoute wem* of you, through foul or fair. *hurt, injury
Or if you list to fly as high in air
As doth an eagle, when him list to soar,
This same steed shall bear you evermore
Withoute harm, till ye be where *you lest* *it pleases you*
(Though that ye sleepen on his back, or rest),
And turn again, with writhing* of a pin. *twisting
He that it wrought, he coude* many a gin;** *knew **contrivance
He waited* in any a constellation, *observed
Ere he had done this operation,
And knew full many a seal and many a bond
This mirror eke, that I have in mine hond,
Hath such a might, that men may in it see
When there shall fall any adversity
Unto your realm, or to yourself also,
And openly who is your friend or foe.

*And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set her heart on any manner wight,
If he be false, she shall his treason see,
His newe love, and all his subtlety,
So openly that there shall nothing hide.
Wherefore, against this lusty summer-tide,
This mirror, and this ring that ye may see,
He hath sent to my lady Canace,
Your excellent daughter that is here.
The virtue of this ring, if ye will hear,
Is this, that if her list it for to wear
Upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,
There is no fowl that flyeth under heaven,
That she shall not well understand his steven,* *speech, sound
And know his meaning openly and plain,
And answer him in his language again:
And every grass that groweth upon root
She shall eke know, to whom it will do boot,* *remedy
All be his woundes ne'er so deep and wide.
This naked sword, that hangeth by my side,
Such virtue hath, that what man that it smite,
Throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
Were it as thick as is a branched oak:
And what man is y-wounded with the stroke
Shall ne'er be whole, till that you list, of grace,
To stroke him with the flat in thilke* place *the same
Where he is hurt; this is as much to sayn,
Ye muste with the flatte sword again
Stroke him upon the wound, and it will close.
This is the very sooth, withoute glose;* *deceit
It faileth not, while it is in your hold."*

*And when this knight had thus his tale told,
He rode out of the hall, and down he light.
His steede, which that shone as sunne bright,
Stood in the court as still as any stone.
The knight is to his chamber led anon,
And is unarmed, and to meat y-set.* *seated
These presents be full richely y-fet,* — *fetched
This is to say, the sword and the mirrour, —
And borne anon into the highe tow'r,
With certain officers ordain'd therefor;
And unto Canace the ring is bore*

Solemnely, where she sat at the table;
But sickerly, withouten any fable,
The horse of brass, that may not be remued.* *removed
It stood as it were to the ground y-glued;
There may no man out of the place it drive
For no engine of windlass or polive;* *pulley
And cause why, for they *can not the craft;* *know not the cunning
And therefore in the place they have it laft, of the mechanism*
Till that the knight hath taught them the mannere
To voide* him, as ye shall after hear. *remove

Great was the press, that swarmed to and fro
To gauren* on this horse that stode so: *gaze
For it so high was, and so broad and long,
So well proportioned for to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lombardy;
Therewith so horsely, and so quick of eye,
As it a gentle Poileis courser were:
For certes, from his tail unto his ear
Nature nor art ne could him not amend
In no degree, as all the people wend.* *weened, thought
But evermore their moste wonder was
How that it coulde go, and was of brass;
It was of Faerie, as the people seem'd.
Diverse folk diversely they deem'd;
As many heads, as many wittes been.
They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,* *bees
And made skills* after their fantasies, *reasons
Rehearsing of the olde poetries,
And said that it was like the Pegasee,* *Pegasus
The horse that hadde winges for to flee,* *fly
Or else it was the Greeke's horse Sinon,
That broughte Troye to destruction,
As men may in the olde gestes* read. *tales of adventures
Mine heart," quoth one, "is evermore in dread;
I trow some men of armes be therein,
That shape* them this city for to win: *design, prepare
It were right good that all such thing were know."
Another rownd* to his fellow low, *whispered
And said, "He lies; for it is rather like
An apparence made by some magic,
As jugglers playen at these feastes great."
Of sundry doubts they jangle thus and treat.

As lewed* people deeme commonly *ignorant
 Of thinges that be made more subtilly
 Than they can in their lewdness comprehend;
 They *deeme gladly to the badder end.* *are ready to think
 And some of them wonder'd on the mirrour, the worst*
 That borne was up into the master* tow'r, *chief
 How men might in it suche thinges see.
 Another answer'd and said, it might well be
 Naturally by compositions
 Of angles, and of sly reflections;
 And saide that in Rome was such a one.
 They speak of Alhazen and Vitellon,
 And Aristotle, that wrote in their lives
 Of quainte* mirrors, and of prospectives, *curious
 As knowe they that have their bookes heard.
 And other folk have wonder'd on the swerd,* *sword
 That woulde pierce throughout every thing;
 And fell in speech of Telephus the king,
 And of Achilles for his quainte spear,
 For he could with it bothe heal and dere,* *wound
 Right in such wise as men may with the swerd
 Of which right now ye have yourselves heard.
 They spake of sundry hard'ning of metal,
 And spake of medicines therewithal,
 And how, and when, it shoulde harden'd be,
 Which is unknowen algate* unto me. *however
 Then spake they of Canacee's ring,
 And saiden all, that such a wondrous thing
 Of craft of rings heard they never none,
 Save that he, Moses, and King Solomon,
 Hadden *a name of conning* in such art. *a reputation for
 Thus said the people, and drew them apart. knowledge*
 Put natheless some saide that it was
 Wonder to maken of fern ashes glass,
 And yet is glass nought like ashes of fern;
 But for they have y-knowen it so ferne** *because **before
 Therefore ceaseth their jangling and their wonder.
 As sore wonder some on cause of thunder,
 On ebb and flood, on gossamer and mist,
 And on all things, till that the cause is wist.* *known
 Thus jangle they, and deemen and devise,
 Till that the king gan from his board arise.

*Phoebus had left the angle meridional,
 And yet ascending was the beast royal,
 The gentle Lion, with his Aldrian,
 When that this Tartar king, this Cambuscan,
 Rose from the board, there as he sat full high
 Before him went the loude minstrelsy,
 Till he came to his chamber of parements,
 There as they sounded diverse instruments,
 That it was like a heaven for to hear.
 Now danced lusty Venus' children dear:
 For in the Fish* their lady sat full *Pisces
 And looked on them with a friendly eye.
 This noble king is set upon his throne;
 This strange knight is fetched to him full sone,* *soon
 And on the dance he goes with Canace.
 Here is the revel and the jollity,
 That is not able a dull man to devise:* *describe
 He must have knowen love and his service,
 And been a feastly* man, as fresh as May, *merry, gay
 That shoulde you devise such array.
 Who coulde telle you the form of dances
 So uncouth,* and so freshe countenances** *unfamiliar **gestures
 Such subtle lookings and dissimulances,
 For dread of jealous men's apperceivings?
 No man but Launcelot, and he is dead.
 Therefore I pass o'er all this lustihead* *pleasantness
 I say no more, but in this jolliness
 I leave them, till to supper men them dress.
 The steward bids the spices for to hie* *haste
 And eke the wine, in all this melody;
 The ushers and the squiers be y-gone,
 The spices and the wine is come anon;
 They eat and drink, and when this hath an end,
 Unto the temple, as reason was, they wend;
 The service done, they suppen all by day
 What needeth you rehearse their array?
 Each man wot well, that at a kinge's feast
 Is plenty, to the most*, and to the least, *highest
 And dainties more than be in my knowing.*

*At after supper went this noble king
 To see the horse of brass, with all a rout
 Of lordes and of ladies him about.*

Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass,
That, since the great siege of Troye was,
There as men wonder'd on a horse also,
Ne'er was there such a wond'ring as was tho.* *there
But finally the king asked the knight
The virtue of this courser, and the might,
And prayed him to tell his governance.* *mode of managing him
The horse anon began to trip and dance,
When that the knight laid hand upon his rein,
And saide, "Sir, there is no more to sayn,
But when you list to riden anywhere,
Ye muste trill* a pin, stands in his ear, *turn
Which I shall telle you betwixt us two;
Ye muste name him to what place also,
Or to what country that you list to ride.
And when ye come where you list abide,
Bid him descend, and trill another pin
(For therein lies th' effect of all the gin*), *contrivance
And he will down descend and do your will,
And in that place he will abide still;
Though all the world had the contrary swore,
He shall not thence be throwen nor be bore.
Or, if you list to bid him thennes gon,
Trill this pin, and he will vanish anon
Out of the sight of every manner wight,
And come again, be it by day or night,
When that you list to clepe* him again *call
In such a guise, as I shall to you sayn
Betwixte you and me, and that full soon.
Ride when you list, there is no more to do'n.'
Informed when the king was of the knight,
And had conceived in his wit aright
The manner and the form of all this thing,
Full glad and blithe, this noble doughty king
Repaired to his revel as befor.
The bridle is into the tower borne,
And kept among his jewels lefe* and dear; *cherished
The horse vanish'd, I n'ot* in what mannere, *know not
Out of their sight; ye get no more of me:
But thus I leave in lust and jollity
This Cambuscan his lordes feastyng,* *entertaining
Until well nigh the day began to spring.

Pars Secunda.* *Second Part

The norice of digestion, the sleep, *nurse
Gan on them wink, and bade them take keep,* *heed
That muche mirth and labour will have rest.
And with a gaping* mouth he all them kest,** *yawning **kissed
And said, that it was time to lie down,
For blood was in his dominatioun:
"Cherish the blood, nature's friend," quoth he.
They thanked him gaping, by two and three;
And every wight gan draw him to his rest;
As sleep them bade, they took it for the best.
Their dreames shall not now be told for me;
Full are their heades of fumosity,
That caused dreams *of which there is no charge:* *of no significance*
They slepte; till that, it was *prime large,* *late morning*
The moste part, but* it was Canace; *except
She was full measurable,* as women be: *moderate
For of her father had she ta'en her leave
To go to rest, soon after it was eve;
Her liste not appalled* for to be; *to look pale
Nor on the morrow *unfeastly for to see;* *to look sad, depressed*
And slept her firste sleep; and then awoke.
For such a joy she in her hearte took
Both of her quainte a ring and her mirrour,.
That twenty times she changed her colour;
And in her sleep, right for th' impression
Of her mirror, she had a vision.
Wherefore, ere that the sunne gan up glide,
She call'd upon her mistress'* her beside, *governesses
And saide, that her liste for to rise.*

*These olde women, that be gladly wise
As are her mistresses answer'd anon,
And said; "Madame, whither will ye gon
Thus early? for the folk be all in rest."
"I will," quoth she, "arise; for me lest
No longer for to sleep, and walk about."
Her mistresses call'd women a great rout,
And up they rose, well a ten or twelve;
Up rose freshe Canace herselfe,
As ruddy and bright as is the yonnge sun*

That in the Ram is four degrees y-run;
 No higher was he, when she ready was;
 And forth she walked easily a pace,
 Array'd after the lusty* season swoot,** *pleasant **sweet
 Lightely for to play, and walk on foot,
 Nought but with five or six of her meinie;
 And in a trench* forth in the park went she. *sunken path
 The vapour, which up from the earthe glode,* *glided
 Made the sun to seem ruddy and broad:
 But, natheless, it was so fair a sight
 That it made all their heartes for to light,* *be lightened, glad
 What for the season and the morrowning,
 And for the fowles that she hearde sing.
 For right anon she wiste* what they meant *knew
 Right by their song, and knew all their intent.
 The knotte,* why that every tale is told, *nucleus, chief matter
 If it be tarried* till the list* be cold *delayed **inclination
 Of them that have it hearken'd *after yore,* *for a long time*
 The savour passeth ever longer more;
 For fulsomness of the prolixity:
 And by that same reason thinketh me.
 I shoulde unto the knotte condescend,
 And maken of her walking soon an end.

Amid a tree fordry*, as white as chalk, *thoroughly dried up
 There sat a falcon o'er her head full high,
 That with a piteous voice so gan to cry;
 That all the wood resounded of her cry,
 And beat she had herself so piteously
 With both her winges, till the redde blood
 Ran endelong* the tree, there as she stood *from top to bottom
 And ever-in-one* alway she cried and shrigh; ** *incessantly **shrieked
 And with her beak herselfe she so pight,* *wounded
 That there is no tiger, nor cruel beast,
 That dwelleth either in wood or in forest;
 But would have wept, if that he weepe could,
 For sorrow of her; she shriek'd alway so loud.
 For there was never yet no man alive,
 If that he could a falcon well describe;* *describe
 That heard of such another of fairness
 As well of plumage, as of gentleness;
 Of shape, of all that mighte reckon'd be.
 A falcon peregrine seemed she,

Of fremde land; and ever as she stood *foreign
She swooned now and now for lack of blood;
Till well-nigh is she fallen from the tree.*

*This faire kinge's daughter Canace,
That on her finger bare the quaint ring,
Through which she understood well every thing
That any fowl may in his leden* sayn, **language
And could him answer in his leden again;
Hath understoode what this falcon said,
And well-nigh for the ruth* almost she died; *pity
And to the tree she went, full hastily,
And on this falcon looked piteously;
And held her lap abroad; for well she wist
The falcon muste falle from the twist* *twig, bough
When that she swooned next, for lack of blood.
A longe while to waite her she stood;
Till at the last she apake in this mannere
Unto the hawk, as ye shall after hear:
"What is the cause, if it be for to tell,
That ye be in this furial* pain of hell?" *raging, furious
Quoth Canace unto this hawk above;
"Is this for sorrow of of death; or loss of love?
For; as I trow,* these be the causes two; *believe
That cause most a gentle heart woe:
Of other harm it needeth not to speak.
For ye yourself upon yourself awreak;* *inflict
Which proveth well, that either ire or dread* *fear
Must be occasion of your cruel deed,
Since that I see none other wight you chase:
For love of God, as *do yourselve grace;* *have mercy on
Or what may be your help? for, west nor east, yourself*
I never saw ere now no bird nor beast
That fared with himself so piteously
Ye slay me with your sorrow verily;
I have of you so great compassioun.
For Godde's love come from the tree adown
And, as I am a kinge's daughter true,
If that I verily the causes knew
Of your disease,* if it lay in my might, *distress
I would amend it, ere that it were night,
So wisly help me the great God of kind.** *surely **nature
And herbes shall I right enoughe find,*

To heale with your hurtes hastily."
Then shriek'd this falcon yet more piteously
Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,
And lay aswoon, as dead as lies a stone,
Till Canace had in her lap her take,
Unto that time she gan of swoon awake:
And, after that she out of swoon abraid,* *awoke
Right in her hawke's leden thus she said:

"That pity runneth soon in gentle heart
(Feeling his similtude in paines smart),
Is proved every day, as men may see,
As well *by work as by authority;* *by experience as by doctrine*
For gentle heart kitheth* gentleness. *sheweth
I see well, that ye have on my distress
Compassion, my faire Canace,
Of very womanly benignity
That nature in your principles hath set.
But for no hope for to fare the bet,* *better
But for t' obey unto your heart free,
And for to make others aware by me,
As by the whelp chastis'd* is the lion, *instructed, corrected
Right for that cause and that conclusion,
While that I have a leisure and a space,
Mine harm I will confessen ere I pace."* *depart
And ever while the one her sorrow told,
The other wept, *as she to water wo'ld,* *as if she would dissolve
Till that the falcon bade her to be still, into water*
And with a sigh right thus she said *her till:* *to her*
"Where I was bred (alas that ilke* day!) *same
And foster'd in a rock of marble gray
So tenderly, that nothing ailed me,
I wiste* not what was adversity, *knew
Till I could flee* full high under the sky. *fly
Then dwell'd a tercelet me faste by,
That seem'd a well of alle gentleness;
All were he full of treason and falseness, *although he was*
It was so wrapped *under humble cheer,* *under an aspect
And under hue of truth, in such mannere, of humility*
Under pleasance, and under busy pain,
That no wight weened that he coulde feign,
So deep in grain he dyed his colours.
Right as a serpent hides him under flow'rs,

Till he may see his time for to bite,
Right so this god of love's hypocrite
Did so his ceremonies and obeisances,
And kept in semblance all his observances,
That *sounden unto* gentleness of love. *are consonant to*
As on a tomb is all the fair above,
And under is the corpse, which that ye wet,
Such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot;
And in this wise he served his intent,
That, save the fiend, none wiste what he meant:
Till he so long had weeped and complain'd,
And many a year his service to me feign'd,
Till that mine heart, too piteous and too nice,* *foolish, simple
All innocent of his crowned malice,
Forfeared of his death, as thoughte me, *greatly afraid lest
Upon his oathes and his surety he should die*
Granted him love, on this conditioun,
That evermore mine honour and renown
Were saved, bothe *privy and apert,* *privately and in public*
This is to say, that, after his desert,
I gave him all my heart and all my thought
(God wot, and he, that *other wayes nought*), *in no other way*
And took his heart in change of mine for aye.
But sooth is said, gone since many a day,
A true wight and a thiefe *think not one.* *do not think alike*
And when he saw the thing so far y-gone,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In such a wise as I have said above,
And given him my true heart as free
As he swore that he gave his heart to me,
Anon this tiger, full of doubleness,
Fell on his knees with so great humbleness,
With so high reverence, as by his cheer,* *mien
So like a gentle lover in mannere,
So ravish'd, as it seemed, for the joy,
That never Jason, nor Paris of Troy, —
Jason? certes, nor ever other man,
Since Lamech was, that alderfirst* began *first of all
To love two, as write folk beforne,
Nor ever since the firste man was born,
Coude no man, by twenty thousand
Counterfeit the sophimes* of his art; *sophistries, beguilements

Where doubleness of feigning should approach,
Nor worthy were t'unbuckle his galoche,* *shoe
Nor could so thank a wight, as he did me.
His manner was a heaven for to see
To any woman, were she ne'er so wise;
So painted he and kempt,* *at point devise,* *combed, studied
As well his wordes as his countenance. *with perfect precision*
And I so lov'd him for his obeisance,
And for the truth I deemed in his heart,
That, if so were that any thing him smart,* *pained
All were it ne'er so lite,* and I it wist, *little
Methought I felt death at my heart's twist.
And shortly, so farforth this thing is went,* *gone
That my will was his wille's instrument;
That is to say, my will obey'd his will
In alle thing, as far as reason fill,* *fell; allowed
Keeping the boundes of my worship ever;
And never had I thing *so lefe, or lever,* *so dear, or dearer*
As him, God wot, nor never shall no mo'.

"This lasted longer than a year or two,
That I supposed of him naught but good.
But finally, thus at the last it stood,
That fortune woulde that he muste twin* *depart, separate
Out of that place which that I was in.
Whe'er* me was woe, it is no question; *whether
I cannot make of it description.
For one thing dare I telle boldly,
I know what is the pain of death thereby;
Such harm I felt, for he might not byleve.* *stay
So on a day of me he took his leave,
So sorrowful eke, that I ween'd verily,
That he had felt as much harm as I,
When that I heard him speak, and saw his hue.
But natheless, I thought he was so true,
And eke that he repaire should again
Within a little while, sooth to sayn,
And reason would eke that he muste go
For his honour, as often happ'neth so,
That I made virtue of necessity,
And took it well, since that it muste be.
As I best might, I hid from him my sorrow,
And took him by the hand, Saint John to borrow,* *witness, pledge

And said him thus; 'Lo, I am youres all;
Be such as I have been to you, and shall.'
What he answer'd, it needs not to rehearse;
Who can say bet* than he, who can do worse? *better
When he had all well said, then had he done.
Therefore behoveth him a full long spoon,
That shall eat with a fiend; thus heard I say.
So at the last he muste forth his way,
And forth he flew, till he came where him lest.
When it came him to purpose for to rest,
I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
That alle thing repairing to his kind
Gladdeth himself; thus say men, as I guess;
*Men love of [proper] kind newfangleness,
As birdes do, that men in cages feed.
For though thou night and day take of them heed,
And strew their cage fair and soft as silk,
And give them sugar, honey, bread, and milk,
Yet, *right anon as that his door is up,* *immediately on his
He with his feet will spurne down his cup, door being opened*
And to the wood he will, and wormes eat;
So newefangle be they of their meat,
And love novelties, of proper kind;
No gentleness of bloode may them bind.
So far'd this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentle born, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kite flee,* *fly
And suddenly he loved this kite so,
That all his love is clean from me y-go:
And hath his trothe falsed in this wise.
Thus hath the kite my love in her service,
And I am lorn* withoute remedy." *lost, undone

And with that word this falcon gan to cry,
And swooned eft* in Canacee's barme** *again **lap
Great was the sorrow, for that hawke's harm,
That Canace and all her women made;
They wist not how they might the falcon glade.* *gladden
But Canace home bare her in her lap,
And softly in plasters gan her wrap,
There as she with her beak had hurt herselfe.
Now cannot Canace but herbes delve

Out of the ground, and make salves new
Of herbes precious and fine of hue,
To heale with this hawk; from day to night
She did her business, and all her might.
And by her bedde's head she made a mew,* *bird cage
And cover'd it with velouettes* blue, *velvets
In sign of truth that is in woman seen;
And all without the mew is painted green,
In which were painted all these false fowls,
As be these tidifes,* tercelet, and owls; *titmice
And pies, on them for to cry and chide,
Right for despite were painted them beside.

Thus leave I Canace her hawk keeping.
I will no more as now speak of her ring,
Till it come eft* to purpose for to sayn *again
How that this falcon got her love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus,
The king's son of which that I you told.
But henceforth I will my process hold
To speak of adventures, and of battailes,
That yet was never heard so great marvailles.
First I will telle you of Cambuscan,
That in his time many a city wan;
And after will I speak of Algarsife,
How he won Theodora to his wife,
For whom full oft in great peril he was,
Nhad he been holpen by the horse of brass. *had he not*
And after will I speak of Camballo,
That fought in listes with the brethren two
For Canace, ere that he might her win;
And where I left I will again begin.