The General Prologue

1 Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
2 The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
3 And bathed every veyne in swich licour
4 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
5 Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
6 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
7 Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
8 Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne,
9 And smale foweles maken melodye,
10 That slepen al the nyght with open ye
11 (so priketh hem nature in hir corages);
12 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
13 And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
14 To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
15 And specially from every shires ende
16 Of engelond to caunterbury they wende,
17 The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
18 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seekede.

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

35 But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
36 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
37 Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
38 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
39 And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
40 And eek in what array that they were inne;
41 And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.
A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.
At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
Aboven alle nacions in pruce;
In lettow hadde he reysed and in ruce,
No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
In gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
Of algezir, and riden in belmарьe.
At lyeys was he and at satalye,
Whan they were wonne; and in the grete see
At many a noble armee hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at tramysene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
Somtyme with the lord of palatye
Agayn another hethen in turkye.
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;
And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
He was a verryay, parfit gentil knyght.
But, for to tellen yow of his array,
His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
Of fustian he wered a gypon
Al bismotered with his habergeon,
For he was late ycome from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.
With hym ther was his sone, a yong squier,
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
In flaundres, in artoys, and pycardie,
And born hym wel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.
91  Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
92    He was as fressh as is the month of may.
93  Short was his gowne, with sleves longe and wyde.
94    Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.
95    He koude songes make and wel endite,
96    Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
97    So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale.
98  He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
99    Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
100   And carf biforn his fader at the table.
101  A yeman hadde he and servantz namo
102    At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,
103   And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
104  A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
105    Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
106    (wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly:
107    His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe)
108    And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
109  A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
110  Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.
111  Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
112    And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
113    And on that other syde a gay daggere
114    Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
115    A cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.
116  An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
117    A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.
118  Ther was also a nonne, a prioresse,
119    That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
120   Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte loy;
121   And she was cleped madame eglentynye.
122  Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
123    Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
124    And frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
125    After the scolde of stratford atte bowe,
126    For frenssh of parys was to hire unknowe.
127  At mete wel ytaught was she with alle:
128    She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
129    Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
130   Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
131    That no drope ne fylle upon hire brest.
132  In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
133    Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
134    That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
135   Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
136    Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
137    And sikerly she was of greet desport,
138    And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
139    And peyned hire to countrefete cheere
Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But, for to speken of hire conscience,
She was so charitable and so pitous
She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous
Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde
With rosted flessh, or milk and wastel-breed.
But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;
Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
On which ther was first write a crowned a,
And after amor vincit omnia.

Another nonne with hire hadde she,
That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.
A monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An outrider, that lovede venerie,
A manly man, to been an abbot able.
Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere
Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.

Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle,
The reule of seint maure or of seint beneit,
By cause that it was old and somdel streit
This ilke monk leet olde thynges pace,
And heeld after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees, --
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinion was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,
Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,
As austyn bit? how shal the world be served?
Lat austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!
Therfore he was a prikasour aright:
Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fneste of a lond;
And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat;
He was nat pale as a forpyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.
A frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde maad ful many a mariage
Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun:
As he wiste to have a good pitaunce.
For unto a povre ordre for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;
For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt;
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte.
Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyeres
Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
And certeinly he hadde a murye note:
Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;
Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
Therto he strong was as a champioun.
He knew the tavernes wel in every toun
And everich hostiler and tappestere
Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
For unto swich a worthy man as he
Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce,
For to deelen with no swich poraille,
But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,
Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.
Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste beggere in his hous;
(and yaf a certeyne ferme for the graunt;
Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;)
For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
So plesaunt was his in principio,
Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente.
His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.
And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.
In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,
For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,
But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse,
To make his englissh sweete upon his tonge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght,
As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
This worthy lymytour was cleped huberd.
A marchant was ther with a forked berd,
In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat;
Upon his heed a flaundryssh bever hat,
His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge alwey th’ encrees of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kept for any thyng
Bitwixe middelburgh and orewelle.
Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
So estatly was he of his governaunce
With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.
For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,
But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.
A clerk ther was of oxenford also,
That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
As leene was his hors as is a rake,
And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
But looked holwe, and therto sobrely.
Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office.
For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
Of aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.
Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede,
Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;
Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

A sergeant of the lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde been at the parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discreet he was and of greet reverence --
He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patente and by pleyn commissioun.
For his science and for his heigh renoun,
Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
Al was fee symple to hym in effect;
His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.
Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
And yet he semed bisier than he was.
In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
That from the tyme of kyng william were falle.
Therto he koude endite, and make a thyng,
Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote.
Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A frankeleyn was in his compaignye.
Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
For he was epicurus owene sone,
That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
Was verray felicitee parfit.
An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
Seint julian he was in his contree.
His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous
Of fissh and flessh, and that so plenteuous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke.
After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
An anlaas and a gipser al of silk
Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.
Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.
An haberdasshere and a carpenter,
A webbe, a dyere, and a tapycer, --
And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
Of a solempe and a greet fraternitee.
Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras
But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weil
Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.
Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,
Was shaply for to been an alderman.
For catel hadde they ynoth and rente,
And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn were they to blame.
It is ful fair to been ycleped madame,
And goon to vig ilies al bifore,
And have a mantel roialliche ybore.
A cook they hadde with hem for the nones
To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.
Wel koude he knowe a draughte of londoun ale.
He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.
For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.

A shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;
For aught I woot, he was of dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rounce, as he kouthe,
In a gowne of faldeyn to the knee.
A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe
Fro burdeux-ward, whil that the chapmen sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,
By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.
But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,
His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,
Ther nas noon swich from hulle to cartage.
Hardy he was and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
He knew alle the havenes, as they were,
Fro gootlond to the cape of fynystere,
And every cryke in britaigne and in spayne.
His barge ycleped was the maudelayne.

With us ther was a doctour of phisik;
In al this world ne was the noon hym lik,
To spoke of phisik and of surgerye
For he was grounded in astronomye.
He keped his pacient a ful greet deel
In houres by his magyk natureel.
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent
Of his ymages for his pacient.
He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,
And where they engendred, and of what humour.
He was a verray, parfit praktisour:
The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries
To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,
For ech of hem made oother for to wynne --
Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.
Wel knew he the olde esculapius,
And deyscorides, and eek rufus,
Olde ypocras, haly, and galven,
Serapion, razis, and avycen,
Averrois, damascien, and constantyn,
Bernard, and gatesden, and gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
Lyned with taffata and with sendal;
And yet he was but esy of dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.

A good wif was ther of biside bathe,
But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.
Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt,
She passed hem of ypres and of gaunt.
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge biffer hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she,
That she was out of alle charitee.
Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
That on a sonday weren upon hir heed.
Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
Withouten oother compaignye in youthe, --
But therof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
Thries hadde she been at jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
At rome she hadde been, and at boloigne,
In galice at seint-jame, and at coloigne.
She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
Upon an amblere esily she sat,
Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
a foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
In felaweishipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.
Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre persoun of a toun,
But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
He was also a learned man, a clerk,
That Christ's gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient,
And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes.
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parishens aboute
Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.
He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknesse nor in meschief to visite
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clennesse, how that his sheep sholde lyve.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre
And ran to londoun unto seinte poules
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a brethered to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.
And though he hooly were and vertuous,
He was to synful men nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng discreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.
But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.
He waited after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But cristes loore and his apostles twelve
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymself.
With hym ther was a plowman, was his brother,
That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;
A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
In a tabard he rood upon a mere.

Ther was also a reve, and a millere,
A somnour, and a pardoner also,
A maunciple, and myself -- ther were namo.
The millere was a stout carl for the nones;
Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.
That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,
Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde.
His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
He was a janglere and a goliardeys,
And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.

A gentil maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours myghte take exemple
For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
For wheither that he payde or took by taille,
Algate he wayted so in his achaat
That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace
That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous
Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in engelond,
To make hym lyve by his propre good
In honour dettelees (but if he were wood),
Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;
And able for to helpen al a shire
In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe.

The reve was a sclendre colerik man.
His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;
His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn
Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.
Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.
Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn
The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.
His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye
Was hoolly in this reves governynge,
And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,
Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.
Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;
With grene trees yshadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was astored pryvely:
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
This reve sat upon a ful good stot,
That was al pomely grey and highte scot.
A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
Of northfolk was this reve of which I telle,
Biside a toun men clepen baldeswelle.
Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

A somonour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
With scalled browes blake and piled berd.
Of his visage children were aferd.
Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon;
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.
A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
That he had lerned out of som decree --
No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
Kan clepen watte as wel as kan the pope.
But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay questio quid iuris wolde he crie.
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe to have his concubyn
A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe
In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs,
But if a mannnes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.
Purs is the ercedekenes helle, seyde he.
But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;
Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,
And also war hym of a significavit.
In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
The yonge girles of the diocese,
And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
A gerland hadde he set upon his heed
As greet as it were for an ale-stake.
A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.

With hym ther rood a gentil pardonor
Of rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
That streight was comen fro the court of rome.
Ful loude he soong com hider, love, to me!
This somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.
But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walet.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
Bretful of pardoun, come from rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
As smothe it was as it were late shave.
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro berwyk into ware,
Ne was ther swich another pardoner
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that he seyde wasoure lady veyl:
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seint peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til jhesu crist hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellynge upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;
And thus, with fyned flaterye and japes,
He made the person and the peple his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie;
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.
Now have I toold you sooithly, in a clause,
Th’ estaat, th’ array, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this campaignye
In southwerk at this gentil hostelrye
That highte the tabard, faste by the belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we baren us that ilke nyght,
Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;
And after wol I telle of our viage
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
That ye n' arette it nat my vileynye,
Thogh that I pleylyn speke in this mateere,
Ne thogh I speke hir wordes and hir cheere,
For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewye,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Plato seith, whoso that kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.
Greet chiere made oure hoost us everichon,
And to the soper sette he us anon.
He served us with vitaille at the beste;
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.
A semely man oure hooste was withalle
For to han been a marchal in an halle.
A large man he was with eyen stepe --
A fairer burgeys is ther noon in chepe --
Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,
And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.
Eek therto he was right a myrie man,
And after soper pleyen he bigan,
And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,
Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges,
And sayde thus: now, lordynge, trewely,
Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;
For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye
Atones in this herberwe as is now.
Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.
And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
Ye goon to caunterbury -- God yow speede,
The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon
To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
For to stonden at my juggement,
And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
Now, by my fader soule that is deed,
But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!
Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche.

Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.
Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,
And graunted hym withouten moore avys,
And bad him seye his voirdit as hym leste.
Lordynges, quod he, now herkneth for the beste;
But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.
This is the poynt, to spoken short and pleyn,
That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,
In this viage shal telle tales tweye
To caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,
Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle,
That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and moost solaas,
Shal have a soper at oure aller cost
Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,

Whan that we come agayn fro caunterbury.
And for to make yow the moore mury,
I wol myselven goodly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde,
And whoso wolde my juggement withsye
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore.

This thyng was graunted, andoure othes swore
With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also
That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been oure governour,
And oure tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,
And we wol reuled been at his devys
In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echon,
Withouten any lenger taryynge.

Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,
Up roos oure hoost, and was oure aller cok,
And gradrede us togidre alle in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel moore than paas
Unto the waterynge of seint thomas;
And there oure hoost bigan his hors areste
And sayde, lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.
Ye woot youre forward, and I it youre recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song accorde,
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.
As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,
Whoso be rebel to my juggement
Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;
He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.
Sire knyght, quod he, my mayster and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.
Cometh neer, quod he, my lady prioresse.
And ye, sire clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to telle as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght,
Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By foreward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his free assent,
He sayde, syn I shal bigynne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.
And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,
And he bigan with right a myrie cheere
His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.

The Knight's Tale

Part I
Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duc that highte theseus;
Of atthenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne;
What with his wysdom and his chivalrie,
He conquered al the regne of femenye,
That whilom was ycleped scithia,
And weddede the queene ypolita,
And broghte hire hoom with hym in his contree
With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee,
And eek hir yonge suster emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duc to atthenes ryde,
And al his hoost in armes hym bisyde.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere
How wonnen was the regne of femenye
By theseus and by his chivalrye;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bitwixen atthenes and amazones;
And how asseged was ypolita,
The faire, hardy queene of scithia;
And of the feste that was at hir weddyng,
And of the tempest at hir hoom-comynge;
But al that thyng I moot as now forbere.
I have, God woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough.
The remenant of the tale is long ynough.
I wol nat letten eek noon of this route;
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat se now who shal the soper wynne;
And ther I lefte, I wol ayeyn bigynne.
This duc, of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his mooste pride,
He was war, as he caste his eye aside,
Where that ther kneled in the heighe weye
A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,
Ech after oother, clad in clothes blake;
But swich a cry and swich a wo they make
That in this world nys creature lyvynge
That herde swich another waymentynge;
And of this cry they nolde nevere stenten
Til they the reynes of his brydel henten.
What fold been ye, that at myn homcomynge
Perturben so my feste with criynge?
Quod theseus. Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?
Or who hath yow mysboden or offended?
And telleth me if it may been amended,
And why that ye been clothed thus in blak.
The eldeste lady of hem alle spak,
Whan she hadde sownned with a deedly cheere,
That it was routhe for to seen and heere.
She seyde: lord, to whom fortune hath yiven
Victorie, and as a conqueror to lyven,
Nat greveth us youre glorie and youre honour,
But we biseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse!
Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentilless, 
Upon us wrecched women lat thou falle.
For, certes, lord, ther is noon of us alle,
That she ne hath been a duchesse or a queene.
Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene,
Thanked be fortune and hire false wheel,
That noon estaat assureth to be weel.
And certes, lord, to abyden youre presence,
Heere in this temple of the goddesse clemence
We han ben waitynge al this fourtenyght.
Now help us, lord, sith it is in thy myght.
I, wrecche, which that wepe and wayle thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng cappaneus,
That starf at thebes -- cursed be that day! --
And alle we that been in this array
And maken al this lamentacioun,
We losten alle oure housbondes at that toun,
Whil that the seege theraboute lay.
And yet now the olde creon, weylaway!
That lord is now of thebes the citee,
Fulfild of ire and of iniquitee,
He for despit and for his tirannye,
To do the dede bodyes vileynye
Of alle oure lorde whiche that been yslawe,
Hath alle the bodyes on an heep ydrawe,
And wol nat suffren hem, by noon assent,
Neither to been yburyed nor ybrent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despit.
And with that word, withouten moore respit,
They fillen gruf and criden pitously,
Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
And latoure sorwe synken in thyn herte.
This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so greet estaat;
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knyght,
He wolde doon so ferforthly his myght
Upon the tiraunt creon hem to wreke,
That al the peple of grece sholde speke
How creon was of theseus yserved
As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
And right anoon, withouten moore abood,
His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To thebes-ward, and al his hoost biside.
No neer atthenes wolde he go ne ride,
Ne take his ese fully half a day,
But onward on his wey that nyght he lay,
And sente anon ypolita the queene,
And emelye, hir yonge suster sheene,
Unto the toun of atthenes to dwelle,
And forth he rit; ther is namoore to telle.
The rede statue of mars, with spere and targe,
So shyneth in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes glyteren up and doun;
And by his baner born is his penoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was ybete
The mynotaur, which that he slough in crete.
Thus rit this duc, thus rit this conquerour,
And in his hoost of chivalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to thebes and alighte
Faire in a feeld, ther as he thoughte to fighte.
But shortly for to spoken of this thyng,
With creon, which that was of thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough hym manly as a knyght
In pleyn bataille, and putte the folk to flyght;
And by assaut he wan the citee after,
And rente adoun bothe wall and sparre and rafter;
And to the ladyes he restored agayn
The bones of hir housbondes that were slayn,
To doon obsequies, as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to longe for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge
That the ladyes made at the brennynge
Of the bodies, and the grete honour
Dooth to the ladyes, whan they from hym wente;
But shortly for to telle is myn entente.
Whan that this worthy duc, this theseus,
Hath creon slayn, and wonne thebes thus,
Stille in that feeld he took al nyght his reste,
And dide with al the contree as hym leste.
To ransake in the taas of bodyes dede,
Hem for to strepe of harneys and of wede,
The pilours diden bisynesse and cure
After the bataille and disconfiture.
And so bifel that in the taas they founde,
Thurgh-girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,
Of whiche two arcita highte that oon,
And that oother knyght highte palamon.
Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere
The heraudes knewe hem best in special
As they that were of the blood roial
Of thebes, and of sustren two yborn.
Out of the taas the pilours han hem torn,
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of theseus; and he ful soone hem sente
To athenes, to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, -- he nolde no raunsoun.
And whan this worthy duc hath thus ydon,
He took his hoost, and hoom he rit anon
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
And ther he lyveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyf; what nedeth wordes mo?
And in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,
This palamon and his felawe arcite
For everemoore; ther may no gold hem quite.
This passeth yeer by yeer and day by day,
Till it fil ones, in a morwe of may,
That emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the may with floures newe --
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe,
I noot which was the fyner of hem two --
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
She was arisen and al redy dight;
For may wole have no slogardie a-nyght.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh hym out of his slep to sterte,
This maked emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to may, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fressh, for to devyse:
Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hire hede;
And as an aungel hevenysshly she soong.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong,
Which of the castel was the chief dongeoun,
(ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun
Of which I tolde yow and tellen shal)
Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
Ther as this emelye hadde hir pleynyge.
Bright was the sonne and cler that morwenynge,
And palamoun, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler,
Was risen and romed in a chamber an heigh,
In which he al the noble citee seigh,
And eek the gardyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as this fresshe emelye the shene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this palamoun,
Goth in the chambré romynge to and fro,
And to hymself compleynynge of his wo.
That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, allass!
And so bifel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow, thikke of many a barre
Of iren greet and square as any sparre,
He cast his eye upon emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte and cride, a!
As though he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that cry arcite anon up sterte,
And seyde, cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see?
Why cridestow? who hath thee doon offence?
For goddes love, taak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be.
Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of saturne, by som constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the hevene whan that we were born.
We moste endure it; this is the short and playn.
This palamon answerde and seyde agayn:
Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thow hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prison caused me nat for to crye,
But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
The fairnesse of that lady that I see
Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro
Is cause of al my criyng and my wo.
I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
But venus is it soothly, as I gesse.
Therwithal on knees doun he fil,
And seyde: venus, if it be thy wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure
Bifore me, sorweful, wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scapen.
And if so be my destynee be shapen
By eterne word to dyen in prisoun,
Ofoure lynage have som compassioun,
That is so lowe ybroght by tiranne.
And with that word arcite gan espye
Wher as this lady romed to and fro,
And with that sighte hir beautee hurte hym so,
That, if that palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as muehe as he, or moore.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place,
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
That I may seen hire atte leeste weye,
My nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye.
This palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he looked and anserde,
Whether seistow this in ernest or in pley?
Nay, quod arcite, in ernest, by my fey!
God helpe me so, me list ful yvele pleye.
This palamon gan knytte his browes tweye.
It nere, quod he, to thee no greet honour
For to be fals, ne for to be traitour
To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
Ysworn ful depe, and ech of us til oother,
That nevere, for to dyen in the peyne,
Til that the deeth departe shal us tweyne,
Neither of us in love to hyndre oother,
Ne in noon oother cas, my leeve brother;
But that thou sholdest trewely forthren me
In every cas, as I shal forthren thee, --
This was thyn ooth, and myn also, certeyn;
I woot right wel, thou darst it nat withseyn.
Thus artow of my conseil, out of doute,
And now thoudest falsly been aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And evere shal til that myn herte sterve.
Nay, certes, false arcite, thow shalt nat so.
I loved hire first, and tolde thee my wo
As to my conseil and my brother sworn
To forthre me, as I have toold biforn.
For which thou art ybounden as a knyght
To helpen me, if it lay in thy myght,
Or elles artow fals, I dar wel seyn.
This arcite ful proudly spak ageyn:
Thow shalt, quod he, be rather fals than I;
And thou art fals, I telle thee outrely,
For paramour I loved hire first er thow.
What wiltow seyen? thou woost nat yet now
Wether she be a womman or goddesse!
Thyn is affeccioun of hoolynesse,
And myn is love, as to a creature;
For which I tolde thee myn aventure
As to my cosyn and my brother sworn.
I pose that thow lovedest hire biforn;
Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That "who shal yeve a lovere any lawe?"
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
And therfore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed.
He may nat fleen it, thogh he sholde be deed,
Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf.
And eek it is nat likly al thy lyf
To stonden in hir grace; namoore shal I;
For wel thou woost thyselven, verraily,
That thou and I be damned to prisoun
Perpetuellly; us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon;
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
Ther cam a kyte, whil that they were so wrothe,
And baar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And theryfore, at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon oother.
Love, if thee list, for I love and ay shal;
And soothly, leeve brother, this is al.
Heere in this prisoun moote we endure,
And everich of us take his aventure.
Greet was the strif and long bitwixe hem tweye,
If that I hadde leyser for to seye,
But to th' effect. It happed on a day,
To telle it yow as shortly as I may,
A worthy duc that highte perotheus,
That felawe was unto duc theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lite,
Was come to atthenes his felawe to visite,
And for to pleye as he was wont to do;
In this world he loved no man so,
And he loved hym als tendrely agayn.
So wel they lovede, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan that oon was deed, soothly to telle,
His felawe wente and soughte hym doun in helle, --
But of that storie list me nat to write.
Duc perotheus loved wel arcite,
And hadde hym knowe at thebes yeer by yere,
And finally at requeste and preyere
Of perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
Duc theseus hym leet out of prisoun
Frely to goon wher that hym liste over al,
In swich a gyse as I you tellen shal.
This was the forward, pleynly for t' endite,
Bitwixen theseus and hym arcite
That if so were that arcite were yfounde
Evere in his lif, by day or nyght, oo stounde
In any contree of this theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he sholde lese his heed.
Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed;
But taketh his leve, and homward he him spedde.
Lat hym be war! his nekke lith to wedde.
How greet a sorwe suffreth now arcite!
The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smyte;
He wepeth, wayleth, crieth pitously;
To sleen hymself he waiteth prively.
He seyde, allas that day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle.
Alas, that evere knew I perotheus!
For elles hadde I dwelled with theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun everemo.
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and nat in wo.
Oonly the sighte of hire whom that I serve,
Though that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
Wolde han suffised right enough for me.
O deere cosyn palamon, quod he,
Thyn is the victorie of this aventure.
FUL blissfully in prison maistow dure, --
In prison? certes nay, but in paradys!
Wel hath fortune yturned thee the dys,
That hast the sighte of hire, and I th' absence.
For possible is, syn thou hast hire presence,
And art a knyght, a worthy and an able,
That by som cas, syn fortune is chaungeable,
Thow maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
But I, that am exiled and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir,
That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir,
Ne creature that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe or doon confort in this,
Wel oughte I sterve in wanhope and distresse.
Farwel my lif, my lust, and my gladnesse!
Alas, why pleynen folk so in commune
On purveiaunce of god, or of fortune,
That yeveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel bettre than they kan hemself devyse?
Som man desireth for to han richesse,
That cause is of his mordre or greet siknesse;
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his meynee slayn.
Infinite harmes been in this mateere.
We witen nat what thing we preyen heere:
We faren as he that dronke is as a mous.
A dronke man woot wel he hath an hous,
But he noot which the righte wey is thider.
And to a dronke man the wey is slider.
And certes, in this world so faren we;
We seken faste after felicitee,
But we goon wrong ful often, trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende and hadde a greet opiinioun
That if I myghte escapen from prisoun,
Thanne hadde I been in joye and perfit heele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Syn that I may nat seen you, emelye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye.
Upon that oother syde palamon,
Whan that he wiste arcite was agon,
Swich sorwe he maketh that the grete tour
Resouneth of his youlyng and clamour.
The pure fettres on his shynes grete
Weren of his bittre, salte teeres wete.
Allas, quod he, arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn.
Thou walkest now in thebes at thy large,
And of my wo thow yevest litel charge.
Thou mayst, syn thou hast wisdom and manhede,
Assemblen alle the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so sharp on this citee,
That by som aventure or some tretee
Thow mayst have hire to lady and to wyf
For whom that I moste nedes lese my lyf.
For, as by wey of possibilitee,
Sith thou art at thy large, of prisoun free,
And art a lord, greet is thyn avauntage
Moore than is myn, that sterve here in a cage.
For I moot wepe and wayle, whil I lyve,
With al the wo that prison may me yive,
And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo.

Therewith the fyr of jalousie up sterte
Withinne his brest, and hente him by the herte
So woodly that he lyk was to biholde
The boxtree or the ashen dede and colde.
Thanne seyde he, o cruwel goddes that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of atthamaunt
Youre parlement and youre eterne graunt,
What is mankynde moore unto you holde
Than is the sheep that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beest,
And dwelleth eek in prison and arreest,
And hath siknesse and greet adversitee,
And ofte tymes giltelees, pardee.
What governance is in this prescience,
That giltelees tormenteth innocence?
And yet encresseth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce,
For goddes sake, to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beest may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beest is deed he hath no peyne;
But man after his deeth moot wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and wo.
Withouten doute it may stonden so.
The answere of this lete I to dyvynys,
But wel I woot that in this world greet pyne ys.
Allas, I se a serpent or a theef,
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Goon at his large, and where hym list may turne.
Of thebes with his waste walles wyde;
And venus sleeth me on that oother syde
For jalousie and fere of hym arcite.
Now wol I stynte of palamon a lite,
And lete hym in his prisoun st ille dwelle,
And of arcita forth I wol yow telle.
The somer passeth, and the nyghtes longe
Encressen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lover and the prisoner.
I noot which hath the wofuller mester.
For, shortly for to seyn, this palamoun
Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,
In cheynes and in fettres to been deed;
And arcite is exiled upon his heed
For everemo, as out of that contree,
Ne nevere mo he shal his lady see.
Yow loveres axe I now this questioun:
Who hath the worse, arcite or palamoun?
That oon may seen his lady day by day,
But in prison he moot dwelle alway;
That oother wher hym list may ride or go,
But seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
Now demeth as yow liste, ye that kan,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.

Explicit prima pars.

Sequitur pars secunda.

Whan that arcite to thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde allas!
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature
That is, or shal, whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
His eyen holwe, and grisly to biholde,
His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,
And solitarie he was and evere allone,
And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone;
And if he herde song or instrument,
Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,
And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
And in his geere for al the world he ferde,
Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Engendred of humour malencolik,
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up so doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful lovere daun arcite.
What sholde I al day of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This crueel torment and this peyne and wo,
At thebes, in his contree, as I seyde,
Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde,
Hym thoughte how that the wynged God mercurie
Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie.
His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;
An hat he werede upon his heris brighte.
Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
As he was whan that argus took his sleep;
And seyde hym thus: to atthenes shaltou wende,
Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende.
Now trewely, hou soore that me smerte,
Quod he, to atthenes right now wol I fare,
Ne for the drede of deeth shal I nat spare
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve.
And with that word he caughte a greet mirour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage al in another kynde.
Right anon it ran hym in his mynde,
That, sith his face was so disfigured
Of maladye the which he hadde endured,
He myghte wel, if that he bar hym lowe,
Lyve in atthenes everemoore unknowe.
And seen his lady wel ny day by day.
And right anon he chaunged his array,
And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
And al allone, save oonly a squier
That knew his privetee and al his cas,
Which was disgised povrely as he was,
To atthenes is he goon the nexte way.
And to the court he wente upon a day,
And at the gate he profreth his servyse
To drugge and drawe, what so men wol devyse.
And shortly of this matere for to seyn,
He fil in office with a chamberleyn
The which that dwellynge was with emelye;
For he was wys and koude soone espye
Of every servaunt which that serveth here.
Wel koude he hewen wode, and water bere,
For he was yong and myghty for the nones,
And thereto he was long and big of bones
To doon that any wight kan hym devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servyse,
Page of the chambr of emelye the brighte;
And philostrate he seyde that he highte.
But half so wel biloved a man as he
Ne was ther nevere in court of his degree;
He was so gentil of condicioun
That thurghout al the court was his renoun.
They seyden that it were a charitee
And putten hym in worshipful servyse,
Ther as he myghte his vertu excercise.
And thus withinne a while his name is spronge,
Bothe of his dedes and his goode tonge,
That theseus hath taken hym so neer,
That of his chambre he made hym a squier,
And gaf hym gold to mayntene his degree.
And eek men broghte hym out of his contree,
From yeer to yeer , ful pryvely his rente;
But honestly and slyly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lil he ladde,
And bar hym so, in pees and eek in werre,
Ther was no man that theseus hath derre.
And in this blisse lete I now arcite,
And speke I wole of palamon a lite.
In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
Thise seven yeer hath seten palamoun
Forpyneyd, what for wo and for distresse.
Who feeleth double soor and hevynesse
But palamon, that love destreyneth so
That wood out of his wit he goth for wo?
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuely, noght oonly for a yer.
Who koude ryme in englyssh proprely
His martirdom? for sothe it am nat I;
Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yer, of may
The thridde nyght, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen moore pleyn)
Were it by aventure or destynee --
As, whan a thyng is shapen, it shal be --
That soone after the mydnyght palamoun,
By helpyng of a freend, brak his prisoun
And fleeth the citee faste as he may go.
For he hadde yeve his gayler drynke so
Of a clarree maad of a certeyn wyn,
With nercotikes and opie of thebes fyn,
That al that nyght, thogh that men wolde him shake,
The gayler sleep, he myghte nat awake;
And thus he fleeth as faste as evere he may.
The nyght was short and faste by the day,
That nedes cost he moot hymselven hyde;
And til a grove faste ther bisyde
With dredeful foot thanne stalketh palamon.
For, shortly, this was his opinion,
That in that grove he wolde hym hyde al day,
And in the nyght thanne wolde he take his way
To thebes-ward, his freendes for to preye
On theseus to helpe him to werreye;
And shortly, outher he wolde lese his lif,
Or wynnen emelye unto his wyf.
This is th' effect and his entente pleyn.
Now wol I turne to arcite ageyn,
That litel wiste how ny that was his care,
Til that fortune had broght him in the snare.
The bisy larke, messager of day,
Salueth in hir song the morwe gray,
And firy phebus riseth up so bright
That al the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes hangynge on the leves.
And arcita, that in the court roial
With theseus is squier principal,
Is risen and looketh on the myrie day.
And for to doon his observaunce to may,
Remembrynge on the poynt of his desir,
He on a courser, startlynge as the fir,
Is riden into the feeldes hym to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove of which that I yow tolde
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken hym a gerland of the greves
Were it of wodebynde or hawethorn leves,
And loude he song ayeyn the sonne shene:
May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe may,
In hope that I som grene gete may.
And from his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into the grove ful hastily he sterte,
And in a path he rometh up and doun,
1516 Ther as by aventure this palamoun
1517 Was in a bussh, that no man myghte hym se,
1518 For soore afered of his deeth was he.
1519 No thyng ne knew he that it was arcite;
1520 God woot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
1521 But sooth is seyd, go sithen many yeres,
1522 That feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres.
1523 It is ful fair a man to bere hym evene,
1524 For al day meeteth men at unset stevene.
1525 Ful litel woot arcite of his felawe,
1526 That was so ny to herknen al his sawe,
1527 For in the bussh he sitteth now ful stille.
1528 Whan that arcite hadde romed al his fille,
1529 And songen al the roundel lustily,
1530 Into a studie he fil sodeynly,
1531 As doon thise loveres in hir queynte geres,
1532 Now in the crope, now doun in the breres,
1533 Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
1534 Right as the friday, soothly for to telle,
1535 Now it shyneth, now it reyneth faste,
1536 Right so kan geery venus overcaste
1537 The hertes of hir folk; right as hir day
1538 Is gereful, right so chaungeth she array.
1539 Selde is the friday al the wowke ylike,
1540 Whan that arcite had songe, he gan to sike,
1541 And sette hym doun withouten any moore.
1542 Allas, quod he, that day that I was bore!
1543 How longe, junio, thurgh thy crueltee,
1544 Woltow werreyen thebes the citee?
1545 Allas, ybroght is to confusioun
1546 The blood roial of cadme and amphion, --
1547 Of cadmus, which that was the firste man
1548 That thebes bulte, or first the toun bigan,
1549 And of the citoie first was crouned kyng.
1550 Of his lynage am I and his ofspryng
1551 By verray ligne, as of the stok roial,
1552 And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
1553 That he that is my mortal enemy,
1554 I serve hym as his squier pov Treyly.
1555 And yet dooth junio me wel moore shame,
1556 For I dar noght biknowe myn owene name;
1557 But ther as I was wont to highte arcite,
1558 Now highte I philostrate, noght worth a myte.
1559 Allas, thou felle mars! allas, junio!
1560 Thus hath youre ire oure lynage al fordo,
1561 Save oonly me and wrecched palamoun,
1562 That theseus martireth in prisoun.
1563 And over al this, to sleen me outrley,
1564 Love hath his fiery dart so brennygly
1565 Ystiked thurgh my trewe, careful herte,
1566 That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, emelye!
Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of myn oother care
Ne sette I nat the montance of a tare,
So that I koude doon aught to youre plesaunce.
And with that word he fil doun in a traunce
A longe tyme, and after he up sterte.
This palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte
He felte a coold swerd sodeynliche glyde,
For ire he quook, no lenger wolde he byde.
And whan that he had herd arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He stirte hym up out of the buskes thikke,
And seide: arcite, false traytour wikke,
Now arto hent, that loves my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my conseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told thee heerbiforn,
And hast byjaped heere duc theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus!
I wol be deed, or elles thou shalt dye.
Thou shalt nat love my lady emelye,
But I wol love hire oonly and namo;
For I am palamon, thy mortal foo.
And though that I no wepene have in this place,
But out of prison am astert by grace,
I drede noght that outher thow shalt dye,
Chees which thou wolt, for thou shalt nat asterte!
This arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he hym knew, and hadde his tale herd,
As fiers as leon pulled out his swerd,
And seyde thus: by God that sit above,
Nere it that thou art sik and wood for love,
And eek that thow no wepne hast in this place,
Thou sholdest neveer out of this grove pace,
That thou ne sholdest dyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurete and the bond
Which that thou seist that I have maad to thee.
What, verray fool, thynk wel that love is free,
And I wol love hire maugree al thy myght!
But for as muche thou art a worthy knyght;
And wilnest to darreyne hire by bataille,
Have heer my trouthe, tomorwe I wol nat faille,
Withoute wityng of any oother wight,
That heere I wol be founden as a knyght,
And bryngen harneys right ynough for thee;
And ches the beste, and leef the worste for me.
And mete and drynke this nyght wol I brynge
Ynough for thee, and clothes for thy beddynge.

And if so be that thou my lady wynne,

And sle me in this wode ther I am inne,

Thow mayst wel have thy lady as for me.

This palamon answerde, I graunte it thee.

And thus they been departed til amorwe,

Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

O cupide, out of alle charitee!

O regne, that wolt no felawe have with thee!

Ful soothe is seyd that love ne lordshipe

Wol noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe.

Wel fynden that arcite and palamoun.

Arcite is riden anon unto the toun,

And on the morwe, er it were dayes light,

Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,

Bothe suffisaunt and mete to darreyne

The bataille in the feeld bitwix hem tweyne;

And on his hors, allone as he was born,

He carieth al the harneys hym biforn.

And in the grove, at tyme and place yset,

This arcite and this palamon ben met.

Tho chaungen gan the colour in hir face,

Right as the hunters in the regne of trace,

That stondeth at the gappe with a spere,

Whan hunted is the leon or the bere,

And hereth hym come russhyyng in the greves,

And breketh bothe bowes and the leves,

And thynketh, heere cometh my mortal enemy!

Withoute fa ille, he moot be deed, or I;

For outher I moot sleen hym at the gappe,

Or he moot sleen me, if that me myshappe, --

So ferden they in chaungyng of hir hewe,

As fer as everich of hem oother knewe.

Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng,

But streight, withouten word or rehersyng,

Everich of hem heelp for to armen oother

As freendlly as he were his owene brother;

And after that, with sharpe speres stronge

They foynen ech at oother wonder longe.

Thou myghtest wene that this palamon

In his fightyng were a wood leon,

And as a crueel tigre was arcite;

As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,

That frothen whit as foom for ire wood.

Up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood.

And in this wise I lete hem fightyng dwelle,

And forth I wole of theseus yow telle.

The destinee, ministre general,

That executeth in the world over al

The purvelaunce that God hath seyn biforn,

So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.
For certeini, oure appetites heer,
Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this ruled by the sighte above.
This mene I now by myghty theseus,
That for to hunten is so desirus,
And namely at the grete hert in may,
That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde.
For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
That is al his joye and appetit
To been hymself the grete hertes bane,
For after mars he serveth now dyane.
Pserir was the day, as I have toold er this,
And theseus with alle joye and blis,
With his ypolita, the faire queene,
And emelye, clothed al in grene,
On huntyng be they riden roially.
And to the grove that stood ful faste by,
In which ther was an hert, as men hym tolde,
Duc theseus the streighte wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rideth hym ful right,
For thider was the hert wont have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his weye.
This duc wol han a cours at hym or tweye
With houndes swiche as that hym list comaunde.
And whan this duc was come unto the launde,
Under the sonne he looketh, and anon
He was war of arcite and palamon,
That foughten breme, as it were bores two.
The brighte swerdes wenten to and fro
So hidously that with the leeste strook
It semed as it wolde felle an ook.
But what they were, no thyng he ne woot.
This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,
And pulled out a swerd, and cride, hoo!
Namaore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!
By myghty mars, he shal anon be deed
That Smytheth any strook that I may seen.
But telleth me what myster men ye been,
That been so hardy for to fighten heere

Withouten juge or oother officere,
As it were in a lystes roially.
This palamon answerd hasteily,
And sayde, sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We have the death diserved bothe two.

Two woful wrecches been we, two caytyves,
That been encombred of oure owene lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yif us neither mercy ne refuge,
But sle me first, for seinte charitee!
But sle my felawe eek as wel as me;
Or sle hym first, for though thou knowest it lite,
This is thy mortal foo, this is arcite,
That fro thy lond is banysshed on his heed,
For which he hath deserved to be deed.
For this is he that cam unto thy gate
And seyde that he highte philostrate.
Thus hath he japed thee ful many a yer,
And thou hast maked hym thy chief squier;
And this is he that loveth emelye.
For sith the day is come that I shal dye,
I make pleylnly my confessedioun
That I am thilke woful palamoun
That hath thy prisoun broken wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote emelye the brighte
That I wol dye present in hir sighte.
Wherfore I axe deeth and my juwise;
But sle my felawe in the same wise,
For bothe han we deserved to be slayn.
This worthy duc answerde anon agayn,
And seyde, this is a short conclusioun.
Youre owene mouth, by youre confessedioun,
Hath dampned yow, and I wol it recorde;
It nedeth noght to pyne yow with the corde.
Ye shal be deed, by myghty mars the rede!
The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,
Gan for to wepe, and so dide emelye,
And alle the ladyes in the compaignye.
Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle;
For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
And no thyng but for love was this debaat;
And saugh hir blody wounds wyde and soore,
And alle crieden, bothe lasse and moore,
Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!
And on hir bare knees adoun they falle,
And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood;
Til at the laste aslaked was his mood,
For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte.
And though he first for ire quook and sterte,
He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
The trespas of hem bothe, and eek the cause,
And although that his ire hir gilt accused,
Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused,
As thus: he thoght wel that every man
Wol helpe hymself in love, if that he kan,
And eek delivere hymself out of prisoun.
And eek his herte hadde compassioun
Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon;
And in his gentil herte he thoughte anon,
And softe unto hymself he seyde, fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,
To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud despitous man
That wol mayntene that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in swich cas kan no divisioun,
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon.
And shortly, whan his ire is thus agoon,
He gan to looken up with eyen lighte,
And spak thise same wordes al on highte:
The God of love, a, benedicite!
How myghty and how greet a lord is he!
Ayeyns his myght ther gayneth none obstacles.
He may be cleped a God for his myracles;
For he kan maken, at his owene gyse,
Of everich herte as that hym list divyse.
Lo heere this arcite and this palamoun,
That quitly weren out of my prisoun,
And myghte han lyved in thebes roially,
And witen I am hir mortal enemy,
And that hir deth lith in my myght also;
And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Broght hem hyder bothe for to dye.
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fool, but if he love?
Bihoold, for goddes sake that sit above,
Se how they blede! be they noght wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the God of love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle.
But this is yet the beste game of alle,
That she for whom they han this jolitee
Kan hem therfore as muche thank as me.
She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
By god, than woot a cokkow or an hare!
But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold, --
I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
And therfore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,
And woot hou soore it kan a man distreyne,
As he that hath ben caught ofte in his laas,
I yow foryeve al hoolly this trespaas,
At requeste of the queene, that kneleth heere,
And eek of emelye, my suster deere.
And ye shul bothe anon unto me swere
That nevere mo ye shal my contree dere,
Ne make werre upon me nyght ne day,
But been my freendes in all that ye may.
I yow foryeve this trespas every deel.
And they hym sworen his axyng faire and weel,
And hym of lordshippe and of mercy preyde,
And he hem graunteth grace, and thus he seyde:
To speke of roial lynage and richesse,
Though that she were a queene or a princesse,
Ech of you bothe is worthy, doutelees,
To wedden whan tyme is, but nathelees
I speke as for my suster emelye,
For whom ye have this strif and jalousye.
Ye woot yourself she may nat wedden two
Atones, though ye lighten everemo.
That oon of you, al be hym looth or lief,
He moot go pipen in an yvy leef;
This is to seyn, she may nat now han bothe,
Al be ye never so jalouse ne so wrothe.
And forthy I yow putte in this degree,
That ech of yow shal have his destynee
As hym is shape, and herkneth in what wyse;
Lo heere youre ende of that I shal devyse.
My wyl is this, for plat conclusioun,
Withouten any reppticacioun, --
If that you liketh, take it for the beste:
That everich of you shal goon where hym leste
Frely, withouten raunson or daunger;
And this day fifty wykes, fer ne ner,
Everich of you shal brynge an hundred knyghtes
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes,
Al redy to darreyne hire by bataille.
And this bihote I yow withouten faille,
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knyght,
That wheither of yow bothe that hath myght, --
This is to seyn, that wheither he or thow
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve,
Thanne shal I yeve emelya to wyve
The lystes shal I maken in this place,
And God so wisly on my soule rewe,
As I shal evene juge been and trewe.
Ye shul noon oother ende with me maken,
That oon of yow ne shal be deed or taken.
And if yow thynketh this is weel ysayd,
Seyeth youre avys, and holdeth you apayd.
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun.
Who looketh lightly now but palamoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but arcite?
Who kouthe telle, or who kouthe it endite,
The joye that is maked in the place
Whan theseus hath doon so fair a grace?
But doun on knees wente every maner wight,
And thonked hym with al hir herte and myght,
And namely the thebans often sithe.
And thus with good hope and with herte blithe
They taken hir leve, and homward gonne they ride
To thebes, with his olde walles wyde.

Explicit secunda pars.

Sequitur pars tercia.
Hath theseus doon wroght in noble wyse.
But yet hadde I foryeten to devyse
The noble kervyng and the portreitures,
The shap, the contenaunce, and the figures,
That weren in thise oratories thre.

First in the temple of venus maystow se
Wroght on the wall, ful pitous to biholde,
The broken slepes, and the sikes colde,
The sacred teeris, and the waymentynge,
That loves servantz in this lyf enduren;
The othes that hir covenantz assuren;
Plesaunce and hope, desir, foolhardynesse,
Beautee and youthe, bauderie, richesse,
Charmes and force, lesynges, flaterye,
Despense, bisynesse, and jalousye,
That wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland,
And a cokkow sittynge on hir hand;
Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
Lust and array, and alle the circumstaunces
Of love, which that I rekned and rekne shal,
By ordre weren peynted on the wal,
And mo than I kan make of mencioun.
For soothly al the mount of citheroun,
Ther venus hath hir principal dwellynge,
With al the gardyn and the lustynesse.
Nat was foryeten the porter, ydelnesse,
Ne narcisus the faire of yore agon,
Ne yet the folye of kyng salomon,
Ne yet the grete strengthe of ercules --
Th-enchauntementz of medea and circes --
Ne of turnus, with the hardy fiers corage,
The riche cresus, kaytyf in servage.
Thus may ye seen that wysdom ne richesse,
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
Ne may with venus holde champartie,
For as hir list the world than may she gye.
Lo, alle thise folk so caught were in hir las,
Til they for wo ful ofte seyde allas!
Suffiseth heere ensamples oon or two,
And though I koude rekene a thousand mo.
The statue of venus, glorious for to se,
Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
And fro the navele doun al covered was
With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
A citole in hir right hand hadde she,
And on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;
Above hir heed hir dowves flikerynge.
Biforn hire stood hir sone cupido;
Upon his shuldres wynges hadde he two,
And blynd he was, as it is often seene;
A bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kene.
Why sholde I noght as wel eek telle yow al
The portreiture that was upon the wal
Withinne the temple of myghty mars the rede?
Al peynted was the wal, in lengthe and brede,
Lyk to the estres of the grisly place
That highte the grete temple of mars in trace,
In thilke colde, frosty regioun
Ther as mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.
First on the wal was peynted a forest,
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
And dounward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of mars armypotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and swich a veze
That it made al the gate for to rese.
The northren lyght in at the dores shoon,
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.
The dore was al of adamant eterne,
Yclenched overthwart and endelong
For to make it strong,
Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
Was tonne-greet, of iren bright and shene.
Ther saugh I first the derke ymaginyng
Of felonye, and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire, reed as any gleede;
The pykepurs, and eek the pale drede;
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brennynge with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde;
The open werre, with woundes al bibledde;
Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther, --
His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
The nayl ydryven in the shode a-nyght;
The colde deeth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the temple sat meschaunce,
With disconfort and sory contenaunce.
Yet saugh I woodnesse, laughynge in his rage,
Armed compleint, outhees, and fiers outrage;
The careyne in the busk, with throte ycorve;
A thousand slayn, and nat of qualm ystorve;
The tiraunt, with the pray by force yraft;
The toun destroyed, ther was no thyng laft.
Yet saugh I brent the shippes hoppesteres;
The hunte strangled with the wilde beres;
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
The cook yscalded, for al his longe ladel.
Noght was foryeten by the infortune of marte
The cartere overryden with his carte:
Under the wheel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther were also, of martes divisioun,

The barbour, and the bocher, and the smyth,
That forgeth sharpe swerdes on his styth.
And al above, depeynted in a tour,
Saugh I conquest, sittynge in greet honour,
With the sharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a soutil twynes threed.
Depeynted was the slaughtre of julius,
Of grete nero, and of antonius;
Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was hir deth depeynted ther-biforn
By manasynge of mars, right by figure.
So was it shewed in that portreiture,
As is depeynted in the sterres above
Who shal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Suffiseth oon ensample in stories olde;
I may nat rekene hem alle though I wolde.
The statue of mars upon a carte stood
Armed, and looked grym as he were wood;
And over his heed ther shynen two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
That oon puella, that oother rubeus --
This God of armes was arrayed thus.
A wolf ther stood biforn hym at his feet
With eyen rede, and of a man he eet;
With soutil pencel depeynted was this storie
In redoutynge of mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of dyane the chaste,
As shortly as I kan, I wol me haste,
Depeynted been the walles up and doun
Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee.
Ther saugh I how woful calistopee,
Whan that diane agreved was with here,
Was turned from a womman til a bere,
And after was she maad the loode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre.
Hir sone is eek a sterre, as men may see.
Ther saugh I dane, yturned til a tree, --
I mene nat the goddesse diane,
But penneus doghter, which that highte dane.
Ther saugh I attheon an hert ymaked,
For vengeaunce that he saugh diane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught
And freeten hym, for that they knewe hym naught.
Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
How atthalante hunted the wilde boor,
And meleagre, and many another mo,
For which dyane wroghte hym care and wo.
Ther saugh I many another wonder storie,
The which me list nat drawen to memorie.
This goddesse on an hert ful hye seet,
With smale houndes al aboute hir feet;
And undernethe hir feet she hadde a moone, --
Wexynge it was and sholde wanye soone.
In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
Hir eyen caste she ful lowe adoun,
Ther pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travaillynge was hire biforn;
But for hir child so longe was unborn,
Ful pitously lucyna gan she calle,
And seyde, help, for thou mayst best of alle!
Wel koude he peynten lifly that it wroghte;
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.
Now been thise lystes maad, and theseus,
The temples and the theatre every deel,
Whan it was doon, hym lyked wonder weel.
But stynte I wole of theseus a lite,
And speke of palamon and of arcite.
The day approcheth of hir retourynge,
That everich sholde an hundred knyghtes brynge
The bataille to darreyne, as I yow tolde.
And til atthenes, hir covenant for to holde,
Hath everich of hem broght an hundred knyghtes,
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
And sikerly ther trowed many a man
That nevere, sithen that the world bigan,
As for to speke of knyghthod of hir hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas of so fewe so noble a compaignye.
For every wight that lovede chivalrye,
And wolde, his thankes, han a passant name,
Hath preyed that he myghte been of that game;
And wel was hym that therto chosen was.
For if ther fille tomorwe swich a cas,
Ye knownen wel that every lusty knyght
That loveth paramours and hath his myght,
Were it in engelond or elleswhere,
They wolde, hir thankes, wilnen to be there, --
To fighte for a lady, benedicitee!
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with palamon.
With hym ther wenten knyghtes many on;
Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
And in a brestplate and light gypoun;
And som wol have a paire plates large;
And som wol have a pruce sheeld or a targe;
Som wol ben armed on his legses weel,
And have an ax, and som a mace of steel --
Ther is no newe gyse that it nas old.
 Armed were they, as I have yow told,
Everych after his opinioun.
Ther maistow seen, comynge with palamoun,
Lygurge hymself, the grete kyng of trace.
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face;
The cercles of his eyen in his heed,
They gloweden bitwixen yelow and reed,
And lik a grifphon looked he aboute,
With kempe heeris on his browses stoute;
His lymes grete, his brawnes harde and stronge,
And as the gyse was in his contree,
Ful hye upon a chaar of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in the trays.
In stede of cote-armure over his harnays,
With nayles yelewe and brighte as any gold,
He hadde a beres skyn, col-blak for old.
His longe heer was kembd bihynde his bak;
As any ravenes fetheres it shoon for blak;
A wretie of gold, arm-greet, of huge wighte,
Upoyn his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubyes and of dyamauntz.
Aboute his chaar ther wenten white alauntz,
Twenty and mo, as grete as any steer,
To hunten at the leoun or the deer,
And folwed hym with mosel faste ybounde,
Colered of gold, and tourettes fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes hadde he in his route,
Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute.
With arcita, in stories as men fynde,
The grete emetreus, the kyng of inde,
Upon a steede bay trapped in steel,
Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,
Cam ridynge lyk the God of armes, mars.
His cote-armure was of clooth of tars
Couched with perles white and rounde and grete;
2162 His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;
2163 A mantelet upon his shulder hangynge,
2164 Bret-ful of rubyes rede as fyr sparklynge;
2165 His crispe heer lyk rynges was yronne,
2166 And that was yelow, and glytered as the sonne.
2167 His nose was heigh, his eyen bright citryn,
2168 His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn;
2169 A fewe frakenes in his face yspreynd,
2170 Bitwixen yelow and somdel blak ymeynd;
2171 And as a leon he his lookyng caste.
2172 Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
2173 His berd was wel bigonne for to sprynge;
2174 His voys was as a trompe thonderynge.
2175 Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
2176 A gerland, fressh and lusty for to sene.
2177 Upon his hand he bar for his deduyt
2178 An egle tame, as any lilye whyt.
2179 An hundred lordes hadde he with hym there,
2180 Al armed, save hir heddes, in al hir gere,
2181 Ful richely in alle maner thynges.
2182 For trusteth wel that dukes, erles, kynges
2183 Were gadered in this noble compaignye,
2184 For love and for encrees of chivalrye.
2185 Aboute this kyng ther ran on every part
2186 Ful many a tame leon and leopart.
2187 And in this wise thise lordes, alle and some,
2188 Been on the sonday to the citee come
2189 Aboute Pryme, and in the toun alight.
2190 This theseus, this duc, this worthy knyght,
2191 Whan he had broght hem into his citee,
2192 And inned hem, everich at his degree,
2193 He festeth hem, and dooth so greet labour
2194 To esen hem and doon hem al honour,
2195 That yet men wenen that no mannes wit
2196 Of noon estaat ne koude amenden it.
2197 The mynstralcye, the service at the feeste,
2198 The grete yiftes to the meeste and leeste,
2199 The riche array of theseus paleys,
2200 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
2201 What ladyes fairest been or best daunsynge,
2202 Or which of hem kan dauncen best and synge,
2203 Ne who moost felyngly speketh of love;
2204 What haukes sitten on the perche above,
2205 What houndes liggen on the floor adoun, --
2206 Of al this make I now no mencioum,
2207 But al th' effect, that thynketh me the beste.
2208 Now cometh the point, and herkneth if yow leste.
2209 The sonday nyght, er day began to sprynge,
2210 Whan palamon the larke herde synge,
2211 (although it nere nat day by houres two,
2212 Yet song the larke) and palamon right tho
With hooly herte and with an heigh corage,
He roos to wenden on his pilgrymage
Unto the blisful citherea benigne, --
I mene venus, honourable and digne.
And in hir houre he walketh forth a pas
Unto the lystes ther hire temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and with humble cheere
And herte soor, he seyde as ye shal heere:
Faireste of faire, o lady myn, venus,
Doughter to jove, and spouse of vulcanus,
Thow gladere of the mount of citheron,
For thilke love thow haddest to adoon,
Have pitee of myn bittre teeris smerte,
And taak myn humble preyere at thyn herte.
Allas! I ne have no langage to telle
Th' effectes ne the tormentz of myn helle;
Myn herte may myne harmes nat biwreye;
I am so confus that I kan noght seye
But, -- mercy, lady bright, that knowest weele
My thought, and seest what harmes that feele!
Considere al this and rewe upon my soore,
As wisly as I shal for everemoore,

Emforth my myght, thy trewe servant be,
And holden weree alwey with chastitee.
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe!
I kepe noght of armes for to yelpe,
Ne I ne axe nat tomorwe to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this cas, ne veyne glorie
Of pris of armes blowen up and doun;
But I wolde have fully possessioun
Of emelye, and dye in thy servyse.
Fynd thow the manere hou, and in what wyse:
I recche nat but it may bettre be
To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in myne armes.
For though so be that mars is God of armes,
Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
Thy temple wol I worshippe everemo,
And on thyn auter, where I ride or go,
I wol doon sacrifice and fires beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Thanne preye I thee, tomorwe with a spere
That arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Thanne rekke I noght, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that arcita wynne hire to his wyf.
This is th' effect and ende of my preyere:
Yif me my love, thow blisful lady deere.
Whan the orison was doon of palamon,
Ful pitously, with alle circumstaunces,  
Al telle I nought as now his observaunces;  
But atte laste the statue of venus shook,  
And made a signe, wherby that he took  
That his preyere accepted was that day.  
For thogh the signe shewed a delay,  
Yet wiste he wel that graunted was his Boone;  
And with glad herte he wente hym hoom ful soone.  
The thridde houre inequal that palamon  
Bigan to venus temple for to gon,  
Up roos the sonne, and up roos emelye,  
And to the temple of dyane gan hye.  
Hir maydens, that she thider with hire ladde,  
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,  
Th’ encens, the clothes, and the remenant al  
That to the sacrifice longen shal;  
The horns fulle of meeth, as was the gyse:  
Ther lakked noght to doon hir sacrifise.  
Smokynge the temple, ful of clothes faire,  
This emelye, with herte debonaire,  
Hir body wessh with water of a welle.  
But hou she diede hir ryte I dar nat telle,  
But it be any thing in general;  
And yet it were a game to heeren al.  
To hym that meneth wel it were no charge;  
But it is good a man been at his large.  
Hir brighte heer was kembd, untressed al;  
A coroune of a grene ook cerial  
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.  
Two fyres on the auter gan she beete,  
And dide hir thynges, as men may biholde  
In stace of thebes and thise bookes olde.  
Whan kyndled was the fyr, with pitous cheere  
Unto dyane she spak as ye may heere:  
O chaste goddesse of the wodes grene,  
To whom bothe hevene and erthe and see is sene,  
Queene of the regne of pluto derk and lowe,  
Goddesse of maydens, that myn herte hast knowe  
Ful many a yeer, and woost what I desire,  
As keepe me fro thy vengeaunce and thyn ire,  
That attheon aboughte cruelly.  
Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I  
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,  
Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf.  
I am, thow woost, yet of thy compaignye,  
A mayde, and love huntynge and venerye,  
And for to walken in the wodes wilde,  
And noght to ben a wyf and be with childe.  
Noght wol I knowe compaignye of man.  
Now help me, lady, sith ye may and kan,  
For tho thre formes that thou hast in thee.
And palamon, that hath swich love to me,
And eek arcite, that loveth me so soore,
(this grace I preye thee withoute moore)
As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
And from me turne awaye hir hertes so
That al hire hoote love and hir desir,
And al hir bisy torment, and hir fir
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt nat do me grace,
Or if my destynee be shapen so
That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
As sende me hym that moost desireth me.

Bihoold, goddesse of clene chastitee,
The bittre teeris that on my chekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde and kepere of us alle,
My maydenhede thou kepe and wel conserve
And whil I lyve, a mayde I wol thee serve.
The fires brenne upon the auter cleere,
Whil emelye was thus in hir preyere.
But sodeynly she saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon oon of the fyres queynte,
And quyked agayn, and after that anon
That oother fyr was queynt and al agon;
And as it queynte it made a whistelynge,
As doon thise wete brondes in hir brennynge,
And at the brondes ende out ran anon
As it were blody dropes many oon;
For which so soore agast was emelye
That she was wel ny mad, and gan to crye,
For she ne wiste what it signyfied;
But oonly for the feere thus hath she cried,
And weep that it was pitee for to heere.
And therwithal dyane gan appeere,
With bowe in honde, right as an hunteresse,
And seyde, doghter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word writen and confermed,
Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho
That han for thee so muchel care and wo;
But unto which of hem I may nat telle.
Farwel, for I ne may no lenger dwelle.
The fires which that on myn auter brenne
Shulle thee declaren, er that thou go henne,
Thyn aventure of love, as in this cas.
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clateren faste and rynge,
And forth she wente, and made a vanysshynge;
For which this emelye astoned was,
And seyde, what amounteth this, alass?
I putte me in thy proteccioun,
Dyane, and in thy disposicioun.
And hoom she goth anon the nexte weye.
This is th’ effect; ther is namoore to seye.
The nexte houre of mars folwynge this,
Arcite unto the temple walked is
Of fierse mars, to doon his sacrifice,
With alle the rytes of his payen wyse.
With pitous herte and heigh devocioun,
Right thus to mars he seyde his orisoun:
O stronge god, that in the regnes colde
Of trace honoured art and lord yholde,
And hast in every regne and every lond
Of armes al the brydel in thyn hond,
And hem fortunest as thee lyst devyse,
Accepte of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my myght be worthy for to serve
Thy godhede, that I may been oon of thyne,
Thanne preye I thee to rewe upon my pyne.
For thilke peyne, and thilke hoote fir
In which thow whilom brendest for desir,
Whan that thow usedest the beautee
Of faire, yonge, fresshe venus free,
And haddest hire in armes at thy wille --
Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille,
Whan vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
And foond thee liggynge by his wyf, allas! --
For thilke sorwe that was in thyn herte,
Have routhe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonnynge, as thow woost,
And, as I trowe, with love offended moost
That evere was any lyves creature;
For she that dooth me al this wo endure
Ne reccheth nevere wher I synke or fleete.
And wel I woot, er she me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wynne hire in the place,
And, wel I woot, withouten help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe noght ava ille.
Thanne help me, lord, tomorwe in my bata ille,
For thilke yre that whilom breneste thee,
As wel as thilke yre now brenneth me,
And do that I tomorwe have victorie.
Myn be the travaille, and thyn be the glorie!
Thy sovereyn temple wol I moost honouren
Of any place, and alwey moost laboure
In thy pleasaunce and in thy craftes stronge,
And in thy temple I wol my baner honge
And alle the armes of my compaignye;
And everemo, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fir I wol biforn thee fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:
My beard, my lord, that hangeth long adown,
That never yet ne felte offensioun
Of reason nor of shere, I wol thee yive,
And ben thy trewe servant whil I lyve.
Now, lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore;
Yif me victorie, I aske thee namoore.
The preyere stynt of arcita the stronge,
The rynges on the temple dore that honge,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful faste,
Of which arcita somwhat hym agaste.
The fyres brenden upon the outer brighte,
That it gan al the temple for to lighte;
A sweete smel the ground anon up yaf,
And arcita anon his hand up haf,
And moore encens into the fyr he caste,
With othery rytes mo; and atte laste
The statue of mars bogan his hauberkyrenge;
And with that soune he herde a murmurynge
Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, victorie!
For which he yaf to mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye and hope wel to fare
Arcite anon unto his in is fare,
As fayn as fowel is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon swich strif ther is bigonne,
For thilke graunte, in the hevene above,
Bitwixe venus, the goddesse of love,
And mars, the stierne God armypotente,
That juppiter was bisy it to stente;
Til that the pale saturnus the colde,
That knew so manye of aventures olde,
Foond in his olde experience an art
That he ful soone hath pleased every part.
As sooth is seyd, elde hath greet avantage;
In elde is bothe wysdom and usage;
Men may the olde atrenne, and noght atrede.
Saturne anon, to stynten strif and drede,
Al be it that it is agayn his kynde,
Of al this strif he gan remedie fynde.
My deere doghter venus, quod saturne,
My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
Hath moore power than woot any man.
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte,
The murmure and the cherles rebellyng,
The groynynge, and the pryve empoysonyng;
I do vengeance and pleyen correccioun,
Whil I dwelle in the signe of the leoun.
Myn is the ruyne of the hye halles,
The fallynge of the toures and of the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slow sampsoun, shakynge the piler;
And myne be the maladyes colde,
The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
My lookyng is the fader of pestilence.
Now weep namoore, I shal doon diligence
That palamon, that is thyn owene knyght,
Shal have his lady, as thou hast him hight.
Though mars shal helpe his knyght, yet nathelees
Bitwixe yow ther moot be som tyme pees,
Al be ye noght of o compleccioun,
That causeth al day swich divisioun.
I am thyn aiel, redy at thy wille;
Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust fulf ille.
Now wol I stynten of the goddes above,
Of mars, and of venus, goddesse of love,
And telle yow as pleynly as I kan
The grete effect, for which that I bygan.

Explicit tercia pars.

Sequitur pars quarta.

Greet was the feeste in atthenes that day,
And eek the lusty seson of that may
Made every wight to been in swich plesaunce
That al that monday justen they and daunce,
And spenden it in venus heigh servyse.
But by the cause that they sholde ryse
Eerly, for to seen the grete fight,
Unto hir reste wenten they at nyght.
And on the morwe, whan that day gan sprynge,
Of hors and harneys noyse and claterynge
Ther was in hostelryes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordez upon steedes and palfreys.
Ther maystow seen devisynge of harneys
So unkouth and so riche, and wroght so weel
Of goldsmithrye, of browdynge, and of steel;
The sheeldes brighte, testeres, and trappures,
Gold-hewen helmes, hauberkes, cote-armures;
Lordez in parementz on hir courseres,
Knyghtes of retenue, and eek squieres
Nailynge the speres, and helmes bokelynge;
Gigynge of sheeldes, with layneres lacynge
(there as nede is they weren no thyng ydel);
The fomy steedes on the golden brydel
Gnawynge, and faste the armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yemen on foote, and communes many oon
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes,
That in the bataille blowen blody sounes;
The paleys ful of peple up and doun,
Heere thre, ther ten, holdynge hir questioun,
Dyvynynge of thise thebane knyghtes two.
Somme seyden thus, somme seyde it shal be so;
Somme helden with hym with the blake berd,
Somme with the balled, somme with the thikke herd;
Somme seyde he looked grymme, and he wolde fighte;
He hath a sparth of twenty pound of wighte.
Thus was the halle ful of divynynge,
Longe after that the sonne gan to sprynge.
The grete theseus, that of his sleep awaked
With mynstralcie and noyse that was maked,
Heeld yet the chambr of his paleys riche,
Til that the thebane knyghtes, bothe yliche
Honured, were into the paleys fet.
Duc theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arrayed right as he were a God in trone.
The peple preesseth thiderward ful soone
Hym for to seen, and doon heigh reverence,
And eek to herkne his heste and his sentence.
And heraud on a scaffold made an oo!
Til al the noyse of peple was ydo,
And whan he saugh the peple of noyse al stille,
Tho shewed he the myghty dukes wille.
The lord hath of his heigh discrecioun
Considered that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood to fighten in the gyse
Of mortal bataille now in this emprise.
Wherfore, to shapen that they shal nat dye,
He wol his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up payne of los of lyf,
No maner shot, ne polax, ne short knyf
Into the lystes sende, or thider brynge;
Ne short swerd, for to stoke with poynit bitynge,
Ne man ne drawe, ne bere it by his syde.
Ne no man shal unto his felawe ryde
But o cours, with a sharpe ygrounde spere;
Foyne, if hym list, on foote, hymself to were.
And he that is at meschief shal be take
And noght slayn, but be broght unto the stake
That shal ben ordeyned on either syde;
But thider he shal by force, and there abyde.
And if so falle the chieftayn be take
On outhere syde, or elles sleen his make,
No lenger shal the turneiynge laste.
God spede you! gooth forth, and ley on faste!
With long swerd and with maces fighteth youre fille.
Gooth now youre wey, this is the lordes wille.
2561 The voys of peple touchede the hevene,
2562 So loude cride they with murie stevene,
2563 God save swich a lord, that is so good,
2564 He wilneth no destruccion of blood!
2565 Up goon the trompes and the melodye,
2566 And to the lystes rit the compagnye,
2567 By ordinance, thurghout the citee large,
2568 Hanged with clooth of gold, and nat with sarge.
2569 Ful lik a lord this noble duc gan ryde,
2570 This two thebans upon either syde;
2571 And after rood the queene, and emelye,
2572 And after that another compagnye
2573 Of oon and oother, after hir degree.
2574 And thus they passen thurghout the citee,
2575 And to the lystes come they by tyme.
2576 It nas nat of the day yet fully pryme
2577 Whan set was theseus ful riche and hye,
2578 Ypolita the queene, and emelye,
2579 And othere ladys in degrees aboute.
2580 Unto the seetes preesseth al the route.
2581 And westward, thurgh the gates under marte,
2582 Arcite, and eek the hondred of his parte,
2583 With baner reed is entred right anon;
2584 And in that selve moment palamon
2585 Is under venus, estward in the place,
2586 With baner whyt, and hardy chiere and face.
2587 In al the world, to seken up and doun,
2588 So evene, withouten variacioun,
2589 Ther nere swiche compagnyes tweye;
2590 For ther was noon so wys that koude seye
2591 That any hadde of oother avauntage
2592 Of worthynesse, ne of estaat, ne age,
2593 So evene were they chosen, for to gesse.
2594 And in two renges faire they hem dresse.
2595 Whan that hir names rad were everichon,
2596 That in hir nombre gyle were ther noon,
2597 Tho were the gates shet, and cried was loude:
2598 Do now youre devoir, yonge knyghtes proude!
2599 The heraudes lefte hir prikyng up and doun;
2600 Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun.
2601 Ther is namoore to seyn, but west and est
2602 In goon the speres ful sadly in arrest;
2603 In gooth the sharpe spore into the syde.
2604 Ther seen men who kan juste and who kan ryde;
2605 Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke;
2606 He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
2607 Up spryngen speres twenty foot on highte;
2608 Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte;
2609 The helmes they tohewen and toshrede;
2610 Out brest the blood with stierne stremes rede;
2611 With myghty maces the bones they tobreste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng gan threste;
Ther stomblen steedes stronge, and doun gooth al;
He rolleth under foot as dooth a bal;
He foyneth on his feet with his tronchoun,
And he hym hurtleth with hors adoun;
He thurgh the body is hurt and sither take,
Maugree his heed, and broght unto the stake:
Another lad is on that oother syde.
And some tyme dooth hem theseus to reste,
Hem to refresshe and drynken, if hem leste.
Ful ofte a day han thise thebanes two
Unhorsed hath ech oother of hem tweye.
Ther nas no tygre in the vale of galgopheye,
When that hir whelp is stole whan it is lite,
So cruel on the hunte as is arcite
For jelous herte upon this palamon.
Ne in belmelrye ther nys so fel leon,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood,
Ne of his praye desireth so the blood,
As palamon to sleen his foo arcite.
The jelous strokes on hir helmes byte;
Out renneth blood on bothe hir sydes rede.
Som tyme an ende ther is of every dede.
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The stronge kyng emetreus gan hente
This palamon, as he faught with arcite,
And made his swerd depe in his flessh to byte;
And by the force of twenty is he take
Unyolden, and ydrawe unto the stake.
And in the rescus of this palamoun
The stronge kyng lygurge is born adoun,
And kyng emetreus, for al his strengthe,
Is born out of his sadel a swerdes lengthe,
So hitte him palamoun er he were take;
But al for nught, he was broght to the stake.
His hardy herte myghte hym helpe naught:
He moste abyde, whan that he was caught,
By force and eek by composicioun.
Who sorweth now but woful palamoun,
That moot namoore goon agayn to fighte?
And whan that theseus hadde seyn this sighte,
Unto the folk that fotghen thus echon
He cryde, hoo! namoore, for it is doon!
I wol be trewe juge, and no partie.
Arcite of thebes shal have emelie,
That by his fortune hath hire faire ywonne.
For joye of this, so loude and heighe withalle,
It semed that the lystes sholde falle.
What kan now faire venus doon above?
What seith she now? what dooth this queene of love,
But wepeth so, for wantynge of hir wille,
Til that hir teeres in the lystes fille?
She seyde, I am ashamed, douteless.
Saturnus seyde, doghter, hoold thy pees!
Mars hath his wille, his knyght hath al his boone,
And, by myn heed, thow shalt been esed soone.
The trompours, with the loude mynstralcie,
The heraudes, that ful loude yelle and crie,
Been in hire wele for joye of daun arcite.
But herkneth me, and stynteth noyse a lite,
Which a miracle ther bifel anon.
This fierse arcite hath of his helm ydon,
And on a courser, for to shewe his face,
He priketh endelong the large place
Lokynge upward upon this emelye;
And she agayn hym caste a freendlich ye
(for wommen, as to spoken in comune,
Thei folwen alle the favour of fortune)
And was al his chiere, as in his herte.
Out of the ground a furie infernal sterte,
From pluto sent at requeste of saturne,
For which his hors for fere gan to turne,
And leep aside, and founred as he leep;
And er that arcite may taken keep,
He pighte hym on the pomel of his heed,
That in the place he lay as he were deed,
His brest tobrosten with his sadel-bowe.
As blak he lay as any cole or crowe,
So was the blood yronnen in his face.
Anon he was yborn out of the place,
With herte soor, to theseus paleys.
Tho was he korven out of his harneys,
And in a bed ybrought ful faire and blyve;
For he was yet in memorie and alyve,
And alwey criynge after emelye.
Duc theseus, with al his compaignye,
Is comen hoom to atthenes his citee,
With alle blisse and greet solempniteit.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde noght disconforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek that arcite shal nat dye;
He shal been heeled of his maladye.
And of another thyng they weren as fayn,
That of hem alle was ther noon yslayn,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To othere woundes and to broken armes
Somme hadden salves, and somme hadden charmes;
2713 Fermacies of herbes, and eek save
2714 They dronken, for they wolde hir lymes have.
2715 For which this noble duc, as he wel kan,
2716 Conforteth and honoureth every man,
2717 And made revel al the longe nyght
2718 Unto the straunge lorde, as was right.
2719 Ne ther was holden no disconfitynge
2720 But as a justes, or a tourneiynge;
2721 For soothe ther was no disconfiture.
2722 For fallyng nys nat but an aventure,
2723 Ne to be lad by force unto the stake
2724 Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
2725 O persone allone, withouten mo,
2726 And haried forth by arme, foot, and too,
2727 And eke his steede dryven forth with staves
2728 With footmen, bothe yemen and eek knaves, --
2729 It nas arreted hym no vileynye;
2730 Ther may no man clepen it cowardye.
2731 For which anon duc theseus leet crye,
2732 To stynten alle rancour and envye,
2733 The gree as wel of o syde as of oother,
2734 And eyther syde ylik as ootheres brother;
2735 And yaf hem yiftes after hir degree,
2736 And fully heeld a feeste dayes three,
2737 And conveyed the kynges worthily
2738 Out of his toun a journee largely.
2739 And hoom wente every man the righte way.
2740 Ther was namoore but fare wel, have good day!
2741 Of this bataille I wol namoore endite,
2742 But speke of palamon and of arcite.
2743 Swelleth the brest of arcite, and the soore
2744 Encreseseth at his herte moore and moore.
2745 The clothered blood, for any lechecraft,
2746 Corrupteth, and is in his bouk ylaft,
2747 That neither veyne-blood, ne ventusynge,
2748 Ne drynke of herbes may ben his helpynge.
2749 The vertu expulsif, or animal,

2750 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural
2751 Ne may the venym voyden ne expelle.
2752 The pipes of his longes gonne to swelle,
2753 And every lacerte in his brest adoun
2754 Is shent with venym and corrupcioun.
2755 Hym gayneth neither, for to gete his lif,
2756 Vomyt upward, ne dounward laxatif.
2757 Al is tobrosten thilke regioun;
2758 Nature hath now no dominacioun.
2759 And certeining, ther nature wol nat wirche,
2760 Fare wel phisik! go ber the man to chirche!
2761 This al and som, that arcita moot dye;
2762 For which he sendeth after emelye,
And palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
Thanne seyde he thus, as ye shal after heere:
Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
To yow, my lady, that I love moost;
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To yow aboven every creature,
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.
Allas, the wo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! allas, myn emelye!
Allas, departynge of oure compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, withouten any compaignye.
Fare wel, my sweete foo, myn emelye!
And softe taak me in youre armes tweye,
For love of god, and herkneth what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn palamon
Had strif and rancour many a day agon
And juppiter so wys my soule gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstances trewely --
That is to seyen, trouthe, honour, knyghthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, estaat, and heigh kynrede,
Fredom, and al that longeth to that art --
So juppiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne knowe I non
So worthy to ben loved as palamon,
That serveth yow, and wol doon al his lyf.
And if that evere ye shul ben a wyf,
Foryet nat palamon, the gentil man.
And with that word his speche faille gan,
For from his feet up to his brest was come
The coold of deeth, that hadde hym overcome,
And yet mooreover, for in his armes two
The vital strengthe is lost and al ago.
Oonly the intellect, withouten moore,
That dwelled in his herte syk and soore,
Gan faillen whan the herte felte deeth.
Dusked his eyen two, and failled breeth,
But on his lady yet caste he his ye;
His laste word was, mercy, emelye!
His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,
As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher.
Therfore I stynte, I nam no diviniztre;
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre,
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.

Arcite is coold, ther mars his soule gye!

Now wol I spoken forth of emelye.

Shrighte emelye, and howleth palamon,

And theseus his suster took anon

Swownynge, and baar hire fro the corps away.

What helpeth it to tarien forth the day

To tellen how she weep bothe eve and morwe?

For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe,

Whan that hir housbondes ben from hem ago,

That for the moore part they sorwen so,

Or ellis fallen in swich maladye,

That at the laste certeinely they dye.

Infinite been the sorwes and the teeres

Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeeres,

In al the toun for deeth of this theban.

For hym ther wepeth bothe child and man;

So greet wepyng was ther noon, certayn,

Whan ector was ybroght, al fressh yslayn,

To troye. Allas, the pitee that was ther,

Cracchynge of chekes, rentynge eek of heer.

Why woldestow be deed, thise wommen crye,

And haddest gold ynough, and emelye?

No man myghte gladen theseus,

Savynge his olde fader egeus,

That knew this worldes transmutacioun,

As he hadde seyn it chaunge bothe up and doun,

Joye after wo, and wo after gladnesse,

And shewed hem ensamples and liknesse.

Right as ther dyed nevere man, quod he,

That he ne lyvede in erthe in some degree,

Right so ther lyvede never man, he seyde,

In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.

This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,

And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.

Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore.

And over al this yet seyde he muchel moore

To this effect, ful wisely to enhorte

The peple that they sholde hem reconforte.

Duc theseus, with al his bisy cure,

Caste now wher that the sepulture

Of goode arcite may best ymaked be,

And eek most honorable in his degree.

And at the laste he took conclusiouen

That ther as first arcite and palamoun

Hadden for love the bataille hem bitwene,

That in that selve grove, swoote and grene,

Ther as he hadde his amorouse desires,

His compleynte, and for love his hoote fires,

He wolde make a fyr in which the office
Funeral he myghte al accomplice.
And leet comande anon to hakke and hewe
The okes olde, and leye hem on a rewe
In colpons wel arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte feet they renne
And ryde anon at his comandement.
And after this, theseus hath ysent
After a beere, and it al over spradde
With cloth of gold, the richeste that he hadde.
And of the same suyte he cladde arcite;
Upon his hondes hadde he gloves white,
Eek on his heed a coroune of laurer grene,
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde hym, bare the visage, on the beere;
Therwith he weep that pitee was to heere.
And for the peple sholde seen hym alle,
Whan it was day, he broghte hym to the halle,
That roreth of the criyng and the soun.
Tho cam this woful theban palamoun,
With flotery berd and ruggy, asshy heeres,
In clothes blake, ydropped al with teeres;
And, passynge othere of wepynge, emelye,
The rewefulleste of al the compaignye.
In as muche as the servyce sholde be
The moore noble and riche in his degree,
Duc theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge,
That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,
And covered with the armes of daun arcite.
Upon thise steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seten folk, of whiche oon baar his sheeld,
Another his spere up on his hondes heeld,
The thridde baar with hym his bowe turkeys
(of brend gold was the caas and eek the harneys);
Riden forth a paas with sorweful cheere
Toward the grove, as ye shul after heere.
The nobleste of the grekes that ther were
Upon hir shuldres caryeden the beere,
With slakke paas, and eyen rede and wete,
Thurghout the citee by the maister strete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is the strete ywrye.
Upon the right hond wente olde egeus,
And on that oother syde duc theseus,
With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn;
Eek palamon, with ful greet compaignye;
And after that cam woful emelye,
With fyr in honde, as was that tyme the gyse,
To do the office of funeral servyse.
Heigh labour and ful greet apparaillynge
Was at the service and the fyr-makynge,
That with his grene top the hevene raughte;
And twenty fadme of brede the armes straughte --
This is to seyn, the bowes weren so brode.
Of stree first ther was leyd ful many a lode.
But how the fyr was maked upon highte,
Ne eek the names that the trees highte,
As ook, firre, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popler,
Wylugh, elm, plane, assh, box, chasteyn, lyme, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, bech, hasel, ew, whippeltree, --
How they weren feld, shal nat be toold for me;
Ne hou the goddes ronnen up and doun,
Disherited of hire habitacioun,
In which they woneden in reste and pees,
Nymphes, fawnes and amadrides;
Ne hou the beestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for fere, whan the wode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nat wont to seen the sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And thanne with drye stikkes cloven a thre,
And thanne with grene wode and spicerye,
And thanne with clooth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes, hangynge with ful many a flour;
The mirre, th' encens, with al so greet odour;
Ne how arcite lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is;
Ne how that emelye, as was the gyse,
Putte in the fyr of funeral servyse;
Ne how she swnowned whan men made the fyr,
Ne what she spak, ne what was hir desir;
Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste,
Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
And of hire vestimentz, whiche that they were,
And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood;
Ne how the grekes, with an huge route,
Thries riden al the fyr aboute
Upon the left hand, with a loud shoutynge,
And thries with hir speres claterynge;
And thries how the ladyes gonne crye;
Ne how that lad was homward emelye;
Ne how arcite is brent to ashen colde;
Ne how that lyche-wake was yholde
Al thilke nyght; ne how the grekes pleye
Thries riden al the fyr abyoute
Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
But shortly to the point thanne wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.
By processe and by lengthe of certeyn yeres,
Al stynted is the moornynge and the teres
Of grekes, by oon general assent.
Thanne semed me ther was a parlement
At attennes, upon certein pointz and caas;
Among the whiche pointz yspoken was,
To have with certein contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of thebans obeisaunce.
For which this noble theseus anon
Leet senden after gentil palamon,
Unwist of hym what was the cause and why;
But in his blake clothes sorwefullly
He cam at his comandement in hye.
Tho sente theseus for emelye.
Whan they were set, and hust was al the place,
And theseus abiden hadde a space
Er any word cam fram his wise brest,
His eyen sette he ther as was his lest.
And with a sad visage he siked stille,
And after that right thus he seyde his wille:
The firste moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was th' effect, and heigh was his entente.
Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente;
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.
That same prince and that moevere, quod he,
Hath stablissed in this wrecched world adoun
Certeyne dayes and duracioun
To al that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may nat pace,
Al mowe they yet tho dayes wel abregge.
Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t' allegge,
For it is preeved by experience,
But that me list declaren my sentence.
Thanne may men by this ordre wel discerne
That thilke moevere stable is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every part dirryveth from his hool;
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
Of no partie or cantel of a thyng,
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable,
Descendynge so til it be corrupamble.
And therfore, of his wise purveiaunce,
He hath so wel biset his ordinaunce,
That species of thynges and progressiouns
Shullen enduren by successiouns,
And nat eterne, withouten any lye.
This maystow understonde and seen at ye.
Loo the ook, that hath so long a norisshynge
From tyme that it first bigynneth to sprynge,
And hath so long a lif, as we may see,
Yet at the laste wasted is the tree.
Considereth eek how that the harde stoon
Under oure feet, on which we trede and goon,
Yet wasteth it as it lyth by the weye.
The brode ryver somtyme wexeth dreye;
The grete tounes se we wane and wende.
Thanne may ye se that al this thyng hath ende.
Of man and womman seen we wel also
This is to seyn, in youthe or elles age,
He moot be deed, the kyng as shal a page;
Som in his bed, som in the depe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may see;
Ther helpeth noght, al goth that ilke weye.
Thanne may I seyn that al this thyng moot deye.
What maketh this but juppiter, the kyng,
That is prince and cause of alle thyng,
Convertynge al unto his propre welle
From which it is dirryved, sooth to telle?
And heer-agaysn no creature on lyve,
Of no degree, ava illeth for to stryve.
Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee,
And take it weel that we may nat eschue,
And namely that to us alle is due.
And whoso gruccheth ought, he dooth folye,
And rebel is to hym that al may gye.
And certeiny a man hath moost honour
To dyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name;
Thanne hath he doon his freend, ne hym, no shame.
And gladder oghte his freend been of his deeth,
Whan with honour up yolden is his breeth,
Than when his name apalled is for age,
For al forgeten is his vassellage.
Thanne is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dyen whan that he is best of name.
The contrarie of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why grucchen we, why have wehevynesse,
That goode arcite, of chivalrie the flour,
Departed is with duetee and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?

Why grucchen heere his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loved hem so wee!?
Kan he hem thank? nay, God woot, never a deel,
That both his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they mowe hir lustes nat amende.

What may I conclude of this longe serye,

But after wo I rede us to be merye,

And thanken juppiter of al his grace?

And er that we departen from this place

I rede that we make of sorwes two

O parfit joye, lastynge everemo.

And looketh now, wher moost sorwe is herinne,

Ther wol we first amenden and bigynne.

Suster, quod he, this is my fulle assent,

With al th’ avys heere of my parlement,

That gentil palamon, youre owene knyght,

That serveth yow with wille herte, and myght,

And ever hath doon syn ye first hym knewe,

That ye shul of youre grace upon hym rewe,

And taken hym for housbonde and for lord.

Lene me youre hond, for this is oure accord.

Lat se now of youre wommanly pitee.

He is kynges brother sone, pardee;

And though he were a povre bacheler,

Syn he hath served yow so many a yeer,

And had for yow so greet adversitee,

It moste been considered, leeveth me;

For gentil mercy oghte to passen right.

Thanne seyde he thus to palamon the knight:

I trowe ther nedeth litel sermonyng

Com neer, and taak youre lady by the hond.

Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond

That highte matrimoigne or mariage,

By al the conseil and the baronage.

And thus with alle blisse and melodie

Hath palamon ywedded emelye.

And god, that al this wyde world hath wroght,

Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;

For now is palamon in alle wele,

Lyvynge in blisse, in richesse, and in heele,

And emelye hym loveth so tendrely,

And he hire serveth al so gentilly,

That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene

Of jalousie or any oother teene.

Thus endeth palamon and emelye;

And God save al this faire compaignye! amen.

Whan that the knyght had thus his tale ytoold,

In al the route nas ther yong ne oold

That he ne seyde it was a noble storie,

And worthy for to drawen to memorie;
And namely the gentils everichon.
Oure hooste lough and swoor, so moot I gon,
This gooth aright; unbokeled is the male.
Lat se now who shal telle another tale;
For trewely the game is wel bigonne.
Now telleth ye, sir monk, if that ye konne
Somwhat to quite with the knyghtes tale.
The millere, that for dronken was al pale,
So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
He nolde avalen neither hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curteisie,
And swoor, by armes, and by blood and bones,
I kan a noble tale for the nones,
With which I wol now quite the knyghtes tale.
Oure hooste saugh that he was dronke of ale,
And seyde, abyd, robyn, my leeve brother;
Som bettre man shal telle us first another.
Abyd, and lat us werken thriftily.
By goddes soule, quod he, that wol nat I;
For I wol speke, or elles go my wey.
Oure hoost answere, tel on, a devel wey!
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome.
Now herkneth, quod the millere, alle and some!
But first I make a protestacioun
That I am dronke, I knowe it by my soun;
And therfore if that I mysspeke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of southwerk, I you preye.
For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.
The reve answere and seyde, stynt thy clappe!
It is a synne and eek a greet folye
To apeyren any man, or hym defame,
And eek to bryngen wyves in swich fame.
This dronke millere spak ful s oone ageyn
Leve brother osewold,
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.
But I sey nat therfore that thou art oon;
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon,
And evere a thousand goode ayeyns oon badde.
That knowestow wel thyself, but if thou madde.
Why artow angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardee, as wel as thou;
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plogh,
Take upon me moore than ynogh,
As demen of myself that I were oon;
I wol bileve wel that I am noon.
An housbonde shal nat been inquisitif
Of goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.
So he may fynde goddes foyson there,
Of the remenant nedeth nat enquere.
What sholde I moore seyn, but this millere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherles tale in his manere.
M’ athynketh that I shal reherce it heere.
And therfore every gentil wight I preye,
For goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce
Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.
And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gent illesse,
And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys.
The millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;
So was the reve eek and othere mo,
Avyseth yow, and put me out of blame;
And eek men shal nat maken ernest of game.

The Miller’s Tale

Whilom ther was dwellynge at oxenford
A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to bord,
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With hym ther was dwellynge a poure scoler,
Hadde lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was turned for to lerne astrologye,
And koude a certeyn of conclusiouns,
To demen by interrogaciouns,
If that men asked hym in certein houres
Whan that men sholde have droghte or elles shoures,
Or if men asked hym what sholde bifalle
Of every thyng; I may nat rekene hem alle.
This clerk was cleped hende nicholas.
Of deere love he koude and of solas;
And therto he was sleigh and ful privee,
And lyk a mayden meke for to see.
A chambre hadde he in that hostelrye
Allone, withouten any compaignye,
Ful fetisly ydight with herbes swoote;
And he hymself as sweete as is the roote
Of lycorys, or any cetewale.
His almageste, and bookes grete and smale,
His astrelabie, longynghe for his art,
His augrym stones layen faire apart,
On shelves couched at his beddes heed;
His presse ycovered with a faldyng reed;
And al above ther lay a gay sautrie,
On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
So swetely that all the chambre rong;
And angelus ad virginem he song;
And after that he song the kynges noote.
Ful often blessed was his myrie throte.
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente
After his freendes fyndyng and his rente.
This carpenter hadde wedded newe a wyf,
Which that he lovede moore than his lyf;
Of eighteteene yeer she was of age.
Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,
For she was wylde and yong, and he was old,
And demed hymself been lik a cokewold.
He knew nat catoum, for his wit was rude,
That bad man sholde wedde his simylitude.
Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,
For youthe and elde is often at debaat.
But sith that he was fallen in the snare,
He moste endure, as oother folk, his care.
Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal
As any wezele hir body gent and smal.
A ceynt she werede, barred al of silk,
A barmclooth eek as whit as morne milk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a goore.
Whit was hir smok, and broyden al bifoore
And eek bihynde, on hir coler aboute,
Of col-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper
Were of the same suyte of hir coler;
Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye.
And sikerly she hadde a likerous ye;
Ful smale ypulled were hire browes two,
And tho were bent and blake as any sloo.
She was ful moore blisful on to see
Than is the newe pere-jonette tree,
And softer than the wolle is of a wether.
And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether,
Tasseeled with silk, and perled with latoun.
In al this world, to seken up and doun,
There nys no man so wys that koude thenche
So gay a popelote or swich a wenche.
Ful brighter was the shynyng of hir hewe
Than in the tour the noble yforged newe.
Therto she koude skippe and make game,
As any kyde or calf folwynge his dame.
Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,
Or hooerd of apples leyd in hey or heeth.
Wynsynge she was, as is a joly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A brooch she baar upon hir lowe coler,
As brood as is the boos of a bokeler.
Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye.
She was a prymerole, a piggesnye,
For any lord to leggen in his bedde,
Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.
Now, sire, and eft, sire, so bifel the cas,
That on a day this hende nicholas
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye,
Whil that hir housbonde was at oseneye,
As clerkes ben ful subtile and ful queynte;
And prively he caughte hire by the queynte,
And seyde, ywis, but if ich have my wille,
For deerne love of thee, lemmman, I sp ille.
And heeld hire harde by the haunchebones,
And seyde, lemmman, love me al atones,
Or I wol dyen, also God me save!
And she sproong as a colt dooth in the trave,
And with hir heed she wryed faste awey,
And seyde, I wol nat kisse thee, by my fey!
Why, lat be, quod she, lat be, nicholas,
Or I wol crie -- out, harrow -- and -- allass! --
Do wey your handes, for your curteisye!
This nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That she hir love hym graunted at laste,
And swoor hir ooth, by seint thomas of kent,
That she wol been at his comandement,
Whan that she may hir leyser wel espie.
Myn housbonde is so ful of jalousie
That but ye wayte wel and been privee,
I woot right wel I nam but deed, quod she.
Ye moste been ful deerne, as in this cas.
Nay, therof care thee noght, quod nicholas.
A clerk hadde litherly biset his whyle,
But if he koude a carpenter bigyle.
And thus they been accorded and ysworn
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.
Whan nicholas had doon thus everideel,
And thakked hire aboute the lendes weel,
He kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie,
And pleyth faste, and maketh melodie.
Thanne fil it thus, that to the paryssh chirche,
Cristes owene werkes for to wirche,
This goode wyf went on an haliday.
Hir forheed shoon as bright as any day,
So was it wasshen when she leet hir werk.

Now was ther of that chirche a parissh clerk,
The which that was ycleped absolon.
Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,
And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
Ful streight and evene lay his joly shode.
His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos.
With poules wyndow corven on his shoos,
In hoses rede he wente feticly.
Yclad he was ful smal and proprely
Al in a kirtel of a lyght waget;
Ful faire and thikke been the poyntes set.
Therupon he hadde a gay surplys
As whit as is the blosme upon the rys.
A myrie child he was, so God me save.
Wel koude he laten blood and clippe and shave,
And maken a chartre of lond or acquitaunce.
In twenty manere koude he trippe and daunce
After the scole of oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro,
And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;
Therto he song som tyme a loud quynyble;
And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther any gaylard tappestere was.
But sooth to seyn, he was somdeel squaymous
Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
This absolon, that jolif was and gay,
Gooth with a sencer on the haliday,
Sensynge the wyves of the parisshe faste;
And many a lovely look on hem he caste,
And namely on this carpenteris wyf.
To looke on hire hym thoughte a myrie lyf,
She was so propre and sweete and likerous.
I dar wel seyn, if she hadde been a mous,
And he a cat, he wolde hire hente anon.
This parissh clerk, this joly absolon,
Hath in his herte swich a love-longynge
That of no wyf took he noon offrynge;
For curteisie, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone, whan it was nyght, ful brighte shoon,
And absolon his gyterne hath ytake,
For paramours he thoghte for to wake.
And forth he gooth, jolif and amorous,
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous
A litel after cokkes hadde ycrowe,
And dressed hym up by a shot-wyndowe
That was upon the carpenteris wal.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smal,
Now, deere lady, if thy wille be,
I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me,
Ful wel acordaunt to his gyternyng.
This carpenter awook, and herde him synge,
And spak unto his wyf, and seyde anon,
What! alison! herestow nat absolon,
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?
And she anserwed hir housbonde therwithal,
Yis, God woot, john, I heere it every deel.
This passeth forth; what wol ye bet than weel?
Fro day to day this joly absolon
So woweth hire that hym is wo bigon.
He waketh al the nyght and al the day;
He kembeth his lokkes brode, and made hym gay;
And swoor he wolde been hir owene page;
He syngeth, brokkynge as a nyghtyngale;
He sente hire pyment, meeth, and spiced ale,
And wafres, pipyng hoot out of the gleede;
And, for she was of town, he profred meede.
For som folk wol ben wonnen for richesse,
And somme for strokes, and somme for gentillesse.
Somtyme, to shewe his lightnesse and maistrye,
He pleyeth herodes upon a scaffold hye.
But what availleth hym as in this cas?
She loveth so this hende nicholas
That absolon may blowe the bukses horn;
He ne hadde for his labour but a scorn.
And thus she maketh absolon hire ape,
And al his ernest turneth til a jape.
Ful sooth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
Men seyn right thus, alwey the nye slye
Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth.
For though that absolon be wood or wrooth,
By cause that he fer was from hire sight,
This nye nicholas stood in his light.
Now ber thee wel, thou hende nicholas,
For absolon may waille and synge allas.
And so bifel it on a saterday,
This carpenter was goon til osenay;
And hende nicholas and alisoun
Acorded been to this conclusioun,
That nicholas shal shapen hym a wyle
This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle;
And if so be the game wente aright,
She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght,
For this was his desir and hire also.
And right anon, withouten wordes mo,
This nicholas no lenger wolde tarie,
But dooth ful softe unto his chambre carie
Bothe mete and drynke for a day or tweye,
And to hire housbonde bad hire for to seye,
If that he axed after nicholas,
She sholde seye she nyste where he was,
Of al that day she saugh hym nat with ye;
She trowed that he was in maladye,
For no cry hir mayde koude hym calle,
This passeth forth al thilke saterday,
That nicholas stille in his chamble lay,
And eet and sleep, or dye what hym leste,
Til sunday, that the sonne gooth to reste.
This sely carpenter hath greet merveyle
Of nicholas, or what thyng myghte hym eyle,
And seyde, I am adrad, by seint thomas,
It stondeth nat aright with nicholas.
God shilde that he deyde sodeynly!
This world is now ful tikel, sikerly.
I saugh to-day a cors yborn to chirche
That now, on monday last, I saugh hym wirche.
Go up, quod he unto his knave anoon,
Clepe at his dore, or knokke with a stoon.
Looke how it is, and tel me boldely.
This knave gooth hym up ful sturdily,
And at the chamble dore whil that he stood,
He cride and knokked as that he were wood,
What! how! what do ye, maister nicholay?
How may ye slepen al the longe day?
But al for noght, he herde nat a word.
An hole he foond, ful lowe upon a bord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to crepe,
And at that hole he looked in ful depe,
This nicholas sat evere capyng upright,
As he had kiked on the newe moone.
Adoun he gooth, and tolde his maister soone
In what array he saugh this ilke man.
This carpenter to blessen hym bigan,
And seyde, help us, seinte frydeswyde!
A man woot litel what hym shal bityde.
This man is falle, with his astromye,
In some woodnesse or in som agonye.
I thoghte ay wel how that it sholde be!
Men sholde nat knowe of goddes pryvetee.
Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man
That noght but oonly his bileve kan!
So ferde another clerk with astromye;
He walked in the feeldes, for to prye
Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle,
Til he was in a marle-pit yfalle;
He saugh nat that. But yet, by seint thomas,
Me reweth soore of hende nicholas.
He shal be rated of his studiyng,
If that I may, by jhesus, hevene kyng!
Get me a staf, that I may underspore,
Whil that thou, robyn, hevest up the dore.
He shal out of his studiyng, as I gesse --
And to the chambre dore he gan hym dresse.
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
And by the haspe he haaf it of atones;
Into the floor the dore fil anon.
This nicholas sat ay as stille as stoon,
And evere caped upward into the eir.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
And hente hym by the sholdres myghtily,
And shook hym harde, and cride spitously,
What! nicholay! what, how! what, looke adoun!
Awak, and thenk on cristes passioun!
I crouche thee from elves and fro wightes.
Therwith the nyght-spel seyde he anon-rightes
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the thresshfold of the dore withoute:
Jhesu crist and seinte benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,
For nyghtes verye, the white pater-noster!
Where wentestow, seinte petres soster?
And atte laste this hende nicholas
Gan for to sik soore, and seyde, allas!
Shal al the world be lost aftsoones now?
This carpenter answerde, what seystow?
What! thynk on god, as we doon, men that swyne.
This nicholas answerde, fecche me drinke,
And after wol I speke in pryvetee
Of certeyn thyng that toucheth me and thee.
I wol telle it noon oother man, certeyn.
Of certeyn thyng that toucheth me and thee.
I wol telle it noon oother man, certeyn.
This carpenter goth doun, and comth ageyn,
And broghte of myghty ale a large quart;
And whan that ech of hem had dronke his part,
This nicholas his dore faste shette,
And doun the carpenter by hym he sette.
He seyde john, myn hooste, lief and deere,
Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere
Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere
That to no wight thou shalt this conseil wreye;
For it is cristes conseil that I seye,
And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore;
For this vengeaunce thou shalt han therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou shalt be wood.
Nay, crist forbede it, for his hooly blood!
Quod tho this sely man, I nam no labbe;
Ne, though I seye, I nam nat lief to gabbe.
Sey what thou wolt, I shal it nevero telle
To child ne wyf, by hym that harwed helle!
Now john, quod nicholas, I wol nat lye;
I have yfounde in myn astrologye,
As I have looked in the moone bright,
That now a monday next, at quarter nyght,
Shal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
That half so greet was neuer noes flood.
This world, he seyde, in lasse than an hour
Shal al be dreyn, so hidous is the shour.
Thus shal mankynde drenche, and lese hir lyf.
This carpenter anserwe, allas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? allas, myn alisoun!
For sorwe of this he fil almoost adoun,
And seyde, is ther no remedie in this cas?
Why, yis, for gode, quod hende nicholas,
If thou wolt werken after loore and reed.
Thou mayst nat werken after thyn owene heed;
For thys seith salomon, that was ful trewe,
Werk al by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe. --
And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,
I undertake, withouten mast and seyl,
Yet shal I saven hire and thee and me.
Hastow nat herd hou saved was noe,
Whan that oure lord hadde warned hym biforn
That al the world with water sholde be lorn?
Yis, quod this carpenter, ful yoore ago.
Hastou nat herd, quod nicholas, also
The sorwe of noe with his felaweshipe,
But whan thou hast, for hire and thee and me,
Ygeten us thise knedyng tubbes thre,
Thanne shaltow hange hem in the roof ful hye,
That no man of oure purveiaunce spye.
And whan thou thus hast doon, as I have seyd,
And hast oure vitaille faire in hem yleyd,
And eek an ax, to smyte the corde atwo,
Whan that the water comth, that we may go,
And breke an hole an heigh, upon the gable,
Unto the gardyn-ward, over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way,
Whan that the grete shour is goon away,
Thanne shaltou swymme as myrie, I undertake,
As dooth the white doke after hire drake.
Thanne wol I clepe, -- how, alison! how, john!
Be myrie, for the flood wol passe anon. --
And thou wolt seyn, -- hayl, maister nicholay!
Good morwe, I se thee wel, for it is day. --
And thanne shul we be lorde al oure lyf
Of al the world, as noe and his wyf.
But of o thyng I warne thee ful right:
Be wel avysed on that ilke nyght
That we ben entred into shippes bord,
That noon of us ne speke nat a word,
Ne clepe, ne crie, but be in his preyere;
For it is goddes owene heeste deere.
Thy wyf and thou moote hange fer atwynne;
For that bitwixe yow shal be no synne,
Namoore in lookyng than ther shal in deede,
This ordinance is seyd. Go, God thee speede!
Tomorwe at nyght, whan men ben alle aslepe,
Into oure knedyng-tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitten there, abidyng goddes grace.
Go now thy wey, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng.
Men seyn thus, -- sende the wise, and sey no thyng: --
Thou art so wys, it needeth thee nat teche.
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the biseche.
This sely carpenter goth forth his wey.
Ful ofte he seide allas and weylawey,
And to his wyf he tolde his pryvetee,
And she was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this queynte cast was for to seye.
But nathelees she ferde as she wolde deye,
And seyde, allas! go forth thy wey anon,
Help us to scape, or we been dede echon!
I am thy trewe, verray wedded wyf;
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf.
Lo, which a greet thyng is affeccioun!
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,
So depe may impressioun be take.
This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;
Hym thynketh verraily that he may see
Noees flood come walwynge as the see
To drenchen alisoun, his hony deere.
He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere;
He siketh with ful many a sory swogh;
And after that a tubbe and a kymelyn,
And pryvely he sente hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryvetee.
His owene hand he made laddres thre,
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
Unto the tubbes hangynge in the balkes,
And hem vitailed, bothe trogh and tubbe,
Suffisyngen right ynogh as for a day.
But er that he hadde maad al this array,
He sente his knave, and eek his wenche also,
Upon his nede to london for to go.
And on the monday, whan it drow to nyght,
He shette his dore withoute candel-lyght,
And dressed alle thyng as it sholde be.
They seten stille wel a furl ong way.
Now, pater-noster, clom! seyde nicholay,
And clom, quod john, and clom, seyde alisoun.
This carpenter seyde his devocioun,
And stille he sit, and biddeth his preyere,
Awaitynge on the reyn, if he it heere.
The dede sleep, for wery bisynesse,
Fil on this carpenter right, as I gesse,
And seyde, I noot, I saugh hym heere nat wirche
Syn saterday; I trowe that he be went
For tymber, ther oure abbot hath hym sent;
For he is wont for tymber for to go,
And dwellen at the grange a day or two;
Or elles he is at his hous, certeyn.
Where that he be, I kan nat soothly seyn.
This absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoghte, now is tyme to wake al nyght;
For sikirly I saugh hym nat stirynge
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to sprynge.
So moot I thryve, I shal, at cokkes crowe,
Ful pryvely knokken at his wyndowe
That stant ful lowe upon his boures wal.
To alison now wol I tellen al
My love-longynge, for yet I shal nat mysse
That at the leeste wey I shal hire kisse.
Som maner confort shal I have, parfay.
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kissyng atte leeste.
Al nyght me mette eek I was at a feeste.
Therfore I wol go slepe an houre or tweye,
And al the nyght thanne wol I wake and pleye.
Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon
Up rist this joly lovere absolon
And hym arraieth gay, at poynt-devys.
But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys,
To smellen sweete, er he hadde kembd his heer.
Under his tonge a trewe-love he beer,
For therby wende he to ben gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
And stille he stant under the shot-wyndowe --
Unto his brest it raughte, it was so lowe --
And softe he cougheth with a semy soun --
What do ye, hony-comb, sweete alisoun,
My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?
Awaketh, leman myn, and speketh to me!
Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swete ther I go.
No wonder is thogh that I swelte and swete;
I moorne as dooth a lamb after the tete.
Ywis, leman, I have swich love-longyngge,
That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge.
I may nat ete na moore than a mayde.
gro fro the wyndow, jakke fool, she sayde;
As help me god, it wol nat be 'com pa me.'
I love another -- and elles I were to blame --
Wel bet than thee, by jhesu, absolon.
Go forth thy wey, or I wol caste a ston,
And lat me slepe, a twenty devel wey!
allas, quod absolon, and weylawey,
That trewe love was evere so yvel biset!
Thanne kysse me, syn it may be no bet,
For jhesus love, and for the love of me.
Wiltow thanne go thy wey therwith? quod she.
Ye, certes, lemman, quod this absolon.
Thanne make thee redy, quod she, I come anon.
And unto nicholas she seyde stille,
Now hust, and thou shalt laughen al thy fille.
This absolon doun sette hym on his knees
And seyde, I am a lord at alle degrees;
For after this I hope ther cometh moore.
Lemman, thy grace, and sweete bryd, thyn oore!
The wyndow she undoeth, and that in haste.
Have do, quod she, com of, and speed the faste,
Lest that oure neighebores thee espie.
This absolon gan wype his mouth ful drie.
Derk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,
And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,
And absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
Ful savourly, er he were war of this.
He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, fy! allas! what have I do?
Tehee! quod she, and clapte the wyndow to,
And absolon gooth forth a sory pas.
A berd! a berd! quod hende nicholas,
By goddes corpus, this goth faire and weel.
This sely absolon herde every deel,
And on his lippe he gan for anger byte,
And to hymself he seyde, I shal thee quyte.
Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with clooth, with chippes,
But absolon, that seith ful ofte, allas!
My soule bitake I unto sathanas,
But me were levere than al this toun, quod he,
Of this despit awroken for to be.
Allas, quod he, allas, I ne hadde ybleynt!
His hoote love was coold and al yqueynt;
For fro that tyme that he hadde kist hir ers,
Of paramours he sette nat a kers;
For he was heeled of his maladie.
Ful ofte paramours he gan deffie,
And weep as dooth a child that is ybete.
A softe paas he wente over the strete
Until a smyth men cleped daun gerveys,
That in his forge smythed plough harneys;
He sharpteth shaar and kultour bisily.
This absolon knokketh al esily,
What, who artow? it am I, absalon.
And seyde, undo, gerveys, and that anon.
What, absolon! for cristes sweete tree,
Why rise ye so rathe? ey, benedicitee!
What eyleth yow? som gay gerl, God it woot,
Hath broght yow thus upon the viriitoot.
By seinte note, ye woote wel what I mene.
This absolon ne roghte nat a bene
Of al his pley; no word agayn he yaf;
He hadde moore tow on his distaf
Than gerveys knew, and seyde, freend so deere,
That hoot kultour in the chymenee heere,
As lene it me, I have therwith to doone,
And I wol brynge it thee agayn ful soone.
Gerveys anserde, certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles alle untold,
Thou sholdest have, as I am trewe smyth.
Ey, cristes foo! what wol ye do therwith?
Therof, quod absolon, be as be may.
I shal wel telle it thee to-morwe day --
And caughte the kultour by the colde stele.
Ful softe out at the dore he gan to stele,
And wente unto the carpenteris wal.
He cogheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndowe, right as he dide er.
This alison answerde, who is ther
That knokketh so? I warante it a theef.
Why, nay, quod he, God woot, my sweete leef,
Of gold, quod he, I have thee broght a rying.
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save;
Ful fynt is, and therto wel ygrave.
This wol I yeve thee, if thou me kisse.
This nicholas was risen for to pisse,
And thoughte he wolde amenden al the jape;
He sholde kisse his ers er that he scape.
And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,
And out his ers he puteth pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche-bon;
And therwith spak this clerk, this absolon,
Spek, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art.
This nicholas anon leet fle a fart,
As greet as it had been a thonder-dent,
That with the strook he was almoost yblent;
And he was redy with his iren hoot,
And nicholas amydde the ers he smoot.
Of gooth the skyn an hande-brede aboute,
The hoot kultour brende so his toute,
And for the smert he wende for to dye.
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crye,
Help! water! water! water! help, for goddes herte!
This carpenter out of his slomber sterte,
And herde oon crien water as he were wood,
And thoughte, alasia, now comth nowelis flood!
He sit hym up withouten wordes mo,
And with his ax he smoot the corde atwo,
And doun gooth al; he founde neither to selle,
Ne breed ne ale, til he cam to the celle
Upon the floor, and ther aswonne he lay.
Up stirte hire alison and nicholay,
The neighebores, bothe smale and grete,
In ronnen for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan,
For with the fal he brosten hadde his arm.
But stonde he moste unto his owene harm;
For whan he spak, he was anon bore doun
With hende nicholas and alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood,
He was agast so of nowelis flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanytee
He hadde yboghth hym knedyng tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyed hem, for goddes love,
To sitten in the roof, par compaignye.
The folk gan laughen at his fantasye;
Into the roof they kiken and they cape,
And turned al his harm unto a jape.
For what so that this carpenter anwerde,
It was for noght, no man his reson herde.
They seyde, the man is wood, my leve brother;
And every wight gan laughen at this stryf.
Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf,
For al his kepyng and his jalousye;
And absolon hath kist hir nether ye;
And nicholas is scalded in the towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!

The Reeve's Prologue

Whan folk hadde laughen at this nyce cas
Of absolon and hende nicholas,
Diverse folk diversely they seyde,
But for the moore part they loughe and pleyde.
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,
But it were oonly osewold the reve.
By cause he was of carpenteris craft,
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft;
He gan to grucche, and blamed it a lite.
So theek, quod he, ful wel koude I thee quite
With bleryng of a proud milleres ye,
If that me liste speke of ribaudye.
But ik am oold, me list not pley for age;
Gras tymes is doon, my fodder is now forage;
This white top writeth myne olde yeris;
Myn herte is also mowled as myne heris,
But if I fare as dooth an open-ers, --
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be roten in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we:
Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype;
We hoppen alwey whil the world wol pype.
For in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,
Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon.
For whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke;
Yet in oure asshen olde is fyr yreke.
Foure gleedes han we, which I shal devyse, --
Avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise;
Oure olde lemes mowe wel been unweelde,
But wyl ne shal nat faillen, that is sooth.
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne
Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.
For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon;
And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne
Til that almoost al empty is the tonne.
The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymb.
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chymb
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yoore;
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore!
Whan that oure hoost hadde herd this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.
He seide, what amounteth al this wit?
What shul we speke alday of hooly writ?
The devel made a reve for to preche,
Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche.
Sey forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme
Lo depeford! and it is half-vey pryme.
Lo grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne!
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne.
Now, sires, quod this osewold the reve
I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve,
Thogh I answere, and somdeel sette his howve;
For leveful is with force force of-showve.
This dronke millere hath ytoold us heer
How that bigyled was a carpenteer,
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon.
And, by youre leve, I shal hym quite anoon;
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke.
I pray to God his nekke mote to-breke;
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke.

The Reeve’s Tale

At trumpyngtoun, nat fer fro cantebrigge,
Ther gooth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle;
And this is verry sooth that I yow telle:
A millere was ther dwellynge many a day.
As any pecok he was proud and gay.
Pipen he koude and fisshe, and nettes beete,
And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;
Ay by his belt he baar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade
A joly poppere baar he is in his pouche;
Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche.
A sheffeld thwitel baar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camus was his nose;
As piled as an ape was his skulle.
He was a market-betere atte fulle.
Ther dorste no wight hand upon hym legge,
That he ne swoor he sholde anon abegge.
A theef he was for sothe of corn and mele,
And that a sly, and usaunt for to stele.
His name was hoote deynous symkyn.
A wyf he hadde, ycomen of noble kyn;
The person of the toun hir fader was.
With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that symkyn sholde in his blood allye.
She was yfostred in a nonnerye;
For symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde,
But she were wel ynorissed and a mayde,
To saven his estaat of yomanrye.
And she was proud, and peert as is a pye.
A ful fair sitehe was it upon hem two;
On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go
With his typet bounden aboute his heed,
And she cam after in a gyte of reed;
And symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
Ther dorste no wight clepen hire but dame;
Was noon so hardy that wente by the weye
That with hire dorste rage or ones pleye,
But if he wolde be slayn of symkyn
With panade, or with knyf, or boidekyn.
For jalous folk ben perilous everemo;
Algate they wolde hire wyves wenden so.
And eek, for she was somdel smoterlich,
She was as digne as water in a dich,
And ful of hoker and of bisemare.
Hir thoughte that a lady sholde hire spare,
What for hire kynrede and hir nortelrie
That she hadde lerned in the nonnerie.
A doghter hadde they bitwixe hem two
Of twenty yeer, withouten any mo,
Savynge a child that was of half yeer age;
In cradel it lay and was a propre page.
This wenche thikke and wel ygrowen was,
With kamus nose, and eyen greye as glas,
With buttokes brode, and brestes rounde and hye;
But right fair was hire heer, I wol nat lye.
This person of the toun, for she was feir,
In purpos was to maken hire his heir,
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
And straunge he made it of hir mariage.
His purpos was for to bistowe hire hye
Into som worthy blood of auncetrye;
For hooly chirches good moot been despended
On hooly chirches blood, that is descended.
Therfore he wolde his hooly blood honoure,
Though that he hooly chirche sholde devoure.
Greet sokene hath this m illere, out of doute,
With whete and malt of al the land aboute;
And nameliche ther was a greet collegge
Men clepen the soler halle at cantebregge;
Ther was hir whete and eek hir malt ygrounde.
And on a day it happed, in a stounde,
Sik lay the maunciple on a maladye;
Men wenden wisly that he sholde dye.
For which this millere stal bothe mele and corn
An hundred tyme moore than biforn;
For therbiforn he stal but curteisly,
But now he was a theef outrageously,
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare.
But therof sette the millere nat a tare;
He craketh boost, and swoor it was nat so.
Thanne were ther yonge povre scolers two,
That dwelten in this halle, of which I seye.
Testif they were, and lusty for to pleye,
And, oonly for hire myrthe and revelrye,
Upon the wardeyn bisily they crye
To yeve hem leve, but a litel stounde,
To goon to mille and seen hir corn ygrounde;
And hardly they dorste leye hir nekke
The millere sholde not stele hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve;
And at the laste the wardeyn yaf hem leve.
John highte that oon, and aleyn highte that oother;
Of o toun were they born, that highte strother,
Fer in the north, I kan nat telle where.
This aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
And on an hors the sak he caste anon.
Forth goth aleyn the clerk, and also john,
With good swerd and with bokeler by hir syde.
John knew the wey, -- hem nedede no gyde, --
And at the mille the sak adoun he layth.
Aley spak first, al hayl, symond, y-fayth!
Hou fares thy faire doghter and thy wyf?
Aleyn, welcome, quod symkyn, by my lyf!
And john also, how now, what do ye heer?
Symond, quod john, by god, nede has na peer.
Hym boes serve hymself that has na swayn,
Or elles he is a fool, as clerkes sayn.
Our manciple, I hope he wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed;
And forthy is I come, and eek alayn,
To grynde oure corn and carie it ham agayn;
I pray yow spede us heythen that ye may.
It shal be doon, quod symkyn, by my fay!
What wol ye doon whil that it is in hande?
By god, right by the hopur wil I stande,
For john, y-faith, I may been of youre sort;
This millere smyled of hir nycetee,
And thoghte, al this nys doon but for a wyle.
They wene that no man may hem bigyle,
But by my thrift, yet shal I blere hir ye,
For al the sleighte in hir philosophye.
The moore queynte crekes that they make,
The moore wol I stele whan I take.
In stide of flour yet wol I yeve hem bren.
-- The gretteste clerkes been nogh wisest men, --
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare.
Of al hir art ne counte I nogh a tare.
Out at the dore he gooth ful pryvely,
Whan that he saugh his tyme, softlye.
He looketh up and doun til he hath founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood ybounde
Bihynde the mille, under a levesel;
And to the hors he goth hym faire and wel;
He strepeth of the brydel right anon.
And whan the hors was laus, he gynneth gon
Toward the fen, ther wilde mares renne,
And forth with wehee, thurgh thikke and thurgh thenne.
This millere gooth agayn, no word he seyde,
But dooth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
Til that hir corn was faire and well ygrounde.
And whan the mele is sakked and ybounde,
This john goth out and fynt his hors away,
And gan to crie harrow! and weylaway!
Oure hors is lorn, alayn, for goddes banes,
Step on thy feet! com of, man, al atanes!
Allas, our wardeyn has his palfrey lorn.
This aleyn al forgat, bothe mele and corn;
Al was out of his mynde his housbondrie.
What, whilk way is he geen? he gan to crie.
The wyf cam lepynge inward with a ren.
She seyde, allas! youre hors goth to the fen
With wilde mares, as faste as he may go.
Unthank come on his hand that boond hym so,
And he that bettre sholde han knyt the reyne!
Allas, quod john, aleyn, for cristes peyne
Lay doun thy swerd, and I wil myn alswa.
I is ful wight, God waat, as is a raa;
By goddes herte, he sal nat scape us bathe!
Why ne had thow pit the capul in the lathe?
Ilhayl! by god, alayn, thou is a fonne!
Thise sely clerkes han ful faste yronne
Toward the fen, bothe aleyn and eek john.
And whan the millere saugh that they were gon,
He half a busshel of hir flour hath take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
He seyde, I trowe the clerkes were aferd.
Yet kan a millere make a clerkes berd,
For al his art; now lat hem goon hir weye!
Lo, wher he gooth! ye, lat the children pleye.
They gete hym nat so lightly, by my croun.
Thise sely clerkes rennen up and doun
With keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa, warderere,
Ga whistle thou, and I shal kepe hym heere!
But shortly, til that it was verray nyght,
They koure nat, though they dide al hir myght,
Hir capul cacche, he ran alwey so faste,
Til in a dych they caughte hym atte laste.
Wery and weet, as beest is in the reyn,
Comth sely john, and with him comth aleyn.
Allas, quod john, the day that I was born!
Now are we dryve til hethyng and til scorn.
Oure corn is stoln, men wil us fooles calle,
Bathe the wardeyn and oure felawes alle,
And namely the millere, weylaway!
Thus pleyneth john as he gooth by the way
Toward the mille, and bayard in his hond.
The millere sitty nge by the fyr he fond,
For it was nyght, and forther myghte they noght;
But for the love of God they hym bisoght
Of herberwe and of ese, as for hir peny.
The millere seyde agayn, if ther be eny,
Swich as it is, yetshal ye have youre part.
Myn hous is streit, but ye han lerned art;
Ye konne by argumentes make a place
A myle brood of twenty foot of space.
Lat se now if this place may suffise,
Or make it rowm with speche, as is youre gise.
Now, symond, seyde john, by seint cutberd,
Ay is thou myrie, and this is faire answerd.
I have herd seyd, -- man sal taa of twa thynges --
But specially I pray thee, hooste deere,
Get us som mete and drynke, and make us cheere,
And we wil payen trewely atte fulle.
With empty hand men may na haukes tulle;
Loo, heere oure silver, redy for to spende.
This millere into toun his doghter sende
For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
And boond hire hors, it sholde namoore go loos;
In his owene chambre hem made a bed,
With sheetes and with chalons faire yspred
Noght from his owene bed ten foot or twelve.
His doghter hadde a bed, al by hirselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by.
It myghte be no bet, and cause why?
Ther was no roumer herberwe in the place.
They soupen and they speke, hem to solace,
And drynken evere strong ale atte beste.
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
Wel hath this millere vern ysshed his heed;
Ful pale he was for dronken, and nat reed.
He yexeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose
As he were on the quakke, or on the pose.
To bedde he goth, and with hym thurgh the nose
As any jay she light was and jolyf,
So was hir joly whistle wel ywet.
The cradel at hir beddes feet is set,
To rokken, and to yeve the child to sowke.
And whan that dronken al was in the crowke,
To bedde wente the doghter right anon;
To bedde goth aleyn and also john;
Ther nas na moore, -- hem nedede no dwale.
This millere hath so wisely bi bbed ale
That as an hors he fnorteth in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynde he took no keep.
His wyf bar hym a burdon, a ful strong;
Men myghte hir rowtyng heere two furlong;
The wenche rowteth eek, par compaignye.
Aley the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He poked john, and seyde, slepestow?
Herdestow evere slyk a sang er now?
Lo, swilk a complyn is ymel hem alle,
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Ye, they sal have the flour of il endyng.
This lange nyght ther tydes me na reste;
But yet, nafors, al sal be for the beste.
For, john, seyde he, als evere moott I thryve,
If that I may, yon wenche wil I swyve.
Som esement has lawe yshapen us;
For, john, ther is a lawe that says thus,
That gif a man in a point be agreved,
That in another he sal be releved.
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we han had an il fit al this day;
And syn I sal have neen amendement
Agayn my los, I will have esement.
By goddes sale, it sal neen other bee!
This john answerde, alayn, avyse thee!
The millere is a perilous man, he seyde,
And gif that he out of his sleep abreyde,
He myghte doon us bathe a vileynye.
Aley answerde, I counte hym nat a flye.
And up he rist, and by the wenche he crepte.
This wenche lay uprighte, and faste slepte,
Til he so ny was, er she myghte espie,
That it had been to late for to crie,
And shortly for to seyn, they were aton.
Now pley, aleyn, for I wol speke of john.
This john lith st ille a furl ong wey or two,
And to hymself he maketh routhe and wo.
Allas! quod he, this is a wikked jape;
Now may I seyn that I is but an ape.
Yet has my felawe somewhat for his harm;
He has the milleris doghter in his arm.
He auntred hym, and has his nedes sped,
And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
And when this jape is tald another day,
I sal been halde a daf, a cokenay!
I wil arise and auntre it, by my fayth!
-- Unhardy is unseely, -- thus men sayth.
And up he roos, and softlye he wente
Unto the cradel, and in his hand it hente,
And baar it softe unto his beddes feet.

Soone after this the wyf hir rowtyng leet,
And gan awake, and wente hire out to pisse,
And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
And groped heer and ther, but she foond noon.

Allas! quod she, I hadde almoost mysgoon;
I hadde almoost goon to the clerkes bed.
Ey, benedicite! thanne hadde I foule ysped.
And forth she gooth til she the cradel fond.
She gropeth alwey forther with hir hond,
And foond the bed, and thoghte noght but good,
By cause that the cradel by it stood,
And nyste wher she was, for it was derk;
But faire and wel she creep in to the clerk,
And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.
Withinne a while this john the clerk up leep,
And on this goode wyf he leith on soore.
So myrie a fit ne hadde she nat ful yoore;
He priketh harde and depe as he were mad.
This joly lyf han thise two clerkes lad
Til that the thridde cok bigan to synge.
Aleyne wax wery in the dawenynge,
For he had swonken al the longe nyght,
The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
I is thyn awen clerk, swa have I seel!
Now, deere lemman, quod she, go, far weel!
But er thou go, o thyng I wol thee telle:
Whan that thou wendest homward by the melle,
Right at the entree of the dore bihynde
Thou shalt a cake of half a busshel fynde
That was ymaked of thyn owene mele,
Which that I heelp my sire for to stele.
And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe!
And with that word almoost she gan to wepe.
Aleyn up rist, and thoughte, er that it dawe,
I wol go crepen in by my felawe;
And fond the cradel with his hand anon.
By god, thoughte he, al wrang I have mysgon.
Myn heed is toty of my swynk to-nyght,
That makes me that I ga nat aright.
I woot wel by the cradel I have mysgo;
Heere lith the millere and his wyf also.
And forth he goth, a twenty devel way,
Unto the bed ther as the millere lay.
He wende have cropen by his felawe john,
And by the millere in he creep anon,
And caughte hym by the nekke, and softe he spak.
He seyde, thou john, thou swynes-heed, awak,
4263 For cristes saule, and heer a noble game.
4264 For by that lord that called is seint jame,
4265 As I have thries in this shorte nyght
4266 Swyved the milleres doghter bolt upright,
4267 Whil thou hast, as a coward, been agast.
4268 Ye, false harlot, quod the miller, hast?
4269 A, false traitour! false clerk! quod he,
4270 Thow shalt be deed, by goddes dignitee!
4271 Who dorste be so boold to disparage
4272 My doghter, that is come of swich lynage?
4273 And by the throte-bolle he caughte alayn,
4274 And he hente hym despitously agayn,
4275 And on the nose he smoot hym with his fest.
4276 Doun ran the blody streem upon his brest;
4277 And in the floor, with nose and mouth tobroke,
4278 They walwe as doon two pigges in a poke;
4279 And up they goon, and doun agayn anon,
4280 Til that the millere sporne at a stoon,
4281 And doun he fil bakward upon his wyf,
4282 That wiste no thyng of this nyce stryf;
4283 For she was falle aslepe a lite wight
4284 With john the clerk, that waked hadde al nyght,
4285 And with the fal out of hir sleep she breyde.
4286 Help! hooly croys of bromeholm, she seyde,
4287 In manus tuas! lord, to thee I calle!
4288 Awak, symond! the feend is on me falle.
4289 Myn herte is broken; help! I nam but deed!
4290 Ther lyth oon upon my wombe and on myn heed.
4291 Help, symkyn, for the false clerkes fighte!
4292 This john stirte up as faste as ever he myghte,
4293 And grasbeth by the walles to and fro,
4294 To fynde a staf; and she stirte up also,
4295 And knew the estres bet than dide this john,
4296 And by the wal a staf she foond anon,
4297 And saugh a litel shymeryng of a light,
4298 For at an hole in shoon the moone bright;
4299 And by that light she saugh hem bothe two,
4300 But sikerly she nyste who was who,
4301 But as she saugh a whit thyng in hir ye.
4302 And whan she gan this white thyng espye,
4303 She wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer,
4304 And with the staf she drow ay neer and neer,
4305 And wende han hit this aleyn at the fulle,
4306 And smooth the millere on the pyled骷髅,
4307 That doun he gooth, and cride, harrow! I dye!
4308 Thise clerkes beete hym weel and lete hym lye;
4309 And greythen hem, and tooke hir hors anon,
4310 And eek hire mele, and on hir wey they gon.
4311 And at the mille yet they tooke hir cake
4312 Of half a busshel flour, ful wel ybake.
Thus is the proude millere wel ybet,
And hath ylost the gryndynge of the whete,
And payed for the soper everideel
Of alyen and of john, that bette hym weel.
His wyf is swyved, and his doghter als.
Lo, swich it is a millere to be fals!
And therfore this proverbe is seyd ful sooth,
Hym thar nat wene wel that yvele dooth;
A gylour shal hymself bigyled be.
And god, that sitteth heighe in magestee,
Save al this compaignye, grete and smale!
Thus have I quyt the millere in my tale.

The Cook's Prologue

The cook of londoun, whil the reve spak,
For joye him thoughte he clawed him on the bak.
Ha! ha! quod he, for cristes passion,
This millere hadde a sharp conclusion
Upon his argument of herbergage!
Wel seyde salomon in his langage,
-- Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous; --
For herberwynge by nyghte is perilous.
Wel oghte a man avysed for to be
Whom that he broghte into his pryvetee.
I pray to god, so yeve me sorwe and care
If evere, sitthe I highte hogge of ware,
Herde I a millere bettre yset a-werk.
He hadde a jape of malice in the derk.
But God forbede that we stynte heere;
And therfore, if ye vouche-sauf to heere
A tale of me, that am a poure man,
I wol yow telle, as wel as evere I kan,
A litel jape that fil in oure citee.
Oure hoost answerde and seide, I graunte it thee.
Now telle on, roger, looke that it be good;
For many a pastee hastow laten blood,
And many a jakke of dovere hastow soold
That hath been twies hoot and twies coold.
Of many a pilgrym hastow cristes curs,
For of thy percely yet they fare the wors,
That they han eten with thy stubbel goos;
For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.
Now telle on, gentil roger by thy name.
But yet I pray thee, be nat wroth for game;
A man may seye ful sooth in game and pley.
Thou seist ful sooth, quod roger, by my fey!
But -- sooth pley, quaad pley, -- as the flemyng seith.
And therfore, herry bailly, by thy feith,
Be thou nat wrooth, er we departen heer,
Though that my tale be of an hostileer.
But nathelees I wol nat telle it yit;
But er we parte, ywis, thou shalt be quit.
And therewithal he lough and made cheere,
And seyde his tale, as ye shul after heere.

**The Cook’s Tale**

A prentys whilom dwelled inoure citee,
And of a craft of vitailliers was hee.
Gaillard he was as goldfynch in the shawe,
Broun as a berye, a propre short felawe,
With lokkes blake, ykembd ful fetisly.
Dauncen he koude so wel and jo lily
That he was cleped perkyn revelour.
He was as ful of love and paramour
As is the hyve ful of hony sweete:
Wel was the wenche with hym myghte meete.
At every bridale wolde he synge and hoppe;
He loved bet the taverne than the shoppe.
For whan ther any ridyng was in chepe,
Out of the shoppe thider wolde he lepe --
Til that he hadde al the sighte yseyn,
And daunced wel, he wolde nat come ayeyn --
And gadered hym a meynee of his sort
To hoppe and synge and maken swich disport;
And ther they setten stevene for to meeete,
To pleyen at the dys in swich a streete.
For in the toune nas ther no prentys
That fairer koude caste a paire of dys
Than perkyn koude, and therto he was free
Of his dispence, in place of pryvetee.
That fond his maister wel in his chaffare;
For often tyme he foond his box ful bare.
For sikerly a prentys revelour
That haunteth dys, riot, or paramour.
His maister shal it in his shoppe abye,
Al have he no part of the mynstralcye.
For thefte and riot, they been convertible,
Al konne he pleye on gyterne or ribible.
Revel and trouthe, as in a lowe degree,
They been ful wrothe al day, as men may see.
this joly prentys with his maister bood,
Til he were ny out of his prentishood,
Al were he snybbed bothe erly and late,
And somtyme lad with revel to newegate.
But atte laste his maister him bithoghte.
Upon a day, whan he his papir soghte,
Of a proverbe that seith this same word,
Wel bet is roten appul out of hoord
Than that it rotie al the remenaunt.
So fareth it by a riotous servaunt;
It is ful lasse harm to lete hym pace,
Than he shende alle the servantz in the place.
Therfore his maister yaf hym acquittance,
And bad hym go, with sorwe and with meschance!
And thus this joly prentys hadde his leve.
Now lat hym riote al the nyght or leve.
And for ther is no theef withoute a lowke,
That helpeth hym to wasten and to sowke
Of that he brybe kan or borwe may,
Anon he sente his bed and his array
Unto a compeer of his owene sort,
That lovede dys, and revel, and disport,
And hadde a wyf that heeld for contenance
A shoppe, and swyved for hir sustenance.