

THE CANTERBURY TALES
And other Poems
by
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"IN faith, Squier, thou hast thee well acquit,
And gentilly; I praise well thy wit,"
Quoth the Franklin; "considering thy youth
So feelingly thou speak'st, Sir, I aloue* thee, *allow, approve
As to my doom, there is none that is here *so far as my
judgment
Of eloquence that shall be thy peer, goes*
If that thou live; God give thee goode chance,
And in virtue send thee continuance,
For of thy speaking I have great dainty.* *value, esteem
I have a son, and, by the Trinity;
It were me lever than twenty pound worth land, *I would
rather*
Though it right now were fallen in my hand,
He were a man of such discretion
As that ye be: fy on possession,
But if a man be virtuous withal. *unless
I have my sone snibbed* and yet shall, *rebuked; "snubbed."
For he to virtue *listeth not t'intend,* *does not wish to
But for to play at dice, and to dispend, apply himself*
And lose all that he hath, is his usage;
And he had lever talke with a page,
Than to commune with any gentle wight,
There he might learen gentilless aright."

Straw for your gentilless!" quoth our Host.
"What? Frankelin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost* *knowest
That each of you must tellen at the least
A tale or two, or breake his behest.* *promise
"That know I well, Sir," quoth the Frankelin;
"I pray you have me not in disdain,
Though I to this man speak a word or two."
"Tell on thy tale, withoute wordes mo'."
"Gladly, Sir Host," quoth he, "I will obey
Unto your will; now hearken what I say;
I will you not contrary* in no wise, *disobey
As far as that my wittes may suffice.

*I pray to God that it may please you,
Then wot I well that it is good enow.*

*"These olde gentle Bretons, in their days,
Of divers adventures made lays,
Rhymeden in their firste Breton tongue;
Which layes with their instruments they sung,
Or elles reade them for their pleasance;
And one of them have I in remembrance,
Which I shall say with good will as I can.
But, Sirs, because I am a borel* man, *rude, unlearned
At my beginning first I you beseech
Have me excused of my rude speech.
I learned never rhetoric, certain;
Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.
I slept never on the mount of Parnasso,
Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Coloures know I none, withoute dread,* *doubt
But such coloures as growen in the mead,
Or elles such as men dye with or paint;
Colours of rhetoric be to me quaint;* *strange
My spirit feeleth not of such mattere.
But, if you list, my tale shall ye hear."*

THE TALE.

*In Armorik', that called is Bretagne,
There was a knight, that lov'd and *did his pain* *devoted himself,
To serve a lady in his beste wise; strove*
And many a labour, many a great emprise,* *enterprise
He for his lady wrought, ere she were won:
For she was one the fairest under sun,
And eke thereto come of so high kindred,
That *well unnethes durst this knight for dread,*
Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress
But, at the last, she for his worthiness,
And namely* for his meek obeisance, *especially
Hath such a pity caught of his penance,* *suffering, distress
That privily she fell of his accord
To take him for her husband and her lord
(Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives);
And, for to lead the more in bliss their lives,*

Of his free will he swore her as a knight,
That never in all his life he day nor night
Should take upon himself no mastery
Against her will, nor kith^e her jealousy, ^{*show}
But her obey, and follow her will in all,
As any lover to his lady shall;
Save that the name of sovereignty
That would he have, for shame of his degree.
She thanked him, and with full great humbless
She saide; "Sir, since of your gentleness
Ye proffer me to have so large a reign,
^{*Ne would} God never betwixt us twain,
As in my guilt, were either war or strife:^{*}
Sir, I will be your humble true wife,
Have here my troth, till that my hearte brest."^{*} ^{*burst}
Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.

For one thing, Sires, safely dare I say,
That friends ever each other must obey,
If they will longe hold in company.
Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.
When mast'ry comes, the god of love anon
Beateth his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
Love is a thing as any spirit free.
Women ^{*of kind} desire liberty, ^{*by nature}
And not to be constrained as a thrall,^{*} ^{*slave}
And so do men, if soothly I say shall.
Look who that is most patient in love,
He ^{*is at his advantage all above.} ^{*enjoys the highest}
Patience is a high virtue certain, advantages of all^{*}
For it vanquisheth, as these clerkes sayn,
Thinges that rigour never should attain.
For every word men may not chide or plain.
Learne to suffer, or, so may I go,^{*} ^{*prosper}
Ye shall it learn whether ye will or no.
For in this world certain no wight there is,
That he not doth or saith sometimes amiss.
Ire, or sickness, or constellation,^{*} ^{*the influence of}
Wine, woe, or changing of complexion, the planets^{*}
Causeth full oft to do amiss or speaken:
On every wrong a man may not be wreaken.^{*} ^{*revenged}
After^{*} the time must be temperance ^{*according to}
To every wight that ^{*can of} governance. ^{*is capable of}

*And therefore hath this worthy wise knight
(To live in ease) sufferance her behight;* *promised
And she to him full wisly* gan to swear *surely
That never should there be default in her.
Here may men see a humble wife accord;
Thus hath she ta'en her servant and her lord,
Servant in love, and lord in marriage.
Then was he both in lordship and servage?
Servage? nay, but in lordship all above,
Since he had both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wife also,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And when he was in this prosperrity,
Home with his wife he went to his country,
Not far from Penmark, where his dwelling was,
And there he liv'd in bliss and in solace.* *delight
Who could tell, but* he had wedded be, *unless
The joy, the ease, and the prosperity,
That is betwixt a husband and his wife?
A year and more lasted this blissful life,
Till that this knight, of whom I spake thus,
That of Cairrud was call'd Arviragus,
Shope* him to go and dwell a year or twain *prepared, arranged
In Engleland, that call'd was eke Britain,
To seek in armes worship and honour
(For all his lust* he set in such labour); *pleasure
And dwelled there two years; the book saith thus.*

Now will I stint of this Arviragus, *cease speaking
And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
That lov'd her husband as her heart's life.
For his absence weepeth she and siketh,* *sigheth
As do these noble wives when them liketh;
She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;
Desire of his presence her so distraineth,
That all this wide world she set at nought.
Her friendes, which that knew her heavy thought,
Comforte her in all that ever they may;
They preache her, they tell her night and day,
That causeless she slays herself, alas!
And every comfort possible in this case
They do to her, with all their business,* *assiduity
And all to make her leave her heaviness.*

By process, as ye knowen every one,
Men may so longe graven in a stone,
Till some figure therein imprinted be:
So long have they comforted her, till she
Received hath, by hope and by reason,
Th' imprinting of their consolation,
Through which her greate sorrow gan assuage;
She may not always duren in such rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his letters home of his welfare,
And that he will come hastily again,
Or elles had this sorrow her hearty-slain.
Her friendes saw her sorrow gin to slake,* *slacken, diminish
And prayed her on knees for Godde's sake
To come and roamen in their company,
Away to drive her darke fantasy;
And finally she granted that request,
For well she saw that it was for the best.

Now stood her castle faste by the sea,
And often with her friendes walked she,
Her to disport upon the bank on high,
There as many a ship and barge sigh,* *saw
Sailing their courses, where them list to go.
But then was that a parcel* of her woe, *part
For to herself full oft, "Alas!" said she,
Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
Will bringe home my lord? then were my heart
All warish'd* of this bitter paine's smart." *cured
Another time would she sit and think,
And cast her eyen downward from the brink;
But when she saw the grisly rockes blake,* *black
For very fear so would her heart quake,
That on her feet she might her not sustene* *sustain
Then would she sit adown upon the green,
And piteously *into the sea behold,* *look out on the sea*
And say right thus, with *careful sikes* cold: *painful sighs*
"Eternal God! that through thy purveyance
Leadest this world by certain governance,
In idle, as men say, ye nothing make; *idly, in vain*
But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockes blake,
That seem rather a foul confusion
Of work, than any fair creation

Of such a perfect wise God and stable,
Why have ye wrought this work unreasonable?
For by this work, north, south, or west, or east,
There is not foster'd man, nor bird, nor beast:
It doth no good, to my wit, but *annoyeth.* *works mischief*
See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Have rockes slain, *all be they not in mind;* *though they are
Which mankind is so fair part of thy work, forgotten*
Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.* *image
Then seemed it ye had a great cherte* *love, affection
Toward mankind; but how then may it be
That ye such meanes make it to destroy?
Which meanes do no good, but ever annoy.
I wot well, clerkes will say as them lest,* *please
By arguments, that all is for the best,
Although I can the causes not y-know;
But thilke* God that made the wind to blow, *that
As keep my lord, this is my conclusion:
To clerks leave I all disputation:
But would to God that all these rockes blake
Were sunken into helle for his sake
These rockes slay mine hearte for the fear."
Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.

Her friendes saw that it was no disport
To roame by the sea, but discomfort,
And shope* them for to playe somewhere else. *arranged
They leade her by rivers and by wells,
And eke in other places delectables;
They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.* *backgammon
So on a day, right in the morning-tide,
Unto a garden that was there beside,
In which that they had made their ordinance* *provision,
arrangement
Of victual, and of other purveyance,
They go and play them all the longe day:
And this was on the sixth morrow of May,
Which May had painted with his softe showers
This garden full of leaves and of flowers:
And craft of manne's hand so curiously
Arrayed had this garden truely,
That never was there garden of such price,* *value, praise

**But if* it were the very Paradise. *unless*
Th'odour of flowers, and the freshe sight,
Would have maked any hearte light
That e'er was born, *but if* too great sickness *unless*
Or too great sorrow held it in distress;
So full it was of beauty and pleasance.
And after dinner they began to dance
And sing also, save Dorigen alone
Who made alway her complaint and her moan,
For she saw not him on the dance go
That was her husband, and her love also;
But natheless she must a time abide
And with good hope let her sorrow slide.*

*Upon this dance, amonge other men,
Danced a squier before Dorigen
That fresher was, and jollier of array
As to my doom, than is the month of May. *in my judgment*
He sang and danced, passing any man,
That is or was since that the world began;
Therewith he was, if men should him describe,
One of the *beste faring* men alive, *most accomplished*
Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich, and wise,
And well beloved, and holden in great price. *esteem, value
And, shortly if the sooth I telle shall,
Unweeting of this Dorigen at all, *unknown to*
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that y-called was Aurelius,
Had lov'd her best of any creature
Two year and more, as was his aventure;* *fortune
But never durst he tell her his grievance;
Withoute cup he drank all his penance.
He was despaired, nothing durst he say,
Save in his songes somewhat would he wray* *betray
His woe, as in a general complaining;
He said, he lov'd, and was belov'd nothing.
Of suche matter made he many lays,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelays
How that he durste not his sorrow tell,
But languished, as doth a Fury in hell;
And die he must, he said, as did Echo
For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.
In other manner than ye hear me say,*

He durste not to her his woe bewray,
Save that paraventure sometimes at dances,
Where younge folke keep their observances,
It may well be he looked on her face
In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
But nothing wiste she of his intent.
Nath'less it happen'd, ere they thennes* went, *thence (from the
Because that he was her neighebour, garden)*
And was a man of worship and honour,
And she had knowen him *of time yore,* *for a long time*
They fell in speech, and forth aye more and more
Unto his purpose drew Aurelius;
And when he saw his time, he saide thus:
Madam," quoth he, "by God that this world made,
So that I wist it might your hearte glade,* *gladden
I would, that day that your Arviragus
Went over sea, that I, Aurelius,
Had gone where I should never come again;
For well I wot my service is in vain.
My guerdon* is but bursting of mine heart. *reward
Madame, rue upon my paine's smart,
For with a word ye may me slay or save.
Here at your feet God would that I were grave.
I have now no leisure more to say:
Have mercy, sweet, or you will *do me dey."* *cause me to die*

She gan to look upon Aurelius;
"Is this your will," quoth she, "and say ye thus?
Ne'er erst,"* quoth she, "I wiste what ye meant: *before
But now, Aurelius, I know your intent.
By thilke* God that gave me soul and life, *that
Never shall I be an untrue wife
In word nor work, as far as I have wit;
I will be his to whom that I am knit;
Take this for final answer as of me."
But after that *in play* thus saide she. *playfully, in jest*
"Aurelius," quoth she, "by high God above,
Yet will I grante you to be your love
(Since I you see so piteously complain);
Looke, what day that endelong* Bretagne *from end to end of
Ye remove all the rockes, stone by stone,
That they not lette* ship nor boat to gon, *prevent
I say, when ye have made this coast so clean

Of rockes, that there is no stone seen,
Then will I love you best of any man;
Have here my troth, in all that ever I can;
For well I wot that it shall ne'er betide.
Let such folly out of your hearte glide.
What dainty* should a man have in his life *value, pleasure
For to go love another manne's wife,
That hath her body when that ever him liketh?"
Aurelius full often sore siketh;* *sigheth
Is there none other grace in you?" quoth he,
"No, by that Lord," quoth she, "that maked me.
Woe was Aurelius when that he this heard,
And with a sorrowful heart he thus answer'd.
"Madame, quoth he, "this were an impossible.
Then must I die of sudden death horrible."
And with that word he turned him anon.

Then came her other friends many a one,
And in the alleys roamed up and down,
And nothing wist of this conclusion,
But suddenly began to revel new,
Till that the brighte sun had lost his hue,
For th' horizon had reft the sun his light
(This is as much to say as it was night);
And home they go in mirth and in solace;
Save only wretch'd Aurelius, alas
He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
He said, he may not from his death astart.* *escape
Him seemed, that he felt his hearte cold.
Up to the heav'n his handes gan he hold,
And on his knees bare he set him down.
And in his raving said his orisoun.* *prayer
For very woe out of his wit he braid;* *wandered
He wist not what he spake, but thus he said;
With piteous heart his plaint hath he begun
Unto the gods, and first unto the Sun.
He said; "Apollo God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flower,
That giv'st, after thy declination,
To each of them his time and his season,
As thine herberow* changeth low and high; *dwelling, situation
Lord Phoebus: cast thy merciable eye
On wretched Aurelius, which that am but lorn.* *undone

*Lo, lord, my lady hath my death y-sworn,
Withoute guilt, but* thy benignity *unless
Upon my deadly heart have some pity.
For well I wot, Lord Phoebus, if you lest,* *please
Ye may me helpe, save my lady, best.
Now vouchsafe, that I may you devise* *tell, explain
How that I may be holp,* and in what wise. *helped
Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen,
That of the sea is chief goddess and queen, —
Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,
Yet emperess above him is she; —
Ye know well, lord, that, right as her desire
Is to be quick'd* and lighted of your fire, *quickened
For which she followeth you full busily,
Right so the sea desireth naturally
To follow her, as she that is goddess
Both in the sea and rivers more and less.
Wherefore, Lord Phoebus, this is my request,
Do this miracle, or *do mine hearte brest;* *cause my heart
That flow, next at this opposition, to burst*
Which in the sign shall be of the Lion,
As praye her so great a flood to bring,
That five fathom at least it overspring
The highest rock in Armoré Bretagne,
And let this flood endure yeares twain:
Then certes to my lady may I say,
"Holde your hest," the rockes be away.
Lord Phoebus, this miracle do for me,
Pray her she go no faster course than ye;
I say this, pray your sister that she go
No faster course than ye these yeares two:
Then shall she be even at full alway,
And spring-flood laste bothe night and day.
And *but she* vouchsafe in such mannere *if she do not*
To grante me my sov'reign lady dear,
Pray her to sink every rock adown
Into her owen darke regioun
Under the ground, where Pluto dwelleth in
Or nevermore shall I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.
Lord Phoebus! see the teares on my cheek
And on my pain have some compassioun."*

*And with that word in sorrow he fell down,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penance,* *distress
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought,
Despaired in this torment and this thought
Let I this woeful creature lie;
Choose he for me whe'er* he will live or die. *whether*

*Arviragus with health and great honour
(As he that was of chivalry the flow'r)
Is come home, and other worthy men.
Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
Thou hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,
The freshe knight, the worthy man of arms,
That loveth thee as his own heart's life:
Nothing list him to be imaginatif *he cared not to fancy*
If any wight had spoke, while he was out,
To her of love; he had of that no doubt;* *fear, suspicion
He not intended* to no such matter, *occupied himself with
But danced, jousted, and made merry cheer.
And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,
And of the sick Aurelius will I tell
In languor and in torment furious
Two year and more lay wretch'd Aurelius,
Ere any foot on earth he mighte gon;
Nor comfort in this time had he none,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.* *scholar
He knew of all this woe and all this work;
For to none other creature certain
Of this matter he durst no worde sayn;
Under his breast he bare it more secree
Than e'er did Pamphilus for Galatee.
His breast was whole withoute for to seen,
But in his heart aye was the arrow keen,
And well ye know that of a sursanure
In surgery is perilous the cure,
But* men might touch the arrow or come thereby. *except
His brother wept and wailed privily,
Till at the last him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleans in France, —
As younge clerkes, that be likerous* — *eager
To readen artes that be curious,
Seeken in every *halk and every henn* *nook and corner**

Particular sciences for to learn,—
He him remember'd, that upon a day
At Orleans in study a book he say* *saw
Of magic natural, which his fellow,
That was that time a bachelor of law
All* were he there to learn another craft, *though
Had privily upon his desk y-laft;
Which book spake much of operations
Touching the eight and-twenty mansions
That longe to the Moon, and such folly
As in our dayes is not worth a fly;
For holy church's faith, in our believe,* *belief, creed
Us suff'reth none illusion to grieve.
And when this book was in his remembrance
Anon for joy his heart began to dance,
And to himself he saide privily;
"My brother shall be warish'd* hastily *cured
For I am sicker* that there be sciences, *certain
By which men make divers apparences,
Such as these subtle tregetoures play. *tricksters
For oft at feaste's have I well heard say,
That tregetours, within a halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and down.
Sometimes hath seemed come a grim lioun,
And sometimes flowers spring as in a mead;
Sometimes a vine, and grapes white and red;
Sometimes a castle all of lime and stone;
And, when them liked, voided* it anon: *vanished
Thus seemed it to every manne's sight.
Now then conclude I thus; if that I might
At Orleans some olde fellow find,
That hath these Moone's mansions in mind,
Or other magic natural above.
He should well make my brother have his love.
For with an appearance a clerk* may make, *learned man
To manne's sight, that all the rockes blake
Of Bretagne were voided* every one, *removed
And shippes by the brinke come and gon,
And in such form endure a day or two;
Then were my brother warish'd* of his woe, *cured
Then must she needes *holde her behest,* *keep her promise*

Or elles he shall shame her at the least."
Why should I make a longer tale of this?
Unto his brother's bed he comen is,
And such comfort he gave him, for to gon
To Orleans, that he upstart anon,
And on his way forth-ward then is he fare,* *gone
In hope for to be lissed* of his care. *eased of

When they were come almost to that city,
But if it were a two furlong or three, *all but*
A young clerk roaming by himself they met,
Which that in Latin *thriftily them gret.* *greeted them
And after that he said a wondrous thing; civilly*
I know," quoth he, "the cause of your coming;"
Aud ere they farther any foote went,
He told them all that was in their intent.
The Breton clerk him asked of fellows
The which he hadde known in olde daws,* *days
And he answer'd him that they deade were,
For which he wept full often many a tear.
Down off his horse Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magician is be gone
Home to his house, and made him well at ease;
Them lacked no vitail* that might them please. *victuals, food
So well-array'd a house as there was one,
Aurelius in his life saw never none.
He shewed him, ere they went to suppere,
Forestes, parkes, full of wilde deer.
There saw he hartes with their hornes high,
The greatest that were ever seen with eye.
He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds,
And some with arrows bleed of bitter wounds.
He saw, when voided* were the wilde deer, *passed away
These falconers upon a fair rivere,
That with their hawkes have the heron slain.
Then saw he knightes jousting in a plain.
And after this he did him such pleasance,
That he him shew'd his lady on a dance,
In which himselfe danced, as him thought.
And when this master, that this magic wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handes two,
And farewell, all the revel is y-go.* *gone, removed
And yet remov'd they never out of the house,

While they saw all the sightes marvellous;
But in his study, where his bookes be,
They satte still, and no wight but they three.
To him this master called his squier,

And said him thus, "May we go to supper?
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
Since I you bade our supper for to make,
When that these worthy men wente with me
Into my study, where my bookes be."
"Sir," quoth this squier, "when it liketh you.
It is all ready, though ye will right now."
"Go we then sup," quoth he, "as for the best;
These amorous folk some time must have rest."
At after supper fell they in treaty
What summe should this master's guerdon* be, *reward
To remove all the rockes of Bretagne,
And eke from Gironde to the mouth of Seine.
He made it strange,* and swore, so God him save, *a matter of
Less than a thousand pound he would not have, difficulty*
*Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon.
Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answered thus; "Fie on a thousand pound!
This wide world, which that men say is round,
I would it give, if I were lord of it.
This bargain is full-driv'n, for we be knit;* *agreed
Ye shall be payed truly by my troth.
But looke, for no negligence or sloth,
Ye tarry us here no longer than to-morrow."
"Nay," quoth the clerk, *"have here my faith to borrow."* *I pledge
my
To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest, faith on it*
And well-nigh all that night he had his rest,
What for his labour, and his hope of bliss,
His woeful heart *of penance had a liss.* *had a respite
from suffering*
Upon the morrow, when that it was day,
Unto Bretagne they took the righte way,
Aurelius and this magician beside,
And be descended where they would abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde frosty season of December.
Phoebus wax'd old, and hued like latoun,* *brass

That in his hote declinatioun
Shone as the burned gold, with streames* bright; *beams
But now in Capricorn adown he light,
Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.
The bitter frostes, with the sleet and rain,
Destroyed have the green in every yard. *courtyard, garden
Janus sits by the fire with double beard,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Before him stands the brawn of tusked swine
And "nowel"* crieth every lusty man *Noel
Aurelius, in all that ev'r he can,
Did to his master cheer and reverence,
And prayed him to do his diligence
To bringe him out of his paines smart,
Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.
This subtle clerk such ruth* had on this man, *pity
That night and day he sped him, that he can,
To wait a time of his conclusion;
This is to say, to make illusion,
By such an appearance of jugglery
(I know no termes of astrology),
That she and every wight should ween and say,
That of Bretagne the rockes were away,
Or else they were sunken under ground.
So at the last he hath a time found
To make his japes* and his wretchedness *tricks
Of such a *superstitious cursedness.* *detestable villainy*
His tables Toletanes forth he brought,
Full well corrected, that there lacked nought,
Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,
Neither his rootes, nor his other gears,
As be his centres, and his arguments,
And his proportional convenients
For his equations in everything.
And by his eighte spheres in his working,
He knew full well how far Alnath was shove
From the head of that fix'd Aries above,
That in the ninthe sphere consider'd is.
Full subtilly he calcul'd all this.
When he had found his firste mansion,
He knew the remnant by proportion;
And knew the rising of his moone well,

*And in whose face, and term, and every deal;
And knew full well the moone's mansion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew also his other observances,
For such illusions and such meschances,* *wicked devices
As heathen folk used in thilke days.
For which no longer made he delays;
But through his magic, for a day or tway,
It seemed all the rockes were away.*

*Aurelius, which yet despaired is
Whe'er* he shall have his love, or fare amiss, *whether
Awaited night and day on this miracle:
And when he knew that there was none obstacle,
That voided* were these rockes every one, *removed
Down at his master's feet he fell anon,
And said; "I, woeful wretch'd Aurelius,
Thank you, my Lord, and lady mine Venus,
That me have holpen from my cares cold."
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Where as he knew he should his lady see.
And when he saw his time, anon right he
With dreadful* heart and with full humble cheer** *fearful **mien
Saluteth hath his sovereign lady dear.
"My rightful Lady," quoth this woeful man,
"Whom I most dread, and love as I best can,
And lothest were of all this world displease,
Were't not that I for you have such disease,* *distress, affliction
That I must die here at your foot anon,
Nought would I tell how me is woebegone.
But certes either must I die or plain,* *bewail
Ye slay me guilteless for very pain.
But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
Advise you, ere that ye break your truth:
Repente you, for thilke God above,
Ere ye me slay because that I you love.
For, Madame, well ye wot what ye have hight,* *promised
Not that I challenge anything of right
Of you, my sovereign lady, but of grace:
But in a garden yond', in such a place,
Ye wot right well what ye behighte* me, *promised
And in mine hand your trothe plighted ye,
To love me best; God wot ye saide so,*

*Albeit that I unworthy am thereto;
Madame, I speak it for th' honour of you,
More than to save my heart's life right now;
I have done so as ye commanded me,
And if ye vouchesafe, ye may go see.
Do as you list, have your behest in mind,
For, quick or dead, right there ye shall me find;
In you lies all to *do me live or dey,* *cause me to
But well I wot the rockes be away." live or die**

*He took his leave, and she astonish'd stood;
In all her face was not one drop of blood:
She never ween'd t'have come in such a trap.
"Alas!" quoth she, "that ever this should hap!
For ween'd I ne'er, by possibility,
That such a monster or marvail might be;
It is against the process of nature."
And home she went a sorrowful creature;
For very fear unnethes* may she go. *scarcely
She weeped, wailed, all a day or two,
And swooned, that it ruth was to see:
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
For out of town was gone Arviragus.
But to herself she spake, and saide thus,
With face pale, and full sorrowful cheer,
In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.
"Alas!" quoth she, "on thee, Fortune, I plain,* *complain
That unaware hast me wrapped in thy chain,
From which to scape, wot I no succour,
Save only death, or elles dishonour;
One of these two behoveth me to choose.
But natheless, yet had I lever* lose *sooner, rather
My life, than of my body have shame,
Or know my selfe false, or lose my name;
And with my death *I may be quit y-wis.* *I may certainly
purchase
Hath there not many a noble wife, ere this, my exemption*
And many a maiden, slain herself, alas!
Rather than with her body do trespass?
Yes, certes; lo, these stories bear witness.
When thirty tyrants full of cursedness* *wickedness
Had slain Phidon in Athens at the feast,
They commanded his daughters to arrest,*

*And bringe them before them, in despite,
All naked, to fulfil their foul delight;
And in their father's blood they made them dance
Upon the pavement, — God give them mischance.
For which these woeful maidens, full of dread,
Rather than they would lose their maidenhead,
They privily *be start* into a well, *suddenly leaped
And drowned themselves, as the bookes tell.
They of Messene let inquire and seek
Of Lacedaemon fifty maidens eke,
On which they woulde do their lechery:
But there was none of all that company
That was not slain, and with a glad intent
Chose rather for to die, than to assent
To be oppressed* of her maidenhead. *forcibly bereft
Why should I then to dien be in dread?
Lo, eke the tyrant Aristoclides,
That lov'd a maiden hight Stimpthalides,
When that her father slain was on a night,
Unto Diana's temple went she right,
And hent* the image in her handes two, *caught, clasped
From which image she woulde never go;
No wight her handes might off it arace,* *pluck away by force
Till she was slain right in the selfe* place. *same
Now since that maidens hadde such despite
To be defouled with man's foul delight,
Well ought a wife rather herself to sle,* *slay
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.
What shall I say of Hasdrubale's wife,
That at Carthage bereft herself of life?
For, when she saw the Romans win the town,
She took her children all, and skipt adown
Into the fire, and rather chose to die,
Than any Roman did her villainy.
Hath not Lucretia slain herself, alas!
At Rome, when that she oppressed* was *ravished
Of Tarquin? for her thought it was a shame
To live, when she hadde lost her name.
The seven maidens of Miliesie also
Have slain themselves for very dread and woe,
Rather than folk of Gaul them should oppress.
More than a thousand stories, as I guess,*

Could I now tell as touching this matter.
 When Abradate was slain, his wife so dear
 Herselfe slew, and let her blood to glide
 In Abradate's woundes, deep and wide,
 And said, 'My body at the leaste way
 There shall no wight defoul, if that I may.'
 Why should I more examples hereof sayn?
 Since that so many have themselves slain,
 Well rather than they would defouled be,
 I will conclude that it is bet* for me *better
 To slay myself, than be defouled thus.
 I will be true unto Arviragus,
 Or elles slay myself in some mannere,
 As did Demotione's daughter dear,
 Because she woulde not defouled be.
 O Sedasus, it is full great pity
 To reade how thy daughters died, alas!
 That slew themselves *for suche manner cas.* *in circumstances of
 As great a pity was it, or well more, the same kind*
 The Theban maiden, that for Nicanor
 Herselfe slew, right for such manner woe.
 Another Theban maiden did right so;
 For one of Macedon had her oppress'd,
 She with her death her maidenhead redress'd.* *vindicated
 What shall I say of Niceratus' wife,
 That for such case bereft herself her life?
 How true was eke to Alcibiades
 His love, that for to dien rather chese,* *chose
 Than for to suffer his body unburied be?
 Lo, what a wife was Alceste?" quoth she.
 "What saith Homer of good Penelope?
 All Greece knoweth of her chastity.
 Pardie, of Laedamia is written thus,
 That when at Troy was slain Protesilaus,
 No longer would she live after his day.
 The same of noble Porcia tell I may;
 Withoute Brutus coulde she not live,
 To whom she did all whole her hearte give.
 The perfect wifehood of Artemisie
 Honoured is throughout all Barbarie.
 O Teuta queen, thy wifely chastity
 To alle wives may a mirror be."

Thus plained Dorigen a day or tway,
Purposing ever that she woulde dey;* *die
But natheless upon the thirde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And asked her why that she wept so sore.
And she gan weepen ever longer more.
"Alas," quoth she, "that ever I was born!
Thus have I said," quoth she; "thus have I sworn. "
And told him all, as ye have heard before:
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.
This husband with glad cheer,* in friendly wise, *demeanour
Answer'd and said, as I shall you devise.* *relate
"Is there aught elles, Dorigen, but this?"
"Nay, nay," quoth she, "God help me so, *as wis* *assuredly*
This is too much, an* it were Godde's will." *if
"Yea, wife," quoth he, "let sleepe what is still,
It may be well par'venture yet to-day.
Ye shall your trothe holde, by my fay.
For, God so wisly* have mercy on me, *certainly
I had well lever sticked for to be, *I had rather be slain*
For very love which I to you have,
But if ye should your trothe keep and save.
Truth is the highest thing that man may keep."
But with that word he burst anon to weep,
And said; "I you forbid, on pain of death,
That never, while you lasteth life or breath,
To no wight tell ye this misaventure;
As I may best, I will my woe endure,
Nor make no countenance of heaviness,
That folk of you may deeme harm, or guess."
And forth he call'd a squier and a maid.
"Go forth anon with Dorigen," he said,
"And bringe her to such a place anon."
They take their leave, and on their way they gon:
But they not wiste why she thither went;
He would to no wight telle his intent.

This squier, which that hight Aurelius,
On Dorigen that was so amorous,
Of aventure happen'd her to meet
Amid the town, right in the quickest* street, *nearest
As she was bound* to go the way forthright *prepared, going
Toward the garden, there as she had hight.* *promised

*And he was to the garden-ward also;
 For well he spied when she would go
 Out of her house, to any manner place;
 But thus they met, of aventure or grace,
 And he saluted her with glad intent,
 And asked of her whitherward she went.
 And she answered, half as she were mad,
 "Unto the garden, as my husband bade,
 My trothe for to hold, alas! alas!"
 Aurelius gan to wonder on this case,
 And in his heart had great compassion
 Of her, and of her lamentation,
 And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
 That bade her hold all that she hadde hight;
 So loth him was his wife should break her truth* *troth, pledged
 word
 And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,* *pity
 Considering the best on every side,
 *That from his lust yet were him lever abide,
 Than do so high a churlish wretchedness* *wickedness
 Against franchise,* and alle gentleness; *generosity
 For which in fewe words he saide thus;
 "Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
 That since I see the greate gentleness
 Of him, and eke I see well your distress,
 That him were lever* have shame (and that were ruth)** *rather
 **pity
 Than ye to me should breake thus your truth,
 I had well lever aye* to suffer woe, *forever
 Than to depart* the love betwixt you two. *sunder, split up
 I you release, Madame, into your hond,
 Quit ev'ry surement* and ev'ry bond, *surety
 That ye have made to me as herebeforn,
 Since thilke time that ye were born.
 Have here my truth, I shall you ne'er reprove* *reproach
 Of no behest; and here I take my leave, *of no (breach of)
 As of the truest and the beste wife promise*
 That ever yet I knew in all my life.
 But every wife beware of her behest;
 On Dorigen remember at the least.
 Thus can a squier do a gentle deed,
 As well as can a knight, withoute drede."* *doubt*

*She thanked him upon her knees bare,
And home unto her husband is she fare,* *gone
And told him all, as ye have hearde said;
And, truste me, he was so *well apaid,* *satisfied*
That it were impossible me to write.
Why should I longer of this case indite?
Arviragus and Dorigen his wife
In sov'reign blisse ledde forth their life;
Ne'er after was there anger them between;
He cherish'd her as though she were a queen,
And she was to him true for evermore;
Of these two folk ye get of me no more.*

*Aurelius, that his cost had *all forlorn,* *utterly lost*
Cursed the time that ever he was born.
"Alas!" quoth he, "alas that I behight* *promised
Of pured* gold a thousand pound of weight *refined
To this philosopher! how shall I do?
I see no more, but that I am fordo.* *ruined, undone
Mine heritage must I needes sell,
And be a beggar; here I will not dwell,
And shamen all my kindred in this place,
But* I of him may gette better grace. *unless
But natheless I will of him assay
At certain dayes year by year to pay,
And thank him of his greate courtesy.
My trothe will I keep, I will not he."
With hearte sore he went unto his coffer,
And broughte gold unto this philosopher,
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,
And him beseeched, of his gentleness,
To grant him *dayes of* the remenant; *time to pay up*
And said; "Master, I dare well make avaunt,
I failed never of my truth as yet.
For sickerly my debte shall be quit
Towardes you how so that e'er I fare
To go a-begging in my kirtle bare:
But would ye vouchesafe, upon surety,
Two year, or three, for to respite me,
Then were I well, for elles must I sell
Mine heritage; there is no more to tell."*

This philosopher soberly answer'd, *gravely
And saide thus, when he these wordes heard;
"Have I not holden covenant to thee?"
"Yes, certes, well and trueely," quoth he.
"Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liked?"
"No, no," quoth he, and sorrowfully siked.* *sighed
"What was the cause? tell me if thou can."
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before,
It needeth not to you rehearse it more.
He said, "Arviragus of gentleness
Had lever* die in sorrow and distress, *rather
Than that his wife were of her trothe false."
The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als',* *also
How loth her was to be a wicked wife,
And that she lever had lost that day her life;
And that her troth she swore through innocence;
She ne'er erst* had heard speak of apparence** *before
That made me have of her so great pity,
And right as freely as he sent her to me,
As freely sent I her to him again:
This is all and some, there is no more to sayn."*

The philosopher answer'd; "Leve brother, *dear
Evereach of you did gently to the other;
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,
But God forbidde, for his blissful might,
But if a clerk could do a gentle deed
As well as any of you, it is no drede* *doubt
Sir, I release thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crept out of the ground,
Nor ever ere now haddest knowen me.
For, Sir, I will not take a penny of thee
For all my craft, nor naught for my travail;* *labour, pains
Thou hast y-payd well for my vitaille;
It is enough; and farewell, have good day."
And took his horse, and forth he went his way.
Lordings, this question would I aske now,
Which was the moste free,* as thinketh you? *generous
Now telle me, ere that ye farther wend.
I can* no more, my tale is at an end. *know, can tell*

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

*["YEA, let that passe," quoth our Host, "as now.
Sir Doctor of Physik, I praye you,
Tell us a tale of some honest mattere."
"It shall be done, if that ye will it hear,"
Said this Doctor; and his tale gan anon.
"Now, good men," quoth he, "hearken everyone."]*

THE TALE.

*There was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that called was Virginius,
Full filled of honour and worthiness,
And strong of friendes, and of great richness.
This knight one daughter hadde by his wife;
No children had he more in all his life.
Fair was this maid in excellent beauty
Aboven ev'ry wight that man may see:
For nature had with sov'reign diligence
Y-formed her in so great excellence,
As though she woulde say, "Lo, I, Nature,
Thus can I form and paint a creature,
When that me list; who can me counterfeit?
Pygmalion? not though he aye forge and beat,
Or grave or painte: for I dare well sayn,
Apelles, Zeuxis, shoulde work in vain,
Either to grave, or paint, or forge, or beat,
If they presumed me to counterfeit.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath made me his vicar-general
To form and painten earthly creatures
Right as me list, and all thing in my cure* is, *care
Under the moone, that may wane and wax.
And for my work right nothing will I ax* *ask
My lord and I be full of one accord.
I made her to the worship* of my lord;
So do I all mine other creatures,*

*What colour that they have, or what figures."
Thus seemeth me that Nature woulde say.*

This maiden was of age twelve year and tway, *two
In which that Nature hadde such delight.
For right as she can paint a lily white,
And red a rose, right with such painture
She painted had this noble creature,
Ere she was born, upon her limbes free,
Where as by right such colours shoulde be:
And Phoebus dyed had her tresses great,
Like to the streames* of his burned heat. *beams, rays
And if that excellent was her beauty,
A thousand-fold more virtuous was she.
In her there lacked no condition,
That is to praise, as by discretion.
As well in ghost* as body chaste was she: *mind, spirit
For which she flower'd in virginity,
With all humility and abstinence,
With alle temperance and patience,
With measure* eke of bearing and array. *moderation
Discreet she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sayn;
Her faconde* eke full womanly and plain, *speech
No counterfeited termes hadde she
To seeme wise; but after her degree
She spake, and all her worde's more and less
Sounding in virtue and in gentleness.
Shamefast she was in maiden's shamefastness,
Constant in heart, and ever *in business* *diligent, eager*
To drive her out of idle sluggardy:
Bacchus had of her mouth right no mast'ry.
For wine and slothe do Venus increase,
As men in fire will casten oil and grease.
And of her owen virtue, unconstrain'd,
She had herself full often sick y-feign'd,
For that she woulde flee the company,
Where likely was to treaten of folly,
As is at feasts, at revels, and at dances,
That be occasions of dalliances.
Such thinges make children for to be
Too soone ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is full perilous, and hath been yore;* *of old*

*For all too soone may she learne lore
Of boldeness, when that she is a wife.*

And ye mistresses, in your olde life *governesses, duennas
That lordes' daughters have in governance,
Take not of my wordes displeasance
Thinke that ye be set in governings
Of lordes' daughters only for two things;
Either for ye have kept your honesty,
Or else for ye have fallen in frailty
And knowe well enough the olde dance,
And have forsaken fully such meschance* *wickedness
For evermore; therefore, for Christe's sake,
To teach them virtue look that ye not slake.* *be slack, fail
A thief of venison, that hath forlaft* *forsaken, left
His lik'rousness,* and all his olde craft, *gluttony
Can keep a forest best of any man;
Now keep them well, for if ye will ye can.
Look well, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for your wick'* intent, *wicked, evil
For whoso doth, a traitor is certain;
And take keep* of that I shall you sayn; *heed
Of alle treason, sov'reign pestilence
Is when a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye have children, be it one or mo',
Yours is the charge of all their surveyance,* *supervision
While that they be under your governance.
Beware, that by example of your living,
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That they not perish for I dare well say,
If that they do, ye shall it dear abeye.* *pay for, suffer for
Under a shepherd soft and negligent
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.
Suffice this example now as here,
For I must turn again to my mattere.*

*This maid, of which I tell my tale express,
She kept herself, her needed no mistress;
For in her living maidens mighte read,
As in a book, ev'ry good word and deed
That longeth to a maiden virtuous;
She was so prudent and so bounteous.*

For which the fame out sprang on every side
Both of her beauty and her bounte* wide: *goodness
That through the land they praised her each one
That loved virtue, save envy alone,
That sorry is of other manne's weal,
And glad is of his sorrow and unheal* — *misfortune
The Doctor maketh this descriptioun. —
This maiden on a day went in the town
Toward a temple, with her mother dear,
As is of younge maidens the mannere.
Now was there then a justice in that town,
That governor was of that regioun:
And so befell, this judge his eyen cast
Upon this maid, avising* her full fast, *observing
As she came forth by where this judge stood;
Anon his hearte changed and his mood,
So was he caught with beauty of this maid
And to himself full privily he said,
"This maiden shall be mine *for any man."* *despite what any
Anon the fiend into his hearte ran, man may do*
And taught him suddenly, that he by sleight
This maiden to his purpose winne might.
For certes, by no force, nor by no meed,* *bribe, reward
Him thought he was not able for to speed;
For she was strong of friendes, and eke she
Confirmed was in such sov'reign bounte,
That well he wist he might her never win,
As for to make her with her body sin.
For which, with great deliberatioun,
He sent after a clerk was in the town,
The which he knew for subtle and for bold.
This judge unto this clerk his tale told
In secret wise, and made him to assure
He shoulde tell it to no creature,
And if he did, he shoulde lose his head.
And when assented was this cursed rede,* *counsel, plot
Glad was the judge, and made him grete cheer,
And gave him giftes precious and dear.
When shapen* was all their conspiracy *arranged
From point to point, how that his lechery
Performed shoulde be full subtilly,
As ye shall hear it after openly,

Home went this clerk, that highte Claudius.
This false judge, that highte Appius, —
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for a storial* thing notable; *historical, authentic
The sentence* of it sooth** is out of doubt); — *account **true
This false judge went now fast about
To hasten his delight all that he may.
And so befell, soon after on a day,
This false judge, as telleth us the story,
As he was wont, sat in his consistory,
And gave his doomes* upon sundry case'; *judgments
This false clerk came forth *a full great pace,* *in haste
And saide; Lord, if that it be your will,
As do me right upon this piteous bill,* *petition
In which I plain upon Virginus.
And if that he will say it is not thus,
I will it prove, and finde good witness,
That sooth is what my bille will express."
The judge answer'd, "Of this, in his absence,
I may not give definitive sentence.
Let do* him call, and I will gladly hear; *cause
Thou shalt have alle right, and no wrong here."
Virginus came to weet* the judge's will, *know, learn
And right anon was read this cursed bill;
The sentence of it was as ye shall hear
"To you, my lord, Sir Appius so clear,
Sheweth your poore servant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginus,
Against the law, against all equity,
Holdeth, express against the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thrall* by right, *slave
Which from my house was stolen on a night,
While that she was full young; I will it preve* *prove
By witness, lord, so that it you *not grieve;* *be not displeasing*
She is his daughter not, what so he say.
Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,
Yield me my thrall, if that it be your will."
Lo, this was all the sentence of the bill.
Virginus gan upon the clerk behold;
But hastily, ere he his tale told,
And would have proved it, as should a knight,
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,

*That all was false that said his adversary,
This cursed judge would no longer tarry,
Nor hear a word more of Virginius,
But gave his judgement, and saide thus:
"I deem* anon this clerk his servant have; *pronounce, determine
Thou shalt no longer in thy house her save.
Go, bring her forth, and put her in our ward
The clerk shall have his thrall: thus I award."*

*And when this worthy knight, Virginius,
Through sentence of this justice Appius,
Muste by force his deare daughter give
Unto the judge, in lechery to live,
He went him home, and sat him in his hall,
And let anon his deare daughter call;
And with a face dead as ashes cold
Upon her humble face he gan behold,
With father's pity sticking* through his heart, *piercing
All* would he from his purpose not convert.** *although **turn
aside*

*"Daughter," quoth he, "Virginia by name,
There be two wayes, either death or shame,
That thou must suffer, — alas that I was bore!* *born
For never thou deservedest wherefore
To dien with a sword or with a knife,
O deare daughter, ender of my life,
Whom I have foster'd up with such pleasance
That thou were ne'er out of my remembrance;
O daughter, which that art my laste woe,
And in this life my laste joy also,
O gem of chastity, in patience
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentence:
For love and not for hate thou must be dead;
My piteous hand must smiten off thine head.
Alas, that ever Appius thee say!* *saw
Thus hath he falsely judged thee to-day."
And told her all the case, as ye before
Have heard; it needeth not to tell it more.*

*"O mercy, deare father," quoth the maid.
And with that word she both her armes laid
About his neck, as she was wont to do,
(The teares burst out of her eyen two),*

*And said, "O goode father, shall I die?
Is there no grace? is there no remedy?"
"No, certes, deare daughter mine," quoth he.
"Then give me leisure, father mine, quoth she,
"My death for to complain* a little space *bewail
For, pardie, Jephthah gave his daughter grace
For to complain, ere he her slew, alas!
And, God it wot, nothing was her trespass,* *offence
But for she ran her father first to see,
To welcome him with great solemnity."
And with that word she fell a-swoon anon;
And after, when her swooning was y-gone,
She rose up, and unto her father said:
"Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.
Give me my death, ere that I have shame;
Do with your child your will, in Godde's name."
And with that word she prayed him full oft
That with his sword he would smite her soft;
And with that word, a-swoon again she fell.
Her father, with full sorrowful heart and fell,* *stern, cruel
Her head off smote, and by the top it hent,* *took
And to the judge he went it to present,
As he sat yet in doom* in consistory. *judgment*

*And when the judge it saw, as saith the story,
He bade to take him, and to hang him fast.
But right anon a thousand people *in thrast* *rushed in*
To save the knight, for ruth and for pity
For known was the false iniquity.
The people anon had suspect* in this thing, *suspicion
By manner of the clerke's challenging,
That it was by th'assent of Appius;
They wiste well that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And cast him in a prison right anon,
Where as he slew himself: and Claudius,
That servant was unto this Appius,
Was doomed for to hang upon a tree;
But that Virginius, of his pity,
So prayed for him, that he was exil'd;
And elles certes had he been beguil'd;
The remenant were hanged, more and less,
That were consenting to this cursedness.* *villainy*

Here men may see how sin hath his merite: *deserts
Beware, for no man knows how God will smite
In no degree, nor in which manner wise
The worm of conscience may arise* frighten, horrify
Of wicked life, though it so privy be,
That no man knows thereof, save God and he;
For be he lewed* man or elles lear'd,** *ignorant **learned
He knows not how soon he shall be afear'd;
Therefore I rede* you this counsel take, *advise
Forsake sin, ere sinne you forsake.*

THE PARDONER'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

OUR Hoste gan to swear as he were wood;
"Harow!" quoth he, "by nailes and by blood,
This was a cursed thief, a false justice.
As shameful death as hearte can devise
Come to these judges and their advoca's.* *advocates, counsellors
Algate* this sely** maid is slain, alas! *nevertheless **innocent
Alas! too deare bought she her beauty.
Wherefore I say, that all day man may see
That giftes of fortune and of nature
Be cause of death to many a creature.
Her beauty was her death, I dare well sayn;
Alas! so piteously as she was slain.
[Of bothe giftes, that I speak of now
Men have full often more harm than prow,*) *profit
But truly, mine owen master dear,
This was a piteous tale for to hear;
But natheless, pass over; 'tis *no force.* *no matter*
I pray to God to save thy gentle corse,* *body
And eke thine urinals, and thy jordans,
Thine Hippocras, and eke thy Galliens,
And every boist* full of thy lectuary, *box
God bless them, and our lady Sainte Mary.
So may I the',* thou art a proper man, *thrive
And like a prelate, by Saint Ronian;
Said I not well? Can I not speak *in term?* *in set form*
But well I wot thou dost* mine heart to erme,** *makest **grieve
That I have almost caught a cardiacle:* *heartache
By corpus Domini, but* I have triacle,** *unless **a remedy
Or else a draught of moist and corny ale,
Or but* I hear anon a merry tale, *unless
Mine heart is brost* for pity of this maid. *burst, broken
Thou *bel ami,* thou Pardoner," he said, *good friend*
"Tell us some mirth of japes* right anon." *jokes
"It shall be done," quoth he, "by Saint Ronion.
But first," quoth he, "here at this ale-stake* *ale-house sign
I will both drink, and biten on a cake."
But right anon the gentles gan to cry,

"Nay, let him tell us of no ribaldry.
Tell us some moral thing, that we may lear* *learn
Some wit,* and thenne will we gladly hear." *wisdom, sense
"I grant y-wis,"* quoth he; "but I must think *surely
Upon some honest thing while that I drink."

THE TALE

Lordings (quoth he), in churchē when I preach,
I paine me to have an hautein* speech, *take pains **loud
And ring it out, as round as doth a bell,
For I know all by rote that I tell.
My theme is always one, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
First I pronounce whence that I come,
And then my bulles shew I all and some;
Our liege lorde's seal on my patent,
That shew I first, *my body to warrent,* *for the protection
That no man be so hardy, priest nor clerk, of my person*
Me to disturb of Christe's holy werk.
And after that then tell I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,
Of patriarchs, and of bishops I shew,
And in Latin I speak a wordes few,
To savour with my predication,
And for to stir men to devotion
Then show I forth my longe crystal stones,
Y-crammed fall of cloutes* and of bones; *rags, fragments
Relics they be, as *weene they* each one. *as my listeners think*
Then have I in latoun* a shoulder-bone *brass
Which that was of a holy Jewe's sheep.
"Good men," say I, "take of my wordes keep;* *heed
If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swell,
That any worm hath eat, or worm y-stung,
Take water of that well, and wash his tongue,
And it is whole anon; and farthermore
Of pockes, and of scab, and every sore
Shall every sheep be whole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take keep* of that I tell. *heed

"If that the goodman, that the beastes oweth,* *owneth
Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,
Fasting, y-drinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our elders taught,
His beastes and his store shall multiply.
And, Sirs, also it healeth jealousy;
For though a man be fall'n in jealous rage,
Let make with this water his pottage,
And never shall he more his wife mistrust,* *mistrust
Though he the sooth of her defaulte wist; *though he truly
All had she taken priestes two or three. knew her sin*
Here is a mittain* eke, that ye may see; *glove, mitten
He that his hand will put in this mittain,
He shall have multiplying of his grain,
When he hath sowed, be it wheat or oats,
So that he offer pence, or elles groats.
And, men and women, one thing warn I you;
If any wight be in this churche now
That hath done sin horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it y-shriven* be; *confessed
Or any woman, be she young or old,
That hath y-made her husband cokewold,* *cuckold
Such folk shall have no power nor no grace
To offer to my relics in this place.
And whoso findeth him out of such blame,
He will come up and offer in God's name;
And I assoil* him by the authority *absolve
Which that by bull y-granted was to me."

By this gaud* have I wonne year by year *jest, trick
A hundred marks, since I was pardonere.
I stande like a clerk in my pulpit,
And when the lewed* people down is set, *ignorant
I preache so as ye have heard before,
And telle them a hundred japes* more. *jests, deceits
Then pain I me to stretch forth my neck,
And east and west upon the people I beck,
As doth a dove, sitting on a bern;* *barn
My handes and my tongue go so yern,* *briskly
That it is joy to see my business.
Of avarice and of such cursedness* *wickedness
Is all my preaching, for to make them free
To give their pence, and namely* unto me. *especially

For mine intent is not but for to win,
And nothing for correction of sin.
I recke never, when that they be buried,
Though that their soules go a blackburied.
For certes *many a predication *preaching is often inspired
Cometh oft-time of evil intention;* by evil motives*
Some for plesance of folk, and flattery,
To be advanced by hypocrisy;
And some for vainglory, and some for hate.
For, when I dare not otherwise debate,
Then will I sting him with my tongue smart* *sharply
In preaching, so that he shall not astart* *escape
To be defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespass'd* to my brethren or to me. *offended
For, though I telle not his proper name,
Men shall well knowe that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus *quite I* folk that do us displeasances: *I am revenged on*
Thus spit I out my venom, under hue
Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
But, shortly mine intent I will devise,
I preach of nothing but of covetise.
Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was, —
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preach against the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be guilty in that sin,
Yet can I maken other folk to twin* *depart
From avarice, and sore them repent.
But that is not my principal intent;
I preache nothing but for covetise.
Of this matter it ought enough suffice.
Then tell I them examples many a one,
Of olde stories longe time gone;
For lewed* people love tales old; *unlearned
Such thinges can they well report and hold.
What? trowe ye, that whiles I may preach
And winne gold and silver for* I teach, *because
That I will live in povert' wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never truely.
For I will preach and beg in sundry lands;
I will not do no labour with mine hands,

Nor make baskets for to live thereby,
Because I will not beggen idly.
I will none of the apostles counterfeit;* *imitate (in poverty)
I will have money, wool, and cheese, and wheat,
All* were it given of the poorest page, *even if
Or of the poorest widow in a village:
All should her children sterve* for famine. *die
Nay, I will drink the liquor of the vine,
And have a jolly wench in every town.
But hearken, lordings, in conclusioun;
Your liking is, that I shall tell a tale
Now I have drunk a draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shall you tell a thing
That shall by reason be to your liking;
For though myself be a full vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you telle can,
Which I am wont to preache, for to win.
Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin.

In Flanders whilom was a company
Of younge folkes, that haunted folly,
As riot, hazard, stewes,* and taverns; *brothels
Where as with lutes, harpes, and giterns,* *guitars
They dance and play at dice both day and night,
And eat also, and drink over their might;
Through which they do the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluity abominable.
Their oathes be so great and so damnable,
That it is grisly* for to hear them swear. *dreadful
Our blissful Lorde's body they to-tear;* *tore to pieces
Them thought the Jewes rent him not enough,
And each of them at other's sinne lough.* *laughed
And right anon in come tombesteres
Fetis* and small, and younge fruitesteres.** *dainty **fruit-girls
Singers with harpes, baudes,* waferers,** *revellers **cake-sellers
Which be the very devil's officers,
To kindle and blow the fire of lechery,
That is annexed unto gluttony.
The Holy Writ take I to my witness,
That luxury is in wine and drunkenness.
Lo, how that drunken Lot unkindely* *unnaturally

*Lay by his daughters two unwittingly,
 So drunk he was he knew not what he wrought.
 Herodes, who so well the stories sought,
 When he of wine replete was at his feast,
 Right at his owen table gave his hest* *command
 To slay the Baptist John full guilteless.
 Seneca saith a good word, doubteless:
 He saith he can no difference find
 Betwixt a man that is out of his mind,
 And a man whiche that is drunkelew:* *a drunkard
 But that woodness,* y-fallen in a shrew,* *madness **one evil-
 tempered
 Persevereth longer than drunkenness.*

*O gluttony, full of all cursedness;
 O cause first of our confusion,
 Original of our damnation,
 Till Christ had bought us with his blood again!
 Looke, how deare, shortly for to sayn,
 Abought* was first this cursed villainy: *atoned for
 Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.
 Adam our father, and his wife also,
 From Paradise, to labour and to woe,
 Were driven for that vice, it is no dread.* *doubt
 For while that Adam fasted, as I read,
 He was in Paradise; and when that he
 Ate of the fruit defended* of the tree, *forbidden
 Anon he was cast out to woe and pain.
 O gluttony! well ought us on thee plain.
 Oh! wist a man how many maladies
 Follow of excess and of gluttonies,
 He woulde be the more measurable* *moderate
 Of his diete, sitting at his table.
 Alas! the shorte throat, the tender mouth,
 Maketh that east and west, and north and south,
 In earth, in air, in water, men do swink* *labour
 To get a glutton dainty meat and drink.
 Of this matter, O Paul! well canst thou treat
 Meat unto womb,* and womb eke unto meat, *belly
 Shall God destroye both, as Paulus saith.
 Alas! a foul thing is it, by my faith,
 To say this word, and fouler is the deed,
 When man so drinketh of the *white and red,* *i.e. wine**

*That of his throat he maketh his privy
Through thilke cursed superfluity
The apostle saith, weeping full piteously,
There walk many, of which you told have I, —
I say it now weeping with piteous voice, —
That they be enemies of Christe's crois;* *cross
Of which the end is death; womb* is their God. *belly
O womb, O belly, stinking is thy cod,* *bag
Full fill'd of dung and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foul is the soun.
How great labour and cost is thee to find!* *supply
These cookes how they stamp, and strain, and grind,
And turne substance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocke they
The marrow, for they caste naught away
That may go through the gullet soft and swoot* *sweet
Of spicery and leaves, of bark and root,
Shall be his sauce y-maked by delight,
To make him have a newer appetite.
But, certes, he that haunteth such delices
Is dead while that he liveth in those vices.*

*A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness
Is full of striving and of wretchedness.
O drunken man! disfgur'd is thy face,
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace:
And through thy drunken nose sowneth the soun',
As though thou saidest aye, Samsoun! Samsoun!
And yet, God wot, Samson drank never wine.
Thou fallest as it were a sticked swine;
Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure;* *care
For drunkenness is very sepulture* *tomb
Of manne's wit and his discretion.
In whom that drink hath domination,
He can no counsel keep, it is no dread.* *doubt
Now keep you from the white and from the red,
And namely* from the white wine of Lepe, *especially
That is to sell in Fish Street and in Cheap.
This wine of Spaine creepeth subtilly —
In other wines growing faste by,
Of which there riseth such fumosity,
That when a man hath drunken draughtes three,*

*And weeneth that he be at home in Cheap,
He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
Not at the Rochelle, nor at Bourdeaux town;
And thenne will he say, Samsoun! Samsoun!
But hearken, lordings, one word, I you pray,
That all the sovreign actes, dare I say,
Of victories in the Old Testament,
Through very God that is omnipotent,
Were done in abstinence and in prayere:
Look in the Bible, and there ye may it lear.* *learn
Look, Attila, the greate conqueror,
Died in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,
Bleeding aye at his nose in drunkenness:
A captain should aye live in soberness
And o'er all this, advise* you right well *consider, bethink
What was commanded unto Lemuel;
Not Samuel, but Lemuel, say I.
Reade the Bible, and find it expressly
Of wine giving to them that have justice.
No more of this, for it may well suffice.*

*And, now that I have spoke of gluttony,
Now will I you *defende hazardry.* *forbid gambling*
Hazard is very mother of leasings,* *lies
And of deceit, and cursed forswearings:
Blasphem' of Christ, manslaughter, and waste also
Of chattel* and of time; and furthermo' *property
It is reprove,* and contrar' of honour, *reproach
For to be held a common hazardour.
And ever the higher he is of estate,
The more he is holden desolate.* *undone, worthless
If that a prince use hazardry,
In alle governance and policy
He is, as by common opinion,
Y-hold the less in reputation.*

*Chilon, that was a wise ambassador,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honor
From Lacedemon, to make alliance;
And when he came, it happen'd him, by chance,
That all the greatest that were of that land,
Y-playing atte hazard he them fand.* *found
For which, as soon as that it mighte be,*

He stole him home again to his country
And saide there, "I will not lose my name,
Nor will I take on me so great diffame,* *reproach
You to ally unto no hazardors.* *gamblers
Sende some other wise ambassadors,
For, by my troth, me were lever* die, *rather
Than I should you to hazardors ally.
For ye, that be so glorious in honours,
Shall not ally you to no hazardours,
As by my will, nor as by my treaty."
This wise philosopher thus said he.
Look eke how to the King Demetrius
The King of Parthes, as the book saith us,
Sent him a pair of dice of gold in scorn,
For he had used hazard therebeforn:
For which he held his glory and renown
At no value or reputatioun.
Lordes may finden other manner play
Honest enough to drive the day away.

Now will I speak of oathes false and great
A word or two, as olde bookes treat.
Great swearing is a thing abominable,
And false swearing is more reprovable.
The highe God forbade swearing at all;
Witness on Matthew: but in special
Of swearing saith the holy Jeremie,
Thou thalt swear sooth thine oathes, and not lie:
And swear in doom* and eke in righteousness; *judgement
But idle swearing is a cursedness.* *wickedness
Behold and see, there in the firste table
Of highe Godde's hestes* honourable, *commandments
How that the second best of him is this,
Take not my name in idle* or amiss. *in vain
Lo, rather* he forbiddeth such swearing, *sooner
Than homicide, or many a cursed thing;
I say that as by order thus it standeth;
This knoweth he that his hests* understandeth, *commandments
How that the second best of God is that.
And farthermore, I will thee tell all plat,* *flatly, plainly
That vengeance shall not parte from his house,
That of his oathes is outrageous.
"By Godde's precious heart, and by his nails,

*And by the blood of Christ, that is in Hailes,
Seven is my chance, and thine is cinque and trey:
By Godde's armes, if thou falsely play,
This dagger shall throughout thine heart go."
This fruit comes of the *bicched bones two,* *two cursed bones
(dice)*
Forswearing, ire, falseness, and homicide.
Now, for the love of Christ that for us died,
Leave your oathes, bothe great and smale.
But, Sirs, now will I ell you forth my tale.*

*These riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long *erst than* prime rang of any bell, *before
Were set them in a tavern for to drink;
And as they sat, they heard a belle clink
Before a corpse, was carried to the grave.
That one of them gan calle to his knave,* *servant
"Go bet," quoth he, "and aske readily
What corpse is this, that passeth here forth by;
And look that thou report his name well."
"Sir," quoth the boy, "it needeth never a deal;* *whit
It was me told ere ye came here two hours;
He was, pardie, an old fellow of yours,
And suddenly he was y-slain to-night;
Fordrunk* as he sat on his bench upright, *completely drunk
There came a privy thief, men clepe Death,
That in this country all the people slay'th,
And with his spear he smote his heart in two,
And went his way withoute wordes mo'.
He hath a thousand slain this pestilence;
And, master, ere you come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were full necessary
For to beware of such an adversary;
Be ready for to meet him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame; I say no more."
"By Sainte Mary," said the tavernere,
"The child saith sooth, for he hath slain this year,
Hence ov'r a mile, within a great village,
Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page;
I trow his habitation be there;
To be advised* great wisdom it were, *watchful, on one's guard
Ere* that he did a man a dishonour." *lest*

"Yea, Godde's armes," quoth this riotour,
"Is it such peril with him for to meet?
I shall him seek, by stile and eke by street.
I make a vow, by Godde's digne* bones." *worthy
Hearken, fellows, we three be alle ones:* *at one
Let each of us hold up his hand to other,
And each of us become the other's brother,
And we will slay this false traitor Death;
He shall be slain, he that so many slay'th,
By Godde's dignity, ere it be night."
Together have these three their trothe plight
To live and die each one of them for other
As though he were his owen sworn brother.
And up they start, all drunken, in this rage,
And forth they go towards that village
Of which the taverner had spoke beforne,
And many a grisly* oathe have they sworn, *dreadful
And Christe's blessed body they to-rent,* *tore to pieces
"Death shall be dead, if that we may him hent."* *catch
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
Right as they would have trodden o'er a stile,
An old man and a poore with them met.
This olde man full meekely them gret,* *greeted
And saide thus; "Now, lordes, God you see!"* *look on graciously
The proudest of these riotoures three
Answer'd again; "What? churl, with sorry grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped* save thy face? *closely wrapt up
Why livest thou so long in so great age?"
This olde man gan look on his visage,
And saide thus; "For that I cannot find
A man, though that I walked unto Ind,
Neither in city, nor in no village go,
That woulde change his youthe for mine age;
And therefore must I have mine age still
As longe time as it is Godde's will.
And Death, alas! he will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a restless caitife,* *miserable wretch
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knocke with my staff, early and late,
And say to her, 'Leve* mother, let me in. *dear
Lo, how I wane, flesh, and blood, and skin;
Alas! when shall my bones be at rest?"

Mother, with you I woulde change my chest,
That in my chamber longe time hath be,
Yea, for an hairy clout to *wrap in me.'* *wrap myself in*
But yet to me she will not do that grace,
For which fall pale and welked* is my face. *withered
But, Sirs, to you it is no courtesy
To speak unto an old man villainy,
But* he trespass in word or else in deed. *except
In Holy Writ ye may yourselves read;
'Against* an old man, hoar upon his head, *to meet
Ye should arise:' therefore I you rede,* *advise
Ne do unto an old man no harm now,
No more than ye would a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, whether ye go or ride
I must go thither as I have to go."

"Nay, olde churl, by God thou shalt not so,"
Saide this other hazardor anon;
"Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
Thou spakest right now of that traitor Death,
That in this country all our friendes slay'th;
Have here my troth, as thou art his espy;* *spy
Tell where he is, or thou shalt it abie,* *suffer for
By God and by the holy sacrament;
For soothly thou art one of his assent
To slay us younge folk, thou false thief."
"Now, Sirs," quoth he, "if it be you so lief* *desire
To finde Death, turn up this crooked way,
For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
Under a tree, and there he will abide;
Nor for your boast he will him nothing hide.
See ye that oak? right there ye shall him find.
God save you, that bought again mankind,
And you amend!" Thus said this olde man;
And evereach of these riotoures ran,
Till they came to the tree, and there they found
Of florins fine, of gold y-coined round,
Well nigh a seven bushels, as them thought.
No longer as then after Death they sought;
But each of them so glad was of the sight,
For that the florins were so fair and bright,
That down they sat them by the precious hoard.

The youngest of them spake the firste word:
 "Brethren," quoth he, "*take keep* what I shall say; *heed*
 My wit is great, though that I bourde* and play *joke, frolic
 This treasure hath Fortune unto us given
 In mirth and jollity our life to liven;
 And lightly as it comes, so will we spend.
 Hey! Godde's precious dignity! who wend* *weened, thought
 Today that we should have so fair a grace?
 But might this gold be carried from this place
 Home to my house, or elles unto yours
 (For well I wot that all this gold is ours),
 Then were we in high felicity.
 But truly by day it may not be;
 Men woulde say that we were thieves strong,
 And for our owen treasure do us hong.* *have us hanged
 This treasure muste carried be by night,
 As wisely and as slyly as it might.
 Wherefore I rede,* that cut** among us all *advise **lots
 We draw, and let see where the cut will fall:
 And he that hath the cut, with hearte blithe
 Shall run unto the town, and that full swithe,* *quickly
 And bring us bread and wine full privily:
 And two of us shall keepe subtilly
 This treasure well: and if he will not tarry,
 When it is night, we will this treasure carry,
 By one assent, where as us thinketh best."
 Then one of them the cut brought in his fist,
 And bade them draw, and look where it would fall;
 And it fell on the youngest of them all;
 And forth toward the town he went anon.
 And all so soon as that he was y-gone,
 The one of them spake thus unto the other;
 "Thou knowest well that thou art my sworn brother,
 Thy profit will I tell thee right anon. *what is for thine
 Thou knowest well that our fellow is gone, advantage*
 And here is gold, and that full great plenty,
 That shall departed* he among us three. *divided
 But natheless, if I could shape* it so *contrive
 That it departed were among us two,
 Had I not done a friende's turn to thee?"
 Th' other answer'd, "I n'ot* how that may be; *know not
 He knows well that the gold is with us tway.

What shall we do? what shall we to him say?"
 "Shall it be counsel?"* said the firste shrew;** *secret **wretch
 "And I shall tell to thee in wordes few
 What we shall do, and bring it well about."
 "I grante," quoth the other, "out of doubt,
 That by my truth I will thee not bewray."* *betray
 "Now," quoth the first, "thou know'st well we be tway,
 And two of us shall stronger be than one.
 Look; when that he is set,* thou right anon *sat down
 Arise, as though thou wouldest with him play;
 And I shall rive* him through the sides tway, *stab
 While that thou strugglest with him as in game;
 And with thy dagger look thou do the same.
 And then shall all this gold departed* be, *divided
 My deare friend, betwixte thee and me:
 Then may we both our lustes* all fulfil, *pleasures
 And play at dice right at our owen will."
 And thus accorded* be these shrewes** tway *agreed **wretches
 To slay the third, as ye have heard me say.

The youngest, which that wente to the town,
 Full oft in heart he rolled up and down
 The beauty of these florins new and bright.
 "O Lord!" quoth he, "if so were that I might
 Have all this treasure to myself alone,
 There is no man that lives under the throne
 Of God, that shoulde have so merry as I."
 And at the last the fiend our enemy
 Put in his thought, that he should poison buy,
 With which he mighte slay his fellows twy.* *two
 For why, the fiend found him *in such living,* *leading such a
 That he had leave to sorrow him to bring. (bad) life*
 For this was utterly his full intent
 To slay them both, and never to repent.
 And forth he went, no longer would he tarry,
 Into the town to an apothecary,
 And prayed him that he him woulde sell
 Some poison, that he might *his rattes quell,* *kill his rats*
 And eke there was a polecat in his haw,* *farm-yard, hedge
 That, as he said, his eapons had y-slaw:* *slain
 And fain he would him wreak,* if that he might, *revenge
 Of vermin that destroyed him by night.
 Th'apothecary answer'd, "Thou shalt have

A thing, as wisely God my soule save, *surely
In all this world there is no creature
That eat or drank hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance* of a corn of wheat, *amount
That he shall not his life *anon forlete;* *immediately lay down*
Yea, sterve* he shall, and that in lesse while *die
Than thou wilt go *apace* nought but a mile: *quickly*
This poison is so strong and violent."
This cursed man hath in his hand y-hent* *taken
This poison in a box, and swift he ran
Into the nexte street, unto a man,
And borrow'd of him large bottles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The third he kepte clean for his own drink,
For all the night he shope him* for to swink** *purposed **labour
In carrying off the gold out of that place.
And when this riotour, with sorry grace,
Had fill'd with wine his greate bottles three,*

*To his fellows again repaired he.
What needeth it thereof to sermon* more? *talk, discourse
For, right as they had cast* his death before, *plotted
Right so they have him slain, and that anon.
And when that this was done, thus spake the one;
"Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
And afterward we will his body bury."
And with that word it happen'd him *par cas* *by chance
To take the bottle where the poison was,
And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,
For which anon they sterved* both the two. *died
But certes I suppose that Avicen
Wrote never in no canon, nor no fen,
More wondrous signes of empoisoning,
Than had these wretches two ere their ending.
Thus ended be these homicides two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.*

*O cursed sin, full of all cursedness!
O trait'rous homicide! O wickedness!
O glutt'ny, luxury, and hazardry!
Thou blasphemmer of Christ with villany,* *outrage, impiety
And oathes great, of usage and of pride!
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,*

*That to thy Creator, which that thee wrought,
 And with his precious heart-blood thee bought,
 Thou art so false and so unkind,* alas! *unnatural
 Now, good men, God forgive you your trespass,
 And ware* you from the sin of avarice. *keep
 Mine holy pardon may you all warice,* *heal
 So that ye offer *nobles or sterlings,* *gold or silver coins*
 Or elles silver brooches, spoons, or rings.
 Bowe your head under this holy bull.
 Come up, ye wives, and offer of your will;
 Your names I enter in my roll anon;
 Into the bliss of heaven shall ye gon;
 I you assoil* by mine high powere, *absolve
 You that will offer, as clean and eke as clear
 As ye were born. Lo, Sires, thus I preach;
 And Jesus Christ, that is our soules' leech,* *healer
 So grante you his pardon to receive;
 For that is best, I will not deceive.*

*But, Sirs, one word forgot I in my tale;
 I have relics and pardon in my mail,
 As fair as any man in Engleland,
 Which were me given by the Pope's hand.
 If any of you will of devotion
 Offer, and have mine absolution,
 Come forth anon, and kneele here adown
 And meekely receive my pardoun.
 Or elles take pardon, as ye wend,* *go
 All new and fresh at every towne's end,
 So that ye offer, always new and new,
 Nobles or pence which that be good and true.
 'Tis an honour to evereach* that is here, *each one
 That ye have a suffisant* pardonere *suitable
 T'assoile* you in country as ye ride, *absolve
 For adventures which that may betide.
 Paraventure there may fall one or two
 Down of his horse, and break his neck in two.
 Look, what a surety is it to you all,
 That I am in your fellowship y-fall,
 That may assoil* you bothe *more and lass,* *absolve
 When that the soul shall from the body pass. *great and small*
 I rede* that our Hoste shall begin, *advise
 For he is most enveloped in sin.*

*Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first anon,
And thou shalt kiss; the relics every one,
Yea, for a groat; unbuckle anon thy purse.*

*"Nay, nay," quoth he, "then have I Christe's curse!
Let be," quoth he, "it shall not be, *so the'ch.* *so may I thrive*
Thou wouldest make me kiss thine olde breech,
And swear it were a relic of a saint,
Though it were with thy *fundament depaint'*. *stained by your
bottom*
But, by the cross which that Saint Helen fand,* *found
I would I had thy coillons* in mine hand, *testicles
Instead of relics, or of sanctuary.
Let cut them off, I will thee help them carry;
They shall be shrined in a hogge's turd."
The Pardoner answered not one word;
So wroth he was, no worde would he say.*

*"Now," quoth our Host, "I will no longer play
With thee, nor with none other angry man."
But right anon the worthy Knight began
(When that he saw that all the people lough*), *laughed
"No more of this, for it is right enough.
Sir Pardoner, be merry and glad of cheer;
And ye, Sir Host, that be to me so dear,
I pray you that ye kiss the Pardoner;
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,* *nearer
And as we didde, let us laugh and play."
Anon they kiss'd, and rode forth their way.*

THE SHIPMAN'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE

Our Host upon his stirrups stood anon,
And saide; "Good men, hearken every one,
This was a thrifty* tale for the nones. *discreet, profitable
Sir Parish Priest," quoth he, "for Godde's bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy *forword yore:* *promise formerly*
I see well that ye learned men in lore
Can* muche good, by Godde's dignity." *know
The Parson him answer'd, "Ben'dicite!
What ails the man, so sinfully to swear?"
Our Host answer'd, "O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men," quoth our Host, "hearken to me.
I smell a Lollard in the wind," quoth he.
"Abide, for Godde's digne* passion, *worthy
For we shall have a predication:
This Lollard here will preachen us somewhat."
"Nay, by my father's soul, that shall he not,
Saide the Shipman; "Here shall he not preach,
He shall no gospel glose* here nor teach. *comment upon
We all believe in the great God," quoth he.
"He woulde sowe some difficulty,
Or springe cockle in our cleane corn.
And therefore, Host, I warne thee beforne,
My jolly body shall a tale tell,
And I shall clinke you so merry a bell,
That I shall waken all this company;
But it shall not be of philosophy,
Nor of physic, nor termes quaint of law;
There is but little Latin in my maw."* *belly

THE TALE.

A Merchant whilom dwell'd at Saint Denise,
That riche was, for which men held him wise.
A wife he had of excellent beauty,
And *companionable and revellous* was she, *fond of society and
Which is a thing that causeth more dispence merry making*

Than worth is all the cheer and reverence
That men them do at feastes and at dances.
Such salutations and countenances
Passen, as doth the shadow on the wall;
Put woe is him that paye must for all.
The sely* husband algate** he must pay, *innocent **always
He must us clothe and he must us array
All for his owen worship richely:
In which array we dance jollily.
And if that he may not, paraventure,
Or elles list not such dispence endure,
But thinketh it is wasted and y-lost,
Then must another paye for our cost,
Or lend us gold, and that is perilous.

This noble merchant held a noble house;
For which he had all day so great repair,* *resort of visitors
For his largesse, and for his wife was fair,
That wonder is; but hearken to my tale.
Amonges all these gwestes great and smale,
There was a monk, a fair man and a bold,
I trow a thirty winter he was old,
That ever-in-one* was drawing to that place. *constantly
This younge monk, that was so fair of face,
Acquainted was so with this goode man,
Since that their firste knowledge began,
That in his house as familiar was he
As it is possible any friend to be.
And, for as muchel as this goode man,
And eke this monk of which that I began,
Were both the two y-born in one village,
The monk *him claimed, as for cousinage,* *claimed kindred
And he again him said not once nay, with him*
But was as glad thereof as fowl of day;
"For to his heart it was a great pleasance.
Thus be they knit with etern' alliance,
And each of them gan other to assure
Of brotherhood while that their life may dure.
Free was Dan John, and namely* of dispence,** *especially
**spending
As in that house, and full of diligence
To do pleasance, and also *great costage;* *liberal outlay*
He not forgot to give the leaste page

*In all that house; but, after their degree,
He gave the lord, and sithen* his meinie,** *afterwards **servants
When that he came, some manner honest thing;
For which they were as glad of his coming
As fowl is fain when that the sun upriseth.
No more of this as now, for it sufficeth.*

*But so befell, this merchant on a day
Shope* him to make ready his array *resolved, arranged
Toward the town of Bruges for to fare,
To buye there a portion of ware;* *merchandise
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messenger, and prayed hath Dan John
That he should come to Saint Denis, and play* *enjoy himself
With him, and with his wife, a day or tway,
Ere he to Bruges went, in alle wise.
This noble monk, of which I you devise,* *tell
Had of his abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To see their granges and their barnes wide);
And unto Saint Denis he came anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our deare cousin, full of courtesy?
With him he brought a jub* of malvesie, *jug
And eke another full of fine vernage,
And volatile,* as aye was his usage: *wild-fowl
And thus I let them eat, and drink, and play,
This merchant and this monk, a day or tway.
The thirde day the merchant up ariseth,
And on his needeis sadly him adviseth;
And up into his countour-house* went he, *counting-house
To reckon with himself as well may be,
Of thilke* year, how that it with him stood, *that
And how that he dispended bad his good,
And if that he increased were or non.
His bookes and his bagges many a one
He laid before him on his counting-board.
Full riche was his treasure and his hoard;
For which full fast his countour door he shet;
And eke he would that no man should him let* *hinder
Of his accountes, for the meane time:
And thus he sat, till it was passed prime.*

Dan John was risen in the morn also,
 And in the garden walked to and fro,
 And had his thinges said full courteously.
 The good wife came walking full privily
 Into the garden, where he walked soft,
 And him saluted, as she had done oft;
 A maiden child came in her company,
 Which as her list she might govern and gie,* *guide
 For yet under the yarde* was the maid. *rod
 "O deare cousin mine, Dan John," she said,
 "What aileth you so rath* for to arise?" *early
 "Niece," quoth he, "it ought enough suffice
 Five houres for to sleep upon a night;
 But* it were for an old appalled** wight, *unless **pallid, wasted
 As be these wedded men, that lie and dare,* *stare
 As in a forme sits a weary hare,
 Alle forstraught* with houndes great and smale; *distracted,
 confounded
 But, deare niece, why be ye so pale?
 I trowe certes that our goode man
 Hath you so laboured, since this night began,
 That you were need to reste hastily."
 And with that word he laugh'd full merrily,
 And of his owen thought he wax'd all red.
 This faire wife gan for to shake her head,
 And saide thus; "Yea, God wot all" quoth she.
 "Nay, cousin mine, it stands not so with me;
 For by that God, that gave me soul and life,
 In all the realm of France is there no wife
 That lesse lust hath to that sorry play;
 For I may sing alas and well-away!
 That I was born; but to no wight," quoth she,
 "Dare I not tell how that it stands with me.
 Wherefore I think out of this land to wend,
 Or elles of myself to make an end,
 So full am I of dread and eke of care."

This monk began upon this wife to stare,
 And said, "Alas! my niece, God forbid
 That ye for any sorrow, or any dread,
 Fordo* yourself: but telle me your grief, *destroy
 Paraventure I may, in your mischief,* *distress
 Counsel or help; and therefore telle me

All your annoy, for it shall be secre.
For on my portos* here I make an oath, *breviary
That never in my life, *for lief nor loth,* *willing or unwilling*
Ne shall I of no counsel you bewray."
"The same again to you," quoth she, "I say.
By God and by this portos I you swear,
Though men me woulden all in pieces tear,
Ne shall I never, for* to go to hell, *though I should
Bewray* one word of thing that ye me tell, *betray
For no cousinage, nor alliance,
But verily for love and affiance."* *confidence, promise
Thus be they sworn, and thereupon they kiss'd,
And each of them told other what them list.
"Cousin," quoth she, "if that I hadde space,
As I have none, and namely* in this place, *specially
Then would I tell a legend of my life,
What I have suffer'd since I was a wife
With mine husband, all* be he your cousin. *although
"Nay," quoth this monk, "by God and Saint Martin,
He is no more cousin unto me,
Than is the leaf that hangeth on the tree;
I call him so, by Saint Denis of France,
To have the more cause of acquaintance
Of you, which I have loved specially
Aboven alle women sickerly,* *surely
This swear I you *on my professioun;* *by my vows of religion
Tell me your grief, lest that he come adown,
And hasten you, and go away anon."

"My deare love," quoth she, "O my Dan John,
Full lief* were me this counsel for to hide, *pleasant
But out it must, I may no more abide.
My husband is to me the worste man
That ever was since that the world began;
But since I am a wife, it sits* not me *becomes
To telle no wight of our privy,
Neither in bed, nor in none other place;
God shield* I shoulde tell it for his grace; *forbid
A wife shall not say of her husband
But all honour, as I can understand;
Save unto you thus much I telle shall;
As help me God, he is nought worth at all
In no degree, the value of a fly.

But yet me grieveth most his niggardy.* *stinginess
And well ye wot, that women naturally
Desire thinges six, as well as I.
They woulde that their husbands shoulde be
Hardy,* and wise, and rich, and thereto free, *brave
And buxom* to his wife, and fresh in bed. *yielding, obedient
But, by that ilke* Lord that for us bled, *same
For his honour myself for to array,
On Sunday next I muste needes pay
A hundred francs, or elles am I lorn.* *ruined, undone
Yet *were me lever* that I were unborn, *I would rather*
Than me were done slander or villainy.
And if mine husband eke might it espy,
I were but lost; and therefore I you pray,
Lend me this sum, or elles must I dey.* *die
Dan John, I say, lend me these hundred francs;
Pardie, I will not faile you, *my thanks,* *if I can help it*
If that you list to do that I you pray;
For at a certain day I will you pay,
And do to you what pleasance and service
That I may do, right as you list devise.
And but* I do, God take on me vengeance, *unless
As foul as e'er had Ganilion of France."

This gentle monk answer'd in this mannere;
"Now truly, mine owen lady dear,
I have," quoth he, "on you so greate ruth,* *pity
That I you swear, and plighte you my truth,
That when your husband is to Flanders fare,* *gone
I will deliver you out of this care,
For I will bringe you a hundred francs."
And with that word he caught her by the flanks,
And her embraced hard, and kissed her oft.
"Go now your way," quoth he, "all still and soft,
And let us dine as soon as that ye may,
For by my cylinder* 'tis prime of day; *portable sundial
Go now, and be as true as I shall be ."
"Now elles God forbidde, Sir," quoth she;
And forth she went, as jolly as a pie,
And bade the cookes that they should them hie,* *make haste
So that men mighte dine, and that anon.
Up to her husband is this wife gone,
And knocked at his contour boldly.

"Qui est là?" quoth he. "Peter! it am I," *who is there?**
Quoth she; "What, Sir, how longe all will ye fast?
How longe time will ye reckon and cast
Your summes, and your bookes, and your things?
The devil have part of all such reckonings!
Ye have enough, pardie, of Godde's sond. *sending, gifts*
Come down to-day, and let your bagges stond. *stand*
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John
Shall fasting all this day elenge gon?*
What? let us hear a mass, and go we dine."
"Wife," quoth this man, "little canst thou divine
The curious businesse that we have;
For of us chapmen, all so God me save, *merchants*
And by that lord that cleped is Saint Ive,
Scarcely amonges twenty, ten shall thrive
Continually, lasting unto our age.
We may well make cheer and good visage,
And drive forth the world as it may be,
And keepen our estate in privity,
Till we be dead, or elles that we play
A pilgrimage, or go out of the way.
And therefore have I great necessity
Upon this quaint world to advise** me. *strange **consider*
For evermore must we stand in dread
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhead. *trading*
To Flanders will I go to-morrow at day,
And come again as soon as e'er I may:
*For which, my deare wife, I thee beseeke *beseech*
As be to every wight buxom and meek, *civil, courteous*
And for to keep our good be curious,
And honestly governe well our house.
Thou hast enough, in every manner wise,
That to a thrifty household may suffice.
Thee lacketh none array, nor no vitail;
Of silver in thy purse thou shalt not fail."

And with that word his contour door he shet, *shut*
And down he went; no longer would he let, *delay, hinder*
And hastily a mass was there said,
And speedily the tables were laid,
And to the dinner faste they them sped,
And richely this monk the chapman fed.
And after dinner Dan John soberly

*This chapman took apart, and privily
He said him thus: "Cousin, it standeth so,
That, well I see, to Bruges ye will go;
God and Saint Austin speede you and guide.
I pray you, cousin, wisely that ye ride:
Governe you also of your diet
Attemperly,* and namely** in this heat. *moderately
Betwixt us two needeth no *strange fare,* *ado, ceremony*
Farewell, cousin, God shielde you from care.
If any thing there be, by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me will command in any wise,
It shall be done, right as ye will devise.
But one thing ere ye go, if it may be;
I woulde pray you for to lend to me
A hundred frankes, for a week or twy,
For certain beastes that I muste buy,
To store with a place that is ours
(God help me so, I would that it were yours);
I shall not faile surely of my day,
Not for a thousand francs, a mile way.
But let this thing be secret, I you pray;
For yet to-night these beastes must I buy.
And fare now well, mine owen cousin dear;
Grand mercy of your cost and of your cheer." *great thanks**

This noble merchant gentilly anon *like a gentleman
Answer'd and said, "O cousin mine, Dan John,
Now sickerly this is a small request:
My gold is youres, when that it you lest,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare;* *merchandise
Take what you list, *God shielde that ye spare.* *God forbid that
you
But one thing is, ye know it well enow should take too little*
Of chapmen, that their money is their plough.
We may creance* while we have a name, *obtain credit
But goldless for to be it is no game.
Pay it again when it lies in your ease;
After my might full fain would I you please."*

*These hundred frankes set he forth anon,
And privily he took them to Dan John;
No wight in all this world wist of this loan,*

*Saving the merchant and Dan John alone.
They drink, and speak, and roam a while, and play,
Till that Dan John rode unto his abbay.
The morrow came, and forth this merchant rideth
To Flanders-ward, his prentice well him guideth,
Till he came unto Bruges merrily.
Now went this merchant fast and busily
About his need, and buyed and creanced;* *got credit
He neither played at the dice, nor danced;
But as a merchant, shortly for to tell,
He led his life; and there I let him dwell.*

The Sunday next the merchant was y-gone, *after
To Saint Denis y-comen is Dan John,
With crown and beard all fresh and newly shave,
In all the house was not so little a knave,* *servant-boy
Nor no wight elles that was not full fain
For that my lord Dan John was come again.
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
The faire wife accorded with Dan John,
That for these hundred francs he should all night
Have her in his armes bolt upright;
And this accord performed was in deed.
In mirth all night a busy life they lead,
Till it was day, that Dan John went his way,
And bade the meinie* "Farewell; have good day." *servants
For none of them, nor no wight in the town,
Had of Dan John right no suspicioun;
And forth he rode home to his abbay,
Or where him list; no more of him I say.*

*The merchant, when that ended was the fair,
To Saint Denis he gan for to repair,
And with his wife he made feast and cheer,
And tolde her that chaffare* was so dear, *merchandise
That needes must he make a chevisance,* *loan
For he was bound in a recognisance
To paye twenty thousand shields* anon. *crowns, ecus
For which this merchant is to Paris gone,
To borrow of certain friendes that he had
A certain francs, and some with him he lad.* *took
And when that he was come into the town,
For great cherte* and great affectioun *love*

Unto Dan John he wente first to play;
Not for to borrow of him no money,
Bat for to weet* and see of his welfare, *know
And for to telle him of his chaffare,
As friendes do, when they be met in fere.* *company
Dan John him made feast and merry cheer;
And he him told again full specially,
How he had well y-bought and graciously
(Thanked be God) all whole his merchandise;
Save that he must, in alle manner wise,
Maken a chevisance, as for his best;
And then he shoulde be in joy and rest.
Dan John answered, "Certes, I am fain* *glad
That ye in health be come borne again:
And if that I were rich, as have I bliss,
Of twenty thousand shields should ye not miss,
For ye so kindly the other day
Lente me gold, and as I can and may
I thanke you, by God and by Saint Jame.
But natheless I took unto our Dame,
Your wife at home, the same gold again,
Upon your bench; she wot it well, certain,
By certain tokens that I can her tell
Now, by your leave, I may no longer dwell;
Our abbot will out of this town anon,
And in his company I muste gon.
Greet well our Dame, mine owen niece sweet,
And farewell, deare cousin, till we meet.

This merchant, which that was full ware and wise,
Creanced hath, and paid eke in Paris *had obtained credit*
To certain Lombards ready in their hond
The sum of gold, and got of them his bond,
And home he went, merry as a popinjay.* *parrot
For well he knew he stood in such array
That needes must he win in that voyage
A thousand francs, above all his costage.* *expenses
His wife full ready met him at the gate,
As she was wont of old usage algate* *always
And all that night in mirth they beset;* *spent
For he was rich, and clearly out of debt.
When it was day, the merchant gan embrace

*His wife all new, and kiss'd her in her face,
And up he went, and maked it full tough.*

*"No more," quoth she, "by God ye have enough;"
And wantonly again with him she play'd,
Till at the last this merchant to her said.
"By God," quoth he, "I am a little wroth
With you, my wife, although it be me loth;
And wot ye why? by God, as that I guess,
That ye have made a *manner strangeness* *a kind of
estrangement*
Betwixte me and my cousin, Dan John.
Ye should have warned me, ere I had gone,
That he you had a hundred frankes paid
By ready token; he *had him evil apaid* *was displeased*
For that I to him spake of chevisance,* *borrowing
(He seemed so as by his countenance);
But natheless, by God of heaven king,
I thoughte not to ask of him no thing.
I pray thee, wife, do thou no more so.
Tell me alway, ere that I from thee go,
If any debtor hath in mine absence
Y-payed thee, lest through thy negligence
I might him ask a thing that he hath paid."*

*This wife was not afeared nor afraid,
But boldly she said, and that anon;
"Mary! I defy that false monk Dan John,
I keep* not of his tokens never a deal.** *care **whit
He took me certain gold, I wot it well. —
What? evil thedom* on his monke's snout! — *thriving
For, God it wot, I ween'd withoute doubt
That he had given it me, because of you,
To do therewith mine honour and my prow,* *profit
For cousinage, and eke for belle cheer
That he hath had full often here.
But since I see I stand in such disjoint,* *awkward position
I will answer you shortly to the point.
Ye have more slacke debtors than am I;
For I will pay you well and readily,
From day to day, and if so be I fail,
I am your wife, score it upon my tail,
And I shall pay as soon as ever I may.*

*For, by my troth, I have on mine array,
And not in waste, bestow'd it every deal.
And, for I have bestowed it so well,
For your honour, for Godde's sake I say,
As be not wroth, but let us laugh and play.
Ye shall my jolly body have *to wed;* *in pledge*
By God, I will not pay you but in bed;
Forgive it me, mine owen spouse dear;
Turn hitherward, and make better cheer."*

*The merchant saw none other remedy;
And for to chide, it were but a folly,
Since that the thing might not amended be.
"Now, wife," he said, "and I forgive it thee;
But by thy life be no more so large;* *liberal, lavish
Keep better my good, this give I thee in charge."
Thus endeth now my tale; and God us send
Taling enough, until our lives' end!*

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

THE PROLOGUE.

"WELL said, by *corpus Domini,"* quoth our Host; *the Lord's body*
"Now longe may'st thou saile by the coast,
Thou gentle Master, gentle Marinere.
God give the monk *a thousand last quad year!* *ever so much evil*
Aha! fellows, beware of such a jape.* *trick
The monk *put in the manne's hood an ape,* *fooled him*
And in his wife's eke, by Saint Austin.
Drawe no monkes more into your inn.
But now pass over, and let us seek about,
Who shall now telle first of all this rout
Another tale;" and with that word he said,
As courteously as it had been a maid;
"My Lady Prioress, by your leave,
So that I wist I shoulde you not grieve,* *offend
I woulde deeme* that ye telle shoulde *judge, decide
A tale next, if so were that ye would.
Now will ye vouchesafe, my lady dear?"
"Gladly," quoth she; and said as ye shall hear.

THE TALE.

O Lord our Lord! thy name how marvellous
Is in this large world y-spread! (quoth she)
For not only thy laude* precious *praise
Performed is by men of high degree,
But by the mouth of children thy bounte* *goodness
Performed is, for on the breast sucking
Sometimes shewe they thy herying.* *glory

Wherefore in laud, as I best can or may
Of thee, and of the white lily flow'r
Which that thee bare, and is a maid alway,
To tell a story I will do my labour;
Not that I may increase her honour,
For she herself is honour and root
Of bounte, next her son, and soules' boot.* *help

O mother maid, O maid and mother free!* *bounteous
O bush unburnt, burning in Moses' sight,
That ravished'st down from the deity,
Through thy humbless, the ghost that in thee light;
Of whose virtue, when he thine hearte light,* *lightened,
gladdened
Conceived was the Father's sapience;
Help me to tell it to thy reverence.

Lady! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
There may no tongue express in no science:
For sometimes, Lady! ere men pray to thee,
Thou go'st before, of thy benignity,
And gettest us the light, through thy prayere,
To guiden us unto thy son so dear.

My conning* is so weak, O blissful queen, *skill, ability
For to declare thy great worthiness,
That I not may the weight of it sustene;
But as a child of twelvemonth old, or less,
That can unnethes* any word express, *scarcely
Right so fare I; and therefore, I you pray,
Guide my song that I shall of you say.

There was in Asia, in a great city,
Amonges Christian folk, a Jewery,
Sustained by a lord of that country,
For foul usure, and lucre of villainy,
Hateful to Christ, and to his company;
And through the street men mighte ride and wend,* *go, walk
For it was free, and open at each end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were

*Children an heap y-come of Christian blood,
That learned in that schoole year by year
Such manner doctrine as men used there;
This is to say, to singen and to read,
As smalle children do in their childhead.*

*Among these children was a widow's son,
A little clergion,* seven year of age, *young clerk or scholar
That day by day to scholay* was his won,** *study **wont
And eke also, whereso he saw th' image
Of Christe's mother, had he in usage,
As him was taught, to kneel adown, and say
Ave Maria as he went by the way.*

*Thus had this widow her little son y-taught
Our blissful Lady, Christe's mother dear,
To worship aye, and he forgot it not;
For sely* child will always soone lear.** *innocent **learn
But aye when I remember on this mattere,
Saint Nicholas stands ever in my presence;
For he so young to Christ did reverence.*

*This little child his little book learning,
As he sat in the school at his primere,
He Alma redemptoris hearde sing,
As children learned their antiphonere;
And as he durst, he drew him nere and nere,* *nearer
And hearken'd aye the wordes and the note,
Till he the firste verse knew all by rote.*

Nought wist he what this Latin was tosay, *meant
For he so young and tender was of age;
But on a day his fellow gan he pray
To expound him this song in his language,
Or tell him why this song was in usage:
This pray'd he him to construe and declare,
Full oftentime upon his knees bare.*

*His fellow, which that elder was than he,
Answer'd him thus: "This song, I have heard say,
Was maked of our blissful Lady free,
Her to salute, and eke her to pray
To be our help and succour when we dey.* *die*

*I can no more expound in this matter:
I learne song, I know but small grammere."*

*"And is this song y-made in reverence
Of Christe's mother?" said this innocent;
Now certes I will do my diligence
To conne* it all, ere Christemas be went; *learn; con
Though that I for my primer shall be shent,* *disgraced
And shall be beaten thrise in an hour,
I will it conne, our Lady to honour."*

His fellow taught him homeward privily *on the way home
From day to day, till he coud* it by rote, *knew
And then he sang it well and boldly
From word to word according with the note;
Twice in a day it passed through his throat;
To schoole-ward, and homeward when he went;
On Christ's mother was set all his intent.*

*As I have said, throughout the Jewery,
This little child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma redemptoris, evermo';
The sweetness hath his hearte pierced so
Of Christe's mother, that to her to pray
He cannot stint* of singing by the way. *cease*

*Our firste foe, the serpent Satanas,
That hath in Jewes' heart his waspe's nest,
Upswell'd and said, "O Hebrew people, alas!
Is this to you a thing that is honest,* *creditable, becoming
That such a boy shall walken as him lest
In your despite, and sing of such sentence,
Which is against your lawe's reverence?"*

*From thenceforth the Jewes have conspired
This innocent out of the world to chase;
A homicide thereto have they hired,
That in an alley had a privy place,
And, as the child gan forth by for to pace,
This cursed Jew him hent,* and held him fast *seized
And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast.*

I say that in a wardrobe he him threw, *privy
Where as the Jewes purged their entrail.
O cursed folk! O Herodes all new!
What may your evil intente you avail?
Murder will out, certain it will not fail,
And namely* where th' honour of God shall spread; *especially
The blood out crieth on your cursed deed.*

O martyr souted to virginity, *confirmed
Now may'st thou sing, and follow ever-in-one* *continually
The white Lamb celestial (quoth she),
Of which the great Evangelist Saint John
In Patmos wrote, which saith that they that gon
Before this Lamb, and sing a song all new,
That never fleshly woman they ne knew.*

*This poore widow waited all that night
After her little child, but he came not;
For which, as soon as it was daye's light,
With face pale, in dread and busy thought,
She hath at school and elleswhere him sought,
Till finally she gan so far espy,
That he was last seen in the Jewery.*

*With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She went, as she were half out of her mind,
To every place, where she hath supposed
By likelihood her little child to find:
And ever on Christ's mother meek and kind
She cried, and at the laste thus she wrought,
Among the cursed Jewes she him sought.*

She freined, and she prayed piteously *asked*
To every Jew that dwelled in that place,
To tell her, if her childe went thereby;
They saide, "Nay;" but Jesus of his grace
Gave in her thought, within a little space,
That in that place after her son she cried,
Where he was cast into a pit beside.*

*O greate God, that preformest thy laud
By mouth of innocents, lo here thy might!
This gem of chastity, this emeraud,* *emerald*

*And eke of martyrdom the ruby bright,
Where he with throat y-carven* lay upright, *cut
He Alma Redemptoris gan to sing
So loud, that all the place began to ring.*

*The Christian folk, that through the streete went,
In came, for to wonder on this thing:
And hastily they for the provost sent.
He came anon withoute tarrying,
And heried* Christ, that is of heaven king, *praised
And eke his mother, honour of mankind;
And after that the Jewes let* he bind. *caused*

*With torment, and with shameful death each one
The provost did* these Jewes for to sterve** *caused **die
That of this murder wist, and that anon;
He woulde no such cursedness observe* *overlook
Evil shall have that evil will deserve;
Therefore with horses wild he did them draw,
And after that he hung them by the law.*

*The child, with piteous lamentation,
Was taken up, singing his song alway:
And with honour and great procession,
They crry him unto the next abbay.
His mother swooning by the biere lay;
Unnethes* might the people that were there *scarcely
This newe Rachel bringe from his bier.*

*Upon his biere lay this innocent
Before the altar while the masses last;* *lasted
And, after that, th' abbot with his convent
Have sped them for to bury him full fast;
And when they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this child, when sprinkled was the water,
And sang, O Alma redemptoris mater!*

*This abbot, which that was a holy man,
As monkes be, or elles ought to be,
This younger child to conjure he began,
And said; "O deare child! I halse* thee, *implore
In virtue of the holy Trinity;*

*Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,
Since that thy throat is cut, to my seeming."*

*"My throat is cut unto my necke-bone,"
Saide this child, "and, as *by way of kind,* *in course of nature*
I should have died, yea long time ago;
But Jesus Christ, as ye in bookes find,
Will that his glory last and be in mind;
And, for the worship* of his mother dear, *glory
Yet may I sing O Alma loud and clear.*

"This well of mercy, Christs mother sweet, *fountain
I loved alway, after my conning:* *knowledge
And when that I my life should forlete,* *leave
To me she came, and bade me for to sing
This anthem verily in my dying,
As ye have heard; and, when that I had sung,
Me thought she laid a grain upon my tongue.*

*"Wherefore I sing, and sing I must certain,
In honour of that blissful maiden free,
Till from my tongue off taken is the grain.
And after that thus saide she to me;
'My little child, then will I fetch thee,
When that the grain is from thy tongue take:
Be not aghast,* I will thee not forsake.'" *afraid*

*This holy monk, this abbot him mean I,
His tongue out caught, and took away the grain;
And he gave up the ghost full softly.
And when this abbot had this wonder seen,
His salte teares trickled down as rain:
And groff* he fell all flat upon the ground, *prostrate, grovelling
And still he lay, as he had been y-bound.*

The convent lay eke on the pavement *all the monks
Weeping, and herying* Christ's mother dear. *praising
And after that they rose, and forth they went,
And took away this martyr from his bier,
And in a tomb of marble stones clear
Enclosed they his little body sweet;
Where he is now, God lene* us for to meet. *grant*

*O younge Hugh of Lincoln! slain also
With cursed Jewes, — as it is notable,
For it is but a little while ago, —
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That, of his mercy, God so merçiable* *merciful
On us his greate mercy multiply,
For reverence of his mother Mary.*