THE
CANTERBURY TALES
OF
CHAUCER.

To which are added,

An ESSAY upon his LANGUAGE and
VERSIFICATION; an INTRODUCTORY
DISCOURSE; and NOTES.

VOL. II.

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Vol. II. a2 CANTER.
THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE CLERKES PROLOGUE.

SIRE Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoste said,
Ye ride as stille and coy, as doth a maid,
Were newe spoused, fitting at the bord:
This day ne herd I of your tounge a word.
I trow ye studie abouten som sophime:
But Salomon faith, that every thing hath time.
For Goddes sake as beth of better chere,
It is no time for to studien here.
Tell us som mery tale by your say;
For what man that is entred in a play,
He nedes most unto the play aßent.
But precheth not, as freres don in Lent,
To make us for our olde sinnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us not to slepe.
Tell us som mery thing of aventures,
Your termes, your colours, and your figures,
Kepe hem in store, til so be ye endite
Hie stile, as whan that men to kinges write.
Speketh so plain at this time, I you pray,
That we may understanden what ye say.
This worthy Clerk benignely anfwerde;
Hoste, quod he, I am under your yerde,
Ye have of us as now the governance,
And therefor wolde I do you obeysance,
As fer as reson asketh hardly:
I wol you tell a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe, of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste,
I pray to God so yeve his soule reste.

Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweet
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie,
As Lynyan did of philosophie,
Or law, or other art particulere:
But deth, that wol not suffice us dwellen here,
But as it were a twinkling of an eye,
Hem both hath slaine, and alle we shul dye.

But forth to tellen of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I began,
I say that first he with his stile enditeth
(Or he the body of his tale writeth)
A proheme, in the which descriveth he
Piemont, and of Saluces the contree,
And speketh of Apennin the hilles hie,
That ben the boundes of west Lumbardie:
And of mount Vesulus in special,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle final

Taketh
Taketh his first springing and his fours,
That eastward ay encreseth in his cours
To Emelie ward, to Ferare, and Venise,
The which a longe thing were to devise.
And trewely, as to my judgement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wol conveyen his materie:
But this is the tale which that ye mow here.

T H E  C L E R K E S  T A L E.

T h e r is right at the West side of Itaille
Doun at the rote of Vesulus the cold,
A lusty plain, habundant of vitaille,
Ther many a toun and tour thou maist behold,
That founded were in time of fathers old,
And many another delitable fighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

A markis whilom lord was of that lond,
As were his worthy elders him before,
And obeyfant, ay redy to his hond,
Were all his lieges, bothe leffe and more:
Thus in delit he liveth, and hath don yore,
Beloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Both of his lordes, and of his commune.

Therwith he was, to speken of linage,
The gentilest yborne of Lumbardie,
THE CLERKES TALE.

A faire person, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curtesie:
Discreet ynough, his contree for to gie,
Sauf in som thinges that he was to blame,
And Walter was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought
In time coming what might him betide,
But on his luft present was all his thought,
And for to hauke and hunt on every side:
Wel neigh all other cures let he slide,
And eke he n’old (and that was worst of all)
Wedden no wif for ought that might befall.

Only that point his peple bare so sore,
That flockmel on a day to him they went,
And on of hem, that wisest was of lore,
(Or elles that the lord wold beft assent
That he shuld tell him what the peple ment,
Or elles coud he wel shew swiche materes)
He to the markis said as ye shull here.

O noble markis, your humanitee
Assureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,
As oft as time is of necessitee,
That we to you mow tell our hevinesse:
Accepteth, lord, than of your gentillesse,
That
That we with pitous herte unto you plaine,
And let your eres nat my vois disdaine.

Al have I not to don in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yet for as moch as ye, my lord so dere,
Han alway shewed me favour and grace,
I dare the better aske of you a space
Of audience, to shewen our request,
And ye, my lord, to don right as you left.

For certes, lord, so wel us liketh you
And all your werke, and ever have don, that we
Ne couden not ourself devisen how
We mighten live in more felicitee:
Save o thing, lord, if it your wille be,
That for to be a wedded man you left,
Than were your peple in soverain hertes rest.

Boweth your nekke under the blisful yok
Of soveraintee, and not of servise,
Which that men clepen spousafsle or wedlok:
And thinketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes passe in sondry wise;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ride,
Ay sleth the time, it wol no man abide.
THE CLERKES TALE.

And though your grene youthe flouris as yet,
In crepeth age alway as still as ston,
And deth manaseth every age, and fmit
In eche estat, for ther escapeth non:
And al so certain, as we knowe eche on
That we shul die, as uncertain we all
Ben of that day whan deth shal on us fall,

Accepteth than of us the trewe entent,
That never yet refuseden your heft,
And we wol, lord, if that ye wol assent,
Chese you a wise in short time at the meft,
Borne of the gentillest and of the best
Of all this lond, so that it oughte same
Honour to God and you, as we can deme.

Deliver us out of all this besy drede,
And take a wif, for highe Goddes sake:
For if it so befell, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deth your linage shulde flake,
And that a strange successour shuld take
Your héritage, o! wo were us on live:
Wherfore we pray you hastily to wive.

Hir meke praiere and hir pitous chere
Made the markis for to han pitee.
Ye wol, quod he, min owen peple dere,
To that I never er thought constrainen me.
I me rejoyncd of my libertee,
That felden time is found in mariage;
Ther I was free, I mowste ben in servage.

But natheles I see your trewe entent,
And trust upon your wit, and have don ay:
Wherfore of my free will I wol assent
To wedden me, as fone as ever I may.
But ther as ye han profred me to-day
To chesen me a wif, I you relese
That chois, and pray you of that profer cese.

For God it wot, that children often ben
Unlike hir worthy eldres hem before,
Bountee cometh al of God, not of the stren,
Of which they ben ygendred and ybore:
I trust in Goddes bountee, and thencefore
My mariage, and min eftat, and rest
I him betake, he may don as him left.

Let me alone in chesing of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wol endure:
But I you pray, and charge upon your lif,
That what wif that I take, ye me assure

To
The Clerkes Tale.

To worship hire while that hire lif may dure,
In word and werk both here and elles where,
As she an emperoures daughter were.

And furthermore this shuln ye swere, that ye
Again my chois shul never grutch ne strive.
For fith I shal forgo my libertee
At your request, as ever mote I thrive,
Ther as min herte is set, ther wol I wive:
And but ye wol assent in swiche manere,
I pray you speke no more of this materere.  

With hertly will they sworen and assenten
To all this thing, ther saide not o wight nay:
Beseching him of grace, or that they wenten,
That he wold granten hem a certain day
Of his spoufaile, as fone as ever he may,
For yet alway the peple somwhat dred,
Left that this markis wolde no wif wed.

He granted hem a day, swiche as him left,
On which he wold be wedded sikerly,
And said he did all this at hir request;
And they with humble herte ful buxumly
Kneling upon hir knees ful reverently
Him thonken all, and thus they han an end
Of hir entente, and home agen they wend.
And hereupon he to his officeres
Commandeth for the sefte to purvay.
And to his privee knightes and squieres
Swiche charge he yave, as him lift on hem lay:
And they to his commandement obey,
And eche of hem doth al his diligence
To do unto the sefte al reverence.

_Pars secunda._

Nought fer fro thilke paleis honourable,
Wher as this markis shope his mariage,
Ther stood a thorpe, of fighte delitable,
In which that poure folk of that village
Hadden hir bestes and hir herbergage,
And of hir labour toke hir sustenance,
After that the erthe yave hem habundance.

Among this poure folk ther dwelt a man,
Which that was holden pourest of hem all:
But highe God somtime senden can
His grace unto a litel oxes stylall:
Janicola men of that thorpe him call.
A doughter had he, faire ynough to fight,
And Grisildis this yonge maiden hight.

But for to speke of vertuous beautee,
Than was she on the fairest under sonne:
Ful pourely yfoftred up was she:
No likerous luft was in hire herte yronne:
Wel ofter of the well than of the tonne
She dranke, and for she wolde vertue plefe,
She knew wel labour, but non idel ese.

But though this mayden tendre were of age,
Yet in the brest of hire virginitee
Ther was enclosed sad and ripe corage:
And in gret reverence and charitee
Hire olde pourc fader softred she:
A few sheep spinning on the feld she kept,
She wolde not ben idel til she slept.

And whan she homward came, she wolde bring
Wortes and other herbes times oft,
The which she shred and sethe for hire living,
And made hire bed ful hard, and nothing soft:
And ay she kept hire sadres lif on loft
With every obeisance and diligence,
That child may don to sadres reverence.

Upon Grisilde, this pouré creature,
Ful often fithe this markis sette his eye,
As he on hunting rode paraventure:
And whan it fell that he might hire espie,
He
He not with wanton looking of folie
His eyen cast on hire, but in sad wife
Upon hire chere he wold him oft avise,

Commending in his herte hire womanhede,
And eke hire vertue, passing any wight
Of so yong age, as wel in chere as dede.
For though the peple have no gret insight
In vertue, he considere d ful right
Hire bountee, and disposed that he wold
Wedde hire only, if ever he wedden shold.

The day of wedding came, but no wight can
tellen what woman that it shulde be,
For which mervaille wondred many a man,
And saiden, whan they were in privattee,
Wol not our lord yet leve his vanitee?
Wol he not wedde? alas, alas the while!
Why wol he thus himself and us begile?

But natheles this markis hath do make
Of gemmes, sette in gold and inasure,
Broches and ringes, for Grisildes sake,
And of hire clothing toke he the mesure
Of a maiden like unto hire stature,
And eke of other ornamentes all,
That unto swiche a wedding shulde fall.
The time of underne of the same day
Approcheth, that this wedding shulde be,
And all the paleis put was in array,
Both halle and chambres, eche in his degree,
Houses of office stuffed with plentee
Ther mayst thou see of deinteous vitaille,
That may be found, as fer as lafteth Itaille.

This real markis richely arraide,
Lordes and ladies in his compagnie,
The which unto the feste weren praiade,
And of his retenue the bachelerie,
With many a foun of sondry melodie,
Unto the village, of the which I told,
In this array the righte way they hold.

Grisilde of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hire shapen was all this array,
To fetchen water at a welle is went,
And cometh home as sone as ever she may.
For wel she had herd say, that thilke day
The markis shulde wedde, and if she might,
She wolde fayn han seen som of that fght.

She thought I wol with other maidens stond,
That ben my felawes, in our dore and see

The
The markiseffe, and therto wol I fond
To don at home, as sone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And than I may at leifer hire behold,
If she this way unto the castel hold.

And as she wolde over the threswold gon,
The markis came and gan hire for to call,
And she sate doun hire water-pot anon
Beside the threswold in an oxes stall,
And doun upon hire knees she gan to fall,
And with sad countenance kneleth still,
Til she had herd what was the lordes will.

This thoughtful markis spake unto this maid
Ful soberly, and said in this manere:
Wher is your fader, Grisildis? he said.
And she with reverence in humble chere
Answered, lord, he is al redy here.
And in she goth withouten lenger lette,
And to the markis she hire fader fette.

He by the hond than toke this poure man,
And saide thus, when he him had aside:
Janicola, I neither may ne can
Lenger the plesance of min herte hide,
If that thou vouchesfaus, what so betide
Thy
Thy daughter wol I take or that I wend
As for my wif, unto hire lives end.

Thou lovest me, that wot I wel certain,
And art my faithful liegeman ybore,
And all that liketh me, I dare wel sain
It liketh thee, and specially therfore
Tell me that point, that I have said before,
If that thou wolt unto this purpos drawe,
To taken me as for thy son in lawe.

This soden cas this man astoned so,
That red he wex, abaist, and al quaking
He stood, unnethes said he wordes mo,
But only thus; Lord, quod he, my willing
Is as ye wol, ne ageins your liking
I wol no thing, min owen lord so dere,
Right as you lift, governeth this matere.

Than wol I, quod this markis softely,
That in thy chambre, I, and thou, and she,
Have a collation, and wost thou why?
For I wol ask hire, if it hire wille be
To be my wif, and rule hire after me:
And all this shal be don in thy presençe,
I wol not speke out of thin audience.
And in the chambre, while they were aboute
The tretee, which as ye shul after here,
The peple came into the hous withoute,
And wondred hem, in how honest manere
Ententifly she kept hire fader dere:

But utterly Grisildis wonder might,
For never erst ne saw she swiche a fight.

No wonder is though that she be astoned,
To see so gret a geft come in that place,
She never was to non swiche gestes woned,
For which she loked with ful pale face.
But shortly forth this matere for to chace,
Thise arn the wordes that the markis faid
To this benigne, veray, faithful maid.

Grisilde, he faid, ye shuln wel understond,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I you wedde, and eke it may so ftond
As I suppose, ye wol that it so be:
But thise demaundes aske I firit (quod he)
That fin it shal be don in hasty wise,
Wol ye assent, or elles you avife?

I fay this, be ye redy with good herte
To all my lust, and that I freely may
As me best thinketh do you laugh or smerte,
And never ye to gruntchen, night ne day,
And eke whan I say ya, ye say not nay,
Neither by word, ne frowning countenance?
Swere this, and here I swere our alliance.

Wondring upon this thing, quaking for drede,
She saide; Lord, indigne and unworthy
Am I, to thilke honour, that ye me bede,
But as ye wol yourSELF, right so wol I:
And here I swere, that never willingly
In werk, ne thought, I n'ill you dilobe
For to be ded, though me were loth to deie.

This is ynough, Grisilde min, quod he.
And forth he goth with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after than came she,
And to the peple he said in this manere:
This is my wif, quod he, that stondeth here.
Honoureth her, and loveth hire, I pray,
Who so me loveth, ther n'is no more to say.

And for that nothing of hire olde gere
She shulde bring into his hous, he bad
That women shuld despoilen hire right there,
Of which thise ladies weren nothing glad
To handle hire clothes wherein she was clad:

But
But natheles this maiden bright of hew
Fro foot to hed they clothed han all new.

Hire heres han they kempt, that lay untrested
Ful rudely, and with hir fingres final
A coroune on hire hed they han ydressed,
And sette hire ful of nouches gret and final:
Of hire array what shuld I make a tale?
Unneth the peple hire knew for hire fauurnesse, 8260
When she tranfinewed was in swiche richesse.

This markis hath hire spoused with a ring
Brought for the same cause, and than hire sette
Upon an hors snow-white, and wel ambling,
And to his paleis, or he lenger lette,
(With joyful peple, that hire lad and mette)
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And shortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe markisess 8270
God hath swiche favour fent hire of his grace,
That it ne femeth not by likelinesse
That she was borne and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxes stall,
But nourished in an emperoures hall.
To every wight she waxen is so dere,  
And worshipful, that folk ther she was bore,  
And fro hire birthe knew hire yere by yere,  
Unnethes trowed they, but doref han swore,  
That to Janicle, of which I spake before,  
She daughter n'as, for as by conjecture  
Hem thoughte she was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was she,  
She was encresed in swiche excellence  
Of thewes good, yset in high bountee,  
And so discrete, and faire of eloquence,  
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,  
And coude so the peples herte enbrace,  
That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face.

Not only of Saluces in the toun  
Published was the bountee of hire name,  
But eke beside in many a regioun,  
If on faith wel, another faith the same:  
So spredeth of hire hie bountee the fame,  
That men and women, yong as wel as old,  
Gon to Saluces upon hire to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but really,  
Wedded with fortunat honestete,  
In Goddes pces liveth ful esily
At home, and grace ynough outward had he: 8300,
And for he saw that under low degree
Was honest vertue hid, the peple him held
A prudent man, and that is seen ful feld.

Not only this Grisildis thurgh hire wit
Coude all the fete of wifly homlineffe,
But eke whan that the cas required it,
The comune profit coude she redresse:
Ther n'as discord, rancour, ne hevinesse
In all the lond, that she ne coude appese,
And wisely bring hem all in hertes efe. 8310

Though that hire husbond absent were or non,
If gentilmen, or other of that contree
Were wroth, she wolde bringen hem at on,
So wise and ripe wordes hadde she,
And jugement of so gret equitee,
That she from heven fent was, as men wend,
Peple to save, and every wrong to amend.

Not longe time after that this Grisilde
Was wedded, she a daughter hath ybore,
All had hire lever han borne a knave childe: 8320
Glad was the markis and his folk thersfore,
For though a maiden childe come all before,

C 2

She
She may unto a knave child atteine
By likelyhed, sin she n'is not barreine.

Pars tertia.

Ther fell, as it befalleth times mo,
Whan that this childe had fouked but a throwe,
This markis in his herte longed so
To tempt his wif, hire sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This marveillous defir his wif to affay,
Needles, God wot, he thought hire to affray.

He had affaiied hire ynough before,
And found hire ever good, what nedeth it
Hire for to tempt, and alway more and more?
Though som men praiše it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I say that evil it fit
To affay a wif whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in anguiſh and in drede.

For which this markis wrought in this manere;
He came a-night alone ther as she lay
With ſterne face, and with ful trouble chere,
And sayde thus; Grisilde, (quod he) that day
That I you toke out of your poure array,
And put you in eſtat of high noblesſe,
Ye han it not forgotten, as I gesſe.

I say,
I say, Grisilde, this present dignietye,
In which that I have put you, as I trow,
Maketh you not forgetful for to be
That I you toke in poure estat ful low,
For ony wele ye mote yourselfen know. 8350
Take hede of every word that I you say,
Ther is no wight that hereth it but we tway.

Ye wote yourself wel how that ye came here
Into this hous, it is not long ago,
And though to me ye be right lefe and dere,
Unto my gentils ye be nothing so:
They say, to hem it is gret shame and wo
For to be suggetes, and ben in servage
To thee, that borne art of a smal linage.

And namely fin thy doughter was ybore, 8360
Thise wordes han they spoken doubtles,
But I desire, as I have don before,
To live my lif with hem in rest and pees:
I may not in this cas be reccheles;
I mote do with thy doughter for the best,
Not as I wold, but as my gentils left.

And yet, God wote, this is ful loth to me:
But natheles withouten youre weting
THE CLERKES TALE.

I wol nought do, but thus wol I (quod he) That ye to me aßsenten in this thing. 8370
Shew now your patience in your werking, That ye me hight and swore in your village The day that maked was our mariage,

When she had herd all this, she not ameved Neyther in word, in chere, ne countenance, (For as it semed, she was not agreved) She sayde; Lord, all lith in your plesance, My child and I, with hertely obeisance Ben youres all, and ye may sawe or spill, Your owen thing: werketh after your will. 8380

Ther may no thing, so God my soule sawe, Like unto you, that may displefen me: Ne I desire nothing for to have, Ne drede for to lefe, sauf only ye: This will is in myn herte, and ay shal be, No length of time, or deth may this deface, Ne change my corage to an other place.

Glad was this markis for hire answering, But yet he feined as he were not so, Al drery was his chere and his loking, 8390
Whan that he shuld out of the chambre go, Sone after this, a furlong way or two,
THE CLERKES TALE.

He prively hath told all his entent
Unto a man, and to his wif him sent.

A maner sergeant was this prive man,
The which he faithful often founden had
In thinges gret, and eke swiche folk wel can
Don execution on thinges bad:
The lord knew wel, that he him loved and drad.
And whan this sergeant wifl his lordes will,
Into the chambre he ftalked him ful still,

Madame, he sayd, ye mote foryeve it me,
Though I do thing, to which I am constreined:
Ye ben so wise, that right wel knownen ye,
That lordes heftes may not ben yfeined,
They may wel be bewailed and complained,
But men mote nedes to hir luft obey,
And so wol I, ther n'is no more to say.

This child I am commanded for to take.
And spake no more, but out the child he hent Despitously, and gan a chere to make,
As though he wold have slain it, or he went.
Grisildis most al suffer and al consent:
And as a lambe, she fitteth meke and still,
And let this cruel sergeant do his will.
Suspecious was the difflame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word alfo,
Suspect the time in which he this began:
Alas! hire doughter, that she loved fo,
She wende he wold han flaien it right tho,
But natheles she neither wept ne friked,
Conforming hire to that the markis liked.

But at the laft to fpoken she began,
And mekely she to the sergeant praid
(So as he was a worthy gentil man)That she might kiffe hire child, or that it deid:
And in hire barme this litel child she leid,
With ful fad face, and gan the child to bliffe,
And lulled it, and after gan it kiffe.

And thus she sayd in hire benigne vois:
Farewel, my child, I shal thee never fee,
But fin I have thee marked with the crois,
Of thilke fader ybledd mot thou be,
That for us died upon a crois of tree:
Thy soule, litel child, I him betake,
For this night shalt thou dien for my fake.

I trow that to a norice in this cas
It had ben hard this routhe for to fee:
Wel might a moder than han cried alas,
But natheles so sad stedfast was she,
That she endured all adversitee,
And to the sergeant mekely she sayde,
Have here agen your litel yonge mayde.

Goth now (quod she) and doth my lorde heft:
And o thing wold I pray you of your grace,
But if my lord forbade you at the left,
Burieth this litel body in som place,
That bestes ne no briddles it to-race.
But he no word to that purpos wold say,
But toke the child and went upon his way.

This sergeant came unto his lord again,
And of Grisildes wordes and hire chere
He told him point for point, in short and plain,
And him presented with his doughter dere.
Somwhat this lord hath routhe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos held he still,
As lorde don, whan they wol have hir will,

And bad this serjeant that he prively
Shulde this child ful softe wind and wrappe,
With alle circumstances tendrely,
And carry it in a cosre, or in a lappe;
But upon peine his hed of for to swappe

That
That no man shulde know of his entent,
Ne whens he came, ne whider that he went;

But at Boloigne, unto his sufter dere,
That thilke time of Pavie was countesse,
He shuld it take, and shew hire this mater,
Besfeching hire to don hire befinesse
This child to fostren in all gentillesse,
And whos child that it was he bade hire hide 8470
From every wight, for ought that may betide.

This serjeant goth, and hath fulfilde this thing.
But to this marquis now retorne we;
For now goth he ful fast imagining,
If by his wives chere he mighte see,
Or by hire wordes apperceive, that she
Were changed, but he never coud hire finde,
But ever in on ylike sad and kinde.

As glad, as humble, as besy in service
And eke in love, as she was wont to be, 8480
Was she to him, in every maner wise;
Ne of hire daughter not a word spake she:
Non accident for non adversitee
Was seen in hire, ne never hire doughters name
Ne nevened she, for ernest ne for game.
In this estat ther passed ben foure yere
Er she with childe was, but as God wold,
A knave childe she bare by this Waltere
Ful gracious, and fair for to behold:
And whan that folk it to his fader told,
Not only he, but all his contree mery
Was for this childe, and God they thonke and hery.

When it was two yere old, and from the brest
Departed of his norice, on a day
This markis caughte yet another left
To tempte his wif yet ofter, if he may.
O! nedeles was she tempted in assay.
But wedded men ne connen no mesure,
Whan that they finde a patient creature.

Wif, quod this markis, ye han herd or this
My peple sikely beren our mariage,
And namely sin my sone yboren is,
Now is it weref than ever in al our age:
The murmure fleth myn herte and my corage,
For to myn eres cometh the vois fo smerte;
That it wel nie destroyed hath myn herte.

Now
Now say they thus, when Walter is agon,
Than shal the blood of Janicle succede,
And ben our lord, for other han we non:
Swiche wordes sayn my peple, it is no drede. 8510
Wel ought I of swiche murmure taken hede,
For certainly I drede al swiche sentence,
Though they not plainen in myn audience.

I wolde live in pees, if that I might:
Wherfore I am disposed utterly,
As I his suffer serued er by night,
Right so thinke I to serve him privelly.
This warne I you, that ye not sodenly
Out of yourself for no wo shuld outraie,
Beth patient, and therof I you prai.e.

I have, quod she, sayd thus and ever shal,
I wol no thing, ne n’ill no thing certain,
But as you lift: not greveth me at al,
Though that my daughter and my sone be flain
At your commandement: that is to fain,
I have not had no part of children twein,
But first fikeness, and after wo and peine.

Ye ben my lord, doth with your owen thing
Right as you lift, asketh no rede of me:

For
For as I left at home al my clothing
When I came first to you, right so (quod she)
Left I my will and al my libertee,
And toke your clothing: wherfore I you prey,
Doth your plesance, I wol youre lust obey.

And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your will to know, er ye your lust me told,
I wold it do withouten negligence:
But now I wote your lust, and what ye wold,
All your plesance ferme and stable I hold,
For wist I that my deth might do you ese,
Right gladly wold I dien, you to plesse.

Deth may not maken no comparifoun
Unto your love: and whan this markis say
The constance of his wif, he cast adoun
His eyen two, and wondreth how she may
In patience suffer al this array:
And forth he goth with drery conteinance,
But to his herte it was ful gret plesance.

This ugly sergeant in the same wise
That he hire doughter caughte, right so he
(Or were, if men can any were devise)
Hath hent hire stone, that ful was of beautee:
And ever in on so patient was she,

That
That she no chere made of hevinesse,
But kisst hire sone and after gan it blesse.

Save this she prayed him, if that he might,
Hire litel sone he wold in erthe grave,
His tendre limmes, delicat to fight,
Fro soules and fro bestes for to save.
But she non answer of him mighte have,
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloigne he tendrely it brought.

This markis wondreth ever lenger the more
Upon hire patience, and if that he
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbefore,
That parfitly hire children loved she,
He wold han wend that of som subtilttee
And of malice, or for cruel corage,
That she had suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew, that next himself, certain
She loved hire children best in every wise.
But now of women wold I asken sayn,
If thise affaies mighten not suffise;
What coude a sturdy husbond more devise
To preve hire wifhood, and hire stedsfastnesse,
And he continuing ever in sturdinesse?
But ther ben folk of swiche condition,
That, when they han a certain purpos take,
They can not flint of hir entention,
But, right as they were bounden to a flake,
They wol not of hir firfte purpos flake:
Right so this markis fully hath purposed
To tempt his wif, as he was first disposed.

He waiteth, if by word or contenance
That she to him was changed of corage:
But never coud he vinden variance,
She was ay on in herte and in visage,
And ay the further that she was in age,
The more trewe (if that it were possible)
She was to him in love, and more penible.

For which it seened thus, that of hem two:
Ther was but o will; for as Walter left,
The same luft was hire plesance also;
And God be thanked, all fell for the best.
She shewed wel, for no worldly unrest
A wif, as of hireself, no thing ne sholde
Wille in effect, but as hire husbond wolde.

The sclandre of Walter wonder wide spradde,
That of a cruel herte he wikkedly,
For he a poure woman wedded hadde,
Hath murdred both his children prively:
Swich murmure was among hem comunly.
No wonder is: for to the peoples ere
Ther came no word, but that they murdred were.

For which ther as his peple therbefore
Had loved him wel, the sclandre of his diffame
Made hem that they him hateden therfore:
To ben a murdrour is an hateful name.
But natheles, for ernest ne for game,
He of his cruel purpos n'olde flente,
To tempt his wif was fette all his entente.

Whan that his daughter twelf yere was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in subtil wife
Enformed of his will, sent his message,
Commanding him, swiche billes to devise,
As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
How that the pope, as for his peoples rest
Bade him to wed another, if him left.

I say he bade, they shulden contrefete
The popes bulles, making mention
That he hath leve his firste wif to lete,
As by the popes dispensation,
To stinten rancour and diffension
Betwix
Betwix his peple and him: thus spake the bull,
The which they han publisshed at the full.

The rude peple, as no wonder is,
Wenden ful wel, that it had ben right so:
But whan thisse tidings came to Grisildis,
I deme that hire herte was ful of wo;
But she ylike sad for evermo
Disposéd was, this humble creature,
The adversitée of fortune al to endure;

Abiding ever his lust and his plesance,
To whom that she was yeven, herte and al,
As to hire veray worldly suffisance.
But shortly if this storie tell I shal,
This markis written hath in special
A lettre, in which he sheweth his entente,
And secretly he to Boloigne it sente,

To the erl of Pavie, which that hadde tho
Wedded his sufter, prayed he specially
To bringen home agein his children two
In honourable eftat al openly:
But o thing he him prayed utterly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquire,
Shulde not tell whos children that they were,

Vol. II.
But say, the maiden shuld ywedded be
Unto the markis of Saluces anon.
And as this erl was prayed, so did he,
For at day sette he on his way is gon 8650
Toward Saluces, and lordes many on
In rich arraie, this maiden for to gide,
Hire yonge brother riding hire beside.

Arraied was toward hire mariage
This freshe maiden, ful of gemmes clere,
Hire brother, which that seven yere was of age,
Arraied eke ful fresh in his manere:
And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
Toward Saluces shaping hir journay
Fro day to day they riden in hir way. 8660

Pars quinta.

Among al this, after his wicked usage,
This markis yet his wif to tempten more
To the utterefte prefe of hire corage,
Fully to have experience and lore,
If that she were as stedfast as before,
He on a day in open audience
Ful boistoufily hath said hire this sentence:

Certes, Grisilde, I had ynough plesance
To han you to my wif, for your goodnesse,
And for your trouthe, and for your obeylsance, Not for your linage, ne for your richesse, But now know I in veray sothfastness, That in gret lordship, if I me wel avise, Ther is gret servitude in sondry wife.

I may not don, as every ploughman may: My peple me constreineth for to take Another wif, and crien day by day; And eke the pope rancour for to flake Consenteth it, that dare I undertake:

And trewely, thus moche I wol you say, My newe wif is coming by the way.

Be strong of herte, and voide anon hire place, And thilke dower that ye broughten me Take it agen, I grant it of my grace. Returneth to your fadres hous, (quod he) No man may alway have prosperitee. With even herte I rede you to endure The stroke of fortune, or of aventure.

And she agen answerd in patience: My lord, quod she, I wrote, and wifl alway, How that betwixen your magnificence And my poverte no wight ne can ne may
Maken comparison, it is no nay;
I ne held me never digne in no manere
To be your wif, ne yet your chamberere.

And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witnesse,
And all so wisly he my soule glad)
I never held me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servant to your worthinesse,
And ever shal, while that my lif may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

That ye so longe of your benignitee
Han holden me in honour and nobley,
Wheras I was not worthy for to be,
That thanke I God and you, to whom I prey
Foryelde it you, ther is no more to fey:
Unto my fader gladly wol I wende,
And with him dwell unto my lives ende;

Ther I was fostred of a childe ful smal,
Til I be ded my lif ther wol I lede,
A widew clene in body, herte and al.
For fith I yave to you my maidenhede,
And am your trewe wif, it is no drede,
God shilde swiche a lordes wif to take
Another man to husbond or to make.

And
And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte you wele and prosperite:
For I wol gladly yelden hire my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For sith it liketh you, my lord, (quod she)
That whilom weren all myn hertes rest,
That I shal gon, I wol go whan you lefte.

But ther as ye me profre swiche dowaire
As I first brought, it is wel in my mind,
It were my wretched clothes, nothing faire,
The which to me were hard now for to find.
O goode God! how gentil and how kind
Ye semed by your speche and your visage,
The day that maked was oure marriage!

But soth is said, algate I find it trewe,
For in effect it preved is on me,
Love is not old, as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for non adversitee
To dien in this cas, it shal not be
That ever in word or werke I shal repent,
That I you yave min herte in hole entent.

My lord, ye wote, that in my fadres place
Ye dide me stripe out of my poure wede,
And richely ye clad me of your grace; 
To you brought I nought elles out of drede, 
But faith, and nakedness, and maidenhede; 
And here agen your clothing I restore, 
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.

The remenant of your jeweles redy be 
Within your chambre, I dare it sally fain: 
Naked out of my fadres hous (quod she) 
I came, and naked I mote turne again. 
All your plesance wolde I folwe fain: 
But yet I hope it be not your cntent, 
That I smokes out of your paleis went.

Ye coude not do so dishonest a thing, 
That thilke wombe, in which your children lay, 
Shulde before the peple, in my walking, 
Be seen al bare: wherfore I you pray 
Let me not like a worme go by the way: 
Remembre you, min owen lord so dere, 
I was your wif, though I unworthy were.

Wherfore in guerdon of my maidenhede, 
Which that I brought and not agen I bere, 
As vouchesfauf to yeve me to my mede 
But swiche a smok as I was wont to were, 
That I therwith may wrie the wombe of hire
That was your wif: and here I take my leve
Of you, min owen lord, left I you greve.

The sinok, quod he, that thou haft on thy bake,
Let it be still, and bere it forth with thee.
But wel unnethes thilke word he spake,
But went his way for routhe and for pitee.
Before the folk hireselven stripeth she,
And in hire sinok, with foot and hed al bare,
Toward hire fadres hous forth is she fare.

The folk hire folwen weeping in hir wey,
And fortune ay they cursen as they gon:
But sche fro weping kept hire eyen drey,
Ne in this time word ne spake she non.
Hire fader, that this tiding herd anon,
Curseth the day and time, that nature
Shope him to ben a lives creature.

For out of doute this olde poure man
Was ever in suspect of hire mariage:
For ever he demed, sin it first began,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corage,
Him wolde thinke it were a disparage
To his estat, so lowe for to alight,
And voiden hire as fone as ever he might.
Agein his daughter haftily goth he,
(For he by noife of folk knew hire coming)
And with hire olde cote, as it might be,
He covereth hire ful forwefully weping:
But on hire body might he it not bring,
For rude was the cloth, and more of age
By daies fele than at hire mariage.

Thus with hire fader for a certain space
Dwelleth this flour of wifly patience,
That nother by hire wordes ne hire face,
Beforn the folk, ne eke in hir absence,
Ne shewed she that hire was don offence,
Ne of hire high eftat no remembrance
Ne hadde she, as by hire contenance.

No wonder is, for in hire gret eftat
Hire goft was ever in pleine humilitee;
No tendre mouth, no herte delicat,
No pompe, no femblant of realtee;
But ful of patient benignitee,
Discrete, and prideles, ay honourable,
And to hire husbond ever meke and stabe.

Men speke of Job, and moft for his humbleffe,
As clerkes, whan hem lift, can wel endite,
Namely
Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse.

Though clerkes preisen women but a lite,
Ther can no man in humblesse him acquite
As woman can, ne can be half so trewe
As women ben, but it be falle of newe.

Pars sexta.

Fro Boloigne is this erl of Pavie come,
Of which the fame up sprang to more and lesse:
And to the peples eres all and some
Was couth eke, that a newe markiseffe
He with him brought, in swiche pomp and richesse,
That never was ther seen with mannes eye
So noble array in al West Lombardie.

The markis, which that shope and knew all this,
Er that this erl was come, sent his missage
For thilke poure fely Grisildis,
And she with humble herte and glad visage,
Not with no swollen thought in hire corage,
Came at his heft, and on hire knees hire fette,
And reverently and wisely she him grette.

Grisilde, (quod he) my will is utterly,
This maiden, that shal wedded be to me,
Received be to-morwe as really
As
As it possible is in myn hous to be:
And eke that every wight in his degree
Have his estat in sitting and service,
And high plesance, as I can best devise.

I have no woman suffisant certain
The chambres for to array in ordinance
After my lust, and therefore wolde I sain,
That thin were all swiche manere governance:
Thou knowest eke of old all my plesance;
Though thin array he bad, and evil besey,
Do thou thy devoir at the lefte wey.

Not only, lord, that I am glad (quod she)
To don your lust, but I desire also
You for to serve and plese in my degree,
Withouten fainting, and shal evermo:
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne shal the gost within myn herte stente
To love you best with all my trewe entente.

And with that word she gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peined her to don all that she might,
Praying the chambereres for Goddes sake
To haften hem, and faste swepe and shake,
And
And she the most serviceable of all
Hath every chambre arraied, and his hall.

Abouten undern gan this erl alight,
That with him brought thife noble children twey:
For which the peple ran to see the sight
Of hir array, so richely besey:

And than at erst amonges hem they fey,
That Walter was no fool, though that him left
To change his wif; for it was for the beft.

For she is fairer, as they demen all,
Than is Grisilde, and more tendre of age,
And fairer fruit betwene hem shulde fall,
And more plesant for hire high linage:
Hire brother eke so faire was of vifage,
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesance,
Commending now the markis governance.

O stormy peple, unfad and ever untrewe,
And undiscrete, and changing as a fane,
Delighting ever in rombel that is newe,
For like the mone waxen ye and wane:
Ay ful of clapping, dere ynough a jane,
Your dome is fals, your constance evil preveth,
A ful gret fool is he that on you leveth.

Thus
Thus saiden fade folk in that citee,
Whan that the peple gased up and doun:
For they were glad, right for the novelte,
To have a newe lady of hir toun.
No more of this make I now mentioun,
But to Grisilde agen I wol me dresse,
And telle hir constance, and hir besinesse.

Ful befy was Grisilde in every thing,
That to the feast was appertinent;
Right naught was she abast of hir clothing,
Though it were rude, and somdel eke to-rent,
But with glad chere to the yate is went
With other folk, to grete the markisesse,
And after that doth forth hir besinesse.

With so glad chere his gestes she receiveth,
And conningly everich in his degree,
That no defaute no man apperceiveth,
But ay they wondren what she mighte be,
That in so poure array was for to see,
And coude swiche honour and reverence,
And worthily they preisen hir prudence.

In all this mene while she ne stent
This maide and eke hir brother to commend
With
With all hire herte in ful benigne entent,
So wel, that no man coud hire preife amend:
But at the last whan that thife lordes wend
To fitten doun to mete, he gan to call
Grifilde, as she was bely in the hall.

Grifilde, (quod he, as it were in his play)
How liketh thee my wif, and hire beautee?
Right wel, my lord, quod she, for in good fay,
A fairer saw I never non than she:
I pray to God yeve you prosperitee;
And so I hope, that he wol to you send
Plesance ynough unto your lives end.

O thing befeche I you and warne also,
That ye ne prikke with no turmenting
This tendre maiden, as ye han do mo:
For she is foftred in hire norishing
More tendrely, and to my supposing
She mighte not adversitee endure,
As coude a poure foftred creature.

And whan this Walter saw hire patience,
Hire glade chere, and no malice at all,
And he so often hadde hire don offence,
And she ay fade and constant as a wall,
Continuing ever hire innocence over all,
THE CLERKES TALE.

This sturdy markis gan his herte dresse
To rewe upon hire wisly stedfastnesse.

This is ynough, Grisilde min, quod he,
Be now no more agaft, ne evil apaid,
I have thy faith and thy benigneene,
As wel as ever woman was, aflaid
In gret estat, and pourelich arraid:
Now know I, dere wif, thy stedfastnesse,
And hire in armes toke, and gan to kelle.

And she for wonder toke of it no kepe;
She herde not what thing he to hire saide:
She ferde as she had stert out of a slepe,
Til she out of hire masednesse abraid.
Grisilde, quod he, by God that for us deid,
Thou art my wif, non other I ne have,
Ne never had, as God my soule fave.

This is thy daughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Shal be min heir, as I have ay disposed;
Thou bare hem of thy body trevely:
At Boloigne have I kept hem prively:
Take hem agen, for now maift thou not say,
That thou haft lorn non of thy children tway.

And
And folk, that otherwise han said of me,
I warne hem wel, that I have don this dede
For no malice, ne for no crueltee,
But for to affay in thee thy womanhede:
And not to flee my children (God forbede)
But for to kepe hem prively and still,
Til I thy purpos knew, and all thy will.

Whan she this herd aswounne doun she falleth
For pitous joye, and after hire swounning
She both hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes pitousfly weeping
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissing
Ful like a moder with hire falte teres
She bathed both hir vifage and hir heres.

O, which a pitous thing it was to see
Hire swounning, and hire humble vois to here!
Grand mercy, lord, God thank it you (quod she)
That ye han sayed me my children dere:
Now rekke I never to be ded right here,
Sin I stond in your love, and in your grace,
No force of deth, ne whan my spirt pace.

O tendre, o dere, o yonge children mine,
Your woful mother wened stedfastly,
That
That cruel houndes, or some foul vermine
Had eten you; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tendrely
Hath don you kepe: and in that same fround
Al fodenly she swapt adoun to ground.

And in hire fwould so sadly holdeth she
Hire children two, whan she gan hem embrace,
That with great fleight and great difficultee
The children from hire arm they gan arrace:
O! many a tere on many a pitous face 8980
Doun ran of hem that floden hire beside,
Unnethe abouten hire might they abide.

Walter hire gladeth, and hire forwe flaketh,
She riseth up abashed from hire trance,
And every wight hire joye and feste maketh,
Til she hath caught agen hire contenance.
Walter hire doth so faithfully plesance,
That it was deintee for to seen the chere
Betwix hem two, sin they ben met in fere.

Thife ladies, whan that they hir time sey, 8990
Han taken hire, and into chambre gon,
And stripen hire out of hire rude arrey,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte shone,
With a coroune of many a riche stone
Upon
Upon hire hed, they into hall hire broughte:
And ther she was honoured as hire ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful end;
For every man, and woman, doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to dispemd,
Til on the welkin shone the sterres bright:
For more solempe in every mannes fight
This fefte was, and greter of coflage,
Than was the revel of hire mariage.

Ful many a yere in high prosperitee
Liven thise two in concord and in reft,
And richely his daughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthiell
Of all Itaille, and than in pees and reft
His wives fader in his court he kepeth,
Til that the soule out of his body crepeth.

His sone succeedeth in his heritage,
In reft and pees, after his fadres day:
And fortunat was eke in mariage,
Al put he not his wif in gret a slay:
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde times yore,
And herkneth, what this auetuor faith thefore.
This story is said, not for that wives shuld
Folwe Grisilde, as in humilitie,
For it were importable, tho they wold;
But for that every wight in his degree
Shulde be constant in adversiteit,
As was Grisilde, therfore Petrark writeth
This storie, which with high stile he enditeth.

For fith a woman was so patient
Unto a mortal man, wel more we ought
Receiven all in gree that God us sent.
For gret skill is he preve that he wrought:
But he ne tempteth no man that he bought,
As faith feint Jame, if ye his pistell rede;
He preveth folk al day, it is no drede.

And suffreth us, as for our exercis,
With sharpe scourges of adversiteit,
Ful often to be bete in fondry wise;
Not for to know our will, for certes he
Or we were borne, knew all our freeleete;
And for our best is all his governance;
Let us than live in vertuous suffrance.

But o word, lordings, herkeneth, or I go:
It were so hard to finden now adayes.
In all a toun Grisildes three or two:
For if that they were put to swiche affayes,
The gold of hem hath now so bad alayes
With bras, that though the coine be faire at eye,
It wolde rather braft atwo than plie.

For which here, for the wives love of Bathe,
Whos lif and al hire seete God maintene
In high maistrie, and elles were it seath,
I wol with lufty herte fresshe and grene,
Say you a song to gladen you, I wene:
And let us flint of ernestful matere.
Herkneth my song, that faith in this manere.

Grisilde is ded, and eke hire patience,
And both at ones buried in Itaille:
For which I crie in open audience,
No wedded man so hardy be to affaille
His wives patience, in truft to find
Grisildes, for in certain he shal faille.

O noble wives, ful of high prudence,
Let non humilitee your tonges naile:
Ne let no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of you a storie of swiche mervaille,
As of Grisildis patient and kinde,
Left Chichevache you swalwe in hire entraille.

E 2
Folweth
THE CLERKES TALE.

Folweth ecco, that holdeth no silence,
But ever answereth at the countretaille:
Beth not bedaffed for your innocence,
But sharply taketh on you the governaille:
Emprenteth wel this lesson in your minde,
For comun profit, sith it may availle. 9070

Ye archewives; spondeth ay at defence,
Sin ye be strong, as is a gret camaille,
Ne suffreth not, that men do you offence.
And flendre wives, feble as in bataille,
Beth egre as is a tigre yond in Inde;
Ay clappeth as a mill, I you counfaille.

Ne drede hem not, doth hem no reverence,
For though thin husbond armed be in maille,
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence
Shal perce his breft, and eke his aventaille: 9080
In jalousie I rede eke thou him binde,
And thou shalt make him couche as doth a quaille.

If thou be faire, ther folk ben in presence
Shew thou thy visage, and thin apparaillle:
If thou be foule, be free of thy dispence,
To get thee frendes ay do thy travaille:
Be ay of chere as light as lefe on linde,
And let him care, and wepe, and wring, and waille.

THE
THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE.

Weping and wailing, care and other forwe
I have ynoough, on even and on morwe, 9c90
Quod the marchant, and so have other mo,
That wedded ben; I trowe that it be so:
For wel I wot it fareth so by me.
I have a wif, the werfte that may be,
For though the fent to hire ycoupled were,
She wolde him overmatche I dare wel swere.
What shulde I you reherfe in special
Hire high malice? she is a shrew at al.

Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Grisildes grete patience, 9100
And of my wife the passing crueltie.
Were I unbounden, all so mote I the,
I wolde never eft comen in the snare.
We wedded men live in forwe and care,
Assay it who so wol, and he shal finde
That I say soth, by feint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I say not alle;
God shilde that it shulde so befalle.

A good fire hoste, I have ywedded be
Thife monethes two, and more not parde; 9110
And yet I trowe that he, that all his lif
Wifles hath ben, though that men wolde him rife
THE MARCHANTES PROLOGUE

Into the herte, ne coude in no manere
Tellen so much forwe, as I you here
Coud tellen of my wives cursednesse.

Now, quod our hoste, marchant, so God you blessè,
Sin ye so mochel knownen of that art,
Ful hertely I pray you tell us part.

Gladly, quod he, but of min owen fore
For fory herte I tellen may no more.

THE MARCHANTES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwelling in Lumbardie
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he lived in gret prosperitee;
And sixty yere a wifes man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delit
On women, ther as was his appetit,
As don thife fooles that ben seculere.
And whan that he was passed sixty yere,
Were it for holinesse or for dotage,
I cannot sain, but swiche a gret corage
Hadde this knight to ben a wedded man,
That day and night he doth all that he can
To espien, wher that he might wedded be;
Praying our lord to granten him, that he
Mighte ones knownen of that blisful lif,
That is betwix an hufbond and his wif,

And
And for to live under that holy bond,
With which God firfte man and woman bond.
Non other lif (said he) is worth a bene:
For wedlok is so esy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradise.
Thus faith this olde knight, that was fo wife.
And certainly, as soth as God is king,
To take a wif, it is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hore,
Than is a wif the fruit of his trefore;
Than shuld he take a yong wif and a faire,
On which he might engendren him an heire,
And lede his lif in joye and in folas,
Wheras thife bachelers singen alas,
Whan that they finde any adverfitee
In love, which n'is but childish vanitee.
And trewely it fit wel to be so,
That bachelers have often peine and wo:
On brotel ground they bile, and brotelnesse
They finden, whan they wenen fikernesse:
They live but as a bird or as a beste,
In libertee and under non arefte,
Ther as a wedded man in his eftat
Liveth a lif blisful and ordinat,
Under the yoke of mariage ybound:
Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abound.
For who can be so buxom as a wif?
Who is so trewe and eke so ententif
To kepe him, sike and hole, as is his make?
For wele or wo she n'ill him not forfake:
She n'is not wery him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrede til that he sterve.

And yet som clerkes fain, it is not so,
Of which he Theophrast is on of tho:
What force though Theophrast lift for to lie?
Ne take no wif, quod he, for husbondrie,
As for to spare in houfhold thy dispence:
A trewe fervant doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than doth thin owen wif,
For she wol claimen half part al hire lif.
And if that thou be sike, so God me save,
Thy veray frenedes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe thee bet than she, that waiteth ay
After thy good, and hath don many a day.

This sentence, and an hundred thinges worse
Writeth this man ther God his bones curfe.
But take no kepe of al swiche vanitee,
Defieth Theophrast, and herkeneth me.

A wif is Goddes yealte veraily;
All other maner yeftes hardely,
As londes, rentes, pasture, or commune,
Or mebles, all ben yeftes of fortune,
That passer as a shadow on the wall:
But drede thou not, if plainly speke I shal,
A wif wol last and in thin hous endure,
Wel longer than thee lift paraventure.

Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;
He which that hath no wif I hold him shent;
He liveth helples, and all desolat:
(I speke of folk in seculer estat)
And herkneth why, I say not this for nought,
That woman is for mannes helpe ywrought.
The highe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And saw him al alone belly naked,
God of his grete goodnesse faide than,
Let us now make an helpe unto this man
Like to himself, and than he made him Eve.

Here may ye see, and hereby may ye preve,
That a wif is mannes helpe and his comfort,
His paradis terestre and his disport:
So buxom and so vertuous is she,
They mosten nedes live in unitee:
O fleshe they ben, and o fleshe, as I gesse,
Hath but on herte in wele and in distresse.

A wif? a! seinte Marie, benedicite,
How might a man have any adverfite
That hath a wif? certes I cannot seye.
The blisse the which that is betwix hem tweye.
Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be poure, she helpeth him to swinke;
She kepeth his good, and wasteth never a del;
All that hire husbond doth, hire liketh wel;
She faith not ones nay, whan he faith ye;
Do this, faith he; al redy, fire, faith she.

O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious,
Thou art so mery, and eke so vertuous,
And so commended, and approved eke,
That every man that holt him worth a leke,
Upon his bare knees ought all his lif
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
Or elles pray to God him for to send
A wif, to laft unto his lives end.
For than his lif is set in sikernessse,
He may not be deceived, as I gesse,
So that he werche after his wives rede;
Than may he boldly beren up his hede,
They ben so trewe, and therwithal so wife,
For which, if thou wilt werchen as the wife,
Do alway so, as women wol thee rede.

Lo how that Jacob, as thise clerekes rede,
By good conseil of his mother Rebekke
Bounde the kiddes fkin about his nekke;
For which his sadres benifon he wan.

Lo Judith, as the storie eke tell can,
By good conseil the Goddes peple kept,
And flow him Holofernes while he slept.

Lo Abigail, by good conseil how she
Saved hire husbond Nabal, whan that he
Shuld han be flain. And loke, Hester also
By good conseil delivered out of wo
The peple of God, and made him Mardochee
Of Assuere enhaunfed for to be.

Ther n'is no thing in gree superlatif
(As faith Senek) above an humble wif.

Suffer thy wives tonge, as Caton bit,
She shal command, and thou shalt suffren it,
And yet the wol obey of curtesie.

A wif is keper of thin husbondrie:
Wel may the file man bewaile and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wif the hous to kepe.
I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt werche,
Love wel thy wif, as Crist loveth his cherche:
If thou lovest thyself, love thou thy wif.
No man hateth his flesh, but in his lif
He softeith it, and therfore bid I thee
Cherish thy wif, or thou shalt never the.
Husband and wif, what so men jape or play,
Of worldly folk holden the siker way:
They ben so knit, ther may non harm betide,
And namely upon the wives side.

For
66 THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For which this January, of whom I told,
Considered hath within his dayes old
The luftly lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage hony-swete.
And for his frendes on a day he sent
To tellen hem th'effect of his entent.

With face sad, his tale he hath hein told:
He sayde, frendes, I am hore and old,
And almost (God wot) on my pittes brinke,
Upon my soule somewhat moft I thinke.
I have my body folily dispended,
Blessed be God that it shal ben amended:
For I wol ben certain a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haft I can.

Unto som maiden, faire and tendre of age,
I pray you shapeth for my mariage
All fodenly, for I wol not abide:
And I wol fonde to espien on my fide,
To whom I may be wedded haftily.
But for as moche as ye ben more than I,
Ye shullen rather swiche a thing espien
Than I, and wher me beste were to allien.

But o thing warn I you, my frendes dere,
I wol non old wif han in no manere:
She shal not paffen twenty yere certain.
Old fish and yonge flesh-wold I have fain.
THE MARCHANTES TALE. 61

Bet is (quod he) a pike than a pikerel,
And bet than old beef is the tendre veel,
I wol no woman thirty yere of age,
It is but benestraw and gret forage.
And eke thise olde widewes (God it wote)
They connen so much craft on Wades bote,
So mochel broken harm whan that hem left,
That with hem shuld I never live in rest. 9300
For fondry scoles maken subtill clerkes;
Woman of many scoles half a clerk is.
But certainly, a yong thing men may gie,
Right as men may warm wax with handes plie.
Wherfore I say you plainly in a clause,
I wol non old wif han right for this cause.

For if so were I hadde swiche meschance,
That I in hire ne coude have no plesance,
Than shuld I lede my lif in avoutrie,
And so streight to the devil whan I die. 9310
Ne children shuld I non upon hire geten:
Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
Than that min heritage shulde fall
In straunge hondes: and this I tell you all.
I dote not, I wot the cause why
Men shulden wedde: and furthermore wot I,
Ther speketh many a man of matriage,
That wot no more of it than wot my page,
For which causes a man shuld take a wif.
If he ne may not liven chast his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devotion,
Because of leful procreation
Of children, to the honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they shulden lecherie eschue,
And yeld hir dette whan that it is due:
Or for that eche of hem shuld helpen other
In meschefe, as a sufter shal the brother,
And live in chastitee ful holily.

But, fires, (by your leve) that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,
I fele my limmes stark and suffisant
To don all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myselfen beft what I may do.
Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tre,
That bloismeth er the fruit ywoxen be;
The bloisy tre n'is neither drie ne ded:
I fele me no wher hoor but on my hed.
Min herte and all my limmes ben as grene,
As laurer thurgh the yere is for to sene.
And fin that ye han herd all min entent,
I pray you to my will ye wolde affent.
Diverse men diversely him told
Of mariage many ensamples old;
Som blamed it, som praised it certain;
But atte laste, shortly for to fain,
(As all day falleth altercation,
Betwixen frendes in disputison)
Ther fell a strif betwix his brethren two,
Of which that on was cleped Placebo,
Justinus sothly called was that other.

Placebo sayd; O January brother,
Ful litel nede han ye, my lord to dere,
Conceif to aske of any that is here:
But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
That you ne liketh for your high prudence,
To weiven fro the word of Salomon.
This word sayd he unto us everich on;
Werke alle thing by conseil, thus sayd he,
And than ne shalt thou not repenten thee.

But though that Salomon spake swiche a word,
Min owen dere brother and my lord,
So wisely God my soule bringe at reft,
I hold your owen conseil is the beft.

For, brother min, take of me this motif,
I have now ben a court-man all my lif,
And God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have stonden in ful gret degree
Abouten lorde of ful high estat:
Yet had I never with non of hem debat,

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I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he faith, I hold it firme and ftable,
I fay the fame, or elles thing femailble.
A ful greet fool is any confeillour,
That ferveth any lord of high honour,
That dare presume, or ones thinken it,
That his confeil fhuld passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye han yourfelven fhewed here to-day
So high sentence, fo holily, and wel,
That I consent, and confirme every del
Your wordes all, and your opinion.
By God ther n'is no man in all this toun
Ne in Itaille, coud bet han ylayd:
Crist holt him of this confeil wel appaid.
And trewely it is an high corage
Of any man that ftopen is in age,
To take a young wif, by my fader kin:
Your herte hongeth on a joly pin.

Doth now in this materere right as you left,
For finally I hold it for the beft.

Justinus, that ay fittle fat and herd,
Right in this wife he to Placebo anfwerd.
Now, brother min, be patient I pray,
Sin ye han faid, and herkneth what I fay.

Senek
Senek among his other wordes wife
Saith, that a man ought him right wel avise,
To whom he yeveth his lond or his catel.
And fith I ought avisen me right wel,
To whom I yeveth my good away fro me,
Wel more I ought avisen me, parde,
To whom I yeveth my body: for alway
I warne you wel it is no childes play
To take a wif without avisement.
Men must enqueren (this is min assent)
Wheder she be wife and sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or elles other waies a shrew,
A chidester, or a waster of thy good,
Or riche or poure, or elles a man is wood.
Al be it so, that no man vinden shal
Non in this world, that trotteth hol in al,
Ne man, ne beste, swiche as men can devise,
But natheles it ought ynough suffice
With any wif, if so were that she had
Mo goode thewes, than hire vices bad:
And all this axeth leifer to enquire.
For God it wot, I have wept many a tere
Ful privelly, fin that I had a wif.
Praise who so wol a wedded mannes lif,
Certain I find in it but cost and care,
And observances of alle blisses bare.
And yet, God wot, my neighebours aboute,
And namely of women many a route,
Sain that I have the mosst stedefast wif,
And eke the mekest on that bereth lif.
But I wot beft, wher wringeth me my sho.
Ye may for me right as you liketh do.
Avifeth you, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage
And namely with a yong wif and a faire.
By him that made water, fire, erthe, and aire
The yongest man, that is in all this route,
Is besy ynow to bringen it aboute
To han his wif alone, trusteth me:
Ye shul not plefen hire fully yeres three,
This is to fain, to don hire ful plesance.
A wif axeth ful many an observance.
I pray you that ye be not evil appaid.

Wel, quod this January, and haft thou saide?
Straw for Senek, and straw for thy proverbes,
I counte not a panier ful of herbes
Of scole termes; wiser men than thou,
As thou haft herd, assented here right now
To my purpos: Placebo, what faye ye?

I say it is a cursed man, quod he,
That letteth matrimoine fikerly.
And with that word they risen fodenly,

And
And ben assented fully, that he holde
Be wedded whan him lift, and wher he wolde. 9450
High fantastie and curious belinette
Fro day to day gan in the soule empreffe
Of January about his mariage.
Many a faire shap, and many a faire visage
Ther passeth thurgh his herte night by night:
As who so toke a mirrour polished bright,
And set it in a comune market place;
Than shuld he see many a figure pace
By his mirrour, and in the same wise
Gan January in with his thought devise
9460
Of maidens, which that dwelten him beside:
He wiste not wher that he might abide.
For if that on have beautee in hire face,
Another fent so in the peple grace
For hire sadness and hire benignitee,
That of the peple the gretest vois hath she:
And som were riche and hadden a bad name;
But natheles; betwix ernest and game,
He at the last appointed him on on,
And let all other from his herte gon;
9470
And chees hire of his owen auctoritee,
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And whan that he was in his bed ybrought,
He purtreied in his herte and in his thought
Hire freshe beautee, and hire age tendre,
Hire middel smal, hire armes long and sclyndre,
Hire wise governance, hire gentillesse,
Hire womanly bering, and hire sadnesse.

And whan that he on hire was condescended,
Him thought his chois it might not ben amended;
For whan that he, himself concluded had, 9481
Him thought eche other mannes wit so bad,
That impoffible it were to replie
Again his chois; this was his fantasie.

His frendes sent he to, at his instance,
And praised hem to don him that plesance,
That haftily they wolden to him come;
He wolde abregge hir labour all and fome:
Neded no more to hem to go ne ride,
He was appointed ther he wolde abide. 9490

Placebo came, and eke his frendesfone,
And alderfirft he bade hem all a bone,
That non of hem non argumentes make.
Again the purpos that he hath ytake:
Which purpos was plesant to God (faid he)
And veray ground of his prosperitee.

He said, ther was a maiden in the toun,
Which that of beautee hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, she were of smal degree,
Sufficeth him hire youth and hire beautee: 9500
Which
Which maid (he said) he wold han to his wif
To lede in efe and holinesse his life:
And thanked God, that he might han hire all,
That no wight with his blisse parten shall:
And praised hem to labour in this nede,
And shapen that he faille not to spede.
For than, he sayd, his spirit was at efe;
Than is (quod he) nothing may me displese,
Save o thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I wol rehefe in your presence.

I have (quod he) herd said ful yore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two,
This is to say, in erthe and eke in heven,
For though he kepe him fro the finnes seven,
And eke from every branch of thilke tree;
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee,
And so gret efe and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast now in min age,
That I shal leden now so mery a lif,
So delicat, withouten wo or strif,
That I shal han min heven in erthe here,
For fin that veray heven is bought so dere
With tribulation and gret penance,
How shuld I than, living in twiche plecsnce
As alle wedded men don with hir wives,
Come to the blisse, ther Crift eterne on live is?
This is my drede, and ye, my brethren tweie,
Assoileth me this question I preie.

Justinus, which that hated his folie,
Answerd anon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrege,
He wolde non auctoritee allege,
But sayde, fire, so ther be non obstacle
Other than this, God of his hie miracle,
And of his mercy may so for you werche,
That er ye have your rights of holy cherche,
Ye may repent of wedded mannes lif,
In which ye fain ther is no wo ne strif:
And elles God forbede, but if he sent
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Wel often, rather than a single man.
And therfore, fire, the best rede that I can,
Despeire you pot, but haveth in memorie,
Paraventure she may be your purgatorie;
She may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than shal your soule up unto heven skippe
Swifter than doth an arow of a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shal know,
That ther n'is non so gret felicitee
In mariage, ne never more shal be,
That you shal let of your salvation,
So that ye use, as skil is and reson,
The lustes of your wif attemprely,
And that ye plese hire nat to amorously:
And that ye kepe you eke from other sinne.
My tale is don, for my wit is but thinne.
Beth not agaft hereof, my brother dere,
But let us waden out of this mater.
The wif of Bathe, if ye han understond,
Of mariage, which ye now han in hond,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space:
Fareth now wel, God have you in his grace.

And with this word this Justine and his brother Han take hir leve, and eche of hem of other.
And whan they saw that it must nedes be,
They wroughten so by sleighte and wise tretee,
That she this maiden, which that Maius hight,
As hastily as ever that she might,
Shal wedded be unto this January.
I trow it were to longe you to tary,
If I you told of every script and bond,
By which that she was feoffed in his lond;
Or for to rekken of hire rich array.
But finally ycomen is the day,
That to the chirche bothe ben they went,
For to receive the holy sacrament.
Forth cometh the preest, with stole about his nekke,
And bade hire be like Sara and Rebekke,

F 4

In
THE MARCHAMTES TALE.

In wisdome and in trouthe of mariage;
And sayd his orisóns, as is usage,
And crouched hem, and bade God shuld hem bleffe,
And made all sikr ynow with holinesse.

Thus ben they wedded with solemnitye;
And at the feste sitteth he and she
With other worthy folk upon the deis,
Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleis,
And ful of instruments, and of vitaille,
The moft deinteous of all Itaille.
Beforn hem stood swiche instruments of foun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphion,
Ne maden never swiche a melodie.
At every cours in came loute ministralcie,
That never Joab tromped for to here,
Ne he Theodomas yet half so clere
At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute,
Bacchus the win hem skinketh al aboute,
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,
(For January was become hire knight,
And wolde bothe affaien his corage
In libertee, and eke in mariage)
And with hire firebrond in hire hond aboute
Danceth before the bride and all the route,
And certainly I dare right wel lay this,
Ymeneus, that God of wedding is,

Saw
Saw never his life so mery a wedded man.

Hold thou thy pees, thou poet Marcian,
That writest us that ilke wedding mery
Of hire Philologie and him Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe:
To final is both thy pen and eke thy tongue
For to descriven of this mariage.

Whan tendre youth hath wedded stouping age,
There is swiche mirth that it may not be written;
Affaieth it yourself, than may ye witen
If that I lie or non in this matere.

Maius, that fit with so benigne a chere,
Hire to behold it fened faerie,
Quene Heftor lokd never with swiche an eye
On Assuere, so meke a look hath she,
I may you not devise all hire beautee;
But thus noonc of hire beautee tell I may,
That she was like the brighte morwe of May
Fulfilled of all beautee, and pleasance.

This January is raviished in a trance,
At every time he loketh in hire face,
But in his herte he gan hire to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hire streine
Harder than ever Paris did Heleine.
But natheles yet had he gret pitee
That thilke night offenden hire must he.

And
And thought, alas, o tendre creature,
Now wolde God ye mighten wel endure
All my corage, it is so sharpe and kene;
I am agast ye shal it nat sustene.
But God forbede, that I did all my might.
Now wolde God that it were waxen night,
And that the night wold laften ever mo.
I wold that all this peple were ago.
And finally he doth all his labour,
As he best mighte, saying his honour,
To haste hem fro the mete in subtil wise.

The time came that reson was to rise,
And after that men dance, and drinken fast,
And spices all about the hous they cast,
And ful of joye and blisfe is every man,
All but a squier, that highte Damian,
Which carf beforne the knight ful many a day:
He was so ravisht on his lady May,
That for the veray peine he was nie wood;
Almost he swe\textsuperscript{t}l, and swounded ther he stood:
So fore hath Venus hurt him with hire brond,
As that she bare it dancing in hire hond.
And to his bed he went him haftily;
No more of him as at this time speke I;
But ther I let him wepe ynow and plaine,
Til freshe May wol rewen on his peine.

\textsuperscript{9640}
THE MARCHANTES TALE. 75

O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw bredeth!
O famuler fo, that his service bedeth!
O servant traitour, false of holy hewe,
Like to the nedder in bosom, sliue untrewe,

God helde us alle from your acquaintance!

O January, dronken in plefance
Of mariage, see how thy Damian,
Thin owen squier and thy bornen man,
Entendeth for to do thee vilanie:
God grante thee thin homly fo to espie.
For in this world n'is werse pestilence,
Than homly fo, all day in thy presence.

Parformed hath the sone his arke diurne,
No longer may the body of him sojourne

On the orisont, as in that latitude:
Night with his mantel, that is derke and rude,
Gan oversprede the Hemisperie aboute:
For which departed is this lufty route
Fro January, with thank on every side.
Home to hir houses lustily they ride,
Ther as they don hir things, as hem left,
And whan they saw hir time gon to rest.

Sone after that this hastif January
Wol go to bed, he wol no longer tary.
He drinketh Ipocras, clarre, and vernage
Of spices hot, to encrefen his corage:

And
And many a letuarie had he ful fine,
Swiche as the cursed monk dan Constantine
Hath written in his book _de Coitu_
To ete hem all he wolde nothing eschue;
And to his privée frendes thus sayd he:

For Goddes love, as fone as it may be,
Let voiden all this houts in curteis wise.
And they han don right as he wol devise.

Men drinken, and the travers drawe anon;
The bride is brought a-bed as still as fton;
And whan the bed was with the preeft yblessed,
Out of the chambré hath every wight him dressed,
And January hath faft in armes take
His frefhe May, his paradis, his make.
He lulleth hire, he kifseth hire ful oft;
With thicke bristles of his berd unsoft,
Like to the skin of houndfish, sharp as brece,
(For he was thave al newe in his manere)

He rubbeth hire upon hire tendre face,
And sayde thus; Alas! I mote trespace
To you, my spouse, and you gretly offend,
Or time come that I wol doun descend.
But natheles considereth this, (quod he)
Ther n'is no werkman, whatsoever he be,
That may both werken wel and hastily;
This wol be don at leiser parfitly.
It is no force how longe that we play;
In trewe wedlok coupled be we twa;
And blessed be the yoke that we ben inne,
For in our actes may ther be no sinne.
A man may do no sinne with his wif,
Ne hurt himselven with his owen knif:
For we have leve to play us by the lawe.

Thus laboureth he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he taketh a sop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bed than sitteth he.
And after that he sang ful loud and clere,
And kist his wif, and maketh wanton chere.

He was al coltish, ful of ragerie,
And ful of jergon, as a flecked pie.
The slacke skin about his necke shaketh,
While that he sang, so chanteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hire herte,
When she him saw up sittin in his sherte
In his night cap, and with his necke lene:
She praiseth not his playing worth a bene.
Than sayd he thus; my reste wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake;
And doun he layd his hed and slept til prime.
And afterward, whan that he saw his time,
Up risiseth January, but freshe May
Held hire in chambr til the fourthe day,
As usage is of wives for the best.
For every labour sometime most han reste;
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to say, no lives creature;
Be it of fish, or brid, or beast, or man:
Now wol I speke of woful Damian,
That langureth for love, as ye shul here;
Therfore I speke to him in this manere:
I say, O fely Damian, alas!
Answer to this demand, as in this cas;
How shalt thou to thy lady freshe May.
Tellen thy wo? She wol alway say nay;
Eke if thou speke, she wol thy wo bewrein;
God be thin help, I can no better fein.
This fike Damian in Venus fire
So brenneth, that he dieth for desire;
For which he put his lif in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wise endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a lettre wrote he all his forwe,
In manere of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freshe lady May.
And in a purse of filk, heng on his sherte,
He hath it put, and layd it at his herte.
The mone that at none was thilke day
That January hath wedded freshe May
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer gliden;
So long hath Maius in hire chambre abiden,
As cuftome is unto thife nobles alle.
A bride shal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes four or three dayes at the lefte
Ypassed ben, than let hire go to feste.
The fourthe day complete fro none to none,
Whan that the highe messe was ydone,
In halle fat this January and May,
As freh as is the brighte somers day.
And fo befel, how that this goode man
Remembred him upon this Damian,
And sayde; Seinte Marie, how may it be,
That Damian entendeth not to me?
Is he ay fike? or how may this betide?
His squiers, which that ftoden ther beseide,
Excufed him, because of his fiknesse,
Which letted him to don his befinesse:
Non other cause mighte make him tary.
That me forthinketh, quod this January;
He is a gentil squier by my trouthe,
If that he died, it were gret harme and rouse.
He is as wife, discreet, and as secree,
As any man I wote of his degree,
And therto manly and eke servisable,
And for to ben a thrifty man right able.
But
But after mete as fone as ever I may,
I wol myselfe viste him, and eke May,
To don him all the comfort that I can.
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bountee and his gentillesse
He wolde so comforten in siknesse
His squier, for it was a gentil dede.
   Dame, quod this January, take good hede,
At after mete, ye with your women alle,
(Whan that ye ben in chambre out of this halle)
That all ye gon to see this Damian:
Doth him disport, he is a gentil man,
And telleth him that I wol him viste,
Have I no thing but rested me a lite:
And spede you fasse, for I wol abide
Til that ye slepen fasse by my side.
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A squier, that was marfhal of his halle,
And told him certain thinges that he wolde.
   This freshe May hath streight hire way yholde
With all hire women unto Damian.
Doun by his beddes side fit she than,
Comforting him as goodly as she may.
   This Damian, whan that his time he say,
In secre weave, his purse, and eke his bill,
In which that he ywritten had his will,
Hath
Hath put into hire hond withouten more; 
Save that he siked wonder depe and sore, 
And sofely to hire right thus sayd he; 
Mercie, and that ye nat discover me: 
For I am ded, if that this thing be kid.

This purse hath she in with hire bosome hid,
And went hire way; ye get no more of me; 
But unto January ycome is she, 
That on his beddes side file ful sof.
He taketh hire, and kisseth hire ful oft: 
And layd him douu to slepe, and that anon.
She feined hire, as that she muste gon
Ther as ye wote that every wight mot nede; 
And whan she of this bill hath taken hede,
She rent it all to cloutes at the last, 
And in the privee sofely it caft.

Who studieth now but faire freshe May?
Adoun by olde January she lay, 
That slepte, til the cough hath him awaked:
Anon he prayd hire fripen hire al naked,
He wolde of hire, he said, have som plesance; 
And said, hire clothes did him encombrance.
And she obeieth him, be hire lefe or loth.
But left that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wrought, I dare nat to you tell, 
Or wheder hire thought it paradis or hell;

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But
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

But ther I let hem werken in hir wife
Til evesong rang, and that they must arise. 9840

Were it by desstine, or aventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or constellation, that in swiche estat
The heven stood at that time fortunat,
As for to put a bill of Venus werkes
(For alle thing hath time, as sayn thise clerkes)
To any woman for to get hire love,
I cannot say, but grete God above,
That knoweth that non act is causeles,
He deme of all, for I wol hold my pees.
9850
But soth is this, how that this freeshe May
Hath taken swiche impression that day
Of pitee on this fike Damian,
That fro hire herte she ne driven can
The remembrance for to don him efe.

Certain (thought she) whom that this thing displese
I rekke not, for here I him assure,
To love him best of any creature,
Though he no more hadde than his herte.

Lo, pitee renneth fone in gentil herte. 9860
Here may ye seen, how excellent franchisfe
In women is whan they hem narwe avise.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many on,
That hath an herte as hard as any ston,

Which
Which wold han lette him sterven in the place.
Wel rather than han granted him hire grace:
And hem rejoysen in hir cruel pride;
And rekken not to ben an homicide.

This gentil May, fulfilled of pitee,
Right of hire hond a lettre maketh she,
In which she granteth him hire veray grace:
Ther lacked nought, but only day and place;
Wher that she might unto his lust suffice:
For it shal he, right as he wol devise.

And whan she saw hire time upon a day
To visiten this Damian goth this May,
And sotilly this lettre doun she threft
Under his pilwe, rede it if him left.
She taketh him by the hond, and hard him twift
So secretly, that no wight of it wift,
And bade him ben all hol, and forth she went.
To January, whan he for hire sent.

Up riseth Damian the nexte morwe,
Al pasled was his siknessse and his forwe.
He kembeth him, he proineth him and piketh,
He doth all that his lady lust and liketh;
And eke to January he goth as lowe,
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is so pleasant unto every man,
(For craft is all, who so that don it can)

That
That every wight is fain to speke him good;
And fully in his ladies grace he stood.
Thus let I Damian about his nede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.

Som clerkes holden that felicitee
Stant in delit, and therfore certain he
This noble January, with all his might
In honest wise as longeth to a knight,
Shope him to liven ful deliciously.

His housing, his array, as honestly
To his degree was maked as a kinges.
Amonges other of his honest things
He had a gardin walled all with fton,
So fayre a gardin wote I no wher non.
For out of doute I veraily suppose,
That he that wrote the Romant of the Rose,
Ne coude of it the beautee wel devise:
Ne Priapus ne mighte not suffise,
Though he be god of gardins, for to tell
The beautee of the gardin, and the well,
That flood under a laurer alway grene.
Ful often time he Pluto and his quene
Proserpina, and alle hir faerie,
Disporten hem and maken' melodie
About that well, and daunced, as men told.

This noble knight, this January the old
swiche
Swiche deinte hath in it to walke and pley,
That he wol suffre no wight bere the key,
Sauf he himself, for of the final wiket
He bare alway of silver a cliket,
With which whan that him lift he it unshette.
And whan that he wold pay his wives dette
In somer secon thider wold he go,
And May his wif, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not don a-bedde,
He in the gardin parfourned hem and spedde.
And in this wise many a mery day
Lived this January and frefhe May,
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O foden hap, o thou fortune unftable,
Like to the Scorpion fo deceivable,
That flatrest with thy hed whan thou wolt ftng;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin enveniming.
O brotel joye, o fette poyfon queinte,
O monstre, that fo fotilly canft peinte
Thy giftes, under hewe of ftedfastnesse,
That thou deceivest bothe more and leffe,
Why haft thou January thus deceived,
That haddeft him for thy ful frend received?
And now thou haft beraft him both his eyen,
For frowye of which defireth he to dyen.

Alas!
Alas! this noble January free,
Amidde his lust and his prosperitee
Is waxen blind, and that al sodenly.
He wepeth and he waileth pitously;
And therewithall, the fire of jalousie
(Left that his wif shuld fall in som folie)
So brent his herte, that he wolde fain,
That som man had both him and hire yslain:
For nother after his deth, ne in his lif,
Ne wold he that she were no love ne wif,
But ever live as a widewe in clothes blake,
Sole as the turtle that hath loft hire make.
But at the laft, after a moneth or tway
His forwe gan asswagen, soth to say.
For whan he wift it might non other be,
He patiently toke his adversitee:
Save out of doute he ne may nat forgon,
That he n'as jalous ever more in on:
Which jalousie it was so outrageous,
That neither in halle, ne in non other hous,
Ne in non other place never the mo
He n'olde suffre hire for to ride or go,
But if that he had honde on hire alway.
For which ful often wepeth freshe May,
That loveth Damian so brenningly,
That she moste either dien sodenly,
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Or elles she moste han him as hire left;
She waited whan hire herte wold to-brest.
Upon that other side Damian
Becomen is the forwefullest man
That ever was, for neither night ne day
Ne might he speke a word to freshe May,
As to his purpos of no swiche matere,
But if that January must it here,
That had an hand upon hire evermo,
But natheles, by writing to and fro,
And privee signes, wist he what she ment,
And she knew eke the sin of his entent.

O January, what might it thee availe,
Though thou might feen, as fer as shippes faile?
For as good is blind to deceived be,
As be deceived, whan a man may see.
Lo Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For all that ever he coude pore or prien,
Yet was he blent, and, God wot, so ben mo,
That wenen wifly that it be not so:
Passe over is an efc, I say no more.

This freshe May, of which I spake of yore,
In warm wex hath enprented the cliquet,
That January bare of the smal wicket,
By which into his gardin oft he went;
And Damian that knew all hire entent.
The cliket contrefeted prively;
Ther n'is no more to say, but hastily
Som wonder by this cliket shal betide,
Which ye shul heren, if ye wol abide.

O noble Ovide, soth sayest thou, God wote,
What fleight is it if love be long and hote,
That he n'ill find it out in som manere?
By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lere;
Though they were kept ful long and streit over all,
They ben accorded, rowning thrugh a wall,
Ther no wight coude han founden swiche a fleigthe.
But now to purpos; er that daies eights
Were passed of the month of Juil, befill,
That January hath caught so gret a will,
Thrugh egging of his wif, him for to play
In his gardin, and no wight but they tway,
That in a motwe unto this May saide he;
Rise up, my wif, my love, my lady free;
The turtles vois is herd, myn owen swete;
The winter is gon, with all his raines wete.
Come forth now with thin eyen columbine,
Wel fairer ben thy brests than ony wine.
The gardin is enclosed all aboute;
Come forth, my white spouse, for out of doute,
Thou haft me wounded in myn herte, o wif:
No spot in thee n'as never in all thy lif.

Come
Come forth, and let us taken our disport,
I chese thee for my wif and my comfort.
Swiche olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damian a signe made she,
That he shuld go before with his clike,
This Damian hath opened the wiker,
And in he stert, and that in swiche manere,
That no wight might him neyther see ne here,
And stil he fit under a bush. Anon
This January, as blind as is a scon,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo,
Into this freshe garden is ago,
And clapped to the wiker sodenly.
Now, wif, quod he, here n'is but thou, and I,
That art the creature that I best love:
For by that lord that fit in heven above,
I hadde lever dien on a knif,
Than thee offendeth, dere trewe wif.
For Goddes fake, thinke how I thee chees,
Not for no covetise douteles,
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old and may not see,
Beth to me trewe, and I wol tell you why;
Certes three thinges shal ye win therby;
First love of Crist, and to yourself honour,
And all min heritage, toun and tour.

I yeve
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

I yeve it you, maketh chartres as you left: 
This shal be don to-morwe er sonne rest,
So wisly God my soule bring to blisse;
I pray you on this covenant ye me kisse.  

And though that I be jalous, wiste me nought;
Ye ben so depe enprented in my thought,
That whan that I consider your beautee,
And therewithall the unlikely elde of me,
I may not certes, though I shulde die,
Forbere to ben out of your compagnie
For very love; this is withouten doute:
Now kisse me, wif, and let us roome aboute.

This freshe May, whan the thife wordes herd,
Benignely to January answerd,
But first and forword she began to wepe:
I have, quod she, a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also min honour,
And of my wishood thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have assured in your hond,
Whan that the preest to you my body bond:
Wherfore I wol answere in this manere,
With leve of you, myn owen lord so dere.

I pray to God that never daw that day,
That I ne sterue, as soule as woman may,
If ever I do unto my kin that shame,
Or elles I empeire so my name,

That
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

That I be false; and if I do that lacke,
Do stripe me and put me in a sacke,
And in the nexte river do me drenche:
I am a gentil woman, and no wenche.

Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrew,
And women han reprefe of you ay newe.

Ye con non other dalleance, I leve,
But speke to us as of untrust and repree.

And with that word she saw wher Damian
Sat in the bush, and coughen she began;
And with hire finger a signe made she,
That Damian shuld clime up on a tre,
That charged was with fruit, and up he went:
For veraily he knew all hire entent,
And every signe that she coude make,
Wel bet than January hire owen make.

For in a lettre she had told him all
Of this mater, how that he werken shall.

And thus I let him fitting in the pery,
And January and May roming ful mery.

Bright was the day, and blew the firmament;
Phoebus of gold his stremes doun hath sent
To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;
He was that time in Gemini, I gesse,
But litel fro his declination
Of Cancer, Joyes exaltation.
And so befell in that bright morwe tide,
That in the gardin, on the farther fide,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compagnie
Folwing his wif, the quene Proserpina,
Which that he ravi shed out of Ethna,
While that she gadred floures in the mede,
(In Claudian ye may the story rede,
How that hire in his grifely carte he fette)
This king of Faerie adoun him fette
Upon a benche of turves frehe and grene,
And right anon thus faid he to his quene.

My wif, quod he, ther may no wight say nay;
The experience fo preveth it every day,
The treson which that woman doth to man,
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notable of your untruth and brotelnesse.

O Salomon, richest of all richeffe,
Fulfilled of sapience, and worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and resfon can.
Thus prai feth he the bountee yet of man;
Among a thousand men yet fond I on,
But of all women fond I never non.
Thus faith this king, that knewe your wikkednesse;
And Jesus, Filius Sirach, as I gefle.
He speketh of you but felden reverence.
A wilde fire, a corrupt pestilence,
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night:
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shal make him cokewold.

Lo, wher he sit, the lechour, in the tree.
Now wol I graunten of my majestee
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he shal have again his eyen sight,
Whan that his wif wol don him vilanie;
Than shal he knowen all hire harlotrie,
Both in reprefe of hire and other mo.
Ye, fire, quod Proserpine, and wol ye so?
Now by my modre Ceres soule I swere,
That I shal yeve hire sufficient anfwere,
And alle women after for hire fake;
That though they ben in any gult ytake,
With face bold they shul hemfelye excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolden hem accuse.
For lacke of anfwere, non of us shul dien.
Al had ye seen a thing with bothe youre eyen,
Yet shul we so visage it hardly,
And wepe and swere and chiden subtilly,
That ye shul ben as lewed as ben gees.
What rekketh me of your auctoritees?
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

I wote wel that this Jewe, this Salomon,
Fond of us women fooles many on:
But though that he ne fond no good woman,
Ther hath ysonden many an other man
Women ful good, and trewe, and vertuous;
Witness fe on hem that dwelte in Cristes hous,
With martyrdom they preved hir constance.
The Romain gestes maken remembrance
Of many a veray trewe wif also.
But, fire, ne be not wroth, al be it so,
Though that he said he fond no good woman,
I pray you take the sentence of the man:
He ment thus, That in soverain bountee
N'is non but God, no, nouter he ne she.
Ey, for the veray God that n'is but on,
What maken ye so moche of Salomon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he riche were and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of false goddes,
How might he don a thing that more forbode is?
Parde as faire as ye his name emplassre,
He was a lechour, and an idolasstre, 10171
And in his elde he veray God forsoke.
And if that God ne hadde (as faith the boke)
Spared him for his fathers sake, he sholde
Han lost his regne rather than he wolde. 10168
I fete nat of all the vilanie,
That he of women wrote, a boterflie.
I am a woman, nedes moste I speke,
Or swell unto that time min herte breke. 10180
For sin he said that we ben jangleresses,
As ever mote I brouken hole my tressles,
I shal nat sparen for no curtesie
To speke him harm, that sayth us vilanie.

Dame, quod this Pluto, be no lenger wroth,
I yeve it up: but sin I swore min oth,
That I wold graunten him his fight again,
My word shal stand, that warne I you certain:
I am a king, it fit me not to lie.

And I, quod she, am quene of Faerie. 10190
Hire answere she shal han I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.

Forsoth, quod he, I wol you not contrary.
Now let us turne again to January,
That in the gardin with his faire May
Singeth wel merier than the popingay:
You love I best, and shal, and other non.

So long about the alleyes is he gon,
Til he was comen again to thilke pery,
Wher as this Damian fitteth ful mery 10200
On high, among the freshe leves grene.

This freshe May, that is so bright and shene.

Gan
Gan for to sike, and said; alas my side!
Now, sire, quod she, for ought that may betide
I moste have of the peres that I see,
Or I moste die; so fore longeth me
To eten of the smale peres grene:
Help for hire love that is of heven quene.
I tell you wel a woman in my plit
May have to fruit so gret an appetit,
That she may dien, but she of it have.
Alas! quod he, that I n'adde here a knave,
That coude climbe, alas! alas! (quod he).
For I am blinde. Ye, sire, no force, quod she;
But wold ye vouchesauf for Goddes fake,
The pery in with your armes for to take,
(For wel I wot that ye mistruten me)
Than wold I climben wel ynough, (quod she)
So I my fote might setten on your back.
Certes, said he, therin shal be no lack,
Might I you helpen mith min herte blood.
He stoupeth doun, and on his back she stood,
And caught hire by a twist, and up she goth.
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I can nat glose, I am a rude man:)
And sodenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.

And whan that Pluto saw this grete wrong,
To January he yaf again his fight,
And made him see as wel as ever he might.
And when he thus had caught his fight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fain:
But on his wif his thought was ever mo.

Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,
And saw how Damían his wife had dressed
In swiche manere, it may not ben expressed,
But if I wolde speke uncurteiily.
And up he yaf a roaring and a cry,
As doth the mother when the child shal die;
Out ! helpe ! alas ! harow ! he gan to cry;
O stronge lady stote, what doest thou?

And she answered: fire, what aileth you?
Have patience and reþon in your minde,
I have you holpen on both your eyen blinde.
Up peril of my soule, I shal nat lien,
As me was taught to helpen with your eyen,
Was nothing better for to make you see,
Than strengle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in ful good entent.

Strogle! quod he, ye, algate in it went.
God yeve you both on shames deth to dien,
He swived thee, I saw it with min eyen,
And elles be I honged by the halse.

Than is, quod he, my medicine al false.
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

For certainly, if that ye mighten see,
Ye wold not say thise wordes unto me.
Ye have som glimens, and no parfit sight.
I see, quod he, as wel as ever I might,
(Thanked be God) with both min eyen two,
And by my feith me thought he did thee so. 10260

Ye mafe, ye mafen, goode fire, quod she;
This thank have I for I have made you see:
Alas! quod she, that ever I was so kind.

Now, dame, quod he, let al passe out of mind:
Come doun, my lefe, and if I have mislaid,
God helpe me so, as I am evil appaid,
But by my fadres soule, I wende have fein,
How that this Damian had by thee lein,
And that thy smock had lein upon his breft. 10269

Ye, fire, quod she, ye may wene as you left:
But, fire, a man that waketh of his flepe,
He may not fodenly wel taken kepe
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfitly,
Til that he be adawed veraily.
Right so a man, that long hath blind ybe,
He may not fodenly so wel ysee,
Firt when his fight is newe comen agein,
As he that hath a day or two ysein.
Til that your fight yfateled be a while,
Ther may ful many a fighte you begile. 10280

Beware
THE MARCHANTES TALE.

Beware, I pray you, for by heven king
Ful many a man weneth to see a thing,
And it is all another than it femeth:
He which that misconceiveth oft misdemeth.
And with that word she lep doun fro the tree.
This January who is glad but he?
He kisseth hire, and clippeth hire ful oft,
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful soft;
And to his paleis home he hath hire lad.
Now, good men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of Januarie,
God blesse us, and his moder Seinte Marie.

THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

By Goddes mercy, sayde oure Hoste tho,
Now swiche a wif I preie God kepe me fro.
Lo, swiche sleightes and subtilitees
In women ben; for ay as besy as bees
Ben they us fely men for to deceive,
And from a sothe wol they ever weive.
By this Marchantes tale it preveth wel.
But natheles, as trewe as any ftele,
I have a wif, though that she poure be;
But of hire tonge a labbing shrewe is she;
And yet she hath an hepe of vices mo.
Therof no force; let all swiche thinges go.

H 2

But
THE SQUIERES PROLOGUE.

But wete ye what? in conseil be it feyde,
Me reweth fore I am unto hire teyde;
For and I shulde rekene every vice,
Which that she hath, ywis I were to nice;
And cause why, it shulde reported be
And told to hire of som of this compagnie, 10310
(Of whom it nedeth not for to declare,
Sin women connen uter swiche chaffare)
And eke my wit sufficeth not thereto
To tellen all; wherfore my tale is do.

Squier, come ner, if it youre wille he,
And say somwhat of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as any man.
Nay, fire, quod he, but swiche thing as I can
With hertly wille, for I wol not rebelle
Agein youre luft, a tale wol I telle. 10320
Have me excusfed if I speke amis;
My wille is good; and lo, my tale is this.

THE SQUIERES TALE.

At Sarra, in the lond of Tartaric,
Ther dwelt a king that werreied Russie,
Thurgh which ther died many a doughty man:
This noble king was cleped Cambuscan,
Which in his time was of so gret renoun,
That ther n'as no wher in no regioun
So excellent a lord in alle thing:
Him lacked nought that longeth to a king,
As of the seate of which that he was borne.
He kept his lay to which he was ysforne,
And therto he was hardy, wise, and riche,
And pitous and just, and alway yliche;
Trewe of his word, benigne and honourable;
Of his corage as any centre ftable;
Yong, frefh, and strong, in armes desirous,
As any bacheler of all his hous.
A faire person he was, and fortunate
And kept alway so wel real estat,
That ther n'as no wher swiche another man.

This noble king, this Tartre Cambuscan,
Hadde two fones by Elfeta his wif,
Of which the eldeft fone highte Algaris,
That other was ycleped Camballo.
A daughter had this worthy king also,
That yongest was, and highte Canace:
But for to tellen you all hire beautee,
It lith not in my tongue, ne in my conning,
I dare not undertake so high a thing:
Min English eke is unsufficient,
It muste ben a Rethor excellent,
That coude his colours longing for that art,
If he shuld hire descriven ony part:

H 3
I am
THE SQUIERES TALE.

I am non swiche, I mote speke as I can. And so befell, that whan this Cambuscan
Hath twenty winter borne his diademe,
As he was wont fro yere to yere I deme,
He let the feste of his nativitee
Don crien, throughout Sarra his citee,
The last Idus of March, after the yere.
Phebus the sonne ful jolif was and clere,
For he was nigh his exaltation
In Martes face, and in his mansion
In Aries, the colerike hote signe:
Ful lufti was the wether and benigne,
For which the foules again the sonne shene,
What for the seon and the yonge grene,
Ful loude fongen hir affectiions:
Hem semed han getten hem protection
Again the swerd of winter kene and cold.
This Cambuscan, of which I have you told,
In real vestiments, fit on his deis
With diademe, ful high in his paleis;
And holt his feste so solemne and so riche,
That in this world ne was ther non it liche.
Of which if I shal tellen all the array,
Than wold it occupie a somers day;
And eke it nedeth not for to devise
At every cours the order of hir service.

I wol
I wol not tellen of hir strange fewes,
Ne of hir swannes, ne hir heronfewes.
Eke in that lond, as tellen knightes old,
Ther is som mete that is ful deintee hold,
That in this lond men recche of it ful fmal:
Ther n'is no man that may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is prime,
And for it is no fruit, but losse of time,
Unto my purpose I wol have recours.
And so befell that after the thriddle cours
While that this king sit thus in his nobley,
Herking his miniftralles hir thinges pley
Beforne him at his bord deliciously,
In at the halle dore al fodenly
Ther came a knight upon a stede of bras,
And in his hond a brod mirrour of glas;
Upon his thombe he had of gold a ring,
And by his fide a naked swerd hanging:
And up he rideth to the highe bord.
In all the halle ne was ther spoke a word,
For mervaille of this knight; him to behold
Ful besily they waiten yong and old.
This strange knight that come thus fodenly
Al armed fave his hed ful richely,
Salueth king and quene, and lorde alle
By order, as they faten in the halle,
With so high reverence and observance,
As well in speche as in his contenance,
That Gawain with his olde curtesie,
Though he were come again out of faerie,
Ne coude him not amenden with a word.
And after this, besorn the highe bords
He with a manly vois sayd his messaige,
After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of fyllable or of letter.
And for his tale shulde seme the better,
Accordant to his wordes was his chere,
As techeth art of speche hem that it lere,
Al be it that I cannot sowe his file,
Ne cannot climben over so high a file,
Yet say I this, as to comun intent,
Thus much amounteth all that ever he ment,
If it so be that I have it in mind.

He sayd; The king of Arabie and of Inde,
My liege lord, on this solempne day
Salueth you as he best can and may,
And sendeth you in honour of your fefte,
By me, that am al redy at your hefte,
This stede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of a day nature!
(This is to sayn, in four and twenty houres)
Wher so you lift, in drought or elles houres,
Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte willeth for to pace,
Withouten wemme of you, thurgh soule or faire.
Or if you lift to flee as high in the aire,
As doth an egle, whan him lift to sore,
This same stede shal bere you evermore.
Withouten harme, till ye be ther you left,
(Though that ye flepen on his back or rest)
And turne again, with writhing of a pin.
He that it wrought, he coude many a gin;
He waited many a constellation,
Or he had don this operation,
And knew ful many a fele and many a bond.
This mirrour eke, that I have in min hond,
Hath swiche a might, that men may in it see,
When ther shal falle ony adverfitee
Unto your regne, or to yourself also,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over all this, if any lady bright
Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,
If he be false, she shal his trefon see,
His newe love, and all his subtiltee
So openly, that ther shal nothing hide.
Wherfore again this lusty somer tide
This mirrour and this ring, that ye may fe,
He hath sent to my lady Canace,

Your
Your excellente daughter that is here.

The vertue of this ring, if ye wol here, Is this, that if hire lift it for to were
Upon hire thombe, or in hire purfe it here, Ther is no soule that fleeth under heven,
That she ne shal wel understond his steven, And know his mening openly and plaine,
And answere him in his langage again : And every gras that groweth upon rote
She shal eke know, and whom it wol do bote,
All be his woundes never so depe and wide.

This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side, Swiche vertue hath, that what man that it finite,
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and bite,
Were it as thicke as is a braunched oke :
And what man that is wounded with the stroke Shal never be hole, til that you lift of grace
To stroken him with the platte in thilke place Ther he is hurt ; this is as much to fain,
Ye moten with the platte swerd again Stroken him in the wound, and it wol close.
This is the veray soth withouten glofe, It failleth not, while it is in your hold.

And whan this knight hath thus his tale told, And when this knight hath thus his tale told,
He rideth out of halle, and doun he light : His stede, which that shone as sonne bright,
Stant in the court as stille as any fton.
This knight is to his chambre ladde anon,
And is unarmed, and to the mete yfette.
Thise presents ben ful richelich yfette,
This is to fain, the swerd and the mirrour,
And borne anon into the highe tour,
With certain officers ordained thercore;
And unto Canace the ring is bore
Solempnely, ther she fat at the table;
But sikerly, withouten any fable,
The hors of bras, that may not be remued;
It ftant, as it were to the ground yglued;
Ther may no man out of the place it drive
For non engine, of windas, or polive:
And cause why, for they con not the craft,
And thercore in the place they han it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught him the manere
To voiden him, as ye shal after here.

Gret was the prees, that swarmed to and fro
To gauren on this hors that ftondeth fo:
For it fo high was, and fo brod and long,
So wel proportioned for to be strong,
Right as it were a ftede of Lumbardie;
Therwith fo horfly, and so quik of eye,
As it a gentil Poileis courfer were:
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere
Nature
Nature ne art ne coud him not amend
In no degree, as all the peple wend.
   But evermore hir moste wonder was,
How that it coude gon, and was of bras;
It was of faerie, as the peple semed.
Diverse folk diversely han demed;
As many heds, as many wittes ben.
They murmured, as doth a swarme of been,
And maden skilles after hir fantasies,
Reherfing of the olde poetries,
    And sayd it was ylike the Pegasee,
The hors that hadde winges for to flee,
Or elles it was the Grekes hors Sinon,
That broughte Troye to destruction,
As men moun in thise olde gestes rede.
   Min herte (quod on) is evermore in drede,
I trow som men of armes ben therin,
That shapen hem this citee for to win:
It were right good that al swiche thing were know.
Another rowned to his felaw low,
    And sayd, He lieth, for it is rather like
An apparence ymade by som magike,
As jogelours plaien at thise festes grete.
Of sondry doutes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple.demen comunly
Of things, that ben made more subtily,
Than they can in hir lewedness comprehende, 
They demen gladly to the badder ende. 
And som of hem wondred on the mirrour, 
That born was up in to the maister tour, 
How men mighte in it swiche thinges see: 
Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be 
Naturally by compositions 
Of angles, and of flie reflections; 
And faide that in Rome was swiche on. 
They speke of Alhazen and Vitellon, 
And Aristotle, that writen in hir lives 
Of queinte mirrours, and of prospectives, 
As knowen they, that han hir bookes herd. 

And other folk han wondred on the swerd, 
That wolde percen thurghout every thing: 
And fell in speche of Telephus the king, 
And of Achilles for his queinte spere, 
For he coude with it bothe hele and dere, 
Right in swiche wise as men may with the swerd, 
Of which right now ye have yourselves herd. 
They speken of sondry harding of metall, 
And speken of medicines therwithall, 
And how, and whan it shuld yharded be, 
Which is unknow algates unto me. 
Tho speken they of Canacees ring, 
And falden all, that swiche a wonder thing
Of craft of ringes herd they never non,
Save that he Moifes and king Salomon
Hadden a name of conning in swiche art.
Thus fain the peple, and drawen hem apart.
But natheles som fained that it was
Wonder to maken of ferne ashen glas,
And yet is glas nought like ashen of ferne,
But for they han yknownen it fo ferne,
Therfore ceseth hir jangling and hir wonder.

As fore wondren som on cause of thonder,
On ebbe and floud, on gosforær, and on mist,
And on all thing, til that the cause is wifte.
Thus janglen they, and demen and devise,
Til that the king gan fro his bord arise.

Phebus hath left the angle meridional,
And yet ascending was the bestre real,
The gentil Leon, with his Aldrian,

Whan that this Tartre king, this Cambuscan,
Rose from his bord, ther as he fat ful hie:
Beforne him goth the loude minstralcie,
Til he come to his chambre of parements,
Ther as they founden divers instruments,
That it is like an heven for to here.

Now dauncen lufty Venus children dere:
For in the fishe hir lady fat ful hie,
And loketh on hem with a frendly eye.
This noble king is set upon his trone;
This strange knight is set to him full sone, 10590
And on the daunce he goth with Canace.

Here is the revell and the jolitee,
That is not able a dull man to devise:
He must han known love and his servise,
And ben a fastlich man, as fresh as May,
That shulde you devise the swiche array.

Who coude tellen you the forme of daunces
So uncouth, and so freshe contenaunces,
Swiche subtill lokings and dissimulings,
For dred of jalous mennes appereyngs? 10600
No man but Launcelot, and he is ded.

Therefore I passe over all this lustyhed,
I say no more, but in this jolinesse
I let hem, til men to the souper hem dresse.

The steward bit the spices for to hie,
And eke the win, in all this melodie;
The ushers and the squierie ben gon,
The spices and the win is come anon:
They ete and drinke, and when this had an end,
Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wend: 10610
The service don, they soupen all by day.

What nedeth you reherfen hir array?
Eche man wot wel, that at a kinges fest
Is plente, to the most and to the left.  

And
And deintees mo than ben in my knowing.
At after souper goth this noble king
To seen this hors of bras, with all a route
Of lordes and of ladies him aboute.
Swiche wondering was ther on this hors of bras,
That sin the gret assage of Troye was,
Ther as men wondred on an hors also,
Ne was ther swiche a wondering, as was tho.
But finally the king asketh the knight
The vertue of this courser, and the might,
And praised him to tell his governaunce.
This hors anon gan for to trip and daunce,
Whan that the knight laid hond up on his rein,
And said, fire. ther n'is no more to fain,
But whan you lift to riden any where,
Ye moten trill a pin, stant in his ere,
Which I shal tellen you betwixt us two,
Ye moten nempne him to what place also,
Or to what contree that you lift to ride.
And whan ye come ther as you lift abide,
Bid him descend, and trill another pin,
(For therin lieth the effect of all the gin)
And he wol doun descend and don your will,
And in that place he wol abiden stille:
Though al the world had the contrary swore,
He shal not Thennnes be drawe ne be bore.
Or
Or if you lift to bid him thennes gon,
Trille this pin, and he wol vanish anon
Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come agen, be it by day or night,
When that you lift to clepen him again
In swiche a guife, as I shal to you fain
Betwixen you and me, and that ful fone.
Ride when you lift, ther n’is no more to done.

Enfourmed whan the king was of the knight,
And hath conceived in his wit aright
The maner and the forme of all this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty king
Repaireth to his revel, as beforne.
The bridel is in to the tour yborne,
And kept among his jewels lefe and dere:
The hors vanisht, I n’ot in what manere,
Out of hir sight, ye get no more of me:
But thus I lete in luft and jolitee
This Cambuscan his lordes festeyning,
Til that wel nigh the day began to spring.

Pars secunda.

The norice of digestion, the slepe,
Gan on hem winke, and bad hem taken kepe,
That mochel drinke, and labour wol have rest:
And with a galping mouth hem all he keft,
And said, that it was time to lie adoun,
For blood was in his dominationun:
Cherisheth blood, natures frend, quod he.

They thanken him galping, by two by three;
And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
As slepe hem bade, they toke it for the beft.

Hir dremes shul not now be told for me;
Ful were hir hedes of fumositee,
That causeth dreme, of which ther is no charge.
They slepen til that it was prime large,
The moste part, but it were Canace;
She was ful' mesurable, as women be.
For of hire father had she take hire leve.
To gon to rest, sone after it was eve;
Hire lifte not appalled for to be,
Nor on the morwe unfestliche for to see;

And slept hire firste slepe, and than awoke.
For swiche a joye she in hire herte toke.
Both of hire queinte ring, and of hire mirrour,
That twenty time she chaunged hire colour;
And in hire slepe right for the impresshon
Of hire mirrour she had a vision.
Wherfore, or that the sonne gan up glide,
She clepeth upon hire maistresse hire beside,
And saide, that hire luste for to arise.

Thise olde women, that ben gladly wise,
As is hire maistresse, answered hire anon,
And said; Madame, whider wol ye gon
Thus erly? for the folk ben all in rest,
I wol, quod she, arisen (for me left
No longer for to slepe) and walken aboute.

Hire maistresse clepeth women a gret route,
And up they risen, wel a ten or twelve;
Up riseth freshe Canace hirselfe,
As rody and bright, as the yonge sonne,
That in the ram is foure degrees yronne;
No higher was he, whan she redy was;
And forth she walketh elyly a pas,
Arrayed after the lufty sefon fote
Lightely for to playe, and walken on fote,
Nought but with five or fixe of hire meinie;
And in a trench out the park goth she.

The vapour, which that from the erthe glode,
Maketh the sonne to feme rody and brode:
But natheles, it was so faire a fight,
That it made all hir hertes for to light,
What for the sefon, and the morwening,
And for the foules that she herde sing.
For right anon she wisde what they ment
Right by hir song, and knew al hir entent.
The knotte, why that every tale is tolde,
If it be taried til the luft be colde

I 2
Of hem, that han it herkened after yore,
The favour passeth ever lenger the more,
For fulsumnesse of the prolixitee:
And by that fame reson thinketh me
I shuld unto the knotte condescende,
And maken of hire walking sone an ende.

Amidde a tree for-dry, as white as chalk,
As Canace was playing in hire walk,
Ther fat a faucon over hire hed ful hie,
That with a pitous vois so gan to crie,
That all the wood resounded of hire cry,
And beten had hirefelf so pitously
With both hire winges, til the rede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as she flood.

And ever in on alway she cried and shright,
And with hire bek hirefelen she so twight,
That ther n'is tigre, ne no cruel beft,
That dwelleth other in wood, or in forest,
That n'olde han wept, if that he wepen coude,
For forwe of hire, she shright alway so loude.

For ther was never yet no man on live,
If that he coude a faucon wel descreve,
That herde of swiche another of fayreneffe
As wel of plumage, as of gentilesse,
Of shape, of all that might yrekened be.
A faucon peregrine seined she
Of fremde lond, and ever as she stood,
She swouned now and now for lack of blood,
Til wel neigh is she fallen fro the tree.

This faire kinges doughter Canace,
That on hire finger bare the queinte ring,
Thurgh which she understood wel every thing
That any foule may in his leden sain,
And coude answere him in his leden again, 10750
Hath understonden what this faucon seyd,
And wel neigh for the routhe almost she deyd :
And to the tree she goth ful hastily,
And on this faucon loketh ful pitousely,
And held hire lap abrode, for wel she wist
The faucon muste fallen from the twist
Whan that she swouned next, for faute of blood.
A longe while to waiten hire she stood,
Til at the laft she spake in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye fhul after here. 10760

What is the cause, if it be for to tell,
That ye ben in this furial peine of hell?
Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
Is this for forwe of deth, or losse of love?
For as I trow, thife be the causes two,
That caufen most a gentil herte wo.
Of other harme it nedeth not to speke,
For ye yourself upon yourself awreke,
Which preveth wel, that other ire or drede
Mote ben encheleson of your cruel dede,
Sin that I se non other wight you chace.
For the love of God, as doth yourselfen grace:
Or what may be your helpe? for weft ne est
Ne saw I never er now no brid ne best,
That ferde with himself so pitoully.
Ye sle me with your sorwe veraily,
I have of you so gret compasoun.
For Goddes love come fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kinges daughter trewe,
If that I veraily the causes knewe
Of your disease, if it lay in my might,
I wold amend it, or that it were night,
As wisly help me the gret God of kind.
And herbes shal I right ynoough yfind,
To helen with your hurtes hastily.
Tho fright this souncon yet more pitoully
Than ever she did, and fell to ground anon,
And lith aswoune, as ded as lith a fton,
Til Canace hath in hire lappe hire take,
Unto that time she gan of swoune awake:
And after that she out of swoune abraide,
Right in hire haukes ledem thus she sayde,
That pitie reneth none in gentil herte
(Feling his similitude in peines smerte)
Is proved alle day, as men may see,
As wel by werke as by auëtoritee,
For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.
I fee wel, that ye have on my distresse
Compassion, my faire Canace,
Of very waynely benignitee,
That nature in your principles hath set,
But for non hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obey unto your herte free,
And for to maken other yware by me,
As by the whelpe chastifed is the leon,
Right for that cause and that conclusion,
While that I have a leifer and a space,
Min harme I wol confessen er I pace.
And ever while that on hire forwe told,
That other wept, as she to water wold,
Til that the faucen bad hire to be still,
And with a fike right thus she said hire till.
Ther I was bred, (alas that ilke day !)
And soffred in a roche of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing ailed me.
I ne wist not what was adversitee,
Til I coud flee ful high under the skie.
Tho dwelled a tercelet me faste by,
That semed welle of alle gentillesse,
Al were he ful of treston and falsenesse.
It was so wrapped under humble chere,
And under hew of trouth in swiche manere,
Under plesance, and under besy peine,
That no wight coude have wend he coude seine,
So depe in greyn he died his coloure.
Right as a serpent hideth him under floures,
Til he may see his time for to bite;
Right so this god of loves hypocrite
Doth so his ceremonies and obeifance,
And kepeth in semblaunt alle his observance
That founeth unto gentillesse of loye.
As on a tombe is all the faire above,
And under is the corps, swiche as ye wote;
Swiche was this hypocrite both cold and hote,
And in this wise he served his entent,
That, save the fend, non wiste what he ment:
Til he so long had weped and complained,
And many a yere his service to me fained,
Till that min herte, to pitous and to nice,
Al innocent of his crowned malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his seuretee,
Graunted him love, on this conditioun,
That evermo min honour and renoun
Were saved, bothe privee and apert;
This is to say, that, after his desert,
I yave him all min herte and all my thought,
(God wote, and he, that other wayes nought)
And toke his herte in chaunge of min for ay.
But soth is said, gon sithen is many a day, 10850
A trewe wight and a theef thinken not on.
And whan he faw the thing so fer ygon,
That I had granted him fully my love,
In swiche a guise as I have faiid above,
And yeven him my trewe herte as free
As he sware that he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fell on his knees with so gret 'humbleesse,
With so high reverence, as by his chere,
So like a gentil lover of manere,
So ravished, as it femed, for the joye,
That never Jason, ne Paris of Troye,
Jason? certes, ne never other man,
Sin Lamech was, that alderfirst began
To loven two, as writen folk beforne,
Ne never sithen the first man was borne,
Ne coude man by twenty thousand part
Contrefete the sophimes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbocle his galoche,
Ther doublenesse of faining shuld approche, 10870
Ne coude so thanke a wight, as he did me.
His maner was an heven for to see
To any woman, were she never so wise;
So painted he and kempt, at point devise,
As well his wordes, as his contenance.
And I so loved him for his obeisance,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that any thing him smerte,
Al were it never so lite, and I it wift,
Me thought I felt deth at myn herte twift. 10880
And shortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
That my will was his willes instrument;
This is to say, my will obeyed his will
In alle thing, as fer as resoun fill,
Keping the boundes of my worship ever:
Ne never had I thing so lese, ne lever,
As him, God wot, ne never shal no mo.

This lasteth lenger than a yere or two,
That I supposed of him nought but good.
But finally, thus at the last it stood,
That fortune wolde that he musste twin
Out of that place, which that I was in,
Wher me was wo, it is no question;
I cannot make of it description.
For o thing dare I tellen boldely,
I know what is the peine of deth therby,
Swiche harme I felt, for he ne might byleve.

So on a day of me he toke his leve,
THE SQUIERES TALE. 123

So forweful eke, that I wend verailly,
That he had felt as mochel harme as I,
Whan that I herd him speke, and saw his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,
And eke that he repairen shuld again
Within a litel while, soth to fain,
And reson wold eke that he muste go
For his honour, as often happeth so,
That I made vertue of neceffitee,
And toke it wel, fin that it muste be.
As I best might, I hid fro him my sorwe,
And toke him by the hond, Seint John to borwe,
And said him thus; lo, I am youres all,
Beth swiche as I have ben to you and shal.

What he anfwerd, it nedeth not reherfe;
Who can say bet than he, who can do werfe?
Whan he hath al wel said, than hath he done.
Therfore behoveth him a ful long spone,
That shal ete with a fend; thus herd I say.

So at the last he muste forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he come ther him left.
Whan it came him to purpos for to rest,
I trow that he had thilke text in mind,
That alle thing repairing to his kind
Gladeth himself; thus fain men as I gesse:
Men loven of propre kind newesaneflennesse.
As briddles don, that men in cages fede.
For though thou night and day take of hem hede,
And strew hir cage faire and soft as filke,
And give hem sugre, hony, bred, and milke,
Yet right anon as that his dore is up,
He with his feet wol spurnen doun his cup.
And to the wood he wol, and wormes etc.
So newefangel ben they of hir mete,
And loven noveltes of propre kind;
No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bind.
So ferd this tercelet, alas the day!
Though he were gentil borne, and fresh, and gay,
And goodly for to seen, and humble, and free,
He saw upon a time a kite flee,
And sodenly he loved this kite so,
That all his love is clene fro me ago:
And hath his trouthe falsed in this wife.
Thus hath the kite my love in hire service,
And I am lorn withouten remedy.
And with that word this faucon gan to cry,
And swouneth est in Canacees barme.
Gret was the forwe for that haukes harme,
That Canace and all hire women made;
They n'iften how they might the faucon glade.
But Canace home bereth hire in hire lap,
And softely in plastres gan hire wrap.
THE SQUIERES TALE. 125

Ther as s he with hire bek had hurt hireselfe.
Now cannot Canace but herbes delve
Out of the ground, and maken falves newe
Of herbes precious and fine of hewe,
To helen with this hauk; fro day to night
She doth hire besinesse, and all hire might.
And by hire beddes hed s he made a mew,
And covered it with velouettes blew,
In signe of trouth, that is in woman fene;
And all without the mew is painted grene, 10960
In which were painted all thise falsé foules,
As ben thise tidifes, tercelettes, and owles;
And pies, on hem for to cry and chide,
Right for despit were painted hem beside,
Thus lete I Canace hire hauk keping.
I wol no more as now speke of hire ring,
Til it come eft to purpos for to fain,
How that this faucon gat hire love again
Repentant, as the story telleth us,
By mediation of Camballus 10970
The kinges sone, of which that I you told.
But hennesforth I wol my processe hold
To speke of aventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never herd so gret mervailles.
First wol I tellen you of Cambuscan,
That in his time many a citee wan:

And
And after wol I speke of Algarfif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wif,
For whom ful oft in gret peril he was,
Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.  10980
And after wol I speke of Camballo,
That fought in listes with the brethren two
For Canace, er that he might hire winne,
And ther I left I wol again beginne.

THE FRANKELEINES PROLOGUE.

In faith, Squier, thou haft thee wel yquit
And gentilly, I preife wel thy wit,
Quod the Frankelein; considering thin youthe,
So felingly thou spekeft, fire, I aloue the
As to my dome, ther is non that is here,
Of eloquence that shal be thy pere,  10990
If that thou live; God yeve thee goode chance,
And in vertue fend thee continuance,
For of thy speking I have gret deintee.
I have a fone, and by the Trinitee
It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
He were a man of swiche discretion,
As that ye ben: fie on possession,

But
But if a man be vertuous withal.
I have my fone fnibbed, and yet fhal,
For he to vertue lifteth not to entend,
But for to play at dis, and to dispend,
And lefe all that he hath, is his usage;
And he had lever taken with a page,
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Ther he might leren gentillesse aright.

Straw for your gentillesse, quod our hofte.
What? Frankelein, parde, fire, wel thou wofit,
That eche of you mote tellen at the lefth
A tale or two, or breken his beheft.
That know I wel, fire, quod the Frankelein,
I pray you haveth me not in disdein,
Though I to this man speke a word or two.
Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.
Gladly, fire hofte, quod he, I wol obey
Unto your will; now herkeneth what I fey;
I wol you not contrarien in no wife,
As fer as that my wittes may suffice.
I pray to God that it may plesen you,
Than wot I wel that it is good ynow.

Thife olde gentil Bretons in hir dayes
Of diverse aventure maden layes,
Rimeyed in hir firffe Breton tonge:
Which layes with hir instruments they fonge;

Or
Or elles reddan hem for hir plesance,
And on of hem have I in remembrance,
Which I shal sayn with good wille as I can.
But, sires, because I am a borel man,
At mybeginning first I you beseche
Have me excused of my rude speche.
I lerned never rhetorike certain;
Thing that I speke, it mote be bare and plain.
I slept never on the mount of Pernafo,
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche as men die with or peinte;
Colours of rhetorike ben to me queinte;
My spirit feleth not of swiche matere.
But if you lust my tale shul ye here.

**THE FRANKELEINES TALE.**

In Armorike, that called is Bretaigne,
Ther was a knight, that loved and did his peine
To serve a ladie in his best wife;
And many a labour, many a gret emprise
He for his lady wrought, or she were wonne:
For she was on the fairest under sonne,
And eke therto comen of so high kinrede,
That wel unnethes durst this knight for drede.
Tell hire his wo, his peine, and his distresse.
But at the last, she for his worthiness,
And namely for his meke obeysance,
Hath swiche a pitee caught of his penance,
That prively she fell of his accord
To take him for hire husbond and hire lord,
(Of swiche lordship as men han over hir wives)
And, for to lede the more in blisse hir lives,
Of his free will he swore hire as a knight,
That never in all his lif he day ne night
Ne shulde take upon him no maistrie
Agains hire will, ne kithe hire jaloufie,
But hire obey, and folwe hire will in al,
As any lover to his lady shal:
Save that the name of soverainetee
That wold he han for shame of his degree.
She thanked him, and with ful gret humbleffe
She saide; fire, sin of your gentillesse
Ye profren me to have so large a reine,
Ne wolde God never betwix us tweine,
As in my gilt, were either werre or strif:
Sire, I wol be your humble trewe wif,
Have here my trouth, till that myn herte breste.
Thus ben they both in quiete and in reffe.
For o thing, fires, saufly dare I seie,
That frendes everich other must obeie,
The Frankeleines Tale.

If they wol longe holden compaignie.

Love wol not be constreined by maistrie.

Whan maistrie cometh, the God of love anon
Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon.

Love is a thing, as any spirit free.

Women of kind desire liberty,

And not to be constreined as a thrall;

And so don men, if sothly I say shal.

Loke who that is most patient in love,

He is at his advantage all above:

Patience is an high vertue certain,

For it vanquisheth, as thise clerkes fain,

Thinges that rigour never shulde atteine.

For every word men may not chide or pleine.

Lerneth to suffren, or, so mote I gon,

Ye shul it lerne whether ye wol or non.

For in this world certain no wight ther is,

That he'ne doth or sayth somtime amis.

Ire, sikenesse, or constellation,

Win, wo, or changing of complexion,

Causteth ful oft to don amis or spoken:

On every wrong a man may not be wreken.

After the time must be temperance

To every wight that can of governance.

And therfore hath this worthy wise knight,

(To liven in ese) suffrance hire behight;
THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

And she to him ful wisly gan to swere,
That never shuld ther be defaute in here.

Here may men seen an humble wise accord:
Thus hath she take hire servaunt and hire lord,
Servant in love; and lord in marriage;
Than was he both in lordship and servaage?
Servaage? nay, but in lordship al above,
Sin he hath both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wif alfo,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperitee,
Home with his wif he goth to his contree;
Not fer fro Penmark, ther his dwelling was,
Wher as he liveth in blisse and in folas.
Who coude tell, but he had wedded be,
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee;
That is betwix an husbond and his wif?
A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,
Til that this knight, of which I spake of thus,
That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus,
Shope him to gon and dwelle a yere or twaine
In Engelond, that cleped was eke Bretaigne,
To seke in armes worship and honour:
(For all his luft he set in swiche labour)
And dwelte ther two yere; the book faith thus.
Now wol I stintel of this Arviragus,

K 2
And speke I wol of Dorigene his wif,
That loveth hire husband as hire hertes lif.
For his absence wepeth she and siketh,
As don thise noble wives whan hem liketh; 
i1130
She morneth, waketh, wailleth, faileth, pleineth;
Desir of his presence hire so distraineth,
That all this wide world she set at nought.
Hire frendes, which that knew hire hevy thought,
Comforten hire in all that ever they may;
They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day,
That causeles she sleth hersel, alas!
And every comfort possible in this cas
They don to hire, with all hir besinese,
Al for to make hire leve hire hevinesse.  
i1140

By processe, as ye knowen everich on,
Men mowe so longe graven in a ston,
Til som figure therin emprented be:
So long han they comforted hire, til she
Received hath, by hope and by rexon,
The emprenting of hir consolation,
Thurgh which hir grete forwe gan affluage;
She may not alway duren in swiche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare, 
i1150
And that he wol come hastily again,
Or elles had this forwe hire herte flain.

Hire
Hire frendes saw hire forwe gan to flake,
And preiden hire on knees for Goddes fake
To come and romen in hir compaignie,
Away to driven hire derke fantasie:
And finally she granted that request,
For wel she saw that it was for the best.

Now flood hire castel fafte by the see,
And often with hire frendes walked she,
Hire to disporten on the bank an hie,
Wher as she many a ship and barge sie,
Sailing hir cours, wher as hem lift to go.
But than was that a parcel of hire wo,
For to hireself ful oft, alas! said she,
Is ther no ship, of so many as I see,
Wol bringen home my lord? than were my herte
Al warished of his bitter peines smerte.

Another time wold she sit and thinke,
And cast her eyen dounward fro the brinke;
But whan she saw the grifly rockes blake,
For veray fere so wold hire herte quake,
That on hire feet she might hire not tuftene.
Than wold she sit adoun upon the grene,
And pitously into the see behold,
And say right thus, with careful fikes cold,
Etere God, that thurgh thy purveance
Ledest this world by certain governance,

K3
In idel, as men fain, ye nothing make.
But, lord, thife grily fendly rockes blake, That seinen rather a foule confusion
Of werk, than any faire creation
Of swiche a parfit wise God and stabe,
Why han ye wrought this werk unreasonable?
For by this werk, north, south, ne west, ne eft,
Ther n'is ystoftred man, ne brid, ne best:
It doth no good to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye not, lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Han rockes flain, al be they not in mind;
Which mankind is so faire part of thy werk,
Thou madeft it like to thyn owen merk,
Than, semeth it, ye had a gret cherteT
Toward mankind; but how than may it be,
That ye swiche menes make it to destroyen?
Which menes don no good, but ever anoyen.
I wote wel, clerkes wol fain as hem left
By arguments, that all is for the best,
Though I ne can the caufes nought yknow;
But thilke God that made the wind to blow,
As kepe my lord, this is my conclusion:
To clerkes lete I all disputision:
But wolde God, that all thife rockes blake
Were fonken into helle for his sake.
THE FRANKELEINES TALE. 135

This rockes flee min herte for the fere.
Thus wold the say with many a pitous tere.
Hire frendes saw that it was no disport
To romen by the see, but discomfort,
And shape hem for to plaien somwher elles.
They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
And eke in other places delitable;
They dancen and they play at ches and tables.

So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
Unto a gardin that was ther beside,
In which that they had made hir ordinance
Of vitaille, and of other purveance,
They gon and plaie hem all the longe day:
And this was on the sixte morwe of May,
Which May had painted with his softe flioures
This gardin ful of leves and of floures:

And craft of mannes hond so curiously
Arrayed had this gardin trewely,
That never was ther gardin of swiche pris,
But if it were the veray paradis.
The odour of floures, and the freshe light,
Wold han ymaked any herte light
That ever was born, but if to gret fikenesse
Or to gret forwe held it in diffresse,
So ful it was of beautee and plefance.

And after dinner gonnen they to dance

And
And sing also, sauf Dorigene alone,
Which made alway hire complaint and hire mone,
For she ne saw him on the dance go,
That was hire husband, and hire love also:
But natheles she must a time abide,
And with good hope let hire forwe slide.

Upon this dance, amongst other men,
Danced a squier before Dorigien,
That fresher was and jolier of array,
As to my dome, than is the month of May. 11240
He singeth, danceth, passing any man,
That is or was sin that the world began;
Therwith he was, if men shuld him discribe,
On of the beste faring men on live,
Yong, strong, and vertuous, and riche, and wise,
And wel beloved, and holden in gret prife.
And shortly, if the soth I tellen shal,
Unwetining of this Dorigene at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Had loved hire best of any creature
Two yere and more, as was his aventure:
But never dorst he tell hire his grevance,
Withouten cup he dranke all his penance.
He was dispered, nothing dorst he say,
Sauf in his sones somwhat wold he wray

His
His wo, as in a general complaining;
He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.
Of which matter made he many layes,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes; 11260
How that he doreste not his forwe telle,
But languisheth, as doth a furie in helle;
And die he must, he said, as did Ecco
For Narcissus, that dorest not tell hire, wo.

In other maner than ye here me say,
Ne dorest he not to hire his wo bewray,
Sau that paraventure somtime at dances,
Ther yonge folk kepen hir observances,
It may wel be he loked on hire face
In swiche a wife, as man that axeth grace, 11270
But nothing wiste she of his entent.
Natheles it happed, or they thennes went,
Because that he was hire neighebor,
And was a man of worship and honour,
And had yknownen him of time yore,
They fell in speche, and forth ay more and more
Unto his purpos drow Aurelius;
And when he saw his time, he saide thus.
Madame, quod he, by God that this world made,
So that I wiste it might your herte glade, 11280
I wold that day, that your Arviragus
Went over see, that I Aurelius

Had
Had went ther I shuld never come again;
For wel I wot my service is in vain,
My guerdon n'is but bresting of min herte.
Madame, rueth upon my peines smerte,
For with a word ye may me sleen or fave.
Here at your feet God wold that I were grave,
I ne have as now no leifer more to fey:
Have mercy, swete, or ye wol do me dey. 11299
She gan to loke upon Aurelius;
Is this your will (quod she) and fay ye thus?
Never erst (quod she) ne wist I what ye ment:
But now, Aurelie, I know your entent.
By thilke God that yaf me soule and lif,
Ne shal I never ben an untrew wif
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit,
I wol ben his to whom that I am knit:
Take this for final answer as of me.
But after that in play thus faide she. 11300
Aurelie, (quod she) by high God above
Yet wol I granten you to ben your love,
(Sin I you see so pitously complaine)
Loke, what day that endelong Bretaigne
Ye remue all the rockes,ston by ston,
That they ne letten ship ne bote to gon,
I say, whan ye han made the cost to clene
Of rockes, that ther n'is no ston ysene,

Than
THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

Than wol I love you best of any man,
Have here my trouth, in all that ever I can; 11310
For wel I wote that it shal never betide,
Let swiche folie out of your herte glide.
What deintee shuld a man have in his lif
For to go love another mannes wif,
That hath hire body when that ever him liketh?
Aurelius ful often fore siketh;
Is ther non other grace in you? quod he.
No, by that lord, quod she, that maked me.
Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herd,
And with a forweful herte he thus answerd. 11320
Madame, quod he, this were an impossible.
Than mofte I die of soden deth horrible.
And with that word he turned him anon.
Tho come hire other frendes many on,
And in the alleyes romed up and doun,
And nothing wifl of this conclusioun.
But sodenly begonnen revel newe,
Til that the brighte sone had lost his hewe,
For the orizont had rest the sone his light;
(This is as much to sayn as it was night) 11330
And home they gon in mirth and in solas;
Sauf only wrecche Aurelius, alas!
He to his hous is gon with forweful herte.
He faith, he may not from his deth afterte.
THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

Him femeth, that he felt his herte cold.
Up to the heven his hondes gan he hold,
And on his knees bare he set him doun,
And in his raving said his orisoun.
For veray wo out of his wit he braide,
He n'ifte what he spake, but thus he saide; With pitous herte his plaint hath he begonne
Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne.
He said; Apollo, God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flour,
That yeveft after thy declination
To eche of hem his time and his sefon,
As that thin herbergh changeth low and hie;
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable eie
On wrecche Aurelie, which that am but lorne.
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth ys worne
Withouten gilt, but thy benignite
Upon my dedly herte have som pitee.
For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you left,
Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.
Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise
How that I may be holpe and in what wise.
Your blisful sufter, Lucina the shene,
That of the see is chief goddesse and quene,
Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,
Yet emperice aboven him is she:
THE FRANKELEINES TALE. 141

Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hire desire
Is to be quiked and lighted of your fire,
For which she folweth you ful besily,
Right fo the see desireth naturelly
To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse
Both in the see and rivers more and leffe.
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requesf,
Do this miracle, or do min herte brefte;
That now next at this opposition,
Which in the signe shal be of the Leon,
As preyeth hire fo gret a flood to bring,
That five fadome at the left it overspring
The higheft rock in Armorike Bretaigne,
And let this flood enduren yeres twaine:
Than certes to my lady may I say,
Holdeth your heft, the rockes ben away.
Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
Prey hire she go no faster cours than ye;
I say this, preyeth your futter that she go
No faster cours than ye thife yeres two:
Than shal she ben even at ful alway,
And spring-flood laften bothe night and day.
And but she vouchesauf in swiche manere
To graunten me my soveraine lady dere,
Prey hire to sinken every rock adoun
Into hire owen derke regioun

Under
Under the ground, ther Pluto dwelleth in,
Or nevermo shal I my lady win.

Thy temple in Delphos wol I barefoot seke.
Lord Phebus, see the teres on my cheke.
And on my peine have sem compassioun.
And with that word, in forwe he fell adoun,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance:
His brother, which that knew of his penance,
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought.
Dispeired in this torment and this thought
Let I this woful creature lie,
Chese he for me whether he wol live or die.

Arviragus with hele and gret honour
(As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
Is comen home, and other worthy men:
O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
That haft thy lusty husbond in thin armes,
The freshe knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee, as his owen hertes lif:
Nothing lift him to be imaginatif,
If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,
To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
He not entendeth to no swiche materer,
But danceth, jufteth, and maketh mery chere.
And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwell,
And of the fike Aurelius wol I tell.

In
In languor and in torment furious
Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurelius,
Er any foot on eurthe he mighte gon;
Ne comfort in this time ne had he non,
Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
He knew of all this wo and all this werk;
For to non other creature certain
Of this materie he dorste no word fain;
Under his bryst he bare it more secree,
Than ever did Pamphilus for Galathee.
His bryst was hole withouten for to seen,
But in his herte ay was the arwe kene,
And wel ye knowe that of a fursanure
In surgerie is perilous the cure,
But men might touch the arwe or come therby.

His brother wepeth and waileth privelly,
Til at the last him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleaunce in France,
As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
To reden artes that ben curious,
Seken in every halke and every herne
Particuler sciences for to lerne,
He him remembred, that upon a day
At Orleaunce in studie a book he say
Of Magike naturel, which his felaw,
That was that time a bacheler of law,
144 THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
Had prively upon his desk ylaft;
Which book spake moche of operations
Touching the eight and twenty mansions
That longen to the Mone, and swiche folie
As in our dayes n'is not worth a flie:
For holy cherches feith, in our beleve,
Ne suffreth non illusion us to greve.
And whan this book was in his remembrance,
Anon for joye his herte gan to dance,
And to himself he saied prively;
My brother shal be warished hastily:
For I am siker that ther be sciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thife subtil tregetoures play.
For oft at festes have I wel herd say,
That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and doun.
Somtime hath semed come a grim leoun,
And somtime floures spring as in a mede,
Somtime a vine, and grapes white and rede,
Somtime a castel al of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon:
Thus semeth it to every mannes fight.
Now than conclude I thus, if that I might
At Orleaunce som olde felaw find,
That hath thise Mones mansions in mind;
Or other, Magike naturel above,
He shuld wel make my brother have his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannens fght, that all the rockes blake
Of Breaigne were yvoided everich on;
And shippes by the brinke comen and gon;
And in swiche forme endure a day or two:
Than were my brother warished of his wo;
Than must she nedes holden hire belieth;
Or elles he shal shame hire at the left.

What shulde I make a lenger talle of this?
Unto his brothers bed he come is;
And swiche comfort he yaf him, for to gon
To Orleauence, that he up stert anon,
And on his way forthward than is he fare,
In hope for to ben lisfed of his care.

What they were come almost to that citee;
But if it were a two furlong or three;
A yonge clerk roming by himself they mette;
Which that in Latine thirstily hem grette.
And after that he sayd a wonder thing;
I know, quod he, the cause of your coming;
And or they forther any foot went;
He told hem all that was in hit entent.
This Breton clerk him axed of felawes,  
The which he had yknown in olde dawes,  
And he ansswered him that they rede were,  
For which he wept ful often many a tere.  

Doun of his hors Aurelius light anon,  
And forth with this magicien is gon  
Home to his hous, and made hem wel at efe:  
Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem plefe.  
So wel arraied hous as ther was on,  
Aurelius in his lif saw never non.  

He shewed him, or they went to foupere,  
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde dere.  
Ther saw he hartes with hir hornes hie,  
The gretest that were ever seen with eie.  
He saw of hem an hundred flain with houndes,  
And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.  
He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,  
Thise sauconers upon a faire rivere,  
That with hir haukes han the heron flain.  

Tho saw he knightes juven in a plain.  
And after this he did him swiche plefance,  
That he him shewed his lady on a dance,  
On which himselfven danced, as him thought.  
And whan this maister, that this magike wrought,  
Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,  
And farewell, al the revel is ago.

And
And yet remued they never out of the hous, 
While they saw all thise fightes merveillous; 
But in his studie, ther his bookes be, 
They yaten still, and no wight but they three. 
To him this maister called his squier, 11520
And sayd him thus, may we go to souper? 
Almost an houre it is, I undertake, 
Sin I you bade our souper for to make, 
Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me 
Into my studie, ther my bookes be. 
Sire, quod this squier, whan it liketh you, 
It is al redy, though ye wol right now. 
Go we than soupe, quod he, as for the best, 
Thise amorous folk sometime moste han rest. 11530
At after souper fell they in tretee 
What summe shuld this maisters guerdon be, 
To remue all the rockes of Breaigne, 
And eke from Gerounde to the mouth of Saine. 
He made it strange, and swore, so God him save, 
Lesse than a thousand pound he wold not have, 
Ne-gladly for that summe he wold not gon. 
Aurelius with blissful herte anon 
Answered thus; fie on a thousand pound: 
This wide world, which that men sayn is round, 
I wold it yeve, if I were lord of it. 11541
This bargaine is ful drive, for we ben knit;
Ye shul be paied trewe by my trouth.
But loketh, for non negligence or flouth,
Ye tarie us here no lenger than to morwe.
Nay, quod this clerk, have here my faith to borwe.
To bed is gon Aurelius whan him left,
And wel nigh all that night he had his reft,
What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,
His woful herte of penance had a liffe.

Upon the morwe whan that it was day,
To Bretaigne token they the righte way,
Aurelie, and this magicien him beside,
And ben descended ther they wold abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde froasty sezon of December.
Phesus waxe old, and hewed like saton,
That in his hote declination
Shone as the burned gold, with stremes bright;
But now in Capricorne adoun he light,
Wher as he shone ful pale, I dare wel fain.
The bitter frostes with the fleet and rain
Destroyed han the grene in every yerd.
Janus fit by the fire with double berd,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Beforn him stant braune of the tusked swine,
And nowel crieth every lufty man.
Aurelius in all that ever he can,
Doth to his maister chere and reverence,
And praieth him to don his diligence
To bringen him out of his peines smerte,
Or with a swerd that he wold slit his herte.

This fottil clerk swiche routh hath on this man,
That night and day he spedeth him, that he can,
To wait a time of his conclusion:
This is to sayn, to make illusion,
By swiche an apperance or joglerie,
(I can no termes of Astrologie)
That she and every wight shuld wene and say,
That of Bretaigne the rockes were away,
Or elles they were fonken under ground.
So at the last he hath his time ysfound
To make his japes and his wretchednesse
Of swiche a superstitious cursednesse.
His tables Tolctanes forth he brought
Ful wel corrected, that ther lacked nought,
Nother his collect, ne his expand yeres,
Nother his rotes, ne his other geres,
As ben his centres, and his argumentes,
And his proportionel convenientes
For his equations in every thing.
And by his eighte fperes in his werking,
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove
Fro the hed of thilke fix Aries above,
That
That in the ninthe spere considered is,
Ful sotilly he calculed all this.
When he had found his firste mansion,
He knew the remenant by proportion;
And knew the rising of his Mone wel,
And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
And knew ful wel the mones mansion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew also his other observances,
For swiche illusions and swiche meschances,
As hethen folk used in thilke daies.
For which no lenger maketh he delayes,
But thurgh his magike, for a day or tway,
It semed all the rockes were away.

Aurelius, which that despeired is,
Whether he shal han his love, or fare amis,
Awaiteth night and day on this miracle:
And when he knew that ther was non obstacle,
That voided were thise rockes everich on,
Doun to his maisters feet he fell anon,
And sayd; I woful wretch Aurelius,
Thanke you, my lord, and lady min Venus,
That me han holpen fro my cares cold.
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Theras he knew he shuld his lady see.
And whan he saw his time, anon right he

With
THE FRANKELEINES TALE. 151

With dredful herte and with ful humble chere Salued hath his soveraine lady dere,
My rightful lady, quod this woful man, Whom I moost drede, and love, as I best can, And lotheft were of all this world displese, N'ere it that I for you have swiche disese, That I muʃt die here at your foot anon, Nought wold I tell how me is wo begon, But certes other muʃt I die or plaine;
Ye fle me gilteles for veray peine. 11630
But of my deth though that ye han no routh, Aviseth you, or that ye breke your trouthe; Repenteth you for thilke God above, Or ye me fle, because that I you love, For, madame, wel ye wote what ye have hight; Not that I chalenge any thing of right Of you, my soveraine lady, but of grace; But in a gardin yond, in swiche a place, Ye wote right wel what ye behighten me, And in myn hond your trouthe plighten ye, 11640
To love me beʃt; God wote ye faied so, Although that I unworthy be therto;
Madame, I speke it for the honour of you, More than to save my hertes lif right now: I have don so as ye commanded me, And if ye vouchesaf, ye may go see.
Doth as you list, have your behest in mind,
For quick or ded, right ther ye shul me find:
In you lith all to do me live or dey,
But wele I wote the rockes ben away.

He taketh his leve, and she astonished flood;
In all hire face n'as o drope of blood:
She wened never han come in swiche a trappe.
Alas! quod she, that ever this shuld happe!

For wend I never by possibilitee,
That swiche a monstre or mervaille might be:
It is again the processe of nature,
And home she goth a forweiful creature,
For veray sere unnethes may she go.
She wepeth, waileth all a day or two,
And swouneth, that it routhe was to see;
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
For out of toun was gon Arviragus.
But to hireself she spake, and saied thus,
With face pale, and with ful fory chere,
In hire complaint, as ye shul after here.

Alas! quod she, on thee, fortune, I plain,
That unware hast me wrapped in thy chain:
Fro which to escapen, wote I no soccour,
Sauf only deth, or elles dishonour:
On of thise two behoveth me to chese.
But natheles, yet had I lever lefe
My lif, than of my body have a shame,
Or know myselfen false, or lese my name;
And with my deth I may be quit ywis.
Hath ther not many a noble wif or this,
And many a maid yflaine hireself, alas!
Rather than with hire body don trespas?
Yes certes; lo, thife stories bere witneffe.

When thirty tyrants ful of cursednesse
Had slain Phidon in Athens at the fett,
They commanded his doughtren for to arrest,
And bringen hem beforne hem in despit
Al naked, to fulfill hir foule delit;
And in hir fadres blood they made hem dance
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschance.
For which thife woful maidens ful of drede,
Rather than they wold lese hir maidenhede,
They prively ben stert into a welle,
And dreint hemfelyen, as the bookes telle.

They of Messene let enquire and seke
Of Lacedomie fifty maidens eke,
On which they wolden don hir lecherie;
But ther was non of all that compagnie
That she n'as flaine, and with a glad entent
Chees rather for to dien, than assault
To ben oppriffed of hire maidenhede.
Why shuld I than to dien ben in drede?
Lo eke the tyrant Aristoclidés,
That loved a maid hight Stimphilides,
Whan that hire father flaine was on a night,
Unto Dianes temple goth she right,
And hente the image in hire handes two,
Fro which image wold she never go,
No wight hire handes might of it arrace,
Til she was flaine right in the selve place.

Now fin that maidens hadden swiche despit
To be defouled with mannes foule delit,
Wel ought a wif rather hirselfen sle,
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.

What shal I sayn of Hafdrubales wif,
That at Cartage beraft hirself hire lif?
For whan she saw that Romains wan the toun,
She toke hire children all, and skipt adoun
Into the fire, and chees rather to die,
Than any Romain did hire vilanie.

Hath not Lucrece yslaine hirself, alas!
At Rome, whan that she oppressed was
Of Tarquine? for hire thought it was a shame
To liven, whan she hadde loft hire name.

The seven maidens of Milefie also
Han flaine hemself for veray drede and wo,
Rather than folk of Gaule hem shuld oppresse.

Mo than a thousand stories, as I geffe.

Coude
THE FRANKELEINES TALE. 158

Coude I now tell as touching this materie.

Whan Abradate was slain, his wif fo dere
Hirefelven flow, and let hire blood to glide
In Abradates woundes, depe and wide,
And sayd, my body at the lefte way
Ther shal no wight defoulen, if I may. 1173

What shuld I mo enamples hereof fain?
Sin that so many han hemfelven slain
Wel rather than they wold defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is bet for me
To fyle myself than be defouled thus.
I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
Or elles fyle myself in some manere,
As did Demotiones daughter dere,
Because she wolde not defouled be.

O Sedasus, it is ful gret pitee
To redeh how thy doughtren died, alas!
That flowe hemfelven for swiche maner cas.

As gret a pitee was it or wel more,
The Theban maiden, that for Nichanore
Hirefelven flow, right for swiche manere wo.
Another Theban mayden did right so,
For on of Macedoine, had hire opprefled,
She with hire deth hire maidenhed redressed.

What shal I fain of Nicerates wif,
That for swiche cas beraft hirefelf hire lif? 1175

How
How trewe was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chees,
Than for to suffice his body unburied be?
Lo, which a wif was Alceflē eke? (quod she)
What sayth Homere of good Penelope?
All Grece knoweth of hire chastitee.
Parde of Laodomia is written thus,
That whan at Troye was slain Prothesilaus,
No lenger wolde she live after his day.
The fame of noble Portia tell I may;
Withouten Brutus coude she not live,
To whom she had all hol hire herte yeve.
The parfit wifhood of Artemisē
Honoured is thurghout all Barbarie.
O Teuta queene, thy wifly chastitee
To alle wives may a mirrour be.
Thus plained Dorigene a day or twy;
Purposing ever that she wolde dey;
But natheles upon the thridde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And axed hire why that she weep so fore:
And she gan wepen ever lenger the more.
Alas, quod she, that ever I was yborne!
Thus have I said, (quod she) thus have I sworne.
And told him all, as ye have herd before:
It nedeth not rehearse it you no more.
THE FRANKELEINES TALE. 157

This husband with glad chere in frendly wife
Answerd and sayd, as I shal you devise.
Is ther ought elles, Dorigene, but this?
Nay, nay, quod she, God helpe me so, as wis
This is to much, and it were Goddes will. 11781

Ye, wif, quod he, let slepen that is still,
It may be wel paraventure yet to-day.
Ye shal your trouthe holden by my fay.
For God so wisly have mercy on me,
I had wel lever stiked for to be,
For veray love which that I to you have,
But if ye shuld your trouthe kepe and fave.
Trouth is the hieft thing that man may kepe.
But with that word he braft anon to wepe, 11790
And sayd; I you forbede on peine of deth,
That never while you lafteth lif or breth,
To no wight tell ye this misaventure.
As I may best I wol my wo endure.
Ne make no contenance of hevinesse,
That folk of you may demen harme or gesse.
And forth he cleped a squier and a maid.
Goth forth anon with Dorigene, he said,
And bringeth hire to swiche a place anon.
They take hir leve, and on hir way they gon: 11800
But they ne wisten why she thider went,
She n'olde no wight tellen hire entent.

1 This
This squire, which that highte Aurelius,
On Dorigene that was so amorous,
Of adventure happed hire to mete
Amid the toun, right in the quikkest strete,
As she was boun to go the way forthright
Toward the garden, ther as she had hight.
And he was to the gardenward also;
For wel he spied when she wolde go
Out of hire hous, to any maner place:
But thus they met of aventur or grace,
And he salueth hire with glad entent,
And axeth of hire whiderward she went.
And she answered, half as she were mad,
Unto the garden, as myn husbond bad,
My trouthe for to hold, alas! alas!
Aurelius gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte had grete compassion
Of hire, and of hire lamentation,
And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden all that she had hight,
So loth him was his wif shuld breke hire trouthe.
And in his herte he caught of it grete routh,
Considering the best on every side,
That fro his lust yet were him lever abide,
Than do so high a cherlish wretchednesse
Ageins fraunchifte, and alle gentillesse;
For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.

Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That sin I see the grete gentillesse
Of him, and eke I see wel your distresse,
That him were lever have shame (and that were
Than ye to me shuld breken thus your trouthe,
I hadde wel lever ever to suffren wo,
Than to depart the love betwix you two.
I you relese, madame, into your hond
Quit every seurement and every bond,
That ye han made to me, as herebeforne,
Sin thilke time that ye were yborne.

Have here my trouthe, I shal you never repreve
Of no beheft, and here I take my leve,
As of the trewest and the beste wif,
That ever yet I knew in all my lif.
But every wif beware of hire beheft;
On Dorigene remembrith at the left.
Thus can a squier don a gentil dede,
As wel as can a knight, withouten drede.

She thanketh him upon hire knees bare,
And home unto hire husbond is she fare,
And told him all, as ye han herd me sayd:
And, trusteth me, he was so wel apayd,
That it were impossible me to write.

What shuld I lenger of this cas endite?

Arviragus
Árviragus and Dorigene his wif
In soveraine bliffe leden forth hir lif;
Never eft ne was ther anger hem betwene;
He cherished hire as though she were a quene,
And she was to him trewe for evermore:
Of thife two folk ye get of me no more.

Aurelius, that his cost hath all forlorn,
Curseth the time, that ever he was borne.
Alas! quod he, alas that I behight.
Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight
Unto this philosophre! how shal I do?
I fee no more, but that I am fordo.
Min heritage mote I nedes fell,
And ben a begger, here I n'ill not dwell,
And shamen all my kinrede in this place,
But I of him may geten better grace.

But natheles I wol of him assay
At certain daies yere by yere to pay,
And thanke him of his grete curtesie.
My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lie.

With herte fore he goth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philosophre,
The value of five hundred pound I gesse,
And him besecheth of his gentillesse
To graunt him daies of the remenaunt,
And sayde; maifter, I dare wel make avaunt.
I faileth never of my trouthe as yet:
For sikerly my dette shal be quit
Towards you, how so that ever I fare
To gon a begging in my kirtle bare:
But wold ye vouchen sauf upon seurtey
Two yere or thre for to respiten me;
Then were I wel, for elles mote I fell
Min heritage, ther is no more to tell.

This Philosophre sobrely answerd;
And faied thus, whan he thise wordes herd:
Have I not holden covenant to the?
Yes certes, wel and trewely; quod he.
Haft thou not had thy lady as thee liketh?
No, no, quod he; and forweefully he siketh.
What was the cause? tell me if thou can.

Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye han herd before,
It nedeth not reherfe it any more.
He sayd; Arviragus of gentillesse
Had lever die in sorwe and in distresse,
Than that his wif were of hire trouthe fals.
The sorwe of Dorigene he told him als,
How loth hire was to ben a wicked wif;
And that she lever had lost that day hire lif;
And that her trouthe she swore thurgh innocence;
She never erft hadde herd spake of apparence:

Vor: II: M That
THE FRANKELEINES TALE.

That made me han of hire so gret pitee,
And right as freely as he sent hire to me,
As freely sent I hire to him again:
This is all and som, ther n'is no more to sain. 11910

The Philosophre answerd; leve brother,
Everich of you did gentilly to other:
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,
But God forbede for his blisful might,
But if a clerk coude don a gentil dede:
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.

Sire, I relefe thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crore out of the ground,
Ne never er now ne haddest knowen me.
For, sire, I wol not take a peny of thee. 11920
For all my craft, ne nought for my travaile:
Thou haft ypaied wel for my vitaille.
It is ynough, and farewell, have good day.
And toke his hors, and forth he goth his way.

Lordings, this question wold I axen now,
Which was the moste free, as thinketh you?
Now telleth me, or that ye further wende.
I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

THE DOCTOURES PROLOGUE.

Ye, let that paffen, quod our Hofile, as now.
Sire Doctour of Physike, I prey you, 11930
Tell
Tell us a tale of som honest materie:
It shall be don; if that ye wol it here;
Said this doctour, and his tale began anon:
Now, good men, quod he; herkeneth everich on:

THE DOCTOURES TALE:

There was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knight, that cleped was Virginius;
Fulfiled of honour and worthinesse,
And strong of frendes, and of gret richesse:
This knight a daughter hadde by his wif.
No children had he ino in all his lif.
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see:
For nature hath with soveraine diligence
Yformed hire in so gret excellence,
As though she wolde sayn, lo; I nature,
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,
When that me lift; who can me contrefete?
Pigmalion? not, though he ay forge and bete;
Or grave, or peinte: for I dare wel fain;
Apelles, Xeuxis, thulden werche in vain,
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or bete;
If they presumed me to contréfete.
For he that is the former principal,
Hath maked me his vicaire general
To forme and peinten erthly creatures
Right as me lift, and eche thing in my cure is
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe;
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.
I made hire to the worship of my lord;
So do I all min other creatures.
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus semeth me that nature wolde fay.
This maid of age twelf yere-was and tway,
In which that nature hadde swiche delit.
For right as she can peint a lily whit
And red a rose, right with swiche peinture.
She peinted hath this noble creature
Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,
Wheras by right swiche colours shulden be:
And Phebus died hath hire trefles grete,
Like to the stremes of his burned hete.
And if that excellent were hire beautee,
A thousand fold more vertuous was she.
In hire ne lacked no condition,
That is to preife, as by discretion.
As wel in gost as body, chaft was she:
For which she floured in virginitee,
With all humilitiee and abstinenence,
With all attemperance and patience,
THE DOCTOURES TALE.

With mesure eke, of bering and array.
Discrete she was in answering alway,
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sain,
Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,
No contrefeted termes hadde she
To semen wise; but after hire degree
She spake, and all hire wordes more and lesse
Souning in vertue and in gentillesse.
Shamefaft she was in maidens shamefaftness,
Constant in herte, and ever in besinesse.
To drive hire out of idel flogardie:
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maistrie.
For wine and youthe don Venus encrease,
As men in fire wol casten oile and grese.
And of hire owen vertue unconstreined,
She hath hirself ful often fike yeined,
For that she wolde fleen the compagnie,
Wher likely was to treten of folie,
As is at feftes, at revels, and at dances,
That ben occasions of daliances.
Swiche thinges maken children for to be
To sone ripe and bold, as men may see,
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore;
For al to sone may she lernen lore
Of boldnesse, whan she woxen is a wif.
And ye maistresses in your olde lif,

M 3

That
That lordes doughters han in governance,
Ne taketh of my wordes displeasance:
Thinketh that ye ben set in governinges
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges,
Other for ye han kept your honestee,
Or elles for ye han fallen in freetee,
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,
And han forfaken fully swiche meschance
For evermo: therfore for Cristes sake
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne flake.
A theef of venison, that hath forlast
His likerousnesse, and all his olde craft,
Can kepe a forest best of any man:
Now kepeth hem wel, for if ye wol ye can.
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,
Left ye be damned for your wikke entent,
For who so doth, a traytour is certain:
And taketh kepe of that I shal you sain;
Of alle treson soveraine pestilence
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
Though ye han children, be it on or no,
Your is the charge of all hir surveance,
While that they ben under your governance.
Beth ware, that by ensample of your living,
Or by your negligence in chastising,
That
That they ne perish: for I dare wel saye,
If that they don, ye shul it dere abeye.
Under a shepherd soft and negligent,
The wolf hath many a shepe and lamb to-rent.

Sufficeth this enspample now as here,
For I mote turne agen to my materre.

This maid, of which I tell my tale expresse,
She kept hireself, hire neded no maistresse; 12040
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,
As in a booke, every good word and dede,
That londeth to a maiden vertuous:
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame out sprong on every side
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide:
That thurgh the lond they preisfed hire ech one,
That loved vertue, sauf envie alone,
That forie is of other mannes wele,
And glad is of his forwe and his unhele; 12050
The doctour maketh this descriptioun.

This maiden on a day went in the toun
Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,
As is of yonge maidens the manere.

Now was ther than a justice in that toun,
That governour was of that regioun:
And so befell, this juge his eyen cast
Upon this maid, avising hire ful fast.
As she came forth by ther this juge stood:  
Anon his herte changed and his mood,  
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,  
And to himself ful prively he said,  
This maiden shal be min for any man.  
Anon the fend into his herte ran,  
And taught him sodenly, that he by sleight  
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.  
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,  
Him thought he was not able for to spede;  
For she was strong of frendes, and eke she  
Confirmed was in swiche soveraine bountee,  
That wel he wist he might hire never winne,  
As for to make hire with hire body sinne.  
For which with gret deliberatioun  
He sent after a cherl was in the toun,  
The which he knew for solil and for bold.  
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told  
In secree wise, and made him to ensure,  
He shulde tell it to no creature,  
And if he did, he shulde lese his hede.  
And whan assented was this cursed rede,  
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,  
And yaf him yestes precious and dere.  
Whan shapen was all hir conspiracie  
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie
Parformed shulde be ful folily,
As ye shul here it after openly,
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.
This false juge, that highte Appius,
(So was his name, for it is no fable,
But knowen for an historial thing notable;)
The sentence of it soth is out of doute
This false juge goth now faft aboute
To haften his delit all that he may.
And so befell, fone after on a day
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
As he was wont, fat in his consistorie,
And yaf his domes upon fondry cas;
This false cherl came forth a ful gret pas,
And saide; lord, if that it be your will,
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,
In which I plaine upon Virginius.
And if that he wol fayn it is not thus,
I wol it preve, and finden good witnesse,
That soth is that my bille wol expresse.

The juge answered, of this in his absence
I may not yeve diffinitif sentence.
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here;
Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.
Virginius came to wete the juges will,
And right anon was red this curfed bill;
The sentence of it was as ye shul here.

To you, my lord sire Appius fo dere,
Sheweth your poure servant Claudius,
How that a knight called Virginius,
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,
Holdeth, expresse agein the will of me,
My servant, which that is my thral by right,
Which from min hous was stolen on a night
While that she was ful yong, I wol it preve
By witnessfe, lord, so that it you not greve; 12120
She n'is his daughter nought, what so he say.
Wherfore to you, my lord the juge, I pray;
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.

Virginius gan upon the cherl behold;
But haftily, er, he his tale told,
And wold han preved it, as shuld a knight,
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,
That all was fals, that said his adversary,
This cursed juge wolde nothing tary,
Ne here a word more of Virginius,
But yave his jugement, and saide thus.

I deme anon this cherl his servant have.
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hire faye.
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.
The cherl shal have his thral; thus I award.
And whan this worthy knight Virginius,
Thurgh sentence of this justice Appius,
Muste by force his dere daughter yeven
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,

He goth him home, and set him in his hall,
And let anon his dere daughter call;
And with a face ded as athen cold,
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,
With fadres pitee flaking thurgh his herte,
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.

Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,
Ther ben two waies, other deth or shame,
That thou muyst suffre, alas that I was bore!
For never thou desveredest wherfore
To dien with a swerd or with a knif,
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,
Which I have softred up with swiche plesance,
That thou were never out of my remembrance;
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,
And in my lif my laste joye also,
O gemme of chaftitee, in patience
Take thou thy deth, for this is my sentence;
For love and not for hate thou muyst be ded,
My pitous hond muyst smiten of thin hed.

Alas that ever Appius thee say!
Thus hath he falsely juged thee to-day.

And
And told hire all the cas, as ye before
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.
O mercy, dere father, quod this maid.
And with that word she both hire armes laid
About his necke, as she was wont to do,
(The teres braft out, of hire eyen two,)
And said, O goode father, shal I die?
Is ther no grace? is ther no remedie?
No certes, dere daughter min, quod he.
Than yeve me leifer, father min, quod she,
My deth for to complaine a litel space:
For parde Jepte yave his daughter grace
For to complaine, or he hire low, alas!
And God it wot, nothing was hire trespas,
But for she ran hire father first to see,
To welcome him with gret solempniteit.
And with that word she fell aswoune anon,
And after, whan hire swooning was agon,
She riseth up, and to hire father said:
Blessed be God, that I shal die a maid.
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a shame.
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.
And with that word she praised him ful oft,
That with his swerd he wolde smite hire soft;
And with that word, aswoune again she fell.
Hire father, with ful forweful herte and will,
Hire hed of smote, and by the top it hent,
And to the juge he gan it to present,
As he sat yet in dome in consistorie.
And whan the juge it saw, as faith the storie,
He bad to take him, and anhang him fast.
But right anon a thousand peple in thrast
To save the knight, for routh and for pitee,
For knownen was the false iniquitee.
The peple anon had suspect in this thing
By maner of the cherles chalenging,
That it was by the assent of Appius;
They wisten wel that he was lecherous.
For which unto this Appius they gon,
And cafte him in a prifon right anon,
Wheras he flow himself: and Claudius,
That servent was unto this Appius,
Was demed for to hange upon a tre;
But that Virginius of his pitee
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,
And elles certes had he ben begiled:
The remenant were anhanged, more and leffe,
That were consentant of this cursednesse.

Here men may see how sin hath his merite:
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol smite
In no degree, ne in which maner wise
The worme of conscience may agrise
The Pardoner's Tale:

Of wicked life, though it so privée be,
That no man wote therof, sauf God and he:
For be he lewed man or elles lered,
He n'ot how fone that he shal ben afered.
Therfore I rede you this conseil take;
Forfaketh sinne, or sinne you forfake:

The Pardoner's Prologue:

Our Hoste gan to swere as he were wood;
Harow! (quod he) by nailes and by blood,
This was a false cherl, and a false justice.
As shameful deth, as herte can devise,
Come to thise juges and hir advocas.
Algate this sely maide is slain, alas!
Alas! to dere abought she hire beautee.
Wherfore I say, that al day man may see,
That yeftes of fortune and of nature
Ben cause of deth to many a creature.

Hire beautee was hire deth, I dare wel sain;
Alas! so pitously as she was slain.
Of bothe yeftes, that I speke of now,
Men han ful often more for harm than prow:
But treweley, min owen maister dere,
This was a pitous tale for to here:
But natheles, passe over, is no force.
I pray to God so save thy gentil corps,

And
And eke thyn urinals, and thy jordanes,
Thin ypocras, and eke thy galianes,
And every boist ful of thy letuarie,
God blesse him and our lady Seinte Marie.
So mote I the, thou art a propre man,
And like a prelat by Seint Ronian;
Said I not wel? I cannot speke in terme;
But wel I wot, thou doft min herte to erne,
That I have almoist caught a cardiacl:
By corpus domini but I have triacle,
Or elles a draught of moist and corny ale,
Or but I here anon a mery tale,
Myn herte is loft for pitee of this maid.
Thou bel amy, thou pardoner, he said,
Tel us som mirth of japes right anon.
It shal be don, quod he, by Seint Ronion.
But first (quod he) here at this ale-stake
I wol both drinke, and biten on a cake.
But right anon thise gentiles gan to crie;
Nay, let him tell us of no ribaudrie.
Tell us som moral thing, that we mow lere,
Som wit, and thanne wol we gladly here.
I graunte ywis, quod he, but I must thinke
Upon som honest thing, while that I drinke.

THE PARDONERES TALE.

Lording, quod he, in chirche whan I preche,
I peyne me to have an hautein speche,
And ring it out, as round as goth a bell,
For I can all by rote that I tell.
My teme is alway on, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And than my bulles shew I all and some:
Our liege lorde's sele on my patente,
That shew I first my body to warrent;
That no man be so bold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to disturb of Cristes holy werk.
And after that than tell I forth my tales:
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,
Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe;
And in Latin I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron with my predication;
And for to flere men to devotion:
Than shew I forth my longe cristal stones,
Ycrammed ful of cloutes and of bones,
Relikes they ben, as wenen they echon.
Than have I in laton a shulder bone,
Which that was of an holy iewe's shepe.
Good men, say I, take of my wordes kepe:
If that this bone be washe in any well,
If cow, or calf, or shepe, or oxe swell,
That any worm hath ete, or worm yftonge,
Take water of that well, and wash his tonge,
176 THE PARDONERES TALE.

And
And it is hole anon: and furthermore
Of pockes, and of scab, and every sore
Shal every shepe be hole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take kepe of that I tell:
If that the good man, that the bestes oweth,
Wol every weke, er that the cok him croweth,
Fastinge ydrinken of this well a draught;
As thilke holy Jew our eldres taught,
His bestes and his store shal multiplie.
And, fires, also it heleeth jalousie.
For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
Let maken with this water his potage,
And never shal he more his wif mistrift,
Though he the soth of hire defaute wift;
Al had she taken preestes two or three.
Here is a mitaine eke, that ye may see:
He that his hand wol put in this mitaine,
He shal have multiplying of his graine,
When he hath fowen, be it whete or oats,
So that he offer pens or elles grotes.
And, men and women, o thing warne I you:
If any wight be in this chirche now,
That hath don finnie horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it yfhriven be:
Or any woman, be she yong or old,
That hath ymade hire husbond cokewold,
Swiche folk shul han no power ne no grace
To offer to my relikes in this place.  
And who so findeth him out of swiche blame,
He wol come up and offer in Goddes name,  
And I assoyle him by the auctoritee,
Which that by bulle ygranted was to me.

By this gaude have I wonnen yere by yere
An hundred mark, fin I was pardonere.
I fonde like a clerk in my pulpet,
And whan the lewed peple is doun yyet,
I preche so as ye han herd before,
And tell an hundred false japes more.
Than peine I me to strechon forth my necke,
And est and west upon the peple I becke,  
As doth a dove, sitting upon a berne:
Myn hondes and my tonge gon so yerne,
That it is joye to see my besineesse.

Of avarice and of swiche cursednesse
Is all my preching, for to make hem free
To yeve hir pens, and namely unto me.
For min entente is not but for to winne,
And nothing for correction of sinne.
I recke never whan that they be beried,
Though that hir soules gon a blake beried.  

For certes many a predication
Cometh oft time of evil entention;
Som for plesance of folk, and flaterie;
To bën avanced by hypocrisie;
And som for vaine glorie, and som for hate.
For whan I dare non other wayes debate,
Than wol I fling him with my tongue finerte
In preching, so that he shal not afterte
To ben defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespased to my brethren or to me.

For though I telle not his propre name,
Men shal wel knowen that it is the fame
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus quyte I folk, that don us displeasances:
Thus spit I out my venime under hewe
Of holinesse; to feyné holy and trewe:
But shortly min entente I wol devise,
I preche of nothing but for covetise.
Therefore my tename is yet, and ever was,
Radix malorum est cupiditas.

Thus can I preche again the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice:
But though myself be gilty in that sinne,
Yet can I maken other folk to twinne
From avarice, and fore hem to repente.
But that is not my principal entente;
I preche nothing but for covetise.
Of this matere it ought ynough suffise:

Than
THE PARDONERES TALE.

Than tell I hem ensamples many on
Of olde stories lone time agon.
For lewed peple loven tales olde;
Swhiche thinges can they wel report and holde.
What? trowen ye, that whiles I may preche
And winnen gold and silver for I teche,
That I wol live in povertie wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never trewely.
For I wol preche and beg in sondry londes,
I wol not do no labour with min hondes,
Ne make baskettes for to live therby,
Because I wol not beggen idelly.

I wol non of the apostles contrefete:
I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete,
Al were it yeven of the porest page,
Or of the porest widewe in a village:
Al shulde hire children sterven for famine.
Nay, I wol drinke the licour of the vine,
And have a joly wenche in every toun.

But herkeneth, lordings, in conclusioun,
Your liking is that I shal tell a tale.
Now I have dronke a draught of corny ale,
By God I hope I shal you tell a thing,
That shal by refon ben at your liking:
For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you tellen can,

Which
THE PARDONERES TALE. 181

Which I am wont to prechen, for to winne.
Now hold yourpees, my tale I wol beginne.

In Flandres whilom was a compagnie
Of yonge folk, that haunteden folie,
As hasard, riot, ftewes, and tavernes;
Wheras with harpes, lutes, and gitternes,
They dance and plaie at dis bothe day and night,
And ete also, and drinke over hir might;
Thurgh which they don the devil sacrifice
Within the devils temple, in cursfed wife,
By superfluitee abominable.
Hir othes ben so gret and so damnable,
That it is grisly for to here hem swere,
Our blisful lordes body they to-tere;
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ynough;
And eche of hem at others finne lough.

And right anon in comen tombesteres
Fetis and smale, and yonge fruitesteres,
Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
Which ben the veray devils officeres,
To kindle and blow the fire of lecherie,
That is annexed unto glotonie.
The holy writ take I to my witnesse,
That luxurie is in wine and dronkenesse.

N 3   Lo,
Lo, how that dronken Loth unkindely
Lay by his daughters two unwetingly,
So dronke he was he n'isfe what he wrought.

Herodes, who so wel the stories fught,
Whan he of wine replete was at his feste,
Right at his owen table he yave his hefe
To sleen the Baptift John ful gilteles.

Seneca faith a good word douteles:
He faith he can no difference find
Betwix a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whiche that is dronkelewe:
But that woodnesse, yfallen in a shrew,
Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.

O glotonie, full of cursednesse;
O cause first of our confusion,
O original of our damnation,
Til Crist had bought us with his blood again.
Loketh, how dere, shortly for to sain,
Abought was thilke cursed vilanie:
Corrupt was all this world for glotonie.

Adam our father, and his wif also,
Fro Paradis, to labour and to wo,
Were driven for that vice, it is no drede.
For while that Adam fasted, as I rede,
He was in Paradis, and whan that he
Ete of the fruit defended on a tree,
Anon he was out cast to wo and peine.

O glotonie, on thee wel ought us plaine.

O, wist a man how many maladies

Folwen of exceede and of glotonies,

He wolde ben the more mesureable

Of his diete, sitting at his table.

Alas! the shorte throte; the tendre mouth,

Maketh that Eft and West, and North and South,

In erthe, in air, in water, men to-swinke,

To gete a gloton deintee mete and drinke.

Of this materes, O Poule, wel canst thou trete.

Mete unto wombe, and wombe eke unto mete

Shal God destroien bothe, as Paulus faith,

Alas! a foule thing is it by my faith

To say this word, and fouler is the dede,

Whan man so drinketh of the white and rede,

That of his throte he maketh his privee

Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.

The Apostle faith weeping ful pitously,

Ther walken many, of which you told have I,

I say it now weeping with pitous vois,

That they ben enemies of Cristes crois:

Of whiche the end is deth, womb is hir God,

O wombe, O belly, flinking is thy cod,

Fulfilled of dong and of corruption;

At either end of thee soule is the soun,
THE PARDONERES TALE.

How gret labour and cost is thee to find!
Thise cokes how they stamp, and strein, and grind,
And turnen substance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocken they
The mary, for they casten nought away,
That may go thurgh the gullet soft and sote;
Of spicerie, of leef, of barke, and rote,
Shal ben his fause ymaked by delit
To make him yet a newer appetit.

But certes he, that haunteth swiche delices,
Is ded, while that he liveth in tho vices.
A lecherous thing is wine, and dronkenesse
Is ful of striving and of wretchednesse.
O dronken man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breth, foul art thou to embrase;
And thurgh thy dronken nose semeth the soun,
As though thou saidest ay, Sampson, Sampson:
And yet, God wot, Sampson dronk never no wine.
Thou fallest, as it were a stiked swine:
Thy tonge is loft, and all thin honest cure,
For dronkenesse is veray sepulture
Of mannes wit, and his discretion.
In whom that drinke hath domination,
He can no conseil kepe, it is no drede.
Now kepe you fro the white and fro the rede.

And
And namely from the white wine of Lepe,
That is to fell in Fishestrete and in Chepe.
This wine of Spaigne crepeth subtilly
In other wines growing fasting by,
Of which ther riseth swiche fumofitee,
That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
And weneth that he be at home in Chepe,
He is in Spaigne, right at the toun of Lepe,
Not at the Rochell, ne at Burdeaux toun;
And thanne wol he say, Sampfoun, Sampfoun.

But herkeneth, lordings, o word, I you pray,
That all the soveraine actes, dare I say,
Of victories in the Olde Testament,
Thurgh veray God, that is omnipotent,
Were don in abstinence and in prayer:
Loketh the Bible, and ther ye mow it lere.

Loke Attila, the grete conquerour,
Died in his sleepe, with shame and dishonour,
Bleding ay at his nose in dronkeneffe:
A capitaine shulde live in sobreneffe:
And over all this, avisteth you right wel,
What was commanded unto Lamuel;
Not Samuel, but Lamuel say I.
Redeth the Bible, and find it expresly
Of wine yeving to hem that have justice.
No more of this, for it may wel suffice.

And
And now that I have spoke of glotonie,
Now wol I you defenden hafardrie.
Hafard is veray moder of lesinges,
And of deceite, and cursed forfweringes:
Blaspheming of Crist, manslaughter, and waft also
Of catel, and of time; and forthermo
It is repreve, and contrary of honour,
For to ben hold a commun hafardour.
And ever the higher he is of estat,
The more he is holden desolat.
If that a Prince useth hafarderie,
In alle governance and policie
He is, as by commun opinion,
Yhold the lesse in reputation.
Stilbon, that was a wife embassadour,
Was sent to Corinth with ful gret honour
Fro Calidone, to maken hem alliance:
And whan he came, it happed him par chance,
That all the gretest that were of that lond
Yplaying atte hafard he hem fond.
For which, as fone as that it mighte be,
He stale him home agein to his contrec,
And sayde ther, I wol not lefe my name,
Ne wol not take on me fo gret defame,
You for to allie unto non hafardours.
Sendeth fem other wife embassadours,
THE PARDONERES TALE. 187

For by my trouthe, me were lever die,
Than I you shuld to hafardours allie. 12550
For ye, that ben so glorious in honours,
Shal not allie you to non hafardours,
As by my wille, ne as by my tretee.
This wise philosophre thus sayd he.

Loke eke how to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book sayth us,
Sent him a pair of dis of gold in scorne,
For he had used hafard therbeforne:
For which he held his glory and his renoun
At no value or reputatioun. 12560
Lorde may finden other maner play
Honest ynough to drive the day away.

Now wol I speke of othes falsé and grete
A word or two, as olde bookes trete.
Gret fwering is a thing abhominable,
And falsé fwering is yet more reprevable.
The highe God forbad fwering at al,
Witneffe on Mathew: but in special
Of fwering sayth the holy Jeremie,
Thou shalt fwere soth thin othes, and not lie;12570
And fwere in dome, and eke in rightwisnesse;
But idel fwering is a cursednesse.

Behold and see, that in the firste table
Of highe Goddes heftes honourable,
How that the second heft of him is this,
Take not my name in idel or amis.
Lo, rather he forbedeth swiche swering,
Than homicide, or many an other thing.
I say that as by ordre thus it stondeth;
This knoweth he that his heftes understondeth, 1258:
How that the second heft of God is that.
And furtherrmore, I wol thee tell all plat,
That vengeance shal not parten from his hous,
That of his othes is outrageous.
By Goddes precious herte, and by his nailes,
And by the blood of Crist, that is in Hailes,
Seven is my chance, and thin is cink and treye:
By Goddes armes, if thou falsfly pleye,
This dagger shal thurghout thin herte go.
This fruit cometh of the bicchel bones two, 1259:
Forswering, ire, falsenesse, and homicide.
Now for the love of Crist that for us dide,
Leteth your othes, bothe gret and finale.
But, fires, now wol I tell you forth my tale.
Thise riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long erft or prime rong of any bell,
Were set hem in a taverne for to drinke:
And as they fat, they herd a belle clinke
Beforn a corps, was caried to his grave:
That on. of hem gan callen to his knave, 1260:
Go
Go bet, quod he, and axe redily,
What corps is this, that paffeth here forth by:
And loke that thou report his name wel.
Sire, quod this boy, it nedeth never a del;
It was me told or ye came here two houres;
He was parde an old felaw of youres,
And fodenly he was yslain to-night,
Fordronke as he fat on his benche upright,
Ther came a privee theef, men clepen Deth,
That in this contree all the peple fleth,
And with his spere he smote his herte atwo,
And went his way withouten wordes mo.
He hath a thoufand slain this pestilence:
And, maister, or ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were ful necessarie
For to beware of swiche an adverfarie:
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I say no more.
By Seinte Marie, sayd this tavernere,
The child sayth soth, for he hath slain this yere
Hens over a mile, within a gret village,
Both man and woman, child, and hyne, and page;
I trowe his habitation be there:
To ben avifed gret wisdome it were,
Or that he did a man a dishonour.
Ye, Goddes armes, quod this riotour,
THE PARDONERES TALE.

Is it swiche peril with him for to mete?
I shal him seke by stile and eke by strete.
I make a vow by Goddes digne bones.
Herkeneth, felawes, we three ben alle ones: 12630
Let eche of us hold up his hond to other;
And eche of us becomen others brother,
And we wol flen this fals traitour deth:
He shal be slayn, he that so many sleth,
By Goddes dignitee, or it be night.

Togeder han thise three hir trouthes plight
To live and dien eche of hem for other;
As though he were his owen boren brother.
And up they ftert al dronken in this rage,
And forth they gon towardes that village, 12640
Of which the taverner had spoke beforne,
And many a grisly oth than have they sworn,
And Cristes blessed body they to-rent;
Deth shal be ded, if that we may him hent.

Whan they han gon not fully half a mile,
Right as they wold han troden over a stile,
An olde man and a poure with hem mette.
This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
And sayde, thus; Now, lordes, God you see.

The proudest of thise riotoures three 12650
Answerd agen; What? cherl, with sory grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped sawe thy face?
Why livest thou so longe in so grete age?
This olde man gan loke in his vifage,
And sayde thus; For I ne cannot finde
A man, though that I walked into Inde,
Neither in citee, ne in no village,
That wolde change his youthe for min age;
And thersore mote I han min age stille
As longe time as it is Goddes will.
Ne deth, alas! ne will not han my lif.
Thus walke I like a refeteles caitif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate;
I knocke with my staf, erlich and late,
And sayn to hire, Leve mother, let me in.
Lo, how I vanishe, flesh, and blood, and skin:
Alas! whan shul my bones ben at refte?
Mother, with you wold I changen my cheste,
That in my chambre longe time hath be,
Ye, for an heren clout to wrap in me.
But yet to me she wol not don that grace,
For which ful pale and welked is my face.

But, sirues, to you it is no curtesie
To speke unto an olde man vilanie,
But he trespase in word or elles in dede.
In holy writ ye moun yourselven rede;
Ageins an olde man, hore upon his hede,
Ye shuld arise: thersore I yeve you rede,
Ne doth unto an olde man non harm now;
No more than that ye wold a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, wher ye go or ride;
I mooste go thider as I have to go.
Nay, olde cherl, by God thou shalt not fo;
Sayde this other hasardour anon;
Thou partest not so lightly by Seint John.
Thou spake right now of thilke traitour deth;
That in this contree all our frendes sleth;
Have here my trouth as thou art his espie;
Tell wher he is, or thou shalt it abié;
By God and by the holy Sacrement;
For sothly thou art on of his assent
To slen us yonge folk, thou false thefe.
Now, fires, quod he, if it be you so lefe
To finden deth, tourne up this croked way;
For in that grove I left him by my fay
Under a tree, and ther he wol abide;
Ne for your boft he wol him nothing hide.
Se ye that oke? right ther ye shuln him find.
God fave you, that bought agen mankind,
And you amende; thus sayd this olde man.
And everich of thise riotoure ran,
Til they came to the tree, and ther they found
Of Floreins fine of gold yeoined round.
Wel nigh an eighte bushels, as hem thought.
No lenger as than after deth they fought,
But eche of hem so glad was of the fight,
For that the floreins ben so faire and bright,
That doun they sette hem by the precious hord.
The worsfe of hem he spake the firste word. 12710

Brethren, quod he, take kepe what I shal say;
My wit is gret, though that I bourde and play.
This tresour hath fortune unto us yeven
In mirth and jolitee our lif to liven,
And lightely as it cometh, so wol we spend.
Ey, Goddes precious digniteit, who wend
To-day, that we shuld han so faire a grace?
But might this gold be caried fro this place
Home to myn hous, or elles unto youres,
(For wel I wote that all this gold is oures) 12720
Thanne were we in high felicitee.
But treweley by day it may not be;
Men wolden say that we were theeves stong,
And for our owen tresour don us hong.
This tresour must ycaried be by night
As wiscly and as sleighly as it might,
Wherfore I rede, that cut among us alle
We drawe, and let see wher the cut wol falle:
And he that hath the cut, with herte blith,
Shal rennen to the toun, and that ful fwith, 12730
And bring us bred and win ful prively:
And two of us shal kepen subtilly
This tresour wel: and if he wol not tarien.
When it is night we wol this tresour carien.
By on assent wher as us thinketh best.

That on of hem the cut brought in his fett,
And bad hem drawe and loke wher it wold falle.
And it fell on the yongest of hem alle:
And forth toward the toun he went anon.
And al so fone as that he was agon,

That on of hem spake thus unto that other;
Thou wotest wel thou art my sworen brother,
Thy profite wol I tell thee right anon.
Thou woft wel that our felaw is agon,
And here is gold and that ful grete plentee,
That shal departed ben among us three.
But natheles if I can shape it so,
That it departed were among us two,
Had I not don a frendes turn to thee?

That other anfwerd I n'ot how that may be:
He wote wel that the gold is with us tweye.
What shuln we don what shuln we to him seye?
Shal it be conseil sayd the firfte shrewe?
And I shal tellen thee in wordes fewe
What we shul don and bring it wel aboute.
Lgrante quod that other out of doute
That by my trouth I wol thee not bewreie.

Now, quod the first, thou woost wel we ben tweie;
And tweie of us shul strenger be than on.
Loke, whan that he is set, thou right anon
Arise, as though thou woldest with him play;
And I shal rive him thurgh the fides tway,
While that thou styroglest with him as in game;
And with thy dagger loke thou do the same;
And than shal all this gold departed be;
My dere frend, betwixen thee and me:
Than moun we bothe our lustes al fulfille;
And play at dis right at our owen willé;
And thus accorded ben thise shrewes tweye,
To flen thie thridde, as ye han herd me seye.

This yongest, which that wente to the toun,
Ful oft in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thise floreins newe and bright;
O Lord, quod he, if so were that I might
Have all this trésour to myself alone,
Ther n'is no man that liveth under the trone
Of God, that shulde live so mery as I;
And at the laft the fend our enemy
Putte in his thought, that he shuld poison bye;
With which he mighte flen his felaws tweye.
For why, the fend fond him in swiche living,
That he had leve to forwe him to bring.
THE PARDONERES TALE.

For this was outrely his ful entente
To flen hem both, and never to repente.
And forth he goth, no longer wold he tary,
Into the toun unto a Potecary,
And praised him that he him wolde sell
Som poison, that he might his ratouns quell.
And eke ther was a polkat in his hawe,
That, as he sayd, his capons had yslawe:
And sayd he wolde him wreken, if he might,
Of vermine, that destroied hem by night.

The Potecary answerd, Thou shalt have
A thing, as wifly God my soule sawe,
In all this world ther n'is no creature,
That ete or dronke hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance of a corne of whete,
That he ne shal his lif anon forlete;
Ye, s Sterve he shal, and that in leffe while,
Than thou wolt gon a pas not but a mile:
This poison is so strong and violent.

This cursed man hath in his hond yhent
This poison in a box, and swithe he ran
Into the nexte strete unto a man,
And borwed of him large botelles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke,
For all the night he shope him for to swinke.
In carrying of the gold out of that place.

And whan this riotour with fory grace
Hath filled with win his grete botelles three,
To his felawes agen repaireth he.

What nedeth it therof to fermon more?
For right as they had cast his deth before,
Right so they han him flain, and that anon.
And whan that this was don, thus spake that on;
Now let us fit and drinke, and make us mery,
And afterward we wiln his body bery.
And with that word it happed him *par cas*,
To take the botelle, ther the poison was,
And dronke, and yave his felaw drinke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.

But certes I suppose that Avicenne
Wrote never in no canon, ne in no fenne,
Mo wonder signes of empoisoning,
Than had thise wretches two or hir ending.
Thus ended ben thise homicides two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.

*O cursednesse of alle cursednesse!*

*O traitours homicide! O wickednesse!*

*O glotonie, luxurie, and hafardrie!*

Thou blasphemour of Crist with vilanie,
And othes grete, of usage and of pride!
*Alas! mankind, how may it betide,*

*O 3*
That to thy Creautour, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious herte-blood thee bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind, alas!

Now, good men, God foryeve you your trespas;
And ware you fro the sinne of avarice.
Min holy pardon may you all warice,
So that ye offre nobles or starlings,
Or elles silver broches, spones, ringes.
Boweth your hed under this holy Bulle.
Cometh up, ye wives, and offreth of your wolle;
Your names I entre here in my roll anon;
Into the blisse of heven shul ye gon;
I you assole by min high powere,
You that wiln offre, as clene and eke as clere
As ye were borne. Lo, fires, thus I preche;
And Jefu Crist, that is our soules leche,
So graunte you his pardon to receive;
For that is best, I wol you not deceive.

But, fires, o word forgate I in my tale;
I have relikes and pardon in my male,
As faire as any man in Englelond,
Which were me yeven by the Popes hond,
If any of you wol of devotion
Offren, and han min absolution,
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth here adoun,
And mekely receiveth my pardoun.
THE PARDONERES TALE.

Or elles taketh pardon, as ye wende,
Al newe and freshe at every tounes ende,
So that ye offren alway newe and newe,
Nobles or pens, which that ben good and trewe.
It is an honour to everich that is here,
That ye moun have a suffisant pardonere
To assoilen you in contree as ye ride,
For aventures, which that moun betide.
Paraventure ther may falle on, or two,
Doun of his hors, and breke his necke atwo.
Loke, which a seurte is it to you alle,
That I am in your felawship yfalle,
That may assoile you bothe more and lasse,
Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe,
I rede that our hoste shal beginne,
For he is most enveloped in sinne,
Come forth, sire hoste, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the relikes everich on,
Ye for a grote; unbokel anon thy purse.

Nay nay, quod he, than have I Cristes curse.
Let be, quod he, it shal not be, so the ich.
Thou woldest make me kisse thin olde brech,
And swere it were a relike of a seint,
Though it were with thy foundement depeint.
But by the crois, which that Seint Heleine fond,
I wolde I had thin coilons in min hond.
Infede of relikes, or of seintuarie.
Let cut hem of, I wol thee help hem carie;
They shul be shrined in an hogges tord.
This Pardoner answered not a word;
So wroth he was, no word ne wolde he say.
Now, quod our hosfe, I wol no lenger play
With thee, ne with non other angry man.
But right anon the worthy knight began,
(Whan that he saw that all the peple lough)
No more of this, for it is right ynough.
Sire Pardoner, be mery and glad of chere;
And ye, sire hosfe, that ben to me so dere,
I pray you that ye kiffe the Pardoner;
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,
And as we diden, let us laugh and play.
Anon they kisse, and ridden forth hir way.

THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

OUR hosfe upon his stirrops sfole anon,
And saide; Good men, herkeneth everich on,
This was a thristye tale for the nones.
Sire parish preest, quod he, for Goddes bones,
Tell us a tale, as was thy forward yore;
I see wel that ye leerned men in lore
Can mochel good, by Goddes dignitee.
The Perfon him answerd, Benedicite!

What
THE SHIPMANNES PROLOGUE.

What eileth the man, so sinfully to swere?
Our hoste answerd, O Jankin, be ye there?
Now, good men, quod our hoste, herkneth to me.
I smell a loller in the wind, quod he.
Abideth for Goddes digne passion,
For we shul han a predicacion:
This loller here wol prechen us somwhat.
Nay by my fathers soule, that shal he nat,
Sayde the Shipman, here shal he nat preche,
He shal no gospel glosen here ne teche. 12920
We leven all in the gret God, quod he.
He wolde sowen som difficultee,
Or springen cockle in our clene corne.
And therfore, hoste, I warne thee before,
My joly body shal a tale telle,
And I shal clinken you so mery a belle,
That I shal waken all this compagnie:
But it shal not ben of philosophie,
Ne of phylike, ne termes queinte of lawe;
Ther is but litel Latin in my mawe, 12930

THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

A Marchant whilom dwelled at Seint Denise,
That riche was, for which men held him wise.
A wif he had of excellent beautee,
And compaignable, and revelous was she,

Which
Which is a thing that causeth more dispence,
Than worth is all the chere and reverence,
That men hem don at festes and at dances.
Swiche falutations and contenances
Passen, as doth a shadwe upon the wall:
But wo is him that payen mote for all.
The fely husband algate he mote pay,
He mote us clothe and he mote us array
All for his owen worship richely;
In which array we dancen jolily,
And if that he may, not paraventure,
Or elles lust not swiche dispence endure,
But thinketh it is wasted and yloft,
Than mote another payen for our cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.

This noble Marchant held a worthy hous,
For which he had all day so gret repaire
For his largeste, and for his wif was faire,
That wonder is: but herkeneth to my tale.

Amonges all thiste gestes gret and smale,
Ther was a Monk, a faire man and a bold,
I trow a thritty winter he was old,
That ever in on was drawing to that place.
This yonge Monk, that was so faire of face,
Acquainted was so with this goode man,
Sithen that his firste knowleage began.
That in his hous as familier was he,
As it possible is any frend to be.
And for as mochel as this goode man
And eke this Monk, of which that I began,
Were bothe two yborne in o village,
The Monk him claimeth, as for cofinage,
And he again him sayd not ones nay,
But was as glad therof, as foule of day;
For to his herte it was a gret plesance.
Thus ben they knit with eterne alliance,
And eche of hem gan other for to ensure
Of brotherhed, while that hit lif may dure.
Free was Dan John, and namely of dispence
As in that hous, and ful of diligence
To don plesance, and also gret costage:
He not forgate to yeve the lefte page
In all that hous; but, after his degree,
He yave the lord, and fithen his meinee,
Whan that he caine, som maner honest thing;
For which they were as glad of his coming
As foule is sayn, whan that the sonne up riseth.
No more of this as now, for it suffiseth.
But so befell, this Marchant on a day
Shope him to maken redy his array
Toward the town of Brugges for to fare,
To byen ther a portion of ware:

For
For which he hath to Paris sent anon
A messenger, and praised hath Dan John
That he should come to Seint Denis, and pleye
With him, and with his wife, a day or two, 1299
Or he to Bruges went, in alle wise.

This noble Monk, of which I you devise,
Hath of his Abbot, as him list, licence,
(Because he was a man of high prudence,
And eke an officer out for to ride,
To seen his granges, and his bernees wide) And unto Seint Denis he cometh anon.

Who was so welcome as my lord Dan John,
Our dere cousin, ful of cortesse?
With him he brought a jubbe of Malvace, 1300
And eke another ful of fine Vernage,
And volatile, as ay was his ufage:
And thus I let hem ete, and drinke, and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or twoye.

The thridde day this marchant up ariseth,
And on his nedes sadly him aviseth;
And up into his countour hous goth he,
To reken with himeleven, wel may be,
Of thilke yere, how that it with him stood,
And how that he dispended had his good, 1301
And if that he encresed were or non.
His bookes and his bagges many on
The Layth befor him on his counting bord.
Ful riche was his tresour and his hord;
For which ful fast his countour dore he shet;
And eke he n'olde no man shuld him let
Of his accountes, for the mene time:
And thus he sit, til it was passed prime.

Dan John was risen in the morwe afo,
And in the gardin walketh to and fro,
And hath his thinges sayd ful curteisfly.

This goode wif came walking privelly
Into the gardin, ther he walketh sof,
And him salueth, as she hath don oft:
A maiden child came in hire compaignie,
Which as hire luft she may governe and gie,
For yet under the yerde was the maide.

O dere cosin min Dan John, she saide,
What aileth you so rathe for to arise?
Nece, quod he, it ought ynough suffise

Five houres for to slepe upon a night:
But it were for an olde appalled wight,
As ben thife wedded men, that lie and dare,
As in a fourme fitteth a wery hare,
Were al forstraught with houndes gret and smale.
But, dere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certes, that our goode man
Hath you laboured, sith this night began,

That
That you were nede to reften haftily.
And with that word he lough ful merily; 13046
And of his owen thought he wexe all red.
This faire wif gan for to shake hire hed;
And saied thus; Ye, God wote all, quod she.
Nay, cousin min, it stant not so with me.
For by that God, that yave me soule and lif;
In all the reame of Fraunce is ther no wif;
That laffe luft hath to that forby play:
For I may singe alas and wala wa
That I was borne, but to no wight (quod she)
Dare I not tell how that it stant with me. 13056
Wherfore I thinke out of this lond to wende,
Or elles of myself to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eke of care.

This monk began upon this wif to stare,
And sayd, Alas! my nece, God forbede,
That ye for any forwe, or any drede,
Fordo yourself: but telleth me your grefe,
Paraventure I may in your mischefe
Conseile or helpe: and thersore telleth me
All your annoy, for it shal ben secree. 13066
For on my Portos here I make an oth,
That never in my lif, for lefe ne loth,
Ne shal I of no conseil you bewray.
The same agen to you, quod she, I say.

By
By God and by this Portos I you sware,
Though men me wolden all in peces terre,
Ne shal I never, for to gon to helle,
Bewrey o word of thing that ye me tell,
Nought for no cosinage; ne alliance,
But veraily for love and affiance.
Thus ben they sworne, and hereupon they kifte,
And eche of hem told other what hem liftte.

Cofin, quod the, if that I had a space,
As I have non, and namely in this place,
Than wold I tell a legend of my lif,
What I have suffred fith I was a wif,
With min husbond, al be he your cofin.

Nay, quod this monk, by God and Seint Martin,
He n'is no more cosin unto me,
Than is the leef that hangeth on the tree:
I clepe him so by Seint Denis of France
To han the more cause of acquaintance
Of you, which I have loved specially.

Aboven alle women sikerly,
This sware I you on my professioun:
Telleth your grefe, lef that he come adoun,
And hafteth you, and goth away anon.

My dere love, quod the, o my Dan John,
Ful lefe were me this confcil for to hide,
But out it mote, I may no lenger abide.
Myn husband is to me the werfte man,
That ever was fith that the world began:
But fith I am a wif, it fit not me
To telle no wight of our privetee;
Neither in bed, ne in non other place;
God shilde I shulde it telle for his grace;
A wif ne shal not fayn of hire hufbond
But all honour, as I can understand;
Save unto you thus moch I telle thal:
As helpe me God, he is nought worth at all, in no degree, the value of a flie.
But yet me greveth moft his nigardie:
And wel ye wot, that women naturally
Desiren thinges fixe, as wel as I.
They wolden that hir husbondes shulden be,
Hardy, and wife, and riche, and therto free;
And buxome to his wif, and frefh a-bedde.
But by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
For his honour myfelven for to array,
A funday next I mufte nedes pay
An hundred franks, or elles am I lorne.
Yet were me lever that I were unborne,
Than me were don a sclandre or vilanie.
And if min husbond eke might it espie,
I n'ere but loft; and therfore I you prey
Lene me this summe, or elles mote I dey.

Dan
Dan John, I say, lene me this hundred frankes;  
Parde I wol not faille you my thankes,  
If that you lift to do that I you pray.  
For at a certain day I wol you pay,  
And do to you what plesance and service  
That I may don, right as you lift devise:  
And but I do, God take on me vengeance,  
As foul as ever had Genelon of France.  
This gentil monk answerd in this manere;  
Now trewely, min owen lady dere,  
I have (quod he) on you so grete a routhe,  
That I you swere, and plighte you my trouthe,  
That whan your husbond is to Flandres fare,  
I wol deliver you out of this care,  
For I wol bringen you an hundred frankes.  
And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,  
And hire embraced hard, and kifte hire oft,  
Goth now your way, quod he, al stille and soft,  
And let us dine as fone as that ye may,  
For by my kalender it is prime of day:  
Goth now, and beth as trewe as I shal be.  
Now elles God forbede, fire, quod she;  
And forth she goth, as joly as a pie,  
And bad the cokes that they shuld hem hie,  
So that men mighten dine, and that anon.  
Up to hire husbond is this wif ygon,
And knocketh at his countour boldely.  

*Quis est la?* quod he.  
Peter, it am I,  
Quod sii. What, fire, how longe wol ye saft?  
How longe time wol ye reken and cast  
Your summes, and your bookes, and your thinges?  
The devil have part of all swiche rekeninges.  
Ye han ynough parde of Goddes sone.  
Come doun to-day, and let your bagges stonde.  
Ne be ye not ashamed, that Dan John.  
Shal fasting all this day elenge gon?  
What? let us here a masse, and go we dine.  
Wif, quod this man, litel canst thou divine.  
The curious besinesse, that we have:  
For of us chapmen, all to God me fay,  
And by that lord that cleped is Seint Iue,  
Scarly amonges twenty, ten shul thrive  
Continuclly, lafting unto oure age.  
We moun wel maken chere and good visage,  
And driven fort he world as it may be,  
And kepem oure estat in privitee,  
Til we be ded, or elles that we play  
A pilgrimage, or gon out of the way,  
And therfore have I gret necessitee  
Upon this quente world to avisen me.  
For evermore mote we stond in drede  
Of hap and fortune in our chapmanhede.
To Flandres wol I go to-morwe at day,
And come agein as fone as ever I may:
For which, my dere wif, I thee befeke
As be to every wight buxom, and meke,
And for to kepe our good be curious,
And honestly governe wel our hous:
Thou haft ynough, in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty houshold may suffice:
Thee lacketh non array, ne no vitaille;
Of silver in thy purse shalt thou not faille.
And with that word his countour dore he fhette,
And doun he goth; no lenger wold he lette;
And haftily a maffe was ther faide;
And spedily the tables were ylaide,
And to the diner fffe they hem spedde;
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.

And after diner Dan John sobrely
This chapman toke apart, and privel
He faid him thus: Cofin, it ftondeth fo,
That, wel I fee, to Brugges ye wol go,
God and Seint Auffin sped ye and gide:
I pray you, cofin, wisely that ye ride;
Governeth you also of your diete
Attemprely, and namely in this hetre.
Betwix us two nedeth no strange fare;
Farewel, cofin, God shilde you fro care.
If any thing ther be by day or night,
If it lie in my power and my might,
That ye me wol command in any wife,
It shal be don, right as ye wol devise.

But o thing or ye go, if it may be,
I wolde prayen you for to lene me
An hundred frankes for a weke or tweye,
For certain bestes that I muste beye,
To floren with a place that is oures:
(God helpe me so, I wold that it were yourse)
I shal not faille surely of my day,
Not for a thousand frankes, a mile way.

But let this thing be secre, I you preye;
For yet to-night thise bestes mote I beye.
And fare now wel, min own cosin dere,
Grand mercy of your cost and of your chere.

This noble marchant gentilly anon
Answerd and said, O cosin min Dan John,
Now sikerly this is a sinal request:
My gold is yourse, whan that it you lefte,
And not only my gold, but my chaffare:
Take what you lefte, God shilde that ye spare.
But o thing is, ye know it wel ynough
Of chapmen, that hir money is hir plough.
We moun creancen while we han a name,
But goodles for to ben it is no game. 
Pay it agen, whan it lith in your efe;
After my might ful sayn wold I you plese.
Thise hundred frankes fet he forth anon,
And prively he toke hem to Dan John:
No wight in al this world wif of this lone,
Saving this marchant, and Dan John alone.
They drinke, and speke, and ryme a while and pleye,
Til that Dan John rideth to his abbeye.

The morwe came, and forth this marchant rideth
To Flandres ward, his prentis wel him gideth,
Til he came in to Brugges merily.

Now goth this marchant feste and besily
About his nede, and bieth, and creanceth;
He neither playeth at the dis, ne dancest;
But as a marchant, shortly for to tell,
He ledeth his lif, and ther I let him dwell.

The sonday next the marchant was agon,
To Seint Denis ycomen is Dan John,
With crowne and berde all fresh and newe yshave,
In all the hous ther n'as so litel a knaye,
Ne no wight elles, that he n'as ful fain,
For that my lord Dan John was come again,
And shortly to the point right for to gon,
This faire wif accordeth with Dan John,
That for thise hundred frankes he shuld all night
Haven hire in his ames bolt upright:

And
And this accord performed was in dede.
In mirth all night a bely lif they lede
Til it was day, that Dan John yede his way,
And bad the meinie farewel, have good day. 13259
For non of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
Hath of Dan John right non suspicioun;
And forth he rideth home to his abbey,
Or wher him lifte, no more of him I ley.
This marchant, whan that ended was the faire,
To Seint Denis he gan for to repaire,
And with his wif he maketh feste and chere,
And telleth hire that chaffare is to dere,
That nedes muste he make a chevilsance,
For he was bonde in a recognisance,
To payen twenty thousand sheldes anon.
For which this marchant is to Paris gon
To borwe of certain frendes that he hadde
A certain frankes, and som with him he ladde,
And whan that he was come in to the toun,
For gret chiertee and gret affectioun
Unto Dan John he goth him first to pleye;
Not for to axe or borwe of him moneye,
But for to wete and seen of his welfare,
And for to tellen him of his chaffare,
As frendes don, whan they ben mette in fere.
Dan John him maketh feste and mery chere; 13270

And
THE SHIPMANNES TALE. 315

And he him tolde agen ful specially,
How he had wel ybought and graciously
(Thanked be God) all hole his marchandise:
Save that he must in alle manere wise
Maken a chevifance, as for his beste:
And than he shulde ben in joye and reste.
Dan Jolin anfwered, Certes I am fain,
That ye in hele be comen home again:
And if that I were riche, as have I bliffe,
Of twenty thousand sheildes shuld ye not mise,
For ye to kindely this other day
Lente me gold, and as I can and may
I thanke you, by God and by Seint Jame.
But natheles I toke unto our Dame,
Your wif at home, the same gold again
Upon your benche, she wote it wel certein,
By certain tokenes that I can hire tell.
Now by your leve, I may no lenger dwell;
Our abbot wol ouf of this toune anon,
And in his compagnie I muste gon.
Grete wel our dame, min owen nece swete,
And farewell, dere colin, til we mete,
This marchant which that was ful ware and wife,
Creanced hath, and paide eke in Paris
To certain Lumbardes redy in hir hond
The summe of gold, and gate of hem his bond.
And home he goth, mery as a popingay.
For wel he knew he stood in swiche array,
That nedes musste he winne in that viage
A thousand frankes, above all his cottage.
His wif ful redy mette him at the gate,
As she was wont of old usage algate:
And all that night in mirthe they ben sette,
For he was riche, and clerely out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan enbracce
His wif all newe, and kistf hire in hire face,
And up he goth, and maketh it ful tough.
No more, quod she, by God ye have ynough:
And wantonly agen with him she plaide,
Til at the laff this marchant to hire safide.
By God, quod he, I am a litel wrothe
With you, my wif, although it be me lothe:
And wote ye why? by God, as that I geffe,
That ye han made a manere strangenesse
Betwixen me and my cosin Dan John.
Ye shulde have warned me, or I had gon,
That he you had an hundred frankes paide
By redy token: and held him evil apaide,
For that I to him speake of chevisance:
(Me femed so as by his contentance)
But nathelesse by God our heven king,
I thoughte not to axe of him no thing.

I pray
I pray thee, wif, ne do thou no more so.
Tell me alway, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in min absence.
Ypaide thee, left thurgh thy negligence
I might him axe a thing that he hath paide.
This wif was not afcrde ne affraide,
But boldly she faide, and that anon;
Mary I defie that false monk Dan John,
I kepe not of his tokens never a del:
He toke me certain gold, I wote it wel.
What? evil thedome on his monkes snoute:
For, God it wote, I wend withouten doute,
That he had yeve it me, because of you,
To don therwith min honour and my prow,
For cofinage, and eke for belle chere,
That he hath had ful often times here.
But sift I see I fonde in wiche disjoint,
I wol anfwere you shortly to the point.
Ye have mo flakke dettours than am I:
For I wol pay you wel and redily
Fro day to day, and if so be I faille,
I am your wif, score it upon my taile,
And I shal pay as fone as ever I may.
For by my trouth, I have on min array,
And not in wafte, bestowed it every del.
And for I have bestowed it so wel

The Shipmannes Tale.
THE SHIPMANNES TALE.

For your honour, for Goddes sake I say,
As beth not wroth, but let us laugh and play,
Ye shal my joly body han to wedde;
By God I n'ill not pay you but a bedde:
Foryeye it me, min owen spouse dere;
Turne hitherward and make th better chere.

This merchant saw ther was no remedy:
And for to chide, it n'ere but a joly,
Sith that the thing may not amended be.
Now, wif, he said, and I foryeye it thee; 1336
But by thy lif he be no more to large;
Kepe bet my good, this yeve I thee in charge,
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende.
Taling ynough, unto our lives ende.

THE PRIIORESSSES PROLOGUE.

Wel said by corpus Domini, quod our Hoffe,
Now longe mote thou fallen by the coste,
Thou gentil Maister, gentil Marinere.
God give the monke a thousand last quad yere,
A ha, felawes, beth ware of swiche a jape.
The monke put in the mannes hole an ape, 13379
And in his wifes eke, by Seint Austin.
Draweth no monkes more into your in.
But now passe over, and let us seke aboute,
Who shal now tellen first of all this route
Another tale: and with that word he said,
As curteisly as it had ben a maid,
My lady Prioresse, by your leve,
So that I wist I shuld you not agreve,
I wolde demen, that ye tellen shold
A tale next, if so were that ye wold.

Now wol ye voucheauf, my lady dere?
Gladly, quod she, and saide as ye shul here,

THE PRIORESSES TALE.

O Lord our lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ye sprad! (quod she)
For not al only thy laude precious
Parfourmed is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourmed is, for on the brest fouking
Somtime shewen they thin herying.

Wherfore in laude, as I can best and may, Of thee and of the white lily flour,
Which that thee bare, and is a maide alway,
To tell a storie I wol do my labour;
Not that I may encrefen hire honour,
THE PRIORSESSE TALE.

For the hire selven is honour and rote
Of bountee, next hire sone, and soules bote.

O mother maide, o maide and mother fre,
O bushe unbrent, brenning in Moyses sight,
That ravishe deft doun fro the deitee,
Thurgh thin humblesse, the goft that in thee alight:
Of whos vertue, whan he thin herte light,
Conceived was the fathers sapience:
Helpe me to tel it in thy reverence.

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertue and thy gret humilitie,
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science:
For somtyme, lady, or men pray to thee,
Thou goft befor of thy benignitee,
And geteft us the light of thy prayere,
To giden us unto thy sone so dere.

My conning is so weke, o blisful quene,
For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I ne may the weighte not sustene;
But as a child of twelf moneth old or lesse,
That can unnethes any word expresse,
Right so fare I, and thersore I you pray,
Gideth my sone, that I shal of you say.
THE PRIORESSES TALE.

There was in Asia, in a great city,
Among the Christian folk a Jewerie,
Sustained by a lord of that country,
For foulure, and lucre of villainy,
Hateful to Christ, and to his compagnie:
And through the streets men might ride and wend,
For it was free, and open at either end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
Children an hepe comen of Christian blood,
That learned in that school yere by yere,
Swiche manere doctrine as men used there:
This is to say, toingen and to rede,
As feminine children don in her childhood.

Among these children was a widewes one,
A little clergion, sevene yere of age,
That day by day to school was his wone,
And eke also, wheras he fey the image
Of Christian mother, had he in usage,
As him was taught, to kneel adown, and say
Ave Maria, as he goth by the way.

Thus
Thus hath this widewe hire litel sone ytaught
Our blisful Lady, Cristes moder dere.
To worship ay, and he forgate it naught:
For fely childe wol alway sone lere:
But ay, whan I remembre on this matere;
Seint Nicholas stant ever in my presence;
For he so yong to Crist did reverence:

This litel childe his litel book lerning,
As he sate in the scole at his primere,
He Alma redemptoris herde sing,
As children lered his antiphonere:
And as he dorst, he drow him nere and nere,
And herkened ay, the wordes and the note,
Til he the firste vers coude al by rote:

Nought wist he what this Latin was to say,
For he so yonge and tendre was of age;
But on a day his felaw gan he pray
To expounden him this song in his langage;
Or telle him why this song was in usage:
This prayde he him to construe and declare,
Ful often time upon his knees bare:

His felaw, which that elder was than he,
Answerd him thus: This song, I have herd say,
Was maked of our blisful Lady fre,
Hire to saue, and eke hire for to prey,
To ben our help, and socour whan we dey,
I can no more expound in this materie:
I lerne song, I can but smal grammere.

And is this song maked in reverence
Of Cristes moder: said this innocent;
Now certes I wol don my diligence
To conne it all, or Cristemasse be went,
Though that I for my primer shal be shent,
And shal be beten thries in an houre,
Wol it conne, our Ladie for to honoure.

His felaw taught him homeward privelie
Fro day to day, til he coude it by rote,
And than he song it wel and boldely
Fro word to word according with the note:
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
To scoleward and homeward whan he wente:
On Cristes moder set was his entente.

As I have saied, thurghout the Jewerie
This litel child as he came to and fro,
Ful merily than wold he sing and crie,
O Alma redemptoris, ever mo:
The sweteneffe hath his herte persed fo.
THE PRIORESSES TALE.

Of Cristes moder, that to hire to pray
He cannot stint of singing by the way.

Our firste fo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jewes herte his waspes neff,
Up swale and said, O Ebraike peple, alas! 13490
Is this to you a thing that is honest,
That swiche a boy shal walken as him lefte
In your despit, and sing of swiche sentence,
Which is again our lawes reverence?

From thennesforth the Jewes han conspired
This innocent out of this world to chace:
An homicide therto han they hired,
That in an aleye had a privee place,
And as the child gan forthby for to pace,
This cursed Jew him hent, and held him fast,
And cut his throte, and in a pit him cast. 13501

I say that in a wardrope they him threwe,
Wher as thise Jewes purgen hir entraille.
O cursed folk, of Herodes alle newe,
What may your evil entente you availle?
Mordre wol out, certein it wol not faille,
And namely ther the honour of God shal sprede:
The blood out crieth on your cursed dede.

O martyr
THE PRIOresses TALE.

O martyr fouded in virginitie,
Now maist thou singe, and folwen ever in on
The white lamb celestial, quod she,
Of which the gret Evangelist Seint John
In Pathmos wrote, which sayth that they that gon
Beforn this lamb, and singe a song al newe,
That never fleshly woman they ne knewe.

This poure widewe awaiteth al that night
After hire litel childe, and he came nought:
For which as fone as it was dayes light,
With face pale of drede and befy thought,
She hath at scole and elles wher him sught,
Til finally she gan fo fer aspie,
That he laft seen was in the Jewerie.

With modres pitee in hire breft enclosed
She goth, as she were half out of hire minde,
To every place, wher she hath supposed
By likelihed hire litel child to finde:
And ever on Cristes moder meke and kinde
She cried, and at the lafte thus she wrought,
Among the cursfed Jewes she him sought.

She freyneth, and she praith pitusly
To every Jew that dwelled in thilke place,
To telle hire, if hire child went ought forth by:
They sayden, Nay; but Jefu of his grace
Yawe in hire thought, within a litel space,
That in that place after hire fone she criye,
Ther he was caffen in a pit beside.

O grete God, that parformest thy laude
By mouth of innocentes, lo here thy might!
This gemme of chaftitee, this emeraude,
And eke of martirdome the rubie bright,
Ther he with throte ycorven lay upright,
He Alma redemptoris gan to finge
So loude, that all the place gan to ringe.

The Cristen folk, that thurgh the strete wente,
In comen, for to wondre upon this thing:
And hastifly they for the provost fente.
He came anon withouten taryng,
And herieth Crist, that is of heven king,
And eke his moder, honour of mankind,
And after that the Jewes let he binde.

This child with pitous lamentation
Was taken up, singynge his song alway:
And with honour and gret proceccion,
They carien him unto the next abbey.
His moder swooning by the bere lay;
Unnethes might the peple that was there
This newe Rachel bringen fro his bere.

With torment, and with shameful deth eche on
This provost doth thise Jewes for to spere,
That of this morder wifte, and that anon; 1356
He n'olde no swiche cursednesse observe:
Evil shal he have, that evil wol deserve.
Therefore with wilde hors he did hem drawe,
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his bere ay lith this innocent
Beforn the auter while the maffe laft:
And after that, the abbot with his covent
Han spedde hem for to berie him ful fast:
And whan they holy water on him caft,
Yet spake this child, whan fpreint wasthe holy water,
And sang, o alma redemptoris mater. 1357

This abbot, which that was an holy man,
As monkes ben, or elles ought to be,
This yonge child to conjure he began,
And said; O dere child, I halfe thee
In vertue of the holy Trinitee,
Tell me what is thy cause for to sing,
Sith that thy throte is cut to my seming.
THE PRIORESSES TALE.

My throte is cut unto my nekke bon,
Saide this child, and as by way of kinde
I shuld have deyd, ye longe time agon:
But Jesu Crist, as ye in bookes finde,
Wol that his glory laft and be in minde,
And for the worship of his moder dere,
Yet may I sing \( o \) alma loude and clere.

This welle of mercie, Cristes moder swete,
I loved alway, as after my conning:
And whan that I my lif shulde forlete,
To me she came, and bad me for to fing
This antem veraily in my dying,
As ye han herde, and, whan that I had songe,
Me thought she laid a grain upon my tonge.

Wherfore I fing, and fing I mote certain
In honour of that blisful maiden free,
Til fro my tonge of taken is the grain.
And after that thus saide she to me;
My litel child, than wol I fetchen thee,
Whan that the grain is fro thy tong ytake:
Be not agafte, I wol thee not forsake.

This holy monk, this abbot him mene I,
His tonge out caught, and toke away the grain;
And he yave up the ghost ful softly.
And whan this abbot had this wonder sein,
His falte teres trilled adoun as reyne:
And groff he fell al platte upon the ground,
And still he lay, as he had ben ybound.

The covent lay eke upon the pavement
Weping and herying Cristes moder dere.
And after that they risen, and forth ben went,
And toke away this martir fro his bere,
And in a tombe of marble stones clere
Enclosen they his litel body swete:
Ther he is now, God lene us for to mete.

O yonge Hew of Lincoln, slain also
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,
For it n'is but a litel while ago,
Pray eke for us, we sinful folk unstable,
That of his mercy God so merciable
On us his grete mercie multiplie,
For reverence of his moder Marie.

PROLOGUE TO SIRE THOPAS.

Whan said was this miracle, every man
As sober was, that wonder was to see,
Til that our hoste to japen he began,
And than at erft he loked upon me,
And saide thus; What man art thou? quod he. 
Thou lokest, as thou woldest finde an hare, 
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.

Approche nere, and loke up merily. 
Now ware you, fires, and let this man have place. 
He in the waste is shapen as wel as I: 
This were a popet in an arme to embrace 
For any woman, fmal and faire of face. 
He femeth elvish by his contenance, 
For unto no wight doth he daliance.

Say now somwhat, sin other folk han saide; 
Tell us a tale of mirthe and that anon. 
Hoaste, quod I, ne be not evil apaide, 
For other tale certes can I non, 
But of a rime I lerned yore agon. 
Ye, that is good, quod he, we shullen here 
Som deintee thing, me thinketh by thy chere.

THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

LISTENETH, lordinges, in good entent, 
And I wol tel you verament 
Of mirthe and of folas, 
Al of a knight was faire and gent
In bataille and in turnment,
His name was sire Thopas.

Yborne he was in fer contree,
In Flandres, al beyonde the see,
At Popering in the place,
His father was a man ful free,
And lord he was of that contree,
As it was Goddes grace.

Sire Thopas was a doughty swain,
White was his face as paindemaine
His lippes red as rose.
His rudde is like scarlet in grain,
And I you tell in good certain
He had a femely nose.

His here, his berde, was like safroun,
That to his girdle raught adoun,
His shoon of cordewane;
Of Brugges were his hosen broun;
His robe was of chekelatoun,
That coste many a janne.

He coude hunt at the wilde dere,
And ride on hauking for the rivere

With
With grey goshaук on honde:
Therto he was a good archere,
Of wrafäling was ther non his pere,
Ther ony ram shuld stonde.

Ful many a maide bright in bour
They mourned for him *par amour*,
Whan hem were bet to slepe;
But he was chaste and no lechour,
And swete as is the bramble flour,
That bereth the red hepe.

And so it fell upon a day,
Forsoth, as I you tellen may,
Sire Thopas wold out ride;
He worth upon his fede gray,
And in his hond a launcegey,
A long swerd by his sícde.

He priketh thurgh a faire forest,
Therin is many a wilde best,
Ye bothe buck and hare,
And as he priked North and Est,
I telle it you, him had almesté
Betidde a fory care.
The springen herbes grete and finale, 13690
The licoris and the fetewale,
    And many a cloue gilofre,
And notemuge to put in ale,
Whether it be moist or stale,
    Or for to lain in cofre.

The briddles fingen, it is no nay,
The sperhauk and the popingay,
    That joye it was to here,
The throftel cok made eke his lay,
The wode dove upon the spreay
    He fang ful loude and clere.

Sire Thopas fell in love-longing
Al whan he herd the throftel finge.
    And priked as he were wood;
His faire stede in his priking
So swatte, that men might him wring,
    His fides were al blood.

Sire Thopas eke fo wery was
For priking on the softe gras,
    So fiers was his corage,
That doun he laid him in that place
To maken his stede som folace,
    And yaf him good forage:

A, Seinte
THE RIME OF SIRE THOPAS.

A, Seinte Mary, _benedicite_,
What aileth this love at me
To binde me so sore?
Me dremed all this night parde,
An elf quene shal my lemmen be,
And lepe under my gore.

An elf quene wol I love ywis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my make || in toun,—
All other women I forfake,
And to an elf quene I me take
By dale and eke by doun.

Into his sadel he clombe anon,
And priked over stile and fton
An elf quene for to espie,
Til he so long had ridden and gone,
That he fond in a privee won
The contree of Faerie.

Wherin he foughte North and South,
And oft he spied with his mouth
In many a forest wilde,
For in that contree n'as ther non,
That to him dorft ride or gon,
Neither wif ne childe,

Til
Til that ther came a grete geaunt,
His name was Sire Oliphaunt,
   A perilous man of dede,
He sayde, Child, by Termagaunt,
But if thou prike out of myn haunt,
   Anon I fle thy flede || with mace—
Here is the Quene of Faerie,
With harpe, and pipe, and simphonie,
   Dwelling in this place.

The child sayd, Al so mote I the,
To morwe wol I meten thee,
   Whan I have min armoure,
And yet I hope par ma fay,
That thou shalt with this launsegay
   Abien it ful foure; || thy mawe
Shal I perce, if I may,
Or it be fully prime of the day,
   For here thou shalt be flawe.

Sire Thopas drow abak ful faft;
This geaunt at him ftones cast
   Out of a fel staffe sling:
But faire escaped child Thopas,
And all it was thurgh Goddes grace,
   And thurgh his faire bering.

Yet
Yet lifteneth, lordings, to my tale,
Merier than the nightingale,
For now I wol you rone,
How Sire Thopas with fides' finale,
Priking over hill and dale,
Is comen agein to toune.

His mery men commandeth he,
To maken him bothe game and gle,
For nedes muft he fighte,
With a geaunt with hedes three,
For paramour and jolitee
Of on that shone ful brighte.

Do come, he sayd, my mineftrales
And gestours for to tellen tales
Anon in min arming,
Of romances that ben reales,
Of popes and of cardinales,
And eke of love-longing.

They set him first the swete win,
And mede eke in a maselin,
And real spicerie,
Of ginger-bred that was ful fin,
And licoris and eke comin,
With fuger that is trie.
He didde next his white lere
Of cloth of lake fin and clere
   A breche and eke a sherte,
And next his shert an haketon,
And over that an habergeon,
   For percing of his herte,

And over that a fin hauberk,
Was all ywrought of Jewes werk,
   Ful strong it was of plate,
And over that his cote-armoure,
As white as is the lily floure,
   In which he wold debate.

His sheld was all of gold so red,
And therin was a bores hed,
   A charboucle beside;
And ther he swore on ale and bred
How that the geaunt shuld be ded,
   Betide what so betide.

His jambeux were of cuirbouly,
His fwerdes sheth of ivory,
   His helme of latoun bright,
His fadel was of rewel bone,
His bridel as the sonne shone,
   Or as the mone light.

His
His spere was of fin cypres, 13810
That bodeth werre, and nothing pees,
The hed ful sharpe yground.
His stede was all dapple gray,
It goth an aumble in the way
Ful softely and round || in londe—
Lo, Lordes min, here is a fit;
If ye wol ony more of it,
To telle it wol I fond.

Now hold your mouth pour charite, 13820
Bothe knight and lady fre,
And herkeneth to my spell,
Of bataille and of chevalrie,
Of ladies love and druerie,
Anon I wol you tell.

Men spoken of romaunces of pris,
Of Hornchild, and of Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sire Guy,
Of Sire Libeux, and Pleindamour,
But Sire Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of real chevalrie. 13830

His goode stede he al bestrode,
And forth upon his way he glode,
As sparcl out of bronde;
Upon his creft he bare a tour,
And therin friked a lily flour,
  God shilde his corps fro shonde.

And for he was a knight auntrous,
He n'olde slepen in non hous,
  But liggen in his hood,
His brighte helm was his wanger,
  And by him baited his defrer
  Of herbes fin and good.

Himself drank water of the well,
As did the knight Sire Percivell
  So worthy under wede,
Til on a day ——

PROLOGUE TO MELIBEUS.

No more of this for Goddes dignitee,
Quod oure hofte, for thou makeft me
So wery of thy veray lewednesse,
  That al so wisly God my soule bleffe,
Min eres aken of thy drafty speche.
Now swiche a rime the devil I beteche;
  This
This may wel be rime dogerel, quod he.
Why so? quod I, why wolt thou letten me
More of my tale, than an other man,
Sin that it is the best e rime I can?

By God, quod he, for plainly at o word,
Thy drafty riming is not worth a tord:
Thou dost nought elles but dispenteft time.
Sire, at o word, thou shalt no longer rime. 13860
Let see wher thou canft tellen ought in geste,
Or tellen in prose somwhat at the lefte,
In which ther be som mirthe or som doctrine.

Gladly, quod I, by Goddes swete pine
I wol you tell a litel thing in prose,
That oughte liken you, as I suppose,
Or elles certes ye be to dangerous.
It is a moral tale vertuous,
Al be it told somtime in sondry wise
Of sondry folk; as I shal you devise. 13870

As thus, ye wote that every Evangelist,
That telleth us the peine of Jefu Crist,
Ne faith not alle thing as his felaw doth:
But natheles hir sentence is al soth,
And alle accorden as in hir sentence,
Al be ther in hir telling difference:
For som of hem say more, and som say lefte,
Whan they his pitous passion expresse:

I mene
I mene of Mark and Mathew, Luke and John,
But douteles hir sentence is all on.
Therfore, lordinges all, I you beseeche;
If that ye thinke I vary in my speche;
As thus, though that I telle som del more
Of proverbes, than ye han herde before
Comprehended in this litel tretise here,
To enforcen with the effe& of my matere;
And though I not the same wordes say
As ye han herde: ye yet to you alle I pray
Blameth me not, for, as in my sentence;
Shul ye nowher finden no difference
Fro the sentence of thilke tretise lite,
After the which this mery tale I write.
And therfore herkeneth what I shal say;
And let me tellen all my tale I pray.

THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

A YONGE man called Melibeus, mighty and riche, begate upon his wif; that called was Prudence, a doughter which that called was Sophie.

Upon a day befell, that he for his disport is went into the feldes him to playe. His wif and eke his doughter hath he laft within his
hous, of which the dores weren fast yfhette. Fourere of his olde foos han it espied, and seten ladders to the walles of his hous, and by the windowes ben entred, and beten his wif, and wounded his daughter with five mortal woundes, in five sondry places; this is to say, in hire feet, in hire hondes, in hire eres, in hire nose, and in hire mouth; and lesten hire for dede, and wented away.

Whan Melibeus retorned was into his hous, and sey al this meschief, he, like a mad man, rending his clothes, gan to wepe and cry.

Prudence his wif, as fer forth as she dorste, besought him of his weping for to fint: but not forthy he gan to crie and wepen ever lenger the more.

This noble wif Prudence remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the Remedie of love, wheras he faith; he is a fool that distourbeth the moder to wepe, in the deth of hire childe, til she have wept hire fille, as for a certain time: and than shal a man don his diligent with amiable wordes hire to reconsorte and praye hire of hire weping for to fint. For which reson this noble wif Prudenc suffried hire houibond for to wepe and crie,
as for a certain space; and whan she saw hire time, she sayde to him in this wise. Alas! my lord, quod she, why make ye youreself for to be like a fool? Forsothe it apperteyneth not to a wise man, to maken swiche a forwe: Your daughter, with the grace of God, shal warifh and escape. And al were it so that she right now were deade, ye ne ought not as for hire deth youreself to destroye: Senek faith; the wise man shal not take to gret discomfort for the deth of his children, but certes he shulde suffren it in patience, as wel as he abideth the deth of his owen propre persone.

This Melibeus answered anon and saide: what man (quod he) shulde of his weping stinte, that hath so gret a cause for to wepe? Jesu Crist, our Lord, himself wepte for the deth of Lazarus his frend. Prudence answered; certes wel I wote, attempre weping is nothing defended, to him that sorwefull is, among folk in forwe, but it is rather graunted him to wepe. The Apostle Poule unto the Romaines writeth; man shal rejoyce with hem that maken joye, and wepen with swiche folk as wepen. But though attempre weping be ygranted, outrageus weping certes is defended. Mefure of weping R 2 shulde
Tale of Melibeus.

Shulde be considered, after the lore that techeth us Senck. Whan that thy frend is dede (quod he) let not thin eyen to moiste ben of teres, ne to muche drie: although the teres comen to thin eyen, let hem not falle. And whan thou haft forgon thy frend, do diligence to get agein another frend: and this is more wisdom than for to wepe for thy frend, which that thou haft lorne, for therin is no bote. And therfore if ye governe you by fapience, put away forwe out of youre herte. Remembreth you that Jesus Sirak fayth; a man that is joyous and glad in herte, it him conserveth florishing in his age: but sothly a sorweful herte maketh his bones drie. He faith eke thus, that forwe in herte fleeth ful many a man. Salomon fayth, that right as mouthes in the shepes sleefe anoien to the clothes, and the smale worms to the tree, right so anoieith forwe to the herte of man. Wherfore us ought as wel in the ceth of our children, as in the losse of our goodes temporel, have patience.

Remembre you upon the patient Job, whan he hadde loft his children and his temporel substaunce, and in his body endured and received ful many a grevous tribulation, yet sayde he thus:
thus: Oure Lord hath yeve it to me, oure Lord hath beraft it me; right as oure Lord hath wold, right so is it don; ybleffed be the name of oure Lord. To thife foresaide things answered Melibeus unto his wif Prudence: all thy wordes (quod he) ben trewe, and therto profitable, but trewely min herte is troubled with this forwe so grevously, that I n'ot what to don. Let calle (quod Prudence) thyn trewe frendes alle, and thy linage, which that ben wise, and telleth to hem your cas, and herkeneth what they faye in confeilling, and governe you after hir sentence. Salomon faith; werke all thinges by confeil, and thou shalt never repente.

Than, by confeil of his wif Prudence, this Melibeus let callen a gret congregation of folk, as surgiens, phisiciens, olde folk and yonge, and som of his olde enemies reconciled (as by hir femblant) to his love and to his grace: and therwithal ther comen some of his neigheboures, that diden him reverence more for drede than for love, as it happeth oft. Ther comen also ful many subtil flaters, and wise Advocats lerned in the lawe.

And whan thife folk togeder assembled weren, this Melibeus in forweful wise shewed hem his cas,
cas, and by the manere of his speche, it semed that in herte he bare a cruel ire, redy to don venge-
aunce upon his foos, and fodeinly desired that the werre shulde beginne, but natheles yet axed he his confeil upon this mater. A sur-
gien, by licence and assent of swiche as weren wise, up rose, and unto Melibeus sayde, as ye moun here.

Sire, (quod he) as to us surgiens apperteineth, that we do to every wight the befte that we can, wher as we ben withholden, and to our patient that we do no damage: wherfore it happeth many time and ofte, that whan twey men han everich wounded other, o fame surgien heleth hem both, wherfore unto our art it is not pertinent to norice werre, ne parties to supporte. But certes, as to the wairishing of youre doughter, al be it so that periloufly she be wounded, we shuln do so en-
tentif besinesse fro day to night, that with the grace of God, she shal be hole and found, as fone as is possibe. Almost right in the same wise the phisiciens answorden, fave that they faiden a fewe wordes more: that right as maladies ben cured by hir contraries, right fo shal man wairishe werre. His neigheboures ful of enye, his feined frendes that femed reconciled, and his flaters, maden
THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. 247

A maiden semblant of weeping, and empeired and agregged muchel of this matere, in preyfing gretly Melibee of might, of power, of richesse, and of frendes, despifing the power of his adversaries: and saiden outrely, that he anon shulde wreken him on his foos, and beginnen werre.

Up rose then an Advocat that was wise, by leve and by conseil of other that were wise, and fayde: Lordinges, the neede for the which we ben assembled in this place, is a ful hevie thing, and an heigh matere, because of the wrong and of the wikkednesse that hath be don, and eke by reson of the grete damages, that in time coming ben possible to fallen for the same cause, and eke by reson of the grete richesse and power of the parties bothe, for the which resons, it were a ful grete peril to erryn in this matere. Wherfore, Melibeus, this is our sentence; we conseille you, aboven alle thing, that right anon thou do thy diligence in keping of thy propre persone, in swiche a wise that thou ne want non espie ne watche, thy body for to save. And after that, we conseille that in thin hous thou sette suffisant garnison, so that they moun as wel thy body as thy hous defende. But certes for to meeuen werre, ne sodenly for to do venge-

R 4 aunce,
aunce, we moun not deme in so litle time that it were profitable. Wherfore we axen leifer and space to have deliberation in this cas to deme; for the comune proverbe faith thus; He that sone demeth, sone shal repente. And eke men sain, that thilke juge is wise, that sone under- fondeth a matere, and jugeth by leiser. For al be it so, that al tarying be anoiful, algates it is not to repreve in yeving of jugement, ne in vengeance taking, whan it is suffisant and resonable. And that shewed our Lord Jesu Crist by ensample, for whan that the woman that was taken in advoutrie, was brought in his presence to knowen what shuld be don with hire persone, al be it that he wift wel himself what that he wolde anfwere, yet ne wolde he not anfwere fodeinly, but he wolde have deliberation, and in the ground he wrote twies; and by thise causes we axen deliberation: and we shuln than by the grace of God conseille the thing that shal be profitable. 

Up sterte than the yonge folk at ones, and the most partie of that compagnie han scorned this olde wise man, and begonnen to make noise and saiden; Right so as while that iren is hot men shulde finite, right so men shuln do wrenken hir
THE TALE OF MELIBEUS.

hir wronges, while that they ben freshe and newe: and with loude voys they criden werre, werre. Up rose tho on of thife olde wife, and with his hand made countenaunce that men shuld holde hem stille, and yeve him audience. Lordinges, (quod he) ther is ful many a man that crieth werre, werre, that wote ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his beginning hath fo gret an entring and fo large, that every wight may enter whan him liketh, and lightly find werre: but certes what end that shal befalle, it is not light to know. For sothly whan thatwerre is ones begonne, ther is ful many a child unborne of his moder, that shal ferve yong, bycause of thilke werre, other elles live in forwe, and dien in wretchednesse: and therefore or that any werre be begonne, men must have gret conseil and gret deliberation. And when this olde man wende to enforcen his tale by refons, wel nie alle at ones begonne they to rise, for to breken his tale, and bidden him ful oft his wordes for to abregge. For sothly he that precheth to hem that listen not heren his wordes, his sermon hem anoith. For Jesu Sirak sayth, that musike in weping is a noious thing. This is to sayn, as muche availleth to speke
speek beforne folk to which his speche anoith, as to singe beforne him that wepeth. "And whan this wise man saw that him wanted audience, al shamefaft he sette him doun agein. For Salomon faith: ther as thou ne mayst have non audience, enforce thee not to speke. I see wel, (quod this wise man) that the comune proverbe is soth, that good conseil wanteth, whan it is most nede.

Yet had this Melibeus in his conseil many folk, that prively in his ere conseilled him certain thing, and conseilled him the contrary in general audience. Whan Melibeus had herd that the gretest partie of his conseil were accorded that he shulde make werre, anon he consented to hire conseilling, and fully affermed hir sentence. Than dame Prudence, whan that she saw how that hire hosome shope him for to awreke him on his foos, and to beginne werre, she in ful humible wife, whan she saw hire time, sayde him these wordes: my lord, (quod she) I you beseche as hertly as I dare and can, ne haste you not to fadge, and for alle guerdons as yeve me audience. For Piers Alphonse sayth; who so that doth to thee outhere good or harme, haste thee not to quite it, for in this wise thy frend
frende wol abide, and thin enemie shal the lenger
live in drede. The proverbe sayth; he hasteth
wel that wisely can abide: and in wikked hast
is no profite.

This Melibe answered unto his wif Prud-
dence: I purpose not (quod he) to werken by
thy conseil, for many causes and refons: for
certes every wight wold hold me than a fool;
this is to sayn, if I for thy conseilling wolde
change thinges, that benordeinedand affirmed
by so many wise men. Secondly, I say, that
all women ben wicke, and non good of hem
all. For of a thousand men, saith Salomon, I
found o good man: but certes of alle women
good woman found I never. And also certes,
if I governed me by thy conseil, it shulde feme
that I had yeve thee over me the maitrie: and
God forbede that it so were. For Jeüus Sirak
sayth, that if the wif have the maitrie, she is
contrarious to hire husbond. And Salomon
sayth; never in thy lif to thy wif, ne to thy
childe, ne to thy frend, ne yeve no power over
thy self: for better it were that thy children
axe of thee thinges that hem nedeth, than thou
fee thy self in the handes of thy children. And
also if I wol werche by thy conseilling, certes
it must be sometime secreet, til it were time that it be known: and this ne may not be, if I shulde be conseilled by thee. [For it is written; the janglerie of women ne can no thing hide, save that which they wrote not. After the Philosophre sayth; in wikked conseil women venquishen men: and for thisis reasons I ne owe not to be conseilled by thee.] Whan dame Prudence, ful debonairly and with great pacience, had herd all that hire houesbonde liked for to say, than axed she of him licence for to speke, and sayde in this wise. My lord, (quod she) as to your first reason, it may lightly ben answerd: for I say that it is no solie to chaunge conseil when the thing is chaunged, or elles when the thing semeth otherwise than it semed afore. And moreover I say, though that ye have sworne and behight to performe your emprise, and nevertheless ye weive to performe thilke fame emprise by just cause, men shuld not say therfore ye were a lyer, ne forsworn: for the book sayth, that the wise man maketh no les- sing, when he turneth his corage for the better. And al be it that your emprise be established and ordeined by great multitude of folk, yet thar you not accomplish thilke ordinance but you liketh:
liketh: for the trouthe of thinges, and the pro-
fit, ben rather founden in fewe folk that ben
wise and ful of reson, than by gret multitude
of folk, ther every man cryeth and clattereth
what him liketh: sothly swiche multitude is
not honest. As to the second reson, wheras
ye say, that alle women ben wicke: savy your
grace, certes ye despise alle women in this wise,
and he that all despiseth, as faith the book, all
displeseth. Aud Senek faith, that who so wol
have sapience, shal no man dispreise, but he
shal gladly teche the science that he can, with-
out presumption or pride: and swiche thinges as
he nought can, he shal not ben ashamed to
lere hem, and to enquire of leffe folk than him-
sel. And, Sire, that ther hath ben ful many a
good woman, may lightly be preved: for certes,
Sire, our Lord Jesu Crist n’olde never han de-
scended to be borne of a woman, if all women
had be wicked. And after that, for the gret
bountee that is in women, our Lord Jesu Crist,
whan he was risen from deth to lif, appered
rather to a woman than to his Apostles. And
though that Salomon sayde, he found never no
good woman, it folweth not therfore, that all
women be wicked: for though that he ne found
no
no good woman, certes many another man hath
founde many a woman ful good and trewe. Or
elles peraventure the extent of Salomon was
this, that in soveraine bountee he found no
woman; this is to say, that ther is no wight
that hath soveraine bountee, save God alone,
as he himself recordeth in his Evangelies. For
ther is no creature so good, that him ne wanteth
somwhat of the perfection of God that is his
maker. Youre thridde resoun is this; ye say that
if that ye governe you by my conseil, it shulde
feme that ye had yeve me the maistrie and the
lordship of your person. Sire, save your grace,
it is not so; for if so were that no man shulde
be conseilled but only of hem that han lordship
and maistrie of his person, men n'olde not be
conseilled so often: for sothly thilke man that
asketh conseil of a purpos, yet hath he free chois
whether he wol werke after that conseil or non.
And as to your fourth resoun, ther as ye fain that
the janglerie of women can hide thinges that
they wot not; as who so sayth, that a woman
can not hide that she wote; Sire, this wordes
ben understonde of women that ben jangleresses
and wicked; of which women men fain that three
thinges driven a man out of his hous, that is to
say,
THE TALE OF MELIBEUS. fay, smoke, dropping of raine, and wicked wives. And of swiche women Salomon fayth, That a man were better dwell in desert, than with a woman that is riotous. And, fire, by your leve, that am not I; for ye have ful often affaied my gret silence and my gret patience, and eke how wel that I can hide and hele thinges, that men oughten secretly to hiden. And fothly as to your fithe reson, wheras ye say, that in wicked conseil women venquishen men; God wote that thilke reson stant here in no stede: for understondeth now, ye axen conseil for to do wickednesse; and if ye wol werken wickednesse, and your wif restraineth thilke wicked purpos, and overcometh you by reson and by good conseil, certes your wif ought rather to be preised than to be blamed. Thus shulde ye understonde the philosophre that sayth, In wicked conseil women venquishen hir husbondes. And ther as ye blamen all women and hir resons, I shal shewe you by many ensamples, that many women have ben ful good, and yet ben, and hir conseil holesome and profitable. Eke som men han sayd, that the conseil of women is either to dere, or elles to litel of pris. But al be it so that ful many a woman be bad, and hir conseil vile and nought
nought worth, yet han men founded ful many a good woman, and discrete and wife in conseilling.
Lo, Jacob, thurgh the good conseil of his mother Rebecke, wan the benison of his father, and the lordship over all his brethren. Judith, by hire good conseil, delivered the citee of Bethulie, in which she dwelt, out of the honde of Holoferne, that had it besieged, and wolde it al destroye. Abigail delivered Nabal hire housbond fro David the king, that wolde han slain him; and appezed the ire of the king by hire wit, and by hire good conseilling. Hezter by hire conseil enhaunced gretly the peple of God, in the regne of Assuerus the king. And the same bountee in good conseilling of many a good woman moun men rede and tell. And further more, whan that oure Lord had created Adam oure forme father, he sayd in this wise; it is not good to be a man allone: make we to him an helpe semblable to himself. Here moun ye see that if that women weren not good, and hire conseil good and profitable, oure Lord God of heven wolde neither han wrought hem, ne called hem helpe of man, but rather confusion of man. And ther sayd a clerk ones in two vers; what is better than gold? Jaspere. What is better than
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than jaspre? wisdom. And what is better than wisdom? woman. And what is better than a good woman? nothing. And, Sire, by many other reasoons moun ye seen, that many women ben good, and hir conseil good and profitable. And theryfore, Sire, if ye wol troste to my conseil, I shal restore you your daughter hole and found: and I wol don to you so muche, that ye shuln have honour in this cas.

Whan Melibee had herd the wordes of his wif Prudence, he sayd thus: I se wel that the word of Salomon is soth; for he faith, that wordes, that ben spoken discretly by ordinannce, ben honiecombes, for they yeven swetenesse to the soule, and holffomnesse to the body. And, wif, because of thy swete wordes, and eke for I have proved and affaied thy grete sapience and thy grete trouthe, I wol governe me by thy conseil in alle thing.

Now, Sire, (quod dame Prudence) and sin that ye vouchesafe to be governed by my conseil, I wol enforme you how that ye shuln governe yourself, in chesing of youre conseillours. Ye shuln first in alle your werkes mekely be-sequen to the heigh God, that he wol be your conseillour: and shapeth you to swiche entente

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that he yeve you conseil and conforte, as taught Tobie his sone; at alle times thou shalt blesse God, and preie him to dresse thy wayes; and loke that alle thy conseils ben in him for evermore. Seint James eke sayth; if any of you have nede of sapience, axe it of God. And afterwurde, than shullen ye take conseil in yourself, and examine wel your owen thoughtes, of swiche thinges as you thinketh that ben best for your profit. And than shuln ye drive fro your herte three thinges that ben contrarious to good conseil; that is to sayn, ire, coveitise, and haftinesse.

First, he that axeth conseil of himself, certes he must be withouten ire, for many causes. The first is this: he that hath gret ire and wrath in himself, he weneth alway that he may do thing that he may not do. And secondly, he that is irous and wroth, he may not wel deme: and he that may not wel deme, may not wel conseille. The thridde is this; he that is irous and wroth, as sayth Senek, ne may not speke but blamful thinges, and with his vicious wordes he stirreth other folk to anger and to ire. And eke, Sire, ye must drive coveitise out of your herte. For the Apostle sayth, that coveitise
is the rote of alle harmes. And trosteth wel, that a coveitous man ne can not deme ne thinke, but only to fulfille the ende of his coveitise; and certes that ne may never ben accomplisfed; for ever the more haboundance that he hath of richesse, the more he desireth. And, Sire, ye must also drive out of youre herte hastinesse: for certes ye ne moun not deme for the beste a soden thought that falleth in youre herte, but ye must avise you on it ful ofte: for as ye have herde herebefor, the commune proverbe is this; he that sone demeth, sone repenteth.

Sire, ye ne be not alway in like disposition, for certes som thing that somtime semeth to you that it is good for to do, another time it semeth to you the contrarie.

And whan ye han taken counsell in yourself, and han demed by good deliberacon swiche thing as you semeth beste, than rede I you that ye kepe it secree. Bewreye not your counsell to no person, but if so be that ye wenien sikerly, that thurgh youre bewreying youre condition shal ben to you more profitable. For Jesu Sirak faith: neither to thy foo ne to thy frend discover not thy secree, ne thy folie: for they woln yeve you audience and looking, and sup-
portation in your presence, and scorn you in your absence. Another clerk sayth, that scarcely shalt thou find any persone that may kepe thy conseil secrely. The book sayth; while that thou kepest thy conseil in thin herte, thou kepest it in thy prison: and whan thou bewreyest thy conseil to any wight, he holdeth thee in his snare. And therfore you is better to hide your conseil in your herte, than to preye him to whom ye han bewreyed youre conseil, that he wol kepe it close and stille. For Seneca sayth: if so be that thou ne mayst not thin owen conseil hide, how darest thou preyen any other wight thy conseil secrely to kepe? but natheles, if thou wene sikerly that thy bewreying of thy conseil to a persone wol make thy condition to standen in the better plight, than shalt thou telle him thy conseil in this wise. First, thou shalt make no semblant whether thee were lever pee or werre, or this or that; ne shewe him not thy will ne thin entente: for troste wel that communly these conseillours ben flaterers, namely the conseillours of grete lorde, for they enforcen hem alway rather to speken plesant wordes enclining to the lorde luft, than wordes that ben trewe or profitable: and therfore men sayn, that
that the riche man hath felde good conseil, but if he have it of himself. And after that thou shalt consider thy frenedes and thin enemies. And as touching thy frenedes, thou shalt consider which of hem ben most feithful and most wise, and eldest and most appreved in conseilling: and of hem shalt thou axe thy conseil, as the cas requireth.

I say, that first ye shuln clepe to youre conseil youre frenedes that ben trewe. For Salomon faith: that right as the herte of a man deliteth in favour that is swote, right so the conseil of trewe frenedes yeveth swetenesse to the soule. He sayth also, ther may nothing be likened to the trewe freund: for certes gold ne siluer ben not so muche worth as the good will of a trewe freund. And eke he sayth, that a trewe freund is a strong defence; who so that it findeth, certes he findeth a grete tresor. Than shuln ye eke consider if that your trewe frenedes ben discrete and wise: for the book faith, axe alway thy conseil of hem that ben wise. And by this same reason shuln ye clepen to youre conseil youre frenedes that ben of age, swiche as han feyn and ben expert in many thinges, and ben appreved in conseillinges. For the book sayth,

S 3 in
in olde men is al the sapience, and in longe time the prudence. And Tullius sayth, that grete thinges ne ben not ay accomplisshed by strengthe, ne by deliverenesse of body, but by good conseil, by auñtoritee of perfones, and by science: the which three thinges ne ben not feble by age, but certes they enforcen and encreisen day by day. And than shuln ye kepe this for a general rule. Fyrst ye shuln clepe to youre conseil a fewe of youre frendes that ben especial. For Salomon faith; many frendes have thou, but among a thousand chese thee on to be thy conseillour. For al be it so, that thou first ne telle thy conseil but to a fewe, thou mayest afterwarde tell it to mo folk, if it be nede. But loke alway that thy conseillours have thilke three conditions that I have sayd before; that is to say, that they be trewe, wise, and of olde experience. And werke not alway in every nede by on conseillour alone: for somtime behoveth it to be conseilled by many. For Salomon sayth; salvation of thinges is wher as ther ben many conseillours.

Now fith that I have told you of which folk ye shulde be conseilled: now wol I teche you which conseil ye ought to eschue. Fyrst ye shuln eschue.
eschue the conseilling offooles; for Salomon sayth, Take no conseil of a fool: for he ne can not conseille but after his owen luft and his af-fection. The book sayth, the proprettee of a fool is this: He troweth lightly harne of every man, and lightly troweth all bountee in himself. Thou shalt eke eschue the conseilling of all flaterers, swiche as enforcen hem rather to preisen youre perfone by flaterie, than for to tell you the sothfaftnesse of things.

Wherfore Tullius sayth, Among alle the pesti-lences that ben in frendship, the greteft is flaterie. And thereby it is more nede that thou eschue and drede flaterers, than any other peple. The book faith, Thou shalt rather drede and flee fro the swete wordes of flatering preisers, than fro the egre wordes of thy frend that faith thee sothes. Salomon faith, that the wordes of a flaterer is a fnare to cacchen innocentes. He sayth also, He that speketh to his frend wordes of swetenesse and of plefaunce, he setteth a net beforne his feet to cacchen him. And therfore sayth Tullius, En-cline not thin eres to flaterers, ne take no conseil of wordes of flaterie. And Caton sayth, Avise thee wel, and eschue wordes of swetenesse and of ple-faunce. And eke thou shalt eschue the conseil-
ling of thin olde enemies that ben reconciled. The book sayth, that no wight retourneth safely into the grace of his olde enemie. And Yfope sayth, Ne trost not to hem, to which thou haft somtime had were or enmitee, ne telle hem not thy conseil. And Senek telleth the cause why. It may not be, sayth he, ther as gret fire hath long time endured, that ther ne dwelleth som vapour of warmnesse. And therfore faith Salomon, In thin olde foo trost thou never, For sikerly, though thin enemie be reconciled, and maketh thee chere of humilitie, and louteth to thee with his hed, ne trost him never: for certes he maketh thilke feined humilitie more for his profite, than for any love of thy persone; because that he demeth to have victorie over thy personne by swiche feined contenance, the which victorie he might not have by strif of were. And Peter Alphonse sayth; Make no felawship with thin olde enemies, for if thou do hem bountee, they wollen perverten it to wickednesse, And eke thou must eschue the conseilling of hem that ben thy servaunts, and beren thee gret reve- rence: for paraventure they fein it more for drede than for love. And therfore faith a philo- sophre in this wise: Ther is no wight partitly trewe
trewe to him that he tofore dredeth. And Tullius sayth, Ther n’is no might so gret of any emperour that longe may endure, but if he have more love of the peple than drede. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of folk that ben dronke-ewe, for they ne can no conseil hide. For Salomon sayth, Ther n’is no privetee ther as regneth dronkenessse. Ye shuln also have in suspec the conseilling of swiche folk as conseille you o thing prively, and conseille you the contrarie openly. For Cassiodore sayth, That it is a manere fleighte to hinder his enemy when he sheweth to don a thing openly, and werketh prively the contrary. Thou shalt also have in suspec the conseilling of wicked folk, for hir conseil is alway ful of fraude. And David sayth; Blisful is that man that hath not folwed the conseilling of shrewes. Thou shalt also eschue the conseilling of yonge folk, for hir conseilling is not ripe, as Salomon faith.

Now, Sire, fith I have shewed you of which folk ye shullen take youre conseil, and of which folk ye shullen eschue the conseil, now wol I teche you how ye shuln examine your conseil after the doctrine of Tullius. In examining than of your conseillours, ye shuln considre many things.

Alderfirst
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Alderfirst thou shalt confide that in thilke thing that thou purposest, and upon what thing that thou wolt have conseil, that veray trouthe be said and conserved; this is to say, telle trewely thy tale: for he that sayth false, may not wel be conseilled in that cas, of which he lieth. And after this, thou shalt confide the thinges that accorden to that thou purposest for to do by thy conseillours, if reson accord therto, and eke if thy might may atteine therto, and if the more part and the better part of thin conseillours accorden therto or no. Than shalt thou confide what thing shal folwe of that conseilling; as hate, pees, werre, grace, profite, or domage, and many other thinges: and in alle thinges thou shalt chose the beste, and weive alle other thinges. Than shalt thou confide of what roote is engendred the materere of thy conseil, and what fruit it may conceive and engendre. Thou shalt eke confide alle the causes, from whennes they ben sprongen. And whan thou haft examined thy conseil, as I have said, and which partie is the better and more profitable, and haft appreved it by many wise folk and olde, than shalt thou confide, if thou mayst performe it and maken of it a good ende. For certes
certes refon wol not that any man shulde be-ginne a thing, but if he mighte performe it as. him oughte: ne no wight shulde take upon him so hevy a charge, that he might not beren it. For the proverbe sayth; he that to muche embraceth diffreineth litel. And Caton faith; aflay to do swiche thinges as thou haft power to don, left the charge oppresse thee so fore, that thee behoveth to weive thing that thou haft be-gonne. And if so be that thou be in doute, whether thou mayst performe a thing or non, chefe rather to suffre than to beginne. And Peter Alphonse sayth; If thou haft might to don a thing, of which thou must repente, it is better nay than ya: this is to sayn, that thee is better to holde thy tongue stille than for to speke. Than mayst thou understande by stronger re-fons, that if thou haft power to performe a werk, of which thou shalt repente, than is thee better that thou suffre than beginne. Wel sain, they that defenden every wight to aflaye a thing of which he is in doute, whether he may per-forme it or non. And after whan ye han ex-amined youre conseil, as I have said beforne, and knowen wel that ye moun performe your em-prise, conferme it than sadly til it be at an ende. Now
Now is it reson and time that I shewe you whan, and wherfore, that ye moun chaunge your conseil, withouten repreve. Sothly, a man may change his purpos and his conseil, if the cause ceseth, or whan a newe cas betideth. For the lawe faith, that upon thinges that newly betiden, behoveth newe conseil. And Seneca sayth; if thy conseil is comen to the eres of thin enemies, chaunge thy conseil. Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil, if so be that thou find that by erroir, or by other cause, harme or damage may betide. Also if thy conseil be dishoneste, other elles come of dishoneste cause, chaunge thy conseil: for the lawes sain, that all behestes that ben dishoneste ben of no value: and eke, if so be that it be impossible, or may not goodly be performed or kept.

And take this for a general reule, that every conseil that is assermed so strongly, that it may not be chaunged for no condition that may betide, I say that thilke conseil is wicked.

This Melibeus, whan he had herd the doctrine of his wif dame Prudence, answered in this wise. Dame, quod he, as yet unto this time ye han wel and covenably taught me, as in general, how I shal governe me in the cheching and
and in the withholding of my conseillours: but now wold I fain that ye wold condescend in especial, and telle me how liketh you, or what femeth you by our conseqilours that we han chosen in our present nede.

My lord, quod she, I befeche you in alle humleffe, that ye wol not wilfully replie agein my refons, ne dißempre your herte, though I speke thing that you displese; for God wote that, as in min entente, I speke it for your bëste, for youre honour and for youre profite eke, and sothly I hope that youre benigne wolle wol taken it in patience. And trosteth me wel, quod she, that youre conseil as in this cas ne shulde not (as to speke properly) be called a conseqil, but a motion or a meving of folie, in which conseqil ye han erred in many a fondry wise.

First and forward, ye han erred in the afsembling of youre conseqillours: for ye sholde first han cleped a fewe folk to youre conseqil, and after ye mighte han shewed it to mo folk, if it hadnede be nede. But certes ye han sodeinly cleped to your conseqil a gret multitudde of peple, ful chargeant and ful anoyous for to here. Also ye han erred, for ther as ye shulde han only cleped to youre conseqile youre trewe frendes, olde and
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and wife, ye han cleped straunge folk, yonge folk, false flaterers, and enemies reconciled, and folk that don you reverence withouten love. And eke ye han erred, for ye han brought with you to youre conseil ire, coveitise, and hastifnesse, the which three thinges ben contrary to every conseil honest and profitable: the which three thinges ye ne han not anientisled or destroyed, neither in youre self ne in youre conseillours, as you ought. Ye han erred also, for ye han shewed to youre conseillours youre talent and youre affections to make werre anon, and for to do vengeaunce, and they han espied by youre wordes to what thing ye ben enclined: and therfore han they conseilled you rather to youre talent, than to youre profite. Ye han erred also, for it semeth that you suffisbeth to han ben conseilled by thiste conseillours only, and with litel avis, wheras in so high and so gret a nede, it had ben necessarie mo conseillours, and more deliberation to performe your emprise. Ye han erred also, for ye han not examined your conseil in the forefaid manere, ne in due manere, as the cas requireth. Ye han erted also, for ye han maked no division betwix youre conseillours; this is to sayn, betwix youre trewe frendes and youre feined conseillours:
lours: ne ye han not knowe the wille of your trewe frendes, olde and wise, but ye han caft alle hir worde in an hochepot, and enclined your herte to the more part and to the greter nombre, and ther be ye condescended; and Sith ye wot wel that men shuln alway finde a greter nombre offooles than of wise men, and therfore the conseilings that ben at congregations and multitudes of folk, ther as men take more regard to the nombre, than to the sapience of perfones, ye seen wel, that in fwich conseilings fooles han the maistrie. Melibeus answered and said agein: I graunte wel that I have erred; but ther as thou haft told me herebeforne, that he n'is not to blame that chaungeth his conseil in certain cas, and for certain and just causes, I am al re- dy to chaunge my conseil right as thou wolt devise. The proverbe sayth; for to don sinne is mannish, but certes for to persever long in finne is werke of the Divel.

To this sentence answered anon dame Prud- ence, and saide; examineth (quod the) wel your conseil, and let us see the which of hem han spoken most resonably, and taught you best conseil. And for as muche as the examination is necessarie, let us beginne at the Surgiens and
at the Physiciens, that firt spaken in this mater. I say that Physiciens and Surgiens han sayde you in youre conseil discreetly, as hem oughte: and in hir speche saiden ful wisely, that to the office of hem apperteineth to don to every wight honour and profite, and no wight to anoye, and after hir craft to don gret diligence unto the cure of hem which that they han in hir gouvernaunce. And, Sire, right as they han anwered wisely and discreetly, right so rede I that they be highly and soverainly guerdoned for hir noble speche, and eke for they shulden do the more ententif besineff in the curation of thy dere doughter. For al be it so that they ben youre frendes, therfore shullen ye not suffren, that they serve you for nought, but ye oughte the rather guerdone hem, and shewe hem youre largesse. And as touching the proposition, which the Physiciens entreteden in this cas, this is to fain, that in maladies, that a contrarie is warished by another contrarie; I wold fain knowe how ye understonde thilke text, and what is youre sentence. Certes, quod Melibeus, I understond it in this wise; that right as they han don me a contrarie, right so shulde I don hem another; for right as they han venged hem upon me and don.
don me wrong, right so, shal I venge me upon hem, and don hem wrong, and than have I cured a contrarie by another.

Lo, lo, quod dame Prudence, how lightly is every man inclined to his own desire and his own plesaunce! certes (quod fie) the wordes of the Physiciens ne shulden not han ben unnderstonden in that wise; for certes wickednesse is not contrarie to wickednesse, ne vengeance to vengeance, ne wrong to wrong, but they ben semblable: and therfore a vengeance is not warifhed by another vengeance, ne a wrong by another wrong, but everich of hem encrefeth and aggreggeth other. But certes the wordes of the Phyficiens shulden ben unnderfontonde in this wise; for good and wickednesse ben two contraries, and pees and werre, vengeance and suffraunce, discord and accord, and many other thinges: but certes, wickednesse shal be warifhed by goodnesse, discord by accord, werre by pees, and so forth of other thinges. And hereto accordeth Seint Poule the Apostles in many places: he sayth, ne yelde not harme for harme, ne wicked speche for wicked speche, but do wel to him that doth to thee harme, and blesse him that faith to thee.
harme. And in many other places he amonesteth pees and accord. But now wol I speke to you of the conseil, which that was yeven to you by the men of lawe, and the wife folk, and old folke, that sayden alle by on accord as ye han herd beforne, that over alle things ye shuln do youre diligence to kepe youre persone, and to warnestore your house: and sayden also, that in this cas you oughte for to werchen ful avisely and with gret deliberation. And, Sire, as to the first point, that toucheth the keping of youre persone, ye shuln understond, that he that hath werre, shal ever more devoutly and mekely preien beforne alle things, that Jesu Crist of his mercie wol han him in his protection, and ben his soveraine helping at his nede: for certes in this world ther is no wight that may be conseilled ne kept suffisantly, without the keping of oure lord Jesu Crist. To this sentence accordeth the Prophe te David that sayth: if God ne kepe the citee, in idel wa- keth he that kepeth it. Now, Sire, than shuln ye committe the keping of youre persone to youre tewe frendes, that ben appreved and yknowe, and of hem shuln ye axen helpe, youre persone for to kepe. For Caton fa th: if thou have
have rede of helpe, axe it of thy frendes, for ther n'is non so good a Physicien as thy trewe frend. And after this than shuln ye kepe you fro alle straunge folk, and fro lieres, and have alway in suspeçt hir compaignie. For Piers Alphonse sayth: ne take no compaignie by the way of a straunge man, but if so be that thou have knowen him of lenger time: and if so be that he falle into thy compaignie paraventure withouten thin assent, enquire than, as subtilly as thou maist, of his conversation, and of his lif beforne, and feine thy way, sayng thou wolt go thider as thou wolt not go: and if he bere a sper, hold thee on the right side, and if he bere a swerd, hold thee on his left side. And after this than shuln ye kepe you wisely from all swiche manere peple as I have sayed be- fore, and hem and hir conseil eschue. And after this than shuln ye kepe you in swiche manete, that for any presumption of your strengthe, that ye ne despise not, ne account not the might of your adverary so lite, that ye let the keping of youre persone for your pre- sumption; for every wise man dredeth his ene- mie. And Salomon sayth; welful is he that of alle hath drede; For certes he that thurgh
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the hardinesse of his herte, and thurgh the hardinesse of himself, hath to gret presumpton, him shal evil betide. Than shuln ye evermo countrewaite emboysfements, and alle espiaile. For Senek sayth, that the wise man that dredeth harmes, eschueth harmes; ne he ne falleth into perils, that perils eschueth. And al be it so, that it sem that thou art in fikre place, yet shalt thou alway do thy diligence in keping of thy person; this is to sayn, ne be not negligent to kepe thin person, not only fro thy gretest enemy, but also fro thy lefte ene

my. Senek sayth; a man that is wel avised, he dredeth his lefte enemie. Ovide sayth, that the litel wefel wol flee the gret boll and the wilde hart. And the book sayth; a litel thorne may prikke a king ful fore, and a litel hound wol holde the wilde bore. But natheles, I say not thou shalt be so coward, that thou doue wher as is no drede. The book faith, that som men [han taught hir deceivour, for they han to muche dreded] to be deceived. Yet shalt thou drede to be empoysoned; and [therfore shalt thou] kepe thee fro the compaignie of scorners: for the book sayth, with scorners ne make no compaignie, but flee hir wordes as venime.

Now
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Now as to the second point, wheras your wise conseillours conseilled you to warnestore your hous with gret diligence, I wolde fain knowe how that ye understode thilke wordes, and what is youre sentence.

Melibeus answered and faide; Certes I understond it in this wise, that I shal warnestore min hous with toures, swiche as han castelles and other manere edifices, and armure, and artelries, by which things I may my persone and myn hous so kepen and defenden, that min enemies shuln ben in drede min hous for to approche.

To this sentence answered anon Prudence. Warneftering (quod fhe) of heighe toures and of grete edifices, is with grete coflages and with grete travaile; and whan that they ben accomplished, yet ben they not worth a fire, but if they ben defended by trewe frendes, that ben olde and wise. And understonde wel, that the greteste and strongeste garnefon that a riche man may have, as wel to kepen his persone as his goodes, is, that he be beloved with his subgets, and with his neighboures. For thus sayth Tullius, that ther is a maner garnefon, that no man may venquish ne discomfite, and that is a lord
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a lord to be beloved of his citizeins, and of his peple.

Now, Sire, as to the thridde point, wheras youre olde and wise conseillours sayden, that you ne oughte not fodeinly ne haftily proceden in this nede, but that you oughte purveyen and appareilen you in this cas, with gret diligence and gret deliberation; trewely, I trowe, that they sayden right wisely and right soth. For Tullius sayth: in every nede er thou beginne it, appareile thee with gret diligence. Than say I, that in vengeaunce taking, in werre, in bataille, and in warneftoring, er thou beginne, I rede that thou appareile thee thereto, and do it with gret deliberation. For Tullius sayth, that longe appareiling tofore the bataille, maketh short victorie. And Cassiodorus sayth: the garneson is stronger, whan it is longe time avised.

But now let us speken of the conseil that was accorded by youre neighhebours, swiche as don you reverence withouten love; youre olde enemes reconciled; your flatereres, that conseilled you certain thinges prively, and openly conseilled you the contrarie; the yonge folk also, that conseilled you to venge you, and to make werre anon. Certes, Sire, as I have sayde beforne,
forne, ye han gretly erred to han cleped swiche maner folk to youre confeil, which confeilliours ben ynough reproved by the refons aforesaid. But natheles, let us now descende to the special. Ye shul firt proceden after the doctrine of Tullius. Certes the trouthe of this mater or of this confeil nedeth not diligentely to enquere, for it is wel wift, which they ben that han don to you this trespas and vilanie, and how many trespasours, and in what manere they han don to you all this wrong, and all this vilanie. And after this, than shuln ye examine the second condi- tion, which that the same Tullius addeth in this mater. For Tullius putteth a thing, which that he clepeth consenting: this is to fayn, who ben they, and which ben they, and how many, that consenten to thy confeil in thy wilfulness, to don haftif vengeaunce. And let us confidre alfo who ben they, and how many ben they, and which ben they, that consenteden to youre ad- versaries. As to the firt point, it is wel knownen which folk they be that consenteden to youre wilfulness. For trewely, all tho that conseileden you to maken fodein werre, ne ben not youre frendes. Let us now confidre which ben they that ye holden so gretly youre frendes, as to
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youre persone: for al be it so that ye be mighty and riche, certes ye ne ben but allone: for certes ye ne han no child but a doughter, ne ye ne han no brethren, ne cosins germains, ne non other nigh kinrede, wherfore that youre enemies for drede shulde flinte to plede with you, or to destrye youre persone. Ye knowen alfo, that your richesfes moten ben dispended in diverse parties; and whan that every wight hath his part, they ne wollen taken but litel regard to venge youre deth. But thin enemies ben three, and they han many brethren, children, cosins, and other nigh kinrede: and though so were, that thou haddeft slain of hem two or three, yet dwellen ther ynow to wreken hir deth, and to flee thy persone. And though so be that youre kinrede be more stedefast and fiker than the kin of your adversaries, yet natheles youre kinrede is but a fer kinrede; they ben but litel fibbe to you, and the kin of youre enemies ben nigh fibbe to hem.

And certes as in that, hir condition is better than youres. Than let us confidre alfo of the consfeilling of hem that conseilled you to take fodein vengeance, whether it accorde to reson: and certes, ye knowe wel, nay; for as by right and reson, ther may no man taken vengeaunce on no wight,
wight, but the juge that hath the jurisdicction of it, whan it is ygrauited him to take thilke venge-
unce hastily, or attemprely, as the lawe requireth. And yet moreover of thilke word that Tullius 
clepeth consenteng, thou shalt confidre, if thy 
might and thy power may consente and suffice to 
thy wilfunesse, and to thy conseilours: and 
certes, thou mayest wel say, that nay; for sikely, 
as for to speke proprely, we moun do nothing 
but only swiche thing as we moun don rightfuilly: 
and certes rightfully ye ne mowe take no venge-
ance, as of youre propre auctoritee. Than mowe 
ye sen that your power ne consenteth not, ne ac-
cordeth not to youre wilfulnesse. Now let us 
examine the thridde point, that Tullius clepeth 
consequent. Thou shalt understonde, that the 
vengeaunce that thou purpo赛st for to take, is the 
consequent, and therof folweth another venge-
ance, peril, and werre, and other damages 
withouten nombre, of which we ben not ware, 
as at this time. And as touching the fourthe 
point, that Tullius clepeth engendring, thou 
shalt consider, that this wrong which that is 
don to thee, is engendred of the hate of thin 
enemies, and of the vengeaunce taking upon 
that wold engender another vengeaunce, and
muckle forwe and wafting of rieheffes, as I sayde ere.

Now, sire, as to the point, that Tryllius clepeth causes, which that is the last point, thou shalt understand, that the wrong that thou hast received, hath certaine causes, which that clerkes clepen oriens, and efficiens, and causa longinqua, and causa propinqua, this is to sayn, the fer cause, and the nigh cause. The fer cause is almighty God, that is cause of alle thinges; the ner cause, is thin three enemies; the cause accidental was hate; the cause material, ben the five woundes of thy doughter; the cause formal, is the maner of hir werking, that broughten ladders, and clomben in at thy windowes; the cause final was for to flee thy doughter; it letted not in as muche as in hem was. But for to speke of the fer cause, as to what ende they shuln come, or what shal finally betide of hem in this cas, ne can I not deme, but by conjecting and supposing: for we shuln suppose, that they shuln come to a wicked ende, because that the book of Decrees sayth: Selden or with gret peine ben causes ybrought to a good ende, whan they ben badly begonne.

Now, Sire, if men wold axen me, why that God suffred men to do you this vilanie, certes I can
can not wel answer, as for no sothfastnesse. For
the Apostle sayth, that the sciences, and the
jugements of oure Lord God Almighty ben ful
dope; ther may no man comprehend ne serche
hem sufficiently. Natheles, by certain presum-
tions and conjectings, I hold and believe, that
God, which that is ful of justice and of right-
wisenesse, hath suffred this betide, by just cause
resonable.

Thy name is Melibee, this is to sayn, a man
that drinketh honys. Thou hast dronke so muche
hony of swete temporel richesse, and delices, and
honours of this world, that thou art dronken,
and hast forgotten Jesu Christ thy creatour: thou
ne hast not don to him swiche honour and re-
verence as thee ought, ne thou ne hast wel
ytaken kepe to the wordes of Ovide, that sayth:
Under the honey of the goodes of thy body is
hid the venime that fleth the soule. And Salo-
mon sayth: If thou hast founden honys, ete of it
that sufficeth; for if thou ete of it out of mesure,
thou shalt spewe, and be nedy and poure. And
peraventure Crist hath thee in despit, and hath
tourned away fro thee his face, and his eres of
misericorde; and also he hath suffred, that thou
haft ben punished in the manere that thou haft
ytrespaed.
ytrespaed. Thou haft don finne again our Lord Crist, for certes the three enemies of mankind, that is to sayn, the flesh, the fend, and the world, thou haft suffred hem entre into thin herte wilfully, by the windowes of thy body, and haft not defended thyself suffisantly agein hir affautes, and hir temptations, so that they han wounded thy soule in five places, this is to sayn the dedly finnes that ben entred into thyne herte by thy five wittes: and in the same manere our Lord Crist hath wold and suffred, that thy three enemies ben entred into thyne hous by the windowes, and han ywounded thy daughter in the foresayd manere.

Certes, quod Melibee, I see wel that ye enforce you muchel by wordes to overcomen me, in swiche manere, that I shal not venge me on mine enemies, shewing me the perils and the evils that mighten falle of this vengeaunce: but who so wolde confidre in alle vengeaunce the perils and evils that mighten sue of vengeaunce taking, a man wold never take vengeaunce, and that were harme: for by the vengeaunce taking ben the wicked men disfereved fro the goode men. And they that han will to do wickednesse, restreinen hir wicked purpos, whan they fen
fen the punishing and the chastising of the trespassors. [To this answered dame Prudence: Certes, quod she, I graunte you that of vengeance taking cometh muche evil and muche good; but vengeance taking apperteyneth not to everich on, but only to juges, and to hem that han the jurisdiction over the trespassors;] and yet say I more, that right as a singuler persone finneth in taking vengeance of another man, right so finneth the juge, if he do no vengeance of hem that it han deserved. For Senek sayth thus: That maister (he sayth) is good, that preveth shrewes. And Caffiodore faith: A man dredeth to do outrages, when he wot and knoweth, that it displeseth to the juges and soveraines. And another sayth: The juge that dredeth to do right, maketh men shrewes. And Seint Poule the Apostle sayth in his Epistle, when he writeth unto the Romaines, that the juges beren not the spere withouten cause, but they beren it to punishe the shrewes and misdoers, and for to defende the goode men. If ye wiln than take vengeance of youre enemies, ye shuln retourne or have your recours to the juge, that hath the jurisdiction upon hem, and he shal punishe hem; as the lawe axeth and requireth.

A, sayd
A, sayd Melibee, this vengeaunce liketh me nothing. I bethink me now, and take hede how that fortune hath norisshed me fro my child-hode, and hath holpen me to passe many a stronge pas: now wol I assayen hire, trowing, with Goddes helpe, that she shal helpe me my shame for to venge.

Certes, quod Prudence, if ye wol werke by my conseil, ye shuln not assaye fortune by no way: ne ye ne shuln not lene or bowe unto hire, after the wordes of Senek; for things that ben solily don, and tho that ben don in hope of fortune, shuln never come to good ende. And as the same Senek sayth: The more clere and the more shining that fortune is, the more brotel and the soner broke she is. Trusteth not in hire, for she n'is not stedfaast ne stabe: for whan thou trowest to be most siker and seure of hire helpe, she wol faille and deceive thee. And wheras ye sayn, that fortune hath norisshed you fro youre childhode, I say that in so muchel ye shuln the leffe truste in hire, and in hire wit. For Senek faith: What man that is norisshed by fortune, she maketh him a gret fool. Now than sin ye desire and axe vengeaunce, and the vengeaunce, that is don after the lawe and before the juge, ne liketh
liketh you not, and the vengeaunce, that is don
in hope of fortune, is perilous and uncertain,
than have ye non other remedie, but for to have
your recours unto the soveraine juge, that
vengeth alle vilanies, and wronges; and he shal
venge you, after that himself witnesseth, wheras
he faith; Leveth the vengeaunce to me, and I
shal do it.

Melibeus answered: If I ne venge me of the
vilanie that men han don to me, I sompne or
warne hem, that han don to me vilanie, and alle
other, to do me another vilanie. For it is writ-
ten; If thou take no vengeaunce of an olde vil-
ny, thou sompneft thin adversaries to do thee a
newe vilanie: and also for my suffraunce, men
wolden do me so muche vilanie, that I might nei-
ther bere it ne sufteine; and so shulde I ben put
and holden over lowe. For som men sain, In
muchel suffring shul many thinges falle unto
thee, which thou shalt not mowe suffre.

Certes, quod Prudence, I graunte you wel, that
overmuchel suffraunce is not good, but yet ne
folweth it not therof, that every persone to
whom men don vilanie, shuld take of it venge-
aunce: for that apperteineth and longeth all only
to the juges, for they shul venge the vilanies and
injuries:
injuries: and therefore tho two autoritorees, that ye han sayd above, ben only understonden in the juges: for whan they suffren overmuchel the wronges and vilanies to be don, withouten punishing, they fompne not a man all only for to do newe wronges, but they commaunden it: al fo as a wise man sayth, that the juge that corredoeth not the sinner, commaundeth and biddereth him do finne. And the juges and soveraines mighten in hir lond so muche suffre of the shrewes and misdoers, that they shulden by swiche suffraunce, by proces of time, wexen of swiche power and might, that they shuld putte out the juges and the soveraines from hir places, and atte lafte maken hem lese hir lordshippes.

But now let us putte, that ye have leve to venge you: I say ye be not of might and power, as now to venge you: for if ye wol maken comparison unto the might of youre adversaries, ye shuln finde in many things, that I have shewed you er this, that hir condition is better than youres, and therfore say I, that it is good as now, that ye suffre and be patient.

Forthermore ye knowen wel, that after the commune saw, it is a woodnesse, a man to strive with a stonger, or a more mighty man than he is himself;
himself; and for to strive with a man of even strength, that is to say; with as strong a man as he is, it is peril; and for to strive with a weaker man, it is folly; and therefore shulde a man flee striving, as muchel as he mighte. For Salomon sayth: It is a great worship to a man to kepe him fro noise and strife. And if it so happe, that a man of greter mighte and strength than thou art, do thee grevaunce: studie and besie thee rather to stille the same grevaunce, than for to venge thee. For Senek sayth, that he putteth him in a grete peril, that striveth with a greter man than he is himself. And Caton sayth: If a man of higher estat or degree, or more mighty than thou, do thee anoye or grevance, suffre him: for he that ones hath greved thee, may another time releve thee and helpe thee. Yet for I cas, ye have bothe mighte and licence for to venge you, I say that thier ben ful many thinges that shuln restreine you of vengeaunce taking, and make you for to encline to suffre, and for to han patience in the wronges that han ben don to you. First and forward, if ye wol confidre the defautes that ben in your owen persone, for which defautes God hath suffred you have this tribulation, as I have sayd to you herebeforne. For
the Poete sayth, that we oughten patiently taken the tribulations that comen to us, when that we thinken and consideren, that we han deserved to have hem. And Seint Gregorie sayth, that when a man considereth wel the nombre of his defautes and of his finnes, the peines and the tribulations that he suffereth, fement the lesse unto him. And in as mucho as him thinketh his finnes more hevy and grevous, in so mucho semeth his peine the lighter and the esier unto him. 'Also ye owen to encline and bowe youre herte, to take the patience of oure Lord Jesu Crist, as sayth Seint Peter in his Epistles. Jesu Crist (he faith) hath suffred for us, and yeven ensample to every man to folwe and füe him, for he dide never finne, ne never came ther a vilains word out of his mouth. Whan men cursed him, he cursed hem nought; and whan men beten him, he manaced hem nought. Also the gret patience, which Seintes that ben in Paradis han had in tribulations that they han suffred, withouten hir desert or gilt, oughte muchel flirre you to patience. Forthermore, ye shulde enforce you to have patience, considering that the tribulations of this world but litel while endure, and fone passed ben and gon, and the joye that a
man seeketh to han by patience in tribulations is perdurable; after that the Apostle sayth in his Epistle; the joye of God, he sayth, is perdurable, that is to sayn, everlafting. Also troweth and beleeveth steadfastly, that he n'is not wel ynorished ne wel ytaught, that cannot have patience, or wol not receive patience. For Solomon sayth, that the doctrine and wit of a man is known by patience. And in another place he sayeth, that he that is patient, governeth him by great prudence. And the same Solomon faith: The angrie and wrathful man maketh noises, and the patient man attempreth and stilleth hem. He faith also, It is more worth to be patient than for to be right strong. And he that may have the lordship of his own herte, is more to preise, than he that by his force or strengthe taketh great citees. And thercfo faith Seint James in his Epistle, that patience is a great vertue of perfection.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, Dame Prudence, that patience is a great vertue of perfection, but every man may not have the perfection that ye seken, ne I am not of the nombre of the right parfit men: for min herte may never be in pess, unto the time it be venged. And al be it so, that it was great peril to min enemies.
enemies to do me a vilanie in taking vengeaunce upon me, yet token they non hede of the peril, but fulfilleden hir wicked will and hir corage: and theryfore me thinketh men oughten not repreve me, though I put me in a litel peril for to venge ine, and though I do a gret excelle, that is to sayn, that I venge on outrage by another.

A, quod dame Prudence, ye sayn your will and as you liketh: but in no cas of the world a man shulde not don outrage ne excelle, for to vengen him. For Cassiodore sayth, that as evil doth he that vengeth him by outrage, as he that doth the outrage. And theryfore ye shuln venge you after the orde of right, that is to sayn, by the lawe, and not by excelle, ne by outrage. And also if ye wol venge you of the outrage of youre adversaries, in other manere than right commaundeth, ye finnen. And theryfore sayth Senek, that a man shal never venge shrewednesse by shrewednesse. And if ye say that right axeth a man to defende violence by violence, and fighting by fighting: certes ye say soth, whan the defence is don withouten intervalle, or withouten tarying or delay, for to defende him, and not for to venge. And it behoveth, that a man putte swiche attemperaunce in his de-
fence, that men have no cause ne mater to re-preve him, that defendeth him, of outrage and excess, for elles were it againe reson. Parde ye knowen wel, that ye maken no defence as now, for to defende you, but for to venge you: and so sheweth it, that ye han no will to do youre dede attemprely: and thersore me thinketh that patience is good. For Salomon sayth, that he that is not patient, shal have gret harme.

Certes, quod Melibee, I graunte you, that whan a man is impatient and wrothe of that that toucheth him not, and that apperteyneth not unto him, though it harme him it is no wonder. For the lawe faith, that he is coupable that entremeteth or medleth with swiche thing, as apperteyneth not unto him. And Salomon faith, that he that entremeteth of the noise or strif of another man, is like to him that taketh a straunge hound by the eres: for right as he that taketh a straunge hound by the eres is otherwhile bitten with the hound, right in the same wise, it is reson that he have harme, that by his impatience medleth him of the noise of another man, wheras it apperteyneth not unto him. But ye knowe wel, that this dede, that is to sayn, my greef and my disease, toucheth me right nigh. And thersore
though I be wroth and impatient, it is no mer- vaille: and (saving your grace) I cannot see that it might gretly harme me, though I took vengeance, for I am richer and more mighty than min enemies ben: and wel knowe ye, that by money and by having grete possessiouns, ben alle things of this world governed. And Salomon fayth, that alle things obeye to money.

When Prudence had herd hire husbond avaunte him of his richesse and of his money, dispriying the power of his adversaries, she spake and sayd in this wise: Certes, dere Sire, I graunte you that ye ben riche and mighty, and that richesxes ben good to hem that han wel ygeten hem, and that wel conne usen hem. For right as the body of a man may not liven withouten foul, no more may it liven withouten temporel goodes, and by richesxes may a man gete him grete frendes. And therfore fayth Pamphilus: If a netherdes daughter (he sayth) be riche, she may chese of a thousand men, which she wol take to hire, husbond: for of a thousand men on wol not forsaken hire ne refusen hire. And this Pamphilus faith also: If thou be right happy, that is to sayn, if thou be right riche, thou shalt finde a gret nombre of felawes
felawes and frendes; and if thy fortune chaungeo, that thou weye poure, farewel frendshipe and selawshipe, for thou shalt be al alone withouten any compaignie, but if it be the compaignie of poure folk. And yet sayth this Pamphilus moreover, that they that ben bond and thralle of linage, shuln be made worthy and noble by richesses. And right so as by richesses ther comen many goodes, right so by povertie com, ther many harms and eviles: for gret povertie constreineth a man to do many eviles. And therfore clepeth Cassiodore povertie the moder of ruine, that is to sayn, the moder of overthrowing or falling doun. And therfore sayth Piers Alfonse: on of the gretest adverfitees of this world, is whan a free man by kinde, or of birthe, is constreined by povertie to eten the almesse of his enemie. And the same sayth Innocent in on of his bookes: he sayth, that forweful and mishappy is the condition of a poure beggar, for if he axe not his mete, he dieth for hunger, and if he axe, he dieth for shame: and algates necesfitee constreineth him to axe. And therfore sayth Salomon, that better it is to die, than for to have fwhiche povertie. And as the same Salomon sayth: Better it is to die of bitter deth, than
for to liven in swiche wise. By thise refons that I have said unto you, and by many other refons that I coude saye, I graunte you that richesles ben good to hem that wel geten hem, and to hem that wel usen tho richesles: and therfore wol I shewe you how ye shuln behaye you in gadering of youre richesles, and in what manere ye shuln usen hem.

First, ye shuln geten hem withouten gret desir, by good leifer, sookingly, and not over hastifly, for a man that is to desiring to gete richesles, abandoneth him first to thefte and to alle other eviles. And therfore sayth Salomon: He that hasteth him to besily to wexe riche, he shal be non innocent. He sayth also, that the richesle that hastily cometh to a man, sone and lightly goeth and passeth from a man, but that richesle that cometh litel and litel, wexeth alway and multlieth. And, Sire, ye shulen gete richesles by youre wit and by youre travaille, unto youre profite, and that withouten wrong or harme doing to any other persone. For the lawe sayth: Ther maketh no man himself riche, if he do harme to another wight; this is to say, that nature defendeth and forbedeth by right, that no man make himself riche, unto the harme of
of another persone. And Tullius sayth, that no forwe, ne no drede of deth, ne nothing that may falle unto a man, is so muchel ageins nature, as a man to encrefe his owen profite, to harme of another man. And though the grete men and the mighty men geten richesses more lightly than thou, yet shalt thou not ben idel ne fowle to do thy profite, for thou shalt in alle wise flee idelnesse. For Salomon sayth, that idelnesse techeth a man to do many eyiles. And the fame Salomon sayth, that he that travailleth and befieth him to tillen his lond, shal ete bred: but he that is idel, and casteth him to no besinesse ne occupation, shal falle into poverté, and die for hunger. And he that is idel and fowle, can never find covenable time for to do his profite. For ther is a verfifour sayth, that the idel man excufeth him in Winter, because of the grete cold, and in Sommer by enchesfon of the hete. For thise causes, sayth Caton, waketh, and enclineth you not over muchel to flepe, for over muchel reste norifheth and causeth many vices. And therfore sayth Seint Jerome; Doeth fon good dedes, that the devil which isoure enemie, ne finde you not unoccupied, for the devil ne taketh not lightly unto his werking swiche as he findeth occupied in goode werkes.
Than thus in getting riches they must flee idleness. And afterward ye shuln usen the riches, which ye han geten by youre wit and by youre travaille, in swiche manere, that men holde you not to scarce ne to sparing, ne foollarge, that is to say, over large a spender: for right as men blamen an avaricious man, because of his scarcitee and chincherie, in the same wise is he to blame, that spendeth over largely. And therefore saith Caton: Use (sayth he) the riches that thou hast ygeten in swiche manere, that men have no materie ne cause to calle thee nother wretche ne chinche: for it is a grete shame to a man to have a poure herte and a riche purse.

He saith also: the goodes that thou hast ygeten, use hem by mesure, that is to sayn, spende mesureably; for they that folily waisten and dispenden the goodes that they han, whan they han no more propre of hir owen, than they shapen hem to take the goodes of another man. I say than that ye shuln flee avarice, using youre riches in swiche manere, that men sayn not that your riches ben yberied, but that ye have hem in youre might, and in youre welding. For a wise man repreveth the avaricious man, and saith thus in two vers. Wherto and why berieth a man
man his goodes by his gret avarice, and knoweth wel, that nedes must he die, for deth is the end of every man, as in this present lif? and for what cauie or enchesfon joineth he him, or knitteth he him so faft unto his goodes, that alle his wittes mown not disseveren him, or departen him from his goodes, and knoweth wel, or oughte to knowe, that whan he is ded, he shal nothing bere with him out of this world? And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that the avaricious man is likened unto helle, that the more it swalweth, the more desir it hath to swalwe and devour. And as wel as ye wolde eschue to be called an avaricious man or chinch, as wel shulde ye kepe you and governe you in swiche a wise, that men calle you not fool-large. Therfore faith Tullius: The goodes of thin hous ne shulde not ben hid ne kept fo close, but that they might ben opened by pitee and debonairete; that is to sayn, to yeve hem part that han gret nede; ne thy goodes shuldren not ben fo open, to be every mannes goodes. Afterward, in geting of youre richesbes, and in using of hem, ye shuln alway have three thinges in youre herte, that is to say, oure Lord God, conscience, and good name. Firft, ye shuln have God in youre herte, and for no
no riches fe ye shuln do no thing, which may in any manere displese God that is your creatour and maker. For after the word of Salomon, it is better to have a litel good with love of God, than to have muchel good, and lese the love of his Lord God. And the Prophete sayth, That better it is to ben a good man, and have litel good and trefor, than to be holden a shwe, and have grete riches ses. And yet I say furthermore, that ye shulden alway do youre besineffe to gete you riches ses, so that ye gete hem with good conscience. And the Apostlfe sayth, that ther n'is thing in this world of which we shulden have so grete joye, as whan our conscience bereth us good witenes. And the Wife man sayth: The substaunce of a man is ful good, whan sinne is not in mannes conscience. Afterward, in geting of youre riches ses, and in using of hem, ye must have grete besineffe and grete diligence, that youre good name be alway kept and conserved. For Salomon sayth, that beter it is, and more it availeth a man to have a good name, than for to have grete riches ses: and therfore he sayth in another place: Do grete diligence (faith Salomon) in keping of thy frendes, and of thy good name, for it shal lenger abide with thee, than any trefor,
for, be it never so precious. And certes, he shulde not be called a Gentilman, that after God and good conscience, alle things left, ne doth his diligence and besineffe, to kepen his good name. And Caffiodore sayth, that it is a signe of a gentil herte, whan a man loveth and desireth to have a good name. And therfore sayth Seint Augustine, that ther ben two thinges that ar right necessarye and nedeful; and that is good conscience, and good los; that is to sayn, good conscience to thin owen persone inward, and good los for thy neighebour outward. And he that trosteth him so muchel in his good conscience, that he despiseth and setteth at nought his good name or los, and recketh not though he kepe not his good name, n'is but a cruel cherl.

Sire, now have I shewed you how ye shulden do in geting richesses, and how ye shuln usen hem: and I see wel that for the truft that ye han in youre richesses, ye wil ne move werre and bataille. I conseille you that ye beginne no bataille ne werre, in truft of youre richesses, for they ne sufficen not werres to mainteine. And therfore sayth a Philosophre: That man that desirith and wol algates han werre, shal never have suffisaunce: for the richer that he is, the greter dispences.
dispences must he make, if he wol have worship and victorie. And Salomon faith, that the greter richesses that a man hath, the mo dispendours he hath. And, dere Sire, al be it so, that for your richesses ye moun have muchel folk, yet behoveth it not, ne it is not good to beginne werre, wheras ye moun in other manere have pees, unto youre worship and profite: for the victorie of batailles that ben in this world, lith not in gret nombre or multitude of peple, ne in the vertue of man, but it lith in the will and in the hond of oure Lord God almighty. And therefore Judas Machabeus, which was Goddes knight, whan he shulde fighte again his adverfarie, that hadde a greter nombre and a greter multitude of folk, and strenger than was the peple of this Machabee, yet he recomforted his litel compaignie, and sayde right in this wise: Al so lightly (sayde he) may our Lord God almighty yeve victorie to a fewe folk, as to many folk; for the victorie of a bataille cometh not by the gret nombre of peple, but it cometh from oure Lord God of heven. And, dere Sire, for as muchel as ther is no man certaine, if it be worthy that God yeve him victorie or not, after that Salomon sayth, therfore every man shulde gretly drede
drede werres to beginne: and because that in batailles fallen many perils, and it happeth other while, that as sone is the gret man flain, as the litel man; and, as it is ywritten in the second book of Kinges, the dedes of batailles ben aventureous, and nothing certain, for as lightly is on hurt with a spere, as another; and for ther is gret-peril in werre; therfore shulde a man flee and eechue werre in as muchel as a man may goodly. For Salomon sayth: He that loveth peril, shal selle in peril.

After that Dame Prudence had spoken in this manere, Melibee answerd and saide: I see wel, dame Prudence, that by youre faire wordes and by youre refons, that ye han swewed me, that the werre liketh you nothing: but I have not yet herd your conseil, how I shal do in this nede.

Certes, quod she, I conseille you that ye acorde with youre aduersaries, and that ye have pees with hem. For Seint James sayth in his Epistle, that by concorde and pees, the smale richesses waxen grete, and by debat and discorde grete richesses fallen doun. And ye knowen wel, that on of the gretest and mosfte soveraine thing that is in this world, is unitee and pees. And therfore
therefore sayde our Lord Iesu Crist to his Apostles in this wise: Wel happy and blessed ben they that loven and purchasen pees, for they ben called the children of God. A, quod Melibee, now see I wel, that ye loven not min honour, ne my wor-
ship. Ye knowen wel that min adversaries han begonne this debat and brige by hir outrage; and ye see wel, that they ne requeren ne prayen me not of pees, ne they axen not to be recon-
ciled; wol ye than that I go and meke me, and obeye me to hem, and crie hem mercie? For-
soth that were not my worship: for right as men sayn, that overgret homlinesse engendreth dispreifing, so fareth it by to gret humilitie or mekenesse.

Than began dame Prudence to make semblanunt of wrathe, and sayde: Certes, Sire, (sauf your grace) I love youre honour and youre profite, as I do min owen, and ever have don; ye, ne non other, seyn never the contrary: and if I had sayde, that ye shulde han purchased the pees and the reconciliation, I ne hadde not muchel mistakene me, ne sayde amis. For the Wise man sayth: The dissention beginneth by another man, and the reconciling beginneth by thyself. And the Prophete faith: Flee, shrewedness.
and do goodnesse; seke peef and solwe it, in as muchel as in thee is. Yet say I not, that ye shuln rather pursue to youre adversaries for pees, than they shuln to you: for I know wel that ye ben so hard-herted, that ye wol do nothing for me; and Salomon sayth: he that hath over hard an herte, atte lafte he shal mis-happe and misfide.

Whan Melibee had herd dame Prudence make semblaunt of wrath, he sayde in this wise. Dame, I pray you that ye be not displeased of thinges that I say, for I knowe wel that I am angry and wroth, and that is no wonder; and they that ben wroth, woten not wel what they don, ne what they sayn. Therfore the Prophete sayth, that troubled eyen han no clere sighte. But sayth and conseilleth me as you liketh, for I am redy to do right as ye wol desire. And if ye repreve me of my folie, I am the more holde to love you and to preise you. For Salomon faith, that he that repreveth him that doth folie, he shal find greter grace, than he that deceiveth him by sweete wordes.

Than sayde Dame Prudence; I make no semblaunt of wrath ne of anger, but for youre grete profite. For Salomon faith: he is more

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worth, that repreveth or chideth a fool for his folie, shewing him semblaunt of wrath, than he that supporteth him and preiseth him in his misdoing, and laugheth at his folie. And this same Salomon faith afterward, that by the sorweful visage of a man, that is to sayn, by the sory and hevy countenance of a man, the fool correcteth and amendeth himself.

Than said Melibee; I shal not conne answere unto so many faire refons as ye putten to me and shewen: sayth shortly youre will and youre conseil, and I am al redy to performe and fullfille it.

Than Dame Prudence discovered all hire will unto him and saide: I conseille you, quod she, above alle thinges that ye make pees betwene God and you, and be reconciled unto him and to his grace, for as I have sayde you herebefore, God hath suffered you to have this tribulation and dife for youre finnes: and if ye do as I say you, God wol fende youre adversaries unto you, and make hem falle at youre feet, redy to do youre will and youre commandements. For Salomon sayth; whan the condition of man is pleaunt and liking to God, he chaungeth the hertes of the mannes adversaries,
faries, and constrineth hem to besechen him of pees and of grace. And I pray you let me speke with your adversaries in privee place, for they shuln not knowe that it be of youre will or youre assent; and than, when I knowe hir will and hir entente, I may conseille you the more seurely.

Dame, quod Melibcus, doth youre will and youre liking, for I putte me holly in youre disposition and ordinaunce.

Than Dame Prudence, when she fey the good will of hire husbond, delibered unto hire, and toke avis in hire self, thinking how she might bring this nede unto goode ende. And when she fey hire time, she sent for thise adversaries to come unto hire in to a private place, and shewed wisely unto hem the grete goodes that comen of pees, and the grete harmes and perils that ben in werre; and said to hem in a goodly manere, how that hem oughte have gret repent- aunce of the injuries and wronges, that they hadden don to Melibeus hire lord, and unto hire and to hire daughter.

And when they herden the goodly wordes of Dame Prudence, they weren so surprised and ravished, and hadden so gret joye of hire, that wonder
THE TALE OF MELIBEUS

wonder was to telle. A, lady, quod they, ye have shewed unto us the blessing of swetenesse, after the saying of David the Prophete; for the reconnailing, which we be not worthy to have in no manere, but we oughten requeren it with grete contrition and humilitie, ye of youre grete goodnesse have presented unto us. Now see we wel, that the science and conning of Salomon is ful trewe; for he faith, that swete wordes multiplien and encrefen frendes, and maken shrewes to be debonaire and meke.

Certes, quod they, we putten oure dede, and all oure matere and cause, al holly in youre good will, and ben redy to obeye unto the speche and commandement of my lord Melibeus. And therfore, dere and benigne lady, we praye you and befeche you as mekely as we conne and moun, that it like unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfille in dede youre goodly wordes. For we consideren and knowelechen, that we han offended and greved my lord Melibeus out of mesure, fo fer forth, that we ben not of power to maken him amendes; and therfore we oblige and binde us and oure frendes, for to do all his will and his commandements: but peraventure he hath swiche hevinesse and swiche wrath to
as ward, because of oure offence, that he wol enjoynen us swiche a peine, as we moun not bere ne susteine; and thersore, noble ladie, we beseche to youre womanly pittee to take swich avisement in this nede, that we, ne oure frendes, ben not disherited and destroied, thurgh oure folie.

Certes, quod Prudence, it is an hard thing and right perilous, that a man putte him all outrely in the arbitration and jugement, and in the might and power of his enemie: for Salomon sayth: leveth me, and yeveth credence to that that I shal say: to thy sone, to thy wif, to thy frend, ne to thy brother, ne yeve thou never might ne maiстрie over thy body, while thou livest. Now, sith he defendeth that a man shulde not yeve to his brother, ne to his frend, the might of his body, by a strenger resoun he defendeth and forbedeth a man to yeve himself to his enemy. And nathelles, I conseille you that ye mistruste not my lord: for I wot wel and know veraily, that he is debonaire and meke, large, curteis, and nothing desirous ne coveitous of good ne richesse: for ther is nothing in this world that he desireth, fave only worship and honour. Forthermore I know wel,
and am right sure, that he shal nothing do in this nede withouten my conseil; and I shal so werken in this cas, that by the grace of oure Lord God ye shuln be reconciled unto us.

Than saiden they with o vois; worshipful lady, we putten us and oure goodes al fully in youre will and disposition, and ben redy to come, what day that it like unto youre nobleffes to limite us or affigne us, for to makeoure obligation and bond, as strong as it liketh unto youre goodnesse, that we moun fulfille the will of you and of my lord Melibee.

Whan Dame Prudence had herd the answer of thife men, she bad hem go again prively, and she retourned to hire lord Melibee, and told him how she fond his adversaries ful repentaunt, knowleching ful lowly hir finnes and trespas, and how they weren redy to suffren all peine, requering and preying him of mercy and pitee.

Than saide Melibee; he is wel worthy to have pardon and foryevenesfe of his finne, that excuseth not his finne, but knowlecheth, and repenteth him, axing indulgence. For Senek faith; ther is the remission and foryevenesfe, wher as the confession is; for confession is neighbour to innocence. And therefore I af-
fente and conferme me to have pees, but it is
good that we do nought withouten the assent
and will of oure frendes.

Than was Prudence right glad and joyful,
and saide; certes, fire, ye han wel and goodly
answered: for right as by the conseil, assent,
and helpe of your frendes, ye han be stired to
venge you and make werre: right so withouten
hir conseil shul ye not accord you, ne have
pees with youre adversaries. For the lawe
faith: ther is nothing so good by way of kinde,
as a thing to be unbounde by him that it was
ybounde.

And than Dame Prudence, withouten delay
or tarying, sent anon hire messageres for hir
kin and for hir olde frendes, which that were
trewe and wise: and told hem by ordre, in the
presence of Melibee, all the matere, as it is
above expressed and declared; and preied hem
that they wold yeve hir avis and conseil, what
were best to do in this nede. And whan Me-
libeus frendes hadden taken hir avis and delibe-
ration of the foresaid matere, and hadden ex-
amined it by gret besinesse and gret diligence,
they yaven ful conseil for to have pees and reste,

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and that Melibee shulde receive with good herte his adversaries to foryevenesse and mercy.

And whan dame Prudence had herd the af-fent of hire lord Melibee, and the conseil of his frendes, accord with hire will and hire en-tention, she was wonder glad in hire herte, and sayde: ther is an olde Proverbe, quod she, sayth, that the goodnesse that thou maist do this day, do it, and abide not, ne delay it not til to morwe: and therfore I conseille, that ye fende youre messageres, swiche as ben discrete and wise, unto youre adversaries, telling hem on youre behalf, that if they wol trete of pees and of accord, that they shape hem, withouten delay or tarying, to come unto us. Which thing parfourned was indede. And whan thise trespasours and repenting folk of hir folies, that is to sayn, the adversaries of Melibee, hadden herd what thise messageres sayden unto hem, they weren right glade and joyful, and an-swerden ful mekely and benignely, yelding graces and thankinges to hir lord Melibee, and to all his compagnie: and shopen hem withouten delay to go with the messageres, and obeye to the commaundement of hir lord Me-libee.

And
And right anon they token hir way to the court of Melibee, and token with hem som of hir trewe frendes, to make feith for hem, and for to ben hir borwes. And whan they were comen to the presence of Melibee, he saide hem thise wordes: it flant thus, quod Melibee, and soth it is, that ye causeles, and withouten skill and reson, han don grete injuries and wronges to me, and to my wif Prudence, and to my daughter also, for ye han entred into myn hous by vio-

lence, and have don swiche outrage, that alle men knowen wel that ye han deserved the deth: and therfore wol I know and wete of you, whe-

ther ye wol putte the punishing and chastising, and the vengeaunce of this outrage, in the will of me and of my wif, or ye wol not.

Than the wisest of hem three answered for hem alle, and saide. Sire, quod he, we knowen wel, that we ben unworthy to come to the court of so gret a lord and so worthy as ye ben, for we han so gretly mistaken us, and han offended and agilte in swiche wise agein youre high lord-

shippe, that trewely we han deserved the deth; but yet for the grete goodnesse and debonairete, that all the world witnesseth of youre persone, we submitten us to the excellence and benignitee
of your gracious lordship, and ben redy to obeye to alle your comandements, beseeching you, that of your merciable pitee ye wol consider our grete repentance and lowe submission, and graunte us foryevenessee of our outrageous trespasses and offence: for wel we knowen, that your liberal grace and mercie stretchen hem forther into goodnesse, than don our outrageous giltes and trespasses into wickednesse; al be it that cursedly and damnable we han agilte again your highe lordship.

Than Melibee toke hem up fro the ground ful benignely, and received hir obligations, and hir bonds, by hir othes upon hir plegges and borwes, and assigned hem a certain day to retourne unto his court for to receive and accept sentence and jugement, that Melibee wolde commande to be don on hem, by the causes aforesaid; which thinges ordained, every man returned to his hous.

And whan that dame Prudence saw hire time, she freined and axed hire lord Melibee, what vengeance he thoughte to taken of his adversaries.

To which Melibee answard, and saide: certes, quod he, I thinke and purpose me fully to disherite
disherite hem of all that ever they han, and for
to putte hem in exile for ever.

Certes, quod Dame Prudence, this were a
cruel sentence, and muchel agein reson. For
ye ben riche ynough, and han no nede of other
mennes good; and ye might lightly in this
wife gete you a coveitous name, which is a vi-
cious thing, and oughte to ben eschewed of
every good man: for after the fawe of the
Apostle, coveitise is rote of alle harms. And
therefore it were better for you to lese muchel
good of your owen, than for to take of hir good
in this manere. For better it is to lese good
with worschip, than to winne good with vilanie
and shame. And every man oughte to do his
diligence and his besineffe, to gete him a good
name. And yet shal he not only besie him in
keping his good name, but he shal also en-
forcen him alway to do som thing, by which
he may renovelle his good name: for it is writ-
ten, that the olde good los, or good name, of a
man is sone gon and passede, whan it is not
newed. And as touching that ye sayn, that ye
wol exile your adversaries, that thinketh me
muchel agein reson, and out of mesure, con-
sidered the power that they han yeven you
upon himself. And it is written, that he is worthy to lose his privilege, that misuseth the might and the power that is yeven him. And I sette cas, ye might enjoiue hem that peine by right and by lawe, (which I trowe ye mowe not do) I say, ye might not putte it to execution peraventure, and than it were like to retourne to the werre, as it was beforne. And theryfore if ye wol that men do you obeysaunce, ye must deme more curteisly, that is to sayn, ye must yeve more esie sentences and jugements. For it is written: he that most curteisly commandeth, to him men most obeyen. And theryfore I pray you, that in this neceffitye and in this nede ye cafte you to overcome youre herte. For Senek sayth, that he that overcometh his herte, overcometh twies. And Tullius faith: ther is nothing fo commendable in a grete lord, as whan he is debonaire and meke, and appefeth him lightly. And I pray you, that ye wol now forbere to do vengeaunce, in swiche a manere, that your good name may be kept and conſerved, and that men mown have caufe and matere to preife you of pitee and of mercy; and that ye have no caufe to repente you of thing that ye don. For Seneke faieth: he over-
cometh in an evil manere, that repenteth him of his victorie. Whersore I pray you let mercy be in your herte, to the effect and entente, that God almighty have mercy upon you in his last jugement: for seint James faith in his Epistle: jugement withoute mercy shal be do to him, that hath no mercy of another wight.

Whan Melibee had heard the grete skilles and refons of dame Prudence, and hire wife informations and techinges, his herte gan encline to the will of his wif, considering hire trewe entente, enforced him anon and assented fully to worken after hire conseil, and thanked God, of whom procedeth all goodnesse and all vertue, that him sent a wif of so gret discretion. And whan the day came that his adversaries shulde appere in his presence, he spake to hem ful goodly, and saide in this wise. Al be it so, that of youre pride and high presumption and folie, and of youre negligence and unconning, ye have misborne you, and trespased unto me, yet for as muchel as I see and behold youre grete humilitie, and that ye ben fory and repentant of youre giltes, it confreineth me to do you grace and mercy: wherfore I receive you into my grace, and foryeve you outrely alle the offences, injuries,
injuries, and wronges, that ye have don agein me and mine, to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeles mercie wol at the time of our dying foryeve us our giltes, that we han trespased to him in this wretched world: for douteles, if we be sory and repentant of the finnes and giltes, which we han trespased in the sight of our Lord God, he is so free and so merciable, that he wol foryeven us our giltes, and bringen us to the bliffe that never hath ende. Amen.

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.