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**By
Geoffrey Chaucer**

Freeditorial 

THE CANTERBURY TALES AND OTHER POEMS

THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTINGALE

THE noble vindication of true love, as an exalting, purifying, and honour-conferring power, which Chaucer has made in "The Court of Love," is repeated in "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale." At the same time, the close of the poem leads up to "The Assembly of Fowls;" for, on the appeal of the Nightingale, the dispute between her and the Cuckoo, on the merits and blessings of love, is referred to a parliament of birds, to be held on the morrow after Saint Valentine's Day. True, the assembly of the feathered tribes described by Chaucer, though held on Saint Valentine's Day, and engaged in the discussion of a controversy regarding love, is not occupied with the particular cause which in the present poem the Nightingale appeals to the parliament. But "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" none the less serves as a link between the two poems; indicating as it does the nature of those controversies, in matters subject to the supreme control of the King and Queen of Love, which in the subsequent poem we find the courtiers, under the guise of birds, debating in full conclave and under legal forms. Exceedingly simple in conception, and written in a metre full of musical irregularity and forcible freedom, "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" yields in vividness, delicacy, and grace to none of Chaucer's minor poems. We are told that the poet, on the third night of May, is sleepless, and rises early in the morning, to try if he may hear the Nightingale sing. Wandering by a brook-side, he sits down on the flowery lawn, and ere long, lulled by the sweet melody of many birds and the well-according music of the stream, he falls into a kind of doze — "not all asleep, nor fully waking." Then (an evil omen) he hears the Cuckoo sing before the Nightingale; but soon he hears the Nightingale request the Cuckoo to remove far away, and leave the place to birds that can sing. The Cuckoo enters into a defence of her song, which becomes a railing accusation against Love and a recital of the miseries which Love's servants endure; the Nightingale vindicates Love in a lofty and tender strain, but is at last overcome with sorrow by the bitter words of the Cuckoo, and calls on the God of Love for help. On this the poet starts up, and, snatching a stone from the brook, throws it at the Cuckoo, who flies away full fast. The grateful Nightingale promises that, for this service, she will be her champion's singer all that May; she warns him against believing the Cuckoo, the foe of Love; and then, having sung him one of her new songs, she flies away to all the other birds that are in that dale, assembles them, and demands that they should do her right upon the Cuckoo. By one assent it is agreed that a parliament shall be held, "the morrow after Saint Valentine's Day," under a maple before the window of Queen Philippa at Woodstock, when judgment shall be passed upon the Cuckoo; then the Nightingale flies into a hawthorn, and sings a lay of love so

loud that the poet awakes. The five-line stanza, of which the first, second, and fifth lines agree in one rhyme, the third and fourth in another, is peculiar to this poem; and while the prevailing measure is the decasyllabic line used in the "Canterbury Tales," many of the lines have one or two syllables less. The poem is given here without abridgement. (Transcriber's note: Modern scholars believe that Chaucer was not the author of this poem)

THE God of Love, ah! benedicite,
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
For he can make of lowe heartes high,
And of high low, and like for to die,
And harde heartes he can make free.
He can make, within a little stound, moment
Of sicke folke whole, and fresh, and sound,
And of the whole he can make sick;
He can bind, and unbinden eke,
What he will have bounden or unbound.
To tell his might my wit may not suffice;
For he can make of wise folk full nice, — foolish
For he may do all that he will devise, —
And lither folke to destroye vice, idle, vicious
And proude heartes he can make agrise. tremble
Shortly, all that ever he will he may;
Against him dare no wight say nay;
For he can glad and grieve whom him liketh. whom he pleases
And who that he will, he laugheth or siketh, sigheth
And most his might he sheddeth ever in May.
For every true gentle hearte free,
That with him is, or thinketh for to be,
Against May now shall have some stirring, impulse
Either to joy, or else to some mourning,
In no season so much, as thinketh me.
For when that they may hear the birdes sing,
And see the flowers and the leaves spring,
That bringeth into hearte's remembrance
A manner ease, medled with grievance, mingled with sorrow
And lusty thoughtes full of great longing.
And of that longing cometh heaviness,
And thereof groweth greate sickeness,
And for the lack of that that they desire:
And thus in May be heartes set on fire,

So that they brennen forth in great distress. burn
I speake this of feeling truly;
If I be old and unlusty,
Yet I have felt the sickness thorough May
Both hot and cold, an access ev'ry day, every day a hot and a
How sore, y-wis, there wot no wight but I. cold fit
I am so shaken with the fevers white,
Of all this May sleep I but lite; little
And also it is not like unto me pleasing
That any hearte shoulde sleepy be,
In whom that Love his fiery dart will smite,
But as I lay this other night waking,
I thought how lovers had a tokening, significance
And among them it was a common tale,
That it were good to hear the nightingale
Rather than the lewd cuckoo sing.
And then I thought, anon it was day, whenever
I would go somewhere to assay
If that I might a nightingale hear;
For yet had I none heard of all that year,
And it was then the thirde night of May.
And anon as I the day espied,
No longer would I in my bed abide;
But to a wood that was fast by,
I went forth alone boldely,
And held the way down by a brooke's side,
Till I came to a laund of white and green, lawn
So fair a one had I never in been;
The ground was green, y-powder'd with daisy, strewn with daisies
The flowers and the greves like high, bushes of the same height
All green and white; was nothing elles seen.
There sat I down among the faire flow'rs,
And saw the birdes trip out of their bow'rs,
There as they rested them alle the night;
They were so joyful of the daye's light,
They began of May for to do honours.
They coud that service all by rote; knew
There was many a lovely note!
Some sange loud as they had plain'd,
And some in other manner voice feign'd,
And some all out with the full throat.

They pruned them, and made them right gay, preened their feathers
And danc'd and leapt upon the spray;
And evermore two and two in fere, together
Right so as they had chosen them to-year this year
In Feverere upon Saint Valentine's Day. February
And the river that I sat upon, beside
It made such a noise as it ran,
Accordant with the birde's harmony, keeping time with
Me thought it was the beste melody
That might be heard of any man.
And for delight, I wote never how,
I fell in such a slumber and a swow, — swoon
Not all asleep, nor fully waking, —
And in that swow me thought I hearde sing
The sorry bird, the lewd cuckow;
And that was on a tree right faste by.
But who was then evil apaid but I? dissatisfied
"Now God," quoth I, "that died on the crois, cross
Give sorrow on thee, and on thy lewed voice!
Full little joy have I now of thy cry."
And as I with the cuckoo thus gan chide,
I heard, in the next bush beside,
A nightingale so lustily sing,
That her clear voice she made ring
Through all the greenwood wide.
"Ah, good Nightingale," quoth I then,
"A little hast thou been too long hen; hence, absent
For here hath been the lewd cuckow,
And sung songs rather than hast thou: sooner
I pray to God that evil fire her bren!" burn
But now I will you tell a wondrous thing:
As long as I lay in that swooning,
Me thought I wist what the birds meant,
And what they said, and what was their intent
And of their speech I hadde good knowing.
There heard I the nightingale say:
"Now, good Cuckoo, go somewhere away,
And let us that can singe dwelle here;
For ev'ry wight escheweth thee to hear, shuns
Thy songes be so elenge, in good fay." strange faith
"What," quoth she, "what may thee all now

It thinketh me, I sing as well as thou,
 For my song is both true and plain,
 Although I cannot crakel so in vain, sing tremulously
 As thou dost in thy throat, I wot ne'er how.
 "And ev'ry wight may understande me,
 But, Nightingale, so may they not do thee,
 For thou hast many a nice quaint cry; foolish
 I have thee heard say, 'ocy, ocy;'
 How might I know what that should be?"
 "Ah fool," quoth she, "wost thou not what it is?
 When that I say, 'ocy, ocy,' y-wis,
 Then mean I that I woulde wonder fain
 That all they were shamefully slain, die
 That meanen aught againe love amiss.
 "And also I would that all those were dead,
 That thinke not in love their life to lead,
 For who so will the god of Love not serve,
 I dare well say he is worthy to sterve, die
 And for that skill, 'ocy, ocy,' I grede." reason cry
 "Ey!" quoth the cuckoo, "this is a quaint law, strange
 That every wight shall love or be to-draw! torn to pieces
 But I forsake alle such company;
 For mine intent is not for to die,
 Nor ever, while I live, on Love's yoke to draw. to put on love's
 yoke
 "For lovers be the folk that be alive,
 That most disease have, and most unthrive, misfortune
 And most endure sorrow, woe, and care,
 And leaste feelen of welfare:
 What needeth it against the truth to strive?"
 "What?" quoth she, "thou art all out of thy mind!
 How mightest thou in thy churlishness find
 To speak of Love's servants in this wise?
 For in this world is none so good service
 To ev'ry wight that gentle is of kind;
 "For thereof truly cometh all gladness,
 All honour and all gentleness,
 Worship, ease, and all heartes lust, pleasure
 Perfect joy, and full assured trust,
 Jollity, pleasance, and freshness,
 "Lowlihead, largess, and courtesy,

Seemelihead, and true company,
 Dread of shame for to do amiss;
 For he that truly Love's servant is,
 Were lother to be shamed than to die. more reluctant
 "And that this is sooth that I say,
 In that belief I will live and dey;
 And, Cuckoo, so I rede that thou, do y-wis." counsel
 "Then," quoth he, "let me never have bliss,
 If ever I to that counsail obey!
 "Nightingale, thou speakest wondrous fair,
 But, for all that, is the sooth contrair;
 For love is in young folk but rage,
 And in old folk a great dotage;
 Who most it useth, moste shall enpair. suffer harm
 "For thereof come disease and heaviness,
 Sorrow and care, and many a great sickness,
 Despite, debate, anger, envy,
 Depraving, shame, untrust, and jealousy, loss of fame or character
 Pride, mischief, povert', and woodness. madness
 "Loving is an office of despair,
 And one thing is therein that is not fair;
 For who that gets of love a little bliss,
 But if he be away therewith, y-wis,
 He may full soon of age have his hair. see note
 "And, Nightingale, therefore hold thee nigh;
 For, 'lieve me well, for all thy quainte cry,
 If thou be far or longe from thy make, mate
 Thou shalt be as other that be forsake,
 And then thou shalt hoten as do I." be called
 "Fie," quoth she, "on thy name and on thee!
 The god of Love let thee never the! thrive
 For thou art worse a thousand fold than wood, mad
 For many one is full worthy and full good,
 That had been naught, ne hadde Love y-be.
 "For evermore Love his servants amendeth,
 And from all evile taches them defendeth, blemishes
 And maketh them to burn right in a fire,
 In truth and in worshipful desire, honourable
 And, when him liketh, joy enough them sendeth."
 "Thou Nightingale," he said, "be still!
 For Love hath no reason but his will;

For ofttime untrue folk he easeth,
And true folk so bitterly displeaseth,
That for default of grace he lets them spill." favour be ruined
Then took I of the nightingale keep,
How she cast a sigh out of her deep,
And said, "Alas, that ever I was bore!
I can for teen not say one worde more;" vexation, grief
And right with that word she burst out to weep.
"Alas!" quoth she, "my hearte will to-break
To heare thus this lewd bird speak
Of Love, and of his worshipful service.
Now, God of Love, thou help me in some wise,
That I may on this cuckoo be awreak!" revenged
Methought then I start up anon,
And to the brook I ran and got a stone,
And at the cuckoo heartly cast;
And for dread he flew away full fast,
And glad was I when he was gone.
And evermore the cuckoo, as he flay, flew
He saide, "Farewell, farewell, popinjay,"
As though he had scorned, thought me;
But ay I hunted him from the tree,
Until he was far out of sight away.
And then came the nightingale to me,
And said, "Friend, forsooth I thank thee
That thou hast lik'd me to rescow; rescue
And one avow to Love make I now,
That all this May I will thy singer be."
I thanked her, and was right well apaid: satisfied
"Yea," quoth she, "and be thou not dismay'd,
Though thou have heard the cuckoo erst than me; before
For, if I live, it shall amended be
The next May, if I be not afraid.
"And one thing I will rede thee also,
Believe thou not the cuckoo, the love's foe,
For all that he hath said is strong leasing." falsehood
"Nay," quoth I, "thereto shall nothing me bring
For love, and it hath done me much woe."
"Yea? Use," quoth she, "this medicine,
Every day this May ere thou dine:
Go look upon the fresh daisy,

And, though thou be for woe in point to die,
That shall full greatly less thee of thy pine. sorrow
"And look alway that thou be good and true,
And I will sing one of my songes new
For love of thee, as loud as I may cry:"
And then she began this song full high:
"I shrew all them that be of love untrue." curse
And when she had sung it to the end,
"Now farewell," quoth she, "for I must wend, go
And, God of Love, that can right well and may,
As much joy sende thee this day,
As any lover yet he ever send!"
Thus took the nightingale her leave of me.
I pray to God alway with her be,
And joy of love he send her evermore,
And shield us from the cuckoo and his lore;
For there is not so false a bird as he.
Forth she flew, the gentle nightingale,
To all the birdes that were in that dale,
And got them all into a place in fere, together
And besought them that they would hear
Her disease, and thus began her tale. distress, grievance
"Ye witte well, it is not for to hide, know
How the cuckoo and I fast have chide, quarrelled
Ever since that it was daylight;
I pray you all that ye do me right
On that foul false unkind bride." bird
Then spake one bird for all, by one assent:
"This matter asketh good advisement;
For we be fewe birdes here in fere,
And sooth it is, the cuckoo is not here,
And therefore we will have a parlement.
"And thereat shall the eagle be our lord,
And other peers that been of record, of established authority
And the cuckoo shall be after sent; summoned
There shall be given the judgment,
Or else we shall finally make accord. be reconciled
"And this shall be, withoute nay, contradiction
The morrow after Saint Valentine's Day,
Under a maple that is fair and green,
Before the chamber window of the Queen,

At Woodstock upon the green lay." lawn
She thanked them, and then her leave took,
And into a hawthorn by that brook,
And there she sat and sang upon that tree,
"Term of life love hath withhold me;" love hath me in her
So loude, that I with that song awoke. service all my life
Explicit. The End

The Author to His Book.

O LEWD book! with thy foul rudeness,
Since thou hast neither beauty nor eloquence,
Who hath thee caus'd or giv'n the hardiness
For to appear in my lady's presence?
I am full sicker thou know'st her benevolence, certain
Full agreeable to all her abying, merit
For of all good she is the best living.
Alas! that thou ne haddest worthiness,
To show to her some pleasant sentence,
Since that she hath, thorough her gentleness,
Accepted thee servant to her dign reverence!
O! me repenteth that I n'had science,
And leisure als', t'make thee more flourishing,
For of all good she is the best living.
Beseech her meekly with all lowliness,
Though I be ferre from her in absence, far
To think on my truth to her and steadfastness,
And to abridge of my sorrows the violence,
Which caused is whereof knoweth your sapience; wisdom
She like among to notify me her liking,
For of all good she is the best living.
Explicit.

L'Envoy; To the Author's Lady.

Aurore of gladness, day of lustiness,
Lucern at night with heav'nly influence lamp
Illumin'd, root of beauty and goodness,
Suspires which I effund in silence! sighs pour forth
Of grace I beseech, allege let your writing declare
Now of all good, since ye be best living.
Explicit.

THE ASSEMBLY OF FOWLS.

In "The Assembly of Fowls" — which Chaucer's "Retraction" describes as "The Book of Saint Valentine's Day, or of the Parliament of Birds" — we are presented with a picture of the mediaeval "Court of Love" far closer to the reality than we find in Chaucer's poem which bears that express title. We have a regularly constituted conclave or tribunal, under a president whose decisions are final. A difficult question is proposed for the consideration and judgment of the Court — the disputants advancing and vindicating their claims in person. The attendants upon the Court, through specially chosen mouthpieces, deliver their opinions on the cause; and finally a decision is authoritatively pronounced by the president — which, as in many of the cases actually judged before the Courts of Love in France, places the reasonable and modest wish of a sensitive and chaste lady above all the eagerness of her lovers, all the incongruous counsels of representative courtiers. So far, therefore, as the poem reproduces the characteristic features of procedure in those romantic Middle Age halls of amatory justice, Chaucer's "Assembly of Fowls" is his real "Court of Love;" for although, in the castle and among the courtiers of Admetus and Alcestis, we have all the personages and machinery necessary for one of those erotic contentions, in the present poem we see the personages and the machinery actually at work, upon another scene and under other guises. The allegory which makes the contention arise out of the loves, and proceed in the assembly, of the feathered race, is quite in keeping with the fanciful yet nature-loving spirit of the poetry of Chaucer's time, in which the influence of the Troubadours was still largely present. It is quite in keeping, also, with the principles that regulated the Courts, the purpose of which was more to discuss and determine the proper conduct of love affairs, than to secure conviction or acquittal, sanction or reprobation, in particular cases — though the jurisdiction and the judgments of such assemblies often closely concerned individuals. Chaucer introduces us to his main theme through the vestibule of a fancied dream — a method which he repeatedly employs with great relish, as for instance in "The House of Fame." He has spent the whole day over Cicero's account of the Dream of Scipio (Africanus the Younger); and, having gone to bed, he dreams that Africanus the Elder appears to him — just as in the book he appeared to his namesake — and carries him into a beautiful park, in which is a fair garden by a river-side. Here the poet is led into a splendid temple, through a crowd of courtiers allegorically representing the various instruments, pleasures, emotions, and encouragements of Love; and in the temple Venus herself is found, sporting with her porter Richess. Returning into the garden, he sees the Goddess of Nature seated on a hill of flowers; and before her are assembled all the birds — for it is Saint Valentine's Day, when every fowl chooses her mate. Having with a graphic touch enumerated and described the principal birds, the poet sees that on her hand Nature bears a female eagle of surpassing loveliness and virtue, for which three male eagles advance contending claims. The disputation lasts all day; and at evening the assembled birds, eager to be gone with their mates, clamour for

a decision. The tercelet, the goose, the cuckoo, and the turtle — for birds of prey, water-fowl, worm-fowl, and seed-fowl respectively — pronounce their verdicts on the dispute, in speeches full of character and humour; but Nature refers the decision between the three claimants to the female eagle herself, who prays that she may have a year's respite. Nature grants the prayer, pronounces judgment accordingly, and dismisses the assembly; and after a chosen choir has sung a roundel in honour of the Goddess, all the birds fly away, and the poet awakes. It is probable that Chaucer derived the idea of the poem from a French source; Mr Bell gives the outline of a fabliau, of which three versions existed, and in which a contention between two ladies regarding the merits of their respective lovers, a knight and a clerk, is decided by Cupid in a Court composed of birds, which assume their sides according to their different natures. Whatever the source of the idea, its management, and the whole workmanship of the poem, especially in the more humorous passages, are essentially Chaucer's own.

THE life so short, the craft so long to learn,
Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquering,
The dreadful joy, always that flits so yern; fleets so fast
All this mean I by Love, that my feeling with reference to
Astoneth with his wonderful working, amazes
So sore, y-wis, that, when I on him think,
Naught wit I well whether I fleet or sink, float
For all be that I know not Love indeed, albeit, although
Nor wot how that he quiteth folk their hire, rewards folk for
Yet happeth me full oft in books to read their service
Of his miracles, and of his cruel ire;
There read I well, he will be lord and sire;
I dare not saye, that his strokes be sore;
But God save such a lord! I can no more.
Of usage, what for lust and what for lore,
On bookes read I oft, as I you told.
But wherefore speak I alle this? Not yore
Agone, it happed me for to behold
Upon a book written with letters old;
And thereupon, a certain thing to learn,
The longe day full fast I read and yern. eagerly
For out of the old fieldes, as men saith,
Cometh all this new corn, from year to year;
And out of olde bookes, in good faith,
Cometh all this new science that men lear. learn
But now to purpose as of this mattere:
To reade forth it gan me so delight,

That all the day me thought it but a lite. little while
This book, of which I make mention,
Entitled was right thus, as I shall tell;
"Tullius, of the Dream of Scipion:"
Chapters seven it had, of heav'n, and hell,
And earth, and soules that therein do dwell;
Of which, as shortly as I can it treat,
Of his sentence I will you say the great. important part
First telleth it, when Scipio was come
To Africa, how he met Massinisse,
That him for joy in armes hath y-nome. taken
Then telleth he their speech, and all the bliss
That was between them till the day gan miss. fail
And how his ancestor Africane so dear
Gan in his sleep that night to him appear.
Then telleth it, that from a starry place
How Africane hath him Carthage y-shew'd,
And warned him before of all his grace,
And said him, what man, learned either lewd, ignorant
That loveth common profit, well y-thew'd, the public advantage
He should unto a blissful place wend, go
Where as the joy is without any end.
Then asked he, if folk that here be dead i.e. the younger Scipio
Have life, and dwelling, in another place?
And Africane said, "Yea, withoute dread;" doubt
And how our present worldly lives' space
Meant but a manner death, what way we trace;
And rightful folk should go, after they die,
To Heav'n; and showed him the galaxy.
Then show'd he him the little earth that here is,
To regard the heaven's quantity; by comparison with
And after show'd he him the nine spheres;
And after that the melody heard he,
That cometh of those spheres thrice three,
That wells of music be and melody
In this world here, and cause of harmony.
Then said he him, since earthe was so lite, small
And full of torment and of harde grace, evil fortune
That he should not him in this world delight.
Then told he him, in certain yeares' space,
That ev'ry star should come into his place,

Where it was first; and all should out of mind, perish from memory
That in this world is done of all mankind.
Then pray'd him Scipio, to tell him all
The way to come into that Heaven's bliss;
And he said: "First know thyself immortal,
And look aye busily that thou work and wiss guide affairs
To common profit, and thou shalt not miss
To come swiftly unto that place dear,
That full of bliss is, and of soules clear. noble
"And breakers of the law, the sooth to sayn,
And likerous folk, after that they be dead, lecherous
Shall whirl about the world always in pain,
Till many a world be passed, out of dread; without doubt
And then, forgiven all their wicked deed,
They shalle come unto that blissful place,
To which to come God thee sende grace!"
The day gan failen, and the darke night,
That reaveth beastes from their business, taketh away
Berefte me my book for lack of light,
And to my bed I gan me for to dress, prepare
Full fill'd of thought and busy heaviness;
For both I hadde thing which that I n'old, would not
And eke I had not that thing that I wo'ld.
But, finally, my spirit at the last,
Forweary of my labour all that day, utterly wearied
Took rest, that made me to sleepe fast;
And in my sleep I mette, as that I say, dreamed
How Africane, right in the self array same garb
That Scipio him saw before that tide, time
Was come, and stood right at my bedde's side.
The weary hunter, sleeping in his bed,
To wood again his mind goeth anon;
The judge dreameth how his pleas be sped;
The carter dreameth how his cartes go'n;
The rich of gold, the knight fights with his fone; foes
The sicke mette he drinketh of the tun;
The lover mette he hath his lady won.
I cannot say, if that the cause were,
For I had read of Africane beforne, because
That made me to mette that he stood there;
But thus said he; "Thou hast thee so well borne

In looking of mine old book all to-torn,
Of which Macrobius raught not a lite, recked not a little
That somedeal of thy labour would I quite." I would reward you for
some of your labour

Cytherea, thou blissful Lady sweet!
That with thy firebrand dauntest when thee lest, when you please

That madest me this sweven for to mette, dream

Be thou my help in this, for thou may'st best!

As wisly as I saw the north-north-west, surely

When I began my sweven for to write,

So give me might to rhyme it and endite. write down

This foresaid Africane me hent anon, took

And forth with him unto a gate brought

Right of a park, walled with greene stone;

And o'er the gate, with letters large y-wrought,

There were verses written, as me thought,

On either half, of full great difference,

Of which I shall you say the plain sentence. meaning

"Through me men go into the blissful place

Of hearte's heal and deadly woundes' cure;

Through me men go unto the well of grace;

Where green and lusty May shall ever dure;

This is the way to all good adventure;

Be glad, thou reader, and thy sorrow off cast;

All open am I; pass in and speed thee fast."

"Through me men go," thus spake the other side,

"Unto the mortal strokes of the spear,

Of which disdain and danger is the guide;

There never tree shall fruit nor leaves bear;

This stream you leadeth to the sorrowful weir,

Where as the fish in prison is all dry;

Th'eschewing is the only remedy."

These verses of gold and azure written were,

On which I gan astonish'd to behold;

For with that one increased all my fear,

And with that other gan my heart to bold; take courage

That one me het, that other did me cold; heated

No wit had I, for error, for to choose perplexity, confusion

To enter or fly, or me to save or lose.

Right as betwixten adamantes two magnets

Of even weight, a piece of iron set,

Ne hath no might to move to nor fro;
 For what the one may hale, the other let; attract restrain
 So far'd I, that n'ist whether me was bet knew not whether it was
 T' enter or leave, till Africane, my guide, better for me
 Me hent and shov'd in at the gates wide. caught
 And said, "It standeth written in thy face,
 Thine error, though thou tell it not to me; perplexity, confusion
 But dread thou not to come into this place;
 For this writing is nothing meant by thee, does not refer to
 Nor by none, but he Love's servant be; unless
 For thou of Love hast lost thy taste, I guess,
 As sick man hath of sweet and bitterness.
 "But natheless, although that thou be dull,
 That thou canst not do, yet thou mayest see;
 For many a man that may not stand a pull,
 Yet likes it him at wrestling for to be,
 And deeme whether he doth bet, or he; judge better
 And, if thou haddest cunning to endite, skill
 I shall thee shoue matter of to write." to write about
 With that my hand in his he took anon,
 Of which I comfort caught, and went in fast. took
 But, Lord! so I was glad and well-begone! fortunate
 For over all, where I my eyen cast, everywhere
 Were trees y-clad with leaves that ay shall last,
 Each in his kind, with colour fresh and green
 As emerald, that joy it was to see'n.
 The builder oak; and eke the hardy ash;
 The pillar elm, the coffer unto carrain;
 The box, pipe tree; the holm, to whippe's lash
 The sailing fir; the cypress death to plain;
 The shooter yew; the aspe for shaftes plain;
 Th'olive of peace, and eke the drunken vine;
 The victor palm; the laurel, too, divine.
 A garden saw I, full of blossom'd boughes,
 Upon a river, in a greene mead,
 Where as sweetness evermore enow is,
 With flowers white, blue, yellow, and red,
 And colde welle streames, nothing dead, fountain
 That swamme full of smalle fishes light,
 With finnes red, and scales silver bright.
 On ev'ry bough the birdes heard I sing,

With voice of angels in their harmony,
That busied them their birdes forth to bring;
The pretty conies to their play gan hie; rabbits haste
And further all about I gan espy
The dreadful roe, the buck, the hart, and hind, timid
Squirrels, and beastes small, of gentle kind. nature
Of instruments of stringes in accord
Heard I so play a ravishing sweetness,
That God, that Maker is of all and Lord,
Ne hearde never better, as I guess:
Therewith a wind, unneth it might be less, scarcely
Made in the leaves green a noise soft,
Accordant the fowles' song on loft. in keeping with above
Th'air of the place so attemper was, mild
That ne'er was there grievance of hot nor cold; annoyance
There was eke ev'ry wholesome spice and grass,
Nor no man may there waxe sick nor old:
Yet was there more joy a thousand fold moreover
Than I can tell, or ever could or might;
There ever is clear day, and never night.
Under a tree, beside a well, I sey saw
Cupid our lord his arrows forge and file; polish
And at his feet his bow all ready lay;
And well his daughter temper'd, all the while,
The heades in the well; and with her wile cleverness
She couch'd them after, as they shoulde serve arranged in order
Some for to slay, and some to wound and kerve. carve, cut
Then was I ware of Pleasance anon right,
And of Array, and Lust, and Courtesy,
And of the Craft, that can and hath the might
To do by force a wight to do folly; make
Disfigured was she, I will not lie; disguised
And by himself, under an oak, I guess,
Saw I Delight, that stood with Gentleness.
Then saw I Beauty, with a nice attire,
And Youthe, full of game and jollity,
Foolhardiness, Flattery, and Desire,
Messagerie, and Meed, and other three;
Their names shall not here be told for me:
And upon pillars great of jasper long
I saw a temple of brass y-founded strong.

And all about the temple danc'd alway
Women enough, of whiche some there were
Fair of themselves, and some of them were gay
In kirtles all dishevell'd went they there; tunics
That was their office ever, from year to year; duty, occupation
And on the temple saw I, white and fair,
Of doves sitting many a thousand pair.
Before the temple door, full soberly,
Dame Peace sat, a curtain in her hand;
And her beside, wonder discretely,
Dame Patience sitting there I fand, found
With face pale, upon a hill of sand;
And althernext, within and eke without,
Behest, and Art, and of their folk a rout. Promise crowd
Within the temple, of sighes hot as fire
I heard a swough, that gan aboute ren, murmur run
Which sighes were engender'd with desire,
That made every hearte for to bren burn
Of newe flame; and well espied I then,
That all the cause of sorrows that they dree endure
Came of the bitter goddess Jealousy.
The God Priapus saw I, as I went
Within the temple, in sov'reign place stand,
In such array, as when the ass him shent ruined
With cry by night, and with sceptre in hand:
Full busily men gan assay and fand endeavour
Upon his head to set, of sundry hue,
Garlandes full of freshe flowers new.
And in a privy corner, in disport,
Found I Venus and her porter Richess,
That was full noble and hautain of her port; haughty
Dark was that place, but afterward lightness
I saw a little, unneth it might be less; scarcely
And on a bed of gold she lay to rest,
Till that the hote sun began to west. decline towards the west
Her gilded haire with a golden thread
Y-bounden were, untressed, as she lay; loose
And naked from the breast unto the head
Men might her see; and, soothly for to say,
The remnant cover'd, welle to my pay, satisfaction
Right with a little kerchief of Valence;

There was no thicker clothe of defence.
The place gave a thousand savours sweet;
And Bacchus, god of wine, sat her beside;
And Ceres next, that doth of hunger boot; relieves hunger
And, as I said, amidst lay Cypride, in the midst
To whom on knees the younge folke cried
To be their help: but thus I let her lie,
And farther in the temple gan espy,
See note for the stories of the lovers in the next two stanzas

That, in despite of Diana the chaste,
Full many a bowe broke hung on the wall,
Of maidens, such as go their time to waste
In her service: and painted over all
Of many a story, of which I touche shall
A few, as of Calist', and Atalant',
And many a maid, of which the name I want. do not have
Semiramis, Canace, and Hercules,
Biblis, Dido, Thisbe and Pyramus,
Tristram, Isoude, Paris, and Achilles,
Helena, Cleopatra, Troilus,
Scylla, and eke the mother of Romulus;
All these were painted on the other side,
And all their love, and in what plight they died.
When I was come again into the place
That I of spake, that was so sweet and green,
Forth walk'd I then, myselfe to solace:
Then was I ware where there sat a queen,
That, as of light the summer Sunne sheen
Passeth the star, right so over measure out of all proportion
She fairer was than any creature.
And in a lawn, upon a hill of flowers,
Was set this noble goddess of Nature;
Of branches were her halles and her bowers
Y-wrought, after her craft and her measure;
Nor was there fowl that comes of engendrure
That there ne were prest, in her presence, ready
To take her doom, and give her audience. receive her decision
For this was on Saint Valentine's Day,
When ev'ry fowl cometh to choose her make, mate
Of every kind that men thincken may;

And then so huge a noise gan they make,
That earth, and sea, and tree, and ev'ry lake,
So full was, that unnethes there was space scarcely
For me to stand, so full was all the place.
And right as Alain, in his Plaint of Kind,
Deviseth Nature of such array and face; describeth
In such array men mighte her there find.
This noble Emperess, full of all grace,
Bade ev'ry fowle take her owen place,
As they were wont alway, from year to year,
On Saint Valentine's Day to stande there.
That is to say, the fowles of ravine birds of prey
Were highest set, and then the fowles smale,
That eaten as them Nature would incline;
As worme-fowl, of which I tell no tale;
But waterfowl sat lowest in the dale,
And fowls that live by seed sat on the green,
And that so many, that wonder was to see'n.
There mighte men the royal eagle find,
That with his sharpe look pierceth the Sun;
And other eagles of a lower kind,
Of which that clerkes well devise con; which scholars well
There was the tyrant with his feathers dun can describe
And green, I mean the goshawk, that doth pine cause pain
To birds, for his outrageous ravine. slaying, hunting
The gentle falcon, that with his feet distraieth grasps
The kinge's hand; the hardy sperhawk eke, pert
The quaile's foe; the merlion that paineth
Himself full oft the larke for to seek;
There was the dove, with her eyen meek;
The jealous swan, against his death that singeth; in anticipation of
The owl eke, that of death the bode bringeth. omen
The crane, the giant, with his trumpet soun';
The thief the chough; and eke the chatt'ring pie;
The scorning jay; the eel's foe the heroun;
The false lapwing, full of treachery;
The starling, that the counsel can betray;
The tame ruddock, and the coward kite; robin-redbreast
The cock, that horologe is of thorpes lite. clock little villages
The sparrow, Venus' son; the nightingale,
That calleth forth the freshe leaves new;

The swallow, murd'rer of the bees smale,
 That honey make of flowers fresh of hue;
 The wedded turtle, with his heart true;
 The peacock, with his angel feathers bright;
 The pheasant, scorner of the cock by night;
 The waker goose; the cuckoo ever unkind;
 The popinjay, full of delicacy; parrot
 The drake, destroyer of his own kind;
 The stork, the wrecker of adultery; avenger
 The hot cormorant, full of gluttony;
 The raven and the crow, with voice of care;
 The throstle old; and the frosty fieldfare. long-lived
 What should I say? Of fowls of ev'ry kind
 That in this world have feathers and stature,
 Men mighten in that place assembled find,
 Before that noble goddess of Nature;
 And each of them did all his busy cure care, pains
 Benignely to choose, or for to take,
 By her accord, his formel or his make. consent mate
 But to the point. Nature held on her hand
 A formel eagle, of shape the gentilest
 That ever she among her workes fand,
 The most benign, and eke the goodliest;
 In her was ev'ry virtue at its rest, highest point
 So farforth that Nature herself had bliss
 To look on her, and oft her beak to kiss.
 Nature, the vicar of th'Almighty Lord, —
 That hot, cold, heavy, light, and moist, and dry,
 Hath knit, by even number of accord, —
 In easy voice began to speak, and say:
 "Fowles, take heed of my sentence," I pray; opinion, discourse
 And for your ease, in furth'ring of your need,
 As far as I may speak, I will me speed.
 "Ye know well how, on Saint Valentine's Day,
 By my statute, and through my governance,
 Ye choose your mates, and after fly away
 With them, as I you pricke with pleasance; inspire with pleasure
 But natheless, as by rightful ordinance,
 May I not let, for all this world to win, hinder
 But he that most is worthy shall begin.
 "The tercel eagle, as ye know full weel, well

The fowl royal, above you all in degree,
 The wise and worthy, secret, true as steel,
 The which I formed have, as ye may see,
 In ev'ry part, as it best liketh me, —
 It needeth not his shape you to devise, — describe
 He shall first choose, and speaken in his guise. in his own way
 "And, after him, by order shall ye choose,
 After your kind, evereach as you liketh;
 And as your hap is, shall ye win or lose; fortune
 But which of you that love most entriketh, entangles
 God send him her that sorest for him siketh." sigheth
 And therewithal the tercel gan she call,
 And said, "My son, the choice is to thee fall.
 "But natheless, in this condition
 Must be the choice of ev'reach that is here,
 That she agree to his election,
 Whoso he be, that shoulde be her fere; companion
 This is our usage ay, from year to year;
 And whoso may at this time have this grace,
 In blissful time he came into this place." in a happy hour
 With head inclin'd, and with full humble cheer, demeanour
 This royal tercel spake, and tarried not:
 "Unto my sov'reign lady, and not my fere, companion
 I chose and choose, with will, and heart, and thought,
 The formel on your hand, so well y-wrought,
 Whose I am all, and ever will her serve,
 Do what her list, to do me live or sterve. die
 "Beseeching her of mercy and of grace,
 As she that is my lady sovereign,
 Or let me die here present in this place,
 For certes long may I not live in pain;
 For in my heart is carven ev'ry vein: every vein in my heart is
 Having regard only unto my truth, wounded with love
 My deare heart, have on my woe some ruth. pity
 "And if that I be found to her untrue,
 Disobeisant, or wilful negligent, disobedient
 Avaunter, or in process love a new, braggart in the course
 I pray to you, this be my judgement, of time
 That with these fowles I be all to-rent, torn to pieces
 That ilke day that she me ever find same
 To her untrue, or in my guilt unkind.

"And since none loveth her so well as I,
 Although she never of love me behet, promised
 Then ought she to be mine, through her mercy;
 For other bond can I none on her knit; I can bind her no other way
 For weal or for woe, never shall I let cease, fail
 To serve her, how far so that she wend; go
 Say what you list, my tale is at an end."
 Right as the freshe redde rose new
 Against the summer Sunne colour'd is,
 Right so, for shame, all waxen gan the hue
 Of this formel, when she had heard all this;
 Neither she answer'd well, nor said amiss, she answered nothing,
 So sore abashed was she, till Nature either well or ill
 Said, "Daughter, dread you not, I you assure." confirm, support
 Another tercel eagle spake anon,
 Of lower kind, and said that should not be;
 "I love her better than ye do, by Saint John!
 Or at the least I love her as well as ye,
 And longer have her serv'd in my degree;
 And if she should have lov'd for long loving,
 To me alone had been the guerdoning. reward
 "I dare eke say, if she me finde false,
 Unkind, janglere, rebel in any wise, boastful
 Or jealous, do me hange by the halse; hang me by the neck
 And but I beare me in her service unless
 As well ay as my wit can me suffice,
 From point to point, her honour for to save,
 Take she my life and all the good I have."
 A thirde tercel eagle answer'd tho: then
 "Now, Sirs, ye see the little leisure here;
 For ev'ry fowl cries out to be ago
 Forth with his mate, or with his lady dear;
 And eke Nature herselfe will not hear,
 For tarrying her, not half that I would say;
 And but I speak, I must for sorrow dey. unless die
 Of long service avaunt I me no thing, boast
 But as possible is me to die to-day,
 For woe, as he that hath been languishing
 This twenty winter; and well happen may
 A man may serve better, and more to pay, with more satisfaction
 In half a year, although it were no more.

Than some man doth that served hath full yore. for a long time
 "I say not this by me for that I can
 Do no service that may my lady please;
 But I dare say, I am her truest man, liegeman, servant
As to my doom, and fainest would her please; in my judgement
 At shorte words, until that death me seize, in one word
 I will be hers, whether I wake or wink.
 And true in all that hearte may bethink."
 Of all my life, since that day I was born,
So gentle plea, in love or other thing, such noble pleading
 Ye hearde never no man me beforne;
 Whoso that hadde leisure and cunning skill
 For to rehearse their cheer and their speaking:
 And from the morrow gan these speeches last,
 Till downward went the Sunne wonder fast.
The noise of fowles for to be deliver'd set free to depart
 So loude rang, "Have done and let us wend," go
That well ween'd I the wood had all to-shiver'd: been shaken to
 "Come off!" they cried; "alas! ye will us shend! pieces ruin
 When will your cursed pleading have an end?
 How should a judge either party believe,
 For yea or nay, withouten any preve?" proof
 The goose, the duck, and the cuckoo also,
So cried "keke, keke," "cuckoo," "queke queke," high,
 That through mine ears the noise wente tho. then
 The goose said then, "All this n'is worth a fly!
 But I can shape hereof a remedy;
And I will say my verdict, fair and swith, speedily
 For water-fowl, whoso be wroth or blith." glad
 "And I for worm-fowl," said the fool cuckow;
 For I will, of mine own authority,
For common speed, take on me the charge now; advantage
 For to deliver us is great charity."
 "Ye may abide a while yet, pardie," by God
 Quoth then the turtle; "if it be your will
A wight may speak, it were as good be still.
 "I am a seed-fowl, one th'unworthiest,
 That know I well, and the least of cunning;
 But better is, that a wight's tongue rest,
Than entremette him of such doing meddle with
 Of which he neither rede can nor sing; counsel

And who it doth, full foul himself accloyeth, embarrasseth
 For office uncommanded oft annoyeth."
 Nature, which that alway had an ear
 To murmur of the lewedness behind,
 With facond voice said, "Hold your tongues there, eloquent, fluent
 And I shall soon, I hope, a counsel find,
 You to deliver, and from this noise unbind;
 I charge of ev'ry flock ye shall one call, class of fowl
 To say the verdict of you fowles all."
 The tercelet said then in this mannere; male hawk
 "Full hard it were to prove it by reason,
 Who loveth best this gentle formel here;
 For ev'reach hath such replication, reply
 That by skilles may none be brought adown; arguments
 I cannot see that arguments avail;
 Then seemeth it that there must be battaile."
 "All ready!" quoth those eagle tercelles tho; then
 "Nay, Sirs!" quoth he; "if that I durst it say,
 Ye do me wrong, my tale is not y-do, done
 For, Sirs, — and take it not agrief, I pray, — be not offended
 It may not be as ye would, in this way:
 Ours is the voice that have the charge in hand,
 And to the judges' doom ye muste stand. ye must abide by the
 judges' decision
 "And therefore 'Peace!' I say; as to my wit,
 Me woulde think, how that the worthiest
 Of knighthood, and had longest used it,
 Most of estate, of blood the gentilest,
 Were fitting most for her, if that her lest; if she pleased
 And, of these three she knows herself, I trow, am sure
 Which that he be; for it is light to know." easy
 The water-fowles have their heades laid
 Together, and of short advisement, after brief deliberation
 When evereach his verdict had y-said
 They saide soothly all by one assent,
 How that "The goose with the facond gent, refined eloquence
 That so desired to pronounce our need, business
 Shall tell our tale;" and prayed God her speed.
 And for those water-fowles then began
 The goose to speak. and in her cackeling
 She saide, "Peace, now! take keep ev'ry man, heed

And hearken what reason I shall forth bring;
 My wit is sharp, I love no tarrying;
 I say I rede him, though he were my brother,
 But she will love him, let him love another!" unless
 "Lo! here a perfect reason of a goose!"
 Quoth the sperhawke. "Never may she the! thrive
 Lo such a thing 'tis t'have a tongue loose!
 Now, pardie: fool, yet were it bet for thee better
 Have held thy peace, than show'd thy nicety; foolishness
 It lies not in his wit, nor in his will,
 But sooth is said, a fool cannot be still."
 The laughter rose of gentle fowles all;
 And right anon the seed-fowls chosen had
 The turtle true, and gan her to them call,
 And prayed her to say the soothe sad serious truth
 Of this mattere, and asked what she rad; counselled
 And she answer'd, that plainly her intent
 She woulde show, and soothly what she meant.
 "Nay! God forbid a lover shoulde change!"
 The turtle said, and wax'd for shame all red:
 "Though that his lady evermore be strange, disdainful
 Yet let him serve her ay, till he be dead;
 For, sooth, I praise not the goose's rede counsel
 For, though she died, I would none other make; mate
 I will be hers till that the death me take."
 "Well bourded!" quoth the ducke, "by my hat! a pretty joke!
 That men should loven alway causeless,
 Who can a reason find, or wit, in that?
 Danceth he merry, that is mirtheless?
 Who shoulde reck of that is reckeless? care for one who has
 Yea! queke yet," quoth the duck, "full well and fair! no care for him
 There be more starres, God wot, than a pair!"
 "Now fy, churl!" quoth the gentle tercelet,
 "Out of the dunghill came that word aright;
 Thou canst not see which thing is well beset;
 Thou far'st by love, as owles do by light,—
 The day them blinds, full well they see by night;
 Thy kind is of so low a wretchedness,
 That what love is, thou caust not see nor guess."
 Then gan the cuckoo put him forth in press, in the crowd
 For fowl that eateth worm, and said belive: quickly

"So I," quoth he, "may have my mate in peace,
I recke not how longe that they strive.
Let each of them be solain all their life; single
This is my rede, since they may not accord; counsel
This shorte lesson needeth not record."
"Yea, have the glutton fill'd enough his paunch,
Then are we well!" saide the emerlon; merlin
"Thou murd'rer of the heggugg, on the branch hedge-sparrow
That brought thee forth, thou most rueful glutton,
Live thou solain, worme's corruption!

For no force is to lack of thy nature; the loss of a bird of your
Go! lewed be thou, while the world may dare!" depraved nature is no
matter of regret.

"Now peace," quoth Nature, "I commande here;
For I have heard all your opinion,
And in effect yet be we ne'er the nere. nearer
But, finally, this is my conclusion, —
That she herself shall have her election
Of whom her list, whoso be wroth or blith; angry or glad
Him that she chooseth, he shall her have as swith. quickly
"For since it may not here discussed be
Who loves her best, as said the tercelet,
Then will I do this favour t' her, that she
Shall have right him on whom her heart is set,
And he her, that his heart hath on her knit:
This judge I, Nature, for I may not lie because
To none estate; I have none other eye. can see the matter in
no other light

"But as for counsel for to choose a make,
If I were Reason, certes then would I
Counsaile you the royal tercel take,
As saith the tercelet full skilfully, reasonably
As for the gentlest, and most worthy,
Which I have wrought so well to my pleasance,
That to you it ought be a suffisance." to your satisfaction
With dreadful voice the formel her answer'd: frightened
"My rightful lady, goddess of Nature,
Sooth is, that I am ever under your yerd, rod, or government
As is every other creature,
And must be yours, while that my life may dure;
And therefore grante me my firste boon, favour

And mine intent you will I say right soon."
"I grant it you," said she; and right anon
This formel eagle spake in this degree: manner
"Almighty queen, until this year be done
I aske respite to advise me;
And after that to have my choice all free;
This is all and some that I would speak and say;
Ye get no more, although ye do me dey. slay me
"I will not serve Venus, nor Cupide,
For sooth as yet, by no manner of way."
"Now since it may none other ways betide," happen
Quoth Dame Nature, "there is no more to say;
Then would I that these fowles were away,
Each with his mate, for longer tarrying here."
And said them thus, as ye shall after hear.
"To you speak I, ye tercels," quoth Nature;
"Be of good heart, and serve her alle three;
A year is not so longe to endure;
And each of you pain him in his degree strive
For to do well, for, God wot, quit is she
From you this year, what after so befall;
This entremess is dressed for you all." dish is prepared
And when this work y-brought was to an end,
To ev'ry fowle Nature gave his make,
By even accord, and on their way they wend: fair agreement
And, Lord! the bliss and joye that they make!
For each of them gan other in his wings take,
And with their neckes each gan other wind, enfold, caress
Thanking alway the noble goddess of Kind.
But first were chosen fowles for to sing,—
As year by year was alway their usance, — custom
To sing a roundel at their departing,
To do to Nature honour and pleasance;
The note, I trowe, maked was in France;
The wordes were such as ye may here find
The nexte verse, as I have now in mind:
Qui bien aime, tard oublie.

"Now welcome summer, with thy sunnes soft,
That hast these winter weathers overshake dispersed, overcome
Saint Valentine, thou art full high on loft,

Which driv'st away the longe nightes blake; black
Thus singe smalle fowles for thy sake:
Well have they cause for to gladden oft, be glad, make mirth
Since each of them recover'd hath his make; mate
Full blissful may they sing when they awake."
And with the shouting, when their song was do, done
That the fowls maden at their flight away,
I woke, and other bookes took me to,
To read upon; and yet I read alway.
I hope, y-wis, to reade so some day,
That I shall meete something for to fare
The bet; and thus to read I will not spare. better
Explicit. the end

THE FLOWER AND THE LEAF

"The Flower and the Leaf" is pre-eminently one of those poems by which Chaucer may be triumphantly defended against the charge of licentious coarseness, that, founded upon his faithful representation of the manners, customs, and daily life and speech of his own time, in "The Canterbury Tales," are sweepingly advanced against his works at large. In an allegory — rendered perhaps somewhat cumbrous by the detail of chivalric ceremonial, and the heraldic minuteness, which entered so liberally into poetry, as into the daily life of the classes for whom poetry was then written — Chaucer beautifully enforces the lasting advantages of purity, valour, and faithful love, and the fleeting and disappointing character of mere idle pleasure, of sloth and listless retirement from the battle of life. In the "season sweet" of spring, which the great singer of Middle Age England loved so well, a gentle woman is supposed to seek sleep in vain, to rise "about the springing of the gladsome day," and, by an unfrequented path in a pleasant grove, to arrive at an arbour. Beside the arbour stands a medlar-tree, in which a Goldfinch sings passing sweetly; and the Nightingale answers from a green laurel tree, with so merry and ravishing a note, that the lady resolves to proceed no farther, but sit down on the grass to listen. Suddenly the sound of many voices singing surprises her; and she sees "a world of ladies" emerge from a grove, clad in white, and wearing garlands of laurel, of agnus castus, and woodbind. One, who wears a crown and bears a branch of agnus castus in her hand, begins a roundel, in honour of the Leaf, which all the others take up, dancing and singing in the meadow before the arbour. Soon, to the sound of thundering trumps, and attended by a splendid and warlike retinue, enter nine knights, in white, crowned like the ladies; and after they have jostled an hour and more, they alight and advance to the ladies. Each dame takes a knight by the hand; and all incline reverently to the laurel tree, which they encompass, singing of love, and dancing. Soon, preceded by a band of minstrels, out of the open field comes a lusty company of knights and ladies in green, crowned with chaplets of flowers; and they do reverence to a tuft of flowers in the middle of the meadow, while one of their number sings a bergerette in praise of the daisy. But now it is high noon; the sun waxes fervently hot; the flowers lose their beauty, and wither with the heat; the ladies in green are scorched, the knights faint for lack of shade. Then a strong wind beats down all the flowers, save such as are protected by the leaves of hedges and groves; and a mighty storm of rain and hail drenches the ladies and knights, shelterless in the now flowerless meadow. The storm overpast, the company in white, whom the laurel-tree has safely shielded from heat and storm, advance to the relief of the others; and when their clothes have been dried, and their wounds from sun and storm healed, all go together to sup with the Queen in white — on whose hand, as they pass by the arbour, the Nightingale perches, while the Goldfinch flies to the Lady of the Flower. The pageant gone, the gentlewoman quits the arbour, and meets a lady in white, who, at her request, unfolds the hidden meaning of all that she has seen; "which," says Speght quaintly, "is this: They which honour the Flower, a thing fading with every

blast, are such as look after beauty and worldly pleasure. But they that honour the Leaf, which abideth with the root, notwithstanding the frosts and winter storms, are they which follow Virtue and during qualities, without regard of worldly respects." Mr Bell, in his edition, has properly noticed that there is no explanation of the emblematical import of the medlar-tree, the goldfinch, and the nightingale. "But," he says, "as the fruit of the medlar, to use Chaucer's own expression (see Prologue to the Reeve's Tale), is rotten before it is ripe, it may be the emblem of sensual pleasure, which palls before it confers real enjoyment. The goldfinch is remarkable for the beauty of its plumage, the sprightliness of its movements, and its gay, tinkling song, and may be supposed to represent the showy and unsubstantial character of frivolous pleasures. The nightingale's sober outward appearance and impassioned song denote greater depth of feeling." The poem throughout is marked by the purest and loftiest moral tone; and it amply deserved Dryden's special recommendation, "both for the invention and the moral." It is given without abridgement. (Transcriber's note: Modern scholars believe that Chaucer was not the author of this poem)

WHEN that Phoebus his car of gold so high
Had whirled up the starry sky aloft,
And in the Bull enter'd certainly;
When showers sweet of rain descended soft,
Causing the grounde, fele times and oft, many
Up for to give many a wholesome air,
And every plain was y-clothed fair
With newe green, and maketh smalle flow'rs
To springe here and there in field and mead;
So very good and wholesome be the show'rs,
That they renewe what was old and dead
In winter time; and out of ev'ry seed
Springeth the herbe, so that ev'ry wight
Of thilke season waxeth glad and light. this
And I, so glad of thilke season sweet,
Was happed thus upon a certain night, thus circumstanced
As I lay in my bed, sleep full unmeet unfit, uncompliant
Was unto me; but why that I not might
Rest, I not wist; for there n'as earthly wight, was not
As I suppose, had more hearte's ease
Than I, for I n'had sickness nor disease. had not distress
Wherefore I marvel greatly of myself,
That I so long withoute sleepe lay;
And up I rose three houres after twelf,
About the springing of the gladsome day;

And on I put my gear and mine array, garments
And to a pleasant grove I gan to pass,
Long ere the brighte sun uprisen was;
In which were oakes great, straight as a line,
Under the which the grass, so fresh of hue,
Was newly sprung; and an eight foot or nine
Every tree well from his fellow grew,
With branches broad, laden with leaves new,
That sprangen out against the sunne sheen;
Some very red; and some a glad light green;
Which, as me thought, was right a pleasant sight.
And eke the birdes' songes for to hear
Would have rejoiced any earthly wight;
And I, that could not yet, in no mannere,
Heare the nightingale of all the year, during
Full busy hearkened with heart and ear,
If I her voice perceive could anywhere.
And at the last a path of little brede breadth
I found, that greatly had not used be;
For it forgrowen was with grass and weed, overgrown
That well unneth a wight mighte see: scarcely
Thought I, "This path some whither goes, pardie!" of a surety
And so I follow'd it, till it me brought
To a right pleasant arbour, well y-wrought,
That benched was, and all with turfes new
Freshly y-turf'd, whereof the greene grass,
So small, so thick, so short, so fresh of hue,
That most like to green wool, I wot, it was;
The hedge also, that yeden in compass, went all around
And closed in all the greene herbere, arbour
With sycamore was set and eglatere, eglantine, sweet-briar
Wreathed in fere so well and cunningly, together
That ev'ry branch and leaf grew by measure, regularly
Plain as a board, of a height by and by: the same height side
I saw never a thing, I you ensure, by side
So well y-done; for he that took the cure pains, care
To maken it, I trow did all his pain
To make it pass all those that men have seen.
And shapen was this arbour, roof and all,
As is a pretty parlour; and also
The hedge as thick was as a castle wall,

That whoso list without to stand or go,
Though he would all day pryen to and fro,
He should not see if there were any wight
Within or no; but one within well might
Perceive all those that wente there without
Into the field, that was on ev'ry side
Cover'd with corn and grass; that out of doubt,
Though one would seeken all the worlde wide,
So rich a fielde could not be espied
Upon no coast, as of the quantity; for its abundance
For of all goode thing there was plenty. or fertility
And I, that all this pleasant sight did see,
Thought suddenly I felt so sweet an air
Of the eglentere, that certainly
There is no heart, I deem, in such despair,
Nor yet with thoughtes froward and contrair
So overlaid, but it should soon have boot, remedy, relief
If it had ones felt this savour swoot. sweet smell
And as I stood, and cast aside mine eye,
I was ware of the fairest medlar tree
That ever yet in all my life I seye, saw
As full of blossoms as it mighte be;
Therein a goldfinch leaping prettily
From bough to bough; and as him list he eat
Here and there of the buds and flowers sweet.
And to the arbour side was adjoining
This fairest tree, of which I have you told;
And at the last the bird began to sing
(When he had eaten what he eate wo'ld)
So passing sweetly, that by many fold
It was more pleasant than I could devise; tell, describe
And, when his song was ended in this wise,
The nightingale with so merry a note
Answered him, that all the woode rung,
So suddenly, that, as it were a sote, like a fool
I stood astound'; so was I with the song
Thorough ravished, that, till late and long, for a long time
I wist not in what place I was, nor where;
Again, me thought, she sung e'en by mine ear.
Wherefore I waited about busily
On ev'ry side, if that I might her see;

And at the last I gan full well espy
Where she sat in a fresh green laurel tree,
On the further side, even right by me,
That gave so passing a delicious smell,
According to the eglantere full well. blending with
Whereof I had so inly great pleasure,
That, as me thought, I surely ravish'd was
Into Paradise, where as my desire
Was for to be, and no farther to pass,
As for that day; and on the sweete grass
I sat me down; for, as for mine intent, to my mind
The birde's song was more convenient, appropriate to my humour
And more pleasant to me, by many fold,
Than meat, or drink, or any other thing;
Thereto the arbour was so fresh and cold,
The wholesome savours eke so comforting,
That, as I deemed, since the beginning
Of the world was there never seen ere than before then
So pleasant a ground of none earthly man.
And as I sat, the birdes heark'ning thus,
Me thought that I heard voices suddenly,
The most sweetest and most delicious
That ever any wight, I trow truely, verily believe
Heard in their life; for the harmony
And sweet accord was in so good musike,
That the voices to angels' most were like.
At the last, out of a grove even by,
That was right goodly, and pleasant to sight,
I saw where there came, singing lustily,
A world of ladies; but to tell aright
Their greate beauty, lies not in my might,
Nor their array; nevertheless I shall
Tell you a part, though I speak not of all.
In surcoats white, of velvet well fitting, upper robes
They were clad, and the seames each one,
As it were a mannere of garnishing,
Was set with emeraldes, one and one,
By and by; but many a riche stone in a row
Was set upon the purples, out of doubt, embroidered edges
Of collars, sleeves, and traines round about;
As greate pearles, round and orient, brilliant

And diamondes fine, and rubies red,
And many another stone, of which I went cannot recall
The names now; and ev'reach on her head
Had a rich fret of gold, which, without dread, band doubt
Was full of stately riche stones set; valuable, noble
And ev'ry lady had a chapelet
Upon her head of branches fresh and green,
So well y-wrought, and so marvellously,
That it was a right noble sight to see'n;
Some of laurel, and some full pleasantly
Had chapelets of woodbine; and sadly, sedately
Some of agnus castus wearen also
Chapelets fresh; but there were many of tho' those
That danced and eke sung full soberly;
And all they went in manner of compass; in a circle
But one there went, in mid the company,
Sole by herself; but all follow'd the pace
That she kept, whose heavenly figur'd face
So pleasant was, and her well shap'd person,
That in beauty she pass'd them ev'ry one.
And more richly beseen, by many fold,
She was also in ev'ry manner thing:
Upon her head, full pleasant to behold,
A crown of golde, rich for any king;
A branch of agnus castus eke bearing
In her hand, and to my sight truely
She Lady was of all that company.
And she began a roundell lustily,
That "Suse le foyle, devers moi," men call,
"Siene et mon joly coeur est endormy;"
And then the company answered all,
With voices sweet entuned, and so small, fine
That me thought it the sweetest melody
That ever I heard in my life, soothly. truly
And thus they came, dancing and singing,
Into the midst of the mead each one,
Before the arbour where I was sitting;
And, God wot, me thought I was well-begone, fortunate
For then I might advise them one by one, consider
Who fairest was, who best could dance or sing,
Or who most womanly was in all thing.

They had not danced but a little throw, short time
When that I hearde far off, suddenly,
So great a noise of thund'ring trumpets blow,
As though it should departed have the sky; rent, divide
And after that, within a while, I sigh, saw
From the same grove, where the ladies came out,
Of men of armes coming such a rout, company
As all the men on earth had been assembled as if
Unto that place, well horsed for the nonce occasion
Stirring so fast, that all the earthe trembled
But for to speak of riches, and of stones,
And men and horse, I trow the large ones i.e. jewels
Of Prester John, nor all his treasury,
Might not unneth have bought the tenth party hardly part
Of their array: whoso list heare more,
I shall rehearse so as I can a lite. little
Out of the grove, that I spake of before,
I saw come first, all in their cloakes white,
A company, that wore, for their delight,
Chapelets fresh of oake cerial,
Newly y-sprung; and trumpets were they all. trumpeters
On ev'ry trump hanging a broad bannere
Of fine tartarium was, full richly beat; embroidered with gold
Every trumpet his lord's armes bare;
About their necks, with greate pearles set,
Were collars broad; for cost they would not let, be hindered by
As it would seem, for their scutcheons each one
Were set about with many a precious stone.
Their horses' harness was all white also.
And after them next, in one company,
Came kinges at armes and no mo',
In cloakes of white cloth with gold richly;
Chaplets of green upon their heads on high;
The crownes that they on their scutcheons bare
Were set with pearl, and ruby, and sapphire,
And eke great diamondes many one:
But all their horse harness, and other gear,
Was in a suit according, ev'ry one,
As ye have heard the foresaid trumpets were;
And, by seeming, they were nothing to lear, had nothing to learn
And their guiding they did all mannerly. perfectly

And after them came a great company
Of heraldes and pursuivantes eke,
Arrayed in clothes of white velvet;
And, hardily, they were no thing to seek, assuredly
How they on them shoulde the harness set:
And ev'ry man had on a chapelet;
Scutcheones and eke harness, indeed,
They had in suit of them that 'fore them yede. corresponding with
went

Next after them in came, in armour bright,
All save their heades, seemly knightes nine,
And ev'ry clasp and nail, as to my sight,
Of their harness was of red golde fine;
With cloth of gold, and furred with ermine,
Were the trappures of their steedes strong, trappings
Both wide and large, that to the grounde hung.
And ev'ry boss of bridle and paytrel horse's breastplate
That they had on, was worth, as I would ween,
A thousand pound; and on their heades, well
Dressed, were crownes of the laurel green,
The beste made that ever I had seen;
And ev'ry knight had after him riding
Three henchemen upon him awaiting. pages
Of which ev'ry first, on a short truncheon, staff
His lorde's helmet bare, so richly dight, adorned
That the worst of them was worthy the ranson ransom
Of any king; the second a shielde bright
Bare at his back; the thirde bare upright
A mighty spear, full sharp y-ground and keen;
And ev'ry childe ware of leaves green page
A freshe chaplet on his haire bright;
And cloakes white of fine velvet they ware
Their steedes trapped and arrayed right,
Without difference, as their lordes' were;
And after them, on many a fresh courser,
There came of armed knightes such a rout, company, crowd
That they bespread the large field about.
And all they warden, after their degrees,
Chapelets newe made of laurel green,
Some of the oak, and some of other trees;
Some in their handes bare boughes sheen, bright

Some of laurel, and some of oakes keen,
Some of hawthorn, and some of the woodbind,
And many more which I had not in mind.
And so they came, their horses fresh stirring
With bloody soundes of their trumpets loud;
There saw I many an uncouth disguising strange manoeuvring
In the array of these knightes proud;
And at the last, as evenly as they could,
They took their place in midst of the mead,
And ev'ry knight turned his horse's head
To his fellow, and lightly laid a spear
Into the rest; and so the jousts began
On ev'ry part aboute, here and there;
Some brake his spear, some threw down horse and man;
About the field astray the steedes ran;
And, to behold their rule and governance, conduct
I you ensure, it was a great pleasuance.
And so the joustes last' an hour and more; lasted
But those that crowned were in laurel green
Wonne the prize; their dintes were so sore, strokes
That there was none against them might sustene:
And the jousting was alle left off clean,
And from their horse the nine alight' anon,
And so did all the remnant ev'ry one.
And forth they went together, twain and twain,
That to behold it was a worthy sight,
Toward the ladies on the greene plain,
That sang and danced as I said now right;
The ladies, as soon as they goodly might,
They brake off both the song and eke the dance,
And went to meet them with full glad semblance. air, aspect
And ev'ry lady took, full womanly,
By th'hand a knight, and so forth right they yede went
Unto a fair laurel that stood fast by,
With leaves lade the boughs of greate brede; breadth
And, to my doom, there never was, indeed, judgment
Man that had seene half so fair a tree;
For underneath it there might well have be been
A hundred persons, at their own pleasance, in perfect comfort
Shadowed from the heat of Phoebus bright,
So that they shoulde have felt no grievance annoyance

Of rain nor haile that them hurte might.
The savour eke rejoyce would any wight
That had been sick or melancholious,
It was so very good and virtuous. full of healing virtues
And with great rev'rence they inclined low
Unto the tree so sweet and fair of hue; appearance
And after that, within a little throw, short time
They all began to sing and dance of new,
Some song of love, some plaining of untrue, complaint of
Environing the tree that stood upright; unfaithfulness
And ever went a lady and a knight. going round
And at the last I cast mine eye aside,
And was ware of a lusty company
That came roaming out of the felde wide;
And hand in hand a knight and a lady;
The ladies all in surcoats, that richly
Purfiled were with many a riche stone; trimmed at the borders
And ev'ry knight of green ware mantles on,
Embroider'd well, so as the surcoats were;
And ev'reach had a chaplet on her head
(Which did right well upon the shining hair),
Maked of goodly flowers, white and red.
The knightes eke, that they in hande led,
In suit of them ware chaplets ev'ry one,
And them before went minstrels many one,
As harpes, pipes, lutes, and psaltry,
All clad in green; and, on their heades bare,
Of divers flowers, made full craftily
All in a suit, goodly chaplets they ware;
And so dancing into the mead they fare.
In mid the which they found a tuft that was
All overspread with flowers in compass around, in a circle
Whereunto they inclined ev'ry one,
With great reverence, and that full humbly
And at the last there then began anon
A lady for to sing right womanly,
A bargaret, in praising the daisy.
For, as me thought, among her notes sweet,
She saide: "Si douce est la margarete."
Then alle they answered her in fere together
So passingly well, and so pleasantly,

That it was a most blissful noise to hear.
But, I n'ot how, it happen'd suddenly know not
As about noon the sun so fervently
Wax'd hote, that the pretty tender flow'rs
Had lost the beauty of their fresh colours,
Forshrunk with heat; the ladies eke to-brent, shrivelled very burnt
That they knew not where they might them bestow;
The knightes swelt, for lack of shade nigh shent fainted destroyed
And after that, within a little throw,
The wind began so sturdily to blow,
That down went all the flowers ev'ry one,
So that in all the mead there left not one;
Save such as succour'd were among the leaves
From ev'ry storm that mighte them assail,
Growing under the hedges and thick greves; groves, boughs
And after that there came a storm of hail
And rain in fere, so that withoute fail together
The ladies nor the knights had not one thread
Dry on them, so dropping was all their weed. clothing
And when the storm was passed clean away,
Those in the white, that stood under the tree,
They felt no thing of all the great affray
That they in green without had in y-be: had been in
To them they went for ruth, and for pity,
Them to comfort after their great disease; trouble
So fain they were the helpless for to ease. glad, eager
Then I was ware how one of them in green
Had on a crowne, rich and well sitting; becoming
Wherefore I deemed well she was a queen,
And those in green on her were awaiting. in attendance
The ladies then in white that were coming
Toward them, and the knightes eke in fere, together
Began to comfort them, and make them cheer.
The queen in white, that was of great beauty,
Took by the hand the queen that was in green,
And saide: "Sister, I have great pity
Of your annoy, and of your troublous teen, injury, grief
Wherein you and your company have been
So long, alas! and if that it you please
To go with me, I shall you do the ease,
"In all the pleasure that I can or may;"

Whereof the other, humbly as she might,
Thanked her; for in right evil array
She was, with storm and heat, I you behight; assure
Arid ev'ry lady then anon aright,
That were in white, one of them took in green
By the hand; which when that the knights had seen,
In like mannere each of them took a knight
Y-clad in green, and forth with them they fare
Unto a hedge, where that they anon right,
To make their joustes, they would not spare
Boughes to hewe down, and eke trees square,
Wherewith they made them stately fires great,
To dry their clothes, that were wringing wet.
And after that, of herbes that there grew,
They made, for blisters of the sun's burning,
Ointmentes very good, wholesome, and new,
Wherewith they went the sick fast anointing;
And after that they went about gath'ring
Pleasant salades, which they made them eat,
For to refresh their great unkindly heat.
The Lady of the Leaf then gan to pray
Her of the Flower (for so, to my seeming,
They should be called, as by their array),
To sup with her; and eke, for anything,
That she should with her all her people bring;
And she again in right goodly mannere
Thanked her fast of her most friendly cheer;
Saying plainely, that she would obey,
With all her heart, all her commandement:
And then anon, without longer delay,
The Lady of the Leaf hath one y-sent
To bring a palfrey, after her intent, according to her wish
Arrayed well in fair harness of gold;
For nothing lack'd, that to him longe sho'ld. should belong to him
And, after that, to all her company
She made to purvey horse and ev'rything provide
That they needed; and then full lustily,
Ev'n by the arbour where I was sitting,
They passed all, so merrily singing,
That it would have comforted any wight.
But then I saw a passing wondrous sight;

For then the nightingale, that all the day
Had in the laurel sat, and did her might
The whole service to sing longing to May,
All suddenly began to take her flight;
And to the Lady of the Leaf forthright
She flew, and set her on her hand softly;
Which was a thing I marvell'd at greatly.
The goldfinch eke, that from the medlar tree
Was fled for heat into the bushes cold,
Unto the Lady of the Flower gan flee,
And on her hand he set him as he wo'ld,
And pleasantly his winges gan to fold;
And for to sing they pain'd them both, as sore made great exertions
As they had done of all the day before. during
And so these ladies rode forth a great pace, rapidly
And all the rout of knightes eke in fere;
And I, that had seen all this wonder case, wondrous incident
Thought that I would assay in some mannere
To know fully the truth of this mattere,
And what they were that rode so pleasantly;
And when they were the arbour passed by,
I dress'd me forth, and happ'd to meet anon issued forth
A right fair lady, I do you ensure; assure
And she came riding by herself alone,
All in white; then with semblance full demure
I her saluted, and bade good adventure fortune
Might her befall, as I could most humbly;
And she answer'd: "My daughter, gramercy!" great thanks
"Madame," quoth I, "if that I durst enquire
Of you, I would fain, of that company,
Wit what they be that pass'd by this herbere?
And she again answered right friendly:
"My faire daughter, all that pass'd hereby
In white clothing, be servants ev'ry one
Unto the Leaf; and I myself am one.
"See ye not her that crowned is," quoth she
"Clad all in white?" — "Madame," then quoth I, "yes:"
"That is Dian', goddess of chastity;
And for because that she a maiden is,
In her hande the branch she beareth this,
That agnus castus men call properly;

And all the ladies in her company,
 "Which ye see of that herbe chaplets wear,
 Be such as have kept alway maidenhead:
 And all they that of laurel chaplets bear,
 Be such as hardy were in manly deed, — courageous
 Victorious name which never may be dead!
 And all they were so worthy of their hand valiant in fight
 In their time, that no one might them withstand,
 "And those that weare chaplets on their head
 Of fresh woodbind, be such as never were
 To love untrue in word, in thought, nor deed,
 But ay steadfast; nor for pleasance, nor fear,
 Though that they should their heartes all to-tear, rend in pieces
 Would never flit, but ever were steadfast, change
 Till that their lives there asunder brast." till they died
 "Now fair Madame," quoth I, "yet would I pray
 Your ladyship, if that it mighte be,
 That I might knowe, by some manner way
 (Since that it hath liked your beauty,
 The truth of these ladies for to tell me),
 What that these knightes be in rich armour,
 And what those be in green and wear the flow'r?
 "And why that some did rev'rence to that tree,
 And some unto the plot of flowers fair?"
 "With right good will, my daughter fair," quoth she,
 "Since your desire is good and debonair; gentle, courteous
 The nine crowned be very exemplair the true examples
 Of all honour longing to chivalry;
 And those certain be call'd The Nine Worthy,
 "Which ye may see now riding all before,
 That in their time did many a noble deed,
 And for their worthiness full oft have bore
 The crown of laurel leaves upon their head,
 As ye may in your olde bookes read;
 And how that he that was a conquerour
 Had by laurel alway his most honour.
 "And those that beare boughes in their hand
 Of the precious laurel so notable,
 Be such as were, I will ye understand,
 Most noble Knightes of the Rounde Table,
 And eke the Douceperes honourable;

Whiche they bear in sign of victory,
As witness of their deedes mightily.
"Eke there be knightes old of the Garter,
That in their time did right worthily;
And the honour they did to the laurer laurel
Is for by it they have their laud wholly, because
Their triumph eke, and martial glory;
Which unto them is more perfect richness
Than any wight imagine can, or guess.
"For one leaf given of that noble tree
To any wight that hath done worthily,
An' it be done so as it ought to be, if
Is more honour than any thing earthly;
Witness of Rome, that founder was truly
Of alle knighthood and deedes marvellous;
Record I take of Titus Livius."
And as for her that crowned is in green,
It is Flora, of these flowers goddess;
And all that here on her awaiting be'n,
It are such folk that loved idleness,
And not delighted in no business,
But for to hunt and hawk, and play in meads,
And many other such-like idle deedes.
"And for the great delight and the pleasance
They have to the flow'r, and so rev'rently
They unto it do such obeisance
As ye may see." "Now, fair Madame," quoth I,
"If I durst ask, what is the cause, and why,
That knightes have the ensign of honour insignia
Rather by the leaf than by the flow'r?"
"Soothly, daughter," quoth she, "this is the troth:
For knights should ever be persevering,
To seek honour, without feintise or sloth, dissimulation
From well to better in all manner thing:
In sign of which, with leaves aye lasting
They be rewarded after their degree,
Whose lusty green may not appaired be, impaired, decayed
"But ay keeping their beauty fresh and green;
For there is no storm that may them deface,
Nor hail nor snow, nor wind nor frostes keen;
Wherefore they have this property and grace:

And for the flow'r, within a little space,
 Woll be lost, so simple of nature will
 They be, that they no grievance may endure; injury, hardship
 "And ev'ry storm will blow them soon away,
 Nor they laste not but for a season;
 That is the cause, the very truth to say,
 That they may not, by no way of reason,
 Be put to no such occupation."
 "Madame," quoth I, "with all my whole service
 I thank you now, in my most humble wise;
 "For now I am ascertain'd thoroughly
 Of ev'ry thing that I desir'd to know."
 "I am right glad that I have said, soothly,
 Aught to your pleasure, if ye will me trow," believe
 Quoth she again; "but to whom do ye owe
 Your service? and which wolle ye honour, will
 Tell me, I pray, this year, the Leaf or the Flow'r?"
 "Madame," quoth I, "though I be least worthy,
 Unto the Leaf I owe mine observance:"
 "That is," quoth she, "right well done, certainly;
 And I pray God, to honour you advance,
 And keep you from the wicked remembrance
 Of Malebouche, and all his cruelty; Slander
 And all that good and well-condition'd be.
 "For here may I no longer now abide;
 I must follow the greate company,
 That ye may see yonder before you ride."
 And forthwith, as I coulde, most humbly
 I took my leave of her, and she gan hie haste
 After them as fast as she ever might;
 And I drew homeward, for it was nigh night,
 And put all that I had seen in writing,
 Under support of them that list it read.
 O little book! thou art so uncunning, unskilful
 How dar'st thou put thyself in press, for dread?
 It is wonder that thou waxest not red!
 Since that thou know'st full lite who shall behold little
 Thy rude language, full boistously unfold. unfolded in homely and
 unpolished fashion
 Explicit. The End

THE HOUSE OF FAME

Thanks partly to Pope's brief and elegant paraphrase, in his "Temple of Fame," and partly to the familiar force of the style and the satirical significance of the allegory, "The House of Fame" is among the best known and relished of Chaucer's minor poems. The octosyllabic measure in which it is written — the same which the author of "Hudibras" used with such admirable effect — is excellently adapted for the vivid descriptions, the lively sallies of humour and sarcasm, with which the poem abounds; and when the poet actually does get to his subject, he treats it with a zest, and a corresponding interest on the part of the reader, which are scarcely surpassed by the best of The Canterbury Tales. The poet, however, tarries long on the way to the House of Fame; as Pope says in his advertisement, the reader who would compare his with Chaucer's poem, "may begin with Chaucer's third Book of Fame, there being nothing in the two first books that answers to their title." The first book opens with a kind of prologue (actually so marked and called in earlier editions) in which the author speculates on the causes of dreams; avers that never any man had such a dream as he had on the tenth of December; and prays the God of Sleep to help him to interpret the dream, and the Mover of all things to reward or afflict those readers who take the dream well or ill. Then he relates that, having fallen asleep, he fancied himself within a temple of glass — the abode of Venus — the walls of which were painted with the story of Aeneas. The paintings are described at length; and then the poet tells us that, coming out of the temple, he found himself on a vast sandy plain, and saw high in heaven an eagle, that began to descend towards him. With the prologue, the first book numbers lines; of which only — more than are actually concerned with or directly lead towards the real subject of the poem — are given here. The second book, containing lines, of which will be found in this edition, is wholly devoted to the voyage from the Temple of Venus to the House of Fame, which the dreamer accomplishes in the eagle's claws. The bird has been sent by Jove to do the poet some "solace" in reward of his labours for the cause of Love; and during the transit through the air the messenger discourses obligingly and learnedly with his human burden on the theory of sound, by which all that is spoken must needs reach the House of Fame; and on other matters suggested by their errand and their observations by the way. The third book (of lines, only a score of which, just at the outset, have been omitted) brings us to the real pith of the poem. It finds the poet close to the House of Fame, built on a rock of ice engraved with names, many of which are half-melted away. Entering the gorgeous palace, he finds all manner of minstrels and historians; harpers, pipers, and trumpeters of fame; magicians, jugglers, sorcerers, and many others. On a throne of ruby sits the goddess, seeming at one moment of but a cubit's stature, at the next touching heaven; and at either hand, on pillars, stand the great authors who "bear up the name" of ancient nations. Crowds of people enter the hall from all regions of earth, praying the goddess to give them good or evil fame, with and without their own deserts; and they receive answers favourable, negative, or contrary, according to the

caprice of Fame. Pursuing his researches further, out of the region of reputation or fame proper into that of tidings or rumours, the poet is led, by a man who has entered into conversation with him, to a vast whirling house of twigs, ever open to the arrival of tidings, ever full of murmurings, whisperings, and clatterings, coming from the vast crowds that fill it — for every rumour, every piece of news, every false report, appears there in the shape of the person who utters it, or passes it on, down in earth. Out at the windows innumerable, the tidings pass to Fame, who gives to each report its name and duration; and in the house travellers, pilgrims, pardoners, couriers, lovers, &c., make a huge clamour. But here the poet meets with a man "of great authority," and, half afraid, awakes; skilfully — whether by intention, fatigue, or accident — leaving the reader disappointed by the nonfulfilment of what seemed to be promises of further disclosures. The poem, not least in the passages the omission of which has been dictated by the exigencies of the present volume, is full of testimony to the vast acquaintance of Chaucer with learning ancient and modern; Ovid, Virgil, Statius, are equally at his command to illustrate his narrative or to furnish the ground-work of his descriptions; while architecture, the Arabic numeration, the theory of sound, and the effects of gunpowder, are only a few among the topics of his own time of which the poet treats with the ease of proficient knowledge. Not least interesting are the vivid touches in which Chaucer sketches the routine of his laborious and almost recluse daily life; while the strength, individuality, and humour that mark the didactic portion of the poem prove that "The House of Fame" was one of the poet's riper productions.

GOD turn us ev'ry dream to good!
For it is wonder thing, by the Rood, Cross
To my witte, what causeth swevens, dreams
Either on morrows or on evens;
And why th'effect followeth of some,
And of some it shall never come;
Why this is an avision
And this a revelation;
Why this a dream, why that a sweven,
And not to ev'ry man like even; alike
Why this a phantom, why these oracles,
I n'ot; but whoso of these miracles
The causes knoweth bet than I,
Divine he; for I certainly define
Ne can them not, nor ever think do not know them
To busy my wit for to swink labour
To know of their significance
The genders, neither the distance
Of times of them, nor the causes

For why that this more than that cause is;
Or if folke's complexions
Make them dream of reflections;
Or elles thus, as others sayn,
For too great feebleness of the brain
By abstinence, or by sickness,
By prison, strife, or great distress,
Or elles by disordinance derangement
Of natural accustomance; mode of life
That some men be too curious
In study, or melancholious,
Or thus, so inly full of dread,
That no man may them boote bede; afford them relief
Or elles that devotion
Of some, and contemplation,
Causeth to them such dreames oft;
Or that the cruel life unsoft
Of them that unkind loves lead,
That often hope much or dread,
That purely their impressions
Cause them to have visions;
Or if that spirits have the might
To make folk to dream a-night;
Or if the soul, of proper kind, its own nature
Be so perfect as men find,
That it forewot what is to come, foreknows
And that it warneth all and some
Of ev'reach of their adventures,
By visions, or by figures,
But that our fleshe hath no might
To understanden it aright,
For it is warned too darkly;
But why the cause is, not wot I.
Well worth of this thing greate clerks,
That treat of this and other works;
For I of none opinion
Will as now make mention;
But only that the holy Rood
Turn us every dream to good.
For never since that I was born,
Nor no man elles me befor,

Mette, as I trowe steadfastly, dreamed
So wonderful a dream as I,
The tenth day now of December;
The which, as I can it remember,
I will you tellen ev'ry deal. whit
But at my beginning, truste weel, well
I will make invocation,
With special devotion,
Unto the god of Sleep anon,
That dwelleth in a cave of stone,
Upon a stream that comes from Lete,
That is a flood of hell unsweet,
Beside a folk men call Cimmerie;
There sleepeth ay this god unmerry,
With his sleepy thousand sones,
That alway for to sleep their won is; wont, custom
And to this god, that I of read, tell of
Pray I, that he will me speed
My sweven for to tell aright,
If ev'ry dream stands in his might.
And he that Mover is of all
That is, and was, and ever shall,
So give them joye that it hear,
Of alle that they dream to-year; this year
And for to standen all in grace favour
Of their loves, or in what place
That them were liefest for to stand, most desired
And shield them from povert' and shand, shame
And from ev'ry unhap and disease,
And send them all that may them please,
That take it well, and scorn it not,
Nor it misdeemen in their thought, misjudge
Through malicious intention;
And whoso, through presumption.
Or hate, or scorn, or through envy,
Despite, or jape, or villainy, jesting
Misdemean it, pray I Jesus God,
That dream he barefoot, dream he shod,
That ev'ry harm that any man
Hath had since that the world began,
Befall him thereof, ere he sterve, die

And grant that he may it deserve, earn, obtain
 Lo! with such a conclusion
 As had of his avision
 Croesus, that was the king of Lyde,
 That high upon a gibbet died;
 This prayer shall he have of me;
 I am no bet in charity. no more charitable
 Now hearken, as I have you said,
 What that I mette ere I abraid, awoke
 Of December the tenth day;
 When it was night to sleep I lay,
 Right as I was wont for to do'n,
 And fell asleepe wonder soon,
 As he that weary was for go was weary from going
 On pilgrimage miles two
 To the corsaint Leonard, relics of
 To make lithe that erst was hard.
 But, as I slept, me mette I was
 Within a temple made of glass;
 In which there were more images
 Of gold, standing in sundry stages,
 And more riche tabernacles,
 And with pierrie more pinnacles, gems
 And more curious portraitures,
 And quainte manner of figures strange kinds
 Of golde work, than I saw ever.
 But, certainly, I wiste never knew
 Where that it was, but well wist I
 It was of Venus readily,
 This temple; for in portraiture
 I saw anon right her figure
 Naked floating in a sea,
 And also on her head, pardie,
 Her rose garland white and red,
 And her comb to comb her head,
 Her doves, and Dan Cupido,
 Her blinde son, and Vulcano,
 That in his face was full brown.

As he "roamed up and down," the dreamer saw on the wall a tablet of brass inscribed with the opening lines of the Aeneid; while the whole story of Aeneas was told in the "portraitures" and gold work. About three hundred and fifty lines are devoted to the

description; but they merely embody Virgil's account of Aeneas' adventures from the destruction of Troy to his arrival in Italy; and the only characteristic passage is the following reflection, suggested by the death of Dido for her perfidious but fate-compelled guest:

Lo! how a woman doth amiss,
To love him that unknowen is!
For, by Christ, lo! thus it fareth,
It is not all gold that glareth. glitters
For, all so brook I well my head,
There may be under goodlihead fair appearance
Cover'd many a shrewed vice; cursed
Therefore let no wight be so nice foolish
To take a love only for cheer, looks
Or speech, or for friendly mannere;
For this shall ev'ry woman find,
That some man, of his pure kind, by force of his nature
Will shoven outward the fairest,
Till he have caught that which him lest; pleases
And then anon will causes find,
And sweare how she is unkind,
Or false, or privy double was. secretly
All this say I by Aeneas with reference to
And Dido, and her nice lest, foolish pleasure
That loved all too soon a guest;
Therefore I will say a proverb,
That he that fully knows the herb
May safely lay it to his eye;
Withoute dread, this is no lie. doubt

When the dreamer had seen all the sights in the temple, he became desirous to know who had worked all those wonders, and in what country he was; so he resolved to go out at the wicket, in search of somebody who might tell him.

When I out at the doores came,
I fast aboute me beheld;
Then saw I but a large feld, open country
As far as that I mighte see,
Withoute town, or house, or tree,
Or bush, or grass, or ered land, ploughed
For all the field was but of sand,
As small as men may see it lie fine

In the desert of Libye;
 Nor no manner creature
 That is formed by Nature,
 There saw I, me to rede or wiss. advise or direct
 "O Christ!" thought I, "that art in bliss,
 From phantom and illusion vain fancy and deception
 Me save!" and with devotion
 Mine eyen to the heav'n I cast.
 Then was I ware at the last
 That, faste by the sun on high,
 As kennen might I with mine eye, as well as I might discern
 Me thought I saw an eagle soar,
 But that it seemed muche more larger
 Than I had any eagle seen;
 This is as sooth as death, certain,
 It was of gold, and shone so bright,
 That never saw men such a sight,
 But if the heaven had y-won, unless
 All new from God, another sun;
 So shone the eagle's feathers bright:
 And somewhat downward gan it light. descend, alight
 The Second Book opens with a brief invocation of Venus and of Thought; then it
 proceeds:

This eagle, of which I have you told,
 That shone with feathers as of gold,
 Which that so high began to soar,
 I gan beholde more and more,
 To see her beauty and the wonder;
 But never was there dint of thunder,
 Nor that thing that men calle foudre, thunderbolt
 That smote sometimes a town to powder,
 And in his swifte coming brenn'd, burned
 That so swithe gan descend, rapidly
 As this fowl, when that it beheld
 That I a-roam was in the feld;
 And with his grim pawes strong,
 Within his sharpe nailes long,
 Me, flying, at a swap he hent, swoop seized
 And with his sours again up went,
 Me carrying in his clawes stark strong

As light as I had been a lark,
How high, I cannot telle you,
For I came up, I wist not how.

The poet faints through bewilderment and fear; but the eagle, speaking with the voice of a man, recalls him to himself, and comforts him by the assurance that what now befalls him is for his instruction and profit. Answering the poet's unspoken inquiry whether he is not to die otherwise, or whether Jove will him stellify, the eagle says that he has been sent by Jupiter out of his "great ruth,"

"For that thou hast so truely
So long served ententively with attentive zeal
His blinde nephew Cupido, grandson
And faire Venus also,
Withoute guerdon ever yet,
And natheless hast set thy wit
(Although that in thy head full lite is) little
To make bookes, songs, and ditties,
In rhyme or elles in cadence,
As thou best canst, in reverence
Of Love, and of his servants eke,
That have his service sought, and seek,
And pained thee to praise his art,
Although thou haddest never part;
Wherefore, all so God me bless,
Jovis holds it great humbless,
And virtue eke, that thou wilt make
A-night full oft thy head to ache,
In thy study so thou writest,
And evermore of love enditest,
In honour of him and praisings,
And in his folke's furtherings,
And in their matter all devisest, relates
And not him nor his folk despisest,
Although thou may'st go in the dance
Of them that him list not advance.
Wherefore, as I said now, y-wis,
Jupiter well considers this;
And also, beausire, other things; good sir
That is, that thou hast no tidings
Of Love's folk, if they be glad,
Nor of naught elles that God made;

And not only from far country
That no tidings come to thee,
But of thy very neighbours,
That dwellen almost at thy doors,
Thou hearest neither that nor this.
For when thy labour all done is,
And hast y-made thy reckonings,
Instead of rest and newe things,
Thou go'st home to thy house anon,
And, all so dumb as any stone,
Thou sittest at another book,
Till fully dazed is thy look; blinded
And livest thus as a hermite

Although thine abstinence is lite." little

Therefore has Jove appointed the eagle to take the poet to the House of Fame, to do him some pleasure in recompense for his devotion to Cupid; and he will hear, says the bird,

"When we be come there as I say,
More wondrous thinges, dare I lay, bet
Of Love's folke more tidings,
Both soothe sawes and leasings; true sayings and lies
And more loves new begun,
And long y-served loves won,
And more loves casually
That be betid, no man knows why, happened by chance
But as a blind man starts a hare;
And more jollity and welfare,
While that they finde love of steel, love true as steel
As thinketh them, and over all weel;
More discords, and more jealousies,
More murmurs, and more novelties,
And more dissimulations,
And feigned reparations;
And more bearded, in two hours,
Withoute razor or scissours
Y-made, than graines be of sands;
And eke more holding in hands, embracings
And also more renovelances renewings
Of old forleten acquaintances; broken-off acquaintanceships
More love-days, and more accords, agreements
Than on instruments be chords;

And eke of love more exchanges
Than ever cornes were in granges." barns
The poet can scarcely believe that, though Fame had all the pies magpies and all the
spies in a kingdom, she should hear so much; but the eagle proceeds to prove that she
can.

First shalt thou heare where she dwelleth;
And, so as thine own booke telleth,
Her palace stands, as I shall say,
Right ev'n in middes of the way
Betweene heav'n, and earth, and sea,
That whatsoe'er in all these three
Is spoken, privy or apert, secretly or openly
The air thereto is so overt, clear
And stands eke in so just a place, suitable
That ev'ry sound must to it pace,
Or whatso comes from any tongue,
Be it rowned, read, or sung, whispered
Or spoken in surety or dread, doubt

Certain it must thither need." it must needs go thither

The eagle, in a long discourse, demonstrates that, as all natural things have a natural
place towards which they move by natural inclination, and as sound is only broken air,
so every sound must come to Fame's House, "though it were piped of a mouse" — on the
same principle by which every part of a mass of water is affected by the casting in of a
stone. The poet is all the while borne upward, entertained with various information by
the bird; which at last cries out —

"Hold up thy head, for all is well!
Saint Julian, lo! bon hostel!
See here the House of Fame, lo
May'st thou not heare that I do?"
"What?" quoth I. "The greate soun',"
Quoth he, "that rumbleth up and down
In Fame's House, full of tidings,
Both of fair speech and of chidings,
And of false and sooth compounded; compounded, mingled
Hearken well; it is not rowned. whispered
Hearest thou not the greate swough?" confused sound
"Yes, pardie!" quoth I, "well enough."
And what sound is it like?" quoth he
"Peter! the beating of the sea,"

Quoth I, "against the rockes hollow,
When tempests do the shippes swallow.
And let a man stand, out of doubt,
A mile thence, and hear it rout. roar
Or elles like the last humbling dull low distant noise
After the clap of a thund'ring,
When Jovis hath the air y-beat;
But it doth me for feare sweat."
"Nay, dread thee not thereof," quoth he;
"It is nothing will bite thee,
Thou shalt no harme have, truly."
And with that word both he and I
As nigh the place arrived were,
As men might caste with a spear.
I wist not how, but in a street
He set me fair upon my feet,
And saide: "Walke forth apace,
And take thine adventure or case, thy chance of what
That thou shalt find in Fame's place." may befall
"Now," quoth I, "while we have space
To speak, ere that I go from thee,
For the love of God, as telle me,
In sooth, that I will of thee lear, learn
If this noise that I hear
Be, as I have heard thee tell,
Of folk that down in earthe dwell,
And cometh here in the same wise
As I thee heard, ere this, devise?
And that there living body n'is is not
In all that house that yonder is,
That maketh all this loude fare?" hubbub, ado
"No," answered he, "by Saint Clare,
And all so wisly God rede me; so surely god
But one thing I will warne thee, guide me
Of the which thou wilt have wonder.
Lo! to the House of Fame yonder,
Thou know'st how cometh ev'ry speech;
It needeth not thee eft to teach. again
But understand now right well this;
When any speech y-comen is
Up to the palace, anon right

It waxeth like the same wight becomes person
Which that the word in earthe spake,
Be he cloth'd in red or black;
And so weareth his likeness,
And speaks the word, that thou wilt guess fancy
That it the same body be,
Whether man or woman, he or she.
And is not this a wondrous thing?"
"Yes," quoth I then, "by Heaven's king!"
And with this word, "Farewell," quoth he,
And here I will abide thee, wait for
And God of Heaven send thee grace
Some good to learen in this place." learn
And I of him took leave anon,
And gan forth to the palace go'n.

At the opening of the Third Book, Chaucer briefly invokes Apollo's guidance, and entreats him, because "the rhyme is light and lewd," to "make it somewhat agreeable, though some verse fail in a syllable." If the god answers the prayer, the poet promises to kiss the next laurel-tree he sees; and he proceeds:

When I was from this eagle gone,
I gan behold upon this place;
And certain, ere I farther pace,
I will you all the shape devise describe
Of house and city; and all the wise
How I gan to this place approach,
That stood upon so high a roche, rock
Higher standeth none in Spain;
But up I climb'd with mucche pain,
And though to climbe grieved me, cost me painful effort
Yet I ententive was to see, attentive
And for to pore wondrous low, gaze closely
If I could any wise know
What manner stone this rocke was,
For it was like a thing of glass,
But that it shone full more clear
But of what congealed mattere
It was, I wist not readily,
But at the last espied I,
And found that it was ev'ry deal entirely
A rock of ice, and not of steel.

Thought I, "By Saint Thomas of Kent,
This were a feeble fundament foundation
To builden a place so high; on which to build
He ought him lite to glorify little
That hereon built, God so me save!"
Then saw I all the half y-grave
With famous folke's names fele, many
That hadde been in mucche weal, good fortune
And their fames wide y-blow.
But well unnethes might I know scarcely
Any letters for to read
Their names by; for out of dread doubt
They were almost off thawed so,
That of the letters one or two
Were molt away of ev'ry name, melted
So unfamous was wox their fame; become
But men say, "What may ever last?"
Then gan I in my heart to cast conjecture
That they were molt away for heat,
And not away with stormes beat;
For on the other side I sey saw
Of this hill, that northward lay,
How it was written full of names
Of folke that had greate fames
Of olde times, and yet they were
As fresh as men had writ them there
The selfe day, right ere that hour
That I upon them gan to pore.
But well I wiste what it made; meant
It was conserved with the shade,
All the writing which I sigh, saw
Of a castle that stood on high;
And stood eke on so cold a place,
That heat might it not deface. injure, destroy
Then gan I on this hill to go'n,
And found upon the cop a won, summit house
That all the men that be alive
Have not the cunning to describe skill to describe
The beauty of that like place,
Nor could easte no compass find no contrivance
Such another for to make,

That might of beauty be its make, match, equal
Nor one so wondrously y-wrought,
That it astonieth yet my thought,
And maketh all my wit to swink, labour
Upon this castle for to think;
So that the greate beauty,
Cast, craft, and curiosity, ingenuity
Ne can I not to you devise; describe
My witte may me not suffice.
But natheless all the substance
I have yet in my remembrance;
For why, me thoughte, by Saint Gile,
Alle was of stone of beryle,
Bothe the castle and the tow'r,
And eke the hall, and ev'ry bow'r, chamber
Withoute pieces or joinings,
But many subtile compassings, contrivances
As barbicans and pinnacles, watch-towers
Imageries and tabernacles,
I saw; and eke full of windows,
As flakes fall in greate snows.
And eke in each of the pinnacles
Were sundry habitacles, apartments or niches
In which stood, all without,
Full the castle all about,
Of all manner of minstrales
And gestiours, that telle tales
Both of weeping and of game, mirth
Of all that longeth unto Fame.
There heard I play upon a harp,
That sounded bothe well and sharp,
Him, Orpheus, full craftily;
And on this side faste by
Satte the harper Arion,
And eke Aeacides Chiron
And other harpers many a one,
And the great Glasgerion;
And smalle harpers, with their glees, instruments
Satten under them in sees, seats
And gan on them upward to gape,
And counterfeit them as an ape,

Or as craft counterfeiteth kind. art counterfeits nature

Then saw I standing them behind,
Afar from them, all by themselves,
Many thousand times twelve,
That made loude minstrelsies
In cornmuse and eke in shawmies,
And in many another pipe,
That craftily began to pipe,
Both in dulcet and in reed,
That be at feastes with the bride.
And many a flute and liltng horn,
And pipes made of greene corn,
As have these little herde-grooms, shepherd-boys
That keepe beastes in the brooms.
There saw I then Dan Citherus,
And of Athens Dan Pronomus,
And Marsyas that lost his skin,
Both in the face, body, and chin,
For that he would envyen, lo!
To pipe better than Apollo.
There saw I famous, old and young,
Pipers of alle Dutche tongue,
To learne love-dances and springs,
Reyes, and these strange things.
Then saw I in another place,
Standing in a large space,
Of them that make bloody soun', martial
In trumpet, beam, and clarioun; horn
For in fight and blood-sheddings
Is used gladly clarionings.
There heard I trumpe Messenus.
Of whom speaketh Virgilius.
There heard I Joab trump also,
Theodamas, and other mo',
And all that used clarion
In Catalogne and Aragon,
That in their times famous were
To learne, saw I trumpe there.
There saw I sit in other sees,
Playing upon sundry gleees,
Whiche that I cannot neven, name

More than starres be in heaven;
Of which I will not now rhyme,
For ease of you, and loss of time:
For time lost, this knowe ye,
By no way may recover'd be.
There saw I play jongelours, jugglers
Magicians, and tregetours,
And Pythonesses, charmeresses,
And old witches, and sorceresses,
That use exorcisations,
And eke subfumigations;
And clerkes eke, which knowe well scholars
All this magic naturel,
That craftily do their intents,
To make, in certain ascendants,
Images, lo! through which magic
To make a man be whole or sick.
There saw I the queen Medea,
And Circes eke, and Calypsa.
There saw I Hermes Ballenus,
Limote, and eke Simon Magus.
There saw I, and knew by name,
That by such art do men have fame.
There saw I Colle Tregetour
Upon a table of sycamore
Play an uncouth thing to tell; strange, rare
I saw him carry a windmell
Under a walnut shell.
Why should I make longer tale
Of all the people I there say, saw
From hence even to doomesday?
When I had all this folk behold,
And found me loose, and not y-hold, at liberty and unrestrained
And I had mused longe while
Upon these walles of beryle,
That shone lighter than any glass,
And made well more than it was much greater
To seemen ev'rything, y-wis,
As kindly thing of Fame it is; natural
I gan forth roam until I fand found
The castle-gate on my right hand,

Which all so well y-carven was,
That never such another n'as; was not
And yet it was by Adventure chance
Y-wrought, and not by subtile cure. careful art
It needeth not you more to tell,
To make you too longe dwell,
Of these gates' flourishinges,
Nor of compasses, nor carvings, devices
Nor how they had in masonries,
As corbets, full of imageries.
But, Lord! so fair it was to shew,
For it was all with gold behew. coloured
But in I went, and that anon;
There met I crying many a one
"A largess! largess! hold up well!
God save the Lady of this pell, palace
Our owen gentle Lady Fame,
And them that will to have name
Of us!" Thus heard I cryen all,
And fast they came out of the hall,
And shooke nobles and sterlings, coins
And some y-crowned were as kings,
With crownes wrought fall of lozenges;
And many ribands, and many fringes,
Were on their clothes truely
Then at the last espied I
That pursuivantes and herauds, heralds
That cry riche folke's lauds, praises
They weren all; and ev'ry man
Of them, as I you telle can,
Had on him throwen a vesture
Which that men call a coat-armure,
Embroidered wondrously rich,
As though there were naught y-lich; nothing like it
But naught will I, so may I thrive,
Be aboute to descrive concern myself with describing
All these armes that there were,
That they thus on their coates bare,
For it to me were impossible;
Men might make of them a bible
Twenty foote thick, I trow.

For, certain, whoso coulde know
Might there all the armes see'n
Of famous folk that have been
In Afric', Europe, and Asie,
Since first began the chivalry.
Lo! how should I now tell all this?
Nor of the hall eke what need is
To telle you that ev'ry wall
Of it, and floor, and roof, and all,
Was plated half a foote thick
Of gold, and that was nothing wick', counterfeit
But for to prove in alle wise
As fine as ducat of Venise,
Of which too little in my pouch is?
And they were set as thick of nouches ornaments
Fine, of the finest stones fair,
That men read in the Lapidaire,
As grasses growen in a mead.
But it were all too long to read declare
The names; and therefore I pass.
But in this rich and lusty place,
That Fame's Hall y-called was,
Full muche press of folk there n'as, was not
Nor crowding for too muche press.
But all on high, above a dais,
Set on a see imperial, seat
That made was of ruby all,
Which that carbuncle is y-call'd,
I saw perpetually install'd
A feminine creature;
That never formed by Nature
Was such another thing y-sey. seen
For altherfirst, sooth to say, first of all
Me thoughte that she was so lite, little
That the length of a cubite
Was longer than she seem'd to be;
But thus soon in a while she
Herself then wonderfully stretch'd,
That with her feet the earth she reach'd,
And with her head she touched heaven,
Where as shine the starres seven.

And thereto eke, as to my wit, moreover
I saw a greater wonder yet,
Upon her eyen to behold;
But certes I them never told.
For as fele eyen hadde she, as many eyes
As feathers upon fowles be,
Or were on the beastes four
That Godde's throne gan honour,
As John writ in th'Apocalypse.
Her hair, that oundy was and crips, wavy and crisp
As burnish'd gold it shone to see;
And, sooth to tellen, also she
Had all so fele upstanding ears, many
And tongues, as on beasts be hairs;
And on her feet waxen saw I
Partridges' winges readily.
But, Lord! the pierrie and richness gems, jewellery
I saw sitting on this goddess,
And the heavenly melody
Of songes full of harmony,
I heard about her throne y-sung,
That all the palace walles rung!
(So sung the mighty Muse, she
That called is Calliope,
And her eight sisteren eke, sisters
That in their faces seeme meek);
And evermore eternally
They sang of Fame as then heard I:
"Heried be thou and thy name, praised
Goddess of Renown and Fame!"
Then was I ware, lo! at the last,
As I mine eyen gan upcast,
That this ilke noble queen
On her shoulders gan sustene sustain
Both the armes, and the name
Of those that hadde large fame;
Alexander, and Hercules,
That with a shirt his life lese. lost
Thus found I sitting this goddess,
In noble honour and richness;
Of which I stint a while now, refrain (from speaking)

Of other things to telle you.
Then saw I stand on either side,
Straight down unto the doores wide,
From the dais, many a pillere
Of metal, that shone not full clear;
But though they were of no richness,
Yet were they made for great nobless,
And in them greate sentence. significance
And folk of digne reverence, worthy, lofty
Of which I will you telle fand, I will try to tell you
Upon the pillars saw I stand.
Altherfirst, lo! there I sigh saw
Upon a pillar stand on high,
That was of lead and iron fine,
Him of the secte Saturnine,
The Hebrew Josephus the old,
That of Jewes' gestes told; deeds of braver
And he bare on his shoulders high
All the fame up of Jewry.
And by him stood other seven,
Full wise and worthy for to neven, name
To help him bearen up the charge, burden
It was so heavy and so large.
And, for they writen of battailes,
As well as other old marvailles,
Therefore was, lo! this pillere,
Of which that I you telle here,
Of lead and iron both, y-wis;
For iron Marte's metal is,
Which that god is of battaile;
And eke the lead, withoute fail,
Is, lo! the metal of Saturn,
That hath full large wheel to turn. orbit
Then stode forth, on either row,
Of them which I coulde know,
Though I them not by order tell,
To make you too longe dwell.
These, of the which I gin you read,
There saw I standen, out of dread,
Upon an iron pillar strong,
That painted was all endelong from top to bottom

With tiger's blood in ev'ry place,
The Tholosan that highte Stace,
That bare of Thebes up the name
Upon his shoulders, and the fame
Also of cruel Achilles.

And by him stood, withoute lease, falsehood

Full wondrous high on a pillere
Of iron, he, the great Homere;
And with him Dares and Dytus,
Before, and eke he, Lollius,
And Guido eke de Colempnis,
And English Gaufrid eke, y-wis.
And each of these, as I have joy,
Was busy for to bear up Troy;
So heavy thereof was the fame,
That for to bear it was no game.

But yet I gan full well espy,
Betwixt them was a little envy.
One said that Homer made lies,
Feigning in his poetries,

And was to the Greeks favourable;
Therefore held he it but a fable.

Then saw I stand on a pillere
That was of tinned iron clear,
Him, the Latin poet Virgile,
That borne hath up a longe while
The fame of pious Aeneas.

And next him on a pillar was
Of copper, Venus' clerk Ovide,
That hath y-sowen wondrous wide
The greate god of Love's fame.

And there he bare up well his name
Upon this pillar all so high,

As I might see it with mine eye;
For why? this hall whereof I read

Was waxen in height, and length, and bread, breadth
Well more by a thousand deal times
Than it was erst, that saw I weel.

Then saw I on a pillar by,
Of iron wrought full sternely,
The greate poet, Dan Lucan,

That on his shoulders bare up than,
As high as that I might it see,
The fame of Julius and Pompey;
And by him stood all those clerks
That write of Rome's mighty works,
That if I would their names tell,
All too longe must I dwell.
And next him on a pillar stood
Of sulphur, like as he were wood, mad
Dan Claudian, the sooth to tell,
That bare up all the fame of hell,
Of Pluto, and of Proserpine,
That queen is of the darke pine the dark realm of pain
Why should I telle more of this?
The hall was alle fulle, y-wis,
Of them that writen olde gests, histories of great deeds
As be on trees rookes' nests;
But it a full confus'd mattere
Were all these gestes for to hear,
That they of write, and how they hight. are called
But while that I beheld this sight,
I heard a noise approache blive, quickly
That far'd as bees do in a hive, went
Against their time of outflying;
Right such a manner murmuring,
For all the world, it seem'd to me.
Then gan I look about, and see
That there came entering the hall
A right great company withal,
And that of sundry regions,
Of all kinds and conditions
That dwell in earth under the moon,
Both poor and rich; and all so soon
As they were come into the hall,
They gan adown on knees to fall,
Before this ilke noble queen, same
And saide, "Grant us, Lady sheen, bright, lovely
Each of us of thy grace a boon." favour
And some of them she granted soon,
And some she warned well and fair, refused
And some she granted the contrair contrary

Of their asking utterly;
But this I say you truly,
What that her cause was, I n'ist; wist not, know not
For of these folk full well I wist,
They hadde good fame each deserved,
Although they were diversely served.
Right as her sister, Dame Fortune,
Is wont to serven in commune. commonly, usually
Now hearken how she gan to pay
Them that gan of her grace to pray;
And right, lo! all this company
Saide sooth, and not a lie. truth
"Madame," thus quoth they, "we be
Folk that here beseeche thee
That thou grant us now good fame,
And let our workes have good name
In full recompensatioun
Of good work, give us good renown
"I warn it you," quoth she anon; refuse
"Ye get of me good fame none,
By God! and therefore go your way."
"Alas," quoth they, "and well-away!
Tell us what may your cause be."
"For that it list me not," quoth she, pleases
No wight shall speak of you, y-wis,
Good nor harm, nor that nor this."
And with that word she gan to call
Her messenger, that was in hall,
And bade that he should faste go'n,
Upon pain to be blind anon,
For Aeolus, the god of wind;
"In Thrace there ye shall him find,
And bid him bring his clarioun,
That is full diverse of his soun',
And it is called Cleare Laud,
With which he wont is to heraud proclaim
Them that me list y-praised be,
And also bid him how that he
Bring eke his other clarioun,
That hight Slander in ev'ry town, is called
With which he wont is to diffame defame, disparage

Them that me list, and do them shame."
This messenger gan faste go'n,
And found where, in a cave of stone,
In a country that highte Thrace,
This Aeolus, with harde grace, Evil favour attend him!
Helde the windes in distress, constraint
And gan them under him to press,
That they began as bears to roar,
He bound and pressed them so sore.
This messenger gan fast to cry,
"Rise up," quoth he, "and fast thee hie,
Until thou at my Lady be,
And take thy clarions eke with thee,
And speed thee forth." And he anon
Took to him one that hight Triton,
His clarions to beare tho, then
And let a certain winde go,
That blew so hideously and high,
That it lefte not a sky cloud
In all the welkin long and broad. sky
This Aeolus nowhere abode delayed
Till he was come to Fame's feet,
And eke the man that Triton hete, is called
And there he stood as still as stone.
And therewithal there came anon
Another huge company
Of goode folk, and gan to cry,
"Lady, grant us goode fame,
And let our workes have that name,
Now in honour of gentleness;
And all so God your soule bless;
For we have well deserved it,
Therefore is right we be well quit." requited
"As thrive I," quoth she, "ye shall fail;
Good workes shall you not avail
To have of me good fame as now;
But, wot ye what, I grante you.
That ye shall have a shrewde fame, evil, cursed
And wicked los, and worse name, reputation
Though ye good los have well deserv'd;
Now go your way, for ye be serv'd.

And now, Dan Aeolus," quoth she,
"Take forth thy trump anon, let see,
That is y-called Slander light,
And blow their los, that ev'ry wight
Speak of them harm and shrewedness, wickedness, malice
Instead of good and worthiness;
For thou shalt trump all the contrair
Of that they have done, well and fair."

Alas! thought I, what adventures (evil) fortunes

Have these sorry creatures,
That they, amonges all the press,
Should thus be shamed guileless?
But what! it muste needes be.
What did this Aeolus, but he
Took out his blacke trump of brass,
That fouler than the Devil was,
And gan this trumpet for to blow,
As all the world 't would overthrow.
Throughout every regioun
Went this foule trumpet's soun',
As swift as pellet out of gun
When fire is in the powder run.
And such a smoke gan out wend, go
Out of this foule trumpet's end,
Black, blue, greenish, swart, and red, black
As doth when that men melt lead,
Lo! all on high from the tewell; chimney
And thereto one thing saw I well, also
That the farther that it ran,
The greater waxen it began,
As doth the river from a well, fountain
And it stank as the pit of hell.
Alas! thus was their shame y-rung,
And guileless, on ev'ry tongue.
Then came the thirde company,
And gan up to the dais to hie, hasten
And down on knees they fell anon,
And saide, "We be ev'ry one
Folk that have full truely
Deserved fame right fully,
And pray you that it may be know

Right as it is, and forth y-blow."
"I grante," quoth she, "for me list
That now your goode works be wist; known
And yet ye shall have better los,
In despite of all your foes,
Than worthy is, and that anon. merited
Let now," quoth she, "thy trumpet go'n,
Thou Aeolus, that is so black,
And out thine other trumpet take,
That highte Laud, and blow it so
That through the world their fame may go,
Easily and not too fast,
That it be knowen at the last."
"Full gladly, Lady mine," he said;
And out his trump of gold he braid pulled forth
Anon, and set it to his mouth,
And blew it east, and west, and south,
And north, as loud as any thunder,
That ev'ry wight had of it wonder,
So broad it ran ere that it stent. ceased
And certes all the breath that went
Out of his trumpet's mouthe smell'd
As men a pot of balme held as if
Among a basket full of roses;
This favour did he to their loses. reputations
And right with this I gan espy
Where came the fourthe company.
But certain they were wondrous few;
And gan to standen in a rew, row
And saide, "Certes, Lady bright,
We have done well with all our might,
But we not keep to have fame; care not
Hide our workes and our name,
For Godde's love! for certes we
Have surely done it for bounty, goodness, virtue
And for no manner other thing."
"I grante you all your asking,"
Quoth she; "let your workes be dead."
With that I turn'd about my head,
And saw anon the fifthe rout, company
That to this Lady gan to lout, bow down

And down on knees anon to fall;
And to her then besoughten all
To hide their good workes eke,
And said, they gave not a leek cared
For no fame, nor such renown;
For they for contemplatioun
And Godde's love had y-wrought,
Nor of fame would they have aught.
"What!" quoth she, "and be ye wood?
And weene ye for to do good, do ye imagine
And for to have of that no fame?
Have ye despite to have my name? do ye despise
Nay, ye shall lie every one!
Blow thy trump, and that anon,"
Quoth she, "thou Aeolus, I hote, command
And ring these folkes works by note,
That all the world may of it hear."
And he gan blow their los so clear reputation
Within his golden clarioun,
That through the worlde went the soun',
All so kindly, and so soft,
That their fame was blown aloft.
And then came the sixth company,
And gunnen fast on Fame to cry; began
Right verily in this mannere
They saide; "Mercy, Lady dear!
To telle certain as it is,
We have done neither that nor this,
But idle all our life hath be; been
But natheless yet praye we
That we may have as good a fame,
And great renown, and knowen name, well-known
As they that have done noble gests, feats.
And have achieved all their quests, enterprises; desires
As well of Love, as other thing;
All was us never brooch, nor ring, although
Nor elles aught from women sent,
Nor ones in their hearte meant
To make us only friendly cheer,
But mighte teem us upon bier; might lay us on our bier
Yet let us to the people seem (by their adverse demeanour)

Such as the world may of us deem, judge
That women loven us for wood. madly
It shall us do as muche good,
And to our heart as much avail,
The counterpoise, ease, and travail, compensation
As we had won it with labour;
For that is deare bought honour,
At the regard of our great ease. in comparison with
And yet ye must us more please; in addition
Let us be holden eke thereto
Worthy, and wise, and good also,
And rich, and happy unto love,
For Godde's love, that sits above;
Though we may not the body have
Of women, yet, so God you save,
Let men glue on us the name; fasten
Sufficeth that we have the fame."
"I grante," quoth she, "by my troth;
Now Aeolus, withoute sloth,
Take out thy trump of gold," quoth she,
"And blow as they have asked me,
That ev'ry man ween them at ease, believe
Although they go in full bad leas." sorry plight
This Aeolus gan it so blow,
That through the world it was y-know.
Then came the seventh rout anon,
And fell on knees ev'ry one,
And saide, "Lady, grant us soon
The same thing, the same boon,
Which this next folk you have done." the people just before us
"Fy on you," quoth she, "ev'ry one!
Ye nasty swine, ye idle wretches,
Full fill'd of rotten slowe tetches! blemishes
What? false thieves! ere ye would
Be famous good, and nothing n'ould have good fame
Deserve why, nor never raught, recked, cared (to do so)
Men rather you to hangen ought.
For ye be like the sleepy cat,
That would have fish; but, know'st thou what?
He woulde no thing wet his claws.
Evil thrift come to your jaws,

And eke to mine, if I it grant,
Or do favour you to avaunt. boast your deeds
Thou Aeolus, thou King of Thrace,
Go, blow this folk a sorry grace," disgrace
Quoth she, "anon; and know'st thou how?
As I shall telle thee right now,
Say, these be they that would honour
Have, and do no kind of labour,
Nor do no good, and yet have laud,
And that men ween'd that Belle Isaude
Could them not of love wern; could not refuse them her love
And yet she that grinds at the quern mill
Is all too good to ease their heart."
This Aeolus anon upstart,
And with his blacke clarioun
He gan to blazen out a soun'
As loud as bellows wind in hell;
And eke therewith, the sooth to tell,
This sounde was so full of japes, jests
As ever were mows in apes; grimaces
And that went all the world about,
That ev'ry wight gan on them shout,
And for to laugh as they were wood; mad
Such game found they in their hood. so were they ridiculed
Then came another company,
That hadde done the treachery,
The harm, and the great wickedness,
That any hearte coulde guess;
And prayed her to have good fame,
And that she would do them no shame,
But give them los and good renown,
And do it blow in clarioun. cause it to be blown
"Nay, wis!" quoth she, "it were a vice;
All be there in me no justice,
Me liste not to do it now,
Nor this will I grant to you."
Then came there leaping in a rout, crowd
And gan to clappen all about strike, knock
Every man upon the crown,
That all the hall began to soun';
And saide; "Lady lefe and dear, loved

We be such folk as ye may hear.
To tellen all the tale aright,
We be shrewes every wight, wicked, impious people
And have delight in wickedness,
As goode folk have in goodness,
And joy to be y-knowen shrews,
And full of vice and wicked thews; evil qualities
Wherefore we pray you on a row, all together
That our fame be such y-know
In all things right as it is."

"I grant it you," quoth she, "y-wis.
But what art thou that say'st this tale,
That wearest on thy hose a pale, vertical stripe
And on thy tippet such a bell?"

"Madame," quoth he, "sooth to tell,
I am that ilke shrew, y-wis, the same wretch
That burnt the temple of Isidis,
In Athenes, lo! that city."

"And wherefore didst thou so?" quoth she.

"By my thrift!" quoth he, "Madame,
I woulde fain have had a name
As other folk had in the town;
Although they were of great renown
For their virtue and their thews, good qualities
Thought I, as great fame have shrews
(Though it be naught) for shrewdeness,
As good folk have for goodness;
And since I may not have the one,
The other will I not forgo'n.

So for to gette fame's hire, the reward of fame
The temple set I all afire.

Now do our los be blowen swithe,
As wisly be thou ever blithe." see note

"Gladly," quoth she; "thou Aeolus,
Hear'st thou what these folk prayen us?"

"Madame, I hear full well," quoth he,

"And I will trumpen it, pardie!"

And took his blacke trumpet fast,

And gan to puffen and to blast,

Till it was at the worlde's end.

With that I gan aboute wend, turn

For one that stood right at my back
Me thought full goodly to me spake, courteously, fairly
And saide, "Friend, what is thy name?
Art thou come hither to have fame?"
"Nay, for soothe, friend!" quoth I; surely
"I came not hither, grand mercy, great thanks
For no such cause, by my head!
Sufficeth me, as I were dead,
That no wight have my name in hand.
I wot myself best how I stand,
For what I dree, or what I think, suffer
I will myself it alle drink,
Certain, for the more part,
As far forth as I know mine art."
"What doest thou here, then," quoth he.
Quoth I, "That will I telle thee;
The cause why I stande here,
Is some new tidings for to lear, learn
Some newe thing, I know not what,
Tidings either this or that,
Of love, or suche thinges glad.
For, certainly, he that me made
To come hither, said to me
I shoulde bothe hear and see
In this place wondrous things;
But these be not such tidings
As I meant of." "No?" quoth he.
And I answered, "No, pardie!
For well I wot ever yet,
Since that first I hadde wit,
That some folk have desired fame
Diversely, and los, and name;
But certainly I knew not how
Nor where that Fame dwelled, ere now
Nor eke of her description,
Nor also her condition,
Nor the order of her doom, the principle of her judgments
Knew I not till I hither come."
"Why, then, lo! be these tidings,
That thou nowe hither brings,
That thou hast heard?" quoth he to me.

"But now no force, for well I see no matter
What thou desirest for to lear."
Come forth, and stand no longer here.
And I will thee, withoute dread, doubt
Into another place lead,
Where thou shalt hear many a one."
Then gan I forth with him to go'n
Out of the castle, sooth to say.
Then saw I stand in a vally,
Under the castle faste by,
A house, that domus Daedali,
That Labyrinthus called is,
N'as made so wondrously, y-wis, was not
Nor half so quaintly was y-wrought. strangely
And evermore, as swift as thought,
This quainte house aboute went, strange
That nevermore it stille stent; ceased to move
And thereout came so great a noise,
That had it stooden upon Oise,
Men might have heard it easily
To Rome, I trowe sickerly. confidently believe
And the noise which I heard,
For all the world right so it far'd
As doth the routing of the stone rushing noise
That from the engine is let go'n.
And all this house of which I read tell you
Was made of twigges sallow, red, willow
And green eke, and some were white,
Such as men to the cages twight, pull to make cages
Or maken of these panniers,
Or elles hutches or dossers; back-baskets
That, for the swough and for the twigs, rushing noise
This house was all so full of gigs, sounds of wind
And all so full eke of chirking, creakings
And of many other workings;
And eke this house had of entries
As many as leaves be on trees,
In summer when that they be green,
And on the roof men may yet see'n
A thousand holes, and well mo',
To let the soundes oute go.

And by day in ev'ry tide continually
 Be all the doores open wide,
And by night each one unshet; unshut, open
 Nor porter there is none to let hinder
 No manner tidings in to pace;
 Nor ever rest is in that place,
That it n'is fill'd full of tidings, is not
 Either loud, or of whisperings;
 And ever all the house's angles
Are full of rownings and of jangles, whisperings and chattering
 Of wars, of peace, of marriages,
 Of rests, of labour, of voyages,
 Of abode, of death, of life,
 Of love, of hate, accord, of strife,
 Of loss, of lore, and of winnings,
 Of health, of sickness, of buildings,
 Of faire weather and tempests,
Of qualm of folkes and of beasts; sickness
 Of divers transmutations
 Of estates and of regions;
Of trust, of dread, of jealousy, doubt
 Of wit, of cunning, of folly,
 Of plenty, and of great famine,
Of cheap, of dearth, and of ruin; cheapness & dearness (of food)
 Of good or of mis-government,
 Of fire, and diverse accident.
And lo! this house of which I write,
Sicker be ye, it was not lite; be assured small
 For it was sixty mile of length,
All was the timber of no strength; although
 Yet it is founded to endure,
While that it list to Adventure, while fortune pleases
 That is the mother of tidings,
 As is the sea of wells and springs;
 And it was shapen like a cage.
"Certes," quoth I, "in all mine age, life
 Ne'er saw I such a house as this."
 And as I wonder'd me, y-wis,
Upon this house, then ware was I
 How that mine eagle, faste by,
 Was perched high upon a stone;

And I gan straighte to him go'n,
And saide thus; "I praye thee
That thou a while abide me, wait for
For Godde's love, and let me see
What wonders in this place be;
For yet parauntre I may lear peradventure learn
Some good thereon, or somewhat hear,
That lefe me were, ere that I went." were pleasing to me
"Peter! that is mine intent,"
Quoth he to me; "therefore I dwell; tarry
But, certain, one thing I thee tell,
That, but I bringe thee therein, unless
Thou shalt never can begin be able
To come into it, out of doubt,
So fast it whirleth, lo! about.
But since that Jovis, of his grace,
As I have said, will thee solace
Finally with these ilke things, same
These uncouth sightes and tidings,
To pass away thy heaviness,
Such ruth hath he of thy distress compassion
That thou suff'rest debonairly, gently
And know'st thyselfen utterly
Desperate of alle bliss,
Since that Fortune hath made amiss
The fruit of all thy hearte's rest
Languish, and eke in point to brest; on the point of breaking
But he, through his mighty merite,
Will do thee ease, all be it lite, little
And gave express commandement,
To which I am obedient,
To further thee with all my might,
And wiss and teache thee aright, direct
Where thou may'st moste tidings hear,
Shalt thou anon many one lear."
And with this word he right anon
Hent me up betwixt his tone, caught toes
And at a window in me brought,
That in this house was, as me thought;
And therewithal me thought it stent, stopped
And nothing it aboute went;

And set me in the floore down.
But such a congregatioun
Of folk, as I saw roam about,
Some within and some without,
Was never seen, nor shall be eft, again, hereafter
That, certes, in the world n' is left is not
So many formed by Nature,
Nor dead so many a creature,
That well unnethes in that place scarcely
Had I a foote breadth of space;
And ev'ry wight that I saw there
Rown'd evereach in other's ear whispered
A newe tiding privily,
Or elles told all openly
Right thus, and saide, "Know'st not thou
What is betid, lo! righte now?" happened
"No," quoth he; "telle me what."
And then he told him this and that,
And swore thereto, that it was sooth;
"Thus hath he said," and "Thus he do'th,"
And "Thus shall 't be," and "Thus heard I say
"That shall be found, that dare I lay;" wager
That all the folk that is alive
Have not the cunning to describe describe
The thinges that I hearde there,
What aloud, and what in th'ear.
But all the wonder most was this;
When one had heard a thing, y-wis,
He came straight to another wight,
And gan him tellen anon right
The same tale that to him was told,
Or it a furlong way was old,
And gan somewhat for to eche eke, add
To this tiding in his speech,
More than it ever spoken was.
And not so soon departed n'as was
He from him, than that he met
With the third; and ere he let
Any stound, he told him als'; without delaying a momen
Were the tidings true or false,
Yet would he tell it natheless,

And evermore with more increase
Than it was erst. Thus north and south at first
Went ev'ry tiding from mouth to mouth,
And that increasing evermo',
As fire is wont to quick and go become alive, and spread
From a spark y-sprung amiss,
Till all a city burnt up is.
And when that it was full up-sprung,
And waxen more on ev'ry tongue increased
Than e'er it was, it went anon
Up to a window out to go'n;
Or, but it mighte thereout pass,
It gan creep out at some crevass, crevice, chink
And fly forth faste for the nonce.
And sometimes saw I there at once
A leasing, and a sad sooth saw, a falsehood and an earnest
That gan of adventure draw true saying by chance
Out at a window for to pace;
And when they metten in that place,
They were checked both the two,
And neither of them might out go;
For other so they gan to crowd, push, squeeze, each other
Till each of them gan cryen loud,
"Let me go first!" — "Nay, but let me!
And here I will ensure thee,
With vowes, if thou wilt do so,
That I shall never from thee go,
But be thine owen sworn brother!
We will us medle each with other, mingle
That no man, be he ne'er so wroth,
Shall have one of us two, but both
At ones, as beside his leave, despite his desire
Come we at morning or at eve,
Be we cried or still y-rowned." quietly whispered
Thus saw I false and sooth, compounded, compounded
Together fly for one tiding.
Then out at holes gan to wring squeeze, struggle
Every tiding straight to Fame;
And she gan give to each his name
After her disposition,
And gave them eke duration,

Some to wax and wane soon,
As doth the faire white moon;
And let them go. There might I see
Winged wonders full fast flee,
Twenty thousand in a rout, company
As Aeolus them blew about.
And, Lord! this House in alle times
Was full of shipmen and pilgrimes,
With scrippes bretfull of leasings, wallets brimful of falsehoods
Entremedled with tidings true stories
And eke alone by themselve.
And many thousand times twelve
Saw I eke of these pardoners,
Couriers, and eke messengers,
With boistes crammed full of lies boxes
As ever vessel was with lyes. lees of wine
And as I altherfaste went with all speed
About, and did all mine intent
Me for to play and for to lear, to amuse and instruct myself
And eke a tiding for to hear
That I had heard of some country,
That shall not now be told for me; —
For it no need is, readily;
Folk can sing it better than I.
For all must out, or late or rath, soon
All the sheaves in the lath; barn
I heard a greate noise withal
In a corner of the hall,
Where men of love tidings told;
And I gan thitherward behold,
For I saw running ev'ry wight
As fast as that they hadde might,
And ev'reach cried, "What thing is that?"
And some said, "I know never what."
And when they were all on a heap,
Those behinde gan up leap,
And clomb upon each other fast, climbed
And up the noise on high they cast,
And trodden fast on others' heels,
And stamp'd, as men do after eels.
But at the last I saw a man,

Which that I not describe can;
But that he seemed for to be
A man of great authority.
And therewith I anon abraid awoke
Out of my sleepe, half afraid;
Rememb'ring well what I had seen,
And how high and far I had been
In my ghost; and had great wonder
Of what the mighty god of thunder
Had let me know; and gan to write
Like as ye have me heard endite.
Wherefore to study and read alway
I purpose to do day by day.
And thus, in dreaming and in game,
Endeth this little book of Fame.
Here endeth the Book of Fame

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

In several respects, the story of "Troilus and Cressida" may be regarded as Chaucer's noblest poem. Larger in scale than any other of his individual works — numbering nearly half as many lines as *The Canterbury Tales* contain, without reckoning the two in prose — the conception of the poem is yet so closely and harmoniously worked out, that all the parts are perfectly balanced, and from first to last scarcely a single line is superfluous or misplaced. The finish and beauty of the poem as a work of art, are not more conspicuous than the knowledge of human nature displayed in the portraits of the principal characters. The result is, that the poem is more modern, in form and in spirit, than almost any other work of its author; the chaste style and sedulous polish of the stanzas admit of easy change into the forms of speech now current in England; while the analytical and subjective character of the work gives it, for the nineteenth century reader, an interest of the same kind as that inspired, say, by George Eliot's wonderful study of character in "Romola." Then, above all, "Troilus and Cressida" is distinguished by a purity and elevation of moral tone, that may surprise those who judge of Chaucer only by the coarse traits of his time preserved in *The Canterbury Tales*, or who may expect to find here the Troilus, the Cressida, and the Pandarus of Shakspeare's play. It is to no trivial gallant, no woman of coarse mind and easy virtue, no malignantly subservient and utterly debased procurer, that Chaucer introduces us. His Troilus is a noble, sensitive, generous, pure-souled, manly, magnanimous hero, who is only confirmed and stimulated in all virtue by his love, who lives for his lady, and dies for her falsehood, in a lofty and chivalrous fashion. His Cressida is a stately, self-contained, virtuous, tender-hearted woman, who loves with all the pure strength and trustful abandonment of a generous and exalted nature, and who is driven to infidelity perhaps even less by pressure of circumstances, than by the sheer force of her love, which will go on loving — loving what it can have, when that which it would rather have is for the time unattainable. His Pandarus is a gentleman, though a gentleman with a flaw in him; a man who, in his courtier-like good-nature, places the claims of comradeship above those of honour, and plots away the virtue of his niece, that he may appease the love-sorrow of his friend; all the time conscious that he is not acting as a gentleman should, and desirous that others should give him that justification which he can get but feebly and diffidently in himself. In fact, the "Troilus and Cressida" of Chaucer is the "Troilus and Cressida" of Shakespeare transfigured; the atmosphere, the colour, the spirit, are wholly different; the older poet presents us in the chief characters to noble natures, the younger to ignoble natures in all the characters; and the poem with which we have now to do stands at this day among the noblest expositions of love's workings in the human heart and life. It is divided into five books, containing altogether lines. The First Book (lines) tells how Calchas, priest of Apollo, quitting beleaguered Troy, left there his only daughter Cressida; how Troilus, the youngest brother of Hector and son of King Priam, fell in love with her at first sight, at a festival in the temple of Pallas, and sorrowed

bitterly for her love; and how his friend, Cressida's uncle, Pandarus, comforted him by the promise of aid in his suit. The Second Book (lines) relates the subtle manoeuvres of Pandarus to induce Cressida to return the love of Troilus; which he accomplishes mainly by touching at once the lady's admiration for his heroism, and her pity for his love-sorrow on her account. The Third Book (lines) opens with an account of the first interview between the lovers; ere it closes, the skilful stratagems of Pandarus have placed the pair in each other's arms under his roof, and the lovers are happy in perfect enjoyment of each other's love and trust. In the Fourth Book (lines) the course of true love ceases to run smooth; Cressida is compelled to quit the city, in ransom for Antenor, captured in a skirmish; and she sadly departs to the camp of the Greeks, vowing that she will make her escape, and return to Troy and Troilus within ten days. The Fifth Book (lines) sets out by describing the court which Diomedes, appointed to escort her, pays to Cressida on the way to the camp; it traces her gradual progress from indifference to her new suitor, to incontinence with him, and it leaves the deserted Troilus dead on the field of battle, where he has sought an eternal refuge from the new grief provoked by clear proof of his mistress's infidelity. The polish, elegance, and power of the style, and the acuteness of insight into character, which mark the poem, seem to claim for it a date considerably later than that adopted by those who assign its composition to Chaucer's youth: and the literary allusions and proverbial expressions with which it abounds, give ample evidence that, if Chaucer really wrote it at an early age, his youth must have been precocious beyond all actual record. Throughout the poem there are repeated references to the old authors of Trojan histories who are named in "The House of Fame"; but Chaucer especially mentions one Lollius as the author from whom he takes the groundwork of the poem. Lydgate is responsible for the assertion that Lollius meant Boccaccio; and though there is no authority for supposing that the English really meant to designate the Italian poet under that name, there is abundant internal proof that the poem was really founded on the "Filostrato" of Boccaccio. But the tone of Chaucer's work is much higher than that of his Italian "auctour;" and while in some passages the imitation is very close, in all that is characteristic in "Troilus and Cressida," Chaucer has fairly thrust his models out of sight. In the present edition, it has been possible to give no more than about one-fourth of the poem — out of the seven-line stanzas that compose it; but pains have been taken to convey, in the connecting prose passages, a faithful idea of what is perforce omitted.

THE FIRST BOOK.

THE double sorrow of Troilus to tell,
That was the King Priamus' son of Troy,
In loving how his adventures fell fortunes
From woe to weal, and after out of joy, afterwards
My purpose is, ere I you parte froy. from
Tisiphone, thou help me to indite
These woeful words, that weep as I do write.
To thee I call, thou goddess of torment!
Thou cruel wight, that sorrowest ever in pain;
Help me, that am the sorry instrument
That helpeth lovers, as I can, to plain. complain
For well it sits, the soothe for to sayn, befits
Unto a woeful wight a dreary fere, companion
And to a sorry tale a sorry cheer. countenance
For I, that God of Love's servants serve,
Nor dare to love for mine unlikeliness, unsuitableness
Praye for speed, although I shoulde sterve, success die
So far I am from his help in darkness;
But nathless, might I do yet gladness
To any lover, or any love avail, advance
Have thou the thank, and mine be the travail.
But ye lovers that bathen in gladness,
If any drop of pity in you be,
Remember you for old past heaviness,
For Godde's love, and on adversity
That others suffer; think how sometime ye
Founde how Love durste you displease;
Or elles ye have won it with great ease.
And pray for them that been in the case
Of Troilus, as ye may after hear,
That Love them bring in heaven to solace; delight, comfort
And for me pray also, that God so dear
May give me might to show, in some mannere,
Such pain or woe as Love's folk endure,
In Troilus' unseely adventure unhappy fortune
And pray for them that eke be despair'd
In love, that never will recover'd be;
And eke for them that falsely be appair'd slandered
Through wicked tongues, be it he or she:

Or thus bid God, for his benignity, pray
To grant them soon out of this world to pace, pass, go
That be despaired of their love's grace.
And bid also for them that be at ease
In love, that God them grant perseverance,
And send them might their loves so to please,
That it to them be worship and plesance; honour and pleasure
For so hope I my soul best to advance,
To pray for them that Love's servants be,
And write their woe, and live in charity;
And for to have of them compassion,
As though I were their owen brother dear.
Now listen all with good entention, attention
For I will now go straight to my mattere,
In which ye shall the double sorrow hear
Of Troilus, in loving of Cresside,
And how that she forsook him ere she died.

In Troy, during the siege, dwelt "a lord of great authority, a great divine," named Calchas; who, through the oracle of Apollo, knew that Troy should be destroyed. He stole away secretly to the Greek camp, where he was gladly received, and honoured for his skill in divining, of which the besiegers hoped to make use. Within the city there was great anger at the treason of Calchas; and the people declared that he and all his kin were worthy to be burnt. His daughter, whom he had left in the city, a widow and alone, was in great fear for her life.

Cressida was this lady's name aright;
As to my doom, in alle Troy city in my judgment
So fair was none, for over ev'ry wight
So angelic was her native beauty,
That like a thing immortal seemed she,
As sooth a perfect heav'nly creature,
That down seem'd sent in scorning of Nature.

In her distress, "well nigh out of her wit for pure fear," she appealed for protection to Hector; who, "piteous of nature," and touched by her sorrow and her beauty, assured her of safety, so long as she pleased to dwell in Troy. The siege went on; but they of Troy did not neglect the honour and worship of their deities; most of all of "the relic hight Palladion, that was their trust aboven ev'ry one." In April, "when clothed is the mead with newe green, of jolly Ver Spring the prime," the Trojans went to hold the festival of Palladion — crowding to the temple, "in all their beste guise," lusty knights, fresh ladies, and maidens bright.

Among the which was this Cresseida,
In widow's habit black; but nathless,
Right as our firste letter is now A,
In beauty first so stood she makeless; matchless
Her goodly looking gladded all the press; crowd
Was never seen thing to be praised derre, dearer, more worthy
Nor under blacke cloud so bright a sterre, star
As she was, as they saiden, ev'ry one
That her behelden in her blacke weed; garment
And yet she stood, full low and still, alone,
Behind all other folk, in little brede, inconspicuously
And nigh the door, ay under shame's drede; for dread of shame
Simple of bearing, debonair of cheer, gracious
With a full sure looking and mannere. assured
Dan Troilus, as he was wont to guide
His younge knightes, led them up and down
In that large temple upon ev'ry side,
Beholding ay the ladies of the town;
Now here, now there, for no devotioun
Had he to none, to reave him his rest, deprive him of
But gan to praise and lacke whom him lest; praise and disparage
whom he pleased
And in his walk full fast he gan to wait watch, observe
If knight or squier of his company
Gan for to sigh, or let his eyen bait feed
On any woman that he could espy;
Then he would smile, and hold it a folly,
And say him thus: "Ah, Lord, she sleepeth soft
For love of thee, when as thou turnest off.
"I have heard told, pardie, of your living,
Ye lovers, and your lewed observance, ignorant, foolish
And what a labour folk have in winning
Of love, and in it keeping with doubtance; doubt
And when your prey is lost, woe and penance; suffering
Oh, very fooles! may ye no thing see?
Can none of you aware by other be?"
But the God of Love vowed vengeance on Troilus for that despite, and, showing that his
bow was not broken, "hit him at the full."

Within the temple went he forth playing,
This Troilus, with ev'ry wight about,

On this lady and now on that looking,
Whether she were of town, or of without; from beyond the walls
And upon cas befell, that through the rout by chance crowd
His eye pierced, and so deep it went,
Till on Cresside it smote, and there it stent; stayed
And suddenly wax'd wonder sore astoned, amazed
And gan her bet behold in busy wise: better
"Oh, very god!" thought he; "where hast thou woned dwelt
That art so fair and goodly to devise? describe
Therewith his heart began to spread and rise;
And soft he sighed, lest men might him hear,
And caught again his former playing cheer. jesting demeanour
She was not with the least of her stature, she was tall
But all her limbes so well answering
Were to womanhood, that creature
Was never lesse mannish in seeming.
And eke the pure wise of her moving by very the way
She showed well, that men might in her guess she moved
Honour, estate, and womanly nobless. dignity
Then Troilus right wonder well withal
Began to like her moving and her cheer, countenance
Which somedea dainous was, for she let fall disdainful
Her look a little aside, in such mannere
Ascaunce "What! may I not stande here?" as if to say
And after that her looking gan she light, her expression became
That never thought him see so good a sight. more pleasant
And of her look in him there gan to quicken
So great desire, and strong affection,
That in his heart's bottom gan to sticken
Of her the fix'd and deep impression;
And though he erst had pored up and down, previously looked
Then was he glad his hornes in to shrink;
Unnethes wist he how to look or wink. scarcely
Lo! he that held himselfe so cunning,
And scorned them that Love's paines drien, suffer
Was full unaware that love had his dwelling
Within the subtile streames of her eyen; rays, glances
That suddenly he thought he felte dien,
Right with her look, the spirit in his heart;
Blessed be Love, that thus can folk convert!
She thus, in black, looking to Troilus,

Over all things he stoode to behold;
But his desire, nor wherefore he stood thus,
He neither cheere made, nor worde told; showed by his countenance
But from afar, his manner for to hold, to observe due courtesy
On other things sometimes his look he cast,
And eft on her, while that the service last. again lasted
And after this, not fully all awhaped, daunted
Out of the temple all easily he went,
Repenting him that ever he had japed jested
Of Love's folk, lest fully the descent
Of scorn fell on himself; but what he meant,
Lest it were wist on any manner side,
His woe he gan dissemble and eke hide.

Returning to his palace, he begins hypocritically to smile and jest at Love's servants and their pains; but by and by he has to dismiss his attendants, feigning "other busy needs." Then, alone in his chamber, he begins to groan and sigh, and call up again Cressida's form as he saw her in the temple — "making a mirror of his mind, in which he saw all wholly her figure." He thinks no travail or sorrow too high a price for the love of such a goodly woman; and, "full unadvised of his woe coming,"

Thus took he purpose Love's craft to sue, follow
And thought that he would work all privily,
First for to hide his desire all in mew in a cage, secretly
From every wight y-born, all utterly,
But he might aught recover'd be thereby; unless he gained by it
Rememb'ring him, that love too wide y-blow too much spoken of
Yields bitter fruit, although sweet seed be sow.
And, over all this, much more he thought
What thing to speak, and what to holden in;
And what to arden her to love, he sought; constrain
And on a song anon right to begin,
And gan loud on his sorrow for to win; overcome
For with good hope he gan thus to assent resolve
Cressida for to love, and not repent.

The Song of Troilus.

"If no love is, O God! why feel I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whence cometh my woe?
If it be wick', a wonder thinketh me
Whence ev'ry torment and adversity

That comes of love may to me savoury think: seem acceptable to me
 For more I thirst the more that I drink.
 "And if I at mine owen luste bren burn by my own will
 From whence cometh my wailing and my plaint?
 If maugre me, whereto plain I then? to what avail do I complain?
 I wot ner why, unwearie, that I faint. neither
 O quicke death! O sweete harm so quaint! strange
 How may I see in me such quantity,
 But if that I consent that so it be?
 "And if that I consent, I wrongfully
 Complain y-wis: thus pushed to and fro,
 All starreless within a boat am I,
 Middles the sea, betwixte windes two,
 That in contrary standen evermo'.
 Alas! what wonder is this malady! —
 For heat of cold, for cold of heat, I die!"

Devoting himself wholly to the thought of Cressida — though he yet knew not whether she was woman or goddess — Troilus, in spite of his royal blood, became the very slave of love. He set at naught every other charge, but to gaze on her as often as he could; thinking so to appease his hot fire, which thereby only burned the hotter. He wrought marvellous feats of arms against the Greeks, that she might like him the better for his renown; then love deprived him of sleep, and made his food his foe; till he had to "borrow a title of other sickness," that men might not know he was consumed with love. Meantime, Cressida gave no sign that she heeded his devotion, or even knew of it; and he was now consumed with a new fear — lest she loved some other man. Bewailing his sad lot — ensnared, exposed to the scorn of those whose love he had ridiculed, wishing himself arrived at the port of death, and praying ever that his lady might glad him with some kind look — Troilus is surprised in his chamber by his friend Pandarus, the uncle of Cressida. Pandarus, seeking to divert his sorrow by making him angry, jeeringly asks whether remorse of conscience, or devotion, or fear of the Greeks, has caused all this ado. Troilus pitifully beseeches his friend to leave him to die alone, for die he must, from a cause which he must keep hidden; but Pandarus argues against Troilus' cruelty in hiding from a friend such a sorrow, and Troilus at last confesses that his malady is love. Pandarus suggests that the beloved object may be such that his counsel might advance his friend's desires; but Troilus scouts the suggestion, saying that Pandarus could never govern himself in love.

"Yea, Troilus, hearken to me," quoth Pandare,
 "Though I be nice; it happens often so, foolish
 That one that access doth full evil fare, in an access of fever
 By good counsel can keep his friend therefro'.

I have my selfe seen a blind man go
Where as he fell that looke could full wide;
A fool may eke a wise man often guide.
"A whetstone is no carving instrument,
But yet it maketh sharpe carving tooles;
And, if thou know'st that I have aught miswent, erred, failed
Eschew thou that, for such thing to thee school is. schooling, lesson
Thus oughte wise men to beware by fooles;
If so thou do, thy wit is well bewared;
By its contrary is everything declared.

"For how might ever sweetness have been know To him that never tasted bitterness?
And no man knows what gladness is, I trow, That never was in sorrow or distress: Eke
white by black, by shame eke worthiness, Each set by other, more for other seemeth, its
quality is made As men may see; and so the wise man deemeth." more obvious by the
contrast Troilus, however, still begs his friend to leave him to mourn in peace, for all his
proverbs can avail nothing. But Pandarus insists on plying the lover with wise saws,
arguments, reproaches; hints that, if he should die of love, his lady may impute his
death to fear of the Greeks; and finally induces Troilus to admit that the well of all his
woe, his sweetest foe, is called Cressida. Pandarus breaks into praises of the lady, and
congratulations of his friend for so well fixing his heart; he makes Troilus utter a formal
confession of his sin in jesting at lovers and bids him think well that she of whom rises
all his woe, hereafter may his comfort be also.

"For thilke ground, that bears the weedes wick' that same
Bears eke the wholesome herbes, and full oft
Next to the foule nettle, rough and thick,
The lily waxeth, white, and smooth, and soft; grows
And next the valley is the hill aloft,
And next the darke night is the glad morrow,
And also joy is next the fine of sorrow." end, border

Pandarus holds out to Troilus good hope of achieving his desire; and tells him that, since
he has been converted from his wicked rebellion against Love, he shall be made the best
post of all Love's law, and most grieve Love's enemies. Troilus gives utterance to a hint
of fear; but he is silenced by Pandarus with another proverb — "Thou hast full great
care, lest that the carl should fall out of the moon." Then the lovesick youth breaks into a
joyous boast that some of the Greeks shall smart; he mounts his horse, and plays the
lion in the field; while Pandarus retires to consider how he may best recommend to his
niece the suit of Troilus.

THE SECOND BOOK.

IN the Proem to the Second Book, the poet hails the clear weather that enables him to sail out of those black waves in which his boat so laboured that he could scarcely steer — that is, "the tempestuous matter of despair, that Troilus was in; but now of hope the kalendes begin." He invokes the aid of Clio; excuses himself to every lover for what may be found amiss in a book which he only translates; and, obviating any lover's objection to the way in which Troilus obtained his lady's grace - - through Pandarus' mediation — says it seems to him no wonderful thing:

"For ev'ry wighte that to Rome went
Held not one path, nor alway one mannere;
Eke in some lands were all the game y-shent
If that men far'd in love as men do here,
As thus, in open dealing and in cheer,
In visiting, in form, or saying their saws; speeches
For thus men say: Each country hath its laws.

"Eke scarcely be there in this place three
That have in love done or said like in all;" alike in all respects

And so that which the poem relates may not please the reader — but it actually was done, or it shall yet be done. The Book sets out with the visit of Pandarus to Cressida:—

In May, that mother is of monthes glade, glad
When all the freshe flowers, green and red,
Be quick again, that winter deade made, alive
And full of balm is floating ev'ry mead;
When Phoebus doth his brighte beames spread
Right in the white Bull, so it betid happened
As I shall sing, on Maye's day the thrid,
That Pandarus, for all his wise speech,
Felt eke his part of Love's shottes keen,
That, could he ne'er so well of Love preach,
It made yet his hue all day full green; pale
So shope it, that him fell that day a teen it happened access
In love, for which full woe to bed he went,
And made ere it were day full many a went. turning
The swallow Progne, with a sorrowful lay,
When morrow came, gan make her waimenting, lamenting
Why she foshapen was; and ever lay transformed
Pandare a-bed, half in a slumbering,
Till she so nigh him made her chittering,

How Tereus gan forth her sister take,
That with the noise of her he did awake,
And gan to call, and dress him to arise, prepare
Rememb'ring him his errand was to do'n
From Troilus, and eke his great emprise;
And cast, and knew in good plight was the Moon favourable aspect
To do voyage, and took his way full soon
Unto his niece's palace there beside
Now Janus, god of entry, thou him guide!

Pandarus finds his niece, with two other ladies, in a paved parlour, listening to a maiden who reads aloud the story of the Siege of Thebes. Greeting the company, he is welcomed by Cressida, who tells him that for three nights she has dreamed of him. After some lively talk about the book they had been reading, Pandarus asks his niece to do away her hood, to show her face bare, to lay aside the book, to rise up and dance, "and let us do to May some observance." Cressida cries out, "God forbid!" and asks if he is mad — if that is a widow's life, whom it better becomes to sit in a cave and read of holy saints' lives. Pandarus intimates that he could tell her something which could make her merry; but he refuses to gratify her curiosity; and, by way of the siege and of Hector, "that was the towne's wall, and Greekes' yerd" or scourging-rod, the conversation is brought round to Troilus, whom Pandarus highly extols as "the wise worthy Hector the second." She has, she says, already heard Troilus praised for his bravery "of them that her were liefest praised be" by whom it would be most welcome to her to be praised.

"Ye say right sooth, y-wis," quoth Pandarus;
For yesterday, who so had with him been,
Might have wonder'd upon Troilus;
For never yet so thick a swarm of been bees
Ne flew, as did of Greekes from him flee'n;
And through the field, in ev'ry wighte's ear,
There was no cry but "Troilus is here."
"Now here, now there, he hunted them so fast,
There was but Greekes' blood; and Troilus
Now him he hurt, now him adown he cast;
Ay where he went it was arrayed thus:
He was their death, and shield of life for us,
That as that day there durst him none withstand,
While that he held his bloody sword in hand."

Pandarus makes now a show of taking leave, but Cressida detains him, to speak of her affairs; then, the business talked over, he would again go, but first again asks his niece to arise and dance, and cast her widow's garments to mischance, because of the glad fortune that has befallen her. More curious than ever, she seeks to find out Pandarus'

secret; but he still parries her curiosity, skilfully hinting all the time at her good fortune, and the wisdom of seizing on it when offered. In the end he tells her that the noble Troilus so loves her, that with her it lies to make him live or die — but if Troilus dies, Pandarus shall die with him; and then she will have "fished fair." He beseeches mercy for his friend:

"Woe worth the faire gemme virtueless! evil befall!

Woe worth the herb also that doth no boot! has no remedial power

Woe worth the beauty that is ruthelless! merciless

Woe worth that wight that treads each under foot!

And ye that be of beauty crop and root perfection

If therewithal in you there be no ruth, pity

Then is it harm ye live, by my truth!"

Pandarus makes only the slight request that she will show Troilus somewhat better cheer, and receive visits from him, that his life may be saved; urging that, although a man be soon going to the temple, nobody will think that he eats the images; and that "such love of friends reigneth in all this town."

Cressida, which that heard him in this wise,

Thought: "I shall feele what he means, y-wis;" test

"Now, eme quoth she, "what would ye me devise? uncle

What is your rede that I should do of this?" counsel, opinion

"That is well said," quoth he;" certain best it is

That ye him love again for his loving,

As love for love is skilful guerdoning. reasonable recompense

"Think eke how elde wasteth ev'ry hour age

In each of you a part of your beauty;

And therefore, ere that age do you devour,

Go love, for, old, there will no wight love thee

Let this proverb a lore unto you be: lesson

"Too late I was ware," quoth beauty when it past;

And elde daunteth danger at the last.' old age overcomes disdain

"The kinge's fool is wont to cry aloud, When that he thinks a woman bears her high, 'So longe may ye liven, and all proud, Till crowes' feet be wox under your eye! grown And send you then a mirror in to pry to look in In which ye may your face see a-morrow! in the morning I keep then wishe you no more sorrow.'" I care to wish you nothing worse

Weeping, Cressida reproaches her uncle for giving her such counsel; whereupon Pandarus, starting up, threatens to kill himself, and would fain depart, but that his niece detains him, and, with much reluctance, promises to "make Troilus good cheer in honour." Invited by Cressida to tell how first he know her lover's woe, Pandarus then relates two soliloquies which he had accidentally overheard, and in which Troilus had poured out all the sorrow of his passion.

With this he took his leave, and home he went

Ah! Lord, so was he glad and well-begone! happy

Cresside arose, no longer would she stent, stay

But straight into her chamber went anon,

And sat her down, as still as any stone,

And ev'ry word gan up and down to wind

That he had said, as it came to her mind.

And wax'd somedeal astonish'd in her thought,

Right for the newe case; but when that she

Was full advised, then she found right naught had fully considered

Of peril, why she should afeared be:

For a man may love, of possibility,

A woman so, that his heart may to-brest, break utterly

And she not love again, but if her lest. unless it so please her

But as she sat alone, and thoughte thus,
In field arose a skirmish all without;
And men cried in the street then:"

Troilus hath right now put to flight the Greekes' rout." host
With that gan all the meinie for to shout: (Cressida's) household

"Ah! go we see, cast up the lattice wide,
For through this street he must to palace ride;

"For other way is from the gates none,
Of Dardanus, where open is the chain."

With that came he, and all his folk anon,
An easy pace riding, in routes twain, two troops
Right as his happy day was, sooth to sayn: good fortune

For which men say may not disturbed be
What shall betiden of necessity. happen

This Troilus sat upon his bay steed
All armed, save his head, full richely,
And wounded was his horse, and gan to bleed,

For which he rode a pace full softly
But such a knightly sighte truly aspect
As was on him, was not, withoute fail,
To look on Mars, that god is of Battaile.

So like a man of armes, and a knight,
He was to see, full fill'd of high prowess;

For both he had a body, and a might
To do that thing, as well as hardiness; courage

And eke to see him in his gear him dress, armour
So fresh, so young, so wieldy seemed he, active
It was a heaven on him for to see. look
His helmet was to-hewn in twenty places,
That by a tissue hung his back behind; riband
His shield to-dashed was with swords and maces,
In which men might many an arrow find,
That thirled had both horn, and nerve, and rind; pierced
And ay the people cried, "Here comes our joy,
And, next his brother, holder up of Troy."
For which he wax'd a little red for shame,
When he so heard the people on him cryen
That to behold it was a noble game,
How soberly he cast adown his eyen:
Cresside anon gan all his cheer espie,
And let it in her heart so softly sink,
That to herself she said, "Who gives me drink?"
For of her owen thought she wax'd all red,
Rememb'ring her right thus: "Lo! this is he
Which that mine uncle swears he might be dead,
But I on him have mercy and pity:" unless
And with that thought for pure shame she
Gan in her head to pull, and that full fast,
While he and all the people forth by pass'd.
And gan to cast, and rollen up and down ponder

Within her thought his excellent prowess,
And his estate, and also his renown,
His wit, his shape, and eke his gentleness
But most her favour was, for his distress
Was all for her, and thought it were ruth
To slay such one, if that he meant but truth.

.....

And, Lord! so gan she in her heart argue
Of this matter, of which I have you told
And what to do best were, and what t'eschew,
That plaited she full oft in many a fold.
Now was her hearte warm, now was it cold.
And what she thought of, somewhat shall I write,
As to mine author listeth to endite.
She thoughte first, that Troilus' person
She knew by sight, and eke his gentleness;
And saide thus: "All were it not to do'n,' although it were
To grant him love, yet for the worthiness impossible
It were honour, with play and with gladness, pleasing entertainment
In honesty with such a lord to deal,
For mine estate, and also for his heal. reputation health
"Eke well I wot my kinge's son is he; know
And, since he hath to see me such delight,
If I would utterly his sighte flee,

Parauntre he might have me in despite, peradventure
Through which I mighte stand in worse plight.
Now were I fool, me hate to purchase obtain for myself
Withoute need, where I may stand in grace, favour
"In ev'rything, I wot, there lies measure; a happy medium

For though a man forbidde drunkenness,
He not forbids that ev'ry creature
Be drinkeless for alway, as I guess;
Eke, since I know for me is his distress,
I oughte not for that thing him despise,
Since it is so he meaneth in good wise.

"Now set a case, that hardest is, y-wis,
Men mighte deeme that he loveth me; believe
What dishonour were it unto me, this?
May I him let of that? Why, nay, pardie! prevent him from

I know also, and alway hear and see,
Men love women all this town about;
Be they the worse? Why, nay, withoute doubt!

"Nor me to love a wonder is it not;
For well wot I myself, so God me speed! —
All would I that no man wist of this thought — although I would

I am one of the fairest, without drede, doubt
And goodlieste, who so taketh heed;
And so men say in all the town of Troy;
What wonder is, though he on me have joy?

"I am mine owen woman, well at ease,
I thank it God, as after mine estate,
Right young, and stand untied in lusty leas, pleasant leash
Withoute jealousy, or such debate: (of love)
Shall none husband say to me checkmate;
For either they be full of jealousy,
Or masterful, or love novelty.

"What shall I do? to what fine live I thus? end

Shall I not love, in case if that me lest?

What? pardie! I am not religious;

And though that I mine hearte set at rest

And keep alway mine honour and my name,

By all right I may do to me no shame."

But right as when the sunne shineth bright

In March, that changeth oftentime his face,

And that a cloud is put with wind to flight,

Which overspreads the sun as for a space;

A cloudy thought gan through her hearte pace, pass

That overspread her brighte thoughtes all,

So that for fear almost she gan to fall.

The cloudy thought is of the loss of liberty and security, the stormy life, and the malice
of wicked tongues, that love entails:

But after that her thought began to clear,

And saide, "He that nothing undertakes

Nothing achieveth, be him loth or dear." unwilling or desirous

And with another thought her hearte quakes;
Then sleepeth hope, and after dread awakes,
Now hot, now cold; but thus betwixt the tway two
She rist her up, and wente forth to play. rose take recreation
Adown the stair anon right then she went
Into a garden, with her nieces three,
And up and down they made many a went, winding, turn
Flexippe and she, Tarke, Antigone,
To playe, that it joy was for to see;
And other of her women, a great rout, troop
Her follow'd in the garden all about.
This yard was large, and railed the alleys,
And shadow'd well with blossomy boughes green,
And benched new, and sanded all the ways,
In which she walked arm and arm between;
Till at the last Antigone the sheen bright, lovely
Gan on a Trojan lay to singe clear,
That it a heaven was her voice to hear.

Antigone's song is of virtuous love for a noble object; and it is singularly fitted to deepen the impression made on the mind of Cressida by the brave aspect of Troilus, and by her own cogitations. The singer, having praised the lover and rebuked the revilers of love, proceeds:

"What is the Sunne worse of his kind right, true nature
Though that a man, for feebleness of eyen,
May not endure to see on it for bright?
Or Love the worse, tho' wretches on it cryen?"

No weal is worth, that may no sorrow drien; happiness endure

And forthy, who that hath a head of verre, therefore glass

From cast of stones ware him in the werre.

"But I, with all my heart and all my might,

As I have lov'd, will love unto my last

My deare heart, and all my owen knight,

In which my heart y-grown is so fast,

And his in me, that it shall ever last

All dread I first to love him begin, although I feared

Now wot I well there is no pain therein."

Cressida sighs, and asks Antigone whether there is such bliss among these lovers, as they can fair endite; Antigone replies confidently in the affirmative; and Cressida answers nothing, "but every worde which she heard she gan to printen in her hearte fast." Night draws on:

The daye's honour, and the heaven's eye,

The nighte's foe, — all this call I the Sun, —

Gan westren fast, and downward for to wry, go west turn

As he that had his daye's course y-run;

And white thinges gan to waxe dun

For lack of light, and starres to appear;

Then she and all her folk went home in fere. in company

So, when it liked her to go to rest,

And voided were those that voiden ought, gone out (of the house)

She saide, that to sleepe well her lest. pleased

Her women soon unto her bed her brought;

When all was shut, then lay she still and thought

Of all these things the manner and the wise;
Rehearse it needeth not, for ye be wise.
A nightingale upon a cedar green,
Under the chamber wall where as she lay,
Full loude sang against the moone sheen,
Parauntre, in his birde's wise, a lay perchance
Of love, that made her hearte fresh and gay;
Hereat hark'd she so long in good intent, listened
Till at the last the deade sleep her hent. seized
And as she slept, anon right then her mette she dreamed
How that an eagle, feather'd white as bone,
Under her breast his longe clawes set,
And out her heart he rent, and that anon,
And did his heart into her breast to go'n, caused
Of which no thing she was abash'd nor smert; amazed nor hurt
And forth he flew, with hearte left for heart.

Leaving Cressida to sleep, the poet returns to Troilus and his zealous friend — with whose stratagems to bring the two lovers together the remainder of the Second Book is occupied. Pandarus counsels Troilus to write a letter to his mistress, telling her how he "fares amiss," and "beseeching her of ruth;" he will bear the letter to his niece; and, if Troilus will ride past Cressida's house, he will find his mistress and his friend sitting at a window. Saluting Pandarus, and not tarrying, his passage will give occasion for some talk of him, which may make his ears glow. With respect to the letter, Pandarus gives some shrewd hints:

"Touching thy letter, thou art wise enough,
I wot thou n'ilt it dignely endite wilt not write it haughtily
Or make it with these argumentes tough,
Nor scrivener-like, nor craftily it write;

Beblot it with thy tears also a lite; little
And if thou write a goodly word all soft,
Though it be good, rehearse it not too oft.
"For though the beste harper pon live alive
Would on the best y-sounded jolly harp
That ever was, with all his fingers five

Touch ay one string, or ay one warble harp, always play one tune
Were his nailes pointed ne'er so sharp,
He shoulde maken ev'ry wight to dull to grow bored
To hear his glee, and of his strokes full.

"Nor jompre eke no discordant thing y-fere, jumble together
As thus, to use termes of physic;
In love's termes hold of thy mattere
The form alway, and do that it be like; make it consistent
For if a painter woulde paint a pike
With ass's feet, and head it as an ape,
It 'cordeth not, so were it but a jape." is not harmonious

Troilus writes the letter, and next morning Pandarus bears it to Cressida. She refuses to receive "scrip or bill that toucheth such mattere;" but he thrusts it into her bosom, challenging her to throw it away. She retains it, takes the first opportunity of escaping to her chamber to read it, finds it wholly good, and, under her uncle's dictation, endites a reply telling her lover that she will not make herself bound in love; "but as his sister, him to please, she would aye fain be glad to do his heart an ease." Pandarus, under pretext of inquiring who is the owner of the house opposite, has gone to the window; Cressida takes her letter to him there, and tells him that she never did a thing with more pain than write the words to which he had constrained her. As they sit side by side, on a stone of jasper, on a cushion of beaten gold, Troilus rides by, in all his goodness. Cressida waxes "as red as rose," as she sees him salute humbly, "with dreadful cheer, and oft his

hues mue change;" she likes "all y-fere, his person, his array, his look, his cheer, his goodly manner, and his gentleness;" so that, however she may have been before, "to goode hope now hath she caught a thorn, she shall not pull it out this nexte week." Pandarus, striking the iron when it is hot, asks his niece to grant Troilus an interview; but she strenuously declines, for fear of scandal, and because it is all too soon to allow him so great a liberty — her purpose being to love him unknown of all, "and guerdon reward him with nothing but with sight." Pandarus has other intentions; and, while Troilus writes daily letters with increasing love, he contrives the means of an interview. Seeking out Deiphobus, the brother of Troilus, he tells him that Cressida is in danger of violence from Polyphete, and asks protection for her. Deiphobus gladly complies, promises the protection of Hector and Helen, and goes to invite Cressida to dinner on the morrow. Meantime Pandarus instructs Troilus to go to the house of Deiphobus, plead an access of his fever for remaining all night, and keep his chamber next day. "Lo," says the crafty promoter of love, borrowing a phrase from the hunting-field; "Lo, hold thee at thy tristre tryst close, and I shall well the deer unto thy bowe drive." Unsuspicious of stratagem, Cressida comes to dinner; and at table, Helen, Pandarus, and others, praise the absent Troilus, until "her heart laughs" for very pride that she has the love of such a knight. After dinner they speak of Cressida's business; all confirm Deiphobus' assurances of protection and aid; and Pandarus suggests that, since Troilus is there, Cressida shall herself tell him her case. Helen and Deiphobus alone accompany Pandarus to Troilus' chamber; there Troilus produces some documents relating to the public weal, which Hector has sent for his opinion; Helen and Deiphobus, engrossed in perusal and discussion, roam out of the chamber, by a stair, into the garden; while Pandarus goes down to the hall, and, pretending that his brother and Helen are still with Troilus, brings Cressida to her lover. The Second Book leaves Pandarus whispering in his niece's ear counsel to be merciful and kind to her lover, that hath for her such pain; while Troilus lies "in a kankerdort," hearing the whispering without, and wondering what he shall say for this "was the first time that he should her pray of love; O! mighty God! what shall he say?"