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Selected Poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

from *Representative Poetry On-line*

Prepared by members of the Department of English at the University of Toronto
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... if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
(The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue, 502-506)

Image of Geoffrey
Chaucer

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Biographical information

Given name: Geoffrey
Family name: Chaucer
Birth date: ca. 1343
Death date: 1400

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue

Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of Caunterbury

1Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,
2The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
3And bathed every veyne in swich licour
4Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
5Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
6Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
7The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
8Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
9And smale foweles maken melodye,
10That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
11So priketh hem Nature in hir corages,
12Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,

13And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
14To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
 15And specially, from every shires ende
 16Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
17The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
18That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

19Bifil that in that seson on a day,
20In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,
 21Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
22To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
 23At nyght were come into that hostelrye
24Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
25Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle
 26In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
 27That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
 28The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
29And wel we weren esed atte beste.
 30And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
31So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
 32That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
33And made forward erly for to ryse,
34To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse.

35But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
 36Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
37Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
38To telle yow al the condicioun
 39Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
40And whiche they weren and of what degree,
 41And eek in what array that they were inne;
 42And at a Knyght than wol I first bigynne.

43A Knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
 44That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 45To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
46Trouthe and honóur, fredom and curteisie.
47Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
48And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
 49As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
 50And evere honóured for his worthynesse.
51At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne;
52Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
 53Aboven alle nacions in Pruce.
54In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,--
55No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
56In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
57Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.

58At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
59Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
60At many a noble armee hadde he be.

61At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
62And foughten for oure feith at Tramysse
63In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.
64This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
65Somtyme with the lord of Palatye
66Agayn another hethen in Turkye;
67And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
68And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
69And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
70He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde,
71In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
72He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.

73But for to tellen yow of his array,
74His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay;
75Of fustian he wered a gypon
76Al bismótered with his habergeon;
77For he was late y-come from his viage,
78And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

79With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squiér,
80A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,
81With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
82Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
83Of his statúre he was of evene lengthe,
84And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe.
85And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
86In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
87And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
88In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
89Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
90Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.
91Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
92He was as fressh as is the month of May.
93Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde;
94Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;
95He koude songes make and wel endite,
96Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
97So hote he lovede that by nyghtertale
98He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
99Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,

100And carf biforn his fader at the table.

101A Yeman hadde he and servántz namo

102At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;

103And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.

104A sheef of peacock arwes bright and kene,

105Under his belt he bar ful thriftily--

106Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;

107His arwes drouped nocht with fetheres lowe--

108And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.

109A not-heed hadde he, with a broun viságe.

110Of woodecraft wel koude he al the uságe.

111Upon his arm he baar a gay bracér,

112And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,

113And on that oother syde a gay daggere,

114Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;

115A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene.

116An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.

117A forster was he, soothly as I gesse.

118Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,

119That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;

120Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte Loy,

121And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.

122Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,

123Entuned in hir nose ful semely;

124And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,

125After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,

126For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.

127At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle:

128She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,

129Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.

130Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe

131Thát no drope ne fille upon hire brist;

132In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.

133Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene

134That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene

135Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.

136Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.

137And sikerly she was of greet desport,

138And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,

139And peyned hire to countrefete cheere

140Of court, and been estatlich of manere,

141And to ben holden digne of reverence.

142But for to speken of hire conscience,

143She was so charitable and so pitous

144She wolde wepe if that she saugh a mous
145Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
 146Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde
147With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel breed;
 148But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
149Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
 150And al was conscience and tendre herte.

151Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was;
152Hire nose tretys, her eyen greye as glas,
153Hir mouth ful smal and ther-to softe and reed;
154But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
 155It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
156For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
157Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
 158Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
159A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
160And ther-on heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
 161On which ther was first write a crowned A,
162And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

163Another Nonne with hire hadde she,
164That was hire chapeleyne, and Preestes thre.

165A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
166An outridere, that lovede venerie;
 167A manly man, to been an abbot able.
168Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
 169And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
170Gýnglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,
 171And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,
172Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.
173The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
174By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,--
175This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
176And heeld after the newe world the space.
177He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen
178That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
179Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheles,
 180Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,--
 181This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
182But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
 183And I seyde his opinioun was good.
184What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood,
 185Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
186Or swynken with his handes and labóure,

187As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?

188Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.

189Therefore he was a prikasour aright:

190Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;

191Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare

192Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.

193I seigh his sleeves y-púrfiled at the hond

194With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;

195And for to festne his hood under his chyn

196He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pyn;

197A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.

198His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,

199And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.

200He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;

201His eyen stepe, and rolynge in his heed,

202That stemed as a forneys of a leed;

203His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.

204Now certainly he was a fair prelaat.

205He was nat pale, as a forpyned goost:

206A fat swan loved he best of any roost.

207His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

208A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,

209A lymytour, a ful solémpne man.

210In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan

211So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.

212He hadde maad ful many a mariage

213Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.

214Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

215Ful wel biloved and famulier was he

216With frankeleyns over al in his contree,

217And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;

218For he hadde power of confessioun,

219As seyde hym-self, moore than a curát,

220For of his ordre he was licenciat.

221Ful swetely herde he confessioun,

222And plesaunt was his absolucioun.

223He was an esy man to yeve penaunce

224There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;

225For unto a povre ordre for to yive

226Is signe that a man is wel y-shryve;

227For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt

228He wiste that a man was répentant;

229For many a man so hard is of his herte

230He may nat wepe al-thogh hym soore smerte.

231Therefore in stede of wepyng and preyéres

232Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.

233His typet was ay farsed full of knyves
 234And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
 235And certainly he hadde a murye note:
236Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
237Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
 238His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
 239Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
 240He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
241And everich hostiler and tappestere
242Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
 243For unto swich a worthy man as he
244Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
 245To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;
246It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
247Fór to deelen with no swich poraille,
248But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
249And over-al, ther as profit sholde arise,
250Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.
251Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
 252He was the beste beggere in his hous;
253[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt,
 254Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;]
 255For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
256So plesaunt was his *In principio*,
257Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente:
258His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
259And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe.
260In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,
 261For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer
 262With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scolér,
263But he was lyk a maister, or a pope;
264Of double worstede was his semycope,
265That rounded as a belle, out of the presse.
266Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse,
 267To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;
 268And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
 269His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
 270As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
271This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubérd.

 272A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,
273In motteleye, and hye on horse he sat;
 274Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat;
275His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
276His resons he spak ful solémpnely,
277Sownynge alway thencrees of his wynnyng.
278He wolde the see were kept for any thing

279Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.

280Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.

281This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;

282Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,

283So estatly was he of his gouvernaunce,

284With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.

285For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,

286But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.

287A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,

288That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.

289As leene was his hors as is a rake,

290And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,

291But looked holwe, and ther-to sobrelly.

292Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;

293For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,

294Ne was so worldly for to have office;

295For hym was lévere háve at his beddes heed

296Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,

297Of Aristotle and his philosophie,

298Than robes riche, or fíthele, or gay sautrie.

299But al be that he was a philosophre,

300Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;

301But al that he myghte of his freendes hente

302On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,

303And bisily gan for the soules preye

304Of hem that yaf hym wher-with to scoleye.

305Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.

306Noght o word spak he moore than was neede;

307And that was seyð in forme and reverence,

308And short and quyk and ful of hy sentéce.

309Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche;

310And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

311A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,

312That often hadde been at the Parvys,

313Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.

314Discreet he was, and of greet reverence--

315He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.

316Justice he was ful often in assise,

317By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.

318For his science and for his heigh renoun,

319Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.

320So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:

321Al was fee symple to hym in effect;

322His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.

323Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,

324And yet he semed bisier than he was.

325In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
326That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.

327Ther-to he koude endite and make a thyng,

328Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;

329And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.

330He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,

331Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;

332Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

333A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye.

334Whit was his berd as is the dayesy;e;

335Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.

336Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;

337To lyven in delit was evere his wone,

338For he was Epicurus owene sone,

339That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit

340Was verrailly felicitee parfit.

341An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;

342Seint Julian he was in his contree.

343His breed, his ale, was always after oon;

344A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.

345Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,

346Of fissh and flessch, and that so plentevous,

347It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,

348Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,

349After the sondry sesons of the year;

350So chaunged he his mete and his soper.

351Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,

352And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.

353Wo was his cook but if his sauce were

354Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.

355His table dormant in his halle alway

356Stood redy covered al the longe day.

357At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;

358Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.

359An anlaas, and a gipser al of silk,

360Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.

361A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;

362Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.

363An Haberdasshere, and a Carpenter,

364A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer,--

365And they were clothed alle in o lyveree

366Of a solémpne and a greet fraternitee.
367Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
368Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
369But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
370Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
371Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
372To sitten in a yeldehalle, on a deys.
373Éverich, for the wisdom that he kan,
374Was shaply for to been an alderman;
375For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
376And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente,
377And elles certeyn were they to blame.
378It is ful fair to been y-cleped *Madame*,
379And goon to vigilies al bifore,
380And have a mantel roialliche y-bore.

381A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
382To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
383And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.
384Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.
385He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
386Máken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
387But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
388That on his shyne a mormal hadde he;
389For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

390A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
391For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe.
392He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,
393In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
394A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
395Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
396The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
397And certainly he was a good felawe.
398Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he y-drawe
399Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
400Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
401If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,
402By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
403But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
404His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
405His herberwe and his moone, his lode-menage,
406Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
407Hardy he was and wys to undertake;
408With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
409He knew alle the havenes, as they were,

410From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,
411And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
412His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

413With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
414In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
415To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
416For he was grounded in astronomye.
417He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel
418In houres, by his magyk natureel.
419Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
420Of his ymáges for his pacient.
421He knew the cause of everich maladye,
422Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,
423And where they engendred and of what humour.
424He was a verray, parfit praktisour;
425The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
426Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
427Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
428To sende him drogges and his letuaries;
429For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,
430Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
431Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
432And De{ "y }scorides, and eek Rufus,
433Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
434Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,
435Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
436Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
437Of his diete mesurable was he,
438For it was of no superfluitee,
439But of greet norissyng and digestible.
440His studie was but litel on the Bible.
441In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
442Lyned with taffata and with sendal.
443And yet he was but esy of dispence;
444He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
445For gold in phisik is a cordial;
446Therefore he lovede gold in special.

447A Good Wif was ther of biside Bathe,
448But she was som-del deaf, and that was scathe.
449Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
450She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
451In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
452That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
453And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she

454That she was out of alle charitee.
455Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
 456I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
 457That on a Sondag weren upon hir heed.
 458Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
459Ful streite y-teyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
 460Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
461She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;
 462Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
463Withouten oother compaignye in youthe;
464But ther-of nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
465And thries hadde she been at Jérusalem;
466She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
467At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
468In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
469She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
470Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
 471Upon an amblere esily she sat,
 472Y-wympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
473As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
474A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
 475And on hire feet a paire of spores sharpe.
476In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;
477Of remedies of love she knew *per chauncé*,
478For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

 479A good man was ther of religioun,
480And was a povre Person of a Toun;
 481But riche he was of hooly thought and werk.
 482He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 483That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche;
484His parisspens devoutly wolde he teche.
 485Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
 486And in adversitee ful pacient;
487And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.
 488Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
 489But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
 490Unto his povre parisspens aboute,
491Of his offrýng and eek of his substaunce;
 492He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
 493Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
494But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
495In siknesse nor in meschief to visite
496The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
 497Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
498This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
 499That first he wroghte and afterward he taughte.

500Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
 501And this figure he added eek therto,
 502That if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?
 503For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
504No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
505And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
 506A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
 507Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive
 508By his clenness how that his sheep sholde lyve.
 509He sette nat his benefice to hyre
 510And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
 511And ran to Londoun, unto Seinte Poules,
512To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
513Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
 514But dwelte at hoom and kepte wel his folde,
 515So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
 516He was a shepherde, and noght a mercenarie.
 517And though he hooly were and vertuous,
518He was to synful man nat despitous,
519Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
 520But in his techyng díscreet and benygne.
521To drawen folk to hevене by fairnesse,
 522By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.
 523But it were any persone obstinat,
 524What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
525Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
 526A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
527He waited after no pompe and reverence,
528Ne maked him a spiced conscience;
529But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve
 530He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselfe.

531With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
532That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother;
533A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
 534Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.
 535God loved he best, with al his hoolle herte,
536At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.
 537And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.
538He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
 539For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
 540Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
 541His tithes payede he ful faire and wel,
542Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
543In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

 544Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
 545A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
 546A Maunciple, and myself,--ther were namo.

547The Millere was a stout carl for the nones;
 548Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones.
 549That proved wel, for over-al, ther he cam,
 550At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
551He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
552Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
553Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
554His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
 555And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
556Upon the cop right of his nose he had
557A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,
 558Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
559His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
 560A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.
561His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;
562He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
563And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
564Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
 565And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
 566A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
567A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
 568And therewithal he broghte us out of towne.

569A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
570Of which achátours myghte take exemple
571For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
572For, wheither that he payde or took by taille,
573Algate he wayted so in his achaat
 574That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
 575Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
576That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
 577The wisdom of an heap of lerned men?
578Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
579That weren of lawe expert and curious,
580Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous
581Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
 582Of any lord that is in Engelond,
583To maken hym lyve by his propre good,
584In honour dettelees, but if he were wood,
585Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;
 586And able for to helpen al a shire
 587In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
588And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe

589The Reve was a sclendre colerik man.
590His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;

591His heer was by his erys round y-shorn;
 592His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
 593Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
594Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
595Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
596Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
 597Wel wiste he, by the droghte and by the reyn,
598The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
 599His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
600His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
 601Was hoolly in this reves governyng;
602And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng
603Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
604There koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
605There nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
606That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
607They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
608His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth;
 609With grene trees shadwed was his place.
 610He koude better than his lord purchace;
611Ful riche he was a-stored pryvely.
 612His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
613To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
 614And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
615In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
616He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
617This Reve sat upon a ful good stot,
618That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
619A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
 620And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
621Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
 622Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.
623Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
624And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

625A Somonour was ther with us in that place,
626That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
627For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
628As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
629With scaled browes blake and piled berd,--
 630Of his visage children were aferd.
631Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymston,
632Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
 633Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
634That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,

635Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
 636Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
 637And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.
638Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.
 639And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
 640Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
 641A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
 642That he had lerned out of som decree,--
 643No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
 644And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
645Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.
646But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
 647Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
648Ay "*Questio quid juris*" wolde he crie.
649He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
650A better felawe sholde men noght fynde.
 651He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
652A good felawe to have his concubyn
 653A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
654And prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
 655And if he foond owher a good felawe,
 656He wolde techen him to have noon awe,
657In swich caas, of the erchedekenes curs,
 658But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
659For in his purs he sholde y-punysshed be:
 660"Purs is the erchedekenes helle," seyde he.
 661But wel I woot he lyed right in dede.
 662Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
663For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith;
664And also war him of a *Significavit*.
665In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
666The yonge girles of the diocise,
667And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
 668A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,
669As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
 670A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.

671With hym ther rood a gentil Pardonere
672Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
673That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
 674Ful loude he soong, "Com hider, love, to me!"
675This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
 676Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
677This Pardonere hadde heer as yelow as wex,
678But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
679By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
 680And therwith he his shuldres overspradde.
681But thynne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon;

682But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
 683For it was trussed up in his walét.
684Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
685Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
 686Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
687A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
 688His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
 689Bret-ful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.
 690A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
 691No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
 692As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;
 693I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
694But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
 695Ne was ther swich another pardonere;
696For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
697Which that, he seyde, was Oure Lady veyl;
698He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
699That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente
700Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.
701He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
 702And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
703But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
704A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
705Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
 706Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
 707And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
708He made the person and the peple his apes.
 709But trewely to tellen atte laste,
710He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
711Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
712But alderbest he song an offertorie;
 713For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
714He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge
 715To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
716Therefore he song the murierly and loude.

 717Now have I toold you shortly, in a clause,
718Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
 719Why that assembled was this compaignye
 720In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye
721That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
 722But now is tyme to yow for to telle
723How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
 724Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
 725And after wol I telle of our viage
 726And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.

 727But first, I pray yow, of youre curteisye,

728That ye narette it nat my vileynye,
 729Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
730To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
731Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
732For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
 733Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
734He moot reherce, as ny as evere he kan,
735Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
736Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;
 737Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
 738Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
739He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
740He moot as wel seye o word as another.
741Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
 742And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
743Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
744"The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."

745Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
746Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
 747Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
 748My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

 749Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,
 750And to the soper sette he us anon,
 751And served us with vitaille at the beste:
752Strong was the wyn and wel to drynke us leste.

753A semely man Oure Hooste was with-alle
 754For to been a marchal in an halle.
755A large man he was with eyen stepe,
756A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;
 757Boold of his speche, and wys, and well y-taught,
 758And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
759Eek thereto he was right a myrie man,
 760And after soper pleyen he bigan,
 761And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
 762Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
763And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,
 764Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
 765For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
 766I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
767At ones in this herberwe as is now.
 768Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how;
 769And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
 770To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.

771"Ye goon to Canterbury--God yow speede,
772The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!

773And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
 774Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
 775For trewely confort ne myrthe is noon
 776To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
 777And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
 778As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
 779And if you liketh alle, by oon assent,
 780For to stonden at my juggement,
 781And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
 782To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
 783Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,
 784But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
 785Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche."

786Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche;
 787Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
 788And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
 789And bad him seye his verdit, as hym leste.

790"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;
 791But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn;
 792This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,
 793That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye
 794In this viage, shal telle tales tweye,
 795To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
 796And homward he shal tellen othere two,
 797Of aventúres that whilom han bifalle.
 798And which of yow that bereth hym beste of alle,
 799That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
 800Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,
 801Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,
 802Heere in this place, sittyng by this post,
 803Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
 804And, for to make yow the moore mury,
 805I wol myselfen gladly with yow ryde,
 806Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;
 807And whoso wole my juggement withseye
 808Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
 809And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
 810Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
 811And I wol erly shape me therfore."

812This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore
 813With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
 814That he wolde vouche-sauf for to do so,
 815And that he wolde been oure governour,
 816And of our tales juge and réportour,
 817And sette a soper at a certeyn pris;
 818And we wol reuled been at his devys
 819In heigh and lough; and thus, by oon assent,

820We been acorded to his juggement.

821And therupon the wyn was fet anon;

822We dronken, and to reste wente echon,

823Withouten any lenger taryynge.

824Amorwe, whan that day gan for to sprynge,

825Up roos oure Hoost and was oure aller cok,

826And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok;

827And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,

828Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;

829And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,

830And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste:

831Ye woot youre foreward and I it yow recorde.

832If even-song and morwe-song accorde,

833Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.

834As ever mote I drynke wyn or ale,

835Whoso be rebel to my juggement

836Shal paye for all that by the wey is spent.

837Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;

838He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.

839Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord

840Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.

841Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioress.

842And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,

843Ne studieth noght. Ley hond to, every man."

844Anon to drawen every wight bigan,

845And, shortly for to tellen as it was,

846Were it by áventúre, or sort, or cas,

847The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,

848Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght;

849And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,

850By foreward and by composicioun,

851As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?

852And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,

853As he that wys was and obedient

854To kepe his foreward by his free assent,

855He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,

856What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!

857Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."

858And with that word we ryden forth oure weye;

859And he bigan with right a myrie cheere

860His tale anon, and seyde in this manére.

Notes

1] Bold-faced vowels indicate syllables that, though frequently silent today, may have been sounded in Chaucer's time. (In the original printed edition of *RPO*, these vowels had a dot accent over them.)

THE CANTERBURY TALES are extant in 84 MSS., of which 55 are complete or nearly so. The earliest were written near the beginning of the 15th century. The two earliest editions are those of Caxton (ca. 1478 and ca. 1484). The Canterbury Tales are a series of twenty-four stories, supposed to be related by members of a band of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas at

Canterbury. A general Prologue and a number of head-links and end-links describe the pilgrims and narrate the effect of the tales and the events of the journey; but there are gaps in the sequence, and the number of stories planned is not completed. For the gallery of portraits in the General Prologue no literary parallel has been found. Some of them have been shown pretty clearly to be in some measure drawn from actual persons; others are rather representatives of a class; taken in all they give a broad and vivid picture of contemporary society. There is some evidence that the Prologue was written in 1387. Some of the tales were written previously and some considerably later.
shoures soote: showers sweet.

3] And bathed the veins of every plant in such moisture, by the power of which the flower is brought forth.

5] Zephirus: the west wind.

7] croppes: shoots.

the yonge sonne: the sun which has recently entered on its annual course through the signs of the zodiac. The year was then said to begin at the vernal equinox.

8] Has run through his half-course in the sign of Aries. In the introduction to the Man of Law's Tale (C.T., B, 5, 6) we are told that the date was April 18. The present passage must mean that the sun had completed the second half of his course in Aries, which sign he entered on March 12 and left on April 11.

9] foweles: birds.

10] ye: eye.

11] Nature so incites them in their hearts.

13] straunge strondes: foreign shores.

14] ferne-halwes: distant or ancient shrines (O.E. *halga*, a saint. Cf. hallowe'en). kowthe: known.

17] martir: Thomas A Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, murdered 1170, canonized 1173.

18] Who has helped them when they were sick. Note the identical rhyme, allowable in Middle English and in French.

19] Bifil: it befell.

20] As I lodged at the Tabard Inn in Southwark (on the south bank of the Thames, opposite London).

22] corage: heart.

24] Wel nyne and twenty: fully twenty-nine. Including Chaucer but not the Host, thirty-one pilgrims are mentioned in the Prologue. It has been suggested that *Preestes thre*, at line 164, is a scribe's mistake. If there was only one Nun's Priest the number of the pilgrims would be just twenty-nine.

25] by aventure y-falle In felaweshipe: by chance fallen into association.

29] esed atte beste: made comfortable in the best manner.

31] everychon: everyone.

33] made forward: (we) made an agreement.

34] ther ... devyse: to that place of which I am telling you.

37] It seems to me in accordance with reason.

38] condicioun: character.

40] And of what sort they were and of what rank.

46] fredom: generosity.

47] his lordes werre: his feudal lord's war, i.e. the king's service in the French wars.

48] thereto: besides that. ferre: farther.

51] Alisaundre: Alexandria, captured from the Turks in 1365.

52] He had often sat at the head of the table above the representation of all nations among the knights of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, during their campaigns against the heathen.

54] He had made military expeditions in Lithuania and Russia.

55] degree: rank.

56] Gernade: Granada.

57] Algezir: Algeciras, taken from the Moors in 1344. Belmarye: Benmarin, Moorish kingdom in Africa.

58] Lyeys: Ayas in Armenia, taken from the Turks in 1367. Satalye. Adalia on coast of Asia Minor, taken from the Turks in 1361.

59] Grete See: the Mediterranean.

60] arnee: armed expedition, armada. The reading of some MSS., *aryve*, translated as "landing," is doubtful, since the word occurs nowhere else.

62] Tramysene: Tlemçen, a former kingdom in Western Algeria.

64] ilke: same.

65] lord of Palatye: ruler of Balat in Asia Minor; probably a Turk in league with the Christians.

66] Ygayn: against.

67] sovereyn prys: supreme renown.

68] Though he was excellent (i.e. brave) he was also prudent.

69] port: bearing.

70] vileynye: discourtesy.

71] unto no maner wight: to any kind of man.

72] He was a true, perfect, noble knight. *verray* is an adjective modifying *knight*, not an adverb modifying *perfect*.

74] gay: gaily dressed.

75] fustian: coarse cloth. gypon: tunic, shirt.

76] All soiled by his hauberk or coat of mail.

77] For he had lately come from his journey (and had not taken time to procure fresh clothes before going on pilgrimage, perhaps as the result of a vow made in peril. The squire, who was in gay clothes, had perhaps met him in London).

80] lovyere: lover (Southern form). bachelor: candidate for knighthood.

81] lokkes crulle: curled locks. as: as if.

83] event lengthe: medium height.

84] delyvere: active, agile.

85] chyvachie: cavalry raid.

86] Artoys, Pycardie: provinces of northern France. The Bishop of Norwich had led an expedition into these districts in 1382.

87] as of so little space: considering that his time of service had been so short.

88] lady: lady's (a feminine noun without genitive ending).

89] Embroidered were his clothes as if he were a meadow.

91] floytynge: playing on the flute or possibly whistling.

93] This was the latest fashion of the time.

95] He could compose songs, both the music and the words.

96] Juste: joust. purtreye: draw or paint.

97] nyghtertale: night-time.

98] sleep: slept.

100] carf: carved. Carving was a gentleman's accomplishment and a regular duty of a squire.

101] Yeman: yeoman, servant of the next degree above a groom. he: the Knight. namo: no more.

102] hym lifte ryde to: it pleased him to ride so.

104] a sheer of pecock arwes: a sheaf of arrows with peacock's feathers.

105] thriftily: carefully.

106] Well could he prepare his equipment in a yeoman-like manner.

107] fetheres lowe: feathers of which the pinnules lie so close to the rib (low) that they do not properly support the arrow in the air but cause it to droop and fall short.

109] not-heed: cropped head, with hair cut short.

111] bracicr: arm-guard. A heavy leather glove to protect the arm and sleeve from the friction of the bow-string.

112] bokeler: buckler, small embossed shield.

113] that oother: the other *That* is here the old neuter article.

114] Harneised: equipped.

115] Christophere: image of St. Christopher, used as a protection against danger. sheene: bright.

116] bawdryk: baldric, a belt worn over one shoulder and under the opposite arm, supporting the horn.

117] forster: forester.

119] coy: quiet, modest.

120] seinte Loy: St. Eligins or Eloi, Bishop of Noyon. He was a skilled goldsmith and noted for his beauty and courtesy.

123] Entuned in hir nose. The recitative parts of the church service were nasally intoned to avoid straining the throat. (Manly).
semely: becomingly.

124] fetisly: skilfully, properly.

125] Strafford atte Bowe: the reference is to the Benedictine nunnery of St. Leonards at Bromley, near Stratford at Bow, east of London. Manly has shown the probability that Madame Eglentyne was drawn from one of the nuns of this convent.

126] The implication is clearly that her French was provincial. French of Paris was considered the standard French.

129] depe: deeply.

131] brist: breast.

132] list: pleasure.

134] no ferthing sene: no small fragment visible.

136] raughte: reached. These are the points of good table manners emphasized in the rules of deportment.

137] sikerly: certainly. desport: mirth, good humour.

139] And took pains to imitate courtly behaviour and to be stately in bearing.

142] conscience: sensibility.

143] pitous: compassionate.

144] saugh: saw.

145] bledde: were bleeding.

147] wastel breed: bread made of fine flour.

149] men Smoot it: anyone smote it. with a yerde smerte: with a rod, sharply.

151] wympul: cloth covering forehead, neck, and sides of the face. semyly ... pynched: neatly pleated.

152] tretys: well-formed.

153] thereto: in addition.

154] sikerly: certainly.

156] hardily: certainly. undergrowe: under-grown.

157] fetys: well-made. was war: was aware, observed.

159] peire of bedes: set of prayer-beads. gauded al with grene: having every eleventh bead or gaud green. The other beads (O.E. *bed*, prayer) marked the *Ave Marias*, the gauds (L. *gaudia*), the Paternoster.

160] heng: hung. sheene: bright.

162] *Amor vincit omnia*: Love conquers all things (cf. Vergil, *Eclogues*, X, 69). But nothing in the description of the Prioress or in her subsequent tale indicates that earthly love is meant.

164] chapeleyne: a sort of private secretary. Preestes thre. See 1. 24 and note.

165] a fair for the maistrie: an extremely fine one; *for the maistrie* is an adverbial phrase modifying *fair*.

166] outridere: an officer whose duty it was to inspect the estates of the monastery. venerie: hunting.

168] deyntee: dainty, i.e. fine, choice.

170] als: as.

172] Where this lord was ruler of a subordinate monastery (*celle*).

173] St. Benedict founded the Benedictine order in 529 in Italy. St. Maurus, his disciple, introduced it into France. The *reule* is the famous Benedictine rule for the conduct of monasteries.

174] somdel streit: somewhat narrow, strict.

175] ilke: same. leet: let. olde thynges: in loose apposition with 1. 173. pace: pass by.

176] The line perhaps means "and held his course according to the new fashion".

177] He gave (i.e., cared) not a plucked hen for that text.

178] St. Jerome says that we do not find in the Bible a single pious hunter. (Manly).

179] recchelees: reckless, careless, undisciplined, vagabond.

182] thilke: that same.

184] What: why. wood: mad.

186] swynke: work.

187] Austyn: St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), and author of a famous monastic rule. hit: biddeth. How ... served? Who shall carry on the business of the world?

188] swynk: labour.

189] a prikasour aright: truly a hard rider.

191] prikyng: hard riding or tracking a hare by its footprints.

192] lust: pleasure.

193] seigh: saw. y-purfiled: bordered, trimmed.

194] grys: gray fur.

196] curious: elaborate.

199] enoynt: anointed.

200] in good poynt: in good condition (from French *en bon point*, cf. *embonpoint*, plumpness).

201] stepe: large, prominent.

202] That (i.e., his eyes) gleamed like a furnace under a cauldron.

203] estaat: condition.

205] forpyned: tormented.

208] Frere: friar. wantowne: unrestrained, free, gay.

209] limitour: licensed to beg within certain limits. solimpne: important, impressive.

210] ordres fourre. See note on *Piers the Plowman*, 55. kan: knows.

211] So much of gossip and flattery.

214] post: cf. the phrase, "a pillar of the church".

216] frankeleyns: landholders, country squires. See note on l. 331.

219] curát: parish priest.

220] licenciat: licensed by the Pope, through his order, to hear confession and give absolution in all places.

224] Where he knew that he would receive a good gift.

225] povre: poor. yive: give.

226] y-shryve: shriven, absolved.

227] For if the man gave the friar durst assert.

230] him soore smerte: it may pain him sorely.

233] typet: tippet, cape. farsed: stuffed.

236] rote: a kind of fiddle.

237] For songs he absolutely carried off the prize.

241] hostiler: inn-keeper. tappestere: barmaid. Later *tapster* is masculine.

242] Better than a leper or a female beggar.

244] It was unfitting, considering his official position.

246] honest: becoming. avaunce: be profitable.

247] poraille: poor people.

248] vitaille: victuals.

249] ther as: where.

250] lowely of servyse: humble in offering his services.

251] vertuous: efficient, capable.

253] Lines 253-54 are found only in a few MSS., one of which, the Hengwrt, is among the best. The lines sound like Chaucer's and fit their context, but he may have cancelled them. They mean that the Friar paid a certain rent for the exclusive privilege of begging within his assigned limits.

256] In principio: the first fourteen verses of the Gospel of St. John, beginning *In principio erat verbum*, popularly regarded as having a magical power and often recited by friars on their rounds.

257] ferthyng: very small gift, possibly the coin.

258] What he got irregularly (picked up by begging) was much more than his regular income. This was a proverbial expression with a suggestion of dishonesty; or the line may possibly mean: "What he got by begging was much more than the rent which he paid for that privilege" (with reference to 252a and 252b).

259] He could frolic, romp, or dally amorously as if he were a puppy.

260] love-dayes: days appointed for settling disputes out of court.

263] Maister: a master of arts.

264] semycope: short cape.

265] presse: clothes-press or possibly the mould of the bell.

266] lised: lisped. wantownesse: affectation.

271] cleped: called.

273] motteleye: parti-coloured cloth.

275] fetisly: neatly.

276] resons: opinions. solémpnely: impressively.

277] Talking always about the increase of his profit.

278] He wished that the sea should be guarded, whatever might happen, between Middelburgh (in the Netherlands) and Orwell (near

Harwich, in Essex). Middelburgh was the staple port for wool between and 1388, a fact which has helped scholars to date this Prologue.

280] He could sell French crowns (*icus*, i.e. shields) at a profit. This was, however, forbidden by law to private traders.

281] his wit bisette: employed his judgment, intellect.

283] So dignified was he in his behaviour when making bargains and gains or arrangements for borrowing or lending money.

284] *Chevysaunce* sometimes means usury, which was forbidden.

286] I noot: I do not know. Chaucer professes ignorance because of his insinuations against the merchant's character; or, perhaps, through the condescension of a court poet.

288] Who had long attended lectures in logic.

291] holwe: hollow. ther-to: in addition.

292] overeste courtepy: outermost short coat.

294] have office: accept a secular office.

295] Hym was lévere: he preferred.

296] Twenty bookes. This is rather his desire than a fact. Few wealthy persons owned as many, and the Clerk was poor.

298] fithle: fiddle. sautrye: psaltery, a stringed instrument like a zither.

300] In this line Chaucer jestingly takes the word *philosophre* in the sense of alchemist.

301] hente: get.

304] yaf: gave. scoleye: study.

305] cure: care.

307] in forme and reverence: formally and respectfully.

308] hy sentence: lofty meaning.

309] His speech was tending towards righteousness.

311] A Sergeant of the Lawe: one of the highest rank in the legal profession below that of judge, specially appointed by the king after at least 16 years of study and practice of the law. There were only about twenty of these sergeants when Chaucer wrote, and Manly has found some evidence that he was here describing one Thomas Pynchbek. war: wary.

312] Parvys: perhaps the porch of St. Pauls where the lawyers met their clients.

315] swich: such.

316] Justice in assise: special temporary judge in the assizes or county courts. Pynchbek often held this position between 1376 and 1388.

317] By letters patent and by full commission, giving him authority over all kinds of cases.

320] Pynchbek was known as a great buyer of land.

321] He was able to make his title as absolute as if it were held in fee simple (unrestricted possession).

322] infect: ilidated.

324] nas: for *ne was* (double negative).

325] He had (in mind) accurately all the cases and judgments since the Norman Conquest.

327] Moreover he could compose and draw up a document.

328] pynche at: find fault with. Is there a pun on Pynchbek's name?

329] koude he pleyn by rote: he knew fully by heart.

330] medlee cote: coat of mixed weave.

331] ceint: girdle.

333] Frankeleyn: a large landholder, ranking next below a baron. If the Sergeant of the Law is Thomas Pynchbek, the Frankeleyn, who was *in his compaignye*, may be John Bussy or Bushy, who lived in Lincolnshire, near Pynchbek, and held the offices here said to have been held by the Frankeleyn.

334] berd: beard. dayesye: daisy.

335] complexioun: temperament, physical and mental make-up, which was thought to depend on the combination of the four humours -- blood, phlegm, cholere (red bile), melancholy (black bile). sangwyn: characterized by the predominance of blood, hence ruddy, vigorous, fond of pleasure, optimistic.

336] In the morning he liked a piece of fine bread soaked in wine.

337] delit: delight. wone: custom.

338] Epicurus: the Greek philosopher (d. 270 B.C.), in popular legend an advocate of sensual pleasure.

339] pleyn: full.

340] parfit: perfect.

342] Seint Julian: the patron saint of hospitality.

343] after oon: according to one standard.

344] envyvned: stored with wine.

345] bake mete: meat pies.

346] plentevous: plenteous.

347] snewed: snowed.

349] After: according to.

350] soper: supper.

351] muwe: mew, coop for fattening fowls. Originally a cage where hawks were confined while moulting.

352] breem: bream. luce: pike. stewe: fishpond.

353] but if: unless.

354] Poynaunt: poignant, pungent. geere: gear, utensils.

355] table dormant: permanent table instead of a removable table on trestles.

357] sessiouns: of the justices of the peace.

358] knyght of the shire: member of Parliament for his county.

359] anlaas: dagger. gipser: pouch.

360] heng: hung.

361] countour: accountant, auditor.

362] vauasour: at this time, a substantial landholder (sometimes defined as one who holds land not of the king but of one of his vassals).

364] Webbe: weaver (O.E. *webba*). Tapycer: weaver of tapestry.

365] in o lyveree: in one livery.

366] Of a distinguished and large gild. Since they were of different trades this would be one of the purely social and religious gilds.

367] Their apparel was freshly and newly trimmed.

368] chaped: mounted.

370] everydeel: every part.

371] burgeys: burgess, townsman.

372] yeldehall: guildhall, town hall. deys: dais, platform.

373] Everich: everyone, each one. kan: knows.

374] shaply: adapted, fit.

375] catel: property. rente: income.

378] y-cleped: called.

379] vigilies: celebrations on the eve of a festival or saint's day.

380] roialliche Y-bore: royally borne.

381] for the nones: for the occasion (to cook their meals). Originally *for then anes* or (ones), "for the once", from O.E. dat. *Þæm* and adverb *{a_}nes*, treated as a noun in dat. case. Later, *for the nonce*.

382] marybones: marrowbones.

383] poudre-marchant tart: sharp flavouring powder. galyngale: spice made from root of an English sedge.

385] sethe: boil.

386] mortreux: stews.

388] mormal: ulcer.

389] blankmanger: creamed chicken.

390] wonynge fer by weste: dwelling far westward. Dertemouthe: Dartmouth, in Devonshire, then an important sea-port.

392] rouncy: anag or a heavy cart-horse. as he kouthe: as well as he could.

393] faldyng: coarse woolen cloth.

394] laas: lace, cord.

397] a good felawe: good company or possibly a rascal.

398] He had stolen many a draught of wine while on the way home from Bordeaux or he had carried off many a load of Bordeaux wine while the merchant was asleep.

400] keep: heed.

402] He made them walk the plank.

404] stremes: currents. hym bisides: near him.

405] herberwe: harbour. moone: phases of the moon, which determine the tides. lode-manage: pilotage. Cf. lode-star, lodestone.

406] Hulle: Hull in Yorkshire. Cartage: probably Cartagena in Spain.

410] Gootlond: island of Gotland, off Sweden.

411] cryke: creek, i.e. inlet. Britaigne: Brittany.

412] Maudelayne: a vessel from Dartmouth called the Magdaleyne paid customs duties in 1379 and 1391.

416] astronomye: astrology.

417] He cared for his patient very diligently in the astrological hours by means of his knowledge of natural magic. He could well predict or determine a favourable ascendant (the time when any heavenly body is rising above the horizon) for making talismans to cure his patient.

422] By whichever one of the four humours it was caused. Illness was thought to arise from excess of one of the four humours. See the note on l. 335.

424] verray: true. Cf. l. 72 and note.

425] The cause yknowe: the cause being known, i.e. when he had diagnosed the case.

426] boote: remedy.

428] letuaries: electuaries, syrups.

430] newe to bigynne: late in beginning, of recent date.

431] Esculapius: Aesculapius, god of medicine; or a treatise attributed to him.

432] De{"y}scorides: Dioscorides, Greek writer on *materia medica* c. 50 A.D. Rufus of Ephesus wrote on the parts of the human body (2nd century A.D.).

433] Ypocras: Hippocrates of Cos, born c. 460 B.C., founder of Greek medicine. Haly: Persian physician, d. 994. Galyen: Galen, famous Roman physician of 2nd century A.D.

434] Serapion, Razis, Avycen: Arabian physicians, the last-named author of the *Canon of Medicine* (11th century).

435] Averrois: famous Arab physician and philosopher (12th century). Damascien: perhaps John of Damascus (A.D. 676-754). Constantyn: Constantinus Afer, monk of Carthage, founder of medical school at Salerno.

436] Bernard Gordon, a Scot, professor of medicine at Montpellier ca. 1300. Gatesden (John) of Merton College, Oxford, physician to Edward II, died 1361. Gilbertyn: Gilbertus Anglicus (end of 13th century).

437] mesurable: moderate.

440] Apparently in reference to the saying: "Ubi tres medici, duo athei." Cf. the beginning of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642), where he refers to "the general scandal of my profession".

441] sangwyn: red. pers: blue.

442] taffata ... sendal: varieties of thin silk.

443] esy of dispence: moderate in expenditure.

444] pestilence: the Black Death of 1348-9 or the later plagues of 1362, 1369, and 1376.

445] cordial: remedy for the heart (because gold is the most precious metal). Gold was actually used in prescriptions.

446] Ironical.

447] biside Bathe: "Just outside the north gate of the city ... lay the church and parish known as 'St. Michael's Without' or 'St. Michael's juxta Bathon', a suburb largely given over to weaving." (Manly).

448] som-deel deaf: somewhat deaf (on account of a blow on the ear received in a quarrel with her fifth husband. See the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, C.T., D, 666 ff.). scathe: a pity.

449] haunt: practice.

450] Ypres and Gaunt (Ghent), centres of the Flemish wool-trade.

452] offrynge: offertory.

454] out of alle charitee: driven beyond the limits of Christian forbearance.

455] coverchiefs: head-coverings, kerchiefs.

459] moyste: soft, pliable.

461] at chirche dore: the marriage ceremony was held in the church-porch, the nuptial mass at the altar.

463] Withouten: besides.

464] as nowthe: at present.

465] Jerusalem: pronounced here Jérusalem, as it is sometimes spelled.

466] strem: stream.

467] Boloigne, the shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Boulogne-sur-mer in France.

468] At the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Galicia (Spain) and at that of the three kings at Cologne.

469] koude: knew a great deal about.

470] Gat-tothed: with gaps between her teeth. Either a sign that she would be a great traveller or that she was bold and lascivious.

473] targe: shield.

474] foot-mantel: riding skirt.

476] carpe: talk.

477] remedies of love: a jesting allusion to Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*.

478] She knew all the tricks of the game. From a common French phrase of the time. *Elle sçait toute la vielle danse* is said of an old duenna in the *Roman de la Rose*, 3946.

480] poore Person: poor parson, parish-priest.

484] parissshens: parishioners.

487] y-preved ofte sithes: proved often-times.

491] offrýng: voluntary contributions of the parishioners. substaunce: income from his benefice.

494] ne latte nat: ceased, omitted not.

495] meschief: mishap.

496] ferreste: farthest. muche and lite: great and small, rich and poor.

498] yaf: gave.

500] the gospel: Matthew, v, 19. tho: those.

504] lewed man: ignorant man or layman (see note on *Piers the Plowman*, 69).

505] keep: heed.

512] chaunterie for soules: an endowment for a priest to sing mass daily for the repose of a soul. Cf. *Piers the Plowman*, 80-83.

513] Or to be retained by a guild as their chaplain.

518] despitous: scornful.

519] daungerous: haughty, domineering. digne: disdainful.

521] by fairnesse: by leading a good life.

525] snibben: snub, rebuke. for the nonys: to suit the occasion. See note on 1. 381.

527] waited after: watched for, looked for.

528] spiced conscience: a conscience that is highly seasoned, i.e. over-sophisticated, insincere.

529] apostles: genitive case.

531] was his brother. The relative is omitted.

532] y-lad: led, carried. fother: load.

533] swynkere: worker.

536] thogh him gamed or smerte: though he felt pleasure or pain (impersonal construction with dative), i.e., in all circumstances.

538] dyke: dig ditches.

542] his propre swynk: his own labour. catel: property.

543] tabard: labourer's loose coat, smock. mere: mare. Persons of quality usually did not ride on mares.

547] for the nones: here apparently used as an intensive, very, exceedingly. Contrast lines 379, 523, 547-8. That proved fortunate, for wherever he came he would win the prize (a ram) at wrestling.

551] a thikke knarre: a thickset fellow.

552] nolde heve of harre: would not heave off its hinge.

553] rennyng: running.

554] berd: beard.

556] cop: top.

557] werte: wart.

559] nosethirles: nostrils.

561] forneys: furnace.

562] janglere: loud talker. goliardeys: jester, teller of ribald stories.

563] And that: i.e., his talk. harlotries: scurrilities.

564] tollen thries: take thrice the amount of corn to which he was entitled for grinding it. He had a thumb of gold: he was an honest miller (who, according to the proverb, has a thumb of gold) -- an ironical remark. But Pollard suggests that the meaning is "And yet he did not need to cheat, for he was so skilful in testing flour with his thumb that he could make a fortune honestly."

567] sowne: sound.

569] Maunciple of a temple: caterer of one of the Inns of Court.

570] achetours: purchasers.

571] byynge: buying. vitaille: victuals, provisions.

572] by taille: by tally, on credit.

573] At all events he was so watchful in his buying that he always came out ahead and in good condition.

576] lewed: ignorant.

578] maistres: masters, the Benchers of the Temple.

579] curious: skilful.

580] duszeyne: dozen.

581] stywardes of rente and lond: managers of estates.

583] his propre good: his own income.

584] but if he were wood: unless he were mad.

585] Or live as economically as it pleased him to desire.

588] jette hir aller cappe: set the caps of them all, made fools of them. Altering the tilt of a man's hat may make him look ridiculous. hir aller: of them all (*aller*, gen. plu., O.E. *ealra*).

589] Reve: officer of a manor, often exercising the functions of bailiff or steward. colerik: characterized by predominance of cholera or red bile; hot tempered. See note on l. 335.

590] ny: nigh, close.

591] Close-cropped hair was a sign of servile station. Cf. l. 109. A reeve was originally a representative of the serfs of a manor.

594] y-sene: visible.

595] kepe: watch, guard. gerner: garner, granary.

596] No auditor of the estate could get the better of him (detect him in dishonesty).

598] neet: cattle.

600] hors: horses. stoor: farm stock.

602] yaf: he gave.

603] See note on l. 621.

604] No one could prove him to be in arrears.

605] bailiff: originally a superior officer to a reeve, here his subordinate. hierde: shepherd (the word is Old English. Cf. Scottish *herd*). hyne: hind, servant.

606] Whose trickery and deceit he did not know.

607] adrad: afraid. the deeth: death. Cf. French *la mort*. But possibly the reference is to the Black Death, the plague.

608] wonyng: dwelling.

611] He had secretly stored up a fortune.

613] By giving and lending him his own property (purposely ambiguous).

615] myster: trade (Old French *mestier*, Modern French *métier*, Lat. *ministerium*).

616] carpenter: this is the occasion of a quarrel with the Miller, who tells a tale at the expense of a carpenter.

617] stot: stallion.

618] pomely grey: dappled gray. Scot: a common name for horses in Norfolk, where the reeve lived (l. 619).

619] surcote of pers: surcoat, upper coat, of blue.

621] Baldeswelle: modern Bawdswell in Norfolk. This village belonged to the estate of the Earl of Pembroke. The second earl went abroad in 1369, soon after he came of age (cf. line 601) and remained there most of this time until his death in 1375. During the minority of his heir some of his estates were mismanaged and an investigation was held in 1386. Chaucer had been surety for the custodian of others of the estates since 1378 and was probably familiar with the details. It seems likely that this Reeve was drawn from an actual official of the Pembroke estate who was suspected of dishonesty.

623] Tukked: his long coat was tucked into his girdle. as is a frere: it is thought that Friar Tuck in the Robin Hood ballads derived his name from this method of dress.

624] hyndreste of our route: hindmost of our company (owing to cowardice, craftiness, or dislike of the Miller, who "broghte us out of towne" with a bag-pipe, doubtless riding first).

625] Somonour: Summoner, apparitor or constable of an ecclesiastical court, which dealt with cases of adultery, witchcraft, slander, sacrilege, usury, simony, neglect of tithes, contracts and the sacraments, and wills. These officers were often reputed to be corrupt blackmailers.

626] The cherubim were depicted with faces red as fire.

627] sawcefleem: afflicted with *salsum phlegma*, a skin disease; pimples. eyen narwe: because the eyelids were swollen.

628] sparwe: sparrow.

629] scaled: scabby. piled: scanty, with hair falling out. Possibly he was afflicted with a form of leprosy.

631] lytarge: litharge, protoxide of lead.

632] Boras: borax. ceruce: white lead. oille of tartre: cream of tartar.

634] whelkes: pimples.

638] Thanne: then. wood: mad.

645] clepen "Watte": call out "Walter", as parrots cry "Poll".

646] If anyone should test him further, then his philosophy (learning) was all spent.

648] Questio quid juris: the question is, what portion of the law applies in this case -- a phrase often heard by the Summoner in court.

649] harlot: rascal.

650] bettre felawe: better companion.

652] Goodfelawe: this term was so often applied to priests who broke the law of celibacy that it came to mean a rascal, a disreputable person.

654] And he could secretly indulge in the same sin.

657] erchedekenes curs: the excommunication pronounced by the archdeacon, the head of the ecclesiastical court.

659] By paying a fine or a bribe.

663] Excommunication will damn just as absolution will save. If ironical, this would imply agreement with Wycliffe's opinion that excommunication and absolution are of no importance in themselves. But if that is the implication it is very covertly expressed.

664] war him: let the sinner beware. Significavit: a writ of excommunication ordering the offender to be imprisoned by the civil authorities.

665] In daunger: in his control. at his owene gise: in his own way, at his mercy.

666] girles: young people of both sexes.

667] Conseil: secrets. al hir reed: the adviser of them all.

- 669]** ale-stake: a pole projecting above the door of an ale-house. A garland or bush hanging from it was the sign of a drinking-place.
- 671]** Pardoner: a dispenser of papal indulgences or commutations of penance in return for a money payment for charitable purposes. Some unauthorized pardoners carried forged papal licenses, exhibited bogus relics, and offered to sell absolution.
- 672]** Rouncivale: the hospital of the Blessed Mary of Rouncivalle, near Charing Cross, a cell or subordinate house of the convent of Our Lady of Roncesvalles in Navarre. In 1382 and 1387 unauthorized sales of pardons were made by persons professing to collect for the hospital.
- 673]** Note the rhyme Rome-tó me.
- 675]** burdoun: burden, bass part (Old French *bourdon*).
- 677]** wex: wax.
- 678]** strike of flex: hank of flax.
- 679]** ounces: small bunches.
- 681]** by colpons: in bundles (Old French *colpon*, modern *coupon*).
- 682]** for jolitee: for smartness.
- 684]** Him thoughte: it seemed to him. newe jet: new fashion.
- 685]** Dischevelee: with loose hair.
- 687]** vernycle: a copy of the handkerchief of St. Veronica preserved in St. Peter's at Rome. Said to have been lent to Christ as he was going to Calvary and to bear the impress of his face.
- 694]** Berwyk, in Northumberland at Scottish border, extreme northern English town. Ware, in Hertfordshire, first town of importance north of London.
- 696]** mak: bag. pilwe-beer: pillow-case.
- 697]** Lady: Lady's. See note on l. 88.
- 698]** gobet: piece.
- 699]** wente: walked.
- 700]** hente: caught hold of. See Matthew, xiv, 28-31.
- 701]** A cross made of mixed metal set with stones.
- 703]** relikes. In his cynical confession, *Pardoner's Prologue*, C.T., C, 345-390, the Pardoner describes his bogus relics more fully and explains how he wins money by exhibiting them to the people.

704] person: parson. up on lond: far inland.

705] Pope Urban V in a bull of 1369 declared that some pardoners made their collections at church on feast-days, thus depriving the priests of the offerings usually made to them.

708] made ... his apes: made fools of them.

710] ecclesiaste: preacher. The Pardoner's Tale is a specimen of one of his sermons.

711] lessoun: an appointed portion of the Bible. storie: a series of extracts covering a story of the Bible or the life of a saint.

712] alderbest: best of all (O.E. *ealra betst*). offertorie: that part of the Mass that follows the creed and precedes or accompanies the collection.

714] affik: make smooth.

716] murierly: more merrily.

718] Thestaat: the rank. Tharray: the dress.

721] the Belle: an inn which has not been identified.

723] baren us: conducted ourselves.

728] That you should not ascribe it to my ill-breeding (see note on 1. 70).

730] cheere: appearance or bearing.

731] proprely: literally, exactly.

732] at-so wel: just as well.

734] He must repeat as closely as ever he can.

735] Everich a: every single.

736] Although he speak never so roughly and coarsely.

739] although he were his brother: although the original speaker were his brother.

740] He must say one word as well as another, must omit nothing.

741] brode: plainly.

743] whoso kan hym rede: if anyone can read him. "Few scholars in western Europe in the Fourteenth Century could read Greek" (Manly).

744] cosyn: cousin. Quoted from Plato's *Timaeus*, 29 B. He doubtless obtained it from Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, III,

prose 12. See his translation.

746] Al: although. hir degre: their due order of precedence (which, of course, would have been dull and monotonous; in irony).

752] us leste: it pleased us.

753] The Host's name was Herry Bailey (C.T.,A,4358). Henri Bayliff, ostyler, was a controller of the subsidy for Southwark in 1380-81. Henry Bailly, probably the same person, represented Southwark in parliament in 1376-7 and 1378-9 and was often tax collector, assessor, or coroner between 1377 and 1394.

755] stepe: prominent.

756] burgeys: townsman. Chepe: Cheapside.

759] Eek thereto: besides.

763] lordynges: sirs.

767] herberwe: lodging, inn.

772] quite yow youre meede: give you your reward.

774] You plan to tell tales and to jest.

783] fader: father's (gen. without ending in noun of relationship).

784] But: unless. yeve: give. heed: head.

786] Conseil: intention. for to seche: to be sought, lacking. It did not take us long to make up our minds.

787] It seemed to us not worth while to deliberate on the matter.

788] graunted: we granted. avys: consideration.

789] him leste: it pleased him.

793] to shorte with oure weye: to shorten our way with. oure: implying that he will accompany them. The reading *your* in some MSS. is probably a scribal change.

794] tales tweye: that this plan was changed is evident from C. T., line 25, when the pilgrims are approaching Canterbury and the Host says to the Parson "For every man, save thou, hath toold his tale" (not "his tales"). After *The Parson's Tale* the work ends without any account of the arrival at Canterbury or of the return journey.

797] aventures: occurrences. whilom: formerly.

800] sentence: content. solaas: entertainment.

801] It oure aller cost: at the expense of us all.

807] withseye: gainsay.

811] shape me therfore: prepare myself for it.

812] swore: sworn or we swore.

818] devys: direction.

819] In heigh and lough: in all respects.

821] fet: fetched.

825] was oure aller cok: was the cock or waker of us all.

827] a litel moore than paas: at a little more than a foot-pace.

828] the wateryng of Seint Thomas: a brook used for watering horses, about a mile and a half from the Tabard Inn.

830] if you leste: if it please you.

831] foreward: agreement. it yow recorde: recall it to you.

834] mote: may.

837] Draweth cut: draw lots. ferrer twinne: farther depart.

842] shamefastnesse: shyness.

843] Ne studieth noght: do not fall into abstraction.

846] aventure, or sort, or cas: "Perhaps the three nearest equivalents that we can propose for these words are 'luck, fate, and chance'" (Pollard).

847] fil: fell.

850] foreward and composicioun: agreement and compact.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Cook's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

¶The prologe of the Cookes tale

1 The Cook / of Londo|un| / whil the Reue spak/
 2 ffor ioye hym thoughte / he clawed hym on the bak/
 3 Haha quod he / for Cri{s}tes pa{ss}io|un|
 4 This Millere / hadde a sharp conclu{s}io|un|
 5 Vp on his argument/ of herbergage
 6 Wel seyde Salomon / in his langage
 7 Ne bryng nat euery man / in to thyn hous
 8 ffor herberwyng/ by nyghte is |per|ilous
 9 Wel oghte a man / auy{s}ed for to be
 10 Whom |bt| he broghte / in to his |pri|uete
 11 I pray to god / so yeue me sorwe and care
 12 If euer sith / I highte hogge of ware
 13 Herde I a Millere / bettre y{s}et awerk /
 14 He hadde a iape of malice / in the derk/

15 But god forbede / that we stynten heere

{{hic}}

16 ffor if ye / vouche {s}auf to heere

{{audire}}

17 A tale of me / that am a poure man

18 I wol yow telle / as wel as e|uer|e I kan

19 A litel iape / that fil in oure Citee

20 ¶Oure hoo{s}t an{s}werde / and seyde I graunte it thee

21 Now tel on Roger / looke that it be good

22 ffor many a pa{s}tee / ha{s}tow laten blood

23 And many a lakke of Douere / ha{s}tow soold

24 That hath been twies hoot/ and twies coold

25 Of many a pilgrym / ha{s}tow Cri{s}tes curs

26 ffor of thy |per|{s}le / yet they fare the wors

27 That they han eten / with thy stubbul goos

28 ffor in thy shoppe / is many a flye loos

29 Now tel on / gentil Roger / by thy name

30 But yet I praye thee / be nat wrooth for game

31 A man may seye ful {s}ooth / in game and pley

32 ¶Thow sei{s}t ful sooth / quod Roger by my fey

{{Folio 57r}}

33 But sooth pley quade pley / as the fflemyng seith

34 And therfore herry Bailly / by thy feith

35 Be thou nat wrooth / er we departen heer

36 Thogh |pt| my tale / be of an ho{s}tiler

37 But nathelees / I wol nat telle it yit

38 But er we parte / ywis thow shalt be quyit/

39 And ther with al / he lough / and made cheere

40 And seyde his tale / as ye shal after heere

¶Here bigynneth the Cook/ his tale

1 A Prentis / whilom dwelled in oure Citee

2 And of a craft/ of vitailleurs was he

3 Gaillard he was / as goldfynch in the shawe

4 Broun as a berye / a |prop|re short/ felawe

5 With lokkes blake / ykembd ful feti{s}ly

6 Dauncen he koude / so wel and iolily

7 That he / was clepyd Perkyn Reuelour

8 He was / as ful / of loue and |per|amour

9 As is the hyue / ful of hony swete

10 Wel was the wenche / |pt| |with| hym myghte meete

11 At euery bridale / wolde he synge |&| hoppe

12 he loued bet the Tauerne / than the shoppe

13 ffor / whan ther any ridyng/ was in Chepe

14 Out of the {s}hoppe / thider wolde he lepe

15 Til |pt| he hadde / al the sighte y{s}eyn

16 And daunced wel / he wolde nocht come ageyn

17 And gadred hym / a meynee of his sort/

18 To hoppe and synge / and maken swich di{s}port/
 19 And ther / they setten steuene / for to meete
 20 To pleyen at the dees / in swich a Streete
 21 ffor in the town / nas ther no Prentys
 22 That fairer / koude ca{s}te a paire of dys
 23 Than Perkyn koude / and ther to he was free
 24 Of his di{s}pen{s}e / in place of pryuetee
 25 That foond his mai{s}ter wel / in his chaffare
 26 ffor ofte tyme / he foond his box ful bare
 27 ffor sikerly / a prentys reuelour
 28 That haunteth dees / ryot/ or |per|amour

{{Folio 57v}}

29 His mai{s}ter / shal it in his shoppe abyge
 30 Al haue he / no part of the Min{s}tralcyge
 31 ffor thefte and riot / they been con|uer|tible
 32 Al konne he pleye / on Giterne / or Rubible
 33 Reuel and trouthe / as in a lowe degree
 34 They been ful wrothe al day / as men may see
 35 ¶ This ioly Prentys / with his Mai{s}ter bood
 36 Til he were neigh / out of his |pre|nti{s}hood
 37 Al were he snybbed / bothe erly and late
 38 And som tyme / lad with reuel to Newgate
 39 But atte la{s}te / his mai{s}ter hym bithoghte
 40 Vp on a day / whan he his papir soghte
 41 Of a |pro|uerbe / that seith this same word
 42 Wel bet is roten Appul / out of hoord
 43 Than |pt| it rotte / al the remenaunt/
 44 So fareth it/ by a riotous seruaunt/
 45 It is ful la{ss}e harm / to lete hym pace
 46 Than he shende / alle the {s}eruantz in the place
 47 Ther fore / his mai{s}ter gaf hym acquitaunce
 48 And bad hym go / with sorw / and |with| me{s}chaunce
 49 And thus this ioly |pre|ntys / hadde his leewe
 50 Now lat hym riote / al the nyght/ or leewe
 51 And for ther nys no theef/ with oute a lowke
 52 That helpeth hym / to wa{s}ten and to sowke
 53 Of that he brybe kan / or borwe may
 54 Anon / he {s}ente his bed / and his array
 55 Vn to a compeer / of his owene sort/
 56 That loued dees / and reuel / and di{s}port/
 57 And hadde a wyf / that heeld for contenaunce
 58 A shoppe / and swyued for hir su{s}tenaunce

Of this Cokes tale
 maked Chaucer na
 moore

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles. Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers.

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
{ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
{C} : capitulum
{^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
{?.} : punctus elevatus
{^} : caret

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Friar's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 73v}}

¶The prologe of the ffreres tale

1 This worthy lymytour / this noble frere
 2 He made alwey / a manere louryng cheere
 3 Vp on the Somnour / but for hone{s}tee
 4 No vileyns word / as yet to hym spak he
 5 But atte la{s}te / he seyde vn to the wyf
 6 ¶ Dame quod he god yeue yow right good lyf
 7 Ye han heer touched / al {s}o mote I thee
 8 In scole matere / greet difficultee
 9 Ye han seyde muche thyng/ right wel I seye
 10 But dame / here as we ryden by the weye

11 Vs nedeth nat/ to speken / but of game
 12 And lete Auctoritees / on goddes name
 13 To prechyng/ and to scole of clergye
 14 But/ if it like / to this compaignye
 15 I wol yow / of a Somnour telle a game
 16 Pardee / ye may wel knowe by the name
 17 That of a Somn|our| / may no good be {s}ayd
 18 I praye / that noon of yow / be ypayd
 19 A somnour / is a rennere vp and doun
 20 With mandementz / for fornicacioun
 21 And is ybet/ at euery townes ende
 22 ¶ Oure hoo{s}t tho spak / a sire ye sholde be hende

{{Folio 74r}}

23 And curteys / as a man of youre e{s}taat/
 24 In compaignye / we wol no debaat/
 25 Telleth youre tale / and lat the Somn|our| be
 26 ¶ Nay quod the Somn|our| / lat hym seye to me
 27 What so hym li{s}t/ whan it comth to my lot/
 28 By god / I shal hym quyten euery grot/
 29 I shal hym telle / which a gret honour
 30 It is / to be a flaterynge lymytour
 31 And of / many another maner cryme
 32 Which nedeth nat rehercen / for this tyme
 33 And his office / I shal hym telle ywys
 34 ¶ Oure hoo{s}t an{s}werde / pees namoore of this
 35 And after this / he seyde vn to the frere
 36 Tel forth youre tale / leue mai{s}ter deere

¶ Here endeth the prologe of the frere

1 Whilom / ther was dwellynge in my contree
 2 An Erchedekne / a man of hy degree
 3 That boldely / dide executio|un|
 4 In puny{ss}hyng of ffornicacio|un|
 5 Of wicchecraft/ and eek of Bawderye
 6 Of diffamacio|un| / and auoutrye
 7 Of chirche Reues / and of te{s}tamentz
 8 Of contractes / and eek of lakke of sacramentz
 9 Of v{s}ure / and of Symonye al{s}o
 10 But |cer|tes / lecchours / dide he grette{s}t wo
 11 They sholde syngen if that they were hent/
 12 And smale tytheres were foule y{s}chent/
 13 If any |per|{s}o|un| / wold vp on hem pleyne
 14 Ther myghte a{s}terte hym no pecunial peyne
 15 ffor smale tithes |&| for smal offryng/
 16 he made the peple ful pitu{s}ly to {s}yng/
 17 ffor er the by{ss}chop caght hem |with| hys hooc
 18 They were in the erchdeknys book/
 19 And thanne had he thurgh hys Iuri{s}diccion
 20 Power / to do on hem correccion

{{Folio 74v}}

21 He hadde a Somn|our| / redy to his hond

22 A slyer boy / nas noon in Engelond
 23 ffor subtilly / he hadde his e{s}piaille
 24 That taughte hym / wher hym myghte auaille
 25 He koude spare / of lecchours / oon or two
 26 To techen hym / to foure and twenty mo
 27 ffor theigh this Somn|our| / wood were as an hare
 28 To telle his harlotrye / I wol nat spare
 29 ffor we been / out of his correccio|un|
 30 They han of vs / no Iuri{s}diccio|un|
 31 Ne neu|uer|e shullen / terme of hir lyues
 32 ¶Peter / so been wommen of the Styves
 33 Quod the Somnour / yput out of my cure
 34 ¶Pees with my{s}chaunce / and with my{s}aurenture
 35 Thus seyde oure hoo{s}t / and lat hym telle his tale
 36 Now telleth forth / thogh |þt| the Somn|our| gale
 37 Ne spareth nat/ myn owene may{s}ter deere
 38 ¶This fal{s}e thief/ this Somn|our| / quod the frere
 39 Hadde alwey / baudes redy to his hond
 40 As any hauk/ to lure in Engelond
 41 That tolde hym / al the secree |þt| they knewe
 42 ffor hire aqueyntance / was nat come of newe
 43 They weren / hi{s}e Approwours pryuely
 44 He took hym self / a greet |pro|fit ther by
 45 His mai{s}ter knew nat alwey / what he wan
 46 With outen mandement/ a lewed man
 47 He koude somne / on peyne of cri{s}tes curs
 48 And they were glade / for to fille his purs
 49 And make hym / grete fe{s}tes atte nale
 50 And right as Iudas / hadde pur{s}es smale
 51 And was a thief/ right swich a thief was he
 52 His mai{s}ter / hadde but half his duetee
 53 He was / if I shal yeuen hym his laude
 54 A thief / and eek a somnour / and a baude
 55 He hadde eek wenches / at his retenue
 56 That wheither |þt| sir |Robert| / or sir hewe
 57 Or Iakke / or Rauf/ or who {s}o that it were
 58 That lay by hem / they tolde it in his ere
 59 Thus was the wenche and he / of oon a{ss}ent/
 60 And he wolde fecche / a feyned mandement/

{{Folio 75r}}

61 And somne hem to Chapitre / bothe two
 62 And pile the man / and lete the wenche go
 63 ¶Thanne wolde he seye / freend I shal for thy sake
 64 Do stryke / hir / out of oure lettres blake
 65 Thee thar namoore / as in this cas |tra|uaille
 66 I am thy freend / ther I thee may auaille
 67 Certeyn / he knew of bryberyes mo
 68 Than po{ss}ible is / to telle in yeres two
 69 ffor in this world / nys dogge for the bowe
 70 That kan an hurt deer / from an hool knowe
 71 Bet than this Somn|our| / knew a sly lecchour
 72 Or an Auouter / or a |per|amour
 73 And for that was / the fruyt of al his rente

74 Ther fore on it / he {s}ette al his entente
 75 ¶And so bifel / that ones on a day
 76 This Somnour / eu|uer|e waityng on his pray
 77 ffor to somne an old wydewe / a Ribibe
 78 ffeynynge a cau{s}e / for he wolde brybe
 79 Happed / that he say / bifore hym ryde
 80 A gay yeman / vnder a ffore{s}t syde
 81 A bowe he bar / and arwes brighte |&| kene
 82 He hadde vp on / a courtepy of grene
 83 An hat vp on his heed / with frenges blake
 84 ¶Sir quod this Somn|our| / hayl / and wel atake
 85 ¶Wel come quod he / and euery good felawe
 86 Wher ride{s}tow / vnder this grene shawe
 87 Seyde this yeman / wiltow fer to day
 88 ¶This Somnour hym an{s}werde / and seyde nay
 89 Here fa{s}te by quod he / is myn entente
 90 To ryden / for to rey{s}en vp a rente
 91 That longeth / to my lordes duetee
 92 ¶Artow thanne a Bailly{?.} / ye quod he
 93 He dor{s}te nat/ for verray filthe and shame
 94 Seye |pt| he was a Somn|our| / for the name
 95 ¶De{p+}dieux quod this yeman / deere brother
 96 Thow art a bailly / and I am another
 97 I am vnknownen / as in this contree
 98 Of thyn aqueyntance / I wolde praye thee
 99 And eek of bretherhede / if |pt| yow le{s}te
 100 I haue gold / and siluer/ in my che{s}te

{{Folio 75v}}

101 If that thee happed / to come in oure shire
 102 Al shal be thyn / right as thow wolt de{s}ire
 103 ¶Graunt |mer|cy quod this Somn|our| / by my feith
 104 Euerich in ootheres hond / his trouthe leyth
 105 ffor to be sworn bretheren / til they deye
 106 In daliaunce / they ryden forth and pleye
 107 ¶This Somn|our| / which |pt| was / as ful of Iangles
 108 As ful of venym / been thi{s}e waryangles
 109 And eu|uer|e enqueryng/ vp on euery thyng/
 110 Brother quod he / wher is now youre dwellyng/
 111 Another day / if |pt| I sholde yow seche
 112 This yeman hym an{s}werde / in softe speche
 113 ¶Brother quod he / fer in the North contree
 114 Wher as I hope / {s}om tyme I shal thee see
 115 Er we departe / I shal thee {s}o wel wi{ss}e
 116 That of myn hous / ne shaltow ne|uer|e my{ss}e
 117 ¶Now brother quod this Somn|our| / I yow preye
 118 Teche me / whil |pt| we ryden by the weye
 119 Syn |pt| ye been a Baillyf / as am I
 120 Som subtiltee / and tel me feithfully
 121 In myn office / how I may moo{s}t wynne
 122 And spareth nat/ for con{s}cience ne synne
 123 But as my brother / tel me how do ye
 124 ¶Now by my trouthe / brother deere / seyde he
 125 As I shal tellen thee / a feithful tale

126 My wages been / ful {s}treyte / and ful smale
 127 My lord is hard to me / and daungerous
 128 And myn office / is ful laborous
 129 And therefore / by extorcions I lyue
 130 ffor sothe I take / al that men wol me yeue
 131 Algate / by sleighte / or by violence
 132 ffro yeer to yeer / I wynne al my di{s}pence
 133 I kan no bettre tellen / feithfully
 134 ¶Now certes quod this Somn|our| / {s}o fare I
 135 I spare nat to taken / god it woot/
 136 But it be to heuy / or to hoot/
 137 What I may gete / in con{s}eil |pri|uely
 138 No manere con{s}cience / of that haue I
 139 Nere myn extorcio|un| / I myghte na lyuen
 140 Ne of swiche Iapes / wol I nat be shryuen

{{Folio 76r}}

141 Stomak/ ne Con{s}cience / ne knowe I noon
 142 I sherewe / thi{s}e Shryfte{s}fadres eu|uer|ychon
 143 Wel be we met/ by god / and by seint Iame
 144 But leue brother / tel me thanne thy name
 145 Quod this Somnour / in this mene whyle
 146 This yeman / gan a litel for to smyle
 147 ¶Brother quod he / woltow |pt| I thee telle
 148 I am a feend / my dwellyng/ is in helle
 149 And here I ryde / aboute my purcha{s}yng/
 150 To wite / wher men wolde yeue me any thyng/
 151 My |pur|chas / is theeffect of al my rente
 152 Looke how thow ryde{s}t/ for the same entente
 153 To wynne good / thow rekke{s}t neu|uer|e how
 154 Right {s}o fare I / for ryde wold I now
 155 Vn to the worldes ende / for a preye
 156 ¶A quod this Somn|our| / benedicite what sey ye
 157 I wende / ye were a yeman trewely
 158 Ye han a mannes shap / as wel as I
 159 Han ye a figure thanne / de|ter|mynat
 160 In helle ther ye been / in youre e{s}tat
 161 ¶Nay |cer|teynly quod he / ther haue we noon
 162 But whan vs liketh / we kan take vs oon
 163 Or ellis make yow seme / we ben shape
 164 Som tyme / lyk a man / or lyk an Ape
 165 Or lyk an Aungel / kan I ryde or go
 166 It is no wonder thyng/ theigh it be so
 167 A lou{s}y Iogelour / kan deceyue thee
 168 And pardee yet kan I / moore craft than he
 169 ¶Whi quod this Somnour / ryde ye thanne or goon
 170 In sondry shap / and nat alwey in oon
 171 ¶ffor we quod he / wol vs swiche formes make
 172 As moo{s}t able is / oure preyes for to take
 173 ¶What maketh yow / to han al this labour
 174 ¶fful many a cau{s}e / leue sir Somnour
 175 Seyde this feend / but alle thyng hath tyme
 176 The day is short / and it is pa{ss}ed pryme
 177 And yet/ ne wan I no thyng/ in this day

178 I wol entende / to wynnyng / if I may
 179 And nat entende / oure wittes to declare
 180 ffor brother myn / thy wit is al to bare

{{Folio 76v}}

181 To vnder{s}tonde / al thogh I tolde hem thee
 182 But for thow axe{s}t/ why labouren we
 183 ffor som tyme / we been goddes In{s}trumentz
 184 And meenes / to doon his comandementz
 185 Whan that hym li{s}t / vp on his creatures
 186 In di|uer{s} art/ and in di|uer|{s}e figures
 187 With outen hym / we han no myght |cer|tayn
 188 If that hym ly{s}t/ to {s}tonde ther agayn
 189 And som tyme / at oure preyere / han we leue
 190 Oonly the body / and nat the soule greue
 191 Witne{ss}e on Iob / whom |bt| we diden wo
 192 And som tyme / han we myght of bothe two
 193 This is to seyn / of soule and body eke
 194 And som tyme / be we suffred for to seke
 195 Vp on a man / and do his soule vnre{s}te
 196 And nat his body / and al is for the be{s}te
 197 Whan he with {s}tandeth / oure temptacio|un|
 198 It is / a cau{s}e / of his sauacio|un|
 199 Al be it/ that it was / nat oure entente
 200 He sholde be sauf/ but |bt| we wolde hym hente
 201 And som tyme / be we |{s}8|uant/ vn to man
 202 As to the Erchebi{ss}ho|pre| / Seint Dun{s}tan
 203 And to the Apo{s}tles / seruanteek was I
 204 ¶Yet tel me / quod the Somn|our| feithfully
 205 Make ye yow newe bodyes / thus alway
 206 Of Elementz{?} / the feend an{s}werde nay
 207 Som tyme we feyne / and som tyme we ary{s}e
 208 With dede bodyes / in ful {s}ondry wy{s}e
 209 And speke as renably / and faire and wel
 210 As to the Phitoni{ss}a / dide Samuel
 211 And yet wol som men seye / it was nat he
 212 I do no fors / of youre dyuynytee
 213 But o thyng warne I thee / I wol nat lape
 214 Thow wolt algates wite / how we be shape
 215 Thow shalt her afterwardes / my brother deere
 216 Come there / thee nedeth nat of me to lere
 217 ffor thow shalt/ by thyn owene experience
 218 Konne in a chayer / rede of this sentence
 219 Bet than Virgile / whil he was on lyue
 220 Or Dant al{s}o / now lat vs ryde blyue

{{Folio 77r}}

221 ffor I wol holde / compaignye with thee
 222 Til it be so / that thow for{s}ake me
 223 ¶Nay quod this Somn|our| / that shal nat bityde
 224 I am a yeman / knowen is ful wyde
 225 My trouhte wol I holde / as in this cas
 226 ffor theigh thow were / the deuel Sathanas

227 My trouthe wol I holde / to thee my brother
 228 As I am sworn / and ech of vs til oother
 229 ffor to be trewe brother / in this cas
 230 And bothe we goon / abouten oure purchas
 231 Taak thow thy part/ what |pt| men wol thee yeue
 232 And I shal myn / thus may we bothe lyue
 233 And if that any of vs / haue moore than oother
 234 Lat hym be trewe / and parte it with his brother
 235 ¶I graunte quod the deuel / by my fey
 236 And with that word / they ryden forth hir wey
 237 And right at the entryng/ of the townes ende
 238 To which this Somnour / shoop hym for to wende
 239 They saye a Cart/ that charged was |with| hey
 240 Which that a Cartere / droof forth in his wey
 241 Deep was the wey / for which the Carte {s}tood
 242 This Carter smoot/ and cryde as he were wood
 243 Hayt Brok/ hayt Scot/ what spare ye for the stones
 244 The feend quod he / yow fecche body and bones
 245 As ferforthly / as euere were ye foled
 246 So muchel wo / as I haue with yow tholed
 247 The deuel haue al / bothe hors / and Cart/ and hey
 248 ¶This Somn|our| seyde / heer shul we han a pley
 249 And neer the feend he drogh / as noght ne were
 250 fful pryuely / and rowned in his ere
 251 Herkne my brother / herkne by thy feith
 252 Here{s}tow nat/ how |pt| the Cartere seith
 253 Hent it anon / for he hath yeue it thee
 254 Bothe hey / and Cart/ and eek his caples thre
 255 ¶Nay quod the deuel / god woot/ neuer a del
 256 It is nat his entente / tru{s}t thow me wel
 257 Axe hym thy self / if thow nat trowe{s}t me
 258 Or ellys stynt a while / and thow shalt se
 259 ¶This Cartere / taketh his hors {^}{{vp}} on the croupe
 260 And they bigonne / drawen and to stoupe

{{Folio 77v}}

261 Heyt now quod he / ther |Iesu| cri{s}t yow ble{ss}e
 262 And al his handes werk/ bothe moore and le{ss}e
 263 That was wel twight/ myn owene lyard boy
 264 I pray god saue thee / and Seint loy
 265 Now is my Cart/ out of the slow pardee
 266 ¶Lo brother quod the feend / what tolde I thee
 267 Heere may ye se / myn owene deere brother
 268 The Carl spak o thyng/ but he thoghte another
 269 Lat vs go forth / abouten oure viage
 270 Heere wyne I no thyng vp on cariage
 271 ¶Whan that {^}{{they}} coomen / {s}om what out of towne
 272 This Somnour / to his brother gan to rowne
 273 Brother quod he / here woneth an old rebekke
 274 That hadde almoo{s}t/ as leef to le{s}e hir nekke
 275 As for to yeue a peny / of hir good
 276 I wol han .xij. pens / thogh that she be wood
 277 Or I wol somne hir / vn to oure office
 278 And yet god woot/ of hir knowe I no vice

279 But for thow can{s}t nat/ as in this contree
 280 Wynne thy co{s}t/ taak heer en{s} ample of me
 281 This Somnour / clappeth at the wydwes gate
 282 Com out quod he / thow olde viritrate
 283 I trowe thow ha{s}t/ {s}om frere / or pree{s}t with thee
 284 ¶Who clappeth seyde this wyf / benedicitee
 285 God saue yow sire / what is youre swete wille
 286 ¶I haue quod he / of somonce a bille
 287 Vp peyne of cur{s}yng/ looke that thow be
 288 To morn / bifore the Erchedeknes knee
 289 Tan{s}were to the court/ of |cer|teyn thynges
 290 ¶Now lord quod she / cri{s}t |Iesu| kyng of kynges
 291 So wi{s}ly helpe me / as I ne may
 292 I haue been syk/ and that ful many a day
 293 I may nat go so fer quod she / ne ryde
 294 But I be deed / so priketh it in my syde
 295 May I nat axe a libel / {s}ir Somnour
 296 And an{s}were there / by my procutour
 297 To swich thyng/ as men wole oppo{s}en me
 298 ¶Yis quod this Somnour / pay anoon lat see
 299 Twelf pens to me / and I wol thee acyute
 300 I shal no |pro|fit han ther by / but lyte

{{Folio 78r}}

301 My Mai{s}ter hath the profit / and nat I
 302 Com of / and lat me ryden ha{s}tily
 303 Yif me .xij. pens / I may no lenger tarye
 304 ¶Twelf pens quod she / now lady Seinte Marie
 305 So wi{s}ly help me god / out of care and synne
 306 This wyde world / thogh that I sholde wynne
 307 Ne haue I nat .xij. pens / with Inne myn hoold
 308 Ye knowen wel / that I am poure and oold
 309 Kythe youre alme{ss}e / on me poure wrecche
 310 ¶Nay thanne quod he / the foule feend me fecche
 311 If I thexcu{s}e / theigh thow shul be spilt/
 312 ¶Allas quod she / god woot I haue no gilt/
 313 ¶Pay me quod he / or by the swete Seinte Anne
 314 As I wol bere away / thy newe panne
 315 ffor dette / which thow owe{s}t me of oold
 316 Whan |þt| thow made{s}t / thyn hou{s}bonde cokewold
 317 I payde at hom / for thy correccio|un|
 318 ¶Thow lyxt quod she / by my sauacio|un|
 319 Ne was I ne|uer|e er now / wydwe ne wyf/
 320 Somoned vn to youre court/ in al my lyf /
 321 Ne ne|uer|e I nas / but of my body trewe
 322 Vn to the deuel / blak/ and row of hewe
 323 Yeue I thy body / and my panne al{s}o
 324 ¶And whan the deuel / herde hir cur{s}en so
 325 Vp on hir knees / he seyde in this manere
 326 Now Mabely / myn owene moder deere
 327 Is this youre wyl in erne{s}t / |þt| ye seye
 328 ¶The deuel quod she / so fecche hym or he deye
 329 And panne and al / but he wol hym repente
 330 ¶Nay olde stot/ that is nat myn entente

331 Quod this Somnour / for to repente me
 332 ffor any thyng/ that I haue had of thee
 333 I wolde I hadde thy smok / and euery clooth
 334 ¶Now brother quod the deuel / be nocht wrooth
 335 Thy body and this panne / been myne by right
 336 Thow shalt |with| me to helle / yet to nyght/
 337 Wher thow shalt knowen / of oure pryuetee
 338 Moore / than a mai{s}ter of dyuynytee
 339 And with that word / this foule feend hym hente
 340 Body and soule / he with the deuel wente

{{Folio 78v}}

341 Wher as that Somnours / han hir heritage
 342 And god / that made after his ymage
 343 Mankynde / saue / and gyde vs alle and some
 344 And leue thi{s}e Somn|our|s / good men to bicome
 345 ¶Lordynges / I koude han told yow / quod this frere
 346 Hadde I had ley{s}er / for this Somn|our| heere
 347 After the text / of cri{s}t/ Poul and |Iohan|
 348 And of oure othere doctours / many oon
 349 Swiche peynes / that youre hertes myghte agry{s}e
 350 Al be it {s}o / no tonge may {^}{{it}} deuy{s}e
 351 Thogh that I myghte / a thou{s}and wynter telle
 352 The peynes / of thilke cur{s}ed hous of helle
 353 But for to kepe vs / fro that cur{s}ed place
 354 Waketh / and preyeth |Iesu| for his grace
 355 So kepe vs / fro the temptour Sathanas
 356 Herketh this word / beth war as in this cas
 357 The leo|un| sit/ in his awayt alway
 358 To sle the Innocent/ if that he may
 359 Di{s}po{s}eth ay youre hertes / to with{s}tonde
 360 The feend / that yow wolde maken thral and bonde
 361 He may nat tempte yow / ouer your myght /
 362 ffor cri{s}t/ wol be youre champion and knyght/
 363 And prayeth / that this Somn|our|s hem repente
 364 Of hir my{s}dedes / er that the feend hem hente

¶Here endeth / the freres tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles.

Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
 {ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
 {C} : capitulum
 {^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
 {?.} : punctus elevatus
 {^} : caret

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Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The General Prologue from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 2r}}

Here bygynneth the Book{/} of the tales of Can|ter|bury

1Whan that Aueryll |with| his Shoures soote
2The droghte of March / hath |per|ced to the roote
3And bathed euery veyne in swich lycour
4Of which |ver|tu engendred is the flour
5Whan zephirus eek / |with| his sweete breeth
6In{s}pired hath in euery holt/ and heeth
7The tendre croppes / and the yonge sonne
8Hath in the Ram / his half cours yronne
9And sm[a]le foweles / maken melodye
10That sl[epen] al the nyght/ with open Iye
11So priketh hem nature / in hir corages
12Than[ne longen] folk/ to goon on pilgrimages
13And Palmere[s] for to seeken straunge strondes

14To ferne halwes / kouthe in sondry londes
 15And specially / from euery shyres ende
 16Of Engelond / to Caunterbury they wende
 17The holy bli{s}ful martir / for to seke
 18That hem hath holpen whan |pt| they weere seeke
 19Bifel |pt| in that se{s}o|un| on a day
 20In Southwerk/ at the Tabard / as .I. lay
 21Redy to weenden / on my pilgrymage
 22To [Ca]unterbury / with ful deuout corage
 23At nyght/ was come / in to that ho{s}telrye
 24Wel .xxix. in a compaignye
 25Of sondry folk / by auenture yfalle
 26In felawe{s}hipe / and pilgrymes weere they alle
 27That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde
 28The chambres and the stables / weeren wyde
 29And wel we weeren e{s}ed / at the be{s}te
 30And shortly whan the sonne was to re{s}te
 31So hadde I spoken with hem euerichoon
 32That I was of hir felawe{s}hipe anon

{{Folio 2v}}

33And maade / erly for to ry{s}e
 34To take oure wey / ther as .I. yow deuys{s}e
 35¶But natheles / while .I. haue tyme and space
 36Er that I ferther / in this tale pace
 37Me thynketh it/ acordant to re{s}o|un|
 38To telle yow / al the condicio|un|
 39Of eech of hem / so as it seemed me
 40And whiche they weere / and of what degree
 41And eek/ in what array / |pt| they weere Inne
 42And at a knyght/ thanne wol I fir{s}t bigynne

Knyght/

43¶A knyght ther was / and that a worthy man
 44That fro the tyme / |pt| he fir{s}t bigan
 45To ryden out/ he loued chiuallrye
 46Trouthe and hon|our| / fredom and curtei{s}ye
 47fful worthy was he / in his lordes werre
 48And ther to hadde he ryden / no man ferre
 49As wel in cri{s}tendom / as hethene{ss}e
 50And euere honored / for his worthyne{ss}e
 51¶At Ali{s}aundre he was / whan it was wonne
 52fful ofte tyme / he hadde the bord bigonne
 53Abouen alle nacions / in Pruce
 54In lectow / hadde he rey{s}ed / and in Ruce
 55No cri{s}ten man so ofte / of his degree
 56In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
 57At Algizir / and ryden in Belmarye
 58At lyeys was he / and at Satalye
 59Whan they weere wonne / and in the grete See
 60At many a noble armee / hadde he bee
 61¶At mortal batailles / hadde he been fiftene
 62And foghten for oure feyth / at Tramy{s}ene

63In ly{s}tes thryes / and ay slayn his foo
 64¶This ilke worthy knyght/ hadde been al{s}o
 65Som tyme / with the lord of Palatye
 66Agayn another hethen in Turkye
 67And e|uer|e moore / he hadde a souereyn prys
 68And thogh |þt| he weere worthy / he was wys
 69And of his poort/. as meke / as is a mayde
 70Ne neuere yet/ no vileynye he sayde
 71In al his lyf/ vn to no manere wight
 72He was a verray |per|fit/ gentil knyght/

{ {Folio 3r} }

73But for to tellen yow / of his array
 74Hi{s}e hors weere goode / but he ne was nat gay
 75Of ffu{s}tian / he wered a gypo|un|
 76Al bi{s}motered / with his haubergeo|un|
 77ffor he was laate / comen from his viage
 78And wente / for to doon his pilgrymage

Squyer

79¶With hym / ther was his sone a yong/ Squyer
 80A louere / and a lu{s}ty Bachiler
 81With lokkes crulle / as they weere leyd in |pre|{ss}e
 82Of .xx. yeer / he was of age I ge{ss}e
 83Of his stature / he was of euene lengthe
 84And wonderly delyuere / and of greet strengthe
 85And he hadde been som tyme / in chiu[ac]hye
 86In fflaundes / in Artoys / and Picardye
 87And born hym wel / as in so litel space
 88In hope / to stonden / in his lady grace
 89¶Embrouded was he / as it weere a meede
 90Al ful of fre{ss}he floures / white and reede
 91Syngynge he was / or floytynge al the day
 92He was as fre{ss}h / as is the Monthe of May
 93Short was his gowne / with sleues / longe |&| wyde
 94Wel koude he sitte on hors / and faire ryde
 95He koude songes wel make / and endite
 96Iu{s}te and eek daunce / and wel portreye and write
 97So hote he loued / that by nyghtertale
 98He slepte namoore / than dooth a nyghtyngale
 99Curteys he was / lowely / and seruy{s}able
 100And carf biforn his fader / at the table

Yeman

101¶A yeman he hadde / and seruantz namo
 102At that tyme / for hym li{s}te ryde so
 103And he was clad / in coote and hood of greene
 104A sheef of Pecok arwes / bright/ and keene
 105Vnder his belt/ he bar ful thriftily
 106Wel koude he dre{ss}e his takel yemanly
 107His arwes drowped noght/ with fetheres lowe
 108And in his hand / he bar a myghty bowe
 109A not heed hadde he / with a broun vi{s}age

110Of wodecraft / koude he wel al the v{s}age

111Vp on his arm / he bar a gay bracer

112And by his syde / a swerd and a Bokeler

{{Folio 3v}}

113And on that oother syde / a gay daggere

114Harney{s}ed wel / and sharp / as poynt/ of spere

115A |christ|ofre on his bre{s}t/ of siluer sheene

116An horn he bar / the bawdryk/ was of greene

117A ffor{s}ter was he / soothly as I ge{ss}e

Priore{ss}e.

118¶Ther was al{s}o / a Nonne a Priore{ss}e

119That of hir smylyng/ was ful symple and coy

120Hir grette{s}te ooth / was but by Seint Loy

121And she was clepyd / madame Eglentyne

122fful wel she soong/ the seruyce dyuyne

123Entuned in hir no{s}e / ful semely

124And fren{ss}h she spak / ful faire and feti{s}ly

125After the scole / of Stratford at the Bowe

126ffor fren{s}h of Parys / was to hire vnknewe

127At mete / wel ytaught/ was she with alle

128She leet/ no mor{s}el / from hir lyppe falle

129Ne wette hir fyngres / in hir sauce deepe

130Wel koude she carye a mor{s}el / and wel keepe

131That no drope / fille vp on hir bri{s}t/

132In curtei{s}ye / was set muchel hir li{s}t/

133Hir ouer lyppe / wyped she so cleene

134That in hir coppe / ther was no ferthyng/ seene

135Of grece / whan she dronken hadde hir draghte

136fful semely / after hir mete she raghte

137And sikerly / she was of greet/ de{s}port/

138And ful ple{s}aunt/ and amyable of port/

139And peyned hire / to countrefete chiere

140Of Court/ and been e{s}tatlich of manere

141And to been holden / digne of re|uer|ence

142But for to speken / of hir con{s}cience

143She was so charitable / and so pitous

144She wolde^{^}{{wepe}} / if |pt| she sawe a Mous

145Caught in a trappe / if it weere deed / or bledde

146Of smale houndes / hadde she / |pt| she fedde

147With ro{s}ted fle{ss}h / or mylk/ and wa{s}tel breed

148But soore wepte she / if oon of hem weere deed

149Or if men smoot/ it / with a yerde smerte

150And al was con{s}cience / and tendre herte

151fful semely / hir wympel pynched was

152Hir no{s}e tretez / hir eyen / greye as glas

{{Folio 4r}}

153Hir mouth ful smal / and ther to / softe and reed

154But sikerly / she hadde a fair forheed

155It was almoo{s}t/ a spanne brood I trowe

156ffor hardily / she was nat vndergrowe

157ffful fetys was hir cloke / as I was war
 158Of smal Coral / aboute hir arm she bar
 159A peyre of bedes / gauded al with greene
 160And ther on heeng/ a brooch of gold ful sheene
 161On which / was fir{s}t writen / a crowned .A.
 162And after / Amor vincit/ omnia.
 163¶Another Nonne / with hire hadde she

Nonne Chapeleyne

164That was hire Chapeleyne / and pree{s}tes thre
 and thre pre{s}tes

Monk/

165¶A Monk ther was / a fair for the may{s}trye
 166An outrydere / that/ louede venerye
 167A manly man / to been an Abbot able
 168ffful many a deyntee hors / hadde he in stable
 169And whanne he rood / men myghte his brydel heere
 170Gyngle in a whi{s}tlynge wynd / as cleere
 171And eek/ as loude / as dooth the Chapel belle
 172There as this lord / is kepere of the Selle
 173The rule of Seint Maure / or of Seint Beneyt/
 174By cau{s}e |pt| it was oold / and som deel streyt/
 175This ilke Monk/ leet oolde thynges pace
 176And heeld / after the newe world the space
 177He yaf noght of that text/ a pulled hen
 178That seith / |pt| hunterys been none holy men
 179Ne |pt| a Monk/. whan he is recchelees
 180Is likned / til a fi{ss}h / |pt| is waterlees
 181This is to seyn / a Monk/ out of his Cloy{s}tre
 182But thilke text/ heeld he nat worth an Oy{s}tre
 183And I seyde / his opynyon was good
 184What sholde he studie / and make hym seluen wood
 185Vp on a book/ in Cloy{s}tre alwey to poure
 186Or swynke with his handes / and laboure
 187As Au{s}tyn bit/. how shal the world be serued
 188Lat Au{s}tyn haue his swynk/. to hym re{s}erued
 189Ther fore / he was a pryka{s}our aryght/
 190Grehoundes he hadde / as swift/ as fowel in flyght/
 191Of prikyng/ and of huntynge/ for the haare
 192Was al his lu{s}t/. for no co{s}t wolde he spaare

{{Folio 4v}}

193I saugh his sleues / |pur|filed at the hond
 194With grys / and that the fyne{s}te of a lond
 195And for to fe{s}ne his hood / vnder his chyn
 196He hadde / of gold / wroght a ful curious pyn
 197A loue knotte / in the gretter ende ther was
 198His heed was balled / that shoon as any glas
 199And eek his face / as he hadde been enoynt/
 200He was a lord ful fat/ and in good poynt/
 201Hi{s}e eyen steepe / and rollynge in his heed

202That stemed / as a fourneys of a leed
 203Hi{s}e bootes souple / his hors / in greet e{s}taat/
 204Now certeynly / he was a fair |pre|lat/
 205He was nat paale / as is a forpynd goo{s}t/
 206A fat swan / loued he / be{s}t of any roo{s}t/
 207His palfrey / was as broun as any berye

¶ffrere

208¶A frere ther was / a wantowne and a merye
 209A lymytour / a ful solempne man
 210In alle the ordres foure / is noon |bt| kan
 211So muche of daliaunce / and fair langage
 212He hadde maked / ful many a mariage
 213Of yonge wommen / at his owene co{s}t/
 214Vn to his ordre / he was a noble po{s}t/
 215fful wel biloued / and famylier was hee
 216With ffrankeleyns / ouer al in his contree
 217And eek/ with worthy wommen / of the town
 218ffor he hadde / power of confe{ss}ioun
 219As seyde hym self / moore than a curaat/
 220ffor of his ordre / he was licenciaat/
 221fful swetely / herde he confe{ss}io|un|
 222And ple{s}ant/ was his ab{s}olucio|un|
 223He was an e{s}y man / to yeue penaunce
 224Ther as he wi{s}te / to haue a good pitaunce
 225ffor vn to a poure ordre / for to yeue
 226Is signe / that a man / is wel y{s}hryue
 227ffor if he yaf/ he dor{s}te make auaunt/
 228He wi{s}te / |bt| a man was repentaunt/
 229ffor many a man / so hard is of his herte
 230He may nat weepe / thogh |bt| he soore smerte
 231Ther fore / in {s}tede of wepyng / and preyeres
 232Men moote yeue siluer / to the poure freres

{{Folio 5r}}

233¶His tpet/ was ay far{s}ed ful of knyues
 234And pynnes / for to yeuen faire wyues
 235And certeynly / he hadde a murye noote
 236Wel koude he synge / and pleyen on a roote
 237Of yeddynges / he bar outrely the prys
 238His nekke whit was / as the flour delys
 239Ther to he stroong/ was / as a Champioun
 240He knew the tauernes wel in euery town
 241And euery ho{s}tiler / and Tappe{s}tere
 242Bet / than a lazer / or a begge{s}tere
 243ffor vn to swich a worthy man / as he
 244Acorded nat / as by his facultee
 245To haue / with syke lazars aqueyntaunce
 246It is nat hone{s}te / it may noght auaunce
 247ffor to deelen / with no swich poraille
 248But al with riche / and sellerys of vitaille
 249And ouer al / ther as |profit| sholde ary{s}e
 250Curteys he was / and lowely of seruy{s}e

251Ther was no man / nowheer / {s}o |ver|tuos
 252He was the be{s}te beggere / of his hous
 253And yaf a |cer|teyn ferme / for the graunt/
 254Noon of his bretheren / cam ther in his haunt/
 255ffor thogh a wydwe / hadde noght/ a sho
 256So ple{s}ant/ was his In principio
 257Yet wolde he haue a ferthyng/ er he wente
 258His purchaas / was wel bettre than his rente
 259And rage he koude / as it weere right a whelp
 260In louedayes / koude he muchel help
 261ffor there / he was nat lyk/ a Cloy{s}trer
 262With a threedbare cope / as is a poure scoler
 263But he was lyk a mai{s}ter / or a Pope
 264Of double wor{s}tede / was his semycope
 265And rounded as a belle / out of the pre{ss}e
 266Somwhat he lyp{s}ed / for his wantowne{ss}e
 267To make his engly{ss}h / sweete vp on his tonge
 268And in his harpyng/ whan |pt| he hadde songe
 269hi{s}e eyen twynkled / in his heed aryght/
 270As doon the {s}terres / in the fro{s}ty nyght/
 271This worthy lymytour / was cleped huberd

March|an|t

272¶A Marchant was ther / with a forked berd

{{Folio 5v}}

273In Motlee / and hye on hors he sat/
 274Vp on his heed / a fflaundry{ss}h Be|uer|e hat/
 275his bootes cla{s}ped / faire and feti{s}ly
 276Hi{s}e re{s}ons / he spak ful solempnely
 277Sownyng/ alwey / thencrees of his wynnyng/
 278He woolde / the see weere kept/ for any thyng/
 279Bitwixen Myddelburgh / and Orewelle
 280Wel koude he / in e{s}chaunge / sheeldes selle
 281This worthy man / ful wel his wit bi{s}ette
 282Ther wi{s}te no wight/. that he was in dette
 283So e{s}taatly was he / of his go|uer|nauce
 284With his bargaynes / and |with| his cheuy{s}aunce
 285ffor soothe / he was a worthy man with alle
 286But sooth to seyn / I noot how men hym calle

¶Clerc/ of Oxenford

287¶A Clerc/ ther was / of Oxenford al{s}o
 288That vn to logyk/. hadde longe ygo
 289As leene was his hors / as is a rake
 290And he was noght right fat/ I vndertake
 291But looked holwe / and ther to sobrelly
 292fful threedbaare / was his o|uer|e{s}te Courtepy
 293ffor he hadde / geten hym yet/ no benefice
 294Ne was {s}o worldly / for to haue office
 295ffor hym was leuere / haue at his beddes heed
 296Twenty bookes / clad / in blak / or reed
 297Of Ari{s}totele / and his Philo{s}ophye

298Than robes riche / or ffithle / or gay Sautrye
 299But al be / that he was a Philo{s}ophre
 300Yet hadde he / but litel gold in Cofre
 301But al that he myghte / of his frendes hente
 302On bookes / and on lernynge / he it spente
 303And bi{s}ily / gan for the soules preye
 304Of hem / that yaf hym / wher with to scoleye
 305Of studye / took he moo{s}t cure and moo{s}t heede
 306Noght oo word spak/ he / moore than was neede
 307And that was spoke / in forme / and reuerence
 308And short/ and quyk/ and ful of heigh sentence
 309Sownynge in moral |ver|tu / was his speche
 310And gladly wolde he lerne / and gladly teche

¶Sergeaunt of Lawe

311¶A Sergeaunt of lawe / waar / and wys
 312That often / hadde been at the Parvys

{ {Folio 6r} }

313Ther was al{s}o /ful ryche of excellence
 314Di{s}creet he was / and of greet re|uer|ence
 315He {s}eemed swich / hi{s}e wordes weeren {s}o wy{s}e
 316Iu{s}tice he was / ful often in A{ss}i{s}e
 317By patente / and by pleyn c|om|mi{ss}io|un|
 318ffor his science / and for his heigh reno|un|
 319Of fees and robes / hadde he many oon
 320So greet a purcha{s}our / was nowher noon
 321Al was fee symple / to hym / in effect/
 322His purcha{s}yng/ myghte nat been infect/
 323Nowher {s}o bi{s}y a man as he / ther nas
 324And yet he {s}eemed / bi{s}yer than he was
 325In |ter|mes / hadde he caas / and doomes alle
 326That from tyme of kyng william / weere falle
 327Ther to / he koude endite / and make a thyng/
 328Ther koude no wight/ pynchen at his writyng/
 329And euery statut/. koude he pleyn by roote
 330He rood but hoomly / in a medlee coote
 331Girt with a ceynt of sylk/. with barres smale
 332Of his array / telle I no lenger tale

¶ff|ran|keleyn

333A ffrankeleyn / was in his compaignye
 334Whit was his berd / as is the daye{s}ye
 335Of his complexcion / he was sangwyn
 336Wel loued he by the morwe / a sop in wyn
 337To lyuen in delyt/ was euere his wone
 338ffor he was / Epicurus owene sone
 339That heeld opynyo|un| / |bt| pleyn delit
 340Was verray / felicitee parfit/
 341An hou{s}holdere / and that a greet was hee
 342Seint Iulyan he was / in his contree
 343His breed / his ale / was always after oon
 344A bettre envyned man / was neuere noon

345With outen bake mete / was neuere his hous
 346Of fre{ss}h fi{ss}h / and fle{ss}h / and that so plentevous
 347It snewed in his hous / of mete and drynke
 348Of alle deyntees / |pt| men koude bithynke
 349After / the sondry se{s}ons / of the yeer
 350So chaunged he / his mete / and his soper
 351fful many a fat partrych / hadde he in Muwe
 352And many a breem / and many a luce in Stuwe

{{Folio 6v}}

353Wo was his Cook/ / but if his sauce weere
 354Poynaunt/ and sharp / and redy al his geere
 355Hys table dormaunt/ in his halle alway
 356Stood redy couered / al the longe day
 357At Se{ss}ions / ther was he / lord and Sire
 358fful ofte tyme / he was knyght of the Shire
 359An Anlaas / and a Gip{s}er / al of Sylk/
 360Heeng/ at his girdel / whit as morne mylk/
 361A shirreue hadde he been / and Countour
 362Was nowheer / swich a worthy vaua{s}our

Haberda{ss}he|re|

363¶An haberda{ss}here / and a Carpenter

Carpenter

364A Webbe / a Dyere / and a Tapycer

Webbe

365And they weere clothed alle / in oo ly|uer|ee

Dyere

366Of a solempne / and a greet fra|ter|nytee

Tapycer

367fful fre{ss}h and newe / hir geere apyked was
 368Hir knyues weere chaped / noght with bras
 369But al with siluer / wroght ful cleene and wel
 370Hir girdles / and hir pouches / euerydel
 371Wel {s}eemed eech of hem / a fair Burgeys
 372To sitten in a yeldehalle / on a deys
 373Euerych / for the wi{s}dom / |pt| he kan
 374Was shaply / for to been an Alderman
 375ffor catel / hadde they ynogh / and rente
 376And eek hir wyues / wolde it wel a{s}ente
 377And ellis certeyn / they weere to blame
 378It is ful fair / to been yclepyd madame
 379And goon to vigilies / al bifore
 380And haue a Mantel / realliche ybore

Cook/

381¶A Cook they hadde with hem / for the nones
 382To boille the chiknes / with the Marybones
 383And poudre marchaunt/. tart/ and / Galyngale
 384Wel koude he knowe / a draghte of london ale
 385He koude roo{s}te / and seethe / and broille / |&| frye
 386Maken Mortreux / and wel bake a pye
 387But greet harm was it / as it thoughte me
 388That on his Shyne / a Mormal hadde he
 389ffor Blankmanger / that maade he with the be{s}te

Shipman

390¶A Shipman was ther / wonyng fer by we{s}te
 391ffor aught I woot/ he was of Dertemouthe
 392He rood vp on a Rouncy / as he kouthe

{ {Folio 7r} }

393In a gowne of faldyng/ to the knee
 394A daggere hangyng on a laas / hadde he
 395Aboute his nekke / vnder his arm adown
 396The hootte Somer / hadde maad his hewe al brown
 397And certeynly / he was a good felawe
 398fful many a draghte of wyn / hadde he drawe
 399ffro Burdeuxward/ whil |þt| the Chapman sleep
 400Of nyce con{s}cience / took he no keep
 401If |þt| he faught/ and hadde the hyer hond
 402By watre he sente hem hoom / to euery lond
 403But of his craft/ to rekene wel his tydes
 404His stremys / and his daungers hym bi{s}ydes
 405His {^}{{herberwe}} and his moone / his lodmenage
 406Ther was noon swich / from hull to Cartage
 407Hardy he was / and wys to vndertake
 408With many a tempe{s}t/ hadde his beard been shake
 409He knew alle the hauenes / as they weere
 410ffro Gootlond / to the cape of ffyny{s}teere
 411And euery cryke / in Britaigne / and in Spaigne
 412His barge / yclepyd was the Mawdelayne

Doct|our| of

413¶With vs / ther was / a Doctour of Phi{s}yk/

Phi{s}yk/.

414In al this world / ne was ther noon hym lyk/
 415To speken of Phi{s}yk/ and of Surgerye
 416ffor he was grounded / in A{s}tronomye
 417He kepte his pacient/ a ful greet deel
 418In houres / by his magyk natureel
 419Wel koude he fortunen / the a{s}cendent/
 420Of hi{s}e ymages / for his pacient/
 421He knew the cau{s}e / of euery maladye
 422Weere it/ of hoot/ or coold / or moy{s}te / or drye
 423And where it engendred / and of what humour
 424He was a verray / |per|fit practi{s}our

425The cau{s}e yknowe / and of his harm the roote
 426Anoon he yaf / the sike man his boote
 427¶ffful redy hadde he / hi{s}e Apothecaryes
 428To senden hym / his drogges / and his letuaryes
 429ffor eech of hem / maade oother for to wynne
 430Hir frend{s}hipe / was noght newe to bigynne
 431Wel knew he / the oolde E{s}culapyus
 432And Di{s}corides / and eek/ Ru{s}us

{{Folio 7v}}

433Olde ypocras / Haly / and Galyen
 434Serapion / Razis / and Avycen
 435Auerroys / Dama{s}cien / and Con{s}tantyn
 436Bernard / and Gate{s}den / and Gilbertyn
 437Of his diete / me[a]{s}urable was hee
 438ffor it was / of no su|per|fluytee
 439But of greet nori{ss}ynge / and dige{s}tible
 440His studye / was but litel on the Bible
 441In sangwyn and in Pers / he clad was al
 442Lyned with Taffata / and with Sendal
 443And yet he was / but e{s}y of di{s}pence
 444He kepte / |pt| he wan in pe{s}tilence
 445ffor gold in Phi{s}yk/. is a Cordial
 446Therefore / he loued gold in special

The goode Wyf

447¶A good wyf was ther / of bi{s}yde Bathe

of bi{s}yde Bathe

448But she was somdel deef/ and that was scathe
 449Of clooth makyng / she hadde swich an haunt/
 450She pa{ss}ed hem / of Ipres / and of Gaunt/
 451In al the pary{ss}he / wyf ne was ther noon
 452That to the offryng / bifore hire sholde goon
 453And if ther dide / certeyn / {s}o wrooth was shee
 454That she was / out of alle charitee
 455Hir Co|uer|chiefes / ful fyne weere of grownd
 456I dor{s}te swere / they weyeden. ten pownd
 457That on a Sonday / weeren vp on hir heed
 458Hir ho{s}en weeren / of fyn scarlet reed
 459fful streyte yteyd / and shoes / ful moy{s}te |&| newe
 460Boold was hir face / and fair and reed of hewe
 461She was a worthy woman / al hir lyue
 462Hou{s}bondes at chirche dore / she hadde fyue
 463With outen oother compaignye / in yowthe
 464But ther of / nedeth noght/ to speke as nowthe
 465And thries / hadde she been at Ieru{s}alem
 466She hadde pa{ss}ed / many a straunge strem
 467At Rome she hadde been / and at Boloyne
 468In Galyce at Seint Iame / and at Coloyne
 469She koude muchel / of wandryng by the weye
 470Gattothed was she / soothly for to seye
 471Vp on an Amblere / e{s}ily she sat/

472Ywympled wel / and on hir heed an hat/

{{Folio 8r}}

473As brood as is / a Bokeler / or a Targe

474A foot mantel / aboute hir hypes large

475And on hir feet/ a peyre of spores sharpe

476In felawe{s}hipe / wel koude she laughe.[] and carpe

477Of remedies of loue / she knew |per| chaunce

478ffor she koude of that art/ the olde daunce

[Per{s}o|un| of a town

479¶A good man / was ther / of Religioun

480And was a poure |per|{s}on / of a toun

481But riche he was / of holy thoght and werk/

482He was al{s}o / a lerned man a Clerk/

483That Cri{s}tes go{s}pel / trewely wolde |pre|che

484His pari{ss}hens / deuoutly wolde he teche

485Benygne he was / and wonder diligent

486And in aduer{s}itee / ful pacient/

487And swich he was proeued / ofte sythes

488fful looth weere hym / to cur{s}en for his tythes

489But rather wolde he yeuen / out of doute

490Vn to his poure pari{ss}hens aboute

491Of his offrynge / and eek/ of his sub{s}taunce

492He koude / in litel thyng/ haue suffi{s}aunce

493Wyd was his pari{ss}he / and hou{s}es fer a {s}onder

494But he ne lafte noght/ for reyn ne thonder

495In sikne{ss}e / nor in me{s}chief/ to vi{s}ite

496The ferre{s}te in his pari{ss}he / muche and lyte

497Vp on his feet/ and in his hond a staf/

498This noble en{s}ample / to his sheep he yaf/

499That fir{s}t he wroghte / and afterward he taughte

500Out of the go{s}pel / he tho wordes caughte

501And this figure / he added eek ther to

502That if gold ru{s}te / what sholde Iren do

503ffor if a pree{s}t be foul / in whom we tru{s}te

504No wonder is / a lewed man to ru{s}te

505And shame it is / if a pree{s}t take keep

506A shiten Shepherde / and a clene sheep

507Wel oghte a pree{s}t/ en{s}ample for to yiuue

508By his clenne{ss}e / how |þt| his sheep sholde lyue

509He sette noght/. his benefice to hyre

510And leet his sheep / encombred in the Myre

511And ran to Londo|un| / vn to Seint Poules

512To seeken hym / a Chauntrye for soules

{{Folio 8v}}

513Or with a breetherede / to been withhoolde

514But dwelte at hoom / and kepte wel his foolde

515So |þt| the wolf/ ne maade it noght/ my{s}carye

516He was a shepherde / and noght a Mercenarye

517And thogh he hooly weere / and vertuous

518He was noght/ to synful men de{s}pitous

519Ne of his speche / daungerous / ne digne
 520But in his techyng/ di{s}cree/ and benygne
 521To drawen folk/ to heuene / |with| fairne{ss}e
 522By good en{s}ample / this was his bi{s}yne{ss}e
 523But it weere / any |per|{s}one ob{s}tynaat/
 524What so he weere / of heigh / or lowe e{s}taat/
 525Hym wolde he snybben / sharply for the nonys
 526A bettre pree{s}t/ I trowe ther nowher noon ys
 527He wayted / after no pomp / and reuerence
 528Ne maked hym / a spyced con{s}cience
 529But Cri{s}tes loore / and hi{s}e Apo{s}tles twelue
 530He taughte / but fir{s}t/ he folwed it hym selue

Plowman

531¶With hym ther was a Plowman / was his broother
 532That hadde ylad of donge / ful many a ffoother
 533A trewe swynkere / and a good was he
 534Lyuyng in pees / and |per|fit charitee
 535God loued he be{s}t/ with al his hoole herte
 536At alle tymes / thogh hym gamed / or smerte
 537And thanne his Neighebore / right as hym selue
 538He wolde thre{ss}he / and ther to / dyke and delue
 539ffor Cri{s}tes sake / for euery poure wight/
 540With outen hyre / if it laye in his myght/
 541His tythes payde he / ful faire and wel
 542Bothe of his |prop|re swynk/ and his catel
 543In a Tabard he rood / vp on a Mere
 544Ther was al{s}o / a Reue / and a Millere
 545A Somonour / and a Pardoner al{s}o
 546A Maunciple / and my self/ ther weere namo

Millere

547¶The Millere / was a stout carl / for the nones
 548fful byg/ he was / of brawen / and eek of bones
 549That proeued wel / for ouer al ther he cam
 550At wra{s}tlyng / he wolde haue alwey the Ram
 551He was short shuldred / brood / a thikke knarre
 552Ther was no dore / that he noolde heue of harre

{ {Folio 9r} }

553Or breke it at a rennyng / with his heed
 554His beard / as any sowe / or fox / was reed
 555And ther to brood / as thogh it weere a spaade
 556Vp on the cop right of his no{s}e he haade
 557A werte / and ther on stood / a tuft/ of heerys
 558Reede / as the bri{s}tles / of a Sowes eerys
 559Hi{s}e no{s}ethirles / blake weere and wyde
 560A swerd and a bokeler / baar he by his syde
 561His mouth as greet was / as a greet fourneys
 562He was a Ianglere / a Golyardeys
 563And that was moo{s}t/ of synne and harlotryes
 564Wel koude he stelen corn / and tollen thryes
 565And yet he hadde / a thombe of gold |per|dee

566A whit coote / and a blew hood wered hee
 567A Baggepipe / wel koude he / blowe and sowne
 568And ther with al / he broghte vs out of towne

[M]aunciple

569¶A gentil Maunciple / was ther / of a Temple
 570Of which / Achatours myghte take exemple
 571ffor to been wy{s}e / in byynge of vitaille
 572ffor wheither |bt| he payde / or took by taille
 573Algate / he wayted so / in his achaat/
 574That he was ay biforn / and in good staat/
 575¶Now is nat that of god / a ful greet grace
 576That swich a lewed mannes wit/ shal pace
 577The wy{s}dom / of a heep of lerned men
 578Of Mai{s}tres hadde he mo / than thryes ten
 579That weeren / of lawe / expert/ and curious
 580Of whiche / ther weere a dozeyne / in that hous
 581Worthy / to been Stywardes / of rente / and lond
 582Of any lord / that is in Engelond
 583To make hym lyue / by his |prop|re good
 584In honour dettelees / but if he weere wood
 585Or lyue as scar{s}ly / as hym ly{s}t de{s}ire
 586And able / for to helpen / al a Shire
 587In any caas / that myghte falle / or happe
 588And yet this Maunciple / sette hir aller cappe

Reue

589¶The Reue / was a sclendre coleryk/ man
 590His beard was shaue / as neigh as euer he kan
 591His heer was by his eerys / ful rownd y{s}horn
 592His top was dokked / lyk/ a pree{s}t byforn

{{Folio 9v}}

593fful longe weere hi{s}e legges / and ful leene
 594Ylik a staf / . ther / was no calf y{s}eene
 595Wel koude he keepe / a Gerner and a Bynne
 596Ther was noon Auditour / koude on hym wynne
 597Wel wi{s}te he / by the droghte and by the reyn
 598The yeldyng / of his seed / and of his greyn
 599His lordes sheep / his neet / his dayerye
 600His swyn / his hors / his Stoor / and his pultrye
 601Was hoolly / in this Reues go|uer|nyng
 602And by his couenant/. yaf the rekenyng
 603Syn that his loord / was twenty yeer of age
 604Ther koude no man / bryng hym in arerage
 605Ther nas Baillyf/. hierde / nor oother hyne
 606That he ne knew / his sleyghte / and his couyne
 607They weere adrad of hym / as of the deeth
 608His wonyng/ was ful faire vp on an heeth
 609With greene trees / shadwed was his place
 610He koude bettre / than his lord purchase
 611fful riche / he was a{s}toored pryuely
 612His lord / wel koude he ple{s}en subtilly

613To yeue / and leene hym / of his owene good
 614And haue a thank/. and yet a coote and hood
 615In youthe / he lerned hadde / a good Mi{s}ter
 616He was a wel good wrighte / a Carpenter
 617This Reue sat/ vp on a wel good Stot/
 618That was a Pomely gray / and highte Scot/
 619A long Surcote of Pers / vp on he haade
 620And by his syde / he baar a ru{s}ty blaade
 621Of Northfolk was this Reue / of which I telle
 622Bi{s}yde a town / men clepyn Balde{s}welle
 623Tukked he was / as is a ffrere aboute
 624And euere he rood / the hyndre{s}te of oure route

Somonour

625¶A Somonour/ was ther was with vs / in that place
 626That hadde / a fyr reed Cherubynnes face
 627ffor Sawceflewm he was / with eyen{`}, narwe
 628And hoot he was / and lecherous as a Sparwe
 629With scaled browes blake / and pyled berd
 630Of his vi{s}age / children weere aferd
 631Ther nas quyk/ siluer / lytarge / ne Brym{s}toon
 632Borace / Ceruce / ne Oille of Tartre noon

{{Folio 10r}}

633Ne oynement/. that wolde clen{s}e and byte
 634That hym myghte helpen / of his whelkes whyte
 635Nor of the knobbes / sittynge on his chekes
 636Wel loued he garlek/ oynons and eek lekes
 637And for to drynke strong wyn / reed as blood
 638Thanne wolde he speke / and crye as he were wood
 639A fewe |ter|mes hadde he / two / or thre
 640That he hadde lerned / out of som decree
 641No wonder is / he herde it al the day
 642And eek ye knowe wel / how |pt| a Iay
 643Kan clepen watte / as wel as kan the Pope
 644But who {s}o koude / in oother thyng hym grope
 645Thanne hadde he spent/ al his philo{s}ophie
 646Ay / Que{s}tio quid iuris / wolde he crye
 647¶He was a gentil harlot/ and a kynde
 648A bettre felawe / sholde men noght fynde
 649He wolde suffre / for a quart/ of wyn
 650A good felawe / to haue his concubyn
 651A twelf monthe / and excu{s}en hym at the fulle
 652fful pryuely / a fynch eek koude he pulle
 653And if he foond owher / a good felawe
 654He wolde techen hym / to haue noon awe
 655In swich caas / of the Ercedeknes curs
 656But if a mannes soule / were in his purs
 657ffor in his purs / he sholde ypuny{ss}hed be
 658Purs is the Ercedeknes helle / seyde he
 659¶But wel I woot / he lyed right in dede
 660Of cur{s}yng/ oghte ech gilty man drede
 661ffor curs wol sle / right as a{ss}oilyng/ sauyth

662And al{s}o / war hym of a Significauit/
 663¶In daunger hadde he / at his owene gy{s}e
 664The yonge gerles / of the dioci{s}e
 665And knew hir con{s}eil / and was al hir reed
 666A gerland / hadde he set/ vp on his heed
 667As greet/. as it were / for an Ale stake
 668A bokeler / hadde he maad hym of a cake

Pardoner

669¶With hym ther rood / a gentil Pardoner
 670Of Rouncyual / his freend / and his comper
 671That streight was comen / fro the Court of Rome
 672fful loude he {s}oong/ com hyder loue to me

{{Folio 10v}}

673This Somon|our| baar to hym / a styf burdoun
 674Was ne|uer|e trompe / of half {s}o greet a soun
 675¶This |per|doner / hadde heer / as yelow as wex
 676But smothe it heeng/ as dooth a stryke of flex
 677By ounces / henge his lokkes |þt| he hadde
 678And ther with / he his shuldres ouer{s}pradde
 679But thynne it lay / by colpons oon and oon
 680But hood for Iolitee / wered he noon
 681ffor it was tru{ss}ed vp / in his walet/
 682Hym thoughte / he rood al of the newe Iet/
 683Di{s}cheuellee saue his cappe / he rood al bare
 684Swiche glarynge eyen / hadde he as an hare
 685A vernycle / hadde he sowed / vp on his cappe
 686His walet/ biforn hym / in his lappe
 687Bretful of pardo|un| / comen from Rome al hoot/
 688A voys he hadde / as smal / as hath a Goot/
 689No berd hadde he / ne neuere sholde haue
 690As smothe it was / as it were late y{s}haue
 691I trowe he were a geldyng/ or a Mare
 692But of his craft/. fro Berwyk in to Ware
 693Ne was ther / swich another Pardoner
 694ffor in his Male / he hadde a pilwe beer
 695Which |þt| he seyde / was oure lady veyl
 696He seyde he hadde / a gobet of the seyl
 697That Seint Peter hadde / whan |þt| he wente
 698Vp on the See / til |Iesu| Cri{s}t hym hente
 699He hadde a cros of lato|un| / ful of stones
 700And in a glas / he hadde pigges bones
 701But with thi{s}e relykes / whan |þt| he foond
 702A poure |per|{s}on / dwellyng vp on lond
 703Vp on a day / he gat hym moore moneye
 704Than |þt| the |per|{s}o|un| gat/ in Monthes tweye
 705And thus / with feyned flaterye and Iapes
 706He made the |per|{s}on / and the peple his apes
 707But trewely / to tellen at the la{s}te
 708He was in chirche / a noble Eccle{s}ia{s}te
 709Wel koude he / rede a le{ss}on / and a Storie
 710But alderbe{s}t/ he {s}oong an Offertorie

711ffor wel he wi{s}te / whan |pt| soong was songe
712He mo{s}te |pre|che / and wel affyle his tonge

{{Folio 11r}}

713To wynne siluer / as he ful wel koude
714Ther fore he soong/ the muryerly and loude
715¶Now haue I toold yow / soothly in a clau{s}e
716The{s}taat / tharray / the nombre / and eek the cau{s}e
717Why |pt| a{ss}embled was this compaignye
718In Southwerk/. at this gentil ho{s}telrye
719That highte the tabard / fa{s}te by the belle
720But now is tyme / to yow for to telle
721How |pt| we baren vs / that ilke nyght/
722Whan we weere / in that ho{s}telrye alyght/
723And after wol I telle / of oure viage
724And al the remenant/ of oure pilgrymage
725¶But fir{s}t I pray yow / of youre curtei{s}ye
726That ye narette it / noght my vileynye
727Though |pt| I pleyedly speke / in this matere
728To telle yow / hir wordes / and hir cheere
729Ne thogh I speke / hir wordes |prop|rely
730ffor this ye knowen / al{s}o wel as I
731Who so shal telle a tale / after a man
732He moot reherce / as neigh as e|uer|e he kan
733Euerich a word / if it be in his charge
734Al speke he / neuer {s}o rudeliche and large
735Or ellis / he moot telle his tale vntrewe
736Or feyne thyng/ or fynde wordes newe
737He may noght spare / al thogh he weere his brother
738He moot as wel / seye o word / as another
739Cri{s}t spak hym self/ ful brode in holy writ /
740And wel ye woot/ no vileynye is it
741Ek Plato seith / who so kan hym rede
742The wordes / mote be co{s}yn / to the dede
743¶Al{s}o I pray yow / to foryeue it me
744Al haue I nat set folk / in hir degree
745Here in this tale / as |pt| they sholde stonde
746My wit is short/ ye may wel vnder{s}tonde
747¶Greet cheere / made oure hoo{s}t vs euerichon
748And to the souper / sette he vs anon
749He serued vs / with vitaille / at the be{s}te
750Strong was the wyn / and wel to drynke vs le{s}te
751A semely man / oure hoo{s}t was with alle
752ffor to been / a Marchal in an halle

{{Folio 11v}}

753A large man he was / with eyen stepe
754A fairer burgeys / was ther noon in Chepe
755Boold of his speche / and wys / and wel ytaught/
756And of manhode / hym lakked right naught/
757Eke ther to / he was right a murye man
758And after souper / pleyen he bigan
759And spak of murthe / amonges othere thynges

760Whan |pt| we hadde maad oure rekenynges
 761And seyde thus / now lordes trewely
 762Ye been to me / right wel come hertely
 763ffor by my trouthe / if |pt| I shal nat lye
 764I seigh noght this yeer / so murye a compaignye
 765Atones in this herberwe / as is now
 766ffayn wolde I doon yow myrthe / wi{s}te I how
 767And of a myrthe / I am right now bithoght/
 768To doon yow e{s}e / and it shal co{s}te noght/
 769¶Ye goon to Caun|ter|bury / god yow spede
 770The bli{s}ful Martir / quyte yow youre mede
 771And wel I woot / as ye goon by the weye
 772Ye shapen yow / to talen and to pleye
 773ffor trewely / confort / ne murthe is noon
 774To ryde by the weye / domb as stoon
 775And ther fore / wol I maken yow de{s}port/
 776As I seyde er{s}t/ and doon yow {s}om confort/
 777And if yow liketh alle / by oon a{ss}ent/
 778ffor to stonden / at my Iuggement/
 779And for to werken / as I shal yow seye
 780Tomorwe / whan ye ryden by the weye
 781Now by my fader soule / |pt| is deed
 782But ye be murye / I wol yeue yow myn heed
 783Hoold vp youre hondes / with outen moore speche
 784¶Oure con{s}eil / was nat longe for to seche
 785Vs thoughte / it was nat worth / to make it wys
 786And graunted hym / with outen moore avys
 787And bade hym seye / his voirdit/ as hym le{s}te
 788¶Lordynges quod he / now herkneth for the be{s}te
 789But taketh it noght/ I pray yow in de{s}deyn
 790This is the poynt/ to speken short and pleyn
 791That ech of yow / to shorte with oure weye
 792In this viage / shal tellen tales tweye

{{Folio 12r}}

793To Caunterburyward / I mene it so
 794And homward / he shal tellen othere two
 795Of auentures / |pt| whilom haue bifalle
 796And which of yow / |pt| bereth hym be{s}t of alle
 797That is to seyn / that telleth in this cas
 798Tales of be{s}t sentence / and moo{s}t solas
 799Shal haue a Souper / at oure aller co{s}t /
 800Here in this place / sittynge by this po{s}t/
 801Whan that we come agayn / fro Caun|ter|bury
 802And for to make yow / the moore mury
 803I wol my self/ goodly wit yow ryde
 804Right at myn owene co{s}t/ and be you|re| gyde
 805And who so wole / my Iuggement with {s}eye
 806Shal paye / al that we spende by the weye
 807And if ye vouche sauf / |pt| it be so
 808Tel me anoon / with outen wordes mo
 809And I wol erly / shape me ther fore
 810¶This thyng was graunted / and oure othes swore
 811With ful glad herte / and preyden hym al{s}o

812That he wolde vouche sauf / for to do so
 813And that he wolde been / oure go|uer|nour
 814And of oure tales / Iuge and reportour
 815And sette a Souper / at a certeyn prys
 816And we wol ruled been / at his deuys
 817In heigh and logh / and thus by oon a{ss}ent/
 818We been acorded / to his Iuggement/
 819And ther vp on / the wyn was fet anoon
 820We dronken / and to re{s}te wente echo|n_|
 821With outen / any lenger taryynge
 822¶A morwe / whan |pt| day bigan to sprynge
 823Vp roos oure hoo{s}t/ and was oure aller cok/
 824And gadred vs / togydres in a flok/
 825And forth we ryden /a litel moore than pas
 826Vn to the wateryng/ of Seint Thomas
 827And there oure hoo{s}t / bigan his hors are{s}te
 828And seyde / lordes / herkneth if yow le{s}te
 829¶Ye woot youre forward / and it yow recorde
 830If euen{s}ong / and morwe{s}ong/ acorde
 831Lat se now / who shal telle the fir{s}te tale
 832As euere mote I drynke wyn / or Ale

{Folio 12v}

833Who {s}o be rebel / to my Iuggement/
 834Shal paye / for al / that by the wey is spent
 835Now draweth cut/ er |pt| we ferrer twynne
 836He which |pt| hath the shorte{s}te / shal bigynne
 837¶Sire knyght quod he / my may{s}ter and my lord
 838Now draweth cut/ for that is myn acord
 839Cometh neer quod he / my lady Priore{ss}e
 840And ye sire Clerc/. lat be youre shamefa{s}tne{ss}e
 841Ne studieth noght/ ley hond to / euery man
 842¶Anoon to drawen / euery wight bigan
 843And shortly / for to tellen / as it was
 844Were it by auenture / or sort/ or cas
 845The sothe is this / the Cut fil to the knyght/
 846Of which ful blithe and glad was euery wight/
 847And telle he mo{s}te his tale / as was re{s}oun
 848By forward / and by compo{s}icio|un|
 849As ye han herd / what nedeth wordes mo
 850And whan this goode man / saugh |pt| it was {s}o
 851As he / |pt| wys was / and obedient/
 852To kepe his forward / by his free a{ss}ent/
 853He seyde / syn I shal bigynne the game
 854What wel come be the Cut/ in goddes name
 855Now lat vs ryde / and herkneth what I seye
 856And with that word / we ryden forth oure weye
 857And he bigan / with right a murye cheere
 858His tale anoon / and seyde as ye may heere

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expanded contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles.

Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers.

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
{ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
{C} : capitulum
{^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
{?.} : punctus elevatus
{^} : caret

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Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Miller's Prologue and Tale from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 41r}}

¶The prologe of the Milleres tale

1Whan that the knyght/ hadde thus his tale ytoold
2In al the compaignie / nas ther yong ne oold
3That he ne seyde / it was a noble Storie
4And worthy / for to drawn to memorie
5And namely / the gentils euerichon
6¶Oure hoo{s}t lough / and swoor / {s}o moot I gon
7This gooth aright/ vnbokeled is the male
8Lat se now / who shal telle another tale
9ffor trewely / the game is wel bigonne
10Now telleth ye sire Monk / if |bt| ye konne
11Som what / to quite with the knyghtes tale
12¶The Millere / that for dronken was a pale
13So that vnnethe / vp on his hors he sat

14He nolde aualen / neither hood ne hat
 15Ne abiden no man / for his curtei{s}ye
 16But in Pilates voys / he gan to crye
 17And swoor by armes / and by blood and bones
 18I kan a noble tale / for the nones
 19With which / I wol now quite the knyghtes tale
 20¶Oure hoo{s}t saugh / |pt| he was dronke of ale

{{Folio 41v}}

21¶And seyde / abyde / Robyn leeue brother
 22Som better man / shal telle vs fir{s}t another
 23Abyde / and lat vs werken thriftily
 24¶By goddes soule quod he / that wol nat/ I
 25ffor I wol speke / or ellis go my wey
 26¶Oure hoo{s}t an{s}werde / tel on a deuelewey
 27Thow art a fool / thy wit is ouercome
 28¶Now herkneth quod the Millere / alle and some
 29But fir{s}t/ I make a prote{s}tacioun
 30That I am dronke / I knowe it by my sown
 31And therfore / if |pt| I my{ss}peke / or seye
 32Wite it/ / the ale of Southwerk/ I preye
 33ffor I wol telle / a legende and a lyf
 34Bothe of a Carpenter / and of his wyf
 35How |pt| a clerk/ hath set the wrightes cappe
 36¶The Reue an{s}werde / and seyde stynt thy clappe
 37Lat be / thy lewed dronken harlotrye
 38It is a synne / and eek a greet folye
 39To apeyren any man / or hym diffame
 40And eek to bryngen wyues / in swich fame
 41Thow may{s}t ynow / of othere thynges seyn
 42¶This dronken Mille|re| / spak ful soone ageyn
 43And seyde / leeue brother O{s}ewold
 44Who hath no wyf / he is no Cokewold
 45But I seye nat therfore / |pt| thow art oon
 46Ther been ful goode wyues many oon
 47Why artow angry / wit my tale now
 48I haue a wyf |per|dee / as wel as thow
 49Yet nolde I / for the oxen in my plough
 50Take vp on me / moore than ynough
 51As demen of my self / |pt| I were oon
 52I wol bileeue wel / |pt| I am noon
 53An hou{s}bonde / shal noght been Inqui{s}ityf /
 54Of goddes pryuetee / nor of his wyf/
 55So he may fynde / goddes foy{s}on there
 56Of the remenant/ nedeth noght/ enquere
 57¶What sholde I moore seyn / but this Millere
 58He nolde his wordes / for no man forbere
 59But tolde his cherles tale / in his manere
 60Me athynketh / that I shal reherce it heere

{{Folio 42r}}

61And therefore / euery gentil wight I preye
 62Demeth noght/ for goddes loue / |pt| I seye

63Of yuel entente / but for I moot reher{s}e
 64Hir tales alle / be they bet or wer{s}e
 65Or ellis fal{s}en / som of my matere
 66And therfore / who {s}o li{s}t it noght yhere
 67Turne ouer the leef / and che{s}e another tale
 68ffor he shal fynde ynowe / grete and smale
 69Of storial thyng/ that toucheth gentile{ss}e
 70And eek moralitee / and holyne{ss}e
 71Blameth noght me / if |pt| ye che{s}e amys
 72The Millere is a cherl / ye knowe wel this
 73So was the Reue eek/ and othere mo
 74And harlotrye / they tolden bothe two
 75Auy{s}eth yow / and put me out of blame
 76And eek / men shal noght/ maken erne{s}t of game

¶Here bigynneth / the Millerys tale

1Whilom / ther was dwellyng in Oxenford
 2A riche gnof/ that ge{s}tes heeld to bord
 3And of his craft/ he was a Carpenter
 4With hym ther was dwellynge a poure Scoler
 5Hadde lerned Art/ but al his fanta{s}ie
 6Was turned / for to leere A{s}trotologie
 7And koude / a certeyn of conclu{s}ions
 8To demen / by interrogacions
 9If |pt| men axed hym / in |cer|tein houres
 10Whan |pt| men sholde haue droghte / or ellis shoures
 11Or if men axed hym / what shal bifalle
 12Of euery thyng / I may nat rekene hem alle
 13¶This clerk / was clepyd Hende Nicholas
 14Of derne loue he koude / and of solas
 15And ther to he was sleigh / and ful pryuee
 16And lyk a mayde meke / for to see
 17A chambre hadde he / in that ho{s}telrie
 18Allone / with outen any compaignye
 19fful feti{s}ly dight / with herbes swoote
 20And he hym self/ as sweete as is the roote

{{Folio 42v}}

21Of lycorys / or any Cetuale
 22His Almage{s}te / and bookes grete and smale
 23His A{s}trelabye / longynge for his Art/
 24His Augrym stones / layen faire a part/
 25On shelues couched / at his beddes heed
 26His Pre{ss}e / ycouered with a ffaldyng reed
 27And al aboue / ther lay a gay Sautrye
 28On which / he made a nyghtes melodye
 29So swetely / |pt| al the chambre roong/
 30And Angelus ad Virginem / he soong/
 31And after that/ he soong the kynges note
 32fful often / bli{ss}ed was / his murye throte
 33And thus this swete clerk / his tyme spente
 34After his freendes fyndyng/ and his rente
 35¶This Carpenter / hadde wedded newe a wyf

36Which |bt| he louede / moore than his lyf
 37Of .xviiij. yeer / she was of age
 38Ialous he was / and heeld hi|re| narwe in Cage
 39ffor she was wilde and yong / and he was old
 40And demed hym self / been lyk a Cokewold
 41He knew nat Cato|un| / for his wit was rude
 42That bad / men sholde wedde his similitude
 43Men sholde wedden / after hir e{s}taat
 44ffor youthe and Elde / is often at debaat
 45But sith |bt| he / was fallen in the snare
 46He mo{s}te endure / as oother folk/ his care
 47¶ffair was this yonge wyf / and ther with al
 48As any we{s}ele / hir body gent and smal
 49A ceynt she werde / barred al of sylk /
 50A barmclooth / as whit as morne Mylk/
 51Vp on hir lendes / ful of many a goore
 52Whit was hir smok/ and broyden al bifoore
 53And eek bihynde / on hir coler aboute
 54Of col blak silk / with Inne and eek |with| oute
 55The tapes / of hir white voluper
 56Were of the same sute / of hir coler
 57Hir filet brood of sylk/ and set ful hye
 58And sikerly / she hadde a likerous Iye
 59fful smale y pulled / were hir browes two
 60And tho were bent/ and blake as is a slo

{{Folio 43r}}

61She was ful moore / bli{s}ful on to see
 62Than is the newe / Pereionette tree
 63And softer / than the wolfe is of a wether
 64And by hir girdel / heeng a purs of lether
 65Ta{ss}eled with silk / and perled with latoun
 66In al this world / to seken vp and doun
 67Ther nys no man so wys / |bt| koude thenche
 68So gay a Popelote / or swich a wenche
 69fful brighter was / the shynyng of hir hewe
 70Than in the Tour / the noble yforged newe
 71But of hir soong/ it was as loude and yerne
 72As any swalwe / sitting on a Berne
 73Ther to / she koude skippe / and make game
 74As any kyde / or Calf / folwyng his dame
 75Hir mouth was sweete / as Bragot/ or the meeth
 76Or hoord of Apples / leyd in hey or heeth
 77Wyn{s}yng she was / as is a ioly Colt/
 78Loong as a Ma{s}t/ and vp righte as a bolt/
 79A brooch she baar / vp on hir loue coler
 80As brood / as is the boos of a Bokeler
 81Hir shoes were laced / on hir legges hye
 82She was a Prymerole / a pigge{s}nye
 83ffor any lord / to leggen in his bedde
 84Or yet/ for any good yeman to wedde
 85¶Now sire and eft sire / so bifel the cas
 86That on a day / this hende Nicholas
 87ffil with this yonge wyf / to rage |&| pleye

88Whil |pt| hir hou{s}bonde / was at O{s}neye
 89As clerkes been / ful subtil and ful queynte
 90And pryuely / he caughte hi|re| by the queynte
 91And seyde ywys / but if ich haue my wille
 92ffor derne loue / of thee lemman I spille
 93And heeld hi|re| harde / by the haunche bones
 94And seyde lemman / loue me al atones
 95Or I wol dyen / al {s}o god me saue
 96And she sproong/ as a Colt dooth in the Traue
 97And with hir heed / she wryed fa{s}te away
 98She seyde I wol nat ki{ss}e thee by my fey
 99Wy lat be quod ich / lat be Nicholas
 100Or I wol crye / out harrow and allas

{{Folio 43v}}

101Do wey youre handes / for youre curtei{s}ye
 102¶This Nicholas / gan mercy for to crye
 103And spak so faire / and profred hym so fa{s}te
 104That she hir loue / hym graunted atte la{s}te
 105And swoor hir ooth / by Seint Thomas of Kent/
 106That she wolde been / at his comaundement
 107Whan |pt| she may / hir ley{s}er wel e{s}pie
 108Myn hou{s}bonde / is so ful of Ialou{s}ie
 109That but ye waite wel / and been pryuee
 110I woot right wel / I nam but deed quod she
 111Ye mo{s}te been ful derne / as in this cas
 112¶Nay ther of / care thee noght quod Nicholas
 113A clerck/ hadde lutherly / bi{s}et his while
 114But if he koude / a Carpenter bigyle
 115And thus they been / acorded and y{s}worn
 116To waite a tyme / as I haue told biforn
 117Whan Nicholas / hadde doon thus euerydel
 118And thakked hire / vp on the lendes wel
 119He ki{s}te hir sweete / and taketh his sautrye
 120And pleyeth fa{s}te / and maketh melodye
 121¶Thanne fil it thus / |pt| to the pari{ss}h chirche
 122Cri{s}tes owene werkes / for to wirche
 123This goode wyf / wente on an haliday
 124Hir forheed shoon / as bright as any day
 125So was it wa{ss}hen / whan she leet hir werk/
 126¶Now was ther of that chirche a pari{ss}h clerk/
 127The which / |pt| was yclepid Ab{s}olon
 128Crul was his heer / and as the gold it shoon
 129And strouted as a ffanne / large and brode
 130fful streight and euene / lay his ioly shode
 131His rode was reed / hi{s}e eyen greye as goos
 132With Poules wyndow / coruen on his shoos
 133In ho{s}es red / he wente feti{s}ly
 134Yclad he was / ful smal and |prop|rely
 135Al in a kirtel / of a light waget {{set}}
 136fful faire and thikke / been the pointes
 137And ther vp on / he hadde a gay surplys
 138As whit/ as is the blo{s}me vp on the rys
 139A murye child he was / {s}o god me saue

140Wel koude he laten blood / and clippe and shaue

{{Folio 44r}}

141And maken a chartre of lond / or Aquitaunce
 142On twenty manere / koude he trippe and daunce
 143After the scole / of Oxenford tho
 144And with his legges / ca{s}ten to and fro
 145And pleyen songes / on a smal Rubible
 146Ther to he soong {s}om tyme / a loud quynnyble
 147And as wel / koude he pleye on a gyterne
 148In al the town / nas Brewhous ne Ta|uer|ne
 149That he ne vi{s}ited / with his solas
 150Ther any / gaylard tappe{s}tere was
 151But {s}ooth to seyn / he was {s}om del squaymous
 152Of fartyng / and of speche daungerous
 153¶This Ab{s}olon / |pt| ioly was and gay
 154Gooth with a sencer / on the haliday
 155Sen{s}ynge the wyues / of the pari{ss}he fa{s}te
 156And many a louely look / on hem he ca{s}te
 157And namely / on this Carpenters wyf
 158To looke on hire / hym thoughte a murye lyf
 159She was {s}o |prop|re and sweete and likerous
 160I dar wel seyn / if she hadde been a Mous
 161And he a cat/ he wolde hir hente anon
 162This pari{ss}he clerk/ this ioly Ab{s}olon
 163Hath in his herte / swich a loue longynge
 164That of no wyf / ne took he noon offrynge
 165ffor curtei{s}ye / he seyde he wolde noon
 166The Moone / whan it was nyght/ ful brighte shoon
 167And Ab{s}olon / his gyterne / hath ytake
 168ffor |per|amours / he thoghte for to wake
 169And forth he gooth / iolyf and amorous
 170Til he cam / to the Carpenters hous
 171A litel / after cokkes hadde ycrowe
 172And dre{ss}ed hym vp / by a shot wyndowe
 173That was / vp on / the Carpenters wal
 174He syngeth / in his voys / gentil and smal
 175Now deere lady / if thy wille be
 176I prey yow / |pt| ye wol rewe on me
 177fful wel acordant/ to his giternynge
 178This Carpenter awook/ and herde hym synge
 179And spak/ vn to his wyf / and seyde anon
 180What Ali{s}on / here{s}tow noght Ab{s}olon

{{Folio 44v}}

181That chaunteth thus / vnder oure boures wal
 182¶And she / an{s}werde hir hou{s}bonde / ther with al
 183Yis god woot Io{hn} / I here it euerydel
 184This pa{ss}eth forth / what wol ye bet than wel
 185ffro day to day / this ioly Ab{s}olon
 186So woweth hi|re| / |pt| hym is wo bigon
 187He waketh al the nyght/ and al the day
 188He kembed his lokkes brode / and made hym gay

189He woweth hi|re| / by meenes / and brocage
 190And swoor / he wolde been hir owene page
 191He syngeth brokkyng/ as a nyghtyngale
 192He sente hir pyment/ Meeth / and spiced Ale
 193And wafres pipyng hoot/ out of the gleede
 194And for she was of towne / he |pro|fred meede
 195ffor som folk / wol be wonnen for riche{ss}e
 196And som for strokes / and som for gentile{ss}e

Vnde Ouidi|us| Ictib|us| Agrestis

197Som tyme to shewe / his lightne{ss}e and mai{s}trye
 198He pleyeth Herodes / vp on a Scaffold hye
 199But what auailleth hym / as in this cas
 200She loueth so / this hende Nicholas
 201That Ab{s}olon / may blowe the Bukkes horn
 202He ne hadde for his labour / but a scorn
 203And thus she maketh / Ab{s}olon hir Ape
 204And al his erne{s}t/ turneth til a Iape
 205fful sooth is this |pro||uer|be / it is no lye
 206Men seith right thus / alwey the neighe slye
 207Maketh / the ferre leewe to be looth
 208ffor thogh |pt| Ab{s}olon / be wood or wrooth
 209By cau{s}e / |pt| he fer was from hir sighte
 210This neighe Nicholas / stood in his lighte
 211¶Now bere thee wel / thow hende Nicholas
 212ffor Ab{s}olon / may waille / and synge allas
 213¶And so bifel it/ on a Saterdag
 214This Carpenter / was goon til O{s}enay
 215And Hende Nicholas / and Ali{s}o|un|
 216Acorded been / to this conclu{s}io|un|
 217That Nicholas / shal shapen hem a wile
 218This sely Ialous hou{s}bonde / to bigile
 219And if so be / the game wente aright/
 220She sholde slepen / in his arm al nyght/

{{Folio 45r}}

221ffor this was hir de{s}ir / and his al{s}o
 222And right anoon / with outen wordes mo
 223This Nicholas / no lenger wolde tarie
 224But dooth ful {s}ofte / vn to his chambre carie
 225Bothe mete and drynke / for a day or tweye
 226And to hir hou{s}bonde / bad hire for to seye
 227If |pt| he axed / after Nicholas
 228She sholde seye / she ny{s}te wher he was
 229Of al that day / she seigh hym noght |with| Iye
 230She trowed / |pt| he was in maladye
 231ffor / for no cry / hir mayde koude hym calle
 232He nolde an{s}were / for no thyng |pt| myghte falle
 233¶This pa{ss}eth forth / al thilke Saterdag
 234That Nicholas / stille in his chambre lay
 235And eet/ and sleep / or dide what hym le{s}te
 236Til Sonday / |pt| sonne gooth to re{s}te
 237¶This sely Carpenter / hath greet |mer|uaille

238Of Nicholas / or what thyng myghte hym aille
 239And seyde / I am adrad / by Seint Thomas
 240It stondest nat aright/ with Nicholas
 241God shilde / |pt| he deyde sodeynly
 242This world is now / ful tikel sikerly
 243I seigh to day a corps / born to chirche
 244That now a monday la{s}t/ I seigh hym wirche
 { }b{ }
 245Clepe at his dore / or knobbe with a stoon
 { }a{ }
 246Go vp quod he / vn to his knaue anoon
 247Looke how it is / and tel me boldely
 248¶This knaue gooth hym vp / ful sturdily
 249And at the chambre dore / whil |pt| he {s}tood
 250He cryde and knobbed / as |pt| he were wood
 251What how / what do ye mai{s}ter Nicholay
 252How may ye slepen / al the longe day
 253But al for noght/ he herde nat a word
 254An hole he foond / ful lowe vp on a bord
 255Ther as the Cat / was wont In for to crepe
 256And at that hole / he looked In ful depe
 257And atte la{s}te / he hadde of hym a sighte
 258¶This Nicholas / sat euere capyng vp righte
 259As he hadde kiked / on the newe moone
 260Adown he gooth / and tolde his mai{s}ter soone

{{Folio 45v}}

261In what array / he saw this ilke man
 262¶This Carpenter / to ble{ss}en hym bigan
 263And seyde / help vs seinte ffride{s}wyde
 264A man woot litel / what hym shal bityde
 265This man is falle / with his A{s}tromye
 266In {s}om woodne{ss}e / or in som Agonye
 267I thoghte ay wel / how |pt| it sholde be
 268Men sholde noght knowe / of goddes |pri|uete
 269Ye bli{ss}ed be alwey / a lewed man
 270That noght/ but oonly his bileue kan
 271So ferde another clerk/ with A{s}tromye
 272He walked in the feeldes / for to pry
 273Vp on the {s}terres / what ther sholde bifalle
 274Til he was / in a Marlepit yfalle
 275He saw nat that/ but yet by Seint Thomas
 276Me reweth sore / of hende Nicholas
 277He shal be rated / of his studyng/
 278If |pt| I may / by |Jesus| heuene kyng/
 279Get me a staf / |pt| I may vnder{s}pore
 280Whil |pt| thow Robyn / heue{s}t vp the dore
 281He shal out of his {s}tudyng/ as I ge{ss}e
 282And to the chambre dore / he gan hym dre{ss}e
 283His knaue / was a {s}trong carl / for the nones
 284And by the ha{s}pe / he haaf it vp atones
 285In to the floor / the dore fil anoon
 286This Nicholas / sat ay as stille as {s}toon
 287And euere caped vp / in to the Eyr

288This Carpenter / wende he were in de{s}peyr
 289And hente hym / by the sholdres myghtily
 290And shook hym harde / and cryde spitou{s}ly
 291What Nicholay / what how looke adoun
 292Awake / and thenk on Cri{s}tes pa{ss}ioun
 293I crouche thee / from Elues / and fro wightes
 294Ther with the nyght spel / seyde he anon rightes
 295On foure halues / of the hous aboute
 296And on the thre{ss}hfold / on the dore with oute
 297|Iesu| cri{s}t/ and Seint/ Benedight/
 298Ble{ss}e this hous / from euery wikked wight/
 299ffor the nyghte{s}uerye / the white Pater no{s}ter
 300Where wente{s}tow / seinte Petres su{s}ter

{{Folio 46r}}

301And at the la{s}te / this hende Nicholas
 302Gan for to sike soore / and seyde allas
 303Shal al the world / be lo{s}t eft {s}oones now
 304¶This Carpenter an{s}werde / what sei{s}tow
 305What thenk / on god / as we doon men |þt| swynke
 306¶This Nicholas an{s}werde / fecche me drynke
 307And after / wol I speke in pryuetee
 308Of |cer|tein thyng / |þt| toucheth me and thee
 309I wol telle it / noon oother man |cer|tayne
 310¶This Carpenter gooth doun / and comth agayn
 311And broghte of myghty ale / a large quart/
 312And whan |þt| eech of hem / hadde dronke his part/
 313This Nicholas / his dore fa{s}te shette
 314And doun the Carpenter / by hym he sette
 315And seyde / |Iohan| / myn hoo{s}t/ lief and deere
 316Thou shalt vp on thy trouthe / swere me heere
 317That to no wight/ thou shalt this con{s}eil wreye
 318ffor it is cri{s}tes con{s}eil / that I seye
 319And if thou telle it/ man thou art forlore
 320ffor this vengeaunce / thow shalt haue therfore
 321That if thow wreye me / thow shalt be wood
 322¶Nay Cri{s}t forbede it/ for his holy blood
 323Quod tho this sely man / I nam no labbe
 324And thogh I seye / I nam nat lief to gabbe
 325Sey what thow wolt/ I shal it neuere telle
 326To child ne wyf/ by hym that harwed helle
 327¶Now |Iohan| quod Nicholas / I wol nocht lye
 328I haue yfounde / in myn A{s}trotrogye
 329As I haue looked / in the moone bright/
 330That now a monday next/ at quarter nyght/
 331Shal falle a reyn / and that so wilde and wood
 332That half so greet/ was ne|uer|e Nowels flood
 333This world he seyde / in la{ss}e than in an hour
 334Shal al be dreynt/ so hidous is the shour
 335Thus shal man kynde drenche / and le{s}e hir lyf
 336¶This Carpenter an{s}werde / allas my wyf/
 337And shal she drenche / allas myn Ali{s}oun
 338ffor sorwe of this / he fil almoo{s}t adoun
 339And seyde / is ther no remedie in this cas

340¶Why yis for gode / quod Hende Nicholas

{{Folio 46v}}

341If thow wolt werken / after loore and reed
 342Thow may{s}t noght werken / after thyn owene heed
 343ffor thus seith Salomon / |pt| was ful trewe
 344Werk al by con{s}eil / and thow shalt noght rewe
 345And if thow werken wolt/ by good con{s}ayl
 346I vndertake / with outen ma{s}t/ or Sayl
 347Yit shal I saue hi|re| / and thee and me
 348Ha{s}tow nat herd / how saued was Noe
 349Whan |pt| oure lord / hadde warned hym biforn
 350That al the world / with water sholde be lorn
 351¶Yis quod this Carpenter/ ful yore ago
 352¶Ha{s}tow nat herd / quod Nicholas al{s}o
 353The sorwe of Noe / with his felawe{s}hipe
 354Er |pt| he myghte / gete his wyf to shipe
 355Hym hadde leuere / I dar wel vndertake
 356At thilke tyme / than alle hi{s}e wetheres blake
 357That she hadde had a ship / hir self allone
 358And therefore / wo{s}tow what is be{s}t to done
 359This axeth ha{s}te / and of an ha{s}tyf thyng/
 360Men may noght |pre|che / or maken tariyng/
 361Anoon go gete vs fa{s}te / in to this In
 362A knedyng trogh / or ellis a kymelyn
 363ffor eech of vs / but looke |pt| they be large
 364In whiche we mowen swymme / as in a barge
 365And han ther Inne / vitaille suffi{s}aunt/
 366But for a day / fy on the remenaunt/
 367The water shal a{s}lake / and goon away
 368Aboute pryme / vp on the nexte day
 369But Robyn / may nat wite of this / thy knaue
 370Ne eek/ thy mayde Gille / I may nat saue
 371Axe noght why / for thogh thou axe me
 372I wol noght/ tellen goddes pryuetee
 373Suffi{s}eth thee / but if thy wittes madde
 374To han as greet a grace / as Noe hadde
 375Thy wif shal I wel sauen / out of doute
 376Go now thy wey / and speed thee heer aboute
 377But whan thou ha{s}t / for hi|re| and thee and me
 378Ygeten vs / thi{s}e knedyng/ tubbes thre
 379Thanne shaltow hangen hem / in the roof ful hye
 380That no man / of oure purueiance e{s}pye

{{Folio 47r}}

381And whan thow thus ha{s}t doon / as I haue seyde
 382And ha{s}t oure vitaille / faire in hem yleyd
 383And eek an Ax / to smyte the corde atwo
 384Whan |pt| the water cometh / |pt| we may go
 385And breke an hole / an heigh vp on the gable
 386Vn to the gardynward / ouer the stable
 387That we may frely / pa{ss}en forth oure wey
 388Whan |pt| the grete shour / is goon away

389Thanne shaltow swymme / as murye I vndertake
 390As dooth the white doke / after his drake
 391Thanne woltow clepe / how Ali{s}on / how |Iohan|
 392Be murye / for the flood wol pa{ss}e anon
 393And thou wolt seyn / hail mai{s}ter Nicholay
 394Good morwe / I see thee wel / for it is day
 395And thanne shal we be lordes al oure lyf/
 396Of al the world / as Noe and his wyf/
 397But of o thyng / I. warne thee ful right
 398Be wel auy{s}ed / on that ilke nyght/
 399That we been entred / in to shippes bord
 400That noon of vs / ne speke noht a word
 401Ne clepe ne crye / but been in his prayere
 402ffor it is / goddes owene he{s}te deere
 403Thy wyf and thow / mote hange fer atwynne
 404ffor |pt| bitwix yow / shal be no synne
 405Namooore in lookyng/ than ther shal in dede
 406This ordinaunce is seyde / go god thee spede
 407Tomorwe at nyght/ whan men been alle a{s}lepe
 408In to oure knedyng/ tubbes / wol we crepe
 409And sitten there / abidyng goddes grace
 410Go now thy wey / I haue no lenger space
 411To make of this / no lenger sermonyng/
 412Men seyn thus / seend the wi{s}e and sey no thyng/
 413Thow art so wys / it nedeth thee nat teche
 414Go saue oure lyf/ and that I thee bi{s}eche
 415¶This sely Carpenter / gooth forth his wey
 416fful ofte he seyde / allas and weylawey
 417And to his wyf / he tolde his |pri|uete
 418And she was war / and knew it bet than he
 419What al this queynte ca{s}t/ was for to seye
 420But nathelees / she ferde as she wolde deye

{{Folio 47v}}

421And seyde allas / go forth thy wey anon
 422Help vs to scape / or we been dede echon
 423I am thy trewe / verray wedded wyf/
 424Go deere spou{s}e / and help to saue oure lyf/
 425¶Lo which a greet thyng / is affeccio|un|
 426Men may dyen / of ymaginacio|un|
 427So depe / may im|pre|{ss}io|un| be take
 428This sely Carpenter / bigynneth quake
 429Hym thynketh verrailiche / |pt| he may se
 430Noes flood / come walwyng as the see
 431To drenchen Ali{s}o|un| / his hony deere
 432He wepeth / waileth / maketh sory cheere
 433He siketh / |with| ful many a sory swogh
 434And gooth / and geteth hym a knedyng/ trogh
 435And after / a tubbe and a kymelyn
 436And pryuely / he sente hem to his In
 437And heeng hem / in the roof in |pri|uete
 438His owene hand / he made laddres thre
 439To clymben / by the ronges and the stalkes
 440Vn to the tubbes / hangyng/ in the balkes

441And hem vitailed / bothe trogh and tubbe
 442With breed and che{s}e / and good ale in a Iubbe
 443Suffi{s}ynge right ynogh / as for a day
 444But er |pt| he hadde maad / al this array
 445He sente his knaue / and eek his wenche al{s}o
 446Vp on his nede / to londo|un| for to go
 447And on the monday / whan it drogh to nyght/
 448He shette his dore / with outen candel lyght/
 449And dre{ss}ed alle thyng/ as it sholde be
 450And shortly / vp they clomben alle thre
 451They seten stille / wel a furlong way
 452Now Pater no{s}ter / clom seyde Nicholay
 453And clum quod |Iohan| / and clum seyde Ali{s}o|un|
 454This Carpenter / seyde his deuocio|un|
 455And stille he sit/ and biddeth his prayere
 456Awaitynge on the reyn / if he it heere
 457¶The dede sleep / for wery bi{s}yne{ss}e
 458ffil on this Carpenter / right as I ge{ss}e
 459Aboute corfew tyme / or litel moore
 460ffor trauallyng of his goo{s}t/ he groneth soore

{{Folio 48r}}

461And eft he routeth / for his heed my{s}lay
 462¶Doun of the laddre / stalketh Nicholay
 463And Ali{s}o|un| / ful softe adoun she spedde
 464With outen wordes mo / they goon to bedde
 465Ther as the Carpenter / is wont to lye
 466Ther was the reuel / and the melodye
 467And thus lyth Ali{s}o|un| / and Nicholas
 468In.bu{s}yne{ss}e of myrthe / and in solas
 469Til that the belle of laudees / gan to ryng
 470And freres in the chauncel / gonne synge
 471¶This pari{ss}h clerk/ this amorous Ab{s}olo|n_|
 472That is for loue / alwey so wo bigon
 473Vp on the monday / was at O{s}neye
 474With compaignye / hym to di{s}porte and pleye
 475And axed vp on caas / a Cloi{s}trer
 476fful pryuely / after |Iohan| the Carpenter
 477And he drogh hym a part/ out of the cherche
 478And seyde I noot/ I saugh hym here noght werche
 479Sith Saterdag / I trowe |pt| he be went
 480ffor tymber / ther oure Abbot hath hym sent/
 481ffor he is wont/ for tymber for to go
 482And dwellen atte graunge / a day or two
 483Or ellis / he is at his hous |cer|teyn
 484Where |pt| he be / I kan noght soothly seyn
 485¶This Ab{s}olon / ful iolyf was and lyght/
 486And thoghte / now is tyme to wake al nyght/
 487ffor sikerly / I saugh hym noght stiryng
 488Aboute his dore / syn day bigan to sprynge
 489So mote I thryue / I shal at Cokkes crowe
 490fful |pri|uely / knokken at his wyndowe
 491That stant ful lowe / vp on his boures wal
 492To Ali{s}on / now wol I tellen al

493My loue longyng/. for yit I shal nat my{ss}e
 494That at the lee{s}te wey / I shal hir ki{ss}e
 495Som manere confort/ / shal I haue parfay
 496My mouth hath icched / al this longe day
 497That is a signe of ki{ss}yng/ at/ the lee{s}te
 498Al nyght me mette eek / I was at a fee{s}te
 499Ther fore I wol go slepe / an houre or tweye
 500And al the nyght/ than wol I wake and pleye

{{Folio 48v}}

501¶Whan |pt| the fir{s}te cok/ hath crowe anon
 502Vp ri{s}t / this ioly louere Ab{s}olon
 503And hym arrayeth gay / at point deus
 504But fir{s}t / he cheweth grayn and likorys
 505To smellen swete / er he hadde kembd his heer
 506Vnder his tonge / a trewe loue he beer
 507ffor ther by / wende he to be gracious
 508He rometh / to the Carpenters hous
 509And stille he stant/ vnder the shot wyndowe
 510Vn to his bre{s}t/ it raughte / it was so lowe
 511And ofte he cogheth / with a semy sown
 512What do ye hony comb / swete Ali{s}oun
 513My faire bryd / my swete cynamome
 514Awaketh lemman myn / and speketh to me
 515Wel litel thynken ye / vp on my wo
 516That for youre loue / I swete ther I go
 517No wonder is / thogh |pt| I swelte and swete
 518I moorne / as dooth a lamb / after the tete
 519Ywis lemman / I haue swich loue longyng/
 520That lyk a turtle trewe / is my moornyng/
 521I may nat ete / namoore than a mayde
 522¶Go fro the wyndow / Iakke fool she sayde
 523As help me god / it wol nat be com pa me
 524I loue another / and ellis I were to blame
 525Wel bet than thee / by Ihu Ab{s}olon
 526Go forth thy wey / or I wol ca{s}te a {s}toon
 527And lat me slepe / a twenty deuelewey
 528¶Allas quod Ab{s}olon / and weilawey
 529That trewe loue / was euere {s}o yuel bi{s}et/
 530Thanne kys me / syn |pt| it may be no bet/
 531ffor |Jesus| loue / and for the loue of me
 532¶Woltow thanne / go thy wey ther with quod she
 533¶Ye certes lemman / quod this Ab{s}olon
 534¶Thanne make thee redy quod she / I come anon
 535¶This Ab{s}olon / doun sette hym on his knees
 536And seyde / I am a lord / at alle degrees
 537ffor after this / I hope ther cometh moore
 538Lemman thy grace / and swete bryd thyn oore
 539¶The wyndow she vndooth / and that in ha{s}te
 540Haue do quod she / com of and speed thee fa{s}te

{{Folio 49r}}

541Le{s}t |pt| oure neghebores / thee e{s}pye

542¶This Ab{s}olon / gan wipe his mouth ful drye
 543Derk was the nyght/ as psych / or as the cole
 544And at the wyndow / out she putte hir hole
 545And Ab{s}olon / hym fil no bet ne wers
 546But with his mouth / he ki{s}te hir naked ers

No|ta| mal|um| quid

547fful sauourly / er he were war of this
 548Abak he {s}terte / and thoghte it was amys
 549ffor wel he wi{s}te / a womman hath no berd
 550He felte a thyng al rogh / and longe yherd
 551And seyde / fy allas / what haue I do
 552¶Te hee quod she / and clapte the wyndow to
 553And Ab{s}olon / gooth forth a sory paas
 554¶A berd / a berd / quod hende Nicholas
 555By goddes corpus / this gooth faire and wel
 556¶This sely{:}Ab{s}olon / herde euery del
 557And on his lippe / he gan for anger byte
 558And to hym self/ he seyde I shal thee quyte
 559¶Who rubbeth now / who froteth now his lippes
 560With du{s}t/ |with| sond / |with| straw / |with| clooth |with| chippes
 561But Ab{s}olon / |þt| seith ful ofte allas
 562My soule / bitake vn to Sathanas
 563But me were leuere / than al this town quod he
 564Of this de{s}pit/ awreken for to be
 565Allas quod he / allas I ne hadde ybleynt/
 566His hote loue was coold / and al yqueynt
 567ffor fro that tyme / |þt| he hadde ki{s}t hir ers
 568Of |per|amours / he {s}ette noght a kers
 569ffor he was heelyd / of his maladye
 570fful ofte |per|amours / he gan defye
 571And weep / as dooth a child |þt| is ybete
 572A softe paas / he wente ouer the strete
 573Vn til a smyth / men clepen daun Gerueys
 574That in his forge / smythed plogh harneys
 575He sharpeth shaar / and cultour bi{s}ily
 576This Ab{s}olon / knokketh al e{s}ily
 577And seyde / vndo Gerueys and that anon
 578¶What who artow|?| / it/ am I Ab{s}olon
 579What Ab{s}olon / what Cri{s}tes swete tree
 580Why ri{s}e ye {s}o rathe / ey benedicitee

{{Folio 49v}}

581What eyleth yow / som gay gerl / god it woot/
 582Hath broght yow thus / vp on the viritoot/
 583By Seinte note / ye woot wel what I mene
 584¶This Ab{s}olon / ne roghte nat a bene
 585Of al his pley / no word agayn he yaf/
 586He hadde moore tow / on his dy{s}taf/
 587Than Gerueys knew / and seyde freend so deere
 588That hote cultour / in the chymenee heere
 589As lene it me / I haue ther with to doone
 590I wol brynge it thee / agayn ful {s}oone

591¶Gerueys an{s}werde / certes were it gold
 592Or in a poke / nobles al vntold
 593Thow sholde{s}t haue / as I am trewe Smyth
 594Ey Cri{s}tes foo / what wol ye do ther with
 595¶Ther of quod Ab{s}olon / be as be may
 596I shal wel telle it thee / another day
 597And caughte the cultour / by the colde stele
 598fful softe / out at the dore he gan to stele
 599And wente / vn to the Carpenters wal
 600He cogheth fir{s}t/ and knokketh ther with al
 601Vp on the wyndow / right as he dide er
 602¶This Ali{s}on an{s}werde / who is ther[?]
 603That knokketh so / I warante it a theef/
 604¶Wy nay quod he god woot/ my swete lief/
 605I am thyn Ab{s}olon / my derelyng/
 606Of gold quod he / I haue thee broght a ryng/
 607My moder yaf it me / so god me saue
 608fful fyn it is / and ther to wel ygraue
 609This wol I yeuen thee / if thow me ki{ss}e
 610¶This Nicholas / was ri{s}en for to pi{ss}e
 611And thoghte / he wolde amenden al the Iape
 612He sholde ki{ss}e his ers / er |pt|/ he scape
 613And vp the wyndow / dide he ha{s}tely
 614And out his ers / he putteth pryuely
 615Ouer the buttok / to the haunche bon
 616¶And ther with / spak/ this clerk/ this Ab{s}olon
 617Spek swete herte / I noot noght wher thow art/
 618This Nicholas / anoon leet fle a fart/
 619As greet/ as it hadde been a thonder dent/
 620That with the strook/ he was almoos{t} yblent/

{{Folio 50r}}

621And he was redy / with his Iren hoot/
 622And Nicholas / in the ers he smoot/
 623Of gooth the skyn / an handbrede aboute
 624The hoote cultour / brende so his toute
 625That for the smert/ he wende for to dye
 626As he were wood / for wo he gan to crye
 627Help water / water / help for goddes herte
 628¶This Carpenter / out of his slomber sterte
 629And herde oon cryen water / as he were wood
 630And thoghte allas / now cometh Nowelys flood
 631He sette hym vp / with oute wordes mo
 632And with his Ax / he smoot the corde atwo
 633And down gooth al / he foond neither to selle
 634Ne breed ne ale / til he cam to the Celle
 635Vp on the floor / and the|re| a{s}wowne he lay
 636¶Vp {s}tirte hi|re| / Ali{s}on and Nicholay
 637And cryden out and harrow / in the Strete
 638The neghebores / bothe smale and grete
 639In ronnen / for to gauren on this man
 640That a{s}wowne lay / bothe pale and wan
 641ffor with the fal / he bro{s}ten hadde his arm
 642But stonde he mo{s}te / vn to his owene harm

643ffor whan he spak / he was anon bore doun
 644With hende Nicholas and Ali{s}oun
 645They tolden euery man / |pt| he was wood
 646He was aga{s}t so / of Nowelys flood
 647Thurgh fanta{s}ie / |pt| of his vanytee
 648He hadde ybought hym / knedyng tubbes thre
 649And hadde hem hanged / in the roof aboue
 650And |pt| he preyde hem / for goddes loue
 651To sitten in the roof / |per| compaignye
 652¶The folk gan laughen / at his fanta{s}ye
 653In to the roof / they kiken and they cape
 654And turned al his harm / vn to a Iape
 655ffor what {s}o / |pt| this Carpenter an{s}werde
 656It was for noght/ no man his re{s}on herde
 657With othes grete / he was {s}o sworn adoun
 658That he was holden wood / in al the toun
 659ffor euery clerk / anon right heeld with oother
 660They seyde / the man was wood / my leeu brother

{{Folio 50v}}

661And e|uer|y wight/ gan laughen at this stryf/
 662Thus swyued / was the Carpenters wyf/
 663ffor al his keypyng/ and his Ialou{s}ye
 664And Ab{s}olon / hath ki{s}t hir nether Iye
 665And Nicholas / is scalded in the toute
 666This tale is doon / and god saue al the route

¶Here is ended / the Millerys tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expanded contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles. Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers.

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
 {ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
 {C|} : capitulum
 {^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
 {?.} : punctus elevatus
 {^} : caret

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Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{ {Folio 195r} }

¶The myry talkyng/ of the hoo{s}t/ to the Phi{s}cien

1Oure hoo{s}t gan to swere / as he were wood
2Harrow quod he / by nayles and by blood
3This was a fals cherl / and a fals Iu{s}ti{s}e
4As shameful deeth / as herte may deuy{s}e
5Come to thi{s}e Iuges / and hir aduocatz
6Algate this sely mayde / is slayn allas
7Allas / to deere boghte she beautee
8Wherfore I seye alday / |pt| men may {s}e
9That yiftes of ffortune / and of nature
10Been cau{s}e of deeth / to many a creature
11Of bothe yiftes / |pt| I speke of now

12Men han ful ofte / moore for harm than prow
 13¶But trewely / myn owene mai{s}ter deere
 14This is a pitous tale / for to heere
 15But nathelees pa{ss}e ouer/ is no fors
 16I pray to god / so saue thy gentil cors
 17And eek thyne Vrynals / and thy Iurdones
 18Thyn Ypocras / and eek thy galyones
 19And euery boy{s}te / ful of thy letuarie
 20God ble{ss}e hem / and oure lady Seinte Marie
 21So mote I then / thow art a |pro|pre man
 22And lyk a |pre|lat / by Seint Ronyan

{{Folio 195v}}

23Seyde I nat wel / I kan nat/ speke in terme
 24But wel I woot/ thow doo{s}t myn herte to erme
 25That I almoo{s}t/ haue caught/ a Cardynacle
 26By corpus bones / but if I haue triacle
 27Or ellis a draghte / of moy{s}te and corny ale
 28Or but I heere anon / a murye tale
 29Myn herte is lo{s}t/ for pitee of this mayde
 30¶Thow beel amy / thow Pardoner he sayde
 31Tel vs som myrthe / or Iapes right anon
 32¶It shal be doon quod he / by Seint Ronyon
 33But fir{s}t quod he / heere at this ale stake
 34I wol bothe drynke / and eten of a Cake
 35¶And right anon / thi{s}e gentils gonne to crye
 36Nay lat hym telle vs / of no ribawdye
 37Tel vs {s}om moral thyng/ / |pt| we may leere
 38Som wit / and thanne wol we gladly heere
 39¶I graunte ywis quod he / but I moot thynke
 40Vp on som hone{s}te thyng/ whil |pt| I drynke

¶Radix |o{ _mi}| malo|rum| / e{s}t Cupiditas // Ad Thimoth|_eu| .6^{0}^.

¶Here bigynneth / the {^}{{|pro|loge of the}} Pardo|ner|s tale

1LOrdynge quod he / in chirches whan I |pre|che
 2I peyne me / to han an hauteyn speche
 3And rynge it out/ as round as gooth a belle
 4ffor I kan / al by rote that I telle
 5My theme is alwey oon / and e|uer|e was
 6Radix malo|rum| / e{s}t cupiditas
 7¶ffir{s}t I |pro|nounce / whennes |pt| I come
 8And thanne my bulles / shewe I alle |&| some
 9Oure lige lordes seel / on my patente
 10That shewe I fir{s}t/ my body to warente
 11That no man be so boold / ne pree{s}t ne clerk/
 12Me to de{s}tourbe / of Cri{s}tes holy werk/
 13And after that/ thanne telle I forth my tales
 14Bulles of Popes / and of Cardynales

{{Folio 196r}}

15Of Patriarkes / and Bi{ss}hopes I shewe
 16And in latyn / I speke a wordes fewe

17To saffron with / my |pre|dicacio|un|
 18And for to stire hem / to deuocio|un|
 19¶Thanne shewe I forth / my longe |cri|{s}tal {s}tones
 20Ycrammed ful / of cloutes and of bones
 21Relikes been they / as wenen they echon
 22Thanne haue I in a lato|un| / a shulder bon
 23Which |pt| was / of an holy Iewes sheep
 24Goode men I seye / tak of my wordes keep
 25If |pt| this boon be wa{ss}he / in any welle
 26If cow / or calf/ or sheep / or Oxe swelle
 27That any worm hath ete / or worm y{s}tonge
 28Taak water of that welle / and wa{ss}h his tonge
 29And it is hool anoon / and forther moor
 30Of pokkes / and of Scabbe / and e|uer|y soor
 31Shal e|uer|y sheep be hool / |pt| of this welle
 32Drynketh a draughte / taak kepe eek what I telle
 33¶If |pt| the goode man / |pt| the be{s}tes oweth
 34Wol euery wike / er |pt| the cok hym croweth
 35fa{s}tynge / drynken of this welle a draghte
 36As thilke holy Iew / oure eldres taghte
 37Hi{s}e be{s}tes and his stoor / shal multiplie
 38And sire al{s}o / it heeleth Ialous{s}ie
 39ffor thogh a man / be falle in Ialous rage
 40Lat maken with this water / his potage
 41And neuere shal he moore / his wyf my{s}tri{s}te
 42Thogh he the {s}oothe / of hir defaute wi{s}te
 43Al hadde she / taken pree{s}tes / two or thre
 44¶Heere is a Miteyn eek / |pt| ye may se
 45He |pt| his hand / wol putte / in this Mitayn
 46He shal haue / multiplyyng/ of his grayn
 47Whan he hath sowen / be it whete or Otes
 48So |pt| / he / offre pens / or ellis grotes
 49¶Goode men and wommen / o thyng warne I yow
 50If any wight/ be in this chirche now
 51That hath doon synne horrible / that he
 52Dar nat for shame / of it y{s}hryuen be
 53Or any womman / be she yong or old
 54That hath ymaked / hir hou{s}bond Cokewold

{ {Folio 196v} }

55Swich folk / shal haue no power / ne no |gra|ce
 56To offren to my Relikes / in this place
 57And who so fyndeth hym / out of swich blame
 58He wol come vp / and offre a goddes name
 59And I a{ss}oille hym / by the auctoritee
 60Which |pt| by bulle / ygraunted was to me
 61¶By this gaude / haue I wonne / yeer by yeer
 62An hundred mark/ sith I was Pardoner
 63I stonde lyk a Clerk / in my pulpet/
 64And whan |pt| lewed peple / is doun y{s}et/
 65I |pre|che so / as ye han herd bifore
 66And telle / and hundred fal{s}e Iapes more
 67Thanne peyne I me / to {s}trecche forth the nekke
 68And E{s}t and We{s}t/ vp on the peple I bekke

69As dooth a dowue / sitting on a berne
 70Myne handes / and my tonge goon {s}o yerne
 71That it is ioie / to se my bi{s}yne{ss}e
 72Of Auarice / and of swich cur{s}edne{ss}e
 73Is al my |pre|chyng/ for to make hem free
 74To yeuen hir pens / and namely vn to me
 75ffor myn entente is nat/ but for to wynne
 76And no thyng/ for correccio|un| of synne
 77I rekke ne|uer|e / whan |pt| they been beryed
 78Thogh |pt| hir soules / goon a blakeberied
 79ffor certes / many a |pre|dicacio|un|
 80Comth ofte tyme / of yuel entencio|un|
 81¶Som for ple{s}ance of folk/ and flaterye
 82To been auanced / by ypocri{s}ie
 83And som for veyne glorie / and som for hate
 84ffor whan I dar / noon oother weyes debate
 85Thanne wol I {s}tyng hym / |with| my tonge s|mer|te
 86In |pre|chyng/ so |pt| he shal nat a{s}terte
 87To been diffamed fal{s}ly / if |pt| he
 88Hath tre{s}pa{s}ed / to my bretheren / or to me
 89ffor though I telle noght/ his |prop|re name
 90Men shal wel knowe / that it is the same
 91By {s}ignes / and by othere circum{s}tances
 92Thus quyte I folk/ that {^}{{doon}} vs di{s}ple{s}ances
 93Thus spete I out/ my venym vnder hewe
 94Of holyne{ss}e/ to seme holy and trewe

{{Folio 197r}}

95But shortly / myn entente I wol deuy{s}e
 96I |pre|che of no thyng/ but for coueiti{s}e
 97Ther fore my theme is yet/ and e|uer|e was
 98Radix malo|rum| / e{s}t Cupiditas
 99¶Thus kan I |pre|che / agayn that same vice
 100Which |pt| I v{s}e / and that is Auarice
 101But though my self/ be gilty in that synne
 102Yet kan I make / oother folk to twynne
 103ffrom Auarice / and soore to repente
 104But that is nat/ my principal entente
 105I |pre|che no thyng/ but for coueiti{s}e
 106Of this matere / it oghte ynow suffi{s}e
 107¶Thanne telle I hem / en{s}amples many oon
 108Of olde stories / longe tyme agoon
 109ffor lewed peple / louen tales olde
 110Swiche thynges / kan they wel reporte |&| holde
 111What trowe ye / |pt| whiles I may |pre|che
 112And wynne / gold and siluer / for I teche
 113That I wol lyue in pouerte / wilfully
 114Nay nay / I thoghte it ne|uer|e trewely
 115ffor I wol |pre|che / and begge / in sondry landes
 116I wol nat do no labour / |with| myne handes
 117Ne make ba{s}kettes / and lyue ther by
 118By cau{s}e / I wol nat beggen ydelly
 119I wol / none of the Apo{s}tles countrefete
 120I wol haue moneye / wolle / che{s}e / and whete

121Al were it yeuen / of the pouere{s}t page
 122Or of the pouere{s}te widwe / in a village
 123Al sholde hir children / {s}terue for famyne
 124Nay I wol drynke / licour of the vyne
 125And haue a ioly wenche / in euery toun
 126But herkneth lordynges / in conclu{s}ioun
 127¶Youre likyng is / |þt| I shal telle a tale
 128Now haue I dronke / a draghte of corny Ale
 129By god I hope / I shal yow telle a thyng/
 130That shal by re{s}o|un| / been at youre likyng/
 131ffor thogh my self be / a ful vicious man
 132A moral tale / yet I yow telle kan
 133Which I am wont to |pre|che / for to wynne
 134Now holde youre pees / my tale I wol bigynne

{{Folio 197v}}

[H]ere bigynneth / the Pardo|ner|s tale

1In fflandres / whilom was a compaignye
 2Of yonge folk/ that haunteden folye
 3As Riot/ ha{s}ard / Stewes / and Tauernes
 4Where as with harpes / lutes / and gyternes
 5They daunce / and pleyen at dees / bothe day |&| nyght/
 6And ete al{s}o and drynke / o|uer| hir myght/
 7Thurgh which / they doon the deuel sacrifi{s}e
 8With Inne that deueles temple / in cur{s}ed wi{s}e
 9By su|per|fluytee / abhomynable
 10Hir othes been {s}o grete / and so dampnable
 11That it is gri{s}ly / for to heere hem swere
 12Oure bli{ss}ed lordes body / they to tere
 13Hem thoughte / that Iewes / rente hym noght ynough
 14And eech of hem / at otheres synne lough
 15And right anon / thanne coomen Tombe{s}teres
 16ffetys and smale / and yonge ffrute{s}teres
 17Syngeris with harpes / Baudes / waufereres
 18Whiche been / the verray deueles Officers
 19To kyndle and blowe / the fyr of lecherye
 20That is annexed / vn to glotonye
 21The holy writ take I / to my witne{ss}e
 22That luxure / is in wyn / and dronkene{ss}e

¶Nolite inebriari vino in quo e{s}t luxuria

23¶Lo how |þt| dronken loth / vnkyndely
 24Lay by his doghtres two / vnwityngly
 25So dronke he was / he ny{s}te what he wroghte
 26Herodes / who so wel the stories soghte
 27Whan he of wyn was replet/ at his fe{s}te
 28Right at his owene table / he yaf his he{s}te
 29To sleen the Bapti{s}t/ |Iohan| / ful giltelees
 30Senec/ seith a good word dotelees

¶No|ta|

31¶He seith / he kan no difference fynde

32Bitwix a man / that { ` , } is out of his mynde
 33And a man / which |pt| is dronkelewe
 34But that woodne{ss}e / yfallen in a sherewe
 35|per|{s}euereth lenger / than dooth dronkene{ss}e
 36O glotonye / ful of cur{s}edne{ss}e
 37O cau{s}e fir{s}t/ of oure confu{s}io|un|
 38O original / of oure dampnacio|un|
 39Til Cri{s}t hadde boght vs / with his blood agayn
 40Lo how deere / shortly for to sayn

{ {Folio 198r} }

41Aboght was / thilke cur{s}ed vileynye
 42Corrupt/ was al this world for glotonye
 43Adam oure fader/ and his wyf al{s}o
 44ffro Paradys / to labour and to wo
 45Were dryuen for that vice / it is no drede
 46ffor whil |pt| Adam fa{s}ted / as I rede

//|Ieronimus| |contra| Iouinian|um| // Q|Am| diu Ieiuna[uit Adam] duxit vxorem

47He was in Paradys / and whan |pt| he
 in paradi{s}o fuit / comedit |&| eiect|us| e{s}t/ {s}ta[tim]

48Eet of the frut/ defended on a tree

duxit vxorem

49Anon he was out ca{s}t/ to wo and peyne
 50O glotonye / on thee wel oghte vs pleyne
 51¶O wi{s}te a man / how manye maladies
 52ffolwen of exce{ss}e / and of glotonyes
 53He wolde been / the moore me{s}urable
 54Of his diete / sitting at his table
 55Allas the shorte throte / the tendre mouth
 56Marketh / |pt| E{s}t/ and We{s}t/ and North and South
 57In erthe / in Eyr / in Water / men to swynke
 58To gete a gloton / deyntee mete and drynke
 59Of this matere / o Paul / wel kan{s}tow trete
 60Mete vn to wombe / and wombe eek vn to mete

// e{s}ca ventri et venter e{s}cis

61Shal god de{s}troyen bothe / as Paulus seith
 deus aut|em| |&| |hunc| |&| ill|am| de{s}tuet

62Allas a foul thyng/ is it by my feith
 63To seye this word / and fouler is the dede
 64Whan man so drynketh / of the white |&| rede
 65That of his throte / he maketh his pryuee
 66Thurgh / thilke cur{s}ed su|per|fluite
 67¶The Apo{s}tle wepyng/ seith ful pitou{s}ly

// Ad Philipen{s}es ca^{0}^ . 3^{0}^ .

68Ther walken manye / of whiche yow toold haue I
 69I seye it now wepyng/ with pitous voys
 70Ther been enemys / of Cri{s}tes croys
 71Of whiche the ende is deth / wombe is hir god
 72O wombe / o bely / o stynkyng cod
 73ffulfilled of dong/ and of corrupcioun
 74At either ende of thee / foul is the soun
 75How greet labour / and co{s}t/ is thee to fynde
 76Thi{s}e Cokes / how they stampe / |&| streyne / |&| grynde
 77And turnen sub{s}tance / in to accident/
 78To fulfillen al / the likerous talent/
 79Out of the harde bones / knokke they
 80The mary / for they ca{s}te nat away

{{Folio 198v}}

81That may go thurgh the golet/ softe and soote
 82Of Spicerie / of lief / and bark / and roote
 83Shal been his Sauce / ymaked by delit
 84To make hym yet/ a newer appetit/
 85But |cer|tes / he that haunteth swiche delices
 ¶|qui aut|em| in delicijs e{s}t viuens/ mortuus e{s}t

86Is deed / whil |pt| he lyueth in tho vices
 87¶|A lecherous thyng is wyn // and dronkene{ss}e

¶|luxurio{s}a res/ vinum {?}

88Is ful of stryuyng/ and of wrecchedne{ss}e

¶|et contumelio{s}a ebrietas

89O dronke man / di{s}figured is thy face
 90Sour is thy breeth / foul artow to embrace
 91And thurgh thy dronke no{s}e / {s}emeth the {s}oun
 92As thogh thou seyde{s}t ay / Samp{s}o|un| Samp{s}oun
 93And yet god woot/ Samp{s}on drank ne|uer|e no wyn
 94Thou falle{s}t/ as it were a stiked swyn
 95Thy tonge is lo{s}t/ and al thyn hone{s}t cure
 96ffor dronkene{ss}e / is verray sepulture
 97Of mannes wit/ and his di{s}crecio|un|
 98In whom |pt| drynke / hath domynacio|un|
 99He kan no con{s}eil kepe / it is no drede
 100Now kepe yow / fro the white and fro the rede
 101And namely / fro the white wyn of lepe
 102That is to selle / in ffi{ss}h{s}trete / or in Chepe
 103This wyn of Spaigne / crepeth subtilly
 104In othere wyne / growynge fa{s}te by
 105Of which/ ther ri{s}eth swich fumo{s}jitee
 106That whan a man / hath dronken draghtes thre
 107And weneth |pt| he be at hom in Chepe
 108He is in Spaigne / right at the toun of lepe
 109Nat at the Rochel / ne at Burdeux toun
 110And thanne wol he seyn / Samp{s}on Samp{s}oun
 111¶|But herkneth lordynges / o word I yow preye

112That alle the souereyn actes / dar I seye
 113Of victories / in the olde te{s}tament/
 114Thurgh verray god / that is o|_mi|potent/
 115Were doon in ab{s}tinence / and in prayere
 116Looketh the Bible / and ther ye may it leere
 117¶Looke Attila / the grete conquerour
 118Deyde in his sleep / with shame and di{s}hon|our|
 119Bledyng at his no{s}e / in dronkene{ss}e
 120A Capitayn / sholde lyue in sobrene{ss}e

{ {Folio 199r} }

121¶And o|uer| al this / auy{s}eth yow right wel
 122What was comaunded / vn to Lamwel

Noli vin|um| dare |&c'|

123Nat Samuel / but Lamwel seye I
 124Redeth the Bible / and fynd it ex|pre|{s}ly
 125Of wyn yeuyng / to hem |pt| han Iu{s}ti{s}e
 126Namooore of this / for it may wel suffi{s}e
 127¶And now / that I haue spoken of glotonye
 128Now wol I / yow defende ha{s}ardrye
 129Ha{s}ard / is verray moder of le{s}ynges

¶|Poli|rum|| li^{0}^. 1^0^. ¶|Mendacio|rum|

130And of deceite / and cur{s}ed for{s}werynges

|&| |per|iuria|rum| ma|ter| e{s}t Alea

131Bla{s}pheme of Cri{s}t/ man{s}laughtre / and wa{s}t/ al{s}o
 132Of catel / and of tyme / and forthermo
 133It is reproue / and contrarie of honour
 134ffor to ben holden / a c|om|mune ha{s}ardour
 135And euere the hyer / he is of e{s}taat/
 136The moore is he holden de{s}olat/
 137If |pt| a Prynce / v{s}eth ha{s}ardrye
 138In alle gouernance / and policye
 139He is / as by c|om|mune opynyo|un|
 140Yholde / the la{ss}e in reputacio|un|
 141¶|Stilbon| / that was a wys Emba{ss}adour
 142Was sent to Corynthe / in ful gret honour
 143ffro lacedomye / to make hi|re| allia|un|ce
 144And whan he cam / hym happed |per| chaunce
 145That alle the grette{s}te / |pt| were of that lond
 146Pleiynge at the ha{s}ard / he hem fond
 147ffor which as {s}oone / as it myghte be
 148He stal hym hom agayn / to his contree
 149And seyde / ther wol I nat le{s}e my name
 150Ny wol nat take on me / so greet defame
 151Yow for to allie / vn to none ha{s}ardours
 152Sendeth / othere wi{s}e Emba{ss}adours
 153ffor by my trouthe / me were le|uer|e dye
 154Than I yow sholde / to ha{s}ardours allye
 155ffor ye that been / {s}o glorious in honours

156Shal nat allye yow / with ha{s}ardours
 157As by my wyl / ne as by my tretee
 158This wi{s}e Philo{s}ophre / thus seyde he
 159¶Looke eek / that to the kyng Demetrius
 160The kyng of Parthes / as the book seith vs

{{Folio 199v}}

161Sente hym a paire of dees / of gold in scorn
 162ffor he hadde v{s}ed / ha{s}ard ther biforn
 163ffor which / he heeld his glorie / or his renoun
 164At no value / or reputacioun
 165Lordes may fynden / oother ma|ner|e pley
 166Hone{s}te ynow / to dryue the day away
 167¶Now wol I speke / of oother fal{s}e and grete
 168A word or two / as olde bokes trete
 169¶Greet sweryng/ is a thyng abhomynable
 170And fals sweryng/ is yet moore repreuable
 171The heighe god / forbad sweryng at al
 172Witne{ss}e on Mathew / but in special

¶Nolite iurare o|mn|ino / Mathei .5.

173Of sweryng/ seith the holy Ieremye

¶Ieremie .4^{0}^. Iurabis in veritate

174Thow shalt swere sooth thyne othes / |&| nat lye

in Iudicio |&| Iu{s}ticia

175And swere in doom / and eek in rightwi{s}ne{ss}e
 176But ydel sweryng/ is a cur{s}edne{ss}e
 177¶Bihoold and se / |pt| in the fir{s}te table
 178Of heighe goddes he{s}tes honorable
 179How |pt| the seconde he{s}te of hym / is this
 180Take nat my name / in ydel or amys
 181Lo rather he forbedeth / swich sweryng/
 182Than homycide / or many a cur{s}ed thyng/
 183I seye / |pt| as by ordre / thus it standeth
 184This knoweth / that hi{s}e he{s}tes vnder{s}tandeth
 185How that the seconde he{s}te of god / is that/
 186And forther ouer/ I wol thee telle al plat/
 187That vengeance / shal nat parten from his hous
 188That of hi{s}e othes / is to outrageous
 189By goddes |pre|cious herte / and by his nayles
 190And by the blood of Cri{s}t/ that is in hayles
 191Seuene is my chance / and thyn is cynk |&| treye
 192By goddes armes / if thow fa[{}s]ly pleye
 193This dagger / shal thurgh out thyn herte go
 194This frut cometh / of the bicche bones two
 195ffor{s}weryng/ / Ire / fal{s}ne{ss}e / homycide
 196Now for the loue of Cri{s}t/ that for vs dyde
 197Lete youre othes / bothe grete and smale
 198But sires / now wol I / telle forth my tale
 199¶Thi{s}e Riotours thre / of whiche I telle

200Longe er{s}t/ er Pryme ronge of any belle

{{Folio 200r}}

201Were set hem / in a Ta|uer|ne to drynke
 202And as they sat/ they herde a belle klynke
 203Biforn a cors / was caryed to his graue
 204That oon of hem / gan callen to his knaue
 205Go bet quod he / and axe redily
 206What cors is this / that pa{ss}eth heer forby
 207And looke / |pt| thow reporte his name wel
 208¶Sire quod this boy / it nedeth ne|uer| a del
 209It was me told / er ye cam heer two houres
 210He was |per|dee / an old felawe of youres
 211And sodeynly / he was y{s}layn to nyght/
 212ffordronke / as he sat on his bench vp right/
 213Ther cam a |pri|uee thief// men clepeth deeth
 214That in this contree / al the peple sleeth
 215And with his spere / he smoot his herte atwo
 216And wente his wey / with outen wordes mo
 217He hath / a thou{s}and slayn this pe{s}tilence
 218And mai{s}ter / er ye come in his |pre|{s}ence
 219Me thynketh / that it were nece{ss}arie
 220ffor to be war / of swich an Ad|uer|{s}arie
 221Beeth redy / for to meete hym e|uer|e moore
 222Thus taughte me my dame / I sey namoore
 223¶By Seinte Marie / seyde this Tauerner
 224The child seith sooth / for he hath slayn this yer
 225Henne ouer a myle / with Inne a greet village
 226Bothe man and womman / child and hyne |&| page
 227I trowe / his habitacio|un| be there
 228To been auy{s}ed / greet wi{s}dom it were
 229Er that he dide / a man a di{s}honour
 230¶Ye goddes armes / quod this Riotour
 231Is it swich |per|il / with hym for to meete
 232I shal hym seke / by wey / and eek by Strete
 233I make avow / to goddes digne bones
 234Herkneth felawes / we thre been al ones
 235Lat ech of vs / holde vp his hand to oother
 236And ech of vs / bicomme ootheres brother
 237And we wol sleen / this fal{s}e traytour deeth
 238He shal be slayn / he |pt| so manye sleeth
 239By goddes dignytee / er it be nyght/
 240¶Togidres han thi{s}e thre / hir trouthes plyght/

{{Folio 200v}}

241To lyue and dyen / ech of hem with oother
 242As thogh he were / his owene ybore brother
 243And vp they stirte / al dronken / in this rage
 244And forth they goon / towardes that village
 245Of which the Ta|uer|ner / hadde spoke biforn
 246And many a gri{s}ly ooth / thanne han they sworn
 247And Cri{s}tes ble{ss}ed body / they to rente
 248Deeth shal be deed / if they may hym hente

249¶Whan they han goon / nat fully half a myle
 250Right as they wolde / han treden o|uer| a style
 251An old man and a poure / with hem mette
 252This olde man / ful mekely hem grette
 253And seyde thus / now lordes god yow se
 254¶The proude{s}te / of thi{s}e Riotours thre
 255An{s}werde agayn / what carl |with| sory |gra|ce
 256Why artow al forwrapped / saue thy face
 257Why lyue{s}tow so longe / in {s}o greet age
 258¶This olde man / gan looke in his vi{s}age
 259And seyde thus / for I ne kan nat fynde
 260A man / thogh |pt| I walked in to Inde
 261Neither in Citee / ne in no village
 262That wolde chaunge / his youthe for myn age
 263And ther fore moot I han / myn age {s}tille
 264As longe tyme / as it is goddes wille
 265¶Ne deeth allas / ne wol nat haue my lyf
 266Thus walke I / lyk a re{s}telees caytyf/
 267And on the ground / which is my modres gate
 268I knokke with my staf/ bothe erly and late
 269And seye / leeue moder leet me In
 270Lo how I vany{ss}he / fle{ss}h |&| blood |&| skyn
 271Allas / whan shal my bones / been at re{s}te
 272Moder / with yow / wolde I chaunge my che{s}te
 273That in my chambre / longe tyme hath be
 274Ye for an heyre clowt/ to wrappe me
 275But yet to me / she wol nat/ do that |gra|ce
 276ffor which ful pale / and welked is my face
 277But sires / to yow / it is no curtei{s}ye
 278To speken / to an old man vileynye
 279But he tre{s}pa{s}e in word / or ellis in dede
 280In holy writ/ ye may your {s}elf wel rede

{ {Folio 201r} }

281¶Agayns an old man / hoor vp on his heed

¶coram canuto capite con{s}urg[e]

282Ye shal ari{s}e / wher fore I yeue yow reed
 283Ne dooth vn to an old man / noon harm now
 284Namoore than |pt| ye wolde / . men dide to yow
 285In age // if |pt| ye so longe abyde
 286And god be with yow / wher ye go or ryde
 287I moot go thider / as I haue to go
 288¶Nay olde cherl / by god thow shalt nat so
 289Seyde / this oother ha{s}ardour anon
 290Thow |per|te{s}t nat {s}o lightly / by Seint |Iohan|
 291Thow speeke right now / of thilke traytour deeth
 292That in this contree / alle oure freendes sleeth
 293Haue here my trouthe / as thow art his e{s}pye
 294Tel wher he is / or thow shalt it abyde
 295By god / and by the holy sacrament
 296ffor {s}oothly / thow art oon of his a{ss}ent/
 297To sleen vs yonge folk/ thow fal{s}e theef/

298¶Now sires quod he / if |pt| yow be {s}o leef/
 299To fynde deeth / turn vp this croked wey
 300ffor in that groue / I lafte hym by my fey
 301Vnder a tree / and ther he wol abyde
 302Nat for youre boo{s}t/ he wol hym no thyng hyde
 303Se ye that ook/ right ther ye shal hym fynde
 304God saue yow / that boghte agayn man kynde
 305And yow amende / thus seyde this olde man
 306¶And euerich / of thi{s}e Riotours ran
 307Til he cam to that tree / and ther they founde
 308Of floryns fyne / of gold / ycoyned rounde
 309Wel ny an .viij. bu{ss}hels / as hem thoughte
 310No lenger thanne / after deeth they soughte
 311But ech of hem / so glad was of the sighte
 312ffor |pt| the floryns / been {s}o faire and brighte
 313That doun they sette hem / by this |pre|cious hoord
 314The wor{s}te of hem / he spak the fir{s}te word
 315¶Bretheren quod he / taak kepe / what |pt| I seye
 316My wit is greet/ thogh |pt| I bourde and pleye
 317This tre{s}or hath ffortune / vn to vs yeuen
 318In myrthe and iolitee / oure lyf to lyuen
 319And lightly as it cometh / {s}o wol we spende
 320Ey goddes precious dignytee / who wende

{ {Folio 201v} }

321To day / that we sholde han / so fair a |gra|ce
 322But myghte this gold / be caried fro this place
 323Hoom to myn hous / or ellis vn to youre
 324ffor wel ye woot/ that al this gold is oures
 325Thanne were we / in height felicitee
 326But trewely / by daye it may nat be
 327Men wolde seyn / |pt| we were theues {s}tronge
 328And for oure owene tre{s}or / doon vs hongre
 329This tre{s}or / mo{s}te ycaried be by nyghte
 330As wi{s}ly / and as sleyly / as it myghte
 331Ther fore I rede / that/ cut amonges vs alle
 332Be drawe / and lat se / wher the {` ,}cut/ wol falle
 333And he |pt| hath the cut/ with herte blithe
 334Shal renne to towne / and that ful swithe
 335And brynge vs / breed / and wyn / ful |pri|uely
 336And two of vs / shal kepen subtilly
 337This tre{s}or wel / and if he wol nat tarye
 338Whan it is nyght/ we wol this tre{s}or carye
 339By oon a{ss}ent/ wher as vs thynketh be{s}t/
 340That oon of hem / the cut broghte in his fe{s}t/
 341And bad hem drawe / and looke wher it wol falle
 342And it fel / on the yonge{s}te of hem alle
 343And forth toward the town / (he wente anon)
 344And al{s}o soone / as |pt| he was agon
 345That oon of hem / spak thus vn to that oother
 346Thow knowe{s}t wel / thow art my sworn brother
 347Thy |pro|fit/ wol I telle thee anon
 348Thow woo{s}t wel / |pt| oure felawe is agon
 349And heere is gold / and that ful greet plentee

350That shal departed been / among vs thre
 351But nathelees / if I kan shape it {s}o
 352That it departed were / among vs two
 353Hadde I nat doon / a freendes torn to thee
 354¶That oother an{s}werde / I noot how that may be
 355He woot/ |pt| the gold / is with vs tweye
 356What shal we doon / what shal we to hym seye
 357¶Shal it be con{s}eil / seyde the fir{s}te shrewe
 358And I shal telle / in a wordes fewe
 359What we shul doon / and brynge it wel aboute
 360¶I graunte quod that oother / out of doute

{ {Folio 202r} }

361That by my trouthe / I wol thee nat biwreye
 362¶Now quod the fir{s}te / thow woo{s}t wel we be tweye
 363And two of vs / shul {s}trenger be than oon
 364Looke whan |pt| he is set/ that right anon
 365Arys / as though thow wolde{s}t/ with hym pleye
 366And I shal ryue hym / thurgh the sydes tweye
 367Whil that thow {s}trogele{s}t with hym / as in game
 368And with thy daggere / looke thow do the same
 369And thanne shal {`},al this gold departed be
 370My deere freend / bitwixe thee and me
 371Thanne may we bothe / oure lu{s}tes al fulfille
 372And pleye at dees / right at oure owene wille
 373And thus acorded been / thi{s}e sherewes tweye
 374To sleen the thridde / as ye han herd me seye
 375¶This yonge{s}te / which that wente to the toun
 376fful ofte in herte / he rolleth vp and doun
 377The beautee of thi{s}e floryns / newe |&| brighte
 378O lord quod he / if so were |pt| I myghte
 379Haue al this tre{s}or / to my self allone
 380Ther is no man / |pt| lyueth vnder the trone
 381Of god / that sholde lyue / {s}o myrie as I
 382And at the la{s}te / the feend oure enemy
 383Putte in his thoght/ |pt| he sholde poy{s}on beye
 384With which he myghte sleen / his felawes tweye
 385ffor why / the feend foond hym / in swich lyuynge
 386That he hadde leue / hym to sorwe brynge
 387ffor this was outrely / his ful entente
 388To sleen hem bothe / and neuere to repente
 389¶And forth he goth / no lenger wolde he tarye
 390In to the toun / vn to Apothecarye
 391And preyed hym /|pt| he hym wolde selle
 392Som poy{s}o|un| / that he myghte his rattes quelle
 393And eek ther was / a polcat/ in his hawe
 394That as he seyde / his capons hadde y{s}lawe
 395And fayn he wolde / wreke hym if he myghte
 396On |ver|myn / that de{s}troyed hym by nyghte
 397¶The Pothecarie an{s}werde / and thow shalt haue
 398A thyng/ that al{s}o god / my soule saue
 399In al this world / ther is no creature
 400That ete / or dronke / hath of this confiture

{{Folio 202v}}

401Nat but the monta|un|ce / of a corn of whete
 402That he ne shal his lyf / anoon for lete
 403Ye sterue he shal / and that in la{ss}e while
 404Than thow wolt goon a paas / nat but a myle
 405The poy{s}on / is {s}o {s}trong / and violent/
 406This cur{s}ed man / hath in his hand yhent/
 407This poy{s}on in a box / and sith he ran
 408In to the nexte Strete / vn to a man
 409And borwed hym / large Botels thre
 410And in the two / his poi{s}on poured he
 411The thridde / he kepte clene for his drynke
 412ffor al the nyght/ he shoop hym for to swynke
 413In cari yng/ of the gold / out of that place
 414And whan this Riotour / with sory |gra|ce
 415Hadde filled with wyn / hi{s}e grete Botels thre
 416To hi{s}e felawes / agayn repaireth he
 417¶What nedeth it/ to sarmone of it moore
 418ffor right as they / hadde ca{s}t his deeth bifore
 419Right {s}o / they han hym slayn / and that anon
 420And whan this was doon / thus spak that oon
 421Now lat vs sitte and drynke / and make vs merye
 422And afterward / we wol his body berye
 423And with that word / it happed hym |per| cas
 424To take the Botel / ther the poy{s}on was
 425And drank / and yaf his felawe drynke al{s}o
 426ffor which anon / they storuen bothe two
 427¶But certes I suppo{s}e / that Auycen
 428Wroot neuere in no Canon / ne in no fen
 429Mo wonder signes / of emпой{s}onyng/
 430Than hadde thi{s}e wrecches two / er hir endyng/
 431Thus ended been / thi{s}e homicides two
 432And eek / the fal{s}e emпой{s}one|re| al{s}o
 433¶O {.} cur{s}ed synne / of alle cur{s}edne{ss}e
 434O {.} traytours homicide / o wikkedne{ss}e
 435O {.} glotonye / luxure / and ha{s}ardrye
 436Thou bla{s}phemour of Cri{s}t/ with vileynye
 437And othes grete / of v{s}age / and of pryde
 438Allas mankynde / how may it bityde
 439That to thy Creatour / which |bt| thee wroghte
 440And with his |pre|cious herte blood / the boghte

{{Folio 203r}}

441Thow art {s}o fals / and {s}o vnkynde allas
 442¶Now goode men / god foryeue yow youre |ter|pas
 443And ware yow / fro the synne of Auarice
 444Myn holy pardo|un| / may yow alle wari{ss}e
 445So that ye offre nobles / or starlynges
 446Or ellis siluer broches / spones / rynges
 447Boweth you|re| heed / vnder this holy bulle
 448Cometh vp ye wyues / offreth of youre wolle
 449Youre name I entre /{^}{{here}} in my rolle anon
 450In to the bli{ss}e of heuene / shul ye gon

451I yow a{ss}oille / by myn heigh power
 452Ye |pt| wol offre / as clene and eek as cler
 453As ye were born / and lo sires thus I |pre|che
 454And |Iesu| cri{s}t/ that is oure soules leche
 455So graunte yow / his pardo|un| to receyue
 456ffor that is be{s}t/ I wol yow nat deceyue
 457¶But sires / o word / forgat I in my tale
 458I haue Relikes / and pardon in my male
 459As faire / as any man in Engelond
 460Whiche were me yeuen / by the Popes hond
 461If any of yow / wol of deuocio|un|
 462Offren / and han myn ab{s}olucio|un|.
 463Com forth anon / and kneleth here adoun
 464And mekely / receyueth my pardoun
 465Or ellis / taketh |per|do|un| as ye wende
 466Al newe and fre{ss}h / at euery myles ende
 467So |pt| ye offren alwey / newe and newe
 468Nobles / or pens / whiche |pt| been goode |&| trewe
 469It is an honour / to euerich that is heer
 470That ye mowe haue / a suffi{s}ant |per|doner
 471Ta{ss}oille yow / in contree as ye ryde
 472ffor auentures / whiche |pt| may bityde
 473|per|aventure / ther may falle oon or two
 474Doun of his hors / and breke his nekke atwo
 475Looke which a seuretee is it to yow alle
 476That I am / in you|re| felawe{s}hip yfalle
 477That may a{ss}oille yow / bothe moore |&| la{ss}e
 478Whan |pt| the soule / shal fro the body pa{ss}e
 479I rede / that oure hoo{s}t/ shal bigynne
 480ffor he is moo{s}t/ enveloped in synne

{ {Folio 203v} }

481Com forth sire hoo{s}t / and offre fir{s}t anon
 482And thow shalt ki{ss}e / the Relikes e|uer|ychon
 483Ye for a grote / vnbokele anon thy purs
 484¶Nay nay quod he / thanne haue I Cri{s}tes curs
 485Lat be quod he / it shal nat be {s}o thee ich
 486Thow wolde{s}t/ make me ki{ss}e thyn olde breech
 487And swere it were / a Relyk of a Seint/
 488Thogh it were / with thy fondement depeynt/
 489But by the croys / which |pt| Seint Eleyne foond
 490I wold I hadde / thy coylyons in myn hond
 491In {s}tide of Relikes / or of Seintuarie
 492Lat cutte hem of / I wol thee hem carie
 493They shul be shryned / in an hogges toord
 494¶This pardoner / an{s}werde nat a word
 495So wrooth he was / no word ne wolde he seye
 496¶Now quod oure hoo{s}t/ I wol no lenger pleye
 497With thee / ne with noon oother angry man
 498¶But right anon / the worthy knyght bigan
 499Whan |pt| he saugh / |pt| al the peple lough
 500Namooore of this / for it is right ynough
 501Sire Pardoner be glad / and murye of cheere
 502And sire hoo{s}t/ that been to me so deere

503I pray yow / |bt| ye ki{ss}e the Pardoner
504And Pardoner / I pray thee / drawe thee near
505And as we diden / lat vs lawe and pleye
506Anon they ki{s}te / and ryden forþ {^,}hir weye

¶Here is ended the Pardoners tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles. Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
{ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
{C|} : capitulum
{^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
{?.} : punctus elevatus
{^} : caret

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First publication date: 1866

RPO poem editor: Ian Lancashire

RP edition: 1996

Recent editing: 1:2002/6/8

Composition date: 1392 - 1395

Rhyme: couplets

Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Parlement of Fowls

(excerpt)

675 Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,

676 That hast this wintres wedres overshake,

677 And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

678 Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,

679 Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:

680 *Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,*

681 *That hast this wintres wedres overshake.*

682 Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,

683 Sith ech of hem recovered hath hys make;

684 Ful blissful mowe they syng when they wake:

685 *Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe*

686 *That hast this wintres wedres overshake*
687 *And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!*

Notes

675] *The Parlement of Foules* is an allegorical love-vision poem in 699 lines, written probably in 1382 in honour of the marriage of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. It is extant in fourteen mss., most of them in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge, and was first printed by Caxton in 1477-78. The poem describes a contention between three male eagles for the love of a female, the favourite of the goddess Nature. The other birds are called on by Nature to judge the dispute, which is left unsettled. The other birds choose their mates (it is St. Valentine's day); and certain of them sing a roundel in honour of Nature. A roundel or triolet is a short poem in which the first line or lines recur as a refrain in the middle and at the end.

676] wedres: storms.
overshake: shaken off.

678] on-lofte: aloft, above.

679] foules: birds.

682] han: have.

683] make: mate.

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Original text: unspecified.

First publication date: 1382

RPO poem editor: N. J. Endicott

RP edition: 2RP.1.39; *RPO* 1996-2000.

Recent editing: 2:2002/6/7

Composition date: 1382

Form: roundel

Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Reeve's Prologue and Tale from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

¶The |pro|loge / of the Reues tale

- 1 Whan folk hadde laughen / at this nyce cas
- 2 Of Ab{s}olon / and hende Nicholas
- 3 Di|uer|{s}e folk / diuer{s}ely they seyde
- 4 But for the moore part/ they lowe and pleyde
- 5 Ne at his tale / I seigh no man hym greue
- 6 But it were oonly/ O{s}ewold the Reue
- 7 By cau{s}e he was / of Carpenters craft/
- 8 Alitel Ire / is in his herte ylaft/
- 9 He gan to grucche / and blamed it alite
- 10 So the ik quod he / ful wel koude I thee quyte
- 11 With bleryng/ of a proud Millerys Iye
- 12 If |þt| me li{s}te / speke of rybaudye
- 13 But ik am oold / me li{s}t no pleye for age
- 14 Gras tyme is doon / my fodder is now forage

15 This white top / writeth myne olde yerys
 16 Myn herte / is al{s}o mowled / as myne herys
 17 But if ik fare / as dooth an Openers
 18 That ilke fruyt/ is euer lenger the wers
 19 Til it be roten / in Mollok / or in stree
 20 We olde men / I drede {s}o fare we
 21 Til we be roten / kan we nocht be rype
 22 We hoppe alwey / whil |pt| the world wol pipe
 23 ffor in oure wil / ther stiketh euere a nayl
 24 To haue an hoor heer / and a grene tayl
 25 As hath a leek / for thogh oure myght be goon
 26 Oure wil de{s}jireth folie / euere in oon
 27 ffor whan we may nocht/ doon / than wol we speke
 28 Yet in oure a{ss}hen olde / is fyr yreke

{{Folio 51r}}

29 ffoure gleedes haue we / whiche I shal deuy{s}e
 30 Auauntyng/ lyyng/ Anger Coueiti{s}e
 31 Thi{s}e foure sparkles / longen vn to eelde
 32 Oure lymes / mowe wel been vnweelde
 33 But wil ne shal nocht faillen / that is sooth
 34 And yet I haue alwey / a coltes tooth
 35 As many a yeer / as it is pa{ss}ed henne
 36 Syn |pt| my tappe of lyf / bigan to renne
 37 ffor sikerlik/ whan ik was bore anon
 38 Deeth drogh the tappe of lyf / and leet it goon
 39 And euere sith / hath {s}o the tappe yronne
 40 Til |pt| almoo{s}t / al empty is the tonne
 41 The {s}treem of lyf / now droppeth on the chymbe
 42 The sely tonge / may wel ryng and chymbe
 43 Of wrecchedne{ss}e / |pt| pa{ss}ed is ful yoore
 44 With olde folk / saue dotage is namoore
 45 ¶Whan |pt| oure hoo{s}t/ hadde herd this sermonyng/
 46 He gan to speke / as lordly as a kyng/
 47 He seyde / what amounteth al this wit
 48 What shal we speke alday / of holy writ
 49 The deuel made / a Reue for to |pre|che
 50 Or of a Soute|re| / a Shipman / or a leche
 51 Sey forth thy tale / and tarie nocht the tyme
 52 Lo Depeford / and it is half wey pryme
 53 Lo Grenewych / ther many a sherewe is Inne
 54 It were al tyme / thy tale to bigynne
 55 ¶Now sires / quod this O{s}ewold the Reue
 56 I pray yow alle / |pt| ye nocht yow greue
 57 Thogh I an{s}were / and som del sette his howue
 58 ffor leueful is / with force / force of showue
 59 This dronken Mille|re| / hath ytoold vs heer
 60 How |pt| / bigiled was a Carpenter
 61 |per|aurenture in scorn / for I am oon
 62 And by youre leue / I shal hym quyte anon
 63 Right / in his cherles termes / wol I speke
 64 I pray to god / his nekke mote to breke
 65 He kan wel / in myn eye / seen a {s}talke
 66 But in his owene / he kan nocht {s}een a balke

Narra|ter|

1 AT Trompyngto|un| / nat fer fro Cantebrygge
 2 Ther gooth a brook / and ouer that a brygge

{{Folio 51v}}

3 Vp on the which brook/ ther stant a Melle
 4 And this is verray sooth / |þt| I yow telle
 5 A Mille|re| was ther dwellyng many a day
 6 As any Pecok/ he was proud and gay
 7 Pipen he koude / and fi{ss}he / and nettes beete
 8 And torne coppes / and wel wra{s}tle and sheete
 9 And by his belt/ he baar a long Panade
 10 And of a swerd / ful trenchaunt was the blade
 11 A ioly poppe|re| / baar he in his pouche
 12 Ther was no man / for |per|il dor{s}te hym touche
 13 A sheffeld thwitel / baar he in his ho{s}e
 14 Round was his face / and camu{s}e was his no{s}e
 15 As piled as an Ape / was his skulle
 16 He was a Market bete|re| / atte fulle
 17 Ther dor{s}te no wight/ hand vp on hym legge
 18 That he ne swoor / he sholde anon abegge
 19 A theef he was for sothe / of corn and mele
 20 And |þt| a sleigh / and v{s}ant for to stele
 21 His name was hoten / deynous Symkyn
 22 A wif he hadde / comen of noble kyn
 23 The per{s}on of the toun / hir fader was
 24 With hi|re| he yaf / ful many a panne a bras
 25 ffor |þt| Symkyn / sholde in his blood allye
 26 She was yfo{s}tred / in a Nonnerye
 27 ffor Symkyn / wolde no wyf as he sayde
 28 But she were wel ynori{ss}ed and a mayde
 29 To sauen / his e{s}taat of yemanrye
 30 And she was proud / and peert as is a pye
 31 A ful fair sighte / was it vp on hem two
 32 On halidayes / biforn hi|re| wolde he go
 33 With his tipet/ wunden aboute his heed
 34 And she cam after / in a gyte of reed
 35 And Symkyn / hadde ho{s}en of the same
 36 Ther dor{s}te no wight/ clepen hire but dame
 37 Was noon {s}o hardy / |þt| wente by the weye
 38 That with hire/ dor{s}te rage / or ones pleye
 39 But if he / wolde be slayn of Symkyn
 40 With panade / or with knyf/ or boydekyn
 41 ffor Ialous folk / been |per|ilou{s}e eueremo
 42 Algate / they wolde hir wyues wenden {s}o

{{Folio 52r}}

43 And eek / for she was som del smoterlich
 44 She was as digne / as water in a dich
 45 And ful of hoker / and of bi{s}mare
 46 Hir thoghte / |þt| a lady sholde hir spare
 47 What for hir kynrede / and hir nortelrye

48 That she hadde lerned / in the Nonnerye
 49 A doghter hadde they / bitwix hem two
 50 Of twenty yeer / with outen any mo
 51 Sauyng a child / |pt| was of hal yeer age
 52 In Cradel it lay / and was a |prop|re page
 53 This wenche / thikke and wel ygrowen was
 54 With camu{s}e no{s}e / and eyen greye as glas
 55 With buttokes brode / and bre{s}tes rounde and hye
 56 But right fair was hir heer/ I wol nat lye
 57 ¶The |per|{s}on of the toun / for she was {s}o feir
 58 In purpos was / to maken hi|re| his heir
 59 Bothe of his catel / and his Me{s}uage
 60 And {s}traunge he made it/ of hir mariage
 61 His purpos was / for to bi{s}towe hir hye
 62 In to som worthy blood of Auncetrye
 63 ffor holicherches good / moot been de{s}pended
 64 On holicherches blood / |pt| is de{s}cended
 65 Ther fore / he wolde his holy blood honoure
 66 Thogh |pt| he / holy chirche sholde deuoure
 67 ¶Greet sokne / hath this Mille|re| out of doute
 68 With whete and malt/ of al the land aboute
 69 And nameliche / ther was a greet Collegge
 70 Men clepeth / the Soler halle at Cantebregge
 71 Ther was hir whete / and eek hir malt ygrounde
 72 And on a day / it happed in {{^}}{a} stounde
 73 Syk was this maunciple / on a maladie
 74 Men wenden wi{s}ly / |pt| he sholde dye
 75 ffor which this Millere / {s}tal bothe mele and corn
 76 An hondred tyme / moore than biforn
 77 ffor ther biforn / he {s}tal but curtei{s}ly
 78 But now / he was a theef outrageou{s}ly
 79 ffor which the wardeyn / chidde and made fare
 80 But ther of / sette the Millere noght a tare
 81 He craked boo{s}t/ and swoor it was noght so
 82 Thanne were ther / yonge poure scolers two

{{Folio 52v}}

83 That/ dwelten in the halle / of which I seye
 84 Te{s}tyf they were / and lu{s}ty for to pleye
 85 And oonly / for hir myrthe and reuerye
 86 Vp on the wardeyn / bi{s}ily they crye
 87 To yeue hem leue / but a litel stounde
 88 To go to Mille / and seen hir corn ygrounde
 89 And hardily / they dor{s}te leye hir nekke
 90 The Millere / sholde noght {s}telen hem half a pekke
 91 Of corn by sleighte / ne by force hem reue
 92 And atte la{s}te / the wardeyn yaf hem leue
 93 |Iohan| highte that oon / and Aleyn highte that oother
 94 Of oon town were they born / |pt| highte Strother
 95 ffer in the North / I kan noght telle where
 96 This Aleyn / maketh redy al his gere
 97 And on an hors / the sak he ca{s}te anon
 98 fforth gooth Aleyn the clerk/. and al{s}o |Iohan|
 99 With good swerd / and with bokeler by his syde

100 |Iohan| knew the wey / hym neded no gyde
 101 And at the Mille / the sak adoun he layth
 102 ¶Aleyn spak fir{s}t/ alhayl Symkyn in fayth
 103 How fares / thy faire doghter / and thy wyf
 104 ¶Aleyn wel come / quod Symkyn by my lyf
 105 And |Iohan| al{s}o / how now / what do ye here
 106 ¶By god quod |Iohan| / Symond nede has na peere
 107 Hym bilhoues serue hym self / |þt| has na swayn
 108 Or ellis / he is a fool / as clerkes sayn
 109 Oure maunciple / I hope he wol be deed
 110 Swa werkes ay / the wanges in his heed
 111 And ther fore is I come / and eek Alayn
 112 To grynde oure corn / and carie it heem agayn
 113 I pray yow / speed vs heythen / what ye may
 114 ¶It shal be doon / quod Symkyn by my fay
 115 What wol ye doon / whil |þt| it is in hande
 116 ¶By god / right by the ho|per| / wol I stande
 117 Quod |Iohan| / and se how the corn gas In
 118 Yet {s}aw I neuere / by my fader kyn
 119 How |þt| the ho|per| / wagges til and fra
 120 ¶Aleyn an{s}werde / |Iohan| wiltow swa
 121 Thanne wol I be byneth / by my crown
 122 And se / how |þt| the mele falles down

{{Folio 53r}}

123 In to the trogh / that sal be my de{s}port/
 124 ffor |Iohan| in faith / I may been of youre sort/
 125 I is as ille a Millere / as ar ye
 126 ¶This Millere / smyled of hir nycetee
 127 And thoghte / al this nys doon / but for a wyle
 128 They wene / |þt| no man may hem bigile
 129 But by my thrift / yet shal I blere hir Iye
 130 ffor al the sleighte / in hir Phi{s}lophye
 131 The moore queynte crekys / |þt| they make
 132 The moore wol I {s}tele / whan I take
 133 In {s}tede of flour / yet wol I yeue hem bren
 134 The grette{s}t clerkes / been noght the wi{s}e{s}t men
 135 As whilom to the wolf/ thus spak the mare
 136 Of al hir art/ counte I noght a tare
 137 Out of the dore / he gooth ful pryuely
 138 Whan |þt| he saugh his tyme / softly
 139 He looketh vp and down / til he hath founde
 140 The clerkes hors / ther {^}{as} it stood ybounde
 141 Bihynde the Mille / vnder a leef{s}el
 142 And to the hors / he gooth hym faire and wel
 143 He {s}trepeth of the bridel / right anon
 144 And whan the hors was laus / he gynneth gon
 145 Toward the fen / ther wilde mares renne
 146 And forth with wehe / thurgh thikke and thenne
 147 This Millere gooth ayein / no word he seyde
 148 But dooth his note / and with the clerkes pleyde
 149 Til |þt| hir corn / was faire and wel ygrounde
 150 And whan the mele / was sakked and ybounde
 151 ¶This |Iohan| gooth out/ and fynt his hors away

152 And gan to crye / harrow and weilaway
 153 Oure hors is lo{s}t/. Alayn for goddes banes
 154 Step on thy feet/ com of man al atanes
 155 Allas oure wardeyn / has his palfrey lorn
 156 ¶This Alayn al forgat/ bothe mele and corn
 157 Al was out of his mynde / his hou{s}bondrye
 158 What whilk wey is he gane / he gan to crye
 159 ¶The wyf cam lepyng/ Inward with a ren
 160 She seyde allas / youre hors gooth to the fen
 161 With wilde mares / as fa{s}te as he may go
 162 Vnthank come on his hand / |pt| boond hym {s}o

{{Folio 53v}}

163 And he |pt| bettre / sholde haue knyht the reyne
 164 ¶Allas / quod |Iohan| / Aleyn for Cri{s}tes peyne
 165 Lay down thy swerd / and I wol myn al{s}wa
 166 I is ful wight / god waat/ as is a ra
 167 By god hert/ he sal nat scape vs bathe
 168 Why ne had thow / pit the capil in the lathe
 169 Ilhail / by god Alayn / thow is a fonne
 170 ¶This sely clerkes / haan ful fa{s}te yronne
 171 Toward the fen / bothe Alayn and eek |Iohan|
 172 And whan the Millere seigh / |pt| they were gon
 173 He half a bu{ss}hel / of hir flour hath take
 174 And bad his wyf / go knede it in a cake
 175 He seyde / I trowe / the clerkes were aferd
 176 Yet kan a Millere / maken a clerkes berd
 177 ffor al his art/ ye lat hem goon hir weye
 178 Lo whe|re| he gooth / ye lat the children pleye
 179 They gete hym noght {s}o lightly / by my croun
 180 ¶Thi{s}e sely clerkes / rennen vp and down
 181 With keep / keep / {s}tand / {s}tand / Io{ss}a warderere
 182 Ga whi{s}tle thow / and I sal kepe hym heere
 183 But shortly / til |pt| it was verray nyght/
 184 They koude noght/ thogh they dide al hir myght/
 185 Hir capyl cacche / he ran alwey {s}o fa{s}te
 186 Til in a dych / they caughte hym at the la{s}te
 187 ¶Wery and weet/ as bee{s}t is in the reyn
 188 Comth sely |Iohan| / and with hym comth Aleyn
 189 Allas quod |Iohan| / the day |pt| I was born
 190 Now ar we dryuen / til hethyng |&| til scorn
 191 Oure corn is stole / men wil vs foolis calle
 192 Bothe the wardeyn / and oure felawes alle
 193 And namely the Millere / weilaway
 194 ¶Thus pleyneth |Iohan| / as he gooth by the wey
 195 Toward the Mille / and Bayard in his hond
 196 The Millere / sittying by the fyr he fond
 197 ffor it was nyght/ and ferther myghte they noght/
 198 But for the loue of god / they hym bi{s}oght/
 199 Of herberwe and of e{s}e / as for hir peny
 200 ¶The Millere seide agayn / if ther be eny
 201 Swich as it is / yet shal ye haue youre part/
 202 Myn hous is streyt/ but ye han lerned art/

{{Folio 54r}}

203 Ye kan by argumentz / make a place
 204 A myle brood / of twenty foot of space
 205 lat se now / if this place may suffi{s}e
 206 Or make it rowm with speche / as is you|re| gy{s}e
 207 ¶Now Symond seyde this |Iohan| / by Seint Cutberd
 208 Ay is thou myrie / and that is faire an{s}werd
 209 I haue herd seye / men sal tak/ of twa thynges
 210 Swilk as he fyndes / or tak swilk as he brynges
 211 But specialy / I pray thee hoo{s}t deere
 212 Get vs {s}om mete and drynke / and make vs cheere
 213 And we wol payen / trewely atte fulle
 214 With empty hand / men may none haukes tulle
 215 Lo heere oure siluer / redy for to spende
 216 ¶This Millere in to town / his doghter {s}ende
 217 ffor ale and breed / and ro{s}ted hem a goos
 218 And boond hir hors / it sholde namoore go loos
 219 And in his owene chambre / hem made a bed
 220 With shetes and |with| chalons / faire y{s}pred
 221 Noght from his owene bed / but ten foot or twelue
 222 His doghter hadde a bed / al by hir selue
 223 Right in the same chambre by and by
 224 It myghte be no bet/ and cau{s}e why
 225 Ther was no rowmer herberwe / in the place
 226 They soupen / and they speken / hem to solace
 227 And drynken euere {s}troong ale / at the be{s}te
 228 Aboute mydnyght / wente they to re{s}te
 229 Wel hath this Millere / verny{ss}hed his heed
 230 fful pale he was for dronke / and noght reed
 231 He yexeth / and he speketh thurgh the no{s}e
 232 As he were / on the quakke / or on the po{s}e
 233 To bedde he goth / and |with| hym goth his wyf
 234 As any Iay / she light was and iolyf
 235 So was / hir ioly whi{s}tle / wel ywet
 236 The Cradel / at hir beddes feet is set/
 237 To rokken / and to yeue the child to sowke
 238 And whan |pt| dronken / al was in the Crowke
 239 To bedde wente / the doghter right anon
 240 To bedde gooth Aleyn / and al{s}o |Iohan|
 241 Ther nas namoore / hem neded no dwale
 242 This Millere / hath so wi{s}ly bibbed ale

{{Folio 54v}}

243 That as an hors / he fnorteth in his sleep
 244 Ne of his tayl bihynde / he took no keep
 245 His wyf bar hym / a burdon / a ful strong/
 246 Men myghten hir routyng/ heren a furlong/
 247 The wenche / routeth eek |per| compaignye
 248 ¶Aleyn the clerc/ that herde this melodye
 249 He poked |Iohan| / and seyde slepe{s}tow
 250 Herd thow euere / slyk a sang er now
 251 Lo swilk a couplyng/ is ymel hem alle
 252 A wilde fyr / on thair bodies falle

253 Wha herkned euere / swilk/ a ferly thyng/
 254 Ye they sal haue / the flour of il endyng/
 255 This lang/ nyght/ ther tydes me na re{s}te
 256 But yet na force / al sal be for the be{s}te
 257 ffor |Iohan| seyde he / als e|uer|e moot I thryue
 258 If |þt| I may / yon wenche wol I swyue
 259 Som e{s}ement/ has lawe shapen vs
 260 ffor |Iohan| / ther is a lawe / |þt| says thus
 261 That gif a man / in a point be agreued
 262 That in another / he sal be releued
 263 Oure corn is {s}toln / {s}oothly it is na nay
 264 And we han had / an ille fit to day
 265 And syn I sal / haue naan amendement/
 266 Agayn my los / I wil haue e{s}ement/
 267 By goddes saule / it sal naan other be
 268 ¶|This |Iohan| an{s}werde / Aleyn auy{s}e thee
 269 The Millere / is a |per|ilous man he sayde
 270 And if |þt| he / out of his sleep abrayde
 271 He myghte doon vs bathe / a vileynye
 272 ¶|Aleyn an{s}werde / I counte hym noght a flye
 273 And vp he ri{s}t / and by the wenche he crepte
 274 This wenche lay vp righte / and fa{s}te slepte
 275 Til he {s}o neigh was / er she myghte e{s}pie
 276 That it hadde been / to late for to crie
 277 And shortly for to {s}eyn / they were at oon
 278 Now pley Aleyn / for I wol speke of |Iohan|
 279 ¶|This |Iohan| lith {s}tille / a furlang wey / or two
 280 And to hym self/ he maketh routhe and wo
 281 Allas quod he / this is a wikked Iape
 282 Now may I seyn / |þt| I is but an ape

{{Folio 55r}}

283 Yet has my felawe / som what for his harm
 284 He has the Milleris doghter / in his arm
 285 He aunted hym / and has his nedes sped
 286 And I lye / as a draf sak / in my bed
 287 And whan this iape / is told another day
 288 I sal ben halden / a daf a Cokenay
 289 I wil ari{s}e and aunte it/ by my fayth
 290 Vnhardy is vn{s}ely / thus men sayth
 291 ¶|And vp he roos / and softely he wente
 292 Vn to the Cradel / and in his hand it hente
 293 And baar it softe / vn to his beddes feet/
 294 Soone after this / the wyf hir routynt leet/
 295 And gan awake / and wente hir out to pi{s}se
 296 And cam agayn / and gan hir Cradel my{s}se
 297 And groped heer and ther / but she foond noon
 298 Allas quod she / I hadde almoo{s}t my{s}goon
 299 I hadde almoo{s}t/ goon to the clerkes bed
 300 Ey benedicite / thanne had I foule y{s}ped
 301 And forth she gooth / til she the Cradel fond
 302 She gropeth alwey / forther |with| hir hond
 303 And foond the bed / and thoghte noght but good
 304 By cau{s}e / |þt| the Cradel by it {s}tood

305 And ny{s}te wher she was / for it was derk/
 306 But faire and wel / she creep in to the clerk/
 307 And lyth ful {s}tille / and wolde haue caught a sleep
 308 With Inne a while / this |Iohan| the clerk vp leep
 309 And on this goode wyf / he leyth on {s}oore
 310 So murie a fyt/ ne hadde she nat ful yoore
 311 He priketh harde and depe / as he were mad
 312 This ioly lyf / han thi{s}e two clerkes lad
 313 Til |þt| / the thridde cok/ bigan to synge
 314 ¶Aleyn wax wery / in the dawenyng
 315 ffor he hadde swonken / al the longe nyght/
 316 And seyde / fare wel Malyn swete wight/
 317 The day is come / I may no lenger byde
 318 But euere mo / wher {s}o I go or ryde
 319 I is thyn awen clerk/ so haue I sel
 320 ¶Now deere lemman quod she / go fare wel
 321 But er thow go / o thyng/ I wol thee telle
 322 Whan that thow wende{s}t / homward by the Melle

{{Folio 55v}}

323 Right at the entree / of the dore bihynde
 324 Thow shalt a Cake / of half a bu{ss}hel fynde
 325 That was ymaked / of thyn owene mele
 326 Which |þt| I heelp / my {s}ire for to {s}tele
 327 And good lemman / god thee saue and kepe
 328 And with that word / almoo{s}t he gan to wepe
 329 ¶Aleyn vp ri{s}t/ and thoghte er |þt| it daw
 330 I wol go crepen In / by my felawe
 331 And fond the Cradel / with his hond anon
 332 By god thoghte he / al wrang I haue my{s}gon
 333 Myn heed is toty / of my swynk to nyght/
 334 That maketh me / |þt| I go noght aright/
 335 I woot wel by the Cradel / I haue my{s}go
 336 Here lyth the Millere / and his wyf al{s}o
 337 And forth he gooth / on twenty deueleway
 338 Vn to the bed / ther as the Millere lay
 339 He wende haue copen / by his felawe |Iohan|
 340 And by the Millere / In he creep anoon
 341 And caughte hym by the nekke / and softe he spak/
 342 He seyde thou |Iohan| / thow Swyne{s}hed awak/
 343 ffor cri{s}tes saule / and here a noble game
 344 ffor by that lord / |þt| called is Seint Iame
 345 As I haue thries / in this shorte nyght
 346 Swyued the Milleris doghter / both vp right
 347 Whil thow ha{s}t / as a coward been aga{s}t/
 348 ¶Ye fal{s}e harlot/ quod the Millere ha{s}t/
 349 A fal{s}e traytour / fal{s}e clerk/ quod he
 350 Thou shalt be deed / by goddes dignytee
 351 Who dor{s}te be {s}o bold / to di{s}parage
 352 My doghter / that is come of swich lynage
 353 And by the throte bolle / he caughte Alayn
 354 And he hente hym / de{s}pitou{s}ly agayn
 355 And on the no{s}e / he smoot hym with his fe{s}t/
 356 Doun ran the bloody strem / vp on his bre{s}t/

357 And on the floor / with no{s}e and mouth tobroke
 358 They walwen / as doon two pigges in a poke
 359 And vp they goon / and doun agayn anoon
 360 Til |pt| the Millere / sporned on a {s}toon
 361 And doun he fil / bakward vp on his wyf
 362 That wi{s}te no thyng/ of this nyce stryf

{{Folio 56r}}

363 ffor she was falle a{s}lepe / alitel wight/
 364 With |Iohan| the clerk / that waked hadde al nyght/
 365 And with the fal / out of hir sleep she brayde
 366 Help holy cros of Bornholm / she sayde
 367 In manus tuas / lord to thee I calle
 368 Awake Symond / the feend is on me falle
 369 Myn herte is broken / help I nam but ded
 370 Ther lyth oon vp on my wombe / and vp myn hed
 371 Help Symkyn / for the fal{s}e clerkes fighte
 372 ¶This |Iohan| sterte vp / as fa{s}te as e|uer|e he myghte
 373 And gra{s}peth by the walles / to and fro
 374 To fynde a {s}taf / and she {s}terte vp al{s}o
 375 And knew the e{s}tres / bet than dide this |Iohan|
 376 And by the wal / a staf she foond anon
 377 And saugh / a litel shymeryng of a light
 378 ffor at an hole / in shoon the moone bright/
 379 And by that light/ she saugh hem bothe two
 380 But sikerly / she ny{s}te who was who
 381 But as she saugh / a whit thyng in hir Iye
 382 And whan she gan / this white thyng e{s}pye
 383 She wende the clerk/ hadde wered a voluper
 384 And with the {s}taf / she drow ay ner and ner
 385 And wende han hit/ this Aleyn atte fulle
 386 And smoot the Millere / on the piled skulle
 387 That doun he gooth / and cryde harrow I dye
 388 Thi{s}e clerkes bette hym wel / and lete hym lye
 389 And greithen hem / and tooke hir hors anon
 390 And eek hir mele / and on hir wey they gon
 391 And at the Mille / yet they toke hir cake
 392 Of half a bu{ss}hel flour/ ful wel ybake
 393 ¶Thus is the proude Millere / wel ybete
 394 And hath ylo{s}t/ the gryndyng of the whete
 395 And payed for the souper / euerydel
 396 Of Aleyn / and of |Iohan| / that bette hym wel
 397 His wyf is swyued / and his doghter als
 398 Lo which it is / a Millere to be fals
 399 And therfore this |pro|uerbe / is seyde ful {s}ooth
 400 Hym thar nat wene wel / |pt| yuele dooth
 401 A gilour shal hym self / bigiled be
 402 And god / that sitteth heighe in mage{s}tee

{{Folio 56v}}

403 Saue al this compaignie / grete and smale
 404 Thus haue I quyt the Millere / in my tale

¶Here endeth the Reues tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles. Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
{ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
{C} : capitulum
{^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
{?.} : punctus elevatus
{^} : caret

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Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Shipman's Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 204r}}

¶Here bigynneth the Shipmannes tale

- 1 A Marchant whilom / dwelled at Seint Denys
- 2 That riche was / for which men helde hym wys
- 3 A wyf he hadde / of excellent beautee
- 4 And compaignable / and reuelous was she
- 5 Which is a thyng/ that cau{s}eth moore di{s}pence
- 6 Than worth / is al the cheere and reuerence
- 7 That men hem doon / at fe{s}tes and at daunces
- 8 Swiche salutacions / and contencances
- 9 Pa{ss}en / as dooth a shadwe vp on the wal
- 10 But wo is hym / that payen moot for al
- 11 The sely hou{s}bonde / algate he moot paye
- 12 He moot vs clothe / and he moot vs arraye
- 13 Al for his owene wor{s}hip / richely

14 In which array / we dauncen iolily
 15 And if |pt| he noght may / |per|aunture
 16 Or ellis / li{s}t no swich di{s}pen{s}e endure
 17 But thynketh / it is wa{s}ted and ylo{s}t/
 18 Thanne moot another / payen for oure co{s}t/
 19 Or lene vs gold / and that is |per|ilous
 20 This noble Marchant/ heeld a worthy hous
 21 ffor which / he hadde alday / {s}o greet repair
 22 ffor his large{ss}e / and for his wyf was fair
 23 That wonder is / but herkneth to my tale
 24 Amonges alle hi{s}e ge{s}tes / grete and smale
 25 ¶ Ther was a Monk/ a fair man and a bold
 26 I trowe / a thritty wynter / he was old
 27 That euere in oon / was drawyng/ to that place
 28 This yonge Monk/ that was {s}o fair of face
 29 Aqueynted was so / with the goode man
 30 Sith that/ hir fir{s}te knewliche bigan
 31 That in his hous / as famulier was he
 32 As it is po{ss}ible / any freend to be
 33 And for as muchel / as this goode man
 34 And eek this Monk / of which |pt| I bigan
 35 Were bothe two yborn / in o village
 36 The Monk/ hym claymeth / as for co{s}ynage

37{{Folio 204v}}

38 And he agayn / he seith nat ones nay
 39 But was as {`},glad ther of / as fowel of day
 40 ffor to his herte / it was a gret ple{s}ance
 41 Thus been they knyht/ with eterne alliance
 42 And ech of hem / gan oother/ for ta{ss}ure
 43 Of bretherhede / whil |pt| hir lyf may dure
 44 ¶ ffree was daun |Iohan| / and manly of di{s}pence
 45 As in that hous / and ful of diligence
 46 To doon ple{s}ance / and al{s}o greet co{s}tage
 47 He nat forgat/ to yeue the lee{s}te page
 48 In al that hous / but after hir degree
 49 He yaf the lord / and sith al his meynee
 50 Whan |pt| he cam / {s}om manere hone{s}te thyng/
 51 ffor which / they were as glad of his comyng/
 52 As fowel is fayn / whan |pt| the sonne vp ri{s}eth
 53 Namooore of this as now / for it suffi{s}eth
 54 ¶ But {s}o bifel / this Marchant/ on a day
 55 Shoop hym / to make redy his array
 56 Toward the town of Brugges / for to fare
 57 To byen there / a porcion of ware
 58 ffor which he hath / to Parys sent anon
 59 A me{ss}ager / and preyed hath daun |Iohan|
 60 That he sholde come / to Seint Denys and pleye
 61 With hym / and with his wyf/ a day or tweye
 62 Er he to Brugges wente / in alle wi{s}e
 63 ¶ This noble Monk/ of which I yow deuy{s}e
 64 Hath of his Abbot/ as hym li{s}t licence
 65 By cau{s}e he was a man / of heigh prudence
 66 And eek an Officer / out for to ryde

67 To {s}een hir granges / and hir bernes wyde
 68 And vn to Seint Denys / he comth anon
 69 Who was {s}o welcome / as my lord Daun [Iohan]
 70 Oure deere co{s}yn / ful of curtei{s}ye
 71 With hym broghte he / a Iubbe of Malue{s}ye
 72 And eek another/ ful of fyn vernage
 73 And volatil / as ay was his v{s}age
 74 And thus I lete hem / ete and drynke and pleye
 75 This Marchant/ and this Monk / a day or tweye
 76 ¶The thridde day / this Marchant vp ari{s}eth
 77 And on his nedes / sadly hym auy{s}eth

{ {Folio 205r} }

78 And vp / in to his Countour hous goth he
 79 To rekene with hym self / wel may be
 80 Of thilke yeer / how |pt| it with hym {s}tood
 81 And how |pt| he / de{s}pended hadde his good
 82 And if that he / encre{ss}ed were or noon
 83 Hi{s}e bokes / and his bagges / many oon
 84 He leyth biforn hym / on his Countyng bord
 85 fful riche was his tre{s}or / and his hord
 86 ffor which ful fa{s}te / his Countour dore he shette
 87 And eek he nolde / |pt| no man sholde hym lette
 88 Of his acountes / for the mene tyme
 89 And thus he sit / til it was pa{ss}ed |pri|me
 90 ¶Daun [Iohan] was ri{s}en / in the morwe al{s}o
 91 And in the gardyns / walketh to and fro
 92 And hath his thynges seyde / ful curtei{s}ly
 93 ¶This goode wyf / cam walkyng |pri|uely
 94 In to the gardyn / ther he walketh softe
 95 And hym salueth / as she hath doon ofte
 96 A mayde child / cam in hir compaignye
 97 Which as hir li{s}t/ she may gouerne and gye
 98 ffor yet/ vnder the yerde was the mayde
 99 ¶O deere co{s}yn myn / Daun [Iohan] she sayde
 100 What eyleth yow / so rathe for to ry{s}e
 101 ¶Nece quod he / it oghte ynow suffi{s}e
 102 ffyue houres / for to slepe / vp on a nyght/
 103 But it were / for an old apalled wight/
 104 As been thi{s}e wedded men / |pt| lye and dare
 105 As in a forme / sit a wery hare
 106 Were al for{s}traught/ |with| houndes grete |&| smale
 107 But deere Nece / why be ye so pale
 108 I trowe |cer|tes / that oure goode man
 109 Hath yow laboured / sith the nyght bigan
 110 That yow were nede / to re{s}ten ha{s}tily
 111 And with that word / he lough ful myrily
 112 And of his owene thoght/ he weex al reed
 113 ¶This faire wyf / gan for to shake hir heed
 114 And seyde thus / ye god woot al quod she
 115 Nay co{s}yn myn / it stant nat {s}o with me
 116 ffor by that god / that yaf me soule and lyf
 117 In al the Reawme of ffrance / is ther no wyf

{{Folio 205v}}

118 That la{ss}e lu{s}t hath / to that sory pley
 119 ffor I may syngre / allas and weilawey
 120 That I was born / but to no wight/ quod she
 121 Dar I nat telle / how |pt| it stant with me
 122 Wher fore I thynke / out of this land to wende
 123 Or ellis / of my self / to make an ende
 124 So ful am I / of drede/ and eek of care
 125 ¶This Monk bigan / vp on this wyf to stare
 126 And seyde / allas / my Nece god forbede
 127 That ye / for any sorwe / or any drede
 128 ffordo your self / but telleth me you|re| grief
 129 |per|aunture / I may in youre me{s}chief/
 130 Con{s}eille / or helpe / and therefore telleth me
 131 Al youre any / for it shal been secree
 132 ffor on my Porthors / I make an oth
 133 That ne|uer|e in my lif / for lief / or loth
 134 Ne shal I / of no con{s}eil / yow biwreye
 135 ¶The same agayn to yow / quod she I seye
 136 By god / and by this Porthors / I swere
 137 Thogh men me wolde / al in to peces tere
 138 Ne shal I ne|uer|e / for to gon to helle
 139 Biwreye a word / of thyng |pt| ye me telle
 140 Nat for no co{s}ynage / ne alliance
 141 But verrailly / for loue and affiance
 142 Thus been they sworn / and her vp on they ke{s}te
 143 And ech of hem / tolde oother what hem le{s}te
 144 ¶Co{s}yn quod she / if |pt| I hadde a space
 145 As I haue noon / and namely in this place
 146 Thanne wolde I telle / a legende of my lyf
 147 What I haue suffred / sith I was a wyf
 148 With myn hou{s}bonde / al be he youre co{s}yn
 149 ¶Nay quod this Monk/ by god and Seint Martin
 150 He is namore / co{s}yn vn to me
 151 Than is this leef/ |pt| hangeth on the tree
 152 I clepe hym so / by Seint Denys of ffrance
 153 To han / the moore cau{s}e of aqueyntance
 154 Of yow / which I haue loued specially
 155 Abouen alle wommen / sikerly
 156 This swere I yow / on my |pro|fe{ss}io|un|
 157 Telleth youre grief / le{s}t |pt| he come adoun

{{Folio 206r}}

158 And ha{s}teth yow / and goth away anon
 159 ¶My deere loue quod she / o my daun |Iohan|
 160 fful lief were me / this con{s}eil for to hyde
 161 But out it moot/ I may namoore abyde
 162 ¶Myn hou{s}bonde is to me / the wor{s}te man
 163 That euere was / sith |pt| the world bigan
 164 But sith I am a wyf / it sit nat me
 165 To tellen no wight/ of oure |pri|uete
 166 Neither abedde / ne in noon oother place
 167 God shilde / I sholde it tellen for his |gra|ce

168 A wyf ne shal nat seyn / of hir hou{s}bonde
 169 But al honour / as I kan vnder{s}tonde
 170 Saue vn to yow / thus muche I tellen shal
 171 As help me god / he is noght worth at al
 172 In on degree / the value of a flye
 173 But yet/ me greueth moo{s}t his nygardye
 174 And wel ye woot/ |þt| wommen naturelly

A womman wolld haue
 her hu{s}band, to be
 hardye, wy{s}e Ryche,
 ¶No|ta|
 free, buxom / that
 is to {s}aye gentell
 and to be fre{s}he
 in bed / the{s}e /
 {s}yxe things a
 woman dothe
 de{s}yre as Mr.
 Chaucer dothe wryte

175 De{s}iren thynges .vj. as wel as I
 176 They wolde / |þt| hir hou{s}bondes sholde be
 177 ¶Hardy and wi{s}e / and riche / and ther to free
 178 And buxom vn to his wyf / and fre{ss}h abedde
 179 But by that ilke lord / that for vs bledde
 180 ffor his honour / my self for to arraye
 181 A sonday next/ I moot nedes paye
 182 An hundred frankes / or ellis am I lorn
 183 Yet were me le|uer|e / |þt| I were Vnborn
 184 Than me were doon / a sclaudre / or vileynye
 185 And if myn hou{s}bonde eek / myghte it e{s}pye
 186 I nere but lo{s}t/ and ther fore I yow preye
 187 Lene me this s|om|me / or ellis moot I deye
 188 Daun |Iohan| I seye / lene me thi{s}e hundred frankes
 189 Pardee / I wol noght/ faile yow my thankes
 190 If |þt| yow li{s}t/ to doon / that I yow praye
 191 ffor at a |cer|teyn day / I wol yow paye
 192 And doon to yow / what ple{s}ance and seruy{s}e
 193 That I may doon / right as yow li{s}t deuy{s}e
 194 And but {.}I{.} do / god take on me vengeance
 195 As foul / as e|uer|e hadde Genelo|un| of ffrance
 196 ¶This gentil Monk/ an{s}werde in this manere
 197 Now trewely / myn owene lady deere
 198 I haue quod he / on yow so gret a routhe
 199 That I yow swere / and plighte yow my trouthe

{{Folio 206v}}

200 That whan youre hou{s}bonde / is to fflandres fare
 201 I wol deliuere yow / out of this care
 202 ffor I wol brynge yow / an hundred frankes
 203 And with that word / he caughte hi|re| by the flankes
 204 And hi|re| embraceth harde / and ki{s}te hi|re| ofte
 205 Goth now youre wey quod he / al {s}tille and softe

206 And lat vs dyne / as {s}oone / as |pt| ye may
 207 ffor by my chilyndre / it is Pryme of day
 208 Goth now / and beth as trewe as I shal be
 209 ¶Now ellis / god forbede sire quod she
 210 And forth she goth / as iolif as a pye
 211 And bad the Cokes / |pt| they sholde hem hye
 212 So |pt| men myghte dyne / and that anon
 213 Vp to hir hou{s}bonde / is his wyf ygon
 214 And knokketh at his Countour/ boldely

qi la.

215 ¶Who {^}{{ys}} ther quod he / Peter it am I
 216 Quod she / what sire / how longe wol ye fa{s}te
 217 How longe tyme / wol ye rekene and ca{s}te
 218 Youre sommes / and youre bokes / and youre thynges
 219 The deuel haue part/ on alle swiche rekenynges
 220 Ye haue ynogh pardee / of goddes sonde
 221 Com down to day / and lat youre bagges {s}tonde
 222 Ne be ye nat a{s}hamed / that daun |Iohan|
 223 Shal fa{s}tynge / al this day elenge gon
 224 What lat vs heere a ma{ss}e / and go we dyne
 225 ¶Wyf quod this man / litel kan{s}tow deuyne
 226 The curious bi{s}yne{ss}e / that we haue
 227 ffor of vs chapmen / al{s}o god me {s}aue
 228 And by that lord / that clepid is Seint Yue
 229 Scar{s}ly amonges .xij. x. shul thryue
 230 Continuelly / la{s}tyng vn to oure age
 231 We may wel make cheere / and good vi{s}age
 232 And dryue forth the world / as it may be
 233 And kepen oure e{s}tat/ in pryuetee
 234 Til we be dede / or ellis that we pleye
 235 A pilgrimage / or goon out of the weye
 236 And ther fore / haue I gret nece{ss}itee
 237 Vp on this queynte world / tauy{s}e me
 238 ffor euere mo / we mote {s}tonde in drede
 239 Of hap and ffortune / in oure chapmanhede

{{Folio 207r}}

240 ¶To fflandres wol I go / tomorwe at day
 241 And come agayn / as {s}oone as e|uer|e I may
 242 ffor which my deere wyf / I thee bi{s}eke
 243 As be to euery wight/ buxom and meke
 244 And for to kepe oure good / be curious
 245 And hone{s}tly / gouerne wel oure hous
 246 Thow ha{s}t ynow / in euery mane|re| wi{s}e
 247 That to a thrifty hou{s}hold / may suffi{s}e
 248 Thee lakketh noon array / ne no vitaille
 249 Of siluer in thy purs / shaltow nat faille
 250 And with that word / his Countour dore he shette
 251 And down he goth / no lenger wolde he lette
 252 But ha{s}tily / a ma{ss}e was ther seyd
 253 And spedily / the tables were yleyd
 254 And to the dyner / fa{s}te they hem spedde

255 And richely this Monk/ the chapman fedde
 256 ¶At after dyner / daun |Iohan| sobrelly
 257 This chapman took a part/ and |pri|uely
 258 He seyde hym thus / co{s}yn it standeth so
 259 That wel I se / to Brugges wol ye go
 260 God and Seint Au{s}tyn / spede yow and gyde
 261 I pray yow co{s}yn / wy{s}ly |þt| ye ryde
 262 Gouverneth yow al{s}o / of youre diete
 263 Atemprelly / and namely / in this hete
 264 Bitwix vs two / nedeth no strange fare
 265 ffarewel co{s}yn / god shilde yow fro care
 266 And if |þt| any thyng/ by day or nyght
 267 If it lye in my power/ and my myght/
 268 That ye me wol comande / in any wi{s}e
 269 It shal be doon / right as ye wol deuy{s}e
 270 ¶O thyng er |þt| ye goon / if it may be
 271 I wold {` , }preye yow / for to lene me
 272 An hundred frankes / for a wyke or tweye
 273 ffor |cer|teyn be{s}tes / |þt| I mo{s}te beye
 274 To store with a place / that is oures
 275 God help me so / I wolde it were youre
 276 I shal nat faille / {s}eurely of my day
 277 Nat for a thou{s}and frankes / a myle way
 278 But lat this thyng be secree / I yow preye
 279 ffor yet to nyght/ thi{s}e be{s}tes moot I beye

{ {Folio 207v} }

280 And fare now wel / myn owene co{s}yn deere
 281 Grant |mer|cy / of youre co{s}t/ and of youre cheere
 282 ¶This noble Marchant/ gentilly anon
 283 An{s}werde and seyde / o co{s}yn myn daun |Iohan|
 284 Now sikerly / this is a smal reque{s}te
 285 My gold is youre / whan |þt| it yow le{s}te
 286 And nat oonly my gold / but my chaffare
 287 Tak what yow li{s}t/ god shilde |þt| ye spare
 288 But o thyng is / ye knowe it wel ynow
 289 Of Chapmen / that hir moneye is hir plow
 290 We may creance / whil we han a name
 291 But goldlees for to been / it is no game
 292 Pay it agayn / whan it lyth in youre e{s}e
 293 After my myght/ ful fayn wol I yow ple{s}e
 294 ¶Thi{s}e hundred frankes / he fette forth anon
 295 And |pri|uely / he took hem to daun |Iohan|
 296 No wight in al this world / wi{s}te of this lone
 297 Sauyng/ this Marchant/ and daun |Iohan| allone
 298 They drynke / and speke / and rome a while |&| pleye
 299 Til that daun |Iohan| / rideth to his Abbeye
 300 ¶The morwe cam / and forth this Marchant rydeth
 301 To fflandres ward / his Prentys wel hym gydeth
 302 Til he cam / in to Brugges murily
 303 Now goth this Marchant/ fa{s}te and bi{s}ily
 304 Aboute his nede / and byeth and crea|un|ceth
 305 He neither / pleyeth at the dees / ne daunceth
 306 But as a Marchant/ shortly for to telle

307 He let his lyf / and ther I lete hym dwelle
 308 ¶The sonday next / the Marchant was agon
 309 To Seint denys / ycomen is daun |Iohan|
 310 With crowne and berd / al fre{ss}h |&| newe shaue
 311 In al the hous / ther nas {s}o litel a knaue
 312 Ne no wight ellis / |pt| he nas ful fayn
 313 That my lord daun |Iohan| / was come agayn
 314 And shortly / to the poynt/ right for to gon
 315 This faire wyf/ acorded with daun |Iohan|
 316 That for thi{s}e hundred frankes / he sholde al nyght/
 317 Haue hire in his armes / bolt vpright/
 318 And this acord / |per|fourned was in dede
 319 In myrthe al nyght/ a bi{s}y lyf they lede

{ {Folio 208r} }

320 Til it was day / that daun |Iohan| wente his way
 321 And bad the meynee / fare wel haue good day
 322 ffor noon of hem / ne no wight in the town
 323 Hath of daun |Iohan| / right no su{s}pecioun
 324 And forth he rydeth hom / til his Abbeye
 325 Or where hym li{s}t/ namoore of hym I seye
 326 ¶This Marchant/ whan |pt| ended was the faire
 327 To Seint Denys / he gan for to repaire
 328 And with his wyf / he maketh fe{s}te and cheere
 329 And telleth hi|re| / that chaffare is so deere
 330 That nedes / mo{s}te he make a cheuy{ss}ance
 331 ffor he was bounden / in a recony{ss}ance
 332 To paye/ twenty thou{s}and sheeld anon
 333 ffor which / this Marchant/ is to Parys gon
 334 To borwe / of |cer|teyne freendes / that he hadde
 335 A |cer|teyn frankes / and s|om|me |with| hym he ladde
 336 And whan |pt| he was come / in to the town
 337 ffor greet chiertee / and greet affeccoun
 338 Vn to daun |Iohan| / he fir{s}t goth / hym to pleye
 339 Nat for to axe / or borwe of hym moneye
 340 But for to wite / and {s}een of his welfare
 341 And for to tellen hym / of his chaffare
 342 As freendes doon / whan they been met yfeere
 343 Daun |Iohan| / hym maketh fe{s}te / and murye cheere
 344 And he hym tolde agayn / ful specially
 345 How he hadde / wel yboght/ and |gra|ciou{s}ly
 346 Thanked be god / al hool his marchandi{s}e
 347 Saue |pt| he mo{s}te / in alle maner wy{s}e
 348 Maken a cheuy{ss}ance / as for his be{s}te
 349 And thanne / he sholde been / in ioye and re{s}te
 350 ¶Daun |Iohan| an{s}werde / certes I am fayn
 351 That ye in heele / ar comen hom agayn
 352 And if |pt| I were riche / as haue I bli{ss}e
 353 Of twenty thou{s}and sheeld / sholde ye nat my{ss}e
 354 ffor ye {s}o kyndely / this oother day
 355 Lente me gold / and as I kan and may
 356 I thanke yow / by god / and by Seint Iame
 357 But nathelees / I took vn to oure dame
 358 Yowre wyf at hom / the same gold agayn

359 Vp on youre bench / she woot it wel certayn

{{Folio 208v}}

360 By |cer|teyn toknes / that I kan yow telle
 361 Now by youre leue / I may no lenger dwelle
 362 Oure Abbot/ wol out of this town anon
 363 And in his compaignye / moot I gon
 364 Greet wel oure dame / myn owene Nece swete
 365 And fare wel deere co{s}yn / til we meete
 366 ¶This Marchant/ which |þt| was ful war and wys
 367 Creanced hath / and payed eek in Parys
 368 To |cer|teyn lombardes / redy in hir hond
 369 The somme of gold / and gat of hem his bond

¶{.}i{.} obligacionem

370 And hoom he gooth / murye as a Papyniay
 371 ffor wel he knew / he {s}tood in swich array
 372 That nedes mo{s}te he wynne / in that viage
 373 A thou{s}and frankes / abouen al his co{s}tage
 374 ¶His wyf ful redy / mette hym at the gate
 375 As she was wont/ of old v{s}age algate
 376 And al that nyght/ in myrthe they bi{s}ette
 377 ffor he was riche / and cleerly out of dette
 378 ¶Whan it was day / this Marchant gan embrace
 379 His wyf al newe / and ki{s}te hi|re| on hir face
 380 And vp he goth / and maketh it ful tough
 381 Namooore quod she / by god ye haue ynough
 382 And wantownely agayn / with hym she pleyde
 383 Til at the la{s}te / this Marchant seyde
 384 ¶By god quod he / I am alitel wroth
 385 With yow my wyf / al thogh it be me looth
 386 And woot ye why / by god as |þt| I ge{ss}e
 387 That ye han maad / a manere strangene{ss}e
 388 Bitwixen me / and my co{s}yn Daun |Iohan|
 389 Ye sholde han warned me / er I had gon
 390 That he yow hadde / a hundred frankes payed
 391 Be redy tokne / and heeld hym yuele apayed
 392 ffor that I to hym / spak of cheuy{ss}ance
 393 Me semed so / as by his contenance
 394 But nathelees / by god oure heuene kyng/
 395 I thoghte nat/ to axe of hym no thyng/
 396 I pray thee wyf/ ne do namooore so
 397 Tel me alwey / er that I fro thee go
 398 If any dettour / hath in myn ab{s}ence
 399 Ypayed thee / le{s}t thurgh thy negligence

{{Folio 209r}}

400 I myghte hym axe / a thyng/ |þt| he hath payed
 401 ¶This wyf / was nat afered ne afrayed
 402 But boldely she seyde / and that anon
 403 Marie I diffye / the fal{s}e Monk/ daun |Iohan|
 404 I kepe nat of his toknes / ne|uer| a del
 405 He took me |cer|teyn gold / this woot I wel

406 What yuel thedam / on his Monkes snowte
 407 ffor god it woot/ I wende with outen dowte
 408 That he hadde yeue it me / by cau{s}e of yow
 409 To doon ther with / myn honour / and my prow
 410 ffor co{s}ynage / and eek for bele cheere
 411 That he hath had / ful ofte tymes heere
 412 ¶But sith I se / it stant in this di{s}ioynt/
 413 I wole an{s}were yow / shortly to the poynt/
 414 Ye han mo slakker dettours / than am I
 415 ffor I wol paye yow / wel and redily
 416 ffro day to day / and if {s}o be I fayle
 417 I am youre wyf / score it vp on my tayle
 418 And I shal paye / as {s}oone as euere I may
 419 ffor by my trouthe / I haue on myn array
 420 And nat in wa{s}t/ bi{s}towed e|uer|y del
 421 And for I haue / bi{s}towed it {s}o wel
 422 ffor youre honour / for goddes sake I seye
 423 As be nat wrooth / but lat vs laughe |&| pleye
 424 Ye shal / my ioly body han to wedde
 425 By god / I wol noght paye yow but abedde
 426 fforgyue it me / myn owene spou{s}e deere
 427 Turn hiderward / and maketh bettre cheere
 428 ¶This Marchant/ saugh / ther was no remedye
 429 And for to chide / it nere but folye
 430 Syn that the thyng/ may nat amended be
 431 Now wyf he seyde / and I foryeue it thee
 432 But by thy lyf/ ne be namoore {s}o large
 433 Keep bet thy good / this yeue {^}{I} thee in charge
 434 Thus endeth my tale / and god vs sende
 435 Taillynge ynough / vn to oure lyues ende

¶Here endeth / the Shipmannes tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles.

Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
 {ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
 {C|} : capitulum
 {^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
 {?.} : punctus elevatus
 {^} : caret

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Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Summoner's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 78v}}

¶The Prologe of the Somnours tale

1This Somnour in his Stiropes / hye he {s}tood
2Vp on this frere / his herte was {s}o wood
3That lyk an A{s}pen lief / he quook for Ire
4¶Lordynges quod he / but o thyng I de{s}ire
5I yow bi{s}eke / that of youre curtei{s}ye
6Syn ye had herd / this fal{s}e frere lye
7As suffreth me / I may my tale telle
8This frere bo{s}teth / that he knoweth helle
9And god it woot/ that it is litel wonder
10ffreres and feendes / been but lyte a {s}onder

{{Folio 79r}}

11ffor pardee / ye han ofte tyme herd telle
 12How that a frere / rauy{ss}hed was to helle
 13In Spirit ones / by avi{s}ioun
 14And as an Aungel / ladde hym vp and down
 15To shewen hym / the peynes |pt| ther were
 16In al the place / say he nat a frere
 17Of oother folk / he say ynowe in wo
 18Vn to this Aungel / spak the frere tho
 19¶Now Sire quod he / han freres swich a |gra|ce
 20That noon of hem / shal come to this place
 21¶Yis quod this Aungel / many a Milioun
 22And vn to Sathanas / he ladde hym down
 23And now hath Sathanas / seith he a tayl
 24Brodder / than of a Carryk is the sayl
 25Hold vp thy tayl / thow Sathanas quod he
 26Shewe forth thyn ers / and lat the frere se
 27Where is the ne{s}t of freres / in this place
 28And er |pt| / half a furlong wey of space
 29Right {s}o as bees / out swarmen from an hyue
 30Out of the deueles ers / ther gonne dryue
 31Twenty thou{s}and freres / on a route
 32And thurgh out helle / swarmeden aboute
 33And comen again / as fa{s}te as they may gon
 34And in his ers / they crepten euerychon
 35He clapte his tayl agayn / and lay ful stille
 36This frere / whan he looked hadde his fille
 37Vp on the tormentz / of this sory place
 38His spirit/ god re{s}tored of his grace
 39Vn to his body agayn / and he awook/
 40But nathelees / for fere yet he quook/
 41So was the deueles ers / ay in his mynde
 42That is his heritage / of verray kynde
 43God saue yow alle / saue this cur{s}ed frere
 44My prologe / wol I ende / in this manere

¶Here endeth the prologe of the Somn|our|s tale

{{Folio 79v}}

¶Here bygynneth the Somnours tale

1Lordynges / ther is in York{s}hire / as I ge{ss}e
 2A Mer{ss}h contree / called holderne{ss}e
 3In which / ther wente a lymytour aboute
 4To |pre|che / and eek to begge / it is no doute
 5And so bifel / that on a day this frere
 6Hadde |pre|ched at a chirche / in his manere
 7And specially / abouen e|uer|y thyng/
 8Excyted he the peple / in his |pre|chyng/
 9To trentals / and to yeue for goddes sake
 10Wher with men myghte / holy hou{s}es make
 11Ther as dyuyne seruice / is honoured
 12Nat ther / as it is wa{s}ted and deuoured
 13Ne ther / it nedeth nat/ to be yeue
 14As to po{ss}e{ss}ioners / that mowen lyue

15Thanked be god / in wele and habundaunce
 16Trentals seyde he / deli|uer|eth from penaunce
 17Hir freendes soules / as wel olde as yonge
 18Ye / whan that they / been ha{s}tily y{s}onge
 19Nat for to holde a pree{s}t/ Ioly and gay
 20He syngeth nat/ but o ma{ss}e in a day
 21Deliuereth out quod he / anon the soules
 22fful hard it is / |with| fle{ss}h hook / or |with| oules
 23To been y clawed / or to brenne / or bake
 24Now spede yow ha{s}tily / for cri{s}tes sake
 25And whan this frere / hadde seyde al his entente
 26With qui cum patre / forth his wey he wente
 27Whan folk in chirche / hadde yeue hym / what hem le{s}te
 28He wente his wey / no lenger wolde he re{s}te
 29With scryppe and typped staf / y tukked hye
 30In euery hous / he gan to poure and pryde
 31And beggeth Mele / and che{s}e / or ellis corn
 32His felawe hadde a staf / typped with horn
 33A peyre of tables / al of yuory
 34And a poyntel / poly{ss}hed feti{s}ly
 35And wroot the names / alwey as he {s}tood
 36Of alle folk / that yaf hem any good

{{Folio 80r}}

37A{s}caunces / that he wolde for hem preye
 38Yif vs a bu{ss}hel whete / Malt/ or Reye
 39A goddes kechyl / or a tryp of chee{s}e
 40Or ellis what yow ly{s}t/ we may nat che{s}e
 41A goddes half peny / or a ma{ss}e peny
 42Or yif vs of youre brawn / if ye haue eny
 43A dagon of youre Blanket/ leue dame
 44Oure su{s}ter deere / lo heere I write your name
 45Baco|un| / or boef / or swich thyng as ye fynde
 46A sturdy / harlot/ wente ay hem bihynde
 47That was hir ho{s}tes man / and baar a sak/
 48And what men yaf hem / leyde it on his bak/
 49And whan |pt| he was out at dore anon
 50He planed away / the names euerichon
 51That he biforn / hadde writen in his tables
 52He {s}erued hem / with nyfles and |with| fables
 53¶Nay ther thow lixt/ thow Somn|our| quod the frere
 54¶Pees quod oure hoo{s}t/ for cri{s}tes moder deere
 55Tel forth thy tale / and spare it nat at al
 56¶So thryue I quod this Somn|our| / so I shal
 57So longe he wente / hous by hous / til he
 58Cam til an hous / ther he was wont to be
 59Refre{ss}hed moore / than in an hundred placis
 60Syk lay the goode man / whos the place is
 61Bedrede vp on a couche / lowe he lay
 62Deus hic/ quod he / o Thomas freend good day
 63Seyde this frere / curtei{s}ly and softe
 64Thomas quod he / god yelde yow ful ofte
 65Haue I vp on this bench / faren ful wel
 66Heere haue I eten / many a murye mel

67And fro the bench / he droof away the cat/
 68And leyde adoun / his potente and his hat/
 69And eek his scrippe / and sette hym {s}ofte adown
 70His felawe / was go walked in to town
 71fforth with his knaue / in to that ho{s}telrye
 72Wher as he shoop hym / thilke nyght to lye
 73¶O deere mai{s}ter / quod this syke man
 74How han ye fare / sith that March bigan
 75I say yow noght/ this fourtnyght/ or moore
 76¶God woot quod he / laboured I haue ful soore

{{Folio 80v}}

77And specially / for thy sauacio|un|
 78Haue I seyde / many a |pre|cious ori{s}o|un|
 79And for oure othere freendes / god hem ble{ss}e
 80I haue to day / been at youre chirche (at me{ss}e)
 81And seyde a sermon / after my symple wit
 82Nat al / after the text/ of holy writ
 83ffor it is hard to yow / as I suppo{s}e
 84And ther fore / wol I teche yow al the glo{s}e
 85Glo{s}yng/ is a glorious thyng |cer|teyn
 86ffor lettre sleeth / so as we clerkes seyn
 87Ther haue I taught hem / to be charitable
 88And spende hir good / ther it is re{s}onable
 89And ther I say oure dame / a wher is she
 90¶Yond in the yerd / I trowe |þt| she be
 91Seyde this man / and she wol come anon
 92¶Ey mai{s}ter / wel come be ye / by Seint |Iohan|
 93Seyde this wyf / how fare ye hertely
 94¶The frere ari{s}eth vp / ful curtei{s}ly
 95And hir embraceth / in hi{s}e armes narwe
 96And ki{s}te hir swete / and chirteth as a Sparwe
 97With his lippes / dame quod he / right wel
 98As he / that is youre seruant/ euery del
 99Thanked be god / that yow yaf soule and lyf
 100Yet say I nat this day / so fair a wyf
 101In al the chirche / god so saue me
 102¶Ye god amende defautes / {s}ir quod she
 103Al gates / wel come be ye / by my fey
 104¶Graunt |mer|cy dame / this haue I founde alwey
 105But/ of youre grete goodne{ss}e / by youre leue
 106I wolde pray yow / that ye nat yow greue
 107I wol with Thomas / speke a litel throwe
 108Thi{s}e Curatz / been ful necligent/ and slowe
 109To grope tendrely / a con{s}cience
 110In shrift/ in |pre|chyng/ is my diligence
 111And studie / in Petres wordes / and in Poules
 112I walke / and fi{ss}he / cri{s}ten mennes soules
 113To yelden |Iesu| cri{s}t/. his |prop|re rente
 114To sprede his word / is set al myn entente
 115¶Now by youre leue / o deere {s}ire quod she
 116Chideth hym wel / for Seinte Trinitee

{{Folio 81r}}

117He is as angry / as a Pi{ss}emyre
 118Thogh that he haue / al that he kan de{s}ire
 119Thogh I hym wrye a nyght/ and make hym warm
 120And on hym leye / my leg/ outhur myn arm
 121He groneth lyk oure boor / lyth in oure Sty
 122Oother di{s}port/ right noon of hym haue I
 123I may nat ple{s}e hym / in no maner cas
 124¶O Thomas Ie vous dy / Thomas / Thomas
 125This maketh the feend / this mo{s}te been amended
 126Ire is a thyng/ that hye god defended
 127And ther of / wol I speke / a word / or two
 128¶Now mai{s}ter quod the wyf / er |pt| I go
 129What wol ye dyne / I wol go ther aboute
 130¶Now dame quod he / now Ie vous dy {s}anz doute
 131Haue I nat of a Capo|un| / but the lyuere
 132And of youre softe breed / nat but a Shyuere
 133And after that/ a ro{s}ted pigges heed
 134But |pt| I nolde / no bee{s}t for me were deed
 135Thanne hadde I with yow / homly suffi{s}aunce
 136I am a man / of litel su{s}tenaunce
 137My spirit/ hath his fo{s}tryng/ in the bible
 138The body is ay / so redy and penyble
 139To wake / that my stomak/ is de{s}troyed
 140I pray yow dame / ye be nat anoyed
 141Thogh I {s}o freendly / yow my con{s}eil shewe
 142By god / i wolde nat telle it/ but a fewe
 143¶Now sire quod she / but o word / er I go
 144My child is deed / with Inne thi{s}e wykes two
 145Soone after/ that ye wente / out of this town
 146¶His deeth say I / by reuelacioun
 147Seith this frere / at hom in oure dortour
 148I dar wel seyn / that er |pt| half an hour
 149After his deeth / I say hym born to bli{ss}e
 150In myn avi{s}io|un| / so god me wi{ss}e
 151So dide oure Sexteyn / and oure ffermerer
 152That han been trewe freres fifty yeer
 153They may now / god be thanked / of his lone
 154Maken hir Iubillee / and walke allone
 155And vp I roos / and al oure Couent eke
 156With many a teere / triklyng on my cheke

{{Folio 81v}}

157With outen noy{s}e / or clateryng of belles
 158Te deum was oure song/ and no thyng elles
 159Sawe that to cri{s}t / I seyde an ori{s}o|un|
 160Thankynge hym / of his reuelacio|un|
 161ffor sire and dame / tru{s}teth me right wel
 162Oure ori{s}ons / been wel moore effectuel
 163And moore we seen / of cri{s}tes secree thynges
 164Than burell folk/ al thogh |pt| they were kynges
 165We lyue in pouerte / and in ab{s}tinence
 166And burell folk/ in riche{s}se and di{s}pence
 167Of mete and drynke / and in hir foul delit/

168We han this worldes lu{s}t/ al in de{s}pit
 169Lazar and Diues / lyueden diuer{s}ly
 170And di|uer{|s}e gerdo|un| / hadde they ther by
 171Who {s}o wol praye / he moot fa{s}te and be clene
 172And fatte his soule / and make his body lene
 173We fare as seith thapo{s}tle / clooth and foode
 174Suffi{s}eth vs / thogh they be nat ful goode
 175Then clenne{ss}e / and the fa{s}tyng/ of vs freres
 176Maketh / that cri{s}t accepteth oure prayeres
 177¶Lo Moy{s}es / fourty dayes / and fourty nyght/
 178ffa{s}ted / er that the heighe god of myght/
 179Spak with hym / in the mountayne of Synay
 180With empty wombe / fa{s}tynge many a day
 181Receyued he the lawe / that was writen
 182With goddes fynger / and Elye wel ye witen
 183In Mount Oreb / er he hadde any speche
 184With hye god / that is oure lyues leche
 185He fa{s}ted longe / and was in contemplaunce
 186Aaron / that hadde the temple in gouernaunce
 187And eek/ that othere pree{s}tes euerichon
 188In to the temple / whan they sholde gon
 189To preye for the peple / and do seruy{s}e
 190They nolden drynken / in no maner wy{s}e
 191No drynke / which that myghte hem dronke make
 192But there in ab{s}tinence / preye and wake
 193Le{s}t that they deyden / tak hede what I seye
 194But they be sobre / that for the peple preye
 195War that I seye namoore / for it suffi{s}eth
 196Oure lord |Iesu| / as holy writ deuy{s}eth

{{Folio 82r}}

197Yaf vs en{s}ample / of fa{s}tyng / and prayeres
 198Ther fore / we mendynantz / we sely freres
 199Been wedded / to pouerte and continence
 200To charitee / humble{ss}e and ab{s}tinence
 201To |per{|s}ecucio|un| / for rightwi{s}ne{ss}e
 202To wepyng/ mi{s}ericorde and clenne{ss}e
 203And ther fore may ye se / that oure prayeres
 204I speke of vs / we mendinantz / we freres
 205Be to the hye god / moore acceptable
 206Than youres / with youre fe{s}tes at the table
 207ffro Paradys fir{s}t/ if I shal nat lye
 208Was man out chaced / for his glotonye
 209And chaa{s}t was man / in Paradys certeyn
 210¶But herkne Thomas / what I shal seyn
 211I ne haue no text/ of it/ as I suppo{s}e
 212But I shal fynde it/ in a maner glo{s}e
 213That specially / oure swete lord |Iesus|
 214Spak this by freres / whan he seyde thus
 215Ble{ss}ed be they / that poure in spirit been
 216And so forth / al the go{s}pel / may ye seen
 217Wher it be likker / oure profe{ss}io|un|
 218Or hire / that swymmen in po{ss}e{ss}io|un|
 219ffy on hir pompe / and hir glotonye

220And for hir lewedne{ss}e / I hem diffye
 221Me thynketh / they been lyk Iouynyan
 222ffat as a whale / and walkyng as a swan
 223Al vynolent/ as Botel in the Spence
 224Hir preyere is / of ful greet re|uer|ence
 225Whan they for soules / seye the p{s}alm of Dauit/
 226Lo buf they seye / cor meum eructaut/
 227Who folweth cri{s}tes go{s}pel / and his foore
 228But we that |hum|ble been / and chaa{s}t / and poore
 229Werkers of goddes word / nat Auditours
 230Ther fore / right as an hauk / vp at a sours
 231Vp spryngeth in to theyr / right {s}o prayeres
 232Of charitable / and cha{s}te bi{s}y freres
 233Maken hir sours / to goddes eryl two
 234Thomas / Thomas / {s}o mote I ryde or go
 235And by that lord / that clepid is Seint yue
 236Nere thow oure brother / sholde{s}tow nat thryue

{{Folio 82v}}

237[In o]ure chapitre / praye we day and nyght/
 238To cri{s}t/ that he thee sende / heele and myght/
 239Thy body / for to welden ha{s}tily
 240¶God woot quod he / no thyng ther of feele I
 241As help me cri{s}t/ as I in fewe yeres
 242Haue spended / vp on di|uer|{s}e manere freres
 243fful many a pound / yet fare I ne|uer|e the bet
 244Certeyn / my good haue I almoo{s}t bi{s}et/
 245ffarwel my gold / for it is al ago
 246¶The frere an{s}werde / o Thomas doo{s}tow so
 247What nedeth yow / di|uer|{s}e freres seche
 248What nedeth hym / that hath a |per|fit leche
 249To sechen / othere leches in the town
 250Youre incon{s}tance / is youre confu{s}ioun
 251Holde ye thanne me / or ellis oure Couent/
 252To preye for yow / been in{s}ufficient/
 253Thomas / that Iape / nys nat worth a myte
 254Youre maladye / is for we han to lyte
 255A yif that Couent / half a quarter otes
 256A yif that Couent/ { }xxiiij{ } grotes
 257A yif that frere a peny / and lat hym go
 258Nay nay Thomas / it may no thyng be {s}o
 259What is a ferthyng worth / parted in twelue
 260Lo / ech thyng / that is oned in hym selue
 261Is moore {s}trong/ than whan it is to {s}catered
 262Thomas / of me / thow shalt nat been yflatered
 263Thow wolde{s}t han oure labour / al for noght/
 264The hye god / that al this world hath wrought/
 265Seith / that the werkman / worthy is his hire
 266Thomas / noght of youre tre{s}or I de{s}ire
 267As for my self / but that al oure Couent
 268To praye for yow / is ay {s}o diligent/
 269And for to buylden / cri{s}tes owene chirche
 270Thomas / if ye wol lernen for to wirche
 271Of buyldyng vp of chirches / may ye fynde

272If it be good / in Thomas lyf of Inde
 273Ye lye heere / ful of Anger and of Ire
 274¶This Cartere / taketh his hors {^}{{vp}} on the croupe
 275With which / the deuel {s}et youre herte afire
 276And chiden heere / the sely Innocent /
 277Your wyf / that is {s}o meke and pacient/

{{Folio 83r}}

278And ther fore Thomas / trowe me if thee le{s}te
 279Ne stryue nat with thy wyf/ as for thy be{s}te
 280And bere this word away / now by thy feith
 281Touchynge swich thyng/ lo what the wi{s}e man seith
 282¶With Inne thyn hous / ne be thow no leo|un|
 283To thy subgitz / do noon o|pp'|{ss}io|un|
 284Ne make thyne aqueyntances / nat for to flee
 285And Thomas / yet eft {s}oones I charge thee
 286Be war from hire / that in thy bo{s}om slepeth
 287War fro the serpent/ that {s}o sleighly crepeth
 288Vnder the gras / and styngeth subtilly
 289Be war my sone / and herkne paciently
 290That twenty thou{s}and men / han lo{s}t hir lyues
 291ffor stryuyng/ with hir lemmans and hir wyues
 292Now sith ye han / {s}o holy meke a wyf
 293What nedeth yow Thomas / to maken stryf/
 294Ther nys ywis / no serpent {s}o cruel
 295Whan man tret on his tayl / ne half {s}o fel
 296As womman is / whan she hath caught an Ire
 297Vengeance is thanne / al that they de{s}ire
 298Ire is a synne / oon of the grete of seuene
 299Abhomynable / vn to the god of heuene
 300And to hym self / it is de{s}truccio|un|
 301This euery lewed viker / or |per|{s}o|un|
 302Kan seye / how Ire engendreth homicide
 303Ire is in sooth / executour of pryde
 304I koude of Ire / seye {s}o mucche sorwe
 305My tale / sholde la{s}te til to morwe
 306And ther fore praye I god / bothe day and nyght
 307An Irous man / god {s}ende hym litel myght/
 308It is greet harm / and |cer|tes greet pitee
 309To sette an Irous man in heigh degree
 310Whilom / ther was an Irous pote{s}tat/
 311As seith Senek/ that durynge his e{s}tat/
 312Vp on a day / our ryden knyghtes two
 313And as ffortune wolde / that it wer {s}o
 314That oon of hem cam hom / that oother noght/
 315Anon the knyght/ bifore the Iuge is broght/
 316That seyde thus / thow ha{s}t thy felawe slayn
 317ffor which / I deme thee to the deeth certayn

{{Folio 83v}}

318[An]d to another knyght/ comanded he
 319Go leed hym to the deeth / I charge thee
 320And happed / as they wente by the weye

321 Toward the place / ther he sholde deye
 322 The knyght cam / which men wenden had be deed
 323 Thanne thoghten they / it were the be{s}te reed
 324 To lede hem bothe / to the Iuge agayn
 325 They seyden / lord / the knyght ne hath nat slayn
 326 His felawe / heere he stant hool alyue
 327 ¶ Ye shul be deed quod he / so moot I thryue
 328 This is to seyn / bothe oon and two and thre
 329 And to the fir{s}te knyght / right thus spak / he
 330 ¶ I dampned thee / thou mo{s}t algate be deed
 331 And thow al{s}o / mo{s}t nedes le{s}e thyn heed
 332 ffor thow art cau{s}e / why thy felawe deyth
 333 And to the thridde knyght / right thus he seith
 334 Thow ha{s}t nat doon / that I comanded thee
 335 And thus he dide / do sleen hem alle thre
 336 ¶ Irous Camby{s}es / was eek dronkelewe
 337 And ay delited hym / to been a shrewe
 338 And {s}o bifel / a lord of his meynee
 339 That louede / vertuous moralitee
 340 Seyde on a day / bitwix hem two right thus
 341 ¶ A lord is lo{s}t / if he be vicius
 342 And dronkene{ss}e / is eek a foul record
 343 Of any man / and namely in a lord
 344 Ther is ful many an eighe / and many an ere
 345 Awaityng on a lord / he noot nat where
 346 ffor goddes loue / drynk moore attemprely
 347 Wyn maketh man / to le{s}en wrecchedly
 348 His mynde / and eek his lymes e|uer|ychon
 349 ¶ The reuers shaltow se / quod he anon
 350 And preue it / by thyn owene experience
 351 That wyn ne dooth to folk / no swich offence
 352 Ther is no wyn / bireueth me my myght /
 353 Of hond ne foot / ne of myne eyen sight /
 354 And for de{s}pit / he drank ful muchel moore
 355 An hundred part / than he hadde doon bifore
 356 And right anon / this Irous cur{s}ed wrecche

.b.

357 Leet this knyghtes sone .a./ bifore hym fecche

{{Folio 84r}}

358 Comandyng hym / he sholde bifore hym {s}tonde
 359 And sodeynly / he took his bowe in honde
 360 And vp the {s}treng / he pulled to his ere
 361 And with an arwe / he slow the child right there
 362 Now / wheither haue I / a siker hand or noon
 363 Quod he / is al my myght and mynde agoon
 364 Hath wyn byreued me / myn eye sight
 365 ¶ What sholde I telle / than{s}were of the knyght /
 366 His {s}one was slayn / ther is namoore to seye
 367 Beth war ther fore / with lordes how ye pleye
 368 Syngeth Placebo / and I shal if I kan
 369 But if it / be / vn to a poure man

370To a poure man / men sholde his vices telle
 371But nat to a lord / thogh he sholde go to helle
 372¶Lo Irous Syrus / thilke Percien
 373How he de{s}troyed / the ryuer of Gy{s}en
 374ffor that an hors of his / was dreynt ther Inne
 375Whan that he wente / Babiloyne to wynne
 376He made / that the Ryuer was {s}o smal
 377That wommen / myghte wade it o|uer| al
 378Lo what seyde he / that {s}o wel teche kan
 379Ne be no felawe / to an Irous man
 380Ne with no wood man / walke by the weye
 381Le{s}t thee repente / I wol no ferther seye
 382¶Now Thomas leue brother / lef thyn Ire
 383Thow shalt me fynde / as Iu{s}t/ as is a Squyre
 384Hoold nat the deueles knyf / ay at thyn herte
 385Thyn angre dooth thee / al to {s}oore smerte
 386But shewe to me / al thy confe{ss}io|un|
 387¶Nay quod the sike man /by Seint Symo|un|
 388I haue be shryuen this day / at my Curat/
 389I haue hym toold / hoolly al myn e{s}tat/
 390Nedeth namoore to speke of it seith he
 391But if my li{s}t/ of myn humylitee
 392¶Yif me thanne of thy gold / to make oure cloy{s}tre
 393Quod he / for many a Mu{s}cle / and many an Oy{s}tre
 394Whan othere men / han been ful wel atey{s}e
 395Hath been oure foode / oure Cloy{s}tre for to rey{s}e
 396And yet god woot/ vnnethe the fundement /
 397Parfourned is / ne of oure pauement/

{{Folio 84v}}

398[N]ys nat a tyle / yet/ with Inne oure wones
 399By god / we owen fourty pound for stones
 400Now help Thomas / for hym |bt| harwed helle
 401Or ellis mote we / oure bookes selle
 402And if yow lakke / oure predicacio|un|
 403Thanne gooth the world / al to de{s}truccio|un|
 404ffor who so / fro this world / wolde vs bireue
 405So god me saue / Thomas by youre leue
 406He wolde bireue / out of the world the sonne
 407ffor who kan teche / and werchen as we konne
 408And that is nat/ of litel tyme quod he
 409But sith Elie was / or Elize
 410Han freres been / that fynde I of record
 411In charitee / thonked be oure lord
 412Now Thomas / help for Seinte charitee
 413And down anon / he {s}et hym on his knee
 414¶This sike man / weex wel neigh wood for Ire
 415He wolde / that the frere / hadde been afire
 416With his fal{s}e di{ss}imulacio|un|
 417Swich thyng / as is in my po{ss}e{ss}ioun|
 418Quod he/{?.} that may I yeue and noon oother
 419Ye sey me thus / how that I am youre brother
 420¶Ye certes quod the frere / tru{s}teth wel
 421I took oure dame / oure lettre with oure sel

422¶Now wel quod he / and {s}om what/ shal I yeue
 423Vn to youre holy Couent/ whil I lyue
 424And in thyn hand / thow shalt it han anon
 425On this condicio|un| / and oother noon
 426That thow departe it {s}o / my deere brother
 427That euery frere / haue as muche as oother
 428This shaltow swere / on thy |pro|fe{ss}io|un|
 429With outen fraude / or cauelacio|un|
 430¶I swere it quod this frere / vp on my feith
 431And ther with al / his hand in his he leith
 432Lo here my feith / in me / shal be no lak
 433¶Now thanne put thyn hand / down by my bak/
 434Seyde this man / and grope wel bihynde
 435Bynethe by buttoke/ there shaltow fynde
 436A thyng/ that I haue hyd in pryuetee
 437¶A thoghte this frere / that shal go with me

{{Folio 85r}}

438And down his hand / he launcheth to the clifte
 439In hope / for to fynde there a yifte
 440And whan this sike man / felte this frere
 441Aboute his tuwel / grope there and heere
 442Amydde his hand / he leet the frere a fart/
 443Ther is no capul / drawyng in a Cart/
 444That myghte han late a fart/ of swich a sown
 445¶The frere vp stirte / as dooth a wood leoun
 446A fal{s}e cherl quod he / for goddes bones
 447This ha{s}tow for de{s}pit/ doon for the nones
 448Thow shalt abyte this fart/ if |pt| I may
 449His meynee / which that herden this affray
 450Cam lepyng In / and chaced out the frere
 451And forth he gooth / with a ful angry cheere
 452And fette his felawe / ther as lay his stoor
 453He looked / as he were a wilde boor
 454He grynt with his teeth / so was he wrooth
 455A sturdy paas / down to the court he gooth
 456Wher as ther woned / a man of greet honour
 457To whom / that he was alwey confe{ss}our
 458This worthy man / was lord of that village
 459This frere cam / as he were in a rage
 460Where as this lord / {s}at etyng/ at his boord
 461Vnnethe / myghte the frere speke a woord
 462Til atte la{s}te / he seyde / god yow see
 463¶This lord gan looke / and seyde benedicitee
 464What frere |Iohan| / what manere world is this
 465I se wel / that {s}om thyng/ ther is amys
 466Ye looken / as the wode were ful of theuys
 467Sit down anon / and tel me what youre grief is
 468And it shal been amended / if I may
 469¶I haue quod he / had a de{s}pit to day
 470God yelde yow / adown in youre village
 471That in this world / ther nys {s}o poure a page
 472That he nolde haue / abhomynacioun
 473Of that/ I haue receyued in youre toun

474And yet/ ne greueth me / no thyng {s}o {s}oore
 475As that this olde cherl / with lokkes hoore
 476Bla{s}phemed hath / oure hooly Couent eke
 477¶Now mai{s}ter quod this lord / I yow bi{s}eke

{{Folio 85v}}

478¶No mai{s}ter sire quod he / but seruytour
 479Thogh I haue had in scole / that honour
 480God liketh nat/ that Raby men vs calle
 481Neither in Market/ nyn youre large halle
 482¶No force quod he / but tel me al youre grief
 483¶Sire quod this frere / an odious me{s}chief
 484This day bityd is / to myn ordre and me
 485And so |per| con{s}equens / to ech degree
 486Of holy chirche / god amende it {s}oone
 487¶Sire quod the lord / ye woot what is to doone
 488Di{s}tempre yow noght/ ye be my confe{ss}our
 489Ye been the salt of therthe / and the sauour
 490ffor goddes loue / youre pacience ye holde
 491Tel me youre grief / and he anon hym tolde
 492As ye han herd biforn / ye woot wel what
 493The lady of the hous / ay stille sat/
 494Til she hadde herd / what the frere sayde
 495¶Ey goddes moder quod she / bli{s}ful mayde
 496Is ther aught ellis / tel me feithfully
 497¶Madame quod he / how thynketh yow ther by
 498¶How |pt| me thynketh quod she / so god me spede
 499I seye / a cherl / hath doon a cherles dede
 500What sholde I seye / god lat hym ne|uer|e thee
 501His sike heed / is ful of vanytee
 502I holde hym / in a manere frene{s}ye
 503¶Madame quod he / by god I shal nat lye
 504But I / on oother wi{s}e / may be wreke
 505I shal diffame hym / ouer al wher I speke
 506The fal{s}e bla{s}phemour / that charged me
 507To parte / that wol nat departed be
 508To euery man yliche / with me{s}chaunce
 509¶The lord sat stille / as he were in a traunce
 510And in his herte / he rolled vp and down
 511How hadde this cherl / ymaginacioun
 512To shewe swich a probleme / to the frere
 513Ne|uer|e er{s}t er now / herde I swich matere
 514I trowe the deuel / putte it in his mynde
 515In Ar{s}metrik/ shal ther no man fynde
 516Bifore this day / of swich a que{s}ti|oun|
 517Who sholde / make a demon{s}tracio|un|

{{Folio 86r}}

518That euery man sholde han / ylike his part /
 519As of a {s}oun / or {s}auour / of a fart/
 520O nyce prowde cherl / I shrewe his face
 521¶Lo sires quod the lord / with harde grace
 522Who euere herde / of swich a thyng/ er now

523To euery man ylike / tel me how
 524It is an inpo{ss}ible / it may nat be
 525Ey nyce cherl / god lat hym ne|uer|e thee
 526The rumblyng of a fart/ and euery {s}oun
 527Nys but of Eyr / reuerberacioun
 528And ther it wa{s}teth / lite and lite away
 529Ther nys no man / kan deme by my fey
 530If that it were / departed equally
 531What lo my cherl / lo yet how shrewedly
 532Vn to my confe{ss}our / to day he spak /
 533I holde hym certeynly / demonyak/
 534Now ete youre mete / and lat the cherl go pleye
 535Lat hym go hange hym self/ a deuel weye
 536¶Now stood / the lordes Squyer at the boord
 537That carf his mete / and herde word by woord
 538Of alle thyng/ of which I haue yow sayd
 539¶My lord quod he / be ye nat yuele apayd
 540I koude telle / for a gowne clooth
 541To yow sire frere / so ye be nat wrooth
 542How that this fart/ sholde euene ydeled be
 543Among youre Couent/ if it liked me
 544¶Tel quod the lord / and thow shalt haue anon
 545A gowne clooth / by god and by Seint |Iohan|
 546¶My lord quod he / whan that the weder is fair
 547With outen wynd / or |per|turbynge of Air
 548Lat brynge a Cartwheel / heere in to this halle
 549But looke that it haue / his spokes alle
 550Twelf spokes / hath a Cartwheel comunly
 551And brynge me thanne twelf freres / woot ye why
 552ffor thrittene / is a Couent/ as I ge{ss}e
 553Yourre confe{ss}our heere / for his worthyne{ss}e
 554Shal |per|fourne vp / the nombre of this Couent/
 555Thanne shal they knele adown / by oon a{ss}ent/
 556And to euery spokes ende / in this manere
 557fful {s}adly / leye his no{s}e / shal a frere

{{Folio 86v}}

558[Y]oure noble Confe{ss}our / ther god hym saue
 559Shal holde his no{s}e / vp right vnder the Naue
 560Thanne shal this cherl / with baly / stif and toght/
 561As any tabour / hider been ybrought/
 562And sette hym on the wheel / right of this Cart/
 563Vp on the Naue / and make hym lete a fart/
 564And ye shal {s}een / on |per|il of my lyf
 565By proue / which that is demon{s}tratyf
 566That equally / the {s}oun of it wol wende
 567And eek the styng / vn to the spokes ende
 568Saue / that this worthy man / youre Confe{ss}our
 569By cau{s}e / he is a man of greet honour
 570Shal han the fir{s}te fruyt/ as re{s}on is
 571The noble v{s}age of freres / yet is this
 572The worthy men of hem / shul fir{s}t be {s}erued
 573And certeynly / he hath it wel di{ss}erued
 574He hath to day / taught/ vs {s}o muchel good

575With |pre|chyng/ in the pulput/ ther he {s}tood
 576That I may vouche sauf / I seye for me
 577He hadde the fir{s}te smel / of fartes thre
 578And so wolde / al his Couent hardily
 579He bereth hym / {s}o faire and holily
 580¶The lord / the lady / ech man / {s}aue the frere
 581Seyden / that Iankyn / spak in this matere
 582As wel / as Eucllyde / or Protholomee
 583Touchyng the cherl / they seyde subtiltee
 584And hy wit/ made hym speke / as he spak
 585He nys no fool / ne no demonyak/
 586And Iankyn hath ywonne / a newe gowne
 587My tale is doon / we been almoo{s}t at towne

¶Here endeth the Somnours tale

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expansions of contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles.

Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
 {ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
 {C} : capitulum
 {^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
 {?.} : punctus elevatus
 {^} : caret

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Rhyme: couplets

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

To Rosemounde

1Ma dame, ye ben of al beaute shryne

2As fer as cerceled is the mapamonde;

3For as the cristall glorious ye shyne,

4And lyke ruby ben your chekys rounde.

5Therwyth ye ben so mery and so iocunde

6That at a reuell whan that I se you dance,

7It is an oynement vnto my wounde,

8Thought ye to me ne do no daliance.

9For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,

10Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;

11Your semy voys that ye so small out twyne

12Makyth my thought in ioy and blys habounde.

13So curtaysly I go, wyth loue bounde,

14That to my self I sey, in my penaunce,

15Suffyseth me to loue you, Rosemounde,
16Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

17Nas neuer pyk walwed in galauntyne
18As I in loue am walwed and iwounde;
19For whych ful ofte I of my self deuyne
20That I am trew Tristam the secunde.
21My loue may not refreyde nor affounde;
22I brenne ay in an amoureuse plesaunce.
23Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,
24Thogh ye to me ne do no daliance.

*Tregentil --/-- Chaucer

Notes

1] shryne: holy shrine.

2] mapamounde: map o' the world (cf. French "monde").

8] do no daliance: do not flirt, chat with.

9] tyne: tub, as holding fish.

10] "Yet that misery will not overwhelm my heart."

11] semy voys: perhaps "semi-voice," quiet voice. small: "synall" in ms, and emended by all editors following W. W. Skeat's suggestion. out twyne: spin out.

12] habounde: abundant, rich in.

15] Rosemounde: "rose of the world" and hence compared to the map of the world (2).

17] "Never was there a pike so drenched in galantine" (a chilled, jello-like sauce).

18] iwounde: tied up.

19] deuyne: imagine.

20] tristam: Tristram, lover and beloved of Iseult, about whom is written the earlier English romance "Sir Tristrem" and whose story appears in works from Malory's *Morte Darthur* to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. They are fated to love one another after mutually drinking a love potion. Despite her marriage to King Mark of Cornwall, their love continues and eventually leads to Tristram's death.

21] refreyde: chilled. affounde: made cold; (perhaps) immersed or foundered (cf. the pike in the galantine sauce).

] Tregentil: "very noble" (or a proper name). This line is written in a different script.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

Troilus and Criseyde: Book I

(excerpt)

From Book I

155And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme

156Of Aperil, whan clothéd is the mede

157With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,

158And swote smellen floures white and rede,

159In sondry wises shewed, as I rede,

160The folk of Troie hir observaunces olde,

161Palladiones feste for to holde.

162And to the temple, in al hir beste wyse,

163In general ther wente many a wight,

164To herkennen of Palladion the servyse;

165And namely, so many a lusty knyght,

166So many a lady fressh and mayden bright,
167Ful wel arayed, both meste, mene, and leste,
 168Ye, bothe for the seson and the feste.

169Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
 170In widewes habit blak; but natheles,
171Right as our firste lettre is now an A,
172In beautee first so stood she, makeles;
 173Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.
174Nas nevere yet seyn thing to ben preysed derre,
 175Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre

176As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone
177That hir bihelden in hir blake wede;
 178And yet she stood ful lowe and stille allone,
179Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,
 180And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,
181Simple of atir and debonaire of chere,
 182With ful assured lokyng and manere.

183This Troilus, as he was wont to gide
 184His yonge knyghtes, lad hem up and doun
185In thilke large temple on every side,
 186Byholding ay the ladies of the town,
 187Now here, now there; for no devoc{.i}oun
188Hadde he to non, to reven hym his reste,
189But gan to preise and lakken whom hym leste.

190And in his walk ful faste he gan to wayten
 191If knyght or squyer of his compaignie
192Gan for to syke, or lete his eighen baiten
 193On any womman that he koude espye;
 194He wolde smyle, and holden it folye,
 195And seye him thus, "God woot, she slepeth softe
 196For love of the, whan thou turnest ful ofte!

197"I have herd told, pardieux, of your lyvyng,
198Ye loveres, and youre lewed observaunces,
199And which a labour folk han in wynnyng
200Of love, and in the kepyng which doutaunces;
 201And whan your preye is lost, woo and penaunces.
202O veray fooles! nyce and blynde be ye!
203Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be."

204And with that word he gan cast up the browe,
205Ascaunces, "Loo! is this naught wisely spoken?"
206At which the god of love gan loken rowe
207Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken.
208He kidde anon his bowe nas naught broken;

209For sodeynly he hitte him atte fulle;
 210And yet as proud a pekok kan he pulle!

 211O blynde world, O blynde entenc{.i}oun!
 212How often falleth al the effect contraire
213Of surquidrie and foul presumpc{.i}oun;
214For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire.
 215This Troilus is clomben on the staire,
 216And litel weneth that he moot descenden;
217But al-day faileth thing that fooles wenden.

218As proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe
 219Out of the wey, so pryketh hym his corn,
 220Til he a lasshe have of the longe whippe;
 221Than thynketh he, "Though I prounce al byforn
 222First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
 223Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
224I moot endure, and with my feres drawe."

Notes

155] A narrative poem in five books and over 8,000 lines extant in whole or in part in twenty 15th-century mss. First printed by Caxton about 1483. The poem was probably completed in 1385 or 1386. It is an adaptation and expansion of Boccaccio's poem *Filostrato* (ca. 1388) and is also indebted to Guido delle Colonne's prose *Historia Trojana* (1287) and Benoit de Sainte Maure's poem *Le Roman de Troie* (ca. 1160). Chaucer has developed the historical background, added a number of episodes, and altered Boccaccio's conception of the characters.

At the beginning of the poem, Calchas, priest of Apollo, foreseeing the destruction of Troy, has deserted to the Greeks, leaving in the city his daughter Criseyde, a widow. She is freed from suspicion of treason and is allowed to remain in all honour.

157] Veer: Latin *Ver*, spring.

158] swote: sweet.

161] Palladiones: the reference is to an image of Pallas. See Vergil, *Aeneid*, II.165.

167] both meste, mene, and leste: both the greatest, those of middle rank, and the lowest classes.

171] This is substituted for Boccaccio's statement that she surpassed other women as the rose does the violet. The change seems pointless unless there is a personal allusion, and it is probable that Chaucer, a courtly poet, is referring to Anne of Bohemia, who was married to Richard II, January 14, 1382. This would account for the use of *now*, which is otherwise hard to explain.

172] makeles: without a mate, peer.

174] nas: nothing was ever seen more worthy of being praised.

177] blake wede: black garment.

179] brede: breadth, space.

181] debonaire of chere: gracious in bearing.

183] Troilus: a son of King Priam.

185] thilke: for *that ilke*, the same.

188] reven him: take away from him.

189] lakken: blame. whom hym leste: whomever it pleased him.

190] wayten: watch, observe.

192] began to sigh or let his eyes feast.

197] pardieux: by the gods.

198] lewed: ignorant, foolish (OE *læwed*, lay, unlearned).

199] which a: what a.

200] which doutaunces: what perplexities.

202] nyce: foolish (Latin *nescius* through Old French *nice*, silly).

203] There is no one (of you) who can be made wary or cautious by (the misfortunes) of others.

205] Ascaunces: as if to say.

206] rowe: angrily.

207] shop: planned. wroken: avenged.

208] kidde: made known (OE *cyðan*, past tense *cyðde*, *cydde*).

209] atte: at the.

213] surquidrie: arrogance.

214] debonaire: modest.

217] wenden: expected.

218] Bayard: a bay horse.

224] feres: companions.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

Troilus and Criseyde: Book II

(excerpt)

From Book II

596With this he took his leve, and hom he wente;

597And lord, so he was glad and wel bygon!

598Criseyde aroos, no lenger she ne stente,

599But streght in-to hire closet wente anon,

600And set hire down as styllle as any ston,

601And every word gan up and down to wynde,

602That he hadde seyde, as it com hire to mynde;

603And wex somdel astoned in hire thought,

604Right for the newe cas; but whan that she

605Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought

606Of peril, why she ought afered be,

607For man may love, of possibilite,

608A womman so, his herte may to-breste,

609And she naught love ayein, but-if hire leste.

610But as she sat allone and thoughte thus,

611Ascry aroos at scarmuch al with-oute,

612And men cryde in the strete, "Se, Troilus

613Hath right now put to flighte the Grekes route!"

614With that gan al hire meyné for to shoute,

615"A! go we see; caste up the latis wyde;

616For thorough this strete he moot to paleys ryde;

617"For other wey is fro the yate noon

618Of Dardanus, ther opyn is the cheyne."

619With that com he and al his folk anoon

620An esy pas rydyng, in routes tweyne,

621Right as his happy day was, sooth to seyne,

622For which, men seyn, may nought distourbed be

623That shal bityden of necessitee.

624This Troilus sat on his baye steede,

625Al armed, save his hed, ful richely,

626And wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,

627On whiche he rood a pas, ful softly,

628But swych a knyghtly sighte, trewely,

629As was on hym was nought, withouten faille,

630To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille.

631So lik a man of armes and a knyght

632He was to seen, fulfilled of heigh prowessse;

633For bothe he hadde a body and a myght

634To doon that thing, as wel as hardynesse;

635And eek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,

636So fressh, so yong, so weldy semed he,

637It was an heven up-on hym for to see.

638His helm to-hewen was in twenty places,

639That by a tyssew heng, his bak byhynde;

640His sheld to-dasshed was with swerdes and maces,

641In which men myghte many an arwe fynde

642That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde;

643And ay the peple cryde, "Here cometh oure joye,

644And, next his brother, holder up of Troye!"

645For which he wex a litel reed for shame,

646Whan he the peple up-on hym herde cryen,

647That to byholde it was a noble game,

648How sobreliche he caste down his yen.

649Cryseyda gan al his chere asprien,

650And leet it so softely yn hir herte synke,

651That to hireself she seyde, "Who yaf me drynke?"

652For of hire owen thought she wex al reed,

653Remembryng hire right thus, "Lo, this is he

654Which that myn uncle swerith he moot be deed,

655But I on hym have mercy and pitee."

656And with that thought, for pure ashamed, she

657Gan in hir hed to pulle, and that as faste,

658Whil he and all the peple forby paste.

659And gan to caste and rollen up and doun

660With-inne hir thought his excellent prowesse,

661And his estat, and also his renown,

662His wit, his shap, and eek his gentillesse;

663But moost hir favour was, for his distresse

664Was al for hire, and thoughte it was a routhe

665To sleen swich oon, if that he mente trouthe.

666Now myghte som envious jangle thus:

667"This was a sodeyn love; how myght it be

668That she so lightly loved Troilus

669Right for the firste syghte; ye, pardé?"

670Now who-so seith so, mote he never ythé!

671For everything, a gynnyng hath it nede

672Er al be wrought, with-outen any drede.

673For I sey nought that she so sodeynly

674Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne

675To like him first, and I have told yow whi;

676And after that, his manhod and his pyne

677Made love with-inne hire herte for to myne,

678For which, by proces and by good servyse,

679He gat hire love, and in no sodeyn wyse.

Notes

596] Troilus, overcome by love, has confided in his friend Pandarus, Criseyde's uncle. The latter has visited Criseyde at her house and urged her to accept Troilus as a lover.

597] wel bygon. Happy. Cf. woe-begone.

598] stente. Stinted, stopped, delayed.

603] somdel. Somewhat.

605] Was ful avysed. Had fully considered.
tho. Then.

608] to-breste. Burst in pieces.

609] but-if hir leste. Unless it please her.

611] Ascry. Alarm.
scarmuch. Skirmish.

614] meyni. Household.

615] latis. Lattice. Root and Robinson read *yatis* (gates), Oxford and Globe eds. *latis*. Though found in only one MS. the latter seems more appropriate here.

618] ther. Where.

621] As was his good fortune.

627] a pas. (At) a foot-pace.

636] weldy. Active.

638] to-hewen. Cut through.

639] lyssew. Woven cord.

642] thiried. Pierced.
nerf. Sinew.
rynde. Outer surface.

645] Wex reed. Turned red.

649] chereAppearance.

651] Who yaf me drunken Who has given me a love-potion?

654] moot be, deed. Must die.

655] But. Unless.

656] for pure ashamed. For very shame.

657] as faste. As fast as possible.

659] caste. Consider,

661] estat. Rank.

663] for. Because.

664] routhe. Pity.

665] to sleen twich oon. To slay such a one.

666] envious. Malicious (person).

670] mote he never ythé! May he never thrive!

671] nede. Of necessity.

672] drede. Doubt.

674] yaf. Gave.

678] by proces. By the course of time and events.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

Troilus and Criseyde: Book V

(excerpt)

From Book V

1030The morwen com, and gostly for to speke,

1031This Diomedé is come un-to Criseyde;

1032And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,

1033So wel he for hym-selven spak and seyde,

1034That alle hire sikes soore adown he leyde.

1035And finally, the sothe for to seyne,

1036He refte hir of the grete of al hire peyne.

1037And after this the storie telleth us

1038That she hym yaf the faire baye stede,

1039The which he ones wan of Troilus;

1040And ek a broche (and that was litel nede)

1041That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedede.

1042And ek, the bet from sorwe him to releve,

1043She made hym were a pencil of hire sleve.

1044I fynde ek in the stories elles-where,

1045Whan thourgh the body hurt was Diomedede

1046Of Troilus, tho wepte she many a teere,

1047Whan that she saugh his wyde wowndes blede;

1048And that she took, to kepen hym, good hede;

1049And for to hele hym of his sorwes smerte,

1050Men seyn, I not, that she yaf hym hire herte.

1051But trewely, the storie telleth us,

1052Ther made nevere woman moore wo

1053Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.

1054She seyde, "Allas! for now is clene a-go

1055My name of trouthe in love, for evere-mo!

1056For I have falsed oon the gentileste

1057That evere was, and oon the worthieste!

1058"Allas, of me, un-to the worldes ende,

1059Shal neyther been y-writen nor y-songe

1060No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.

1061O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!

1062Thourgh-out the world my belle shal be ronge;

1063And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.

1064Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!

1065"Thei wol seyn, in as mucche as in me is,

1066I have hem don dishonour, weylaway!

1067Al be I nat the firste that dide amys,

1068What helpeth that to don my blame away?

1069But syn I see ther is no bettre way,

1070And that to late is now for me to rewe,

1071To Diomedede algate I wol be trewe.

1072"But, Troilus, syn I no bettre may,

1073And syn that thus departen ye and I,

1074Yet prey I God, so yeve yow right good day,

1075As for the gentileste, trewely,

1076That evere I say, to serven feythfully,

1077And best kan ay his lady honour kepe;"--

1078And with that word she brast anon to wepe.

1079"And certes, yow ne haten shal I nevere;

1080And frendes love, that shal ye han of me,

1081And my good word, al sholde I lyven evere.

1082And, trewely, I wolde sory be

1083For to seen yow in adversitee.

1084And giltelees, I woot wel, I yow leve;

1085But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve."

1086But trewely, how longe it was bytwene,
1087That she forsok him for this Diomedee,
1088Ther is non auctor telleth it, I wene.

1089Take every man now to his bokes heede;
1090He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.

1091For though that he bigan to wowe hire sone,
1092Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone.

1093Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde
1094Forther than the storye wol devyse.

1095Hire name, allas! is publissed so wyde
1096That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.
1097And if I myghte excuse hire any wyse,
1098For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,
1099I-wis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe.

...

1786Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragédye,

1787Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
1788So sende myght to make in som comédye!

1789But litel book, no makyng thou nenvie,
1790But subgit be to alle poesye;
1791And kis the steppes, whereas thou seest pace
1792Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.

1793And for ther is so gret diversité

1794In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
1795So prey I God that noon myswrite thee,
1796Ne thee mys metre for defaute of tonge.

1797And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,
1798That thow be understonde God I beseche!
1799But yet to purpos of my rather speche.--

1800The wrath, as I bigan yow for to seye,
1801Of Troilus, the Grekis boughten deere;

1802For thousandes his hondes maden deye,
1803As he that was with-outhe any peere,
1804Save Ector, in his tyme, as I kan heere.

1805But weilaway, save only Goddes wille!
1806Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille.

1807And whan that he was slayn in this manére,

1808His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
1809Up to the holownesse of the eighthe spere,
1810In convers letyng everich element;

1811And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,
1812The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye

1813With sownes fulle of hevenysssh melodie.

1814And doun from thennes faste he gan avyse

1815This litel spot of erthe, that with the se

1816Embraced is, and fully gan despise

1817This wrecched world, and held al vanité

1818To réspect of the pleyn felicité

1819That is in hevene above; and at the laste,

1820Ther he was slayn, his loking doun he caste;

1821And in hym-self he lough right at the wo

1822Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;

1823And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so

1824The blynde lust, the which that may not laste,

1825And sholden al our herte on heven caste.

1826And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,

1827Ther as Mercúrye sorted hym to dwelle.--

1828Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love,

1829Swich fyn hath al his grete worthynesse;

1830Swich fyn hath his estat réal above,

1831Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse:

1832Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!

1833And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,

1834As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.

1835O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,

1836In which that love up groweth with your age,

1837Repeyreth hoom fro worldly vanyté,

1838And of youre herte up-casteth the visage

1839To thilke God that after his ymage

1840Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire

1841This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.

1842And loveth hym, the which that right for love

1843Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,

1844First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;

1845For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,

1846That wol his herte al holly on him leye.

1847And sin he best to love is, and most meke,

1848What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?

1849Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites,

1850Lo here, what alle hir goddes may availle;

1851Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites;

1852Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille

1853Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!

1854Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche

1855In poetrie, if ye hir bokes seche.--

1856O moral Gower, this book I directe
1857To the, and to the, philosophical Strode,
 1858To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to correcte,
 1859Of youre benignités and zeles goode.
1860And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode,
 1861With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye;
 1862And to the Lord right thus I speke and seye:

1863Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on lyve,
 1864That regnest ay in three, and two, and oon,
1865Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe,
 1866Us from visible and invisible foon
 1867Defende; and to thy mercy, everichon,
1868So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,
 1869For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne! Amen.

Notes

1030] After Troilus and Criseyde have become secret lovers she is forced to go to her father at the Greek camp, in exchange for the Trojan Antenor, who has been taken prisoner. She promises Troilus that she will return in ten days. But the Greek Diomede, who is her escort to the camp and who has fallen in love with her, convinces her that the city is doomed and return impossible.

morwen. Morrow.

gostly for to speke. To speak spiritually, that is religiously, truly.

1032] breke. Interrupt.

1034] sikes. Sighs.

1036] Deprived her of the great(er part) of all her pain.

1038] Diomede captured a bay horse from Troilus and gave it to Criseyde. Later, when Troilus had captured the horse of Diomede, Criseyde out of sympathy, returned his present. (From Benoit).

1040] ek. Also.

1042] the bet. The better.

1043] pencil. Small pennon (Old French *penoncele*). A lady's sleeve was often worn as a favour in the chivalric romances.

1044] In the stories elles-where. The incident that follows is also from Benoit.

1046] Of. By.

tho. Then.

1048] kepen. Care for, nurse.

1050] Men say, (though) I do not know, that she gave him her heart. Note the poet's reluctance to admit Criseyde's infidelity.

1054] ago. Gone.

1056] oon the gentileste. One of the noblest.

1060] shende. Disgrace.

1068] don. Put.

1069] syn. Since.

1071] algate. Anyway, at any rate.

1074] yeve. Give.

1076] say. Saw.

1077] lady. Lady's. Feminine noun without genitive ending.

1078] brast. Burst.

1088] auctor. Author.

1090] out of drede. Out of doubt.

1093] Nor does it please me (nor do I wish) to chide this poor unfortunate woman.

1095] publisshed. In some MSS. *punysshed*.

1099] I-wis. Certainly (O.E. *gewis*).
routhe. Pity.

1786] These concluding lines of the poem follow the account of Troilus's gradual discovery that Criseyde had been unfaithful.

1787] May God yet send to thy composer, before he die, the power to write in some comedy. *Ther* at the beginning of 1787 is a mere expletive.

1789] no makyng thou nenvie. Envy no composition.

1792] Stace. P. Papinius Statius (A.D. 61-96), author of the *Thebaid*.

1793] for. Because.

1796] Nor scan thee wrongly because of defective knowledge of thy language.

1798] understonde. Understood.

1799] rather. Earlier.

1802] deye. Die.

1805] But alas! (except only that it was God's will).

1806] slough. Slew.

1807] A late addition to the poem -- not found in some MSS. Taken from another poem of Boccaccio, the *Teseide*, where the hero's soul ascends into the heavens. influenced also by Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Lucan's account of the death of Pompey in *Pharsalia*, IX, 1 ff.

1809] Up to the concavity or inner surface of the eighth sphere, that of the fixed stars. Up to the extreme limits of the universe; see note on Milton's *Nativity Ode*, 125.

1810] Leaving the four elements (earth, water, air, fire) on the other side. Boccaccio has "degli clementi i convessi lasciando", "leaving the convexities of the elements", which Chaucer has mistranslated.

1811] avysement. Attention, understanding.

1812] erratik sterres. Wandering stars, planets.

1813] sownes. Sounds. On the music of the spheres see the Milton note cited above under 1. 1809.

1814] gan avyse. Did perceive.

1818] In comparison with the full, complete happiness.

1820] Ther. Where.

1821] Tough. Laughed.

1827] Where Mercury alloted to him to dwell. (Mercury was the conductor of souls to the next world.)

1828] fyn. End.

1830] estat réal. Royal rank.

1831] lust. Pleasure, joy.

1832] brotelnesse. Brittleness, frailty.

1839] thilke. That ilke, that same.

floures faire. Note the rhyming of words of the same sound but different meaning (cf. the French *rime riche*).

1843] beye. Buy, redeem.

1844] start. Died.
sit. Contraction of sitteth.

1845] nyl falsen no wight. Will not deceive anyone.

1847] sin. Since.

1849] payens. Pagans'.

1853] rascaille. Worthless mob (usually applied to animals not worth hunting).

1855] seche. Seek.

1856] moral Gower. Gower's poetry is marked by its serious ethical outlook. Gower had power of attorney for Chaucer during his absence from England in 1378 and addresses an admonition to him at the end of his *Confessio Amantis*.

1857] to the, philosophical Strode. Skeat reads "to the philosophical Strode", *The Globe Chaucer and Robinson*, by inserting the comma, make the second personal pronoun, which seems more probable. The reference may be to Ralph Strode, a noted philosopher, or to a Ralph Strode who was a prominent London lawyer from 1373 to his death in 1387.

1860] sothfast. True, faithful.
start on rode. Died on the cross.

1863] eterne on lyve. Eternally living.
A close translation of Dante's *Paradiso*, XIV, 28-30.

1865] uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe. Infinite, and comprehending everything.

1868] digne. Worthy.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

Truth

- 1** Fle fro the pres, and dwelle with sothefastnesse,
- 2** Suffise thin owen thing, thei it be smal;
- 3** For hord hath hate, and clymbyng tykelnesse,
- 4** Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal.
- 5** Savour no more thanne the byhove schal;
- 6** Reule weel thiself, that other folk canst reede;
- 7** And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.

- 8** Tempest the nought al croked to redresse,
- 9** In trust of hire that tourneth as a bal.
- 10** Myche wele stant in litel besynesse;
- 11** Bywar therefore to spurne ayeyns an al;
- 12** Stryve not as doth the crokke with the wal.

13Daunte thiself, that dauntest otheres dede;

14And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

15 That the is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;

16The wrestlyng for the worlde axeth a fal.

17Here is non home, here nys but wyldernesse.

18Forth, pylgryme, forth! forth, beste, out of thi stal!

19Know thi contré! loke up! thonk God of al!

20Hold the heye weye, and lat thi gost the lede;

21And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

[*L'envoy.*]

22 Therefore, thou Vache, leve thine olde wrechednesse;

23Unto the world leve now to be thral.

24Crie hym mercy, that of hys hie godnesse

25Made the of nought, and in espec{.i}al

26Draw unto hym, and pray in general

27For the, and eke for other, hevenelyche mede;

28And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.

Notes

1] This poem consists in twenty-two MSS. and was first printed by Caxton, c. 1477-8. In the MSS. it has such titles as *The good counceyl of chawcer* and *Moral balade of Chaucyre*. In the Chaucer Society reprint Furnivall entitled it *Truth*. One scribe, Shirley, heads the poem: *Balade that Chaucier made on his deeth bedde*, which would fix the date in 1400, but his statement has been questioned. The present text is from MS. Brit. Mus. Add. 10310, the only one that includes the *Envoy*. This is addressed to one Vache, probably Sir Philip de la Vache (1346- 1408), son in-law to Chaucer's friend, Sir Lewis Clifford. A prosperous courtier, he lost his offices between 1386 and 1389, but afterwards recovered favour. It has been suggested that the poem was addressed to him during the time of his misfortune. Much of the thought of this poem is from Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, which Chaucer translated.

pres. Crowd.
sothefastnesse. Truth.

2] Let thy property suffice thee, though it be small.

3] tykelnesse. Instability.

4] wele blent overal. Prosperity blindeth everywhere.

6] reede. Advise.

7] Cf. John, viii, 32.
hit is no drede. There is no doubt.

8] Tempest the nought. Do not distress thyself.

9] In trust of Fortune who continually turns her wheel.

10] Much happiness stands in little anxiety.

11] Beware of kicking against an awl (Cf. Acts, ix, 5).

12] crokke. Crock, pot.

13] Daunte. Rule, dominate.

15] buxumnesse. Submissiveness, obedience.

18] beste. Beast.

19] of. For.

20] heye weye. The main road.
gost. Spirit. Cf. Romans, viii, 4; Gal., vi, 16.

22] Vache. See introductory note.
olde wrechednesse. Long continued wretchedness (over thy misfortunes).

23] thral. Slave.

24-25] Crie hym mercy, that ... Made thee of nought. Thank him who, out of his goodness, created thee of nothing.

27] other. Perhaps the poet himself.
mede. Reward.

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 58r}}

¶Here bigynneth the prologe of the tale
of the Wyf of Bathe

1EXperience / thogh noon Auctoritee
2Were in this world / is right ynogh for me
3To speke of wo / that is in mariage
4ffor lordynges / sith |pt| I twelf yeer was of age
5Thonked be god / that is eterne on lyue
6Hou{s}bondes atte chirche dore / I haue had fyue
7If I so ofte / myghte han wedded be
8And alle were worthy men / in hir degree
9But me was told certeyn / noght longe agon is
10That sith |pt| Cri{s}t/ ne wente ne|uer|e but onys
11To weddyng/ in the Cane of Galilee

12That by the same en{s}ample / taughte he me
 13That I ne sholde / wedded be but ones
 14¶Herke eek / lo / which a sharp word for the nones
 15Bi{s}yde a welle / |Ihus| / god and man
 16Spak / in repreeue of the Samaritan
 17¶Thow ha{s}t yhad / fyue hou{s}bondes quod he
 18And that ilke man / which that now hath thee
 19Is nat thyn hou{s}bonde / thus he seyde |cer|teyn
 20What that he mente ther by / I kan nat seyn
 21But |þt| I axe / why |þt| the fifthe man
 22Was noon hou{s}bonde / to the Samaritan
 23How manye / myghte she han in mariage
 24Yet herde I neuere / tellen in myn age
 25Vp on this nombre / diffyncycioun
 26Men may dyuyne / and glo{s}en vp |&| down
 27But wel I woot ex|pre|{s} / with outen lye
 28God bad vs / for to wexe and multiplye
 29That gentil text/ kan I wel vnder{s}tonde
 30¶Eek wel I woot/ he seyde |þt| myn hou{s}bonde
 31Sholde lete / fader and moder/ and take to me
 32But of {^}{no} nombre / mencio|un| made he
 33Of Bigamye / or of Octogamye
 34Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye
 35¶Lo here / the wi{s}e kyng/ daun Salomon
 36I trowe / he hadde wyues many oon

{{Folio 58v}}

37As wolde god / it leueful were to me
 38To be refre{ss}hed / half {s}o ofte as he
 39Which yifte of god hadde he / for alle hi{s}e wyuys
 40No man hath swith / that in this world alyue is
 41God woot/ this noble kyng/ as to my wit
 42The fir{s}te nyght/ hadde many a murye fit
 43With ech of hem / {s}o wel was hym on lyue
 44Ble{ss}ed be god / that I haue wedded fyue
 45Wel come the sixte / whan |þt| e|uer|e he shal
 46ffor sith I wol nat kepe {^}{me} / chaa{s}t in al
 47Whan myn hou{s}bonde / is fro the world agon
 48Som cri{s}ten man / shal wedde me anon
 49ffor thanne thapo{s}tle seith / |þt| I am free
 50To wedde a goddes half / where it liketh me
 51He seith / that to be wedded is no synne
 52Bet is to be wedded / than to brynne
 53What rekketh me / theigh folk / seye vileynye
 54Of shrewed Lameth / and his bigamye
 55I woot wel / Abraham was an holy man
 56And Iacob eek/ as fer as e|uer|e I kan
 57And ech of hem / hadde wyues mo than two
 58And many another / holy man al{s}o
 59¶Where kan ye seye / in any maner age
 60That heighe god / defended mariage
 61By expres word / I pray yow telleth me
 62Or where comanded he virgynytee
 63I woot as wel as ye / it is no drede

64Thapo{s}tle / whan he speketh of maydenhede
 65He seyde / that |pre|cept ther of / hadde he noon
 66Men may con{s}eille a womman / to be oon
 67But con{s}eillyng/ nys no comandement/
 68He put it/ in oure owene Iuggement/
 69ffor hadde god / comanded maydenhede
 70Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng/ |with| the dede
 71And certes / if ther were no seed y{s}owe
 72Virgynytee thanne / wher of sholde it growe
 73Poul dor{s}te nat comanden / at the lee{s}te
 74A thyng/ of which / his may{s}ter yaf noon hee{s}te
 75The dart / is set vp for virgynytee
 76Cacche who so may / who renneth be{s}t lat se

{{Folio 59r}}

77But this word / is noght take of euery wight/
 78But ther as god / li{s}t yeue it of his myght/
 79I woot wel / that thapo{s}tle was a mayde
 80But natheles / thogh |þt| he wroot/ or sayde
 81He wolde / that euery wight/ were swich as he
 82Al nys but con{s}eil / to virgynytee
 83And for to been a wyf / he yaf me leue
 84Of Indulgence / so nys it no repreue
 85To wedde me / if that my make dye
 86With outen excepcio|un| of bigamye
 87Al were it good / no womman for to touche
 88He mente / as in his bed / or in his couche
 89ffor |per|il is / bothe fyr and tow ta{ss}emble
 90Ye knowe / what this en{s}ample may re{s}emble
 91This al and som / he heeld virgynytee
 92Moore |per|fit/ than weddyng in freletee
 93freletee clepe I / but if |þt| he and she
 94Wolde leden / al hir lyf/ in cha{s}titee
 95I graunte it wel / I haue noon enuye
 96Thogh maydenhede / |pre|ferre bigamye
 97It liketh hem to be clene / in body and goo{s}t/
 98Of myn e{s}tat/ ne wol I make no boo{s}t/
 99ffor wel ye knowe / a lord in his hou{s}hold
 100Ne hath nat euery ve{ss}el / al of gold
 101S|om|me been of tree / and doon hir lord s|er|uy{s}e
 102God clepeth folk to hym / in sondry wy{s}e
 103And euerich / hath of god a |prop|re yifte
 104Som this / som that/ as hym liketh shifte
 105Virgynytee / is greet |per|feccio|un|
 106And continence eek/ with deuocio|un|
 107But Cri{s}t/ that of |per|feccion / is welle
 108Bad nat euery wight / he sholde go selle
 109Al that he hadde / and yeue it to the poore
 110And in swich wi{s}e / folwe hym and his foore
 111He spak to hem / that wol lyue |per|fitly
 112And lordynges / by youre leue / that am nat I
 113I wol bi{s}towe / the flour of al myn age
 114In thactes / and in fruyt of mariage

questio

115¶Telle me al{s}o / to what conclu{s}io|un|

116Were membres maad / of generacio|un|

{{Folio 59v}}

117And of so |per|fit/ wys a wight ywroght/
 118Tru{s}teth right wel / they were nat maad for noght/
 119Glo{s}e who {s}o wole / and seye bothe vp and doun
 120That they were maad / for purgacioun
 121Of Vryne / and oure bothe thynges smale
 122Was eek to knowe / a femelle / from a male
 123And for noon oother cau{s}e / sey ye / no{?.}
 124Thex|per|iencie / woot wel it is noght so
 125So that the Clerkes / be nat with me wrothe
 126I sey this / |pt| they maked been for bothe
 127That is to seyn / for office and for e{s}e
 128Of engendrure / ther we nat god di{s}ple{s}e
 129Why sholde men ellis / in hir bokes sette
 130That man shal yelde / to his wyf hir dette
 131Now wherwith / sholde he make his paiement
 132If he ne v{s}ed / his sely In{s}trument/
 133Thanne were they maad / vp on a creature
 134To purge vryne / and eek for engendrure
 135¶But I seye noght / |pt| euery wight is holde
 136That hath swich harneys / as I to yow tolde
 137To goon / and v{s}en hem in engendrure
 138Thanne sholde men take / of Cha{s}titee no cure
 139Cri{s}t was a mayde / and shapen as a man
 140And many a Seynt/ sith that the world bigan
 141Yet lyued they euere / in |per|fit Cha{s}titee
 142I nyl envie / no virgynytee
 143Lat hem be breed / of pured whete seed
 144And lat vs wyues / hote Barlybreed
 145And yet |with| Barly breed / Mark telle kan
 146Oure lord |Iesu| / refre{ss}hed many a man
 147In swich e{s}tat/ as god hath clepyd vs
 148I wol |per|{s}euere / I nam nat |pre|cius
 149In wifhode / wol I v{s}e myn In{s}trument/
 150As frely / as my makere hath it sent/
 151If I be daungerous / god yeue me sorwe
 152Myn hou{s}bonde / shal it han / bothe eue and morwe
 153Whan that hym li{s}t/ com forth and paye his dette
 154And hou{s}bonde / wol I haue / I wol nat lette
 155Which shal be / bothe / my dettour and my thral
 156And haue / his tribulacion / with al

{{Folio 60r}}

157Vp on his fle{ss}h / whil that I am his wyf
 158I haue the power / duryng al my lyf
 159Vp on his |prop|re body / and nat he
 160Right thus / thapo{s}tle / tolde it vn to me
 161And bad oure hou{s}bondes / for to loue vs wel

162Al this sentence / me liketh euery del
 163Vp stirte the Pardoner / and that anon
 164Now dame quod he / by god and by Seint |Iohan|
 165Ye been a noble Prechour/ in this cas
 166I was aboute / to wedde a wyf allas
 167What/ sholde I bye {^}{it} / on my fle{ss}h {s}o deere
 168Yet hadde I leuere / wedde no wyf to yeere
 169¶Abyd quod she / my tale is nat bigonne
 170Nay /thow shalt drynken / of another tonne
 171Er |þt| I go / shal {s}auoure wors than Ale
 172And whan that I / haue toold thee forth my tale
 173Of tribulacion / in maryage
 174Of which I am expert/ in al myn age
 175This is to seye / my self hath been the whippe
 176Thanne may{s}tow / che{s}e / wheither |þt| thow wolt sippe
 177Of thilke tonne / that I shal abroche
 178Be war of it / er thow to neigh approche
 179ffor I shal telle en{s}amples / mo than ten
 180Who so |þt| nyle / be war/ by othere men
 181By hym / shal othere men corrected be
 182Thi{s}e same wordes / writeth Protholome
 183Rede in his Almage{s}te / and take it there
 184¶Dame I wolde pray yow / if youre wyl it were
 185Seyde this Pardoner / as ye bigan
 186Telle forth youre tale / spareth for no man
 187And techeth vs yonge men / of youre praktyke
 188¶Gladly quod she / syn it may yow lyke
 189But that I praye / to al this compaignye
 190If that I speke / after my fanta{s}ye
 191As taketh nat agrief / of that I seye
 192ffor myn entente / nys but for to pleye
 193Now sire / thanne wol I telle yow forth my tale
 194As euere / moot I drynke / wyn or Ale
 195I shal seye sooth / tho hou{s}bondes |þt| I hadde
 196As three of hem were goode / and two were badde

{{Folio 60v}}

197The thre men / were goode / and ryche / and olde
 198Vnnethe myghte they / the Statut holde
 199In which / that they were bounden vn to me
 200Ye woot wel / what I mene of this |per|dee
 201As help me god / I laughe whan I thynke
 202How pitou{s}ly / a nyght I made hem swynke
 203And by my fey / I tolde of it no stoor
 204They hadde me yeuen / hir land and hir tre{s}oor
 205Me neded nat/ do lenger diligence
 206To wynne hir loue / or doon hem re|uer|ence
 207They loued me so wel / by god aboute
 208That I ne tolde / no deyntee of hir loue
 209A wys womman / wol bi{s}ye hi|re| / e|uer|e in oon
 210To gete hir loue / ye ther as she hath noon
 211But sith I hadde hem / hoolly in myn hond
 212And sith that they / hadde yeuen me al hir lond
 213What sholde I take kepe / hem for to ple{s}e

214But it were / for my |pro|fit/ and myn e{s}e
 215I sette hem awerk/ by my fey
 216That many a night/ they songen weylawey
 217The bacon / was nat fet for hem I trowe
 218That {s}om men han / in E{ss}e|x'| at Donmowe
 219I go|uer|ned hem / so wel after my lawe
 220That ech of hem / ful bli{s}ful was and fawe
 221To brynge me / gaye thynges fro the ffeyre
 222They were ful glad / whan I spak to hem feyre
 223ffor god it woot/ I chidde hem spitou{s}ly
 224¶Now herkneth / how I bar me |prop|rely
 225Ye wi{s}e wyues / that konne vnder{s}tonde
 226Thus sholde ye speke / and bere hem wrong on honde
 227ffor half {s}o boldely / kan ther no man
 228Swere and lye / as a womman kan
 229I sey nat this / by wyues |pt| ben wy{s}e
 230But if it be / whan they hem my{s}auy{s}e
 231A wys wyf / if that she kan hir good
 232Shal bere hym an hond / the Cow is wood
 233And take witne{ss}e / of hir owene mayde
 234Of hire a{ss}ent/ but herkneth how I sayde
 235¶Sire olde kaynard / is this thyn array
 236Why is / my Neghebores wyf {s}o gay

{{Folio 61r}}

237She is hon|our|ed / ouer al ther she goth
 238I sitte at hoom / I haue no thrifty cloth
 239What do{s}tow / at my neghebores hous
 240Is she so fair / artow so amorous
 241What rowne ye with oure mayde / benedicite
 242Sire olde lechour / lat thy Iapes be
 243And if I haue / a go{ss}ib / or A freend
 244With outen gilt/ ye chiden as a feend
 245If that I walke / or pleye vn to his hous
 246Thow come{s}t hoom / as dronken as a mous
 247And |pre|che{s}t on thy bench / with yuel preef
 248Thow sey{s}t to me / it is a greet me{s}cheef
 249To wedde a poure womman / for co{s}tage
 250And if that she be ryche / of heigh parage
 251Thanne sei{s}tow / that it is a tormentrye
 252To suffre / hir pryde / and hir malencolye
 253And if |pt| she be fair / thow verray knaue
 254Thow sei{s}t/ that euery holour wol hi|re| haue
 255She may no while / in cha{s}titee abyde
 256That is a{ss}ayled / vp on ech a syde
 257¶Thow sey{s}t/ som folk de{s}iren vs for riche{ss}e
 258S|om|me for oure shap / and s|om|me for oure fairne{ss}e
 259And s|om|me / for she kan outhere synge / or daunce
 260And s|om|me / for gentille{ss}e / and dalyaunce
 261S|om|me for hir handes / and hir armes smale
 262Thus goth al to the deuel / by thy tale
 263Thow sey{s}t / men may nat kepe a Ca{s}tel wal
 264It may so longe / a{ss}aylled been ouer al
 265And if that she be foul / thow sey{s}t |pt| she

266Coueiteth euery man / that she may se
 267ffor as a Spaynel / she wol on hym lepe
 268Til that she fynde / som man hir to chepe
 269Ne noon so grey goos / goth ther in the lake
 270As sei{s}tow / wol be with oute make
 271And sey{s}t/ it is an hard thyng / for to wolde
 272A thyng / that no man wol his thankes holde
 273Thus sei{s}tow lorel / whan thow goo{s}t to bedde
 274And that no wys man / nedeth for to wedde
 275Ne no man / that entendeth vn to heuene
 276With wilde thonder dynt/ and firy leuene

{{Folio 61v}}

277Moote thy welked nekke / be to broke
 278Thow sey{s}t/ that droppynge hou{s}es / and eek smoke
 279And chidyng wyues / maken men to flee
 280Out of hir owene hou{s}es / a |_bn|dicitee |?
 281What eyleth / swich an old man for to chide
 282Thow sey{s}t/ we wyues / wil oure vices hyde
 283Til we be fa{s}t/ and thanne we wol hem shewe
 284Wel may that be / a prouerbe of a Shrewe
 285Thow sei{s}t/ |pt| Oxen / A{ss}es / hors / and houndes
 286They been a{ss}ayed / at dy|uer|{s}e {s}toundes
 287Bacynes / lauours / er that men hem bye
 288Spoones / stooles / and al swich hou{s}bondrye
 289And so be pottes / clothes / and array
 290But folk / of wyues / maken noon a{ss}ay
 291Til they be wedded / olde dotard shrewe
 292And thanne sei{s}tow / we wil oure vices shewe
 293Thow sei{s}t al{s}o / that it di{s}ple{s}eth me
 294But if that thow / wolt prei{s}e my beautee
 295And but thow powre / alwey vp on my face
 296And clepe me faire dame / in e|uer|y place
 297And but thow make a fee{s}te / on thilke day
 298That I was born / and make me fre{ss}h and gay
 299And but thow do / to my norice honour
 300And to my chambrere / with Inne my bour
 301And to my fadres folk / and his allyes
 302Thus sei{s}tow / olde barel ful of lyes
 303And yet/ of oure Ap|pre|tice / Iankyn
 304ffor his crisp heer / shynyng/ as gold so fyn
 305And for he Squyereth me / bothe vp and down
 306Yet ha{s}tow caught/ fals su{s}pecioune
 307I wil hym nat/ thogh thow were deed to morwe
 308¶But tel me this / why hide{s}tow with sorwe
 309The keyes of thy Che{s}te / away fro me
 310It is my good / as wel as thyn pardee
 311What wene{s}tow / make an ydiote of oure dame
 312Now by that lord / that called is Seint Iame
 313Thow shalt noght bothe / thogh |pt| thow were wood
 314Be mai{s}ter / of my body / and my good
 315That oon thow shalt forgo / maugree thyne eyen
 316What helpeth it/ of me enquire and spyen

{{Folio 62r}}

317I trowe / thow wolde{s}t/ lok me in thy chi{s}te
 318Thow sholde{s}t seye / wyf / go wher thee li{s}te
 319Taak youre di{s}port/ I nyl leue no talis
 320I knowe yow / for a trewe wyf / Dame Alis
 321We loue no man / that taketh kepe / or charge
 322Wher |pt| we goon / we wol been at oure large
 323Of alle men / yble{ss}ed moote he be
 324The wi{s}e A{s}trogen / Daun Protholome
 325That seith this prouerbe / in his Almage{s}te
 326Of alle men / his wi{s}dom is hye{s}te
 327That rekketh nat/ who hath the world in honde
 328By this |pro|uer|be / thow shalt vnder{s}tonde
 329Haue thow ynogh / what thar thee rekke / or care
 330How myrily / that othere folkes fare
 331ffor |cer|tes / olde dotard / by youre leue
 332Ye shal han queynte / right ynogh at eue
 333He is to greet a nygard / that wil werne
 334A man to lighte a candle / at his lanterne
 335He shal han / neuer the la{ss}e light pardee
 336Haue thow ynogh / thee thar nat pleyne thee
 337¶Thow sei{s}t al{s}o / that if we make vs gay
 338With clothyng/ and with |pre|cious array
 339That it is peril / of oure cha{s}titee
 340And yet with sorwe / thow mo{s}t enforce thee
 341And seye thi{s}e wordes / in thapo{s}tles name
 342In habit/ maad with cha{s}titee and shame
 343Ye w|om|men / shal apparaille yow quod he
 344And nat in tre{ss}ed heer / and gay perree
 345As perlys / ne with gold / ne clothes ryche
 346After thy text/ ne after thy rubryche
 347I wol nat werke / as muche / as is a gnat/
 348Thow seyde{s}t this / |pt| I was lyk a Cat/
 349ffor who so wolde senge / a Cattes skyn
 350Thanne wolde the Cat/ wel dwellen in his In
 351And if the Cattes skyn / be slyk/ and gay
 352She wol nat dwelle in hou{s}e / half a day
 353But forth she wole / er any day be dawed
 354To shewe hir skyn / and goon a Caterwawed
 355This is to seye / if I be gay si|re| shrewe
 356I wol renne out/ my borel for to shewe

{{Folio 62v}}

357Sire olde fool / what helpeth thee te{s}pyen
 358Thogh thow preye Argus / |with| his hundred eyen
 359To be my warde corps / as he kan be{s}t
 360In feith / he shal nat kepe me / but me le{s}t/
 361Yet koude I make his berd / as mote I thee
 362¶Thow seyde{s}t eek/ |pt| ther ben thynges three
 363The whiche thynges / troublen al this erthe
 364And that no wight/ may endure the ferthe
 365O leeue sire shrewe / |[esu| shorte thy lyf
 366Yet |pre|che{s}tow / and sei{s}t an hateful wyf

367Yrekened is / for oon of thi{s}e my{s}chaunces
 368Been ther / noone othere re{s}emblaunces
 369That ye may likne / youre |per|ables to
 370But if a sely wyf/ be oon of tho
 371¶Thow likne{s}t eek / w|om|manes loue to helle
 372To bareyne lond / ther water may nat dwelle
 373Thow likne{s}t it al{s}o / to wilde fyr
 374The moore it brenneth / the moore it hath de{s}yr
 375To con{s}umen euery thyng/ |pt| brent wol be
 376Thow sei{s}t/ right as wormes shende a tree
 377Right so a wyf / de{s}troyeth hir hou{s}bonde
 378This knowen they / that been to wyues bonde
 379¶Lordynges / right thus / as ye han vnder{s}tonde
 380Bar I stifly / myne olde hou{s}bondes on honde
 381That thus they seyden / in hir dronkene{ss}e
 382And al was fals / but that I took witne{ss}e
 383On Iankyn / and on my Nece al{s}o
 384O lord / the pyne I dide hem / and the wo
 385fful gilteles / by goddes swete pyne
 386ffor as an hors / I koude byte and whyne
 387I koude pleyne / and I was in the gilt
 388Or ellis / often tyme / I hadde been spilt/
 389Who so that fir{s}t to Mille comth / fir{s}t grynt/
 390I pleyned fir{s}t/ so was oure wer|re| stynt/
 391They were ful glad / to excu{s}en hem ful blyue
 392Of thyng/ of which they neuere agilte hir lyue
 393Of wenchis / wolde I bern hem on honde
 394Whan that for syk/ they myghte vnnethe stonde
 395Yet tikled I his herte / for that he
 396Wende that I hadde had of hym / {s}o greet chiertee

{{Folio 63r}}

397I swear / that my walkyng/ out by nyghte
 398Was for to e{s}pye / wenchis that he dighte
 399Vnder that colour / hadde I many a myrthe
 400ffor al swich wit/ is yeuen vs in oure birthe
 401Deceite / wepyng/ spynnyng/ god hath yeue
 402To wommen kyndely / whil they may lyue
 403And thus / of o thyng/ I auante me
 404At ende / I hadde the bet in ech degree
 405By sleighte / or force / or by som maner thyng/
 406As by continuel murmur / or grucchyng/
 407Namely abedde / hadden they me{s}chaunce
 408Ther wolde I chide / and do hem no ple{s}aunce
 409I wolde no lenger / in the bed abyde
 410If that I felte his arm / ouer my syde
 411Til he hadde maad / his raunceon vn to me
 412Thanne wolde I suffre hym / do his nycetee
 413And ther fore / euery man / this tale I telle
 414Wynne who so may / for al is for to selle
 415With empty hond / men may none haukes lure
 416ffor wynnyng/ wolde I al his lu{s}t endure
 417And make me / a feyned appetit/
 418And yet in baco|un| / hadde I ne|uer|e delit

419That made me / that euere I wolde hem chyde
 420ffor thogh the Pope / hadde seten hem bi{s}yde
 421I wolde noght spare hem / at hir owene bord
 422ffor by my trouthe / I quytte hem / word for word
 423As help me / verray god omnipotent
 424Togh I right now / sholde make my te{s}tament/
 425I ne owe hem nat a word / that it nys quyt/
 426I broghte it so aboute / by my wit
 427That they mo{s}te yeue it vp / as for the be{s}te
 428Or ellis / hadde we ne|uer|e been in re{s}te
 429ffor thogh he looked / as a wood leo|un|
 430Yet sholde he faille / of his conclu{s}io|un|
 431¶Thanne wolde I seye / good lief taak keep
 432How mekely / looketh Wilkyn oure sheep
 433Com neer my spou{s}e / lat me ba thy cheke
 434Ye sholden be / al pacient / and meke
 435And han / a swete spyced con{s}cience
 436Sith ye so |pre|che / of Iobes pacience

{{Folio 63v}}

437Suffreth alwey / syn ye so wel kan |pre|che
 438And but ye do / |cer|teyn we shal yow teche
 439That it is fair / to han a wyf in pees
 440Oon of vs two / mo{s}te bowen doutelees
 441And sith a man / is moore re{s}onable
 442Than womman is / ye mo{s}ten been suffrable
 443What eyleth yow / to grucche thus and grone
 444Is it/ for ye wolde haue / my queynte allone
 445Wy taak it al / lo haue it euery del
 446Peter I shrewe yow / but ye loue it wel
 447ffor if I wolde selle / my bele cho{s}e
 448I koude walke / as fre{ss}h as is a ro{s}e
 449But I wol kepe it/ for youre owene tooth
 450Ye be to blame / by god I sey yow sooth
 451Swiche manere wordes / hadde we on honde
 452Now wol I speke / of my ferthe hou{s}bonde
 453My ferthe hou{s}bonde / was a reuelour
 454This is to seyn / he hadde a |per|amour
 455And I was yong/ and ful of ragerye
 456Stibourne and strong/ and ioly as a pye
 457How koude I daunce / to an harpe smale
 458And synge ywys / as any nyghtyngale
 459Whan I hadde dronke / a draghte of swete wyn
 460Metellyus / the foule cherl the swyn
 461That with a staf / birafte his wyf hir lyf
 462ffor she drank/ wyn /. though I hadde been his wyf
 463Ne sholde nat/ han daunted me fro drynke
 464And after wyn / on Venus mo{s}te I thynke
 465ffor al{s}o siker / as coold engendreth hayl
 466A likerous mouth / mo{s}te han a likerous tayl
 467In womman vynolent / is no defence
 468This knowen lechours / by experience
 469But lord cri{s}t/ whan |þt| it remembreth me
 470Vp on my youthe / and on my iolytee

471It tikeleth me / aboute myn herte roote
 472Vn to this day / it dooth myn herte boote
 473That I haue had my world / as in my tyme
 474But age allas / that al wole enuename
 475Hath me biraft/ my beautee / and my pith
 476Lat go farwel / the deuel go ther with

{{Folio 64r}}

477The flour is goon / ther is namoore to telle
 478The bren as I be{s}t kan / now mo{s}te I selle
 479But yet/ to be right murye / wol I fonde
 480Now wol I tellen / of my ferthe hou{s}bonde
 481¶I seye I hadde in herte gret de{s}pit
 482That he / of any oother had delit
 483But he was quyrt/ by god and by Seint Ioce
 484I made hym / of the same wode a troce
 485Nat of my body / in no foul manere
 486But |cer|teynly / I made folk swich chiere
 487That in his owene grece / I made hym frye
 488ffor angre / and for verray Ialou{s}ye
 489By god / in erthe / I was his purgatorie
 490ffor which I hope / his soule be in glorie
 491ffor god it woot/ he sat ful ofte and soong /
 492Whan |pt| his shoo / ful bitterly hym wroong/
 493Ther was no wight/ saue god and he / |pt| wi{s}te
 494In many wi{s}e / how soore I hym twi{s}te
 495He deyde / whan I cam fro |Ier{|_lm|
 496And lyth ygraue / vnder the roode beam
 497Al is his toumbe / nocht so curyus
 498As was the sepulcre / of hym Daryus
 499Which that Appellus / wroghte subtilly
 500It nys but wa{s}t/ to burye hym |pre|ciou{s}ly
 501Lat hym fare wel / god gyue his soule re{s}te

+

502He is now / in his |gra|ue / and in his che{s}te

+

503Now / of my fifthe hou{s}bonde / wol I telle
 504God lat his soule / neuere come in helle
 505And yet was he to me / the moo{s}te shrewe
 506That feele I / on my rybbes al by rewe
 507And euere shal / vn to myn endyng day
 508But in oure bed / he was so fre{ss}h and gay
 509And ther with al / so wel koude he me glo{s}e
 510Whan that he wolde / han my bele cho{s}e
 511That thogh he hadde me bet/ on euery bon
 512He koude wynne agayn / my loue anon
 513I trowe I loued hym be{s}t/ for that he
 514Was of his loue / daungerous to me
 515We wommen han / if that I shal nat lye
 516In this matere / a queynte fanta{s}ye

{{Folio 64v}}

517Wayte what thyng/ we may nat lightly haue
 518Ther after / wol we crye al day / and craue
 519fforbede vs thyng/ and that de{s}iren we
 520Pree{ss}e on vs fa{s}te / and thanne wol we fle
 521With daunger / oute we / al oure chaffare
 522Greet prees at Market / maketh deere ware
 523And to greet cheep / is holden at litel prys
 524This knoweth euery womman / that is wys
 525¶My fifthe hou{s}bonde / god his soule ble{ss}e
 526Which |pt| I took for loue / and no ryche{ss}e
 527He som tyme / was a clerk of Oxenford
 528And hadde laft scole / and wente at hom to bord
 529With my go{ss}yb / dwellyng in oure town
 530God haue hir soule / hir name was Ali{s}oun
 531She knew myn herte / and eek my pryuetee
 532Bet than oure pary{ss}he pree{s}t/ as mote I thee
 533To hire biwreyed I / my con{s}eil al
 534ffor hadde myn hou{s}bonde / pi{ss}ed on a wal
 535Or doon a thyng/ that sholde haue co{s}t his lyf
 536To hire / and to another worthy wyf
 537And to my Nece / which |pt| I loued wel
 538I wolde han toold / his con{s}eil euery del
 539And so I dide / ful often / god it woot/
 540That made his face / often reed and hoot
 541ffor verray shame / and blamed hym self/ for he
 542Hadde toold to me / so greet a pryuetee
 543¶And so bifel / that ones in a lente
 544So often tymes / I to my go{ss}yb wente
 545ffor euere yet/ I louede to be gay
 546And for to walke / in March / Aueryll / and May
 547ffrom hous to hous / to here sondry tales
 548That Iankyn Clerk / and my go{ss}yb dame Alys
 549And I my self / in to the feeldes wente
 550Myn hou{s}bonde was at londo|un| / al that lente
 551I hadde / the bettre ley{s}er for to pleye
 552And for to se / and eek for to be seye
 553Of lu{s}ty folk/ what wi{s}te {^}{I} wher my |gra|ce
 554Was shapen for to be / or in what place
 555Ther fore / I made my vi{s}itacions
 556To vigilies / and to proce{ss}ions

{{Folio 65r}}

557To |pre|chyng/ eek / and to thi{s}e pilgrimages
 558To pleyes of myracles / and to mariages
 559And wered vp on / my gaye scarlet gytes
 560Thi{s}e wormes / ne thi{s}e moththes / ne thi{s}e Mytes
 561Vp on my peril / frete hem neuer a del
 562And wo{s}tow / why / for they were v{s}ed wel
 563¶Now wol I tellen forth / what happed me
 564I seye / that in the feeldes walked we
 565Til trewely / we hadde swich daliaunce
 566This clerk / and I / that of my |pur|ueiaunce

567I spak to hym / and seyde hym / how that he
 568If I were wydewe / sholde wedde me
 569ffor certeynly / I seye for no bob|_an|ce
 570Yet was I neuere / with outen puruei|an|ce
 571Of mariage / nof othere thynges eek /
 572I holde a mou{s}es herte / noght worth a leek/
 573That hath but oon hole / for to sterte to
 574And if that faille / thanne is al y do
 575But now {s}ire / lat me se / what shal I seyn
 576A .ha. by god / I haue my tale ageyn
 577¶Whan that my fourthe hou{s}bonde / was a beere
 578I weep algate / and made sory cheere
 579As wyues mooten / for it is v{s}age
 580And with my co|uer|chief / couered my vi{s}age
 581But for that I was / purueyed of a make
 582I wepte but smal / and that I vndertake
 583¶To chirche was myn hou{s}bonde / born a morwe
 584With neghebores / that for hym maden sorwe
 585And Iankyn oure clerk / was oon of the
 586As help me god / whan that I saw hym go
 587After the beere / me thoughte he hadde a payre
 588Of legges / and of feet/ so clene and fayre
 589That al myn herte / I yaf vn to his hooold
 590He was I trowe / twenty wynter oold
 591And I was fourty / if I shal seye sooth
 592But yet I hadde alwey / a coltes tooth
 593Gat tothed I was / |&| that bicam me weel
 594I hadde the preente / of Seynt Venus seel
 595As help me god / I was a lu{s}ty oon
 596And fayr/ and ryche / and yong/ and wel bigoon

{{Folio 65v}}

597And trewely / as myne hou{s}bondes tolde me
 598I hadde the be{s}te quonyam / myghte be
 599Myn a{s}cendent/ was Taur / and Mars ther Inne
 600Allas / allas / that e|uer|e loue was synne
 601I folwed ay / myn Inclinacio|un|
 602By vertu / of my con{s}tellacio|un|
 603That made me / I koude noght withdrawe
 604My chambre of Venus / from a good felawe
 605¶What sholde I seye / but at the Monthes ende
 606This ioly clerk / Iankyn |bt| was so hende
 607Hath wedded me / with greet solempnytee
 608And to hym yaf I / al the lond and fee
 609That euere was me yeuen / ther bifore
 610But afterward / repented me ful sore
 611He nolde suffre / no thyng of my li{s}t/
 612By god / he smoot me ones / on the ly{s}t/
 613ffor that I rente / out of his book {^}{a} leef
 614That of the strook/ myn ere weex al deef
 615Stibourne I was as is a leone{ss}e
 616And of my tonge / a verray Ianglere{ss}e
 617And walke I wolde / as I hadde doon biforn
 618ffrom hous to hous / al thogh he hadde it sworn

619ffor which / he often tymes / wolde |pre|che
 620And me / of olde Romayn ge{s}tes teche
 621How he Symplicius Gallus / lafte his wif
 622And hire for{s}ook/ for terme of al his lif/
 623Noght/ but for open heueded he hir say
 624Lokyng out at his dore / vp on a day
 625¶Another Romayn / tolde he me by name
 626That for his wyf / was at a so|mer|es game
 627With outen his wityng/ he for{s}ook hi|re| eke
 628And thanne wolde he / vp on his Bible seke
 629That ilke |pro||uer|be / of Eccle{s}ia{s}te
 630Where he comandeth / and forbedeth fa{s}te
 631Man shal nat suffre his wyf / go roule aboute
 632Thanne wolde he seye right thus / with outen doute
 633Who so |þt| buyldeth his hous / al of salwes }
 634And priketh his blynde hors / ouer the falwes }

No|ta|

635And suffreth his wyf / to go seken halwes
 636Is worthy / to ben hanged on the galwes

{{Folio 66r}}

637But al for noght/ I sette noght an hawe
 638Of his |pro||uer|be / nof his olde sawe
 639Ny wolde nat/ of hym corrected be
 640I hate hym / |þt| my vices telleth me
 641And so doon mo / god woot of vs than I
 642This made hym / with me wood al outrely
 643I nolde noght forbere hym / in no cas
 644¶Now wol I sey yow sooth / by Seint Thomas
 645Why |þt| I rente / out of his book a leef
 646ffor which / he smoot me so / |þt| I was deef
 647He hadde a book / |þt| gladly nyght and day
 648ffor his di{s}port/ he wolde rede alway
 649He clepyd it/ Valerie and Theofra{s}te
 650At which book / he logh alwey ful fa{s}te
 651And eek ther was / som tyme a clerk at Rome
 652A Cardynal / that highte Seint Ierome
 653That made a book/ agayn Iovinian
 654In which book/ eek ther was Tertulan
 655Cri{s}ippus / Trotula / and Helowys
 656That was Abbe{ss}e / nat fer fro Parys
 657And eek the parables / of Salomon
 658Ouydes art/ and bokes many on
 659And alle thi{s}e were bounden / in o volume
 660And euery nyght and day / was his cu{s}tume
 661Whan he hadde ley{s}er / and vacacio|un|
 662ffrom oother / worldly ocupacio|un|
 663To reden in this book/ of wikked wyues
 664He knew of hem / mo legendes and lyues
 665Than been of goode wyues in the Bible
 666ffor tru{s}teth wel / it is an inpo{ss}ible
 667That any clerk/ wol speke good of wyues

668But if it be / of holy seintes lyues
 669Nof noon oother womman / neuer the mo
 670Who peynted the leo|un| / tel me who
 671By god / if w|om|men / hadden writen stories
 672As clerkes han / with Inne hir oratories
 673They wolde han writen of men / moore wikkedne{ss}e
 674Than al the mark of Adam may redre{ss}e
 675The children / of Mercurie and Venus
 676Been in hir wirkyng / ful contrarius

{{Folio 66v}}

677Mercurie loueth / wy{s}dam and science
 678And Venus loueth / Riot and di{s}pence
 679And for hir di|uer|{s}e / di{s}po{s}icio|un|
 680Ech faileth / in ootheres exaltacio|un|
 681And thus god woot/ Mercurie is de{s}olat
 682In pi{s}ces / wher Venus is exaltat/
 683And Venus faileth / ther Mercurie is rey{s}ed
 684Ther fore no w|om|man / of no clerk is prey{s}ed
 685The clerk/ whan he is old / and may noght do
 686Of Venus werkes / worth his olde sho
 687Thanne sit he down / and writ in his dotage
 688That wommen / kan nat kepe hir mariage
 689¶But now to purpos / why I tolde thee
 690That I was beten / for a book pardee
 691Vp on a nyght/ Iankyn |pt| was oure sire
 692Redde on his book / as he sat by the fire
 693Of Eua fir{s}t / |pt| for hir wikkedne{ss}e
 694Was al man kynde / broght to wrecchedne{ss}e
 695¶Tho redde he me / how Samp{s}on lo{s}te his herys
 696Slepyng / his lemman kitte it |with| hir sherys
 697Thurgh which tre{s}o|un| / lo{s}te he bothe hi{s}e eyen
 698¶Tho redde he me / if that I shal nat lyen
 699Of Hercules / and of his Dianyre
 700That cau{s}ed hym / to sette hym self afyre
 701¶No thyng forgat he / the sorwe and wo
 702That Socrates / hadde with his wyues two
 703How xantippa / ca{s}te pi{ss}e vp on his heed
 704This sely man sat {s}tille / as he were deed
 705He wipte his heed / namoore dor{s}te he seyn
 706But er that thonder stynte / comth a reyn
 707¶Of Pha{s}ifpha / that was the queene of Crete
 708ffor shrewedne{ss}e / hym thoughte the tale swete
 709ffy spek namoore / it is a gri{s}ly thyng/
 710Of hi|re| horrible lu{s}t/ and hir likyng/
 711¶Of Clitermy{s}tra / for hir lecherye
 712That fal{s}ly / made hir hou{s}bonde for to dye
 713He redde it/ with ful good deuocio|un|
 714¶He tolde me eek / for what occa{s}io|un|
 715Amphiorax / at Thebes lo{s}te his lyf
 716Myn hou{s}bonde / hadde a legende of his wyf

{{Folio 67r}}

717¶Exiphilem / that for an Ouch of gold
 718Hath |pre|uely / vn to the grekys told
 719Wher |pt| hir hou{s}bonde / hidde hym in a place
 720offor which / he hadde at Thebes sory grace
 721¶Of lyma tolde he me / and of lucie
 722They bothe / made hir hou{s}bondes for to dye
 723That oon for loue / that oother was for hate
 724Lyma hir hou{s}bonde / on an euen late
 725Empoy{s}oned hath / for |pt| she was his fo
 726Lucya likerous / loued hir hou{s}bonde so
 727That for he sholde alwey / vp on hir thynke
 728She yaf hym / swich a manere loue drynke
 729That he was deed / er it were by the morwe
 730And thus algates / hou{s}bondes han sorwe
 731¶Thanne tolde he me / how |pt| oon latumys
 732Compleyned / vn to his felawe Arrius
 733That in his gardyn / growed swich a tree
 734On which he seyde / how |pt| hi{s}e wyues thre
 735Honged hem self / for hertes de{s}pitis
 736¶O leeue brother / quod this Arrius
 737Yif me a plante / of thilke ble{ss}ed tree
 738And in my gardyn / planted shal it be
 739¶Of latter date of wyues / hath he red
 740That s|om|me han slayn / hir hou{s}bondes in hir bed
 741And lete hir Lechour / dighte hi|re| al the nyght/
 742Whan |pt| the corps / lay in the floor vp ryght/
 743¶And s|om|me / han dryuen nayles in hir brayn
 744Whil |pt| they sleepe / and thus they han hem slayn
 745¶S|om|me han hem yeuen poy{s}o|un| / in hir drynke
 746He spak moore harm / than herte may bithynke
 747And ther with al / he knew of mo |pro|uerbes
 748Than in this world / ther growen gras or herbes
 749Bet is quod he / thyn habitacio|un|
 750Be with a leo|un| / or a foul drago|un|
 751Than |with| a womman / v{s}yng for to chide
 752Bet is quod he / hye in the roof abyde
 753Than with an angry wyf / down in the hous
 754They been {s}o wikked / and contrarious
 755They haten / that hir hou{s}bondes loueth ay
 756He seyde / a womman / ca{s}t hir shame away

{{Folio 67v}}

757Whan she ca{s}t of hir smok/ and forther mo
 758A fair w|om|man / but she be chaa{s}t al{s}o
 759Is lyk a gold ryng/ in a sowes no{s}e
 760Who wolde wene / or who wolde suppo{s}e
 761The wo / that in myn herte was and pyne
 762¶And whan I say / he wolde ne|uer|e fyne
 763To reden / on this cur{s}ed book al nyght/
 764Al {s}odeynly / thre leues / haue I plyght/
 765Out of his book/ right as he radde / and eke
 766I with my fi{s}t/ so took on the cheke
 767That in oure fyr / he fil bakward adown
 768And he vp {s}tirte / as dooth a wood leoun

769And with his fe{s}t / he smoot me on the heed
 770That in the floor / I lay as I were deed
 771And whan he say / how stille |pt| I lay
 772He was aga{s}t/ and wolde haue fled his way
 773Til atte la{s}te / out of my swowgh I brayde
 774O ha{s}tow slayn me / fal{s}e thief I sayde
 775And for my land / thus ha{s}tow mordred me
 776Er I be deed / yet wol I ki{ss}e thee
 777¶And neer he cam / and kneled faire adown
 778And seyde / deere su{s}ter Ali{s}oun
 779As help me god / I shal thee ne|uer|e smyte
 780That I haue doon / it is thy self to wyte
 781fforyeue it me / and that I thee bi{s}eke
 782And yet eft {s}oones / I hitte hym on the cheke
 783And seyde thief / thus muchel am I wreke
 784Now wol I dye / I may no lenger speke
 785¶But at the la{s}te / with muchel care and wo
 786We fille acorded / by vs seluen two
 787He yaf me / al the brydel in myn hond
 788To han the gouernance / of hous and lond
 789And of his tonge / and his hond al{s}o
 790And made hym brenne his book/ anon right tho
 791And whan that I hadde / geten vn to me
 792By mai{s}trye / al the soueraynetee
 793And |pt| he seyde / myn owene trewe wyf
 794Do as thee lu{s}t/ the |ter|me of al thy lyf
 795Keep thyn honour / and keep eek myn e{s}taut
 796After that day / we hadden ne|uer|e debaat /

{{Folio 68r}}

797God help me {s}o / I was to hym as kynde
 798As any wyf / from Denmark/ vn to Inde
 799And al{s}o trewe / and so was he to me
 800I pray to god / that sit in mage{s}tee
 801So ble{ss}e his soule / for his |mer|cy deere
 802Now wol I seye my tale / if ye wol heere
 803The frere logh / whan he hadde herd al this
 804Now dame quod he / so haue I ioye / or blys
 805This is a long |pre|amble / of a tale
 806And whan the Somnour / herde the frere gale
 807¶Lo quod the Somnour / goddes armes two
 808A frere / wol entremette hym e|uer|e mo
 809Loo goode men / a flye / and eek a frere
 810Wol falle in euery dy{ss}h and matere
 811What speke{s}tow / of preambulacioun
 812What amble / or trotte / or pees / or go sit doun
 813Thow lette{s}t oure di{s}port/ in this manere
 814¶Ye woltow so / sir Somnour / quod the frere
 815Now by my feith / I shal er that I go
 816Telle of a Somnour / swich a tale / or two
 817That al the folk / shal laughen in this place
 818¶Now ellis frere / I wol bi{s}hrewre thy face
 819Quod this Somnour / and I bi{s}hrewre me
 820But if I telle tales / two or thre

821Of freres / er I come to Sydyngborne
 822That I shal make thyn herte for to morne
 823ffor wel I woot/ thy pacience is gon
 824¶Oure hoo{s}t/ cryde pees / and that anon
 825And seyde / lat the womman / telle hir tale
 826Ye fare as folk / that dronken ben of Ale
 827Do dame / tel forth youre tale / and that is be{s}t/
 828¶Al reddy sire quod she / right as yow le{s}t/
 829If I haue licence / of this worthy frere
 830¶Yis dame quod he / tel forth / and I wol heere

¶Here endeth the prologe of the Wyf of Bathe

{{Folio 68v}}

¶Here bigynneth the tale / of the Wyf of Bathe

1IN tholde dayes / of the kyng Arthour
 2Of which that Britons / speken greet honour
 3Al was this land / fulfild of ffairye
 4The Elf queene / with hir ioly compaignye
 5Daunced ful ofte / in many a grene mede
 6This was / the olde opynyoun| / as I rede
 7I speke / of many hundred yerys ago
 8But now kan no man / se none Elues mo
 9ffor now the grete charitee / and prayeres
 10Of lymytours / and othere holy freres
 11That serchen / euery lond and euery stream
 12As thikke / as motes in the sonne beam
 13Ble{ss}ynges halles / chambres / kichenes boures
 14Citees / Burghes / Ca{s}tels / hye Toures
 15Thropes / Bernes / Shipnes / Dayeryes
 16This maketh / |bt| ther been no fairyes
 17ffor ther as wont/ to walken was an Elf
 18Ther walketh now / the lymytour hym self
 19In vndermelys / and in morwenynges
 20And seith his matyns / and his holy thynges
 21As he gooth / in his lymytacioun
 22Wommen / may go saufly vp and down
 23In euery bu{ss}h / or vnder euery tree
 24Ther is noon oother Incubus / but he
 25And he ne wol doon hem / but di{s}honour
 26¶And so bifel / that this kyng Arthour
 27Hadde in his hous / a lu{s}ty Bachiler
 28That on a day / cam ridyng fro Ryuer
 29And happed that allone / as he was born
 30He say a mayde / walkyng hym biforn
 31Of which mayde / anoon maugree hir hed
 32By verray force / he rafte hir maydenhed
 33ffor which o|pp'|{ss}io|un| / was swich clamour
 34And swich pur{s}uyte / vn to the kyng Arthour
 35That dampned was this knyght / for to be deed
 36By cours of lawe / and sholde han lo{s}t his heed

{{Folio 69r}}

37Par aventure / swich was the statut tho
 38But that the queene / and othere ladyes mo
 39So longe preyden / the kyng of grace
 40Til he his lyf / hym graunted in the place
 41And yaf hym to the queene / al at hir wille
 42To che{s}e / wheither she wolde / hym saue or spille
 43And after this / thus spak she to the knyght
 44Whan that she saw / hir tyme vp on a day
 45Thow stande{s}t yet quod she / in swich array
 46That of thy lyf / yet ha{s}tow no {s}uretee
 47I graunte thee lyf / if thow kan{s}t tellen me
 48What thyng is it/ |pt| wommen moo{s}t de{s}iren
 49Be war / and keep thy nekke boon from Iren
 50And if thow kan{s}t nat / tellen me anon
 51Yet/ wol I yeue thee leue / for to gon
 52A twelf monthe and a day / to seche and lere
 53An an{s}were suffi{s}ant/ in this matere
 54And {s}euretee wol I han / er that thow pace
 55Thy body / for to yelden / in this place
 56¶Wo was this knyght/ and sorwefully he siketh
 57But what/ he may nat doon / al as hym liketh
 58And atte la{s}te / he chees hym for to wende
 59And come agayn / right at the yeres ende
 60With swich an{s}were / as god wolde hym |pur|ueye
 61And taketh his leue / and wendeth forth his weye
 62He seketh euery hous / and euery place
 63Where as he hopeth / for to fynde grace
 64To lerne / what thyng/ wommen loue moo{s}t
 65But he ne koude / arryuen in no coo{s}t/
 66Where as he myghte fynde / in this matere
 67Two creatures / acordyng/ in feere
 68¶S|om|me seyden / wommen louen be{s}t riche{ss}e
 69S|om|me seyde honour / s|om|me seyde Iolifne{ss}e
 70S|om|me riche array / s|om|me lu{s}t abedde
 71And ofte tyme / to be widwe and wedde
 72S|om|me seyde / that oure herte / is moo{s}t e{s}ed
 73Whan that we been / yflatered and yple{s}ed
 74He gooth ful ny the sothe / I wol nat lye
 75A man shal wyne vs be{s}t / with flaterye

{{Folio 69v}}

76And with attendaunce / and with bi{s}yne{ss}e
 77Been we ylymed / bothe moore and le{ss}e
 78¶And s|om|me seyn / |pt| we louen be{s}t
 79ffor to be free / and do right as vs le{s}t/
 80And that no man / repreue vs of oure vice
 81But seye |pt| we be wi{s}e / and no thyng nyce
 82ffor trewely / ther is noon of vs alle
 83If any wight/ wolde clawe vs on the galle
 84That we nyl kike / for he weith vs sooth
 85A{ss}ay / and he shal fynde it/ that so dooth
 86ffor be we / ne|uer| {s}o vicious / with Inne
 87We wol be holden wi{s}e / and clene of synne

88¶And s|om|me seyn / that greet delit han we
 89ffor to be holden / stable and eek secree
 90And in o purpos / {s}tedefa{s}tly to dwelle
 91And nat biwreye thyng/ that men vs telle
 92But that tale / is nat worth a Rake stele
 93Pardee / we wommen / konne no thyng hele
 94Witne{ss}e on Mida / wol ye heere the tale
 95¶Ouyde / amonges othere thynges smale
 96Seyde / Mida / hadde vnder his longe herys
 97Growynge vp on his heed / two A{ss}es erys
 98The which vice he hidde / as he be{s}t myghte
 99fful sotilly / from euery mannes sighte
 100That {s}aue his wyf / ther wi{s}te of it na mo
 101He loued hi|re| moo{s}t/ and tru{s}ted hi|re| al{s}o
 102He preyed hi|re| / that to no creature
 103She sholde tellen / of his diffigure
 104¶She swoor hym nay / for al this world to wynne
 105She nolde do / that vileynye / or syn
 106To make hir hou{s}bonde / han {s}o foul a name
 107She nolde nat telle it/ for hir owene shame
 108But nathelees / hir thoughte |pt| she dyde
 109That she {s}o longe / sholde a con{s}eil hyde
 110Hir thoughte / it swal {s}o {s}oore aboute hir herte
 111That nedely / som word / hir mo{s}te a{s}terte
 112And sith / she dor{s}te nat telle it to no man
 113Doun to a Marys / fa{s}te by she ran
 114Til she cam there / hir herte was a fyre
 115And as a Bitore / bombleth in the Myre

{{Folio 70r}}

116She leyde hir mouth / vn to the water down
 117Biwrey me nat/ thow water with thy sown
 118Quod she / to thee I telle it and namo
 119Myn hou{s}bonde / hath longe A{ss}es erys two
 120Now is myn herte al hool / now it is oute
 121I myghte no lenger / kepe it out of doute
 122Heere may ye see / thogh we a tyme abyde
 123Yet out it moot/ we kan no con{s}eil hyde
 124The remenant of the tale / if ye wol heere
 125Redeth Ouyde / and ther ye may it leere
 126¶This knyght/ of which my tale is specially
 127Whan that he say / he myghte nat come ther by
 128This is to seye / what wommen louen moo{s}t/
 129With Inne his bre{s}t/ ful sorweful was the goo{s}t /
 130But hom he gooth / he myghte nat soiorne
 131The day was come / that homward mo{s}te he torne
 132And in his wey / it happed hym to ryde
 133In al this care / vnder a ffore{s}t syde
 134Wher as he say / vp on a daunce go
 135Of ladyes .xxiiij. and yet mo
 136Toward the whiche daunce / he drow ful yerne
 137In hope / that som wi{s}dom sholde he lerne
 138But |cer|teynly / er he cam fully there
 139Vany{ss}hed was this daunce / he ny{s}te where

140No creature say he / that bar lyf
 141Saue on the grene / he say sittynge a wyf
 142A fouler wight/ ther may no man deuy{s}e
 143Agayn the knyght/ this olde wyf gan ry{s}e
 144And seyde sire knyght/ heer forth ne lyth no wey
 145Tel me / what |pt| ye seken by youre fey
 146Par aenture / it may the bettre be
 147This olde folk/ konne muchel thyng quod she
 148¶My leue moder / quod this knyght |cer|teyn
 149I nam but deed / but if that I kan seyn
 150What thyng it is / that wommen moo{s}t de{s}ire
 151Koude ye me wi{ss}e / I wolde wel quyte youre hyre
 152¶Plight me thy trouthe / here in myn hand quod she
 153The nexte thyng/ that I requere thee
 154Thow shalt it do / if it lye in thy myght/
 155And I wol telle it yow / er it be nyght/

{{Folio 70v}}

156¶¶Haue here my trouthe / quod the knyght I graunte
 157¶¶Thanne quod she / I dar me wel auaunte
 158Thy lyf is sauf / for I wole {s}tonde ther by
 159Vp on my lyf / the queene wol {s}eye as I
 160Lat see / which is the proude{s}te of hem alle
 161That wereth on / a co|uer|chief / or a calle
 162That dar weye nay / of that I shal thee teche
 163Lat vs go forth / with outen lenger speche
 164Tho rowned she / a pi{s}tel in his ere
 165And bad hym to be glad / and haue no fere
 166¶¶Whan they be comen to the Court/ this knyght/
 167Seyde / he hadde holde his day / as he had hight/
 168And redy was his an{s}were / as he sayde
 169fful many a noble wyf/ and many a mayde
 170And many a widwe / for |pt| they ben wi{s}e
 171The queene hir self / sittynge as Iu{s}ti{s}e
 172A{ss}embled been / this an{s}were for to here
 173And afterward / this knyght was bode appere
 174To euery wight/ comanded was silence
 175And that the knyght/ sholde telle in audience
 176What thyng/ that worldly wommen louen be{s}t/
 177This knyght/ ne stood nat {s}tille as dooth a be{s}t/
 178But to his que{s}tion / anon an{s}werde
 179With manly voys / that al the court it herde
 180¶¶My lige lady / generally quod he
 181Wommen de{s}ire / to haue souereyntee
 182As wel / ouer hir hou{s}bonde / as hir loue
 183And for to been in mai{s}trie / hym aboue
 184This is youre moo{s}te de{s}ir / thogh ye me kille
 185Dooth as yow li{s}t/ I am here at youre wille
 186¶¶In al the Court/ ne was ther wyf ne mayde
 187Ne wydwe / that contraryed that he sayde
 188But seyden / he was worthy han his lyf
 189¶¶And with that word / vp {s}tirte that olde wyf
 190Which that the knyght/ say sittynge on the grene
 191Mercy quod she / my so|uer|eyn lady queene

192Er that youre Court departe / do me right/
 193I taughte this an{s}were / vn to the knyght/
 194for which / he plighte me his trouthe there
 195The fir{s}te thyng/ I wolde hym requere

{{Folio 71r}}

196He wolde it do / if it laye in his myght/
 197Bifore the court/ thanne preye I thee sire knyght/
 198Quod she / that thow me take vn to thy wyf
 199for wel thow woo{s}t/ that I haue kept thy lyf
 200If I seye fals / sey nay vp on thy fey
 201¶This knyght an{s}werde / allas and weilawey
 202I woot right wel / that swich was my bihe{s}te
 203for goddes loue / as chees a newe reque{s}te
 204Taak al my good / and lat my body go
 205¶Nay thanne quod she / I shrewe vs bothe two
 206for thogh |pt| I be foul / old / and poore
 207I nolde for al the metal / ne for oore
 208That vnder erthe is graue / / or lith aboute
 209But if thy wyf I were / and eek thy loue
 210¶My loue quod he / nay my dampnacio|un|
 211Allas / that any of my nacio|un|
 212Sholde euere / so foule dis|per|aged be
 213But al for noght/ thende is this / that he
 214Con{s}treyned was / he nedes mo{s}te hir wedde
 215And taketh his olde wyf / and goth to bedde
 216¶Now wolden som men / seye |per| auenture
 217That for my necligence / I do no cure
 218To tellen yow / the ioie / and al tharray
 219That at the fe{s}te / was that ilke day
 220To which thyng/ shortly / an{s}were I shal
 221I seye / ther nas no ioie / ne fe{s}te at al
 222Ther nas but heuynes{ss}e / and muche sorwe
 223for |pri|uely / he wedded hi|re| on morwe
 224And al day after/ hidde hym as an Owle
 225So wo was hym / his wyf looked {s}o foule
 226¶Greet was the wo / the knyght hadde in his thought/
 227Whan he was with his wyf / a bedde ybrought/
 228He walweth / and he turneth to and fro
 229His olde wyf / lay smylyng e|uer|e mo
 230And seyde / o deere hou{s}bonde benedicite
 231ffareth euery knyght thus with his wyf / as ye
 232Is this the lawe / of kyng Arthures hous
 233Is euery knyght of his/ thus daungerous
 234I am youre owene loue / and youre wyf
 235I am she / which that saued hath youre lyf

{{Folio 71v}}

236And |cer|tes / yet ne dide I yow ne|uer|e vnright/
 237Why fare ye thus with me / this fir{s}te nyght/
 238Ye faren lyk a man / hadde lo{s}t his wit
 239What is my gilt / for goddes loue tel it
 240And it shal ben amended / if I may

241¶Amended quod this knyght/ allas nay / nay
 242It wol nat ben amended ne|uer|e mo
 243Thow art so loothly / and {s}o old al{s}o
 244And ther to comen / of {s}o lowe a kynde
 245That litel wonder is / thogh I walwe and wynde
 246So wolde god / myn herte wolde bre{s}te
 247¶Is this quod she / the cau{s}e of youre vnre{s}te
 248¶Ye |cer|teynly quod he / no wonder is
 249¶Now sire quod she / I koude amende al this
 250If that me li{s}te / er it were dayes thre
 251So wel ye myghte / bere yow vn to me

¶No|ta| bene

252¶But for ye speken / of swich gentile{ss}e
 253As is de{s}cended / out of old riche{ss}e
 254That therefore / sholden ye be gentil men
 255Swich erroga|un|ce / is nat worth an hen
 256Looke who |pt| is / moo{s}t |ver|tuuous alway
 257Pryuee and apert/ and moo{s}t entendeth ay
 258To do / the gentil dedes / |pt| he kan
 259Taak hym / for the gentile{s}te man
 260Cri{s}t / wol we clayme of hym oure gentile{ss}e
 261Nat of oure eldres / for hir old riche{ss}e
 262ffor thogh they yeue vs / al hir heritage
 263ffor which we clame / to been of hir parage
 264Yet may they nat biquethe / for no thyng/
 265To noon of vs / hir vertuous lyuyng/
 266That made hem / gentil men ycalled be
 267And bad vs / folwen hem in swich degree
 268¶Wel kan / the wi{s}e poete of fflorence
 269That highte Dant/ speken in this {s}entence
 270Lo / in swich maner rym / is Dantes tale
 271fful selde vp ri{s}eth / by his bra|un|ches smale
 272Prowe{ss}e of man / for god of his prowe{s}se
 273Wole / . that of hym / we clayme oure gentile{ss}e
 274ffor of oure eldres / may we no thyng clayme
 275But temporel thyng/ that man may hurte and mayme

{{Folio 72r}}

276Eek e|uer|y wight/ woot this as wel I
 277If gentile{ss}e / were planted naturelly
 278Vn to a |cer|teyn lynage / down the lyne
 279Pryuee and apert/ thanne wolde they ne|uer|e fyne
 280To doon / of gentile{ss}e / the faire office
 281They myghte do / no vileynye or vice
 282¶Taak fyr / and bere it in the derke{s}te hous
 283Bitwix this / and the mount of kauka{s}ous
 284And lat men shette the dores / and go thenne
 285Yet wol the fyr / as faire lye and brenne
 286As twenty thou{s}and men / myghte it biholde
 287His office naturel / ay wol it holde
 288Vp |per|il of my lyf/ til that it dye
 289Here may ye se wel / how |pt| genterye

290Is nat annexed / to po{ss}e{ss}io|un|
 291Sith folk/ ne doon hir o|per|acio|un|
 292Alwey / as dooth the fyr lo in his kynde
 293ffor god it woot/ men may wel often fynde
 294A lordes sone / do shame and vileynye
 295And he |pt| wol han prys / of his gentrye
 296ffor he was born / of a gentil hous
 297And hadde hi{s}e eldres / noble and |ver|tuous
 298And nyl hym seluen / do no gentil dedis
 299Ne folwen his gentil Aunce{s}tre / that deed is
 300He nys nat gentil / be he Duc/ or Erl
 301ffor vileynes synful dedes / maken a cherl
 302ffor gentile{ss}e / nys but renomee
 303Of thyne Aunce{s}tres / for hir hye bo|un|tee
 304Which is straunge thyng/ for thy |per|{s}one
 305Thy gentile{ss}e / cometh fro god allone
 306Thanne comth / oure verray gentile{ss}e of |gra|ce
 307It was no thyng/ biquethe vs / with oure place
 308¶Thenketh how noble / as seith Valerius
 309Was thilke / Tullius ho{s}tillius
 310That out of pouerte / roos to heigh noble{ss}e
 311Redeth Senek/ and redeth eek Boece
 312Ther shul ye {s}een expres / |pt| no drede is
 313That he is gentil / that dooth gentil dedis
 314And ther fore / leue hou{s}bonde / I thus conclude
 315Al were it/ that myne Aunce{s}tres weren rude

{{Folio 72v}}

316Yet may the hye god / and {s}o hope I /
 317Graunte me grace / to lyuen |ver|tuou{s}ly
 318Thanne am I gentil / whan |pt| I bigynne
 319To lyuen |ver|tuou{s}ly / and weyue synne
 320¶And ther as ye / of po|uer|te me repreue
 321The hye god / on whom |pt| we bileue
 322In wilful po|uer|te / chees to lyue his lyf

...

323And certes euery man / mayden / or wyf
 324May vnder{s}tonde / |pt| |Iesus| heuene kyng/
 325Ne wolde nat che{s}e / a vicious lyuyng/
 326Glad po|uer|te / is an hone{s}te thyng |cer|teyn
 327This wol Senek/ and othere clerkes seyn
 328Who {s}o |pt| halt hym payd / of his pouerte
 329I holde hym riche / al hadde he nat a sherte
 330He that coueiteth / is a poure wight/
 331ffor he wolde han / that is nat in his myght/
 332But he |pt| noght hath / ne coueiteth haue
 333Is riche / al thogh we holde hym but a knaue
 334Verray pouerte / is synne |prop|rely
 335Iuuenal seith / of pouerte myrily
 336¶The poure man / whan he gooth by the weye
 337Biforn the theues / he may synge and pleye
 338Pouerte is hateful good / and as I ge{ss}e

339A ful greet bryngelre| / out of bi{s}yne{ss}e
 340A greet amendere eek/ of Sapience
 341To hym / that taketh it in pacience
 342Pouerte is thyng/ al thogh it {s}eme elenge
 343Po{ss}e{ss}io|un| / that no wight wol chalenge
 344Pouerte ful often / whan a man is lowe
 345Maketh hym self / and eek his god to knowe
 346Pouerte / a spectacle is / as thynketh me
 347Thurgh which he may / his verray freendes se
 348And ther fore sire / syn |pt| I noght yow greue
 349Of my pouerte / namoore ye me repreue
 350¶Now sire / of elde ye repreue me
 351And certes sire / thogh noon auctoritee
 352Were in no book / ye gentils of honour
 353Seyn / |pt| men an old wight/ sholde doon fauour
 354And clepe hym fader / for youre gentile{ss}e
 355And Auctours / shal I fynden / as I ge{ss}e

{{Folio 73r}}

356¶Now ther ye seye / that I am foul and old
 357Thanne drede yow noght/ to been a Cokewold
 358ffor filthe and elde / al {s}o mote I thee
 359Been grete wardeyns / vp on cha{s}titee
 360But natheles / syn I knowe youre delit /
 361I shal fulfille / youre worldly appetit/
 362¶Chees now quod she / oon of thi{s}e thynges tweye
 363To han me foul and old / til that I deye
 364And be to yow / a trewe humble wyf
 365And ne|uer|e yow di{s}ple{s}e / in al my lyf
 366Or ellis / ye wol han me / yong and fair
 367And take youre auenture / of the repair
 368That shal be to youre hous / by cau{s}e of me
 369Or in {s}om oother place / may wel be
 370Now chees your seluen / wheither |pt| yow liketh
 371¶This knyght auy{s}eth hym / and {s}oore siketh
 372But atte la{s}te / he seyde in this manere
 373My lady and my loue / and wyf {s}o deere
 374I putte me / in youre wi{s}e gouerna|un|ce
 375Che{s}eth you|re| self/ which |pt| may be moo{s}t ple{s}|_an|ce
 376And moo{s}t honour to yow / and me al{s}o
 377I do no fors / the wheither of the two
 378ffor as yow liketh / it suffi{s}eth me
 379¶Thanne haue I gete / of yow mai{s}trye / quod she
 380Syn I may che{s}e / and gouerne as me le{s}t/
 381¶Ye |cer|tes wyf quod he / I holde it be{s}t/
 382¶Kys me quod she / we be no lenger wrothe
 383ffor by my trouthe / I wol be to yow bothe
 384This is to seyn / ye bothe fair and good
 385I pray to god / that I mote {s}teruen wood
 386But I to yow / be al {s}o good and trewe
 387As euere was wyf / syn |pt| the world was newe
 388And but I be to morn / as fair to sene
 389As any lady / Emperice / or Queene
 390That is bitwix the E{s}t/ and eek the We{s}t/

391Do with my lyf/ and deth / right as yow le{s}t/
 392Ca{s}t vp the Curtyn / looke how |pt| it is
 393And whan the knyght/ say verrailly al this
 394That she {s}o fair was / and so yong ther to

...

395ffor ioye he hente hi|re| / in his armes two

{{Folio 73v}}

396His herte bathed / in a bath of bli{ss}e
 397A thou{s}and tyme a rewe / he gan hir ki{ss}e
 398And she obeyed hym / in euery thyng/
 399That myghte do hym ple{s}ance / or likyng/
 400And thus they lyue / vn to hir lyues ende
 401In |per|fit ioye / and |Iesu| cri{s}t vs sende
 402Hou{s}bondes meke / yonge / and fre{ss}h a bedde
 403And grace / to|uer|byde hem that we wedde
 404And eek / I praye |Iesu| shorte hir lyues
 405That noght wol be go|uer|ned / by hir wyues
 406And olde / and angry nygardes of di{s}pence
 407God sende hem {s}oone / verray pe{s}tilence

¶Here endeth the Wyues tale of Bathe

Notes

1] Old spelling is retained except for ligatured letters, which are normalized. Expanded contractions and abbreviations are placed within vertical bars. The original lineation is retained, but not small capitals and the text of signatures, catchwords, and running titles. Irregularities in spacing are ignored. Reference citations are by folio numbers and editorial through-ms and through-tale line numbers. Unusual characters are identified as follows:

{s} : long-s
 {ss} : ligatured long-s long-s
 {C} : capitulum
 {^,} : comma under opening single quotation mark
 {?.} : punctus elevatus
 {^} : caret

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Composition date: 1392 - 1395
Rhyme: couplets

Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

Yowr Yen Two Woll Sle me Sodenly

1Yowr yen two woll sle me sodenly.

2I may the beaute of them not sustene

3So wondeth it thorow out my herte kene.

4And but your word woll helen hastely

5Mi hertis wound while that it is grene

6 Your yen [two woll sle me sodenly.

7 I may the beaute of them not sustene.]

8Vpon my trowth I sey yow feithfully

9That ye ben of my liffe and deth the quene,

10For with my deth the trowth shalbe sene.

11 Your yen [two woll sle me sodenly.

12 I may the beaute of them not sustene

13 So wondeth it thorow out my herte kene.]

14So hath yowr beaute fro your herte chased

15Pitee that me nauailleth not to pleyn
16For danger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

17Giltles my deth thus han ye me purchaced,
18I sey yow soth, me nedeth not to fayn,
19 So hath your beaute [fro your herte chased
20 Pitee that me nauailleth not to pleyn.]

21Alas that nature hath in yow compased
22So grete beaute that no man may atteyn
23To mercy though he sterue for the peyn.
24 So hath your beaute [fro your herte chased
25 Pitee that me nauailleth not to pleyn
26 For danger halt your mercy in his cheyne.]

27Syn I fro loue escaped am so fat
28I neuere think to ben in his prison lene.
29Syn I am fre, I counte hym not a bene.

30He may answer and sey this and that.
31I do no fors, I speke ryght as I mene,
32 Syn I fro loue [escaped am so fat
33 I neuere think to ben in his prison lene.

34Loue hath my name istrike out of his sclat,
35And he is strike out of my bokes clene.

36For euer mo ther is non other mene,
37 Syn I fro loue [escaped am so fat
38 I neuere think to ben in his prison lene.
39 Syn I am fre, I counte hym not a bene.]

Explicit

Notes

1] Attributed to Chaucer in its first printing and usually entitled "Merciles Beaute," after a 17th-century MS copy of the second, and earlier text. yen two: "two yen" in the MS, but the refrain gives this, the metrically correct reading.

Translated into modern English,

Your two eyes will slay me suddenly.
I cannot endure their beauty
So deeply does it wound my eager heart.

And unless your word will heal, without delay,
My heart's wound while it is new ...

On my oath, I tell you faithfully
That you're the queen of my life and death,
And in my dying will that truth be seen.

So has your beauty driven pity from your heart
That there's no good in me complaining,
So does disdain in his chain bind your mercy.

Just in this way you've paid for my innocent death,
I'm telling you the truth, I don't need to pretend.

Alas, how nature has drawn with compasses
In you such great beauty that no man may find
Mercy, even though he dies in pain.

Because I've escaped so plump from love,
I don't expect to be in his lean prison.
Being free, I don't give a pea for him.

He may reply and say this and that,
I don't care, I'm saying what I think.

Love has struck my name from his slate,
And he is stricken utterly from my books.
For evermore there is no other way.

36] ther: "this" in MS.

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Chaucer, Vol. VI (Norman: Pilgrim Books); and *The Minor Poems*, ed. George B. Pace and
Alfred David, Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Vol. V (Norman: University
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First publication date: 1886

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RP edition: 2002

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Composition date: 1389

Form: triple roundel

Rhyme: ABB abAB abbABB

Form note: Each of the three roundels has only two rhymes (a and b), but each roundel's first
three lines (ABB) are reused at the end of the second and third stanzas.

Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

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