

Canterbury Tales, The

THE CANTERBURY TALES by GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

This edition edited and digitized by Ted &
Florence Daniel, NEW WAVE PUBLISHERS,
2103 N. LIBERTY ST., PORTLAND, OR 97217.

Posted in July 1993.

This file is in the PUBLIC DOMAIN.

THE CANTERBURY TALES
by GEOFFREY CHAUCER

GROUP A

PROLOGUE

Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of Caunterbury.

Whan that Aprille, with hise shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth

Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open eye-

So priketh hem Nature in hir corages-
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende

Of Engelond, to Caunturbury they wende,
The hooly blisful martir for the seke
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.

Bifil that in that seson, on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,

Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
To Caunterbury, with ful devout corage,
At nyght were come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle

In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste;
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,

So hadde I spoken with hem everychon
That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,

And made forward erly for to ryse
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,

Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,

And eek in what array that they were inne;
And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.
A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,

Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,

And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;
In Lettow hadde he reysed, and in Ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.

In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye;
At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
At many a noble arive hadde he be.

At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye

Agayn another hethen in Turkye,
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde;
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde

In al his lyf unto no maner wight;
He was a verray parfit gentil knyght.
But for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay.
Of fustian he wered a gypoun,

Al bismotered with his habergeoun;
For he was late ycome from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.
With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squier,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,

With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie

In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede;

Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day,
He was as fressh as is the monthe of May.
Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.
Wel koude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde,
He koude songes make, and wel endite,

Juste, and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hote he lovede, that by nyghtertale
He slepte namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

A Yeman hadde he, and servantz namo
At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;
And he was clad in cote and hood of grene,
A sheef of pecok arwes bright and kene
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily-

Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly,
Hise arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe-
And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
A not -heed hadde he, with a broun visage,
Of woodecraft wel koude he al the usage.

Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that oother syde a gay daggere,
Harneised wel, and sharpe as point of spere.
A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene,

An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene.
A Forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioressse,
That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy.
Hir gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy,

And she was cleped Madame Eglentyne.
Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe,

For Frenssh of Parys was to hir unknowe.
At mete wel ytaught was she withalle;
She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.
Wel koude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe

That no drope ne fille upon hir brist.
In curteisie was set ful muche hir list;
Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene,
That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.

Ful semely after hir mete she raughte;
And sikerly, she was of greet desport,
And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
And peyned hir to countrefete cheere
Of court, and been estatlich of manere,

And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hir conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous,
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.

Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde

With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But soore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience, and tendre herte.

Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,
Hire nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly, she hadde a fair forheed,
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe,

For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war;
Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
An theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,

On which ther was first write a crowned 'A,'
And after, 'Amor vincit omnia.'
Another Nonne with hir hadde she,
That was hire Chapeleyne, and preestes thre.
 A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,

An outridere, that lovede venerie,
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable;
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere,

And eek as loude, as dooth the chapel belle,
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.
The reule of Seint Maure, or of Seint Beneit,
Bycause that it was old and somdel streit-
This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,

And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters beth nat hooly men,

Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees-

This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre-
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre!
And I seyde his opinioun was good,
What sholde he studie, and make hymselfen wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,

Or swynken with his handes and laboure
As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved;
Therefore he was a prikasour aright,
Grehoundes he hadde, as swift as fowel in flight;

Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleeves ypurfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn

He hadde of gold ywroght a curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as it hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt,

Hise eyen stepe, and roollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat;
Now certainly he was a fair prelaat!
He was nat pale as a forpyned goost,

A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye,
A Frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man,
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan

So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post,
And wel biloved and famulier was he

With frankeleyns overal in his contree
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun,
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.

Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his a absolucioun,
He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;
For unto a povre ordre for to yive

Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;
For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,

He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so harde is of his herte,
He may nat wepe, al thogh hym soore smerte;

Therefore, in stede of wepyng and preyeres,
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven yonge wyves.
And certainly he hadde a murye note,

Wel koude he synge, and pleyen on a rote,
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour delys;
Therto he strong was as a champioun,
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun

And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere.
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;

It is nat honeste, it may nat avaunce,
For to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille;
And overal, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was, and lowely of servyse.

Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous;
He was the beste beggere in his hous,
(And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt
Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;)
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his 'In principio'
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente;

His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe;
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe;
For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,

But he was lyk a maister or a pope;
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse
To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge,

And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
Hise eyen twynkled in his heed aryght
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.
A Marchant was ther, with a forkek berd,

In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat,
Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat,
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
Hise resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownyng alway thencrees of his wynnyng.

He wolde the see were kept for any thyng
Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,

So estatly was he of his governaunce,
With his bargaynes and with his chevysaunce.
Forsothe, he was a worthy man with-alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.
A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,

That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe and therto sobrelly.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,

For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office,
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of Aristotle and his plilosophie,

Than robes riche, or fithelle, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
On bookes and his lernynge he it spente,

And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede,
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was seyde in forme and reverence,

And short and quyk, and ful of hy sentence.
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.
A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the parvys,

Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of greet reverence,-
He semed swich, hise wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.

For his science, and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon,
Al was fee symple to hym in effect,
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.

Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was;
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle,
That from the tyme of Kyng William were falle.

Therto he koude endite, and make a thyng,

Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng.
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;-
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye;
Whit was his berd as is a dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sope in wyn,
To lyven in delit was evere his wone;

For he was Epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verrailly felicitee parfit,
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint Julian was he in his contree.

His breed, his ale, was always after oon,
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,

Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke.
After the sondry sesons of the yeer
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.

Wo was his cook, but if his sauce were
Poynaunt, and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;

Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
An anlaas and a gipser al of silk
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour,
Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.

An Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer-
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was,

Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,
But al with silver wroght ful clene and weel,
Hir girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.

Everich for the wisdom that he kan
Was shaply for to been an alderman;
For catel hadde they ynogh, and rente,

And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente-
And eles, certeyn, were they to blame!

It is ful fair to been ycleped 'ma Dame,'
And goon to vigilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,

And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of London ale;
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,

That on his shyne a mormal hadde he!
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,

In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun,
And certainly he was a good felawe.

Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe
Fro Burdeuxward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep;
If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.

But of his craft, to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe and his moone, his lodemenage,
Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake,

With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake;
He knew alle the havenes as they were
From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,
And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.
His barge yeleped was the Maudelayne.

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel

In houres, by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of hisc ymages for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot or coold, or moyste, or drye,

And where they engendred, and of what humour.
He was a verray parfit praktisour;

The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he hise apothecaries

To sende him drogges and his letuaries,
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deyscorides and eek Rufus,

Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,
Serapioun, Razis, and Avycen,
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,
Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,

For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng, and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal-

And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.
A good wif was ther, of biside Bathe,

He was to synful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng discreet and benygne;
To drawn folk to hevене by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.

But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest, I trowe, that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence,

Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes loore, and Hise apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hym-selve.
With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother.

A trewe swybnker and a good was he,
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebore right as hym-selve;

He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
Hise tithes payed he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.

In a tabard he rood, upon a mere.

Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,
A Somnour and a Pardoner also,
A Maunciple, and myself, ther were namo.
The Millere was a stout carl for the nones,

Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones-
That proved wel, for overal ther he cam
At wrastlyng he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre,
Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,

Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werthe, and thereon stood a toft of heres

Reed as the brustles of a sowes eres;
Hise nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys,
He was a jangler and a goliardeys,

And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
Wel koude he stelen corn, and tollen thries,
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,

And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.
A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For wheither that he payde or took by taille,

Algate he wayted so in his achaat
That he was ay biforn, and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?

Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,

To maken hym lyve by his propre good,
In honour dettelees, but if he were wood;
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire,
And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe-

And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe!
The Reve was a sclendre colerik man;
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan,
His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn,
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.

Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne,
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,

The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,
Was hooly in this reves governyng
And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng,

Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne,
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.

His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth,
With grene trees shadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchase.
Ful riche he was astored pryvely;
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly

To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hook.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster,
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This reve sat upon a ful good stot,

That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of Northfolk was this reve, of which I telle,
Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.

Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.
A Somonour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.

As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe,
With scalled browes blake, and piled berd,
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,

Ne oynement, that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his wheldes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittyng on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;

Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree-

No wonder is, he herde it al the day,
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen 'watte' as wel as kan the Pope.
But who so koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his plilosophie;

Ay 'questio quid juris' wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde,
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde;
He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,
A good felawe to have his concubyn

A twelf-monthe, and excuse hym atte fulle-
Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,
In swich caas, of the erchedekeness curs,

But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be,
'Purs is the erchedekenes helle,' seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede-

For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith-
And also war him of a Significavit.
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocise,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.

A gerland hadde he set upon his heed
As greet as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.
With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,

That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
Ful loude he soong 'com hider, love, to me.'
This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun,
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,

But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge hise lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he hise shuldres overspradde;
But thynne it lay by colpons oon and oon.
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,

For it was trussed up in his walet.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the neue jet,
Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.

His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot,
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,

As smothe it was as it were late shave,

I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,
Ne was ther swich another Pardoner;
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;

He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones;

But with thise relikes whan that he fond
A povre persoun dwellyng up-on-lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye,
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes

He made the persoun and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie,

For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe
He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge;
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude,
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.
Now have I toold you shortly in a clause

Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this compaignye
In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle

How that we baren us that ilke nyght
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght,
And after wol I telle of our viage,
And all the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,

That ye narette it nat my vileynye,
Though that I pleyedly speke in this mateere
To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
Ne though I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen also wel as I,

Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche or large;
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,

Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, al though he were his brother,
He moot as wel seye o word as another.

Crist spak hym-self ful brode in Hooly Writ,
And, wel ye woot, no vileynye is it.

Eek Plato seith, who so kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde-

My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chiere made oure hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us'anon.
He served us with vitaille at the beste;
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us lestel

A semely man oure Hooste was withalle
For to been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was, with eyen stepe,
A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe;
Boold of his speche, and wys, and well ytaught,

And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a myrie man;
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges,

And seyde thus: "Now lordynges, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome hertely,
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
Atones in this herberwe, as is now.

Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how-
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
Ye goon to Caunterbury, God yow speede-
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede-

And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye,
For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as stoon,
And therefore wol I maken yow disport,

As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort;
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
To-morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,

Now, by my fader soule that is deed,
But ye be myrie I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hond, withouten moore speche."
Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche-
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys-

And graunted hym, withouten moore avys,
And bad him seye his voidit, as hym leste.

"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste,
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.
This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,

That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,
In this viage shal telle tales tweye,
To Caunterburyward I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.

And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle-
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas-
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost,
Heere in this place, sittyng by this post,

Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the moore mury
I wol my-selven goodly with yow ryde
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde.
And who so wole my juggement withseye

Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore."
This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore

With ful gald herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouchesauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,

And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement;
And therupon the wyn was fet anon,
We dronken, and to reste wente echon

Withouten any lenger taryyng.
Amorwe, whan that day bigan to spryng,
Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,
And gadrede us to gidre, alle in a flok,
And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,

Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas.
And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth if yow leste,
Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde;
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,

Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne,

He which that hath the shortestest shal bigynne.

Sire knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord,
Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioeresse,
And ye, Sir Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,

Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man."
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght,

Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght.
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By foreward and by composicioun,-
As ye han herd, what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,

As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his foreward by his free assent,
He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."

And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.
Part 2

THE KNYGHTES TALE.

Iamque domos patrias Scithice post aspera gentis prelia
laurigero &c. Thebaid, xii, 519.

Heere bigynneth the knyghtes tale.

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;
Of Atthenes he was lord and governour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne,
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie;

He conquered al the regne of Femenye,
That whilom was ycleped Scithia,
And weddede the queene Ypolita,
And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree,
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,

And eek hir yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duk to Atthenes ryde,
And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,

I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye,
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones,

And how asseged was Ypolita
The faire hardy queene of Scithia,
And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comyng;
But al the thyng I moot as now forbere,

I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough,
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route,
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,

And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;-
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.

This duc of whom I make mencion,
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,

He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
Where that ther kneled in the hye weye
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make,

That in this world nys creature lyvyng
That herde swich another waymentyng!
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten,
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.
"What folk been ye, that at myn hom-comyng

Perturben so my feste with cryyng?"
Quod Theseus, "hav ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended,

And why that ye been clothed thus in blak?"
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak-
Whan she hadde swowned with a deedly cheere,
That it was routhe for to seen and heere-
And seyde, "Lord, to whom Fortune hath yeven

Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse,
Som drope of pitee thurgh thy gentillesse

Upon us wrecched wommen lat thou falle;
For certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene-
Thanked be Fortune, and hir false wheel,

That noon estat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
Heere in the temple of the goddessse Clemence
We han ben waityng al this fourtenyght;

Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght!

I wrecche, which that wepe and waille thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Cappaneus,
That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day!
And alle we that been in this array
And maken al this lamentacioun,

We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
Whil that the seege therabout lay.
And yet now the olde Creon, weylaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the Citee,
Fulfield of ire and of iniquitee,

He, for despit and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileynye,
Of alle oure lordes, whiche that been slawe,
He hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,

Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit."
And with that word, withouten moore respit,
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
"Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy

And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte."
This gentil duk down from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke;
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,

That whilom weren of so greet estaat.
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
He solde doon so ferforthyl his myght

Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That all the peple of Grece sholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus yserved,
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anon, withouten moore abood,

His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebesward, and al his hoost biside,
No neer Atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay-

And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
Unto the toun of Atthenes to dwelle-
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.
The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,

So shyneth, in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and down,
And by his baner gorn is his penoun

Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The Mynotaur which that he slough in Crete.

Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte fighte.
But shortly for to speken of this thyng,

With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght,
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall, and sparre, and rafter.

And to the ladyes he sestored agayn
The bones of hir housbondes that weren slayn,
To doon obsequies as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to longe for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentyng

That the ladyes made at the brennyng
Of the bodies, and the grete honour
That Theseus, the noble conquerour,
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.

Whan that his worthy duc, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and wonne Thebes thus,
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,

Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure,
After the bataille and disconfiture;
And so bifel, that in the taas they founde
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,

Two yonge knyghtes liggyng by and by,
Bothe in oon armes wroght ful richely,
Of whiche two Arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte Palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,

But by here cote-armures, and by hir gere,
The heraudes knewe hem best, in special,
As they that weren of the blood roial
Of Thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,

And had hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and he ful soone hem sente
To Atthenes to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he nolde no raunsoun.
And whan this worthy due hath thus ydon,

He took his hoost, and hoom he rood anon,
With laurer crowned, as a conquerour,

And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour

Terme of his lyve, what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,

Dwellen this Palamon and eek Arcite
For evermoore, ther may no gold hem quite.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene

Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe-
For with the rose colour stroof hir hewe,
I noot which was the fairer of hem two-
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,

She was arisen, and al redy dight-
For May wole have no slogardrie a-nyght;
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh hym out of his slepe to sterte,
And seith, 'arys and do thyn observaunce,'

This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse,
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse,

And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and down, and as hir liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede,
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.

The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun,
Of whiche I tolde yow, and tellen shal,
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal

Ther as this Emelye hadde hir pleyynge.
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
And Palamoun, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,

In which he al the noble citee seigh,
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as this fresshe Emelye the shene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and down.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamoun,

Goth in the chambre romynge to and fro,
And to hym-self compleynynge of his wo.
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, 'allas!'
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre

Of iren greet, and square as any sparre,
He cast his eye upon Emelya,

And therwithal he bleynte, and cryede "A!"
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry Arcite anon upsterte

And seyde, "Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
For Goddess love, taak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be;

Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne by sum constellacioun
Hath yeven us this, al though we hadde it sworn.
So stood the hevене, whan that we were born.

We moste endure it, this the short and playn."
This Palamon answerde and seyde agayn,
"Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye,

But I was hurt right now thurgh-out myn eye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady, that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro,
Is cause of al my cryyng and my wo.

I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But Venus is it, soothly as I gesse."
And therwithal, on knees down he fil,
And seyde, "Venus, if it be thy wil,
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure

Bifore me, sorweful wrecche creature,
Out of this prisoun helpe that we may scapen!
And if so be my destyne be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage have som compassioun,

That is so lowe ybrought by tirannye."
And with that word Arcite gan espye
Wher-as this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,

Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or moore.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously,
"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hir, that rometh in the yonder place!
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace

That I may seen hir atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed, ther is namoore to seye."
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he looked and answerde,

"Wheither seistow this in earnest or in pley?"

"Nay," quod Arcite, "in earnest by my fey,
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye."
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye;
"It nere," quod he, "to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour

To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother,
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
That nevere for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hyndre other,

Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother,
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee.
This was thyn ooth, and myn also certeyn,
I woot right wel thou darst it nat withseyn.

Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute;
And now thou woldest falsly been aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve
And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve.
Nay, certes, false Arcite, thow shalt nat so!

I loved hir first, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conseil, and to my brother sworn,
To forthre me as I have toold biforn,
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,

Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn."
This Arcite ful proudly spak ageyn,
"Thow shalt," quod he, "be rather fals than I.
But thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
For paramour I loved hir first er thow.

What, wiltow seyn thou wistest nat yet now
Wheither she be a womman or goddesse?
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure

As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose, that thow lovedest hir biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe
That 'who shal yeve a love any lawe?'
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,

Than may be yeve of any erthely man.
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed,
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,

Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
And eek it is nat likly, al thy lyf,
To stonden in hir grace, namoore shal I,

For wel thou woost thyselfen, verrailly,
That thou and I be dampned to prisoun

Perpetuelly, us gayneth no faunsoun.
We stryven as dide the houndes for the boon,
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,
And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.

And therefore at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
Love if thee list, for I love, and ay shal;
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,

And everich of us take his aventure."
Greet was the strif and long bitwix hem tweye,
If that I hadde leyser for to seye-
But to theeffect; it happed on a day,
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,

A worthy duc, that highte Perotheus,
That felawe was unto duc Theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to Atthenes his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye as he was wont to do-

For in this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle.

But of that storie list me nat to write;
Duc Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
And hadde hym knowe at Thebes yeer by yere,
And finally, at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun

Duc Theseus hym leet out of prisoun
Frely to goon, wher that hym liste overal,
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
This was the forward, pleyedly for tendite,
Bitwixen Theseus and hym Arcite,

That if so were that Arcite were yfounde
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght or stounde,
In any contree of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed;

Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed,
But taketh his leve and homward he him spedde;
Lat hym be war, his nekke lith to wedde!

How greet a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte,

He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously,
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.

He seyde, "Allas, that day that he was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle

Nat in purgatorie but in helle.
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo;
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.

Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
Wolde han suffised right ynough for me.
O deere cosyn Palamon," quod he,
"Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.

Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure.-
In prisoun? certes, nay, but in Paradys!
Wel hath Fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hir, and I thabsence;
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,

And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
That by som cas, syn Fortune is chaungeable,
Thow maist to thy desir som tyme atteyne.
But I, that am exiled and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir

That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me heelp, or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse,
Farwel, my lif, my lust, and my galdnesse!

Allas, why pleynten folk so in commune
On purveyaunce of God or of Fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they kan hem-self devyse?
Som man desireth for to han richesse,

That cause is of his moerdre of greet siknesse.
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
Infinite harmes been in thai mateere,
We witen nat what thing we preyen here.

We faren as he that dronke is as a mous;
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
And certes, in this world so faren we;

We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende and hadde a greet opinioun
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,

Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,

Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Syn that I may nat seen you, Emelye,
I nam but deed, ther nys no remedye."
 Upon that oother syde, Palamon,

Whan that he wiste Arcite was agon,
Swich sorwe he maketh, that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.
The pure fettres on his shynes grete
Weren of his bittre salte teeres wete.

"Allas," quod he, "Arcite, cosyn myn!
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,

Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so sharp on this citee,
That by som aventure, or som trettee,
Thow mayst have hir to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.

For as by wey of possibilittee,
Sith thou art at thy large of prisoun free,
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,

With al the wo that prison may me yeve,
And eek with payne that love me yeveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo."
Therwith the fyr of jalousie up-sterete
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte

So woodly, that he lyk was to biholde
The boxtree, or the asshen dede and colde.
Thanne seyde he, "O cruel goddes, that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of atthamaunt

Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
What is mankynde moore unto you holde
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beeste,
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreeste,

And hath siknesse, and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee!
What governance is in this prescience
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,

That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For Goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfillle.
And whan a beest is deed, he hath no payne,
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,

Though in this world he have care and wo.
Withouten doute it may stonden so.
The answeere of this lete I to dyvynys,
But well I woot, that in this world greet pyne ys.
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,

That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne!
But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jealous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel ny al the blood

Of Thebes, with hise waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde
For jalousie and fere of hym Arcite."

Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete hym in his prisoun stille dwelle,

And of Arcita forth I wol yow telle.
The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the loveere and the prisoner;
I noot which hath the wofuller mester.

For shortly for to seyn, this Palamoun
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed,
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
For evere mo as out of that contree,

Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prison he moot dwelle alway;

That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
Now demeth as yow liste ye that kan,
For I wol telle forth, as I bigan.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde 'allas,'
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo;
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So mucche sorwe hadde nevere creature,
That is, or shal whil that the world may dure.

His sleep, his mete, his drynke is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft.
Hise eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asschen colde;
And solitarie he was and evere allone

And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were hise spiritz, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe

His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye
Engendred of humour malencolik

Biforen in his celle fantastik,
And shortly turned was al up-so-doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love-re daun Arcite.
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?

Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This crueel torment, and this peyne and woo,
At Thebes in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,
Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie

Biforn hym stood, and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte,
An hat he werede upon hise heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;

And seyde hym thus, "To Atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
"Now trewely, how soore that me smerte,"
Quod he, "to Atthenes right now wol I fare,

Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
To se my lady that I love and serve,
In hir presence I recche nat to sterve."
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,

And saugh his visage al in another kynde.
And right anon it ran hym in his mynde,
That sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladye, the which he hadde endured,
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,

Lyve in Atthenes, everemoore unknowe,
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.
And right anon he chaunged his array,
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
And al allone, save oonly a squier

That knew his privetee and al his cas,
Which was disguised povrely, as he was,
To Atthenes is he goon, the nexte way.
And to the court he wente, upon a day,
And at the gate he profreth his servyse,

To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
He fil in office with a chamberleyn,
The which that dwellynge was with Emelye,
For he was wys and koude soone espye

Of every servant which that serveth here.
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
And therto he was strong and big of bones
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.

A yeer or two he was in this servyse
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;
And Philostrate he seyde that he highte.
But half so wel biloved a man as he
Ne was ther nevere in court, of his degree;

He was so gentil of condicioun
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
They seyden, that it were a charitee,
That Theseus wolde enhaunsen his degree,
And putten hym in worshipful servyse

Ther as he myghte his vertu exercise.
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge
Bothe of hise dedes and his goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken hym so neer
That of his chambre he made hym a Squier,

And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree
From yeer to yeer, ful pryvely, his rente.
But honestly and slyly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.

And thre yeer in this wise his lif he ladde,

And bar hym so in pees, and eek ibn werre,
Ther was no man that Theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palamon a lite.

In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven yeer hath seten Palamoun,
Forpyned, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But Palamon, that love destreyneth so,

That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
And eek therto he is a prisoner,
Perpetuelly, noght oonly for a yer.
Who koude ryme in Englyssh proprely
His martirdom? Forsothe it am nat I,

Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yer, in May,
The thridde nyght, as olde bookes seyn,

That al this storie tellen moore pleyn,
Were it by aventure or destynee-

As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be-
That soone after the mydnyght, Palamoun
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go;
For he hade yeve his gayler drynke so

Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of Thebes fyn,
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake.
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may;

The nyght was short and faste by the day,
That nedes-cost he moot hymselfen hyde;
And til a grove, faste ther bisyde,
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh Palamoun.
For shortly this was his opinioun,

That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way
To Thebesward, his freendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe hym to werreye;
And shortly, outhur he wolde lese his lif,

Or wynnem Emelye unto his wyf;
This is theeffect and his entente pleyn.
Now wol I turne to Arcite ageyn,
That litel wiste how ny that was his care
Til that Fortune had broght him in the snare.

The bisy larke, messenger of day,
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,
And firy Phebus riseth up so brighte
That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,
And with hise stremes dryeth in the greves

The silver dropes hangynge on the leves;
And Arcita, that is in the court roial
With Theseus, his squier principal,
Is risen, and looketh on the myrie day.
And for to doon his observaunce ot May,

Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir
He on a courser startlynge as the fir
Is riden into the feeldes, hym to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde

By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken hym a gerland of the greves,
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn-leves.
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene,
"May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,

Welcome be thou, faire fresshe May,
In hope that I som grene gete may."

And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into a grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he rometh up and doun

Ther as by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se;
For soore afered of his deeth was he.
No thyng ne knew he that it was Arcite,
God woot, he wolde have trowed it ful lite!

But sooth is seyde, gon sithen many yeres,
That feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres.
It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,
For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,

That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fil al sodeynly,

As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
Now in the croppe, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, soothly for to telle,
Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,

Right so kan geery Venus overcaste
The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
Is gerefule, right so chaungeth she array.
Selde is the Friday al the wowke ylike.
Whan that Arcite had songe, he gan to sike,

And sette hym doun withouten any moore;
"Allas," quod he, "that day that I was bore!
How longe, Juno, thurgh thy crueltee
Woltow werreyen Thebes the Citee?
Allas, ybroght is to confusioun

The blood roial of Cadme and Amphioun!
Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man
That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bigan,
And of the citee first was crowned kyng,
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspryng,

By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
And now I am so caytyf and so thral
That he that is my mortal enemy
I serve hym as his squier povrely.
And yet dooth Juno me wel moore shame,

For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name,
But theras I was wont to highte Arcite,
Now highte I Philostrate, noght worth a myte.
Allas, thou felle Mars! allas, Juno!
Thus hath youre ire oure kynrede al fordo,

Save oonly me, and wrecched Palamoun

That Theseus martireth in prisoun.
And over al this, to sleen me outrely,
Love hath his firy dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte,

That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye,
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,

So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce."
And with that word he fil down in a traunce
A longe tyme, and after he upsterte.
This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,

For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
And seide, "Arcite, false traytour wikke!

Now artow hent that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have seyde thee heer-biforn,
And hast byjaped heere duc Theseus,

And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus.
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye;
Thou shalt nat love my lady Emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly, and namo,
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foo!

And though that I no wepene have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght that outhur thou shalt dye,
Or thou ne shalt nat loven Emelye.
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!"

This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leoun pulled out his swerd,
And seyde thus: "By God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,

And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest nevere out of this grove pace,
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurete and the bond
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.

What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free!
And I wol love hir, maugree al thy myght!
But for as mucche thou art a worthy knyght,
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe; tomorwe I wol nat faille

Withoute wityng of any oother wight
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee,
And chese the beste, and leve the worste for me.
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge

Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddyng;
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,
Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me."
This Palamon answerde, "I graunte it thee."

And thus they been departed til amorwe,
Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

O Cupide, out of alle charitee!
O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!
Ful sooth is seyde that love ne lordshipe

Wol noght, hir thankes, have no felaweshipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun:
Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,
And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,

Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne
The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne.
And on his hors, allone as he was born,
He carieth al this harneys hym biforn,
And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,

This Arcite and this Palamon ben met.
Tho chaungen gan the colour in hir face
Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
That stondest at the gappe with a spere,
Whan hunted is the leoun and the bere,

And hereth hym come russhyng in the greves,
And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,
And thynketh, "Heere cometh my mortal enemy,
Withoute faille he moot be deed or I,
For outhur I moot sleen hym at the gappe,

Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe"-
So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,
As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.
Ther nas no good day ne no saluyng,
But streight withouten word or rehersyng

Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother,
As frendly as he were his owene brother.
And after that with sharpe speres stronge
They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.
Thou myghtest wene that this Palamoun

In his fightyng were a wood leoun,
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite.
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frothen white as foom for ire wood.
Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood;

And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,
And forth I wole of Theseus yow telle.

The destinee, ministre general,
That executeth in the world overal
The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,

So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng, by ye or nay,
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.
For certainly, oure appetites heere,

Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.
This mene I now by myghty Theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirus
And namely at the grete hert in May,

That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunte and horn, and houndes hym bisyde.
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
That it is al his joye and appetit

To been hymself the grete hertes bane-
For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.
Cleer was the day, as I have toold er this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blis,
With his Ypolita, the faire quene,

And Emelye, clothed al in grene,
On huntyng be they riden roially,
And to the grove, that stood ful faste by,
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
Duc Theseus the streighte wey hath holde,

And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duc wol han a cours at hym, or tweye,
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.

And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon
He was war of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bores two;
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro

So hidously, that with the leeste strook
It semed as it wolde felle an ook;
But what they were, nothyng he ne woot.
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,

And pulled out a swerd, and cride, "Hoo!
Namooore, up peyne of lesyng of youre heed!
By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
That smyteth any strook, that I may seen!

But telleth me what myster men ye been,

That been so hardy for to fighten heere
Withouten juge or oother officere,
As it were in a lystes roially?"
This Palamon answerde hastily,
And seyde, "Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?

We have the deeth disserved, bothe two.
Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves,
And as thou art a fightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neither mercy ne refuge,

But sle me first for seinte charitee;
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me-
Or sle hym first, for, though thow knowest it lite,
This is thy mortal foo, this is Arcite,
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,

For which he hath deserved to be deed.
For this is he, that cam unto thy gate,
And seyde that he highe Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast maked hym thy chief Squier,

And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleylnly my confessioun
That I am thilke woful Palamoun,
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.

I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote Emelye the grighte,
That I wol dye present in hir sighte;
Wherfore I axe deeth and my juwise-
But sle my felawe in the same wise

For bothe han we deserved to be slayn."
This worthy duc answered anon agayn,
And seyde, "This is a short conclusioun,
Youre owene mouth, by your confessioun,
Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recordere.

It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde,
Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!"
The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,
Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,
And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.

Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle.
For gentilmen they were of greet estaat,
And no thyng but for love was this debaat,
And saugh hir bloody woundes wyde and soore,

And alle crieden, both lasse and moore,
"Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!"
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,

And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,

For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
He hath considered shortly in a clause
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,

Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused.
As thus, he thoghte wel, that every man
Wol helpe hym-self in love, if that he kan,
And eek deliverere hym-self out of prisoun;
And eek his herte hadde compassioun

Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon.
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And softe unto hym-self he seyde, "Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leoun, bothe in word and dede,

To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud despitous man,
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan!
That lord hath litel of discrecioun
That in swich cas kan no divisioun,

But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,
And spak these same wordes al on highte:
"The God of love, A! benedicite!

How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles,
He may be cleped a god for hise myracles,
For he kan maken at his owene gyse
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.

Lo heere, this Arcite and this Palamoun

That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
And myghte han lyved in Thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my myght also;

And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye!
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fole, but if he love?
Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,

Se how they blede? Be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle!

But this is yet the beste game of alle,

That she, for whom they han this jolitee,
Kan hem therfore as muche thank, as me!
She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!

But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold;
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therefore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,

And woot how soore it kan a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
At requeste of the queene that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emelye, my suster deere.

And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere,
That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
Ne make werre upon me, nyght ne day,
But been my freendes in al that ye may,
I yow foryeve this trespas, every deel."

And they hym sworn his axyng, faire and weel,
And hym of lordship and of mercy preyde,
And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:
"To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
Though that she were a queene or a princesse,

Ech of you bothe is worthy doutelees
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
I speke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye:
Ye woot yourself, she may nat wedden two

Atones, though ye fighten everemo!
That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
He moot go pipen in an yvy-leef-
This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
Al be ye never so jalouse, ne so wrothe.

And forthy, I yow putte in this degree;
That ech of yow shal have his destyne
As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
Lo, heere your ende of that I shal devyse.
My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,

Withouten any repplicacioun,
If that you liketh, take it for the beste,
That everich of you shal goon where hym leste,
Frely, withouten raunson, or daunger,
And this day fifty wykes fer ne ner,

Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,

That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght,
This is to seyn, that wheither he, or thow
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve,

To whom that Fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
Tho lystes shal I maken in this place,
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
As I shal evene juge been, and trewe.
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,

That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,
Seyeth youre avys and holdeth you apayd;
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun."
Who looketh lightly now but Palamoun?

Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who kouthe tellen, or who kouthe endite
The joye that is maked in the place,
Whan Theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,

And thonken hym with al hir herte and myght,
And namely the Thebans, often sithe.
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
To Thebes with hise olde walles wyde.

Explicit secunda pars

Sequitur pars tercia

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence,
If I foryete to tellen the dispence
Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
To maken up the lystes roially;
That swich a noble theatre as it was,

I dar wel seyen, in this world ther nas.
The circuit a myle was aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the shap, in manere of compas,
Ful of degrees the heighte os sixty pas,

That whan a man was set on o degree,
He lette nat his felawe for to see.
Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
Westward, right swich another in the opposit;
And shortly to concluden, swich a place

Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space.
For in the lond ther was no crafty man
That geometrie or ars-metrik kan,
Ne portreitour, ne kervere of ymages,
That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages

The theatre for to maken and devyse.

And for to doon his ryte and sacrificise
He estward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddessse of love,
Doon make an auter and an oratorie.

And on the gate westward, in memorie
Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a touret on the wal
Of alabastre whit, and reed coral,

An oratorie, riche for to see,
In worship of Dyane, of chastitee,
Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,

The shap, the contenance, and the figures,
That weren in these oratories thre.
First in the temple of Venus maystow se
Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slespes and the sikes colde,

The sacred teeris and the waymentynge,
The firy strokes, and the desiryng
That loves servauntz in this lyf enduren;
The othes that her covenantz assuren;
Plesaunce and Hope, Desir, Foolhardynesse,

Beautee and Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse,
Charmes and Force, Lesynges, Flaterye,
Despense, Bisynesse, and Jalousye,
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;

Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces
Of love, whiche that I rekned, and rekne shal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
And mo than I kan make of mencion;

For soothly, al the mount of Citheroun,
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellynge,
Was shewed on the wal in portreyng
With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.
Nat was foryeten the Porter Ydelnesse,

Ne Narcisus the faire, of yore agon,
Ne yet the folye of kyng Salamon,
And eek the grete strengthe of Ercules,
Thenchaumentz of Medea and Circes,
Ne of Turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,

The riche Cresus, kaytyf in servage;
Thus may ye seen, that wysdom ne richesse,
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe, hardynesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartie,
For as hir list, the world than may she gye.

Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde 'allas!'
Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two-
And, though, I koude rekene a thousand mo.

The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,

Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
And fro the navele doun al covered was
With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,

A rose gerland, fresssh and wel smellynge;
Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.
Biforn hir stood hir sone, Cupido,
Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
And blynd he was, as it was often seene.

A bowe he bar, and arwes brighte and kene.
Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
The portreiture, that was upon the wal
Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
Al peynted was the wal in lengthe and brede

Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
In thilke colde frosty regioun
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
First on the wal was peynted a forest

In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty knarry bareyne trees olde,
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.

And downward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars Armypotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see,
And therout came a rage and suche a veze,

That it made al the gate for to rese.
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.
The dore was al of adamant eterne,

Yclenched overthwart and endelong
With iren tough, and for to make it strong
Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
Was tonne-greet of iren bright and shene.
Ther saugh I first the dirke ymaginyng

Of felonye, and al the compassyng,
The crueel ire, reed as any gleede,
The pykepurs, and eek the pale drede,
The smyler with the knyfe under the cloke,
The shepne brennyng with the blake smoke,

The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde,
The open werre, with woundes al biblesde,
Contek, with bloody knyf and sharp manace,
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
The sleer of hymself yet saugh I ther,

His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
The nayl ydryven in the shode a nyght,
The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the temple sat Meschaunce,
With Disconfort and Sory Contenaunce.

Yet saugh I Woodnesse laughynge in his rage,
Armed Complent, Outhees, and fiers Outrage;
The careyne in the busk with throte ycorve,
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve,
The tiraunt with the pray by force yraft,

The toun destroyed, ther was nothyng laft.
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres,
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres,
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel,
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.

Noght was foryeten by the infortune of Marte,
The cartere over-ryden with his carte,
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther were also, of Martes divisioun,
The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth

That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,
Saugh I Conquest sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a soutil twyned threed.

Depeynted was the slaughtre of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Antonius;
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deth depeynted therbiforn
By manasyng of Mars, right by figure;

So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suggiseth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.

The statue of Mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and looked grym as he were wood,
And over his heed ther shynen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures
That oon Puella, that oother Rubeus.

This god of armes was arrayed thus:
A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet,
With eyen rede, and of a man he eet.
With soutil pencil was depeynt this storie,

In redoutynge of Mars and of his glorie.

Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
As shortly as I kan I wol me haste,
To telle yow al the descripsioun.
Depeynted been the walles up and down
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.

Ther saugh I, how woful Calistopee
Whan that Diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a womman til a bere,
And after was she maad the loode-sterre;-
Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre-

Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree,
I mene nat the goddesse Diane,
But Penneus doughter which that highte Dane.
Ther saugh I Attheon an hert ymaked,

For vengeaunce that he saugh Diane al naked.
I saugh how that hise houndes have hym caught
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
Yet peynted was a litel forthermoor
How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor,

And Meleagree, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wroghte hym care and wo.
Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
The whiche me list nat drawn to memorie.
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,

With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone,
Wexynge it was, and sholde wanye soone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.

Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travailyng was hir biforn;
But for hir child so longe was unborn
Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,

And seyde, "Help, for thou mayst best of alle!"
Wel koude he peynten lyfly, that it wroghte,
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.

Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus,
That at his grete cost arrayed thus

The temples, and the theatre every deel,
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.-
But stynte I wole of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approacheth of hir retournynge,

That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
And til Atthenes, hir covenantz for to holde,

Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.

And sikerly, ther trowed many a man,
That nevere sithen that the world bigan,
As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.

For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
And wel was hym that therto chosen was.
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas

Ye knowen wel, that every lusty knyght
That loveth paramours, and hath his myght,
Were it in Engelond or elles where,
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there,
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!

It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with Palamon,
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on.
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
In a bristplate, and in a light gypoun,

And somme woln have a paire plates large,
And somme woln have a Puce sheeld, or a targe,
Somme woln ben armed on hir legges weel,
And have an ax, and somme a mace of steel.
Ther is no newe gyse, that it nas old;

Armed were they, as I have yow told,
Everych after his opinioun.
Ther maistow seen comyng with Palamoun
Lygurge hym-self, the grete kyng of Trace.
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face,

The cercles of hise eyen in his heed,
They gloweden bitwyxen yelow and reed,
And lik a griff on looked he aboute,
With kempe heeris on hise browes stoute,
Hise lymes grete, hise brawnes harde and stronge,

Hise shuldres brode, hise armes rounde and longe;
And as the gyse was in his contree,
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in the trays.
In stede of cote-armure, over his harnays

With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold
He hadde a beres skyn, colblak, for-old;
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak,
As any ravenes fethere it shoon for-blak.
A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,

Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.

Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
To hunten at the leoun or the deer,

And folwed hym, with mosel faste ybounde,
Colored of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.
 With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,

The grete Emetreus, the kyng of Inde,
Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
Covered in clooth of gold dyapred weel,
Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars,

Couched with perles white and rounde and grete.
His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;
A mantelet upon his shuldre hangynge
Bret-ful of rubyes rede, as fyr sparklynge.
His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,

And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, hise eyen bright citryn,
Hise lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd,

And as a leoun he his looking caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste;
His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge,
His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene

A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,

Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
For love, and for encrees of chivalrye.
Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part

Ful many a tame leoun and leopard,
And in this wise thise lordes alle and some
Been on the sonday to the citee come,
Aboute pryme, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,

Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
And inned hem, everich in his degree,
He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
To esen hem and doon hem al honour,
That yet men weneth that no maner wit

Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.

The mynstralcye, the service at the feeste,
The grete yiftes to the mooste and leeste,
The riche array of Theseus paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,

What ladyes fairest been, or best daunsynge,
Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love,
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes ligen in the floor adoun-

Of al this make I now no mencioune;
But, al theeffect, that thynketh me the beste,
Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.

The sonday nyght, er day bigan to sprynge,
Whan Palamon the lsrke herde synge,

Al though it nere nat day by houres two,
Yet song the larke, and Palamon also.
With hooly herte and with an heigh corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage,
Unto the blisful Citherea benigne,

I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
And in hir heure he walketh forth a pas
Unto the lystes, ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, with ful humble cheer,
And herte soor, and seyde in this manere.

"Faireste of faire, O lady myn, Venus,
Doughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
Thow glader of the Mount of Citheron,
For thilke love thow haddest to Adoon,
Have pitee of my bittre teeris smerte,

And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
Allas, I ne have no langage to telle
Theeffectes, ne the tormentz of myn helle!
Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye,
I am so confus that I kan noght seye.

But mercy, lady bright! that knowest weele
My thought, and seest what harmes that I feele.
Considerere al this, and rewe upon my soore,
As wisly, as I shal for everemoore,
Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,

And holden werre alwey with chastitee.
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,
Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie

Of pris of armes blowen up and doun,
But I wolde have fully possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
Fynd thow the manere how, and in what wyse-
I recche nat, but it may bettre be

To have victorie of hem, or they of me-
So that I have my lady in myne armes.
For though so be, that Mars is god of armes,
Youre vertu is so greet in hevne above
That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.

Thy temple wol I worshiþe everemo,
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere

That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcita wynne hir to his wyf.
This is theeffect and ende of my preyere,
Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere!"

Whan the orison was doon of Palamon,
His sacrifice he dide, and that anon,
Ful pitously with alle circumstaunce;
Al telle I noght as now his observaunce.
But atte laste, the statue of Venus shook,

And made a signe wherby that he took
That his preyere accepted was that day.
For though the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his boone,
And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.

The thridde houre inequal, that Palamon
Bigan to Venus temple for to gon,
Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
And to the temple of Dyane gan hye.
Hir maydens that she thider with hir ladde,

Ful redily with hem the fyr they ladde,
Thencens, the clothes, and the remenant al
That to the sacrifice longen shal.
The hornes fulle of meeth, as was the gyse,
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrificise,

Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire.
This Emelye, with herte debonaire,
Hir body wessh with water of a welle-
But how she dide hir ryte I dar nat telle,
But it be any thing in general;

And yet it were a game to heeren al,
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge,
But it is good a man been at his large.-
Hir brighte heer was kempt untressed al,
A coroune of a grene ook cerial

Upon hir heed was set, ful fair and meete.
Two fyres on the suter gan she beete,
And dide hir thynges as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes, and thise bookes olde.
Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere

Unto Dyane she spak as ye may heere.

"O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,
To whom bothe hevене and erthe and see is sene,
Queene of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe

Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,
As keep me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,
That Attheon aboughte cruelly.
Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,

Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,
A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,
And noght to ben a wyf, and be with childe.

Noght wol I knowe the compaignye of man;
Now helpe me, lady, sith ye may and kan,
For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,

This grace I preye thee, withoute moore,
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
And fro me turne away hir hertes so,
That al hir hoothe love and hir desir,
And al hir bisy torment and hir fir,

Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
And if my destyne be shapen so
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
As sende me hym that moost desireth me.

Bihould, goddesse, of clene chastitee,
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde, I wol thee serve."

The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,
Whil Emelye was thus in hir preyere;
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
And quyked agayn, and after that anon

That oother fyr was queynt and al agon.
And as it queynte, it made a whistelynge
As doon these wete brondes in hir brennynge;
And at the brondes ende out ran anon
As it were bloody dropes many oon;

For which so soore agast was Emelye
That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye;
For she ne wiste what it signifyed.
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,

And weep that it was pitee for to heere;

And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde, "Doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word writen and confermed,

Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo.
But unto which of hem I may nat telle,
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fires whiche that on myn auter brenne

Shule thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas."
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,
And forth she wente, and made a varysshyng,

For which this Emelye astoned was,
And seyde, "What amounteth this, allas!
I putte me in thy proteccioun,
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun!"
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.

This is theeffect, ther is namoore to seye.

The nexte houre of Mars folwyng this
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierse Mars, to doon his sacrificise
With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.

With pitous herte and heigh devocioun
Right thus to Mars he seyde his orisoun.
"O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of Trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond

Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,
Accepte of me my pitous sacrificise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my myght be worthy for to serve

Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.
For thilke payne, and thilke hoote fir,
In which thou whilom brendest for desir
Whan that thow usedest the greet beautee

Of faire yonge fresshe Venus free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille-
Al though thee ones on a tyme mysfille
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
And foond thee liggyng by his wyf, allas!-

For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte
Have routhe as wel, upon my peynes smerte!
I am yong and unkonnyng as thow woost,

And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
That evere was any lyves creature;

For she that dooth me al this wo endure,
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.
And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wynne hir in the place.
And wel I woot, withouten help or grace

Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght availle.
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bataille
For thilke fyr that whilom brente thee,
As wel as thilke fyr now brenneth me!
And do that I tomorwe have victorie,

Myn be the travaille and thyn be the glorie.
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren
Of any place, and alwey moost labouren
In thy plesauce, and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge,

And alle the armes of my compaignye;
And evere-mo, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde;
My beerd, myn heer, that hongeth long adoun,

That nevere yet ne felte offensioun
Of rasour, nor of shere, I wol thee yeve,
And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.
Now lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;
Yif me the victorie, I aske thee namoore!"

The preyere stynt of Arcita the stronge;
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,
And eek the dores clatereden ful faste,
Of which Arcita somewhat hym agaste.
The fyres brenden upon the auter brighte,

That it gan al the temple for to lighte,
And sweete smel the ground anon upyaf,
And Arcita anon his hand uphaf,
And moore encens into the fyr he caste,
With othere rytes mo, and atte laste

The statue of Mars bigan his hauberk rynges,
And with that soun he herde a murmurynges,
Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, 'Victorie!'
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie;
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare,

Arcite anon unto his in is fare,
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne
For thilke grauntyng in the hevene above
Bitwixe Venus, the Goddesse of Love,

And Mars the stierne God armypotente,
That Jupiter was bisy it to stente;

Til that the pale Saturnus the colde,
That knew so manye of adventures olde,
Foond in his olde experience an art

That he ful soone hath plesed every part.
As sooth is seyde, elde hath greet avantage;
In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;
Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.
Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,

Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.
"My deere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,
"My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath moore power than woot any man.

Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan,
Myn is the prison in the derke cote,
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
The murmure, and the cherles rebellyng,
The groynynge, and the pryvee empoysonyng.

I do vengeance and pleyn correccioun,
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour, or the carpenter.

I slow Sampson shakynge the piler,
And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence

That Palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
Though Mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
Bitwixe yow ther moot be somtyme pees,
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun-

That causeth al day swich divisioun.
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille,
Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulfille."
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
Of Mars and of Venus, goddesse of Love,

And telle yow, as pleynly as I kan,
The grete effect for which that I bygan.

Explicit tercia pars.

Sequitur pars quarta.

Greet was the feeste in Atthenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that May
Made every wight to been in such plesaunce

That al that Monday justen they and daunce,
And spenten it in Venus heigh servyse.

And by the cause that they sholde ryse
Eerly for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir rest wenten they at nyght.

And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
Of hors and harneys, noyse and claterynge
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute.
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, upon steedes and palfreys.

Ther maystow seen divisynge of harneys
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel,
Of goldsmythrye, of browdyngge, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures;
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;

Lordes in parementz on hir courseres,
Knyghtes of retenue and eek squieres,
Nailyngge the speres, and helmes bokelyngge,
Giggyngge of sheeldes, with layneres lacyngge.
There as nede is, they weren nothyng ydel.

The fomy steedes on the golden brydel
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyngge to and fro;
Yemen on foote and communes many oon,
With shorte staves thikke as they may goon,

Pypes, trompes, nakerers, clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen bloody sounes;
The paleys ful of peples up and down,
Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,
Dyvynynge of thise Thebane knyghtes two.

Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so,
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke-herd,
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte,
He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte,

Thus was the halle ful of divynynge
Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.

The grete Theseus, that of his sleep awaked
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
Heeld yet the chambre of his paleys riche,

Til that the Thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
Honored, were into the paleys fet.
Due Theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arrayed, right as he were a god in trone.
The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone,

Hym for to seen and doon heigh reverence.
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.
An heraud on a scaffold made an "Oo!"
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,

Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.

"The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
Considered, that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood, to fighten in the gyse
Of mortal bataille, now in this emprise;

Wherfore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
He wolde his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
Into the lystes sende, ne thider brynge.

Ne short swerd for to stoke, with poynt bitynge,
No man ne drawe, ne bere by his syde;
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere.
Foyne if hym list on foote, hym-self to were;

And he that is at meschief shal be take,
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde,
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
And if so be the chevetayn be take

On outhur syde, or elles sleen his make,
No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.
God spede you, gooth forth, and ley on faste!
With long swerd and with maces fight youre fille;
Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille."

The voys of peple touchede the hevене,
So loude cride they with murie stevene,
"God save swich a lord, that is so good
He wilneth no destruccion of blood."
Up goon the trompes and the melodye,

And to the lystes rit the compaignye,
By ordinance, thurgh-out the citee large
Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
These two Thebanes upon either syde,

And after rood the queene and Emelye,
And after that another compaignye,
Of oon and oother, after hir degre;
And thus they passen thurgh-out the citee
And to the lystes come they by tyme.

It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
Whan set was Theseus ful riche and hye,
Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
Unto the seettes preesseth al the route,

And westward thurgh the gates under Marte,
Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,
With baner reed is entred right anon.
And in that selve moment Palamon
Is under Venus estward in the place,

With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.
In al the world to seken up and down
So evene withouten variacioun
Ther nere swiche compaignyes tweye!
For ther was noon so wys, that koude seye

That any hadde of oother avauntage,
Of worthynesse ne of estaat ne age,
So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
And in two ringes faire they hem dresse,
Whan that hir names rad were everichon,

That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon.
Tho were the gates shet and cried was loude,
"Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!"
The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and down;
Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.

Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest,
In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
Ther seen men who kan juste, and who kan ryde,
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;

He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;
Out gooth the swerdes as the silver brighte.
The helmes they tohewen and toshrede,
Out brest the blood, with stierne stremes rede,

With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal,
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,

And he hym hurtleth with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body is hurt and sithen ytake,
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake,
As forward was, right there he moste abyde;
Another lad is on that oother syde.

And som tyme dooth hem Theseus to reste,
Hem to refresshe, and drynken if hem leste.
Ful ofte a day han thise Thebanes two
Togydre ymet, and wroght his felawe wo.
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye,

Ther nas no tygre in the vlae of Galgopheye
Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is lite,
So crueel on the hunte, as is Arcite
For jelous herte upon this Palamoun;
Ne in Belmarye ther nys so fel leoun

That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
As Palamoun to sleen his foo Arcite.
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte,

Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.

Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede;
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The stronge kyng Emetreus gan hente
This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flessch to byte.

And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawe unto the stake.
And in the rescous of this Palamoun
The stronge kyng Lygurge is born adoun,
And kyng Emetreus, for al his strengthe,

Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
So hitte him Palamoun er he were take;
But al for noght, he was broght to the stake.
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught,
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,

By force, and eek by composicioun.
Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
And whan that Theseus hadde seyn this sighte
Unto the folk that foghten thus echon

He cryde, "Hoo! namoore, for it is doon.
I wol be trewe juge, and no partie;
Arcite of Thebes shal have Emelie,
That by his fortune hath hir faire ywonne!"
Anon ther is a noyse of peple bigonne

For joye of this so loude and heighe withalle
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
What kan now faire Venus doon above?
What seith she now, what dooth this queene of Love,
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,

Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille.
She seyde, "I am ashamed, doutelees."
Saturnus seyde, "Doghter, hoold thy pees,
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,
And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone."

The trompes with the loude mynstralcie,
The heraudes that ful loude yolle and crie,
Been in hir wele for joye of Daun Arcite.
But herkneth me, and stynteth now a lite,
Which a myracle ther bifel anon.

This fierse Arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser for to shewe his face
He priketh endelong the large place,
Lokynge upward upon this Emelye,
And she agayn hym caste a freendlich eye,

(For wommen, as to speken in commune,
They folwen al the favour of Fortune)
And she was al his chiere, as in his herte.

Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
From Pluto sent, at requeste of Saturne,

For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep aside and foundred as he leep.
And er that Arcite may taken keep,
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,

His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place,
With herte soor, to Theseus paleys.

Tho was he korven out of his harneys,
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve,
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
And alwey cryynge after Emelye.
Duc Theseus, with al hes compaignye,

Is comen hoom to Atthenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solemprnitee;
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek that Arcite shal nat dye,

He shal been heeled of his maladye.
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
Al were they soore yhurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest-boon.

To othere woundes, and to broken armes,
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes,
Fermacies of herbes and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
For which this noble duc as he wel kan,

Conforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the longe nyght
Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
But as a justes or a tourneyynge,

For soothly ther was no disconfiture-
For fallyng nys nat but an aventure-
Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
O persone allone, withouten mo,

And haryed forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves,
It nas aretted hym no vileynye,
Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.

For which anon duc Theseus leet crye,
To stynten alle rancour and envye,

The gree, as wel of o syde as of oother,
And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother,
And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,

And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,
And convoyed the kynges worthily
Out of his toun a journee, largely;
And hoom wente every man, the righte way,
Ther was namoore but 'fare-wel, have good day.'

Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,
But speke of Palamoun and of Arcite.
 Swelleth the brest of Arcite, and the soore
Encreeseth at his herte moore and moore.
The clothered blood for any lechecraft

Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusyng,
Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpyng.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
Fro thilke vertu cleped natural

Ne may the venym voyden, ne expelle.
The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
Hym gayneth neither for to gete his lif

Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif;
Al is tobrosten thilke regioun,
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certainly, ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Fare-wel phisik, go ber the man to chirche!

This al and som, that Arcita moot dye;
For which he sendeth after Emelye
And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte

Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love moost.
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To yow aboven every creature.
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure,

Allas, the wo! alas, the peynes stronge
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departyng of our compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! alas, my wyf!

Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave,
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Fare-wel, my swete foo, myn Emelye,

And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,

For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.

"I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon,
For love of yow, and for my jalousye.

And Juppiter so wys my soule gye
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely,
That is to seyn, trouthe, honour, and knyghthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,

Fredom, and al that longeth to that art,
So Juppiter have of my soule part
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved, as Palamon
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf;

And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
Foryet nat Palamon, the gentil man."
And with that word his speche faille gan,
And from his herte up to his brest was come
The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome.

And yet moreover in hise armes two
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore
Gan faillen, when the herte felte deeth.

Dusked hise eyen two, and failled breeth,
But on his lady yet caste he his eye.
His laste word was "mercy, Emelye!"
His spirit chaunged hous, and wente ther
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher,

Therefore I stynte; I nam no divinistre,
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.
Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye:

Now wol I speken forthe of Emelye.
Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his suster took anon
Swownynge, and baar hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarien forth the day

To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?
For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe
Whan that hir housbond is from hem ago,
That for the moore part they sorwen so,
Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,

That at the laste certainly they dye.
Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres
Of olde folk, and eek of tendre yeeres
In al the toun, for deeth of this Theban.
For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;

So greet a wepyng was ther noon, certayn,
Whan Ector was ybrought al fressh yslayn
To Troye, allas, the pitee that was ther!
Cracchyng of chekes, rentyng eek of heer;
"Why soldestow be deed," thise wommen crye,

"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"
No man myghte gladen Theseus,
Savyng his olde fader, Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seyn it chaungen up and doun,

Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,
And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.
"Right as ther dyed nevere man," quod he,
"That he ne lyvede in erthe in som degree,
Right so ther lyvede never man," he seyde,

"In al this world that somtyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we been pilgrymes passyng to and fro.
Deeth is an ende of every worldes soore."
And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore,

To this effect ful wisely to enhorte
The peple, that they sholde hem reconforte.
Duc Theseus, with al his bisy cure,
Caste now, wher that the sepulture
Of goode Arcite may best ymaked be,

And eek moost honorable in his degree.
And at the laste he took conclusioun
That ther as first Arcite and Palamoun
Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,
That in that selve grove swoote and grene

Ther as he hadde hise amoureuse desires,
His compleynte, and for love hise hoote fires
He wolde make a fyr, in which the office
Funeral he myghte al accomplice;
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe

The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
In colpons, wel arrayed for to brenne.
Hise officers with swifte feet they renne
And ryden anon at his comandement;
And after this Theseus hath ysent

After a beere, and it al over-spradde
With clooth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.
And of the same suyte he cladde Arcite,
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,
EEk on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,

And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde hym bare the visage on the beere,
Ther-with he weep that pitee was to heere.
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,

That roreth of the cryng and the soun.
Tho cam this woful Theban, Palamoun,
With flotery berd and rugged asschy heeres,
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres,
And passynge othere of wepyng Emelye,

The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.
In as mucche as the servyce sholde be
The moore noble and riche in his degree,
Duc Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng
That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,

And covered with the armes of daun Arcite.
Upon these steedes that weren grete and white
Ther sitten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld,
The thridde baar with hym his bowe Turkeys,

Of brend gold was the caas, and eek the harneys;
And riden forth a paas, with sorweful cheere,
Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
The nobleste of the Grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,

With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,
Thurghout the citee by the maister-strete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,

And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
With vessel in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn.
Eek Palamon, with ful greet compaignye,
And after that cam woful Emelye,

With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
To do the office of funeral servyse.
Heigh labour, and ful greet apparaillynge,
Was at the service and the fyr makynge,
That with his grene top the heven raughte,

And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte;
This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.
Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode,
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
Ne eek the names that the trees highte,

As, ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popeler,
Wylugh, elm, plane, assch, box, chasteyn, lynde, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltre,
How they weren fild shal nat be toold for me,
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun

Disherited of hir habitacioun,
In whiche they woneden in reste and pees,
Nymphes, Fawnes, and Amadrides;
Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle

Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;

Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And thanne with drye stokkes clovena thre,
And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,

And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes hangynge with ful many a flour,
The mirre, thencens, with al so greet odour;
Ne how Arcite lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is,

Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
Ne how she swowned whan men made the fyr,
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir,
Ne what jeweles men in the fyr caste,

Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
And of hire vestimentz whiche that they were,
And coppes full of wyn, and milk, and blood,
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood,

Ne how the Grekes, with an huge route,
Thryes riden al the place aboute,
Upon the left hand with a loud shoutynge,
And thries with hir speres claterynge,
And thries how the ladyes gonne crye,

And how that lad was homward Emelye;
Ne how Arcite is brent to asshen colde,
Ne how that lychewake was yholde
Al thilke nyght, ne how the Grekes pleye
The wakepleyes ne kepe I nat to seye,

Who wrastleth best naked, with oille enoynt,
Ne who that baar hym best in no disjoynt;
I wol nat tellen eek, how that they goon
Hoom til Atthenes, whan the pley is doon;
But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,

And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By processe, and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres
Of Grekes, by oon general assent.
Thanne semed me ther was a parlement

At Atthenes, upon certein pointz and caas,
Among the whiche pointz yspoken was
To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce,
For which this noble Theseus anon

Leet senden after gentil Palamon,
Unwist of hym what was the cause and why.

But in hise blake clothes sorwefully
He cam at his comandement in hye;
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.

Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
And Theseus abiden hadde a space
Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
Hise eyen sette he ther as was his lest,
And with a sad visage he siked stille,

And after that right thus he seyde his wille.

"The firste moevere of the cause above
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was theeffect, and heigh was his entente;
Wel wiste he, why, and what therof he mente,

For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond,
In certeyn boundes that they may nat flee.
That same prince and that same moevere," quod he,
"Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun

Certeyne dayes and duracioun
To al that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may nat pace;
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge,
Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee allegge,

For it is preeved by experience-
But that me list declaren my sentence.
Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
That thilke moevere stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,

That every part deryveth from his hool;
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
Of no partie nor cantel of a thyng,
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
Descendynge so til it be corrumpable;

And therefore, of his wise purveiaunce,
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
That speses of thynges and progressiouns
Shullen enduren by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.

This maystow understonde and seen at eye.
Lo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
From tyme that it first bigynneth sprynge,
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.

Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,
Yit wasteth it, as it lyth by the weye.
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye,
The grete toures se we wane and wende,

Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.

Of man and womman seen we wel also,
That nedeth, in oon of thise termes two,
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age,
He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page.

Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may se;
Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye,
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
What maketh this, but Juppiter the kyng,

That is prince and cause of alle thyng
Converting al unto his propre welle
From which it is deryved, sooth to telle,
And heer agayns no creature on lyve
Of no degree availleth for to stryve.

Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
And take it weel, that we may nat eschue;
And namely, that to us alle is due.
And who so gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,

And rebel is to hym that al may gye.
And certainly, a man hath moost honour
To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name,
Thanne hath he doon his freend ne hym no shame.

And galdder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
Whan with honour upyolden in his breeth,
Than whan his name apalled is for age;
For al forgotten is his vassellage.
Thanne is it best as for a worthy fame,

To dyen whan that he is best of name.
The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse:
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
That goode Arcite, of chivalrie flour,
Departed is with duetee and honour

Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loved hem so weel?
Kan he hem thank? Nay, God woot never a deel!
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,

And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.
What may I concluden of this longe serye,
But after wo I rede us to be merye,
And thanken Juppiter of al his grace?
And er that we departen from this place

I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
O parfit joye lastyng everemo.
And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is her inne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.
"Suster," quod he, "this is my fulle assent,

With all thavys heere of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon thyn owene kynght,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe,
That ye shul of your grace upon hym rewe,

And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.
Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.
Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee;
He is a kynges brother sone, pardee,
And though he were a povre bacheler,

Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,
And had for yow so greet adversitee,
It moste been considered, leeveth me,
For gentil mercy oghte to passen right."
Thanne seyde he thus to Palamon ful right:

"I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng
To make yow assente to this thyng.
Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond."
Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
That highte matrimoigne, or mariage,

By al the conseil and the baronage.
And thus with alle blisse and melodye
Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye;
And God, that al this wyde world hath wroght,
Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght!

For now is Palamon in alle wele,
Lyvyng in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,
And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene,

Of jalousie, or any oother teene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,
And God save al this faire compaignye!-Amen-

Heere is ended the knyghtes tale.
Part 3

PROLOGUE TO THE MILLERES TALE

Heere folwen the wordes bitwene the Hoost and the Millere

Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,
In al the route ne was ther yong ne oold

That he ne seyde it was a noble storie,
And worthy for to drawen to memorie;
And namely the gentils everichon.
Oure Hooste lough, and swoor, "So moot I gon,
This gooth aright, unboked is the male,

Lat se now who shal telle another tale,
For trewely the game is wel bigonne.
Now telleth on, sir Monk, if that ye konne

Somwhat to quite with the Knyghtes tale."
The Miller that for-dronken was al pale,

So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
He nolde avalen neither hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curteisie,
But in Pilates voys he gan to crie,
And swoor by armes and by blood and bones,

"I kan a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the Knyghtes tale."
Oure Hooste saugh that he was dronke of ale,
And seyde, "Abyd, Robyn, my leeve brother,
Som bettre man shal telle us first another,

Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily."
"By Goddes soule," quod he, "that wol nat I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my wey."
Oure Hoost answerde, "Tel on, a devele wey!
Thou art a fool, thy wit is overcome!

"Now herkneth," quod the Miller, "alle and some,
But first I make a protestacioun
That I am dronke, I knowe it by my soun;
And therefore, if that I mysspeke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk I you preye.

For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe."
The Rev answerde and seyde, "Stynt thy clappe,
Lat be thy lewed dronken harlotrye,

It is a synne and eek a greet folye
To apeyren any man or hym defame,
And eek to bryngen wyves in swich fame;
Thou mayst ynogh of othere thynges seyn."
This dronke Miller spak ful soone ageyn,

And seyde, "Leve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.
But I sey nat therfore that thou art oon,
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon,
And evere a thousand goode ayeyns oon badde;

That knowestow wel thyself, but if thou madde.
Why artow angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardee, as wel as thow,
Yet nolde I for the oxen in my plough
Take upon me moore than ynogh,

As demen of myself that I were oon;
I wol bileve wel, that I am noon.
An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf
Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.
So he may fynde Goddes foysoun there,

Of the remenant nedeth nat enquere."
What sholde I moore seyn, but this Miller

He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere;
Me thynketh that I shal reherce it heere.

And therefore every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
Of yvel entente, but that I moot reherce
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.

And therefore who-so list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef, and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
And eek moralitee, and hoolynesse.

Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys;
The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this,
So was the Reve, and othere manye mo,
And harlotrie they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame,

And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.

THE TALE

(One John, a rich and credulous carpenter of Oxford, is beguiled by his wife Alison, through Nicholas, a poor scholar boarding with them. Absolon, the parish clerk, is slighted by Alison; but wreaks vengeance on Nicholas.)
Part 4

PROLOGUE TO THE REVES TALE

The prologe of the Reves Tale.

Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas
Of Absolon and hende Nicholas,
Diverse folk diversely they seyde,
But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde,
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,

But it were oonly Osewold the Reve;
Bycause he was of carpenteres craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite.
"So theek," quod he, "ful wel koude I you quite,

With bleryng of a proud milleres eye,
If that me liste speke of ribaudye.
But ik am oold, me list no pley for age,
Gras-tyme is doon, my fodder is now forage,
This white top writeth myne olde yeris,

Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris,
But if I fare as dooth an openers;
That ilke fruyt is ever leng the wers,
Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.

We olde men, I drede, so fare we,

Til we be roten kan we nat be rype.
We hoppen ay whil that the world wol pype,
For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek, for thogh oure myght be goon,

Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon.
For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure asshen olde is fyr yreke.
Foure gleedes han we whiche I shal devyse,
Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;

These foure sparkles longen unto eelde.
Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,
But wyl ne shal nat faillen, that is sooth.
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne

Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.
For sikerly whan I was bore, anon
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf, and leet it gon,
And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne,
Til that almost al empty is the tonne.

The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe;
The sely tonge may wel ryng and chymbe
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yoore.
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore."
Whan that oure Hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,

He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,
He seide, "What amounteth al this wit?
What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
The devel made a reve for to preche,
And of a soutere, shipman, or a leche.

Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme.
Lo Depford, and it is half-vey pryve;
Lo, Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne;
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne."
"Now sires," quod this Osewold the Reve,

"I pray yow alle, that ye nat yow greve,
Thogh I answeere, and somdeel sette his howve,
For leveful is with force force of-showve.
This dronke Millere hath ytoold us heer,
How that bigyled was a Carpenter,

Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon;
And by youre leve I shal hym quite anon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke,
I pray to God his nekke mote breke!
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,

But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke."

(Simkin, a rich thieving miller of Trumpington Mill, near

Cambridge, is well served by two Cambridge clerks of the north country, who beguile his wife and daughter, recover the stolen meal which he had hid, and leave him well beaten.)

Part 5

THE PROLOGUE TO THE COKES TALE.

The prologe of the Cokes Tale.

The Cook of London, whil the Reve spak,
For joye him thoughte, he clawed him on the bak.
"Ha! ha!" quod he, "for Criste passioun,
This miller hadde a sharp conclusioun
Upon his argument of herbergage.

Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
'Ne brynge nat every man into thyn hous,'
For herberwyng by nyghte is perilous.
Wel oghte a man avysed for to be,
Whom that be broghte into his pryvetee.

I pray to God so yeve me sorwe and care,
If evere sitthe I highte Hogge of Ware,
Herde I a millere bettre yset awerk.
He hadde a jape of malice in the derk.
But God forbede that we stynte heere,

And therefore, if ye vouche-sauf to heere
A tale of me that am a povre man,
I wol yow telle, as wel as evere I kan,
A litel jape that fil in oure citee."
Oure Hoost answerde and seide, "I graunte it thee,

Now telle on, Roger, looke that it be good,
For many a pastee hastow laten blood,
And many a Jakke of Dovere hastow soold
That hath been twies hoot and twies cold.
Of many a pilgrim hastow Cristes curs,

For of thy percely yet they fare the wors,
That they han eten with thy stubbel-goos,
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.
Now telle on, gentil Roger, by thy name,
But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game,

A man may seye ful sooth in game and pley."
"Thou seist ful sooth," quod Roger, "by my fey;
But 'sooth pley quaad pley,' as the Flemyng seith.
And ther-fore, Herry Bailly, by thy feith,
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,

Though that my tale be of an hostileer.
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit,
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit."
And ther-with-al he lough and made cheere,
And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.

THE TALE (Unfinished).

(Perkin, a London apprentice, being dismissed by his master, seeks his companions in dice, revel and disport.)

Part 6

GROUP B.

PROLOGUE OF THE MAN OF LAWE.

The wordes of the Hoost to the compaignye.

Oure Hooste saugh wel that the brighte sonne
The ark of his artificial day hath ronne
The ferthe part, and half an houre and moore;
And though he were nat depe expert in loore,
He wiste ti was the eightetethe day

Of Aprill, that is messenger to May;
And saugh wel, that the shadwe of every tree
Was as in lengthe the same quantitee
That was the body erect that caused it,
And therefore by the shadwe he took his wit

That Phebus, which that shoon so clere and brighte,
Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on highte;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
It was ten at the klokke, he gan conclude,
And sodeynly he plighte his hors aboute.-

"Lordynges," quod he, "I warne yow, al this route,
The fourthe party of this day is gon.
Now for the love of God and of Seint John,
Leseth no tyme, as ferforth as ye may.
Lordynges, the tyme wasteth nyght and day,

And steleth from us, what pryvely slepynge,

And what thurgh necligence in oure wakyng,
As dooth the strem, that turneth nevere agayn,
Descendyng fro the montaigne into playn.
Wel kan Senec and many a philosophre

Biwaillen tyme, moore than gold in cofre.
'for losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme shendeth us,' quod he.
It wol nat come agayn, withouten drede,
Namooore than wole Malkynes maydenhede,

Whan she hath lost it in hir wantownesse.
Lat us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse;
Sir man of lawe," quod he, "so have ye blis,
Telle us a tale anon, as forward is.
Ye been submytted thurgh youre free assent

To stonden in this cas at my juggement.
Acquiteth yow as now of youre biheeste,
Thanne have ye do youre devoir atte leeste."
"Hooste," quod he, "Depardieux ich assente,

To breke forward is nat myn entente.

Biheste is dette, and I wole holde fayn
Al my biheste, I kan no better sayn.
For swich lawe as a man yeveth another wight,
He sholde hymselfen usen it by right;
Thus wole oure text, but nathelees certeyn

I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn;
But Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly
On metres and on rymyng craftily,
Hath seyde hem in swich Englissh as he kan,
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man.

And if he have noght seyde hem, leve brother,
In o book, he hath seyde hem in another.
For he hath toold of loveris up and doun
Mo than Ovide made of mencioun,
In hise Episteles that been ful olde;

What sholde I tellen hem, syn they ben tolde?
In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione,
And sitthen hath he spoken of everichone
These noble wyves and these loveris eke.
Whoso that wole his large volume seke

Cleped the Seintes Legende of Cupide,
Ther may he seen the large woundes wyde
Of Lucesse, and of Babilan Tesbee,
The swerd of Dido for the false Enee,
The tree of Phillis for hir Demophon,

The pleinte of Dianire and Hermyon,
Of Adriane and of Isiphilee,
The bareyne yle stondyng in the see,
The dreynte Leandre for his Erro,
The teeris of Eleyne, and eek the wo

Of Brixseyde, and of the, Ladomea,
The crueltee of the, queene Medea,
Thy litel children hangyng by the hals
For thy Jason, that was in love so fals.
O Ypermystra, Penolopee, Alceste,

Youre wyfhede he comendeth with the beste!
But certainly no word ne writeth he
Of thilke wikke ensample of Canacee,
That loved hir owene brother synfully-
Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy!-

Or ellis of Tyro Appollonius,
How that the cursed kyng Antiochus
Birafted his doghter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale for to rede,
Whan he hir threw upon the pavement.

And therefore he, of ful avysement,
Nolde nevere write, in none of his sermons,
Of swiche unkynde abhomynaciouns;

Ne I wol noon reherce, if that I may.
But of my tale how shall I doon this day?

Me were looth be likned, doutelees,
To Muses that men clepe Pierides-
Methamorphosios woot what I mene-
But nathelees, I recche noght a bene
Though I come after hym with hawebake,

I speke in prose, and lat him rymes make."
And with that word he, with a sobre cheere,
Bigan his tale, as ye shal after heere.
Part 7

THE TALE OF THE MAN OF LAWE.

The prologe of the Mannes Tale of Lawe.

O hateful harm, condicion of poverte!
With thurst, with coold, with hunger so confoundid!
To asken help thee shameth in thyn herte,
If thou noon aske, so soore artow ywoundid
That verray nede unwrappeth al thy wounde hid;
Maugree thyn heed thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy despence!

Thow blamest Crist, and seist ful bitterly
He mysdeparteth richesse temporal.
Thy neighebor thou wytest synfully,
And seist thou hast to lite and he hath al.
"Parfay!" seistow, "somytyme he rekene shal,
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the gleede,
For he noght helpeth needfulle in hir neede."

Herkne what is the sentence of the wise,
"Bet is to dyen than have indigence."
Thy selve neighebor wol thee despise,
If thou be povre, farwel thy reverence!
Yet of the wise man take this sentence,
"Alle dayes of povre men been wikke;"
Be war therfore, er thou come to that prikke.

If thou be povre, thy brother hateth thee,
And alle thy freendes fleeen from thee; allas,
O riche marchauntz, ful of wele been yee!
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas!
Youre bagges been nat fild with ambes as,
But with sys cynk, that renneth for youre chaunce,
At Cristemasse myrie may ye daunce!

Ye seken lond and see for your wynnynge,
As wise folk ye knowen all thestaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tydynges
And tales, bothe of pees and of debaat.
I were right now of tales desolaat
Nere that a marchant, goon is many a yeere,
Me taughte a tale, which that ye shal heere.

Heere begynneth the Man of Lawe his Tale.

In Surrye whilom dwelte a compaignye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe,
That wyde-where senten hir spicerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyns riche of hewe.
Hir chaffare was so thrifty and so newe
That every wight hath deyntee to chaffare
With hem, and eek to sellen hem hir ware.

Now fil it, that the maistres of that sort
Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende;
Were it for chapmanhode, or for disport,
Noon oother message wolde they thider sende,
But comen hemself to Rome, this is the ende,
And in swich place as thoughte hem advantage
For hir entente, they take hir herbergage.

Sojourned han thise Marchantz in that toun
A certein tyme, as fil to hire plesance.
And so bifel, that the excellent renoun
Of the Emperoures doghter, Dame Custance,
Reported was, with every circumstance
Unto thise Surryen marchantz in swich wyse
Fro day to day, as I shal yow devyse.

This was the commune voys of every man:
"Oure Emperour of Rome, God hym see,
A doghter hath, that syn the world bigan,
To rekene as wel hir goodnesse as beautee,
Nas nevere swich another as is shee.
I prey to God in honour hir sustene
And wolde she were of all Europe the queene!

In hir is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye,
To alle hir werkes vertu is hir gyde,
Humblesse hath slayn in hir al tirannye,
She is mirour of alle curteisye,
Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,
Hir hand ministre of fredam for almesse."

And al this voys was sooth, as God is trewe!
But now to purpos, lat us turne agayn;
Thise marchantz han doon fraught hir shippes newe,
And whan they han this blisful mayden sayn,
Hoom to Surrye been they went ful fayn,
And doon hir nedes as they han doon yoore,
And lyven in wele, I kan sey yow namoore.

Now fil it, that thise marchantz stode in grace
Of hym, that was the Sowdan of Surrye.
For whan they cam from any strange place,
He wolde, of his benigne curteisye,
Make hem good chiere, and bisily espye
Tidynges of sondry regnes, for to leere
The wondres that they myghte seen or heere.

Amonges othere thynges, specially
Thise marchantz han hym toold of dame Custance

So greet noblesse, in earnest ceriously,
That this Sowdan hath caught so greet plesance
To han hir figure in his remembrance,
That all his lust and al his bisy cure
Was for to love hir, while his lyf may dure.

Praventure in thilke large book,
Which that men clipe the hevene, ywriten was
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,
That he for love sholde han his deeth, allas!
For in the sterres clerer than is glas
Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede,
The deeth of every man, withouten drede.

In sterres many a wynter therbiforn
Was writen the deeth of Ector, Achilles,
Of Pompei, Julius, er they were born,
The strif of Thebes, and of Ercules,
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deeth, but mennes wittes ben so dulle
That no wight kan wel rede it atte fulle.

This Sowdan for his privee conseil sente,
And, shortly of this matiere for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entente
And seyde hem, certein, but he myghte have grace
To han Custance withinne a litel space,
He nas but deed; and charged hem in hye
To shapen for his lyf som remedye.

Diverse men diverse thynges seyden;
They argumenten, casten up and down,
Many a subtil resoun forth they leyden,
They speken of magyk and abusioun;
But finally, as in conclusioun,
They kan nat seen in that noon advantage,
Ne in noon oother wey, save mariage.

Thanne sawe they therin swich difficultee
By wey of reson, for to speke al playn
Bycause that ther was swich diversitee
Bitwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn
They trowe that "no cristene prince wolde fayn
Wedden his child under oure lawes swete
That us were taught by Mahoun oure prophete."

And he answerde: "Rather than I lese
Custance, I wol be cristned, doutelees.
I moot been hires, I may noon oother chese;
I prey yow, hoold youre argumentz in pees.

Saveth my lyf, and beth noght recchelees
To geten hir that hath my lyf in cure,
For in this wo I may nat longe endure."

What nedeth gretter dilatacioun?
I syey, by tretys and embassadrye
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche and al the chivalrie,

That in destruccioun of Mawmettrie
And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,
They been acorded, so as ye shal heere,

How that the Sowdan and his baronage
And alle hise liges sholde ycristned be-
And he shal han Custance in mariage,
And certein gold, I noot what quantitee,
And heerto founden suffisant suretee.
This same accord was sworn on eyther syde.
Now, faire Custance, almyghty God thee gyde!

Now wolde som men waiten, as I gesse,
That I sholde tellen al the purveiance
That themperour, of his grete noblesse,
Hath shapen for his doghter dame Custance;
Wel may men knowen that so greet ordinance
May no man tellen in alitel clause
As was arrayed for so heigh a cause.

Bisshopes been shapen with hir for to wende,
Lordes, ladies, knyghtes of renoun,
And oother folk ynogh, this is the ende,
And notified is, thurghout the toun,
That every wight with greet devocioun
Sholde preyen Crist, that he this mariage
Receyve in gree, and spede this viage.

The day is comen of hir departyng,
I seye, the woful day fatal is come,
That ther may be no lenger tariyng,
But forthward they hem dressen, alle and some.
Custance, that was with sorwe al overcome,
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hir to wende,
For wel she seeth ther is noon oother ende.

Allas, what wonder is it thogh she wepte,
That shal be sent to strange nacioun
Fro freendes that so tendrely hir kepte,
And to be bounden under subjeccioun
Of oon, she knoweth nat his condicioun?
Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yoore,
That knowen wyves! I dar sey yow namoore.

"Fader," she seyde, "Thy wrecched child Custance,
Thy yonge doghter, fostred up so softe,
And ye my mooder, my soverayn plesance,
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,
Custance, youre child, hir recomandeth ofte
Unto your grace, for I shal to Surrre
Ne shal I nevere seen yow moore with eye.

Allas! unto the barbre nacioun
I moste goon, syn that it is youre wille,
But Crist, that starf for our savacioun,
So yeve me grace hise heestes to fulfille,-
I, wrecche womman, no fors though I spille.
Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,
And to been under mannes governance."

I trowe, at Troye whan Pirrus brak the wal,
Or Ilion brende, ne at Thebes the Citee,
Ne at Rome for the harm thurgh Hanybal

That Romayns hath venquysshed tymes thre,
Nas herd swich tendre wepyng for pitee
As in the chambre was, for his departyng;
But forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or synge.

O firste moevyng crueel firmanent,
With thy diurnal sweigh, that crowdest ay
And hurlest al from Est til Occident
That naturelly wolde holde another way,
Thy crowdyng set the hevene in swich array
At the bigynnyng of this fiers viage,
That crueel Mars hath slayn this mariage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helples falle, allas!
Out of his angle into the derkeste hous.
O Mars! O Atazir! as in this cas,
O fieble Moone, unhappy been thy paas!
Thou knytttest thee, ther thou art nat receyved;
Ther thou were weel, fro thennes artow weyved.-

Imprudent Emperour of Rome, allas!
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than oother in swich cas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun,
Namely to folk of heigh condicioun,
Noght whan a roote is of a burthe yknowe?
Allas, we been to lewed or to slowe!

To ship is brought this woful faire mayde
Solempnely, with every circumstance,
"Now Jesu Crist be with yow alle," she seyde.
Ther nys namoore but, "Farewel faire Custance!"
She peyneth hir to make good contenance,
And forth I lete hir saille in this manere,
And turne I wole agayn to my matere.

The mooder of the Sowdan, welle of vyices,
Espied hath hir sones pleyne entente,
How he wol lete hise olde sacrifices,
And right anon she for hir conseil sente,
And they been come, to knowe what she mente,
And whan assembled was this folk in feere,
She sette hir down, and seyde as ye shal heere.

"Lordes," quod she, "ye knowen everichon,
How that my sone in point is for to lete
The hooly lawes of oure Alkaron,
Yeven by Goddes message, Makomete.
But oon avow to grete God I heete,
The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte,
Than Makometes lawe out of myn herte!

What sholde us tyden of this newe lawe

But thraldom to our bodies, and penance,
And afterward in helle to be drawe
For we reneyed Mahoun oure creance?
But lordes, wol ye maken assurance
As I shal seyn, assentyng to my loore,
And I shal make us sauf for everemoore."

They sworn and assenten every man
To lyve with hir, and dye, and by hir stonde,
And everich in the beste wise he kan
To strengthen hir shal alle hise frendes fonde,
And she hath this emprise ytake on honde,
Which ye shal heren, that I shal devyse.
And to hem alle she spak right in this wyse:

"We shul first feyne us cristendom to take,-
Coold water shal nat greve us but a lite-
And I shal swich a feeste and revel make,
That as I trowe I shal the Sowdan quite;
For thogh his wyf be cristned never so white,
She shal have nede to wasshe away the rede,
Thogh she a fontful water with hir lede!"

O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee!
Virage, thou Semyrame the secounde!
O serpent under femynyntee,
Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde!
O feyned womman, al that may confounde
Vertu and innocence thurgh thy malice
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice!

O Sathan, envious syn thilke day
That thou were chaced from oure heritage,
Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way!
Thou madest Eva brynge us in servage;
Thou wolt fordoon this cristen mariage.
Thyn instrument, so weylawey the while!
Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile!

This Sowdanesse, whom I thus blame and warie,
Leet prively hir conseil goon hir way.
What sholde I in this tale lenger tarie?
She rydeth to the Sowdan on a day
And seyde hym, that she wolde reneye hir lay,
And cristendom of preestes handes fonge,
Repentyng hir she hethen was so longe;

Bisechyng hym to doon hir that honour
That she moste han the cristen folk to feeste.
"To plesen hem I wol do my labour."
The Sowdan seith, "I wol doon at youre heeste,"
And knelyng thanketh hir of that requeste.
So gald he was, he nyste what to seye;
She kiste hir sone, and hoome she gooth hir weye.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Arryved been this cristen folk to londe,
In Surrye, with a greet solempne route,
And hastifliche this Sowdan sente his sonde
First to his mooder and all the regne aboute,
And seyde his wyf was comen, oute of doute,
And preyde hir for to ryde agayn the queene,
The honour of his regne to susteene.

Greet was the prees, and riche was tharray
Of Surryens and Romayns met yfeere;
The mooder of the Sowdan, riche and gay,
Receyveth hir with also glad a cheere
As any mooder myghte hir doghter deere,
And to the nexte citee ther bisyde
A softe pass solempnely they ryde.

Noght trowe I the triumphe of Julius,
Of which that Lucan maketh swich a boost,
Was roialler, ne moore curius
Than was thassemblee of this blisful hoost.
But this scorioun, this wikked goost,
The Sowdanesse, for all hir falteryng
Caste under this ful mortally to styng.

The Sowdabn comth hymself soone after this
So roially, that wonder is to telle,
And welcometh hir with alle joye and blis,
And thus in murthe and joye I lete hem dwelle-
The fruyt of this matiere is that I telle.-
Whan tyme cam, men thoughte it for the beste,
The revel stynte, and men goon to hir reste.

The tyme cam, this olde Sowdanesse
Ordeyned hath this feeste of which I tolde,
And to the feeste cristen folk hem dresse
In general, ye, bothe yonge and olde.
Heere may men feeste and roialtee biholde,
And deyntees mo than I kan yow devyse;
But al to deere they boghte it er they ryse!

O sodeyn wo, that evere art successour
To worldly blisse, spreynnd with bitternesse!
The ende of the joye of oure worldly labour!
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure galdnesse!
Herke this conseil for thy sikernesse,
Upon thy galde day have in thy minde
The unwar wo or harm that comth bihynde.

For shortly for to tellen at o word,
The Sowdan and the cristen everichone
Been al tohewe and stiked at the bord,
But it were oonly dame Custance allone.
This olde Sowdanesse, cursed krone,
Hath with hir freendes doon this cursed dede,
For she hirsself wolde all the contree lede.

Ne was ther Surryen noon, that was converted,
That of the conseil of the Sowdan woot,

That he nas al tohewe er he astarted.
And Custance han they take anon foot-hoot
And in a ship all steerelees, God woot,
They han hir set, and biddeth hir lerne saille
Out of Surrye agaynward to Ytaille.

A certein tresor that she thider ladde,
And, sooth to seyn, vitaille greet plentee
They han hir yeven, and clothes eek she hadde,
And forth she sailleth in the salte see.
O my Custance, ful of benignytee,
O emperoures yonge doghter deere,
He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!

She blesseth hir, and with ful pitous voys
Unto the croys of Crist thus seyde she,
"O cleere, o welful auter, hooly croys,
Reed of the lambes blood, ful of pitee,
That wesshe the world fro the olde iniquitee,
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe.

Victorious tree, proteccioun of trewe,
That oonly worthy were for to bere
The kyng of hevene with his woundes newe,
The white lamb that hurt was with the spere,
Flemer of feendes out of hym and here
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
Me keep, and yif me myght my lyf tamenden."

Yeres and dayes fleteth this creature
Thurghout the See of Grece unto the Strayte
Of Marrok, as it was hir aventure.
On many a sory meel now may she bayte;
After hir deeth ful often may she wayte,
Er that the wilde wawes wol hire dryve
Unto the place ther she shal arryve.

Men myghten asken why she was nat slayn?
Eek at the feeste who myghte hir body save?
And I answeere to that demande agayn,
Who saved Danyel in the horrible cave,
Ther every wight save he, maister and knave,
Was with the leoun frete, er he astarte?
No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.

God liste to shewe his wonderful myracle
In hir, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis.
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certeine meenes ofte, as knowen clerkis,
Dooth thyng for certein ende, that ful derk is
To mannes wit, that for oure ignorance
Ne konne noght knowe his prudent purveiance.

Now, sith she was nat at the feeste yslawe,
Who kepte hir fro the drenchyng in the see?
Who kepte Jonas in the fisshes mawe
Til he was spouted up at Nynyvee?
Wel may men knowe it was no wight but he

That kepte peple Ebrayk from hir drenchynge,
With drye feet thurghout the see passynge.

Who bad the foure spirites of tempest,
That power han tanoyen lond and see,
"Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
Anoyeth neither see, ne land, ne tree?"
Soothly, the comandour of that was he,
That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte,
As wel eek when she wook as whan she slepte.

Where myghte this womman mete and drynke have?
Thre yeer and moore how lasteth hir vitaille?
Who fedde the Egypcien Marie in the cave,
Or in desert?
no wight but Crist sanz faille.
Fyve thousand folk it was as greet mervaille
With loves fyve and fisshes two to feede;
God sente his foyson at hir grete neede.

She dryveth forth into oure occian
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte laste
Under an hoold that nempnen I ne kan,
Fer in Northhumberlond, the wawe hir caste,
And in the sond hir ship stiked so faste
That thennes wolde it noght of al a tyde,
The wyl of Crist was that she sholde abyde.

The constable of the castel doun is fare
To seen his wrak, and al the ship he soghte,
And foond this wery womman ful of care,
He foond also the tresor that she broghte,
In hir langage mercy she bisoghte,
The lyf out of hire body for to twynne,
Hir to delivere of wo that she was inne.

A maner Latyn corrupt was hir speche,
But algates ther-by was she understonde.
The constable, whan hym lyst no lenger seche,
This woful womman broghte he to the londe.
She kneleth doun and thanketh Goddes sonde;
But what she was, she wolde no man seye,
For foul ne fair, thogh that she sholde deye.

She seyde, she was so mazed in the see
That she forgat hir mynde, by hir trouthe.
The constable hath of hir so greet pitee,
And eke his wyf, that they wepen for routhe.
She was so diligent withouten slouthe
To serve and plesen everich in that place,
That alle hir loven that looken on hir face.

This constable and dame Hermengyld his wyf
Were payens, and that contree every-where;
But Hermengyld loved hir right as hir lyf,
And Custance hath so longe sojourned there
In orisons with many a bitter teere,
Til Jesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermengyld, constablesse of that place.

In al that lond no cristen dorste route,
Alle cristen folk been fled fro that contree
Thurgh payens that conquereden al aboute
The plages of the North by land and see.
To Walys fledde the Cristyanytee
Of olde Britons, dwellynge in this Ile;
Ther was hir refut for the meene-while.

But yet nere cristene Britons so exiled
That ther nere somme that in hir privetee
Honoured Crist, and hethen folk bigiled,
And ny the castel swiche ther dwelten three;
That oon of hem was blynd, and myghte nat see,
But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde,
With whiche men seen, after that they ben blynde.

Bright was the sonne as in that someres day,
For which the constable and his wyf also
And Custance han ytake the righte way
Toward the see, a furlong wey or two,
To pleyen, and to romen, to and fro,
And in hir walk this blynde man they mette,
Croked and oold, with eyen faste yshette.

"In name of Crist," cride this olde Britoun,
"Dame Hermengyld, yif me my sighte agayn."
This lady weex affrayed of the soun,
Lest that hir housbonde, shortly for to sayn,
Wolde hir for Jesu Cristes love han slayn,
Til Custance made hir boold, and bad hir wirche
The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche.

The constable weex abasshed of that sight,
And seyde, "What amounteth all this fare!"
Custance answerde, "Sire, it is Cristes myght,
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare."
And so ferforth she gan oure lay declare,
That she the constable, er that it were eve,
Converteth, and on Crist maketh hym bileve.

This constable was no-thing lord of this place
Of which I speke, ther he Custance fond;
But kepte it strongly many wyntres space
Under Alla, kyng of al Northhumbrelond,
That was ful wys and worthy of his hond
Agayn the Scottes, as men may wel heere;-
But turne I wole agayn to my mateere.

Sathan, that ever us waiteth to bigile,
Saugh of Custance al hir perfeccioun
And caste anon how he myghte quite hir while;
And made a yong knyght, that dwelte in that toun,
Love hir so hote of foul affeccioun
That verrailly hym thoughte he sholde spille,
But he of hir myghte ones have his wille.

He woweth hir, but it availleth noght,
She wolde do no synne, by no were;

And for despit he compassed in his thoght
To maken hir on shameful deeth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye
And pryvely upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermengyldes chambre whil she slepte.

Wery, for-waked in hir orisouns,
Slepeth Custance, and Hermengyld also.
This knyght, thurgh Sathanas temptaciouns,
All softely is to the bed ygo,
And kitte the throte of Hermengyld atwo,
And leyde the bloody knyf by dame Custance,
And wente his wey, ther God yeve hym meschance!

Soone after cometh this constable hoom agayn,
And eek Alla, that kyng was of that lond,
And saugh his wyf despitously yslayn,
For which ful ofte he weep and wroong his hond,
And in the bed the bloody knyf he fond
By Dame Custance; allas, what myghte she seye?
For verray wo hir wit was al aweye!

To kyng Alla was toold al this meschance,
And eek the tyme, and where, and in what wise
That in a ship was founden dame Custance,
As heer-biforn that ye han herd devyse.
The kynges herte of pitee gan agryse,
Whan he saugh so benigne a creature
Falle in disese and in mysaventure.

For as the lomb toward his deeth is broght,
So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.
This false knyght, that hath this tresoun wroght,
Berth hir on hond that she hath doon thys thyng,
But nathelees, ther was greet moornyng
Among the peple, and seyn, they kan nat gesse
That she had doon so greet a wikkednesse;

For they han seyn hir evere so vertuous,
And lovyng Hermengyld right as hir lyf:
Of this baar witnessse everich in that hous

Save he that Hermengyld slow with his knyf.
This gentil kyng hath caught a greet motyf
Of this witnessse, and thoghte he wolde enquere
Depper in this, a trouthe for to lere.

Allas, Custance, thou hast no champioun!
Ne fighte kanstow noght, so weylaway!
But he, that starf for our redempcioun,
And boond Sathan-and yet lith ther he lay-
So be thy stronge champion this day!
For but if Crist open myracle kithe,
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slayn as swithe.

She sette hir doun on knees, and thus she sayde,
"Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Fro false blame, and thou, merciful Mayde,
Marie I meene, doghter to Seynte Anne,

Bifore whos child angeles synge Osanne,
If I be giltlees of this felonye,
My socour be, for ellis shal I dye."

Have ye nat seyn som tyme a pale face
Among a prees, of hym that hath be lad
Toward his deeth, wher as hym gat no grace,
And swich a colour in his face hath had,
Men myghte knowe his face, that was bistad,
Amonges alle the faces in that route?
So stant Custance, and looketh hir aboute.

O queenes, lyvyng in prosperitee,
Duchesses, and ladyes everichone,
Haveth som routhe on hir adversitee;
An emperoures doghter stant allone,
She hath no wight to whom to make hir mone.
O blood roial, that stondest in this drede,
Fer been thy freendes at thy grete nede!

This Alla kyng hath swich compassioun,
As gentil herte is fulfild of pitee,
That from hise eyen ran the water down.
"Now hastily do fecche a book," quod he,
"And if this knyght wol sweren how that she
This womman slow, yet wol we us avyse,
Whom that we wole, that shal beenoure justise."

A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles,
Was fet, and on this book he swoor anoon
She gilty was, and in the meene-whiles
An hand hym smoot upon the nekke-boon,
That down he fil atones, as a stoon;
And bothe hise eyen broste out of his face,
In sighte of every body in that place.

A voys was herd in general audience,
And seyde, "Thou hast desclaundred giltelees
The doghter of hooly chirche in heigh presence,
Thus hastou doon, and yet holde I my pees."
Of this mervaille agast was al the prees,
As mazed folk they stoden everichone
For drede of wreche, save Custance allone.

Greet was the drede and eek the repentance
Of hem that hadden wronge suspecioun
Upon this sely innocent, Custance;
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
And by Custances mediacioun,
The kyng, and many another in that place,
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace.

This false knyght was slayn for his untrouthe,
By juggement of Alla hastily-
And yet Custance hadde of his deeth greet routhe-
And after this Jesus, of His mercy,
Made Alla wedden ful solempnely
This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene,
And thus hath Crist ymaad Custance a queene.

But who was woful, if I shal nat lye,
Of this weddyng but Donegild, and namo,
The kynges mooder, ful of tirannye?
Hir thoughte hir cursed herte brast atwo,
She wolde noght hir sone had do so,
Hir thoughte a despit, that he sholde take
So strange a creature unto his make.

Me list nat of the chaf nor of the stree
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn;
What sholde I tellen of the roialtee
At mariages, or which cours goth biforn,
Who bloweth in the trumpe, or in an horn?
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye;
They ete, and drynke, and daunce, and synge, and pleye.

They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right,
For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,
They moste take in pacience at nyght
Swiche manere necessaries as been plesynges
To folk that han ywedded hem with rynges,
And leye a lite hir hoolynesse aside
As for the tyme, it may no bet bitide.

On hir he gat a knave childe anon,
And to a bisshop and his constable eke
He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is gon
To Scotlondward, his foomen for to seke.
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke,
So longe is goon with childe, til that stille
She halt hire chambre, abidyng Cristes wille.

The tyme is come; a knave child she beer,
Mauricius at the fontstoon they hym calle.
This constable dooth forth come a messageer,
And wroot unto his kyng, that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tidyng is bifalle,
And othere tidynges spedeful for to seye;
He taketh the lettre, and forth he gooth his weye.

This messenger, to doon his advantage,
Unto the kynges mooder rideth swithe,
And salueth hir ful faire in his langage,
"Madame," quod he, "ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanketh God an hundred thousand sithe.
My lady queene hath child, withouten doute,
To joye and blisse to al this regne aboute.

Lo, heere the lettres seled of this thyng,
That I moot bere with al the haste I may.
If ye wol aught unto youre sone, the kyng,
I am youre servant both nyght and day."
Donegild answerde, "as now at this tyme, nay,
But heere al nyght I wol thou take thy reste,
Tomorwe wol I seye thee what me leste."

This messenger drank sadly ale and wyn,
And stolen wer hise lettres prively

Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn;
And countrefeted was ful subtilly
Another lettre wroght ful synfully,
Unto the kyng direct of this mateere
Fro his constable, as ye shal after heere.

The lettre spak, the queene delivered was
Of so horrible a feendly creature
That in the castel noon so hardy was
That any while dorste ther endure;
The mooder was an elf, by aventure,
Yeomen by charmes or by sorcerie,
And every wight hateth hir compaignye.

Wo was this kyng whan he this lettre had sayn,
But to no wight he tolde his sorwes soore,
But of his owene hand he wroot agayn:
"Welcome the sonde of Crist for everemoore
To me, that am now lerned in his loore.
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesaunce,
My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.

Kepeth this child, al be it foul or feire,
And eek my wyf, unto myn hoom-comynge;
Crist, whan hym list, may sende me an heir
Moore agreable than this to my likynge."
This lettre he seleth, pryvely wepynge,
Which to the messenger was take soone
And forth he gooth, ther is namoore to doone.

O messenger, fulfild of dronkenesse,
Strong is thy breeth, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou biwreyest alle secreenesse.
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay,
Thy face is turned in a newe array;
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,
Ther is no conseil hyd, withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have noon Englissh digne
Unto thy malice and thy tirannye;
And therefore to the feend I thee resigne,
Lat hym enditen of thy traitorie!
Fy, mannysh, fy? O nay, by God, I lye!
Fy, feendlych spirit! for I dar wel telle,
Thogh thou heere walke, thy spirit is in helle.

This messenger comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kynges moodres court he lighte
And she was of this messenger ful fayn,
And plesed hym in al that ever she myghte.
He drank, and wel his girdel underpighte.
He slepeth, and he fnorteth in his gyse
Al nyght until the sonne gan aryse.

Eft were hise lettres stolen everychon
And countrefeted lettres in this wyse,
"The king comandeth his constable anon
Up payne of hangyng and on heigh juyse
That he ne sholde suffren in no wyse

Custance inwith his reawme for tabyde,
Thre dayes and o quarter of a tyde.

But in the same ship as he hir fond,
Hir and hir yonge sone, and al hir geere,
He sholde putte, and croude hir fro the lond,
And chargen hir she never eft coome theere."
O my Custance, wel may thy goost have fere,
And slepyng in thy dreem been in penance,
Whan Donegild cast al this ordinance.

This messenger, on morwe whan he wook,
Unto the Castel halt the nexte way,
And to the constable he the lettre took.
And whan that he this pitous lettre say,
Ful ofte he seyde, "Allas and weylaway!"
"Lord Crist," quod he, "how may this world endure,
So ful of synne is many a creature?

O myghty God, if that it be thy wille,
Sith thou art rightful juge, how may it be
That thou wolt suffren innocentz to spille,
And wikked folk regnen in prosperitee?
O goode Custance, allas, so wo is me,
That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
On shames deeth! Ther is noon oother weye!"

Wepen bothe yonge and olde in al that place,
Whan that the kyng this cursed lettre sente,
And Custance, with a deedly pale face,
The ferthe day toward the ship she wente;
But nathelees she taketh in good entente
The wyl of Crist, and knelynge on the stronde,
She seyde, "Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!

He that me kepte fro the false blame,
While I was on the lond amonges yow,
He kan me kepe from harm and eek fro shame
In salte see, al thogh I se noght how.
As strong as evere he was, he is yet now;
In hym triste I, and in his mooder deere,
That is to me myu seyl and eek my steere."

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde,
"Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm."
With that hir coverchief on hir heed she breyde,
And over hise litel eyen she it leyde,
And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
And into hevne hir eyen up she caste.

"Mooder," quod she, "and mayde bright, Marie,
Sooth is that thurgh wommanes eggement
Mankynde was lorn and damned ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a croys yrent;
Thy blisful eyen sawe al his torment;
Thanne is ther no comparison bitwene
Thy wo, and any wo man may sustene.

Thow sawe thy child yslayn bifore thyne eyen,
And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay.
Now, lady bright, to whom alle woful cryen,
Thow glorie of wommanhede, thow faire may,
Thow haven of refut, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thy gentillesse
Ruest on every reweful in distresse.

O litel child, allas, what is thy gilt,
That nevere wroghtest synne as yet, pardee!
Why wil thyn harde fader han thee spilt?
O mercy, deere Constable," quod she,
"As lat my litel child dwelle heer with thee;
And if thou darst nat saven hym for blame,
Yet kys hym ones in his fadres name."

Therwith she looketh bakward to the londe,
And seyde, "Farwel, housbonde routhelless!"
And up she rist, and walketh doun the stronde,
Toward the ship. Hir folweth al the prees,
And evere she preyeth hir child to holde his pees,
And taketh hir leve, and with an hooly entente
She blisseth hir, and into ship she wente.

Vitailed was the ship, it is no drede,
Habundantly for hir ful longe space;
And othere necessaries that sholde nede
She hadde ynogh, heried be Goddes grace;
For wynd and weder almyghty God purchace,
And brynge hir hoom, I kan no bettre seye!
But in the see she dryveth forth hir weye.

Alla the kyng comth hoom, soone after this,
Unto his castel of the which I tolde,
And asketh where his wyf and his child is.
The constable gan aboute his herte colde,
And pleyedly al the manere he hym tolde,
As ye han herd, I kan telle it no bettre;
And sheweth the kyng his seel and eek his lettre,

And seyde, "Lord, as ye comanded me,
Up payne of deeth, so have I doon, certein."
This messenger tormented was, til he
Moste biknowe, and tellen plat and pleyn
Fro nyght to nyght in what place he had leyn,
And thus by wit and sotil enquerynge
Ymaged was, by whom this harm gan sprynge.

The hand was knowe that the lettre wroot,
And al the venym of this cursed dede,
But in what wise certainly I noot.
Theffect is this, that Alla, out of drede,
His mooder slow, that may men pleyedly rede,
For that she traitoure was to hir ligeance,
Thus endeth olde Donegild, with meschance!

The sorwe that this Alla, nyght and day,
Maketh for his wyf, and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may-

But now wol I unto Custance go,
That fleteth in the see in peyne and wo,
Fyve yeer and moore, as liked Cristes sonde,
Er that hir ship approched unto londe.

Under an hethen castel, atte laste,
Of which the name in my text toght I fynde,
Custance and eek hir child the see upcaste.
Almyghty god that saved al mankynde,
Have on Custance and on hir child som mynde,
That fallen is in hethen hand eft-soone,
In point to spille, as I shal telle yow soone.

Doun fro the castel comth ther many a wight
To gauren on this ship and on Custance,
But shortly from the castel on a nyght
The lordes styward, God yeve hym meschance!-
A theef that hadde reneyed oure creance,
Cam into the ship allone, and seyde he sholde
Hir lemman be, wherso she wolde or nolde.

Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigon!
Hir child cride, and she cride pitously,
But blisful Marie heelp hir right anon,
For with hir struglyng wel and myghtily,
The theef fil over bord al sodeynly,
And in the see he dreynte for vengeance,
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.

O foule lust of luxurie, lo, thyn ende!
Nat oonly that thou feyntest mannes mynde,
But verrailly thou wolt his body shende.
Thende of thy werk or of thy lustes blynde
Is compleynyng; hou many oon may men fynde,
That noght for werk somtyme, but for thentente
To doon this synne, been outhere slayn or shente!

How may this wayke womman han this strengthe
Hir to defende agayn this renegat?
O Goliath, unmesurable of lengthe,
Hou myghte David make thee so maat,
So yong, and of armure so desolaat?
Hou dorste he looke upon thy dredful face?
Wel may men seen, it nas but Goddes grace!

Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To sleen hym, Olofernus, in his tente,
And to deliveren out of wrecchednesse
The peple of God? I seyde, for this entente
That right as God spirit of vigour sente
To hem, and saved hem out of meschance,
So sente he myght and vigour to Custance.

Forth gooth hir ship thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubaltar and Septe, dryvyng alway,
Somtyme west, and somtyme north and south,
And somtyme est, ful many a very day;
Til Cristes mooder-blessed be she ay!-
Hath shapen, thurgh hir endeles goodnesse,

To make an ende of al hir hevynesse.

Now lat us stynte of Custance but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romayn Emperour,
That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe
The slaughtre of cristen folk, and dishonour
Doon to his doghter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed wikked Sowdanesse,
That at the feeste leet sleen both moore and lesse;

For which this emperour hath sent anon
His senatour with roial ordinance,
And othere lordes, God woot many oon,
On Surryens to taken heigh vengeance.
They brennen, sleen, and brynge hem to meschance
Ful many a day, but shortly, this is thende,
Hoomward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.

This senatour repaireth with victorie
To Romeward saillynge ful roially,
And mette the ship dryvyng, as seith the storie,
In which Custance sit ful pitously.
No thyng ne knew he what she was, ne why
She was in swich array, ne she nyl seye
Of hir estat, thogh that she sholde deye.

He bryngeth hir to Rome, and to his wyf
He yaf hir, and hir yonge sone also,
And with the senatour she ladde hir lyf.
Thus kan oure Lady bryngen out of wo
Woful Custance, and many another mo.
And longe tyme dwelled she in that place,
In hooly werkes evere, as was hir grace.

The senatoures wyf hir aunte was,
But for all that she knew hir never the moore-
I wol no lenger tarien in this cas,
But to kyng Alla, which I spake of yoore,
That wepeth for his wyf and siketh soore,
I wol retourne, and lete I wol Custance
Under the senatoures governance.

Kyng Alla, which that hadde his mooder slayn,
Upon a day fil in swich repentance
That, if I shortly tellen shal and playn,
To Rome he comth, to receyven his penance,
And putte hym in the popes ordinance
In heigh and logh, and Jesu Crist bisoghte
Foryeve hise wikked werkes that he wroghte.

The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born
How Alla kyng shal comen on pilgrymage,
By herbergeours that wenten hym biforn,
For which the Senatour, as was usage,
Rood hym agayns, and many of his lynage,
As wel to shewen his heighe magnificence
As to doon any kyng a reverence.

Greet cheere dooth this noble Senatour

To kyng Alla, and he to hym also,
Everich of hem dooth oother greet honour;
And so bifel, that inwith a day or two
This senatour is to kyng Alla go
To feste; and shortly, if I shal nat lye,
Custances sone wente in his compaignye.

Som men wolde seyn, at requeste of Custance
This senatour hath lad this child to feeste;
I may nat tellen every circumstance,
Be as be may, ther was he at the leeste,
But sooth is this, that at his moodres heeste
Biforn Alla durynge the metes space,
The child stood lookynge in the kynges face.

This Alla kyng hath of this child greet wonder,
And to the senatour he seyde anon,
"Whos is that faire child, that stondeth yonder?"
"I noot," quod he, "by God and by Seint John!
A mooder he hath, but fader hath he noon,
That I of woot." But shortly, in a stounde,
He tolde Alla how that this child was founde.

"But God woot," quod this senatour also,
"So vertuous a lyver in my lyf
Ne saugh I nevere as she, ne herde of mo
Of worldly wommen, mayde, ne of wyf;
I dar wel seyn, hir hadde levere a knyf
Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke,
There is no man koude brynge hir to that prikke."

Now was this child as lyke unto Custance,
As possible is a creature to be.
This Alla hath the face in remembrance
Of dame Custance, and theron mused he,
If that the childes mooder were aught she
That is his wyf; and prively he sighte
And spedde hym fro the table that he myghte.

"Parfay," thoghte he, "fantome is in myn heed.
I oghte deme, of skilful juggement,
That in the salte see my wyf is deed."
And afterward he made his argument:
"What woot I, if that Crist have hyder ysent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sente
To my contree fro thennes that she wente?"

And, after noon, hoom with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to seen this wonder chaunce.
This senatour dooth Alla greet honour,
And hastifly he sente after Custance.
But trusteth weel, hir liste nat to daunce
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde;
Unnethe upon hir feet she myghte stonde.

Whan Alla saugh his wyf, faire he hir grette,
And weep, that it was routhe for to see.
For at the firste look he on hir sette,
He knew wel verrailly that it was she.

And she for sorwe as doumb stant as a tree,
So was hir herte shet in hir distresse,
Whan she remembered his unkyndenesse.

Twyes she swowned in his owene sighte.
He weep, and hym excuseth pitously.
"Now God," quod he, "and alle hise halwes brighte
So wisly on my soule as have mercy,
That of youre harm as giltelees am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face;
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place!"

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne
Er that hir woful hertes myghte cesse,
Greet was the pitee for to heere hem pleyne,
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encresse.
I pray yow alle my labour to relesse;
I may nat telle hir wo until tomorwe,
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, whan that the sothe is wist,
That Alla giltelees was of hir wo,
I trowe an hundred tymes been they kist,
And swich a blisse is ther bitwix hem two,
That save the joye that lasteth everemo
Ther is noon lyk that any creature
Hath seyn, or shal, whil that the world may dure.

Tho preyde she hir housbonde mekely,
In relief of hir longe pitous pyne,
That he wolde preye hir fader specially
That, of his magestee, he wolde enclyne
To vouchesauf som day with hym to dyne.
She preyde hym eek, he wolde by no weye
Unto hir fader no word of hir seye.

Som men wolde seyn, how that the child Maurice
Dooth this message unto this emperour,
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce
To hym that was of so sovereyn honour,
As he that is of cristen folk the flour,
Sente any child, but it is bet to deeme
He wente hymself, and so it may wel seeme.

This emperour hath graunted gentilly
To come to dyner, as he hym bisoughte,
And wel rede I he looked bisily
Upon this child, and on his doghter thoghte.
Alla goth to his in, and as him oghte
Arrayed for this feste in every wise
As ferforth as his konnyng may suffise.

The morwe cam, and Alla gan hym dresse
And eek his wyf, this emperour to meete,
And forth they ryde in joye and in galdnesse,
And whan she saugh hir fader in the strete,
She lighte down and falleth hym to feete.
"Fader," quod she, "youre yonge child Custance
Is now ful clene out of youre remembrance.

I am youre doghter Custance," quod she,
"That whilom ye han sent unto Surrrie.
It am I, fader, that in the salte see
Was put allone, and dampned for to dye.
Now goode fader, mercy I yow crye,
Sende me namoore unto noon hethenesse,
But thonketh my lord heere of his kyndenesse."

Who kan the pitous joye tellen al
Bitwix hem thre, syn they been thus ymette?
But of my tale make an ende I shal,
The day goth faste, I wol no lenger lette.
This glade folk to dyner they hem sette,
In joye and blisse at mete I lete hem dwelle,
A thousand foold wel moore than I kan telle.

This child Maurice was sithen emperour
Maad by the pope, and lyved cristenly.
To Cristes chirche he dide greet honour;
But I lete all his storie passen by-
Of Custance is my tale specially-
In the olde Romayn geestes may men fynde
Maurices lyf, I bere it noght in mynde.

This kyng Alla, whan he his tyme say,
With his Custance, his hooly wyf so sweete,
To Engelond been they come the righte way,
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quiete.
But litel while it lasteth, I yow heete,
Joye of this world, for tyme wol nat abyde,
Fro day to nyght it changeth as the tyde.

Who lyved evere in swich delit o day
That hym ne moeved outhur conscience
Or ire, or talent, or som-kyn affray,
Envye, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I ne seye but for this ende this sentence,
That litel while in joye or in plesance
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.

For deeth, that taketh of heigh and logh his rente,
Whan passed was a yeer, evene as I gesse,
Out of this world this kyng Alla he hente,
For whom Custance hath ful greet hevynesse.
Now lat us praye God his soule blesse,
And dame Custance, finally to seye,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir weye.

To Rome is come this hooly creature,
And fyndeth ther hir freendes hoole and sounde.
Now is she scaped al hire aventure,
And whan that she hir fader hath yfounde,
Doun on hir knees falleth she to grounde,
Wepyng for tendrenesse, in herte blithe,
She heryeth God an hundred thousande sithe.

In vertu and in hooly almus-dede
They lyven alle, and never asonder wende

Til deeth departed hem; this lyf they lede;-
And fareth now weel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jesu Crist, that of his myght may sende
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,
And kepe us alle that been in this place. Amen.

Heere endeth the tale of the Man of Lawe.

Part 8

PROLOGUE TO THE SHIPMANNES TALE

Here endith the man of lawe his tale. And next folwith
the Shipman his prolog.

Oure Ost upon his stiropes stood anoon,
And seide, "Good men, herkeneth everychoon;
This was a thrifty tale for the nonys.

Sir parisshe preste," quod he, "for Godis bonys,
Telle us a tale, as was thi forward yore;
I se wel, that ye lernede men in lore
Can meche good, bi Godis dignite."
The parson him answerde, "Benedicite,

What eyleth the man so synfully to swere?"
Oure Ost answerde, "O Jankyn, be ye there?
I smelle a Lollere in the wynde," quod he,
"Howe, goodmen," quod oure Hoste, "herkeneth me,
Abyde for Godis digne passioun,

For we shul han a predicacioun,
This Lollere here wol prechen us somewhat."
"Nay, bi Godis soule, that shal he nat,"
Seyde the Shipman, "here shal he not preche,
He shal no gospel glosen here, ne teche.

We leven alle in the grete God," quod he,
"He wolde sowen som difficulte
Or sprengen cokkel in oure clene corn.
And therefore, Ost, I warne the biforn,
My joly body shal a tale telle

And I shal clynkyn yow so mery a belle
That I shal wakyn al this companye;
But it shal not ben of Philosophie,
Ne phislyas, ne termes queynte of lawe;
Ther nis but lital Latyn in my mawe."

Here endith the Shipman his prolog. And next folwyng
he bigynneth his tale.

THE TALE.

(Daun John, a monk of Paris, beguiles the wife of a
merchant of St. Denis by money borrowed from her husband.
She saves herself, on the point of discovery, by a ready
answer.)

END-LINK

Bihoold the murie wordes of the Hoost to the Shipman
and to the lady Prioressse.

"Wel seyde, by corpus dominus," quod our Hoost,
"Now longe moote thou saille by the cost,
Sir gentil maister, gentil maryneer.
God yeve this monk a thousand last quade yeer!
A ha! felawes, beth ware of swich a jape.

The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape,
And in his wyves eek, by Seint Austyn;
Draweth no monkes moore unto your in.
But now passe over, and lat us seke aboute
Who shal now telle first of al this route

Another tale?" and with that word he sayde,
As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,
"My lady Prioressse, by youre leve,
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde

A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere?"
"Gladly," quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.
Part 9

THE PRIORESSES TALE

The prologe of the Prioresses tale.

Domine dominus noster.

O lord oure lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad-quod she-
For noght oonly thy laude precious
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukyng
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriyng.

Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,
Of thee, and of the whyte lylve flour
Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;
Nat that I may encreessen hir honour,
For she hirself is honour, and the roote
Of bountee, next hir sone, and soules boote.

O mooder mayde! O mayde mooder fre!
O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte,
That ravysedest down fro the deitee
Thurgh thyn humblesse, the goost that in thalighte,
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,
Help me to telle it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee,
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science,
For somtyme, lady, er men praye to thee,
Thou goost biforn of thy benyngnytee
And getest us the lyght, thurgh thy preyere,
To gyden us unto thy sone so deere.

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful queene,
For to declare thy grete worthynesse,
That I ne may the weighte nat susteene,
But as a child of twelf monthe oold, or lesse,
That kan unnethes any word expresse,
Right so fare I; and therefore I yow preye,
Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

Heere begynneth the Prioresses Tale.

Ther was in Asye, in a greet citee,
Amonges cristene folk a Jewerye,
Sustened by a lord of that contree
For foule usure and lucre of vileynye,
Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye,
And thurgh this strete men myghte ride or wende,
For it was free and open at eyther ende.

A litel scole of cristen folk ther stood
Doun at the ferther ende, in which ther were
Children an heep, ycomen of cristen blood,
That lerned in that scole yeer by yeer
Swich manere doctrine as men used there,
This is to seyn, to syngen and to rede,
As smale children doon in hir childhede.

Among these children was a wydwe sone,
A litel clergeoun, seven yeer of age,
That day by day to scole was his wone,
And eek also, wher as he saugh thymage
Of Cristes mooder, he hadde in usage
As hym was taught, to knele adoun, and seye
His Ave Marie, as he goth by the weye.

Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone ytaught
Oure blisful lady, Cristes mooder deere,
To worshipe ay; and he forgate it naught,
For sely child wol alday soone leere.
But ay, whan I remembre on this mateere,
Seint Nicholas stant evere in my presence,
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence.

This litel child, his litel book lernynge,
As he sat in the scole at his prymer,
He "Alma redemptoris" herde synge
As children lerned hir anthiphoner;
And as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,
And herkned ay the wordes and the noote,
Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.

Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,

For he so yong and tendre was of age,
But on a day his felawe gan he preye
Texpounden hym this song in his langage,
Or telle hym why this song was in usage;
This preyde he hym to construe and declare
Ful often tyme upon hise knowes bare.

His felawe, which that elder was than he,
Answerde hym thus, "This song, I have herd seye,
Was maked of oure blisful Lady free,
Hir to salue, and eek hir for to preye
To been our help, and socour whan we deye.
I kan namoore expounde in this mateere,
I lerne song, I kan but smal grammere."

"And is this song maked in reverence
Of Cristes mooder?" seyde this innocent.
"Now, certes, I wol do my diligence
To konne it al, er Cristemasse is went;
Though that I for my prymer shal be shent
And shal be beten thries in an houre,
I wol it konne, oure lady for to honoure."

His felawe taughte hym homward prively
Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote;
And thanne he song it wel and boldely
Fro word to word acordynge with the note.
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
To scoleward, and homward whan he wente;
On Cristes mooder set was his entente.

As I have seyd, thurghout the Jewerie
This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie
"O Alma redemptoris" evere-mo.
The swetnesse hath his herte perced so
Of Cristes mooder, that to hir to preye
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye.

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes nest,
Up swal, and seyde, "O Hebrayk peple, allas,
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest,
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest
In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,
Which is agayn oure lawes reverence?"

Fro thennes forth the Jewes han conspired
This innocent out of this world to chace.
An homycide therto han they hyred
That in an aleye hadde a privee place;
And as the child gan forby for to pace,
This cursed Jew hym hente and heeld hym faste,
And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.

I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe,
Where as this Jewes purgen hire entraille.
O cursed folk of Herodes al newe,
What may youre yvel entente yow availle?

Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wol nat faille,
And namely ther thonour of God shal sprede,
The blood out crieth on youre cursed dede.

O matir, sowed to virginitee,
Now maystow syngen, folwyng evere in oon
The white lamb celestial-quod she-
Of which the grete Evaungelsit Seint John
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon
Biforn this lamb and synge a song al newe,

That never, fleshly, wommen they ne knewe.

This povre wydwe awaiteth al that nyght
After hir litel child, but he cam noght;
For which, as soone as it was dayes light,
With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,
She hath at scole and elles-where hym soght,
Til finally she gan so fer espie,
That he last seyn was in the Jewerie.

With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed,
She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde,
To every place where she hath supposed
By liklihede hir litel child to finde,
And evere on Cristes mooder, meeke and kynde
She cride, and atte laste thus she wroghte,
Among the cursed Jewes she hym soghte.

She frayneth, and she preyeth pitously
To every Jew that dwelte in thilke place,
To telle hir if hir child wente oght forby.
They seyde nay; but Jesu, of his grace,
Yaf in hir thoght, inwith a litel space,
That in that place after hir sone she cryde,
Wher he was casten in a pit bisyde.

O grete God, that parfournest thy laude
By mouth of innocentz, lo, heer thy myght!
This gemme of chastite, this emeraude,
And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,
Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,
He "Alma redemptoris" gan to synge
So loude, that al the place gan to rynge.

The cristene folk that thurgh the strete wente
In coomen, for to wondre upon this thyng,
And hastily they for the Provost sente.
He cam anon withouten tariyng,
And herieth Crist that is of hevene kyng,
And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde;
And after that, the Jewes leet he bynde.

This child, with pitous lamentacioun,
Uptaken was, syngyng his song alway,
And with honour of greet processioun
They carien hym unto the nexte abbay;
His mooder swownyng by his beere lay,
Unnethe myghte the peple that was there

This newe Rachel brynge fro his beere.

With torment and with shameful deeth echon
This Provost dooth the Jewes for to sterve,
That of this mordre wiste, and that anon.
He nolde no swich cursednesse observe;
Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve.
Therefore with wilde hors he dide hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem, by the lawe.

Upon his beere ay lith this innocent
Biforn the chief auter, whil masse laste,
And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han sped hem for to burien hym ful faste,
And whan they hooly water on hym caste,
Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water,
And song "O Alma redemptoris mater."

This abbot, which that was an hooly man,
As monkes been-or elles oghte be-
This yonge child, "and, as by wey of kynde,
I sholde have dyed, ye, longe tyme agon,
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes fynde,
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,
And for the worship of his mooder deere,
Yet may I synge "O Alma" loude and cleere.

This welle of mercy, Cristes mooder swete,
I loved alwey as after my konnyng;
And whan that I my lyf sholde forlete,
To me she cam, and bad me for to synge
This antheme, verrailly, in my deyyng,
As ye han herd, and whan that I hadde songe,
Me thoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tonge.

Wherfore I synge, and synge I moot certeyn
In honour of that blisful mayden free,
Til fro my tonge oftaken is the greyn.
And afterward thus seyde she to me,
'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee,
Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge ytake;
Be nat agast, I wol thee nat forsake.'

This hooly monk, this Abbot, hym meene I,
His tonge out-caughte, and took away the greyn,
And he yaf up the goost ful softely;
And whan this Abbot hadde this wonder seyn,
Hise salte teeris trikkled doun as reyn,
And gruf he fil al plat upon the grounde,
And stille he lay, as he had been ybounde.

The covent eek lay on the pavement,
Wepyng, and heryen Cristes mooder deere.
And after that they ryse, and forth been went,
And taken away this martir from his beere,
And in a temple of marbul stonnes cleere
Enclosen they his litel body sweete.
Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete!

O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it nis but a litel while ago,
Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciablen
On us his grete mercy multiplien,
For reverence of his mooder Marie. Amen.

Heere is ended the Prioresses Tale.
Part 10

PROLOGUE TO CHAUCER'S TALE OF SIR THOPAS

Bihoold the murye wordes of the Hoost to Chaucer.

Whan seyde was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was, that wonder was to se,
Til that oure Hooste jopen tho bigan,
And thanne at erst he looked upon me,
And seyde thus, "What man artow," quod he,
"Thow lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
For ever upon the ground I se thee stare.

Approche neer, and looke up murily;
Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place.
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace
For any womman smal, and fair of face.
He semeth elvyssh by his contenance,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.

Sey now somewhat, syn oother folk han sayde,
Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon."
"Hooste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvele apayed,
For oother tale certes kan I noon
But of a ryme I lerned longe agoon."
"Ye, that is good," quod he, "now shul we heere
Som deyntee thyng, me thynketh by his cheere."
Part 11

SIR THOPAS

Heere bigynneth Chaucers tale of Thopas.

Listeth, lordes, in good entent,
And I wol telle verrayment
Of myrthe and of solas,
Al of a knyght was fair and gent
In bataille and in tourneyment,
His name was Sir Thopas.

Yborn he was in fer contree,
In Flaundres, al biyonde the see,
At Poperyng in the place;
His fader was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sir Thopas wax a doghty swayn,

Whit was his face as payndemayn,
Hise lippes rede as rose;
His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn,
And I yow telle, in good certayn,
He hadde a semely nose.

His heer, his berd, was lyk saffroun,
That to his girdel raughte adoun;
Hise shoon of Cordewane.
Of Brugges were his hosen broun,
His robe was of syklatoun
That coste many a jane.

He koude hunte at wilde deer,
And ride an haukyng for river,
With grey goshawk on honde,
Therto he was a good archeer,
Of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer,
Ther any ram shal stonde.

Ful many a mayde, bright in bour,
They moorne for hym, paramour,
Whan hem were bet to slepe;
But he was chaast and no lechour,
And sweete as is the brembulflour
That bereth the rede hepe.

And so bifel upon a day,
Frosothe as I yow telle may,
Sir Thopas wolde out ride;
He worth upon his steede gray,
And in his hand a launcegay,
A long swerd by his side.

The priketh thurgh a fair forest,
Therinne is many a wilde best,
Ye, both bukke and hare,
And as he priketh north and est,
I telle it yow, hym hadde almost
Bitidde a sory care.

Ther spryngen herbes, grete and smale,
The lycorys and cetewale,
And many a clowe-gylofre,
And notemuge to putte in ale,
Wheither it be moyste or stale,
Or for to leye in cofre.

The briddes synge, it is no nay,
The sparhawk and the papejay
That joye it was to heere,
The thrustelcok made eek hir lay,
The wodedowve upon a spray
She sang ful loude and cleere.

Sir Thopas fil in love-longynge,
Al whan he herde the thrustel synge,
And pryked as he were wood;
His faire steede in his prikyng

So swatte that men myghte him wrynge,
His sydes were al blood.

Sir Thopas eek so wery was
For prikyng on the softe gras,
So fiers was his corage,
That doun he leyde him in that plas
To make his steede som solas,
And yaf hym good forage.

"O seinte Marie, benedicite,
What eyleth this love at me
To bynde me so soore?
Me dremed al this nyght, pardee,
An elf-queene shal my lemman be,
And slepe under my goore.

An elf-queene wol I love, ywis,
For in this world no womman is
Worthy to be my make
In towne;
Alle othere wommen I forsake,
And to an elf-queene I me take
By dale and eek by downe."

Into his sadel he clamb anon,
And priketh over stile and stoon
An elf-queene for tespye,
Til he so longe hadde riden and goon
That he foond, in a pryve woon,
The contree of Fairye
So wilde;
For in that contree was ther noon
That to him dorste ryde or goon,
Neither wyf ne childe,

Til that ther cam a greet geaunt,
His name was Sir Olifaunt,
A perilous man of dede;
He seyde "Child, by Termagaunt,
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
Anon I sle thy steede
With mace.
Heere is the queene of Fayerye,
With harpe and pipe and symphonye,
Dwellyng in this place."

The child seyde, "Also moote I thee,
Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,
Whan I have myn armoure.
And yet I hope, par ma fay,
That thou shalt with this launcegay
Abyen it ful sowre.
Thy mawe
Shal I percen if I may
Er it be fully pryne of day,
For heere thow shalt be slawe."

Sir Thopas drow abak ful faste,

This geant at hym stones caste
Out of a fel staf-slynge;
But faire escapeth Child Thopas,
And al it was thurgh Goddes gras,
And thurgh his fair berynge.

Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale,
Murier than the nightyngale,
For now I wol yow rowne
How Sir Thopas, with sydes smale,
Prikyng over hill and dale
Is comen agayn to towne.

His murie men comanded he
To make hym bothe game and glee,
For nedes moste he fighte
With a geaunt with hevedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
Of oon that shoon ful brighte.

"Do come, : he seyde, "my mynstrales,
And geestours, for to tellen tales
Anon in myn armynge;
Of romances that been roiales,
Of Popes and of Cardinales,
And eek of love-likynges."

They fette hym first the sweete wyn,
And mede eek in a mazelyn,
And roial spicerye,
And gyngebreed that was ful fyn,
And lycorys, and eek comyn,
With sugre that is so trye.

He dide next his white leere
Of clooth of lake, fyn and cleere,
A breech, and eek a sherte,
And next his sherte an aketoun,
And over that an haubergeoun,
For percynge of his herte.

And over that a fyn hawberk,
Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,
Ful strong it was of plate.
And over that his cote-armour
As whit as is a lilye flour,
In which he wol debate.

His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
And therinne was a bores heed,
A charbocle bisyde;
And there he swoor on ale and breed,
How that "the geaunt shal be deed
Bityde what bityde!"

Hise jambeux were of quyrboilly,
His swerdes shethe of yvory,
His helm of laton bright,
His sadel was of rewel-boon,

His brydel as the sonne shoon,
Or as the moone light.

His spere it was of fyn ciprees,
That bodeth werre, and no thyng pees,
The heed ful sharpe ygrounde;
His steede was al dappull-gray,
It gooth an ambil in the way
Ful softely and rounde
In londe.
Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit;
If ye wol any moore of it,
To telle it wol I fonde.

The Second Fit.

Now holde youre mouth, par charitee,
Bothe knyght and lady free,
And herkneth to my spelle;
Of batailles and of chivalry
And of ladyes love-drury
Anon I wol yow telle.

Men speken of romances of prys,
Of Hornchild, and of Ypotys,
Of Beves and Sir Gy,
Of Sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour,
But Sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of roial chivalry.

His goode steede al he bistrood,
And forth upon his wey he glood
As sparcle out of the bronde.
Upon his creest he bar a tour,
And therinne stiked a lilie-flour;
God shilde his cors fro shonde!

And for he was a knyght auntrous,
He nolde slepen in noon hous,
But liggen in his hoode.
His brighte helm was his wonger,
And by hym baiteth his dextrer
Of herbes fyne and goode.

Hym-self drank water of the well,
As dide the knyght sir Percyvell
So worly under wede,
Til on a day-----

Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas.

"Na moore of this, for Goddes dignitee,"
Quod oure hooste, "for thou makest me
So wery of thy verray lewednesse,
That also wisly God my soule blesse,
Min eres aken of thy drasty speche.

Now swich a rym the devel I biteche!
This may wel be rym dogerel," quod he.

"Why so?" quod I, "why wiltow lette me
Moore of my tale than another man
Syn that it is the beste tale I kan?"

"By God," quod he, "for pleyonly at a word
Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord,
Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme.
Sir, at o word thou shalt no lenger ryme.
Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste,

Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste,
In which ther be som murthe or som doctryne."
"Gladly," quod I, "by Goddes sweete pyne,
I wol yow telle a litel thyng in prose,
That oghte liken yow as I suppose,

Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.
It is a moral tale vertuuous,
Al be it take somtyme in sondry wyse
Of sondry folk as I shal yow devyse.
As thus; ye woot that every Evaungelist

That telleth us the peyne of Jesu Crist
Ne seith nat alle thyng as his felawe dooth,
But, nathelees, hir sentence is al sooth,
And alle acorden as in hir sentence,
Al be her in hir tellyng difference.

For somme of hem seyn moore, and somme seyn lesse,
Whan they his pitous passioun expresse;
I meene of Marke, Mathew, Luc, and John,
But doutelees hir sentence is al oon,
Therefore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche

If that yow thynke I varie as in my speche,
As thus, though that I telle somewhat moore
Of proverbes, than ye han herd bifoore,
Comprehended in this litel tretys heere,
To enforce with theeffect of my mateere,

And though I nat the same wordes seye
As ye han herd, yet to yow alle I preye,
Blameth me nat; for, as in my sentence
Ye shul nat fynden moche difference
Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte

After the which this murye tale I write.
And therefore herkneth what that I shal seye,
And lat me tellen al my tale, I preye."

THE TALE (in prose).

(A young man called Melibeus, whose wife Prudence and daughter Sophie (Wisdom) are maltreated by his foes in his absence, is counseled with many wise sayings uttered by his wife tending toward peace and forgiveness, instead of revenge.)

Part 12

PROLOGUE TO THE MONKES TALE

The murye wordes of the Hoost to the Monk.

Whan ended was my tale of Melibee,
And of Prudence, and hir benignytee,
Oure hooste seyde, "As I am feithful man,
And by that precious corpus Madrian,
I hadde levere than a barel ale

That goode lief my wyf hadde herd this tale!
She nys nothyng of swich pacience
As was this Melibeus wyf, Prudence.
By Goddes bones, whan I bete my knaves
She bryngeth me forth the grete clobbered staves,

And crieth, 'Slee the dogges, everichoon,
And brek hem, bothe bak and every boon.'
And if that any neighebore of myne
Wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne,
Or be so hardy to hir to trespace,

Whan she comth hoom she rampeth in my face,
And crieth, 'false coward, wreck thy wyf!
By corpus bones, I wol have thy knyf,
And thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne
Fro day to nyght!' Right thus she wol bigynne.

'Allas,' she seith, 'that evere I was shape
To wedden a milksop or a coward ape,
That wol been overlad with every wight;
Thou darst nat stonden by thy wyves right!'
This is my lif, but if that I wol fighte,

And out at dore anon I moot me dighte,
Or elles I am but lost, but if that I
Be lik a wilde leoun fool-hardy.
I woot wel she wol do me slee som day
Som neighebore, and thanne go my way.

For I am perilous with knyf in honde,
Al be it that I dar hir nat withstonde.
For she is byg in armes, by my feith,
That shal he fynde that hir mysdooth or seith-
But lat us passe away fro this mateere.

My lord the Monk," quod he, "be myrie of cheere,
For ye shul telle a tale, trewely.
Loo, Rouchestre stant heer faste by.
Ryde forth, myn owene lord, brek nat oure game.
But, by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name;

Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John,
Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?
Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?
I vowe to God, thou hast a ful fair skyn,
It is a gentil pasture ther thow goost.

Thou art nat lyk a penant or a goost.

Upon my feith, thou art som officer,
Som worthy sexteyn, or som celerer,
For by my fader soule, as to my doom,
Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom,

No povre cloysterer, ne no novys,
But a governour, wily and wys;
And therwith-al of brawnes and of bones
A wel-farynge persone, for the nones.
I pray to God, yeve hym confusioun

That first thee broghte unto religioun.
Thou woldest han been a tredefowel aright;
Haddwstow as greet a leeve as thou hast myght
To parfourne al thy lust in engendrure,
Thou haddest bigeten ful many a creature.

Allas, why werestow so wyd a cope?
God yeve me sorwe, but, and I were a pope,
Nat oonly thou but every myghty man
Though he were shorn ful hye upon his pan,
Sholde have a wyf, for al the world is lorn.

Religioun hath take up al the corn
Of tredyng, and we borel men been shrympes.
Of fieble trees ther comen wrecched ympes.
This maketh that our heyres ben so sclendre
And feble, that they may nat wel engendre;

This maketh that oure wyves wole assaye
Religious folk, for ye mowe bettre paye
Of Venus paiementz than mowe we;
God woot no lussheburghes payen ye.
But be nat wrooth, my lord, for that I pleye,

Ful ofte in game a sooth I have herd seye."
This worthy Monk took al in pacience,
And seyde, "I wol doon al my diligence,
As fer as sowneth into honestee,
To telle yow a tale, or two, or three.

And if yow list to herkne hyderward
I wol yow seyn the lyf of seint Edward;
Or ellis first tragedies wol I telle
Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.
Tragedie is to seyn, a certeyn storie,

As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee
And is yfallen out of heigh degree
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly,
And they ben versified comunely

Of six feet, which men clepen exametron.
In prose eek been endited many oon,
And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse.
Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise;
Now herkneth, if yow liketh for to heere.

But first, I yow biseeke in this mateere,
Though I by ordre telle nat this thynges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,
But tellen hem, som bifore and som bihynde,

As it now comth unto my remembraunce;
Have me excused of myn ignoraunce.

Part 13

THE MONKES TALE

Heere bigynneth the Monkes Tale de Casibut Virorum
Illustrium.

I wol biwaille in manere of Tragedie
The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,
And fillen so, that ther nas no remedie
To brynge hem out of hir adversitee.
For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee,
Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde;
Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee;
Be war of these ensamples, trewe and olde.

Lucifer

At Lucifer, though he an aungel were,
And nat a man, at hym wol I biginne,
For though Fortune may noon aungel dere,
From heigh degree yet fel he for his synne
Doun into helle, where he yet is inne.
O Lucifer, brightest of aungels alle,
Now artow Sathanas, that mayst nat twynne
Out of miserie, in which that thou art falle.

Adam

Loo Adam, in the feeld of Damysse,
With Goddes owene fynger wroght was he,
And nat bigeten of mannes sperme unclene,
And welte all Paradys, savyng o tree.
Hadde nevere worldly man so heigh degree
As Adam, til he, for mysgovernaunce,
Was dryven out of hys hye prosperitee
To labour, and to helle, and to meschaunce.

Sampson

Loo Sampson, which that was annunciat
By angel, longe er his nativitee,
And was to God almyghty consecrat,
And stood in noblesse whil he myghte see,
Was nevere swich another as was hee,

To speke of strengthe and therwith hardynesse;
But to hise wyves toolde he his secree,
Thurgh which he slow hymself for wrecchednesse.

Sampsoun, this noble almyghty champioun,
Withouten wepene, save his handes tweye,
He slow and al torente the leoun
Toward his weddyng walkynge by the weye.
His false wyf koude hym so plese and preye
Til she his conseil knew, and she untrewed
Unto hise foos his conseil gan biwrewe,
And hym forsook, and took another newe.

Thre hundred foxes took Sampson for ire,
And alle hir tayles he togydre bond,
And sette the foxes tayles alle on fire;
For he on every tayl had knyght a brond,
And they brende alle the cornes in that lond,
And alle hir olyveres and vynes eke.
A thousand men he slow eek with his hond,
And hadde no wepene but an asses cheke.

Whan they were slayn, so thursted hym, that he
Was wel ny lorn, for which he gan to preye
That God wolde on his peyne han som pitee,
And sende hym drynke, or elles moste he deye;
And of this asses cheke, that was drewe,
Out of a wang-tooth sprang anon a welle
Of which he drank anon, shortly to seye,
Thus heelp hym God, as Judicum can telle.

By verray force at Gazan, on a nyght,
Maugree Philistiens of that citee,
The gates of the toun he hath upplyght,
And on his bak ycaried hem hath he
Hye on an hille, that men myghte hem see.
O noble almyghty Sampson, lief and deere,
Had thou nat toold to wommen thy secree,
In all this world ne hadde been thy peere.

This Sampson nevere ciser drank, ne wyn,
Ne on his heed cam rasour noon, ne sheere,
By precept of the messenger divyn,
For alle hise strengthes in hise heeres weere.
And fully twenty wynter, yeer by yeere,
He hadde of Israel the governaunce.
But soone shal he wepen many a teere,
For wommen shal hym bryngen to meschaunce!

Unto his lemman Dalida he tolde
That in hise heeres al his strengthe lay,
And falsly to hise fooman she hym solde;
And slepyng in hir barme upon a day
She made to clippe or shere hise heres away,
And made hise foomen al this craft espyn.
And whan that they hym foond in this array,
They bounde hym faste, and putten out hise eyen.

But er his heer were clipped or yshave,

There was no boond with which men myght him bynde,
But now is he in prison in a cave,
Where as they made hym at the queerne grynde.
O noble Sampson, strongest of mankynde,
O whilom juge in glorie and in richesse,
Now maystow wepen with thyne eyen blynde,
Sith thou fro wele art falle in wrecchednesse!

The ende of this caytyf was as I shal seye;
Hise foomen made a feeste upon a day,
And made hym as hir fool biforn hem pleye.
And this was in a temple of greet array;
But atte laste he made a foul affray,
For he two pilers shook, and made hem falle,
And doun fil temple and al, and ther it lay,
And slow hymself, and eek his foomen alle.

This is to seyn, the prynces everichoon,
And eek thre thousand bodyes were ther slayn
With fallynge of the grete temple of stoon.
Of Sampson now wol I namoore sayn:
Beth war by this ensample oold and playn
That no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves
Of swich thyng as they solde han secree fayn,
If that it touche hir lymmes or hir lyves.

Hercules

Off Hercules the sovereyn conquerour
Syngen hise werkes laude and heigh renoun,
For in his tyme of strengthe he was the flour.
He slow and rafte the skyn of the leoun,
He of Centauros leyde the boost adoun,
He arpies slow, the crueel bryddes felle,
He golden apples refte of the dragoun,
He drow out Cerberus the hound of helle.

He slow the crueel tyrant Busirus,
And made his hors to frete hym, flessh and boon;
He slow the firy serpent venymus,
Of Acheloyes two hornes, he brak oon.
And he slow Cacus in a Cave of stoon;
He slow the geaunt Antheus the stronge,
He slow the grisly boor, and that anon,
And bar the hevene on his nekke longe.

Was nevere wight, sith that this world bigan,
That slow so manye monstres as dide he.
Thurghout this wyde world his name ran,
What for his strengthe, and for his heigh bountee,
And every reawme wente he for to see.
He was so stroong that no man myghte hym lette;
At bothe the worldes endes, seith Trophee,

In stide of boundes, he a pileer sette.

A lemman hadde this noble champioun,
That highte Dianira, fressh as May,
And as thise clerkes maken mencion,

She hath hym sent a sherte fressh and gay.
Allas, this sherte, allas, and weylaway!
Envenymed was so subtilly withalle,
That er that he had wered it half a day
It made his flessch al from hise bones falle.

But nathelees somme clerkes hir excusen
By oon that highte Nessus, that it maked.
Be as be may, I wol hir noght accusen;
But on his bak this sherte he wered al naked,
Til that his flessch was for the venym blaked;
And whan he saugh noon oother remedye,
In hoote coles he hath hym-selven raked,
For with no venym deigned hym to dye.

Thus starf this worthy myghty Hercules.
Lo, who may truste on Fortune any throwe?
For hym that folweth al this world of prees,
Er he be war, is ofte yleyd ful lowe.
Ful wys is he that kan hymselven knowe.
Beth war, for whan that Fortune list to glose,
Thanne wayteth she her man to overthrowe,
By swich a wey, as he wolde leest suppose.

Nabugodonosor

The myghty trone, the precious tresor
The golrious ceptre and roial magestee
That hadde the kyng Nabugodonosor,
With tonge unnethe may discryved bee.
He twyes wan Jerusalem the citee;
The vessel of the temple he with hym ladde.
At Babiloigne was his sovereyn see,
In which his glorie and his delit he hadde.

The faireste children of the blood roial
Of Israel he leet do gelde anoon,
And make ech of hem to been his thral.
Amonges othere, Daniel was oon,
That was the wiseste child of everychon;
For he the dremes of the kyng expounded
Wheras in Chaldeye clerk ne was ther noon
That wiste to what fyn hise dremes sowned.

This proude kyng leet maken a statue of gold
Sixty cubites long, and sevene in brede,
To which ymage bothe yonge and oold
Comaunded he to loute and have in drede,
Or in a fourneys ful of flambes rede
He shal be brent, that wolde noght obeye.
But nevere wolde assente to that dede
Daniel, ne hise yonge felawes tweye.

This kyng of kynges proud was and elaat;
He wende, that God that sit in magestee
Ne myghte hym nat bireve of his estaat;
But sodeynly he loste his dignytee,
And lyk a beest hym semed for to bee,
And eet hey as an oxe and lay theroute;

In reyn with wilde beestes walked hee
Til certein tyme was ycome aboute.

And lik an egles fetheres wex his heres,
Hise nayles lyk a briddes clawes weere,
Til God relessed hym a certeyn yeres,
And yaf hym wit, and thanne, with many a teere,
He thanked God; and evere his lyf in feere
Was he to doon amys, or moore trespace,
And til that tyme he leyd was on his beere,
He knew that God was ful of myght and grace.

Balthasar

His sone which that highte Balthasar,
That heeld the regne after his fader day,
He by his fader koude noght be war,
For proud he was of herte and of array;
And eek an ydolastre he was ay.
His hye estaat assured hym in pryde;
But Fortune caste hym down and ther he lay,
And sodeynly his regne gan divide.

A feeste he made unto hise lordes alle
Upon a tyme, and bad hem blithe bee,
And thanne hise officeres gan he calle,
"Gooth, bryngeth forth the vesseles," quod he,
"Whiche that my fader, in his prosperitee,
Out of the temple of Jerusalem birafte,
And to oure hye goddes thanke we
Of honour, that oure eldres with us lafte."

Hys wyf, hise lordes, and hise concubynes
Ay dronken, whil hire appetites laste,
Out of this noble vessels sondry wynes.
And on a wal this kyng hise eyen caste,
And saugh an hand armlees that wroot ful faste,
For feere of which he quook and siked soore.
This hand, that Balthasar so soore agaste,
Wroot 'Mame, techel, phares,' and na moore.

In al that land magicien was noon
That koude expounde what this lettre mente.
But Daniel expowned it anon,
And seyde, "Kyng, God to thy fader lente
Glorie and honour, regne, tresour, rente;
And he was proud, and nothyng God ne dradde,
And therefore God greet wreche upon hym sente,
And hym birafte the regne that he hadde.

He was out-cast of mannes compaignye,
With asses was his habitacioun,
And eet hey as a beest in weet and drye,
Til that he knew by grace and by resoun
That God of hevene hath domynacioun
Over every regne and every creature,
And thanne hadde God of hym compassioun
And hym restored his regne and his figure.

Eek thou that art his sone art proud also,
And knowest alle thise thynges verrailly,
And art rebel to God and art his foo.
Thou drank eek of hise vessels boldely,
Thy wyf eek, and thy wenches synfully
Dronke of the same vessels sondry wynys,
And heryest false goddes cursedly;
Therefore to thee yshapen ful greet pyne ys.

This hand was sent from God, that on the wal
Wroot 'Mane techel phares,' truste me!
Thy regne is doon, thou weyest noght at al,
Dyvyded is thy regne, and it shal be
To Medes and to Perses yeve," quod he.
And thilke same nyght this kyng was slawe
And Darius occupyeth his degree,
Thogh he therto hadde neither right ne lawe.

Lordynges, ensample heer-by may ye take
How that in lordshipe is no sikernesse;
For whan Fortune wole a man forsake,
She bereth away his regne and his richesse,
And eek hise freendes, bothe moore and lesse,
For what man that hath freendes thurgh Fortune
Mishap wol maken hem enemys, as I gesse;
This proverbe is ful sooth and ful commune.

Cenobia

Cenobia, of Palymerie queene,
As writen Persiens of hir noblesse,
So worthy was in armes, and so keene,
That no wight passed hir in hardynesse,
Ne in lynage, ne in oother gentillesse.
Of kynges blood of Perce is she descended.
I seye nat that she hadde moost fairnesse,
But of hire shap she myghte nat been amended.

From hir childhede I fynde that she fledde
Office of wommen, and to wode she wente,
And many a wilde hertes blood she shedde
With arwes brode, that she to hem sente.
She was so swift that she anon hem hente,
And whan that she was elder, she wolde kille
Leouns, leopardes, and beres al to-rente,
And in hir armes weelde hem at hir wille.

She dorste wilde heestes dennes seke,
And rennen in the montaignes al the nyght
And slepen under the bussh, and she koude eke
Wrastlen by verray force and verray myght
With any yong man, were he never so wight;
Ther myghte nothyng in hir armes stonde.
She kepte hir maydenhod from every wight,
To no man deigned hir for to be bonde.

But atte laste hir freendes han hir married
To Odenake, a prynce of that contree,

Al were it so that she hem longe taried,
And ye shul understonde how that he
Hadde swiche fantasies as hadde she.
But nathelees, whan they were knyght infeere,
They lyved in joye and in felicitee,
For ech of hem hadde oother lief and deere;

Save o thyng, that she wolde nevere assente
By no wey that he sholde by hir lye
But ones, for it was hir pleyn entente
To have a child the world to multiplie;
And also soone as that she myghte espye
That she was nat with childe with that dede,
Thanne wolde she suffre hym doon his fantasye
Eft-soone and nat but oones, out of drede.

And if she were with childe at thilke cast,
Namooore sholde he pleyen thilke game
Til fully fourty dayes weren past;
Thanne wolde she ones suffre hym do the same.
Al were this Odenake wilde or tame,
He gat no moore of hir, for thus she seyde,
It was to wyves lecheie and shame
In oother caas, it that men with hem pleyde.

Two sones by this Odenake hadde she,
The whiche she kepte in vertu and lettrure,
But now unto oure tale turne we;
I seye, so worshipful a creature,
And wys ther-with, and large with mesure,
So penyble in the werre, and curteis eke,
Ne moore labour myghte in werre endure,
Was noon, though al this world men wolde seke.

Hir riche array ne myghte nat be told
As wel in vessel as in hir clothynge;
She was al clad in perree and in gold,
And eek she lafte noght for noon huntyng
To have of sondry tonges ful knowyng,
Whan that she leyser hadde, and for to entende
To lerne bookes was al hire likyng,
How she in vertu myghte hir lyf dispende.

And shortly of this proces for to trete,
So doghty was hir housbonde and eek she,
That they conquered manye regnes grete
In the orient, with many a faire citee,
Apertenaunt unto the magestee
Of Rome, and with strong hond held hem ful faste,
Ne nevere myghte hir foomen doon hem flee,
Ay whil that Odenakes dayes laste.

Hir batailles, who-so list hem for to rede,
Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo,
And how that al this proces fil in dede,
Why she conquered, and what title had therto,
And after of hir meschief and hire wo,
How that she was biseged and ytake,
Lat hym unto my maister Petrak go,

That writ ynough of this, I undertake.

Whan Odenake was deed, she myghtily
The regnes heeld; and with hir propre hond
Agayn hir foos she faught so cruelly
That ther nas kyng ne prynce in al that lond
That he nas glad, if he that grace fond
That she ne wolde upon his lond werreye.
With hir they makded alliance by bond
To been in pees, and let hire ride and pleye.

The Emperour of Rome, Claudius,
Ne hym bifore, the Romayn Galien,
Ne dorste nevere been so corageus,
Ne noon Ermyn, ne noon Egipcien,
Ne Surrien, ne noon arabyen,
With-inne the feeldes that dorste with hir fighte,
Lest that she wolde hem with hir handes slen,
Or with hir meignee putten hem to flighte.

In kynges habit wente hir sones two
As heires of hir fadres regnes alle,
And Hermanno, and Thymalao
Hir names were, as Persiens hem calle.
But ay Fortune hath in hir hony galle;
This myghty queene may no while endure.
Fortune out of hir regne made hir falle
To wrecchednesse and to mysaventure.

Aurelian, whan that the governaunce
Of Rome cam into hise handes tweye,
He shoope upon this queene to doon vengeaunce,
And with hise legions he took his weye
Toward Cenobie, and shortly for to seye,
He made hir flee and atte last hir hente,
And fettred hir, and eek hir children tweye,
And wan the land, and hoom to Rome he wente.

Amonges othere thynges that he wan,
Hir chaar, that was with gold wroght and perree,
This grete Romayn, this Aurelian,
Hath with hym lad for that men sholde it see.
Biforen his triumphe walketh shee,
With gilte cheynes on hir nekke hangynge;
Coroned was she, after hir degree,
And ful of perree charged hir clothyng.

Allas, Fortune! she that whilom was
Dredful to kynges and to emperoures,
Now gaureth al the peple on hir, allas!
And she that helmed was in starke shoures
And wan by force townes stronge and toures
Shal on hir heed now were a vitremyte,
And she that bar the ceptre ful of floures
Shal bere a distaf, hir costes for to quyte.

De Petro Rege Ispannie

O noble, O worthy Petro, glorie of Spayne!

Whom Fortune heeld so hye in magestee,
Wel oghten men thy pitous deeth complayne;
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee,
And after at a seege by subtiltee
Thou were bitraysed, and lad unto his tente
Where as he with his owene hand slow thee,
Succedyng in thy regne and in thy rente.

The feeld of snow, with thegle of blak therinne
Caught with the lymerod, coloured as the gleede,
He brew this cursednesse and al this synne.
The wikked nest was werker of this nede,
Noght Charles Olyvver, that took ay heede
Of trouthe and honour, but of Armorike
Genyloun Olyver, corrupt for meede,
Broghte this worthy kyng in swich a brike.

De Petro Rege de Cipro

O worthy Petro, kyng of Cipre, also,
That Alisandre wan by heigh maistrie,
Ful many an hethen wroghtestow ful wo,
Of which thyne owene liges hadde envye,
And for nothyng but for thy chivalrie,
They in thy bed han slayn thee by the morwe.
Thus kan Fortune hir wheel governe and gye,
And out of joye bryng men to sorwe.

De Barnabo de Lumbardia

Off Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte,
God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye,
Why sholde I nat thyn infortune acounte,
Sith in estaat thow cloumbe were so hye?
Thy brother sone, that was thy double allye
For he thy nevew was, and sone-in-lawe,
Withinne his prisoun made thee to dye,
But why, ne how, noot I that thou were slawe.

De Hugelino Comite de Pize

Off the Erl Hugelyn of Pyze the langour
Ther may no tonge telle for pitee.
But litel out of Pize stant a tour,
In whiche tour in prisoun put was he,
And with hym been his litel children thre,
The eldeste scarsly fyf yeer was of age.
Allas, Fortune, it was greet crueltee
Swiche briddes for to putte in swiche a cage!

Dampned was he to dyen in that prisoun,
For Roger, which that Bisshop was of Pize,
Hadde on hym maad a fals suggestioun,
Thurgh which the peple gan upon hym rise,
And putten hym to prisoun in swich wise
As ye han herd, and mete and drynke he hadde
So smal that wel unnethe it may suffise,
And therwithal it was ful povre and badde.

And on a day bifil, that in that hour
Whan that his mete wont was to be broght,
The gayler shette the dores of the tour;
He herde it wel, but he spak right noght-
And in his herte anon ther fil a thoght,
That they for hunger wolde doon hym dyen.
"Allas," quod he, "allas, that I was wroght!"
Therwith the teeris fillen from hise eyen.

His yonge sone, that thre yeer was of age,
Unto hym seyde, "Fader, why do ye wepe?
Whanne wol the gayler bryngen our potage?
Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
I am so hungry that I may nat slepe.
Now wolde God that I myghte slepen evere!
Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe,
Ther is nothyng but breed that me were levere."

Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,
Til in his fadres barm adoun it lay,
And seyde, "Farewel, fader, I moot dye!"
And kiste his fader, and dyde the same day.
And whan the woful fader deed it say,
For wo hise armes two he gan to byte,
And seyde, "Allas, Fortune and weylaway!
Thy false wheel my wo al may I wyte!"

Hise children wende that it for hunger was
That he his armes gnou, and nat for wo,
And seyde, "Fader, do nat so, allas!
But rather ete the flessch upon us two.
Oure flessch thou yaf us, take our flessch us fro,
And ete ynogh," right thus they to hym seyde;
And after that withinne a day or two
They leyde hem in his lappe adoun, and deyde.

Hymself, despeired, eek for hunger starf,
Thus ended is this myghty Erl of Pize.
From heigh estaat Fortune away hym carf,
Of this tragedie it oghte ynough suffise.
Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille
That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
Fro point to point, nat o word wol he faille.

Nero

Al though that Nero were vicius
As any feend that lith in helle adoun,
Yet he, as telleth us Swetonius,
This wyde world hadde in subjeccioun,
Bothe Est and West, South and Septemtrioun;
Of rubies, saphires, and of peerles white
Were alle hise clothes brouded up and down,
For he in gemmes greetly gan delite.

Moore delicaat, moore pompous of array,
Moore proud was nevere emperour than he.
That ilke clooth that he hadde wered o day,

After that tyme he nolde it nevere see.
Nettes of gold-threed hadde he greet plentee,
To fissue in Tybre, whan hym liste pleye.
Hise lustes were al lawe in his decree,
For Fortune as his freend hym wolde obeye.

He Rome brende for his delicacie;
The senatours he slow upon a day,
To heere how men wolde wepe and crie;
And slow his brother, and by his suster lay.
His mooder made he in pitous array,
For he hir wombe slitte, to biholde
Wher he conceyved was, so weilaway
That he so litel of his mooder tolde!

No teere out of hise eyen for that sighte
Ne cam; but seyde, "A fair womman was she."
Greet wonder is how that he koude or myghte
Be domesman of hir dede beautee.
The wyn to bryngen hym comanded he,
And drank anon; noon oother wo he made,
Whan myght is joyned unto crueltee,
Allas, to depe wol the venym wade!

In yowthe a maister hadde this emperour
To techen hym lettrure and curteisye,
For of moralitee he was the flour,
As in his tyme, but if bookes lye.
And whil this maister hadde of hym maistrye,
He maked hym so konnyng and so sowple,
That longe tyme it was, er tirannye
Or any vice dorste on hym uncowple.

This Seneca, of which that I devyse,
By-cause Nero hadde of hym swich drede,
(For he fro vices wolde hym chastise
Discreetly as by word, and nat by dede)
"Sire," wolde he seyn, "an emperour moot nede
Be vertuous and hate tirannye."-
For which he in a bath made hym to blede
On bothe hise armes, til he moste dye.

This Nero hadde eek of acustumaunce
In youthe agayns his maister for to ryse,
Which afterward hym thoughte greet grevaunce;
Therefore he made hym dyen in this wise,
But nathelees, this Seneca the wise
Chees in a bath to dye in this manere,
Rather than han anoother tormentise,
And thus hath Nero slayn his maister deere.

Now fil it so, that Fortune liste no lenger
The hye pryde of Nero to cherice;
For though that he was strong, yet was she strenger;
She thoughte thus, "By God, I am to nyce
To sette a man that is fulfild of vice
In heigh degree, and emperour hym calle.
By God, out of his sete I wol hym trice,
Whan he leest weneth, sonnest shal he falle."

The peple roos upon hym on a nyght
For his defaute, and whan he it espied
Out of hise dores anoon he hath hym dight
Allone, and ther he wende han been allied
He knocked faste, and ay the moore he cried,
The faster shette they the dores alle.
For drede of this hym thoughte that he dyed,
And wente his wey, no lenger dorste he calle.

The peple cride, and rombled up and down,
That with his erys herde he how they seyde,
"Where is this false tiraunt, this Neroun?"
For fere almoost out of his wit he breyde,
And to his goddes pitously he preyde
For socour, but it myghte nat bityde.
For drede of this hym thoughte that he deyde,
And ran into a gardin hym to hyde.

And in this gardyn foond he cherles tweye,
That seten by a fyr greet and reed,
And to thise cherles two he gan to preye
To sleen hym and to girden of his heed,
That to his body whan that he were deed
Were no despit ydoon, for his defame.
Hymself he slow, he koude no bettre reed,
Of which Fortune lough and hadde a game.

De Oloferno

Was nevere capitayn under a kyng
That regnes mo putte in subjeccioun,
Ne strengre was in feeld of alle thyng
As ibn his tyme, ne gretter of renoun,
Ne moore pompous in heigh presumpcioun,
Than Oloferne, which Fortune ay kiste
So likerously, and ladde hym up and down
Til that his heed was of er that he wiste.

Nat oonly that this world hadde hym in awe
For lesynge of richesse or libertee,
But he made every man reneyen his lawe.
"Nabugodonosor was god," seyde hee,
"Noon oother god sholde adoure bee."
Agayns his heeste no wight dorste trespace,
Save in Bethulia, a strong citee,
Where Eliachim a preest was of that place.

But taak kepe of the deeth of Oloferne;
Amydde his hoost he dronke lay a nyght,
Withinne his tente, large as is a berne;
And yet for al his pompe and al his myght
Judith, a womman, as he lay upright
Slepynge, his heed of smoot, and from his tente
Ful prively she stal from every wight,
And with his heed unto hir toun she wente.

De Rege Anthiocho illustri

What nedeth it of kyng Anthiochus
To telle his hye roial magestee,
His hye pride, hise werkes venymous?
For swich another was ther noon as he,
Rede which that he was in Machabee,
And rede the proude wordes that he seyde,
And why he fil fro heigh prosperitee,
And in an hill how wrecchedly he deyde.

Fortune hym hadde enhaunced so in pride
That verrailly he wende he myghte attayne
Unto the sterres upon every syde,
And in balance weyen ech montayne,
And alle the floodes of the see restrayne.
And Goddes peple hadde he moost in hate;
Hem wolde he sleen in torment and in payne,
Wenyng that God ne myghte his pride abate.

And for that Nichanore and Thymothee
Of Jewes weren venquysshed myghtily,
Unto the Jewes swich an hate hadde he
That he bad greithen his chaar ful hastily,
And swoor, and seyde, ful despitously,
Unto Jerusalem he wolde eft-soone,
To wreken his ire on it ful cruelly;
But of his purpos he was let ful soone.

God for his manace hym so soore smoot
With invisible wounde, ay incurable,
That in hise guttes carf it so and boot
That hise peynes weren importable.
And certainly, the wreche was resonable,
For many a mannes guttes dide he payne,
But from his purpos cursed and dampnable
For al his smert he wolde hym nat restreyne;

But bad anon apparailen his hoost,
And sodeynly, er he was of it war,
God daunted al his pride and al his boost,
For he so soore fil out of his char,
That it hise lemes and his skyn totar,
So that he neyther myghte go ne ryde,
But in a chayer men aboute hym bar
Al forbrused, bothe bak and syde.

The wreche of God hym smoot so cruelly
That thurgh his body wikked wormes crepte;
And therwithal he stank so horribly
That noon of al his meynee that hym kepte
Wheither so he wook or ellis slepte,
Ne myghte noghy for stynk of hym endure.
In this meschief he wayled and eek wepte,
And knew God lord of every creature.

To all his hoost and to hymself also
Ful wlatson was the stynk of his careyne,
No man ne myghte hym bere to ne fro,
And in this stynk and this horrible payne
He starf ful wrecchedly in a monteyne.

Thus hath this robbour and this homycide,
That many a man made to wepe and pleyne,
Swich gerdoun as bilongeth unto pryde.

De Alexandro

The storie of Alisaundre is so commune
That every wight that hath discrecioun
Hath herd somewhat or al of his fortune.
This wyde world, as in conclusioun,
He wan by strengthe, or for his hye renoun
They weren glad for pees unto hym sende.
The pride of man and beest he leyde adoun
Wher-so he cam, unto the worldes ende.

Comparison myghte nevere yet been maked
Bitwixen hym and another conquerour,
For al this world for drede of hym hath quaked.
He was of knyghthod and of fredom flour,
Fortune hym made the heir of hir honour.
Save wyn and wommen nothyng myghte aswage
His hye entente in armes and labour,
So was he ful of leonyn corage.

What pris were it to hym, though I yow tolde
Of Darius, and an hundred thousand mo,
Of kynges, princes, erles, dukes bolde,
Whiche he conquered and broghte hem into wo?
I seye, as fer as man may ryde or go,
The world was his, what sholde I moore devyse?
For though I write or tolde yow everemo,
Of his knyghthode it myghte nat suffise.

Twelf yeer he regned, as seith Machabee,
Philippes sone of Macidoyne he was,
That first was kyng in Grece the contree.
O worhty gentil Alisandre, allas,
That evere sholde fallen swich a cas!
Empoysoned of thyn owene folk thou weere;
Thy sys Fortune hath turned into aas
And yet for thee ne weep she never a teere.

Who shal me yeven teeris to compleyne
The deeth of gentillesse and of franchise,
That al the world weilded in his demeyne?
And yet hym thoughte it myghte nat suffise,
So ful was his corage of heigh emprise.
Allas, who shal me helpe to endite
False Fortune, and poyson to despise,
The whiche two of al this wo I wyte?

De Julio Cesare

By wisdom, manhede, and by gret labour
From humble bed to roial magestee
Up roos he, Julius the conquerour,
That wan al thoccident by land and see
By strengthe of hand, or elles by treetee,
And unto Rome made hem tributarie;

And sitthe of Rome the emperour was he,
Til that Fortune weex his adversarie.

O myghty Cesar, that in Thessalie
Agayn Pompeus, fader thyn in lawe,
That of the Orient hadde al the chivalrye
As fer as that the day bigynneth dawe,
Thou thurgh thy knyghthod hast hem take and slawe,
Save fewe folk that with Pompeus fledde,
Thurgh which thou puttest al thorient in awe,
Thanke Fortune, that so wel thee spedde!

But now a litel while I wol biwaille
This Pompeus, this noble governour
Of Rome, which that fleigh at this bataille,
I seye, oon on hise men, a fals traitour,
His heed of-smoot to wynnyn hym favour
Of Julius, and hym the heed he broghte;
Allas, Pompeye, of thorient conquerour,
That Fortune unto swich a fyn thee broghte!

To Rome agayn repaireth Julius,
With his triumphe lauriat ful hye;
But on a tyme Brutus Cassius
That evere hadde of his hye estaat envye,
Ful prively hath maad conspiracye
Agayns this Julius in subtil wise,
And caste the place in which he sholde dye
With boydekyns, as I shal yow devyse.

This Julius to the Capitolie wente
Upon a day, as he was wont to goon;
And in the Capitolie anon hym hente
This false Brutus and his othere foor,
And stiked hym with boydekyns anoon
With many a wounde; and thus they lete hym lye.
But nevere gronte he at no strook but oon,
Or elles at two, but if his sstorie lye.

So manly was this Julius of herte
And so wel lovede estaatly honestee,
That though hise deedly woundes soore smerte,
His mantel over hise hypes caste he,
For no man sholde seen his privetee.
And as he lay of diyng in a traunce,
And wiste verrailly that deed was hee,
Of honestee yet hadde he remembraunce.

Lucan, to thee this storie I recomende,
And to Sweton, and to Valerie also,
That of this storie writen word and ende,
How that to thise grete conqueroures two
Fortune was first freend, and sitthe foo.
No man ne truste upon hire favour longe
But have hir in awayt for evere moo!

Witnesse on alle thise conqueroures stronge.

This riche Cresus whilom kyng of Lyde,
Of whiche Cresus Cirus soore hym dradde,
Yet was he caught amyddes al his pryde,
And to be brent men to the fyr hym ladde.
But swich a reyn doun fro the welkne shadde
That slow the fyr, and made hym to escape;
But to be war no grace yet he hadde,
Til Fortune on the galwes made hym gape.

Whanne he escaped was, he kan nat stente
For to bigynne a newe werre agayn;
He wende wel, for that Fortune hym sente
Swich hap that he escaped thurgh the rayn,
That of hise foos he myghte nat be slayn;
And eek a swevene upon a nyght he mette,
Of which he was so proud and eek so fayn
That in vengeance he al his herte sette.

Upon a tree he was, as that hym thoughte,
Ther Jupiter hym wessh bothe bak and syde,
And Phebus eek a fair towaille hym broughte,
To dryen hym with; and therefore wax his pryde,
And to his doghter that stood hym bisyde,
Which that he knew in heigh science habounde,
He bad hir telle hym what it signyfyde,
And she his dreem bigan right thus expounde.

"The tree," quod she, "the galwes is to meene,
And Juppiter bitokneth snow and reyn,
And Phebus with his towaille so clene,
Tho been the sonne stremes for to seyn.
Thou shalt anhangd be, fader, certeyn;
Reyn shal thee wasshe, and sonne shal thee drye."
Thus warnede hym ful plat and ful pleyn,
His doghter, which that called was Phanye.

Anhangd was Cresus, the proude kyng,
His roial trone myghte hym nat availle.
Tragedie is noon oother maner thyng,
Ne kan in syngyng crye ne biwaille,
But for that Fortune alwey wole assaille
With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
For whan me trusteth hir, thanne wol she faille,
And covere hir brighte face with a clowde.

Explicit Tragedia.

Heere stynteth the Knyght the Monk of his tale.

Part 14

PROLOGUE TO THE NONNES PREESTES TALE

The Prologue of the Nonnes Preestes Tale.

"Hoo!" quod the Knyght, "good sire, namoore of this,
That ye han seyde is right ynough, ywis,
And muchel moore, for litel hevynesse

Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse.
I seye for me, it is a greet disese

Where as men han been in greet welthe and ese,
To heeren of hir sodeyn fal, allas!
And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
As whan a man hath been in povre estaat,
And clymbeth up, and wexeth fortunat,

And there abideth in prosperitee.
Swich thyng is galdsom, as it thynketh me,
And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle."
"Ye," quod our Hoost, "by seinte Poules belle,
Ye seye right sooth! This Monk, he clappeth lowde,

He spak, how Fortune covered with a clowde-
I noot nevere what-and also of a 'Tragedie'-
Right now ye herde; and pardee, no remedie
It is for to biwaille ne compleyne
That that is doon; and als it is a peyne,

As ye han seyde, to heere of hevynesse.
Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!
Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye;
Swich talkyng is nat worth a boterflye,
For ther-inne is ther no desport ne game.

Wherfore sir Monk, or daun Piers by youre name,
I pray yow hertely, telle us somewhat elles,
For sikerly, nere clynkyng of youre belles
That on your bridel hange on every syde,
By hevene kyng, that for us alle dyde,

I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleepe,
Although the slough had never been so deepe;
Thanne hadde your tale al be toold in veyn.
For, certeinly, as that thise clerkes seyn,
Where as a man may have noon audience,

Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence.
And wel I woot the substance is in me,
If any thyng shal wel reported be.
Sir, sey somewhat of huntyng, I yow preye."
"Nay," quod this Monk, "I have no lust to pleye;

Not lat another telle as I have toold."
Thanne spakoure Hoost, with rude speche and boold,
And seyde unto the Nonnes Preest anon,
"Com neer, thou preest, com hyder, thou, sir John,
Telle us swich thyng as mayoure hertes glade;

Be blithe, though thou ryde upon a jade.
What thogh thyn hors be bothe foul and lene?
If he wol serve thee, rekke nat a bene!
Looke that thyn herte be murie everemo."
"Yis sir," quod he, "yis, Hoost, so moot I go,

But I be myrie, ywis, I wol be blamed."
And right anon his tale he hath attamed,

And thus he seyde unto us everichon,
This sweete preest, this goodly man sir John.

Part 15

THE NONNES PREESTES TALE

Heere bigynneth the Nonnes Preestes tale of the Cok and
Hen, Chauntecleer and Pertelote.

A povre wydwe, somdel stape in age,
Was whilom dwellyng in a narwe cotage
Biside a greve, stondynge in a dale.
This wydwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf,

In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,
For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
By housbondrie, of swich as God hir sente,
She foond hirself and eek hire doghtren two.
Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo,

Three keen, and eek a sheep that highte Malle.
Ful sooty was hir bour and eek hire halle,
In whidh she eet ful many a sklendre meel-
Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte,

Hir diete was accordant to hir cote.
Repleccioun ne made hir nevere sik,
Attempree diete was al hir phisik,
And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
The goute lette hir nothyng for to daunce,

Napoplexie shente nat hir heed.
No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed,
Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak,
Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak,
Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye,

For she was as it were a maner deye.
A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,
In which she hadde a Cok, heet Chauntecleer,
In al the land of crowyng nas his peer.

His voys was murier than the murle orgon
On messedayes, that in the chirche gon.
Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge,
Than is a klokke, or an abbey orlogge.
By nature he crew eche ascencioun

Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;
For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,
Thanne crew he, that it myghte nat been amended.
His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailled, as it were a castel wal.

His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon,

Lyk asure were hise legges and his toon,
Hise nayles whiter than the lylve flour,
And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce

Sevene hennes, for to doon al his plesaunce,
Whiche were hise sustres and his paramours,
And wonder lyk to hym as of colours;
Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote.

Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire
And compaignable, and bar hyrself so faire
Syn thilke day that she was seven nyght oold,
That trewely she hath the herte in hoold
Of Chauntecleer loken in every lith.

He loved hir so, that wel was hym therwith.
But swiche a joye was it to here hem synge
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,
In sweete accord, "My lief is faren in londe,"-
For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,

Beestes and briddes koude speke and synge.
And so bifel, that in the dawenyng,
As Chauntecleer, among hise wyves alle,
Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
And next hym sat this faire Pertelote,

This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte
As man that in his dreem is drecched soore.
And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore
She was agast, and seyde, "O herte deere,
What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?

Ye been a verray sleper, fy for shame!"
And he answerde and seyde thus, "Madame,
I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief.
By God, me thoughte I was in swich meschief
Right now, that yet myn herte is soore afright.

Now God," quod he, "my swevene recche aright,
And kepe my body out of foul prisoun.
Me mette how that I romed up and down
Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest

Upon my body, and han had me deed.
His colour was bitwixe yelow and reed,
And tipped was his tayl and bothe hise eeris;
With blak, unlyk the remenant of hise heeris;
His snowte smal, with glowyng eyeen tweye.

Yet of his look, for feere almost I deye!
This caused me my gronyng, doutelees."
"Avoy!" quod she, "Fly on yow hertelees!
Allas," quod she, "for by that God above
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love!

I kan nat love a coward, by my feith,
For certes, what so any womman seith,
We alle desiren, if it myght bee,
To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,
And secree, and no nygard, ne no fool,

Ne hym that is agast of every tool,
Ne noon avauntour; by that God above,
How dorste ye seyn for shame unto youre love
That any thyng myghte make yow aferd?
Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?

Allas, and konne ye been agast of swevenys?
No thyng, God woot, but vanitee in swevene is!
Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,
And ofte of fume and of complecciouns,
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.

Certes, this dreem which ye han met tonyght
Cometh of greet superfluytee
Of youre rede colera, pardee,
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
Of arwes, and of fyre with rede lemes,

Of grete beestes, that they wol hem byte,
Of contekes, and of whelpes grete and lyte;
Right as the humour of malencolie
Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie
For feere of blake beres, or boles blake,

Or elles blake develes wole hem take.
Of othere humours koude I telle also
That werken many a man in sleep ful wo,
But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.
Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man,

Seyde he nat thus, 'ne do no fors of dremes'?
Now sire," quod she, "whan ye flee fro the bemes,
For goddes love as taak som laxatyf!
Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
I conseilte yow the beste, I wol nat lye,

That bothe of colere and of malencolye
Ye purge yow; and for ye shal nat tarie,
Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,
I shal myself to herbes techen yow,
That shul been for youre hele and for youre prow.

And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde,
The whiche han of hir propretee by kynde
To purge yow bynethe and eek above.
Foryet nat this, for Goddes owene love!
Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun;

Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hoote.
And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote
That ye shul have a fevere terciane,
Or an agu that may be youre bane.

A day or two ye shul have digestyves
Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves
Of lawriol, centaure, and fumetere,
Or elles of ellebor that groweth there,
Of katapuce, or of gaitrys beryis,

Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is!
Pekke hem up right as they growe, and ete hem yn!
Be myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn,
Dredeth no dreem, I kan sey yow namoore!"
"Madame," quod he, "graunt mercy of youre loore,

But nathelees, as touchyng Daun Catoun,
That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,
Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
By God, men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man moore of auctorite

Than evere Caton was, so moot I thee,
That al the revers seyn of this sentence,
And han wel founden by experience
That dremes been significaciouns
As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns

That folk enduren in this lif present.
Ther nedeth make of this noon argument,
The verray preeve sheweth it in dede.
Oon of the gretteste auctours that men rede
Seith thus, that whilom two felawes wente

On pilgrimage in a ful good entente;
And happed so, they coomen in a toun
Wher as ther was swich congregacioun
Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,
That they ne founde as mucche as o cotage

In which they bothe myghte logged bee;
Wherfore they mosten of necessitee
As for that nyght departen compaignye,
And ech of hem gooth to his hostelrye,
And took his loggyng as it wolde falle.

That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,
Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough;
That oother man was logged wel ynough,
As was his aventure or his fortune,
That us governeth alle as in commune.

And so bifel, that longe er it were day
This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay,
How that his felawe gan upon hym calle
And seyde, 'Allas, for in an oxes stalle
This nyght I shal be mordred, ther I lye!

Now help me, deere brother, or I dye;
In alle haste com to me!" he sayde.
This man out of his sleep for feere abrayde;
But whan that he was wakened of his sleep,

He turned hym and took of it no keep.

Hym thoughte, his dreem nas but a vanitee.
Thus twies in his slepyng dremed hee,
And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, 'I am now slawe,
Bihoold my bloody woundes depe and wyde;

Arys up erly in the morwe-tyde,
And at the west gate of the toun,' quod he,
'A carte ful of donge ther shaltow se,
In which my body is hid ful prively.
Do thilke carte arresten boldely;

My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn.'-
And tolde hym every point, how he was slayn,
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe;
And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe.
For on the morwe, as soone as it was day,

To his felawes in he took the way,
And whan that he cam to this oxes stalle,
After his felawe he bigan to calle.
The hostiler answerde hym anon,
And seyde, 'Sire, your felawe is agon,

As soone as day he wente out of the toun.'
This man gan fallen in suspecioun,
Remembrynge on hise dremes that he mette,
And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he lette,
Unto the westgate of the toun; and fond

A donge carte, as it were to donge lond,
That was arrayed in that same wise,
As ye han herd the dede man devyse.
And with an hardy herte he gan to crye,
'Vengeance and justice of this felonye;

My felawe mordred is this same myght,
And in this carte he lith gapyng upright.
I crye out on the ministres,' quod he,
'That sholden kepe and reulen this citee!
Harrow! allas, heere lith my felawe slayn!'

What sholde I moore unto this tale sayn?
The peple out-sterter, and caste the cart to grounde,
And in the myddel of the donge they founde
The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
O blisful God, that art so just and trewe!

Lo, howe that thou biwreyest mordre alway!
Mordre wol out, that se we, day by day.
Mordre is so wlatson and abhomynable
To God that is so just and resonable,
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be,

Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre.
Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.
And right anon ministres of that toun

Han hent the carter, and so soore hym pyned,
And eek the hostiler so soore engnyed

That they biknewe hire wikkednesse anon,
And were anhangid by the nekke bon.
Heere may men seen, that dremes been to drede!
And certes, in the same book I rede
Right in the nexte chapitre after this-

I gabbe nat, so have I joye or blis-
Two men that wolde han passed over see
For certeyn cause, into a fer contree,
If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarie,
That made hem in a citee for to tarie,

That stood ful myrie upon an haven-syde-
But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,
The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste.
Jolif and glad they wente unto hir reste,
And casten hem ful erly for to saille,

But herkneth, to that o man fil a greet mervaille;
That oon of hem, in slepyng as he lay,
Hym mette a wonder dreem agayn the day.
Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,
And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,

And seyde hym thus, 'If thou tomorwe wende
Thow shalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende.'
He wook, and tolde his felawe what he mette,
And preyde hym his viage for to lette,
As for that day, he preyede hym to byde.

His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,
Gan for to laughe and scorned him ful faste.
'No dreem,' quod he, 'may so myn herte agaste
That I wol lette for to do my thynges.
I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,

For swevenes been but vanytees and japes.
Men dreme al day of owles or of apes,
And of many a maze therwithal.
Men dreme of thyng that nevere was, ne shal;
But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde

And thus forslewthen wilfully thy tyde,
God woot it reweth me, and have good day.'
And thus he took his leve and wente his way;
But er that he hadde half his cours yseyled,
Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled,

But casuelly the shippes botme rente,
And ship and men under the water wente
In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,
That with hem seyled at the same tyde.
And therefore, faire Pertelote so deere,

By swiche ensamples olde yet maistow leere,
That no man sholde been to recchelees

Of dremes, for I seye thee doutelees
That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede.

Lo, in the lyf of Seint Kenelm I rede,

That was Kenulphus sone, the noble kyng,
Of Mercenrike how Kenelm mette a thyng.
A lite er he was mordred, on a day
His mordre in his avysioun he say.
His norice hym expowned every deel

His swevene, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel
For traisoun, but he nas but seven yeer oold,
And therefore litel tale hath he toold
Of any dreem, so hooly is his herte.
By God, I hadde levere than my sherte

That ye hadde rad his legende, as have I.
Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,
Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun
In Affrike of the worhty Cipioun,
Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been

Warnynge of thynges, that men after seen.
And forther-moore I pray yow looketh wel
In the olde testament of Daniel,
If he heeld dremes any vanitee!
Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see

Wher dremes be somtyme, I sey nat alle,
Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle.
Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharao,
His baker and his butiller also,
Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes!

Whoso wol seken actes of sondry remes
May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng.
Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,
Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified, he sholde anhangen bee?

Lo her Adromacha, Ectores wyf,
That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf
She dremed on the same nyght biforn
How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,
If thilke day he wente into bataille.

She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle;
He wente for to fighte natheles,
But he was slayn anon of Achilles.
But thilke is al to longe for to telle,
And eek it is ny day, I may nat dwelle.

Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,
That I shal han of this avisioun
Adversitee, and I seye forthermoor
That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,
For they been venymes, I woot it weel,

I hem diffye, I love hem never a deel.

Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this;
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace,
For whan I se the beautee of youre face,

Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre eyen,
It maketh al my drede for to dyen.
For, al so siker as In principio
Mulier est hominis confusio,-
Madame, the sentence of this Latyn is,

'Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.'
For whan I felle a-nyght your softe syde,
Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas!
I am so ful of joye and of solas,

That I diffye bothe swevene and dreem."
And with that word he fly doun fro the beem,
For it was day, and eke hise hennes alle;
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
For he hadde founde a corn lay in the yerd.

Real he was, he was namoore aferd;
And fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
And trad as ofte, er that it was pryme.
He looketh as it were a grym leoun,
And on hise toos he rometh up and doun,

Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
He chukketh whan he hath a corn yfounde,
And to hym rennen thanne hise wyves alle.
Thus roial as a prince is in an halle,
Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture,

And after wol I telle his aventure.

Whan that the monthe in which the world bigan
That highte March, whan God first maked man,
Was compleet, and passed were also
Syn March bigan, thritty dayes and two,

Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,
Hise sevene wyves walkynge by his syde,
Caste up hise eyen to the brighte sonne,
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne
Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore;

And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene.
"The sonne," he seyde, "is clomben upon hevne
Fourty degrees and oon, and moore, ywis.
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,

Herkneth these blisful briddes how they synge,
And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge.
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas."
But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,
For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.

God woot that worldly joye is soone ago,
And if a rethor koude faire endite,
He in a cronycle sauflly myghte it write,
As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
Now every wys man, lat him herkne me:

This storie is al so trewe, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
Now wol I come agayn to my sentence.
A colfox, ful of sly iniquitee,

That in the grove hadde wonned yeres three,
By heigh ymaginacioun forn-cast,
The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast
Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
Was wont, and eek hise wyves, to repaire;

And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
Til it was passed undren of the day,
Waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,
As gladly doon thise homycides alle
That in await ligen to mordre men.

O false mordrour, lurkyng in thy den!
O newe Scariot! newe Genyloun!
False dissymulour, O Greek synoun
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe

That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
That thilke day was perilous to thee;
But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
After the opinioun of certein clerkis.

Witnesse on hym, that any parfit clerk is,
That in scole is greet altercacioun
In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men;-
But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren

As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
Or Boece or the Bisshop Bradwardyn,-
Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
Streyneth me nedefully to doon a thyng,
(Nedely clepe I symple necessitee)

Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
Though God forwoot it, er that it was wroght;
Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
But by necessitee condicioneel,-

I wel nat han to do of swich mateere;
My tale is of a Cok, as ye may heere,
That took his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
To walken in the yerd, upon that morwe
That he hadde met that dreem, that I of tolde.

Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
And made Adam fro Paradys to go,
Ther as he was ful myrie, and wel at ese.
But for I noot to whom it myght displese,

If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
Passe over, for I seye it in my game.
Rede auctours, wher they trete of swich mateere,
And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere.
These been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne,

I kan noon harm of no womman divyne.
 Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,
Lith Pertelote, and alle hir sustres by,
Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
Soony murier than the mermayde in the see-

For Phisiologus seith sikerly
How that they syngen wel and myrily.
And so bifel, that as he cast his eye
Among the wortes on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.

Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
But cride anon, "cok! cok!" and up he sterte,
As man that was affrayed in his herte.
For natureelly a beest desireth flee
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,

Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his eye.
This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, "Gentil sire, allas, wher wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?"

Now certes, I were worse than a feend
If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye.
I am nat come your conseil for tespye,
But trewely, the cause of my comynge
Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge.

For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
As any aungel hath that is in hevene.
Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelynge
Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.
My lord youre fader-God his soule blesse!-

And eek youre mooder, of hir gentillesse
Han in myn hous ybeen, to my greet ese;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye,
So moote I brouke wel myne eyen tweye,

Save yow I herde nevere man yet synge
As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.
Certes, it was of herte al that he song!
And for to make his voys the moore strong,

He wolde so peyne hym, that with bothe hise eyen

He moste wynke, so loude he solde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
And eek he was of swich discrecioun,
That ther nas no man in no regioun,

That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe.
I have wel rad in daun Burnel the Asse
Among hise vers, how that ther was a cok,
For that a presstes sone yaf hym a knock,
Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,

He made hym for to lese his benefice.
But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun
Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun
Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee,

Lat se konne ye youre fader countrefete!"
This Chauntecleer hise wynges gan to bete,
As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,
So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.
 Allas, ye lordes! many a fals flatour

Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,
That plesen yow wel moore, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of Flaterye;
Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.

This Chauntecleer stood hye upon his toos,
Strecchyng his nekke, and heeld hise eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones,
And daun Russell the fox stirte up atones,
And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,

And on his bak toward the wode hym beer,
For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.
 O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!

And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce!
Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
Moore for delit, than world to multiplie,

Why woltestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred, deere Maister soverayn!
That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,
Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,

The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?-
For on a Friday soothyl slayn was he.
Thanne wolde I shewe yow, how that I koude pleyne

For Chauntecleres drede and for his peyne.
Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun

Was nevere of ladyes maad, whan Ylioun
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
Whan he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,
And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,
As maden alle the hennes in the clos,

Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe
Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf,
And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage;

She was so ful of torment and of rage
That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
And brende hirselves with a stedefast herte.
O woful hennes, right so criden ye,
As whan that Nero brende the Citee

Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
For that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves,
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
Now I wole turne to my tale agayn.
 This sely wydwe, and eek hir doghtres two,

Herden thise hennes crie, and maken wo,
And out at dores stirten they anon,
And seyn the fox toward the grove gon,
And bar upon his bak the cok away;
And cryden, "Out! harrow! and weylaway!

Ha! ha! the fox!" and after hym they ran,
And eek with staves many another man,
Ran Colle, oure dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
And Malkyn with a dystaf in hir hand,
Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,

So were they fered for berkyng of the dogges,
And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek,
They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breek;
They yolleden as feends doon in helle,
The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle,

The gees for feere flowen over the trees,
Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees,
So hydous was the noyse, a! benedicitee!
Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee
Ne made nevere shoutes half so shille,

Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
Of bras they broghten bemes and of box,
Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped,
And therwithal they skriked and they howped,

It seemed as that hevene sholde falle!
Now, goode men, I pray yow, herkneth alle.

Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly
The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,

In al his drede unto the fox he spak,
And seyde, "Sire, if that I were as ye,
Yet wolde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
'Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle,
A verray pestilence upon yow falle!

Now am I come unto the wodes syde,
Maugree youre heed, the cok shal heere abyde,
I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon,"
The fox answerde, "In feith, it shal be don."
And as he spak that word, al sodeynly

This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,
And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.
And whan the fox saugh that he was gon,
"Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, allas!
I have to yow," quod he, "ydoon trespas,

In as mucche as I maked yow aferd,
Whan I yow hente and broght into this yerd.
But, sire, I dide it of no wikke entente,
Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente;
I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so."

"Nay, thanne," quod he, "I shrewe us bothe two,
And first I shrewe myself bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.
Thou shalt namoore, thurgh thy flaterye,
Do me to synge and wynke with myn eye;

For he that wynketh whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee."
"Nay," quod the fox, "but God yeve hym meschaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
That jangleth, whan he sholde holde his pees."

Lo, swich it si for to be recchelees,
And necligent, and truste on flaterye!
But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralite, goode men;

For seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,
To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis.
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.
Now goode God, if that it be thy wille,
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,
And brynge us to his heighe blisse. Amen.

Heere is ended the Nonnes Preestes tale.
Part 16

GROUP C.

THE PHISICIENS TALE

Heere folweth the Phisiciens tale.

Ther was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knyght that called was Virginius,
Fulfilde of honour and of worthynesse,
And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse.
This knyght a doghter hadde by his wyf,

No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see.
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
Yformed hir in so greet excellence,

As though she wolde seyn, "Lo, I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
Or grave, or peynte, for I dar wel seyn

Apelles, Zanzis sholde werche in veyn
Outher to grave or peynte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.
For He that is the former principal
Hath maked me his vicaire general

To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the Moone, that may wane and waxe,
And for my werk right nothyng wol I axe.
My lord and I been ful of oon accord;

I made hir to the worship of my lord,
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures."
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.
This mayde of age twelf yeer was and tweye,

Is which that Nature hadde swich delit.
For right as she kan peynte a lillie whit,
And reed a rose, right with swich peynture
She peynted hath this noble creature,
Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre,

Where as by right swiche colours sholde be.
And Phebus dyed hath hir treses grete,
Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete;
And if that excellent was hir beautee,
A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.

In hire ne lakked no condicioun
That is to preyse, as by discrecioun;
As wel in goost as body chast was she,
For which she floured in virginitee
With alle humylitee and abstinence,

With alle attemperaunce and pacience,

With mesure eek of beryng and array.
Discreet she was in answeryng alway,
Though she were wise Pallas, dar I seyn,
Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn,

No countrefeted termes hadde she
To seme wys, but after hir degree
She spak, and alle hir wordes, moore and lesse,
Sownynge in vertu and in gentillesse.
Shamefast she was in maydens shamefastnesse,

Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse
To dryve hir out of ydel slogardye.
Bacus hadde of hire mouth right no maistrie;
For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encresse,
As man in fyr wol casten oille or gresse.

And of hir owene vertu unconstreyned,
She hath ful ofte tyme syk hir feyned,
For that she wolde fleen the compaignye
Wher likly was to treten of folye,
As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces

That been occasions of daliaunces.
Swich thynges maken children for to be
To soone rype and boold, as men may se,
Which is ful perilous, and hath been yoore;
For al to soone may they lerne loore

Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.
And ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf,
That lordes doghtres han in governaunce,
Ne taketh of my wordes no displesaunce;
Thenketh that ye been set in governynges

Of lordes doghtres, oonly for two thynges;
Outher for ye han kept youre honestee,
Or elles ye han falle in freletee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,
And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce

For everemo; therefore for Cristes sake,
To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.
A thief of venysoun, that hath forlaft
His likerousnesse, and al his olde craft,
Kan kepe a forest best of any man.

Now kepeth wel, for if ye wole, ye kan.
Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,
Lest ye be dampned for your wikke entente.
For who so dooth, a traitour is, certeyn;
And taketh kepe of that that I shal seyn,

Of alle tresons, sovereyn pestilence
Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence.
Ye fadres and ye moodres, eek also,
Though ye han children, be it oon or two,
Youre is the charge of al hir surveiaunce

Whil that they been under youre governaunce.
Beth war, if by ensample of youre lyvyng,
Or by youre necligence in chastisyng,
That they perisse, for I dar wel seye,
If that they doon ye shul it deere abeye;

Under a shepherde softe and necligent
The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb to-rent.
Suffyseth oon ensample now as here,
For I moot turne agayn to my mateere.
 This mayde, of which I wol this tale expresse,

So kepte hirself, hir neded no maistresse.
For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede,
As in a book, every good word or dede
That longeth to a mayden vertuous,
She was so prudent and so bountevous.

For which the fame out-sprong on every syde
Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde,
That thurgh that land they preised hire echone
That loved vertu; save encye allone,
That sory is of oother mennes wele,

And glad is of his sorwe and his unheele-
The doctour maketh this descripcioun.
 This mayde upon a day wente in the toun
Toward a temple, with hir mooder deere,
As is of yonge maydens the namere.

Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun,

And so bifel this juge hise eyen caste
Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste
As she cam forby, ther as this juge stood.

Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,
So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,
And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
"This mayde shal be myn, for any man."
Anon the feend into his herte ran,

And taughte hym sodeynly, that he by slyghte
The mayden to his purpos wynne myghte.
For certes, by no force, ne by no meede,
Hym thoughte he was nat able for to speede;
For she was strong of freends, and eek she

Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee,
That wel he wiste he myghte hir nevere wynne,
As for to maken hir with hir body synne.
For which, by greet deliberacioun,
He sente after a cherl, was in the toun,

Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.
This Juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold
In secree wise, and made hym to ensure
He sholde telle it to no creature,

And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed.

Whan that assented was this cursed reed,
Glad was this juge, and maked him greet cheere,
And yaf hym yiftes preciouise and deere.

Whan shapen was al hir conspiracie
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie

Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,
(As ye shul heere it after openly)
Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Apius,
So was his name-for this is no fable,

But knowen for historial thyng notable;
The sentence of it sooth is out of doute-
This false juge gooth now faste aboute
To hasten his delit al that he may.
And so bifel soone after on a day,

This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,
And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas.
This false cherl cam forth a ful greet pas
And seyde, "Lord, if that it be youre wille,

As dooth me right upon this pitous bille
In which I pleyne upon Virginus;
And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,
I wol it preeve, and fynde good witesse
That sooth is, that my bille wol expresse."

The juge answerde, "Of this in his absence,
I may nat yeve diffynytyve sentence.
Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere.
Thou shalt have al right and no wrong heere."
Virginus cam to wite the juges wille,

And right anon was rad this cursed bille.
The sentence of it was, as ye shul heere:
"To yow, my lord, Sire Apius so deere,
Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius,
How that a knyght called Virginus

Agayns the lawe, agayn al equitee,
Holdeth expres agayn the wyl of me
My servant, which that is my thral by right,
Which fro myn hous was stole upon a nyght,
Whil that she was ful yong; this wol I preeve

By witesse, lord, so that it nat yow greeve.
She nys his doghter, nat what so he seye.
Wherfore to yow, my lord the Juge, I preye
Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille."
Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille.

Virginus gan upon the cherl biholde,
But hastily, er he his tale tolde,
And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,

And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,
That it was fals, that seyde his adversarie,

This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,
Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,
But yaf his juggement and seyde thus:
"I deeme anon this cherl his servant have,
Thou shalt no lenger in thyn hous hir save.

Go, bryng hir forth, and put hir in our warde.
The cherl shal have his thral, this I awarde."
And whan this worthy knyght Virginius,
Thurgh sentence of this justice Apius,
Moste by force his deere doghter yeven

Unto the juge in lecherie to lyven,
He gooth hym hoom, and sette him in his halle,
And leet anon his deere doghter calle,
And with a face deed as asshen colde,
Upon hir humble face he gan biholde

With fadres pitee stikyng thurgh his herte,
Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte.
"Doghter," quod he, "Virginia, by thy name,
Ther been two weyes, outhur deeth or shame
That thou most suffre, allas, that I was bore!

For nevere thou deservedest wherfore
To dyen with a swerd, or with a knyf.
O deere doghter, ender of my lyf,
Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce,
That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce.

O doghter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lyf my laste joye also,
O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence,
For love and nat for hate, thou most be deed;

My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.
Allas, that evere Apius the say!
Thus hath he falsly jugged the to day."
And tolde hir al the cas, as ye bifore
Han herd, nat nedeth for to telle it moore.

"O mercy, deere fader," quod this mayde,
And with that word she bothe hir armes layde
About his nekke, as she was wont to do.
The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,
And seyde, "Goode fader, shal I dye?

Is ther no grace? is ther no remedye?"
"No certes, deere doghter myn," quod he.
"Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn," quod she,
"My deeth for to compleyne a litel space,
For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace

For to compleyne, er he hir slow, allas!
And God it woot, no thyng was hir trespas

But for she ran hir fader for to see
To welcome hym with greet solempnitee."
And with that word she fil aswowne anon;

And after whan hir swownyng is agon
She riseth up and to hir fader sayde,
"Blissed be God that I shal dye a mayde;
Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame.
Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name."

And with that word she preyed hym ful ofte
That with his swerd he wolde smyte softe,
And with that word aswowne doun she fil.
Hir fader with ful sorweful herte and wil
Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente,

And to the juge he gan it to presente
As he sat yet in doom, in consistorie.
And whan the juge it saugh, as seith the storie,
He bad to take hym and anhange hym faste.
But right anon a thousand peple in thraste

To save the knyght for routhe and for pitee;
For knowen was the false iniquitee.
The peple anon hath suspect of this thyng,
By manere of the cherles chalangyng,
That it was by the assent of Apius-

They wisten wel that he was lecherus;
For which unto this Apius they gon
And caste hym in a prisoun right anon,
Ther as he slow hymself, and Claudius
That servant was unto this Apius,

Was demed for to hange upon a tree,
But that Virginius, of his pitee,
So preyde for hym, that he was exiled;
And elles, certes, he had been bigyled.
The remenant were anhanged, moore and lesse,

That were consentant of this cursednesse.
Heere men may seen, how synne hath his merite.
Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol smyte
In no degree, ne in which manere wyse
The worm of conscience may agryse

Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be
That no man woot therof but God and he.
For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,
He noot how soone that he shal been afered.
Therefore I rede yow this conseil take,
Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

Heere endeth the Phisiciens tale.
Part 17

EPILOGUE

The wordes of the Hoost to the Phisicien and the Pardoner.

Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood;
"Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
This was a fals cherl and a fals justice!
As shameful deeth as herte may devyse
Come to these juges and hire advocatz!

Algate this sely mayde is slayn, allas!
Allas! to deere boughte she beautee!
Wherefore I seye al day, as men may see
That yiftes of Fortune and of Nature
Been cause of deeth to many a creature.

(Hir beautee was hir deeth, I dar wel sayn;
Allas, so pitously as she was slayn!)
Of bothe yiftes that I speke of now
Men han ful ofte moore harm than prow.
But trewely, myn owene maister deere,

This is a pitous tale for to heere.
But nathelees, passe over is no fors;
I pray to God so save thy gentil cors,
And eek thyne uryngals and thy jurdanes,
Thyn ypocras and eek thy Galianes

And every boyste ful of thy letuarie,
God blesse hem, and oure lady Seinte Marie!
So moot I theen, thou art a propre man,
And lyk a prelat, by Seint Ronyan.
Seyde I nat wel? I kan nat speke in terme;

But wel I woot thou doost myn herte to erme,
That I almoost have caught a cardyacle.
By corpus bones, but I have triacle,
Or elles a draughte of moyste and corny ale,
Or but I heere anon a myrie tale,

Myn herte is lost, for pitee of this mayde!
Thou beelamy, thou Pardoner," he sayde,
"Telle us som myrthe or japes right anon."
"It shal be doon," quod he, "by Seint Ronyon;
But first," quod he, "heere at this ale-stake,

I wol bothe drynke and eten of a cake."
And right anon the gentils gonne to crye,
"Nay, lat hym telle us of no ribaudye!
Telle us som moral thyng that we may leere
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly heere!"

"I graunte, ywis," quod he, "but I moot thynke
Upon som honeste thyng, while that I drynke."

THE PARDONERS PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Pardoners tale.

Radix malorum est Cupiditas Ad Thimotheum

Lordynges-quod he-in chirches whan I preche,

I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche,
And ryngte it out as round as gooth a belle,
For I kan al by rote that I telle.
My theme is alwey oon and evere was,

"Radix malorum est Cupiditas."

First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And thanne my bulles shewe I, alle and some;
Oure lige lordes seel on my patente,
That shewe I first, my body to warente,

That no man be so boold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristes hooly werk.
And after that thanne telle I forth my tales,
Bulles of popes and of cardynales,
Of patriarkes and bishopes I shewe,

And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron with my predicacioun,
And for to stire hem to devocioun.
Thanne shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,
Yerammed ful of cloutes and of bones;

Relikes been they, as wenen they echoon.
Thanne have I in latoun a sholder-boon
Which that was of an hooly Jewes sheepe.
"Goode men," I seye, "taak of my wordes keepe:
If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,

If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swelle,
That any worm hath ete, or worm ystonge,
Taak water of that welle, and wassh his tonge,
And it is hool anon; and forthermoor,
Of pokkes and of scabbe and every soor

Shal every sheepe be hool that of this welle
Drynketh a draughte; taak kepe eek what I telle,
If that the goode man that the beestes oweth,
Wol every wyke, er that the cok hym croweth,
Fastynge, drinken of this welle a draughte,

As thilke hooly Jew oure eldres taughte,
Hise beestes and his stoor shal multiplie.
And, sire, also it heeleth jalousie;
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Lat maken with this water his potage,

And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,
Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste,
Al had she taken preestes two or thre.
Heere is a miteyn, eek, that ye may se:
He that his hand wol putte in this mitayn,

He shal have multipliynge of his grayn
What he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.
Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I yow,
If any wight be in this chirche now,

That hath doon synne horrible, that he
Dar nat for shame of it yshryven be,
Or any womman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymaad hir housbonde cokewold,
Swich folk shal have no power ne no grace

To offren to my relikes in this place.
And who so fyndeth hym out of swich fame,
He wol come up and offre, on Goddes name,
And I assoille him, by the auctoritee
Which that by tulle ygraunted was to me."

By this gaude have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
An hundred mark, sith I was pardoner.
I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yset,
I preche so, as ye han heerd bifoore,

And telle an hundred false japes moore.
Thanne payne I me to strecche forth the nekke,
And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
As dooth a dowve sittynge on a berne.
Myne handes adn my tonge goon so yerne

That it is joye to se my bisynesse.
Of avarice and of swich cursednesse
Is al my prechyng, for to make hem free
To yeven hir pens; and namely, unto me!
For myn entente is nat but for to wynne,

And no thyng for correccioun of synne.
I rekke nevere, whan that they been beryed,
Though that hir soules goon a blakeberied,
For certes, many a predicacioun
Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun.

Som for plesance of folk, and flaterye,
To been avaunced by ypocrisye,
And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.
For whan I dar noon oother weyes debate,
Thanne wol I styng hym with my tonge smerte

In prechyng, so that he shal nat astert
To been defamed falsly, if that he
Hath trespassed to my bretheren, or to me.
For though I telle noght his propre name,
Men shal wel knowe that it is the same

By signes, and by othere circumstances.
Thus quyte I folk that doon us displesances,
Thus spitte I out my venym, under hewe
Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe.
But shortly, myn entente I wol devyse;

I preche of no thyng but for coveityse.
Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,
"Radix malorum est Cupiditas."
Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.

But though myself be guilty in that synne,
Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne
From avarice, and soore to repente;
But that is nat my principal entente.
I preche no thyng but for coveitise;

Of this mateere it oghte ynogh suffise.
Thanne telle I hem ensamples many oon
Of olde stories longe tyme agoon,
For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde.

What? trowe ye, the whiles I may preche,
And wynne gold and silver for I teche,
That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely.
For I wol preche and begge in sondry landes,

I wol nat do no labour with myne handes,
Ne make baskettes, and lyve therby,
By cause I wol nat beggen ydelly.
I wol noon of the apostles countrefete,
I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete,

Al were it yeven of the povereste page,
Or of the povereste wydwe in a village,
Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
Nay, I wol drynke licour of the vyne,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.

But herkneth, lordynges, in conclusioun:
Your likyng is, that I shal telle a tale.
Now have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shal yow telle a thyng
That shal by resoun been at youre likyng.

For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you telle kan,
Which I am wont to preche, for to wynne.
Now hoold youre pees, my tale I wol bigynne.
Part 18

THE PARDONERS TALE

Heere bigynneth the Pardoners tale.

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye
Of yonge folk, that haunteden folye,
As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,
Wher as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes
They daunce and pleyen at dees, bothe day and nyght,

And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrificise
Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise,
By superfluytee abhomynable.
Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable

That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.
Oure blissed lordes body they to-tere,
Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough,
And ech of hem at otheres synne lough.
And right anon thanne comen tombesteres,

Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,
Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Whiche been the verray develes officeres
To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
That is annexed unto glotonye.

The hooly writ take I to my witenesse,
That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.
Lo, how that dronken Looth unkyndely
Lay by hise doghtres two unwityngly;
So dronke he was, he nyste what he wroghte.

Herodes, whoso wel the stories soghte,
Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feeste,
Right at his owene table he yaf his heeste
To sleen the Baptist John, ful giltelees.
Senee seith a good word, doutelees;

He seith, he kan no difference fynde
Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde,
And a man which that is dronkelewe,
But that woodnesse fallen in a shrewe
Persevereth lenger than dooth dronkenesse.

O glotonye, ful of cursednesse!
O cause first of oure confusioun!
O original of oure dampnacioun
Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn!
Lo, how deere, shortly for to sayn,

Aboght was thilke cursed vileynye!
Corrupt was al this world for glotonye!
Adam oure fader, and his wyf also,
Fro Paradys to labour and to wo
Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede;

For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradys, and whan that he
Eet of the fruyt deffended on the tree,
Anon he was out-cast to wo and peyne.
O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!

O, wiste a man how manye maladyes
Folwen of excesse and of goltonyes,
He wolde been the moore mesurable
Of his diete, sittynge at his table.
Allas, the shorte throte, the tendre mouth

Maketh that est and west and north and south
In erthe, in eir, in water, man to swynke
To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke.
Of this matiere, O Paul! wel kanstow trete,
Mete unto wombe and wombe eek unto mete

Shal God destroyed bothe, as Paulus seith.
Allas, a foul thyng is it, by my feith!
To seye this word, and fouler is the dede
Whan man so drynketh of the white and rede,
That of his throte he maketh his pryvee

Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.
The Apostel wepyng seith ful pitously,
"Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I,
I seye it now wepyng with pitous voys,
That they been enemys of Cristes croys,

Of whiche the ende is deeth, wombe is hir god."
O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng cod!
Fulfilled of donge and of corrupcioun,
At either ende of thee foul is the soun;
How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde,

These cookes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grynde,
And turnen substaunce into accident,
To fulfillen al thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocke they
The mary, for they caste noght away,

That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote;
Of spicerie, of leef, and bark, and roote,
Shal been his sauce ymaked by delit,
To make hym yet a newer appetit.
But certes, he that haunteth swiche delices

Is deed, whil that he lyveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse
Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.
O dronke man, disfigured is thy face!
Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,

And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun,
As though thou seydest ay, "Sampsoun! Sampsoun!"
And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank nevere no wyn!
Thou fallest, as it were a styked swyn;
Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honeste cure

For dronkenesse is verray sepulture
Of mannes wit and his discrecioun,

In whom that drynke hath dominacioun.
He kan no conseil kepe, it is no drede;
Now kepe yow fro the white and fro the rede,

And namely, fro the white wyn of Lepe,
That is to selle in fysshstrete, or in Chepe.
This wyn of Spaigne crepeth subtilly
In othere wynes, growynge faste by,
Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee,

That whan a man hath dronken draughtes thre
And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toune of Lepe,

Nat at the Rochele, ne at Bur deux toun;
And thanne wol he seye "Sampsoun, Sampsoun!"

But herkneth, lordes, o word I yow preye,
That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Thurgh verray God that is omnipotent
Were doon in abstinence and in preyere.

Looketh the Bible, and ther ye may it leere.
Looke, Attila, the grete conquerour,
Deyde in his sleepe, with shame and dishonour,
Bledynge ay at his nose in dronkenesse.
A capitayn sholde lyve in sobrenesse;

And over al this avyseth yow right wel,
What was comaunded unto Lamwel,
Nat Samuel, but Lamwel, seye I;
Redeth the Bible and fynde it expresly,
Of wyn yevyng to hem that han justise.

Namoore of this, for it may wel suffise.
And now that I have spoken of glotonye,
Now wol I yow deffenden hasardrye.
Hasard is verray mooder of lesynges,
And of dedeite and cursed forswerynges,

Blasphemying of Crist, manslaughtre and wast also,
Of catel and of tyme, and forthermo
It is repreeve and contrarie of honour
For to ben holde a commune hasardour.
And ever the hyer he is of estaat,

The moore is he holden desolaat;
If that a prynce useth hasardrye,
In all governaunce and policye
He is as by commune opinioun
Yholde the lasse in reputacioun.

Stilboun, that was a wys embassadour,
Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour,
Fro Lacidomye to maken hire alliaunce.
And whan he cam hym happede par chaunce,
That alle the gretteste that were of that lond

Pleyynge atte hasard he hem fond.
For which, as soone as it myghte be,
He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree,
And seyde, "Ther wol I nat lese my name,
Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame.

Yow for to allie unto none hasardours.
Sendeth othere wise embassadours,
For by my trouthe me were levere dye
Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.
For ye that been so glorious in honours

Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours,
As by my wyl, ne as by my treetee,"

This wise philosophre, thus seyde hee.
Looke eek, that to the kyng Demetrius
The kyng of Parthes, as the book seith us,

Sente him a paire of dees of gold, in scorn,
For he hadde used hasard therbiforn,
For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun
At no value or reputacioun.
Lordes may fynden oother maner pley

Honeste ynough, to dryve the day away.
Now wol I speke of othes false and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
Gret sweryng is a thyng abhominable,
And fals sweryng is yet moore reprevable.

The heighe God forbad sweryng at al,
Witnesse on Mathew; but in special
Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye,
"Thou shalt seye sooth thyne othes, and nat lye,
And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnesse,"

But ydel sweryng is a cursednesse.
Bihoold and se, that in the firste table
Of heighe Goddes heestes honorable
How that the seconde heeste of hym is this:
Take nat my name in ydel or amys.

Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng
Than homycide, or any cursed thyng!
I seye, that as by ordre thus it stondeth,
This knowen that hise heestes understondeth
How that the seconde heeste of God is that.

And forther-over I wol thee telle al plat,
That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous
That of hise othes is to outrageous-
"By Goddes precious herte and by his nayles,
And by the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,

Sevene is my chaunce and thyn is cynk and treye.
By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,
This dagger shal thurghout thyn herte go!"
This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,
Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide!

Now for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,
Lete youre othes bothe grete and smale.

But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
Thise riotoures thre, of whiche I telle,
Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,

Were set hem in a taverne for to drynke.
And as they sat, they herde a belle clynke
Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.
That oon of hem gan callen to his knave,
"Go bet," quod he, "and axe redily

What cors is this, that passeth heer forby,
And looke, that thou reporte his name weel."
"Sir," quod this boy, "it nedeth neveradeel;
It was me toold, er ye cam heer two houres.
He was, pardee, an old felawe of youres,

And sodeynly he was yslayn to-nyght,
Fordronke, as he sat on his bench upright.
Ther cam a privee theef men clepeth Deeth,
That in this contree al the peple sleeth,
And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo,

And wente his wey withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence,
And maister, er ye come in his presence,
Me thynketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie.

Beth redy for to meete hym everemoore,
Thus taughte me my dame, I sey namoore."
"By Seinte Marie, seyde this taverner,
"The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer
Henne over a mile, withinne a greet village

Bothe man and womman, child, and hyne, and page.
I trowe his habitacioun be there.
To been avysed, greet wysdom it were,
Er that he dide a man a dishonour."
"Ye, Goddes armes," quod this riotour,

"Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?
I shal hym seke, by wey and eek by strete,
I make avow to Goddes digne bones.
Herkneth, felawes, we thre been al ones;
Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,

And ech of us bicomen otheres brother,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth.
He shal be slayn, which that so manye sleeth,
By Goddes dignitee, er it be nyght."
Togidres han thise thre hir trouthes plight,

To lyve and dyen, ech of hem for oother,
As though he were his owene ybore brother;
And up they stirte al dronken in this rage,
And forth they goon towardses that village,
Of which the taverner hadde spoke biforn.

And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rente,
'Deeth shal be deed, if that they may hym hente.'
Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile,
Right as they wolde han troden over a stile,

An oold man and a povre with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And seyde thus, "Now, lordes, God yow see."
The proudeste of thise riotoures three
Answerde agayn, "What, carl, with sory grace,

Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?
Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?"
This olde man gan looke in his visage,
And seyde thus, "For I ne kan nat fynde
A man, though that I walked in to Ynde,

Neither in citee nor in no village,
That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age.
And therefore mooth I han myn age stille
As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.
Ne deeth, allas, ne wol nat han my lyf!

Thus walke I lyk a resteleees kaityf,
And on the ground, which is my moodres gate,
I knokke with my staf bothe erly and late,
And seye, 'leeve mooder, leet me in!
Lo, how I varysshe, flessch and blood and skyn!

Allas, whan shul my bones been at reste?
Mooder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste,
That in my chambre longe tyme hath be,
Ye, for an heyre-clowt to wrappe me.'
But yet to me she wol nat do that grace;

For which ful pale and welked is my face.
But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye
To speken to an old man vileynye,
But he trespasse in word, or elles in dede.
In hooly writ ye may yourself wel rede,

'Agayns an oold man, hoor upon his heed,
Ye sholde arise;' wherfore I yeve yow reed,
Ne dooth unto an oold man noon harm now,
Namoore than that ye wolde men did to yow
In age, if that ye so longe abyde,

And God be with yow where ye go or ryde.
I moote go thider, as I have to go."
"Nay, olde cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so,"
Seyde this oother hasardour anon.
"Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John.

Thou spak right now of thilke traytour Deeth,
That in this contree alleoure freendes sleeth.
Have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,
Telle where he is, or thou shalt it abyde,
By God and by the hooly sacrament,

For soothly thou art oon of his assent
To sleen us yonge folk, thou false theeft?"
"Now, sires," quod he, "if that ye be so leef
To fynde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,
For in that grove I lafte hym, by my fey,

Under a tree, and there he wole abyde.
Noght for your boost he wole him nothyng hyde,
Se ye that ook? right ther ye shal hym fynde,
God save yow that boghte agayn mankynde,

And yow amende." Thus seyde this olde man;

And everich of these riotoures ran
Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde
Of floryns fyne of gold ycoyned rounde
Wel ny an eighte bussshels, as hem thoughte.
No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte,

But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,
For that the floryns been so faire and brighte,
That down they sette hem by this precious hoord.
The worste of hem, he spak the firste word,
"Bretheren," quod he, "taak kepe what I seys;

My wit is greet, though that I bourde and pleye.
This tresor hath Fortune unto us yeven,
In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven.
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.
Ey, Goddes precious dignitee, who wende

Today that we sholde han so fair a grace?
But myghte this gold be caried fro this place
Hoom to myn hous or elles unto youres,
(For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures)
Thanne were we in heigh felicitee.

But trewely, by daye it may nat bee;
Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge,
And for oure owene tresor doon us honge.
This tresor moste ycaried be by nyghte,
As wisely and as slyly as it myghte.

Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle
Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle,
And he that hath the cut, with herte blithe
Shal renne to the towne, and that ful seithe,
And brynge us breed and wyn, ful prively;

And two of us shul kepen subtilly
This tresor wel, and if he wol nat tarie,
Whan it is nyght, we wol this tresor carie,
By oon assent, where as us thynketh best."
That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest,

And bad hym drawe, and looke where it wol falle;
And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,
And forth toward the toun he wente anon.
And al so soone, as that he was agon,
That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother,

"Thou knowest wel thou art my sworn brother,
Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.
Thou woost wel, that oure felawe is agon,
And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,
That shal departed been among us thre.

But nathelees, if I kan shape it so
That it departed were among us two,
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?"

That oother answerde, "I noot hou that may be;
He woot how that the gold is with us tweye;

What shal we doon? what shal we to hym seye?"
"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firste shrewe,
"And I shal tellen, in a wordes fewe,
What we shal doon, and bryngen it wel aboute."
"I graunte," quod that oother, "out of doute,

That by my trouthe I shal thee nat biwreye."
"Now," quod the firste, "thou woost wel we be tweye,
And two of us shul strengre be than oon;
Looke whan that he is set, that right anoon
Arys, as though thou woldest with hym pleye,

And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydes tweye,
Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game.
And with thy daggere looke thou do the same,
And thanne shal al this gold departed be,
My deere freend, bitwixen me and thee.

Thanne may we bothe oure lustes all fulfille,
And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille."
And thus acorded been these shrewes tweye
To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.
This yongeste, which that wente unto the toun,

Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and down
The beautee of these floryns newe and brighte.
"O lorde," quod he, "if so were that I myghte
Have al this tresor to my-self allone,
Ther is no man that lyveth under the trone

Of god, that sholde lyve so murye as I."
And atte laste the feend, oure enemy,
Putte in his thought that he sholde poyson beye,
With which he myghte sleen hise felawes tweye.
For why, the feend foond hym in swich lyvyng,

That he hadde leve hem to sorwe brynge;
For this was outrely his fulle entente,
To sleen hem bothe, and nevere to repente.
And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
Into the toun unto a pothecarie

And preyde hym that he hym wolde selle
Som poysoun, that he myghte hise rattes quelle,
And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,
That, as he seyde, hise capouns hadde yslawe;
And fayn he wolde wreke hym, if he myghte,

On vermyn that destroyed hym by nyghte.
The pothecarie answerde, "and thou shalt have

A thyng, that al so God my soule save,
In al this world ther is no creature
That eten or dronken hath of this confiture

Noght but the montance of a corn of whete,

That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, sterve he shal, and that in lasse while
Than thou wolt goon a paas nat but a mile,
This poyson is so strong and violent."

This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poyson in a box, and sith he ran
Into the nexte strete unto a man
And borwed hym of large botels thre;
And in the two his poyson poured he,

The thridde he kepte clene for his owene drynke,
For al the nyght he shoop hym for to swynke
In cariynge of the gold out of that place.
And whan this riotour, with sory grace,
Hadde filed with wyn his grete botels thre,

To hise felawes agayn repaireth he.

What nedeth it to sermone of it moore?
For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore
Right so they han him slayn, and that anon;
And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon,

"Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie,
And afterward we wol his body berie."
And with that word it happed hym, par cas,
To take the botel ther the poyson was,
And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also,

For which anon they storven bothe two.
But certes, I suppose that Avycen
Wroot nevere in no canoun, ne in no fen,
Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng
Than hadde these wrecches two, er hir endyng.

Thus ended been these homycides two,
And eek the false empoysoner also.

O cursed synne ful of cursednesse!
O traytours homycide! O wikkednesse!
O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!

Thou blasphemour of Crist, with vileynye,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride,
Allas, mankynde! how may it bitide
That to thy Creatour which that the wroghte,
And with His precious herte-blood thee boghte,

Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas!
Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trespass,
And ware yow fro the synne of avarice;
Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,
So that ye offre nobles or sterlynges,

Or elles silver broches, spoones, rynges;
Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle,
Com up, ye wyves, offreth of youre wolle;
Youre names I entre heer in my rolle anon,
Into the blisse of hevене shul ye gon.

I yow assoille by myn heigh power,
Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer
As ye were born-and lo, sires, thus I preche;
And Jesu Crist, that is oure soules leche,
So graunte yow his pardoun to receyve,

For that is best, I wol yow nat deceyve.

But sires, o word forgat I in my tale,
I have relikes and pardoun in my male
As faire as any man in Engelond,
Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.

If any of yow wole of devocioun
Offren and han myn absolucioun,
Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,
And mekely receyveth my pardoun,
Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,

Al newe and fressh at every miles ende,
So that ye offren alwey newe and newe
Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is heer,
That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer

Tassoille yow in contree as ye ryde,
For adventures whiche that may bityde.
Paraventure ther may fallen oon or two
Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke atwo.
Look, which a seuretee is it to yow alle

That I am in youre felaweship yfalle,
That may assoille yow, bothe moore and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.
I rede that oure Hoost heere shal bigynne,
For he is moost envoluped in synne.

Com forth, sire Hoost, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse my relikes everychon,
Ye, for a grote, unbokele anon thy purs.-

"Nay, nay," quod he, "thanne have I Cristes curs!"
"Lat be," quod he, "it shal nat be, so theeche,

Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,
And swere it were a relyk of a seint,
Though it were with thy fundament depeint.
But by the croys which that seint Eleyne fond,
I wolde I hadde thy coillions in myn hond

In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie,
They shul be shryned in an hogges toord."
This Pardoner answerde nat a word;
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.

"Now," quod oure Hoost, "I wol no lenger pleye
With thee, ne with noon oother angry man."
But right anon the worthy knyght bigan,
Whan that he saugh that al the peple lough,
"Namoore of this, for it is right ynough.

Sir Pardoner, be glad and myrie of cheere;
And ye, sir Hoost, that been to me so deere,
I prey yow, that ye kisse the pardoner;
And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,
And, as we diden lat us laughe and pley."
Anon they kiste, and ryden forth hir weye.

Heere is ended the Pardoners tale.

Part 19

GROUP D

PROLOGUE OF THE WYVES TALE OF BATH

The Prologe of the Wyves tale of Bathe.

Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, were right ynogh to me
To speke of wo that is in mariage;
For, lordynges, sith I twelf yeer was of age,
Thonked be God, that is eterne on lyve,

Housbondes at chirche-dore I have had fyve-
For I so ofte have ywedded bee-
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.
But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis

To weddyng in the Cane of Galilee,
That by the same ensample, taughte he me,
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.
Herkne eek, lo, which a sharpe word for the nones,
Biside a welle Jesus, God and Man,

Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan.
"Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes," quod he,
"And thilke man the which that hath now thee
Is noght thyn housbonde;" thus seyde he, certeyn.
What that he mente ther by, I kan nat seyn;

But that I axe, why that the fifthe man
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?
How manye myghte she have in mariage?
Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age
Upon this nombre diffinicioun.

Men may devyne, and glosen up and doun,
But wel I woot expres withoute lye,
God bad us for to wexe and multiplie;
That gentil text kan I wel understonde.
Eek wel I woot, he seyde, myn housbonde

Sholde lete fader and mooder, and take me;
But of no nombre mencion made he,
Of bigamy, or of octogamy;
Why sholde men speke of it vileynye?
Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;

I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon-
As, wolde God, it leveful were to me
To be refresshed half so ofte as he-
Which yifte of God hadde he, for alle hise wyvys?
No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.

God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,
The firste nyght had many a myrie fit
With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve!
Blessed be God, that I have wedded fyve;
Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.

For sothe I wol nat kepe me chaast in al;
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon
Som cristen man shal wedde me anon.
For thanne thapostle seith that I am free,
To wedde a Goddes half where it liketh me.

He seith, that to be wedded is no synne,
Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.
What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye
Of shrewed Lameth and of bigamy?
I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,

And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan,
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,
And many another holy man also.
Whanne saugh ye evere in any manere age
That hye God defended mariage

By expres word? I pray you, telleth me,
Or where comanded he virginitee?
I woot as wel as ye it is no drede,
Thapostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede;
He seyde, that precept therof hadde he noon.

Men may conseille a womman to been oon,
But conseillyng is no comandement;
He putte it in oure owene juggement.
For hadde God comanded maydenhede,
Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede;

And certein, if ther were no seed ysowe,
Virginitee, wherof thanne sholde it growe?
Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,
A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.
The dart is set up of virginitee;

Cacche who so may, who renneth best lat see.
But this word is nat taken of every wight,
But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.
I woot wel, the apostel was a mayde;
But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde

He wolde that every wight were swich as he,
Al nys but conseil to virginitee;
And for to been a wyf, he yaf me leve
Of indulgence, so it is no repreve

To wedde me, if that my make dye,

Withouten excepcioun of bigamye.
"Al were it good no womman for to touche,"
He mente, as in his bed or in his couche;
For peril is bothe fyr and tow tassemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.

This is al and som, he heeld virginitee
Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.
Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she
Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.
I graunte it wel, I have noon envie,

Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamye;
Hem liketh to be clene, body and goost.
Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,
For wel ye knowe, a lord in his houshold,
He nath nat every vessel al of gold;

Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.
God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,
And everich hath of God a propre yifte,
Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.
Virginitee is greet perfeccioun,

And continence eek with devocioun.
But Crist, that of perfeccioun is welle,
Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle
Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,
And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.

He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly,
And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.
I wol bistowe the flour of myn age
In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.
An housbonde I wol have, I nyl nat lette,

Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal
Upon his flessch whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power durynge al my lyf
Upon his propre body, and noght he.

Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,
And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.
Al this sentence me liketh every deel,-
Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon,
"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by Seint John,

Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.
I was aboute to wedde a wyf, allas!
What sholde I bye it on my flessch so deere?
Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!"
"Abyde," quod she, "my tale in nat bigonne.

Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne,
Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.
And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale

Of tribulacioun in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,

(This to seyn, myself have been the whippe),
Than maystow chese wheither thou wolt sippe
Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche,
For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.
Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,

By hym shul othere men corrected be.
The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;
Rede it in his Almageste, and take it there."
"Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,"
Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye bigan,

Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,
And teche us yonge men of your praktike."
"Gladly," quod she, "sith it may yow like.
But yet I praye to al this compaignye,
If that I speke after my fantasye,

As taketh not agrief of that I seye,
For myn entente nis but for to pleye."
-Now sire, now wol I telle forth my tale,
As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,
I shal seye sooth, tho housbondes that I hadde,

As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.
The thre men were goode, and riche, and olde;
Unnethe myghte they the statut holde
In which that they were bounden unto me-
Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pradee!

As help me God, I laughe whan I thynke
How pitously anyght I made hem swynke.
And by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor,
They had me yeven hir gold and hir tresoor;
Me neded nat do lenger diligence

To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence,
They loved me so wel, by God above,
That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love.
A wys womman wol sette hire evere in oon
To gete hire love, ther as she hath noon.

But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,
And sith they hadde me yeven all hir lond,
What sholde I taken heede hem for to plese,
But it were for my profit and myn ese?
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,

That many a nyght they songen weilawey.
The bacoun was nat fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was, and fawe

To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,

For God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.
Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.

Thus shul ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely kan ther no man
Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,
But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.

A wys wyf, it that she kan hir good,
Shal beren hym on hond the cow is wood,
And take witnesse of hir owene mayde,
Of hir assent; but herkneth how I sayde.
"Sir olde kaynard, is this thyn array?

Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?
She is honoured overal ther she gooth;
I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty clooth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is she so fair? artow so amorous?

What rowne ye with oure mayde? benedicite,
Sir olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!
And if I have a gossib or a freend
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend
If that I walke or pleye unto his hous.

Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous
And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!
Thou seist to me, it is a greet meschief
To wedde a povre womman, for costage,
And if she be riche and of heigh parage,

Thanne seistow it is a tormentrie
To soffren hir pride and hir malencolie.
And if she be fair, thou verray knave,
Thou seyst that every holour wol hir have;
She may no while in chastitee abyde

That is assailed upon ech a syde.
Thou seyst, som folk desiren us for richesse,
Somme for oure shape, and somme for oure fairnesse,
And som for she kan outhur synge or daunce,
And som for gentillesse and daliaunce,

Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;
Thur goth al to the devel by thy tale.
Thou seyst, men may nat kepe a castel wal,
It may so longe assailed been overal.
And if that she be foul, thou seist that she

Coveiteth every man that she may se;
For as a spaynel she wol on hym lepe
Til that she fynde som man hir to chepe;
Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake
As, seistow, wol been withoute make;

And seyst, it is an hard thyng for to welde

A thyng that no man wole, his thankes, helde.
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thow goost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendeth unto hevene-

With wilde thonderdynt and firy leve
Moote thy welked nekke be to-broke!
Thow seyst that droppying houses, and eek smoke,
And chidyng wyves maken men to flee
Out of hir owene hous, a benedicitee!

What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?
Thow seyst, we wyves woloure vices hide
Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!
Thou seist, that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,

They been assayd at diverse stoundes;
Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,
Spoones and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,
And so been pottes, clothes, and array;
But folk of wyves maken noon assay

Til they be wedded, olde dotard shrewe!
Thanne, seistow, we woloure vices shewe.
Thou seist also, that it displeseth me
But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,
And but thou poure alwey upon my face,

And clepe me 'faire dame' in every place,
And but thou make a feeste on thilke day
That I was born, and make me fressh and gay,
And but thou do to my norice honour,
And to my chamberere withinne my bour,

And to my fadres folk and hise allyes-
Thus seistow, olde barel ful of lyes!
And yet ofoure apprentice Janekyn,
For his crisp heer, shynynge as gold so fyn,
And for he squiereth me bothe up and down,

Yet hastow caught a fals suspeciou.
I wol hym noght, though thou were deed tomorwe.
But tel me this, why hydestow, with sorwe,
The keyes of my cheste away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee;

What wenestow make an ydiot ofoure dame?
Now, by that lord that called is seint Jame,
Thou shalt nat bothe, though that thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good;
That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne eyen.

What nedeth thee of me to enquere or spyen?
I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste.
Thou sholdest seye, 'Wyf, go wher thee liste,
Taak youre disport, I wol not leve no talys,
I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys.'

We love no man that taketh kepe or charge
Wher that we goon, we wol ben at our large.
Of alle men yblessed moot he be,
The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,
That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:

'Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste,
That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde.'
By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,
Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care
How myrily that othere folkes fare?

He is to greet a nygard, that wolde werne
A man to lighte his candle at his lanterne;
He shal have never the lasse light, pardee,
Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.
Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay

With clothyng and with precious array,
That it is peril of oure chastitee;
And yet, with sorwe, thou most enforce thee,
And seye these wordes in the apostles name,
'In habit, maad with chastitee and shame,

Ye wommen shul apparaille yow,' quod he,
'And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche.'
After thy text, ne after thy rubriche
I wol nat wirche, as muchel as a gnat!

Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;
For whoso wolde senge a cattles skyn,
Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in.
And if the cattles skyn be slyk and gay,
She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,

But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,
To shewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwawed.
This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,
I wol renne out, my borel for to shewe.
Sire olde fool, what eyleth thee to spyen,

Thogh thou preye Argus, with hise hundred eyen,
To be my wardecors, as he kan best,
In feith he shal nat kepe me but me lest;
Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee.
Thou seydest eek, that ther been thynges thre,

The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,
And that no wight ne may endure the ferthe.
O leeve sire shrewe, Jesu shorte thy lyf!
Yet prechestow, and seyst, an hateful wyf
Yrekened is for oon of these meschances.

Been ther none othere maner resemblances
That ye may likne youre parables to,
But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?
Thou likenest wommenes love to helle,
To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.

Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;
The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir
To consume every thyng that brent wole be.
Thou seyst, right as wormes shendeth a tree,
Right so a wyf destroyeth hir housbond.

This knowe they, that been to wyves bonde."
Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,
Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde,
That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse,
And al was fals, but that I took witnessse

On Janekyn and on my nece also.
O lord, the pyne I dide hem, and the wo
Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne!
For as an hors I koude byte and whyne,
I koude pleyne, thogh I were in the gilt,

Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.
Who so that first to mille comth first grynt;
I pleynd first, so was oure werre ystynt.
They were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve
Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.

Of wenchis wolde I beren hym on honde,
Whan that for syk unnethes myghte he stonde,
Yet tikled it his herte, for that he
Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee.
I swoor that al my walkyng out by nyghte

Was for tespye wenchis that he dighte.
Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe;
For al swich thyng was yeven us in oure byrthe,
Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng, God hath yeve
To wommen kyndely whil they may lyve.

And thus of o thyng I avaunte me,
Atte ende I hadde the bettre in ech degree,
By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,
As by continueel murmure or grucchyng.
Namely a bedde hadden they meschaunce;

Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce,
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felte his arm over my syde
Til he had maad his raunsoun unto me;
Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.

And therefore every man this tale I telle,
Wynne who so may, for al is for to selle.
With empty hand men may none haukes lure,-
For wynnyng wolde I al his lust endure
And make me a feyned appetit;

And yet in bacoun hadde I nevere delit;
That made me that evere I wolde hem chide.
For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,
I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,

For by my trouthe I quitte hem word for word.

As help me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now sholde make my testament,
I ne owe hem nat a word, that it nys quit.
I broghte it so aboute by my wit,
That they moste yeve it up as for the beste,

Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste.
For thogh he looked as a wood leoun,
Yet sholde he faille of his conclusioun.
Thanne wolde I seye, "Goode lief, taak keepe,
How mekely looketh Wilkynoure sheepe!

Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke,
Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,
And han a sweete spiced conscience,
Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.
Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche,

And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,
And sith a man is moore resonable,
Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable."

Swiche maneer wordes hadde we on honde.
Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.

My fourthe housbonde was a revelour,
This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour,
And I was yong and ful of ragerye,

Stibourne and strong, and joly as a pye.
Wel koude I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn.
Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,

That with a staf birafte his wyf hire lyf,
For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,
He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke.
And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,
For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,

A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.
In wommen vinolent is no defence,
This knowen lecchours by experience.

But, Lord Crist! whan that it remembreth me
Upon my yowthe and on my jolitee,

It tikleth me aboute myn herte-roote.
Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
That I have had my world, as in my tyme.
But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith!

Lat go, fare-wel, the devel go therwith!
The flour is goon, ther is namoore to telle,
The bren as I best kan, now moste I selle;

But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.
Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.

I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit
That he of any oother had delit;
But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!
I made hym of the same wode a croce;
Nat of my body in no foul manere,

But certainly, I made folk swich cheere
That in his owene grece I made hym frye
For angre and for verray jalousye.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,
For which I hope his soule be in glorie,

For God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song
Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong!
Ther was no wight save God and he, that wiste
In many wise how soore I hym twiste.
He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,

And lith ygrave under the roode-beem,
Al is his tombe noght so curyus
As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,
Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly.
It nys but wast to burye hym preciously,

Lat hym fare-wel, God yeve his soule reste,
He is now in his grave, and in his cheste.
Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.
God lete his soule nevere come in helle!
And yet was he to me the mooste shrewe;

That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,
And evere shal, unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was ful fressh and gay,
And therwithal so wel koude he me glose
Whan that he solde han my bele chose,

That thogh he hadde me bet on every bon
He koude wynne agayn my love anon.
I trowe I loved hym beste, for that he
Was of his love daungerous to me.
We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,

In this matere a queynte fantasye;
Wayte what tthyng we may nat lightly have,
Ther-after wol we crie al day and crave.
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;
Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle;

With daunger oute we al oure chaffare.
Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,
And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys;
This knoweth every womman that is wys.
My fifthe housbonde, God his soule blesse,

Which that I took for love and no richesse,
He somtyme was a clerk of Oxenford,

And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord
With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun,
God have hir soule! hir name was Alisoun.

She knew myn herte and eek my privetee
Bet than oure parisshe preest, as moot I thee.
To hir biwreyed I my conseil al,
For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,
Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,

To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my nece, which that I loved weel,
I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.
And so I dide ful often, God it woot!
That made his face ful often reed and hoot

For verray shame, and blamed hym-self, for he
Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.

And so bifel that ones, in a Lente-
So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,
For evere yet I loved to be gay,

And for to walke in March, Averill, and May,
Fro hous to hous to heere sondry talys-
That Jankyn Clerk and my gossyb, dame Alys,
And I myself into the feeldes wente.
Myn housbonde was at London al that Lente;

I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,
And for to se, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk; what wiste I, wher my grace
Was shapen for to be, or in what place?
Therefore I made my visitaciouns

To vigilies and to processiouns,
To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages;
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.
These wormes ne these motthes, ne these mytes,

Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel-
And wostow why? for they were used weel!
Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.
I seye, that in the feeldes walked we,
Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,

This clerk and I, that of my purveiance
I spak to hym, and seyde hym, how that he,
If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.
For certainly, I sey for no bobance,
Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance

Of mariage, nof othere thynges eek.
I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek
That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,
And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.
I bar hym on honde, he hadde enchanted me-

My dame taughte me that soutiltee.

And eek I seyde, I mette of hym al nyght,
He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,
And al my bed was ful of verray blood;
But yet I hope that he shal do me good,

For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught-
And al was fals, I dremed of it right naught,
But as I folwed ay my dames loore
As wel of this, as of othere thynges moore.
But now sir, lat me se, what I shal seyn?

A ha, by God! I have my tale ageyn.
Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,
I weep algate, and made sory cheere,
As wyves mooten-for it is usage-
And with my coverchief covered my visage;

But for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn housbonde born amorwe
With neighebores that for hym maden sorwe;
And Janekynoure clerk was oon of tho.

As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go
After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,
That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.
He was, I trowe, a twenty wynter oold,

And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth,
But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.
Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel,
I hadde the prente of Seinte Venus seel.
As help me God, I was a lusty oon,

And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,
And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,
I hadde the beste quonyam myghte be.
For certes, I am al Venerien
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.

Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse.
Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne,
Allas, allas, that evere love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun

By vertu of my constellacioun;
That made me I koude noght withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,
And also in another privee place.

For God so wys be my savacioun,
I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,
But evere folwede myn appetit,
Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit.
I took no kepe, so that he liked me,

How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.
What sholde I seye, but at the monthes ende
This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so hende,
Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,
And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee

That evere was me yeven therbifoore;
But afterward repented me ful soore,
He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.
By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst
For that I rente out of his book a leef,

That of the strook myn ere wax al deef.
Stibourne I was as is a leonesse,
And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,
And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,
From hous to hous, although he had it sworn,

For which he often-tymes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romayn geestes teche,
How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,
And hir forsook for terme of al his lyf,
Noght but for open-heveded he hir say,

Lookynge out at his dore, upon a day.
Another Romayn tolde he me by name,
That for his wyf was at a someres game
Withoute his wityng, he forsook hir eke.
And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke

That like proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Where he comandeth, and forbedeth faste,
Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute,
Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:
"Who so that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,

And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,
Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!"
But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe
Of his proverbes, nof his olde lawe,

Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.
I hate hym that my vices telleth me;
And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I!
This made hym with me wood al outrely,
I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas.

Now wol I seye yow sooth, by seint Thomas,
Why that I rente out of his book a leef,
For which he smoot me so that I was deef.
He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,
For his desport he wolde rede alway.

He cleped it 'Valerie and Theofraste,'
At whiche book he lough alway ful faste.
And eek ther was som tyme a clerk at Rome,
A cardinal that highte Seint Jerome,
That made a book agayn Jovinian,

In whiche book eek ther was Tertulan,
Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,
That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,
And eek the Parables of Salomon,
Ovides Art, and bookes many on,

And alle these were bounden in o volume,
And every nyght and day was his custume
Whan he hadde leyser and vacacioun
From oother worldly occupacioun
To reden on this book of wikked wyves.

He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves
Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.
For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,

Ne noon oother womman never the mo.
Who peyntede the leoun, tel me, who?
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse

Than all the mark of Adam may redresse.
The children of Mercurie and Venus
Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius,
Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.

And for hire diverse disposicioun
Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun,
And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat;
And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.

Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.
The clerk, whan he is oold and may noght do
Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,
Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage
That wommen kan nat kepe hir mariage.

But now to purpos, why I tolde thee
That I was beten for a book, pardee.
Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,
Redde on his book as he sat by the fire
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse

Was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse,
For which that Jesu Crist hymself was slayn,
That boghte us with his herte-blood agayn.
Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde,
That womman was the los of al mankynde.

Tho redde he me how Sampson loste hise heres,
Slepynge, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres,
Thurgh whiche tresoun loste he bothe hise eyen.
Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,

Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,

That caused hym to sette hymself a fyre.
No thyng forgat he the penaunce and wo
That Socrates hadde with hise wyves two,
How Xantippa caste pisse up-on his heed.
This sely man sat stille as he were deed;

He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn
But, "er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn."
Of Phasifpha, that was the queene of Crete,
For shrewednesse hym thoughte the tale swete-
Fy, speke namoore! it is a grisly thyng

Of hir horrible lust and hir likyng.
Of Clitermystra for hire lecherye,
That falsly made hir housbonde for to dye,
He redde it with ful good devocioun.
He tolde me eek for what occasioun

Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.
Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf
Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told
Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,

For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lyma tolde he me, and of Lucye,
They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,
That oon for love, that oother was for hate.
Lyma hir housbonde, on an even late,

Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo.
Lucia likerous loved hir housbonde so,
That for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,
She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke
That he was deed, er it were by the morwe.

And thus algates housbondes han sorw.
Thanne tolde he me, how that Latumys
Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius,
That in his gardyn growed swich a tree,
On which he seyde how that hise wyves thre

Hanged hemself, for herte despitus.
"O leeve brother," quod this Arrius,
"Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,
And in my gardyn planted it shal bee."
Of latter date of wyves hath he red,

That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,
And lete hir lecchour dighte hir al the nyght,
Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.
And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn
Whil that they slepte, and thus they han hem slayn.

Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hir drynke.
He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,
And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes

Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.
"Bet is," quod he, "Thyn habitacioun

Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,
Than with a womman usynge for to chyde."
"Bet is," quod he, "hye in the roof abyde
Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous,
They been so wikked and contrarious.

They haten that hir housbondes loveth ay."
He seyde, "a womman cast hir shame away
Whan she cast of hir smok," and forther mo,
"A fair womman, but she be chaast also,
Is lyk a goldryng in a sowes nose."

Who wolde leeve, or who wolde suppose
The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?
And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne
To reden on this cursed book al nyght,
Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght

Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke
I with my fest so took hym on the cheke,
That in oure fyr he ril bakward adoun.
And he up-stirte as dootha wood leoun,
And with his fest he smoot me on the heed

That in the floor I lay, as I were deed.
And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wolde han fled his way,
Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.
"O, hastow slayn me, false theef," I seyde,

"And for my land thus hastow mordred me?
Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee."
And neer he cam and kneled faire adoun,
And seyde, "deere suster Alisoun,
As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte.

That I have doon, it is thyselv to wyte,
Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke."
And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,
And seyde, "theef, thus muchel am I wreke;
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke."

But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,
We fille acorded by us selven two.
He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,
To han the governance of hous and lond,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,

And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan that I hadde geten unto me
By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,
And that he seyde, "myn owene trewe wyf,
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf,

Keepe thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat,"
After that day we hadden never debaat.

God help me so, I was to hym as kynde
As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,
And also trewe, and so was he to me.

I prey to God, that sit in magestee,
So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.
Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere.

Biholde the wordes bitwene the Somonour and the Frere.

The Frere lough whan he hadde herd al this.-
"Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,
This is a long preamble of a tale."
And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,
"Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddess armes two,

A frere wol entremette hym evere-mo.
Lo goode men, a flye and eek a frere
Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.
What spekestow of preambulacioun?
What, amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun,

Thou lettest oure disport in this manere."
"Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the frere,
"Now by my feith, I shal er that I go
Telle of a Somonour swich a tale or two
That alle the folk shal laughen in this place."

"Now elles, frere, I bishrewe thy face,"
Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me,
But if I telle tales two or thre
Of freres, er I come to Sidyngborne,
That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,

For wel I woot thy pacience in gon."
Oure Hooste cride, "Pees, and that anon!"
And seyde, "lat the womman telle hire tale,
Ye fare as folk that dronken were of ale.
Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best."

"Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow lest,
If I have licence of this worthy frere."
"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol heere."

Heere endeth the Wyf of Bathe hir Prologe.

Part 20

THE TALE OF THE WYF OF BATH

Here bigynneth the Tale of the Wyf of Bathe.

In tholde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,
Of which that Britons speken greet honour,
All was this land fulfilled of Fayerye.
The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede;

This was the olde opinion, as I rede.

I speke of manye hundred yeres ago;
But now kan no man se none elves mo,
For now the grete charitee and prayeres
Of lymytours, and othere hooly freres,

That serchen every lond and every streem
As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,
Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,
Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes,

This maketh that ther been no Fayeryes.
For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself
In undermeles and in morwenynges,
And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges

As he gooth in his lymytacioun.
Wommen may go saufly up and down;
In every bussh or under every tree
Ther is noon oother incubus but he,
And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.

And so bifel it that this kyng Arthour
Hadde in his hous a lusty bachelor,
That on a day cam ridynge fro ryver;
And happed that, allone as she was born,
He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,

Of whiche mayde anon, maugree hir heed,
By verray force he rafte hir maydenhed;
For which oppressioun was swich clamour
And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour,
That dampned was this knyght for to be deed

By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed,
Paraventure, swich was the statut tho,
But that the queene and othere ladyes mo
So longe preyeden the kyng of grace,
Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,

And yaf hym to the queene al at hir wille,
To chese, wheither she wolde hym save or spille.
The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,
And after this thus spak she to the knyght,
Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day,

"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array
That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.
I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me
What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.
Be war and keep thy nekke-boon from iren,

And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,
Yet shal I yeve thee leve for to gon
A twelf-month and a day to seche and leere
An answeere suffisant in this mateere;
And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,

Thy body for to yelden in this place."

Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh,
But what! he may nat do al as hym liketh;
And at the laste he chees hym for to wende,
And come agayn right at the yeres ende,

With swich answeere as God wolde hym purveye;
And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.
He seketh every hous and every place,
Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace
To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost;

But he ne koude arryven in no coost
Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere
Two creatures accordynge in feere.
Somme seyde, wommen loven best richesse,
Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,

Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,
And oftetyne to be wydwe and wedde.
Somme seyde, that oure hertes been moost esed
Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed-
He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye,

A man shal wynne us best with flaterye;
And with attendance and with bisynesse
Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.-
And somme seyn, how that we loven best
For to be free, and do right as us lest,

And that no man repreve us of oure vice,
But seye that we be wise, and nothyng nyce.
For trewely, ther is noon of us alle,
If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,
That we nel kike; for he seith us sooth;

Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We sol been holden wise, and clene of synne.
And somme seyn, that greet delit han we
For to been holden stable and eke secree,

And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,
And nat biwerye thyng that men us telle.
But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele,
Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele.
Witnesse on Myda-wol ye heere the tale?

Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,
Seyde, Myda hadde under his longe heres
Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,
The whiche vice he hydde, as he best myghte,
Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte;

That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo,
He loved hir moost and trusted hir also.
He preyede hir, that to no creature
She sholde tellen of his disfigure.
She swoor him nay, for al this world to wynne,

She nolde do that vileynye or synne,
To make hir housbonde han so foul a name,
She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame!

But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde,
That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde,

Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte
That nedely som word hir moste asterte.
And sith she dorste telle it to no man,
Doun to a mareys faste by she ran,
Til she came there, hir herte was afyre,

And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,
She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun;-
"Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,"
Quod she, "to thee I telle it and namo,
Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!

Now is myn herte al hool, now is it oute,
I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute."
Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it moot, we kan no conseil hyde.-
The remenant of the tale, if ye wol heere,

Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.-
This knyght, of which my tale is specially,
Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby,
This is to seye, what wommen love moost,
Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.

But hoom he gooth, he myghte nat sojourne;
The day was come that homward moste he tourne,
And in his wey it happed hym to ryde
In al this care under a forest syde,
Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go

Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;
Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,
In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.
But certainly, er he came fully there,
Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where;

No creature saugh he that bar lyf,
Save on the grene he saugh sittyng a wyf,
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse,
And seyde, "Sire knyght, heer-forth ne lith no wey;

Tel me what that ye seken, by your fey.
Paraventure it may the bettre be,
These olde folk kan muchel thyng," quod she.
"My leeve mooder," quod this knyght, "certeyn,
I nam but deed, but if that I kan seyn

What thyng it is, that wommen moost desire.
Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire."
"Plight me thy trouthe, heere in myn hand," quod she,

"The nexte thyng that I requere thee,
Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,

And I wol telle it yow, er it be nyght."
"Have heer my trouthe," quod the knyght, "I grante."
"Thanne," quod she, "I dar me wel avante,
Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby
Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.

Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle,
That wereth on a coverchief or a calle,
That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.
Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche."
Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,

And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.
Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght
Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,
And redy was his answeere, as he sayde.
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,

And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,
The wueene hirsself sittyng as a justise,
Assembled been, his answeere for to heere;
And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.
To every wight comanded was silence,

And that the knyght sholde telle in audience
What thyng that worldly wommen loven best.
This knyght ne stood nat stille, as doth a best,
But ot his questioun anon answerde
With manly voys, that al the court it herde:

"My lige lady, generally," quod he,
"Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above.
This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille,

Dooth as yow list, I am heer at youre wille."
In al the court ne was ther wyf ne mayde
Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,
But seyden he was worthy han his lyf.
And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,

Which that the knyght saugh sittyng in the grene.
"Mercy," quod she, "my sovereyn lady queene,
Er that youre court departe, do me right.
I taughte this answeere unto the knyght,
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,

The firste thyng I wolde of hym requere,
He wolde it do, if it lay in his myght.
Bifor the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,"
Quod she, "that thou me take unto thy wyf,
For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.

If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!"
This knyght answerde, "Allas and weylawey!

I woot right wel that swich was my biheste!
For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste,
Taak al my good, and lat my body go!"

"Nay, thanne," quod she, "I shrewe us bothe two,
For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore,
I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore,
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love."

"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!
Allas, that any of my nacioun
Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!"
But al for noght, the ende is this, that he
Constreyned was, he nedes moste hir wedde,

And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.
Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,
That for my necligence I do no cure
To tellen yow the joye and al tharray,
That at the feeste was that ilke day;

To whiche thyng shortly answeere I shal.
I seye, ther nas no joye ne feeste at al,
Ther nas but hevynesse and mucche sorwe,
For prively he wedde hir on a morwe,
And al day after hidde hym as an owle,

So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.
Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,
Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybrought,
He walweth and he turneth to and fro.
His olde wyf lay smylynge everemo,

And seyde, "O deere housbonde, benedicitee,
Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf, as ye?
Is this the lawe of Kyng Arthures hous?
Is every knyght of his so dangerous?
I am youre owene love, and eek your wyf;

I am she which that saved hath youre lyf.
And certes, yet dide I yow nevere unright;
Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?
Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit.
What is my gilt? for Goddes love, tel it,

And it shal been amended, if I may."
"Amended," quod this knyght, "allas! nay! nay!
It wol nat been amended nevere mo;
Thou art so loothly and so oold also
And therto comen of so lough a kynde,

That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.
So wolde God, myn herte wolde breste!"
"Is this," quod she, "the cause of youre unreste?"
"Ye certainly," quod he, "no wonder is!"
"Now, sire," quod she, "I koude amende al this,

If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,

So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.
But for ye speken of swich gentillesse
As is descended out of old richesse,
That therefore sholden ye be gentil men,

Swich arrogance nis nat worth an hen.
Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,
Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he kan,
Taak hym for the grettest gentil-man.

Crist wole, we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,
Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.
For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,
For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,
Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng

To noon of us hir vertuous lyvyng,
That made hem gentil men ycalled be,
And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.
Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,
That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.

Lo in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:
'Ful selde upriseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse
Wole, that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse.'
For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme

But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and mayme.
Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,
If gentillesse were planted natureelly
Unto a certeyn lynage down the lyne,
Pryvee nor apert, thanne wolde they nevere fyne

To doon of gentillesse the faire office,
They myghte do no vileynye or vice.
Taak fyr, and ber it in the derkeste hous
Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous,
And lat men shette the dores and go thenne,

Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne
As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;
His office natureel ay wol it holde,
Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye.
Heere may ye se wel, how that genterye

Is nat annexed to possessioun,
Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun
Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.
For God it woot, men may wel often fynde
A lordes sone do shame and vileynye,

And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And hadde hise eldres noble and vertuous,
And nel hym-selven do no gentil dedis,
Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,

He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl;
For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.
For gentillesse nys but renomee
Of thyne auncestres for hire heigh bountee,
Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.

Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone,
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace,
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.
Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostillius,

That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.
Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece,
Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is,
That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.
And therefore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude,

Al were it that myne auncestres weren rude,
Yet may the hye God-and so hope I,-
Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.
Thanne am I gentil whan that I bigynne
To lyven vertuously, and weyve synne.

And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,
The hye God, on whom that we bileeve
In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.
And certes every man, mayden or wyf,
May understonde that Jesus, hevne kyng,

Ne wolde nat chesen vicious lyvyng.
Glad poverte is an honeste thyng, certeyn,
This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.
Who so that halt hym payd of his poverte,
I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte;

He that coveiteth is a povre wight,
For he wolde han that is nat in his myght,
But he that noght hath, ne coveiteth have,
Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.
Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely.

Juvenal seith of poverte myrily,
'The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,
Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'
Poverte is hateful good, and, as I gesse,
A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;

A greet amender eek of sapience
To hym that taketh it in pacience.
Poverte is this, although it seme elenge;
Possessioun, that no wight wol challenge.
Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,

Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe;
Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,
Thurgh which he may hise verray freendes see.
And therefore, sire, syn that I noght yow greve,
Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.

Now sire, of elde ye repreve me,
And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
Seyn, that men sholde an oold wight doon favour,
And clepe hym fader for youre gentillesse,

And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.

Now, ther ye seye that I am foul and old,
Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;
For filthe and eelde, al so moot I thee,
Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee;

But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,
I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit."
"Chese now," quod she, "oon of these thynges tweye:
To han me foul and old til that I deye,
And be to yow a trewe humble wyf,

And nevere yow displese in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,
And take youre aventure of the repair
That shal be to youre hous, by cause of me,
Or in som oother place may wel be.

Now chese yourselven wheither that yow liketh."

This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,
But atte laste, he seyde in this manere:
"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I put me in youre wise governance.

Cheseth yourself, which may be moost plesance
And moost honour to yow and me also.
I do no fors the wheither of the two,
For, as yow liketh, it suffiseth me."
"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,

"Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"
"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best."
"Kys me," quod she, "we be no lenger wrothe,
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe!
This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good.

I prey to God that I moote sterven wood
But I to yow be al so good and trewe
As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.
And but I be tomorn as fair to seene
As any lady, emperice or queene,

That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,
Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.
Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is."

And whan the knyght saugh verrailly al this,
That she so fair was, and so yong therto,

For joye he hente hire in hise armes two.
His herte bathed in a bath of blisse,
A thousand tyme arewe he gan hir kisse,
And she obeyed hym in every thyng

That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.

And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende
In parfit joye;-and Jesu Crist us sende
Housbondes meeke, yonge, fressh abedde,
And grace toverbyde hem that we wedde.
And eek I praye Jesu shorte hir lyves,

That nat wol be governed by hir wyves;
And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,
God sende hem soone verray pestilence!

Heere endeth the Wyves tale of Bathe.
Part 21

PROLOGUE TO THE FRERES TALE

The Prologe of the Freres Tale.

This worthy lymytour, this noble frere,
He made alwey a maner louryng chiere
Upon the Somonour, but for honestee
No vileyns word as yet to hym spak he.
But atte laste he seyde unto the wyf,

"Dame," quod he, "God yeve yow right good lyf!
Ye han heer touched, also moot I thee,
In scole-matere greet difficultee.
Ye han seyde mucche thyng right wel, I seye.
But dame, heere as we ryde by the weye

Us nedeth nat to speken but of game,
And lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,
To prechyng and to scole eek of clergye.
But if it lyke to this compaignye,
I wol yow of a somonour telle a game.

Pardee, ye may wel knowe bby the name
That of a somonour may no good be sayd;
I praye that noon of you be yvele apayd.
A somonour is a renner up and down
With mandementz for fornicacioun,

And is ybet at every townes ende."
Oure Hoost tho spak, "A sire, ye sholde be hende
And curteys, as a man of youre estaat.
In compaignye we wol have no debaat.
Telleth youre tale, and lat the Somonour be."

"Nay," quod the Somonour, "lat hym seye to me
What so hym list. Whan it comth to my lot,
By God I shal hym quiten every grot.
I shal hym tellen which a greet honour
It is to be a flaterynge lymytour,

And his office I shal hym teele, ywis."
Oure Hoost answerde, "Pees, namoore of this!"
And after this he seyde unto the Frere,
"Tel forth youre tale, leeve maister deere."

THE TALE

(How a Summoner, meeting a devil dressed as a yeoman, agrees to share gifts with him as a friend; and is himself consigned to the devil by a poor old woman. Then follow the Summoner's Prologue and Tale of an insult put by a goodman upon a greedy friar.)

Part 22

GROUP E.

THE CLERKES TALE-PROLOGUE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the clerkes tale of Oxenford.

"Sire clerk of Oxenford," oure Hooste sayde,
"Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde,
Were newe spoused, sittyng at the bord.
This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.
I trowe ye studie about som sophyme;

But Salomon seith, 'every thyng hath tyme.'
For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere;
It is no tyme for to studien heere,
Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey.
For what man that is entred in a pley,

He nedes moot unto the pley assente;
But precheth nat as freres doon in Lente,
To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.
Telle us som murie thyng of adventures;

Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite
Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, we yow preye,
That we may understonde what ye seye."

This worthy clerk benignely answerde,
"Hooste," quod he, "I am under youre yerde.
Ye han of us as now the governance;
And therefore wol I do yow obeisance
As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.

I wol yow telle a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padwe of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now deed, and nayled in his cheste;
I prey to God so yeve his soule reste.

Fraunceys Petrark, the lauriat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
Or lawe, or oother art particuler.

But deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer

But as it were a twynklyng of an eye,
Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye.

But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale as I bigan,

I seye, that first with heigh stile he enditeth
Er he the body of his tale writeth,
A prohemye in the which discryveth he
Pemond, and of Saluces the contree,
And spekethe of Apennyn, the hilles hye,

That been the boundes of Westlumbardye;
And of Mount Vesulus in special,
Where as the Poo out of a welle smal
Taketh his firste spryngyng and his sours,
That estward ay encresseth in his cours

To Emeleward, to Ferrare, and Venyse;
The which a long thyng were to devyse.
And trewely, as to my juggement,
Me thynketh it a thyng impertinent,
Save that he wole convoyen his mateere;
But this his tale, which that ye may heere."

Part 23

THE CLERKES TALE

Heere bigynneth the tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

Ther is, at the west syde of Ytaille,
Doun at the roote of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playne, habundant of vitaille,
Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde
That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many another delitable sighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markys whilom lord was of that lond,
As were hise worthy eldres hym bifore,
And obeisant and redy to his hond
Were alle hise liges, bothe lasse and moore.
Thus in delit he lyveth, and hath doon yoore,
Biloved and drad thurgh favour of Fortune,
Bothe of hise lordes and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to speke as of lynage,
The gentilleste yborn of Lumbardye;
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curteisye,
Discreet ynogh his contree for to gye,
Save that in somme thynges that he was to blame,
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame hym thus, that he considereth noght
In tyme comynge what hym myghte bityde,
But in his lust present was al his thoght,
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.
Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde;

And eek he nolde, -and that was worst of alle-
Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.

Oonly that point his peple bar so soore,
That flokmeele on a day they to hym wente,
And oon of hem, that wisest was of loore,
Or elles that the lord best wolde assente,
That he sholde telle hym what his peple mente,
Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere,
He to the markys seyde as ye shul heere:

"O noble Markys, youre humanitee
Asseureth us, and yeveth us hardinesse,
As ofte as tyme is of necessitee
That we to yow mowe telle oure hevynesse.
Accepteth, lord, now for youre gentillesse
That we with pitous herte unto yow pleyne,
And lat youre eres nat my voys desdeyne,

Al have I noght to doone in this mateere
Moore than another man hath in this place;
Yet for as muche as ye, my lord so deere,
Han alwey shewed me favour and grace,
I dar the bettre aske of yow a space
Of audience to shewen oure requeste,
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow leste.

For certes, lord, so wel us liketh yow
And al youre werk, and evere han doon that we
Ne koude nat us-self devysen how
We myghte lyven in moore felicitee,
Save o thyng, lord, if it youre wille be,
That for to been a wedded man yow leste,
Thanne were youre peple in sovereyn hertes reste.

Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok
Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,
Which that men clepeth spousaille or wedlock;
And thenketh, lord, among youre thoghtes wyse
How that oure dayes passe in sondry wyse,
For thogh we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Ay fleeth the tyme, it nyl no man abyde.

And thogh youre grene youthe floure as yit,
In crepeth age alwey, as stille as stoon,
And deeth manaceth every age, and smyt
In ech estaat, for ther escapeth noon;
And al so certein as we knowe echoon
That we shul deye, as uncerteyn we alle
Been of that day, whan deeth shal on us falle.

Accepteth thanne of us the trewe entente
That nevere yet refuseden thyn heeste;
And we wol, lord, if that ye wole assente,
Chese yow a wyf in short tyme atte leeste,
Born of the gentilleste and of the meeste
Of al this land, so that it oghte seme
Honour to God, and yow, as we kan deeme.

Delivere us out of al this bisy drede,
And taak a wyf for hye Goddes sake,
For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deeth your lyne sholde slake,
And that a straunge successour sholde take
Youre heritage, o wo were us alyve!
Wherfore we pray you hastily to wyve."

Hir meeke preyere and hir pitous cheere
Made the markys herte han pitee.
"Ye wol," quod he, "myn owene peple deere,
To that I nevere erst thoughte, streyne me.
I me rejoysed of my libertee,
That seelde tyme is founde in mariage.
Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.

But nathelees I se youre trewe entente,
And truste upon youre wit, and have doon at;
Wherfore of my free wyl I wole assente
To wedde me, as soone as evere I may.
But ther as ye han profred me this day
To chese me a wyf, I yow relese
That choys, and prey yow of that profre cesse.

For God it woot, that children ofte been
Unlyk hir worthy eldres hem bifore.
Bountee comth al of God, nat of the streen,
Of which they been engendred and ybore.
I truste in Goddes bontee; and therfore
My mariage, and myn estaat and reste,
I hym bitake, he may doon as hym leste.

Lat me allone in chesyng of my wyf,
That charge upon my bak I wole endure;
But I yow preye, and charge upon youre lyf
That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worshipe hir, whil that hir lyf may dure,
In word and werk, bothe heere and everywheere,
As she an emperoures doghter weere.

And forthermoore, this shal ye swere, that ye
Agayn my choys shul neither grucche ne stryve,
For sith I shal forgoon my libertee
At youre requeste, as evere moot I thryve,
Ther as myn herte is set, ther wol I wyve!
And but ye wole assente in this manere,
I prey yow, speketh namoore of this matere."

With hertely wyl they sworn and assenten
To al this thyng, ther seyde no wight nay,
Bisekyng hym of grace er that they wenten,
That he wolde graunten hem a certein day
Of his spousaille, as soone as evere he may,
For yet alway the peple somewhat dredde
Lest that this markys no wyf wolde wedde.

He graunten hem a day, swich as hym leste,
On which he wolde be wedded sikerly,
And seyde he dide al this at hir requeste;

And they with humble entente, buxomly,
Knelynge upon hir knees ful reverently
Hym thonken alle, and thus they han an ende
Of hir entente, and hoom agayn they wende.

And heerupon he to hise officeres
Comaundeth for the feste to purveye,
And to hise privee knyghtes and squieres
Swich charge yaf, as hym liste on hem leye.
And they to his comandement obeye,
And ech of hem dooth al his diligence
To doon unto the feeste reverence:

Explicit prima pars.

Incipit secunda pars.

Noght fer fro thilke paleys honorable
Ther as this markys shoop his mariage,
Ther stood a throop, of site delitable,

In which that povre folk of that village
Hadden hir beestes and hir herbergage,
And of hir labour tooke hir sustenance,
After that the erthe yaf hem habundance.

Amonges these povre folk ther dwelte a man
Which that was holden povrest of hem alle;
(But hye God somtyme senden kan
His grace into a litel oxes stalle)
Janicula men of that throop hym calle.
A doghter hadde he, fair ynogh to sighte,
And Grisildis this yonge mayden highte.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne,
For povreliche yfostred up was she,
No likerous lust was thurgh hir herte yronne.
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
She drank, and for she wolde vertu plese
She knew wel labour but noon ydel ese.

But thogh this mayde tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corage;
And in greet reverence and charitee
Hir olde povre fader fostred shee.
A fewe sheepe, spynnyng on feeld she kepte,
-She wolde noght been ydel, til she slepte.

And whan she homward cam, she wolde brynge
Wortes, or othere herbes tymes ofte,
The whiche she shredde and seeth for hir lyvyng,
And made hir bed ful harde and no thyng softe;
And ay she kepte hir fadres lyf on lofte
With everich obeisaunce and diligence
That child may doon to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this povre creature,

Ful ofte sithe this markys caste his eye,
As he on huntyng rood paraventure.
And whan it fil that he myghte hire espye,
He noght with wantowne lookyng of folye
Hise eyen caste on hir, but in sad wyse,
Upon hir chiere he wolde hym ofte avyse,

Commendynge in his herte hir wommanhede
And eek hir vertu, passynge any wight
Of so yong age, as wel in chiere as dede.
For thogh the peple hadde no greet insight
In vertu, he considered ful right
Hir bountee, and disposed that he wolde
Wedde hir oonly, if evere he wedde sholde.

The day of weddyng cam, but no wight kan
Telle what womman that it sholde be,
For which merveille wondred many a man,
And seyden, whan that they were in privetee,
"Wol nat oure lord yet leve his vanytee?
Wol he nat wedde? allas, allas, the while!
Why wole he thus hymself and us bigile?"

But nathelees this markys hath doon make
Of gemmes set in gold and in asure
Brooches and rynges, for Grisildis sake,
And of hir clothynge took he the mesure,
By a mayde lyk to hir stature,
And eek of othere ornementes alle
That unto swich a weddyng sholde falle.

The time of undren of the same day
Approcheth, that this weddyng sholde be;
And al the paleys put was in array,
Bothe halle and chambres, ech in his degree;
Houses of office stuffed with plentee
Ther maystow seen, of deyntevous vitaille,
That may be founde as fer as last Ytaille.

This roial markys, richely arrayed,
Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,
The whiche that to the feeste weren yprayed,
And of his retenue the bachelrye,
With many a soun of sondry melodye
Unto the village, of the which I tolde,
In this array the righte wey han holde.

Grisilde (of this, God woot, ful innocent,
That for hir shapen was al this array)
To fecchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh hoom as soone as ever she may;
For wel she hadde herd seyde, that thilke day
The markys sholde wedde, and if she myghte,
She wolde fayn han seyn som of that sighte.

She thoghte, "I wole with othere maydens stonde,
That been my felawes, in oure dore, and se
The markysesse, and therefore wol I fonde
To doon at hoom as soone as it may be

The labour, which that longeth unto me,
And thanne I may at leyser hir biholde,
If she this wey unto the castel holde."

And as she wolde over hir thressshfold gon
The markys cam and gan hire for to calle,
And she set down hir water pot anon
Beside the thressshfold in an oxes stalle,
And down up-on hir knes she gan to falle,
And with sad contenance kneleth stille,
Til she had herd what was the lordes will.

This thoghtful markys spak unto this mayde
Ful sobrely, and seyde in this manere,
"Where is youre fader, O Grisildis?" he sayde,
And she with reverence in humble cheere
Answerde, "Lord, he is al redy heere."
And in she gooth, withouten lenger lette,
And to the markys she hir fader fette.

He by the hand thanne took this olde man,
And seyde thus, whan he hym hadde asyde,
"Janicula, I neither may ne kan
Lenger the plesance of myn herte hyde;
If that thou vouchsaf, what so bityde,
Thy doghter wol I take, er that I wende,
As for my wyf unto hir lyves ende.

Thou lovest me, I woot it wel certeyn,
And art my feithful lige man ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dar wel seyn,
It liketh thee; and specially therfore
Tel me that poynt that I have seyde bifore,
If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe."

This sodeyn cas this man astonyed so,
That reed he wax abayst and al quakyng
He stood, unnethes seyde he wordes mo,
But oonly thus, "Lord," quod he, "my willynge
Is as ye wole, ne ayeyns youre likyng
I wol no thyng, ye be my lord so deere;
Right as yow lust governeth this mateere."

"Yet wol I," quod this markys softly,
"That in thy chambre I and thou and she
Have a collacioun, and wostow why?
For I wol axe, if it hir wille be
To be my wyf, and reule hir after me;
And al this shal be doon in thy presence,
I wol noght speke out of thyn audience."

And in the chambre whil they were aboute
Hir tretys which as ye shal after heere,
The peple cam unto the hous withoute,
And wondred hem in how honeste manere
And tentifly she kepte hir fader deere.
But outrely Grisildis wondre myghte
For nevere erst ne saugh she swich a sighte.

No wonder is thogh that she were astoned
To seen so greet a grest come in that place;
She nevere was to swiche gestes woned,
For which she looked with ful pale face-
But shortly forth this tale for to chace,
These arn the wordes that the markys sayde
To this benigne verray feithful mayde.

"Grisilde," he seyde, "ye shal wel understonde
It liketh to youre fader and to me
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
As, I suppose, ye wol that it so be.
But these demandes axe I first," quod he,
"That sith it shal be doon in hastif wyse,
Wol ye assente, or elles yow avyse?"

I seye this, be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may,
As me best thynketh, do yow laughe or smerte,
And nevere ye to grucche it nyght ne day,
And eek whan I sey ye, ne sey nat nay,
Neither by word, ne frownyng contenance?
Swere this, and heere I swere yow alliance."

Wondrynge upon this word, quakyng for drede,
She seyde, "Lord, undigne and unworthy
Am I to thilke honour, that ye me beede,
But as ye wole yourself, right so wol I.
And heere I swere, that nevere willyngly
In werk ne thoght I nyl yow disobeye,
For to be deed, though me were looth to deye."

"This is ynogh, Grisilde myn," quod he,
And forth he gooth with a ful sobre cheere
Out at the dore, and after that cam she;
And to the peple he seyde in this manere,
"This is my wyf," quod he, "that standeth heere;
Honoureth hir, and loveth hir, I preye,
Whoso me loveth; ther is namoore to seye."

And for that nothyng of hir olde geere
She sholde brynge into his hous, he bad
That wommen sholde dispoillen hir right there;-
Of which these ladyes were nat right glad
To handle hir clothes, wherinne she was clad-
But nathelees, this mayde bright of hewe
Fro foot to heed they clothed han al newe.

Hir heris han they kembd, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hir fyngres smale
A corone on hir heed they han ydressed,
And sette hir ful of nowches grete and smale.
Of hir array what sholde I make a tale?
Unnethe the peple hire knew for hir fairnesse
Whan she translated was in swich richesse.

This markys hath hir spoused with a ryng
Brought for the same cause, and thanne hir sette

Upon an hors, snow-whit and wel amblyng,
And to his paleys, er he lenger lette,
With joyful peple that hir ladde and mette
Convoyed hir; and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I seye, that to this newe markysesse
God hath swich favour sent hir of his grace,
That it ne semed nat by liklynesse
That she was born and fed in rudenesse
As in a cote or in an oxe-stalle,
But norissed in an emperoures halle.

To every wight she woxen is so deere
And worshipful, that folk ther she was bore
And from hir birthe knewe hir yeer by yeere,
Unnethe trowed they, but dorste han swore
That she to Janicle, of which I spak bifore,
She doghter nere, for as by conjecture,
Hem thoughte she was another creature.

For though that evere vertuous was she,
She was encressed in swich excellence,
Of thewes goode, yset in heigh bountee,
And so discreet and fair of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
And koude so the peples herte embrace,
That ech hir lovede, that looked on hir face.

Noght oonly of Saluces in the toun
Publiced was the bountee of hir name,
But eek biside in many a regioun,
If oon seide wel, another seyde the same;
So spradde of hir heighe bountee the fame
That men and wommen, as wel yonge as olde,
Goon to Saluce upon hir to biholde.

Thus Walter lowely, nay! but roially
Wedded with fortunat honestetee,
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
At hoom, and outward grace ynogh had he,
And for he saugh that under low degree
Was ofte vertu hid, the peple hym heelde
A prudent man, and that is seyn ful seelde.

Nat oonly this Grisildis thurgh hir wit
Koude al the feet of wyfly humblenesse,
But eek, whan that the cas required it,
The commune profit koude she redresse.
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
In al that land, that she ne koude apese,
And wisely brynge hem alle in reste and ese.

Though that hir housbonde absent were anon
If gentil men, or othere of hir contree
Were wrothe, she wolde bryngen hem aton.
So wise and rype wordes hadde she,
And juggementz of so greet equitee,

That she from hevене sent was, as men wende,
Peple to save and every wrong tamende.

Nat longe tyme after that this Grisild
Was wedded, she a doghter hath ybore-
Al had hir levere have born a man child;
Glad was this markys and the folk therfore,
For though a mayde child coome al bifore,
She may unto a knave child atteyne
By liklihede, syn she nys nat bareyne.

Explicit secunda pars.

Incipit tercia pars.

Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,
Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,
This markys in his herte longeth so
To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe
This merveillous desir his wyf tassaye.
Nedelees, God woot, he thoghte hir for taffraye.

He hadde assayed hir ynogh bifore,
And foond hir evere good; what neded it
Hir for to tempte and alwey moore and moore?
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit
To assaye a wyf, whan that it is no nede,
And putten hir in angwyssh and in drede.

For which this markys wroghte in this manere;
He cam allone a nyght, ther as she lay,
With stierne face and with ful trouble cheere,
And seyde thus, "Grisilde," quod he, "that day
That I yow took out of your povere array,
And putte yow in estaat of heigh noblesse,
Ye have nat that forgeten, as I gesse.

I seye, Grisilde, this present dignitee
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe
Maketh yow nat foryetful for to be
That I yow took in povre estaat ful lowe
For any wele ye moot youreselven knowe.
Taak heede of every word that y yow seye,
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tweye.

Ye woot yourself wel how that ye cam heere
Into this hous, it is nat longe ago.
And though to me that ye be lief and deere,
Unto my gentils ye be no thyng so.
They seyn, to hem it is greet shame and wo
For to be subgetz, and to been in servage,
To thee that born art of a smal village.

And namely, sith thy doghter was ybore,
These wordes han they spoken, dutelees;
But I desire, as I have doon bifore,
To lyve my lyf with hem in reste and pees.

I may nat in this caas be recchelees,
I moot doon with thy doghter for the beste,
Nat as I wolde, but as my peple leste.

And yet God woot, this is ful looth to me!
But nathelees, withoute youre wityng
I wol nat doon, but this wol I," quod he,
"That ye to me assente as in this thyng.
Shewe now youre pacience in youre werkyng,
That ye me highte and swore in youre village,
That day that maked was oure mariage."

Whan she had herd al this, she noght ameved
Neither in word, or chiere, or countenance;
For as it semed she was nat agreved.
She seyde, "Lord, al lyth in youre plesaunce,
My child, and I, with hertely obeisaunce
Been youres al, and ye mowe save and spille
Your owene thyng, werketh after youre wille.

Ther may no thyng, God so my soule save,
Likened to yow, that may displese me,
Ne I ne desire no thyng for to have,
Ne drede for to leese save oonly yee;
This wyl is in myn herte, and ay shal be;
No lengthe of tyme or deeth may this deface,
Ne chaunge my corage to another place."

Glad was this markys of hir answeyng,
But yet he feyned as he were nat so.
Al drery was his cheere and his lookyng,
Whan that he sholde out of the chambre go.
Soone after this, a furlong wey or two,
He prively hath toold al his entente
Unto a man, and to his wyf hym sente.

A maner sergeant was this privee man,
The which that feithful ofte he founden hadde
In thynges grete, and eek swich folk wel kan
Doon execucioun on thynges badde.
The lord knew wel that he hym loved and dradde;-
And whan this sergeant wiste the lordes wille,
Into the chambre he stalked hym ful stille.

"Madame," he seyde, "ye moote foryeve it me
Though I do thyng to which I am constreyned,
Ye been so wys, that ful wel knowe ye
That lordes heestes mowe nat been yfeyned,
They mowe wel been biwailed and compleyned,
But men moote nede unto hir lust obeye;
And so wol I, ther is namoore to seye.

This child I am comanded for to take."
And spak namoore, but out the child he hente
Despitously, and gan a cheere make
As though he wolde han slayn it er he wente.
Grisildis moot al suffren and consente,
And as a lamb she sitteth meke and stille,
And leet this crueel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspicious was the diffame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas, hir doghter that she loved so!
She wende he wolde han slawen it right tho;
But nathelees she neither weep ne syked,
Consentyng hir to that the markys lyked.

But atte laste speken she bigan,
And mekely she to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentil man,
That she moste kisse hire child, er that it deyde,
And in hir barm this litel child she leyde,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to kisse,
And lulled it, and after gan it blisse.

And thus she seyde in hir benigne voys,
"Fareweel, my child, I shal thee nevere see,
But sith I thee have marked with the croys
Of thilke fader blessed moote thou be,
That for us deyde upon a croys of tree.
Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake,
For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake."

I trowe, that to a norice in this cas
It had been hard this reuthe for to se;
Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd 'allas!'
But nathelees so sad and stidefast was she,
That she endured al adversitee,
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
"Have heer agayn your litel yonge mayde."

"Gooth now," quod she, "and dooth my lordes heeste;
But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,
That, but my lord forbad yow atte leeste,
Burieth this litel body in son place
That beestes ne no briddes it torace."
But he no word wol to that purpos seye,
But took the child, and wente upon his weye.

This sergeant cam unto his lord ageyn,
And of Grisildis wordes and hir cheere
He tolde hym point for point, in short and pleyn,
And hym presenteth with his doghter deere.
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,
But nathelees his purpos heeld he stille,
As lordes doon whan they wol han hir wille;

And bad his sergeant, that he pryvely
Sholde this child ful softe wynde and wrappe,
With alle circumstances tendrely,
And carie it in a cofre or in a lappe,
But upon payne his heed of for to swappe
That no man sholde knowe of his entente,
Ne whenne he cam, ne whider that he wente.

But at Boloigne to his suster deere,
That thilke tyme of Panik was Countesse,

He sholde it take, and shewe hir this mateere,
Bisekyng hir to doon hir bisynesse
This child to fostre in alle gentillesse,
And whos child that it was, he bad hire hyde
From every wight, for oght that may bityde.

The sergeant gooth, and hath fulfilled this thyng,
But to this markys now retourne we,
For now gooth he ful faste ymaginyng,
If by his wyves cheere he myghte se
Or by hir word aperceyve that she
Were chaunged, but he nevere hir koude fynde,
But evere in oon ylike sad and kynde.

As glad, as humble, as bisy in servyse,
And eek in love, as she was wont to be,
Was she to hym in every maner wyse,
Ne of hir doghter noght a word spak she.
Noon accident for noon adversitee
Was seyn in hir, ne nevere hir doghter name
Ne nempned she, in ernest nor in game.

Explicit tercia pars.

Sequitur pars quarta.

In this estaat ther passed been foure yeer
Er she with childe was; but as God wolde,
A knave child she bar by this Walter,
Ful gracious and fair for to biholde.
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nat oonly he, but al his contree, merye
Was for this child, and God they thanke and herye.

Whan it was two yeer old, and fro the brest
Departed of his norice, on a day
This markys caughte yet another lest
To tempte his wyf yet ofter if he may.
O, nedelees was she tempted in assay!
But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,
Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.

"Wyf," quod this markys, "ye han herd er this
My peple sikly berthoure mariage;
And namely sith my sone yboren is,
Now is it worse than evere in aloure age.
The murmure sleeth myn herte and my corage,
For to myne eres comth the voys so smeerte,
That it wel ny destroyed hath myn herte.

Now sey they thus, 'whan Walter is agon,
Thanne shal the blood of Janicle succede,
And beenoure lord, for oother have we noon.'
Swiche wordes seith my peple, out of drede,
Wel oughte I of swich murmur taken heede,
For certainly I drede swich sentence,
Though they nat pleyne speke in myn audience.

I wolde lyve in pees, if that I myghte;

Wherfore I am disposed outrely
As I his suster servede by nyghte,
Right so thenke I to serve hym pryvely.
This warne I yow, that ye nat sodeynly
Out of yourself for no wo sholde outreye.
Beth pacient, and therof I yow preye."

"I have," quod she, "seyd thus, and evere shal,
I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,
But as yow list, naught greveth me at al
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn-
At youre comandement, this is to sayn-
I have noght had no part of children tweyne
But first siknesse, and after wo and peyne.

Ye been oure lord, dooth with your owene thyng
Right as yow list, axeth no reed at me;
For as I lefte at hoom al my clothyng,
Whan I first cam to yow, right so," quod she,
"Lefte I my wyl and al my libertee,
And took youre clothyng, wherfore I yow preye,
Dooth youre plesauce; I wol youre lust obeye.

And certes, if I hadde prescience
Youre wyl to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,
I wolde it doon withouten necligence.
But now I woot your lust and what ye wolde,
Al your plesance ferme and stable I holde,
For wiste I that my deeth wolde do yow ese,
Right gladly wolde I dyen yow to plese.

Deth may noght make no comparisoun
Unto youre love!" and whan this markys say
The constance of his wyf, he caste adoun
Hise eyen two, and wondreth that she may
In pacience suffre al this array;
And forth he goth with drery contenance,
But ot his herte it was ful greet plesance.

This ugly sergeant, in the same wyse
That he hir doghter caughte, right so he
Or worse, if men worse kan devyse,
Hath hent hir sone, that ful was of beautee,
And evere in oon so pacient was she,
That she no chiere maade of hevynesse,
But kiste hir sone, and after gan it blesse.

Save this, she preyde hym, that if he myghte,
Hir litel sone he wolde in erthe grave
His tendre lymes, delicaat to sighte,
Fro foweles and fro beestes for to save.
But she noon answeere of hym myghte have,
He wente his wey, as hym nothyng ne roghte,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it broghte.

This markys wondred evere lenger the moore
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Ne hadde soothly knowen therbifoore
That parfitly hir children loved she,

He wolde have wend that of som subtiltee,
And of malice, or for crueel corage,
That she hadde suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew that next hymself, certayn,
She loved hir children best in every wyse;
But now of wommen wolde I axen fayn,
If these assayes myghte nat suffise,
What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse
To preeve hire wyfhod or hir stedefastnesse,
And he continuyng evere in sturdinesse?

But ther been folk of swich condicioun,
That whan they have a certein purpos take
They kan nat stynte of hir entencioun,
But right as they were bounden to that stake
They wol nat of that firste purpos slake.
Right so this markys fullliche hath purposed
To tempte his wyf, as he was first disposed.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance
That she to hym was changed of corage;
But nevere koude he fynde variance,
She was ay oon in herte and in visage.
And ay the forther that she was in age,
The moore trewe-if that it were possible-
She was to hym in love, and moore penyble.

For which it semed thus, that of hem two
Ther nas but o wyl; for, as Walter leste,
The same lust was hir plesance also,
And, God be thanked, al fil for the beste.
She shewed wel, for no worldly unreste
A wyf as of hirself no thing ne sholde

Wille in effect, but as hir housbonde wolde.

The sclaudre of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
That of a crueel herte he wikkedly,
For he a povre womman wedded hadde,
Hath mordred bothe his children prively.-
Swich murmure was among hem comunly;
No wonder is, for to the peples ere
Ther cam no word, but that they mordred were.

For which, wher as his peple therbifore
Hadde loved hym wel, the sclaudre of his diffame
Made hem, that they hym hatede therefore.
To been a mordre is an hateful name;
But nathelees, for earnest ne for game
He of his crueel purpos nolde stente:
To tempte his wyf was set al his entente.

Whan that his doghter twelf yeer was of age,
He to the court of Rome in subtil wyse
Enformed of his wyl sente his message,
Comaundyng hem swiche bulles to devyse
As to his crueel purpos may suffyse,
How that the pope as for his peples reste

Bad hym to wedde another, if hym leste.

I seye, he bad they sholde countrefete
The popes bulles, makynge mencioun
That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete
As by the popes dispensacioun,
To stynte rancour and dissencioun
Bitwixe his peple and hym, thus seyde the bulle,
The which they han publiced atte fulle.

The rude peple, as it no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel that it hadde be right so;
But whan this tidynges cam to Grisildis,
I deeme that hir herte was ful wo.
But she, ylike sad for everemo,
Disposed was, this humble creature,
The adversitee of Fortune al tendure,

Abidyng evere his lust and his plesance
To whom that she was yeven, herte and al,
As to hir verray worldly suffisance.
But shortly, if this storie I tellen shal,
This markys writen hath in special
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,
And secreely he to Boloigne it sente;

To the Erl of Panyk, which that hadde tho
Wedded his suster, preyde he specially
To bryngen hoom agayn hise children two,
In honourable estaat al openly;
But o thyng he hym preyede outrely,
That he to no wight, though men wolde enquire,
Sholde nat telle whos children that they were,

But seye, the mayden sholde ywedded be
Unto the Markys of Saluce anon.
And as this Erl was preyed, so dide he;
For at day set he on his wey is goon
Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon,
In riche array this mayden for to gyde,
Hir yonge brother ridynge hir bisyde.

Arrayed was toward hir mariage
This fresshe mayde, ful of gemmes cleere;
Hir brother, which that seven yeer was of age,
Arrayed eek ful fressh in his manere.
And thus in greet noblesse, and with glad cheere,
Toward Saluces shapyng hir journey,
Fro day to day they ryden in hir wey.

Explicit quarta pars.

Sequitur pars quinta.

Among al this, after his wikke usage,
This markys yet his wyf to tempte moore
To the outtreste preeve of hir corage,
Fully to han experience and loore,
If that she were as stidefast as bifoore,

He on a day in open audience
Ful boistously hath seyde hir this sentence.

"Certes, Grisilde, I hadde ynogh plesance,
To han yow to my wyf for your goodnesse,
As for youre trouthe, and for your obeisance-
Noght for youre lynage, ne for youre richesse;
But now knowe I, in verray soothfastnesse,
That in greet lordshipe, if I wel avyse,
Ther is greet servitude in sondry wyse.

I may nat doon as every plowman may;
My peple me constreyneth for to take
Another wyf, and crien day by day,
And eek the pope, rancour for to slake,
Consenteth it, that dar I undertake-
And treweliche thus muche I wol yow seye,
My newe wyf is comynge by the weye.

Be strong of herte, and voyde anon hir place,
And thilke dower that ye broghten me
Taak it agayn, I graunte it of my grace.
Retourneth to youre fadres hous," quod he;
"No man may alway han prosperitee.
With evene herte I rede yow tendure
This strook of Fortune or of aventure."

And she answerde agayn in pacience,
"My lord," quod she, "I woot and wiste alway
How that bitwixen youre magnificence
And my poverté, no wight kan ne may
Maken comparisoun, it is no nay.
I ne heeld me nevere digne in no manere
To be your wyf, no, ne youre chamberere.

And in this hous ther ye me lady maade,
The heighe God take I for my witnesse,
And also wysly he my soule glaade,
I nevere heeld me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servant to youre worthynesse,
And evere shal whil that my lyf may dure
Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye so longe of youre benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,
Wher as I was noght worthy for to bee,
That thonke I God and yow, to whom I preye
Foryelde it yow; ther is namoore to seye.
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with hym dwelle unto my lyves ende.

Ther I was fostred of a child ful smal,
Til I be deed, my lyf ther wol I lede,
A wydwe clene in body, herte, and al,
For sith I yaf to yow my maydenhede
And am youre trewe wyf, it is no drede,
God shilde swich a lordes wyf to take
Another man, to housbonde or to make.

And of youre newe wyf, God of his grace
So graunte yow wele and prosperitee,
For I wol gladly yelden hir my place
In which that I was blisful wont to bee.
For sith it liketh yow my lord," quod shee,
"That whilom weren al myn hertes reste,
That I shal goon, I wol goon whan yow leste.

But ther as ye me profre swich dowaire
As I first broghte, it is wel in my mynde
It were my wrecched clothes, no thyng faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage
The day that maked was oure mariage!

But sooth is seyde, algate I fynde it trewe,
(For in effect it preeved is on me)
Love is noght oold, as whan that it is newe,
But certes, lord, for noon adversitee,
To dyen in the cas it shal nat bee
That evere in word or werk I shal repente
That I yow yaf myn herte in hool entente.

My lord, ye woot that in my fadres place
Ye dide me streepe out of my povre weede,
And richely me cladden of youre grace.
To yow broghte I noght elles, out of drede,
But feith, and nakednesse, and maydenhede.
And heere agayn my clothyng I restoore,
And eek my weddyng ryng for everemo.

The remenant of youre jueles redy be
In-with youre chambre, dar I saufly sayn.
Naked out of my fadres hous," quod she,
"I cam, and naked moot I turne agayn.
Al your plesance wol I folwen fayn,
But yet I hope it be nat your entente
That I smoklees out of your paleys wente.

Ye koude nat doon so dishoneste a thyng,
That thilke wombe in which your children leye,
Sholde biforn the peple in my walkyng
Be seyn al bare; wherfore I yow preye,
Lat me nat lyk a worm go by the weye!
Remembre yow, myn owene lord so deere,
I was your wyf, though I unworthy weere.

Wherfore, in gerdoun of my maydenhede
Which that I broghte, and noght agayn I bere,
As voucheth sauf to yeve me to my meede
But swich a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here
That was your wyf, and heer take I my leeve
Of yow, myn owene lord, lest I yow greve."

"The smok," quod he, "that thou hast on thy bak,
Lat it be stille, and bere it forth with thee."
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,

But wente his wey for routhe and for pitee.
Biforn the folk hirselves strepeth she,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader hous forth is she fare.

The folk hir folwe, wepyng in hir weye,
And Fortune ay they cursen, as they goon.
But she fro wepyng kepte hir eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak she noon.
Hir fader, that this tidynge herde anoon,
Curseth the day and tyme that nature
Shoop hym to been a lyves creature.

For out of doute this olde povre man
Was evere in suspect of hir mariage,
For evere he demed, sith that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfild hadde his corage,
Hym wolde thynke it were a disparage
To his estaat, so lowe for talighte,
And voyden hir as soone as ever he myghte.

Agayns his doghter hastiliche goth he,
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comynge,
And with hir olde coote, as it myghte be,
He covered hir, ful sorwefully wepyng,
But on hir body myghte he it nat brynge.
For rude was the clooth, and moore of age
By dayes fele, than at hir mariage.

Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space
Dwelleth this flour of wyfly pacience,
That neither by hir wordes ne hir face,
Biforn the folk ne eek in hir absence,
Ne shewed she that hir was doon offence,
Ne of hir heighe estaat no remembraunce
Ne hadde she, as by hir contenance.

No wonder is, for in hir grete estaat
Hir goost was evere in pleyn humylitee.
No tendre mouth, noon herte delicaat,
No pompe, no semblant of roialtee,
But ful of pacient benyngnytee,
Discreet and pridelees, ay honorable,
And to hir housbonde evere meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and moost for his humblesse,
As clerkes whan hem list konne wel endite,
Namely of men; but as in soothfastnesse,
Though clerkes preise wommen but a lite,
Ther kan no man in humblesse hym acquite,
As womman kan, ne kan been half so trewe
As wommen been, but it be falle of newe.

(Pars sexta.)

Fro Boloigne is this Erl of Panyk come,
Of which the fame up sprang to moore and lesse,
And in the peples eres, alle and some,
Was kouth eek that a newe markysesse

He with hym broghte, in swich pompe and richesse,
That nevere was ther seyn with mannes eye
So noble array in al Westlumbardye.

The markys, which that shoop and knew al this,
Er that this Erl was come, sente his message
For thilke sely povre Grisildis;
And she with humble herte and glad visage,
Nat with no swollen thoght in hire corage
Cam at his heste, and on hir knees hire sette,
And reverently and wysely she hym grette.

"Grisilde," quod he, "my wyl is outrely
This mayden, that shal wedded been to me,
Received be to morwe as roially
As it possible is in myn hous to be;
And eek that every wight in his degree
Have hsi estaat in sittyng and servyse
And heigh plesaunce, as I kan best devyse.

I have no wommen, suffisaunt, certayn,
The chambres for tarraye in ordinaunce
After my lust, and therefore wolde I fayn
That thyn were al swich manere governaunce;
Thou knowest eek of olde al my plesaunce,
Thogh thyn array be badde and yvel biseye,
Do thou thy devoir at the leeste weye."

"Nat oonly lord, that I am glad," quod she,
"To doon your lust, but I desire also
Yow for to serve and plese in my degree
Withouten feyntyng, and shal everemo.
Ne nevere, for no wele ne no wo,
Ne shal the goost withinne myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entente."

And with that word she gan the hous to dighte,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peyned hir to doon al that she myghte,
Preyyng the chambereres for Goddes sake
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and shake,
And she, the mooste servysable of alle,
Hath every chambre arrayed, and his halle.

Abouten undren gan this Erl alighte,
That with hym broghte these noble children tweye,
For which the peple ran to seen the sighte
Of hir array, so richely biseye;
And thanne at erst amonges hem they seye,
That Walter was no fool, thogh that hym leste
To chaunge his wyf, for it was for the beste.

"For she is fairer," as they deemen alle,
"Than is Grisilde, and moore tendre of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwene hem sholde falle,
And moore plesant for hir heigh lynage."
Hir brother eek so faire was of visage,
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,
Commendynge now the markys governaunce.

O stormy peple, unsad and evere untrewē!
Ay undiscreet and chaungynge as a vane,
Delitynge evere in rumbul that is newe;
For lyk the moone ay wexe ye and wane,
Ay ful of clappyng, deere ynogh a jane,
Youre doom is fals, youre constance yvele preeveth,
A ful greet fool is he that on yow leeveth!

Thus seyden sadde folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gazed up and down,
For they were glad right for the noveltee
To han a newe lady of hir toun.
Namooore of this make I now mencioune,
But to Grisilde agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance and hir bisynesse.

Ful bisy was Grisilde in every thyng
That to the feeste was apertinent.
Right noght was she abayst of hir clothyng,
Though it were rude and somdeel eek torent,
But with glad cheere to the yate is went
With oother folk to greetee the markysesse,
And after that dooth forth hir bisynesse.

With so glad chiere hise gestes she receyveth,
And konnyngly everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man aperceyveth,
But ay they wondren what she myghte bee
That in so povre array was for to see,
And koude swich honour and reverence;
And worhtily they preisen hire prudence.

In al this meenewhile she ne stente
This mayde and eek hir brother to commende
With al hir herte, in ful benyngne entente,
So wel that no man koude hir pris amende
But atte laste, whan that thise lordes wende
To sitten down to mete, he gan to calle
Grisilde, as she was bisy in his halle.

"Grisilde," quod he, as it were in his pley,
"How liketh thee my wyf and hir beautee?"
"Right wel," quod she, "my lord, for in good fey
A fairer saugh I nevere noon than she.
I prey to God yeve hir prosperitee,
And so hope I that he wol to yow sende
Plesance ynogh unto youre lyves ende.

O thyng biseke I yow, and warne also
That ye ne prikke with no tormentynge
This tendre mayden, as ye han doon mo;
For she is fostred in hir norissyng
Moore tendrely, and to my supposyng
She koude nat adversitee endure,
As koude a povre fostred creature."

And whan this Walter saugh hir pacience,
Hir glade chiere, and no malice at al,

And he so ofte had doon to hir offence
And she ay sad and constant as a wal,
Continuynge evere hir innocence overal,
This sturdy markys gan his herte dresse
To rewen upon hir wyfly stedfastnesse.

"This is ynogh Grisilde myn," quod he,
"Be now namoore agast, ne yvele apayed.
I have thy feith and thy benyngnytee
As wel as evere womman was, assayed
In greet estaat, and povreliche arrayed;
Now knowe I, goode wyf, thy stedfastnesse!"
And hir in armes took, and gan hir kesse.

And she for wonder took of it no keep.
She herde nat, what thyng he to hir seyde.
She ferde as she had stert out of a sleep,
Til she out of hire mazednesse abreyde.
"Grisilde," quod he, "by God that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon oother I have,
Ne nevere hadde, as God my soule save.

This is thy doghter which thou hast supposed
To be my wyf; that oother feithfully
Shal be myn heir, as I have ay purposed;
Thou bare hym in thy body trewely.
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively.
Taak hem agayn, for now maystow nat seye
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.

And folk that ootherweys han seyde of me,
I warne hem wel that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for tassaye in thee thy wommanheede,
And not to sleen my clildren, God forbeede!
But for to kepe hem pryvely and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wille."

Whan she this herde, aswowne doun she falleth
For pitous joye, and after hir swownynge
She bothe hir yonge children unto hir calleth,
And in hir armes pitously wepyng
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissyng
Ful lyk a mooder, with hir salte teeres
She bathed bothe hir visage and hir heeres.

O, which a pitous thyng it was to se
Hir swownyng, and hir humble voys to heere!
"Grauntmercy, lord, that thanke I yow," quod she,
"That ye han saved me my children deere.
Now rekke I nevere to been deed right heere.
Sith I stonde in your love and in your grace,
No fors of deeth, ne whan my spirit pace!

O tendre, O deere, O yonge children myne!
Your woful mooder wende stedfastly
That crueel houndes, or som foul vermyne
Hadde eten yow; but God of his mercy

And youre benyngne fader tendrely
Hath doon yow kept," and in that same stounde
Al sodeynly she swapte adoun to grounde.

And in hir swough so sadly holdeth she
Hir children two, whan she gan hem tembrace,
That with greet sleighte and greet difficultee
The children from hir arm they gonne arace.
O many a teere on many a pitous face
Doun ran, of hem that stooden hir bisyde;
Unnethe abouten hir myghte they abyde.

Walter hir gladeth, and hir sorwe slaketh,
She riseth up abaysed from hir traunce,
And every wight hir joye and feeste maketh,
Til she hath caught agayn hir contenance.
Walter hir dooth so feithfully plesaunce,
That it was deyntee for to seen the cheere.
Bitwixe hem two, now they been met yfeere.

These ladyes, whan that they hir tyme say,
Han taken hir and into chambre gon,
And strepen hir out of hir rude array
And in a clooth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon
Upon hir heed, they into halle hir broghte,
And ther she was honored as hir oghte.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende,
For every man and womman dooth his myght
This day in murthe and revel to dispende,
Til on the welkne shoon the sterres lyght.

For moore solempne in every mannes syght
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yeer in heigh prosperitee
Lyven these two in concord and in reste.
And richely his doghter maryed he
Unto a lord, oon of the worthieste
Of al Ytaille, and thanne in pees and reste
His wyves fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

His sone succedeth in his heritage
In reste and pees, after his fader day,
And fortunat was eek in mariage-
Al putte he nat his wyf in greet assay;
This world is nat so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath been of olde tymes yoore.
And herkneth what this auctour seith therfore.

This storie is seyde, nat for that wyves sholde
Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee,
For it were inportable though they wolde,
But for that every wight in his degree
Sholde be constant in adversitee
As was Grisilde. Therefore Petrark writeth

This storie, which with heigh stile he enditeth.

For sith a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte
Receyven al in gree that God us sent.
For greet skile is, he preeve that he wroghte.
But he ne tempteth no man that he boghte,
As seith Seint Jame, if ye his pistel rede;
He preeveth folk al day, it is no drede,

And suffreth us, as for oure excercise,
With sharpe scourges of adversitee
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise,
Nat for to knowe oure wyl, for certes he
Er we were born knew al oure freletee,
And for oure beste is al his governaunce.
Lat us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

But o word, lordynges, herkneth er I go,
It were ful hard to fynde nowadays
In al a toun Grisildis thre or two,
For it that they were put to swiche assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
With bras, that though the coyne be fair at eye,
It wolde rather breste atwo than plye.

For which, heere for the Wyves love of Bathe,
Whos lyf and al hir seete God mayntene
In heigh maistrie, and elles were it scathe,
I wol with lusty herte fressh and grene
Seyn yow a song, to glade yow, I wene,
And lat us stynte of ernestful matere.
Herkneth my song, that seith in this manere.

Lenvoy de Chaucer.

Grisilde is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe atones buried in Ytaille,
For which I crie in open audience
No wedded man so hardy be tassaille
His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde
Grisildis, for in certein he shal faille.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille,
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of yow a storie of swich mervaille
As of Grisildis, pacient and kynde,
Lest Chichivache yow swelwe in hire entraille.

Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,
But evere answereth at the countretaille;
Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence,
But sharply taak on yow the governaille.
Emprenteth wel this lessoun in youre mynde
For commune profit, sith it may availle.

Ye archiwyves, stondesth at defense,
Syn ye be strong as is a greet camaille.

Ne suffreth nat that men yow doon offense,
And sklendre wyves, fieble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Ynde,
Ay clappeth as a mille, I yow consaille.

Ne dreed hem nat, doth hem no reverence,
For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his brest and eek his aventaille.
In jalousie I rede eek thou hym bynde,
And thou shalt make hym couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be fair, ther folk been in presence
Shewe thou thy visage and thyn apparaille;
If thou be foul, be fre of thy dispence,
To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille,
Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde,
And lat hym care, and wepe, and wryng, and waille.

Here endeth the Clerk of Oxenford his Tale.

Bihould the murye wordes of the Hoost.

This worthy clerk, whan ended was his tale,
Oure hoost seyde, and swoor by goddes bones,
"Me wyf at hoom had herd this legende ones;
This is a gentil tale for the nones,
As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille,-
But thyng that wol nat be, lat it be stille."

Heere endeth the tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

(This stanza, perhaps made up by a scribe from other lines in Chaucer, is inserted in Ellesmere MS. and elsewhere as a link between the Clerk's Tale and the Envoy, ascribed to Chaucer. The Envoy, however, belongs to the Clerk, and the stanza seems both spurious and unnecessary.)

Part 24

THE PROLOGUE OF THE MARCHANTES TALE

The Prologe of the Marchantes tale.

"Wepying and waylyng, care and oother sorwe,
I knowe ynogh, on even and a morwe,"
Quod the Marchant, "and so doon othere mo
That wedded been, I trowe that it be so.
For wel I woot, it fareth so with me.

I have a wyf, the worste that may be,
For though the feend to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde hym overmacche, I dar wel swere.
What sholde I yow reherce in special
Hir hye malice? She is a shrewe at al!

Ther is a long and large difference
Bitwix Grisildis grete pacience
And of my wyf the passyng crueltee.

Were I unbounden, al so moot I thee,
I wolde nevere eft comen in the snare.

We wedded men lyve in sorwe and care;
Assaye who so wole, and he shal fynde
I seye sooth, by Seint Thomas of Ynde-
As for the moore part, I seye nat alle;
God shilde, that it sholde so bifalle!

Ay, goode Sir Hoost, I have ywedded bee
Thise monthes two, and moore nat, pardee;
And yet I trowe, he that al his lyve
Wyflees hath been, though that men wolde him ryve
Unto the herte, ne koude in no manere

Tellen so muchel sorwe as I now heere
Koude tellen of my wyves cursednesse!"
Now quod our hoost, "Marchant, so God yow blesse,
Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part."

"Gladly," quod he, "but of myn owene soore,
For soory herte I telle may namoore."

THE TALE.

(January, a rich old dotard, who has married May, in spite of his friends' objections to the inequality of their ages, is deceived by her and his young squire Damian, although Pluto in pity restores his lost sight.)

Part 25

EPILOGUE

The Prologe of the Squieres tale.

"Ey, Goddes mercy!" seydeoure Hooste tho,
"Now swich a wyf I pray God kepe me fro!
Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees
In wommen been, for ay as bisy as bees
Been they us sely men for to deceyve;
And from a sooth evere wol they weyve,
By this Marchantes tale it preveth weel.
But doutelees, as trewe as any steel,
I have a wyf, though that she povre be,
But of hir tonge a labbyng shrewe is she.
And yet she hath an heep of vices mo-
Ther-of no fors, lat alle swiche thynges go.
But wyte ye what, in conseil be it seyde,
Me reweth soore I am unto hire teyde;
For and I sholde rekenen every vice,
Which that she hath, ywis, I were to nyce.
And cause why? it sholde reported be,
And toold to hir of somme of this meynee;
Of whom, it nedeth nat for to declare,
Syn wommen konnen outen swich chaffare.
And eek my with suffiseth nat therto,
To tellen al, wherfore my tale is do."

GROUP F.

PROLOGUE TO THE SQUIERES TALE

Squier, come neer, if it your wille be,
And sey somewhat of love, for certes, ye
Konnen theron as mucche as any man."
"Nay sir," quod he, "but I wol seye as I kan,
With hertly wyl, for I wol nat rebelle
Agayn your lust. A tale wol I telle,
Have me excused if I speke amys;
My wyl is good, and lo, my tale is this."

THE SQUIERES TALE

Heere bigynneth the Squieres Tale.

At Sarray, in the land of Tartarye,
Ther dwelte a kyng, that werreyed Russye,
Thurgh which ther dyde many a doughty man.
This noble kyng was cleped Cambynskan,
Which in his tyme was of so greet renoun,

That ther was nowher in no regioun
So excellent a lord in alle thyng.
Hym lakked noght that longeth to a kyng;
And of the secte, of which that he was born,
He kepte his lay, to which that he was sworn;

And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
Pitous, and just, and everemoore yliche,
Sooth of his word, benigne, and honourable,
Of his corage as any centre stable,
Yong, fressh, strong, and in armes desirous

As any bachelor of al his hous.
A fair persone he was, and fortunat,
And kepte alwey so wel roial estat
That ther was nowher swich another man.
This noble kyng, this Tarte Cambynskan,

Hadde two sones on Elpheta his wyf,
Of whiche the eldeste highte Algarsyf,
That oother sone was cleped Cambalo.
A doghter hadde this worthy kyng also,
That yongest was, and highte Canacee.

But for to telle yow al hir beautee,
It lyth nat in my tonge nyn my konnyng.
I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng;
Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.

I moste been a rethor excellent,

That koude hise colours longynge for that art,
If he sholde hir discryven every part.
I am noon swich; I moot speke as I kan.

And so bifel, that whan this Cambynskan
Hath twenty wynter born his diademe,

As he was wont fro yeer to yeer, I deme,
He leet the feeste of his nativitee
Doon cryen thurghout Sarray his citee,
The last Idus of March after the yeer.
Phebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer,

For he was neigh his exaltacioun
In Martes face, and in his mansioun
In Aries, the colerik hoote signe.
Ful lusty was the weder, and benigne,
For which the foweles agayn the sonne sheene,

What for the sesoun and the yonge grene,
Ful loude songen hir affeccious;
Hem semed han geten hem protecciouns
Agayn the swerd of wynter, keene and coold.
This Cambynskan, of which I have yow toold,

In roial vestiment sit on his deys,
With diademe, ful heighe in his paleys,
And halt his feeste so solempne and so ryche,
That in this world ne was ther noon it lyche.
Of which, if I shal tellen al tharray,

Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day,
And eek it nedeth nat for to devyse,
At every cours, the ordre of hire servyse.
I wol nat tellen of hir strange sewes,
Ne of hir swannes, nor of hire heronsewes;

Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtes olde,
Ther is som mete that is ful deynte holde,
That in this lond men recche of it but smal-
Ther nys no man that may reporten al.
I wol nat taryen yow, for it is pryme,

And for it is no fruyt but los of tyme.
Unto my firste I wole have my recours.
And so bifel, that after the thridde cours
Whil that htis kyng sit thus in his noble eye,
Her knyng hise mynstrals hir thynges pleye

Biforn hym at the bord deliciously,
In at the halle dore al sodeynly
Ther cam a knyght, upon a steede of bras,
And in his hand a brood mirour of glas,
Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ryng,

And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng.
And up he rideth to the heighe bord.
In al the hall ne was ther spoken a word
For merveille of this knyght; hym to biholde
Ful bisily ther wayten yonge and olde.

This strange knyght, that cam thus sodeynly
Al armed, save his heed, ful richely,
Saleweth kyng, and queene, and lordes alle,
By ordre, as they seten in the halle,

With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce,

As wel in speche as in contenance,
That Gawayn, with his olde curteisye,
Though he were comen ayeyn out of Fairye,
Ne koude hym nat amende with a word.
And after this, biforn the heighe bord

He with a manly voys seith his message,
After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of silable or of lettre.
And for his tale sholde seme the bettre,
Accordant to hise wordes was his cheere,

As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.
Al be it that I kan nat sowne his stile,
Ne kan nat clymben over so heigh a style,
Yet seye I this, as to commune entente,
Thus muche amounteth al that evere he mente,

If it so be that I have it in mynde.
He seyde, "The kyng of Arabe and of Inde,
My lige lord, on this solempne day
Saleweth yow, as he best kan and may;
And sendeth yow, in honour of your feeste,

By me, that am al redy at your heeste,
This steede of bras, that esily and weel
Kan in the space of o dday natureel,
This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres,
Wherso yow lyst, in droghte or elles shoures,

Beren youre body into every place
To which youre herte wilneth for to pace,
Withouten wem of yow, thurgh foul or fair.
Or if yow lyst to fleen as hye in the air
As dooth an egle, whan that hym list to soore,

This same steede shal bere yow evere moore
Withouten harm, til ye be ther yow leste,
Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste;
And turne ayeyn, with writhyng of a pyn.
He that it wroghte, koude ful many a gyn;

He wayted many a constellacioun
Er he had doon this operacioun;
And knew ful many a seel, and many a bond.
This mirrour eek, that I have in myn hond,
Hath swich a myght, that men may in it see

Whan ther shal fallen any adversitee
Unto your regne, or to yourself also,
And openly who is your freend, or foo.
And over al this, if any lady bright
Hath set hir herte in any maner wight,

If he be fals, she shal his tresoun see,
His newe love, and al his subtiltee

So openly, that ther shal no thyng hyde.
Wherfore, ageyn this lusty someres tyde,
This mirrour and this ryng that ye may see,

He hath sent unto my lady Canacee,
Your excellent doghter that is heere.
The vertu of the ryng, if ye wol heere,
Is this, that if hir lust it for to were
Upon hir thombe, or in hir purs it bere,

Ther is no fowel that fleeth under the hevene
That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene,
And knowe his menyng openly and pleyn,
And answeere hym in his langage ageyn.
And every gras that groweth upon roote,

She shal eek knowe, and whom it wol do boote,
Al be hise woundes never so depe and wyde.
This naked swerd, that hangeth by my syde
Swich vertu hath, that what man so ye smyte
Thurghout his armure it wole hym kerve and byte,

Were it as thikke as is a branched ook.
And what man that is wounded with a strook
Shal never be hool, til that yow list of grace
To stroke hym with the plate in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as mucche to seyn,

Ye moote with the plate swerd ageyn
Strike hym in the wounde, and it wol close.
This is a verray sooth withouten glose.
It faileth nat, whils it is in youre hoold."
And whan this knyght hath thus his tale toold,

He rideth out of halle, and doun he lighte.
His steede, which that shoon as sonne brighte,
Stant in the court, as stille as any stoon.
This knyght is to his chambre lad anon,
And is unarmed and unto mete yset.

The presentes been ful roially yfet,
This is to seyn, the swerd and the mirrour,
And born anon into the heighe tour
With certeine officers ordeyned therfore.
And unto Canacee this ryng was bore,

Solempnely, ther she sit at the table.
But sikerly, withouten any fable,
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,
It stant as it were to the ground yglewed.
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve,

For noon engyn of wyndas ne polyve;
And cause why, for they kan nat the craft,
And therfore in the place they han it laft,
Til that the knyght hath taught hem the manere
To voyden hym, as ye shal after heere.

Greety was the prees that swarmeth to and fro

To gauren on this hors, that stondest so.
For it so heigh was, and so brood, and long,
So wel proporcioned for to been strong,
Right as it were a steede of Lumbardye;

Therwith so horsly and so quyk of eye,
As it a gentil Poilleys courser were.
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere,
Nature ne art ne koude hym nat amende
In no degree, as al the peple wende.

But everemoore hir mooste wonder was
How that it koude go, and was of bras.
It was a fairye, as al the peple semed.
Diverse folk diversely they demed;
As many heddes, as manye wittes ther been.

They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been,
And maden skiles after hir fantasies,
Rehersynge of thise olde poetries,
And seyde that it was lyk the Pegasee,
The hors that hadde wynges for to flee;

Or elles, it was the Grekes hors Synoun,
That broghte Troie to destruccioun,
As men in thise olde geestes rede.
"Myn herte," quod oon, "is everemoore in drede.
I trowe som men of armes been therinne,

That shapen hem this citee for to wynne.
It were right good that al swich thyng were knowe."
Another rownded to his felawe lowe,
And seyde, "He lyeth; it is rather lyk
An apparence ymaad by som magyk,

As jogelours pleyen at thise feestes grete."
Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demeth comunly
Of thynges that been maad moore subtilly
Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehende;

They demen gladly to the badder ende.
And somme of hem wondred on the mirrour
That born was up into the maister tour-
How men myghte in it swiche thynges se.
Another answerde, and seyde, "It myghte wel be

Naturelly by composiciouns
Of anglis and of slye reflexiouns;"
And seyden, that in Rome was swich oon.
They speken of Alocen and Vitulon,
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lyves

Of queynte mirrours and of perspectives,
As knowen they that han hir bookes herd.
And oother folk han wondred on the swerd,
That wolde percen thurgh out every thyng;
And fille in speche of Thelophus the kyng

And of Achilles with his queynte spere,
For he koude with it bothe heele and dere,
Right in swich wise as men may with the swerd,
Of which right now ye han yourselven herd.
They speken of sondry hardyng of metal,

And speke of medicynes therwithal,
And how and whanne it sholde yharded be,
Which is unknowe, algates unto me.
Tho speeke they of Canacees ryng,
And seyden alle, that swich a wonder thyng

Of craft of rynges herde they nevere noon;
Save that he Moyses, and kyng Salomon
Hadde a name of konnyng in swich art.
Thus seyn the peple, and drawen hem apart.
But nathelees, somme seiden that it was

Wonder to maken of fern asshen glas,
And yet nys glas nat lyk asshen of fern;
But for they han knowen it so fern,
Therefore cesseth hir janglyng and hir wonder.
As soore wondren somme on cause of thonder,

On ebbe, on flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And alle thyng, til that the cause is wyst.
Thus jangle they, and demen, and devyse,
Til that the knyng gan fro the bord aryse.
Phebus hath laft the angle meridional,

And yet ascendyng was the beest roial,
The gentil Leoun, with his Aldrian,
Whan that this Tartre kyng, this Cambynskan
Roos fro his bord, ther that he sat ful hye.
Toforn hym gooth the loude mynstralcye

Til he cam to his chambre of parentz,
Ther as they sownen diverse instrumentz
That it is lyk an hevene for to heere.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere,
For in the Fyssh hir lady sat ful hye,

And looketh on hem with a freendly eye.
This noble kyng is set up in his trone;
This strange knyght is fet to hym ful soone,
And on the daunce he gooth with Canacee.
Heere is the revel and the jolitee

That is nat able a dul man to devyse;
He moste han knowen love and his servyse,
And been a feestlych man as fressh as May,
That sholde yow devysen swich array.
Who koude telle yow the forme of daunces,

So unkouthe and so fresshe contenaunces,
Swich subtil lookyng and dissymulynges,
For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynge?
No man but Launcelet, and he is deed.
Therefore I passe of al this lustiheed;

I sey namoore, but in this jolynesse
I lete hem, til men to the soper dresse.
The styward bit the spices for to hye,
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;
The usshers and the squiers been ygoon,

The spices and the wyn is come anoon,
They ete and drynke, and whan this hadde an ende,
Unto the temple, as reson was, they wende.
The service doon, they soupen al by day;
What nedeth me rehercen hir array?

Ech man woot wel, that at a kynges feeste
Hath plentee, to the mooste and to the leeste,
And deyntees mo than been in my knowyng.
At after soper gooth this noble kyng,
To seen this hors of bras, with al the route

Of lordes, and of ladyes hym aboute.
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,
That syn the grete sege of Troie was,
Ther as men wondreden on an hors also,
Ne was ther swich a wondryng as was tho.

But fynally, the kyng axeth this knyght
The vertu of this courser, and the myght;
And preyde hym to telle his governaunce.
This hors anoon bigan to trippe and daunce,
Whan that this knyght leyde hand upon his reyne,

And seyde, "Sire, ther is namoore to seyne,
But whan yow list to ryden any where,
Ye mooten trille a pyn, stant in his ere,
Which I shal telle yow bitwix us two.
Ye moote nempne hym to what place also,

Or to what contree, that yow list to ryde,
And whan ye com ther as yow list abyde,
Bidde hym descende, and trille another pyn,
(For therin lith theeffect of al the gyn)
And he wol doun descende, and doon youre wille.

And in that place he wol stonde stille,
Though al the world the contrarie hadde yswore;
He shal nat thennes been ydrawe ne ybore.
Or, if yow liste, bidde hym thennes goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wol varysshe anoon

Out of the sighte of every maner wight,
And com agayn, be it day or nyght,
Whan that yow list to clepen hym ageyn,
In swich a gyse as I shal to yow seyn,
Bitwixe yow and me, and that ful soone.

Ride whan yow list; ther is namoore to doone."
Enformed whan the kyng was of that knyght,
And hath conceyved in his wit aright
The manere and the forme of al this thyng,

Thus glad and blithe this noble doughty kyng

Repeireth to his revel as biforn,
The brydel is unto the tour yborn,
And kept among hise jueles, leeve and deere.
The hors vanysshed, I noot in what manere,
Out of hir sighte; ye gete namoore of me.

But thus I lete in lust and jolitee
This Cambynskan, hise lordes festeiynge,
Til wel ny the day bigan to sprynge.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

The norice of digestioun, the sleepe,
Gan on hem wynke, and bad hem taken keepe,
That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;
And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,
And seyde, "It was tyme to lye adoun,

For blood was in his domynacioun.
Cherisseth blood, natures freend," quod he.
They thanken hym, galpynge, by two, by thre,
And every wight gan drawe hym to his reste,
As sleep hem bad; they tooke it for the beste.

Hir dremes shul nat been ytoold for me;
Ful were hir heddes of fumositee,
That causeth dreem, of which ther nys no charge.
They slepen til that it was pryme large,
The mooste part, but it were Canacee;

She was ful mesurable, as wommen be.
For of hir fader hadde she take leve
To goon to reste, soone after it was eve.
Hir liste nat appalled for to be,
Ne on the morwe unfeestlich for to se:

And slepte hir firste sleepe, and thanne awook;
For swich a joye she in hir herte took,
Bothe of hir queynte ryng and hire mirrour,
That twenty tyme she changed hir colour,
And in hir sleep right for impressioun

Of hir mirrour she hadde a visioun.
Wherfore, er that the sonne gan up glyde,
She cleped on hir maistresse, hir bisyde,
And seyde, that hir liste for to ryse.
These olde wommen that been gladly wyse,

As hir maistresse answerde hir anon,
And seyde, "Madame, whider wil ye goon
Thus erly, for the folk been alle on reste?"
"I wol," quod she, "arise, for me leste
No lenger for to slepe; and walke aboute."

Hir maistresse clepeth wommen a greet route,

And up they rysen wel an ten or twelve.
Up riseth fresshe Canacee hirselve,
As rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne,
That in the Ram is foure degrees upronne,

Noon hyer was he, whan she redy was;
And forth she walketh esily a pas,
Arrayed after the lusty sesoun soote,
Lightly for to pleye and walke on foote,
Nat but with fyve or sixe of hir meynee;

And in a trench forth in the park gooth she.
The vapour, which that fro the erthe glood,
Made the sonne to seme rody and brood;
But natheless, it was so fair a sighte
That it made alle hir hertes for to lighte,

What for the sesoun and the morwentyng,
And for the foweles that she herde synge;
For right anon she wiste what they mente
Right by hir song, and knew al hir entente.
The knotte, why that every tale is toold,

If it be taried til that lust be coold
Of hem that han it after herkned yoore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the moore,
For fulsomnesse of his prolixitee;
And by the same resoun thynketh me,

I sholde to the knotte condescende,
And maken of hir walkyng soone an ende.
Amydde a tree fordryed, as whit as chalk,
As Canacee was pleyyng in hir walk,
Ther sat a faucon over hir heed ful hye,

That with a pitous voys so gan to crye
That all the wode resounded of hir cry.
Ybeten hath she hirselve so pitously
With bothe hir wynges, til the rede blood
Ran endelong the tree ther as she stood,

And evere in oon she cryde alwey and shrighthe,
And with hir beek hirselve so she prighthe,
That ther nys tygre, ne noon so crueel beast
That dwelleth outhere in wode or in forest
That nolde han wept, if that he wepe koude

For sorwe of hir, she shrighthe alwey so loude.
For ther nas nevere yet no man on lyve
(If that I koude a faucon wel discryve),
That herde of swich another of fairnesse,
As wel of plumage as of gentillesse

Of shape and al that myghte yrekened be.
A faucon peregryn thanne semed she
Of fremde land, and everemoore as she stood
She swowneth now and now for lakke of blood,
Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree.

This faire kynges doghter Canacee,
That on hir fynger baar the queynte ryng,
Thurgh which she understood wel every thyng
That any fowel may in his leden seyn,
And koude answeren hym in his ledene ageyn,

Hath understonde what this faucoun seyde,
And wel neigh for the routhe almoost she deyde.
And to the tree she gooth ful hastily,
And on this faucoun looketh pitously,
And heeld hir lappe abrood, for wel she wiste

The faucoun moste fallen fro the twiste,
Whan that it swowned next, for lakke of blood.
A longe while to wayten hir she stood,
Til atte laste she spak in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye shal after heere.

"what is the cause, if it be for to telle,
That ye be in this furial pyne of helle?"
Quod Canacee unto the hauk above,
"Is this for sorwe of deeth, or los of love?
For, as I trowe, these been causes two

That causeth moost a gentil herte wo.
Of oother harm it nedeth nat to speke,
For ye yourself upon yourself yow wreke,
Which proveth wel, that oother love or drede
Moot been enchesoun of your cruel dede,

Syn that I see noon oother wight yow chace.
For love of God as dooth yourselven grace.
Or what may been your helpe? for west nor est
Ne saugh I nevere er now no bryd ne beest
That ferde with hymself so pitously.

Ye sle me with your sorwe, verrailly,
I have of yow so greet compassioun.
For Goddes love com fro the tree adoun,
And as I am a kynges doghter trewe,
If that I verrailly the cause knewe

Of your disese, if it lay in my myght
I wolde amenden it er that it were nyght,
As wisly helpe me, grete god of kynde!
And herbes shal I right ynowe yfynde,
To heele with youre hurtes hastily."

Tho shrighthe this faucoun moore yet pitously
Than ever she dide, and fil to grounde anon
And lith aswowne, deed, and lyk a stoon,
Til Canacee hath in hir lappe hir take
Unto the tyme she gan of swough awake.

And after that she of hir swough gan breyde,
Right ibn hir hsukes ledene thus she seyde:
"That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,
Fellynge his similitude in peynes smerte,
Is preved al day, as men may it see,

As wel by werk as by auctoritee.
For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.
I se wel, that ye han of my distresse
Compassioun, my faire Canacee,
Of verray wommanly benignytee

That nature in youre principles hath set.
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obeye unto youre herte free,
And for to maken othere be war by me,
As by the whelp chasted is the leoun,

Right for that cause and that condusioun
Whil that I have a leyser and a space,
Myn harm I wol confessen, er I pace."
And evere whil that oon hir sorwe tolde,
That oother weep, as she to water wolde,

Til that the faucoun bad hire to be stille;
And with a syk right thus she seyde hir wille.
"Ther I was bred, allas, that harde day!
And fostred in a roche of marbul gray
So tendrely, that no thyng eyled me;

I nyste nat what was adversitee,
Til I koude flee ful hye under the sky.
Tho dwelte a tercelet me faste by
That semed welle of alle gentillesse,
Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse;

It was so wrapped under humble cheere,
And under hewe of trouthe in swich manere,
Under plesance, and under bisy peyne,
That I ne koude han wend he koude feyne,
So depe in greyn he dyed his colours.

Right as a serpent hit hym under floures
Til he may seen his tyme for to byte,
Right so this god of love, this ypocryte,
Dooth so hise cerymonyys and obeisaunces,
And kepeth in semblant alle hise observaunces

That sowneth into gentillesse of love.
As in a tounge is al the faire above,
And under is the corps swich as ye woot,
Swich was this ypocrite, bothe coold and hoot;
And in this wise he served his entente,

That-save the feend-noon wiste what he mente;
Til he so longe hadde wopen and compleyned,
And many a yeer his service to me feyned,
Til that myn herte, to pitous and to nyce,
Al innocent of his corouned malice,

For-fered of his deeth, as thoughte me,
Upon hise othes and his seuretee,
Graunted hym love up this condicioun
That everemoore myn honour and renoun

Were saved, bothe privee and apert.

This is to seyn, that after his desert
I yaf hym al myn herte and al my thoght-
God woot and he, that ootherwise noght!-
And took his herte in chaunge for myn for ay.
But sooth is seyde, goon sithen many a day,

'A trewe wight and a theef thenken nat oon.'
And whan he saugh the thyng so fer ygoon,
That I hadde graunted hym fully my love,
In swich a gyse as I have seyde above,
And yeven hym my trewe herte, as free

As he swoor he his herte yaf to me,
Anon this tigre ful of doublenesse
Fil on hise knees, with so devout humblesse,
With so heigh reverence, and as by his cheere
So lyk a gentil love of manere,

So ravysshed, as it semed, for the joye,
That nevere Jason, ne Parys of Troye,
Jason? certes, ne noon oother man
Syn Lameth was, that alderfirst bigan
To loven two, as writen folk biforn,

Ne nevere syn the firste man was born,
Ne koude man, by twenty thousand part,
Countrefete the sophymes fo his art;
Ne were worhty unbokelen his galoche,
Ther doublenesse or feynyng sholde approche,

Ne so koude thonke a wight as he dide me.
His manere was an hevene for to see
Til any womman, were she never so wys;
So peynted he and kembde at point-devys
As wel hise wordes as his contenance

And I so loved hym for his oveisaunce
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that any thyng hym smerte,
Al were it nevere so lite, and I it wiste,
Me thoughte I felte deeth myn herte twiste.

And shortly so ferforth this thyng is went,
That my wyl was his willes instrument;
This is to seyn, my wyl obeyed his wyl
In alle thyng as fer as resoun fil,
Kepyng the boundes of my worship evere.

Ne nevere hadde I thyng so lief, ne levere,
As hym, God woot! ne nevere shal namo.
This lasteth lenger than a yeer or two,
That I supposed of hym noght but good.
But finally, thus atte laste it stood,

That Fortune wolde that he moste twynne
Out of that place, which that I was inne.
Wher me was wo that is no questioun;

I kan nat make of it discripcioun.
For o thyng dare I tellen boldely,

I knowe what is the peyne of deeth therby.
Swich harme I felte, for he ne myghte bileve;
So on a day of me he took his leve
So sorswefully eek, that I wende verrailly,
That he had felt as mucche harm as I,

Whan that I herde hym speke, and saugh his hewe.
But nathelees, I thoughte he was so trewe,
And eek that he repaire sholde ageyn
Withinne a litel while, sooth to seyn,
And resoun wolde eek that he moste go

For his honour, as ofte it happeth so,
That I made vertu of necessitee,
And took it wel, syn that it moste be.
As I best myghte, I hidde fro hym my sorwe,
And took hym by the hond, seint John to borwe,

And seyde hym thus, 'Lo I am youres al.
Beth swich as I to yow have been, and shal.'
What he answerde, it nedeth noght reherce,
Who kan sey bet than he? who kan do werse?
Whan he hath al wel seyde, thanne hath he doon;

'Therefore bihoveth hire a ful long spoon
That shal ete with a feend,' thus herde I seye.
So atte laste he moste forth his weye,
And forth he fleeth, til he cam ther hym leste.
Whan it cam hym to purpos for to reste,

I trowe he hadde thilke text in mynde
That 'alle thyng repeiryng to his kynde
Gladeth hymself;' thus seyn men, as I gesse.
Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,
As briddes doon, that men in cages fede,

For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,
And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk,
And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed, and milk,
Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe,
He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,

And to the wode he wole and wormes ete;
So newefangel been they of hir mete,
And loven novelrie of propre kynde.
No gentilnesse of blood ne may hem bynde.
So ferde this tercelet, allas, the day!

Though he were gentil born, and fressh, and gay,
And goodlich for to seen, humble and free,
He saugh upon a tyme a kyte flee,
And sodeynly he loved this kyte so
That al his love is clene fro me ago,

And hath his trouthe falsed in this wyse.
Thus hath the kyte my love in hire servyse,

And I am lorn withouten remedie."
And with that word this faucoun gan to crie,
And swowned eft in Canacees barm.

Greet was the sorwe for the haukes harm
That Canacee and alle hir wommen made.
They nyste hou they myghte the faucoun glade;
But Canacee hom bereth hir in hir lappe,
And softely in plastres gan hir wrappe,

Ther as she with hir beek hadde hurt hirselve.
Now kan nat Canacee but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and make saves newe
Of herbes precieuse and fyne of hewe,
To heelen with this hauk; fro day to nyght

She dooth hir bisynesse and al hir myght.
And by hir beddes heed she made a mewe,
And covered it with veluettes blewe,
In signe of trouthe that is in wommen sene.
And al withoute, the mewe is peynted grene,

In which were ypeynted alle these false fowles,
As beth these tidyves, tercelettes, and owles,
Right for despit were peynted hem bisyde,
And pyes on hem for to crie and chyde.
Thus lete I Canacee hir hauk kepyng;

I wol namoore as now speke of hir ryng,
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn
How that this faucoun gat hire love ageyn
Repentant, as the storie telleth us,
By mediacioun of Cambalus,

The kynges sone, of which that I yow tolde.
But hennesforth I wol my proces holde
To speken of adventures and of batailles,
That nevere yet was herd so grete mervailles.
First wol I telle yow of Cambynskan,

That in his tyme many a citee wan;
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful ofte in greet peril he was,
Ne hadde he be holpen by the steede of bras;

And after wol I speke of Cambalo
That faught in lystes with the bretheren two
For Canacee, er that he myghte hir wynne.
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.

Explicit secunda pars.

Incipit pars tercia.

Appollo whirleth up his chaar so hye
Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye-

(Unfinished.)

PROLOGUE TO THE FRANKELEYNS TALE

Heere folwen the wordes of the Frankelyn to the Squier,
and the wordes of the hoost to the Frankelyn.

"In feith, Squier, thow hast thee wel yquit,
And gentilly I preise wel thy wit,"
Quod the Frankeleyn, "considerynge thy yowthe,
So feelyngly thou spekest, sire, I allow the;
As to my doom, ther is noon that is heere

Of eloquence that shal be thy peere,
If that thou lyve-God yeve thee good chaunce,
And in vertu sende thee continuance!
For of thy speche I hace greet deyntee;
I have a sone, and, by the Trinitee,

I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,
He were a man of swich discrecioun
As that ye been; fy on possessioun
But if a man be vertuous withal!

I have my sone snybbed, and yet shal,
For he to vertu listneth nat entende,
But for to pleye at dees, and to despende
And lese al that he hath, is his usage.
And he hath levere talken with a page

Than to comune with any gentil wight
There he myghte lerne gentillesse aright."
"Straw for youre gentillesse," quod our Hoost,
"What, Frankeleyn, pardee! sire, wel thou woost
That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste

A tale or two, or breken his biheste."
"That knowe I wel, sire," quod the Frankeleyn,
"I prey yow, haveth me nat in desdeyn
Though to this man I speke a word or two."
"Telle on thy tale, withouten wordes mo."

"Gladly, sire Hoost," quod he, "I wole obeye
Unto your wyl; now herkneth what I seye.
I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse
As fer as that my wittes wol suffyse;
I prey to God that it may plesen yow,
Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow."

THE FRANKELEYNS TALE

The prologe of the Frankeleyns tale.

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes,
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe,
Or elles redder hem, for hir plesaunce.

And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,
Which I shal seyn, with good-wyl, as I kan.
But sires, by cause I am a burel man,
At my bigynnyng first I yow biseche,
Have me excused of my rude speche.

I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;
Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.
I sleep nevere on the Mount of Parnaso,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero.
Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,

But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche, as men dye or peynte.
Colours of rethoryk been me to queynte,
My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere;
But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.

Heere bigynneth the Frankeleyns tale.

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,
Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne
To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a greet emprise,
He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.

For she was oon the faireste under sonne,
And eek therto comen of so heigh kynrede
That wel unnethes dorste this knyght for drede
Telle hir his wo, his peyne, and his distresse.
But atte laste, she for his worthynesse,

And namely for his meke obeysaunce,
Hath swiche a pitee caught of his penaunce,
That pryvely she fil of his accord
To take hym for hir housbonde and hir lord-
Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wyves-

And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves,
Of his free wyl he swoor hir as a knyght,
That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hir jalousie,

But hir obeye and folwe hir wyl in al
As any love to his lady shal;
Save that the name of soveraynetee,
That wolde he have, for shame of his degree.
She thanked hym, and with ful greet humblesse

She seyde, "Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,
Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,
As in my gilt, were outhere werre or stryf.
Sir, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf,

Have heer my trouthe til that myn herte breste."
Thus been they bothe in quiete and in reste.

For o thyng, sires, saufly dar I seye,
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,
If they wol longe holden compaignye.

Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye;
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth hise wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.
Wommen of kynde desiren libertee,

And nat to been constreyned as a thral-
And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal.
Looke who that is moost pacient in love,
He is at his avantage al above.
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,

For it venquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,
Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.
For every word men may nat chide or pleyne,
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wherso ye wole or noon.

For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or seith som tyme amys.
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun
Wyn, wo, or chaungynge of complexioun
Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.

On every wrong a man may nat be wroken;
After the tyme moste be temperaunce
To every wight that kan on governaunce.
And therefore hath this wise worthy knyght,
To lyve in ese, suffrance hir bihight,

And she to hym ful wisly gan to swere
That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.
Heere may men seen an humble wys accord!
Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord,
Servant in love, and lord in mariage;

Thanne was he bothe in lordship and servage-
Servage? nay but in lordshipe above,
Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love-
His lady, certes, and his wyf also,
The which that lawe of love acordeth to.

And whan he was in this prosperitee,
Hoom with his wyf he gooth to his contree,
Nat fer fro Pedmark, ther his dwellyng was,
Where as he lyveth in blisse and in solas.
Who koude telle, but he hadde wedded be,

The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?
A yeer and moore lasted this blisful lyg,
Til that the knyght of which I speke of thus,
That of Kayrrud was cleped Arveragus,

Shoop hym to goon, and dwelle a yeer or tweyne,

In Engelond, that cleped was eek Briteyne,
To seke in armes worship and honour-
For al his lust he sette in swich labour-
And dwelled there two yeer, the book seith thus.

Now wol I stynten of this Arveragus
And speken I wole of Dorigene his wyf,
That loveth hir housbonde as hir hertes lyf.
For his absence wepeth she and siketh,
As doon these noble wyves whan hem liketh.

She moorneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneth,
Desir of his presence hir so destreyneth,
That al this wyde world she sette at noght,
Hir freendes whiche that knewe hir hevyn thought,
Conforten hir in al that ever they may.

They prechen hir, they telle hir nyght and day
That causelees she sleeth hirself, allas!
And every confort possible in this cas
They doon to hir, with all hir bisynesse,
Al for to make hir leve hir hevynesse.

By proces, as ye knowen everichoon,
Men may so longe graven in a stoon,
Til som figure therinne emprented be.
So longe han they comforted hir, til she
Receyved hath by hope and by resoun

The emprentyng of hir consolacioun,
Thurgh which hir grete sorwe gan aswage;
She may nat alwey duren in swich rage.
And eek Arveragus, in al this care,
Hath sent hir lettres hoom of his welfare,

And that he wol com hastily agayn,
Or elles hadde this sorwe hir herte slayn.
Hir freendes sawe hir sorwe gan to slake,
And preyden hir on knees, for Goddes sake,
To com and romen hir in compaignye,

Away to dryve hir derke fantasye.
And finally she graunted that requeste,
For wel she saugh that it was for the beste.

Now stood hir castel faste by the see;
And often with hir freendes walketh she

Hir to disporte, upon the bank an heigh,
Where as she many a ship and barge seigh
Seillynge hir cours, where as hem liste go.
But thanne was that a parcel of hir wo,
For to hirself ful ofte "allas," seith she,

"Is ther no ship of so many as I se
Wol bryngen hoom my lord? thanne were myn herte
Al warissed of hisse bittre peynes smerte."
Another tyme ther wolde she sitte and thynke
And caste hir eyen downward fro the brynke;

But whan she saugh the reisly rokkes blake,
For verray feere, so wolde hir herte quake
That on hir feet she myghte hir noght sustene.
Thanne wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene,
And pitously into the see biholde,

And seyn right thus, with sorweful sikes colde:
"Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce
Ledest the world by certein governaunce,
In ydel, as men seyn, ye no thyng make.
But, lord, these grisly feendly rokkes blake,

That semen rather a foul confusioun
Of werk, than any fair creacioun
Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable?
For by this werk, south, north, ne west ne eest

Ther nys yfostred man, ne bryd, ne beest.
It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth,
Se ye nat, lord, how mankynde it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodyes of mankynde
Han rokkes slayn, al be they nat in mynde;

Which mankynde is so fair part of thy werk
That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.
Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee
Toward mankynde; but how thanne may it bee
That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,

Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?
I woot wel clerkes wol seyn, as hem leste,
By argumentz, that al is for the beste,
Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe,
But thilke God, that made wynd to blowe,

As kepe my lord; this my conclusioun.
To clerkes lete I al this disputisoun-
But wolde God, that alle these rokkes blake,
Were sonken into helle for his sake!
These rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere!"

Thus wolde she seyn, with many a pitous teere.
Hir freendes sawe that ti was no disport
To romen by the see, but disconfort,
And shopen for to pleyen somwher elles;
They leden hir by ryveres and by welles,

And eek in othere places delitables,
They dauncen, and they pleyen at ches and tables.
So on a day, right in the morwe tyde,
Unto a gardyn that was ther bisyde,
In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce

Of vitaille and of oother purveiaunce,
They goon and pleye hem al the longe day.
And this was in the sixte morwe of May,
Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures
This gardyn ful of leves and of floures,

And craft of mannes hand so curiously
Arrayed hadde this gardyn trewely,
That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys
But if it were the verray Paradys.
The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte

Wolde han maked any herte lighte
That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse
Or to greet sorwe helde it in distresse;
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.
At after dyner gonne they to daunce

And synge also, save Dorigen allone,
Which made alwey hir compleint and hir moone
For she ne saugh hym on the daunce go
That was hir housbonde, and hir love also.
But nathelees she moste a tyme abyde,

And with good hope lete hir sorwe slyde.
Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,
Daunced a squier biforn Dorigen
That fressher was, and jolyer of array,
As to my doom, than is the monthe of May.

He syngeth, daunceth, passynge any man
That is or was, sith that the world bigan.
Therwith he was, if men sholde hym discryve,
Oon of the beste farynge man of lyve;
Yong, strong, right vertuous, and riche, and wys,

And wel biloved, and holden in greet prys.
And shortly, if the sothe I tellen shal,
Unwityng of this Dorigen at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,

Hadde loved hir best of any creature
Two yeer and moore, as was his aventure;
But nevere dorste he tellen hir his grevaunce,
Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce.
He was despeyred, no thyng dorste he seye

Save in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye
His wo, as in a general compleynyng.
He seyde he lovede, and was biloved no thyng,
Of swich matere made he manye layes,
Songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes,

How that he dorste nat his sorwe telle,
But langwissheth, as a furye dooth in helle,
And dye he moste, he seyde, as dide Ekko
For Narcisus, that dorste nat telle hir wo,
In oother manere than ye heere me seye,

Ne dorste he nat to hir his wo biwreye,
Save that paraventure som tyme at daunces,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir observaunces,
It may wel be he looked on hir face,

In swich a wise as man that asketh grace;

But no thyng wiste she of his entente.
Nathelees it happed, er they thennes wente,
By cause that he was hir neighebour,
And was a man of worship and honour,
And hadde yknowen hym of tyme yoore,

They fille in speche, and forthe moore and moore
Unto this purpos drough Aurelius.
And whan he saugh his tyme, he seyde thus:
"Madame," quod he, "by God that this world made,
So that I wiste it myghte your herte glade,

I wolde that day that youre Arveragus
Wente over the see, that I, Aurelius,
Hadde went ther nevere I sholde have come agayn.
For wel I woot my servyce is in vayn,
My gerdoun is but brestyng of myn herte.

Madame, reweth upon my peynes smerte,
For with a word ye may me sleen or save.
Heere at your feet, God wolde that I were grave,
I ne have as now no leyser moore to seye,
Have mercy, sweete, or ye wol do me deye."

She gan to looke upon Aurelius:
"Is this youre wyl!" quod she, "and sey ye thus?
"Nevere erst," quod she, "ne wiste I what ye mente.
But now, Aurelie, I knowe youre entente.
By thilke God, that yaf me soule and lyf,

Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf,
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit.
I wol been his to whom that I am knyht.
Taak this for fynal answeere as of me."
But after that, in pley thus seyde she,

"Aurelie," quod she, "by heighe God above,
Yet wolde I graunte yow to been youre love,
Syn I yow se so pitously complayne.
Looke, what day that endelong Britayne
Ye remoeve alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,

That they ne lette shipe ne boot to goon,
I seye, whan ye han maad the coost so clene
Of rokkes that ther nys no stoon ysene,
Thanne wol I love yow best of any man!
Have heer my trouthe in al that evere I kan."

"Is ther noon oother grace in yow?" quod he.
"No, by that lord," quod she, "that maked me;
For wel I woot that it shal nevere bityde;
Lat swiche folies out of your herte slyde.
What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf

For to go love another mannes wyf,
That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh?"
Aurelius ful ofte soore siketh,

Wo was Aurelie, whan that he this herde,
And with a sorweful herte he thus answered.

"Madame," quod he, "this were an impossible;
Thanne moot I dye of sodeyn deeth horrible."
And with that word he turned hym anon.
Tho coome hir othere freendes many oon,
And in the aleyes romeden up and doun,

And no thyng wiste of this conclusioun,
But sodeynly bigonne revel newe,
Til that the brighte sonne loste his hewe,
For thorisonte hath reft the sonne his lyght-
This is as muche to seye as, ti was nyght-

And hoom they goon in joye and in solas,
Save oonly wrecche Aurelius, allas!
He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte;
He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte;
Hym semed that he felte his herte colde;

Up to the hevene hise handes he gan holde,
And on hise knowes bare he sette hym doun,
And in his ravyng seyde his orisoun.
For verray wo out of his wit he breyde;
He nyste what he spak, but thus he seyde:

With pitous herte his pleynt hath he bigonne
Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne
He seyde, "Appollo, God and governour
Of every plaunte, herbe, tree, and flour
That yevest after thy declinacioun

To ech of hem his tyme and his sesoun,
As thyn herberwe chaungeth lowe or heighe,
Lord Phebus, cast thy mericiable eighe
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorn.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deeth ysworn

Withoute gilt, but thy benignytee
Upon my dedly herte have som pitee.
For wel I woot, lord Phebus, if yow lest,
Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.
Now voucheth sauf that I may yow devyse

How that I may been holpen and in what wyse.
Your blisful suster, Lucina the sheene,
That of the see is chief goddesse and queene,
(Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,
Yet emperisse aboven hym is she)

Ye knowen wel, lord, that right as hir desir
Is to be quyked and lightned of youre fir,
For which she folweth yow ful bisily,
Right so the see desireth naturelly
To folwen hir, as she that is goddesse

Bothe in the see and ryveres moore and lesse.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeste;

Do this miracle, or do myn herte breste,
That now next at this opposicioun
Which in the signe shal be of the Leoun,

As preieth hir, so greet a flood to brynge
That fyve fadme at the leeste it oversprynge
The hyste rokke in Armorik Briteyne,
And lat this flood endure yeres tweyne.
Thanne, certes, to my lady may I seye

'Holdeth youre heste, the rokkes been aweye.'
Lord Phebus, dooth this miracle for me,
Preye hir she go no faster cours than ye.
I seye, preyeth your suster that she go
No faster cours than ye thise yeres two.

Thanne shal she been evene atte fulle alway;
And spryng flood laste bothe nyght and day;
And but she vouche sauf in swich manere
To graunte me my sovereyn lady deere,
Prey hir to synken every rok adoun

Into hir owene dirke regioun
Under the ground ther Pluto dwelleth inne,
Or nevere mo shal I my lady wynne.
Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke,
Lord Phebus; se the teeris on my cheke,

And of my peyne have som compassioun!"
And with that word in swowne he fil adoun,
And longe tyme he lay forth in a traunce.
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,
Up caughte hym, and to bedde he hath hym broght.

Dispeyred in this torment and this thoght
Lete I this woful creature lye;
Chese he for me wheither he wol lyve or dye.
Arveragus with heele and greet honour,
As he that was of chivalrie the flour,

Is comen hoom, and othere worthy men.
O blisful artow now, thou Dorigen!
That hast thy lusty housbonde in thyne armes,
The fresshe knyght, the worthy man or armes,
That loveth thee, as his owene hertes lyf.

No thyng list hym to been ymaginatyf
If any wight hadde spoke, whil he was oute,
To hire of love; he hadde of it no doute,
He noght entendeth to no swich mateere,
But daunceth, justeth, maketh hir good cheere,

And thus in joye and blisse I lete hem dwelle,
And of the sike Aurelius I wol telle.
In langour and in torment furyes
Two yeer and moore lay wrecche Aurelyus,
Eer any foot he myghte on erthe gon;

Ne confort in this tyme hadde he noon,

Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of al this wo and al this werk;
For to noon oother creature, certeyn,
Of this matere he dorste no word seyn.

Under his brest he baar it moore secree
Than evere dide Pamphilus for Galathee.
His brest was hool withoute for to sene,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene.
And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure

In surgerye is perilous the cure,
But men myghte touche the arwe, or come therby.
His brother weep and wayled pryvely,
Til atte laste hym fil in remembraunce
That whiles he was at Orliens in Fraunce,

As yonge clerkes, that been lykerous
To reden artes that been curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particular sciences for to lerne,
He hym remembred, that upon a day

At Orliens in studie a book he say
Of magyk natureel, which his felawe,
That was that tyme a bachelor of lawe-
Al were he ther to lerne another craft-
Hadde prively upon his desk ylaft;

Which book spak muchel of the operaciouns,
Touchynge the eighte and twenty mansiouns
That longen to the moone, and swich folye
As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye.
For hooly chirches feith in oure bileve

Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembraunce,
Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,
And to hymself he seyde pryvely,
"My brother shal be warisshed hastily;

For I am siker that ther be sciences
By whiche men make diverse apparences
Swiche as these subtile tregetoures pleye;
For ofte at feestes have I wel herd seye
That tregetours withinne an halle large

Have maad come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and down.
Somytyme hath semed come a grym leoun;
And somtyme floures sprynge as in a mede,
Somytyme a vyne, and grapes white and rede,

Somytyme a castel al of lym and stoon;
And whan hem lyked, voyded it anon,
Thus semed it to every mannes sighte.
Now thanne conclude I thus, that if I myghte

At Orliens som oold felawe yfynde

That hadde this moones mansions in mynde,
Or oother magyk natureel above,
He sholde wel make my brother han his love;
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes sighte, that alle the rokkes blake

Of Britaigne weren yvoyded everichon,
But looketh now for no necligence or slouthe
Ye tarie us heere, no lenger than to-morwe."
"Nay," quod this clerk, "have heer my feith to borwe."
To bedde is goon Aurelius whan hym leste,

And wel ny al that nyght he hadde his reste;
What for his labour and his hope of blisse,
His woful hrete of penaunce hadde a lisse.
Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
To Britaigne tooke they the righte way,

Aurelie and this magicien bisyde,
And been descended ther they wolde abyde.
And this was, as thise bookes me remembre,
The colde frosty sesoun of Decembre.
Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk latoun,

That in this hoothe declynacioun
Shoon as the burned gold, and stremes brighte;
But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
Where as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn.
The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,

Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd;
Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn.
Biforn hym stant brawen of the tusked swyn,

And 'Nowel' crieth every lusty man.
Aurelius, in al that evere he kan,
Dooth to his master chiere and reverence,
And preyeth hym to doon his diligence
To bryngen hym out of his peynes smerte,

Or with a swerd that he wolde slitte his herte.
This subtil clerk swich routhe had of this man,
That nyght and day he spedde hym that he kan
To wayten a tyme of his conclusioun,
This is to seye, to maken illusioun

By swich an apparence or jogelrye-
I ne kan no termes of astrologye-
That she and every wight sholde wene and seye
That of Britaigne the rokkes were aweye,
Or ellis they were sonken under grounde.

So atte laste he hath his tyme yfounde
To maken hise japes and his wrecchednesse
Of swich a supersticious cursednesse.
Hise tables Tolletanes forth he brought,
Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,

Neither his collect ne hise expans yeeris,
Ne hise rootes, ne hise othere geeris,
As been his centris and hise argumentz,
And hise proporcioneles convenientz
For hise equacions in every thyng.

And by his eighte speere in his wirkyng
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove
Fro the heed of thilke fixe Aries above
That in the ninthe speere considered is.
Ful subtilly he kalkuled al this.

Whan he hadde founde his firste mansioun,
He knew the remenaunt by proporcioun,
And knew the arisyng of his moone weel,
And in whos face and terme, and everydeel;
And knew ful weel the moones mansioun

Acordaunt to his operacioun,
And knew also hise othere observaunces
For swiche illusiouns and swiche meschaunces
As hethen folk useden in thilke dayes;-
For which no lenger maked he delayes,

But thurgh his magik, for a wyke or tweye,
It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye.
Aurelius, which that yet despeired is,
Wher he shal han his love, or fare amys,
Awaiteth nyght and day on this myracle.

And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,
That voyded were thise rokkes everychon,
Doun to hise maistres feet he fil anon,
And seyde, "I woful wrecche, Aurelius,
Thanke yow, lord, and lady myn, Venus,

That me han holpen fro my cares colde."
And to the temple his wey forth hath he holde
Where as he knew he sholde his lady see,
And whan he saugh his tyme, anon right hee
With dredful herte and with ful humble cheere

Salewed hath his sovereyn lady deere.
"My righte lady," quod this woful man,
"Whom I moost drede and love as I best kan,
And lothest were of al this world displese,
Nere it that I for yow have swich disese

That I moste dyen heere at youre foot anon,
Noght wolde I telle how me is wo bigon;
But, certes, outhere moste I dye or pleyne,
Ye sle me giltelees for verray peyne.
But of my deeth thogh that ye have no routhe,

Avyseth yow er that ye breke youre trouthe.
Repenteth yow for thilke God above,
Er ye me sleen by cause that I yow love.
For madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight;

Nat that I chalange any thyng of right

Of yow, my sovereyn lady, but youre grace;
But in a gardyn yond at swich a place
Ye woot right wel what ye bihighten me,
And in myn hand youre trouthe plighen ye
To love me best, God woot ye seyde so,

Al be that I unworthy be therto.
Madame, I speke it for the honour of yow,
Moore than to save myn hertes lyf right now.
I have do so as ye comanded me,
And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go see.

Dooth as yow list, have youre biheste in mynde,
For, quyk or deed, right there ye shal me fynde.
In yow lith al, to do me lyve of deye,
But wel I woot the rokkes been aweye!"
 He taketh his leve, and she astonied stood,

In al hir face nas a drope of blood.
She wende nevere han come in swich a trappe.
"Allas," quod she, "that evere this sholde happe.
For wende I nevere, by possibilitee,
That swich a monstre or merveille myghte be.

It is agayns the proces of nature."
And hoom she goth a sorweful creature,
For verray feere unnethe may she go.
She wepeth, wailleth, al a day or two,
And swowneth that it routhe was to see;

But why it was, to no wight tolde shee,
For out of towne was goon Arveragus.
But to hirself she spak, and seyde thus,
With face pale and with ful sorweful cheere,
In hire compleynt, as ye shal after heere.

"Allas!" quod she, "on thee, Fortune, I pleyne,
That unwar wrapped hast me in thy cheyne;
For which tescape woot I no socour
Save oonly deeth or elles dishonour;
Oon of these two bihoveth me to chese.

But nathelees, yet have I levere to lese
My lyf, thanne of my body have a shame,
Or knowe myselven fals or lese my name,
And with my deth I may be quyt, ywis;
Hath ther nat many a noble wyf er this

And many a mayde yslayn hirself, allas,
Rather than with hir body doon trespass?
Yis, certes, lo, these stories beren witnesse,
Whan thritty tirauntz, ful of cursednesse,
Hadde slayn Phidoun in Atthenes, at feste,

They comanded hise doghtres for tareste,
And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit,
Al naked, to fulfille hir foul delit,

And in hir fadres blood they made hem daunce
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem myschaunce;

For which thise woful maydens ful of drede,
Rather than they wolde lese hir maydenhede,
They prively been stirt into a welle
And dreynte hemselven, as the bookes telle.
They of Mecene leete enquere and seke

Of Lacedomye fifty maydens eke,
On whiche they wolden doon hir lecherye;
But was ther noon of al that compaignye
That she nas slayn, and with a good entente
Chees rather for to dye than assente

To been oppressed of hir maydenhede.
Why sholde I thanne to dye been in drede?
Lo, eek the tiraunt Aristoclidis,
That loved a mayden heet Stymphalides,
Whan that hir fader slayn was on a nyght,

Unto Dianes temple goth she right,
And hente the ymage in hir handes two;
Fro which ymage wolde she nevere go,
No wight ne myghte hir handes of it arace,
Til she was slayn right in the selve place.

Now sith that maydens hadden swich despit,
To been defouled with mannes foul delit,
Wel oghte a wyf rather hirselves slee,
Than be defouled, as it thynketh me.
What shal I seyn of Hasdrubales wyf

That at Cartage birafte hirsself hir lyf?
For whan she saugh that Romayns wan the toun,
She took hir children alle and skipte adoun
Into the fyr, and chees rather to dye
Than any Romayn dide hir vileynye.

Hath nat Lucesse yslayn hirsself, allas,
At Rome whan that she oppressed was
Of Tarquyn, for hir thoughte it was a shame
To lyven whan she hadde lost hir name?
The sevene maydens of Melesie also

Han slayn hemsself, for verray drede and wo
Rather than folk of Gawle hem sholde oppresse.
Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Koude I now telle as touchynge this mateere.
Whan Habradate was slayn, his wyf so deere

Hirselves slow, and leet hir blood to glyde
In Habradates woundes depe and wyde;
And seyde, "My body at the leeste way
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may."
What sholde I mo ensamples heer of sayn?

Sith that so manye han hemselven slayn,
Wel rather than they wolde defouled be,

I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To sleen myself, than been defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,

Or rather sleen myself in som manere,
As dide Demociones doghter deere,
By cause that she wolde nat defouled be.
O Cedasus, it is ful greet pitee
To reden how thy doghtren deyde, allas,

That slowe hemself, for swich manere cas!
As greet a pitee was it, or wel moore,
The Theban mayden, that for Nichanore
Hirselven slow right for swich manere wo.
Another Theban mayden dide right so;

For oon of Macidonye hadde hire oppressed,
She with hire deeth hir maydenhede redressed.
What shal I seye of Nicerates wyf,
That for swich cas birafte hirself hir lyf?
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades

His love that rather for to dyen chees
Than for to suffre his body unburyed be.
"Lo, which a wyf was Alceste," quod she,
"What seith Omer of goode Penalopee?
Al Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.

Pardee of Lacedomya is writen thus,
That whan at Troie was slayn Protheselaus,
No lenger wolde she lyve after his day.
The same of noble Porcia telle I may,
Withoute Brutus koude she nat lyve,

To whom she hadde al hool hir herte yeve.
The parfit wyfhod of Arthemesie
Honored is thurgh al the Barbarie.
O Teuta queene, thy wyfly chastitee
To alle wyves may a mirrour bee!

The same thyng I seye of Bilyea,
Of Rodogone, and eek Valeria."
Thus pleyned Dorigene a day or tweye,
Purposynge evere that she wolde deye.
But nathelees, upon the thridde nyght

Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knyght,
And asked hir why that she weep so soore.
And she gan wepen ever lenger the moore.
"Allas!" quod she, "that evere I was born.
Thus have I seyde," quod she, "thus have I sworn;"

And toold hym al as ye han herd bifore,
It nedeth nat reherce it yow namoore.
This housbonde with glad chiere in freendly wyse
Answerde and seyde, as I shal yow devyse,
"Is ther oght elles, Dorigen, but this?"

"Nay, nay," quod she, "God helpe me so, as wys,

This is to mucche, and it were Goddes wille."
"Ye, wyf," quod he, "lat slepen that is stille.
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.
Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay.

For God so wisly have mercy upon me,
I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be
For verray love which that I to yow have,
But if ye sholde your trouthe kepe and save.
Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe."

But with that word he brast anon to wepe
And seyde, "I yow forbede, up peyne of deeth,
That nevere whil thee lasteth lyf ne breeth,
To no wight telle thou of this aventure;
As I may best, I wol my wo endure.

Ne make no contenance of hevynesse,
That folk of yow may demen harm or gesse."
And forth he cleped a squier and a mayde;
"Gooth forth anon with Dorigen," he sayde,
"And bryngeth hir to swich a place anon,"

They take hir leve, and on hir wey they gon,
But they ne weste why she thider wente,
He nolde no wight tellen his entente.
Paraventure, an heep of yow, ywis,
Wol holden hym a lewed man in this,

That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie.
Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie;
She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth,
And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth.
 This squier, which that highte Aurelius,

On Dorigen that was so amorus,
Of aventure happed hir to meete
Amydde the toun, right in the quykkest strete,
As she was bown to goon the wey forth-right
Toward the gardyn, ther as she had hight.

And he was to the gardynward also,
For wel he spyed whan she wolde go
Out of hir hous to any maner place.
But thus they mette, of aventure or grace
And he saleweth hir with glad entente,

And asked of hir whiderward she wente.
And she answerde, half as she were mad,
"Unto the gardyn as myn housbonde bad,
My trouthe for to holde, allas! allas!"
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,

And in his herte hadde greet compassioun
Of hir and of hir lamentacioun,
And of Arveragus, the worthy knyght,
That bad hire holden al that she had hight,
So looth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir trouthe;

And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,
Considerynge the beste on every syde
That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde
Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecchednesse
Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse.-

For which in fewe wordes seyde he thus:
"Madame, seyeth to your lord Arveragus,
That sith I se his grete gentillesse
To yow, and eek I se wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame-and that were routhe-

Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere evere to suffre wo
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.
I yow relesse, madame, into youre hond
Quyrt every surement and every bond,

That ye han maad to me as heer biforn,
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trouthe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve
Of no biheste, and heere I take my leve,
As of the treweste and the beste wyf

That evere yet I knew in al my lyf.
But every wyf be war of hir biheeste,
On Dorigene remembreth atte leeste!
Thus kan a squier doon a gentil dede
As wel as kan a knyght, with outen drede."

She thonketh hym upon hir knees al bare,
And hoom unto hir housbonde is she fare,
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd me sayd;
And be ye siker, he was so weel apayd
That it were impossible me to wryte.

What sholde I lenger of this cas endyte?
Arveragus and Dorigene his wyf
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf,
Nevere eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene.
He cherisseth hir as though she were a queene,

And she was to hym trewe for everemoore.-
Of these two folk ye gete of me namoore.
Aurelius, that his cost hath al forlorn
Curseth the tyme that evere he was born.
"Allas," quod he, "allas, that I bihighte
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wighte
Unto this philosophre! how shal I do?
I se namoore but that I am fordo;
Myn heritage moot I nedes selle
And been a beggere; heere may I nat dwelle,

And shamen al my kynrede in this place,
But I of hym may gete bettre grace.
But nathelees I wole of hym assaye
At certeyn dayes yeer by yeer to paye,
And thanke hym of his grete curteisye;

My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol nat lye."
With herte soor he gooth unto his cofre,
And broghte gold unto this philosophre
The value of fyve hundred pound, I gesse,
And hym bisecheth of his gentillesse

To graunte hym dayes of the remenaunte,
And seyde, "Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
I failed nevere of my trouthe as yit.
For sikerly my dette shal be quyt
Towareds yow, how evere that I fare,

To goon a begged in my kirtle bare!
But wolde ye vouche sauf upon seuretee
Two yeer or thre, for to respiten me,
Thanne were I wel, for elles moot I selle
Myn heritage, ther is namoore to telle."

This philosophre sobrelly answerde,
And seyde thus, whan he thise wordes herde,
"Have I nat holden covenant unto thee?"
"Yes, certes, wel and trewely," quod he.
"Hastow nat had thy lady, as thee liketh?"

"No, no," quod he, and sorwefully he siketh.
"What was the cause, tel me if thou kan?"
Aurelius his tale anon bigan,
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd bifoore,
It nedeth nat to yow reherce it moore.

He seide, Arveragus of gentillesse
Hadde levere dye in sorwe and in distresse
Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals;
The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde hym als,
How looth hir was to been a wikked wyf,

And that she levere had lost that day hir lyf,
And that hir trouthe she swoor, thurgh innocence,
She nevere erst hadde herd speke of apparence.
"That made me han of hir so greet pitee;
And right as frely as he sente hir me,

As frely sente I hir to hym ageyn.
This al and som, ther is namoore to seyn."
This philosophre answerde, "Leeve brother,
Everich of yow dide gentilly til oother.
Thou art a squier, and he is a knyght;

But God forbede, for his blisful myght,
But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede.
Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were copen out of the ground,

Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me;
For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille,
It is ynogh, and farewell, have good day."

And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.

Lordynges, this questioun wolde I aske now,
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende,
I kan namoore, my tale is at an ende.

Heere is ended the Frankeleyns tale.

Part 27

GROUP G.

THE SECONDE NONNES TALE

The Prologe of the Seconde Nonnes Tale.

The ministre and the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in Englissh ydelnesse,
That porter of the gate is of delices,
To eschue, and by hir contrarie hir oppresse,
(That is to seyn by leveful bisynesse),
Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us shente.

For he, that with hise thousand cordes slye
Continuelly us waiteth to biclappe,
Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye,
He kan so lightly cacche hym in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde.
Wel oghte us werche, and ydelnesse withstonde.

And though men dradden nevere for to dye,
Yet seen men wel by resoun, doutelees,
That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,
Of which ther nevere comth no good encrees;
And seen that slouthe hir holdeth in a lees,
Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,
And to devouren al that othere swynke.

And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,
That cause is of so greet confusioun,
I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse,
After the legende, in translacioun
Right of thy glorious lyf and passioun,
Thou with thy gerland wroght with rose and lilie,
Thee meene I, mayde and martir, seint Cecilie.

Invocacio ad Mariam.

And thow that flour of virgines art alle,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,
To thee at my bigynnyng first I calle,
Thou confort of us wrecches, do me endite
Thy maydens deeth, that wan thurgh hir merite

The eterneel lyf, and of the feend victorie,
As man may after reden in hir storie.

Thow mayde and mooder, doghter of thy sone,
Thow welle of mercy, synful soules cure,
In whom that God for bountee chees to wone,
Thow humble and heigh, over every creature
Thow nobledest so ferforth oure nature,
That no desdeyn the makere hadde of kynde,
His sone in blood and flessh to clothe and wynde,

Withinne the cloistre blisful of thy sydis
Took mannes shape the eterneel love and pees,
That of the tryne compas lord and gyde is,
Whom erthe and see and hevene out of relees
Ay heryen, and thou, virgine wemmelees,
Baar of thy body, and dweltest mayden pure,
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,
Nat oonly helpst hem that preyen thee,
But oftentyme, of thy benygnytee,
Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche,
Thou goost biforn, and art hir lyves leche.

Now help, thow meeke and blisful faire mayde,
Me, flemed wrecche in this desert of galle;
Thynk on the womman Cananee, that sayde
That whelpes eten somme of the crommes alle,
That from hir lordes table been yfalle,
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,
Be synful, yet accepte my bileve.

And for that feith is deed withouten werkis,
So for to werken yif me wit and space,
That I be quit fro thennes that moost derk is.
O thou, that art so fair and ful of grace,
Be myn advocat in that heighe place
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,
Thow Cristes mooder, doghter deere of Anne!

And of thy light my soule in prison lighte,
That troubled is by the contagioun
Of my body, and also by the wighte
Of erthely lust and fals affeccioun,
O havene of refut, O salvacioune
Of hem that been in sorwe and in distresse,
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet preye I yow that reden that I write,
Foryeve me, that I do no diligence
This ilke storie subtilly to endite,
For bothe have I the wordes and sentence
Of hym that at the seintes reverence
The storie wroot, and folwe hir legende.
I pray yow, that ye wole my werk amende.

First wolde I yow the name of seinte Cecile
Expowne, as men may in hir storie see.

It is to seye in Englissh, 'hevenes lillie'
For pure chaastnesse of virginitee,
Or for she whitnesse hadde of honestee
And grene of conscience, and of good fame
The soote savour, lillie was hir name.

Or Cecilie is to seye, 'the wey to blynde,'
For she ensample was by good techynge;
Or elles, Cecile, as I writen fynde
Is joynd by a manere conjoynynge
Of 'hevene' and 'lia,' and heere in figuryng
The 'hevene' is set for thoght of hoolynesse,
And 'lia' for hir lastynge bisynesse.

Cecile may eek be seyd, in this manere,
'Wantynge of blyndnesse,' for hir grete light
Of sapience, and for hire thewes cleere
Or elles, loo, this maydens name bright
Of 'hevene' and 'leos' comth, for which by right
Men myghte hir wel 'the hevene of peple' calle,
Ensamble of goode and wise werkes alle.

For 'leos' 'peple' in Englissh is to seye,
And right as men may in the hevene see
The sonne and moone and sterres every weye,
Right so men goostly, in this mayden free,
Syen of feith the magnanymytee,
And eek the cleernesse hool of sapience,
And sondry werkes, brighte of excellence.

And right so as thise philosophres write
That hevene is swift and round and eek brennyng,
Right so was faire Cecilie the white
Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkyng,
And round and hool in good perseveryng,
And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte.
Now have I yow declared what she highte.

Here bigynneth the Seconde Nonnes tale of the lyf of Seinte Cecile.

This mayden, bright Cecilie, as hir lyf seith,
Was comen of Romayns, and of noble kynde,
And from hir cradel up fostred in the feith
Of Crist, and bar his gospel in hir mynde.
She nevere cessed, as I writen fynde,
Of hir preyere, and God to love and drede,
Bisekyng hym to kepe hir maydenhede.

And whan this mayden sholde unto a man
Ywedded be, that was ful yong of age,
Which that ycleped was Valerian,
And day was comen of hir mariage,
She, ful devout and humble in hir corage,
Under hir robe of gold, that sat ful faire,
Hadde next hir flessch yclad hir in an haire.

And whil the orgnes maden melodie,
To God allone in herte thus sang she:
"O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye

Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be."
And for his love that dyde upon a tree,
Every seconde and thridde day she faste,
Ay biddynge in hir orisons ful faste.

The nyght cam, and to bedde moste she gon
With hir housbonde, as ofte is the manere,
And pryvely to hym she seyde anon,
"O sweete and wel biloved spouse deere,
Ther is a conseil, and ye wolde it heere,
Which that right fayn I wolde unto yow seye,
So that ye swere ye shul me nat biwreye."

Valerian gan faste unto hire swere
That for no cas, ne thyng that myghte be,
He sholde nevere mo biwreyen here,
And thanne at erst to hym thus seyde she,
"I have an Aungel which that loveth me,
That with greet love, wher so I wake or sleepe,
Is redy ay my body for to kepe.

And if that he may feelen out of drede
That ye me touche, or love in vileynye,
He right anon wol sle yow with the dede,
And in youre yowthe thus ye sholden dye.
And if that ye in clene love me gye,
He wol yow loven as me for youre clennesses,
And shewen yow his joye and his brightnesse."

Valerian, corrected as God wolde,
Answerde agayn, "If I shal trusten thee,
Lat me that aungel se, and hym biholde,
And if that it a verray aungel bee,
Thanne wol I doon as thou hast prayed me;
And if thou love another man, forsothe
Right with this swerd thanne wol I sle yow bothe."

Cecile answerde anon right in this wise,
"If that yow list, the aungel shul ye see,
So that ye trowe in Crist, and yow baptize.
Gooth forth to Via Apia," quod she,
"That fro this toun ne stant but miles thre;
And to the povre folkes that ther dwelle
Sey hem right thus as that I shal yow telle.

Telle hem, that I Cecile yow to hem sente,
To shewen yow the goode Urban the olde,
For secree thynges and for good entente;
And whan that ye Seint Urban han biholde,
Telle hym the wordes whiche that I to yow tolde,
And whan that he hath purged yow fro synne,
Thanne shul ye se that aungel er ye twynne."

Valerian is to the place ygon,
And right as hym was taught by his lernynge,
He foond this hooly olde Urban anon
Among the seintes buryeles lotynge.
And he anon, withouten tariynge,
Dide his message, and whan that he it tolde,

Urban for joye his handes gan up holde.

The teeris from hise eyen leet he falle.
"Almyghty lord, O Jesu Crist," quod he,
"Sower of chaast conseil, hierde of us alle,
The fruyt of thilke seed of chastitee
That thou hast sowe in Cecile, taak to thee.
Lo, lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile,
Thee serveth ay thyn owene thral Cecile!

For thilke spouse that she took but now
Ful lyk a fiers leoun, she sendeth heere
As meke as evere was any lomb, to yow."
And with that word anon ther gan appeere
An oold man clad in white clothes cleere,
That hadde a book with lettre of gold in honde,
And gan bifore Valerian to stonde.

Valerian as deed fil doun for drede
Whan he hym saugh, and he up hente hym tho,
And on his book right thus he gan to rede,
"O lord, o feith, o god, withouten mo,
O Cristendom, and fader of alle also,
Aboven alle, and over alle, everywhere.-"
These wordes al with gold ywriten were.

Whan this was rad, thanne seyde this olde man,
"Leevestow this thyng or no? sey ye or nay?"
"I leeve al this thyng," quod Valerian,
"For oother thyng than this, I dar wel say,
Under the hevene no wight thynke may."
Tho vanysshed this olde man, he nyste where;
And Pope Urban hym cristned right there.

Valerian gooth hoom, and fynt Cecile
Withinne his chambre with an aungel stonde.
This aungel hadde of roses and of lillie
Corones two, the whiche he bar in honde;
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,
He yaf that oon, and after gan he take
That oother to Valerian hir make.

"With body clene and with unwemmed thoght
Kepeth ay wel these corones," quod he,
"Fro Paradys to yow have I hem broght,
Ne nevere mo ne shal they roten bee,
Ne lese hir soote savour, trusteth me,
Ne nevere wight shal seen hem with his eye
But he be chaast and hate vileynye.

And thow Valerian, for thow so soone
Assentedest to good conseil also,
Sey what thee list, and thou shalt han thy boone."
"I have a brother," quod Valerian tho,
"That in this world I love no man so.
I pray yow that my brother may han grace,
To knowe the trouthe, as I do in this place."

The aungel seyde, "God liketh thy requeste,
And bothe with the palm of martirdom
Ye shullen com unto his blisful feste."
And with that word Tiburce his brother coom;
And whan that he the savour undernoom,
Which that the roses and the lilies caste,
Withinne his herte he gan to wondre faste,

And seyde, "I wondre, this tyme of the yeer,
Whennes that soote savour cometh so
Of rose and lilies that I smelle heer.
For though I hadde hem in myne handes two,
The savour myghte in me no depper go,
The sweete smel that in myn herte I fynde
Hath chaunged me al in another kynde."

Valerian seyde, "Two corones han we,
Snow-white and rose-reed that shynen cleere,
Whiche that thyne eyen han no myght to see,
And as thou smelllest hem thurgh my preyere,
So shaltow seen hem, leeve brother deere,
If it so be thou wolt, withouten slouthe,
Bileve aright and knowen verray trouthe."

Tiburce answerde, "Seistow this to me?
In soothnesse or in dreem I herkne this?"
"In dremes," quod Valerian, "han we be
Unto this tyme, brother myn, ywes;
But now at erst in trouthe oure dwellyng is."
"How woostow this," quod Tiburce, "in what wyse?"
Quod Valerian, "That shal I thee devyse."

The aungel of God hath me the trouthe ytaught
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wolt reneye
The ydoles and be clene, and elles naught."
And of the myracle of these corones tweye
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to seye.
Solempnely this noble doctour deere
Commendeth it, and seith in this manere;

The palm of martirdom for to receyve
Seinte Cecile, fulfilled of Goddes yifte,
The world and eek hire chambre gan she weyve,
Witnesse Tyburces and Valerians shrifte,
To whiche God of his bountee wolde shifte
Corones two, of floures wel smellynge,
And made his aungel hem the corones brynge.

The mayde hath broght these men to blisse above;
The world hath wist what it is worth, certeyn,
Devocioun of chastitee to love. . . .
Tho shewed hym Cecile, al open and pleyn,
That alle ydoles nys but a thyng in veyn,
For they been dombe and therto they been deve,
And charged hym hise ydoles for to leve.

"Whoso that troweth, nat this, a beest he is,"
Quod tho Tiburce, "if that I shal nat lye."
And she gan kisse his brest, that herde this,

And was ful glad he koude trouthe espye.
"This day I take thee for myn allye,"
Seyde this blisful faire mayde deere,
And after that she seyde as ye may heere.

"Lo, right so as the love of Crist," quod she,
"Made me thy brotheres wyf, right in that wise
Anon for myn allye heer take I thee,

Syn that thou wolt thyne ydoles despise.
Go with thy brother now, and thee baptise,
And make thee clene, so that thou mowe biholde
The aungels face of which thy brother tolde."

Tiburce answerde and seyde, "Brother deere,
First tel me whider I shal, and to what man?"
"To whom?" quod he, "com forth with right good cheere,
I wol thee lede unto the Pope Urban."
"Til Urban? brother myn Valerian,"
Quod tho Tiburce, "woltow me thider lede?
Me thynketh that it were a wonder dede."

"Ne menestow nat Urban," quod he tho,
"That is so ofte dampned to be deed,
And woneth in halkes alwey to and fro,
And dar nat ones putte forth his heed;
Men sholde hym brennen in a fyr so reed,
If he were founde, or that men myghte hym spye;
And we also, to bere hym compaignye,

And whil we seken thilke divinitee,
That is yhid in hevne pryvely,
Algate ybrend in this world shul we be!"
To whom Cecile answerde boldely,
"Men myghten dreden wel and skilfully
This lyf to lese, myn owene deere brother,
If this were lyvyng oonly and noon oother.

But ther is bettre lyf in oother place,
That nevere shal be lost, ne drede thee noght,
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace.
That fadres sone hath alle thyng ywroght,
And al that wroght is with a skilful thoght,
The goost, that fro the fader gan procede,
Hath sowled hem, withouten any drede.

By word and by myracel Goddes Sone,
Whan he was in this world, declared heere
That ther was oother lyf ther men may wone."
To whom answerde Tiburce, "O suster deere,
Ne seydestow right now in this manere,
Ther nys but o God, lord in soothfastnesse,
And now of thre how maystow bere witnessse?"

"That shal I telle," quod she, "er I go.
Right as a man hath sapiences thre,
Memorie, engyn, and intellect also,
So, in o beyng of divinitee
Thre persones may ther right wel bee."

Tho gan she hym ful bisily to preche
Of Cristes come, and of hise peynes teche,

And many pointes of his passioun;
How Goddes sone in this world was withholde
To doon mankynde pleyn remissioun,
That was ybounde in synne and cares colde . . .
Al this thyng she unto Tiburce tolde;
And after this, Tiburce in good entente
With Valerian to Pope Urban he wente;

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light
He cristned hym, and made hym in that place
Parfit in his lernynge, Goddes knyght.
And after this Tiburce gat swich grace
That every day he saugh in tyme and space
The aungel of God, and every maner boone
That he God axed, it was sped ful soone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to seyn
How manye wondres Jesu for hem wroghte.
But atte laste, to tellen short and pleyn,
The sergeantz of the toun of Rome hem soghte,
And hem biforn Almache the Prefect broghte,
Which hem opposed, and knew al hire entente,
And to the ymage of Juppiter hem sente,

And seyde, "Whoso wol nat sacrificise,
Swap of his heed, this my sentence heer."
Anon thise martirs that I yow devyse,
Oon Maximus, that was an officer
Of the prefectes, and his corniculer,
Hem hente, and whan he forth the seintes ladde,
Hymself he weepe, for pitee that he hadde.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes loore,
He gat hym of the tormentoures leve,
And ladde hem to his hous withoute moore.
And with hir prechyng, er that it were eve,
They gonnen fro the tormentours to reve,
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk echone
The fals feith, to trowe in God allone.

Cecile cam whan it was woxen nyght,
With preestes that hem cristned alle yfeere,
And afterward, whan day was woxen light,
Cecile hem seyde, with a ful stedefast cheere,
"Now Cristes owene knyghtes, leeve and deere,
Cast alle away the werkes of derkness
And armeth yow in armure of brightnesse.

Ye han forsothe ydoon a greet bataille,
Youre cours is doon, youre feith han ye conserved,
Gooth to the corone of lyf that may nat faille.
The rightful juge which that ye han served
Shal yeve it yow as ye han it deserved."
And whan this thyng was seyde as I devyse,
Men ledde hem forth to doon the sacrificise.

But whan they weren to the place broght,
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,
They nolde encense ne sacrificise right noght,
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun
With humble herte and sad devocioun,
And losten bothe hir hevedes in the place.
Her soules wenten to the kyng of grace.

This Maximus that saugh this thyng bityde,
With pitous teeris tolde it anon-right,
That he hir soules saugh to hevene glyde,
With aungels ful of cleernesse and of light;
And with this word converted many a wight.
For which Almachius dide hym so bete
With whippe of leed, til he the lyf gan lete.

Cecile hym took, and buryed hym anon
By Tiburce and Valerian softely,
Withinne hir buriyng place under the stoon,
And after this Almachius hastily
Bad hise ministres fecchen openly
Cecile, so that she myghte in his presence
Doon sacrifice, and Juppiter encense.

But they, converted at hir wise loore,
Wepten ful soore, and yaven ful credence
Unto hire word, and cryden moore and moore,
"Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference,
Is verray God, this is al oure sentence,
That hath so good a servant hym to serve
This with o voys we trowen, thogh we sterve."

Almachius, that herde of this doynge,
Bad fecchen Cecile, that he myghte hir see,
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axynge:
"What maner womman artow?" tho quod he.
"I am a gentil womman born," quod she.
"I axe thee," quod he, "though it thee greeve,
Of thy religioun and of thy bileeve."

"Ye han bigonne youre question folily,"
Quod she, "that wolden two answeres conclude
In o demande; ye axed lewedly."
Almache answerde unto that similitude,
"Of whennes comth thyn answeryng so rude?"
"Of whennes?" quod she, whan that she was freyned,
"Of conscience and of good feith unfeyned."

Almachius seyde, "Ne takestow noon heede
Of my power?" and she answerde hym,
"Youre myght," quod she, "ful litel is to dreede,
For every mortal mannes power nys
But lyke a bladdre ful of wynd, ywys;
For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe,
May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe."

"Ful wrongfully bigonne thow," quod he,
"And yet in wrong is thy perseveraunce;
Wostow nat how oure myghty princes free

Han thus comanded and maad ordinaunce
That every cristen wight shal han penaunce,
But if that he his cristendom withseye-
And goon al quit, if he wole it reneye?"

"Youre princes erren, as youre nobleye dooth,"
Quod tho Cecile, "and with a wood sentence
Ye make us gilty, and it is nat sooth,
For ye, that knowen wel oure innocence,
For as muche as we doon a reverence
To Crist, and for we bere a cristen name,
Ye putte on us a cryme, and eek a blame.

But we that knowen thilke name so
For vertuous, we may it nat withseye."
Almache answerde, "Chees oon of these two,
Do sacrificise, or cristendom reneye,
That thou mowe now escapen by that weye."
At which the hooly blisful faire mayde
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge sayde,

"O Juge, confus in thy nycetee,
Woltow that I reneye innocence,
To make me a wikked wight," quod shee;
"Lo, he dissymuleth heere in audience,
He stareth, and woodeth in his advertence."
To whom Almachius, "Unsely wrecche,
Ne woostow nat how far my myght may strecche?

Han noght oure myghty princes to me yeven
Ye, bothe power and auctoritee
To maken folk to dyen or to lyven?
Why spekestow so proudly thanne to me?"
"I speke noght but stedfastly," quod she,
"Nat proudly, for I speke as for my syde,
We haten deedly thilke vice of pryde.

And if thou drede nat a sooth to heere,
Thanne wol I shewe al openly by right
That thou hast maad a ful grete lesyng heere,
Thou seyst, thy princes han thee yeven myght
Bothe for to sleen, and for to quyken a wight.
Thou that ne mayst but oonly lyf bireve,
Thou hast noon oother power, ne no leve!

But thou mayst seyn thy princes han thee maked
Ministre of deeth, for if thou speke of mo,
Thou lyst, for thy power is ful naked.'
"Do wey thy booldnesse," seyde Almachius tho,
"And sacrificise to oure goddes er thou go.
I recche na twhat wrong that thou me profre,
For I can suffre it as a philosophre.

But thilke wronges may I nat endure
That thou spekest of oure goddes heere," quod he.
Cecile answerde, "O nyce creature,
Thou seydest no word, syn thou spak to me,
That I ne knew therwith thy nycetee,
And that thou were in every maner wise

A lewed officer and a veyn justise.

Ther lakketh no thyng to thyne outter eyen
That thou nart blynd, for thyng that we seen alle
That it is stoon, that men may wel espyen,
That ilke stoon a god thow wolt it calle.
I rede thee lat thyn hand upon it falle,
And taste it wel, and stoon thou shalt it fynde,

Syn that thou seest nat with thyne eyen blynde.

It is a shame that the peple shal
So scorne thee, and laughe at thy folye,
For comunly men woot it wel overal
That myghty God is in hise hevenes hye,
And these ymages, wel thou mayst espye,
To thee ne to hemself mowen noght profite,
For in effect they been nat worth a myte."

These wordes and swiche othere seyde she,
And he weex wrooth, and bad men sholde hir lede
Hom til hir hous, and "in hire hous," quod he,
"Brenne hire right in a bath of flambes rede."
And as he bad, right so was doon in dede,
For in a bath they gonne hire faste shetten,
And nyght and day greet fyre they underbetten.

The longe nyght and eek a day also
For al the fyr and eek the bathes heete
She sat al coold, and feelede no wo;
It made hir nat a drope for to sweete.
But in that bath hir lyf she moste lete,
For he Almachius, with a ful wikke entente,
To sleen hir in the bath his sonde sente.

Thre strokes in the nekke he smoot hir tho,
The tormentour, but for no maner chaunce
He myghte noght smyte al hir nekke atwo.
And for ther was that tyme an ordinaunce
That no man sholde doon men swich penaunce
The ferthe strook to smyten, softe or soore,
This tormentour ne dorste do namoore.

But half deed, with hir nekke ycorven there,
He lefte hir lye, and on his wey is went.
The cristen folk, which that aboute hir were,
With sheetes han the blood ful faire yhent.
Thre dayes lyved she in this torment,
And nevere cessed hem the feith to teche;
That she hadde fostred, hem she gan to preche.

And hem she yaf hir moebles, and hir thyng,
And to the Pope Urban bitook hem tho,
And seyde, "I axed this at hevene kyng
To han respit thre dayes, and namo,
To recomende to yow er that I go
These soules, lo, and that I myghte do werche
Heere of myn hous perpetuelly a chirche."

Seint Urban with hise deknes prively
This body fette, and buryed it by nyghte,
Among hise othere seintes, honestly.
Hir hous the chirche of seinte Cecilie highte;
Seint Urban halwed it, as he wel myghte,
In which, into this day, in noble wyse
Men doon to Crist and to his seinte servyse.

Heere is ended the Seconde Nonnes tale.

Part 28

PROLOGUE TO THE CHANOONS YEMANNES TALE

The prologe of the Chanouns yemannes tale.

Whan ended was the lyf of seinte Cecile,
Er we hadde riden fully fyve mile,
At Boghtoun under Blee us gan atake
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,
And undernethe he wered a whyt surplys.

His hakeney, which that was al pomely grys,
So swatte, that it wonder was to see,
It wemed as he had priked miles thre.
The hors eek that his yeman rood upon
So swatte, that unnethe myghte it gon.

Aboute the peytrel stood the foom ful hye,
He was of fome al flekked as a pye.
A male tweyfoold upon his croper lay,
It semed that he caried lite array.
Al light for somer rood this worthy man,

And in myn herte wondren I bigan
What that he was, til that I understood
How that his cloke was sowed to his hood;
For which, whan I hadde longe avysed me,
I demed hym som Chanoun for to be.

His hat heeng at his bak down by a laas,
For he hadde riden moore than trot or paas;
He hadde ay priked lik as he were wood.
A clote-leef he hadde under his hood
For swoot, and for to kepe his heed from heete.

But it was joye for to seen hym swete!
His forheed dropped as a stillatorie
Were ful of plantayne and of paritorie.
And whan that he was come, he gan to crye,
"God save," quod he, "this joly compaignye!

Faste have I priked," quod he, "for youre sake,
By cause that I wolde yow atake,
To riden in this myrie compaignye."
His Yeman eek was ful of curteisye,
And seyde, "Sires, now in the morwe tyde

Out of youre hostelrie I saugh yow ryde,
And warned heer my lord and my soverayn
Which that to ryden with yow is ful fayn
For his desport; he loveth daliaunce."
"Freend, for thy warnyng God yeve thee good chaunce,"

Thanne seyde oure Hoost, "for certein, it wolde seme
Thy lord were wys, and so I may wel deme.
He is ful jocunde also, dar I leye.
Can he oght telle a myrie tale or tweye
With which he glade may this compaignye?"

"Who, sire, my lord? ye, ye, with-uten lye!
He kan of murthe and eek of jolitee
Nat but ynough, also, sire, trusteth me.
And ye hym knewen as wel as do I,
Ye wolde wondre how wel and craftily

He koude werke, and that in sondry wise.
He hath take on hym many a greet emprise,
Which were ful hard for any that is heere
To brynge aboute, but they of hym it leere.
As hoomly as he rit amonges yow,

If ye hym knewe, it wolde be for youre prow,
Ye wolde nat forgoon his aqueyntaunce
For muchel good, I dar leye in balaunce
Al that I have in my possessioun.
He is a man of heigh discrecioun,

I warne yow wel, he is a passyng man."
"Wel," quod oure Hoost, "I pray thee, tel em than,
Is he a clerk, or noon? telle what he is?"
"Nay, he is gretter than a clerk, ywis,"
Seyde this Yeman, "and in wordes fewe,

Hoost, of his craft somewhat I wol yow shewe.
I seye my lord kan swich subtilitee-
But al his craft ye may nat wite for me,
And somewhat helpe I yet to his wirkyng-
That al this ground on which we been rydyng

Til that we come to Caunterbury toun,
He koude al clene turne it up so down
And pave ti al of silver and of gold."
And whan this Yeman hadde this tale ytold
Unto oure Hoost, he seyde, "Benedicitee,

This thyng is wonder merveillous to me,
Syn that thy lord is of so heigh prudence,
By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,
That of his worship rekketh he so lite.
His overslope nys nat worth a myte

As in effect to hym, so moot I go.
It is al baudy and to-tore also,
Why is thy lord so sluttissh, I the preye,
And is of power bettre clooth to beye,
If that his dede accorde with thy speche?

Telle me that, and that I thee biseche."
"Why," quod this Yeman, "wherto axe ye me?
God help me so, for he shal nevere thee!
But I wol nat avowe that I seye,
And therefore keepe it secree, I yow preye;

He is to wys, in feith, as I bileeve!
That that is overdoon, it wol nat preeve
Aright; as clerkes seyn, it is a vice.
Wherfore in that I holde hym lewed and nyce;
For whan a man hath over-greet a wit,

Ful oft hym happeth to mysusen it.
So dooth my lord, and that me greveth soore.
God it amende, I kan sey yow namoore."
"Therof no fors, good Yeman," quod oure Hoost,
"Syn of the konnyng of thy lord thow woost,

Telle how he dooth, I pray thee hertely,
Syn that he is so crafty and so sly.
Wher dwelle ye, if it to telle be?"
"In the suburbes of a toun," quod he,
"Lurkyng in hernes and in lanes blynde,

Where as thise robbours and thise theves by kynde
Holden hir pryvee fereful residence,
As they that dar nat shewen hir presence.
So faren we if I shal seye the sothe."
"Now," quod oure Hoost, "yit lat me talke to the,

Why artow so discoloured of thy face?"
"Peter," quod he, "God yeve it harde grace,
I am so used in the fyr to blowe,
That it hath chaunged my colour, I trowe.
I am nat wont in no mirrour to prie,

But swynke soore, and lerne multiplie.
We blondren evere, and pouren in the fir,
And, for al that, we faille of oure desir.
For evere we lakke of oure conclusioun;
To muchel folk we doon illusioun,

And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten, or twelve, or manye sommes mo,
And make hem wenen at the leeste weye
That of a pound we koude make tweye.
Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope

It for to doon, and after it we grope.
But that science is so fer us biforn,
We mowen nat, although we hadden sworn,
It over-take, it slit away so faste.
It wole us maken beggars atte laste."

Whil this yeman was thus in his talkyng,
This Chanoun drough hym neer, and herde al thyng
Which this Yeman spak, for suspecioun
Of mennes speche evere hadde this Chanoun.

For Catoun seith, that he that gilty is

Demeth alle thyng be spoke of hym, ywis.
That was the cause he gan so ny hym drawe
To his yeman, to herknen al his sawe.
And thus he seyde unto his yeman tho,
"Hoold thou thy pees, and spek no wordes mo,

For it thou do, thou shalt it deere abyde.
Thou sclaudrest me heere in this compaignye,
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde."
"Ye," quod oure Hoost, "telle on, what so bityde,
Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte."

"In feith," quod he, "namoore I do but lyte."
And whan this Chanoun saugh it wolde nat bee,
But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,
He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame.
"A!" quod the Yeman, "heere shal arise game.

Al that I kan, anon now wol I telle,
Syn he is goon, the foule feend hym quelle!
For nevere heer after wol I with hym meete,
For peny ne for pound, I yow biheete.
He that me broghte first unto that game,

Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame.
For it is earnest to me, by my feith,
That feele I wel, what so any man seith.
And yet, for al my smert and al my grief,
For al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,

I koude never leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God, my wit myghte suffise
To tellen al that longeth to that art,
And nathelees yow wol I tellen part.
Syn that my lord is goon, I wol nat spare,
Swich thyng as that I knowe, I wol declare.

Heere endeth the prologe of the Chanouns yemannes tale.

(After a lengthy account of the practice of alchemy by his master, the yeoman tells how a priest is beguiled of his money by a certain canon through trickery of a hollow rod.)

Part 29

GROUP H.

PROLOGUE TO THE MAUNICIPLES TALE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Maunciples tale.

Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel toun,
Which that ycleped is Bobbe-up-and-doun
Under the Blee, in Caunterbury weye?
Ther gan oure Hooste for to jape and pleye,
And seyde, "Sires, what, Dun is in the Myre!

Is ther no man for preyere ne for hyre,
That wole awake oure felawe al bihynde?
A theef myghte hym ful lightly robbe and bynde.
See how he nappeth, see how for Cokkes bones,
That he wol falle fro his hors atones.

Is that a Cook of London, with meschaunce?
Do hym com forth, he knoweth his penaunce,
For he shal telle a tale, by my fey,
Although it be nat worth a botel hey.
Awake, thou Cook," quod he, "God yeve thee sorwe,

What eyleth thee, to slepe by the morwe?
Hastow had fleen al nyght, or artow dronke?
Or hastow with som quene al nyght yswonke
So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed?"
This Cook that was ful pale, and no thyng reed,

Seyde to oure Hoost, "So God my soule blesse,
As ther is falle on me swich hevynesse,
Noot I nat why, that me were levere slepe
Than the beste galon wyn in Chepe."
"Wel," quod the Maunciple, "if it may doon ese

To thee, Sire Cook, and to no wight displese
Which that heere rideth in this compaignye,
And that oure Hoost wole of his curteisye,
I wol as now excuse thee of thy tale,
For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale.

Thyne eyen daswen eek, as that me thynketh,
And wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh.
That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed,
Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.
See how he ganeth, lo, this dronken wight!

As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.
Hoold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn,
The devel of helle sette his foot therin.
Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle,
Fy, stynkyng swyn! fy, foule moothe thou falle!

A, taketh heede, sires, of this lusty man!
Now, sweete sire, wol ye justen atte fan?
Therto me thynketh ye been wel yshape,
I trowe that ye dronken han wyn-ape,
And that is, whan men pleyen with a straw."

And with this speche the Cook wax wrooth and wraw,
And on the Manciple he gan nodde faste,
For lakke of speche, and doun the hors hym caste,
Where as he lay til that men up hym took;
This was a fair chyvachee of a Cook!

Allas, he nadde holde hym by his ladel!
And er that he agayn were in his sadel
Ther was greet showvyng bothe to and fro,
To lifte hym up, and muchel care and wo,
So unweeldy was this sory palled goost.

And to the Manciple thanne spak oure hoost,
"By cause drynke hath dominacioun,
Upon this man, by my savacioun,
I trowe he lewedly wolde telle his tale.
For were it wyn, or oold or moysty ale,

That he hath dronke, he speketh in his nose,
And fneseth faste, and eek he hath the pose.
He hath also to do moore than ynough
To kepen hym and his capul out of slough,
And if he falle from his capul eftsoone,

Thanne shal we alle have ynogh to doone
In liftyng up his hevy dronken cors.
Telle on thy tale, of hym make I no fors;
But yet, Manciple, in feith thou art to nyce,
Thus openly repreve hym of his vice.

Another day he wole peraventure
Reclayme thee and brynge thee to lure.
I meene he speke wole of smale thynges,
As for to pynchen at thy rekenynges,
That were nat honeste, if it cam to preef."

"No," quod the Manciple, "that were a greet mescheef,
So myghte he lightly brynge me in the snare;
Yet hadde I levere payen for the mare,
Which that he rit on, than he sholde with me stryve
I wol nat wratthen hym, al so moot I thryve;

That that I speke, I seyde it in my bourde.
And wite ye what, I have heer in a gourde
A draghte of wyn, ye, of a ripe grape,
And right anon ye shul seen a good jape.
This Cook shal drynke therof if that I may,

Up peyne of deeth, he wol nat seye me nat."
And certeynly, to tellen as it was,
Of this vessel the Cook drank faste; allas,
What neded hym? he drank ynough biforn!
And whan he hadde pouped in this horn,

To the Manciple he took the gourde agayn,
And of that drynke the Cook was wonder fayn,
And thanked hym in swich wise as he koude.
Thanne gan oure Hoost to laughen wonder loude,
And seyde, "I se wel it is necessarie

Where that we goon, that drynke we with us carie.
For that wol turne rancour and disese
Tacord and love and many a wrong apese.
O thou Bacus, yblessed be thy name,
That so kanst turnen ernest into game!

Worship and thank be to thy deitee!
Of that mateere ye gete namoore of me,
Telle on thy tale, Manciple, I thee preye."
"Wel, sire," quod he, "now herkneth what I seye."

THE MAUNICIPLES TALE

Heere bigynneth the Maunciples tale of the Crowe.

Whan Phebus dwelled heere in this world adoun,
As olde bookes maken mencion,
He was the mooste lusty bachiler
In al this world, and eek the beste archer.
He slow Phitoun the serpent, as he lay

Slepyng agayn the sonne upon a day;
And many another noble worthy dede
He with his bowe wroghte, as men may rede.
Pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie,
And syngen, that it was a melodie

To heeren of his cleere voys the soun.
Certes, the kyng of Thebes, Amphioun,
That with his syngyng walled that citee,
Koude nevere syngen half so wel as hee.
Therto he was the semelieste man,

That is or was sith that the world bigan.
What nedeth it hise fetures to discryve?
For in this world was noon so fair on lyve.
He was therwith fulfild of gentillesse,
Of honour, and of parfit worthynesse.

This Phebus that was flour of bachilrie,
As wel in fredom as in chivalrie,
For his desport, in signe eek of victorie
Of Phitoun, so as telleth us the storie,
Was wont to beren in his hand a bowe.

Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a crowe,
Which in a cage he fostred many a day,
And taughte it speken as men teche a jay.
Whit was this crowe, as is a snow-whit swan,
And countrefete the speche of every man

He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.
Therwith in al this world no nyghtngale
Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,
Syngen so wonder myrily and weel.
Now hadde this Phebus in his hous a wyf

Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;
And nyght and day dide evere his diligence
Hir for to plese and doon hire reverence.
Save oonly, if the sothe that I shal sayn,
Jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn,

For hym were looth byjaped for to be-
And so is every wight in swich degree;
But al in ydel, for it availleth noght.
A good wyf that is clene of werk and thoght
Sholde nat been kept in noon awayt, certayn.

And trewely the labour is in vayn
To kepe a shrewe, for it wol nat bee.
This holde I for a verray nycetee,
To spille labour for to kepe wyves,
Thus writen olde clerkes in hir lyves.

But now to purpos, as I first bigan:
This worthy Phebus dooth al that he kan
To plesen hir, wenyng that swich plesaunce,
And for his manhede and his governaunce,
That no man sholde han put hym from hire grace.

But God it woot, ther may no man embrace
As to destreyne a thyng, which that nature
Hath natureelly set in a creature.
Taak any bryd, and put it in a cage,
And do al thyn entente and thy corage

To fostre it tendrely with mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that thou kanst bithynke;
And keepe it al so clenly as thou may,
Al though his cage of gold be nevere so gay,
Yet hath this bryd, by twenty thousand foold,

Levere in a forest that is rude and coold
Goon ete wormes, and swich wrecchednesse;
For evere this bryd wol doon his bisynesse
To escape out of his cage, whan he may.
His libertee this bryd desireth ay.

Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk,
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,
And lat hym seen a mous go by the wal,
Anon he weyveth milk and flessh and al,
And every deyntee that is in that hous,

Swich appetit he hath to ete a mous.
Lo, heere hath lust his dominacioun,
And appetit fleemeth discrecioun.
A she wolf hath also a vileyns kynde,
The lewedeste wolf that she may fynde,

Or leest of reputacioun wol she take,
In tyme whan hir lust to han a make.
Alle these ensamples speke I by these men,
That been untrewed, and no thyng by wommen,
For men han evere a likerous appetit

On lower thyng to parfourne hire delit,
Than on hire wyves, be they nevere so faire,
Ne nevere so trewe, ne so debonaire.
Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,
That we ne konne in no thyng han plesaunce

That sowneth into vertu any while.

This Phebus, which that thoghte upon no gile,
Deceyved was, for al his jolitee;
For under hym another hadde shee,
A man of litel reputacioun,

Nat worth to Phebus in comparisoun.
The moore harm is, it happeth ofte so,
Of which ther cometh muchel harm and wo.
And so bifel, whan Phebus was absent,
His wyf anon hath for hir lemman sent;

Hir lemman? certes, this is a knavyssh speche,
Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,
"The word moot nede accorde with the dede."
If men shal telle proprely a thyng,

The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng.
I am a boystous man, right thus seye I.
Ther nys no difference trewely
Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree-
If of hire body dishoneste she bee-

And a povre wenche, oother than this,
If it so be they werke bothe amys,
But that the gentile in hire estaat above,
She shal be cleped his lady as in love,
And for that oother is a povre womman,

She shal be cleped his wenche, or his lemman;
And God it woot, myn owene deere brother,
Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother.

Right so bitwixe a titlelees tiraunt
And an outlawe, or a theef erraunt,

The same I seye, ther is no difference.
To Alisaundre was toold this sentence,
That for the tiraunt is of gretter myght,
By force of meynee for to sleen downright,
And brennen hous and hoom, and make al playn,

Lo, therefore is he cleped a capitayn!
And for the outlawe hath but smal meynee,
And may nat doon so greet an harm as he,
Ne brynge a contree to so greet mescheef,
Men clepen hym an outlawe or a theef.

But for I am a man noght textueel,
I wol noght telle of textes nevere a deel;
I wol go to my tale as I bigan.
Whan Phebus wyf had sente for hir lemman,
Anon they wroghten al hir lust volage.

The white crowe that heeng ay in the cage
Biheeld hire werk, and seyde nevere a word,
And whan that hoom was com Phebus the lord,
This crowe sang, "Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!"
"What bryd!" quod Phebus, "what song syngestow?"

Ne were thow wont so myrily to synge
That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge
To heere thy voys? allas, what song is this?"
"By God," quod he, "I synge nat amys.

Phebus," quod he, "for al thy worthynesse,

For al thy beautee and thy gentillesse,
For al thy song and al thy mynstralcye,
For al thy waityng, blered is thyn eye
With oon of litel reputacioun
Noght worth to thee, as in comparisoun

The montance of a gnat, so moote I thryve,
For on thy bed thy wyf I saugh hym swyve."
What wol ye moore? the crowe anon hym tolde,
By sadde tokenes and by wordes bolde,
How that his wyf han doon hire lecherye,

Hym to greet shame and to greet vileynye,
And tolde hym ofte, he asugh it with hise eyen.
This Phebus gan awayward for to wryen,
And thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo,
His bowe he bente and sette ther inne a flo,

And in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn.
This is theeffect, ther is namoore to sayn,
For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,
Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie,
And eek he brak hise arwes and his bowe,

And after that thus spak he to the crowe.
"Traitor," quod he, "with tonge of scorpioun,
Thou hast me broght to my confusioun,
Allas, that I was wroght! why nere I deed?
O deere wyf, O gemme of lustiheed,

That were to me so sad and eek so trewe,
Now listow deed with face pale of hewe,
Ful giltelees, that dorste I swere, ywys.
O rakel hand, to doon so foule amys!
O trouble wit, O ire recchelees!

That unavysed smyteth gilteles.
O wantrust, ful of fals suspecioun,
Where was thy wit and thy discrecioun?
O, every man, be war of rakelnesse,
Ne trowe no thyng withouten strong witenesse.

Smyt nat to soone, er that ye witen why,
And beeth avysed wel and sobrely,
Er ye doon any execucioun
Upon youre ire for suspecioun.
Allas, a thousand folk hath rakel ire

Fully fordoon, and broght hem in the mire!
Allas, for sorwe I wol myselfen slee!"
And to the crowe, "O false thief," seyde he,
"I wol thee quite anon thy false tale;
Thou songe whilom lyk a nyghtngale,

Now shaltow, false thief, thy song forgon,
And eek thy white fetheres everichon.
Ne nevere in al thy lyf ne shaltou speke,

Thus shal men on a traytour been awreke.
Thou and thyn ofspryng evere shul be blake,

Ne nevere sweete noyse shul ye make,
But evere crie agayn tempest and rayn,
In tokenynge that thurgh thee my wyf is slayn."
And to the crowe he stirte, and that anon,
And pulled hise white fetheres everychon,

And made hym blak, and refte hym al his song,
And eek his speche, and out at dore hym slong,
Unto the devel-which I hym bitake!-
And for this caas been alle Crowes blake.
 Lordynges, by this ensample I yow preye,

Beth war and taketh kepe what I seye:
Ne telleth nevere no man in youre lyf
How that another man hath dight his wyf;
He wol yow haten mortally, certeyn.
Daun Salomon, as wise clerkes seyn,

Techeth a man to kepen his tonge weel.
But as I seyde, I am noght textueel;
But nathelees, thus taughte me my dame;
"My sone, think on the crowe, on Goddes name.
My sone, keepe wel thy tonge and keepe thy freend,

A wikked tonge is worse than a feend.
My sone, from a feend men may hem blesse.
My sone, God of his endelees goodnesse
Walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke,
For man sholde hym avyse what he speeke.

My sone, ful ofte for to mucche speche
Hath many a man been spilt, as clerkes teche.
But for litel speche, avysely,
Is no man shent, to speke generally.
My sone, thy tonge sholdestow restreyne

At alle tymes, but whan thou doost thy peyne
To speke of God in honour and in preyere;
The firste vertu sone, if thou wolt leere,
Is to restreyne and kepe wel thy tonge.
Thus lerne children, whan that they been yonge,

My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed,
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,
Comth muchel harm-thus was me toold and taught.-
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.
Wostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?

Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth
An arme atwo, my deere sone, right so
A tonge kutteth freendshipe al atwo.
A jangler is to God abhomynable;
Reed Salomon, so wys and honorable,

Reed David in hise psalmes, reed Senekke!
My sone, spek nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke;

Dissimule as thou were deaf, it that thou heere
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.
The Flemynge seith, and lerne it if thee leste,

That litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyde;
But he that hath mysseyde, I dar wel sayn,
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.

Thynge that is seyde is seyde, and forth it gooth;
Though hym repente, or be hym leef or looth,
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayde
A tale, of which he is now yvele apayde.
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe

Of tidynynges, wheither they been false or trewe,
Wherso thou com, amonges hye or lowe,
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the Crowe."

Heere is ended the Maunciples tale of the Crowe.
Part 30

GROUP I.

PROLOGUE TO THE PERSOONS TALE

Heere folweth the Prologe of the Persouns tale.

By that the Maunciple hadde his tale al ended,
The sonne fro the south lyne was descended
So lowe, that he nas nat to my sighte
Degrees nyne and twenty as in highte.
Ten of the klokke it was tho, as I gesse,

For ellevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,
My shadwe was at thilke tyme as there,
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.
Therwith the moones exaltacioun,

I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende,
As we were entryng at a thropes ende.
For which our Hoost, as he was wont to gye,
As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,
Seyde in this wise, "Lordynges everichoon,

Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon,
Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree.
Almoost fulfilled is al myn ordinaunce,
I pray to God, so yeve hym right good chaunce

That telleth this tale to us lustily!
"Sire preest," quod he, "artow a vicary,
Or arte a person? sey sooth by thy fey.
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;
For every man save thou hath toold his tale.

Unbokele and shewe us what is in thy male,
For trewely, me thynketh by thy cheere
Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.
Telle us a fable anon, for Cokkes bones."
This Persoun him answerede, al atones,

"Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me,
For Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,
Repreveth hem that weyveth soothfastnesse,
And tellen fables, and swich wrecchednesse.
Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest

Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?
For which I seye, if that yow list to heere,
Moralitee and vertuous mateere;
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,

Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.
But trusteth wel I am a southren man,
I kan nat geeste Rum, Ram, Ruf by lettre,
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre,
And therefore if yow list, I wol nat glose,

I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
To knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende,
And Jesu, for his grace, wit me sende
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage

That highte Jerusalem celestial.
And if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal
Bigynne upon my tale, for which I preye,
Telle youre avys, I kan no bettre seye.
But nathelees, this meditacioun

I putte it ay under correccioun
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;
I take but sentence, trusteth weel.
Therefore I make a protestacioun
That I wol stonde to correccioun."

Upon this word we han assented soone;
For, as us semed, it was for to doone
To enden in som vertuous sentence,
And for to yeve hym space and audience;
Adn bedeoure Hoost he sholde to hym seye

That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle:
"Sire preest," quod he, "now faire yow bifalle,
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere."
And with that word he seyde in this manere,

"Telleth," quod he, "youre meditacioun;
But hasteth yow, the sonne wole adoun.
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,
And to do wel God sende yow his grace."

(Then follows the Persones Tale, concerning penitence, vices and virtues, and holy living. At the end appears the retractation, so-called, of Chaucer.)

Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve.

Now preye I to hem alle that herkne thai litel tretys or rede, that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem, that therof they thanken oure Lord Jesu Crist, of whom procedeth al wit and al goodnesse. And if ther be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem also that they arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnyng, and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyde better, if I hadde had konnyng. For oure Boke seith, 'al that is writen, is writen for oure doctrine,' and that is myn entente. Wherefore, I biseke yow mekely for the mercy of God, that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me, and foryeve me my giltes; and namely, of my translaciouns and enditynges of worldly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retracciouns;

As is the book of Troilus, the book also of Fame, the book of the .XXV. Ladies, the book of the Duchesse, the book of Seint Valentynes day of the Parlement of Briddes, the tales of Caunterbury (thilke that sownen into synne), the book of the Leoun, and many another book, if they were in my remembrance; and many a song and many a lecherous lay, that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me the synne. But of the translacioun of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of Legendes of Seintes and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun; that thanke I oure Lord Jesu Crist, and his blisful mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene; bisekyng hem that they from hennesforth unto my lyves ende sende me grace to biwayle my giltes, and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule; and graunte me grtace of verray penitence, confessioun, and satisfaccioun to doon in this present lyf, thurgh the benigne grace of Hym, that is kyng of kynges, and preest over alle preestes, that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte, so that I may been oon of hem at the day of doome that shulle be saved. Qui cum patre, &cetera.

Heere is ended the book of the tales of Caunterbury compiled by Geoffrey Chaucer of whos soule Jesu Crist have mercy. Amen.

[End.]

.

--

This document was created on Thursday, March 25, 2004 from the Alex Catalogue of Electronic Texts at:

<http://www.infomotions.com/alex/>

The data below is a WHOIS++/ROADS template record used to describe the document:

Template-Type: DOCUMENT
Handle: chaucer-canterbury-102
Title: Canterbury Tales, The
Author-Name-v1: Chaucer, Geoffrey

Publisher: Internet Wiretap
Creation-Date: 1387
Size: 616844
Format: text/plain
Description:
Genres: (No genres supplied)
Keywords: (No subjects supplied)
Subject-Descriptor-v1: 000
Subject-Descriptor-Scheme-v1: LCSH
URI-v1: gopher://wiretap.spies.com:70/00/Library/Classic/canterbury.txt
Archive:
<http://www.infomotions.com/etexts/literature/english/1300-1399/chaucer-canterbury-102.txt>
Index:
<http://www.infomotions.com/alex/cgi-bin/wais.pl?waisDatabase=chaucer-canterbury-102>
Concordance:
<http://www.infomotions.com/alex/cgi-bin/concordance.pl?cmd=selectConcordance&bookcode=chaucer-canterbury-102>

Eric Lease Morgan
Alex Catalogue Manager
Infomotions, Inc.
eric_morgan@infomotions.com