



DELPHI
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World's Greatest Poems

The Delphi Poetry Anthology

DELPHI POETS SERIES

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The World's Greatest Poems

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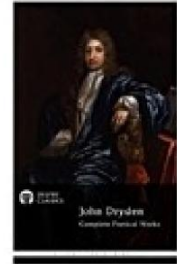
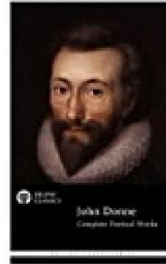


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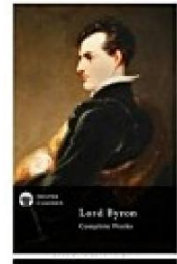
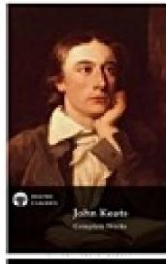
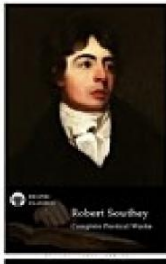
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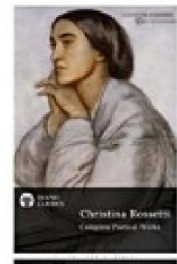
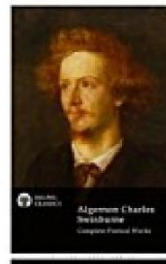
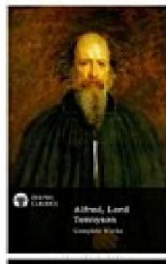
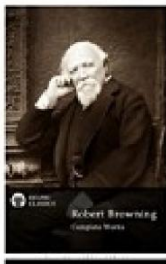
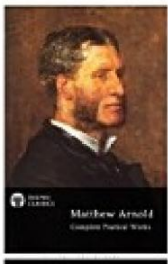
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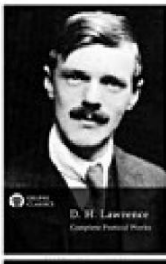
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D E L P H I P O E T S S E R I E S

The World's Greatest Poems

AN ANTHOLOGY



By Delphi Classics, 2015

NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The World's Greatest Poems



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The Ancients

Homer



The Iliad Extracts

Opening Invocation of the Muse: Book I

Translated by Alexander Pope

ACHILLES' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heav'nly Goddess, sing!
That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain:
Whose limbs, unburied on the naked shore, 5
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore:
Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the Sov'reign doom, and such the will of Jove!
Declare, O Muse! in what ill-fated hour
Sprung the fierce strife, from what offended power? 10
Latona's son a dire contagion spread,
And heap'd the camp with mountains of the dead;
The King of Men his rev'rend priest defied,
And for the King's offence, the people died.
For Chryses sought with costly gifts to gain 15
His captive daughter from the victor's chain.
Suppliant the venerable father stands;
Apollo's awful ensigns grace his hands:
By these he begs: and, lowly bending down,
Extends the sceptre and the laurel crown. 20
He sued to all, but chief implored for grace
The brother-kings of Atreus' royal race:
'Ye Kings and Warriors! may your vows be crown'd,
And Troy's proud walls lie level with the ground;
May Jove restore you, when your toils are o'er, 25
Safe to the pleasures of your native shore.
But oh! relieve a wretched parent's pain,
And give Chryseis to these arms again;
If mercy fail, yet let my presents move,
And dread avenging Phœbus, son of Jove.' 30
The Greeks in shouts their joint assent declare,
The Priest to rev'rence and release the Fair.
Not so Atrides: he, with kingly pride,
Repuls'd the sacred sire, and thus replied:
'Hence on thy life, and fly these hostile plains, 35
Nor ask, presumptuous, what the King detains:
Hence, with thy laurel crown, and golden rod,
Nor trust too far those ensigns of thy God.

Mine is thy daughter, Priest, and shall remain;
And prayers, and tears, and bribes, shall plead in vain; 40
Till time shall rifle ev'ry youthful grace,
And age dismiss her from my cold embrace,
In daily labours of the loom employ'd,
Or doom'd to deck the bed she once enjoy'd.
Hence then! to Argos shall the maid retire, 45
Far from her native soil, and weeping sire.'

The trembling priest along the shore return'd,
And in the anguish of a father mourn'd.

Disconsolate, not daring to complain,
Silent he wander'd by the sounding main: 50

Till, safe at distance, to his God he prays,
The God who darts around the world his rays.

'O Smintheus! sprung from fair Latona's line,
Thou guardian power of Cilla the divine,
Thou source of light! whom Tenedos adores, 55
And whose bright presence gilds thy Chrysa's shores;
If e'er with wreaths I hung thy sacred fane,
Or fed the flames with fat of oxen slain,
God of the silver bow! thy shafts employ,
Avenge thy servant, and the Greeks destroy.' 60

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Wind Metaphor Speech: Book VI

Translated by William Cowper

To whom the illustrious Lycian Chief replied.
Why asks brave Diomed of my descent?
For, as the leaves, such is the race of man.
The wind shakes down the leaves, the budding grove
Soon teems with others, and in spring they grow.
So pass mankind. One generation meets
Its destined period, and a new succeeds.
But since thou seem'st desirous to be taught
My pedigree, whereof no few have heard,
Know that in Argos, in the very lap
Of Argos, for her steed-grazed meadows famed,
Stands Ephyra; there Sisyphus abode,
Shrewdest of human kind; Sisyphus, named
Æolides. Himself a son begat,
Glaucus, and he Bellerophon, to whom
The Gods both manly force and beauty gave.
Him Prætus (for in Argos at that time
Prætus was sovereign, to whose sceptre Jove
Had subjected the land) plotting his death,
Contrived to banish from his native home.
For fair Anteia, wife of Prætus, mad
Through love of young Bellerophon, him oft
In secret to illicit joys enticed;
But she prevail'd not o'er the virtuous mind
Discrete of whom she wooed; therefore a lie
Framing, she royal Prætus thus bespake.

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Hector's Farewell of His Wife Andromache and Son: Book VI

Translated by Alexander Pope

He said, and pass'd with sad presaging heart
To seek his spouse, his soul's far dearer part;
At home he sought her, but he sought in vain:
She, with one maid of all her menial train, 465
Had thence retired; and, with her second joy,
The young Astyanax, the hope of Troy,
Pensive she stood on Ilion's tow'ry height,
Beheld the war, and sicken'd at the sight;
There her sad eyes in vain her lord explore, 470
Or weep the wounds her bleeding country bore.

But he who found not whom his soul desired,
Whose virtue charm'd him as her beauty fired,
Stood in the gates, and asked what way she bent
Her parting steps? If to the fane she went, 475
Where late the mourning matrons made resort;
Or sought her sisters in the Trojan court?
'Not to the court' (replied th' attendant train),
'Nor, mixed with matrons, to Minerva's fane:
To Ilion's steepy tower she bent her way, 480
To mark the fortunes of the doubtful day.
Troy fled, she heard, before the Grecian sword:
She heard, and trembled for her distant lord;
Distracted with surprise, she seemed to fly,
Fear on her cheek, and sorrow in her eye. 485
The nurse attended with her infant boy,
The young Astyanax, the hope of Troy.'

Hector, this heard, return'd without delay;
Swift thro' the town he trod his former way,
Thro' streets of palaces and walks of state; 490
And met the mourner at the Scæan gate.
With haste to meet him sprung the joyful fair,
His blameless wife, Eëtion's wealthy heir
(Cicilian Thebé great Eëtion sway'd,
And Hippoplacus' wide-extended shade): 495
The nurse stood near, in whose embraces press'd,
His only hope hung smiling at her breast,
Whom each soft charm and early grace adorn,
Fair as the new-born that gilds the morn.
To this lov'd infant Hector gave the name 500

Scamandrius, from Scamander's honour'd stream:

Astyanax the Trojans call'd the boy,

From his great father, the defence of Troy.

Silent the warrior smil'd, and, pleas'd, resign'd

To tender passions all his mighty mind: 505

His beauteous Princess cast a mournful look,

Hung on his hand, and then dejected spoke;

Her bosom labour'd with a boding sigh,

And the big tear stood trembling in her eye.

'Too daring Prince! ah, whither dost thou run? 510

Ah too forgetful of thy wife and son!

And think'st thou not how wretched we shall be,

A widow I, a helpless orphan he!

For sure such courage length of life denies,

And thou must fall, thy virtue's sacrifice. 515

Greece in her single heroes strove in vain;

Now hosts oppose thee, and thou must be slain!

Oh grant me, Gods! ere Hector meets his doom,

All I can ask of Heav'n, an early tomb!

So shall my days in one sad tenor run, 520

And end with sorrows as they first begun.

No parent now remains, my griefs to share,

No father's aid, no mother's tender care.

The fierce Achilles wrapt our walls in fire,

Laid Thebé waste, and slew my warlike sire! 525

His fate compassion in the victor bred;

Stern as he was, he yet revered the dead,

His radiant arms preserv'd from hostile spoil,

And laid him decent on the funeral pile;

Then raised a mountain where his bones were burn'd; 530

The mountain nymphs the rural tomb adorn'd;

Jove's sylvan daughters bade their elms bestow

A barren shade, and in his honour grow.

'By the same arm my sev'n brave brothers fell;

In one sad day beheld the gates of Hell; 535

While the fat herds and snowy flocks they fed,

Amid their fields the hapless heroes bled!

My mother lived to bear the victor's bands,

The Queen of Hippoplacia's sylvan lands:

Redeem'd too late, she scarce beheld again 540

Her pleasing empire and her native plain,

When, ah! oppress'd by life-consuming woe,

She fell a victim to Diana's bow.

'Yet while my Hector still survives, I see

My father, mother, brethren, all, in thee. 545

Alas! my parents, brothers, kindred, all,
Once more will perish if my Hector fall.
Thy wife, thy infant, in thy danger share;
Oh prove a husband's and a father's care!
That quarter most the skilful Greeks annoy, 550
Where you wild fig-trees join the wall of Troy:
Thou, from this tower defend th' important post;
There Agamemnon points his dreadful host,
That pass Tydides, Ajax, strive to gain,
And there the vengeful Spartan fires his train. 555
Thrice our bold foes the fierce attack have giv'n,
Or led by hopes, or dictated from Heav'n.
Let others in the field their arms employ,
But stay my Hector here, and guard his Troy.'

The Chief replied: 'That post shall be my car, 560
Nor that alone, but all the works of war.
How would the sons of Troy, in arms renown'd,
And Troy's proud dames, whose garments sweep the ground,
Attain the lustre of my former name,
Should Hector basely quit the field of fame? 565
My early youth was bred to martial pains,
My soul impels me to th' embattled plains:
Let me be foremost to defend the throne,
And guard my father's glories, and my own.
Yet come it will, the day decreed by Fates 570
(How my heart trembles while my tongue relates)!
The day when thou, imperial Troy! must bend,
And see thy warriors fall, thy glories end.
And yet no dire presage so wounds my mind,
My mother's death, the ruin of my kind, 575
Not Priam's hoary hairs defiled with gore,
Not all my brothers gasping on the shore;
As thine, Andromache! thy griefs I dread;
I see thee trembling, weeping, captive led!
In Argive looms our battles to design, 580
And woes of which so large a part was thine!
To bear the victor's hard commands, or bring
The weight of waters from Hyperia's spring.
There, while you groan beneath the load of life,
They cry, Behold the mighty Hector's wife! 585
Some haughty Greek, who lives thy tears to see,
Embitters all thy woes by naming me.
The thoughts of glory past, and present shame,
A thousand griefs, shall waken at the name!
May I lie cold before that dreadful day, 590

Press'd with a load of monumental clay!
 Thy Hector, wrapp'd in everlasting sleep,
 Shall neither hear thee sigh, nor see thee weep.'
 Thus having spoke, th' illustrious Chief of Troy
 Stretch'd his fond arms to clasp the lovely boy. 595
 The babe clung crying to his nurse's breast,
 Scared at the dazzling helm, and nodding crest.
 With secret pleasure each fond parent smil'd,
 And Hector hasted to relieve his child;
 The glitt'ring terrors from his brows unbound, 600
 And placed the beaming helmet on the ground.
 Then kiss'd the child, and, lifting high in air,
 Thus to the Gods preferr'd a father's prayer:
 'O thou! whose glory fills th' ethereal throne,
 And all ye deathless Powers! protect my son! 605
 Grant him, like me, to purchase just renown,
 To guard the Trojans, to defend the crown,
 Against his country's foes the war to wage,
 And rise the Hector of the future age!
 So when, triumphant from successful toils 610
 Of heroes slain he bears the reeking spoils,
 Whole hosts may hail him with deserv'd acclaim,
 And say, This Chief transcends his father's fame:
 While pleas'd, amidst the gen'ral shouts of Troy,
 His mother's conscious heart o'erflows with joy.' 615
 He spoke, and fondly gazing on her charms,
 Restor'd the pleasing burden to her arms;
 Soft on her fragrant breast the babe she laid,
 Hush'd to repose, and with a smile survey'd.
 The troubled pleasure soon chastised by fear, 620
 She mingled with the smile a tender tear.
 The soften'd Chief with kind compassion view'd,
 And dried the falling drops, and thus pursued:
 'Andromache! my soul's far better part,
 Why with untimely sorrows heaves thy heart? 625
 No hostile hand can antedate my doom,
 Till Fate condemns me to the silent tomb.
 Fix'd is the term to all the race of earth,
 And such the hard condition of our birth.
 No force can then resist, no flight can save; 630
 All sink alike, the fearful and the brave.
 No more — but hasten to thy tasks at home,
 There guide the spindle, and direct the loom:
 Me glory summons to the martial scene,
 The field of combat is the sphere for men. 635

Where heroes war, the foremost place I claim,
The first in danger as the first in fame.'

Thus having said, the glorious Chief resumes
His tow'ry helmet, black with shading plumes.
His Princess parts with a prophetic sigh, ⁶⁴⁰
Unwilling parts, and oft reverts her eye,
That stream'd at ev'ry look: then, moving slow,
Sought her own palace, and indulged her woe.
There, while her tears deplor'd the godlike man,
Thro' all her train the soft infection ran; ⁶⁴⁵
The pious maids their mingled sorrows shed,
And mourn the living Hector as the dead.

But now, no longer deaf to honour's call,
Forth issues Paris from the palace wall.
In brazen arms that cast a gleamy ray, ⁶⁵⁰
Swift thro' the town the warrior bends his way.
The wanton courser thus, with reins unbound,
Breaks from his stall, and beats the trembling ground;
Pamper'd and proud he seeks the wonted tides,
And laves, in height of blood, his shining sides: ⁶⁵⁵
His head now freed he tosses to the skies;
His mane dishevell'd o'er his shoulders flies;
He snuffs the females in the distant plain,
And springs, exulting, to his fields again.
With equal triumph, sprightly, bold, and gay, ⁶⁶⁰
In arms refulgent as the God of Day,
The son of Priam, glorying in his might,
Rush'd forth with Hector to the fields of fight.

And now the warriors passing on the way,
The graceful Paris first excused his stay. ⁶⁶⁵
To whom the noble Hector thus replied:
'O Chief! in blood, and now in arms, allied!
Thy power in war with justice none contest;
Known is thy courage, and thy strength confess'd.
What pity, sloth should seize a soul so brave, ⁶⁷⁰
Or godlike Paris live a woman's slave!
My heart weeps blood at what the Trojans say,
And hopes thy deeds shall wipe the stain away.
Haste then, in all their glorious labours share;
For much they suffer, for thy sake, in war. ⁶⁷⁵
These ills shall cease, whene'er by Jove's decree
We crown the bowl to Heav'n and Liberty:
While the proud foe his frustrate triumphs mourns,
And Greece indignant thro' her seas returns.'

List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

List of Poets in Alphabetical Order

The Death of Hector: Book XXII

What God, O Muse! assisted Hector's force,
With Fate itself so long to hold the course?
Phæbus it was: who, in his latest hour, 265
Endued his knees with strength, his nerves with power;
And great Achilles, lest some Greek's advance
Should snatch the glory from his lifted lance,
Sign'd to the troops, to yield his foe the way,
And leave untouch'd the honours of the day. 270

Jove lifts the golden balances, that show
The fates of mortal men, and things below:
Here each contending hero's lot he tries,
And weighs, with equal hand, their destinies.
Low sinks the scale surcharg'd with Hector's fate; 275
Heavy with death it sinks, and Hell receives the weight.

Then Phæbus left him. Fierce Minerva flies
To stern Pelides, and, triumphing, cries:
'Oh lov'd of Jove! this day our labours cease,
And conquest blazes with full beams on Greece. 280
Great Hector falls; that Hector famed so far,
Drunk with renown, insatiable of war,
Falls by thy hand, and mine! nor force nor flight
Shall more avail him, nor his God of Light.
See, where in vain he supplicates above, 285
Roll'd at the feet of unrelenting Jove!
Rest here: myself will lead the Trojan on,
And urge to meet the fate he cannot shun.'

Her voice divine the Chief with joyful mind
Obey'd, and rested, on his lance reclin'd. 290
While like Deiphobus the Martial Dame
(Her face, her gesture, and her arms, the same),
In show an aid, by hapless Hector's side
Approach'd, and greets him thus with voice belied:

'Too long, O Hector! have I borne the sight 295
Of this distress, and sorrow'd in thy flight:
It fits us now a noble stand to make,
And here, as brothers, equal fates partake.'

Then he: 'O Prince! allied in blood and fame,
Dearer than all that own a brother's name; 300
Of all that Hecuba to Priam bore,
Long tried, long lov'd; much lov'd, but honour'd more!
Since you of all our numerous race alone
Defend my life, regardless of your own.'

Again the Goddess: 'Much my father's prayer, 305
And much my mother's, press'd me to forbear:
My friends embraced my knees, adjured my stay,
But stronger love impell'd, and I obey.
Come then, the glorious conflict let us try,
Let the steel sparkle and the jav'lin fly; 310
Or let us stretch Achilles on the field,
Or to his arm our bloody trophies yield.'

Fraudful she said; then swiftly march'd before;
The Dardan hero shuns his foe no more.

Sternly they met. The silence Hector broke; 315
His dreadful plumage nodded as he spoke:

'Enough, O son of Peleus! Troy has view'd
Her walls thrice circled, and her Chief pursued.

But now some God within me bids me try
Thine, or my fate: I kill thee, or I die. 320

Yet on the verge of battle let us stay,
And for a moment's space suspend the day:
Let Heav'n's high Powers be call'd to arbitrate
The just conditions of this stern debate

(Eternal witnesses of all below, 325
And faithful guardians of the treasured vow)!

To them I swear: if, victor in the strife,
Jove by these hands shall shed thy noble life,
No vile dishonour shall thy corse pursue;
Stripp'd of its arms alone (the conqueror's due), 330
The rest to Greece uninjur'd I 'll restore:
Now plight thy mutual oath, I ask no more.'

'Talk not of oaths' (the dreadful Chief replies,
While anger flash'd from his disdainful eyes),

'Detested as thou art, and ought to be, 335
Nor oath nor pact Achilles plights with thee;
Such pacts, as lambs and rabid wolves combine,
Such leagues, as men and furious lions join,
To such I call the Gods! one constant state
Of lasting rancour and eternal hate: 340

No thought but rage, and never-ceasing strife,
Till death extinguish rage, and thought, and life.
Rouse then thy forces this important hour,
Collect thy soul, and call forth all thy power.

No farther subterfuge, no farther chance; 345
'T is Pallas, Pallas gives thee to my lance.

Each Grecian ghost by thee deprived of breath,
Now hovers round, and calls thee to thy death.'

He spoke, and launch'd his jav'lin at the foe;

But Hector shunn'd the meditated blow: 350
 He stoop'd, while o'er his head the flying spear
 Sung innocent, and spent its force in air.
 Minerva watch'd it falling on the land,
 Then drew, and gave to great Achilles' hand,
 Unseen of Hector, who, elate with joy, 355
 Now shakes his lance, and braves the dread of Troy:
 'The life you boasted to that jav'lin giv'n,
 Prince! you have miss'd. My fate depends on Heav'n.
 To thee (presumptuous as thou art) unknown
 Or what must prove my fortune, or thy own. 360
 Boasting is but an art, our fears to blind,
 And with false terrors sink another's mind.
 But know, whatever fate I am to try,
 By no dishonest wound shall Hector die;
 I shall not fall a fugitive at least, 365
 My soul shall bravely issue from my breast.
 But first, try thou my arm; and may this dart
 End all my country's woes, deep buried in thy heart!'

The weapon flew, its course unerring held;
 Unerring, but the heav'nly shield repell'd 370
 The mortal dart; resulting with a bound
 From off the ringing orb, it struck the ground.
 Hector beheld his jav'lin fall in vain,
 Nor other lance nor other hope remain;
 He calls Deïphobus, demands a spear, 375
 In vain, for no Deïphobus was there.
 All comfortless he stands: then, with a sigh,
 'T is so — Heav'n wills it, and my hour is nigh!
 I deem'd Deïphobus had heard my call,
 But he secure lies guarded in the wall. 380
 A God deceiv'd me; Pallas, 't was thy deed:
 Death and black Fate approach! 't is I must bleed:
 No refuge now, no succour from above,
 Great Jove deserts me, and the son of Jove,
 Propitious once, and kind! Then welcome Fate! 385
 'T is true I perish, yet I perish great:
 Yet in a mighty deed I shall expire,
 Let future ages hear it, and admire!'

Fierce, at the word, his weighty sword he drew,
 And, all collected, on Achilles flew. 390
 So Jove's bold bird, high balanc'd in the air,
 Stoops from the clouds to truss the quiv'ring hare.
 Nor less Achilles his fierce soul prepares;
 Before his breast the flaming shield he bears,

Refulgent orb! above his fourfold cone 395
 The gilded horse-hair sparkled in the sun,
 Nodding at ev'ry step (Vulcanian frame)!
 And as he mov'd, his figure seem'd on flame.
 As radiant Hesper shines with keener light,
 Far-beaming o'er the silver host of night, 400
 When all the starry train emblaze the sphere:
 So shone the point of great Achilles' spear.
 In his right hand he waves the weapon round,
 Eyes the whole man, and meditates the wound:
 But the rich mail Patroclus lately wore, 405
 Securely cased the warrior's body o'er.
 One place at length he spies, to let in Fate,
 Where 'twixt the neck and throat the jointed plate
 Gave entrance: thro' that penetrable part
 Furious he drove the well-directed dart: 410
 Nor pierc'd the windpipe yet, nor took the power
 Of speech, unhappy! from thy dying hour.
 Prone on the field the bleeding warrior lies,
 While thus, triumphing, stern Achilles cries:
 'At last is Hector stretch'd upon the plain, 415
 Who fear'd no vengeance for Patroclus slain:
 Then, Prince! you should have fear'd, what now you feel;
 Achilles absent was Achilles still.
 Yet a short space the great avenger stay'd,
 Then low in dust thy strength and glory laid. 420
 Peaceful he sleeps, with all our rites adorn'd,
 For ever honour'd, and for ever mourn'd:
 While, cast to all the rage of hostile power,
 Thee birds shall mangle, and thee dogs devour.'
 Then Hector, fainting at th' approach of death: 425
 'By thy own soul! by those who gave thee breath!
 By all the sacred prevalence of prayer;
 Ah, leave me not for Grecian dogs to tear!
 The common rites of sepulture bestow,
 To soothe a father's and a mother's woe; 430
 Let their large gifts procure an urn at least,
 And Hector's ashes in his country rest.'
 'No, wretch accurs'd!' relentless he replies
 (Flames, as he spoke, shot flashing from his eyes),
 'Not those who gave me breath should bid me spare, 435
 Nor all the sacred prevalence of prayer.
 Could I myself the bloody banquet join!
 No — to the dogs that carcass I resign.
 Should Troy to bribe me bring forth all her store,

And, giving thousands, offer thousands more; 440
Should Dardan Priam, and his weeping dame,
Drain their whole realm to buy one funeral flame;
Their Hector on the pile they should not see,
Nor rob the vultures of one limb of thee.'

Then thus the Chief his dying accents drew: 445
'Thy rage, implacable! too well I knew:
The Furies that relentless breast have steel'd,
And curs'd thee with a heart that cannot yield.
Yet think, a day will come, when Fate's decree
And angry Gods shall wreak this wrong on thee; 450
Phœbus and Paris shall avenge my fate,
And stretch thee here, before this Scæan gate.'

He ceas'd: the Fates suppress'd his lab'ring breath,
And his eyes stiffen'd at the hand of death;
To the dark realm the spirit wings its way 455
(The manly body left a load of clay),
And plaintive glides along the dreary coast,
A naked, wand'ring, melancholy ghost!

Achilles, musing as he roll'd his eyes
O'er the dead hero, thus (unheard) replies: 460
'Die thou the first! when Jove and Heav'n ordain,
I follow thee.' He said, and stripp'd the slain.
Then, forcing backward from the gaping wound
The reeking jav'lin, cast it on the ground.
The thronging Greeks behold with wond'ring eyes 465
His manly beauty and superior size:

While some, ignobler, the great dead deface
With wounds ungen'rous, or with taunts disgrace.
'How changed that Hector! who, like Jove, of late
Sent lightning on our fleets and scatter'd Fate!' 470

High o'er the slain the great Achilles stands,
Begirt with heroes and surrounding bands;
And thus aloud, while all the host attends:
'Princes and leaders! countrymen and friends!
Since now at length the powerful will of Heav'n 475
The dire destroyer to our arm has giv'n,
Is not Troy fall'n already? Haste, ye Powers!
See if already their deserted towers
Are left unmann'd; or if they yet retain
The souls of heroes, their great Hector slain? 480
But what is Troy, or glory what to me?
Or why reflects my mind on aught but thee,
Divine Patroclus! Death has seal'd his eyes;
Unwept, unhonour'd, uninterr'd he lies!

Can his dear image from my soul depart, 485
Long as the vital spirit moves my heart?
If, in the melancholy shades below,
The flames of friends and lovers cease to glow,
Yet mine shall sacred last; mine, undecay'd,
Burn on thro' death, and animate my shade. 490
Meanwhile, ye sons of Greece, in triumph bring
The corse of Hector, and your Pæans sing.
Be this the song, slow moving tow'rd the shore,
"Hector is dead, and Ilion is no more." ‘

Then his fell soul a thought of vengeance bred 495
(Unworthy of himself, and of the dead);
The nervous ancles bored, his feet he bound
With thongs inserted thro' the double wound;
These fix'd up high behind the rolling wain,
His graceful head was trail'd along the plain. 500
Proud on his car th' insulting victor stood,
And bore aloft his arms, distilling blood.
He smites the steeds; the rapid chariot flies;
The sudden clouds of circling dust arise.
Now lost is all that formidable air; 505
The face divine, and long-descending hair,
Purple the ground, and streak the sable sand;
Deform'd, dishonour'd, in his native land!
Giv'n to the rage of an insulting throng!
And, in his parents' sight, now dragg'd along. 510
The mother first beheld with sad survey;
She rent her tresses, venerably grey,
And cast far off the regal veils away.
With piercing shrieks his bitter fate she moans,
While the sad father answers groans with groans; 515
Tears after tears his mournful cheeks o'erflow,
And the whole city wears one face of woe:
No less than if the rage of hostile fires,
From her foundations curling to her spires,
O'er the proud citadel at length should rise, 520
And the last blaze send Ilion to the skies.
The wretched Monarch of the falling state,
Distracted, presses to the Dardan gate:
Scarce the whole people stop his desp'rate course,
While strong affliction gives the feeble force: 525
Grief tears his heart, and drives him to and fro,
In all the raging impotence of woe.
At length he roll'd in dust, and thus begun,
Imploring all, and naming one by one:

‘Ah! let me, let me go where sorrow calls; 530
I, only I, will issue from your walls
(Guide or companion, friends! I ask ye none),
And bow before the murd’rer, of my son:
My grief perhaps his pity may engage;
Perhaps at least he may respect my age. 535
He has a father too; a man like me;
One not exempt from age and misery
(Vig’rous no more, as when his young embrace
Begot this pest of me, and all my race).
How many valiant sons, in early bloom, 540
Has that curs’d hand sent headlong to the tomb!
Thee, Hector! last; thy loss (divinely brave)!
Sinks my sad soul with sorrow to the grave.
Oh had thy gentle spirit pass’d in peace,
The son expiring in the sire’s embrace, 545
While both thy parents wept thy fatal hour,
And, bending o’er thee, mix’d the tender shower!
Some comfort that had been, some sad relief,
To melt in full satiety of grief!’

Thus wail’d the father, grov’ling on the ground, 550
And all the eyes of Ilion stream’d around.

Amidst her matrons Hecuba appears
(A mourning Princess, and a train in tears):
‘Ah! why has Heav’n prolong’d this hated breath,
Patient of horrors, to behold thy death? 555
O Hector! late thy parents’ pride and joy,
The boast of nations! the defence of Troy!
To whom her safety and her fame she owed,
Her Chief, her hero, and almost her God!
O fatal change! become in one sad day 560
A senseless corse! inanimated clay!’

But not as yet the fatal news had spread
To fair Andromache, of Hector dead;
As yet no messenger had told his Fate,
Nor ev’n his stay without the Scæan gate. 565
Far in the close recesses of the dome
Pensive she plied the melancholy loom;
A growing work employ’d her secret hours,
Confusedly gay with intermingled flowers.
Her fair-hair’d handmaids heat the brazen urn, 570
The bath preparing for her lord’s return:
In vain: alas! her lord returns no more!
Unbathed he lies, and bleeds along the shore!
Now from the walls the clamours reach her ear

And all her members shake with sudden fear; 575
 Forth from her iv'ry hand the shuttle falls,
 As thus, astonish'd, to her maids she calls:
 'Ah, follow me' (she cried)! 'what plaintive noise
 Invades my ear? 'T is sure my mother's voice.
 My falt'ring knees their trembling frame desert, 580
 A pulse unusual flutters at my heart.
 Some strange disaster, some reverse of fate
 (Ye Gods avert it!) threatens the Trojan state.
 Far be the omen which my thoughts suggest!
 But much I fear my Hector's dauntless breast 585
 Confronts Achilles; chased along the plain,
 Shut from our walls! I fear, I fear him slain!
 Safe in the crowd he ever scorn'd to wait,
 And sought for glory in the jaws of Fate:
 Perhaps that noble heat has cost his breath, 590
 Now quench'd for ever in the arms of death.'
 She spoke; and, furious, with distracted pace,
 Fears in her heart, and anguish in her face,
 Flies thro' the dome (the maids her step pursue),
 And mounts the walls, and sends around her view. 595
 Too soon her eyes the killing object found,
 The godlike Hector dragg'd along the ground.
 A sudden darkness shades her swimming eyes:
 She faints, she falls; her breath, her colour, flies.
 Her hair's fair ornaments, the braids that bound, 600
 The net that held them, and the wreath that crown'd,
 The veil and diadem, flew far away
 (The gift of Venus on her bridal day).
 Around, a train of weeping sisters stands,
 To raise her sinking with assistant hands. 605
 Scarce from the verge of death recall'd, again
 She faints, or but recovers to complain:
 'O wretched husband of a wretched wife!
 Born with one fate, to one unhappy life!
 For sure one star its baneful beam display'd 610
 On Priam's roof, and Hippoplacia's shade.
 From diff'rent parents, diff'rent climes, we came,
 At diff'rent periods, yet our fate the same!
 Why was my birth to great Eëtion owed,
 And why was all that tender care bestow'd? 615
 Would I had never been! — Oh thou, the ghost
 Of my dead husband! miserably lost!
 Thou to the dismal realms for ever gone!
 And I abandon'd, desolate, alone!

An only child, once comfort of my pains, 620
Sad product now of hapless love, remains!
No more to smile upon his sire! no friend
To help him now! no father to defend!
For should he 'scape the sword, the common doom,
What wrongs attend him, and what griefs to come! 625
Ev'n from his own paternal roof expell'd,
Some stranger ploughs his patrimonial field.
The day that to the shades the father sends,
Robs the sad orphan of his father's friends:
He, wretched outcast of mankind! appears 630
For ever sad, for ever bathed in tears;
Amongst the happy, unregarded he
Hangs on the robe or trembles at the knee;
While those his father's former bounty fed,
Nor reach the goblet, nor divide the bread: 635
The kindest but his present wants allay,
To leave him wretched the succeeding day.
Frugal compassion! Heedless, they who boast
Both parents still, nor feel what he has lost,
Shall cry, Begone! thy father feasts not here: 640
The wretch obeys, retiring with a tear.
Thus wretched, thus retiring all in tears,
To my sad soul Astyanax appears!
Forc'd by repeated insults to return,
And to his widow'd mother vainly mourn. 645
He who, with tender delicacy bred,
With Princes sported, and on dainties fed,
And, when still ev'ning gave him up to rest,
Sunk soft in down upon the nurse's breast,
Must — ah what must he not? Whom Ilion calls 650
Astyanax, from her well-guarded walls,
Is now that name no more, unhappy boy!
Since now no more thy father guards his Troy.
But thou, my Hector! liest exposed in air,
Far from thy parents' and thy consort's care, 655
Whose hand in vain, directed by her love,
The martial scarf and robe of triumph wove.
Now to devouring flames be these a prey,
Useless to thee, from this accursed day!
Yet let the sacrifice at least be paid, 660
An honour to the living, not the dead!'
So spake the mournful dame: her matrons hear,
Sigh back her sighs, and answer tear with tear.

List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

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Priam Begs Achilles for Hector's Corpse. Book XXIV

Translated by William Cowper

Watch'd, while the ancient King into the tent
Proceeded of Achilles dear to Jove.
Him there he found, and sitting found apart
His fellow-warriors, of whom two alone
Served at his side, Alcimus, branch of Mars
And brave Automedon; he had himself
Supp'd newly, and the board stood unremoved.
Unseen of all huge Priam enter'd, stood
Near to Achilles, clasp'd his knees, and kiss'd
Those terrible and homicidal hands
That had destroy'd so many of his sons.
As when a fugitive for blood the house
Of some chief enters in a foreign land,
All gaze, astonish'd at the sudden guest,
So gazed Achilles seeing Priam there,
And so stood all astonish'd, each his eyes
In silence fastening on his fellow's face.
But Priam kneel'd, and suppliant thus began.

Think, oh Achilles, semblance of the Gods!
On thy own father full of days like me,
And trembling on the gloomy verge of life.
Some neighbor chief, it may be, even now
Oppresses him, and there is none at hand,
No friend to suocor him in his distress.
Yet, doubtless, hearing that Achilles lives,
He still rejoices, hoping, day by day,
That one day he shall see the face again
Of his own son from distant Troy return'd.
But me no comfort cheers, whose bravest sons,
So late the flower of Ilium, all are slain.
When Greece came hither, I had fifty sons;
Nineteen were children of one bed, the rest
Born of my concubines. A numerous house!
But fiery Mars hath thinn'd it. One I had,
One, more than all my sons the strength of Troy,
Whom standing for his country thou hast slain —
Hector — his body to redeem I come
Into Achaia's fleet, bringing, myself,

Ransom inestimable to thy tent.
Reverence the Gods, Achilles! recollect
Thy father; for his sake compassion show
To me more pitiable still, who draw
Home to my lips (humiliation yet
Unseen on earth) his hand who slew my son.

So saying, he waken'd in his soul regret
Of his own sire; softly he placed his hand
On Priam's hand, and push'd him gently away.
Remembrance melted both. Rolling before
Achilles' feet, Priam his son deplored
Wide-slaughtering Hector, and Achilles wept
By turns his father, and by turns his friend
Patroclus; sounds of sorrow fill'd the tent.
But when, at length satiate, Achilles felt
His heart from grief, and all his frame relieved,
Upstarting from his seat, with pity moved
Of Priam's silver locks and silver beard,
He raised the ancient father by his hand,
Whom in wing'd accents kind he thus bespake.

Wretched indeed! ah what must thou have felt!
How hast thou dared to seek alone the fleet
Of the Achaians, and his face by whom
So many of thy valiant sons have fallen?
Thou hast a heart of iron, terror-proof.
Come — sit beside me — let us, if we may,
Great mourners both, bid sorrow sleep awhile.
There is no profit of our sighs and tears;
For thus, exempt from care themselves, the Gods
Ordain man's miserable race to mourn.
Fast by the threshold of Jove's courts are placed
Two casks, one stored with evil, one with good,
From which the God dispenses as he wills.
For whom the glorious Thunderer mingles both,
He leads a life checker'd with good and ill
Alternate; but to whom he gives unmixt
The bitter cup, he makes that man a curse,
His name becomes a by-word of reproach,
His strength is hunger-bitten, and he walks
The blessed earth, unblest, go where he may.
So was my father Peleus at his birth
Nobly endow'd with plenty and with wealth
Distinguish'd by the Gods past all mankind,

Lord of the Myrmidons, and, though a man,
Yet match'd from heaven with an immortal bride.
But even him the Gods afflict, a son
Refusing him, who might possess his throne
Hereafter; for myself, his only heir,
Pass as a dream, and while I live, instead
Of solacing his age, here sit, before
Your distant walls, the scourge of thee and thine.
Thee also, ancient Priam, we have heard
Reported, once possessor of such wealth
As neither Lesbos, seat of Macar, owns,
Nor eastern Phrygia, nor yet all the ports
Of Hellespont, but thou didst pass them all
In riches, and in number of thy sons.
But since the Powers of heaven brought on thy land
This fatal war, battle and deeds of death
Always surround the city where thou reign'st.
Cease, therefore, from unprofitable tears,
Which, ere they raise thy son to life again
Shall, doubtless, find fresh cause for which to flow.

To whom the ancient King godlike replied.
Hero, forbear. No seat is here for me,
While Hector lies unburied in your camp.
Loose him, and loose him now, that with these eyes
I may behold my son; accept a price
Magnificent, which may'st thou long enjoy,
And, since my life was precious in thy sight,
May'st thou revisit safe thy native shore!

To whom Achilles, lowering, and in wrath.
Urge me no longer, at a time like this,
With that harsh note; I am already inclin'd
To loose him. Thetis, my own mother came
Herself on that same errand, sent from Jove.
Priam! I understand thee well. I know
That, by some God conducted, thou hast reach'd
Achaia's fleet; for, without aid divine,
No mortal even in his prime of youth,
Had dared the attempt; guards vigilant as ours
He should not easily elude, such gates,
So massy, should not easily unbar.
Thou, therefore, vex me not in my distress,
Lest I abhor to see thee in my tent,

And, borne beyond all limits, set at nought
Thee, and thy prayer, and the command of Jove.

He said; the old King trembled, and obey'd.
Then sprang Pelides like a lion forth,
Not sole, but with his two attendant friends
Alcimus and Automedon the brave,
For them (Patroclus slain) he honor'd most
Of all the Myrmidons. They from the yoke
Released both steeds and mules, then introduced
And placed the herald of the hoary King.
They lighten'd next the litter of its charge
Inestimable, leaving yet behind
Two mantles and a vest, that, not unveil'd,
The body might be borne back into Troy.
Then, calling forth his women, them he bade
Lave and anoint the body, but apart,
Lest haply Priam, noticing his son,
Through stress of grief should give resentment scope,
And irritate by some affront himself
To slay him, in despite of Jove's commands.
They, therefore, laving and anointing first
The body, cover'd it with cloak and vest;
Then, Peleus' son disposed it on the bier,
Lifting it from the ground, and his two friends
Together heaved it to the royal wain.
Achilles, last, groaning, his friend invoked.

Patroclus! should the tidings reach thine ear,
Although in Ades, that I have released
The noble Hector at his father's suit,
Resent it not; no sordid gifts have paid
His ransom-price, which thou shalt also share.

So saying, Achilles to his tent return'd,
And on the splendid couch whence he had risen
Again reclined, opposite to the seat
Of Priam, whom the hero thus bespake.

Priam! at thy request thy son is loosed,
And lying on his bier; at dawn of day
Thou shalt both see him and convey him hence
Thyself to Troy. But take we now repast;
For even bright-hair'd Niobe her food
Forgat not, though of children twelve bereft,

Of daughters six, and of six blooming sons.
Apollo these struck from his silver bow,
And those shaft-arm'd Diana, both incensed
That oft Latona's children and her own
Numbering, she scorn'd the Goddess who had borne
Two only, while herself had twelve to boast.
Vain boast! those two sufficed to slay them all.
Nine days they welter'd in their blood, no man
Was found to bury them, for Jove had changed
To stone the people; but themselves, at last,
The Powers of heaven entomb'd them on the tenth.
Yet even she, once satisfied with tears,
Remember'd food; and now the rocks among
And pathless solitudes of Sipylus,
The rumor'd cradle of the nymphs who dance
On Acheloüs' banks, although to stone
Transform'd, she broods her heaven-inflicted woes.
Come, then, my venerable guest! take we
Refreshment also; once arrived in Troy
With thy dear son, thou shalt have time to weep
Sufficient, nor without most weighty cause.

So spake Achilles, and, upstarting, slew
A sheep white-fleeced, which his attendants flay'd,
And busily and with much skill their task
Administ'ring, first scored the viands well,
Then pierced them with the spits, and when the roast
Was finish'd, drew them from the spits again.
And now, Automedon dispensed around
The polish'd board bread in neat baskets piled,
Which done, Achilles portion'd out to each
His share, and all assail'd the ready feast.
But when nor hunger more nor thirst they felt,
Dardanian Priam, wond'ring at his bulk
And beauty (for he seem'd some God from heaven)
Gazed on Achilles, while Achilles held
Not less in admiration of his looks
Benign, and of his gentle converse wise,
Gazed on Dardanian Priam, and, at length
(The eyes of each gratified to the full)
The ancient King thus to Achilles spake.

Hero! dismiss us now each to our bed,
That there at ease reclined, we may enjoy
Sweet sleep; for never have these eyelids closed

Since Hector fell and died, but without cease
I mourn, and nourishing unnumber'd woes,
Have roll'd me in the ashes of my courts.
But I have now both tasted food, and given
Wine to my lips, untasted till with thee.

So he, and at his word Achilles bade
His train beneath his portico prepare
With all dispatch two couches, purple rugs,
And arras, and warm mantles over all.
Forth went the women bearing lights, and spread
A couch for each, when feigning needful fear,
Achilles thus his speech to Priam turn'd.

My aged guest beloved; sleep thou without;
Lest some Achaian chief (for such are wont
Ofttimes, here sitting, to consult with me)
Hither repair; of whom should any chance
To spy thee through the gloom, he would at once
Convey the tale to Agamemnon's ear,
Whence hindrance might arise, and the release
Haply of Hector's body be delay'd.
But answer me with truth. How many days
Wouldst thou assign to the funereal rites
Of noble Hector, for so long I mean
Myself to rest, and keep the host at home?

Then thus the ancient King godlike replied.
If thou indeed be willing that we give
Burial to noble Hector, by an act
So generous, O Achilles! me thou shalt
Much gratify; for we are shut, thou know'st,
In Ilium close, and fuel must procure
From Ida's side remote; fear, too, hath seized
On all our people. Therefore thus I say.
Nine days we wish to mourn him in the house;
To his interment we would give the tenth,
And to the public banquet; the eleventh
Shall see us build his tomb; and on the twelfth
(If war we must) we will to war again.

To whom Achilles, matchless in the race.
So be it, ancient Priam! I will curb
Twelve days the rage of war, at thy desire.

He spake, and at his wrist the right hand grasp'd
Of the old sovereign, to dispel his fear.
Then in the vestibule the herald slept
And Priam, prudent both, but Peleus' son
In the interior tent, and at his side
Brisëis, with transcendent beauty adorn'd.

Now all, all night, by gentle sleep subdued,
Both Gods and chariot-ruling warriors lay,
But not the benefactor of mankind,
Hermes; him sleep seized not, but deep he mused
How likeliest from amid the Grecian fleet
He might deliver by the guard unseen
The King of Ilium; at his head he stood
In vision, and the senior thus bespake.

Ah heedless and secure! hast thou no dread
Of mischief, ancient King, that thus by foes
Thou sleep'st surrounded, lull'd by the consent
And sufferance of Achilles? Thou hast given
Much for redemption of thy darling son,
But thrice that sum thy sons who still survive
Must give to Agamemnon and the Greeks
For *thy* redemption, should they know thee here.

He ended; at the sound alarm'd upsprang
The King, and roused his herald. Hermes yoked
Himself both mules and steeds, and through the camp
Drove them incontinent, by all unseen.

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The Opening of the Epic: Book I

Translated by Alexander Pope

The man for wisdom's various arts renown'd,
Long exercised in woes, O Muse! resound;
Who, when his arms had wrought the destined fall
Of sacred Troy, and razed her heaven-built wall,
Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,
Their manners noted, and their states survey'd,
On stormy seas unnumber'd toils he bore,
Safe with his friends to gain his natal shore:
Vain toils! their impious folly dared to prey
On herds devoted to the god of day;
The god vindictive doom'd them never more
(Ah, men unblest'd!) to touch that natal shore.
Oh, snatch some portion of these acts from fate,
Celestial Muse! and to our world relate.

Now at their native realms the Greeks arrived;
All who the wars of ten long years survived;
And 'scaped the perils of the gulfy main.
Ulysses, sole of all the victor train,
An exile from his dear paternal coast,
Deplored his absent queen and empire lost.
Calypso in her caves constrain'd his stay,
With sweet, reluctant, amorous delay;
In vain-for now the circling years disclose
The day predestined to reward his woes.
At length his Ithaca is given by fate,
Where yet new labours his arrival wait;
At length their rage the hostile powers restrain,
All but the ruthless monarch of the main.
But now the god, remote, a heavenly guest,
In AETHIOPIA graced the genial feast
(A race divided, whom with sloping rays
The rising and descending sun surveys);
There on the world's extremest verge revered
With hecatombs and prayer in pomp prefer'd,
Distant he lay: while in the bright abodes
Of high Olympus, Jove convened the gods:
The assembly thus the sire supreme address'd,
AEGYTHUS' fate revolving in his breast,

Whom young Orestes to the dreary coast
Of Pluto sent, a blood-polluted ghost.

“Perverse mankind! whose wills, created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute degree;
All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscall’d the crimes of fate.
When to his lust AEgysthus gave the rein,
Did fate, or we, the adulterous act constrain?
Did fate, or we, when great Atrides died,
Urge the bold traitor to the regicide?
Hermes I sent, while yet his soul remain’d
Sincere from royal blood, and faith profaned;
To warn the wretch, that young Orestes, grown
To manly years, should re-assert the throne.
Yet, impotent of mind, and uncontroll’d,
He plunged into the gulf which Heaven foretold.”

Here paused the god; and pensive thus replies
Minerva, graceful with her azure eyes:

“O thou! from whom the whole creation springs,
The source of power on earth derived to kings!
His death was equal to the direful deed;
So may the man of blood be doomed to bleed!
But grief and rage alternate wound my breast
For brave Ulysses, still by fate oppress’d.
Amidst an isle, around whose rocky shore
The forests murmur, and the surges roar,
The blameless hero from his wish’d-for home
A goddess guards in her enchanted dome;
(Atlas her sire, to whose far-piercing eye
The wonders of the deep expanded lie;
The eternal columns which on earth he rears
End in the starry vault, and prop the spheres).
By his fair daughter is the chief confined,
Who soothes to dear delight his anxious mind;
Successful all her soft caresses prove,
To banish from his breast his country’s love;
To see the smoke from his loved palace rise,
While the dear isle in distant prospect lies,
With what contentment could he close his eyes!
And will Omnipotence neglect to save
The suffering virtue of the wise and brave?
Must he, whose altars on the Phrygian shore

With frequent rites, and pure, avow'd thy power,
Be doom'd the worst of human ills to prove,
Unbless'd, abandon'd to the wrath of Jove?"

"Daughter! what words have pass'd thy lips unweigh'd!
(Replied the Thunderer to the martial maid;)
Deem not unjustly by my doom oppress'd,
Of human race the wisest and the best.
Neptune, by prayer repentant rarely won,
Afflicts the chief, to avenge his giant son,
Whose visual orb Ulysses robb'd of light;
Great Polypheme, of more than mortal might?
Him young Thousa bore (the bright increase
Of Phorcys, dreaded in the sounds and seas);
Whom Neptune eyed with bloom of beauty bless'd,
And in his cave the yielding nymph compress'd
For this the god constrains the Greek to roam,
A hopeless exile from his native home,
From death alone exempt — but cease to mourn;
Let all combine to achieve his wish'd return;
Neptune atoned, his wrath shall now refrain,
Or thwart the synod of the gods in vain."

"Father and king adored!" Minerva cried,
"Since all who in the Olympian bower reside
Now make the wandering Greek their public care,
Let Hermes to the Atlantic isle repair;
Bid him, arrived in bright Calypso's court,
The sanction of the assembled powers report:
That wise Ulysses to his native land
Must speed, obedient to their high command.
Meantime Telemachus, the blooming heir
Of sea-girt Ithaca, demands my care;
'Tis mine to form his green, unpractised years
In sage debates; surrounded with his peers,
To save the state, and timely to restrain
The bold intrusion of the suitor-train;
Who crowd his palace, and with lawless power
His herds and flocks in feastful rites devour.
To distant Sparta, and the spacious waste
Of Sandy Pyle, the royal youth shall haste.
There, warm with filial love, the cause inquire
That from his realm retards his god-like sire;
Delivering early to the voice of fame
The promise of a green immortal name."

List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

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Odysseus' Visit to the Underworld: Book VI

Arriving on the shore, and launching, first,
Our bark into the sacred Deep, we set
Our mast and sails, and stow'd secure on board
The ram and ewe, then, weeping, and with hearts
Sad and disconsolate, embark'd ourselves.
And now, melodious Circe, nymph divine,
Sent after us a canvas-stretching breeze,
Pleasant companion of our course, and we
(The decks and benches clear'd) untoiling sat,
While managed gales sped swift the bark along. 10
All day, with sails distended, e'er the Deep
She flew, and when the sun, at length, declined,
And twilight dim had shadow'd all the ways,
Approach'd the bourn of Ocean's vast profound.
The city, there, of the Cimmerians stands
With clouds and darkness veil'd, on whom the sun
Deigns not to look with his beam-darting eye,
Or when he climbs the starry arch, or when
Earthward he slopes again his west'ring wheels,
But sad night canopies the woeful race. 20
We haled the bark aground, and, landing there
The ram and sable ewe, journey'd beside
The Deep, till we arrived where Circe bade.
Here, Perimedes' son Eurylochus
Held fast the destined sacrifice, while I
Scoop'd with my sword the soil, op'ning a trench
Ell-broad on ev'ry side, then pour'd around
Libation consecrate to all the dead,
First, milk with honey mixt, then luscious wine,
Then water, sprinkling, last, meal over all. 30
This done, adoring the unreal forms
And shadows of the dead, I vow'd to slay,
(Return'd to Ithaca) in my own abode,
An heifer barren yet, fairest and best
Of all my herds, and to enrich the pile
With delicacies, such as please the shades.
But, in peculiar, to the Theban seer
I vow'd a sable ram, largest and best
Of all my flocks. When thus I had implored
With vows and pray'r, the nations of the dead, 40
Piercing the victims next, I turn'd them both
To bleed into the trench; then swarming came

From Erebus the shades of the deceased,
Brides, youths unwedded, seniors long with woe
Oppress'd, and tender girls yet new to grief.
Came also many a warrior by the spear
In battle pierced, with armour gore-distain'd,
And all the multitude around the foss
Stalk'd shrieking dreadful; me pale horror seized.
I next, importunate, my people urged, ⁵⁰
Flaying the victims which myself had slain,
To burn them, and to supplicate in pray'r
Illustrious Pluto and dread Proserpine.
Then down I sat, and with drawn faulchion chased
The ghosts, nor suffer'd them to approach the blood,
Till with Tiresias I should first confer.
The spirit, first, of my companion came,
Elpenor; for no burial honours yet
Had he received, but we had left his corse
In Circe's palace, tombless, undeplord, ⁶⁰
Ourselves by pressure urged of other cares.
Touch'd with compassion seeing him, I wept,
And in wing'd accents brief him thus bespake.
Elpenor! how cam'st thou into the realms
Of darkness? Hast thou, though on foot, so far
Outstripp'd my speed, who in my bark arrived?
So I, to whom with tears he thus replied.
Laertes' noble son, for wiles renown'd!
Fool'd by some dæmon and the intemp'rate bowl,
I perish'd in the house of Circe; there ⁷⁰
The deep-descending steps heedless I miss'd,
And fell precipitated from the roof.
With neck-bone broken from the vertebræ
Outstretch'd I lay; my spirit sought the shades.
But now, by those whom thou hast left at home,
By thy Penelope, and by thy fire,
The gentle nourisher of thy infant growth,
And by thy only son Telemachus
I make my suit to thee. For, sure, I know
That from the house of Pluto safe return'd, ⁸⁰
Thou shalt ere long thy gallant vessel moor
At the Ææan isle. Ah! there arrived
Remember me. Leave me not undeplord
Nor uninhumed, lest, for my sake, the Gods
In vengeance visit thee; but with my arms
(What arms soe'er I left) burn me, and raise
A kind memorial of me on the coast,

Heap'd high with earth; that an unhappy man
May yet enjoy an unforgotten name.

Thus do at my request, and on my hill ⁹⁰
Funereal, plant the oar with which I row'd,
While yet I lived a mariner of thine.

He spake, to whom thus answer I return'd.
Poor youth! I will perform thy whole desire.

Thus we, there sitting, doleful converse held,
With outstretch'd faulchion, I, guarding the blood,
And my companion's shadowy semblance sad
Meantime discoursing me on various themes.

The soul of my departed mother, next,
Of Anticleia came, daughter of brave ¹⁰⁰
Autolycus; whom, when I sought the shores
Of Ilium, I had living left at home.

Seeing her, with compassion touch'd, I wept,
Yet even her, (although it pain'd my soul)
Forbad, relentless, to approach the blood,
Till with Tiresias I should first confer.

Then came the spirit of the Theban seer
Himself, his golden sceptre in his hand,
Who knew me, and, enquiring, thus began.

Why, hapless Chief! leaving the cheerful day, ¹¹⁰
Arriv'st thou to behold the dead, and this
Unpleasant land? but, from the trench awhile
Receding, turn thy faulchion keen away,
That I may drink the blood, and tell thee truth.

He spake; I thence receding, deep infix'd
My sword bright-studded in the sheath again.
The noble prophet then, approaching, drank
The blood, and, satisfied, address'd me thus.

Thou seek'st a pleasant voyage home again,
Renown'd Ulysses! but a God will make ¹²⁰
That voyage difficult; for, as I judge,
Thou wilt not pass by Neptune unperceiv'd,
Whose anger follows thee, for that thou hast
Deprived his son Cyclops of his eye.

At length, however, after num'rous woes
Endur'd, thou may'st attain thy native isle,
If thy own appetite thou wilt controul
And theirs who follow thee, what time thy bark
Well-built, shall at Thrinacia's shore arrive,
Escaped from perils of the gloomy Deep. ¹³⁰
There shall ye find grazing the flocks and herds
Of the all-seeing and all-hearing Sun,

Which, if attentive to thy safe return,
Thou leave unharm'd, though after num'rous woes,
Ye may at length arrive in Ithaca.
But if thou violate them, I denounce
Destruction on thy ship and all thy band,
And though thyself escape, late shalt thou reach
Thy home and hard-bested, in a strange bark,
All thy companions lost; trouble beside ¹⁴⁰
Awaits thee there, for thou shalt find within
Proud suitors of thy noble wife, who waste
Thy substance, and with promis'd spousal gifts
Ceaseless solicit her to wed; yet well
Shalt thou avenge all their injurious deeds.
That once perform'd, and ev'ry suitor slain
Either by stratagem, or face to face,
In thy own palace, bearing, as thou go'st,
A shapely oar, journey, till thou hast found
A people who the sea know not, nor eat ¹⁵⁰
Food salted; they trim galley crimson prow'd
Have ne'er beheld, nor yet smooth-shaven oar,
With which the vessel wing'd scuds o'er the waves.
Well thou shalt know them; this shall be the sign —
When thou shalt meet a trav'ler, who shall name
The oar on thy broad shoulder borne, a van,
There, deep infixing it within the soil,
Worship the King of Ocean with a bull,
A ram, and a lascivious boar, then seek
Thy home again, and sacrifice at home ¹⁶⁰
An hecatomb to the Immortal Gods,
Adoring each duly, and in his course.
So shalt thou die in peace a gentle death,
Remote from Ocean; it shall find thee late,
In soft serenity of age, the Chief
Of a blest people. — I have told thee truth.
He spake, to whom I answer thus return'd.
Tiresias! thou, I doubt not, hast reveal'd
The ordinance of heav'n. But tell me, Seer!
And truly. I behold my mother's shade; ¹⁷⁰
Silent she sits beside the blood, nor word
Nor even look vouchsafes to her own son.
How shall she learn, prophet, that I am her's?
So I, to whom Tiresias quick replied.
The course is easy. Learn it, taught by me.
What shade soe'er, by leave of thee obtain'd,
Shall taste the blood, that shade will tell thee truth;

The rest, prohibited, will all retire.

When thus the spirit of the royal Seer
Had his prophetic mind reveal'd, again 180
He enter'd Pluto's gates; but I unmoved
Still waited till my mother's shade approach'd;
She drank the blood, then knew me, and in words
Wing'd with affection, plaintive, thus began.

My son! how hast thou enter'd, still alive,
This darksome region? Difficult it is
For living man to view the realms of death.
Broad rivers roll, and awful floods between,
But chief, the Ocean, which to pass on foot,
Or without ship, impossible is found. 190
Hast thou, long wand'ring in thy voyage home
From Ilium, with thy ship and crew arrived,
Ithaca and thy consort yet unseen?

She spake, to whom this answer I return'd.
My mother! me necessity constrain'd
To Pluto's dwelling, anxious to consult
Theban Tiresias; for I have not yet
Approach'd Achaia, nor have touch'd the shore
Of Ithaca, but suff'ring ceaseless woe
Have roam'd, since first in Agamemnon's train 200
I went to combat with the sons of Troy.

But speak, my mother, and the truth alone;
What stroke of fate slew *thee*? Fell'st thou a prey
To some slow malady? or by the shafts
Of gentle Dian suddenly subdued?

Speak to me also of my ancient Sire,
And of Telemachus, whom I left at home;
Possess I still unalienate and safe
My property, or hath some happier Chief
Admittance free into my fortunes gain'd, 210
No hope subsisting more of my return?

The mind and purpose of my wedded wife
Declare thou also. Dwells she with our son
Faithful to my domestic interests,
Or is she wedded to some Chief of Greece?

I ceas'd, when thus the venerable shade.
Not so; she faithful still and patient dwells
Thy roof beneath; but all her days and nights
Devoting sad to anguish and to tears.

Thy fortunes still are thine; Telemachus 220
Cultivates, undisturb'd, thy land, and sits
At many a noble banquet, such as well

Beseems the splendour of his princely state,
 For all invite him; at his farm retired
 Thy father dwells, nor to the city comes,
 For aught; nor bed, nor furniture of bed,
 Furr'd cloaks or splendid arras he enjoys,
 But, with his servile hinds all winter sleeps
 In ashes and in dust at the hearth-side,
 Coarsely attired; again, when summer comes, ²³⁰
 Or genial autumn, on the fallen leaves
 In any nook, not curious where, he finds
 There, stretch'd forlorn, nourishing grief, he weeps
 Thy lot, enfeebled now by num'rous years.
 So perish'd I; such fate I also found;
 Me, neither the right-aiming arch'ness struck,
 Diana, with her gentle shafts, nor me
 Distemper slew, my limbs by slow degrees
 But sure, bereaving of their little life, ²⁴⁰
 But long regret, tender solicitude,
 And recollection of thy kindness past,
 These, my Ulysses! fatal proved to me.
 She said; I, ardent wish'd to clasp the shade
 Of my departed mother; thrice I sprang
 Toward her, by desire impetuous urged,
 And thrice she flitted from between my arms,
 Light as a passing shadow or a dream.
 Then, pierced by keener grief, in accents wing'd
 With filial earnestness I thus replied. ²⁵⁰
 My mother, why elud'st thou my attempt
 To clasp thee, that ev'n here, in Pluto's realm,
 We might to full satiety indulge
 Our grief, enfolded in each other's arms?
 Hath Proserpine, alas! only dispatch'd
 A shadow to me, to augment my woe?
 Then, instant, thus the venerable form.
 Ah, son! thou most afflicted of mankind!
 On thee, Jove's daughter, Proserpine, obtrudes
 No airy semblance vain; but such the state ²⁶⁰
 And nature is of mortals once deceased.
 For they nor muscle have, nor flesh, nor bone;
 All those (the spirit from the body once
 Divorced) the violence of fire consumes,
 And, like a dream, the soul flies swift away.
 But haste thou back to light, and, taught thyself
 These sacred truths, hereafter teach thy spouse.
 Thus mutual we conferr'd. Then, thither came,

Encouraged forth by royal Proserpine,
 Shades female num'rous, all who consorts, erst, 270
 Or daughters were of mighty Chiefs renown'd.
 About the sable blood frequent they swarm'd.
 But I, consid'ring sat, how I might each
 Interrogate, and thus resolv'd. My sword
 Forth drawing from beside my sturdy thigh,
 Firm I prohibited the ghosts to drink
 The blood together; they successive came;
 Each told her own distress; I question'd all.
 There, first, the high-born Tyro I beheld;
 She claim'd Salmoneus as her sire, and wife 280
 Was once of Cretheus, son of Æolus.
 Enamour'd of Enipeus, stream divine,
 Loveliest of all that water earth, beside
 His limpid current she was wont to stray,
 When Ocean's God, (Enipeus' form assumed)
 Within the eddy-whirling river's mouth
 Embraced her; there, while the o'er-arching flood,
 Uplifted mountainous, conceal'd the God
 And his fair human bride, her virgin zone
 He loos'd, and o'er her eyes sweet sleep diffused. 290
 His am'rous purpose satisfied, he grasp'd
 Her hand, affectionate, and thus he said.
 Rejoice in this my love, and when the year
 Shall tend to consummation of its course,
 Thou shalt produce illustrious twins, for love
 Immortal never is unfruitful love.
 Rear them with all a mother's care; meantime,
 Hence to thy home. Be silent. Name it not.
 For I am Neptune, Shaker of the shores.
 So saying, he plunged into the billowy Deep. 300
 She pregnant grown, Pelias and Neleus bore,
 Both, valiant ministers of mighty Jove.
 In wide-spread Iäolchus Pelias dwelt,
 Of num'rous flocks possess'd; but his abode
 Amid the sands of Pylus Neleus chose.
 To Cretheus wedded next, the lovely nymph
 Yet other sons, Æson and Pheres bore,
 And Amythaon of equestrian fame.
 I, next, the daughter of Asopus saw,
 Antiope; she gloried to have known 310
 Th' embrace of Jove himself, to whom she brought
 A double progeny, Amphion named
 And Zethus; they the seven-gated Thebes

Founded and girded with strong tow'rs, because,
Though puissant Heroes both, in spacious Thebes
Unfenced by tow'rs, they could not dwell secure.

Alcmena, next, wife of Amphitryon
I saw; she in the arms of sov'reign Jove
The lion-hearted Hercules conceiv'd,
And, after, bore to Creon brave in fight 320
His daughter Megara, by the noble son
Unconquer'd of Amphitryon espoused.

The beauteous Epicaste saw I then,
Mother of Oedipus, who guilt incurr'd
Prodigious, wedded, unintentional,
To her own son; his father first he slew,
Then wedded her, which soon the Gods divulged.
He, under vengeance of offended heav'n,
In pleasant Thebes dwelt miserable, King
Of the Cadmean race; she to the gates 330
Of Ades brazen-barr'd despairing went,
Self-strangled by a cord fasten'd aloft
To her own palace-roof, and woes bequeath'd
(Such as the Fury sisters execute
Innumerable) to her guilty son.

There also saw I Chloris, loveliest fair,
Whom Neleus woo'd and won with spousal gifts
Inestimable, by her beauty charm'd
She youngest daughter was of Iasus' son,
Amphion, in old time a sov'reign prince 340
In Minuëian Orchomenus,
And King of Pylus. Three illustrious sons
She bore to Neleus, Nestor, Chromius,
And Periclymenus the wide-renown'd,
And, last, produced a wonder of the earth,
Pero, by ev'ry neighbour prince around
In marriage sought; but Neleus her on none
Deign'd to bestow, save only on the Chief
Who should from Phylace drive off the beeves
(Broad-fronted, and with jealous care secured) 350
Of valiant Iphicles. One undertook
That task alone, a prophet high in fame,
Melampus; but the Fates fast bound him there
In rig'rous bonds by rustic hands imposed.
At length (the year, with all its months and days
Concluded, and the new-born year begun)
Illustrious Iphicles releas'd the seer,
Grateful for all the oracles resolved,

Till then obscure. So stood the will of Jove.

Next, Leda, wife of Tyndarus I saw, ³⁶⁰
Who bore to Tyndarus a noble pair,
Castor the bold, and Pollux cestus-famed.
They pris'ners in the fertile womb of earth,
Though living, dwell, and even there from Jove
High priv'lege gain; alternate they revive
And die, and dignity partake divine.

The comfort of Aloëus, next, I view'd,
Iphimedeia; she th' embrace profess'd
Of Neptune to have shared, to whom she bore
Two sons; short-lived they were, but godlike both, ³⁷⁰
Otus and Ephialtes far-renown'd.

Orion sole except, all-bounteous Earth
Ne'er nourish'd forms for beauty or for size
To be admired as theirs; in his ninth year
Each measur'd, broad, nine cubits, and the height
Was found nine ells of each. Against the Gods
Themselves they threaten'd war, and to excite
The din of battle in the realms above.

To the Olympian summit they essay'd
To heave up Ossa, and to Ossa's crown ³⁸⁰
Branch-waving Pelion; so to climb the heav'ns.
Nor had they failed, maturer grown in might,
To accomplish that emprize, but them the son
Of radiant-hair'd Latona and of Jove
Slew both, ere yet the down of blooming youth
Thick-sprung, their cheeks or chins had tufted o'er.

Phædra I also there, and Procris saw,
And Ariadne for her beauty praised,
Whose sire was all-wise Minos. Theseus her
From Crete toward the fruitful region bore ³⁹⁰
Of sacred Athens, but enjoy'd not there,
For, first, she perish'd by Diana's shafts
In Dia, Bacchus witnessing her crime.

Mæra and Clymene I saw beside,
And odious Eriphyle, who received
The price in gold of her own husband's life.

But all the wives of Heroes whom I saw,
And all their daughters can I not relate;
Night, first, would fail; and even now the hour
Calls me to rest either on board my bark, ⁴⁰⁰
Or here; meantime, I in yourselves confide,
And in the Gods to shape my conduct home.

He ceased; the whole assembly silent sat,

Charm'd into ecstasy by his discourse
Throughout the twilight hall, till, at the last,
Areta iv'ry arm'd them thus bespake.

Phæacians! how appears he in your eyes
This stranger, graceful as he is in port,
In stature noble, and in mind discrete?
My guest he is, but ye all share with me 410
That honour; him dismiss not, therefore, hence
With haste, nor from such indigence withhold
Supplies gratuitous; for ye are rich,
And by kind heav'n with rare possessions blest.

The Hero, next, Echeneus spake, a Chief
Now ancient, eldest of Phæacia's sons.
Your prudent Queen, my friends, speaks not beside
Her proper scope, but as beseems her well.
Her voice obey; yet the effect of all
Must on Alcinoüs himself depend. 420

To whom Alcinoüs, thus, the King, replied.
I ratify the word. So shall be done,
As surely as myself shall live supreme
O'er all Phæacia's maritime domain.
Then let the guest, though anxious to depart,
Wait till the morrow, that I may complete
The whole donation. His safe conduct home
Shall be the gen'ral care, but mine in Chief,
To whom dominion o'er the rest belongs.

Him answer'd, then, Ulysses ever-wise. 430
Alcinoüs! Prince! exalted high o'er all
Phæacia's sons! should ye solicit, kind,
My stay throughout the year, preparing still
My conduct home, and with illustrious gifts
Enriching me the while, ev'n that request
Should please me well; the wealthier I return'd,
The happier my condition; welcome more
And more respectable I should appear
In ev'ry eye to Ithaca restored.

To whom Alcinoüs answer thus return'd. 440
Ulysses! viewing thee, no fears we feel
Lest thou, at length, some false pretender prove,
Or subtle hypocrite, of whom no few
Disseminated o'er its face the earth
Sustains, adepts in fiction, and who frame
Fables, where fables could be least surmised.
Thy phrase well turn'd, and thy ingenuous mind
Proclaim *thee* diff'rent far, who hast in strains

Musical as a poet's voice, the woes
Rehears'd of all thy Grecians, and thy own. 450
But say, and tell me true. Beheld'st thou there
None of thy followers to the walls of Troy
Slain in that warfare? Lo! the night is long —
A night of utmost length; nor yet the hour
Invites to sleep. Tell me thy wond'rous deeds,
For I could watch till sacred dawn, could'st thou
So long endure to tell me of thy toils.

Then thus Ulysses, ever-wise, replied.

Alcinoüs! high exalted over all
Phæacia's sons! the time suffices yet 460
For converse both and sleep, and if thou wish
To hear still more, I shall not spare to unfold
More pitiable woes than these, sustain'd
By my companions, in the end destroy'd;
Who, saved from perils of disast'rous war
At Ilium, perish'd yet in their return,
Victims of a pernicious woman's crime.

Now, when chaste Proserpine had wide dispers'd
Those female shades, the spirit sore distress'd
Of Agamemnon, Atreus' son, appear'd; 470
Encircled by a throng, he came; by all
Who with himself beneath Ægisthus' roof
Their fate fulfill'd, perishing by the sword.
He drank the blood, and knew me; shrill he wail'd
And querulous; tears trickling bathed his cheeks,
And with spread palms, through ardour of desire
He sought to enfold me fast, but vigour none,
Or force, as erst, his agile limbs inform'd.
I, pity-moved, wept at the sight, and him,
In accents wing'd by friendship, thus address'd. 480

Ah glorious son of Atreus, King of men!
What hand inflicted the all-numbing stroke
Of death on thee? Say, didst thou perish sunk
By howling tempests irresistible
Which Neptune raised, or on dry land by force
Of hostile multitudes, while cutting off
Beeves from the herd, or driving flocks away,
Or fighting for Achaia's daughters, shut
Within some city's bulwarks close besieged?

I ceased, when Agamemnon thus replied. 490
Ulysses, noble Chief, Laertes' son
For wisdom famed! I neither perish'd sunk
By howling tempests irresistible

Which Neptune raised, nor on dry land received
From hostile multitudes the fatal blow,
But me Ægisthus slew; my woeful death
Confed'rate with my own pernicious wife
He plotted, with a show of love sincere
Bidding me to his board, where as the ox
Is slaughter'd at his crib, he slaughter'd *me*. 500
Such was my dreadful death; carnage ensued
Continual of my friends slain all around,
Num'rous as boars bright-tusk'd at nuptial feast,
Or feast convivial of some wealthy Chief.
Thou hast already witness'd many a field
With warriors overspread, slain one by one,
But that dire scene had most thy pity moved,
For we, with brimming beakers at our side,
And underneath full tables bleeding lay.
Blood floated all the pavement. Then the cries 510
Of Priam's daughter sounded in my ears
Most pitiable of all. Cassandra's cries,
Whom Clytemnestra close beside me slew.
Expiring as I lay, I yet essay'd
To grasp my faulchion, but the trayt'ress quick
Withdrew herself, nor would vouchsafe to close
My languid eyes, or prop my drooping chin
Ev'n in the moment when I sought the shades.
So that the thing breathes not, ruthless and fell
As woman once resolv'd on such a deed 520
Detestable, as my base wife contrived,
The murder of the husband of her youth.
I thought to have return'd welcome to all,
To my own children and domestic train;
But she, past measure profligate, hath poured
Shame on herself, on women yet unborn,
And even on the virtuous of her sex.
He ceas'd, to whom, thus, answer I return'd.
Gods! how severely hath the thund'rer plagued
The house of Atreus even from the first, 530
By female counsels! we for Helen's sake
Have num'rous died, and Clytemnestra framed,
While thou wast far remote, this snare for thee!
So I, to whom Atrides thus replied.
Thou, therefore, be not pliant overmuch
To woman; trust her not with all thy mind,
But half disclose to her, and half conceal.
Yet, from thy consort's hand no bloody death,

My friend, hast thou to fear; for passing wise
Icarius' daughter is, far other thoughts, ⁵⁴⁰
Intelligent, and other plans, to frame.
Her, going to the wars we left a bride
New-wedded, and thy boy hung at her breast,
Who, man himself, consorts ere now with men
A prosp'rous youth; his father, safe restored
To his own Ithaca, shall see him soon,
And *he* shall clasp his father in his arms
As nature bids; but me, my cruel one
Indulged not with the dear delight to gaze
On my Orestes, for she slew me first. ⁵⁵⁰
But listen; treasure what I now impart.
Steer secret to thy native isle; avoid
Notice; for woman merits trust no more.
Now tell me truth. Hear ye in whose abode
My son resides? dwells he in Pylus, say,
Or in Orchomenos, or else beneath
My brother's roof in Sparta's wide domain?
For my Orestes is not yet a shade.
So he, to whom I answer thus return'd.
Atrides, ask not me. Whether he live, ⁵⁶⁰
Or have already died, I nothing know;
Mere words are vanity, and better spared.
Thus we discoursing mutual stood, and tears
Shedding disconsolate. The shade, meantime,
Came of Achilles, Peleus' mighty son;
Patroclus also, and Antilochus
Appear'd, with Ajax, for proportion just
And stature tall, (Pelides sole except)
Distinguish'd above all Achaia's sons.
The soul of swift Æacides at once ⁵⁷⁰
Knew me, and in wing'd accents thus began.
Brave Laertiades, for wiles renown'd!
What mightier enterprise than all the past
Hath made thee here a guest? rash as thou art!
How hast thou dared to penetrate the gloom
Of Ades, dwelling of the shadowy dead,
Semblances only of what once they were?
He spake, to whom I, answ'ring, thus replied.
O Peleus' son! Achilles! bravest far
Of all Achaia's race! I here arrived ⁵⁸⁰
Seeking Tiresias, from his lips to learn,
Perchance, how I might safe regain the coast
Of craggy Ithaca; for tempest-toss'd

Perpetual, I have neither yet approach'd
Achaia's shore, or landed on my own.
But as for thee, Achilles! never man
Hath known felicity like thine, or shall,
Whom living we all honour'd as a God,
And who maintain'st, here resident, supreme
Controul among the dead; indulge not then, 590
Achilles, causeless grief that thou hast died.
I ceased, and answer thus instant received.
Renown'd Ulysses! think not death a theme
Of consolation; I had rather live
The servile hind for hire, and eat the bread
Of some man scantily himself sustain'd,
Than sov'reign empire hold o'er all the shades.
But come — speak to me of my noble boy;
Proceeds he, as he promis'd, brave in arms,
Or shuns he war? Say also, hast thou heard 600
Of royal Peleus? shares he still respect
Among his num'rous Myrmidons, or scorn
In Hellas and in Phthia, for that age
Predominates in his enfeebled limbs?
For help is none in me; the glorious sun
No longer sees me such, as when in aid
Of the Achaians I o'erspread the field
Of spacious Troy with all their bravest slain.
Oh might I, vigorous as then, repair
For one short moment to my father's house, 610
They all should tremble; I would shew an arm,
Such as should daunt the fiercest who presumes
To injure *him*, or to despise his age.
Achilles spake, to whom I thus replied.
Of noble Peleus have I nothing heard;
But I will tell thee, as thou bidd'st, the truth
Unfeign'd of Neoptolemus thy son;
For him, myself, on board my hollow bark
From Scyros to Achaia's host convey'd.
Oft as in council under Ilium's walls 620
We met, he ever foremost was in speech,
Nor spake erroneous; Nestor and myself
Except, no Grecian could with him compare.
Oft, too, as we with battle hemm'd around
Troy's bulwarks, from among the mingled crowd
Thy son sprang foremost into martial act,
Inferior in heroic worth to none.
Beneath him num'rous fell the sons of Troy

In dreadful fight, nor have I pow'r to name
 Distinctly all, who by his glorious arm ⁶³⁰
 Exerted in the cause of Greece, expired.
 Yet will I name Eurypylus, the son
 Of Telephus, an Hero whom his sword
 Of life bereaved, and all around him strew'd
 The plain with his Cetean warriors, won
 To Ilium's side by bribes to women giv'n.
 Save noble Memnon only, I beheld
 No Chief at Ilium beautiful as he.
 Again, when we within the horse of wood
 Framed by Epeüs sat, an ambush chos'n ⁶⁴⁰
 Of all the bravest Greeks, and I in trust
 Was placed to open or to keep fast-closed
 The hollow fraud; then, ev'ry Chieftain there
 And Senator of Greece wiped from his cheeks
 The tears, and tremors felt in ev'ry limb;
 But never saw I changed to terror's hue
His ruddy cheek, no tears wiped *he* away,
 But oft he press'd me to go forth, his suit
 With pray'rs enforcing, griping hard his hilt
 And his brass-burthen'd spear, and dire revenge ⁶⁵⁰
 Denouncing, ardent, on the race of Troy.
 At length, when we had sack'd the lofty town
 Of Priam, laden with abundant spoils
 He safe embark'd, neither by spear or shaft
 Aught hurt, or in close fight by faulchion's edge,
 As oft in war befalls, where wounds are dealt
 Promiscuous at the will of fiery Mars.
 So I; then striding large, the spirit thence
 Withdrew of swift Æacides, along
 The hoary mead pacing, with joy elate ⁶⁶⁰
 That I had blazon'd bright his son's renown.
 The other souls of men by death dismiss'd
 Stood mournful by, sad uttering each his woes;
 The soul alone I saw standing remote
 Of Telamonian Ajax, still incensed
 That in our public contest for the arms
 Worn by Achilles, and by Thetis thrown
 Into dispute, my claim had strongest proved,
 Troy and Minerva judges of the cause.
 Disastrous victory! which I could wish ⁶⁷⁰
 Not to have won, since for that armour's sake
 The earth hath cover'd Ajax, in his form
 And martial deeds superior far to all

The Grecians, Peleus' matchless son except.

I, seeking to appease him, thus began.

O Ajax, son of glorious Telamon!

Canst thou remember, even after death,

Thy wrath against me, kindled for the sake

Of those pernicious arms? arms which the Gods

Ordain'd of such dire consequence to Greece, 680

Which caused thy death, our bulwark! Thee we mourn

With grief perpetual, nor the death lament

Of Peleus' son, Achilles, more than thine.

Yet none is blameable; Jove evermore

With bitt' rest hate pursued Achaia's host,

And he ordain'd thy death. Hero! approach,

That thou may'st hear the words with which I seek

To sooth thee; let thy long displeasure cease!

Quell all resentment in thy gen'rous breast!

I spake; nought answer'd he, but sullen join'd 690

His fellow-ghosts; yet, angry as he was,

I had prevail'd even on him to speak,

Or had, at least, accosted him again,

But that my bosom teem'd with strong desire

Urgent, to see yet others of the dead.

There saw I Minos, offspring famed of Jove;

His golden sceptre in his hand, he sat

Judge of the dead; they, pleading each in turn,

His cause, some stood, some sat, filling the house

Whose spacious folding-gates are never closed. 700

Orion next, huge ghost, engaged my view,

Droves urging o'er the grassy mead, of beasts

Which he had slain, himself, on the wild hills,

With strong club arm'd of ever-during brass.

There also Tityus on the ground I saw

Extended, offspring of the glorious earth;

Nine acres he o'erspread, and, at his side

Station'd, two vultures on his liver prey'd,

Scooping his entrails; nor sufficed his hands

To fray them thence; for he had sought to force 710

Latona, illustrious concubine of Jove,

What time the Goddess journey'd o'er the rocks

Of Pytho into pleasant Panopeus.

Next, suff'ring grievous torments, I beheld

Tantalus; in a pool he stood, his chin

Wash'd by the wave; thirst-parch'd he seem'd, but found

Nought to assuage his thirst; for when he bow'd

His hoary head, ardent to quaff, the flood

Vanish'd absorb'd, and, at his feet, adust
 The soil appear'd, dried, instant, by the Gods. 720
 Tall trees, fruit-laden, with inflected heads
 Stoop'd to him, pomegranates, apples bright,
 The luscious fig, and unctuous olive smooth;
 Which when with sudden grasp he would have seized,
 Winds hurl'd them high into the dusky clouds.
 There, too, the hard-task'd Sisyphus I saw,
 Thrusting before him, strenuous, a vast rock.
 With hands and feet struggling, he shoved the stone
 Up to a hill-top; but the steep well-nigh
 Vanquish'd, by some great force repulsed, the mass 730
 Rush'd again, obstinate, down to the plain.
 Again, stretch'd prone, severe he toiled, the sweat
 Bathed all his weary limbs, and his head reek'd.
 The might of Hercules I, next, survey'd;
 His semblance; for himself their banquet shares
 With the Immortal Gods, and in his arms
 Enfolds neat-footed Hebe, daughter fair
 Of Jove, and of his golden-sandal'd spouse.
 Around him, clamorous as birds, the dead
 Swarm'd turbulent; he, gloomy-brow'd as night, 740
 With uncased bow and arrow on the string
 Peer'd terrible from side to side, as one
 Ever in act to shoot; a dreadful belt
 He bore athwart his bosom, thong'd with gold.
 There, broider'd shone many a stupendous form,
 Bears, wild boars, lions with fire-flashing eyes,
 Fierce combats, battles, bloodshed, homicide.
 The artist, author of that belt, none such
 Before, produced, or after. Me his eye
 No sooner mark'd, than knowing me, in words 750
 By sorrow quick suggested, he began.
 Laertes' noble son, for wiles renown'd!
 Ah, hapless Hero! thou art, doubtless, charged,
 Thou also, with some arduous labour, such
 As in the realms of day I once endured.
 Son was I of Saturnian Jove, yet woes
 Immense sustain'd, subjected to a King
 Inferior far to me, whose harsh commands
 Enjoin'd me many a terrible exploit.
 He even bade me on a time lead hence 760
 The dog, that task believing above all
 Impracticable; yet from Ades him
 I dragg'd reluctant into light, by aid

Of Hermes, and of Pallas azure-eyed.
So saying, he penetrated deep again
The abode of Pluto; but I still unmoved
There stood expecting, curious, other shades
To see of Heroes in old time deceased.
And now, more ancient worthies still, and whom
I wish'd, I had beheld, Pirithoüs ⁷⁷⁰
And Theseus, glorious progeny of Gods,
But nations, first, numberless of the dead
Came shrieking hideous; me pale horror seized,
Lest awful Proserpine should thither send
The Gorgon-head from Ades, sight abhorr'd!
I, therefore, hasting to the vessel, bade
My crew embark, and cast the hawsers loose.
They, quick embarking, on the benches sat.
Down the Oceanus the current bore
My galley, winning, at the first, her way ⁷⁸⁰
With oars, then, wafted by propitious gales.

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Key Passages from ‘The Odyssey’

Book II

Few match their fathers. Any tongue can tell
The more are worse: yea, almost none their sires excel.

Book II, lines 276–7 (Worsley).

Book III

Telemachus, thine own mind will conceive
Somewhat, and other will a god suggest.

Book III, lines 26–7 (Worsley).

Book IV

Nor can I not bewail one fall’n in death severe.
'Tis the sole boon to wretched mortals given,
The lock to sever and the tear to shed.

Book IV, line 195 (Worsley).

Book VI

Since nought is lovelier on the earth than this,
When in the house one-minded to the last
Dwell man and wife — a pain to foes, I wis,
And joy to friends — but most themselves know their own bliss.

Book VI, lines 182–5 (Worsley).

Zeus both to good and evil doth divide
Wealth as he listeth.

Book VI, line 188 (Worsley).

The best thing in the world
being a strong house held in serenity
where man and wife agree.

Book VI, lines 182–4 (translated by Robert Fitzgerald).

Book VII

Nothing more shameless is than Appetite,
Who still, whatever anguish load our breast,
Makes us remember in our own despite
Both food and drink.

Book VII, lines 216–8 (Worsley).

Book VIII

Not all fair gifts to all doth God divide,
Eloquence, beauty, and a noble heart.

Book VIII, lines 167–8 (Worsley).

Variant: We cannot all hope to combine the pleasing qualities of
good looks, brains, and eloquence.

Now mark how evil-workers thrive not well.
The swift is overtaken of the slow.
Ares, the fleetest that on high doth dwell,
Is by Hephaestus, who doth limping go,
Caught with shrewd cunning, and doth forfeit owe.

Book VIII, lines 329–331 (Worsley).

A rogue's word was ever found
Poor voucher.

Book VIII, line 351 (Worsley).

Book IX

More than all pleasures that were ever made
Parents and fatherland our life still bless.
Though we rich home in a strange land possess,
Still the old memories about us cling.

Book IX, lines 34–6 (Worsley).

Book X

The fleeting shadows of the dead.

Book X, line 521 (translated by G. A. Schomberg).

Book XI

His cold remains all naked to the sky,
On distant shores unwept, unburied lie.

Book XI, lines 72–3 (Pope).

No more are women to be trusted now.

Book XI, line 456 (Worsley).

Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear
A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,
Than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead.

Book XI, lines 489–492 (Pope).

The enormous weight
Back to the nether plain rolled tumbling down.

Book XI, line 598 (Worsley).

Book XII

Friends, we are not in dangers all unlearned.

Book XII, line 209 (Worsley).

Most grievous of all deaths it is to die of hunger.

Book XII, line 343; translation cited in T. B. Harbottle, *Dictionary of Quotations* (1897), .

I'd sooner die outright, beneath the waves o'erwhelmed,
Than on this desert island slowly waste away.

Book XII, lines 351–2 (Worsley); translation reported in Harbottle's *Dictionary of Quotations* (1897), .

The wordy tale, once told, were hard to tell again.

Book XII, lines 453–4 (Worsley).

Book XIV

O friend, I dare not, though a worse man sought
These doors, a stranger use discourteously.
All strangers and all poor by Zeus are brought;
Sweet is our gift, yet small.

Book XIV, lines 56–9 (Worsley).

I speak for glory, since by wine made bold
Often to singing even the wise will fall,
Light laughter and the dance, nor can withhold
Words that in sooth were better far untold.

Book XIV, lines 463–6 (Worsley).

Book XV

Watch, lest in thy despite
Some fair possession from thy home he get:
Since, well thou knowest, a woman's soul is set
His house to prosper whom she chance to wed.
Linked to another she discards all debt
Due to the children of her former bed,
Nor thinks at all of him, her dear-loved husband dead.

Book XV, lines 19–23 (Worsley).

He to my mind an equal sin doth show
Who, when a guest would linger, hints good-bye,
And who, if one desire to part, says no.

Book XV, lines 72–3 (Worsley).

Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.

Book XV, line 74 (Pope).

For now the nights move slowly and scarce end;
Yea, there is room for slumber, and to keep
Watch, and a listening ear to sweet words lend.
Needs not at all unto thy couch to creep
For some while yet. Harm comes from even too much sleep.

Book XV, lines 392–4 (Worsley).

But we two, drinking wine and eating bread,
Will charm our dear hearts each with other's pain.
Past sorrow, and the tears a man hath shed,
Who far hath wandered over earth and main,
Yield comfort.

Book XV, lines 398–401 (Worsley).

Book XVII

See how God ever like with like doth pair,
And still the worthless doth the worthless lead!

Book XVII, lines 217–8 (Worsley).

Bad herdsmen waste the flocks which thou hast left behind.

Book XVII, line 246 (Worsley).

Servants, when their lords no longer sway,
Their minds no more to righteous courses bend.

Book XVII, lines 320–1 (Worsley).

Half that man's virtue doth Zeus take away,
Whom he surrenders to the servile day.

Book XVII, lines 322–3 (Worsley).

Shame is no comrade for the poor, I weet.

Book XVII, line 347 (Worsley).

Light is their reckoning, no remorse they feel,
Food not their own to lavish from so brave a meal.

Book XVII, lines 451–2 (Worsley).

If indeed there be a god in heaven.

Book XVII, line 484 (translated by S. H. Butcher, with Andrew Lang).

Book XVIII

Earth than a man no poorer feebler thing
Rears, of all creatures that here breathe and move.

Book XVIII, lines 130–1 (Worsley).

Receive in silence what the Father brings.

Book XVIII, line 142 (Worsley).

Book XIX

Steel itself oft lures a man to fight.

Book XIX, line 13 (Worsley).

Two diverse gates there are of bodiless dreams,
These of sawn ivory, and those of horn.
Such dreams as issue where the ivory gleams
Fly without fate, and turn our hopes to scorn.
But dreams which issue through the burnished horn,
What man soe'er beholds them on his bed,
These work with virtue and of truth are born.

Book XIX, lines 563–8 (Worsley).

Yet not for ever void of sleep remains
Man; for the gods by rule of life dispense
Sleep on all mortals whom the earth maintains.

Book XIX, lines 592–4 (Worsley).

Book XX

Bear up, my soul, a little longer yet;
A little longer to thy purpose cling!

Book XX, line 18 (Worsley).

Then the gods send us their refreshful sleep,
Which good and evil from our mind doth sweep.

Book XX, lines 85–6 (Worsley).

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Sappho

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Hymn to Aphrodite

Translated by Edwin Marion Cox

Shimmering-throned immortal Aphrodite,
Daughter of Zeus, Enchantress, I implore thee,
Spare me, O queen, this agony and anguish,
Crush not my spirit.

Whenever before thou hast hearkened to me —
To my voice calling to thee in the distance,
And heeding, thou hast come, leaving thy father's
Golden dominions,
With chariot yoked to thy fleet-winged coursers,
Fluttering swift pinions over earth's darkness,
And bringing thee through the infinite, gliding
Downwards from heaven,
Then, soon they arrived and thou, blessed goddess,
With divine countenance smiling, didst ask me
What new woe had befallen me now and why,
Thus I had called thee.

What in my mad heart was my greatest desire,
Who was it now that must feel my allurements,
Who was the fair one that must be persuaded,
Who wronged thee Sappho?

For if now she flees, quickly she shall follow
And if she spurns gifts, soon shall she offer them
Yea, if she knows not love, soon shall she feel it
Even reluctant.

Come then, I pray, grant me surcease from sorrow,
Drive away care, I beseech thee, O goddess
Fulfil for me what I yearn to accomplish,
Be thou my ally.

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Third Poem: My Beloved

A troop of horse, the serried ranks of marchers,
A noble fleet, some think these of all on earth
Most beautiful. For me naught else regarding
Is my beloved.

To understand this is for all most simple,
For thus gazing much on mortal perfection
And knowing already what life could give her,
Him chose fair Helen,
Him the betrayer of Ilium's honour.

Then recked she not of adored child or parent,
But yielded to love, and forced by her passion,
Dared Fate in exile.

Thus quickly is bent the will of that woman
To whom things near and dear seem to be nothing.
So mightest thou fail, My Anactoria,
If she were with you.

She whose gentle footfall and radiant face
Hold the power to charm more than a vision
Of chariots and the mail-clad battalions
Of Lydia's army.

So must we learn in a world made as this one
Man can never attain his greatest desire,
But must pray for what good fortune Fate holdeth,
Never unmindful.

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Virgil



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Eclogue I

MELIBOEUS TITYRUS

MELIBOEUS

You, Tityrus, 'neath a broad beech-canopy
Reclining, on the slender oat rehearse
Your silvan ditties: I from my sweet fields,
And home's familiar bounds, even now depart.
Exiled from home am I; while, Tityrus, you
Sit careless in the shade, and, at your call,
"Fair Amaryllis" bid the woods resound.

TITYRUS

O Meliboeus, 'twas a god vouchsafed
This ease to us, for him a god will I
Deem ever, and from my folds a tender lamb
Oft with its life-blood shall his altar stain.
His gift it is that, as your eyes may see,
My kine may roam at large, and I myself
Play on my shepherd's pipe what songs I will.

MELIBOEUS

I grudge you not the boon, but marvel more,
Such wide confusion fills the country-side.
See, sick at heart I drive my she-goats on,
And this one, O my Tityrus, scarce can lead:
For 'mid the hazel-thicket here but now
She dropped her new-yeaned twins on the bare flint,
Hope of the flock- an ill, I mind me well,
Which many a time, but for my blinded sense,
The thunder-stricken oak foretold, oft too
From hollow trunk the raven's ominous cry.
But who this god of yours? Come, Tityrus, tell.

TITYRUS

The city, Meliboeus, they call Rome,
I, simpleton, deemed like this town of ours,
Whereto we shepherds oft are wont to drive
The younglings of the flock: so too I knew
Whelps to resemble dogs, and kids their dams,
Comparing small with great; but this as far
Above all other cities rears her head
As cypress above pliant osier towers.

MELIBOEUS

And what so potent cause took you to Rome?

TITYRUS

Freedom, which, though belated, cast at length
Her eyes upon the sluggard, when my beard
'Gan whiter fall beneath the barber's blade-
Cast eyes, I say, and, though long tarrying, came,
Now when, from Galatea's yoke released,
I serve but Amaryllis: for I will own,
While Galatea reigned over me, I had
No hope of freedom, and no thought to save.
Though many a victim from my folds went forth,
Or rich cheese pressed for the unthankful town,
Never with laden hands returned I home.

MELIBOEUS

I used to wonder, Amaryllis, why
You cried to heaven so sadly, and for whom
You left the apples hanging on the trees;
'Twas Tityrus was away. Why, Tityrus,
The very pines, the very water-springs,
The very vineyards, cried aloud for you.

TITYRUS

What could I do? how else from bonds be freed,
Or elsewhere find gods so nigh to aid?
There, Meliboeus, I saw that youth to whom
Yearly for twice six days my altars smoke.
There instant answer gave he to my suit,
"Feed, as before, your kine, boys, rear your bulls."

MELIBOEUS

So in old age, you happy man, your fields
Will still be yours, and ample for your need!
Though, with bare stones o'erspread, the pastures all
Be choked with rushy mire, your ewes with young
By no strange fodder will be tried, nor hurt
Through taint contagious of a neighbouring flock.
Happy old man, who 'mid familiar streams
And hallowed springs, will court the cooling shade!
Here, as of old, your neighbour's bordering hedge,
That feasts with willow-flower the Hybla bees,
Shall oft with gentle murmur lull to sleep,
While the leaf-dresser beneath some tall rock

Uplifts his song, nor cease their cooings hoarse
The wood-pigeons that are your heart's delight,
Nor doves their moaning in the elm-tree top.

TITYRUS

Sooner shall light stags, therefore, feed in air,
The seas their fish leave naked on the strand,
Germans and Parthians shift their natural bounds,
And these the Arar, those the Tigris drink,
Than from my heart his face and memory fade.

MELIBOEUS

But we far hence, to burning Libya some,
Some to the Scythian steppes, or thy swift flood,
Cretan Oaxes, now must wend our way,
Or Britain, from the whole world sundered far.
Ah! shall I ever in aftertime behold
My native bounds- see many a harvest hence
With ravished eyes the lowly turf-roofed cot
Where I was king? These fallows, trimmed so fair,
Some brutal soldier will possess these fields
An alien master. Ah! to what a pass
Has civil discord brought our hapless folk!
For such as these, then, were our furrows sown!
Now, Meliboeus, graft your pears, now set
Your vines in order! Go, once happy flock,
My she-goats, go. Never again shall I,
Stretched in green cave, behold you from afar
Hang from the bushy rock; my songs are sung;
Never again will you, with me to tend,
On clover-flower, or bitter willows, browse.

TITYRUS

Yet here, this night, you might repose with me,
On green leaves pillowed: apples ripe have I,
Soft chestnuts, and of curdled milk enow.
And, see, the farm-roof chimneys smoke afar,
And from the hills the shadows lengthening fall!

Nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arva.

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Eclogue III

MENALCAS DAMOETAS PALAEMON

MENALCAS

Who owns the flock, Damoetas? Meliboeus?

DAMOETAS

Nay, they are Aegon's sheep, of late by him
Committed to my care.

MENALCAS

O every way

Unhappy sheep, unhappy flock! while he
Still courts Neaera, fearing lest her choice
Should fall on me, this hireling shepherd here
Wrings hourly twice their udders, from the flock
Filching the life-juice, from the lambs their milk.

DAMOETAS

Hold! not so ready with your jeers at men!
We know who once, and in what shrine with you-
The he-goats looked aside- the light nymphs laughed-

MENALCAS

Ay, then, I warrant, when they saw me slash
Micon's young vines and trees with spiteful hook.

DAMOETAS

Or here by these old beeches, when you broke
The bow and arrows of Damon; for you chafed
When first you saw them given to the boy,
Cross-grained Menalcas, ay, and had you not
Done him some mischief, would have chafed to death.

MENALCAS

With thieves so daring, what can masters do?
Did I not see you, rogue, in ambush lie
For Damon's goat, while loud Lycisca barked?
And when I cried, "Where is he off to now?
Gather your flock together, Tityrus,"
You hid behind the sedges.

DAMOETAS

Well, was he
Whom I had conquered still to keep the goat.
Which in the piping-match my pipe had won!
You may not know it, but the goat was mine.

MENALCAS

You out-pipe him? when had you ever pipe
Wax-welded? in the cross-ways used you not
On grating straw some miserable tune
To mangle?

DAMOETAS

Well, then, shall we try our skill
Each against each in turn? Lest you be loth,
I pledge this heifer; every day she comes
Twice to the milking-pail, and feeds withal
Two young ones at her udder: say you now
What you will stake upon the match with me.

MENALCAS

Naught from the flock I'll venture, for at home
I have a father and a step-dame harsh,
And twice a day both reckon up the flock,
And one withal the kids. But I will stake,
Seeing you are so mad, what you yourself
Will own more priceless far- two beechen cups
By the divine art of Alcimedon
Wrought and embossed, whereon a limber vine,
Wreathed round them by the graver's facile tool,
Twines over clustering ivy-berries pale.
Two figures, one Conon, in the midst he set,
And one- how call you him, who with his wand
Marked out for all men the whole round of heaven,
That they who reap, or stoop behind the plough,
Might know their several seasons? Nor as yet
Have I set lip to them, but lay them by.

DAMOETAS

For me too wrought the same Alcimedon
A pair of cups, and round the handles wreathed
Pliant acanthus, Orpheus in the midst,
The forests following in his wake; nor yet

Have I set lip to them, but lay them by.
Matched with a heifer, who would prate of cups?

MENALCAS

You shall not balk me now; where'er you bid,
I shall be with you; only let us have
For auditor- or see, to serve our turn,
Yonder Palaemon comes! In singing-bouts
I'll see you play the challenger no more.

DAMOETAS

Out then with what you have; I shall not shrink,
Nor budge for any man: only do you,
Neighbour Palaemon, with your whole heart's skill-
For it is no slight matter-play your part.

PALAEMON

Say on then, since on the greensward we sit,
And now is burgeoning both field and tree;
Now is the forest green, and now the year
At fairest. Do you first, Damoetas, sing,
Then you, Menalcas, in alternate strain:
Alternate strains are to the Muses dear.

DAMOETAS

"From Jove the Muse began; Jove filleth all,
Makes the earth fruitful, for my songs hath care."

MENALCAS

"Me Phoebus loves; for Phoebus his own gifts,
Bays and sweet-blushing hyacinths, I keep."

DAMOETAS

"Gay Galatea throws an apple at me,
Then hies to the willows, hoping to be seen."

MENALCAS

"My dear Amyntas comes unasked to me;
Not Delia to my dogs is better known."

DAMOETAS

"Gifts for my love I've found; mine eyes have marked
Where the wood-pigeons build their airy nests."

MENALCAS

“Ten golden apples have I sent my boy,
All that I could, to-morrow as many more.”

DAMOETAS

“What words to me, and uttered O how oft,
Hath Galatea spoke! waft some of them,
Ye winds, I pray you, for the gods to hear.”

MENALCAS

“It profiteth me naught, Amyntas mine,
That in your very heart you spurn me not,
If, while you hunt the boar, I guard the nets.”

DAMOETAS

“Prithee, Iollas, for my birthday guest
Send me your Phyllis; when for the young crops
I slay my heifer, you yourself shall come.”

MENALCAS

“I am all hers; she wept to see me go,
And, lingering on the word, ‘farewell’ she said,
‘My beautiful Iollas, fare you well.’”

DAMOETAS

“Fell as the wolf is to the folded flock,
Rain to ripe corn, Sirocco to the trees,
The wrath of Amaryllis is to me.”

MENALCAS

“As moisture to the corn, to ewes with young
Lithe willow, as arbut to the yeanling kids,
So sweet Amyntas, and none else, to me.”

DAMOETAS

“My Muse, although she be but country-bred,
Is loved by Pollio: O Pierian Maids,
Pray you, a heifer for your reader feed!”

MENALCAS

“Pollio himself too doth new verses make:
Feed ye a bull now ripe to butt with horn,
And scatter with his hooves the flying sand.”

DAMOETAS

“Who loves thee, Pollio, may he thither come
Where thee he joys beholding; ay, for him
Let honey flow, the thorn-bush spices bear.”

MENALCAS

“Who hates not Bavius, let him also love
Thy songs, O Maevius, ay, and therewithal
Yoke foxes to his car, and he-goats milk.”

DAMOETAS

“You, picking flowers and strawberries that grow
So near the ground, fly hence, boys, get you gone!
There’s a cold adder lurking in the grass.”

MENALCAS

“Forbear, my sheep, to tread too near the brink;
Yon bank is ill to trust to; even now
The ram himself, see, dries his dripping fleece!”

DAMOETAS

“Back with the she-goats, Tityrus, grazing there
So near the river! I, when time shall serve,
Will take them all, and wash them in the pool.”

MENALCAS

“Boys, get your sheep together; if the heat,
As late it did, forestall us with the milk,
Vainly the dried-up udders shall we wring.”

DAMOETAS

“How lean my bull amid the fattening vetch!
Alack! alack! for herdsman and for herd!
It is the self-same love that wastes us both.”

MENALCAS

“These truly- nor is even love the cause-
Scarce have the flesh to keep their bones together
Some evil eye my lambkins hath bewitched.”

DAMOETAS

“Say in what clime- and you shall be withal
My great Apollo- the whole breadth of heaven
Opens no wider than three ells to view.”

MENALCAS

“Say in what country grow such flowers as bear
The names of kings upon their petals writ,
And you shall have fair Phyllis for your own.”

PALAEEMON

Not mine betwixt such rivals to decide:
You well deserve the heifer, so does he,
With all who either fear the sweets of love,
Or taste its bitterness. Now, boys, shut off
The sluices, for the fields have drunk their fill.

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Eclogue X

GALLUS

This now, the very latest of my toils,
Vouchsafe me, Arethusa! needs must I
Sing a brief song to Gallus- brief, but yet
Such as Lycoris' self may fitly read.
Who would not sing for Gallus? So, when thou
Beneath Sicanian billows glidest on,
May Doris blend no bitter wave with thine,
Begin! The love of Gallus be our theme,
And the shrewd pangs he suffered, while, hard by,
The flat-nosed she-goats browse the tender brush.
We sing not to deaf ears; no word of ours
But the woods echo it. What groves or lawns
Held you, ye Dryad-maidens, when for love-
Love all unworthy of a loss so dear-
Gallus lay dying? for neither did the slopes
Of Pindus or Parnassus stay you then,
No, nor Aonian Aganippe. Him
Even the laurels and the tamarisks wept;
For him, outstretched beneath a lonely rock,
Wept pine-clad Maenalus, and the flinty crags
Of cold Lycaeus. The sheep too stood around-
Of us they feel no shame, poet divine;
Nor of the flock be thou ashamed: even fair
Adonis by the rivers fed his sheep-
Came shepherd too, and swine-herd footing slow,
And, from the winter-acorns dripping-wet
Menalcas. All with one accord exclaim:
"From whence this love of thine?" Apollo came;
"Gallus, art mad?" he cried, "thy bosom's care
Another love is following." Therewithal
Silvanus came, with rural honours crowned;
The flowering fennels and tall lilies shook
Before him. Yea, and our own eyes beheld
Pan, god of Arcady, with blood-red juice
Of the elder-berry, and with vermilion, dyed.
"Wilt ever make an end?" quoth he, "behold
Love recks not aught of it: his heart no more
With tears is sated than with streams the grass,
Bees with the cytissus, or goats with leaves."
"Yet will ye sing, Arcadians, of my woes

Upon your mountains," sadly he replied-
"Arcadians, that alone have skill to sing.
O then how softly would my ashes rest,
If of my love, one day, your flutes should tell!
And would that I, of your own fellowship,
Or dresser of the ripening grape had been,
Or guardian of the flock! for surely then,
Let Phyllis, or Amyntas, or who else,
Bewitch me- what if swart Amyntas be?
Dark is the violet, dark the hyacinth-
Among the willows, 'neath the limber vine,
Reclining would my love have lain with me,
Phyllis plucked garlands, or Amyntas sung.
Here are cool springs, soft mead and grove, Lycoris;
Here might our lives with time have worn away.
But me mad love of the stern war-god holds
Armed amid weapons and opposing foes.
Whilst thou- Ah! might I but believe it not!-
Alone without me, and from home afar,
Look'st upon Alpine snows and frozen Rhine.
Ah! may the frost not hurt thee, may the sharp
And jagged ice not wound thy tender feet!
I will depart, re-tune the songs I framed
In verse Chalcidian to the oaten reed
Of the Sicilian swain. Resolved am I
In the woods, rather, with wild beasts to couch,
And bear my doom, and character my love
Upon the tender tree-trunks: they will grow,
And you, my love, grow with them. And meanwhile
I with the Nymphs will haunt Mount Maenalus,
Or hunt the keen wild boar. No frost so cold
But I will hem with hounds thy forest-glades,
Parthenius. Even now, methinks, I range
O'er rocks, through echoing groves, and joy to launch
Cydonian arrows from a Parthian bow.-
As if my madness could find healing thus,
Or that god soften at a mortal's grief!
Now neither Hamadryads, no, nor songs
Delight me more: ye woods, away with you!
No pangs of ours can change him; not though we
In the mid-frost should drink of Hebrus' stream,
And in wet winters face Sithonian snows,
Or, when the bark of the tall elm-tree bole
Of drought is dying, should, under Cancer's Sign,

In Aethiopian deserts drive our flocks.
Love conquers all things; yield we too to love!”

These songs, Pierian Maids, shall it suffice
Your poet to have sung, the while he sat,
And of slim mallow wove a basket fine:
To Gallus ye will magnify their worth,
Gallus, for whom my love grows hour by hour,
As the green alder shoots in early Spring.
Come, let us rise: the shade is wont to be
Baneful to singers; baneful is the shade
Cast by the juniper, crops sicken too
In shade. Now homeward, having fed your fill —
Eve’s star is rising-go, my she-goats, go.

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Georgic I

Translated by J. B. Greenough

What makes the cornfield smile; beneath what star
Maecenas, it is meet to turn the sod
Or marry elm with vine; how tend the steer;
What pains for cattle-keeping, or what proof
Of patient trial serves for thrifty bees;-
Such are my themes.
O universal lights
Most glorious! ye that lead the gliding year
Along the sky, Liber and Ceres mild,
If by your bounty holpen earth once changed
Chaonian acorn for the plump wheat-ear,
And mingled with the grape, your new-found gift,
The draughts of Achelous; and ye Fauns
To rustics ever kind, come foot it, Fauns
And Dryad-maids together; your gifts I sing.
And thou, for whose delight the war-horse first
Sprang from earth's womb at thy great trident's stroke,
Neptune; and haunter of the groves, for whom
Three hundred snow-white heifers browse the brakes,
The fertile brakes of Ceos; and clothed in power,
Thy native forest and Lycean lawns,
Pan, shepherd-god, forsaking, as the love
Of thine own Maenalus constrains thee, hear
And help, O lord of Tegea! And thou, too,
Minerva, from whose hand the olive sprung;
And boy-discoverer of the curved plough;
And, bearing a young cypress root-uptorn,
Silvanus, and Gods all and Goddesses,
Who make the fields your care, both ye who nurse
The tender unsown increase, and from heaven
Shed on man's sowing the riches of your rain:
And thou, even thou, of whom we know not yet
What mansion of the skies shall hold thee soon,
Whether to watch o'er cities be thy will,
Great Caesar, and to take the earth in charge,
That so the mighty world may welcome thee
Lord of her increase, master of her times,
Binding thy mother's myrtle round thy brow,
Or as the boundless ocean's God thou come,
Sole dread of seamen, till far Thule bow

Before thee, and Tethys win thee to her son
With all her waves for dower; or as a star
Lend thy fresh beams our lagging months to cheer,
Where 'twixt the Maid and those pursuing Claws
A space is opening; see! red Scorpio's self
His arms draws in, yea, and hath left thee more
Than thy full meed of heaven: be what thou wilt-
For neither Tartarus hopes to call thee king,
Nor may so dire a lust of sovereignty
E'er light upon thee, howso Greece admire
Elysium's fields, and Proserpine not heed
Her mother's voice entreating to return-
Vouchsafe a prosperous voyage, and smile on this
My bold endeavour, and pitying, even as I,
These poor way-wildered swains, at once begin,
Grow timely used unto the voice of prayer.
In early spring-tide, when the icy drip
Melts from the mountains hoar, and Zephyr's breath
Unbinds the crumbling clod, even then 'tis time;
Press deep your plough behind the groaning ox,
And teach the furrow-burnished share to shine.
That land the craving farmer's prayer fulfils,
Which twice the sunshine, twice the frost has felt;
Ay, that's the land whose boundless harvest-crops
Burst, see! the barns.
But ere our metal cleave
An unknown surface, heed we to forelearn
The winds and varying temper of the sky,
The lineal tilth and habits of the spot,
What every region yields, and what denies.
Here blithelier springs the corn, and here the grape,
There earth is green with tender growth of trees
And grass unbidden. See how from Tmolus comes
The saffron's fragrance, ivory from Ind,
From Saba's weakling sons their frankincense,
Iron from the naked Chalybs, castor rank
From Pontus, from Epirus the prize-palms
O' the mares of Elis.
Such the eternal bond
And such the laws by Nature's hand imposed
On clime and clime, e'er since the primal dawn
When old Deucalion on the unpeopled earth
Cast stones, whence men, a flinty race, were reared.
Up then! if fat the soil, let sturdy bulls
Upturn it from the year's first opening months,

And let the clods lie bare till baked to dust
By the ripe suns of summer; but if the earth
Less fruitful just ere Arcturus rise
With shallower trench uptilt it- 'twill suffice;
There, lest weeds choke the crop's luxuriance, here,
Lest the scant moisture fail the barren sand.
Then thou shalt suffer in alternate years
The new-reaped fields to rest, and on the plain
A crust of sloth to harden; or, when stars
Are changed in heaven, there sow the golden grain
Where erst, luxuriant with its quivering pod,
Pulse, or the slender vetch-crop, thou hast cleared,
And lupin sour, whose brittle stalks arise,
A hurtling forest. For the plain is parched
By flax-crop, parched by oats, by poppies parched
In Lethe-slumber drenched. Nathless by change
The travailing earth is lightened, but stint not
With refuse rich to soak the thirsty soil,
And shower foul ashes o'er the exhausted fields.
Thus by rotation like repose is gained,
Nor earth meanwhile unearned and thankless left.
Oft, too, 'twill boot to fire the naked fields,
And the light stubble burn with crackling flames;
Whether that earth therefrom some hidden strength
And fattening food derives, or that the fire
Bakes every blemish out, and sweats away
Each useless humour, or that the heat unlocks
New passages and secret pores, whereby
Their life-juice to the tender blades may win;
Or that it hardens more and helps to bind
The gaping veins, lest penetrating showers,
Or fierce sun's ravening might, or searching blast
Of the keen north should sear them. Well, I wot,
He serves the fields who with his harrow breaks
The sluggish clods, and hurdles osier-twined
Hales o'er them; from the far Olympian height
Him golden Ceres not in vain regards;
And he, who having ploughed the fallow plain
And heaved its furrowy ridges, turns once more
Cross-wise his shattering share, with stroke on stroke
The earth assails, and makes the field his thrall.
Pray for wet summers and for winters fine,
Ye husbandmen; in winter's dust the crops
Exceedingly rejoice, the field hath joy;
No tilth makes Mysia lift her head so high,

Nor Gargarus his own harvests so admire.
Why tell of him, who, having launched his seed,
Sets on for close encounter, and rakes smooth
The dry dust hillocks, then on the tender corn
Lets in the flood, whose waters follow fain;
And when the parched field quivers, and all the blades
Are dying, from the brow of its hill-bed,
See! see! he lures the runnel; down it falls,
Waking hoarse murmurs o'er the polished stones,
And with its bubblings slakes the thirsty fields?
Or why of him, who lest the heavy ears
O'erweigh the stalk, while yet in tender blade
Feeds down the crop's luxuriance, when its growth
First tops the furrows? Why of him who drains
The marsh-land's gathered ooze through soaking sand,
Chiefly what time in treacherous moons a stream
Goes out in spate, and with its coat of slime
Holds all the country, whence the hollow dykes
Sweat steaming vapour?
But no whit the more
For all expedients tried and travail borne
By man and beast in turning oft the soil,
Do greedy goose and Strymon-haunting cranes
And succory's bitter fibres cease to harm,
Or shade not injure. The great Sire himself
No easy road to husbandry assigned,
And first was he by human skill to rouse
The slumbering glebe, whetting the minds of men
With care on care, nor suffering realm of his
In drowsy sloth to stagnate. Before Jove
Fields knew no taming hand of husbandmen;
To mark the plain or mete with boundary-line-
Even this was impious; for the common stock
They gathered, and the earth of her own will
All things more freely, no man bidding, bore.
He to black serpents gave their venom-bane,
And bade the wolf go prowl, and ocean toss;
Shook from the leaves their honey, put fire away,
And curbed the random rivers running wine,
That use by gradual dint of thought on thought
Might forge the various arts, with furrow's help
The corn-blade win, and strike out hidden fire
From the flint's heart. Then first the streams were ware
Of hollowed alder-hulls: the sailor then
Their names and numbers gave to star and star,

Pleiads and Hyads, and Lycaon's child
Bright Arctos; how with nooses then was found
To catch wild beasts, and cozen them with lime,
And hem with hounds the mighty forest-glades.
Soon one with hand-net scourges the broad stream,
Probing its depths, one drags his dripping toils
Along the main; then iron's unbending might,
And shrieking saw-blade,- for the men of old
With wedges went to cleave the splintering log;-
Then divers arts arose; toil conquered all,
Remorseless toil, and poverty's shrewd push
In times of hardship. Ceres was the first
Set mortals on with tools to turn the sod,
When now the awful groves 'gan fail to bear
Acorns and arbutes, and her wonted food
Dodona gave no more. Soon, too, the corn
Gat sorrow's increase, that an evil blight
Ate up the stalks, and thistle reared his spines
An idler in the fields; the crops die down;
Upsprings instead a shaggy growth of burrs
And caltrops; and amid the corn-fields trim
Unfruitful darnel and wild oats have sway.
Wherefore, unless thou shalt with ceaseless rake
The weeds pursue, with shouting scare the birds,
Prune with thy hook the dark field's matted shade,
Pray down the showers, all vainly thou shalt eye,
Alack! thy neighbour's heaped-up harvest-mow,
And in the greenwood from a shaken oak
Seek solace for thine hunger.
Now to tell
The sturdy rustics' weapons, what they are,
Without which, neither can be sown nor reared
The fruits of harvest; first the bent plough's share
And heavy timber, and slow-lumbering wains
Of the Eleusinian mother, threshing-sleighs
And drags, and harrows with their crushing weight;
Then the cheap wicker-ware of Celeus old,
Hurdles of arbute, and thy mystic fan,
Iacchus; which, full tale, long ere the time
Thou must with heed lay by, if thee await
Not all unearned the country's crown divine.
While yet within the woods, the elm is tamed
And bowed with mighty force to form the stock,
And take the plough's curved shape, then nigh the root
A pole eight feet projecting, earth-boards twain,

And share-beam with its double back they fix.
For yoke is early hewn a linden light,
And a tall beech for handle, from behind
To turn the car at lowest: then o'er the hearth
The wood they hang till the smoke knows it well.
Many the precepts of the men of old
I can recount thee, so thou start not back,
And such slight cares to learn not weary thee.
And this among the first: thy threshing-floor
With ponderous roller must be levelled smooth,
And wrought by hand, and fixed with binding chalk,
Lest weeds arise, or dust a passage win
Splitting the surface, then a thousand plagues
Make sport of it: oft builds the tiny mouse
Her home, and plants her granary, underground,
Or burrow for their bed the purblind moles,
Or toad is found in hollows, and all the swarm
Of earth's unsightly creatures; or a huge
Corn-heap the weevil plunders, and the ant,
Fearful of coming age and penury.
Mark too, what time the walnut in the woods
With ample bloom shall clothe her, and bow down
Her odorous branches, if the fruit prevail,
Like store of grain will follow, and there shall come
A mighty winnowing-time with mighty heat;
But if the shade with wealth of leaves abound,
Vainly your threshing-floor will bruise the stalks
Rich but in chaff. Many myself have seen
Steep, as they sow, their pulse-seeds, drenching them
With nitre and black oil-lees, that the fruit
Might swell within the treacherous pods, and they
Make speed to boil at howso small a fire.
Yet, culled with caution, proved with patient toil,
These have I seen degenerate, did not man
Put forth his hand with power, and year by year
Choose out the largest. So, by fate impelled,
Speed all things to the worse, and backward borne
Glide from us; even as who with struggling oars
Up stream scarce pulls a shallop, if he chance
His arms to slacken, lo! with headlong force
The current sweeps him down the hurrying tide.
Us too behoves Arcturus' sign observe,
And the Kids' seasons and the shining Snake,
No less than those who o'er the windy main
Borne homeward tempt the Pontic, and the jaws

Of oyster-rife Abydos. When the Scales
Now poising fair the hours of sleep and day
Give half the world to sunshine, half to shade,
Then urge your bulls, my masters; sow the plain
Even to the verge of tameless winter's showers
With barley: then, too, time it is to hide
Your flax in earth, and poppy, Ceres' joy,
Aye, more than time to bend above the plough,
While earth, yet dry, forbids not, and the clouds
Are buoyant. With the spring comes bean-sowing;
Thee, too, Lucerne, the crumbling furrows then
Receive, and millet's annual care returns,
What time the white bull with his gilded horns
Opens the year, before whose threatening front,
Routed the dog-star sinks. But if it be
For wheaten harvest and the hardy spelt,
Thou tax the soil, to corn-ears wholly given,
Let Atlas' daughters hide them in the dawn,
The Cretan star, a crown of fire, depart,
Or e'er the furrow's claim of seed thou quit,
Or haste thee to entrust the whole year's hope
To earth that would not. Many have begun
Ere Maia's star be setting; these, I trow,
Their looked-for harvest fools with empty ears.
But if the vetch and common kidney-bean
Thou'rt fain to sow, nor scorn to make thy care
Pelusiac lentil, no uncertain sign
Bootes' fall will send thee; then begin,
Pursue thy sowing till half the frosts be done.
Therefore it is the golden sun, his course
Into fixed parts dividing, rules his way
Through the twelve constellations of the world.
Five zones the heavens contain; whereof is one
Aye red with flashing sunlight, fervent aye
From fire; on either side to left and right
Are traced the utmost twain, stiff with blue ice,
And black with scowling storm-clouds, and betwixt
These and the midmost, other twain there lie,
By the Gods' grace to heart-sick mortals given,
And a path cleft between them, where might wheel
On sloping plane the system of the Signs.
And as toward Scythia and Rhipaeon heights
The world mounts upward, likewise sinks it down
Toward Libya and the south, this pole of ours
Still towering high, that other, 'neath their feet,

By dark Styx frowned on, and the abysmal shades.
Here glides the huge Snake forth with sinuous coils
'Twixt the two Bears and round them river-wise-
The Bears that fear 'neath Ocean's brim to dip.
There either, say they, reigns the eternal hush
Of night that knows no seasons, her black pall
Thick-mantling fold on fold; or thitherward
From us returning Dawn brings back the day;
And when the first breath of his panting steeds
On us the Orient flings, that hour with them
Red Vesper 'gins to trim his his 'lated fires.
Hence under doubtful skies forebode we can
The coming tempests, hence both harvest-day
And seed-time, when to smite the treacherous main
With driving oars, when launch the fair-rigged fleet,
Or in ripe hour to fell the forest-pine.
Hence, too, not idly do we watch the stars-
Their rising and their setting-and the year,
Four varying seasons to one law conformed.
If chilly showers e'er shut the farmer's door,
Much that had soon with sunshine cried for haste,
He may forestall; the ploughman batters keen
His blunted share's hard tooth, scoops from a tree
His troughs, or on the cattle stamps a brand,
Or numbers on the corn-heaps; some make sharp
The stakes and two-pronged forks, and willow-bands
Amerian for the bending vine prepare.
Now let the pliant basket plaited be
Of bramble-twigs; now set your corn to parch
Before the fire; now bruise it with the stone.
Nay even on holy days some tasks to ply
Is right and lawful: this no ban forbids,
To turn the runnel's course, fence corn-fields in,
Make springes for the birds, burn up the briars,
And plunge in wholesome stream the bleating flock.
Oft too with oil or apples plenty-cheap
The creeping ass's ribs his driver packs,
And home from town returning brings instead
A dented mill-stone or black lump of pitch.
The moon herself in various rank assigns
The days for labour lucky: fly the fifth;
Then sprang pale Orcus and the Eumenides;
Earth then in awful labour brought to light
Coeus, Iapetus, and Typhoeus fell,
And those sworn brethren banded to break down

The gates of heaven; thrice, sooth to say, they strove
Ossa on Pelion's top to heave and heap,
Aye, and on Ossa to up-roll amain
Leafy Olympus; thrice with thunderbolt
Their mountain-stair the Sire asunder smote.
Seventh after tenth is lucky both to set
The vine in earth, and take and tame the steer,
And fix the leashes to the warp; the ninth
To runagates is kinder, cross to thieves.
Many the tasks that lightlier lend themselves
In chilly night, or when the sun is young,
And Dawn bedews the world. By night 'tis best
To reap light stubble, and parched fields by night;
For nights the suppling moisture never fails.
And one will sit the long late watches out
By winter fire-light, shaping with keen blade
The torches to a point; his wife the while,
Her tedious labour soothing with a song,
Speeds the shrill comb along the warp, or else
With Vulcan's aid boils the sweet must-juice down,
And skims with leaves the quivering cauldron's wave.
But ruddy Ceres in mid heat is mown,
And in mid heat the parched ears are bruised
Upon the floor; to plough strip, strip to sow;
Winter's the lazy time for husbandmen.
In the cold season farmers wont to taste
The increase of their toil, and yield themselves
To mutual interchange of festal cheer.
Boon winter bids them, and unbinds their cares,
As laden keels, when now the port they touch,
And happy sailors crown the sterns with flowers.
Nathless then also time it is to strip
Acorns from oaks, and berries from the bay,
Olives, and bleeding myrtles, then to set
Snares for the crane, and meshes for the stag,
And hunt the long-eared hares, then pierce the doe
With whirl of hempen-thonged Balearic sling,
While snow lies deep, and streams are drifting ice.
What need to tell of autumn's storms and stars,
And wherefore men must watch, when now the day
Grows shorter, and more soft the summer's heat?
When Spring the rain-bringer comes rushing down,
Or when the beards of harvest on the plain
Bristle already, and the milky corn
On its green stalk is swelling? Many a time,

When now the farmer to his yellow fields
The reaping-hind came bringing, even in act
To lop the brittle barley stems, have I
Seen all the windy legions clash in war
Together, as to rend up far and wide
The heavy corn-crop from its lowest roots,
And toss it skyward: so might winter's flaw,
Dark-eddying, whirl light stalks and flying straws.
Oft too comes looming vast along the sky
A march of waters; mustering from above,
The clouds roll up the tempest, heaped and grim
With angry showers: down falls the height of heaven,
And with a great rain floods the smiling crops,
The oxen's labour: now the dikes fill fast,
And the void river-beds swell thunderously,
And all the panting firths of Ocean boil.
The Sire himself in midnight of the clouds
Wields with red hand the levin; through all her bulk
Earth at the hurly quakes; the beasts are fled,
And mortal hearts of every kindred sunk
In cowering terror; he with flaming brand
Athos, or Rhodope, or Ceraunian crags
Precipitates: then doubly raves the South
With shower on blinding shower, and woods and coasts
Wail fitfully beneath the mighty blast.
This fearing, mark the months and Signs of heaven,
Whither retires him Saturn's icy star,
And through what heavenly cycles wandereth
The glowing orb Cyllenian. Before all
Worship the Gods, and to great Ceres pay
Her yearly dues upon the happy sward
With sacrifice, anigh the utmost end
Of winter, and when Spring begins to smile.
Then lambs are fat, and wines are mellowest then;
Then sleep is sweet, and dark the shadows fall
Upon the mountains. Let your rustic youth
To Ceres do obeisance, one and all;
And for her pleasure thou mix honeycombs
With milk and the ripe wine-god; thrice for luck
Around the young corn let the victim go,
And all the choir, a joyful company,
Attend it, and with shouts bid Ceres come
To be their house-mate; and let no man dare
Put sickle to the ripened ears until,
With woven oak his temples chapleted,

He foot the rugged dance and chant the lay.
Aye, and that these things we might win to know
By certain tokens, heats, and showers, and winds
That bring the frost, the Sire of all himself
Ordained what warnings in her monthly round
The moon should give, what bodes the south wind's fall,
What oft-repeated sights the herdsman seeing
Should keep his cattle closer to their stalls.
No sooner are the winds at point to rise,
Than either Ocean's firths begin to toss
And swell, and a dry crackling sound is heard
Upon the heights, or one loud ferment booms
The beach afar, and through the forest goes
A murmur multitudinous. By this
Scarce can the billow spare the curved keels,
When swift the sea-gulls from the middle main
Come winging, and their shrieks are shoreward borne,
When ocean-loving cormorants on dry land
Besport them, and the hern, her marshy haunts
Forsaking, mounts above the soaring cloud.
Oft, too, when wind is toward, the stars thou'lt see
From heaven shoot headlong, and through murky night
Long trails of fire white-glistening in their wake,
Or light chaff flit in air with fallen leaves,
Or feathers on the wave-top float and play.
But when from regions of the furious North
It lightens, and when thunder fills the halls
Of Eurus and of Zephyr, all the fields
With brimming dikes are flooded, and at sea
No mariner but furls his dripping sails.
Never at unawares did shower annoy:
Or, as it rises, the high-soaring cranes
Flee to the vales before it, with face
Upturned to heaven, the heifer snuffs the gale
Through gaping nostrils, or about the meres
Shrill-twitching flits the swallow, and the frogs
Crouch in the mud and chant their dirge of old.
Oft, too, the ant from out her inmost cells,
Fretting the narrow path, her eggs conveys;
Or the huge bow sucks moisture; or a host
Of rooks from food returning in long line
Clamour with jostling wings. Now mayst thou see
The various ocean-fowl and those that pry
Round Asian meads within thy fresher-pools,
Cayster, as in eager rivalry,

About their shoulders dash the plenteous spray,
Now duck their head beneath the wave, now run
Into the billows, for sheer idle joy
Of their mad bathing-revel. Then the crow
With full voice, good-for-naught, inviting rain,
Stalks on the dry sand mateless and alone.
Nor e'en the maids, that card their nightly task,
Know not the storm-sign, when in blazing crock
They see the lamp-oil sputtering with a growth
Of mouldy snuff-clots.
So too, after rain,
Sunshine and open skies thou mayst forecast,
And learn by tokens sure, for then nor dimmed
Appear the stars' keen edges, nor the moon
As borrowing of her brother's beams to rise,
Nor fleecy films to float along the sky.
Not to the sun's warmth then upon the shore
Do halcyons dear to Thetis ope their wings,
Nor filthy swine take thought to toss on high
With scattering snout the straw-wisps. But the clouds
Seek more the vales, and rest upon the plain,
And from the roof-top the night-owl for naught
Watching the sunset plies her 'lated song.
Distinct in clearest air is Nisus seen
Towering, and Scylla for the purple lock
Pays dear; for whereso, as she flies, her wings
The light air winnow, lo! fierce, implacable,
Nisus with mighty whirr through heaven pursues;
Where Nisus heavenward soareth, there her wings
Clutch as she flies, the light air winnowing still.
Soft then the voice of rooks from indrawn throat
Thrice, four times, o'er repeated, and full oft
On their high cradles, by some hidden joy
Gladdened beyond their wont, in bustling throngs
Among the leaves they riot; so sweet it is,
When showers are spent, their own loved nests again
And tender brood to visit. Not, I deem,
That heaven some native wit to these assigned,
Or fate a larger prescience, but that when
The storm and shifting moisture of the air
Have changed their courses, and the sky-god now,
Wet with the south-wind, thickens what was rare,
And what was gross releases, then, too, change
Their spirits' fleeting phases, and their breasts
Feel other motions now, than when the wind

Was driving up the cloud-rack. Hence proceeds
That blending of the feathered choirs afield,
The cattle's exultation, and the rooks'
Deep-throated triumph.
But if the headlong sun
And moons in order following thou regard,
Ne'er will to-morrow's hour deceive thee, ne'er
Wilt thou be caught by guile of cloudless night.
When first the moon recalls her rallying fires,
If dark the air clipped by her crescent dim,
For folks afield and on the open sea
A mighty rain is brewing; but if her face
With maiden blush she mantle, 'twill be wind,
For wind turns Phoebe still to ruddier gold.
But if at her fourth rising, for 'tis that
Gives surest counsel, clear she ride thro' heaven
With horns unblunted, then shall that whole day,
And to the month's end those that spring from it,
Rainless and windless be, while safe ashore
Shall sailors pay their vows to Panope,
Glaucus, and Melicertes, Ino's child.
The sun too, both at rising, and when soon
He dives beneath the waves, shall yield thee signs;
For signs, none trustier, travel with the sun,
Both those which in their course with dawn he brings,
And those at star-rise. When his springing orb
With spots he pranketh, muffled in a cloud,
And shrinks mid-circle, then of showers beware;
For then the South comes driving from the deep,
To trees and crops and cattle bringing bane.
Or when at day-break through dark clouds his rays
Burst and are scattered, or when rising pale
Aurora quits Tithonus' saffron bed,
But sorry shelter then, alack I will yield
Vine-leaf to ripening grapes; so thick a hail
In spiky showers spins rattling on the roof.
And this yet more 'twill boot thee bear in mind,
When now, his course upon Olympus run,
He draws to his decline: for oft we see
Upon the sun's own face strange colours stray;
Dark tells of rain, of east winds fiery-red;
If spots with ruddy fire begin to mix,
Then all the heavens convulsed in wrath thou'lt see-
Storm-clouds and wind together. Me that night
Let no man bid fare forth upon the deep,

Nor rend the rope from shore. But if, when both
He brings again and hides the day's return,
Clear-orbed he shineth, idly wilt thou dread
The storm-clouds, and beneath the lustral North
See the woods waving. What late eve in fine
Bears in her bosom, whence the wind that brings
Fair-weather-clouds, or what the rain South
Is meditating, tokens of all these
The sun will give thee. Who dare charge the sun
With leasing? He it is who warneth oft
Of hidden broils at hand and treachery,
And secret swelling of the waves of war.
He too it was, when Caesar's light was quenched,
For Rome had pity, when his bright head he veiled
In iron-hued darkness, till a godless age
Trembled for night eternal; at that time
Howbeit earth also, and the ocean-plains,
And dogs obscene, and birds of evil bode
Gave tokens. Yea, how often have we seen
Etna, her furnace-walls asunder riven,
In billowy floods boil o'er the Cyclops' fields,
And roll down globes of fire and molten rocks!
A clash of arms through all the heaven was heard
By Germany; strange heavings shook the Alps.
Yea, and by many through the breathless groves
A voice was heard with power, and wondrous-pale
Phantoms were seen upon the dusk of night,
And cattle spake, portentous! streams stand still,
And the earth yawns asunder, ivory weeps
For sorrow in the shrines, and bronzes sweat.
Up-twirling forests with his eddying tide,
Madly he bears them down, that lord of floods,
Eridanus, till through all the plain are swept
Beasts and their stalls together. At that time
In gloomy entrails ceased not to appear
Dark-threatening fibres, springs to trickle blood,
And high-built cities night-long to resound
With the wolves' howling. Never more than then
From skies all cloudless fell the thunderbolts,
Nor blazed so oft the comet's fire of bale.
Therefore a second time Philippi saw
The Roman hosts with kindred weapons rush
To battle, nor did the high gods deem it hard
That twice Emathia and the wide champaign
Of Haemus should be fattening with our blood.

Ay, and the time will come when there anigh,
Heaving the earth up with his curved plough,
Some swain will light on javelins by foul rust
Corroded, or with ponderous harrow strike
On empty helmets, while he gapes to see
Bones as of giants from the trench untombed.
Gods of my country, heroes of the soil,
And Romulus, and Mother Vesta, thou
Who Tuscan Tiber and Rome's Palatine
Preservest, this new champion at the least
Our fallen generation to repair
Forbid not. To the full and long ago
Our blood thy Trojan perjuries hath paid,
Laomedon. Long since the courts of heaven
Begrudge us thee, our Caesar, and complain
That thou regard'st the triumphs of mankind,
Here where the wrong is right, the right is wrong,
Where wars abound so many, and myriad-faced
Is crime; where no meet honour hath the plough;
The fields, their husbandmen led far away,
Rot in neglect, and curved pruning-hooks
Into the sword's stiff blade are fused and forged.
Euphrates here, here Germany new strife
Is stirring; neighbouring cities are in arms,
The laws that bound them snapped; and godless war
Rages through all the universe; as when
The four-horse chariots from the barriers poured
Still quicken o'er the course, and, idly now
Grasping the reins, the driver by his team
Is onward borne, nor heeds the car his curb.

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Georgic IV

Of air-born honey, gift of heaven, I now
Take up the tale. Upon this theme no less
Look thou, Maecenas, with indulgent eye.
A marvellous display of puny powers,
High-hearted chiefs, a nation's history,
Its traits, its bent, its battles and its clans,
All, each, shall pass before you, while I sing.
Slight though the poet's theme, not slight the praise,
So frown not heaven, and Phoebus hear his call.
First find your bees a settled sure abode,
Where neither winds can enter (winds blow back
The foragers with food returning home)
Nor sheep and butting kids tread down the flowers,
Nor heifer wandering wide upon the plain
Dash off the dew, and bruise the springing blades.
Let the gay lizard too keep far aloof
His scale-clad body from their honied stalls,
And the bee-eater, and what birds beside,
And Procne smirched with blood upon the breast
From her own murderous hands. For these roam wide
Wasting all substance, or the bees themselves
Strike flying, and in their beaks bear home, to glut
Those savage nestlings with the dainty prey.
But let clear springs and moss-green pools be near,
And through the grass a streamlet hurrying run,
Some palm-tree o'er the porch extend its shade,
Or huge-grown oleaster, that in Spring,
Their own sweet Spring-tide, when the new-made chiefs
Lead forth the young swarms, and, escaped their comb,
The colony comes forth to sport and play,
The neighbouring bank may lure them from the heat,
Or bough befriend with hospitable shade.
O'er the mid-waters, whether swift or still,
Cast willow-branches and big stones enow,
Bridge after bridge, where they may footing find
And spread their wide wings to the summer sun,
If haply Eurus, swooping as they pause,
Have dashed with spray or plunged them in the deep.
And let green cassias and far-scented thymes,
And savory with its heavy-laden breath
Bloom round about, and violet-beds hard by
Sip sweetness from the fertilizing springs.

For the hive's self, or stitched of hollow bark,
Or from tough osier woven, let the doors
Be strait of entrance; for stiff winter's cold
Congeals the honey, and heat resolves and thaws,
To bees alike disastrous; not for naught
So haste they to cement the tiny pores
That pierce their walls, and fill the crevices
With pollen from the flowers, and glean and keep
To this same end the glue, that binds more fast
Than bird-lime or the pitch from Ida's pines.
Oft too in burrowed holes, if fame be true,
They make their cosy subterranean home,
And deeply lodged in hollow rocks are found,
Or in the cavern of an age-hewn tree.
Thou not the less smear round their crannied cribs
With warm smooth mud-coat, and strew leaves above;
But near their home let neither yew-tree grow,
Nor reddening crabs be roasted, and mistrust
Deep marish-ground and mire with noisome smell,
Or where the hollow rocks sonorous ring,
And the word spoken buffets and rebounds.
What more? When now the golden sun has put
Winter to headlong flight beneath the world,
And oped the doors of heaven with summer ray,
Forthwith they roam the glades and forests o'er,
Rifle the painted flowers, or sip the streams,
Light-hovering on the surface. Hence it is
With some sweet rapture, that we know not of,
Their little ones they foster, hence with skill
Work out new wax or clinging honey mould.
So when the cage-escaped hosts you see
Float heavenward through the hot clear air, until
You marvel at yon dusky cloud that spreads
And lengthens on the wind, then mark them well;
For then 'tis ever the fresh springs they seek
And bowery shelter: hither must you bring
The savoury sweets I bid, and sprinkle them,
Bruised balsam and the wax-flower's lowly weed,
And wake and shake the tinkling cymbals heard
By the great Mother: on the anointed spots
Themselves will settle, and in wonted wise
Seek of themselves the cradle's inmost depth.
But if to battle they have hied them forth-
For oft 'twixt king and king with uproar dire
Fierce feud arises, and at once from far

You may discern what passion sways the mob,
And how their hearts are throbbing for the strife;
Hark! the hoarse brazen note that warriors know
Chides on the loiterers, and the ear may catch
A sound that mocks the war-trump's broken blasts;
Then in hot haste they muster, then flash wings,
Sharpen their pointed beaks and knit their thews,
And round the king, even to his royal tent,
Throng rallying, and with shouts defy the foe.
So, when a dry Spring and clear space is given,
Forth from the gates they burst, they clash on high;
A din arises; they are heaped and rolled
Into one mighty mass, and headlong fall,
Not denselier hail through heaven, nor pelting so
Rains from the shaken oak its acorn-shower.
Conspicuous by their wings the chiefs themselves
Press through the heart of battle, and display
A giant's spirit in each pigmy frame,
Steadfast no inch to yield till these or those
The victor's ponderous arm has turned to flight.
Such fiery passions and such fierce assaults
A little sprinkled dust controls and quells.
And now, both leaders from the field recalled,
Who hath the worsen seeming, do to death,
Lest royal waste wax burdensome, but let
His better lord it on the empty throne.
One with gold-burnished flakes will shine like fire,
For twofold are their kinds, the nobler he,
Of peerless front and lit with flashing scales;
That other, from neglect and squalor foul,
Drags slow a cumbrous belly. As with kings,
So too with people, diverse is their mould,
Some rough and loathly, as when the wayfarer
Scapes from a whirl of dust, and scorched with heat
Spits forth the dry grit from his parched mouth:
The others shine forth and flash with lightning-gleam,
Their backs all blazoned with bright drops of gold
Symmetric: this the likelier breed; from these,
When heaven brings round the season, thou shalt strain
Sweet honey, nor yet so sweet as passing clear,
And mellowing on the tongue the wine-god's fire.
But when the swarms fly aimlessly abroad,
Disport themselves in heaven and spurn their cells,
Leaving the hive unwarmed, from such vain play
Must you refrain their volatile desires,

Nor hard the task: tear off the monarchs' wings;
While these prove loiterers, none beside will dare
Mount heaven, or pluck the standards from the camp.
Let gardens with the breath of saffron flowers
Allure them, and the lord of Hellespont,
Priapus, wielder of the willow-scythe,
Safe in his keeping hold from birds and thieves.
And let the man to whom such cares are dear
Himself bring thyme and pine-trees from the heights,
And strew them in broad belts about their home;
No hand but his the blistering task should ply,
Plant the young slips, or shed the genial showers.
And I myself, were I not even now
Furling my sails, and, nigh the journey's end,
Eager to turn my vessel's prow to shore,
Perchance would sing what careful husbandry
Makes the trim garden smile; of Paestum too,
Whose roses bloom and fade and bloom again;
How endives glory in the streams they drink,
And green banks in their parsley, and how the gourd
Twists through the grass and rounds him to paunch;
Nor of Narcissus had my lips been dumb,
That loiterer of the flowers, nor supple-stemmed
Acanthus, with the praise of ivies pale,
And myrtles clinging to the shores they love.
For 'neath the shade of tall Oebalia's towers,
Where dark Galaesus laves the yellowing fields,
An old man once I mind me to have seen-
From Corycus he came- to whom had fallen
Some few poor acres of neglected land,
And they nor fruitful' neath the plodding steer,
Meet for the grazing herd, nor good for vines.
Yet he, the while his meagre garden-herbs
Among the thorns he planted, and all round
White lilies, vervains, and lean poppy set,
In pride of spirit matched the wealth of kings,
And home returning not till night was late,
With unbought plenty heaped his board on high.
He was the first to cull the rose in spring,
He the ripe fruits in autumn; and ere yet
Winter had ceased in sullen ire to rive
The rocks with frost, and with her icy bit
Curb in the running waters, there was he
Plucking the rathe faint hyacinth, while he chid
Summer's slow footsteps and the lagging West.

Therefore he too with earliest brooding bees
And their full swarms o'erflowed, and first was he
To press the bubbling honey from the comb;
Lime-trees were his, and many a branching pine;
And all the fruits wherewith in early bloom
The orchard-tree had clothed her, in full tale
Hung there, by mellowing autumn perfected.
He too transplanted tall-grown elms a-row,
Time-toughened pear, thorns bursting with the plum
And plane now yielding serviceable shade
For dry lips to drink under: but these things,
Shut off by rigorous limits, I pass by,
And leave for others to sing after me.
Come, then, I will unfold the natural powers
Great Jove himself upon the bees bestowed,
The boon for which, led by the shrill sweet strains
Of the Curetes and their clashing brass,
They fed the King of heaven in Dicte's cave.
Alone of all things they receive and hold
Community of offspring, and they house
Together in one city, and beneath
The shelter of majestic laws they live;
And they alone fixed home and country know,
And in the summer, warned of coming cold,
Make proof of toil, and for the general store
Hoard up their gathered harvesting. For some
Watch o'er the victualling of the hive, and these
By settled order ply their tasks afield;
And some within the confines of their home
Plant firm the comb's first layer, Narcissus' tear,
And sticky gum oozed from the bark of trees,
Then set the clinging wax to hang therefrom.
Others the while lead forth the full-grown young,
Their country's hope, and others press and pack
The thrice repured honey, and stretch their cells
To bursting with the clear-strained nectar sweet.
Some, too, the wardship of the gates befalls,
Who watch in turn for showers and cloudy skies,
Or ease returning labourers of their load,
Or form a band and from their precincts drive
The drones, a lazy herd. How glows the work!
How sweet the honey smells of perfumed thyme
Like the Cyclopes, when in haste they forge
From the slow-yielding ore the thunderbolts,
Some from the bull's-hide bellows in and out

Let the blasts drive, some dip i' the water-trough
The sputtering metal: with the anvil's weight
Groans Etna: they alternately in time
With giant strength uplift their sinewy arms,
Or twist the iron with the forceps' grip-
Not otherwise, to measure small with great,
The love of getting planted in their breasts
Goads on the bees, that haunt old Cecrops' heights,
Each in his sphere to labour. The old have charge
To keep the town, and build the walled combs,
And mould the cunning chambers; but the youth,
Their tired legs packed with thyme, come labouring home
Belated, for afar they range to feed
On arbutes and the grey-green willow-leaves,
And cassia and the crocus blushing red,
Glue-yielding limes, and hyacinths dusky-eyed.
One hour for rest have all, and one for toil:
With dawn they hurry from the gates- no room
For loiterers there: and once again, when even
Now bids them quit their pasturing on the plain,
Then homeward make they, then refresh their strength:
A hum arises: hark! they buzz and buzz
About the doors and threshold; till at length
Safe laid to rest they hush them for the night,
And welcome slumber laps their weary limbs.
But from the homestead not too far they fare,
When showers hang like to fall, nor, east winds nigh,
Confide in heaven, but 'neath the city walls
Safe-circling fetch them water, or essay
Brief out-goings, and oft weigh-up tiny stones,
As light craft ballast in the tossing tide,
Wherewith they poise them through the cloudy vast.
This law of life, too, by the bees obeyed,
Will move thy wonder, that nor sex with sex
Yoke they in marriage, nor yield their limbs to love,
Nor know the pangs of labour, but alone
From leaves and honied herbs, the mothers, each,
Gather their offspring in their mouths, alone
Supply new kings and pigmy commonwealth,
And their old court and waxen realm repair.
Oft, too, while wandering, against jagged stones
Their wings they fray, and 'neath the burden yield
Their liberal lives: so deep their love of flowers,
So glorious deem they honey's proud acquist.
Therefore, though each a life of narrow span,

Ne'er stretched to summers more than seven, befalls,
Yet deathless doth the race endure, and still
Perennial stands the fortune of their line,
From grandsire unto grandsire backward told.
Moreover, not Aegyptus, nor the realm
Of boundless Lydia, no, nor Parthia's hordes,
Nor Median Hydaspes, to their king
Do such obeisance: lives the king unscathed,
One will inspires the million: is he dead,
Snapt is the bond of fealty; they themselves
Ravage their toil-wrought honey, and rend amain
Their own comb's waxen trellis. He is the lord
Of all their labour; him with awful eye
They reverence, and with murmuring throngs surround,
In crowds attend, oft shoulder him on high,
Or with their bodies shield him in the fight,
And seek through showering wounds a glorious death.
Led by these tokens, and with such traits to guide,
Some say that unto bees a share is given
Of the Divine Intelligence, and to drink
Pure draughts of ether; for God permeates all-
Earth, and wide ocean, and the vault of heaven-
From whom flocks, herds, men, beasts of every kind,
Draw each at birth the fine essential flame;
Yea, and that all things hence to Him return,
Brought back by dissolution, nor can death
Find place: but, each into his starry rank,
Alive they soar, and mount the heights of heaven.
If now their narrow home thou wouldst unseal,
And broach the treasures of the honey-house,
With draught of water first toment thy lips,
And spread before thee fumes of trailing smoke.
Twice is the teeming produce gathered in,
Twofold their time of harvest year by year,
Once when Taygete the Pleiad uplifts
Her comely forehead for the earth to see,
With foot of scorn spurning the ocean-streams,
Once when in gloom she flies the watery Fish,
And dips from heaven into the wintry wave.
Unbounded then their wrath; if hurt, they breathe
Venom into their bite, cleave to the veins
And let the sting lie buried, and leave their lives
Behind them in the wound. But if you dread
Too rigorous a winter, and would fain
Temper the coming time, and their bruised hearts

And broken estate to pity move thy soul,
Yet who would fear to fumigate with thyme,
Or cut the empty wax away? for oft
Into their comb the newt has gnawed unseen,
And the light-loathing beetles crammed their bed,
And he that sits at others' board to feast,
The do-naught drone; or 'gainst the unequal foe
Swoops the fierce hornet, or the moth's fell tribe;
Or spider, victim of Minerva's spite,
Athwart the doorway hangs her swaying net.
The more impoverished they, the keenlier all
To mend the fallen fortunes of their race
Will nerve them, fill the cells up, tier on tier,
And weave their granaries from the rifled flowers.
Now, seeing that life doth even to bee-folk bring
Our human chances, if in dire disease
Their bodies' strength should languish- which anon
By no uncertain tokens may be told-
Forthwith the sick change hue; grim leanness mars
Their visage; then from out the cells they bear
Forms reft of light, and lead the mournful pomp;
Or foot to foot about the porch they hang,
Or within closed doors loiter, listless all
From famine, and benumbed with shrivelling cold.
Then is a deep note heard, a long-drawn hum,
As when the chill South through the forests sighs,
As when the troubled ocean hoarsely booms
With back-swung billow, as ravening tide of fire
Surges, shut fast within the furnace-walls.
Then do I bid burn scented galbanum,
And, honey-streams through reeden troughs instilled,
Challenge and cheer their flagging appetite
To taste the well-known food; and it shall boot
To mix therewith the savour bruised from gall,
And rose-leaves dried, or must to thickness boiled
By a fierce fire, or juice of raisin-grapes
From Psithian vine, and with its bitter smell
Centaury, and the famed Cecropian thyme.
There is a meadow-flower by country folk
Hight star-wort; 'tis a plant not far to seek;
For from one sod an ample growth it rears,
Itself all golden, but girt with plenteous leaves,
Where glory of purple shines through violet gloom.
With chaplets woven hereof full oft are decked
Heaven's altars: harsh its taste upon the tongue;

Shepherds in vales smooth-shorn of nibbling flocks
By Mella's winding waters gather it.
The roots of this, well seethed in fragrant wine,
Set in brimmed baskets at their doors for food.
But if one's whole stock fail him at a stroke,
Nor hath he whence to breed the race anew,
'Tis time the wondrous secret to disclose
Taught by the swain of Arcady, even how
The blood of slaughtered bullocks oft has borne
Bees from corruption. I will trace me back
To its prime source the story's tangled thread,
And thence unravel. For where thy happy folk,
Canopus, city of Pellaean fame,
Dwell by the Nile's lagoon-like overflow,
And high o'er furrows they have called their own
Skim in their painted wherries; where, hard by,
The quivered Persian presses, and that flood
Which from the swart-skinned Aethiop bears him down,
Swift-parted into sevenfold branching mouths
With black mud fattens and makes Aegypt green,
That whole domain its welfare's hope secure
Rests on this art alone. And first is chosen
A strait recess, cramped closer to this end,
Which next with narrow roof of tiles atop
'Twixt prisoning walls they pinch, and add hereto
From the four winds four slanting window-slits.
Then seek they from the herd a steer, whose horns
With two years' growth are curling, and stop fast,
Plunge madly as he may, the panting mouth
And nostrils twain, and done with blows to death,
Batter his flesh to pulp i' the hide yet whole,
And shut the doors, and leave him there to lie.
But 'neath his ribs they scatter broken boughs,
With thyme and fresh-pulled cassias: this is done
When first the west winds bid the waters flow,
Ere flush the meadows with new tints, and ere
The twittering swallow buildeth from the beams.
Meanwhile the juice within his softened bones
Heats and ferments, and things of wondrous birth,
Footless at first, anon with feet and wings,
Swarm there and buzz, a marvel to behold;
And more and more the fleeting breeze they take,
Till, like a shower that pours from summer-clouds,
Forth burst they, or like shafts from quivering string
When Parthia's flying hosts provoke the fray.

Say what was he, what God, that fashioned forth
This art for us, O Muses? of man's skill
Whence came the new adventure? From thy vale,
Peneian Tempe, turning, bee-bereft,
So runs the tale, by famine and disease,
Mournful the shepherd Aristaeus stood
Fast by the haunted river-head, and thus
With many a plaint to her that bare him cried:
"Mother, Cyrene, mother, who hast thy home
Beneath this whirling flood, if he thou sayest,
Apollo, lord of Thymbra, be my sire,
Sprung from the Gods' high line, why barest thou me
With fortune's ban for birthright? Where is now
Thy love to me-ward banished from thy breast?
O! wherefore didst thou bid me hope for heaven?
Lo! even the crown of this poor mortal life,
Which all my skilful care by field and fold,
No art neglected, scarce had fashioned forth,
Even this falls from me, yet thou call'st me son.
Nay, then, arise! With thine own hands pluck up
My fruit-plantations: on the homestead fling
Pitiless fire; make havoc of my crops;
Burn the young plants, and wield the stubborn axe
Against my vines, if there hath taken the
Such loathing of my greatness." But that cry,
Even from her chamber in the river-deeps,
His mother heard: around her spun the nymphs
Milesian wool stained through with hyaline dye,
Drymo, Xantho, Ligea, Phyllodoce,
Their glossy locks o'er snowy shoulders shed,
Cydippe and Lycorias yellow-haired,
A maiden one, one newly learned even then
To bear Lucina's birth-pang. Clio, too,
And Beroe, sisters, ocean-children both,
Both zoned with gold and girt with dappled fell,
Ephyre and Opis, and from Asian meads
Deiopea, and, bow at length laid by,
Fleet-footed Arethusa. But in their midst
Fair Clymene was telling o'er the tale
Of Vulcan's idle vigilance and the stealth
Of Mars' sweet rapine, and from Chaos old
Counted the jostling love-joys of the Gods.
Charmed by whose lay, the while their woolly tasks
With spindles down they drew, yet once again
Smote on his mother's ears the mournful plaint

Of Aristaeus; on their glassy thrones
Amazement held them all; but Arethuse
Before the rest put forth her auburn head,
Peering above the wave-top, and from far
Exclaimed, "Cyrene, sister, not for naught
Scared by a groan so deep, behold! 'tis he,
Even Aristaeus, thy heart's fondest care,
Here by the brink of the Peneian sire
Stands woebegone and weeping, and by name
Cries out upon thee for thy cruelty."
To whom, strange terror knocking at her heart,
"Bring, bring him to our sight," the mother cried;
"His feet may tread the threshold even of Gods."
So saying, she bids the flood yawn wide and yield
A pathway for his footsteps; but the wave
Arched mountain-wise closed round him, and within
Its mighty bosom welcomed, and let speed
To the deep river-bed. And now, with eyes
Of wonder gazing on his mother's hall
And watery kingdom and cave-prisoned pools
And echoing groves, he went, and, stunned by that
Stupendous whirl of waters, separate saw
All streams beneath the mighty earth that glide,
Phasis and Lycus, and that fountain-head
Whence first the deep Enipeus leaps to light,
Whence father Tiber, and whence Anio's flood,
And Hypanis that roars amid his rocks,
And Mysian Caicus, and, bull-browed
'Twixt either gilded horn, Eridanus,
Than whom none other through the laughing plains
More furious pours into the purple sea.
Soon as the chamber's hanging roof of stone
Was gained, and now Cyrene from her son
Had heard his idle weeping, in due course
Clear water for his hands the sisters bring,
With napkins of shorn pile, while others heap
The board with dainties, and set on afresh
The brimming goblets; with Panchaian fires
Upleap the altars; then the mother spake,
"Take beakers of Maconian wine," she said,
"Pour we to Ocean." Ocean, sire of all,
She worships, and the sister-nymphs who guard
The hundred forests and the hundred streams;
Thrice Vesta's fire with nectar clear she dashed,
Thrice to the roof-top shot the flame and shone:

Armed with which omen she essayed to speak:
“In Neptune’s gulf Carpathian dwells a seer,
Caerulean Proteus, he who metes the main
With fish-drawn chariot of two-footed steeds;
Now visits he his native home once more,
Pallene and the Emathian ports; to him
We nymphs do reverence, ay, and Nereus old;
For all things knows the seer, both those which are
And have been, or which time hath yet to bring;
So willed it Neptune, whose portentous flocks,
And loathly sea-calves ‘neath the surge he feeds.
Him first, my son, behoves thee seize and bind
That he may all the cause of sickness show,
And grant a prosperous end. For save by force
No rede will he vouchsafe, nor shalt thou bend
His soul by praying; whom once made captive, ply
With rigorous force and fetters; against these
His wiles will break and spend themselves in vain.
I, when the sun has lit his noontide fires,
When the blades thirst, and cattle love the shade,
Myself will guide thee to the old man’s haunt,
Whither he hies him weary from the waves,
That thou mayst safelier steal upon his sleep.
But when thou hast gripped him fast with hand and gyve,
Then divers forms and bestial semblances
Shall mock thy grasp; for sudden he will change
To bristly boar, fell tigress, dragon scaled,
And tawny-tufted lioness, or send forth
A crackling sound of fire, and so shake of
The fetters, or in showery drops anon
Dissolve and vanish. But the more he shifts
His endless transformations, thou, my son,
More straitlier clench the clinging bands, until
His body’s shape return to that thou sawest,
When with closed eyelids first he sank to sleep.”
So saying, an odour of ambrosial dew
She sheds around, and all his frame therewith
Steeps throughly; forth from his trim-combed locks
Breathed effluence sweet, and a lithe vigour leapt
Into his limbs. There is a cavern vast
Scooped in the mountain-side, where wave on wave
By the wind’s stress is driven, and breaks far up
Its inmost creeks- safe anchorage from of old
For tempest-taken mariners: therewithin,
Behind a rock’s huge barrier, Proteus hides.

Here in close covert out of the sun's eye
The youth she places, and herself the while
Swathed in a shadowy mist stands far aloof.
And now the ravening dog-star that burns up
The thirsty Indians blazed in heaven; his course
The fiery sun had half devoured: the blades
Were parched, and the void streams with drougthy jaws
Baked to their mud-beds by the scorching ray,
When Proteus seeking his accustomed cave
Strode from the billows: round him frolicking
The watery folk that people the waste sea
Sprinkled the bitter brine-dew far and wide.
Along the shore in scattered groups to feed
The sea-calves stretch them: while the seer himself,
Like herdsman on the hills when evening bids
The steers from pasture to their stall repair,
And the lambs' bleating whets the listening wolves,
Sits midmost on the rock and tells his tale.
But Aristaeus, the foe within his clutch,
Scarce suffering him compose his aged limbs,
With a great cry leapt on him, and ere he rose
Forestalled him with the fetters; he nathless,
All unforgetful of his ancient craft,
Transforms himself to every wondrous thing,
Fire and a fearful beast, and flowing stream.
But when no trickery found a path for flight,
Baffled at length, to his own shape returned,
With human lips he spake, "Who bade thee, then,
So reckless in youth's hardihood, affront
Our portals? or what wouldst thou hence?"- But he,
"Proteus, thou knowest, of thine own heart thou knowest;
For thee there is no cheating, but cease thou
To practise upon me: at heaven's behest
I for my fainting fortunes hither come
An oracle to ask thee." There he ceased.
Whereat the seer, by stubborn force constrained,
Shot forth the grey light of his gleaming eyes
Upon him, and with fiercely gnashing teeth
Unlocks his lips to spell the fates of heaven:
"Doubt not 'tis wrath divine that plagues thee thus,
Nor light the debt thou payest; 'tis Orpheus' self,
Orpheus unhappy by no fault of his,
So fates prevent not, fans thy penal fires,
Yet madly raging for his ravished bride.
She in her haste to shun thy hot pursuit

Along the stream, saw not the coming death,
Where at her feet kept ward upon the bank
In the tall grass a monstrous water-snake.
But with their cries the Dryad-band her peers
Filled up the mountains to their proudest peaks:
Wailed for her fate the heights of Rhodope,
And tall Pangaea, and, beloved of Mars,
The land that bowed to Rhesus, Thrace no less
With Hebrus' stream; and Orithyia wept,
Daughter of Acte old. But Orpheus' self,
Soothing his love-pain with the hollow shell,
Thee his sweet wife on the lone shore alone,
Thee when day dawned and when it died he sang.
Nay to the jaws of Taenarus too he came,
Of Dis the infernal palace, and the grove
Grim with a horror of great darkness- came,
Entered, and faced the Manes and the King
Of terrors, the stone heart no prayer can tame.
Then from the deepest deeps of Erebus,
Wrung by his minstrelsy, the hollow shades
Came trooping, ghostly semblances of forms
Lost to the light, as birds by myriads hie
To greenwood boughs for cover, when twilight-hour
Or storms of winter chase them from the hills;
Matrons and men, and great heroic frames
Done with life's service, boys, unwedded girls,
Youths placed on pyre before their fathers' eyes.
Round them, with black slime choked and hideous weed,
Cocytus winds; there lies the unlovely swamp
Of dull dead water, and, to pen them fast,
Styx with her ninefold barrier poured between.
Nay, even the deep Tartarean Halls of death
Stood lost in wonderment, and the Eumenides,
Their brows with livid locks of serpents twined;
Even Cerberus held his triple jaws agape,
And, the wind hushed, Ixion's wheel stood still.
And now with homeward footstep he had passed
All perils scathless, and, at length restored,
Eurydice to realms of upper air
Had well-nigh won, behind him following-
So Proserpine had ruled it- when his heart
A sudden mad desire surprised and seized-
Meet fault to be forgiven, might Hell forgive.
For at the very threshold of the day,
Heedless, alas! and vanquished of resolve,

He stopped, turned, looked upon Eurydice
His own once more. But even with the look,
Poured out was all his labour, broken the bond
Of that fell tyrant, and a crash was heard
Three times like thunder in the meres of hell.
'Orpheus! what ruin hath thy frenzy wrought
On me, alas! and thee? Lo! once again
The unpitying fates recall me, and dark sleep
Closes my swimming eyes. And now farewell:
Girt with enormous night I am borne away,
Outstretching toward thee, thine, alas! no more,
These helpless hands.' She spake, and suddenly,
Like smoke dissolving into empty air,
Passed and was sundered from his sight; nor him
Clutching vain shadows, yearning sore to speak,
Thenceforth beheld she, nor no second time
Hell's boatman brooks he pass the watery bar.
What should he do? fly whither, twice bereaved?
Move with what tears the Manes, with what voice
The Powers of darkness? She indeed even now
Death-cold was floating on the Stygian barge!
For seven whole months unceasingly, men say,
Beneath a skyey crag, by thy lone wave,
Strymon, he wept, and in the caverns chill
Unrolled his story, melting tigers' hearts,
And leading with his lay the oaks along.
As in the poplar-shade a nightingale
Mourns her lost young, which some relentless swain,
Spying, from the nest has torn unfledged, but she
Wails the long night, and perched upon a spray
With sad insistence pipes her dolorous strain,
Till all the region with her wrongs o'erflows.
No love, no new desire, constrained his soul:
By snow-bound Tanais and the icy north,
Far steppes to frost Rhipaeon forever wed,
Alone he wandered, lost Eurydice
Lamenting, and the gifts of Dis ungiven.
Scorned by which tribute the Ciconian dames,
Amid their awful Bacchanalian rites
And midnight revellings, tore him limb from limb,
And strewed his fragments over the wide fields.
Then too, even then, what time the Hebrus stream,
Oeagrian Hebrus, down mid-current rolled,
Rent from the marble neck, his drifting head,
The death-chilled tongue found yet a voice to cry

‘Eurydice! ah! poor Eurydice!’

With parting breath he called her, and the banks
From the broad stream caught up ‘Eurydice!’”

So Proteus ending plunged into the deep,
And, where he plunged, beneath the eddying whirl
Churned into foam the water, and was gone;
But not Cyrene, who unquestioned thus
Bespake the trembling listener: “Nay, my son,
From that sad bosom thou mayst banish care:
Hence came that plague of sickness, hence the nymphs,
With whom in the tall woods the dance she wove,
Wrought on thy bees, alas! this deadly bane.
Bend thou before the Dell-nymphs, gracious powers:
Bring gifts, and sue for pardon: they will grant
Peace to thine asking, and an end of wrath.
But how to approach them will I first unfold-
Four chosen bulls of peerless form and bulk,
That browse to-day the green Lycaean heights,
Pick from thy herds, as many kine to match,
Whose necks the yoke pressed never: then for these
Build up four altars by the lofty fanes,
And from their throats let gush the victims’ blood,
And in the greenwood leave their bodies lone.
Then, when the ninth dawn hath displayed its beams,
To Orpheus shalt thou send his funeral dues,
Poppies of Lethe, and let slay a sheep
Coal-black, then seek the grove again, and soon
For pardon found adore Eurydice
With a slain calf for victim.”

No delay:

The self-same hour he hies him forth to do
His mother’s bidding: to the shrine he came,
The appointed altars reared, and thither led
Four chosen bulls of peerless form and bulk,
With kine to match, that never yoke had known;
Then, when the ninth dawn had led in the day,
To Orpheus sent his funeral dues, and sought
The grove once more. But sudden, strange to tell
A portent they espy: through the oxen’s flesh,
Waxed soft in dissolution, hark! there hum
Bees from the belly; the rent ribs overboil
In endless clouds they spread them, till at last
On yon tree-top together fused they cling,
And drop their cluster from the bending boughs.
So sang I of the tilth of furrowed fields,

Of flocks and trees, while Caesar's majesty
Launched forth the levin-bolts of war by deep
Euphrates, and bare rule o'er willing folk
Though vanquished, and essayed the heights of heaven.
I Virgil then, of sweet Parthenope
The nursling, wooed the flowery walks of peace
Inglorious, who erst trilled for shepherd-wights
The wanton ditty, and sang in saucy youth

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The Aeneid

Opening of the Epic: Book I

Translated by John Dryden

Arms, and the man I sing, who, forc'd by fate,
And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate,
Expell'd and exil'd, left the Trojan shore.
Long labors, both by sea and land, he bore,
And in the doubtful war, before he won
The Latian realm, and built the destin'd town;
His banish'd gods restor'd to rites divine,
And settled sure succession in his line,
From whence the race of Alban fathers come,
And the long glories of majestic Rome.

O Muse! the causes and the crimes relate;
What goddess was provok'd, and whence her hate;
For what offense the Queen of Heav'n began
To persecute so brave, so just a man;
Involv'd his anxious life in endless cares,
Expos'd to wants, and hurried into wars!
Can heav'nly minds such high resentment show,
Or exercise their spite in human woe?

Against the Tiber's mouth, but far away,
An ancient town was seated on the sea;
A Tyrian colony; the people made
Stout for the war, and studious of their trade:
Carthage the name; belov'd by Juno more
Than her own Argos, or the Samian shore.
Here stood her chariot; here, if Heav'n were kind,
The seat of awful empire she design'd.
Yet she had heard an ancient rumor fly,
(Long cited by the people of the sky,
That times to come should see the Trojan race
Her Carthage ruin, and her tow'rs deface;
Nor thus confin'd, the yoke of sov'reign sway
Should on the necks of all the nations lay.
She ponder'd this, and fear'd it was in fate;
Nor could forget the war she wag'd of late
For conqu'ring Greece against the Trojan state.
Besides, long causes working in her mind,

And secret seeds of envy, lay behind;
Deep graven in her heart the doom remain'd
Of partial Paris, and her form disdain'd;
The grace bestow'd on ravish'd Ganymed,
Electra's glories, and her injur'd bed.
Each was a cause alone; and all combin'd
To kindle vengeance in her haughty mind.
For this, far distant from the Latian coast
She drove the remnants of the Trojan host;
And sev'n long years th' unhappy wand'ring train
Were toss'd by storms, and scatter'd thro' the main.
Such time, such toil, requir'd the Roman name,
Such length of labor for so vast a frame.

Now scarce the Trojan fleet, with sails and oars,
Had left behind the fair Sicilian shores,
Ent'ring with cheerful shouts the wat'ry reign,
And plowing frothy furrows in the main;
When, lab'ring still with endless discontent,
The Queen of Heav'n did thus her fury vent:

“Then am I vanquish'd? must I yield?” said she,
“And must the Trojans reign in Italy?
So Fate will have it, and Jove adds his force;
Nor can my pow'r divert their happy course.
Could angry Pallas, with revengeful spleen,
The Grecian navy burn, and drown the men?
She, for the fault of one offending foe,
The bolts of Jove himself presum'd to throw:
With whirlwinds from beneath she toss'd the ship,
And bare expos'd the bosom of the deep;
Then, as an eagle gripes the trembling game,
The wretch, yet hissing with her father's flame,
She strongly seiz'd, and with a burning wound
Transfix'd, and naked, on a rock she bound.
But I, who walk in awful state above,
The majesty of heav'n, the sister wife of Jove,
For length of years my fruitless force employ
Against the thin remains of ruin'd Troy!
What nations now to Juno's pow'r will pray,
Or off'rings on my slighted altars lay?”

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The Sack of Troy: Book II

All were attentive to the godlike man,
When from his lofty couch he thus began:
“Great queen, what you command me to relate
Renews the sad remembrance of our fate:
An empire from its old foundations rent,
And ev’ry woe the Trojans underwent;
A peopled city made a desert place;
All that I saw, and part of which I was:
Not ev’n the hardest of our foes could hear,
Nor stern Ulysses tell without a tear.
And now the latter watch of wasting night,
And setting stars, to kindly rest invite;
But, since you take such int’rest in our woe,
And Troy’s disastrous end desire to know,
I will restrain my tears, and briefly tell
What in our last and fatal night befell.

“By destiny compell’d, and in despair,
The Greeks grew weary of the tedious war,
And by Minerva’s aid a fabric rear’d,
Which like a steed of monstrous height appear’d:
The sides were plank’d with pine; they feign’d it made
For their return, and this the vow they paid.
Thus they pretend, but in the hollow side
Selected numbers of their soldiers hide:
With inward arms the dire machine they load,
And iron bowels stuff the dark abode.
In sight of Troy lies Tenedos, an isle
(While Fortune did on Priam’s empire smile)
Renown’d for wealth; but, since, a faithless bay,
Where ships expos’d to wind and weather lay.
There was their fleet conceal’d. We thought, for Greece
Their sails were hoisted, and our fears release.
The Trojans, coop’d within their walls so long,
Unbar their gates, and issue in a throng,
Like swarming bees, and with delight survey
The camp deserted, where the Grecians lay:
The quarters of the sev’ral chiefs they show’d;
Here Phoenix, here Achilles, made abode;
Here join’d the battles; there the navy rode.
Part on the pile their wond’ring eyes employ:
The pile by Pallas rais’d to ruin Troy.

Thymoetes first ('t is doubtful whether hir'd,
Or so the Trojan destiny requir'd)
Mov'd that the ramparts might be broken down,
To lodge the monster fabric in the town.
But Capys, and the rest of sounder mind,
The fatal present to the flames designed,
Or to the wat'ry deep; at least to bore
The hollow sides, and hidden frauds explore.
The giddy vulgar, as their fancies guide,
With noise say nothing, and in parts divide.
Laocoon, follow'd by a num'rous crowd,
Ran from the fort, and cried, from far, aloud:
'O wretched countrymen! what fury reigns?
What more than madness has possess'd your brains?
Think you the Grecians from your coasts are gone?
And are Ulysses' arts no better known?
This hollow fabric either must inclose,
Within its blind recess, our secret foes;
Or 't is an engine rais'd above the town,
T' o'erlook the walls, and then to batter down.
Somewhat is sure design'd, by fraud or force:
Trust not their presents, nor admit the horse.'
Thus having said, against the steed he threw
His forceful spear, which, hissing as flew,
Pierc'd thro' the yielding planks of jointed wood,
And trembling in the hollow belly stood.
The sides, transpierc'd, return a rattling sound,
And groans of Greeks inclos'd come issuing thro' the wound
And, had not Heav'n the fall of Troy design'd,
Or had not men been fated to be blind,
Enough was said and done t'inspire a better mind.
Then had our lances pierc'd the treach'rous wood,
And Ilian tow'rs and Priam's empire stood.
Meantime, with shouts, the Trojan shepherds bring
A captive Greek, in bands, before the king;
Taken to take; who made himself their prey,
T' impose on their belief, and Troy betray;
Fix'd on his aim, and obstinately bent
To die undaunted, or to circumvent.
About the captive, tides of Trojans flow;
All press to see, and some insult the foe.
Now hear how well the Greeks their wiles disguis'd;
Behold a nation in a man compris'd.
Trembling the miscreant stood, unarm'd and bound;
He star'd, and roll'd his haggard eyes around,

Then said: 'Alas! what earth remains, what sea
Is open to receive unhappy me?
What fate a wretched fugitive attends,
Scorn'd by my foes, abandon'd by my friends?'
He said, and sigh'd, and cast a rueful eye:
Our pity kindles, and our passions die.
We cheer youth to make his own defense,
And freely tell us what he was, and whence:
What news he could impart, we long to know,
And what to credit from a captive foe.

"His fear at length dismiss'd, he said: 'Whate'er
My fate ordains, my words shall be sincere:
I neither can nor dare my birth disclaim;
Greece is my country, Sinon is my name.
Tho' plung'd by Fortune's pow'r in misery,
'T is not in Fortune's pow'r to make me lie.
If any chance has hither brought the name
Of Palamedes, not unknown to fame,
Who suffer'd from the malice of the times,
Accus'd and sentenc'd for pretended crimes,
Because these fatal wars he would prevent;
Whose death the wretched Greeks too late lament-
Me, then a boy, my father, poor and bare
Of other means, committed to his care,
His kinsman and companion in the war.
While Fortune favor'd, while his arms support
The cause, and rul'd the counsels, of the court,
I made some figure there; nor was my name
Obscure, nor I without my share of fame.
But when Ulysses, with fallacious arts,
Had made impression in the people's hearts,
And forg'd a treason in my patron's name
(I speak of things too far divulg'd by fame),
My kinsman fell. Then I, without support,
In private mourn'd his loss, and left the court.
Mad as I was, I could not bear his fate
With silent grief, but loudly blam'd the state,
And curs'd the direful author of my woes.
'T was told again; and hence my ruin rose.
I threaten'd, if indulgent Heav'n once more
Would land me safely on my native shore,
His death with double vengeance to restore.
This mov'd the murderer's hate; and soon ensued
Th' effects of malice from a man so proud.

Ambiguous rumors thro' the camp he spread,
And sought, by treason, my devoted head;
New crimes invented; left unturn'd no stone,
To make my guilt appear, and hide his own;
Till Calchas was by force and threat'ning wrought-
But why- why dwell I on that anxious thought?
If on my nation just revenge you seek,
And 't is t' appear a foe, t' appear a Greek;
Already you my name and country know;
Assuage your thirst of blood, and strike the blow:
My death will both the kingly brothers please,
And set insatiate Ithacus at ease.'
This fair unfinish'd tale, these broken starts,
Rais'd expectations in our longing hearts:
Unknowing as we were in Grecian arts.
His former trembling once again renew'd,
With acted fear, the villain thus pursued:

“Long had the Grecians (tir'd with fruitless care,
And wearied with an unsuccessful war)
Resolv'd to raise the siege, and leave the town;
And, had the gods permitted, they had gone;
But oft the wintry seas and southern winds
Withstood their passage home, and chang'd their minds.
Portents and prodigies their souls amaz'd;
But most, when this stupendous pile was rais'd:
Then flaming meteors, hung in air, were seen,
And thunders rattled thro' a sky serene.
Dismay'd, and fearful of some dire event,
Eurypylos t' enquire their fate was sent.
He from the gods this dreadful answer brought:

“O Grecians, when the Trojan shores you sought,
Your passage with a virgin's blood was bought:
So must your safe return be bought again,
And Grecian blood once more atone the main.”
The spreading rumor round the people ran;
All fear'd, and each believ'd himself the man.
Ulysses took th' advantage of their fright;
Call'd Calchas, and produc'd in open sight:
Then bade him name the wretch, ordain'd by fate
The public victim, to redeem the state.
Already some presag'd the dire event,
And saw what sacrifice Ulysses meant.
For twice five days the good old seer withstood

Th' intended treason, and was dumb to blood,
Till, tir'd, with endless clamors and pursuit
Of Ithacus, he stood no longer mute;
But, as it was agreed, pronounc'd that I
Was destin'd by the wrathful gods to die.
All prais'd the sentence, pleas'd the storm should fall
On one alone, whose fury threaten'd all.
The dismal day was come; the priests prepare
Their leaven'd cakes, and fillets for my hair.
I follow'd nature's laws, and must avow
I broke my bonds and fled the fatal blow.
Hid in a weedy lake all night I lay,
Secure of safety when they sail'd away.
But now what further hopes for me remain,
To see my friends, or native soil, again;
My tender infants, or my careful sire,
Whom they returning will to death require;
Will perpetrate on them their first design,
And take the forfeit of their heads for mine?
Which, O! if pity mortal minds can move,
If there be faith below, or gods above,
If innocence and truth can claim desert,
Ye Trojans, from an injur'd wretch avert.'

“False tears true pity move; the king commands
To loose his fetters, and unbind his hands:
Then adds these friendly words: ‘Dismiss thy fears;
Forget the Greeks; be mine as thou wert theirs.
But truly tell, was it for force or guile,
Or some religious end, you rais'd the pile?’
Thus said the king. He, full of fraudulent arts,
This well-invented tale for truth imparts:
‘Ye lamps of heav'n!’ he said, and lifted high
His hands now free, ‘thou venerable sky!
Inviolable pow'rs, ador'd with dread!
Ye fatal fillets, that once bound this head!
Ye sacred altars, from whose flames I fled!
Be all of you adjur'd; and grant I may,
Without a crime, th' ungrateful Greeks betray,
Reveal the secrets of the guilty state,
And justly punish whom I justly hate!
But you, O king, preserve the faith you gave,
If I, to save myself, your empire save.
The Grecian hopes, and all th' attempts they made,
Were only founded on Minerva's aid.

But from the time when impious Diomed,
And false Ulysses, that inventive head,
Her fatal image from the temple drew,
The sleeping guardians of the castle slew,
Her virgin statue with their bloody hands
Polluted, and profan'd her holy bands;
From thence the tide of fortune left their shore,
And ebb'd much faster than it flow'd before:
Their courage languish'd, as their hopes decay'd;
And Pallas, now averse, refus'd her aid.
Nor did the goddess doubtfully declare
Her alter'd mind and alienated care.
When first her fatal image touch'd the ground,
She sternly cast her glaring eyes around,
That sparkled as they roll'd, and seem'd to threat:
Her heav'nly limbs distill'd a briny sweat.
Thrice from the ground she leap'd, was seen to wield
Her brandish'd lance, and shake her horrid shield.
Then Calchas bade our host for flight
And hope no conquest from the tedious war,
Till first they sail'd for Greece; with pray'rs besought
Her injur'd pow'r, and better omens brought.
And now their navy plows the wat'ry main,
Yet soon expect it on your shores again,
With Pallas pleas'd; as Calchas did ordain.
But first, to reconcile the blue-ey'd maid
For her stol'n statue and her tow'r betray'd,
Warn'd by the seer, to her offended name
We rais'd and dedicate this wondrous frame,
So lofty, lest thro' your forbidden gates
It pass, and intercept our better fates:
For, once admitted there, our hopes are lost;
And Troy may then a new Palladium boast;
For so religion and the gods ordain,
That, if you violate with hands profane
Minerva's gift, your town in flames shall burn,
(Which omen, O ye gods, on Graecia turn!)
But if it climb, with your assisting hands,
The Trojan walls, and in the city stands;
Then Troy shall Argos and Mycenae burn,
And the reverse of fate on us return.'

“With such deceits he gain'd their easy hearts,
Too prone to credit his perfidious arts.
What Diomed, nor Thetis' greater son,

A thousand ships, nor ten years' siege, had done-
False tears and fawning words the city won.

“A greater omen, and of worse portent,
Did our unwary minds with fear torment,
Concurring to produce the dire event.
Laocoon, Neptune's priest by lot that year,
With solemn pomp then sacrific'd a steer;
When, dreadful to behold, from sea we spied
Two serpents, rank'd abreast, the seas divide,
And smoothly sweep along the swelling tide.
Their flaming crests above the waves they show;
Their bellies seem to burn the seas below;
Their speckled tails advance to steer their course,
And on the sounding shore the flying billows force.
And now the strand, and now the plain they held;
Their ardent eyes with bloody streaks were fill'd;
Their nimble tongues they brandish'd as they came,
And lick'd their hissing jaws, that sputter'd flame.
We fled amaz'd; their destin'd way they take,
And to Laocoon and his children make;
And first around the tender boys they wind,
Then with their sharpen'd fangs their limbs and bodies grind.
The wretched father, running to their aid
With pious haste, but vain, they next invade;
Twice round his waist their winding volumes roll'd;
And twice about his gasping throat they fold.
The priest thus doubly chok'd, their crests divide,
And tow'ring o'er his head in triumph ride.
With both his hands he labors at the knots;
His holy fillets the blue venom blots;
His roaring fills the flitting air around.
Thus, when an ox receives a glancing wound,
He breaks his bands, the fatal altar flies,
And with loud bellowings breaks the yielding skies.
Their tasks perform'd, the serpents quit their prey,
And to the tow'r of Pallas make their way:
Couch'd at her feet, they lie protected there
By her large buckler and protended spear.
Amazement seizes all; the gen'ral cry
Proclaims Laocoon justly doom'd to die,
Whose hand the will of Pallas had withstood,
And dared to violate the sacred wood.
All vote t' admit the steed, that vows be paid
And incense offer'd to th' offended maid.

A spacious breach is made; the town lies bare;
Some hoisting-levers, some the wheels prepare
And fasten to the horse's feet; the rest
With cables haul along th' unwieldy beast.
Each on his fellow for assistance calls;
At length the fatal fabric mounts the walls,
Big with destruction. Boys with chaplets crown'd,
And choirs of virgins, sing and dance around.
Thus rais'd aloft, and then descending down,
It enters o'er our heads, and threatens the town.
O sacred city, built by hands divine!
O valiant heroes of the Trojan line!
Four times he struck: as oft the clashing sound
Of arms was heard, and inward groans rebound.
Yet, mad with zeal, and blinded with our fate,
We haul along the horse in solemn state;
Then place the dire portent within the tow'r.
Cassandra cried, and curs'd th' unhappy hour;
Foretold our fate; but, by the god's decree,
All heard, and none believ'd the prophecy.
With branches we the fanes adorn, and waste,
In jollity, the day ordain'd to be the last.
Meantime the rapid heav'ns roll'd down the light,
And on the shaded ocean rush'd the night;
Our men, secure, nor guards nor sentries held,
But easy sleep their weary limbs compell'd.
The Grecians had embark'd their naval pow'rs
From Tenedos, and sought our well-known shores,
Safe under covert of the silent night,
And guided by th' imperial galley's light;
When Sinon, favor'd by the partial gods,
Unlock'd the horse, and op'd his dark abodes;
Restor'd to vital air our hidden foes,
Who joyful from their long confinement rose.
Tysander bold, and Sthenelus their guide,
And dire Ulysses down the cable slide:
Then Thoas, Athamas, and Pyrrhus haste;
Nor was the Podalirian hero last,
Nor injur'd Menelaus, nor the fam'd
Epeus, who the fatal engine fram'd.
A nameless crowd succeed; their forces join
T' invade the town, oppress'd with sleep and wine.
Those few they find awake first meet their fate;
Then to their fellows they unbar the gate.

“‘T was in the dead of night, when sleep repairs
Our bodies worn with toils, our minds with cares,
When Hector’s ghost before my sight appears:
A bloody shroud he seem’d, and bath’d in tears;
Such as he was, when, by Pelides slain,
Thessalian coursers dragg’d him o’er the plain.
Swoln were his feet, as when the thongs were thrust
Thro’ the bor’d holes; his body black with dust;
Unlike that Hector who return’d from toils
Of war, triumphant, in Aeacian spoils,
Or him who made the fainting Greeks retire,
And launch’d against their navy Phrygian fire.
His hair and beard stood stiffen’d with his gore;
And all the wounds he for his country bore
Now stream’d afresh, and with new purple ran.
I wept to see the visionary man,
And, while my trance continued, thus began:
‘O light of Trojans, and support of Troy,
Thy father’s champion, and thy country’s joy!
O, long expected by thy friends! from whence
Art thou so late return’d for our defense?
Do we behold thee, wearied as we are
With length of labors, and with toils of war?
After so many fun’rals of thy own
Art thou restor’d to thy declining town?
But say, what wounds are these? What new disgrace
Deforms the manly features of thy face?’

“To this the specter no reply did frame,
But answer’d to the cause for which he came,
And, groaning from the bottom of his breast,
This warning in these mournful words express’d:
‘O goddess-born! escape, by timely flight,
The flames and horrors of this fatal night.
The foes already have possess’d the wall;
Troy nods from high, and totters to her fall.
Enough is paid to Priam’s royal name,
More than enough to duty and to fame.
If by a mortal hand my father’s throne
Could be defended, ‘t was by mine alone.
Now Troy to thee commends her future state,
And gives her gods companions of thy fate:
From their assistance walls expect,
Which, wand’ring long, at last thou shalt erect.’
He said, and brought me, from their blest abodes,

The venerable statues of the gods,
With ancient Vesta from the sacred choir,
The wreaths and relics of th' immortal fire.

“Now peals of shouts come thund'ring from afar,
Cries, threats, and loud laments, and mingled war:
The noise approaches, tho' our palace stood
Aloof from streets, encompass'd with a wood.
Louder, and yet more loud, I hear th' alarms
Of human cries distinct, and clashing arms.
Fear broke my slumbers; I no longer stay,
But mount the terrace, thence the town survey,
And hearken what the frightful sounds convey.
Thus, when a flood of fire by wind is borne,
Crackling it rolls, and mows the standing corn;
Or deluges, descending on the plains,
Sweep o'er the yellow year, destroy the pains
Of lab'ring oxen and the peasant's gains;
Unroot the forest oaks, and bear away
Flocks, folds, and trees, and undistinguish'd prey:
The shepherd climbs the cliff, and sees from far
The wasteful ravage of the wat'ry war.
Then Hector's faith was manifestly clear'd,
And Grecian frauds in open light appear'd.
The palace of Deiphobus ascends
In smoky flames, and catches on his friends.
Ucalegon burns next: the seas are bright
With splendor not their own, and shine with Trojan light.
New clamors and new clangors now arise,
The sound of trumpets mix'd with fighting cries.
With frenzy seiz'd, I run to meet th' alarms,
Resolv'd on death, resolv'd to die in arms,
But first to gather friends, with them t' oppose
(If fortune favor'd) and repel the foes;
Spurr'd by my courage, by my country fir'd,
With sense of honor and revenge inspir'd.

“Pantheus, Apollo's priest, a sacred name,
Had scap'd the Grecian swords, and pass'd the flame:
With relics loaden. to my doors he fled,
And by the hand his tender grandson led.
'What hope, O Pantheus? whither can we run?
Where make a stand? and what may yet be done?'
Scarce had I said, when Pantheus, with a groan:
'Troy is no more, and Ilium was a town!

The fatal day, th' appointed hour, is come,
When wrathful Jove's irrevocable doom
Transfers the Trojan state to Grecian hands.
The fire consumes the town, the foe commands;
And armed hosts, an unexpected force,
Break from the bowels of the fatal horse.
Within the gates, proud Sinon throws about
The flames; and foes for entrance press without,
With thousand others, whom I fear to name,
More than from Argos or Mycenae came.
To sev'ral posts their parties they divide;
Some block the narrow streets, some scour the wide:
The bold they kill, th' unwary they surprise;
Who fights finds death, and death finds him who flies.
The warders of the gate but scarce maintain
Th' unequal combat, and resist in vain.'

'I heard; and Heav'n, that well-born souls inspires,
Prompts me thro' lifted swords and rising fires
To run where clashing arms and clamor calls,
And rush undaunted to defend the walls.
Ripheus and Iph'itus by my side engage,
For valor one renown'd, and one for age.
Dymas and Hypanis by moonlight knew
My motions and my mien, and to my party drew;
With young Coroebus, who by love was led
To win renown and fair Cassandra's bed,
And lately brought his troops to Priam's aid,
Forewarn'd in vain by the prophetic maid.
Whom when I saw resolv'd in arms to fall,
And that one spirit animated all:
'Brave souls!' said I, - 'but brave, alas! in vain-
Come, finish what our cruel fates ordain.
You see the desp'rate state of our affairs,
And heav'n's protecting pow'rs are deaf to pray'rs.
The passive gods behold the Greeks defile
Their temples, and abandon to the spoil
Their own abodes: we, feeble few, conspire
To save a sinking town, involv'd in fire.
Then let us fall, but fall amidst our foes:
Despair of life the means of living shows.'
So bold a speech encourag'd their desire
Of death, and added fuel to their fire.

“As hungry wolves, with raging appetite,
Scour thro’ the fields, nor fear the stormy night-
Their whelps at home expect the promis’d food,
And long to temper their dry chaps in blood-
So rush’d we forth at once; resolv’d to die,
Resolv’d, in death, the last extremes to try.
We leave the narrow lanes behind, and dare
Th’ unequal combat in the public square:
Night was our friend; our leader was despair.
What tongue can tell the slaughter of that night?
What eyes can weep the sorrows and affright?
An ancient and imperial city falls:
The streets are fill’d with frequent funerals;
Houses and holy temples float in blood,
And hostile nations make a common flood.
Not only Trojans fall; but, in their turn,
The vanquish’d triumph, and the victors mourn.
Ours take new courage from despair and night:
Confus’d the fortune is, confus’d the fight.
All parts resound with tumults, complaints, and fears;
And grisly Death in sundry shapes appears.
Androgeos fell among us, with his band,
Who thought us Grecians newly come to land.
‘From whence,’ said he, ‘my friends, this long delay?
You loiter, while the spoils are borne away:
Our ships are laden with the Trojan store;
And you, like truants, come too late ashore.’
He said, but soon corrected his mistake,
Found, by the doubtful answers which we make:
Amaz’d, he would have shunn’d th’ unequal fight;
But we, more num’rous, intercept his flight.
As when some peasant, in a bushy brake,
Has with unwary footing press’d a snake;
He starts aside, astonish’d, when he spies
His rising crest, blue neck, and rolling eyes;
So from our arms surpris’d Androgeos flies.
In vain; for him and his we compass’d round,
Possess’d with fear, unknowing of the ground,
And of their lives an easy conquest found.
Thus Fortune on our first endeavor smil’d.
Coroebus then, with youthful hopes beguil’d,
Swoln with success, and a daring mind,
This new invention fatally design’d.
‘My friends,’ said he, ‘since Fortune shows the way,
‘T is fit we should th’ auspicious guide obey.

For what has she these Grecian arms bestow'd,
But their destruction, and the Trojans' good?
Then change we shields, and their devices bear:
Let fraud supply the want of force in war.
They find us arms.' This said, himself he dress'd
In dead Androgeos' spoils, his upper vest,
His painted buckler, and his plummy crest.
Thus Ripheus, Dymas, all the Trojan train,
Lay down their own attire, and strip the slain.
Mix'd with the Greeks, we go with ill presage,
Flatter'd with hopes to glut our greedy rage;
Unknown, assaulting whom we blindly meet,
And strew with Grecian carcasses the street.
Thus while their straggling parties we defeat,
Some to the shore and safer ships retreat;
And some, oppress'd with more ignoble fear,
Remount the hollow horse, and pant in secret there.

"But, ah! what use of valor can be made,
When heav'n's propitious pow'rs refuse their aid!
Behold the royal prophetess, the fair
Cassandra, dragg'd by her dishevel'd hair,
Whom not Minerva's shrine, nor sacred bands,
In safety could protect from sacrilegious hands:
On heav'n she cast her eyes, she sigh'd, she cried-
'T was all she could- her tender arms were tied.
So sad a sight Coroebus could not bear;
But, fir'd with rage, distracted with despair,
Amid the barb'rous ravishers he flew:
Our leader's rash example we pursue.
But storms of stones, from the proud temple's height,
Pour down, and on our batter'd helms alight:
We from our friends receiv'd this fatal blow,
Who thought us Grecians, as we seem'd in show.
They aim at the mistaken crests, from high;
And ours beneath the pond'rous ruin lie.
Then, mov'd with anger and disdain, to see
Their troops dispers'd, the royal virgin free,
The Grecians rally, and their pow'rs unite,
With fury charge us, and renew the fight.
The brother kings with Ajax join their force,
And the whole squadron of Thessalian horse.

"Thus, when the rival winds their quarrel try,
Contending for the kingdom of the sky,

South, east, and west, on airy coursers borne;
The whirlwind gathers, and the woods are torn:
Then Nereus strikes the deep; the billows rise,
And, mix'd with ooze and sand, pollute the skies.
The troops we squander'd first again appear
From several quarters, and enclose the rear.
They first observe, and to the rest betray,
Our diff'rent speech; our borrow'd arms survey.
Oppress'd with odds, we fall; Coroebus first,
At Pallas' altar, by Peneleus pierc'd.
Then Ripheus follow'd, in th' unequal fight;
Just of his word, observant of the right:
Heav'n thought not so. Dymas their fate attends,
With Hypanis, mistaken by their friends.
Nor, Pantheus, thee, thy miter, nor the bands
Of awful Phoebus, sav'd from impious hands.
Ye Trojan flames, your testimony bear,
What I perform'd, and what I suffer'd there;
No sword avoiding in the fatal strife,
Expos'd to death, and prodigal of life;
Witness, ye heavens! I live not by my fault:
I strove to have deserv'd the death I sought.
But, when I could not fight, and would have died,
Borne off to distance by the growing tide,
Old Iphitus and I were hurried thence,
With Pelias wounded, and without defense.
New clamors from th' invested palace ring:
We run to die, or disengage the king.
So hot th' assault, so high the tumult rose,
While ours defend, and while the Greeks oppose
As all the Dardan and Argolic race
Had been contracted in that narrow space;
Or as all Ilium else were void of fear,
And tumult, war, and slaughter, only there.
Their targets in a tortoise cast, the foes,
Secure advancing, to the turrets rose:
Some mount the scaling ladders; some, more bold,
Swerve upwards, and by posts and pillars hold;
Their left hand gripes their bucklers in th' ascent,
While with their right they seize the battlement.
From their demolish'd tow'rs the Trojans throw
Huge heaps of stones, that, falling, crush the foe;
And heavy beams and rafters from the sides
(Such arms their last necessity provides)
And gilded roofs, come tumbling from on high,

The marks of state and ancient royalty.
The guards below, fix'd in the pass, attend
The charge undaunted, and the gate defend.
Renew'd in courage with recover'd breath,
A second time we ran to tempt our death,
To clear the palace from the foe, succeed
The weary living, and revenge the dead.

“A postern door, yet unobserv'd and free,
Join'd by the length of a blind gallery,
To the king's closet led: a way well known
To Hector's wife, while Priam held the throne,
Thro' which she brought Astyanax, unseen,
To cheer his grandsire and his grandsire's queen.
Thro' this we pass, and mount the tow'r, from whence
With unavailing arms the Trojans make defense.
From this the trembling king had oft descried
The Grecian camp, and saw their navy ride.
Beams from its lofty height with swords we hew,
Then, wrenching with our hands, th' assault renew;
And, where the rafters on the columns meet,
We push them headlong with our arms and feet.
The lightning flies not swifter than the fall,
Nor thunder louder than the ruin'd wall:
Down goes the top at once; the Greeks beneath
Are piecemeal torn, or pounded into death.
Yet more succeed, and more to death are sent;
We cease not from above, nor they below relent.
Before the gate stood Pyrrhus, threat'ning loud,
With glitt'ring arms conspicuous in the crowd.
So shines, renew'd in youth, the crested snake,
Who slept the winter in a thorny brake,
And, casting off his slough when spring returns,
Now looks aloft, and with new glory burns;
Restor'd with poisonous herbs, his ardent sides
Reflect the sun; and rais'd on spires he rides;
High o'er the grass, hissing he rolls along,
And brandishes by fits his forky tongue.
Proud Periphas, and fierce Automedon,
His father's charioteer, together run
To force the gate; the Scyrian infantry
Rush on in crowds, and the barr'd passage free.
Ent'ring the court, with shouts the skies they rend;
And flaming firebrands to the roofs ascend.
Himself, among the foremost, deals his blows,

And with his ax repeated strokes bestows
On the strong doors; then all their shoulders ply,
Till from the posts the brazen hinges fly.
He hews apace; the double bars at length
Yield to his ax and unresisted strength.
A mighty breach is made: the rooms conceal'd
Appear, and all the palace is reveal'd;
The halls of audience, and of public state,
And where the lonely queen in secret sate.
Arm'd soldiers now by trembling maids are seen,
With not a door, and scarce a space, between.
The house is fill'd with loud laments and cries,
And shrieks of women rend the vaulted skies;
The fearful matrons run from place to place,
And kiss the thresholds, and the posts embrace.
The fatal work inhuman Pyrrhus plies,
And all his father sparkles in his eyes;
Nor bars, nor fighting guards, his force sustain:
The bars are broken, and the guards are slain.
In rush the Greeks, and all the apartments fill;
Those few defendants whom they find, they kill.
Not with so fierce a rage the foaming flood
Roars, when he finds his rapid course withstood;
Bears down the dams with unresisted sway,
And sweeps the cattle and the cots away.
These eyes beheld him when he march'd between
The brother kings: I saw th' unhappy queen,
The hundred wives, and where old Priam stood,
To stain his hallow'd altar with his brood.
The fifty nuptial beds (such hopes had he,
So large a promise, of a progeny),
The posts, of plated gold, and hung with spoils,
Fell the reward of the proud victor's toils.
Where'er the raging fire had left a space,
The Grecians enter and possess the place.

“Perhaps you may of Priam's fate enquire.
He, when he saw his regal town on fire,
His ruin'd palace, and his ent'ring foes,
On ev'ry side inevitable woes,
In arms, disus'd, invests his limbs, decay'd,
Like them, with age; a late and useless aid.
His feeble shoulders scarce the weight sustain;
Loaded, not arm'd, he creeps along with pain,
Despairing of success, ambitious to be slain!

Uncover'd but by heav'n, there stood in view
An altar; near the hearth a laurel grew,
Dodder'd with age, whose boughs encompass round
The household gods, and shade the holy ground.
Here Hecuba, with all her helpless train
Of dames, for shelter sought, but sought in vain.
Driv'n like a flock of doves along the sky,
Their images they hug, and to their altars fly.
The Queen, when she beheld her trembling lord,
And hanging by his side a heavy sword,
'What rage,' she cried, 'has seiz'd my husband's mind?
What arms are these, and to what use design'd?
These times want other aids! Were Hector here,
Ev'n Hector now in vain, like Priam, would appear.
With us, one common shelter thou shalt find,
Or in one common fate with us be join'd.'
She said, and with a last salute embrac'd
The poor old man, and by the laurel plac'd.
Behold! Polites, one of Priam's sons,
Pursued by Pyrrhus, there for safety runs.
Thro' swords and foes, amaz'd and hurt, he flies
Thro' empty courts and open galleries.
Him Pyrrhus, urging with his lance, pursues,
And often reaches, and his thrusts renews.
The youth, transfix'd, with lamentable cries,
Expires before his wretched parent's eyes:
Whom gasping at his feet when Priam saw,
The fear of death gave place to nature's law;
And, shaking more with anger than with age,
'The gods,' said he, 'requite thy brutal rage!
As sure they will, barbarian, sure they must,
If there be gods in heav'n, and gods be just-
Who tak'st in wrongs an insolent delight;
With a son's death t' infect a father's sight.
Not he, whom thou and lying fame conspire
To call thee his- not he, thy vaunted sire,
Thus us'd my wretched age: the gods he fear'd,
The laws of nature and of nations heard.
He cheer'd my sorrows, and, for sums of gold,
The bloodless carcass of my Hector sold;
Pitied the woes a parent underwent,
And sent me back in safety from his tent.'

“This said, his feeble hand a javelin threw,
Which, flutt'ring, seem'd to loiter as it flew:

Just, and but barely, to the mark it held,
And faintly tinkled on the brazen shield.

“Then Pyrrhus thus: ‘Go thou from me to fate,
And to my father my foul deeds relate.
Now die!’ With that he dragg’d the trembling sire,
Slidd’ring thro’ clotted blood and holy mire,
(The mingled paste his murder’d son had made,)
Haul’d from beneath the violated shade,
And on the sacred pile the royal victim laid.
His right hand held his bloody falchion bare,
His left he twisted in his hoary hair;
Then, with a speeding thrust, his heart he found:
The lukewarm blood came rushing thro’ the wound,
And sanguine streams distain’d the sacred ground.
Thus Priam fell, and shar’d one common fate
With Troy in ashes, and his ruin’d state:
He, who the scepter of all Asia sway’d,
Whom monarchs like domestic slaves obey’d.
On the bleak shore now lies th’ abandon’d king,
A headless carcass, and a nameless thing.

“Then, not before, I felt my cruddled blood
Congeal with fear, my hair with horror stood:
My father’s image fill’d my pious mind,
Lest equal years might equal fortune find.
Again I thought on my forsaken wife,
And trembled for my son’s abandon’d life.
I look’d about, but found myself alone,
Deserted at my need! My friends were gone.
Some spent with toil, some with despair oppress’d,
Leap’d headlong from the heights; the flames consum’d the rest.
Thus, wand’ring in my way, without a guide,
The graceless Helen in the porch I spied
Of Vesta’s temple; there she lurk’d alone;
Muffled she sat, and, what she could, unknown:
But, by the flames that cast their blaze around,
That common bane of Greece and Troy I found.
For Ilium burnt, she dreads the Trojan sword;
More dreads the vengeance of her injur’d lord;
Ev’n by those gods who refug’d her abhorr’d.
Trembling with rage, the strumpet I regard,
Resolv’d to give her guilt the due reward:
‘Shall she triumphant sail before the wind,
And leave in flames unhappy Troy behind?’

Shall she her kingdom and her friends review,
In state attended with a captive crew,
While unreveng'd the good old Priam falls,
And Grecian fires consume the Trojan walls?
For this the Phrygian fields and Xanthian flood
Were swell'd with bodies, and were drunk with blood?
'T is true, a soldier can small honor gain,
And boast no conquest, from a woman slain:
Yet shall the fact not pass without applause,
Of vengeance taken in so just a cause;
The punish'd crime shall set my soul at ease,
And murm'ring manes of my friends appease.'
Thus while I rave, a gleam of pleasing light
Spread o'er the place; and, shining heav'nly bright,
My mother stood reveal'd before my sight
Never so radiant did her eyes appear;
Not her own star confess'd a light so clear:
Great in her charms, as when on gods above
She looks, and breathes herself into their love.
She held my hand, the destin'd blow to break;
Then from her rosy lips began to speak:
'My son, from whence this madness, this neglect
Of my commands, and those whom I protect?
Why this unmanly rage? Recall to mind
Whom you forsake, what pledges leave behind.
Look if your helpless father yet survive,
Or if Ascanius or Creusa live.
Around your house the greedy Grecians err;
And these had perish'd in the nightly war,
But for my presence and protecting care.
Not Helen's face, nor Paris, was in fault;
But by the gods was this destruction brought.
Now cast your eyes around, while I dissolve
The mists and films that mortal eyes involve,
Purge from your sight the dross, and make you see
The shape of each avenging deity.
Enlighten'd thus, my just commands fulfil,
Nor fear obedience to your mother's will.
Where yon disorder'd heap of ruin lies,
Stones rent from stones; where clouds of dust arise-
Amid that smother Neptune holds his place,
Below the wall's foundation drives his mace,
And heaves the building from the solid base.
Look where, in arms, imperial Juno stands
Full in the Scaean gate, with loud commands,

Urging on shore the tardy Grecian bands.
See! Pallas, of her snaky buckler proud,
Bestrides the tow'r, refulgent thro' the cloud:
See! Jove new courage to the foe supplies,
And arms against the town the partial deities.
Haste hence, my son; this fruitless labor end:
Haste, where your trembling spouse and sire attend:
Haste; and a mother's care your passage shall befriend.'
She said, and swiftly vanish'd from my sight,
Obscure in clouds and gloomy shades of night.
I look'd, I listen'd; dreadful sounds I hear;
And the dire forms of hostile gods appear.
Troy sunk in flames I saw (nor could prevent),
And Ilium from its old foundations rent;
Rent like a mountain ash, which dar'd the winds,
And stood the sturdy strokes of lab'ring hinds.
About the roots the cruel ax resounds;
The stumps are pierc'd with oft-repeated wounds:
The war is felt on high; the nodding crown
Now threatens a fall, and throws the leafy honors down.
To their united force it yields, tho' late,
And mourns with mortal groans th' approaching fate:
The roots no more their upper load sustain;
But down she falls, and spreads a ruin thro' the plain.

“Descending thence, I scape thro' foes and fire:
Before the goddess, foes and flames retire.
Arriv'd at home, he, for whose only sake,
Or most for his, such toils I undertake,
The good Anchises, whom, by timely flight,
I purpos'd to secure on Ida's height,
Refus'd the journey, resolute to die
And add his fun'erals to the fate of Troy,
Rather than exile and old age sustain.
'Go you, whose blood runs warm in ev'ry vein.
Had Heav'n decreed that I should life enjoy,
Heav'n had decreed to save unhappy Troy.
'T is, sure, enough, if not too much, for one,
Twice to have seen our Ilium overthrown.
Make haste to save the poor remaining crew,
And give this useless corpse a long adieu.
These weak old hands suffice to stop my breath;
At least the pitying foes will aid my death,
To take my spoils, and leave my body bare:
As for my sepulcher, let Heav'n take care.

'T is long since I, for my celestial wife
Loath'd by the gods, have dragg'd a ling'ring life;
Since ev'ry hour and moment I expire,
Blasted from heav'n by Jove's avenging fire.'
This oft repeated, he stood fix'd to die:
Myself, my wife, my son, my family,
Intreat, pray, beg, and raise a doleful cry-
'What, will he still persist, on death resolve,
And in his ruin all his house involve!'
He still persists his reasons to maintain;
Our pray'rs, our tears, our loud laments, are vain.

'Urg'd by despair, again I go to try
The fate of arms, resolv'd in fight to die:
'What hope remains, but what my death must give?
Can I, without so dear a father, live?
You term it prudence, what I baseness call:
Could such a word from such a parent fall?
If Fortune please, and so the gods ordain,
That nothing should of ruin'd Troy remain,
And you conspire with Fortune to be slain,
The way to death is wide, th' approaches near:
For soon relentless Pyrrhus will appear,
Reeking with Priam's blood- the wretch who slew
The son (inhuman) in the father's view,
And then the sire himself to the dire altar drew.
O goddess mother, give me back to Fate;
Your gift was undesir'd, and came too late!
Did you, for this, unhappy me convey
Thro' foes and fires, to see my house a prey?
Shall I my father, wife, and son behold,
Welt'ring in blood, each other's arms infold?
Haste! gird my sword, tho' spent and overcome:
'T is the last summons to receive our doom.
I hear thee, Fate; and I obey thy call!
Not unreveng'd the foe shall see my fall.
Restore me to the yet unfinish'd fight:
My death is wanting to conclude the night.'
Arm'd once again, my glitt'ring sword I wield,
While th' other hand sustains my weighty shield,
And forth I rush to seek th' abandon'd field.
I went; but sad Creusa stopp'd my way,
And cross the threshold in my passage lay,
Embrac'd my knees, and, when I would have gone,
Shew'd me my feeble sire and tender son:

'If death be your design, at least,' said she,
'Take us along to share your destiny.
If any farther hopes in arms remain,
This place, these pledges of your love, maintain.
To whom do you expose your father's life,
Your son's, and mine, your now forgotten wife!'
While thus she fills the house with clam'rous cries,
Our hearing is diverted by our eyes:
For, while I held my son, in the short space
Betwixt our kisses and our last embrace;
Strange to relate, from young Iulus' head
A lambent flame arose, which gently spread
Around his brows, and on his temples fed.
Amaz'd, with running water we prepare
To quench the sacred fire, and slake his hair;
But old Anchises, vers'd in omens, rear'd
His hands to heav'n, and this request preferr'd:
'If any vows, almighty Jove, can bend
Thy will; if piety can pray'rs commend,
Confirm the glad presage which thou art pleas'd to send.'
Scarce had he said, when, on our left, we hear
A peal of rattling thunder roll in air:
There shot a streaming lamp along the sky,
Which on the winged lightning seem'd to fly;
From o'er the roof the blaze began to move,
And, trailing, vanish'd in th' Idaean grove.
It swept a path in heav'n, and shone a guide,
Then in a steaming stench of sulphur died.

'The good old man with suppliant hands implor'd
The gods' protection, and their star ador'd.
'Now, now,' said he, 'my son, no more delay!
I yield, I follow where Heav'n shews the way.
Keep, O my country gods, our dwelling place,
And guard this relic of the Trojan race,
This tender child! These omens are your own,
And you can yet restore the ruin'd town.
At least accomplish what your signs foreshow:
I stand resign'd, and am prepar'd to go.'

'He said. The crackling flames appear on high.
And driving sparkles dance along the sky.
With Vulcan's rage the rising winds conspire,
And near our palace roll the flood of fire.
'Haste, my dear father, ('t is no time to wait,)

And load my shoulders with a willing freight.
Whate'er befalls, your life shall be my care;
One death, or one deliv'rance, we will share.
My hand shall lead our little son; and you,
My faithful consort, shall our steps pursue.
Next, you, my servants, heed my strict commands:
Without the walls a ruin'd temple stands,
To Ceres hallow'd once; a cypress nigh
Shoots up her venerable head on high,
By long religion kept; there bend your feet,
And in divided parties let us meet.
Our country gods, the relics, and the bands,
Hold you, my father, in your guiltless hands:
In me 't is impious holy things to bear,
Red as I am with slaughter, new from war,
Till in some living stream I cleanse the guilt
Of dire debate, and blood in battle spilt.'
Thus, ord'ring all that prudence could provide,
I clothe my shoulders with a lion's hide
And yellow spoils; then, on my bending back,
The welcome load of my dear father take;
While on my better hand Ascanius hung,
And with unequal paces tripp'd along.
Creusa kept behind; by choice we stray
Thro' ev'ry dark and ev'ry devious way.
I, who so bold and dauntless, just before,
The Grecian darts and shock of lances bore,
At ev'ry shadow now am seiz'd with fear,
Not for myself, but for the charge I bear;
Till, near the ruin'd gate arriv'd at last,
Secure, and deeming all the danger past,
A frightful noise of trampling feet we hear.
My father, looking thro' the shades, with fear,
Cried out: 'Haste, haste, my son, the foes are nigh;
Their swords and shining armor I descry.'
Some hostile god, for some unknown offense,
Had sure bereft my mind of better sense;
For, while thro' winding ways I took my flight,
And sought the shelter of the gloomy night,
Alas! I lost Creusa: hard to tell
If by her fatal destiny she fell,
Or weary sate, or wander'd with affright;
But she was lost for ever to my sight.
I knew not, or reflected, till I meet
My friends, at Ceres' now deserted seat.

We met: not one was wanting; only she
Deceiv'd her friends, her son, and wretched me.

“What mad expressions did my tongue refuse!
Whom did I not, of gods or men, accuse!
This was the fatal blow, that pain'd me more
Than all I felt from ruin'd Troy before.
Stung with my loss, and raving with despair,
Abandoning my now forgotten care,
Of counsel, comfort, and of hope bereft,
My sire, my son, my country gods I left.
In shining armor once again I sheathe
My limbs, not feeling wounds, nor fearing death.
Then headlong to the burning walls I run,
And seek the danger I was forc'd to shun.
I tread my former tracks; thro' night explore
Each passage, ev'ry street I cross'd before.
All things were full of horror and affright,
And dreadful ev'n the silence of the night.
Then to my father's house I make repair,
With some small glimpse of hope to find her there.
Instead of her, the cruel Greeks I met;
The house was fill'd with foes, with flames beset.
Driv'n on the wings of winds, whole sheets of fire,
Thro' air transported, to the roofs aspire.
From thence to Priam's palace I resort,
And search the citadel and desart court.
Then, unobserv'd, I pass by Juno's church:
A guard of Grecians had possess'd the porch;
There Phoenix and Ulysses watch prey,
And thither all the wealth of Troy convey:
The spoils which they from ransack'd houses brought,
And golden bowls from burning altars caught,
The tables of the gods, the purple vests,
The people's treasure, and the pomp of priests.
A rank of wretched youths, with pinion'd hands,
And captive matrons, in long order stands.
Then, with ungovern'd madness, I proclaim,
Thro' all the silent street, Creusa's name:
Creusa still I call; at length she hears,
And sudden thro' the shades of night appears-
Appears, no more Creusa, nor my wife,
But a pale specter, larger than the life.
Aghast, astonish'd, and struck dumb with fear,
I stood; like bristles rose my stiffen'd hair.

Then thus the ghost began to soothe my grief
'Nor tears, nor cries, can give the dead relief.
Desist, my much-lov'd lord,'t indulge your pain;
You bear no more than what the gods ordain.
My fates permit me not from hence to fly;
Nor he, the great controller of the sky.
Long wand'ring ways for you the pow'rs decree;
On land hard labors, and a length of sea.
Then, after many painful years are past,
On Latium's happy shore you shall be cast,
Where gentle Tiber from his bed beholds
The flow'ry meadows, and the feeding folds.
There end your toils; and there your fates provide
A quiet kingdom, and a royal bride:
There fortune shall the Trojan line restore,
And you for lost Creusa weep no more.
Fear not that I shall watch, with servile shame,
Th' imperious looks of some proud Grecian dame;
Or, stooping to the victor's lust, disgrace
My goddess mother, or my royal race.
And now, farewell! The parent of the gods
Restrains my fleeting soul in her abodes:
I trust our common issue to your care.'
She said, and gliding pass'd unseen in air.
I strove to speak: but horror tied my tongue;
And thrice about her neck my arms I flung,
And, thrice deceiv'd, on vain embraces hung.
Light as an empty dream at break of day,
Or as a blast of wind, she rush'd away.

“Thus having pass'd the night in fruitless pain,
I to my longing friends return again,
Amaz'd th' augmented number to behold,
Of men and matrons mix'd, of young and old;
A wretched exil'd crew together brought,
With arms appointed, and with treasure fraught,
Resolv'd, and willing, under my command,
To run all hazards both of sea and land.
The Morn began, from Ida, to display
Her rosy cheeks; and Phosphor led the day:
Before the gates the Grecians took their post,
And all pretense of late relief was lost.
I yield to Fate, unwillingly retire,
And, loaded, up the hill convey my sire.”

List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

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Dido's Appeal to Aeneas and Her Death: Book IV

But soon the queen perceives the thin disguise:
(What arts can blind a jealous woman's eyes!)
She was the first to find the secret fraud,
Before the fatal news was blaz'd abroad.
Love the first motions of the lover hears,
Quick to presage, and ev'n in safety fears.
Nor impious Fame was wanting to report
The ships repair'd, the Trojans' thick resort,
And purpose to forsake the Tyrian court.
Frantic with fear, impatient of the wound,
And impotent of mind, she roves the city round.
Less wild the Bacchanalian dames appear,
When, from afar, their nightly god they hear,
And howl about the hills, and shake the wreathy spear.
At length she finds the dear perfidious man;
Prevents his form'd excuse, and thus began:
"Base and ungrateful! could you hope to fly,
And undiscover'd scape a lover's eye?
Nor could my kindness your compassion move.
Nor plighted vows, nor dearer bands of love?
Or is the death of a despairing queen
Not worth preventing, tho' too well foreseen?
Ev'n when the wintry winds command your stay,
You dare the tempests, and defy the sea.
False as you are, suppose you were not bound
To lands unknown, and foreign coasts to sound;
Were Troy restor'd, and Priam's happy reign,
Now durst you tempt, for Troy, the raging main?
See whom you fly! am I the foe you shun?
Now, by those holy vows, so late begun,
By this right hand, (since I have nothing more
To challenge, but the faith you gave before;)
I beg you by these tears too truly shed,
By the new pleasures of our nuptial bed;
If ever Dido, when you most were kind,
Were pleasing in your eyes, or touch'd your mind;
By these my pray'rs, if pray'rs may yet have place,
Pity the fortunes of a falling race.
For you I have provok'd a tyrant's hate,
Incens'd the Libyan and the Tyrian state;
For you alone I suffer in my fame,
Bereft of honor, and expos'd to shame.

Whom have I now to trust, ungrateful guest?
(That only name remains of all the rest!)
What have I left? or whither can I fly?
Must I attend Pygmalion's cruelty,
Or till Hyarba shall in triumph lead
A queen that proudly scorn'd his proffer'd bed?
Had you deferr'd, at least, your hasty flight,
And left behind some pledge of our delight,
Some babe to bless the mother's mournful sight,
Some young Aeneas, to supply your place,
Whose features might express his father's face;
I should not then complain to live bereft
Of all my husband, or be wholly left."

Here paus'd the queen. Unmov'd he holds his eyes,
By Jove's command; nor suffer'd love to rise,
Tho' heaving in his heart; and thus at length replies:
"Fair queen, you never can enough repeat
Your boundless favors, or I own my debt;
Nor can my mind forget Eliza's name,
While vital breath inspires this mortal frame.
This only let me speak in my defense:
I never hop'd a secret flight from hence,
Much less pretended to the lawful claim
Of sacred nuptials, or a husband's name.
For, if indulgent Heav'n would leave me free,
And not submit my life to fate's decree,
My choice would lead me to the Trojan shore,
Those relics to review, their dust adore,
And Priam's ruin'd palace to restore.
But now the Delphian oracle commands,
And fate invites me to the Latian lands.
That is the promis'd place to which I steer,
And all my vows are terminated there.
If you, a Tyrian, and a stranger born,
With walls and tow'rs a Libyan town adorn,
Why may not we- like you, a foreign race-
Like you, seek shelter in a foreign place?
As often as the night obscures the skies
With humid shades, or twinkling stars arise,
Anchises' angry ghost in dreams appears,
Chides my delay, and fills my soul with fears;
And young Ascanius justly may complain
Of his defrauded and destin'd reign.
Ev'n now the herald of the gods appear'd:

Waking I saw him, and his message heard.
From Jove he came commission'd, heav'nly bright
With radiant beams, and manifest to sight
(The sender and the sent I both attest)
These walls he enter'd, and those words express'd.
Fair queen, oppose not what the gods command;
Forc'd by my fate, I leave your happy land."

Thus while he spoke, already she began,
With sparkling eyes, to view the guilty man;
From head to foot survey'd his person o'er,
Nor longer these outrageous threats forebore:
"False as thou art, and, more than false, forsworn!
Not sprung from noble blood, nor goddess-born,
But hewn from harden'd entrails of a rock!
And rough Hyrcanian tigers gave thee suck!
Why should I fawn? what have I worse to fear?
Did he once look, or lent a list'ning ear,
Sigh'd when I sobb'd, or shed one kindly tear?-
All symptoms of a base ungrateful mind,
So foul, that, which is worse, 'tis hard to find.
Of man's injustice why should I complain?
The gods, and Jove himself, behold in vain
Triumphant treason; yet no thunder flies,
Nor Juno views my wrongs with equal eyes;
Faithless is earth, and faithless are the skies!
Justice is fled, and Truth is now no more!
I sav'd the shipwreck'd exile on my shore;
With needful food his hungry Trojans fed;
I took the traitor to my throne and bed:
Fool that I was- 't is little to repeat
The rest- I stor'd and rigg'd his ruin'd fleet.
I rave, I rave! A god's command he pleads,
And makes Heav'n accessory to his deeds.
Now Lycian lots, and now the Delian god,
Now Hermes is employ'd from Jove's abode,
To warn him hence; as if the peaceful state
Of heav'nly pow'rs were touch'd with human fate!
But go! thy flight no longer I detain-
Go seek thy promis'd kingdom thro' the main!
Yet, if the heav'ns will hear my pious vow,
The faithless waves, not half so false as thou,
Or secret sands, shall sepulchers afford
To thy proud vessels, and their perjur'd lord.
Then shalt thou call on injur'd Dido's name:

Dido shall come in a black sulph'ry flame,
When death has once dissolv'd her mortal frame;
Shall smile to see the traitor vainly weep:
Her angry ghost, arising from the deep,
Shall haunt thee waking, and disturb thy sleep.
At least my shade thy punishment shall know,
And Fame shall spread the pleasing news below."

Abruptly here she stops; then turns away
Her loathing eyes, and shuns the sight of day.
Amaz'd he stood, revolving in his mind
What speech to frame, and what excuse to find.
Her fearful maids their fainting mistress led,
And softly laid her on her ivory bed.

But good Aeneas, tho' he much desir'd
To give that pity which her grief requir'd;
Tho' much he mourn'd, and labor'd with his love,
Resolv'd at length, obeys the will of Jove;
Reviews his forces: they with early care
Unmoor their vessels, and for sea prepare.
The fleet is soon afloat, in all its pride,
And well-calk'd galleys in the harbor ride.
Then oaks for oars they fell'd; or, as they stood,
Of its green arms despoil'd the growing wood,
Studious of flight. The beach is cover'd o'er
With Trojan bands, that blacken all the shore:
On ev'ry side are seen, descending down,
Thick swarms of soldiers, loaden from the town.
Thus, in battalia, march embodied ants,
Fearful of winter, and of future wants,
T' invade the corn, and to their cells convey
The plunder'd forage of their yellow prey.
The sable troops, along the narrow tracks,
Scarce bear the weighty burthen on their backs:
Some set their shoulders to the pond'rous grain;
Some guard the spoil; some lash the lagging train;
All ply their sev'ral tasks, and equal toil sustain.

What pangs the tender breast of Dido tore,
When, from the tow'r, she saw the cover'd shore,
And heard the shouts of sailors from afar,
Mix'd with the murmurs of the wat'ry war!
All-pow'rful Love! what changes canst thou cause
In human hearts, subjected to thy laws!

Once more her haughty soul the tyrant bends:
To pray'rs and mean submissions she descends.
No female arts or aids she left untried,
Nor counsels unexplor'd, before she died.
"Look, Anna! look! the Trojans crowd to sea;
They spread their canvas, and their anchors weigh.
The shouting crew their ships with garlands bind,
Invoke the sea gods, and invite the wind.
Could I have thought this threat'ning blow so near,
My tender soul had been forewarn'd to bear.
But do not you my last request deny;
With yon perfidious man your int'rest try,
And bring me news, if I must live or die.
You are his fav'rite; you alone can find
The dark recesses of his inmost mind:
In all his trusted secrets you have part,
And know the soft approaches to his heart.
Haste then, and humbly seek my haughty foe;
Tell him, I did not with the Grecians go,
Nor did my fleet against his friends employ,
Nor swore the ruin of unhappy Troy,
Nor mov'd with hands profane his father's dust:
Why should he then reject a suit so just!
Whom does he shun, and whither would he fly!
Can he this last, this only pray'r deny!
Let him at least his dang'rous flight delay,
Wait better winds, and hope a calmer sea.
The nuptials he disclaims I urge no more:
Let him pursue the promis'd Latian shore.
A short delay is all I ask him now;
A pause of grief, an interval from woe,
Till my soft soul be temper'd to sustain
Accustom'd sorrows, and inur'd to pain.
If you in pity grant this one request,
My death shall glut the hatred of his breast."
This mournful message pious Anna bears,
And seconds with her own her sister's tears:
But all her arts are still employ'd in vain;
Again she comes, and is refus'd again.
His harden'd heart nor pray'rs nor threat'nings move;
Fate, and the god, had stopp'd his ears to love.

As, when the winds their airy quarrel try,
Justling from ev'ry quarter of the sky,
This way and that the mountain oak they bend,

His boughs they shatter, and his branches rend;
With leaves and falling mast they spread the ground;
The hollow valleys echo to the sound:
Unmov'd, the royal plant their fury mocks,
Or, shaken, clings more closely to the rocks;
Far as he shoots his tow'ring head on high,
So deep in earth his fix'd foundations lie.
No less a storm the Trojan hero bears;
Thick messages and loud complaints he hears,
And bandied words, still beating on his ears.
Sighs, groans, and tears proclaim his inward pains;
But the firm purpose of his heart remains.

The wretched queen, pursued by cruel fate,
Begins at length the light of heav'n to hate,
And loathes to live. Then dire portents she sees,
To hasten on the death her soul decrees:
Strange to relate! for when, before the shrine,
She pours in sacrifice the purple wine,
The purple wine is turn'd to putrid blood,
And the white offer'd milk converts to mud.
This dire presage, to her alone reveal'd,
From all, and ev'n her sister, she conceal'd.
A marble temple stood within the grove,
Sacred to death, and to her murder'd love;
That honor'd chapel she had hung around
With snowy fleeces, and with garlands crown'd:
Oft, when she visited this lonely dome,
Strange voices issued from her husband's tomb;
She thought she heard him summon her away,
Invite her to his grave, and chide her stay.
Hourly 't is heard, when with a boding note
The solitary screech owl strains her throat,
And, on a chimney's top, or turret's height,
With songs obscene disturbs the silence of the night.
Besides, old prophecies augment her fears;
And stern Aeneas in her dreams appears,
Disdainful as by day: she seems, alone,
To wander in her sleep, thro' ways unknown,
Guideless and dark; or, in a desert plain,
To seek her subjects, and to seek in vain:
Like Pentheus, when, distracted with his fear,
He saw two suns, and double Thebes, appear;
Or mad Orestes, when his mother's ghost
Full in his face infernal torches toss'd,

And shook her snaky locks: he shuns the sight,
Flies o'er the stage, surpris'd with mortal fright;
The Furies guard the door and intercept his flight.

Now, sinking underneath a load of grief,
From death alone she seeks her last relief;
The time and means resolv'd within her breast,
She to her mournful sister thus address'd
(Dissembling hope, her cloudy front she clears,
And a false vigor in her eyes appears):
"Rejoice!" she said. "Instructed from above,
My lover I shall gain, or lose my love.
Nigh rising Atlas, next the falling sun,
Long tracts of Ethiopian climates run:
There a Massylian priestess I have found,
Honor'd for age, for magic arts renown'd:
Th' Hesperian temple was her trusted care;
'T was she supplied the wakeful dragon's fare.
She poppy seeds in honey taught to steep,
Reclaim'd his rage, and sooth'd him into sleep.
She watch'd the golden fruit; her charms unbind
The chains of love, or fix them on the mind:
She stops the torrents, leaves the channel dry,
Repels the stars, and backward bears the sky.
The yawning earth rebellows to her call,
Pale ghosts ascend, and mountain ashes fall.
Witness, ye gods, and thou my better part,
How loth I am to try this impious art!
Within the secret court, with silent care,
Erect a lofty pile, expos'd in air:
Hang on the topmost part the Trojan vest,
Spoils, arms, and presents, of my faithless guest.
Next, under these, the bridal bed be plac'd,
Where I my ruin in his arms embrac'd:
All relics of the wretch are doom'd to fire;
For so the priestess and her charms require."

Thus far she said, and farther speech forbears;
A mortal paleness in her face appears:
Yet the mistrustless Anna could not find
The secret fun'ral in these rites design'd;
Nor thought so dire a rage possess'd her mind.
Unknowing of a train conceal'd so well,
She fear'd no worse than when Sichaeus fell;
Therefore obeys. The fatal pile they rear,

Within the secret court, expos'd in air.
The cloven holms and pines are heap'd on high,
And garlands on the hollow spaces lie.
Sad cypress, vervain, yew, compose the wreath,
And ev'ry baleful green denoting death.
The queen, determin'd to the fatal deed,
The spoils and sword he left, in order spread,
And the man's image on the nuptial bed.

And now (the sacred altars plac'd around)
The priestess enters, with her hair unbound,
And thrice invokes the pow'rs below the ground.
Night, Erebus, and Chaos she proclaims,
And threefold Hecate, with her hundred names,
And three Dianas: next, she sprinkles round
With feign'd Avernian drops the hallow'd ground;
Culls hoary simples, found by Phoebe's light,
With brazen sickles reap'd at noon of night;
Then mixes baleful juices in the bowl,
And cuts the forehead of a newborn foal,
Robbing the mother's love. The destin'd queen
Observes, assisting at the rites obscene;
A leaven'd cake in her devoted hands
She holds, and next the highest altar stands:
One tender foot was shod, her other bare;
Girt was her gather'd gown, and loose her hair.
Thus dress'd, she summon'd, with her dying breath,
The heav'ns and planets conscious of her death,
And ev'ry pow'r, if any rules above,
Who minds, or who revenges, injur'd love.

“T was dead of night, when weary bodies close
Their eyes in balmy sleep and soft repose:
The winds no longer whisper thro' the woods,
Nor murm'ring tides disturb the gentle floods.
The stars in silent order mov'd around;
And Peace, with downy wings, was brooding on the ground
The flocks and herds, and party-color'd fowl,
Which haunt the woods, or swim the weedy pool,
Stretch'd on the quiet earth, securely lay,
Forgetting the past labors of the day.
All else of nature's common gift partake:
Unhappy Dido was alone awake.
Nor sleep nor ease the furious queen can find;
Sleep fled her eyes, as quiet fled her mind.

Despair, and rage, and love divide her heart;
Despair and rage had some, but love the greater part.

Then thus she said within her secret mind:
“What shall I do? what succor can I find?
Become a suppliant to Hyarba’s pride,
And take my turn, to court and be denied?
Shall I with this ungrateful Trojan go,
Forsake an empire, and attend a foe?
Himself I refug’d, and his train reliev’d-
‘T is true- but am I sure to be receiv’d?
Can gratitude in Trojan souls have place!
Laomedon still lives in all his race!
Then, shall I seek alone the churlish crew,
Or with my fleet their flying sails pursue?
What force have I but those whom scarce before
I drew reluctant from their native shore?
Will they again embark at my desire,
Once more sustain the seas, and quit their second Tyre?
Rather with steel thy guilty breast invade,
And take the fortune thou thyself hast made.
Your pity, sister, first seduc’d my mind,
Or seconded too well what I design’d.
These dear-bought pleasures had I never known,
Had I continued free, and still my own;
Avoiding love, I had not found despair,
But shar’d with salvage beasts the common air.
Like them, a lonely life I might have led,
Not mourn’d the living, nor disturb’d the dead.”
These thoughts she brooded in her anxious breast.
On board, the Trojan found more easy rest.
Resolv’d to sail, in sleep he pass’d the night;
And order’d all things for his early flight.

To whom once more the winged god appears;
His former youthful mien and shape he wears,
And with this new alarm invades his ears:
“Sleep’st thou, O goddess-born! and canst thou drown
Thy needful cares, so near a hostile town,
Beset with foes; nor hear’st the western gales
Invite thy passage, and inspire thy sails?
She harbors in her heart a furious hate,
And thou shalt find the dire effects too late;
Fix’d on revenge, and obstinate to die.
Haste swiftly hence, while thou hast pow’r to fly.

The sea with ships will soon be cover'd o'er,
And blazing firebrands kindle all the shore.
Prevent her rage, while night obscures the skies,
And sail before the purple morn arise.
Who knows what hazards thy delay may bring?
Woman's a various and a changeful thing."
Thus Hermes in the dream; then took his flight
Aloft in air unseen, and mix'd with night.

Twice warn'd by the celestial messenger,
The pious prince arose with hasty fear;
Then rous'd his drowsy train without delay:
"Haste to your banks; your crooked anchors weigh,
And spread your flying sails, and stand to sea.
A god commands: he stood before my sight,
And urg'd us once again to speedy flight.
O sacred pow'r, what pow'r soe'er thou art,
To thy blest orders I resign my heart.
Lead thou the way; protect thy Trojan bands,
And prosper the design thy will commands."
He said: and, drawing forth his flaming sword,
His thund'ring arm divides the many-twisted cord.
An emulating zeal inspires his train:
They run; they snatch; they rush into the main.
With headlong haste they leave the desert shores,
And brush the liquid seas with lab'ring oars.

Aurora now had left her saffron bed,
And beams of early light the heav'ns o'erspread,
When, from a tow'r, the queen, with wakeful eyes,
Saw day point upward from the rosy skies.
She look'd to seaward; but the sea was void,
And scarce in ken the sailing ships descried.
Stung with despite, and furious with despair,
She struck her trembling breast, and tore her hair.
"And shall th' ungrateful traitor go," she said,
"My land forsaken, and my love betray'd?
Shall we not arm? not rush from ev'ry street,
To follow, sink, and burn his perjur'd fleet?
Haste, haul my galleys out! pursue the foe!
Bring flaming brands! set sail, and swiftly row!
What have I said? where am I? Fury turns
My brain; and my distemper'd bosom burns.
Then, when I gave my person and my throne,
This hate, this rage, had been more timely shown.

See now the promis'd faith, the vaunted name,
The pious man, who, rushing thro' the flame,
Preserv'd his gods, and to the Phrygian shore
The burthen of his feeble father bore!
I should have torn him piecemeal; strow'd in floods
His scatter'd limbs, or left expos'd in woods;
Destroy'd his friends and son; and, from the fire,
Have set the reeking boy before the sire.
Events are doubtful, which on battles wait:
Yet where's the doubt, to souls secure of fate?
My Tyrians, at their injur'd queen's command,
Had toss'd their fires amid the Trojan band;
At once extinguish'd all the faithless name;
And I myself, in vengeance of my shame,
Had fall'n upon the pile, to mend the fun'ral flame.
Thou Sun, who view'st at once the world below;
Thou Juno, guardian of the nuptial vow;
Thou Hecate hearken from thy dark abodes!
Ye Furies, fiends, and violated gods,
All pow'rs invok'd with Dido's dying breath,
Attend her curses and avenge her death!
If so the Fates ordain, Jove commands,
Th' ungrateful wretch should find the Latian lands,
Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,
His peaceful entrance with dire arms oppose:
Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
His men discourag'd, and himself expell'd,
Let him for succor sue from place to place,
Torn from his subjects, and his son's embrace.
First, let him see his friends in battle slain,
And their untimely fate lament in vain;
And when, at length, the cruel war shall cease,
On hard conditions may he buy his peace:
Nor let him then enjoy supreme command;
But fall, untimely, by some hostile hand,
And lie unburied on the barren sand!
These are my pray'rs, and this my dying will;
And you, my Tyrians, ev'ry curse fulfil.
Perpetual hate and mortal wars proclaim,
Against the prince, the people, and the name.
These grateful off'rings on my grave bestow;
Nor league, nor love, the hostile nations know!
Now, and from hence, in ev'ry future age,
When rage excites your arms, and strength supplies the rage
Rise some avenger of our Libyan blood,

With fire and sword pursue the perjur'd brood;
Our arms, our seas, our shores, oppos'd to theirs;
And the same hate descend on all our heirs!"

This said, within her anxious mind she weighs
The means of cutting short her odious days.
Then to Sichaeus' nurse she briefly said
(For, when she left her country, hers was dead):
"Go, Barce, call my sister. Let her care
The solemn rites of sacrifice prepare;
The sheep, and all th' atoning off'rings bring,
Sprinkling her body from the crystal spring
With living drops; then let her come, and thou
With sacred fillets bind thy hoary brow.
Thus will I pay my vows to Stygian Jove,
And end the cares of my disastrous love;
Then cast the Trojan image on the fire,
And, as that burns, my passions shall expire."

The nurse moves onward, with officious care,
And all the speed her aged limbs can bear.
But furious Dido, with dark thoughts involv'd,
Shook at the mighty mischief she resolv'd.
With livid spots distinguish'd was her face;
Red were her rolling eyes, and discompos'd her pace;
Ghastly she gaz'd, with pain she drew her breath,
And nature shiver'd at approaching death.

Then swiftly to the fatal place she pass'd,
And mounts the fun'ral pile with furious haste;
Unsheathes the sword the Trojan left behind
(Not for so dire an enterprise design'd).
But when she view'd the garments loosely spread,
Which once he wore, and saw the conscious bed,
She paus'd, and with a sigh the robes embrac'd;
Then on the couch her trembling body cast,
Repress'd the ready tears, and spoke her last:
"Dear pledges of my love, while Heav'n so pleas'd,
Receive a soul, of mortal anguish eas'd:
My fatal course is finish'd; and I go,
A glorious name, among the ghosts below.
A lofty city by my hands is rais'd,
Pygmalion punish'd, and my lord appeas'd.
What could my fortune have afforded more,
Had the false Trojan never touch'd my shore!"

Then kiss'd the couch; and, "Must I die," she said,
"And unreveng'd? 'T is doubly to be dead!
Yet ev'n this death with pleasure I receive:
On any terms, 't is better than to live.
These flames, from far, may the false Trojan view;
These boding omens his base flight pursue!"

She said, and struck; deep enter'd in her side
The piercing steel, with reeking purple dyed:
Clogg'd in the wound the cruel weapon stands;
The spouting blood came streaming on her hands.
Her sad attendants saw the deadly stroke,
And with loud cries the sounding palace shook.
Distracted, from the fatal sight they fled,
And thro' the town the dismal rumor spread.
First from the frighted court the yell began;
Redoubled, thence from house to house it ran:
The groans of men, with shrieks, laments, and cries
Of mixing women, mount the vaulted skies.
Not less the clamor, than if- ancient Tyre,
Or the new Carthage, set by foes on fire-
The rolling ruin, with their lov'd abodes,
Involv'd the blazing temples of their gods.

Her sister hears; and, furious with despair,
She beats her breast, and rends her yellow hair,
And, calling on Eliza's name aloud,
Runs breathless to the place, and breaks the crowd.
"Was all that pomp of woe for this prepar'd;
These fires, this fun'ral pile, these altars rear'd?
Was all this train of plots contriv'd," said she,
"All only to deceive unhappy me?
Which is the worst? Didst thou in death pretend
To scorn thy sister, or delude thy friend?
Thy summon'd sister, and thy friend, had come;
One sword had serv'd us both, one common tomb:
Was I to raise the pile, the pow'rs invoke,
Not to be present at the fatal stroke?
At once thou hast destroy'd thyself and me,
Thy town, thy senate, and thy colony!
Bring water; bathe the wound; while I in death
Lay close my lips to hers, and catch the flying breath."
This said, she mounts the pile with eager haste,
And in her arms the gasping queen embrac'd;
Her temples chaf'd; and her own garments tore,

To stanch the streaming blood, and cleanse the gore.
Thrice Dido tried to raise her drooping head,
And, fainting thrice, fell grov'ling on the bed;
Thrice op'd her heavy eyes, and sought the light,
But, having found it, sicken'd at the sight,
And clos'd her lids at last in endless night.

Then Juno, grieving that she should sustain
A death so ling'ring, and so full of pain,
Sent Iris down, to free her from the strife
Of lab'ring nature, and dissolve her life.
For since she died, not doom'd by Heav'n's decree,
Or her own crime, but human casualty,
And rage of love, that plung'd her in despair,
The Sisters had not cut the topmost hair,
Which Proserpine and they can only know;
Nor made her sacred to the shades below.
Downward the various goddess took her flight,
And drew a thousand colors from the light;
Then stood above the dying lover's head,
And said: "I thus devote thee to the dead.
This off'ring to th' infernal gods I bear."
Thus while she spoke, she cut the fatal hair:
The struggling soul was loos'd, and life dissolv'd in air.

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Aeneas in the Underworld: Book VI

He said, and wept; then spread his sails before
The winds, and reach'd at length the Cumaean shore:
Their anchors dropp'd, his crew the vessels moor.
They turn their heads to sea, their sterns to land,
And greet with greedy joy th' Italian strand.
Some strike from clashing flints their fiery seed;
Some gather sticks, the kindled flames to feed,
Or search for hollow trees, and fell the woods,
Or trace thro' valleys the discover'd floods.
Thus, while their sev'ral charges they fulfil,
The pious prince ascends the sacred hill
Where Phoebus is ador'd; and seeks the shade
Which hides from sight his venerable maid.
Deep in a cave the Sibyl makes abode;
Thence full of fate returns, and of the god.
Thro' Trivia's grove they walk; and now behold,
And enter now, the temple roof'd with gold.
When Daedalus, to fly the Cretan shore,
His heavy limbs on jointed pinions bore,
(The first who sail'd in air,) 't is sung by Fame,
To the Cumaean coast at length he came,
And here alighting, built this costly frame.
Inscrib'd to Phoebus, here he hung on high
The steerage of his wings, that cut the sky:
Then o'er the lofty gate his art emboss'd
Androgeos' death, and off'rings to his ghost;
Sev'n youths from Athens yearly sent, to meet
The fate appointed by revengeful Crete.
And next to those the dreadful urn was plac'd,
In which the destin'd names by lots were cast:
The mournful parents stand around in tears,
And rising Crete against their shore appears.
There too, in living sculpture, might be seen
The mad affection of the Cretan queen;
Then how she cheats her bellowing lover's eye;
The rushing leap, the doubtful progeny,
The lower part a beast, a man above,
The monument of their polluted love.
Not far from thence he grav'd the wondrous maze,
A thousand doors, a thousand winding ways:
Here dwells the monster, hid from human view,
Not to be found, but by the faithful clew;

Till the kind artist, mov'd with pious grief,
Lent to the loving maid this last relief,
And all those erring paths describ'd so well
That Theseus conquer'd and the monster fell.
Here hapless Icarus had found his part,
Had not the father's grief restrain'd his art.
He twice assay'd to cast his son in gold;
Twice from his hands he dropp'd the forming mold.

All this with wond'ring eyes Aeneas view'd;
Each varying object his delight renew'd:
Eager to read the rest- Achates came,
And by his side the mad divining dame,
The priestess of the god, Deiphobe her name.
"Time suffers not," she said, "to feed your eyes
With empty pleasures; haste the sacrifice.
Sev'n bullocks, yet unyok'd, for Phoebus choose,
And for Diana sev'n unspotted ewes."
This said, the servants urge the sacred rites,
While to the temple she the prince invites.
A spacious cave, within its farthest part,
Was hew'd and fashion'd by laborious art
Thro' the hill's hollow sides: before the place,
A hundred doors a hundred entries grace;
As many voices issue, and the sound
Of Sybil's words as many times rebound.
Now to the mouth they come. Aloud she cries:
"This is the time; enquire your destinies.
He comes; behold the god!" Thus while she said,
(And shiv'ring at the sacred entry stay'd,)
Her color chang'd; her face was not the same,
And hollow groans from her deep spirit came.
Her hair stood up; convulsive rage possess'd
Her trembling limbs, and heav'd her lab'ring breast.
Greater than humankind she seem'd to look,
And with an accent more than mortal spoke.
Her staring eyes with sparkling fury roll;
When all the god came rushing on her soul.
Swiftly she turn'd, and, foaming as she spoke:
"Why this delay?" she cried- "the pow'rs invoke!
Thy pray'rs alone can open this abode;
Else vain are my demands, and dumb the god."

She said no more. The trembling Trojans hear,
O'erspread with a damp sweat and holy fear.

The prince himself, with awful dread possess'd,
His vows to great Apollo thus address'd:
"Indulgent god, propitious pow'r to Troy,
Swift to relieve, unwilling to destroy,
Directed by whose hand the Dardan dart
Pierc'd the proud Grecian's only mortal part:
Thus far, by fate's decrees and thy commands,
Thro' ambient seas and thro' devouring sands,
Our exil'd crew has sought th' Ausonian ground;
And now, at length, the flying coast is found.
Thus far the fate of Troy, from place to place,
With fury has pursued her wand'ring race.
Here cease, ye pow'rs, and let your vengeance end:
Troy is no more, and can no more offend.
And thou, O sacred maid, inspir'd to see
Th' event of things in dark futurity;
Give me what Heav'n has promis'd to my fate,
To conquer and command the Latian state;
To fix my wand'ring gods, and find a place
For the long exiles of the Trojan race.
Then shall my grateful hands a temple rear
To the twin gods, with vows and solemn pray'r;
And annual rites, and festivals, and games,
Shall be perform'd to their auspicious names.
Nor shalt thou want thy honors in my land;
For there thy faithful oracles shall stand,
Preserv'd in shrines; and ev'ry sacred lay,
Which, by thy mouth, Apollo shall convey:
All shall be treasur'd by a chosen train
Of holy priests, and ever shall remain.
But O! commit not thy prophetic mind
To flitting leaves, the sport of ev'ry wind,
Lest they disperse in air our empty fate;
Write not, but, what the pow'rs ordain, relate."

Struggling in vain, impatient of her load,
And lab'ring underneath the pond'rous god,
The more she strove to shake him from her breast,
With more and far superior force he press'd;
Commands his entrance, and, without control,
Usurps her organs and inspires her soul.
Now, with a furious blast, the hundred doors
Ope of themselves; a rushing whirlwind roars
Within the cave, and Sibyl's voice restores:
"Escap'd the dangers of the wat'ry reign,

Yet more and greater ills by land remain.
The coast, so long desir'd (nor doubt th' event),
Thy troops shall reach, but, having reach'd, repent.
Wars, horrid wars, I view- a field of blood,
And Tiber rolling with a purple flood.
Simois nor Xanthus shall be wanting there:
A new Achilles shall in arms appear,
And he, too, goddess-born. Fierce Juno's hate,
Added to hostile force, shall urge thy fate.
To what strange nations shalt not thou resort,
Driv'n to solicit aid at ev'ry court!
The cause the same which Ilium once oppress'd;
A foreign mistress, and a foreign guest.
But thou, secure of soul, unbent with woes,
The more thy fortune frowns, the more oppose.
The dawns of thy safety shall be shown
From whence thou least shalt hope, a Grecian town."

Thus, from the dark recess, the Sibyl spoke,
And the resisting air the thunder broke;
The cave rebellow'd, and the temple shook.
Th' ambiguous god, who rul'd her lab'ring breast,
In these mysterious words his mind express'd;
Some truths reveal'd, in terms involv'd the rest.
At length her fury fell, her foaming ceas'd,
And, ebbing in her soul, the god decreas'd.
Then thus the chief: "No terror to my view,
No frightful face of danger can be new.
Inur'd to suffer, and resolv'd to dare,
The Fates, without my pow'r, shall be without my care.
This let me crave, since near your grove the road
To hell lies open, and the dark abode
Which Acheron surrounds, th' innavigable flood;
Conduct me thro' the regions void of light,
And lead me longing to my father's sight.
For him, a thousand dangers I have sought,
And, rushing where the thickest Grecians fought,
Safe on my back the sacred burthen brought.
He, for my sake, the raging ocean tried,
And wrath of Heav'n, my still auspicious guide,
And bore beyond the strength decrepid age supplied.
Oft, since he breath'd his last, in dead of night
His reverend image stood before my sight;
Enjoin'd to seek, below, his holy shade;
Conducted there by your unerring aid.

But you, if pious minds by pray'rs are won,
Oblige the father, and protect the son.
Yours is the pow'r; nor Proserpine in vain
Has made you priestess of her nightly reign.
If Orpheus, arm'd with his enchanting lyre,
The ruthless king with pity could inspire,
And from the shades below redeem his wife;
If Pollux, off'ring his alternate life,
Could free his brother, and can daily go
By turns aloft, by turns descend below-
Why name I Theseus, or his greater friend,
Who trod the downward path, and upward could ascend?
Not less than theirs from Jove my lineage came;
My mother greater, my descent the same."
So pray'd the Trojan prince, and, while he pray'd,
His hand upon the holy altar laid.

Then thus replied the prophetess divine:
"O goddess-born of great Anchises' line,
The gates of hell are open night and day;
Smooth the descent, and easy is the way:
But to return, and view the cheerful skies,
In this the task and mighty labor lies.
To few great Jupiter imparts this grace,
And those of shining worth and heav'nly race.
Betwixt those regions and our upper light,
Deep forests and impenetrable night
Possess the middle space: th' infernal bounds
Cocytus, with his sable waves, surrounds.
But if so dire a love your soul invades,
As twice below to view the trembling shades;
If you so hard a toil will undertake,
As twice to pass th' innavigable lake;
Receive my counsel. In the neighb'ring grove
There stands a tree; the queen of Stygian Jove
Claims it her own; thick woods and gloomy night
Conceal the happy plant from human sight.
One bough it bears; but (wondrous to behold!)
The ductile rind and leaves of radiant gold:
This from the vulgar branches must be torn,
And to fair Proserpine the present borne,
Ere leave be giv'n to tempt the nether skies.
The first thus rent a second will arise,
And the same metal the same room supplies.
Look round the wood, with lifted eyes, to see

The lurking gold upon the fatal tree:
Then rend it off, as holy rites command;
The willing metal will obey thy hand,
Following with ease, if favor'd by thy fate,
Thou art foredoom'd to view the Stygian state:
If not, no labor can the tree constrain;
And strength of stubborn arms and steel are vain.
Besides, you know not, while you here attend,
Th' unworthy fate of your unhappy friend:
Breathless he lies; and his unburied ghost,
Depriv'd of fun'ral rites, pollutes your host.
Pay first his pious dues; and, for the dead,
Two sable sheep around his hearse be led;
Then, living turfs upon his body lay:
This done, securely take the destin'd way,
To find the regions destitute of day."

She said, and held her peace. Aeneas went
Sad from the cave, and full of discontent,
Unknowing whom the sacred Sibyl meant.
Achates, the companion of his breast,
Goes grieving by his side, with equal cares oppress'd.
Walking, they talk'd, and fruitlessly divin'd
What friend the priestess by those words design'd.
But soon they found an object to deplore:
Misenus lay extended on the shore;
Son of the God of Winds: none so renown'd
The warrior trumpet in the field to sound;
With breathing brass to kindle fierce alarms,
And rouse to dare their fate in honorable arms.
He serv'd great Hector, and was ever near,
Not with his trumpet only, but his spear.
But by Pelides' arms when Hector fell,
He chose Aeneas; and he chose as well.
Swoln with applause, and aiming still at more,
He now provokes the sea gods from the shore;
With envy Triton heard the martial sound,
And the bold champion, for his challenge, drown'd;
Then cast his mangled carcass on the strand:
The gazing crowd around the body stand.
All weep; but most Aeneas mourns his fate,
And hastens to perform the funeral state.
In altar-wise, a stately pile they rear;
The basis broad below, and top advanc'd in air.
An ancient wood, fit for the work design'd,

(The shady covert of the salvage kind,)
The Trojans found: the sounding ax is plied;
Firs, pines, and pitch trees, and the tow'ring pride
Of forest ashes, feel the fatal stroke,
And piercing wedges cleave the stubborn oak.
Huge trunks of trees, fell'd from the steepy crown
Of the bare mountains, roll with ruin down.
Arm'd like the rest the Trojan prince appears,
And by his pious labor urges theirs.

Thus while he wrought, revolving in his mind
The ways to compass what his wish design'd,
He cast his eyes upon the gloomy grove,
And then with vows implor'd the Queen of Love:
"O may thy pow'r, propitious still to me,
Conduct my steps to find the fatal tree,
In this deep forest; since the Sibyl's breath
Foretold, alas! too true, Misenus' death."
Scarce had he said, when, full before his sight,
Two doves, descending from their airy flight,
Secure upon the grassy plain alight.
He knew his mother's birds; and thus he pray'd:
"Be you my guides, with your auspicious aid,
And lead my footsteps, till the branch be found,
Whose glitt'ring shadow gilds the sacred ground.
And thou, great parent, with celestial care,
In this distress be present to my pray'r!"
Thus having said, he stopp'd with watchful sight,
Observing still the motions of their flight,
What course they took, what happy signs they shew.
They fed, and, flutt'ring, by degrees withdrew
Still farther from the place, but still in view:
Hopping and flying, thus they led him on
To the slow lake, whose baleful stench to shun
They wing'd their flight aloft; then, stooping low,
Perch'd on the double tree that bears the golden bough.
Thro' the green leafs the glitt'ring shadows glow;
As, on the sacred oak, the wintry mistletoe,
Where the proud mother views her precious brood,
And happier branches, which she never sow'd.
Such was the glitt'ring; such the ruddy rind,
And dancing leaves, that wanton'd in the wind.
He seiz'd the shining bough with griping hold,
And rent away, with ease, the ling'ring gold;
Then to the Sibyl's palace bore the prize.

Meantime the Trojan troops, with weeping eyes,
To dead Misenus pay his obsequies.
First, from the ground a lofty pile they rear,
Of pitch trees, oaks, and pines, and unctuous fir:
The fabric's front with cypress twigs they strew,
And stick the sides with boughs of baleful yew.
The topmost part his glitt'ring arms adorn;
Warm waters, then, in brazen caldrons borne,
Are pour'd to wash his body, joint by joint,
And fragrant oils the stiffen'd limbs anoint.
With groans and cries Misenus they deplore:
Then on a bier, with purple cover'd o'er,
The breathless body, thus bewail'd, they lay,
And fire the pile, their faces turn'd away-
Such reverend rites their fathers us'd to pay.
Pure oil and incense on the fire they throw,
And fat of victims, which his friends bestow.
These gifts the greedy flames to dust devour;
Then on the living coals red wine they pour;
And, last, the relics by themselves dispose,
Which in a brazen urn the priests inclose.
Old Corynaeus compass'd thrice the crew,
And dipp'd an olive branch in holy dew;
Which thrice he sprinkled round, and thrice aloud
Invok'd the dead, and then dismissed the crowd.
But good Aeneas order'd on the shore
A stately tomb, whose top a trumpet bore,
A soldier's fauchion, and a seaman's oar.
Thus was his friend interr'd; and deathless fame
Still to the lofty cape consigns his name.
These rites perform'd, the prince, without delay,
Hastes to the nether world his destin'd way.
Deep was the cave; and, downward as it went
From the wide mouth, a rocky rough descent;
And here th' access a gloomy grove defends,
And there th' unnavigable lake extends,
O'er whose unhappy waters, void of light,
No bird presumes to steer his airy flight;
Such deadly stenches from the depths arise,
And steaming sulphur, that infects the skies.
From hence the Grecian bards their legends make,
And give the name Avernus to the lake.
Four sable bullocks, in the yoke untaught,
For sacrifice the pious hero brought.
The priestess pours the wine betwixt their horns;

Then cuts the curling hair; that first oblation burns,
Invoking Hecate hither to repair:
A pow'rful name in hell and upper air.
The sacred priests with ready knives bereave
The beasts of life, and in full bowls receive
The streaming blood: a lamb to Hell and Night
(The sable wool without a streak of white)
Aeneas offers; and, by fate's decree,
A barren heifer, Proserpine, to thee,
With holocausts he Pluto's altar fills;
Sev'n brawny bulls with his own hand he kills;
Then on the broiling entrails oil he pours;
Which, ointed thus, the raging flame devours.
Late the nocturnal sacrifice begun,
Nor ended till the next returning sun.
Then earth began to bellow, trees to dance,
And howling dogs in glimm'ring light advance,
Ere Hecate came. "Far hence be souls profane!"
The Sibyl cried, "and from the grove abstain!
Now, Trojan, take the way thy fates afford;
Assume thy courage, and unsheathe thy sword."
She said, and pass'd along the gloomy space;
The prince pursued her steps with equal pace.

Ye realms, yet unreveal'd to human sight,
Ye gods who rule the regions of the night,
Ye gliding ghosts, permit me to relate
The mystic wonders of your silent state!

Obscure they went thro' dreary shades, that led
Along the waste dominions of the dead.
Thus wander travelers in woods by night,
By the moon's doubtful and malignant light,
When Jove in dusky clouds involves the skies,
And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes.

Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell,
Revengeful Cares and sullen Sorrows dwell,
And pale Diseases, and repining Age,
Want, Fear, and Famine's unresisted rage;
Here Toils, and Death, and Death's half-brother, Sleep,
Forms terrible to view, their sentry keep;
With anxious Pleasures of a guilty mind,
Deep Frauds before, and open Force behind;
The Furies' iron beds; and Strife, that shakes

Her hissing tresses and unfolds her snakes.
Full in the midst of this infernal road,
An elm displays her dusky arms abroad:
The God of Sleep there hides his heavy head,
And empty dreams on ev'ry leaf are spread.
Of various forms unnumber'd specters more,
Centaur, and double shapes, besiege the door.
Before the passage, horrid Hydra stands,
And Briareus with all his hundred hands;
Gorgons, Geryon with his triple frame;
And vain Chimaera vomits empty flame.
The chief unsheath'd his shining steel, prepar'd,
Tho' seiz'd with sudden fear, to force the guard,
Off'ring his brandish'd weapon at their face;
Had not the Sibyl stopp'd his eager pace,
And told him what those empty phantoms were:
Forms without bodies, and impassive air.
Hence to deep Acheron they take their way,
Whose troubled eddies, thick with ooze and clay,
Are whirl'd aloft, and in Cocytus lost.
There Charon stands, who rules the dreary coast-
A sordid god: down from his hoary chin
A length of beard descends, uncomb'd, unclean;
His eyes, like hollow furnaces on fire;
A girdle, foul with grease, binds his obscene attire.
He spreads his canvas; with his pole he steers;
The freights of flitting ghosts in his thin bottom bears.
He look'd in years; yet in his years were seen
A youthful vigor and autumnal green.
An airy crowd came rushing where he stood,
Which fill'd the margin of the fatal flood:
Husbands and wives, boys and unmarried maids,
And mighty heroes' more majestic shades,
And youths, intomb'd before their fathers' eyes,
With hollow groans, and shrieks, and feeble cries.
Thick as the leaves in autumn strow the woods,
Or fowls, by winter forc'd, forsake the floods,
And wing their hasty flight to happier lands;
Such, and so thick, the shiv'ring army stands,
And press for passage with extended hands.
Now these, now those, the surly boatman bore:
The rest he drove to distance from the shore.
The hero, who beheld with wond'ring eyes
The tumult mix'd with shrieks, laments, and cries,
Ask'd of his guide, what the rude concourse meant;

Why to the shore the thronging people bent;
What forms of law among the ghosts were us'd;
Why some were ferried o'er, and some refus'd.

“Son of Anchises, offspring of the gods,”
The Sibyl said, “you see the Stygian floods,
The sacred stream which heav'n's imperial state
Attests in oaths, and fears to violate.
The ghosts rejected are th' unhappy crew
Depriv'd of sepulchers and fun'ral due:
The boatman, Charon; those, the buried host,
He ferries over to the farther coast;
Nor dares his transport vessel cross the waves
With such whose bones are not compos'd in graves.
A hundred years they wander on the shore;
At length, their penance done, are wafted o'er.”
The Trojan chief his forward pace repress'd,
Revolving anxious thoughts within his breast,
He saw his friends, who, whelm'd beneath the waves,
Their fun'ral honors claim'd, and ask'd their quiet graves.
The lost Leucaspis in the crowd he knew,
And the brave leader of the Lycian crew,
Whom, on the Tyrrhene seas, the tempests met;
The sailors master'd, and the ship o'erreset.

Amidst the spirits, Palinurus press'd,
Yet fresh from life, a new-admitted guest,
Who, while he steering view'd the stars, and bore
His course from Afric to the Latian shore,
Fell headlong down. The Trojan fix'd his view,
And scarcely thro' the gloom the sullen shadow knew.
Then thus the prince: “What envious pow'r, O friend,
Brought your lov'd life to this disastrous end?
For Phoebus, ever true in all he said,
Has in your fate alone my faith betray'd.
The god foretold you should not die, before
You reach'd, secure from seas, th' Italian shore.
Is this th' unerring pow'r?” The ghost replied;
“Nor Phoebus flatter'd, nor his answers lied;
Nor envious gods have sent me to the deep:
But, while the stars and course of heav'n I keep,
My wearied eyes were seiz'd with fatal sleep.
I fell; and, with my weight, the helm constrain'd
Was drawn along, which yet my gripe retain'd.
Now by the winds and raging waves I swear,

Your safety, more than mine, was then my care;
Lest, of the guide bereft, the rudder lost,
Your ship should run against the rocky coast.
Three blust'ring nights, borne by the southern blast,
I floated, and discover'd land at last:
High on a mounting wave my head I bore,
Forcing my strength, and gath'ring to the shore.
Panting, but past the danger, now I seiz'd
The craggy cliffs, and my tir'd members eas'd.
While, cumber'd with my dropping clothes, I lay,
The cruel nation, covetous of prey,
Stain'd with my blood th' inhospitable coast;
And now, by winds and waves, my lifeless limbs are toss'd:
Which O avert, by yon ethereal light,
Which I have lost for this eternal night!
Or, if by dearer ties you may be won,
By your dead sire, and by your living son,
Redeem from this reproach my wand'ring ghost;
Or with your navy seek the Velin coast,
And in a peaceful grave my corpse compose;
Or, if a nearer way your mother shows,
Without whose aid you durst not undertake
This frightful passage o'er the Stygian lake,
Lend to this wretch your hand, and waft him o'er
To the sweet banks of yon forbidden shore.”
Scarce had he said, the prophetess began:
“What hopes delude thee, miserable man?
Think'st thou, thus unintomb'd, to cross the floods,
To view the Furies and infernal gods,
And visit, without leave, the dark abodes?
Attend the term of long revolving years;
Fate, and the dooming gods, are deaf to tears.
This comfort of thy dire misfortune take:
The wrath of Heav'n, inflicted for thy sake,
With vengeance shall pursue th' inhuman coast,
Till they propitiate thy offended ghost,
And raise a tomb, with vows and solemn pray'r;
And Palinurus' name the place shall bear.”
This calm'd his cares; sooth'd with his future fame,
And pleas'd to hear his propagated name.

Now nearer to the Stygian lake they draw:
Whom, from the shore, the surly boatman saw;
Observ'd their passage thro' the shady wood,
And mark'd their near approaches to the flood.

Then thus he call'd aloud, inflam'd with wrath:
"Mortal, whate'er, who this forbidden path
In arms presum'st to tread, I charge thee, stand,
And tell thy name, and bus'ness in the land.
Know this, the realm of night- the Stygian shore:
My boat conveys no living bodies o'er;
Nor was I pleas'd great Theseus once to bear,
Who forc'd a passage with his pointed spear,
Nor strong Alcides- men of mighty fame,
And from th' immortal gods their lineage came.
In fetters one the barking porter tied,
And took him trembling from his sov'reign's side:
Two sought by force to seize his beauteous bride."
To whom the Sibyl thus: "Compose thy mind;
Nor frauds are here contriv'd, nor force design'd.
Still may the dog the wand'ring troops constrain
Of airy ghosts, and vex the guilty train,
And with her grisly lord his lovely queen remain.
The Trojan chief, whose lineage is from Jove,
Much fam'd for arms, and more for filial love,
Is sent to seek his sire in your Elysian grove.
If neither piety, nor Heav'n's command,
Can gain his passage to the Stygian strand,
This fatal present shall prevail at least."
Then shew'd the shining bough, conceal'd within her vest.
No more was needful: for the gloomy god
Stood mute with awe, to see the golden rod;
Admir'd the destin'd off'ring to his queen-
A venerable gift, so rarely seen.
His fury thus appeas'd, he puts to land;
The ghosts forsake their seats at his command:
He clears the deck, receives the mighty freight;
The leaky vessel groans beneath the weight.
Slowly she sails, and scarcely stems the tides;
The pressing water pours within her sides.
His passengers at length are wafted o'er,
Expos'd, in muddy weeds, upon the miry shore.

No sooner landed, in his den they found
The triple porter of the Stygian sound,
Grim Cerberus, who soon began to rear
His crested snakes, and arm'd his bristling hair.
The prudent Sibyl had before prepar'd
A sop, in honey steep'd, to charm the guard;
Which, mix'd with pow'rful drugs, she cast before

His greedy grinning jaws, just op'd to roar.
With three enormous mouths he gapes; and straight,
With hunger press'd, devours the pleasing bait.
Long draughts of sleep his monstrous limbs enslave;
He reels, and, falling, fills the spacious cave.
The keeper charm'd, the chief without delay
Pass'd on, and took th' irremeable way.
Before the gates, the cries of babes new born,
Whom fate had from their tender mothers torn,
Assault his ears: then those, whom form of laws
Condemn'd to die, when traitors judg'd their cause.
Nor want they lots, nor judges to review
The wrongful sentence, and award a new.
Minos, the strict inquisitor, appears;
And lives and crimes, with his assessors, hears.
Round in his urn the blended balls he rolls,
Absolves the just, and dooms the guilty souls.
The next, in place and punishment, are they
Who prodigally throw their souls away;
Fools, who, repining at their wretched state,
And loathing anxious life, suborn'd their fate.
With late repentance now they would retrieve
The bodies they forsook, and wish to live;
Their pains and poverty desire to bear,
To view the light of heav'n, and breathe the vital air:
But fate forbids; the Stygian floods oppose,
And with circling streams the captive souls inclose.

Not far from thence, the Mournful Fields appear
So call'd from lovers that inhabit there.
The souls whom that unhappy flame invades,
In secret solitude and myrtle shades
Make endless moans, and, pining with desire,
Lament too late their unextinguish'd fire.
Here Procris, Eriphyle here he found,
Baring her breast, yet bleeding with the wound
Made by her son. He saw Pasiphae there,
With Phaedra's ghost, a foul incestuous pair.
There Laodamia, with Evadne, moves,
Unhappy both, but loyal in their loves:
Caeneus, a woman once, and once a man,
But ending in the sex she first began.
Not far from these Phoenician Dido stood,
Fresh from her wound, her bosom bath'd in blood;
Whom when the Trojan hero hardly knew,

Obscure in shades, and with a doubtful view,
(Doubtful as he who sees, thro' dusky night,
Or thinks he sees, the moon's uncertain light,)
With tears he first approach'd the sullen shade;
And, as his love inspir'd him, thus he said:
"Unhappy queen! then is the common breath
Of rumor true, in your reported death,
And I, alas! the cause? By Heav'n, I vow,
And all the pow'rs that rule the realms below,
Unwilling I forsook your friendly state,
Commanded by the gods, and forc'd by fate-
Those gods, that fate, whose unresisted might
Have sent me to these regions void of light,
Thro' the vast empire of eternal night.
Nor dar'd I to presume, that, press'd with grief,
My flight should urge you to this dire relief.
Stay, stay your steps, and listen to my vows:
'T is the last interview that fate allows!"
In vain he thus attempts her mind to move
With tears, and pray'rs, and late-repenting love.
Disdainfully she look'd; then turning round,
But fix'd her eyes unmov'd upon the ground,
And what he says and swears, regards no more
Than the deaf rocks, when the loud billows roar;
But whirl'd away, to shun his hateful sight,
Hid in the forest and the shades of night;
Then sought Sichaeus thro' the shady grove,
Who answer'd all her cares, and equal'd all her love.

Some pious tears the pitying hero paid,
And follow'd with his eyes the flitting shade,
Then took the forward way, by fate ordain'd,
And, with his guide, the farther fields attain'd,
Where, sever'd from the rest, the warrior souls remain'd.
Tydeus he met, with Meleager's race,
The pride of armies, and the soldiers' grace;
And pale Adrastus with his ghastly face.
Of Trojan chiefs he view'd a num'rous train,
All much lamented, all in battle slain;
Glaucus and Medon, high above the rest,
Antenor's sons, and Ceres' sacred priest.
And proud Idaeus, Priam's charioteer,
Who shakes his empty reins, and aims his airy spear.
The gladsome ghosts, in circling troops, attend
And with unwearied eyes behold their friend;

Delight to hover near, and long to know
What bus'ness brought him to the realms below.
But Argive chiefs, and Agamemnon's train,
When his refulgent arms flash'd thro' the shady plain,
Fled from his well-known face, with wonted fear,
As when his thund'ring sword and pointed spear
Drove headlong to their ships, and glean'd the routed rear.
They rais'd a feeble cry, with trembling notes;
But the weak voice deceiv'd their gasping throats.

Here Priam's son, Deiphobus, he found,
Whose face and limbs were one continued wound:
Dishonest, with lopp'd arms, the youth appears,
Spoil'd of his nose, and shorten'd of his ears.
He scarcely knew him, striving to disown
His blotted form, and blushing to be known;
And therefore first began: "O Teucer's race,
Who durst thy faultless figure thus deface?
What heart could wish, what hand inflict, this dire disgrace?
'Twas fam'd, that in our last and fatal night
Your single prowess long sustain'd the fight,
Till tir'd, not forc'd, a glorious fate you chose,
And fell upon a heap of slaughter'd foes.
But, in remembrance of so brave a deed,
A tomb and fun'ral honors I decreed;
Thrice call'd your manes on the Trojan plains:
The place your armor and your name retains.
Your body too I sought, and, had I found,
Design'd for burial in your native ground."

The ghost replied: "Your piety has paid
All needful rites, to rest my wand'ring shade;
But cruel fate, and my more cruel wife,
To Grecian swords betray'd my sleeping life.
These are the monuments of Helen's love:
The shame I bear below, the marks I bore above.
You know in what deluding joys we pass'd
The night that was by Heav'n decreed our last:
For, when the fatal horse, descending down,
Pregnant with arms, o'erwhelm'd th' unhappy town
She feign'd nocturnal orgies; left my bed,
And, mix'd with Trojan dames, the dances led
Then, waving high her torch, the signal made,
Which rous'd the Grecians from their ambuscade.
With watching overworn, with cares oppress'd,

Unhappy I had laid me down to rest,
And heavy sleep my weary limbs possess'd.
Meantime my worthy wife our arms mislaid,
And from beneath my head my sword convey'd;
The door unlatch'd, and, with repeated calls,
Invites her former lord within my walls.
Thus in her crime her confidence she plac'd,
And with new treasons would redeem the past.
What need I more? Into the room they ran,
And meanly murder'd a defenseless man.
Ulysses, basely born, first led the way.
Avenging pow'rs! with justice if I pray,
That fortune be their own another day!
But answer you; and in your turn relate,
What brought you, living, to the Stygian state:
Driv'n by the winds and errors of the sea,
Or did you Heav'n's superior doom obey?
Or tell what other chance conducts your way,
To view with mortal eyes our dark retreats,
Tumults and torments of th' infernal seats."

While thus in talk the flying hours they pass,
The sun had finish'd more than half his race:
And they, perhaps, in words and tears had spent
The little time of stay which Heav'n had lent;
But thus the Sibyl chides their long delay:
"Night rushes down, and headlong drives the day:
'T is here, in different paths, the way divides;
The right to Pluto's golden palace guides;
The left to that unhappy region tends,
Which to the depth of Tartarus descends;
The seat of night profound, and punish'd fiends."
Then thus Deiphobus: "O sacred maid,
Forbear to chide, and be your will obey'd!
Lo! to the secret shadows I retire,
To pay my penance till my years expire.
Proceed, auspicious prince, with glory crown'd,
And born to better fates than I have found."
He said; and, while he said, his steps he turn'd
To secret shadows, and in silence mourn'd.

The hero, looking on the left, espied
A lofty tow'r, and strong on ev'ry side
With treble walls, which Phlegethon surrounds,
Whose fiery flood the burning empire bounds;

And, press'd betwixt the rocks, the bellowing noise resounds
Wide is the fronting gate, and, rais'd on high
With adamantine columns, threatens the sky.
Vain is the force of man, and Heav'n's as vain,
To crush the pillars which the pile sustain.
Sublime on these a tow'r of steel is rear'd;
And dire Tisiphone there keeps the ward,
Girt in her sanguine gown, by night and day,
Observant of the souls that pass the downward way.
From hence are heard the groans of ghosts, the pains
Of sounding lashes and of dragging chains.
The Trojan stood astonish'd at their cries,
And ask'd his guide from whence those yells arise;
And what the crimes, and what the tortures were,
And loud laments that rent the liquid air.

She thus replied: "The chaste and holy race
Are all forbidden this polluted place.
But Hecate, when she gave to rule the woods,
Then led me trembling thro' these dire abodes,
And taught the tortures of th' avenging gods.
These are the realms of unrelenting fate;
And awful Rhadamanthus rules the state.
He hears and judges each committed crime;
Enquires into the manner, place, and time.
The conscious wretch must all his acts reveal,
(Loth to confess, unable to conceal),
From the first moment of his vital breath,
To his last hour of unrepenting death.
Straight, o'er the guilty ghost, the Fury shakes
The sounding whip and brandishes her snakes,
And the pale sinner, with her sisters, takes.
Then, of itself, unfolds th' eternal door;
With dreadful sounds the brazen hinges roar.
You see, before the gate, what stalking ghost
Commands the guard, what sentries keep the post.
More formidable Hydra stands within,
Whose jaws with iron teeth severely grin.
The gaping gulf low to the center lies,
And twice as deep as earth is distant from the skies.
The rivals of the gods, the Titan race,
Here, sing'd with lightning, roll within th' unfathom'd space.
Here lie th' Alaeon twins, (I saw them both,)
Enormous bodies, of gigantic growth,
Who dar'd in fight the Thund'rer to defy,

Affect his heav'n, and force him from the sky.
Salmoneus, suff'ring cruel pains, I found,
For emulating Jove; the rattling sound
Of mimic thunder, and the glitt'ring blaze
Of pointed lightnings, and their forky rays.
Thro' Elis and the Grecian towns he flew;
Th' audacious wretch four fiery coursers drew:
He wav'd a torch aloft, and, madly vain,
Sought godlike worship from a servile train.
Ambitious fool! with horny hoofs to pass
O'er hollow arches of resounding brass,
To rival thunder in its rapid course,
And imitate inimitable force!
But he, the King of Heav'n, obscure on high,
Bar'd his red arm, and, launching from the sky
His writhen bolt, not shaking empty smoke,
Down to the deep abyss the flaming felon strook.
There Tityus was to see, who took his birth
From heav'n, his nursing from the foodful earth.
Here his gigantic limbs, with large embrace,
Infold nine acres of infernal space.
A rav'nous vulture, in his open'd side,
Her crooked beak and cruel talons tried;
Still for the growing liver digg'd his breast;
The growing liver still supplied the feast;
Still are his entrails fruitful to their pains:
Th' immortal hunger lasts, th' immortal food remains.
Ixion and Perithous I could name,
And more Thessalian chiefs of mighty fame.
High o'er their heads a mold'ring rock is plac'd,
That promises a fall, and shakes at ev'ry blast.
They lie below, on golden beds display'd;
And genial feasts with regal pomp are made.
The Queen of Furies by their sides is set,
And snatches from their mouths th' untasted meat,
Which if they touch, her hissing snakes she rears,
Tossing her torch, and thund'ring in their ears.
Then they, who brothers' better claim disown,
Expel their parents, and usurp the throne;
Defraud their clients, and, to lucre sold,
Sit brooding on unprofitable gold;
Who dare not give, and ev'n refuse to lend
To their poor kindred, or a wanting friend.
Vast is the throng of these; nor less the train
Of lustful youths, for foul adult'ry slain:

Hosts of deserters, who their honor sold,
And basely broke their faith for bribes of gold.
All these within the dungeon's depth remain,
Despairing pardon, and expecting pain.
Ask not what pains; nor farther seek to know
Their process, or the forms of law below.
Some roll a weighty stone; some, laid along,
And bound with burning wires, on spokes of wheels are hung
Unhappy Theseus, doom'd for ever there,
Is fix'd by fate on his eternal chair;
And wretched Phlegyas warns the world with cries
(Could warning make the world more just or wise):
'Learn righteousness, and dread th' avenging deities.'
To tyrants others have their country sold,
Imposing foreign lords, for foreign gold;
Some have old laws repeal'd, new statutes made,
Not as the people pleas'd, but as they paid;
With incest some their daughters' bed profan'd:
All dar'd the worst of ills, and, what they dar'd, attain'd.
Had I a hundred mouths, a hundred tongues,
And throats of brass, inspir'd with iron lungs,
I could not half those horrid crimes repeat,
Nor half the punishments those crimes have met.
But let us haste our voyage to pursue:
The walls of Pluto's palace are in view;
The gate, and iron arch above it, stands
On anvils labor'd by the Cyclops' hands.
Before our farther way the Fates allow,
Here must we fix on high the golden bough."

She said: and thro' the gloomy shades they pass'd,
And chose the middle path. Arriv'd at last,
The prince with living water sprinkled o'er
His limbs and body; then approach'd the door,
Possess'd the porch, and on the front above
He fix'd the fatal bough requir'd by Pluto's love.
These holy rites perform'd, they took their way
Where long extended plains of pleasure lay:
The verdant fields with those of heav'n may vie,
With ether vested, and a purple sky;
The blissful seats of happy souls below.
Stars of their own, and their own suns, they know;
Their airy limbs in sports they exercise,
And on the green contend the wrestler's prize.
Some in heroic verse divinely sing;

Others in artful measures led the ring.
The Thracian bard, surrounded by the rest,
There stands conspicuous in his flowing vest;
His flying fingers, and harmonious quill,
Strikes sev'n distinguish'd notes, and sev'n at once they fill.
Here found they Teucer's old heroic race,
Born better times and happier years to grace.
Assaracus and Ilus here enjoy
Perpetual fame, with him who founded Troy.
The chief beheld their chariots from afar,
Their shining arms, and coursers train'd to war:
Their lances fix'd in earth, their steeds around,
Free from their harness, graze the flow'ry ground.
The love of horses which they had, alive,
And care of chariots, after death survive.
Some cheerful souls were feasting on the plain;
Some did the song, and some the choir maintain,
Beneath a laurel shade, where mighty Po
Mounts up to woods above, and hides his head below.
Here patriots live, who, for their country's good,
In fighting fields, were prodigal of blood:
Priests of unblemish'd lives here make abode,
And poets worthy their inspiring god;
And searching wits, of more mechanic parts,
Who grac'd their age with new-invented arts:
Those who to worth their bounty did extend,
And those who knew that bounty to commend.
The heads of these with holy fillets bound,
And all their temples were with garlands crown'd.

To these the Sibyl thus her speech address'd,
And first to him surrounded by the rest
(Tow'ring his height, and ample was his breast):
"Say, happy souls, divine Musaeus, say,
Where lives Anchises, and where lies our way
To find the hero, for whose only sake
We sought the dark abodes, and cross'd the bitter lake?"
To this the sacred poet thus replied:
"In no fix'd place the happy souls reside.
In groves we live, and lie on mossy beds,
By crystal streams, that murmur thro' the meads:
But pass yon easy hill, and thence descend;
The path conducts you to your journey's end."
This said, he led them up the mountain's brow,

And shews them all the shining fields below.
They wind the hill, and thro' the blissful meadows go.

But old Anchises, in a flow'ry vale,
Review'd his muster'd race, and took the tale:
Those happy spirits, which, ordain'd by fate,
For future beings and new bodies wait-
With studious thought observ'd th' illustrious throng,
In nature's order as they pass'd along:
Their names, their fates, their conduct, and their care,
In peaceful senates and successful war.
He, when Aeneas on the plain appears,
Meets him with open arms, and falling tears.
"Welcome," he said, "the gods' undoubted race!
O long expected to my dear embrace!
Once more 't is giv'n me to behold your face!
The love and pious duty which you pay
Have pass'd the perils of so hard a way.
'T is true, computing times, I now believ'd
The happy day approach'd; nor are my hopes deceiv'd.
What length of lands, what oceans have you pass'd;
What storms sustain'd, and on what shores been cast?
How have I fear'd your fate! but fear'd it most,
When love assail'd you, on the Libyan coast."
To this, the filial duty thus replies:
"Your sacred ghost before my sleeping eyes
Appear'd, and often urg'd this painful enterprise.
After long tossing on the Tyrrhene sea,
My navy rides at anchor in the bay.
But reach your hand, O parent shade, nor shun
The dear embraces of your longing son!"
He said; and falling tears his face bedew:
Then thrice around his neck his arms he threw;
And thrice the flitting shadow slipp'd away,
Like winds, or empty dreams that fly the day.

Now, in a secret vale, the Trojan sees
A sep'rate grove, thro' which a gentle breeze
Plays with a passing breath, and whispers thro' the trees;
And, just before the confines of the wood,
The gliding Lethe leads her silent flood.
About the boughs an airy nation flew,
Thick as the humming bees, that hunt the golden dew;
In summer's heat on tops of lilies feed,
And creep within their bells, to suck the balmy seed:

The winged army roams the fields around;
The rivers and the rocks remurmur to the sound.
Aeneas wond'ring stood, then ask'd the cause
Which to the stream the crowding people draws.
Then thus the sire: "The souls that throng the flood
Are those to whom, by fate, are other bodies ow'd:
In Lethe's lake they long oblivion taste,
Of future life secure, forgetful of the past.
Long has my soul desir'd this time and place,
To set before your sight your glorious race,
That this presaging joy may fire your mind
To seek the shores by destiny design'd."-
"O father, can it be, that souls sublime
Return to visit our terrestrial clime,
And that the gen'rous mind, releas'd by death,
Can covet lazy limbs and mortal breath?"

Anchises then, in order, thus begun
To clear those wonders to his godlike son:
"Know, first, that heav'n, and earth's compacted frame,
And flowing waters, and the starry flame,
And both the radiant lights, one common soul
Inspires and feeds, and animates the whole.
This active mind, infus'd thro' all the space,
Unites and mingles with the mighty mass.
Hence men and beasts the breath of life obtain,
And birds of air, and monsters of the main.
Th' ethereal vigor is in all the same,
And every soul is fill'd with equal flame;
As much as earthy limbs, and gross alloy
Of mortal members, subject to decay,
Blunt not the beams of heav'n and edge of day.
From this coarse mixture of terrestrial parts,
Desire and fear by turns possess their hearts,
And grief, and joy; nor can the groveling mind,
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd,
Assert the native skies, or own its heav'nly kind:
Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains;
But long-contracted filth ev'n in the soul remains.
The relics of inveterate vice they wear,
And spots of sin obscene in ev'ry face appear.
For this are various penances enjoin'd;
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plung'd in waters, others purg'd in fires,
Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires.

All have their manes, and those manes bear:
The few, so cleans'd, to these abodes repair,
And breathe, in ample fields, the soft Elysian air.
Then are they happy, when by length of time
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime;
No speck is left of their habitual stains,
But the pure ether of the soul remains.
But, when a thousand rolling years are past,
(So long their punishments and penance last,)
Whole droves of minds are, by the driving god,
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethaeon flood,
In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares
Of their past labors, and their irksome years,
That, unrememb'ring of its former pain,
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again."

Thus having said, the father spirit leads
The priestess and his son thro' swarms of shades,
And takes a rising ground, from thence to see
The long procession of his progeny.
"Survey," pursued the sire, "this airy throng,
As, offer'd to thy view, they pass along.
These are th' Italian names, which fate will join
With ours, and graff upon the Trojan line.
Observe the youth who first appears in sight,
And holds the nearest station to the light,
Already seems to snuff the vital air,
And leans just forward, on a shining spear:
Silvius is he, thy last-begotten race,
But first in order sent, to fill thy place;
An Alban name, but mix'd with Dardan blood,
Born in the covert of a shady wood:
Him fair Lavinia, thy surviving wife,
Shall breed in groves, to lead a solitary life.
In Alba he shall fix his royal seat,
And, born a king, a race of kings beget.
Then Procas, honor of the Trojan name,
Capys, and Numitor, of endless fame.
A second Silvius after these appears;
Silvius Aeneas, for thy name he bears;
For arms and justice equally renown'd,
Who, late restor'd, in Alba shall be crown'd.
How great they look! how vig'rously they wield
Their weighty lances, and sustain the shield!
But they, who crown'd with oaken wreaths appear,

Shall Gabian walls and strong Fidena rear;
Nomentum, Bola, with Pometia, found;
And raise Collatian tow'rs on rocky ground.
All these shall then be towns of mighty fame,
Tho' now they lie obscure, and lands without a name.
See Romulus the great, born to restore
The crown that once his injur'd grandsire wore.
This prince a priestess of your blood shall bear,
And like his sire in arms he shall appear.
Two rising crests, his royal head adorn;
Born from a god, himself to godhead born:
His sire already signs him for the skies,
And marks the seat amidst the deities.
Auspicious chief! thy race, in times to come,
Shall spread the conquests of imperial Rome-
Rome, whose ascending tow'rs shall heav'n invade,
Involving earth and ocean in her shade;
High as the Mother of the Gods in place,
And proud, like her, of an immortal race.
Then, when in pomp she makes the Phrygian round,
With golden turrets on her temples crown'd;
A hundred gods her sweeping train supply;
Her offspring all, and all command the sky.

“Now fix your sight, and stand intent, to see
Your Roman race, and Julian progeny.
The mighty Caesar waits his vital hour,
Impatient for the world, and grasps his promis'd pow'r.
But next behold the youth of form divine,
Ceasar himself, exalted in his line;
Augustus, promis'd oft, and long foretold,
Sent to the realm that Saturn rul'd of old;
Born to restore a better age of gold.
Afric and India shall his pow'r obey;
He shall extend his propagated sway
Beyond the solar year, without the starry way,
Where Atlas turns the rolling heav'ns around,
And his broad shoulders with their lights are crown'd.
At his foreseen approach, already quake
The Caspian kingdoms and Maeotian lake:
Their seers behold the tempest from afar,
And threat'ning oracles denounce the war.
Nile hears him knocking at his sev'nfold gates,
And seeks his hidden spring, and fears his nephew's fates.
Nor Hercules more lands or labors knew,

Not tho' the brazen-footed hind he slew,
Freed Erymanthus from the foaming boar,
And dipp'd his arrows in Lernaean gore;
Nor Bacchus, turning from his Indian war,
By tigers drawn triumphant in his car,
From Nisus' top descending on the plains,
With curling vines around his purple reins.
And doubt we yet thro' dangers to pursue
The paths of honor, and a crown in view?
But what's the man, who from afar appears?
His head with olive crown'd, his hand a censer bears,
His hoary beard and holy vestments bring
His lost idea back: I know the Roman king.
He shall to peaceful Rome new laws ordain,
Call'd from his mean abode a scepter to sustain.
Him Tullus next in dignity succeeds,
An active prince, and prone to martial deeds.
He shall his troops for fighting fields prepare,
Disus'd to toils, and triumphs of the war.
By dint of sword his crown he shall increase,
And scour his armor from the rust of peace.
Whom Ancus follows, with a fawning air,
But vain within, and proudly popular.
Next view the Tarquin kings, th' avenging sword
Of Brutus, justly drawn, and Rome restor'd.
He first renews the rods and ax severe,
And gives the consuls royal robes to wear.
His sons, who seek the tyrant to sustain,
And long for arbitrary lords again,
With ignominy scourg'd, in open sight,
He dooms to death deserv'd, asserting public right.
Unhappy man, to break the pious laws
Of nature, pleading in his children's cause!
Howe'er the doubtful fact is understood,
'T is love of honor, and his country's good:
The consul, not the father, sheds the blood.
Behold Torquatus the same track pursue;
And, next, the two devoted Decii view:
The Drusian line, Camillus loaded home
With standards well redeem'd, and foreign foes o'ercome
The pair you see in equal armor shine,
Now, friends below, in close embraces join;
But, when they leave the shady realms of night,
And, cloth'd in bodies, breathe your upper light,
With mortal hate each other shall pursue:

What wars, what wounds, what slaughter shall ensue!
From Alpine heights the father first descends;
His daughter's husband in the plain attends:
His daughter's husband arms his eastern friends.
Embrace again, my sons, be foes no more;
Nor stain your country with her children's gore!
And thou, the first, lay down thy lawless claim,
Thou, of my blood, who bearist the Julian name!
Another comes, who shall in triumph ride,
And to the Capitol his chariot guide,
From conquer'd Corinth, rich with Grecian spoils.
And yet another, fam'd for warlike toils,
On Argos shall impose the Roman laws,
And on the Greeks revenge the Trojan cause;
Shall drag in chains their Achillean race;
Shall vindicate his ancestors' disgrace,
And Pallas, for her violated place.
Great Cato there, for gravity renown'd,
And conqu'ring Cossus goes with laurels crown'd.
Who can omit the Gracchi? who declare
The Scipios' worth, those thunderbolts of war,
The double bane of Carthage? Who can see
Without esteem for virtuous poverty,
Severe Fabricius, or can cease t' admire
The plowman consul in his coarse attire?
Tir'd as I am, my praise the Fabii claim;
And thou, great hero, greatest of thy name,
Ordain'd in war to save the sinking state,
And, by delays, to put a stop to fate!
Let others better mold the running mass
Of metals, and inform the breathing brass,
And soften into flesh a marble face;
Plead better at the bar; describe the skies,
And when the stars descend, and when they rise.
But, Rome, 't is thine alone, with awful sway,
To rule mankind, and make the world obey,
Disposing peace and war by thy own majestic way;
To tame the proud, the fetter'd slave to free:
These are imperial arts, and worthy thee."

He paus'd; and, while with wond'ring eyes they view'd
The passing spirits, thus his speech renew'd:
"See great Marcellus! how, untir'd in toils,
He moves with manly grace, how rich with regal spoils!
He, when his country, threaten'd with alarms,

Requires his courage and his conqu'ring arms,
Shall more than once the Punic bands affright;
Shall kill the Gaulish king in single fight;
Then to the Capitol in triumph move,
And the third spoils shall grace Feretrian Jove.”
Aeneas here beheld, of form divine,
A godlike youth in glitt'ring armor shine,
With great Marcellus keeping equal pace;
But gloomy were his eyes, dejected was his face.
He saw, and, wond'ring, ask'd his airy guide,
What and of whence was he, who press'd the hero's side:
“His son, or one of his illustrious name?
How like the former, and almost the same!
Observe the crowds that compass him around;
All gaze, and all admire, and raise a shouting sound:
But hov'ring mists around his brows are spread,
And night, with sable shades, involves his head.”
“Seek not to know,” the ghost replied with tears,
“The sorrows of thy sons in future years.
This youth (the blissful vision of a day)
Shall just be shown on earth, and snatch'd away.
The gods too high had rais'd the Roman state,
Were but their gifts as permanent as great.
What groans of men shall fill the Martian field!
How fierce a blaze his flaming pile shall yield!
What fun'ral pomp shall floating Tiber see,
When, rising from his bed, he views the sad solemnity!
No youth shall equal hopes of glory give,
No youth afford so great a cause to grieve;
The Trojan honor, and the Roman boast,
Admir'd when living, and ador'd when lost!
Mirror of ancient faith in early youth!
Undaunted worth, inviolable truth!
No foe, unpunish'd, in the fighting field
Shall dare thee, foot to foot, with sword and shield;
Much less in arms oppose thy matchless force,
When thy sharp spurs shall urge thy foaming horse.
Ah! couldst thou break thro' fate's severe decree,
A new Marcellus shall arise in thee!
Full canisters of fragrant lilies bring,
Mix'd with the purple roses of the spring;
Let me with fun'ral flow'rs his body strow;
This gift which parents to their children owe,
This unavailing gift, at least, I may bestow!”
Thus having said, he led the hero round

The Fair Hills of Ireland

From the Irish

Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886)

A PLENTEOUS place is Ireland for hospitable cheer,
Uileacan dubh O!

Where the wholesome fruit is bursting from the yellow barley ear;
Uileacan dubh O!

There is honey in the trees where her misty vales expand, ⁵
And her forest paths in summer are by falling waters fann'd,
There is dew at high noontide there, and springs i' the yellow sand,
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.

Curl'd he is and ringleted, and plaited to the knee —
Uileacan dubh O! ¹⁰

Each captain who comes sailing across the Irish Sea;
Uileacan dubh O!

And I will make my journey, if life and health but stand,
Unto that pleasant country, that fresh and fragrant strand,
And leave your boasted braveries, your wealth and high
command, ¹⁵

For the fair hills of holy Ireland.

Large and profitable are the stacks upon the ground,
Uileacan dubh O!

The butter and the cream do wondrously abound;
Uileacan dubh O! ²⁰

The cresses on the water and the sorrels are at hand,
And the cuckoo's calling daily his note of music bland,
And the bold thrush sings so bravely his song i' the forests grand,
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.

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A Musical Instrument

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat 5
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river;
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay, 10
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flow'd the river;
And hack'd and hew'd as a great god can 15
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan
(How tall it stood in the river!), 20
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notch'd the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

'This is the way,' laugh'd the great god Pan 25
(Laugh'd while he sat by the river),
'The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed.'
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river. 30

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,

The confines of the blest Elysian ground;
Which when Anchises to his son had shown,
And fir'd his mind to mount the promis'd throne,
He tells the future wars, ordain'd by fate;
The strength and customs of the Latian state;
The prince, and people; and forearms his care
With rules, to push his fortune, or to bear.

Two gates the silent house of Sleep adorn;
Of polish'd ivory this, that of transparent horn:
True visions thro' transparent horn arise;
Thro' polish'd ivory pass deluding lies.
Of various things discoursing as he pass'd,
Anchises hither bends his steps at last.
Then, thro' the gate of iv'ry, he dismiss'd
His valiant offspring and divining guest.
Straight to the ships Aeneas his way,
Embark'd his men, and skimm'd along the sea,
Still coasting, till he gain'd Cajeta's bay.
At length on oozy ground his galleys moor;
Their heads are turn'd to sea, their sterns to shore.

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Fortune Befriends the Bold: Book X

Yet Turnus with undaunted mind is bent
To man the shores, and hinder their descent,
And thus awakes the courage of his friends:
“What you so long have wish’d, kind Fortune sends;
In ardent arms to meet th’ invading foe:
You find, and find him at advantage now.
Yours is the day: you need but only dare;
Your swords will make you masters of the war.
Your sires, your sons, your houses, and your lands,
And dearest wives, are all within your hands.
Be mindful of the race from whence you came,
And emulate in arms your fathers’ fame.
Now take the time, while stagg’ring yet they stand
With feet unfirm, and prepossess the strand:
Fortune befriends the bold.” Nor more he said,
But balanc’d whom to leave, and whom to lead;
Then these elects, the landing to prevent;
And those he leaves, to keep the city pent.

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Battle with Turnus: Book XII

Stupid he sate, his eyes on earth declin'd,
And various cares revolving in his mind:
Rage, boiling from the bottom of his breast,
And sorrow mix'd with shame, his soul oppress'd;
And conscious worth lay lab'ring in his thought,
And love by jealousy to madness wrought.
By slow degrees his reason drove away
The mists of passion, and resum'd her sway.
Then, rising on his car, he turn'd his look,
And saw the town involv'd in fire and smoke.
A wooden tow'r with flames already blaz'd,
Which his own hands on beams and rafters rais'd;
And bridges laid above to join the space,
And wheels below to roll from place to place.
"Sister, the Fates have vanquish'd: let us go
The way which Heav'n and my hard fortune show.
The fight is fix'd; nor shall the branded name
Of a base coward blot your brother's fame.
Death is my choice; but suffer me to try
My force, and vent my rage before I die."
He said; and, leaping down without delay,
Thro' crowds of scatter'd foes he freed his way.
Striding he pass'd, impetuous as the wind,
And left the grieving goddess far behind.
As when a fragment, from a mountain torn
By raging tempests, or by torrents borne,
Or sapp'd by time, or loosen'd from the roots-
Prone thro' the void the rocky ruin shoots,
Rolling from crag to crag, from steep to steep;
Down sink, at once, the shepherds and their sheep:
Involv'd alike, they rush to nether ground;
Stunn'd with the shock they fall, and stunn'd from earth rebound:
So Turnus, hasting headlong to the town,
Should'ring and shoving, bore the squadrons down.
Still pressing onward, to the walls he drew,
Where shafts, and spears, and darts promiscuous flew,
And sanguine streams the slipp'ry ground embrue.
First stretching out his arm, in sign of peace,
He cries aloud, to make the combat cease:
"Rutulians, hold; and Latin troops, retire!
The fight is mine; and me the gods require.
'T is just that I should vindicate alone

The broken truce, or for the breach atone.
This day shall free from wars th' Ausonian state,
Or finish my misfortunes in my fate."

Both armies from their bloody work desist,
And, bearing backward, form a spacious list.
The Trojan hero, who receiv'd from fame
The welcome sound, and heard the champion's name,
Soon leaves the taken works and mounted walls,
Greedy of war where greater glory calls.
He springs to fight, exulting in his force
His jointed armor rattles in the course.
Like Eryx, or like Athos, great he shows,
Or Father Apennine, when, white with snows,
His head divine obscure in clouds he hides,
And shakes the sounding forest on his sides.
The nations, overaw'd, surcease the fight;
Immovable their bodies, fix'd their sight.
Ev'n death stands still; nor from above they throw
Their darts, nor drive their batt'ring-rams below.
In silent order either army stands,
And drop their swords, unknowing, from their hands.
Th' Ausonian king beholds, with wond'ring sight,
Two mighty champions match'd in single fight,
Born under climes remote, and brought by fate,
With swords to try their titles to the state.

Now, in clos'd field, each other from afar
They view; and, rushing on, begin the war.
They launch their spears; then hand to hand they meet;
The trembling soil resounds beneath their feet:
Their bucklers clash; thick blows descend from high,
And flakes of fire from their hard helmets fly.
Courage conspires with chance, and both engage
With equal fortune yet, and mutual rage.
As when two bulls for their fair female fight
In Sila's shades, or on Taburnus' height;
With horns adverse they meet; the keeper flies;
Mute stands the herd; the heifers roll their eyes,
And wait th' event; which victor they shall bear,
And who shall be the lord, to rule the lusty year:
With rage of love the jealous rivals burn,
And push for push, and wound for wound return;
Their dewlaps gor'd, their sides are lav'd in blood;
Loud cries and roaring sounds rebellow thro' the wood:

Such was the combat in the listed ground;
So clash their swords, and so their shields resound.

Jove sets the beam; in either scale he lays
The champions' fate, and each exactly weighs.
On this side, life and lucky chance ascends;
Loaded with death, that other scale descends.
Rais'd on the stretch, young Turnus aims a blow
Full on the helm of his unguarded foe:
Shrill shouts and clamors ring on either side,
As hopes and fears their panting hearts divide.
But all in pieces flies the traitor sword,
And, in the middle stroke, deserts his lord.
Now is but death, or flight; disarm'd he flies,
When in his hand an unknown hilt he spies.
Fame says that Turnus, when his steeds he join'd,
Hurrying to war, disorder'd in his mind,
Snatch'd the first weapon which his haste could find.
'T was not the fated sword his father bore,
But that his charioteer Metiscus wore.
This, while the Trojans fled, the toughness held;
But, vain against the great Vulcanian shield,
The mortal-temper'd steel deceiv'd his hand:
The shiver'd fragments shone amid the sand.

Surpris'd with fear, he fled along the field,
And now forthright, and now in orbits wheel'd;
For here the Trojan troops the list surround,
And there the pass is clos'd with pools and marshy ground.
Aeneas hastens, tho' with heavier pace-
His wound, so newly knit, retards the chase,
And oft his trembling knees their aid refuse-
Yet, pressing foot by foot, his foe pursues.

Thus, when a fearful stag is clos'd around
With crimson toils, or in a river found,
High on the bank the deep-mouth'd hound appears,
Still opening, following still, where'er he steers;
The persecuted creature, to and fro,
Turns here and there, to scape his Umbrian foe:
Steep is th' ascent, and, if he gains the land,
The purple death is pitch'd along the strand.
His eager foe, determin'd to the chase,
Stretch'd at his length, gains ground at ev'ry pace;
Now to his beamy head he makes his way,

And now he holds, or thinks he holds, his prey:
Just at the pinch, the stag springs out with fear;
He bites the wind, and fills his sounding jaws with air:
The rocks, the lakes, the meadows ring with cries;
The mortal tumult mounts, and thunders in the skies.
Thus flies the Daunian prince, and, flying, blames
His tardy troops, and, calling by their names,
Demands his trusty sword. The Trojan threats
The realm with ruin, and their ancient seats
To lay in ashes, if they dare supply
With arms or aid his vanquish'd enemy:
Thus menacing, he still pursues the course,
With vigor, tho' diminish'd of his force.
Ten times already round the listed place
One chief had fled, and t' other giv'n the chase:
No trivial prize is play'd; for on the life
Or death of Turnus now depends the strife.

Within the space, an olive tree had stood,
A sacred shade, a venerable wood,
For vows to Faunus paid, the Latins' guardian god.
Here hung the vests, and tablets were engrav'd,
Of sinking mariners from shipwrack sav'd.
With heedless hands the Trojans fell'd the tree,
To make the ground inclos'd for combat free.
Deep in the root, whether by fate, or chance,
Or erring haste, the Trojan drove his lance;
Then stoop'd, and tugg'd with force immense, to free
Th' incumbent'd spear from the tenacious tree;
That, whom his fainting limbs pursued in vain,
His flying weapon might from far attain.

Confus'd with fear, bereft of human aid,
Then Turnus to the gods, and first to Faunus pray'd:
"O Faunus, pity! and thou Mother Earth,
Where I thy foster son receiv'd my birth,
Hold fast the steel! If my religious hand
Your plant has honor'd, which your foes profan'd,
Propitious hear my pious pray'r!" He said,
Nor with successless vows invok'd their aid.
Th' incumbent hero wrench'd, and pull'd, and strain'd;
But still the stubborn earth the steel detain'd.
Juturna took her time; and, while in vain
He strove, assum'd Meticus' form again,
And, in that imitated shape, restor'd

To the despairing prince his Daunian sword.
The Queen of Love, who, with disdain and grief,
Saw the bold nymph afford this prompt relief,
T' assert her offspring with a greater deed,
From the tough root the ling'ring weapon freed.

Once more erect, the rival chiefs advance:
One trusts the sword, and one the pointed lance;
And both resolv'd alike to try their fatal chance.

Meantime imperial Jove to Juno spoke,
Who from a shining cloud beheld the shock:
"What new arrest, O Queen of Heav'n, is sent
To stop the Fates now lab'ring in th' event?
What farther hopes are left thee to pursue?
Divine Aeneas, (and thou know'st it too,)
Foredoom'd, to these celestial seats are due.
What more attempts for Turnus can be made,
That thus thou ling'rest in this lonely shade?
Is it becoming of the due respect
And awful honor of a god elect,
A wound unworthy of our state to feel,
Patient of human hands and earthly steel?
Or seems it just, the sister should restore
A second sword, when one was lost before,
And arm a conquer'd wretch against his conqueror?
For what, without thy knowledge and avow,
Nay more, thy dictate, durst Juturna do?
At last, in deference to my love, forbear
To lodge within thy soul this anxious care;
Reclin'd upon my breast, thy grief unload:
Who should relieve the goddess, but the god?
Now all things to their utmost issue tend,
Push'd by the Fates to their appointed
While leave was giv'n thee, and a lawful hour
For vengeance, wrath, and unresisted pow'r,
Toss'd on the seas, thou couldst thy foes distress,
And, driv'n ashore, with hostile arms oppress;
Deform the royal house; and, from the side
Of the just bridegroom, tear the plighted bride:
Now cease at my command." The Thund'rer said;
And, with dejected eyes, this answer Juno made:
"Because your dread decree too well I knew,
From Turnus and from earth unwilling I withdrew.
Else should you not behold me here, alone,

Involv'd in empty clouds, my friends bemoan,
But, girt with vengeful flames, in open sight
Engag'd against my foes in mortal fight.
'T is true, Juturna mingled in the strife
By my command, to save her brother's life-
At least to try; but, by the Stygian lake,
(The most religious oath the gods can take,)
With this restriction, not to bend the bow,
Or toss the spear, or trembling dart to throw.
And now, resign'd to your superior might,
And tir'd with fruitless toils, I loathe the fight.
This let me beg (and this no fates withstand)
Both for myself and for your father's land,
That, when the nuptial bed shall bind the peace,
(Which I, since you ordain, consent to bless,)
The laws of either nation be the same;
But let the Latins still retain their name,
Speak the same language which they spoke before,
Wear the same habits which their grandsires wore.
Call them not Trojans: perish the renown
And name of Troy, with that detested town.
Latium be Latium still; let Alba reign
And Rome's immortal majesty remain."

Then thus the founder of mankind replies
(Unruffled was his front, serene his eyes)
"Can Saturn's issue, and heav'n's other heir,
Such endless anger in her bosom bear?
Be mistress, and your full desires obtain;
But quench the choler you foment in vain.
From ancient blood th' Ausonian people sprung,
Shall keep their name, their habit, and their tongue.
The Trojans to their customs shall be tied:
I will, myself, their common rites provide;
The natives shall command, the foreigners subside.
All shall be Latium; Troy without a name;
And her lost sons forget from whence they came.
From blood so mix'd, a pious race shall flow,
Equal to gods, excelling all below.
No nation more respect to you shall pay,
Or greater off'rings on your altars lay."
Juno consents, well pleas'd that her desires
Had found success, and from the cloud retires.

The peace thus made, the Thund'rer next prepares
To force the wat'ry goddess from the wars.
Deep in the dismal regions void of light,
Three daughters at a birth were born to Night:
These their brown mother, brooding on her care,
Indued with windy wings to flit in air,
With serpents girt alike, and crown'd with hissing hair.
In heav'n the Dirae call'd, and still at hand,
Before the throne of angry Jove they stand,
His ministers of wrath, and ready still
The minds of mortal men with fears to fill,
Whene'er the moody sire, to wreak his hate
On realms or towns deserving of their fate,
Hurls down diseases, death and deadly care,
And terrifies the guilty world with war.
One sister plague if these from heav'n he sent,
To fright Juturna with a dire portent.
The pest comes whirling down: by far more slow
Springs the swift arrow from the Parthian bow,
Or Cydon yew, when, traversing the skies,
And drench'd in pois'nous juice, the sure destruction flies.
With such a sudden and unseen a flight
Shot thro' the clouds the daughter of the night.
Soon as the field inclos'd she had in view,
And from afar her destin'd quarry knew,
Contracted, to the boding bird she turns,
Which haunts the ruin'd piles and hallow'd urns,
And beats about the tombs with nightly wings,
Where songs obscene on sepulchers she sings.
Thus lessen'd in her form, with frightful cries
The Fury round unhappy Turnus flies,
Flaps on his shield, and flutters o'er his eyes.

A lazy chillness crept along his blood;
Chok'd was his voice; his hair with horror stood.
Juturna from afar beheld her fly,
And knew th' ill omen, by her screaming cry
And stridor of her wings. Amaz'd with fear,
Her beauteous breast she beat, and rent her flowing hair.

"Ah me!" she cries, "in this unequal strife
What can thy sister more to save thy life?
Weak as I am, can I, alas! contend
In arms with that inexorable fiend?
Now, now, I quit the field! forbear to fright

My tender soul, ye baleful birds of night;
The lashing of your wings I know too well,
The sounding flight, and fun'ral screams of hell!
These are the gifts you bring from haughty Jove,
The worthy recompense of ravish'd love!
Did he for this exempt my life from fate?
O hard conditions of immortal state,
Tho' born to death, not privileg'd to die,
But forc'd to bear impos'd eternity!
Take back your envious bribes, and let me go
Companion to my brother's ghost below!
The joys are vanish'd: nothing now remains,
Of life immortal, but immortal pains.
What earth will open her devouring womb,
To rest a weary goddess in the tomb!"
She drew a length of sighs; nor more she said,
But in her azure mantle wrapp'd her head,
Then plung'd into her stream, with deep despair,
And her last sobs came bubbling up in air.

Now stern Aeneas his weighty spear
Against his foe, and thus upbraids his fear:
"What farther subterfuge can Turnus find?
What empty hopes are harbor'd in his mind?
'T is not thy swiftness can secure thy flight;
Not with their feet, but hands, the valiant fight.
Vary thy shape in thousand forms, and dare
What skill and courage can attempt in war;
Wish for the wings of winds, to mount the sky;
Or hid, within the hollow earth to lie!"
The champion shook his head, and made this short reply:
"No threats of thine my manly mind can move;
'T is hostile heav'n I dread, and partial Jove."
He said no more, but, with a sigh, repress'd
The mighty sorrow in his swelling breast.

Then, as he roll'd his troubled eyes around,
An antique stone he saw, the common bound
Of neighb'ring fields, and barrier of the ground;
So vast, that twelve strong men of modern days
Th' enormous weight from earth could hardly raise.
He heav'd it at a lift, and, pois'd on high,
Ran stagg'ring on against his enemy,
But so disorder'd, that he scarcely knew
His way, or what unwieldy weight he threw.

His knocking knees are bent beneath the load,
And shiv'ring cold congeals his vital blood.
The stone drops from his arms, and, falling short
For want of vigor, mocks his vain effort.
And as, when heavy sleep has clos'd the sight,
The sickly fancy labors in the night;
We seem to run; and, destitute of force,
Our sinking limbs forsake us in the course:
In vain we heave for breath; in vain we cry;
The nerves, unbrac'd, their usual strength deny;
And on the tongue the falt'ring accents die:
So Turnus far'd; whatever means he tried,
All force of arms and points of art employ'd,
The Fury flew athwart, and made th' endeavor void.

A thousand various thoughts his soul confound;
He star'd about, nor aid nor issue found;
His own men stop the pass, and his own walls surround.
Once more he pauses, and looks out again,
And seeks the goddess charioteer in vain.
Trembling he views the thund'ring chief advance,
And brandishing aloft the deadly lance:
Amaz'd he cow'rs beneath his conqu'ring foe,
Forgets to ward, and waits the coming blow.
Astonish'd while he stands, and fix'd with fear,
Aim'd at his shield he sees th' impending spear.

The hero measur'd first, with narrow view,
The destin'd mark; and, rising as he threw,
With its full swing the fatal weapon flew.
Not with less rage the rattling thunder falls,
Or stones from batt'ring-engines break the walls:
Swift as a whirlwind, from an arm so strong,
The lance drove on, and bore the death along.
Naught could his sev'nfold shield the prince avail,
Nor aught, beneath his arms, the coat of mail:
It pierc'd thro' all, and with a grisly wound
Transfix'd his thigh, and doubled him to ground.
With groans the Latins rend the vaulted sky:
Woods, hills, and valleys, to the voice reply.

Now low on earth the lofty chief is laid,
With eyes cast upward, and with arms display'd,
And, recreant, thus to the proud victor pray'd:
"I know my death deserv'd, nor hope to live:

Use what the gods and thy good fortune give.
Yet think, O think, if mercy may be shown-
Thou hadst a father once, and hast a son-
Pity my sire, now sinking to the grave;
And for Anchises' sake old Daunus save!
Or, if thy vow'd revenge pursue my death,
Give to my friends my body void of breath!
The Latian chiefs have seen me beg my life;
Thine is the conquest, thine the royal wife:
Against a yielded man, 't is mean ignoble strife."

In deep suspense the Trojan seem'd to stand,
And, just prepar'd to strike, repress'd his hand.
He roll'd his eyes, and ev'ry moment felt
His manly soul with more compassion melt;
When, casting down a casual glance, he spied
The golden belt that glitter'd on his side,
The fatal spoils which haughty Turnus tore
From dying Pallas, and in triumph wore.
Then, rous'd anew to wrath, he loudly cries
(Flames, while he spoke, came flashing from his eyes)
"Traitor, dost thou, dost thou to grace pretend,
Clad, as thou art, in trophies of my friend?
To his sad soul a grateful off'ring go!
'T is Pallas, Pallas gives this deadly blow."
He rais'd his arm aloft, and, at the word,
Deep in his bosom drove the shining sword.
The streaming blood distain'd his arms around.

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Horace

Translated by John Conington

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Satire I. Qui fit, Maecenas.

How comes it, say, Maecenas, if you can,
That none will live like a contented man
Where choice or chance directs, but each must praise
The folk who pass through life by other ways?
“Those lucky merchants!” cries the soldier stout,
When years of toil have well-nigh worn him out:
What says the merchant, tossing o’er the brine?
“Yon soldier’s lot is happier, sure, than mine:
One short, sharp shock, and presto! all is done:
Death in an instant comes, or victory’s won.”
The lawyer lauds the farmer, when a knock
Disturbs his sleep at crowing of the cock:
The farmer, dragged to town on business, swears
That only citizens are free from cares.
I need not run through all: so long the list,
Fabius himself would weary and desist:
So take in brief my meaning: just suppose
Some God should come, and with their wishes close:
“See, here am I, come down of my mere grace
To right you: soldier, take the merchant’s place!
You, counsellor, the farmer’s! go your way,
One here, one there! None stirring? all say nay?
How now? you won’t be happy when you may.”
Now, after this, would Jove be aught to blame
If with both cheeks he burst into a flame,
And vowed, when next they pray, they shall not find
His temper easy, or his ear inclined?

Well, not to treat things lightly (though, for me,
Why truth may not be gay, I cannot see:
Just as, we know, judicious teachers coax
With sugar-plum or cake their little folks
To learn their alphabet): — still, we will try
A graver tone, and lay our joking by.
The man that with his plough subdues the land,
The soldier stout, the vintner sly and bland,
The venturous sons of ocean, all declare
That with one view the toils of life they bear,
When age has come, and labour has amassed
Enough to live on, to retire at last:
E’en so the ant (for no bad pattern she),
That tiny type of giant industry,

Drags grain by grain, and adds it to the sum
Of her full heap, foreseeing cold to come:
Yet she, when winter turns the year to chill,
Stirs not an inch beyond her mounded hill,
But lives upon her savings: you, more bold,
Ne'er quit your gain for fiercest heat or cold:
Fire, ocean, sword, defying all, you strive
To make yourself the richest man alive.
Yet where's the profit, if you hide by stealth
In pit or cavern your enormous wealth?
"Why, once break in upon it, friend, you know,
And, dwindling piece by piece, the whole will go."
But, if 'tis still unbroken, what delight
Can all that treasure give to mortal wight?
Say, you've a million quarters on your floor:
Your stomach is like mine: it holds no more:
Just as the slave who 'neath the bread-bag sweats
No larger ration than his fellows gets.
What matters it to reasonable men
Whether they plough a hundred fields or ten?
"But there's a pleasure, spite of all you say,
In a large heap from which to take away."
If both contain the modicum we lack,
Why should your barn be better than my sack?
You want a draught of water: a mere urn,
Perchance a goblet, well would serve your turn:
You say, "The stream looks scanty at its head;
I'll take my quantum where 'tis broad instead."
But what befalls the wight who yearns for more
Than Nature bids him? down the waters pour,
And overwhelm him, bank and all; while he whose greed
Is kept in check, proportioned to his need,
He neither draws his water mixed with mud,
Nor leaves his life behind him in the flood.

But there's a class of persons, led astray
By false desires, and this is what they say:
"You cannot have enough: what you possess,
That makes your value, be it more or less."
What answer would you make to such as these?
Why, let them hug their misery if they please,
Like the Athenian miser, who was wont
To meet men's curses with a hero's front:
"Folks hiss me," said he, "but myself I clap
When I tell o'er my treasures on my lap."

So Tantalus catches at the waves that fly
His thirsty palate — Laughing, are you? why?
Change but the name, of you the tale is told:
You sleep, mouth open, on your hoarded gold;
Gold that you treat as sacred, dare not use,
In fact, that charms you as a picture does.
Come, will you hear what wealth can fairly do?
'Twill buy you bread, and vegetables too,
And wine, a good pint measure: add to this
Such needful things as flesh and blood would miss.
But to go mad with watching, nights and days
To stand in dread of thieves, fires, runaways
Who filch and fly, — in these if wealth consist,
Let me rank lowest on the paupers' list.

“But if you suffer from a chill attack,
Or other chance should lay you on your back,
You then have one who'll sit by your bed-side,
Will see the needful remedies applied,
And call in a physician, to restore
Your health, and give you to your friends once more.”
Nor wife nor son desires your welfare: all
Detest you, neighbours, gossips, great and small.
What marvel if, when wealth's your one concern,
None offers you the love you never earn?
Nay, would you win the kinsmen Nature sends
Made ready to your hand, and keep them friends,
'Twere but lost labour, as if one should train
A donkey for the course by bit and rein.

Make then an end of getting: know, the more
Your wealth, the less the risk of being poor;
And, having gained the object of your quest,
Begin to slack your efforts and take rest;
Nor act like one Ummidius (never fear,
The tale is short, and 'tis the last you'll hear),
So rich, his gold he by the peck would tell,
So mean, the slave that served him dressed as well;
E'en to his dying day he went in dread
Of perishing for simple want of bread,
Till a brave damsel, of Tyndarid line
The true descendant, clove him down the chine.

“What? would you have me live like some we know,
Maenius or Nomentanus?” There you go!

Still in extremes! in bidding you forsake
A miser's ways, I say not, Be a rake.
'Twixt Tanais and Visellius' sire-in-law
A step there is, and broader than a straw.
Yes, there's a mean in morals: life has lines,
To north or south of which all virtue pines.

Now to resume our subject: why, I say,
Should each man act the miser in his way,
Still discontented with his natural lot,
Still praising those who have what he has not?
Why should he waste with very spite, to see
His neighbour has a milkier cow than he,
Ne'er think how much he's richer than the mass,
But always strive this man or that to pass?
In such a contest, speed we as we may,
There's some one wealthier ever in the way.
So from their base when vying chariots pour,
Each driver presses on the car before,
Wastes not a thought on rivals overpast,
But leaves them to lag on among the last.
Hence comes it that the man is rarely seen
Who owns that his a happy life has been,
And, thankful for past blessings, with good will
Retires, like one who has enjoyed his fill.
Enough: you'll think I've rifled the scrutore
Of blind Crispinus, if I prose on more.

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Satire IX. *Ibam forte via sacra.*

Long the Sacred Road I strolled one day,
Deep in some bagatelle (you know my way),
When up comes one whose name I scarcely knew —
“The dearest of dear fellows! how d’ye do?”
He grasped my hand— “Well, thanks: the same to you.”
Then, as he still kept walking by my side,
To cut things short, “You’ve no commands?” I cried.
“Nay, you should know me: I’m a man of lore.”
“Sir, I’m your humble servant all the more.”
All in a fret to make him let me go,
I now walk fast, now loiter and walk slow,
Now whisper to my servant, while the sweat
Ran down so fast, my very feet were wet.
“O had I but a temper worth the name,
Like yours, Bolanus!” inly I exclaim,
While he keeps running on at a hand-trot,
About the town, the streets, I know not what.
Finding I made no answer, “Ah! I see,
Tou ‘re at a strait to rid yourself of me;
But ‘tis no use: I’m a tenacious friend,
And mean to hold you till your journey’s end,”
“No need to take you such a round: I go
To visit an acquaintance you don’t know:
Poor man! he’s ailing at his lodging, far
Beyond the bridge, where Caesar’s gardens are.”
“O, never mind: I’ve nothing else to do,
And want a walk, so I’ll step on with you.”

Down go my ears, in donkey-fashion, straight;
You’ve seen them do it, when their load’s too great.
“If I mistake not,” he begins, “you’ll find
Viscus not more, nor Varius, to your mind:
There’s not a man can turn a verse so soon,
Or dance so nimbly when he hears a tune:
While, as for singing — ah! my forte is there:
Tigellius’ self might envy me, I’ll swear.”

He paused for breath: I falteringly strike in:
“Have you a mother? have you kith or kin
To whom your life is precious?” “Not a soul:
My line’s extinct: I have interred the whole.”
O happy they! (so into thought I fell)

After life's endless babble they sleep well:
My turn is next: dispatch me: for the weird
Has come to pass which I so long have feared,
The fatal weird a Sabine beldame sung,
All in my nursery days, when life was young:
"No sword nor poison e'er shall take him off,
Nor gout, nor pleurisy, nor racking cough:
A babbling tongue shall kill him: let him fly
All talkers, as he wishes not to die."

We got to Vesta's temple, and the sun
Told us a quarter of the day was done.
It chanced he had a suit, and was bound fast
Either to make appearance or be cast.
"Step here a moment, if you love me." "Nay;
I know no law: 'twould hurt my health to stay:
And then, my call." "I'm doubting what to do,
Whether to give my lawsuit up or you.
"Me, pray!" "I will not." On he strides again:
I follow, unresisting, in his train.

"How stand you with Maecenas?" he began:
"He picks his friends with care; a shrewd wise man:
In fact, I take it, one could hardly name
A head so cool in life's exciting game.
'Twould be a good deed done, if you could throw
Your servant in his way; I mean, you know,
Just to play second: in a month, I'll swear,
You'd make an end of every rival there."
"O, you mistake: we don't live there in league:
I know no house more sacred from intrigue:
I'm never distanced in my friend's good grace
By wealth or talent: each man finds his place."
"A miracle! if 'twere not told by you,
I scarce should credit it." "And yet 'tis true."
"Ah, well, you double my desire to rise
To special favour with a man so wise."
"You've but to wish it: 'twill be your own fault,
If, with your nerve, you win not by assault:
He can be won: that puts him on his guard,
And so the first approach is always hard."
"No fear of me, sir: a judicious bribe
Will work a wonder with the menial tribe:
Say, I'm refused admittance for to-day;
I'll watch my time; I'll meet him in the way,

Escort him, dog him. In this world of ours
The path to what we want ne'er runs on flowers."

'Mid all this prate there met us, as it fell,
Aristius, my good friend, who knew him well.
We stop: inquiries and replies go round:
"Where do you hail from?" "Whither are you bound?"
There as he stood, impassive as a clod,
I pull at his limp arms, frown, wink, and nod,
To urge him to release me. With a smile
He feigns stupidity: I burn with bile.
"Something there was you said you wished to tell
To me in private." "Ay, I mind it well;
But not just now: 'tis a Jews' fast to-day:
Affront a sect so touchy! nay, friend, nay."
"Faith, I've no scruples." "Ah! but I've a few:
I'm weak, you know, and do as others do:
Some other time: excuse me." Wretched me!
That ever man so black a sun should see!
Off goes the rogue, and leaves me in despair,
Tied to the altar, with the knife in air:
When, by rare chance, the plaintiff in the suit
Knocks up against us: "Whither now, you brute?"
He roars like thunder: then to me: "You'll stand
My witness, sir?" "My ear's at your command."
Off to the court he drags him: shouts succeed:
A mob collects: thank Phoebus, I am freed.

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Ode 1.5 Quis multa gracilis.

Translated by John Conington

What slender youth, besprinkled with perfume,
Courts you on roses in some grotto's shade?
Fair Pyrrha, say, for whom
Your yellow hair you braid,
So trim, so simple! Ah! how oft shall he
Lament that faith can fail, that gods can change,
Viewing the rough black sea
With eyes to tempests strange,
Who now is basking in your golden smile,
And dreams of you still fancy-free, still kind,
Poor fool, nor knows the guile
Of the deceitful wind!
Woe to the eyes you dazzle without cloud
Untried! For me, they show in yonder fane
My dripping garments, vow'd
To Him who curbs the main.

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Ode I.11 Tu ne quaesieris. ('The Carpe Diem Poem')

Ask not ('tis forbidden knowledge), what our destined term of years,

Mine and yours; nor scan the tables of your Babylonish seers.
Better far to bear the future, my Leuconoe, like the past,
Whether Jove has many winters yet to give, or this our last;
THIS, that makes the Tyrrhene billows spend their strength
against
the shore.

Strain your wine and prove your wisdom; life is short; should
hope
be more?

In the moment of our talking, envious time has ebb'd away.
Seize the present; trust to-morrow e'en as little as you may.

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Ode III.2. Angustam amice. “It is sweet and honorable to die for one’s country.”

To suffer hardness with good cheer,
In sternest school of warfare bred,
Our youth should learn; let steed and spear
Make him one day the Parthian’s dread;
Cold skies, keen perils, brace his life.
Methinks I see from rampined town
Some battling tyrant’s matron wife,
Some maiden, look in terror down, —
“Ah, my dear lord, untrain’d in war!
O tempt not the infuriate mood
Of that fell lion! see! from far
He plunges through a tide of blood!”
What joy, for fatherland to die!
Death’s darts e’en flying feet o’ertake,
Nor spare a recreant chivalry,
A back that cowers, or loins that quake.
True Virtue never knows defeat:
HER robes she keeps unsullied still,
Nor takes, nor quits, HER curule seat
To please a people’s veering will.
True Virtue opens heaven to worth:
She makes the way she does not find:
The vulgar crowd, the humid earth,
Her soaring pinion leaves behind.
Seal’d lips have blessings sure to come:
Who drags Eleusis’ rite to day,
That man shall never share my home,
Or join my voyage: roofs give way
And boats are wreck’d: true men and thieves
Neglected Justice oft confounds:
Though Vengeance halt, she seldom leaves
The wretch whose flying steps she hounds.

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Amours. I.1

Translated by Christopher Marlowe

Quemadmodum a Cupidine, pro bellis amores scribere coactus sit

We which were *Ovids* five books, now are three,
For these before the rest preferreth he:
If reading five thou plainst of tediousnesse,
Two tane away, thy labor will be lesse:
With Muse upreard I meant to sing of armes,
Choosing a subject fit for feirse alarmes:
Both verses were alike till Love (men say)
Began to smile and tooke one foote away.
Rash boy, who gave thee power to change a line?
We are the Muses prophets, none of thine.
What if thy Mother take *Dianas* bowe,
Shall *Dian* fanne when love begins to glowe?
In wooddie groves ist meete that *Ceres* Raigne,
And quiver bearing *Dian* till the plaine:
Who'le set the faire treste sunne in battell ray,
While *Mars* doth take the *Aonian* harpe to play?
Great are thy kingdomes, over strong and large,
Ambitious Imp, why seekst thou further charge?
Are all things thine? the Muses *Tempe* thine?
Then scarce can *Phoebus* say, this harpe is mine.
When in this workes first verse I trod aloft,
Love slackt my Muse, and made my numbers soft.
I have no mistris, nor no favorit,
Being fittest matter for a wanton wit,
Thus I complaind, but Love unlockt his quiver,
Tooke out the shaft, ordaind my hart to shiver:
And bent his sinewy bow upon his knee,
Saying, Poet heers a worke beseeming thee.
Oh woe is me, he never shootes but hits,
I burne, love in my idle bosome sits.
Let my first verse be sixe, my last five feete,
Fare well sterne warre, for blunter Poets meete.
Elegian Muse, that warblest amorous laies,
Girt my shine browe with sea banke mirtle praise.

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Amours. I.9

Ad Atticum, amantem non oportere desidiosum esse, sicuti nec militem

All Lovers warre, and Cupid hath his tent,
Atticke all lovers are to warre farre sent.
What age fits Mars, with Venus doth agree,
Tis shame for eld in waive or love to be.
What yeares in souldiours Captaines do require,
Those in their lovers, pretty maydes desire.
Both of them watch: each on the hard earth sleeps:
His Mistris does this; that his Captaines keeps.
Souldiers must travaile farre: the wench forth send,
Her valiant lover followes without end.
Mounts, and raine-doubled flouds he passeth over,
And treades the deserts snowy heapes do cover.
Going to sea, East windes he doth not chide
Nor to hoist saile attends fit time and tyde.
Who but a souldiour or a lover is bould
To suffer storlne mixt snowes with nights sharpe cold?
One as a spy doth to his enemies goe,
The other eyes his rivall as his foe.
He Citties greate, this thresholds lies before:
This breakes Towne gates, but he his Mistris dore.
oft to invade the sleeping foe tis good
And arm'd to shed unarmed peoples bloud.
So the fierce troupes of ThracianRhesus fell
And Captive horses bad their Lord fare-well.
Sooth Lovers watch till sleepe the hus-band charmes,
Who slumbring, they rise up in swelling armes.
The keepers hands and corps-dugard to passe
The souldiours, and poore lovers worke ere was.
Doubtfull is warre and love, the vanquisht rise
And who thou never think'st should fall downe lies.
Therefore who ere love sloathfiilnesse doth call,
Let him surcease: love tries wit best of all.
Achilles burnd Briseis being tane away:
Trojanes destroy the Greeke wealth, while you may.
Hector to armes went from his wives embraces,
And on Andromache his helmet laces.
Great Agamemnon was, men say, amazed,
On Priams loose-trest daughter when he gazed.
Mars in the deed the black-smithes net did stable,

In heaven was never more notorious fable.
My selfe was dull, and faint, to sloth inclinde,
Pleasure, and ease had mollifide my minde.
A faire maides care expeld this sluggishnesse,
And to her tentes wild me my selfe addresse.
Since maist thou see me watch and night warres move:
He that will not growe slothfull let him love.

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Amours III.11

Doletamicam suam ita suis carminibus innotuisse ut rivales multos
sibi pararit

What day was that, which all sad haps to bring,
White birdes to lovers did not aiwayes sing.
Or is I thinke my wish against the starres?
Or shall I plaine some God against me warres?
Who mine was cald, whom I lov'd more then any,
I feare with me is common now to many.
Erre I? or by my bookes is she so knowne?
'Tis so: by my witte her abuse is growne.
And justly: for her praise why did I tell?
The wench by my fault is set forth to sell.
The bawde I play, lovers tp her I guide:
Her gate by my hands is set open wide.
'Tis doubtfiill whether verse availe, or harme,
Against my good they were an envious charme.
When Thebes, when Troy, when Caesar should be writ,
Alone Corinna moves my wanton wit.
With Muse oppos'd would I my lines had done,
And Phcebus had forsooke my worke begun.
Nor, as use will not Poets record heare,
Would I my words would any credit beare.
Scylla by us her fathers rich haire steales,
And Scyllaes wombe mad raging dogs conceales.
Wee cause feete flie, wee mingle hairees with snakes,
Victorious Perseus a wingd steedes back takes.
Our verse great Titys a huge space out-spreads,
And gives the viper curled Dogge three heads.
We make Enceladus use a thousand armes,
And men inthraild by Mermaids singing charmes.
The East winds in Ulisses baggs we shut,
And blabbing Tantalus in mid-waters put.
Niobe flint, Callist we make a Beare,
Bird-changed Progne doth her Itys teare.
Jove turnes himselfe into a Swanne, or gold,
Or his Bulles hornes Europas hand doth hold.
Proteus what should I name? teeth, Thebes first seed?
Oxen in whose mouthes burning flames did breede?
Heav'n starre Electra that bewaild her sisters?
The ships, whose God-head in the sea now glisters?
The Sunne turnd backe from Atreus cursed table?

And sweet toucht harpe that to move stones was able?
Poets large power is boundlesse, and immense,
Nor have their words true histories pretence,
And my wench ought to have seem'd falsely praisd,
Now your credulity harme to me hath raisd.

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Venus and Adonis: Extract from 'The Metamorphoses'

Translated by J. J. Howard

“As kisses sweet the quiver-bearing boy
“Press’d on his mother’s lips, he witless raz’d
“Slightly her bosom, with a dart that stood
“Protruding. Venus, wounded, angry push’d
“Her son far from her; light the wound appear’d;
“At first even her deceiving. With the blaze
“Of manly beauty caught, she now contemns
“The Cythereian shores; nor Paphos seeks,
“Girt by profoundest seas; Cnidos, so fam’d
“For fish; nor Amathus with metals rich.
“Heaven too, she quits, to heaven she now prefers
“Adonis: him she follows, him attends;
“Whose sole employ was loitering in the shade,
“In anxious study to increase her charms.
“Bare to the knee, her robe, like Dian’s train
“High-girt, o’er hills, through woods, and brambly rocks
“She roves: exhorts the dogs, and drives such game
“As threaten not with danger; fearful hares,
“High-antler’d stags, and rapid-flying deer.
“Fierce boars she shuns, and shuns the robber-wolf,
“Strong-talon’d bears, and lions slaughter-gorg’d.

“Thou too, Adonis, admonition heardst
“These to avoid, if admonition ought
“With thee could weigh: — Be brave, — the goddess said —
“To those who fly thee; courage ‘gainst the bold
“To danger drags. Dear youth, thy heart is brave;
“Indulge not to my hazard, nor provoke
“Fierce beasts by nature arm’d, nor seek for fame.
“Nor youth nor beauty, such as Venus move,
“Will move the lion, or the bristly boar:
“Their eyes and breasts untouch’d by brightest charms.
“Thunder and lightning in his bended tusks
“The fierce boar carries; rapid is the force
“The tawny lion, (hated race!) exerts:
“My cause of hatred when to thee disclos’d,
“Will raise thy wonder at the monstrous crime,
“In days of yore committed. Now hard toil
“Unwonted tires me. Lo! the poplar’s shade

“So opportune invites; and the green turf
“A couch presents. Upon the ground with thee
“I’ll rest: — she spoke, and as she stretch’d along,
“She press’d the grass, and press’d the lovely youth:
“Smiling, her head upon his breast reclin’d,
“Midst intermingling kisses, thus she spoke. —

“Perhaps thou’st heard of that renowned maid,
“Whose fleetness in the race the swiftest man’s
“Surpass’d. Not fabulous the tale you heard:
“She vanquish’d all. And hard it was to say,
“If praise for swiftness, or for beauteous form,
“She most deserv’d. To her, who once enquir’d
“Of marriage, fate-predicting Phœbus said —
“A spouse would, Atalanta, be thy bane;
“Avoid an husband’s couch. Yet wilt thou not
“An husband’s couch avoid; but lose thyself,
“Thyself yet living. — Terror-struck to hear
“The sentence of the god, maiden she lives
“Amid the thickest woods; driving severe
“The throngs of pressing suitors from her far,
“By hard conditions. — Ne’er can I be gain’d —
“She said — till vanquish’d in the race. With me
“Your swiftness try: the conqueror in the strife,
“Shall gain me spouse, and gain a genial couch;
“But death must him who lags behind reward.
“Such be the laws of trial. — Pitiless
“The law appear’d; but (such is beauty’s power)
“Crowds of rash lovers to the law agreed.
“There sat Hippomenes to view the race
“Unequal; and exclaim’d, — are there so mad,
“As seek a wife through peril so immense? —
“And the blind love of all the youths condemn’d.
“But when her face he saw, and saw her limbs
“Bar’d for the contest, (limbs like mine, or thine,
“Were thine of female mould,) amaz’d he look’d
“With uprais’d hands, and cry’d; — forgive my fault,
“Ye whom but now I blam’d; the great reward
“For which you labor, then to me unknown! —
“Thus praising, fire he feels, and hopes no youth
“More swift will run, and envious fears their speed —
“But why the fortune of this contest leave,
“Untry’d — he said, — myself? Heaven helps the bold. —
“While musing thus Hippomenes remarks
“The virgin’s flying pace. Though not less swift

“Th’ Aönian youth beheld her, than the dart
“Shot from the Scythian bow; her beauty more
“Ravish’d his eyes, and speed her charms increas’d.
“Th’ opposing breeze, which met her rapid feet,
“Blew back the ribbons which her sandals bound;
“Her tresses floated down her ivory back;
“And loosely flow’d her garment o’er her knees,
“With painted border gay: a purple bloom
“With virgin whiteness mixt, her body shew’d;
“As when the snow-white hall a deepen’d tinge
“From purple curtains shews. While this the guest
“Intently notes, the utmost goal is pass’d:
“Victorious Atalanta with the wreath
“Is crown’d: the vanquish’d sigh, and meet the doom
“Agreed. He, by the youths’ untimely fate
“Deterr’d not, forward stood, and on the nymph
“Fix’d full his eyes, and said; — Why seek you thus
“An easy conquest, vanquishing the weak?
“With me contend. So potent am I born
“You need not blush to such high rank to yield.
“Megareus was my sire, Onchestius his,
“Grandson to Neptune; thus the fourth I boast
“From Ocean’s sovereign. Nor beneath my race
“Stoops aught my valor; should success me crown,
“A lofty and an everlasting fame,
“Hippomenes your conqueror, would you gain. —
“As thus he spoke, with softening eyes the maid
“Beheld him, doubtful which ‘twere best to wish,
“To vanquish or be vanquish’d. While she thus
“Utter’d her thoughts — What god, an envious foe
“To beauty would destroy him: urg’d to seek
“My bed, by risking thus his own dear life?
“I cannot sure so great a prize be thought!
“His beauty melts me not; though yet I own
“Such beauty well might melt. But such a youth
“He seems, he moves me not but from his years.
“What courage in him reigns! his soul unaw’d
“By death. He springs the fourth from Ocean’s king!
“Then how he loves! and prizes so my hand,
“That should hard fortune keep me from his arms,
“He’d perish. Stranger, while thou may’st, depart;
“Avoid the bloody nuptials. Marriage, I
“Too cruel make. No maid would thee refuse;
“And soon may’st thou a wiser nymph select.
“But why for him this care? from me who see

“So many die, whom he too has beheld?
“Then let him perish; since the numerous train
“Of slaughter’d lovers warns him not: he spurns
“An hated life. How! should he then be slain
“Because with me to live he wishes? Death
“Inglorious must he gain, reward of love?
“Hatred would such a conquest still attend.
“Still is not mine the fault. Do thou desist;
“Or if thy madness holds, O, that thy feet
“More swift may be! See in his youthful face
“What virgin beauties! Ah! Hippomenes,
“Would Atalanta thou had’st never seen.
“Well worthy thou of life. Were I more blest;
“Had rugged fate not me a spouse forbade,
“Thou, sole art he, by whom to Hymen’s couch
“With joy I would be led. — Thus spoke the nymph,
“In fond simplicity, first touch’d by love,
“Unknowing what she felt: ardent she lov’d,
“Yet knew the passion not which rul’d her soul.

“Now loud the people, and the king demand,
“The wonted race. To me with anxious words
“Hippomenes, great Neptune’s offspring pray’d —
“O Cytherea! I adjure thee, aid
“My bold attempt; from thee those flames I felt,
“Grant them thy succour. — Gales auspicious waft
“To me the tender prayers, my soul is mov’d:
“Nor long the aid so needful I delay.
“A tract there lies in Cyprus’ richest lands,
“Nam’d Tamasene by those who dwell around,
“This ancient times made sacred unto me:
“And with this gift my temples were endow’d.
“Midst of the field appears a shining tree;
“Yellow its leaves, its crackling branches gold.
“By chance there straying, from the boughs I pluck’d
“Three golden apples, bore them in my hand,
“And seen by none, except the favor’d youth,
“Approach’d Hippomenes, and taught their use.
“The trumpets gave the sign, each ready sprung —
“Shot from the barrier, and with rapid feet
“Skimm’d lightly o’er the sand. O’er the wide main
“With feet unwetted, they might seem to fly;
“Or sweep th’ unbending ears of hoary grain.
“Loud shouts encouraging, and cheering words,
“On every side a stimulus afford,

“To urge the youth’s exertions. — Now, — they cry, —
“Now, now, Hippomenes, the time to press!
“On, on! exert thy vigor — flag not now, —
“The race is thine. — The grateful sounds both heard,
“Megareus’ son, and Schœneus’ daughter; hard
“Which joy’d the most to judge. How oft her pace
“She slacken’d, when with ease she might have pass’d,
“And ceas’d unwilling on his face to gaze.
“Tir’d now, parch’d breathings from the mouth ascends
“Of Neptune’s son, and far remote the goal.
“Then, as his last resource, he distant flung
“One of the tree’s bright produce. In amaze
“The virgin saw it roll; and from the course
“Swerv’d, tempted to obtain the glittering fruit.
“Hippomenes o’ershoots her; all around
“Applauses ring. She soon corrects delay,
“And wasted moments, with more rapid speed,
“And leaves again the youth behind. Again,
“Delay’d to catch the second flying fruit,
“The youth is follow’d, and again o’erpass’d.
“Now near the goal they come, — O, goddess! now
“Who gave the boon assist; he said, and flung
“With youthful force obliquely o’er the plain,
“More to detain, the last bright glittering gold.
“In doubt the virgin saw it fly: I urg’d
“That she should follow; and fresh weight I gave
“The apple when obtain’d; thus by the load
“Her course impeding, and obtain’d delay.
“But lest my tale, in length surpass the race,
“The vanquish’d virgin was the victor’s prize.

“Think’st thou Adonis, did I not deserve
“Most grateful thanks in smoking incense paid?
“Mindless, nor thanks, nor incense yielded he;
“And sudden anger in my bosom rag’d.
“Irk’d at the slight, I instantly provide
“That future times with less contempt behave:
“And ‘gainst them both my raging bosom burns.
“Now pass’d they near a temple, long since rais’d
“By fam’d Echion, in a shady wood,
“To the great mother of the heavenly gods,
“When the long journey tempted to repose;
“And there, inspir’d by me, ill-tim’d desire
“Hippomenes excited. Near the fane
“A cave-like close recess dim-lighted stood,

“With native pumice roof’d, hallow’d of old;
“Where priests the numerous images had plac’d,
“Of ancient deities. They enter’d here,
“And with forbidden lust the place defil’d.
“The wooden images their eyes avert:
“The tower-crown’d goddess dubious stands to plunge,
“The guilty couple in the Stygian wave.
“Too light that sentence seems: straight yellow manes
“Cover their soft smooth necks; their fingers curve
“To mighty claws; their arms to fore-legs turn;
“And new-form’d tails sweep lightly o’er the sand:
“Angry their countenance glares; for speech they roar;
“They haunt the forests for their nuptial dome.
“Transform’d to lions, and by others fear’d,
“Their tam’d mouths champ the Cybeleian reins.
“Do thou, O dearest boy! their rage avoid;
“Not theirs alone, but all the savage tribe,
“That stubborn meet with breasts the furious war;
“Not turn their backs for flight: lest bold too much,
“Thou and myself, have cause too much too mourn. —

“Thus she admonish’d; and by coupled swans
“Upborne, she cleft the air; but his brave soul
“Her cautious admonitions rash contemn’d.

“By chance his dogs the well-mark’d footprints trac’d,
“And from his lurking covert rous’d a boar;
“Whom with a stroke oblique, as from the brake
“To spring he went, the gallant youth transpierc’d.
“Instant, with crooked tusks, the gore-stain’d spear
“Wrench’d the fierce boar away, and at him rush’d,
“Trembling, and safety seeking: every fang
“Deep in his groin he plung’d, and on the sand
“Stretch’d him expiring. Cytherea, borne
“Through midmost ether in her chariot light,
“Had not at Cyprus with her swans arriv’d,
“When, known from far, she heard his dying groans;
“And thither turn’d her snowy birds. From high
“When lifeless she beheld him, in his blood
“Convulsive struggling, quick she darted down,
“She tore her garments, and she tore her hair;
“And with un pitying hands her breast she smote.
“Then, fate upbraiding first, she said; — Not all
“Shall bend to your decision; still shalt thou
“Remain, Adonis, monument of woe,

“Suffer’d by me! The image of thy death,
“Annual repeated, annual shall renew
“Remembrance of my mourning. But thy blood
“A flower shall form. Shalt thou, O Proserpine,
“A female body to a scented herb
“Transform; and I the Cinyreian youth
“Forbidden be to change? — She said, and flung
“Nectar most odorous on the ebbing gore;
“Which instant swelling rose. So bubbles rise
“On the smooth stream when showery floods descend.
“Nor long the term, an hour’s short space elaps’d,
“When the same teinted flower the blood produc’d:
“Such flowers the deep pomegranate bears, which hides
“Its purple grains beneath a flexile rind.
“But short its boast, for the same winds afford
“Its name, and shake them where they light adhere:
“Ripe for their fall in fragile beauty gay.”

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Tempus edax rerum: Extract from 'The Metamorphoses' Book XV

“And now the god inspires my tongue, my tongue
“Shall follow what th’ inspiring god directs,
“My truths I will disclose, display all heaven,
“And oracles of mind divine reveal.
“I sing of mighty things, by none before
“Investigated; what has long lain hid.
“It glads me through the lofty heavens to go;
“To sail amid the clouds, the sluggish earth
“Left far below; and on the shoulders mount
“Of mighty Atlas; thence from far look down,
“On wandering souls of reasoning aid depriv’d,
“Shivering and trembling at the thoughts of death.
“I thus exhort, and scenes of fate unfold.

“O race! whom terror of cold death affrights,
“Why fear ye Styx? why darkness? why vain names,
“The dreams of poets? why in fancy’d worlds
“Severe atonements? Whether slow disease,
“Or on the pile the body flames consume,
“Think not that any suffering it can feel.
“The soul from death is free, and one seat left,
“Another habitation finds and lives.
“Well I remember I was Pantheus’ son,
“Euphorbus, in the fatal war of Troy,
“Whose breast the young Atrides’ massive spear
“Transpierc’d in fight. I lately knew the shield
“My left arm bore, in Juno’s temple hung,
“In Abantean Argos. All is chang’d,
“But nothing dies. The spirit roams about
“From that to this, from this to that again;
“And enters vacant bodies at its will.
“Now from a beast’s to human frame it goes,
“Now from the man it passes to a beast;
“And never perishes. As yielding wax
“Is with new figures printed, nor remains
“Long in one form, nor holds its pristine shape;
“And yet is still the same: so do I teach,
“The soul the same, though vary’d are its seats.
“Hence, lest thy belly’s keen desire o’ercome
“All piety, (and prophet-like I speak)
“Forbear by impious slaughter to disturb

“The souls of kindred friends; and let not blood
“With blood be fed. Now on the boundless sea
“Since I am borne, and to the breeze have loos’d
“My swelling sail, this more: — Nought that the world
“Contains, is in appearance still the same
“All moving alters; changeable is form’d
“Each image. And with constant motion flows
“Ev’n time itself, just like a passing stream;
“For nor the river, nor the flying hour
“Can be detain’d. As wave by wave impell’d,
“The foremost prest by that behind; itself
“Urging its predecessor; so time flies,
“And so is follow’d, ever seeming new.
“For what has been, is lost; what is, no more
“Shall be, and every moment is renew’d.
“You see the night emerge to glorious day,
“And the bright sun in shady darkness sink.
“Nor shews the sky one hue when nature all
“Worn out, in midnight quiet rests; and when
“Bright Lucifer dismounts his snowy steed:
“Varying again when fair Aurora comes
“Of light fore-runner, and the world, to Sol
“About to yield, dyes deep. The orb’d god,
“When from earth’s margin rising, in the morn
“Blushing appears, and blushing seems at eve
“Descending to the main, but at heaven’s height
“Shines in white splendor; there th’ ethereal air
“Is purest, earth’s contagion distant far.
“Nor can nocturnal Phœbe always shew
“Her form the same, nor equal: less to-day,
“If waxing, than to-morrow she’ll appear;
“If waning, greater. Note you not the year
“In four succeeding seasons passing on?
“A lively image of our mortal life.
“Tender and milky, like young infancy
“Is the new spring: then gaily shine the plants,
“Tumid with juice, but helpless; and delight
“With hope the planter: blooming all appears,
“And smiles in varied flowers the feeding earth;
“But delicate and pow’rless are the leaves.
“Robuster now the year, to spring succeeds
“The summer, and a sturdy youth becomes:
“No age is stronger, none more fertile yields
“Its stores, and none with heat more fervid glows.
“Next autumn follows, all the fire of youth

“Allay’d, mature in mildness, just between
“Old age and youth a medium temper holds;
“Some silvery tresses o’er his temples strew’d.
“Then aged winter, frightful object! comes
“With tottering step, and bald appears his head;
“Or snowy white the few remaining hairs.
“Our bodies too themselves submit to change
“Without remission. Nor what we have been,
“Nor what we are, to-morrow shall we be.
“The day has been when we were but as seed,
“And in his mother’s womb the future man
“Dwelt. Nature with her aiding power appear’d,
“Bade that the embryo bury’d deep within
“The pregnant mother, should not rack her more:
“And from its dwelling to the free drawn air
“Produc’d it. To the day the infant brought,
“Lies sinewless; then quadruped he crawls
“In beast-like guise; then trembling, by degrees
“He stands erect, but with a leg unfirm,
“His knees assisting with some strong support.
“Now is he strong and swift, and youth’s brisk stage
“Quick passes; then, the flower of years o’ergone,
“He slides down gradual to descending age:
“This undermines, demolishes the strength
“Of former years. And ancient Milo weeps,
“When he beholds those aged feeble arms
“Hang dangling by his side, once like the limbs
“Of Hercules; so muscular, so large.
“And Helen weeps when in her glass she views
“Her aged wrinkles, wondering to herself
“Why she was ravish’d twice. Consuming time!
“And envious age! all substance ye destroy;
“All things your teeth decay; and you consume
“By gradual progress, but by certain death.
“These also, which the elements we call,
“Their varying changes know: lo! I explain
“Their regular vicissitudes, — attend.

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The Inferno. Canto I

Translated by H. F. Cary

Durante degli Alighieri (c. 1265–1321)

IN the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
Gone from the path direct: and e'en to tell
It were no easy task, how savage wild
That forest, how robust and rough its growth,
Which to remember only, my dismay
Renews, in bitterness not far from death.
Yet to discourse of what there good befell,
All else will I relate discover'd there.
How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,
Such sleepy dullness in that instant weigh'd
My senses down, when the true path I left,
But when a mountain's foot I reach'd, where clos'd
The valley, that had pierc'd my heart with dread,
I look'd aloft, and saw his shoulders broad
Already vested with that planet's beam,
Who leads all wanderers safe through every way.

Then was a little respite to the fear,
That in my heart's recesses deep had lain,
All of that night, so pitifully pass'd:
And as a man, with difficult short breath,
Forespent with toiling, 'scap'd from sea to shore,
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands
At gaze; e'en so my spirit, that yet fail'd
Struggling with terror, turn'd to view the straits,
That none hath pass'd and liv'd. My weary frame
After short pause recomforted, again
I journey'd on over that lonely steep,

The hinder foot still firmer. Scarce the ascent
Began, when, lo! a panther, nimble, light,
And cover'd with a speckled skin, appear'd,
Nor, when it saw me, vanish'd, rather strove
To check my onward going; that ofttimes
With purpose to retrace my steps I turn'd.

The hour was morning's prime, and on his way
Aloft the sun ascended with those stars,
That with him rose, when Love divine first mov'd
Those its fair works: so that with joyous hope
All things conspir'd to fill me, the gay skin
Of that swift animal, the matin dawn
And the sweet season. Soon that joy was chas'd,
And by new dread succeeded, when in view
A lion came, 'gainst me, as it appear'd,

With his head held aloft and hunger-mad,
That e'en the air was fear-struck. A she-wolf
Was at his heels, who in her leanness seem'd
Full of all wants, and many a land hath made
Disconsolate ere now. She with such fear
O'erwhelmed me, at the sight of her appall'd,
That of the height all hope I lost. As one,
Who with his gain elated, sees the time
When all unwares is gone, he inwardly
Mourns with heart-gripping anguish; such was I,
Haunted by that fell beast, never at peace,
Who coming o'er against me, by degrees
Impell'd me where the sun in silence rests.

While to the lower space with backward step
I fell, my ken discern'd the form one of one,
Whose voice seem'd faint through long disuse of speech.
When him in that great desert I espied,
"Have mercy on me!" cried I out aloud,
"Spirit! or living man! what e'er thou be!"

He answer'd: "Now not man, man once I was,
And born of Lombard parents, Mantuana both
By country, when the power of Julius yet
Was scarcely firm. At Rome my life was past
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time
Of fabled deities and false. A bard
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,
When the flames prey'd on Ilium's haughty towers.
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past
Return'st thou? wherefore not this pleasant mount
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight?"
"And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring,
From which such copious floods of eloquence

Have issued?" I with front abash'd replied.
"Glory and light of all the tuneful train!
May it avail me that I long with zeal
Have sought thy volume, and with love immense
Have conn'd it o'er. My master thou and guide!
Thou he from whom alone I have deriv'd
That style, which for its beauty into fame
Exalts me. See the beast, from whom I fled.
O save me from her, thou illustrious sage!

"For every vein and pulse throughout my frame
She hath made tremble." He, soon as he saw
That I was weeping, answer'd, "Thou must needs
Another way pursue, if thou wouldst 'scape
From out that savage wilderness. This beast,
At whom thou criest, her way will suffer none
To pass, and no less hindrance makes than death:
So bad and so accursed in her kind,
That never sated is her ravenous will,
Still after food more craving than before.
To many an animal in wedlock vile
She fastens, and shall yet to many more,
Until that greyhound come, who shall destroy
Her with sharp pain. He will not life support
By earth nor its base metals, but by love,
Wisdom, and virtue, and his land shall be
The land 'twixt either Feltro. In his might
Shall safety to Italia's plains arise,
For whose fair realm, Camilla, virgin pure,
Nisus, Euryalus, and Turnus fell.
He with incessant chase through every town
Shall worry, until he to hell at length
Restore her, thence by envy first let loose.
I for thy profit pond'ring now devise,
That thou mayst follow me, and I thy guide
Will lead thee hence through an eternal space,
Where thou shalt hear despairing shrieks, and see
Spirits of old tormented, who invoke
A second death; and those next view, who dwell
Content in fire, for that they hope to come,
Whene'er the time may be, among the blest,
Into whose regions if thou then desire
T' ascend, a spirit worthier than I
Must lead thee, in whose charge, when I depart,
Thou shalt be left: for that Almighty King,

Who reigns above, a rebel to his law,
Adjudges me, and therefore hath decreed,
That to his city none through me should come.
He in all parts hath sway; there rules, there holds
His citadel and throne. O happy those,
Whom there he chooses!" I to him in few:
"Bard! by that God, whom thou didst not adore,
I do beseech thee (that this ill and worse
I may escape) to lead me, where thou saidst,
That I Saint Peter's gate may view, and those
Who as thou tell'st, are in such dismal plight."

Onward he mov'd, I close his steps pursu'd.

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The Inferno Canto II

Durante degli Alighieri (c. 1265–1321)

NOW was the day departing, and the air,
Imbrownd with shadows, from their toils releas'd
All animals on earth; and I alone
Prepar'd myself the conflict to sustain,
Both of sad pity, and that perilous road,
Which my unerring memory shall retrace.

O Muses! O high genius! now vouchsafe
Your aid! O mind! that all I saw hast kept
Safe in a written record, here thy worth
And eminent endowments come to proof.

I thus began: "Bard! thou who art my guide,
Consider well, if virtue be in me
Sufficient, ere to this high enterprise
Thou trust me. Thou hast told that Silvius' sire,
Yet cloth'd in corruptible flesh, among
Th' immortal tribes had entrance, and was there
Sensible present. Yet if heaven's great Lord,
Almighty foe to ill, such favour shew'd,
In contemplation of the high effect,
Both what and who from him should issue forth,
It seems in reason's judgment well deserv'd:
Sith he of Rome, and of Rome's empire wide,
In heaven's empyreal height was chosen sire:
Both which, if truth be spoken, were ordain'd
And 'stablish'd for the holy place, where sits
Who to great Peter's sacred chair succeeds.
He from this journey, in thy song renown'd,
Learn'd things, that to his victory gave rise
And to the papal robe. In after-times
The chosen vessel also travel'd there,
To bring us back assurance in that faith,
Which is the entrance to salvation's way.
But I, why should I there presume? or who
Permits it? not, Aeneas I nor Paul.
Myself I deem not worthy, and none else
Will deem me. I, if on this voyage then
I venture, fear it will in folly end.
Thou, who art wise, better my meaning know'st,

Than I can speak.” As one, who unresolves
What he hath late resolv’d, and with new thoughts
Changes his purpose, from his first intent
Remov’d; e’en such was I on that dun coast,
Wasting in thought my enterprise, at first
So eagerly embrac’d. “If right thy words
I scan,” replied that shade magnanimous,
“Thy soul is by vile fear assail’d, which oft
So overcasts a man, that he recoils
From noblest resolution, like a beast
At some false semblance in the twilight gloom.
That from this terror thou mayst free thyself,
I will instruct thee why I came, and what
I heard in that same instant, when for thee
Grief touch’d me first. I was among the tribe,
Who rest suspended, when a dame, so blest
And lovely, I besought her to command,
Call’d me; her eyes were brighter than the star
Of day; and she with gentle voice and soft
Angelically tun’d her speech address’d:
“O courteous shade of Mantua! thou whose fame
Yet lives, and shall live long as nature lasts!
A friend, not of my fortune but myself,
On the wide desert in his road has met
Hindrance so great, that he through fear has turn’d.
Now much I dread lest he past help have stray’d,
And I be ris’n too late for his relief,
From what in heaven of him I heard. Speed now,
And by thy eloquent persuasive tongue,
And by all means for his deliverance meet,
Assist him. So to me will comfort spring.
I who now bid thee on this errand forth
Am Beatrice; from a place I come.

(Note: Beatrice. I use this word, as it is pronounced in the Italian, as consisting of four syllables, of which the third is a long one.)
Revisited with joy. Love brought me thence, Who prompts my
speech. When in my Master’s sight I stand, thy praise to him I oft
will tell.”

She then was silent, and I thus began:
“O Lady! by whose influence alone,
Mankind excels whatever is contain’d
Within that heaven which hath the smallest orb,
So thy command delights me, that to obey,

If it were done already, would seem late.
No need hast thou farther to speak thy will;
Yet tell the reason, why thou art not loth
To leave that ample space, where to return
Thou burnest, for this centre here beneath.”

She then: “Since thou so deeply wouldst inquire,
I will instruct thee briefly, why no dread
Hinders my entrance here. Those things alone
Are to be fear’d, whence evil may proceed,
None else, for none are terrible beside.
I am so fram’d by God, thanks to his grace!
That any suff’rance of your misery
Touches me not, nor flame of that fierce fire
Assails me. In high heaven a blessed dame
Besides, who mourns with such effectual grief
That hindrance, which I send thee to remove,
That God’s stern judgment to her will inclines.”
To Lucia calling, her she thus bespake:
“Now doth thy faithful servant need thy aid
And I commend him to thee.” At her word
Sped Lucia, of all cruelty the foe,
And coming to the place, where I abode
Seated with Rachel, her of ancient days,
She thus address’d me: “Thou true praise of God!
Beatrice! why is not thy succour lent
To him, who so much lov’d thee, as to leave
For thy sake all the multitude admires?
Dost thou not hear how pitiful his wail,
Nor mark the death, which in the torrent flood,
Swoln mightier than a sea, him struggling holds?”
Ne’er among men did any with such speed
Haste to their profit, flee from their annoy,
As when these words were spoken, I came here,
Down from my blessed seat, trusting the force
Of thy pure eloquence, which thee, and all
Who well have mark’d it, into honour brings.”

“When she had ended, her bright beaming eyes
Tearful she turn’d aside; whereat I felt
Redoubled zeal to serve thee. As she will’d,
Thus am I come: I sav’d thee from the beast,
Who thy near way across the goodly mount
Prevented. What is this comes o’er thee then?
Why, why dost thou hang back? why in thy breast

Harbour vile fear? why hast not courage there
And noble daring? Since three maids so blest
Thy safety plan, e'en in the court of heaven;
And so much certain good my words forebode.”

As florets, by the frosty air of night
Bent down and clos'd, when day has blanch'd their leaves,
Rise all unfolded on their spiry stems;
So was my fainting vigour new restor'd,
And to my heart such kindly courage ran,
That I as one undaunted soon replied:
“O full of pity she, who undertook
My succour! and thou kind who didst perform
So soon her true behest! With such desire
Thou hast dispos'd me to renew my voyage,
That my first purpose fully is resum'd.
Lead on: one only will is in us both.
Thou art my guide, my master thou, and lord.”

So spake I; and when he had onward mov'd,
I enter'd on the deep and woody way.

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The Inferno Canto III (All hope abandon ye who enter here)

Durante degli Alighieri (c. 1265–1321)

“THROUGH me you pass into the city of woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric mov’d:
To rear me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom, and primeval love.
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.

“All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

Such characters in colour dim I mark’d
Over a portal’s lofty arch inscrib’d:
Whereat I thus: “Master, these words import
Hard meaning.” He as one prepar’d replied:
“Here thou must all distrust behind thee leave;
Here be vile fear extinguish’d. We are come
Where I have told thee we shall see the souls
To misery doom’d, who intellectual good
Have lost.” And when his hand he had stretch’d forth
To mine, with pleasant looks, whence I was cheer’d,
Into that secret place he led me on.

Here sighs with lamentations and loud moans
Resounded through the air pierc’d by no star,
That e’en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote that swell’d the sounds,
Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
Round through that air with solid darkness stain’d,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with error yet encompass’d, cried:
“O master! What is this I hear? What race
Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?”

He thus to me: “This miserable fate
Suffer the wretched souls of those, who liv’d

Without or praise or blame, with that ill band
Of angels mix'd, who nor rebellious prov'd
Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves
Were only. From his bounds Heaven drove them forth,
Not to impair his lustre, nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest th' accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain."

I then: "Master! what doth aggrieve them thus,
That they lament so loud?" He straight replied:
"That will I tell thee briefly. These of death
No hope may entertain: and their blind life
So meanly passes, that all other lots
They envy. Fame of them the world hath none,
Nor suffers; mercy and justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by."

And I, who straightway look'd, beheld a flag,
Which whirling ran around so rapidly,
That it no pause obtain'd: and following came
Such a long train of spirits, I should ne'er
Have thought, that death so many had despoil'd.

When some of these I recogniz'd, I saw
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear
Yielding, abjur'd his high estate. Forthwith
I understood for certain this the tribe
Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing
And to his foes. These wretches, who ne'er lived,
Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung
By wasps and hornets, which bedew'd their cheeks
With blood, that mix'd with tears dropp'd to their feet,
And by disgustful worms was gather'd there.

Then looking farther onwards I beheld
A throng upon the shore of a great stream:
Whereat I thus: "Sir! grant me now to know
Whom here we view, and whence impell'd they seem
So eager to pass o'er, as I discern
Through the blear light?" He thus to me in few:
"This shalt thou know, soon as our steps arrive
Beside the woeful tide of Acheron."

Then with eyes downward cast and fill'd with shame,
Fearing my words offensive to his ear,

Till we had reach'd the river, I from speech
Abstain'd. And lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man hoary white with eld,

Crying, "Woe to you wicked spirits! hope not
Ever to see the sky again. I come
To take you to the other shore across,
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell
In fierce heat and in ice. And thou, who there
Standest, live spirit! get thee hence, and leave
These who are dead." But soon as he beheld
I left them not, "By other way," said he,
"By other haven shalt thou come to shore,
Not by this passage; thee a nimble boat
Must carry." Then to him thus spake my guide:
"Charon! thyself torment not: so 't is will'd,
Where will and power are one: ask thou no more."

Straightway in silence fell the shaggy cheeks
Of him the boatman o'er the livid lake,
Around whose eyes glar'd wheeling flames. Meanwhile
Those spirits, faint and naked, color chang'd,
And gnash'd their teeth, soon as the cruel words
They heard. God and their parents they blasphem'd,
The human kind, the place, the time, and seed
That did engender them and give them birth.

Then all together sorely wailing drew
To the curs'd strand, that every man must pass
Who fears not God. Charon, demoniac form,
With eyes of burning coal, collects them all,
Beck'ning, and each, that lingers, with his oar
Strikes. As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
One still another following, till the bough
Strews all its honours on the earth beneath;

E'en in like manner Adam's evil brood
Cast themselves one by one down from the shore,
Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.

Thus go they over through the umber'd wave,
And ever they on the opposing bank
Be landed, on this side another throng
Still gathers. "Son," thus spake the courteous guide,
"Those, who die subject to the wrath of God,

All here together come from every clime,
And to o'erpass the river are not loth:
For so heaven's justice goads them on, that fear
Is turn'd into desire. Hence ne'er hath past
Good spirit. If of thee Charon complain,
Now mayst thou know the import of his words."

This said, the gloomy region trembling shook
So terribly, that yet with clammy dews
Fear chills my brow. The sad earth gave a blast,
That, lightening, shot forth a vermilion flame,
Which all my senses conquer'd quite, and I
Down dropp'd, as one with sudden slumber seiz'd.

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Poems from 'La Vita Nuova'

Translated by Charles Eliot Norton

Durante degli Alighieri (c. 1265–1321)

III.

To every captive soul and gentle heart
Unto whose sight may come the present word,
That they thereof to me their thoughts impart,
Be greeting in Love's name, who is their Lord.
Now of those hours wellnigh one third had gone
What time doth every star appear most bright,
When on a sudden Love before me shone,
Remembrance of whose nature gives me fright.
Joyful to me seemed Love, and he was keeping
My heart within his hands, while on his arm
He held my lady, covered o'er, and sleeping.
Then waking her, he with this flaming heart
Did humble feed her fearful of some harm.
Thereon I saw him thence in tears depart.

VII.

O ye who turn your steps along Love's way,
Consider, and then say,
If there be any grief than mine more great;
That ye to hear me deign, I only pray;
Then fancy, as ye may,
If I am every torment's inn and gate.
'T was not my little goodness to repay,
But bounty to display,
Love gave me such a sweet and pleasant fate,
That many times I heard behind me say,
"Ah, through what merit, pray,
Hath this man's heart become so light of late?"
But now is wholly lost my hardihead,
Which came from out a treasure of Love's own,
And I stay poor alone,
So that of speech there cometh to me dread.
Thus wishing now to do like unto one
Who, out of shame, concealeth his disgrace,

I wear a joyful face,
While in my heart I waste away and groan.

VIII.

Lovers, lament, since Love himself now cries,
Hearing what cause 't is maketh him to weep.
Love seeth ladies mourn in sorrow deep,
Showing their bitter grieving through their eyes;
Because discourteous Death, on gentle heart
Working his cruel, unrelenting ways,
Hath all despoiled which in the world wins praise
For gentle dame, excepting honor's part.
Hear ye what honor Love to her did pay;
For him in real form I saw lament
Above the lovely image of the dead;
And often toward the heaven he raised his head,
Whereto the gentle soul had made ascent
Which had been mistress of a shape so gay.

Discourteous Death, of clemency the foe,
Mother from old of woe,
Thou judgment irresistible, severe,
Since sorrow to this heart thou dost not spare,
Therefore in grief I go,
And blaming thee my very tongue outwear.
And since I wish of grace to strip thee bare,
Behoves me to declare
The wrong of wrongs in this thy guilty blow;
Not that the folk do not already know,
But to make each thy foe,
Who henceforth shall be nurtured with Love's care,
From out the world thou courtesy hast ta'en,
And virtue, which in woman is to praise;
And in youth's gayest days
The charm of love thou hast untimely slain.
Who is this lady I will not declare,
Save as her qualities do make her known;
Who merits heaven, alone
May have the hope her company to share.

IX.

As I the other day rode far from glad
Along a way it pleased me not to take,

I came on Love, who did his journey make,
In the light garment of a pilgrim clad.
His countenance, it seemed to me, was sad,
As if he grieved for his lost lordship's sake;
Pensive he came, and forth his sighs did break;
Not to see folk, his head bowed down he had.
When me he saw, by name he called to me,
And said, "I come from that far distant part
Where through my will thy heart did dwell of late.
I bring it now on new delight to wait."
Thereon I took of him so great a part
That quick he vanished; how, I did not see.

XII.

Ballad, I send thee forth upon Love's trace,
For thou must him before my Lady bring,
So that of my excuse, which thou dost sing,
My Lord may then with her speak face to face.
Such courteous aspect, Ballad, thou dost show,
That all alone, indeed,
Thou oughtest not in any place to fear;
But if securely thou dost wish to go,
First to find Love is need,
For ill it were without Him to appear;
Seeing that she who ought thy words to hear,
If she be angry, as I think, with me,
And thou with Him companioned should not be,
Might lightly make thee fall into disgrace.
With dulcet sound, when with Him thou mayst be,
Begin with words like these,
First begging her that she would pity take: —
"Lady, he who to you now sendeth me
Wills, when to you it please,
That his excuse you deign to hear me make.
Love is that one who, for thy beauty's sake,
Makes him, as He doth will, his looks to change;
Then why He made his eyes on others range.
Think you, since in his heart no change hath place."
Tell her: "O Lady, this his heart is stayed
With faith so firmly just,
Save to serve you, it hath no other care.
Early 't was yours, and never hath it strayed."
But if she thee distrust,
Say, "Ask of Love, who will the truth declare."

And at the end, beg her, with humble prayer,
That if it trouble her to pardon give,
She then should bid that I no longer live,
Nor shall she see her servant sue for grace.
And say to Him who is compassion's key,
Ere from her thou depart,
That He may tell her of my reason fair, —
"Through favor unto my sweet melody,
Stay with her where thou art,
And of thy servant, what thou wilt, declare,
And if she grant forgiveness through thy prayer,
Make peace on her fair countenance to shine."
When it may please thee, gentle Ballad mine,
Honor to win, go forth upon thy race.

XV.

That which opposeth in my mind doth die
Whene'er I come to see you, beauteous Joy!
And I hear Love say, when to you I 'm nigh,
"Begone, if death be unto thee annoy."
My face the color of my heart displays,
Which, fainting, nay chance support doth seek;
And as I tremble in my drunken daze,
"Die! die!" the very stones appear to shriek.
He who may then behold me doeth ill,
If my affrighted soul he comfort not,
Showing at least that me he pitieth,
Through that compassion which your scorn doth kill,
And which is by the lifeless look begot
Of eyes which have a longing for their death.

XIX.

Ladies that have intelligence of Love,
I of my lady wish with you to speak;
Not that I can believe to end her praise,
But to discourse that I may ease my mind.
I say that when I think upon her worth,
So sweet doth Love make himself feel to me,
That if I then should lose not hardihood,
Speaking, I should enamour all mankind.
And I wish not so loftily to speak
As to become, through fear of failure, vile;
But of her gentle nature I will treat

In manner light compared with her desert,
Ye loving dames and damosels, with you,
For 't is not thing of which to speak to others.
An angel crieth in the mind divine,
And saith: "O Sire, on earth is to be seen
A miracle in action, that proceeds
From out a soul which far as here doth shine.
Heaven, which hath not any other defect
Save want of her, demands her of its Lord,
And every Saint doth for this favor beg."
Only Compassion our part defendeth;
And thus speaks God, who of my lady thinks:
"O my elect, now suffer ye in peace
That, while it pleaseth me, your hope abide
There, where is one who dreads the loss of her:
And who shall say in hell to the foredoomed,
'I have beheld the hope of those in bliss.'"

My lady is desired in highest heaven;
Now will I of her virtue make you know.
I say: Whoso would seem a gentle dame
Should go with her; for when she goes her way
Love casts a frost upon all caitiff hearts,
So that their every thought doth freeze and perish.
And who can bear to stay on her to look
Will noble thing become, or else will die.
And when one finds that he may worthy be
To look on her, he doth his virtue prove;
For that arrives to him which gives him health,
And humbles him till he forgets all wrong.
Yet hath God given her for greater grace,
That who hath spoke with her cannot end ill.

Love saith concerning her: "How can it be
That mortal thing be thus adorned, and pure?"
Then, gazing on her, to himself he swears
That God in her a new thing means to make.
Color of pearl so clothes her as doth best
Become a lady, nowise in excess.
Whate'er of good Nature can make she is,
And by her pattern beauty tries itself.
From out her eyes, howe'er she moveth them,
Spirits inflamed of love go forth, which strike
The eyes of him who then may look on them,
And enter so that each doth find the heart.
Love you behold depicted in her smile,
Whereon no one can look with steadfast gaze.

I know, Canzonè, thou wilt go to speak
With many ladies, when I send thee forth.
And now I bid thee, having bred thee up
As young and simple daughter unto Love,
That where thou comest thou shouldst praying say:
"Direct me on my way, for I am sent
To her with praise of whom I am adorned."
And if thou wishest not to go in vain,
Make thou no stay where villain folk may be;
Endeavor, if thou mayst, to be acquaint
Only with lady or with courteous man,
Who thee shall guide along the quickest way.
Thou wilt find Love in company with her;
Commend me to him as behoveth thee.

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Geoffrey Chaucer



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The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Lines 1–200

Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340–1400)

WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth 5
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the night with open ye, 10
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages:
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende 15
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.
Bifel that, in that sesoun on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay 20
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come in-to that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle 25
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esed atte beste.
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 30
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
And made forward erly for to ryse,
To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.
But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space, 35
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
To telle yew al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree; 40

And eek in what array that they were inne:
 And at a knight than wol I first biginne.
 A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 To ryden out, he loved chivalrye, ⁴⁵
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 And thereto hadde he riden (no man ferre)
 As wel in cristendom as hethenesse,
 And evere honoured for his worthinesse. ⁵⁰
 At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
 Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.
 In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
 No cristen man so ofte of his degree. ⁵⁵
 In Gernade at the sege eek hadde he be
 Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
 At Lyeys was he, and at Satalye,
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
 At many a noble aryve hadde he be, ⁶⁰
 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
 And foughten for our feith at Tramissene
 In listes thryes, and ay slayn his foo.
 This ilke worthy knight hadde been also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palaty, ⁶⁵
 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
 And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
 And of his port as meek as is a mayde.
 He nevere yet no vileinye ne sayde ⁷⁰
 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight.
 But for to tellen yow of his array,
 His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
 Of fustian he wered a gipoun ⁷⁵
 Al bismotered with his habergeoun.
 For he was late y-come from his viage,
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.
 With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
 A lovyer, and a lusty bachelor, ⁸⁰
 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 delivere, and greet of strengthe.
 And he hadde been somtyme in chivachye, ⁸⁵

In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede. 90
 Singinge he was, or floytinge, al the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his goune, with sleeves longe and wyde.
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
 He coude songes make and wel endyte, 95
 Iuste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
 He sleep namore than doth a nightingale.
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
 And carf biforn his fader at the table. 100
 A YEMAN hadde he, and servaunts namo
 At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;
 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;
 A sheef of pecok arwes brighte and kene
 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily, 105
 (Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly:
 His arwes drouped nocht with fetheres lowe),
 And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.
 A not-heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
 Of wode-craft wel coude he al the usage. 110
 Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
 And on that other syde a gay daggere,
 Harneised wel, and sharp as point of spere;
 A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene 115
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
 A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.
 Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy;
 Hir gretteste ooth was but by seynt Loy; 120
 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.
 Ful wel she song the service divyne,
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
 And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe, 125
 For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.
 At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe, 130

That no drope ne fille up-on hir brest.
 In curteisye was set ful moche hir lest.
 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing sene
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte. 135
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,
 And sikerly she was of greet disport,
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,
 And peyned hir to countrefete chere
 Of court, and been estatlich of manere, 140
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But, for to speken of hir conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde. 145
 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel breed.
 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:
 And al was conscience and tendre herte. 150
 Ful semely hir wimpel pinched was;
 Hir nose tretys; hir eyen greye as glas;
 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed.
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe; 155
 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
 Ful fetis was hir cloke, as I was war.
 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene;
 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene, 160
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

Another NONNE with hir hadde she,
 That was hir chapeleyne, and PREESTES thre.
 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye, 165
 An out-rydere, that lovede venerye;
 A manly man, to been an abbot able.
 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable:
 And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here
 Ginglen in a whistling wynd as clere, 170
 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel-belle,
 Ther-as this lord was keper of the celle.
 The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
 By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,
 This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace, 175

And held after the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been nat holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees
Is likned til a fish that is waterlees; 180
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloistre.
But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre.
And I seyde his opinioun was good.
What sholde he studie, and make him-selven wood,
Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure, 185
Or swinken with his handes, and labour,
As Austin bit? How shal the world be served?
Lat Austin have his swink to him reserved.
Therfor he was a pricasour aright;
Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight; 190
Of priking and of hunting 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 fyneste of a lond;
And, for to festne his hood under his chin, 195
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pin:
A love-knot in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,
And eek his face, as he hadde been anoint.
He was a lord ful fat and in good point; 200

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The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Lines 801–858

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.
And for to make yow the more mery,
I wol my-selven gladly with yow ryde,
Right at myn owne cost, and be your gyde.
And who-so wol my jugement withseye 805
Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.
And if ye vouche-sauf that it be so,
Tel me anon, with-outen wordes mo,
And I wol erly shape me therfore.'

This thing was graunted, and our othes swore 810
With ful glad herte, and preyden him also
That he wold vouche-sauf for to do so,
And that he wolde been our governour,
And of our tales juge and reportour,
And sette a soper at a certeyn prys; 815
And we wold reuled been at his devys,
In heigh and lowe; and thus, by oon assent,
We been acorded to his jugement.

And ther-up-on the wyn was fet anoon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echoon, 820
With-outen any lenger tarynge.

A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,
Up roos our host, and was our aller cok,
And gadrede us togidre, alle in a flok,
And forth we riden, a litel more than pas, 825
Unto the watering of seint Thomas.

And there our host bigan his hors areste,
And seyde; 'Lordinges, herkneth if yow leste.
Ye woot your forward, and I it yow recorde.
If even-song and morwe-song acorde, 830
Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.

As evere mote I drinke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my jugement
Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twinne; 835
He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.'
'Sire knight,' quod he, 'my maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh neer,' quod he, 'my lady prioresse;

And ye, sir clerk, lat be your shamfastnesse, 840
Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man.’
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And shortly for to tellen, as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knight, 845
Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
By forward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?
And whan this goode man saugh it was so, 850
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his free assent,
He seyde: ‘Sin I shal biginne the game,
What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.’ 855
And with that word we riden forth our weye;
And he bigan with right a mery chere
His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

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The Knight's Tale

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

WHILOM¹, as olde stories tellen us, ¹formerly
There was a duke that highte¹ Theseus. ¹was called
Of Athens he was lord and governor,
And in his time such a conqueror
That greater was there none under the sun.
Full many a riche country had he won.
What with his wisdom and his chivalry,
He conquer'd all the regne of Feminie,
That whilom was y-cleped Scythia;
And weddede the Queen Hippolyta
And brought her home with him to his country
With muchel¹ glory and great solemnity, ¹great
And eke her younge sister Emily,
And thus with vict'ry and with melody
Let I this worthy Duke to Athens ride,
And all his host, in armes him beside.

And certes, if it n'ere¹ too long to hear, ¹were not
I would have told you fully the mannere,
How wonnen¹ was the regne of Feminie, ¹won
By Theseus, and by his chivalry;
And of the greate battle for the nonce
Betwixt Athenes and the Amazons;
And how assieged was Hippolyta,
The faire hardy queen of Scythia;
And of the feast that was at her wedding
And of the tempest at her homecoming.
But all these things I must as now forbear.
I have, God wot, a large field to ear¹ ¹plough;
And weake be the oxen in my plough;
The remnant of my tale is long enow.
I will not ¹letten eke none of this rout¹. ¹hinder any of
Let every fellow tell his tale about, this company¹
And let see now who shall the supper win.
There ¹as I left¹, I will again begin. ¹where I left off¹

This Duke, of whom I make mentioun,
When he was come almost unto the town,
In all his weal, and in his moste pride,

He was ware, as he cast his eye aside,
Where that there kneeled in the highe way
A company of ladies, tway and tway,
Each after other, clad in clothes black:
But such a cry and such a woe they make,
That in this world n'is creature living,
That hearde such another waimenting¹ ¹lamenting
And of this crying would they never stenten¹, ¹desist
Till they the reines of his bridle henten¹. ¹seize
“What folk be ye that at mine homecoming
Perturben so my feaste with crying?”
Quoth Theseus; “Have ye so great envy
Of mine honour, that thus complain and cry?
Or who hath you misboden¹, or offended? ¹wronged
Do telle me, if it may be amended;
And why that ye be clad thus all in black?”

The oldest lady of them all then spake,
When she had swooned, with a deadly cheer¹, ¹countenance
That it was ruthe¹ for to see or hear. ¹pity
She saide; “Lord, to whom fortune hath given
Vict'ry, and as a conqueror to liven,
Nought grieveth us your glory and your honour;
But we beseechen mercy and succour.
Have mercy on our woe and our distress;
Some drop of pity, through thy gentleness,
Upon us wretched women let now fall.
For certes, lord, there is none of us all
That hath not been a duchess or a queen;
Now be we caitives¹, as it is well seen: ¹captives
Thanked be Fortune, and her false wheel,
That ¹none estate ensureth to be wele¹. ¹assures no continuance of
And certes, lord, t'abiden your presence prosperous estate¹
Here in this temple of the goddess Clemence
We have been waiting all this fortenight:
Now help us, lord, since it lies in thy might.

“I, wretched wight, that weep and waile thus,
Was whilom wife to king Capaneus,
That starf¹ at Thebes, cursed be that day: ¹died
And alle we that be in this array,
And maken all this lamentatioun,
We losten all our husbands at that town,
While that the siege thereabouten lay.

And yet the olde Creon, wellaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the city,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquity,
He for despite, and for his tyranny,
To do the deade bodies villainy¹, ¹insult
Of all our lorde's, which that been y-slaw, ¹slain
Hath all the bodies on an heap y-draw,
And will not suffer them by none assent
Neither to be y-buried, nor y-brent¹, ¹burnt
But maketh houndes eat them in despite.”
And with that word, withoute more respite
They fallen groff,¹ and cryden piteously; ¹grovelling
“Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our sorrow sincken in thine heart.”

This gentle Duke down from his courser start
With hearte piteous, when he heard them speak.
Him thoughte that his heart would all to-break,
When he saw them so piteous and so mate¹ ¹abased
That whilom weren of so great estate.
And in his armes he them all up hent¹, ¹raised, took
And them comforted in full good intent,
And swore his oath, as he was true knight,
He woulde do ¹so farforthly his might¹ ¹as far as his power went¹
Upon the tyrant Creon them to wreak¹, ¹avenge
That all the people of Greece shoulde speak,
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As he that had his death full well deserved.
And right anon withoute more abode¹ ¹delay
His banner he display'd, and forth he rode
To Thebes-ward, and all his, host beside:
No ner¹ Athenes would he go nor ride, ¹nearer
Nor take his ease fully half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay:
And sent anon Hippolyta the queen,
And Emily her younge sister sheen¹ ¹bright, lovely
Unto the town of Athens for to dwell:
And forth he rit¹; there is no more to tell. ¹rode

The red statue of Mars with spear and targe¹ ¹shield
So shineth in his white banner large
That all the fieldes glitter up and down:
And by his banner borne is his pennon
Of gold full rich, in which there was y-beat¹ ¹stamped

The Minotaur which that he slew in Crete
Thus rit this Duke, thus rit this conqueror
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebes, and alight
Fair in a field, there as he thought to fight.
But shortly for to spoken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
In plain bataille, and put his folk to flight:
And by assault he won the city after,
And rent adown both wall, and spar, and rafter;
And to the ladies he restored again
The bodies of their husbands that were slain,
To do obsequies, as was then the guise¹. ¹custom

But it were all too long for to devise¹ ¹describe
The greate clamour, and the waimenting¹, ¹lamenting
Which that the ladies made at the brenning¹ ¹burning
Of the bodies, and the great honour
That Theseus the noble conqueror
Did to the ladies, when they from him went:
But shortly for to tell is mine intent.
When that this worthy Duke, this Theseus,
Had Creon slain, and wonnen Thebes thus,
Still in the field he took all night his rest,
And did with all the country as him lest¹. ¹pleased
To ransack in the tas¹ of bodies dead, ¹heap
Them for to strip of ¹harness and of ²weed, ¹armour ²clothes
The pillers¹ did their business and cure, ¹pillagers
After the battle and discomfiture.
And so befell, that in the tas they found,
Through girt with many a grievous bloody wound,
Two younge knightes ¹ligging by and by¹ ¹lying side by side¹
Both in ¹one armes¹, wrought full richely: ¹the same armour¹
Of whiche two, Arcita hight that one,
And he that other highte Palamon.
Not fully quick¹, nor fully dead they were, ¹alive
But by their coat-armour, and by their gear,
The heralds knew them well in special,
As those that weren of the blood royal
Of Thebes, and ¹of sistren two y-born¹. ¹born of two sisters¹
Out of the tas the pillers have them torn,
And have them carried soft unto the tent
Of Theseus, and he full soon them sent

To Athens, for to dwellen in prison
Perpetually, he ¹n'olde no ransom¹. ¹would take no ransom¹
And when this worthy Duke had thus y-done,
He took his host, and home he rit anon
With laurel crowned as a conquerour;
And there he lived in joy and in honour
Term of his life; what needeth wordes mo'?'
And in a tower, in anguish and in woe,
Dwellen this Palamon, and eke Arcite,
For evermore, there may no gold them quite¹ ¹set free

Thus passed year by year, and day by day,
Till it fell ones in a morn of May
That Emily, that fairer was to seen
Than is the lily upon his stalke green,
And fresher than the May with flowers new
(For with the rose colour strove her hue;
I n'ot¹ which was the finer of them two), ¹know not
Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
She was arisen, and all ready dight¹, ¹dressed
For May will have no sluggardy a-night;
The season pricketh every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
And saith, "Arise, and do thine observance."

This maketh Emily have remembrance
To do honour to May, and for to rise.
Y-clothed was she fresh for to devise;
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,
Behind her back, a yarde long I guess.
And in the garden at ¹the sun uprist¹ ¹sunrise
She walketh up and down where as her list.
She gathereth flowers, party¹ white and red, ¹mingled
To make a sotel¹ garland for her head, ¹subtle, well-arranged
And as an angel heavenly she sung.
The greate tower, that was so thick and strong,
Which of the castle was the chief dungeon
(Where as these knightes weren in prison,
Of which I tolde you, and telle shall),
Was even jointant¹ to the garden wall, ¹adjoining
There as this Emily had her playing.

Bright was the sun, and clear that morrowning,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,

As was his wont, by leave of his gaoler,
Was ris'n, and roamed in a chamber on high,
In which he all the noble city sigh¹, ¹saw
And eke the garden, full of branches green,
There as this fresh Emelia the sheen
Was in her walk, and roamed up and down.
This sorrowful prisoner, this Palamon
Went in his chamber roaming to and fro,
And to himself complaining of his woe:
That he was born, full oft he said, Alas!
And so befell, by aventure or cas¹, ¹chance
That through a window thick of many a bar
Of iron great, and square as any spar,
He cast his eyes upon Emelia,
And therewithal he blent¹ and cried, Ah! ¹started aside
As though he stungen were unto the heart.
And with that cry Arcite anon up start,
And saide, "Cousin mine, what aileth thee,
That art so pale and deadly for to see?
Why cried'st thou? who hath thee done offence?
For Godde's love, take all in patience
Our prison¹, for it may none other be. ¹imprisonment
Fortune hath giv'n us this adversity'.
Some wick'¹ aspect or disposition ¹wicked
Of Saturn, by some constellation,
Hath giv'n us this, although we had it sworn,
So stood the heaven when that we were born,
We must endure; this is the short and plain.

This Palamon answer'd, and said again:
"Cousin, forsooth of this opinion
Thou hast a vain imagination.
This prison caused me not for to cry;
But I was hurt right now thorough mine eye
Into mine heart; that will my bane¹ be. ¹destruction
The fairness of the lady that I see
Yond in the garden roaming to and fro,
Is cause of all my crying and my woe.
I ¹n'ot wher¹ she be woman or goddess, ¹know not whether¹
But Venus is it, soothly¹ as I guess, ¹truly
And therewithal on knees adown he fill,
And saide: "Venus, if it be your will
You in this garden thus to transfigure
Before me sorrowful wretched creature,

Out of this prison help that we may scape.
And if so be our destiny be shape
By etern word to dien in prison,
Of our lineage have some compassion,
That is so low y-brought by tyranny.”

And with that word Arcita ¹gan espy¹ ¹began to look forth¹
Where as this lady roamed to and fro
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.
And with a sigh he saide piteously:
“The freshe beauty slay’th me suddenly
Of her that roameth yonder in the place.
And but¹ I have her mercy and her grace, ¹unless
That I may see her at the leaste way,
I am but dead; there is no more to say.”
This Palamon, when he these wordes heard,
Dispiteously¹ he looked, and answer’d: ¹angrily
“Whether say’st thou this in earnest or in play?”
“Nay,” quoth Arcite, “in earnest, by my fay¹. ¹faith
God help me so, ¹me lust full ill to play¹.” ¹I am in no humour
This Palamon gan knit his browes tway. for jesting¹
“It were,” quoth he, “to thee no great honour
For to be false, nor for to be traitour
To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother
Y-sworn full deep, and each of us to other,
That never for to dien in the pain ,
Till that the death departen shall us twain,
Neither of us in love to hinder other,
Nor in none other case, my leve¹ brother; ¹dear
But that thou shouldest truly farther me
In every case, as I should farther thee.
This was thine oath, and mine also certain;
I wot it well, thou dar’st it not withsayn¹, ¹deny
Thus art thou of my counsel out of doubt,
And now thou wouldest falsely be about
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shall, until mine hearte sterve¹ ¹die
Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so
I lov’d her first, and tolde thee my woe
As to my counsel, and my brother sworn
To farther me, as I have told beforne.
For which thou art y-bounden as a knight

To helpe me, if it lie in thy might,
Or elles art thou false, I dare well sayn,”

This Arcita full proudly spake again:

“Thou shalt,” quoth he, “be rather¹ false than I, ¹sooner
And thou art false, I tell thee utterly;
For par amour I lov’d her first ere thou.

What wilt thou say? ¹thou wist it not right now¹ ¹even now thou
Whether she be a woman or goddess. knowest not¹

Thine is affection of holiness,
And mine is love, as to a creature:

For which I tolde thee mine aventure

As to my cousin, and my brother sworn

I pose¹, that thou loved’st her befor: ¹suppose

Wost¹ thou not well the olde clerke’s saw, ¹know’st

That who shall give a lover any law?

Love is a greater lawe, by my pan,

Than may be giv’n to any earthly man:

Therefore positive law, and such decree,

Is broke alway for love in each degree

A man must needes love, maugre his head.

He may not flee it, though he should be dead,

¹All be she¹ maid, or widow, or else wife. ¹whether she be¹

And eke it is not likely all thy life

To standen in her grace, no more than I

For well thou wost thyselfe verily,

That thou and I be damned to prison

Perpetual, us gaineth no ransom.

We strive, as did the houndes for the bone;

They fought all day, and yet their part was none.

There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,

And bare away the bone betwixt them both.

And therefore at the kinge’s court, my brother,

Each man for himselfe, there is no other.

Love if thee list; for I love and aye shall

And soothly, leve brother, this is all.

Here in this prison musten we endure,

And each of us take his Aventure.”

Great was the strife and long between these tway,

If that I hadde leisure for to say;

But to the effect: it happen’d on a day

(To tell it you as shortly as I may),

A worthy duke that hight Perithous

That fellow was to the Duke Theseus

Since thilke¹ day that they were children lite² ¹that ²little
Was come to Athens, his fellow to visite,
And for to play, as he was wont to do;
For in this world he loved no man so;
And he lov'd him as tenderly again.
So well they lov'd, as olde bookes sayn,
That when that one was dead, soothly to sayn,
His fellow went and sought him down in hell:
But of that story list me not to write.
Duke Perithous loved well Arcite,
And had him known at Thebes year by year:
And finally at request and prayere
Of Perithous, withoute ranson
Duke Theseus him let out of prison,
Freely to go, where him list over all,
In such a guise, as I you tellen shall
This was the forword¹, plainly to indite, ¹promise
Betwixte Theseus and him Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were y-found
Ever in his life, by day or night, one stound¹ ¹moment
In any country of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was accorded thus,
That with a sword he shoulde lose his head;
There was none other remedy nor rede¹. ¹counsel
But took his leave, and homeward he him sped;
Let him beware, his necke lieth ¹to wed¹. ¹in pledge¹

How great a sorrow suff'reth now Arcite!
The death he feeleth through his hearte smite;
He weepeth, wailleth, crieth piteously;
To slay himself he waiteth privily.
He said; "Alas the day that I was born!
Now is my prison worse than beforne:
¹Now is me shape¹ eternally to dwell ¹it is fixed for me¹
Not in purgatory, but right in hell.
Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
For elles had I dwelt with Theseus
Y-fettered in his prison evermo'.
Then had I been in bliss, and not in woe.
Only the sight of her, whom that I serve,
Though that I never may her grace deserve,
Would have sufficed right enough for me.
O deare cousin Palamon," quoth he,
"Thine is the vict'ry of this aventure,
Full blissfully in prison to endure:

In prison? nay certes, in paradise.
Well hath fortune y-turned thee the dice,
That hast the sight of her, and I th' absence.
For possible is, since thou hast her presence,
And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
That by some cas¹, since fortune is changeable, ¹chance
Thou may'st to thy desire sometime attain.
But I that am exiled, and barren
Of alle grace, and in so great despair,
That there n'is earthe, water, fire, nor air,
Nor creature, that of them maked is,
That may me helpe nor comfort in this,
Well ought I ¹sterve in wanhope¹ and distress. ¹die in despair¹
Farewell my life, my lust¹, and my gladness. ¹pleasure
Alas, ¹why plainen men so in commune ¹why do men so often
complain
Of purveyance of God¹, or of Fortune, of God's providence?¹
That giveth them full oft in many a guise
Well better than they can themselves devise?
Some man desireth for to have richness,
That cause is of his murder or great sickness.
And some man would out of his prison fain,
That in his house is of his meinie¹ slain. ¹servants
Infinite harmes be in this mattere.
We wot never what thing we pray for here.
We fare as he that drunk is as a mouse.
A drunken man wot well he hath an house,
But he wot not which is the right way thither,
And to a drunken man the way is slither¹. ¹slippery
And certes in this world so fare we.
We seeke fast after felicity,
But we go wrong full often truely.
Thus we may sayen all, and namely¹ I, ¹especially
That ween'd¹, and had a great opinion, ¹thought
That if I might escape from prison
Then had I been in joy and perfect heal,
Where now I am exiled from my weal.
Since that I may not see you, Emily,
I am but dead; there is no remedy.”

Upon that other side, Palamon,
When that he wist Arcita was agone,
Much sorrow maketh, that the greate tower
Resounded of his yelling and clamour

The pure¹ fetters on his shinnes great ¹very
Were of his bitter salte teares wet.

“Alas!” quoth he, “Arcita, cousin mine,
Of all our strife, God wot, the fruit is thine.
Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
And of my woe thou ¹givest little charge¹. ¹takest little heed¹
Thou mayst, since thou hast wisdom and manhead¹, ¹manhood,
courage
Assemble all the folk of our kindred,
And make a war so sharp on this country
That by some aventure, or some treaty,
Thou mayst have her to lady and to wife,
For whom that I must needes lose my life.
For as by way of possibility,
Since thou art at thy large, of prison free,
And art a lord, great is thine avantage,
More than is mine, that sterve here in a cage.
For I must weep and wail, while that I live,
With all the woe that prison may me give,
And eke with pain that love me gives also,
That doubles all my torment and my woe.”

Therewith the fire of jealousy upstart
Within his breast, and hent¹ him by the heart ¹seized
So woody¹, that he like was to behold ¹madly
The box-tree, or the ashes dead and cold.
Then said; “O cruel goddess, that govern
This world with binding of your word etern¹ ¹eternal
And writen in the table of adamant
Your parlement¹ and your eternal grant, ¹consultation
What is mankind more ¹unto you y-hold¹ ¹by you esteemed
Than is the sheep, that rouketh¹ in the fold! ¹lie huddled together
For slain is man, right as another beast;
And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest,
And hath sickness, and great adversity,
And oftentimes guilteless, pardie¹ ¹by God
What governance is in your prescience,
That guilteless tormenteth innocence?
And yet increaseth this all my penance,
That man is bounden to his observance
For Godde’s sake to ¹letten of his will¹, ¹restrain his desire¹
Whereas a beast may all his lust fulfil.
And when a beast is dead, he hath no pain;

But man after his death must weep and plain,
Though in this worlde he have care and woe:
Withoute doubt it maye standen so.

“The answer of this leave I to divines,
But well I wot, that in this world great pine¹ is; ¹pain, trouble
Alas! I see a serpent or a thief
That many a true man hath done mischief,
Go at his large, and where him list may turn.
But I must be in prison through Saturn,
And eke through Juno, jealous and eke wood¹, ¹mad
That hath well nigh destroyed all the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wide.
And Venus slay’th me on that other side
For jealousy, and fear of him, Arcite.”

Now will I stent¹ of Palamon a lite², ¹pause ²little
And let him in his prison stille dwell,
And of Arcita forth I will you tell.
The summer passeth, and the nightes long
Increase double-wise the paines strong
Both of the lover and the prisonere.
I n’ot¹ which hath the wofuller mistere². ¹know not ²condition
For, shortly for to say, this Palamon
Perpetually is damned to prison,
In chaines and in fetters to be dead;
And Arcite is exiled ¹on his head¹ ¹on peril of his head¹
For evermore as out of that country,
Nor never more he shall his lady see.
You lovers ask I now this question,
Who lieth the worse, Arcite or Palamon?
The one may see his lady day by day,
But in prison he dwelle must alway.
The other where him list may ride or go,
But see his lady shall he never mo’.
Now deem all as you liste, ye that can,
For I will tell you forth as I began.

When that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Full oft a day he swelt¹, and said, “Alas!” ¹fainted
For see this lady he shall never mo’.
And shortly to concluden all his woe,
So much sorrow had never creature
That is or shall be while the world may dure.
His sleep, his meat, his drink is ¹him byraft¹, ¹taken away from

him¹

That lean he wex¹, and dry as any shaft. ¹became
His eyen hollow, grisly to behold,
His hue sallow, and pale as ashes cold,
And solitary he was, ever alone,
And wailing all the night, making his moan.
And if he hearde song or instrument,
Then would he weepen, he might not be stent¹. ¹stopped
So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
And changed so, that no man coulde know
His speech, neither his voice, though men it heard.
And in his gear¹ for all the world he far'd ¹behaviour
Not only like the lovers' malady
Of Eros, but rather y-like manie¹ ¹madness
Engender'd of humours melancholic,
Before his head in his cell fantastic.
And shortly turned was all upside down,
Both habit and eke dispositioun,
Of him, this woful lover Dan¹ Arcite. ¹Lord
Why should I all day of his woe indite?
When he endured had a year or two
This cruel torment, and this pain and woe,
At Thebes, in his country, as I said,
Upon a night in sleep as he him laid,
Him thought how that the winged god Mercury
Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.
His sleepy yard¹ in hand he bare upright; ¹rod
A hat he wore upon his haire bright.
Arrayed was this god (as he took keep¹) ¹notice
As he was when that Argus took his sleep;
And said him thus: "To Athens shalt thou wend¹; ¹go
There is thee shapen¹ of thy woe an end." ¹fixed, prepared
And with that word Arcite woke and start.
"Now truely how sore that e'er me smart,"
Quoth he, "to Athens right now will I fare.
Nor for no dread of death shall I not spare
To see my lady that I love and serve;
In her presence ¹I recke not to sterve.¹" ¹do not care if I die¹
And with that word he caught a great mirror,
And saw that changed was all his colour,
And saw his visage all in other kind.
And right anon it ran him ill his mind,
That since his face was so disfigur'd
Of malady the which he had endur'd,

He mighte well, if that he ¹bare him low, ¹ ¹lived in lowly fashion¹
Live in Athenes evermore unknow,
And see his lady wellnigh day by day.
And right anon he changed his array,
And clad him as a poore labourer.
And all alone, save only a squier,
That knew his privity¹ and all his cas², ¹secrets ²fortune
Which was disguised poorly as he was,
To Athens is he gone the nexte¹ way. ¹nearest
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he proffer'd his service,
To drudge and draw, what so men would devise¹. ¹order
And, shortly of this matter for to sayn,
He fell in office with a chamberlain,
The which that dwelling was with Emily.
For he was wise, and coulde soon espy
Of every servant which that served her.
Well could he hewe wood, and water bear,
For he was young and mighty for the nones¹, ¹occasion
And thereto he was strong and big of bones
To do that any wight can him devise.

A year or two he was in this service,
Page of the chamber of Emily the bright;
And Philostrate he saide that he hight.
But half so well belov'd a man as he
Ne was there never in court of his degree.
He was so gentle of condition,
That throughout all the court was his renown.
They saide that it were a charity
That Theseus would ¹enhance his degree¹, ¹elevate him in rank¹
And put him in some worshipful service,
There as he might his virtue exercise.
And thus within a while his name sprung
Both of his deedes, and of his good tongue,
That Theseus hath taken him so near,
That of his chamber he hath made him squire,
And gave him gold to maintain his degree;
And eke men brought him out of his country
From year to year full privily his rent.
But honestly and slyly¹ he it spent, ¹discreetly, prudently
That no man wonder'd how that he it had.
And three year in this wise his life be lad¹, ¹led
And bare him so in peace and eke in werre¹, ¹war

There was no man that Theseus had so derre¹. ¹dear
And in this blisse leave I now Arcite,
And speak I will of Palamon a lite¹. ¹little

In darkness horrible, and strong prison,
This seven year hath sitten Palamon,
Forpined¹, what for love, and for distress. ¹pined, wasted away
Who feeleth double sorrow and heaviness
But Palamon? that love distraineth¹ so, ¹afflicts
That wood¹ out of his wits he went for woe, ¹mad
And eke thereto he is a prisonere
Perpetual, not only for a year.
Who coulde rhyme in English properly
His martyrdom? forsooth¹, it is not I; ¹truly
Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.
It fell that in the seventh year, in May
The thirde night (as olde bookes sayn,
That all this story tellen more plain),
Were it by a venture or destiny
(As when a thing is shapen¹ it shall be), ¹settled, decreed
That soon after the midnight, Palamon
By helping of a friend brake his prison,
And fled the city fast as he might go,
For he had given drink his gaoler so
Of a clary , made of a certain wine,
With ¹narcotise and opie¹ of Thebes fine, ¹narcotics and opium¹
That all the night, though that men would him shake,
The gaoler slept, he mighte not awake:
And thus he fled as fast as ever he may.
The night was short, and ¹faste by the day ¹close at hand was
That needes cast he must himself to hide¹. the day during which
And to a grove faste there beside he must cast about, or contrive,
With dreadful foot then stalked Palamon. to conceal himself.¹
For shortly this was his opinion,
That in the grove he would him hide all day,
And in the night then would he take his way
To Thebes-ward, his friendes for to pray
On Theseus to help him to warray¹. ¹make war
And shortly either he would lose his life,
Or winnen Emily unto his wife.
This is th' effect, and his intention plain.

Now will I turn to Arcita again,
That little wist how nighe was his care,

Till that Fortune had brought him in the snare.
 The busy lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
 And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright,
 That all the orient laugheth at the sight,
 And with his streames¹ drieth in the greves² ¹rays ²groves
 The silver droppes, hanging on the leaves;
 And Arcite, that is in the court royal
 With Theseus, his squier principal,
 Is ris'n, and looketh on the merry day.
 And for to do his observance to May,
 Remembering the point¹ of his desire, ¹object
 He on his courser, starting as the fire,
 Is ridden to the fieldes him to play,
 Out of the court, were it a mile or tway.
 And to the grove, of which I have you told,
 By a venture his way began to hold,
 To make him a garland of the greves¹, ¹groves
 Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves,
 And loud he sang against the sun so sheen¹. ¹shining bright
 "O May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
 Right welcome be thou, faire freshe May,
 I hope that I some green here getten may."
 And from his courser¹, with a lusty heart, ¹horse
 Into the grove full hastily he start,
 And in a path he roamed up and down,
 There as by aventure this Palamon
 Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
 For sore afeard of his death was he.
 Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite;
 God wot he would have ¹trowed it full lite¹. ¹full little believed it¹
 But sooth is said, gone since full many years,
 The field hath eyen¹, and the wood hath ears, ¹eyes
 It is full fair a man ¹to bear him even¹, ¹to be on his guard¹
 For all day meeten men at ¹unset steven¹. ¹unexpected time
 Full little wot Arcite of his fellow,
 That was so nigh to hearken of his saw¹, ¹saying, speech
 For in the bush he sitteth now full still.
 When that Arcite had roamed all his fill,
 And ¹sungen all the roundel¹ lustily, ¹sang the roundelay¹
 Into a study he fell suddenly,
 As do those lovers in their ¹quainte gears¹, ¹odd fashions¹
 Now in the crop¹, and now down in the breres², ¹tree-top
 Now up, now down, as bucket in a well. ²briars

Right as the Friday, soothly for to tell,
 Now shineth it, and now it raineth fast,
 Right so can geary¹ Venus overcast ¹changeful
 The heartes of her folk, right as her day
 Is gearful¹, right so changeth she array. ¹changeful
 Seldom is Friday all the weeke like.
 When Arcite had y-sung, he gan to sike¹, ¹sigh
 And sat him down withouten any more:
 "Alas!" quoth he, "the day that I was bore!
 How longe, Juno, through thy cruelty
 Wilt thou warrayen¹ Thebes the city? ¹torment
 Alas! y-brought is to confusion
 The blood royal of Cadm' and Amphion:
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man,
 That Thebes built, or first the town began,
 And of the city first was crowned king.
 Of his lineage am I, and his offspring
 By very line, as of the stock royal;
 And now I am ¹so caitiff and so thrall¹, ¹wretched and enslaved¹
 That he that is my mortal enemy,
 I serve him as his squier poorely.
 And yet doth Juno me well more shame,
 For I dare not beknow¹ mine owen name, ¹acknowledge
 But there as I was wont to hight Arcite,
 Now hight I Philostrate, not worth a mite.
 Alas! thou fell Mars, and alas! Juno,
 Thus hath your ire our lineage all fordo¹ ¹undone, ruined
 Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
 That Theseus martyreth in prison.
 And over all this, to slay me utterly,
 Love hath his fiery dart so brenningly¹ ¹burningly
 Y-sticked through my true careful heart,
 That shapen was my death erst than my shert.
 Ye slay me with your eyes, Emily;
 Ye be the cause wherefore that I die.
 Of all the remnant of mine other care
 Ne set I not the ¹mountance of a tare¹, ¹value of a straw¹
 So that I could do aught to your pleasance."

And with that word he fell down in a trance
 A longe time; and afterward upstart
 This Palamon, that thought thorough his heart
 He felt a cold sword suddenly to glide:
 For ire he quake¹, no longer would he hide. ¹quaked

And when that he had heard Arcite's tale,
As he were wood¹, with face dead and pale, ¹mad
He start him up out of the bushes thick,
And said: "False Arcita, false traitor wick'¹, ¹wicked
Now art thou hent¹, that lov'st my lady so, ¹caught
For whom that I have all this pain and woe,
And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
As I full oft have told thee herebeforn,
And hast bejaped¹ here Duke Theseus, ¹deceived, imposed upon
And falsely changed hast thy name thus;
I will be dead, or elles thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily,
But I will love her only and no mo';
For I am Palamon thy mortal foe.
And though I have no weapon in this place,
But out of prison am astart¹ by grace, ¹escaped
I dreade¹ not that either thou shalt die, ¹doubt
Or else thou shalt not loven Emily.
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not astart."

This Arcite then, with full dispiteous¹ heart, ¹wrathful
When he him knew, and had his tale heard,
As fierce as lion pulled out a swerd,
And saide thus; "By God that sitt'th above,
¹N'ere it¹ that thou art sick, and wood for love, ¹were it not¹
And eke that thou no weap'n hast in this place,
Thou should'st never out of this grove pace,
That thou ne shouldest dien of mine hand.
For I defy the surety and the band,
Which that thou sayest I have made to thee.
What? very fool, think well that love is free;
And I will love her maugre¹ all thy might. ¹despite
But, for thou art a worthy gentle knight,
And ¹wilnest to darraine her by bataille¹, ¹will reclaim her
Have here my troth, to-morrow I will not fail, by combat¹
Without weeting¹ of any other wight, ¹knowledge
That here I will be founden as a knight,
And bringe harness¹ right enough for thee; ¹armour and arms
And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
And meat and drinke this night will I bring
Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if so be that thou my lady win,
And slay me in this wood that I am in,
Thou may'st well have thy lady as for me."

This Palamon answer'd, "I grant it thee."
And thus they be departed till the morrow,
When each of them hath ¹laid his faith to borrow¹. ¹pledged his
faith¹

O Cupid, out of alle charity!

O Regne¹ that wilt no fellow have with thee! ¹queen

Full sooth is said, that love nor lordship

Will not, ¹his thanks¹, have any fellowship. ¹thanks to him¹

Well finden that Arcite and Palamon.

Arcite is ridd anon unto the town,

And on the morrow, ere it were daylight,

Full privily two harness hath he dight¹, ¹prepared

Both suffisant and meete to darraine¹ ¹contest

The battle in the field betwixt them twain.

And on his horse, alone as he was born,

He carrieth all this harness him befor;

And in the grove, at time and place y-set,

This Arcite and this Palamon be met.

Then change gan the colour of their face;

Right as the hunter in the regne¹ of Thrace ¹kingdom

That standeth at a gappe with a spear

When hunted is the lion or the bear,

And heareth him come rushing in the greves¹, ¹groves

And breaking both the boughes and the leaves,

Thinketh, "Here comes my mortal enemy,

Withoute fail, he must be dead or I;

For either I must slay him at the gap;

Or he must slay me, if that me mishap:"

So fared they, in changing of their hue

¹As far as either of them other knew¹. ¹When they recognised each

There was no good day, and no saluting, other afar off¹

But straight, withoute wordes rehearsing,

Evereach of them holp to arm the other,

As friendly, as he were his owen brother.

And after that, with sharpe speares strong

They foined¹ each at other wonder long. ¹thrust

Thou mightest weene¹, that this Palamon ¹think

In fighting were as a wood¹ lion, ¹mad

And as a cruel tiger was Arcite:

As wilde boars gan they together smite,

That froth as white as foam, ¹for ire wood¹. ¹mad with anger¹

Up to the ancle fought they in their blood.

And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,
And forth I will of Theseus you tell.

The Destiny, minister general,
That executeth in the world o'er all
The purveyance¹, that God hath seen beforne; ¹foreordination
So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
The contrary of a thing by yea or nay,
Yet some time it shall fallen on a day
That falleth not eft¹ in a thousand year. ¹again
For certainly our appetites here,
Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
All is this ruled by the sight¹ above. ¹eye, intelligence, power
This mean I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to hunt is so desirous —
And namely¹ the greate hart in May — ¹especially
That in his bed there dawneth him no day
That he n'is clad, and ready for to ride
With hunt and horn, and houndes him beside.
For in his hunting hath he such delight,
That it is all his joy and appetite
To be himself the greate harte's bane¹ ¹destruction
For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
Clear was the day, as I have told ere this,
And Theseus, with alle joy and bliss,
With his Hippolyta, the faire queen,
And Emily, y-clothed all in green,
On hunting be they ridden royally.
And to the grove, that stood there faste by,
In which there was an hart, as men him told,
Duke Theseus the straighte way doth hold,
And to the laund¹ he rideth him full right, ¹plain
There was the hart y-wont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth on his way.
This Duke will have a course at him or tway
With houndes, such as him lust¹ to command. ¹pleased
And when this Duke was come to the laund,
Under the sun he looked, and anon
He was ware of Arcite and Palamon,
That foughte breme¹, as it were bulles two. ¹fiercely
The brighte swordes wente to and fro
So hideously, that with the leaste stroke
It seemed that it woulde fell an oak,
But what they were, nothing yet he wote¹. ¹knew

This Duke his courser with his spurres smote,
¹And at a start¹ he was betwixt them two, ¹suddenly¹
And pulled out a sword and cried, “Ho!
No more, on pain of losing of your head.
By mighty Mars, he shall anon be dead
That smiteth any stroke, that I may see!
But tell to me what mister¹ men ye be, ¹manner, kind
That be so hardy for to fighte here
Withoute judge or other officer,
As though it were in listes royally.
This Palamon answered hastily,
And saide: “Sir, what needeth wordes mo’?
We have the death deserved bothe two,
Two woful wretches be we, and caitives,
That be accumbered¹ of our own lives, ¹burdened
And as thou art a rightful lord and judge,
So give us neither mercy nor refuge.
And slay me first, for sainte charity,
But slay my fellow eke as well as me.
Or slay him first; for, though thou know it lite¹, ¹little
This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite
That from thy land is banisht on his head,
For which he hath deserved to be dead.
For this is he that came unto thy gate
And saide, that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed¹ thee full many year, ¹deceived
And thou hast made of him thy chief esquier;
And this is he, that loveth Emily.
For since the day is come that I shall die
I make plainly¹ my confession, ¹fully, unreservedly
That I am thilke¹ woful Palamon, ¹that same
That hath thy prison broken wickedly.
I am thy mortal foe, and it am I
That so hot loveth Emily the bright,
That I would die here present in her sight.
Therefore I aske death and my jwise¹. ¹judgement
But slay my fellow eke in the same wise,
For both we have deserved to be slain.”

This worthy Duke answer’d anon again,
And said, “This is a short conclusion.
Your own mouth, by your own confession
Hath damned you, and I will it record;

It needeth not to pain you with the cord;
Ye shall be dead, by mighty Mars the Red.

The queen anon for very womanhead
Began to weep, and so did Emily,
And all the ladies in the company.
Great pity was it as it thought them all,
That ever such a chance should befall,
For gentle men they were, of great estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate
They saw their bloody woundes wide and sore,
And cried all at once, both less and more,
“Have mercy, Lord, upon us women all.”
And on their bare knees adown they fall
And would have kissed his feet there as he stood,
Till at the last ¹aslaked was his mood¹ ¹his anger was
(For pity runneth soon in gentle heart); appeased¹
And though at first for ire he quoke and start
He hath consider’d shortly in a clause
The trespass of them both, and eke the cause:
And although that his ire their guilt accused
Yet in his reason he them both excused;
As thus; he thoughte well that every man
Will help himself in love if that he can,
And eke deliver himself out of prison.
Of women, for they wepten ever-in-one:¹ ¹continually
And eke his hearte had compassion
And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
And soft unto himself he saide: “Fie
Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
But be a lion both in word and deed,
To them that be in repentance and dread,
As well as-to a proud despiteous¹ man ¹unpitying
That will maintaine what he first began.
That lord hath little of discretion,
That in such case ¹can no division¹: ¹can make no distinction¹
But weigheth pride and humbless ¹after one¹.” ¹alike¹
And shortly, when his ire is thus agone,
He gan to look on them with eyen light¹, ¹gentle, lenient¹
And spake these same wordes ¹all on height.¹ ¹aloud¹

“The god of love, ah! benedicite¹, ¹bless ye him
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against his might there gaine¹ none obstacles, ¹avail, conquer

He may be called a god for his miracles
For he can maken at his owen guise
Of every heart, as that him list devise.
Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
That quietly were out of my prison,
And might have lived in Thebes royally,
And weet¹ I am their mortal enemy, ¹knew
And that their death li'th in my might also,
And yet hath love, ¹maugre their eyen two¹, ¹in spite of their eyes¹
Y-brought them hither bothe for to die.
Now look ye, is not this an high folly?
Who may not be a fool, if but he love?
Behold, for Godde's sake that sits above,
See how they bleed! be they not well array'd?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
Their wages and their fees for their service;
And yet they weene for to be full wise,
That serve love, for aught that may befall.
But this is yet the beste game¹ of all, ¹joke
That she, for whom they have this jealousy,
Can them therefor as muchel thank as me.
She wot no more of all this ¹hote fare¹, ¹hot behaviour¹
By God, than wot a cuckoo or an hare.
But all must be assayed hot or cold;
A man must be a fool, or young or old;
I wot it by myself ¹full yore agone¹: ¹long years ago¹
For in my time a servant was I one.
And therefore since I know of love's pain,
And wot how sore it can a man distraint¹, ¹distress
As he that oft hath been caught in his last¹, ¹snare
I you forgive wholly this trespass,
At request of the queen that kneeleth here,
And eke of Emily, my sister dear.
And ye shall both anon unto me swear,
That never more ye shall my country dere¹ ¹injure
Nor make war upon me night nor day,
But be my friends in alle that ye may.
I you forgive this trespass ¹every deal¹. ¹completely¹
And they him sware ¹his asking¹ fair and well, ¹what he asked¹
And him of lordship and of mercy pray'd,
And he them granted grace, and thus he said:

“To speak of royal lineage and richness,
Though that she were a queen or a princess,

Each of you both is worthy doubtless
 To wedde when time is; but natheless
 I speak as for my sister Emily,
 For whom ye have this strife and jealousy,
 Ye wot¹ yourselves, she may not wed the two ¹know
 At once, although ye fight for evermo:
 But one of you, ¹all be him loth or lief,¹ ¹whether or not he wishes¹
 He must ¹go pipe into an ivy leaf¹: ¹"go whistle"¹
 This is to say, she may not have you both,
 All be ye never so jealous, nor so wroth.
 And therefore I you put in this degree,
 That each of you shall have his destiny
 As ¹him is shape¹; and hearken in what wise ¹as is decreed for him¹
 Lo hear your end of that I shall devise.
 My will is this, for plain conclusion
 Withouten any replication¹, ¹reply
 If that you liketh, take it for the best,
 That evereach of you shall go where ¹him lest¹, ¹he pleases
 Freely without ransom or danger;
 And this day fifty weekes, ¹farre ne nerre¹, ¹neither more nor less¹
 Evereach of you shall bring an hundred knights,
 Armed for listes up at alle rights
 All ready to darraine¹ her by bataille, ¹contend for
 And this behete¹ I you withoute fail ¹promise
 Upon my troth, and as I am a knight,
 That whether of you bothe that hath might,
 That is to say, that whether he or thou
 May with his hundred, as I spake of now,
 Slay his contrary, or out of listes drive,
 Him shall I given Emily to wive,
 To whom that fortune gives so fair a grace.
 The listes shall I make here in this place.
¹And God so wisly on my soule rue¹, ¹may God as surely have
 As I shall even judge be and true. mercy on my soul¹
 Ye shall none other ende with me maken
 Than one of you shalle be dead or taken.
 And if you thinketh this is well y-said,
 Say your advice¹, and hold yourselves apaid². ¹opinion ²satisfied
 This is your end, and your conclusion."
 Who looketh lightly now but Palamon?
 Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?
 Who could it tell, or who could it indite,
 The joye that is maked in the place
 When Theseus hath done so fair a grace?

But down on knees went every ¹manner wight¹, ¹kind of person¹
And thanked him with all their heartes' might,
And namely¹ these Thebans ¹ofte sithe¹. ¹especially ¹oftentimes¹
And thus with good hope and with hearte blithe
They take their leave, and homeward gan they ride
To Thebes-ward, with his old walles wide.

I trow men woulde deem it negligence,
If I forgot to telle the dispençe¹ ¹expenditure
Of Theseus, that went so busily
To maken up the listes royally,
That such a noble theatre as it was,
I dare well say, in all this world there n'as¹. ¹was not
The circuit a mile was about,
Walled of stone, and ditched all without.
¹Round was the shape, in manner of compass,
Full of degrees, the height of sixty pas¹ ¹see note ¹
That when a man was set on one degree
He letted¹ not his fellow for to see. ¹hindered
Eastward there stood a gate of marble white,
Westward right such another opposite.
And, shortly to conclude, such a place
Was never on earth made in so little space,
For in the land there was no craftes-man,
That geometry or arsmetrike¹ can², ¹arithmetic ²knew
Nor pourtrayor¹, nor carver of images, ¹portrait painter
That Theseus ne gave him meat and wages
The theatre to make and to devise.
And for to do his rite and sacrifice
He eastward hath upon the gate above,
In worship of Venus, goddess of love,
¹Done make¹ an altar and an oratory; ¹caused to be made¹
And westward, in the mind and in memory
Of Mars, he maketh hath right such another,
That coste largely of gold a fother¹. ¹a great amount
And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white and red coral
An oratory riche for to see,
In worship of Diane of chastity,
Hath Theseus done work in noble wise.
But yet had I forgotten to devise¹ ¹describe
The noble carving, and the portraitures,
The shape, the countenance of the figures
That weren in there oratories three.

First in the temple of Venus may'st thou see
 Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
 The broken sleepes, and the sikes¹ cold, ¹sighes
 The sacred teares, and the waimentings¹, ¹lamentings
 The fiery strokes of the desirings,
 That Love's servants in this life endure;
 The oathes, that their covenants assure.
 Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
 Beauty and Youth, and Bawdry and Richness,
 Charms and Sorc'ry, Leasings¹ and Flattery, ¹falsehoods
 Dispencc, Business, and Jealousy,
 That wore of yellow golde¹ a garland, ¹sunflowers
 And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand,
 Feasts, instruments, and caroles and dances,
 Lust and array, and all the circumstances
 Of Love, which I reckon'd and reckon shall
 In order, were painted on the wall,
 And more than I can make of mention.
 For soothly all the mount of Citheron,
 Where Venus hath her principal dwelling,
 Was showed on the wall in pourtraying,
 With all the garden, and the lustiness¹. ¹pleasantness
 Nor was forgot the porter Idleness,
 Nor Narcissus the fair of ¹yore agone¹, ¹olden times¹
 Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,
 Nor yet the greate strength of Hercules,
 Th' enchantments of Medea and Circes,
 Nor of Turnus the hardy fierce courage,
 The rich Croesus ¹caitif in servage.¹ ¹abased into slavery¹
 Thus may ye see, that wisdom nor richness,
 Beauty, nor sleight, nor strength, nor hardiness
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie¹, ¹divided possession
 For as her liste the world may she gie¹. ¹guide
 Lo, all these folk so caught were in her las¹ ¹snare
 Till they for woe full often said, Alas!
 Suffice these ensamples one or two,
 Although I could reckon a thousand mo'.

The statue of Venus, glorious to see
 Was naked floating in the large sea,
 And from the navel down all cover'd was
 With waves green, and bright as any glass.
 A citole in her right hand hadde she,
 And on her head, full seemly for to see,

A rose garland fresh, and well smelling,
Above her head her doves flickering
Before her stood her sone Cupido,
Upon his shoulders winges had he two;
And blind he was, as it is often seen;
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.

Why should I not as well eke tell you all
The portraiture, that was upon the wall
Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red?
All painted was the wall in length and brede¹ ¹breadth
Like to the estres¹ of the grisly place ¹interior chambers
That hight the great temple of Mars in Thrace,
In thilke¹ cold and frosty region, ¹that
There as Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
In which there dwelled neither man nor beast,
With knotty gnarry¹ barren trees old ¹gnarled
Of stubbes sharp and hideous to behold;
In which there ran a rumble and a sough¹, ¹groaning noise
As though a storm should bursten every bough:
And downward from an hill under a bent¹ ¹slope
There stood the temple of Mars Armipotent,
Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of which th' entry
Was long and strait, and ghastly for to see.
And thereout came ¹a rage and such a vise¹, ¹such a furious voice¹
That it made all the gates for to rise.
The northern light in at the doore shone,
For window on the walle was there none
Through which men mighten any light discern.
The doors were all of adamant etern,
Y-clenched ¹overthwart and ende-long¹ ¹crossways and
lengthways¹
With iron tough, and, for to make it strong,
Every pillar the temple to sustain
Was tunne-great¹, of iron bright and sheen. ¹thick as a tun (barrel)
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony, and all the compassing;
The cruel ire, as red as any glede¹, ¹live coal
The picke-purse, and eke the pale dread;
The smiler with the knife under the cloak,
The shepen¹ burning with the blacke smoke ¹stable
The treason of the murd'ring in the bed,
The open war, with woundes all be-bled;
Conteke¹ with bloody knife, and sharp menace. ¹contention,

discord

All full of chirking¹ was that sorry place. ¹creaking, jarring noise
The slayer of himself eke saw I there,
His hearte-blood had bathed all his hair:
The nail y-driven in the shode¹ at night, ¹hair of the head
The colde death, with mouth gaping upright.
Amiddes of the temple sat Mischance,
With discomfort and sorry countenance;
Eke saw I Woodness¹ laughing in his rage, ¹Madness
Armed Complaint, Outhees¹, and fierce Outrage; ¹Outcry
The carrain¹ in the bush, with throat y-corve², ¹corpse ²slashed
A thousand slain, and not ¹of qualm y-storve¹; ¹dead of sickness¹
The tyrant, with the prey by force y-reft;
The town destroy'd, that there was nothing left.
Yet saw I brent¹ the shippes hoppesteres, ¹burnt
The hunter strangled with the wilde bears:
The sow freting¹ the child right in the cradle; ¹devouring
The cook scalded, for all his longe ladle.
Nor was forgot, ¹by th'infortune of Mart¹ ¹through the misfortune
The carter overridden with his cart; of war¹
Under the wheel full low he lay adown.
There were also of Mars' division,
The armourer, the bowyer¹, and the smith, ¹maker of bows
That forgeth sharp swordes on his stith¹. ¹anvil
And all above depainted in a tower
Saw I Conquest, sitting in great honour,
With thilke¹ sharpe sword over his head ¹that
Hanging by a subtle y-twined thread.
Painted the slaughter was of Julius,
Of cruel Nero, and Antonius:
Although at that time they were yet unborn,
Yet was their death depainted there beforne,
By menacing of Mars, right by figure,
So was it showed in that portraiture,
As is depainted in the stars above,
Who shall be slain, or elles dead for love.
Sufficeth one ensample in stories old,
I may not reckon them all, though I wo'ld.

The statue of Mars upon a carte¹ stood ¹chariot
Armed, and looked grim as he were wood¹, ¹mad
And over his head there shone two figures
Of starres, that be cleped in scriptures,

That one Puella, that other Rubeus.
This god of armes was arrayed thus:
A wolf there stood before him at his feet
With eyen red, and of a man he eat:
With subtle pencil painted was this story,
In redouting¹ of Mars and of his glory. ¹reverance, fear

Now to the temple of Dian the chaste
As shortly as I can I will me haste,
To telle you all the descriptioun.
Depainted be the walles up and down
Of hunting and of shamefast chastity.
There saw I how woful Calistope,
When that Dian aggrieved was with her,
Was turned from a woman to a bear,
And after was she made the lodestar¹: ¹pole star
Thus was it painted, I can say no far¹; ¹farther
Her son is eke a star as men may see.
There saw I Dane turn'd into a tree,
I meane not the goddess Diane,
But Peneus' daughter, which that hight Dane.
There saw I Actaeon an hart y-made¹, ¹made
For vengeance that he saw Dian all naked:
I saw how that his houndes have him caught,
And frenen¹ him, for that they knew him not. ¹devour
Yet painted was, a little farthermore
How Atalanta hunted the wild boar;
And Meleager, and many other mo',
For which Diana wrought them care and woe.
There saw I many another wondrous story,
The which me list not drawn to memory.
This goddess on an hart full high was set¹, ¹seated
With smalle houndes all about her feet,
And underneath her feet she had a moon,
Waxing it was, and shoulde wane soon.
In gaudy green her statue clothed was,
With bow in hand, and arrows in a case¹. ¹quiver
Her eyen caste she full low adown,
Where Pluto hath his darke regioun.
A woman travailing was her beforne,
But, for her child so longe was unborne,
Full piteously Lucina gan she call,
And saide; "Help, for thou may'st best of all."
Well could he painte lifelike that it wrought;

With many a florin he the hues had bought.
Now be these listes made, and Theseus,
That at his greate cost arrayed thus
The temples, and the theatre every deal¹, ¹part
When it was done, him liked wonder well.

But stint¹ I will of Theseus a lite², ¹cease speaking ²little
And speak of Palamon and of Arcite.
The day approacheth of their returning,
That evereach an hundred knights should bring,
The battle to darraine¹ as I you told; ¹contest
And to Athens, their covenant to hold,
Hath ev'reach of them brought an hundred knights,
Well-armed for the war at alle rights.
And sickerly¹ there trowed² many a man, ¹surely ²believed
That never, sithen¹ that the world began, ¹since
For to spoken of knighthood of their hand,
As far as God hath maked sea and land,
Was, of so few, so noble a company.
For every wight that loved chivalry,
And would, ¹his thankes, have a passant name¹, ¹thanks to his own
Had prayed, that he might be of that game, efforts, have a
And well was him, that thereto chosen was. surpassing name¹
For if there fell to-morrow such a case,
Ye knowe well, that every lusty knight,
That loveth par amour, and hath his might
Were it in Engleland, or elleswhere,
They would, their thankes, willen to be there,
T' fight for a lady; Benedicite,
It were a lusty¹ sighte for to see. ¹pleasing
And right so fared they with Palamon;
With him there wente knightes many one.
Some will be armed in an habergeon,
And in a breast-plate, and in a gipon¹; ¹short doublet.
And some will have ¹a pair of plates¹ large; ¹back and front
armour¹
And some will have a Prusse¹ shield, or targe; ¹Prussian
Some will be armed on their legges weel;
Some have an axe, and some a mace of steel.
There is no newe guise¹, but it was old. ¹fashion
Armed they weren, as I have you told,
Evereach after his opinion.
There may'st thou see coming with Palamon
Licurgus himself, the great king of Thrace:

Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eye in his head
They glowed betwixte yellow and red,
And like a griffin looked he about,
With kemped¹ haire on his browes stout; ¹combed
His limbs were great, his brawns were hard and strong,
His shoulders broad, his armes round and long.
And as the guise¹ was in his country, ¹fashion
Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
With foure white bulles in the trace.
Instead of coat-armour on his harness,
With yellow nails, and bright as any gold,
He had a beare's skin, coal-black for old¹. ¹age
His long hair was y-kempt behind his back,
As any raven's feather it shone for black.
A wreath of gold ¹arm-great¹, of huge weight, ¹thick as a man's
arm¹
Upon his head sate, full of stones bright,
Of fine rubies and clear diamants.
About his car there wente white alauns¹, ¹greyhounds
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,
To hunt the lion or the wilde bear,
And follow'd him, with muzzle fast y-bound,
Collars of gold, and torettes¹ filed round. ¹rings
An hundred lordes had he in his rout¹ ¹retinue
Armed full well, with heartes stern and stout.

With Arcita, in stories as men find,
The great Emetrius the king of Ind,
Upon a ¹steede bay¹ trapped in steel, ¹bay horse¹
Cover'd with cloth of gold diapred¹ well, ¹decorated
Came riding like the god of armes, Mars.
His coat-armour was of ¹a cloth of Tars¹, ¹a kind of silk¹
Couched¹ with pearls white and round and great ¹trimmed
His saddle was of burnish'd gold new beat;
A mantelet on his shoulders hanging,
Bretful¹ of rubies red, as fire sparkling. ¹brimful
His criske hair like ringes was y-run,
And that was yellow, glittering as the sun.
His nose was high, his eye bright citrine¹, ¹pale yellow
His lips were round, his colour was sanguine,
A few fracknes¹ in his face y-sprent², ¹freckles ²sprinkled
Betwixte yellow and black somedea y-ment¹ ¹mixed

And as a lion he ¹his looking cast¹ ¹cast about his eyes¹
Of five and twenty year his age I cast¹ ¹reckon
His beard was well begunnen for to spring;
His voice was as a trumpet thundering.
Upon his head he wore of laurel green
A garland fresh and lusty to be seen;
Upon his hand he bare, for his delight,
An eagle tame, as any lily white.
An hundred lordes had he with him there,
All armed, save their heads, in all their gear,
Full richely in alle manner things.
For trust ye well, that earles, dukes, and kings
Were gather'd in this noble company,
For love, and for increase of chivalry.
About this king there ran on every part
Full many a tame lion and leopart.
And in this wise these lordes ¹all and some¹ ¹all and sundry¹
Be on the Sunday to the city come
Aboute prime, and in the town alight.

This Theseus, this Duke, this worthy knight
When he had brought them into his city,
And inned¹ them, ev' reach at his degree, ¹lodged
He feasteth them, and doth so great labour
To ¹easen them¹, and do them all honour, ¹make them comfortable¹
That yet men weene¹ that no mannes wit ¹think
Of none estate could amenden¹ it. ¹improve
The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
The greate giftes to the most and least,
The rich array of Theseus' palace,
Nor who sate first or last upon the dais.
What ladies fairest be, or best dancing
Or which of them can carol best or sing,
Or who most feelingly speaketh of love;
What hawkes sitten on the perch above,
What houndes ligger¹ on the floor adown, ¹lie
Of all this now make I no mentioun
But of th'effect; that thinketh me the best
Now comes the point, and hearken if you lest. ¹please

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
When Palamon the larke hearde sing,
Although it were not day by houres two,
Yet sang the lark, and Palamon right tho¹ ¹then

With holy heart, and with an high courage,
Arose, to wenden¹ on his pilgrimage ¹go
Unto the blissful Cithera benign,
I meane Venus, honourable and digne¹. ¹worthy
And in her hour he walketh forth a pace
Unto the listes, where her temple was,
And down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer¹ ¹demeanour
And hearte sore, he said as ye shall hear.

“Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venus,
Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
Thou gladder of the mount of Citheron!
For thilke love thou haddest to Adon
Have pity on my bitter teares smart,
And take mine humble prayer to thine heart.
Alas! I have no language to tell
Th’effecte, nor the torment of mine hell;
Mine hearte may mine harmes not betray;
I am so confused, that I cannot say.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest well
My thought, and seest what harm that I feel.
Consider all this, and ¹rue upon¹ my sore, ¹take pity on¹
As wisly¹ as I shall for evermore ¹truly
Enforce my might, thy true servant to be,
And holde war alway with chastity:
That make I mine avow¹, so ye me help. ¹vow, promise
I keepe not of armes for to yelp,¹ ¹boast
Nor ask I not to-morrow to have victory,
Nor renown in this case, nor vaine glory
Of ¹prize of armes¹, blowing up and down, ¹praise for valour¹
But I would have fully possessioun
Of Emily, and die in her service;
Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.
I ¹recke not but¹ it may better be ¹do not know whether¹
To have vict’ry of them, or they of me,
So that I have my lady in mine arms.
For though so be that Mars is god of arms,
Your virtue is so great in heaven above,
That, if you list, I shall well have my love.
Thy temple will I worship evermo’,
And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
I will do sacrifice, and fires bete¹. ¹make, kindle
And if ye will not so, my lady sweet,
Then pray I you, to-morrow with a spear

That Arcita me through the hearte bear
Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
Though that Arcita win her to his wife.
This is th' effect and end of my prayere, —
Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear.”

When th' orison was done of Palamon,
His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
Full piteously, with alle circumstances,

¹All tell I not as now¹ his observances. ¹although I tell not now¹
But at the last the statue of Venus shook,
And made a signe, whereby that he took
That his prayer accepted was that day.
For though the signe shewed a delay,
Yet wist he well that granted was his boon;
And with glad heart he went him home full soon.

The third hour unequal that Palamon
Began to Venus' temple for to gon,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
And to the temple of Dian gan hie.

Her maidens, that she thither with her lad¹, ¹led
Th' incense, the clothes, and the remnant all
That to the sacrifice belonge shall,
The hornes full of mead, as was the guise;
There lacked nought to do her sacrifice.

Smoking¹ the temple full of clothes fair, ¹draping

This Emily with hearte debonnair¹ ¹gentle
Her body wash'd with water of a well.

But how she did her rite I dare not tell;

But¹ it be any thing in general; ¹unless

And yet it were a game¹ to hearen all ¹pleasure

To him that meaneth well it were no charge:

But it is good a man to ¹be at large¹. ¹do as he will¹

Her bright hair combed was, untressed all.

A coronet of green oak cerriall

Upon her head was set full fair and meet.

Two fires on the altar gan she bete,

And did her thinges, as men may behold

In Stage of Thebes, and these bookes old.

When kindled was the fire, with piteous cheer

Unto Dian she spake as ye may hear.

“O chaste goddess of the woodes green,
To whom both heav'n and earth and sea is seen,

Queen of the realm of Pluto dark and low,
Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know
Full many a year, and wost¹ what I desire, ¹knowest
To keep me from the vengeance of thine ire,
That Actaeon aboute¹ cruelly: ¹earned; suffered from
Chaste goddess, well wottest thou that I
Desire to be a maiden all my life,
Nor never will I be no love nor wife.

I am, thou wost¹, yet of thy company, ¹knowest
A maid, and love hunting and ventry¹, ¹field sports
And for to walken in the woodes wild,
And not to be a wife, and be with child.
Nought will I know the company of man.
Now help me, lady, since ye may and can,
For those three formes that thou hast in thee.
And Palamon, that hath such love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I pray thee withoute more,
As sende love and peace betwixt them two:
And from me turn away their heartes so,
That all their hote love, and their desire,
And all their busy torment, and their fire,
Be queint¹, or turn'd into another place. ¹quenched
And if so be thou wilt do me no grace,
Or if my destiny be shapen so
That I shall needes have one of them two,
So send me him that most desireth me.
Behold, goddess of cleane chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheekes fall.
Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,
My maidenhead thou keep and well conserve,
And, while I live, a maid I will thee serve.

The fires burn upon the altar clear,
While Emily was thus in her prayere:
But suddenly she saw a sighte quaint¹. ¹strange
For right anon one of the fire's ¹queint
And quick'd¹ again, and after that anon ¹went out and revived¹
That other fire was queint, and all agone:
And as it queint, it made a whisteling,
As doth a brande wet in its burning.
And at the brandes end outran anon
As it were bloody droppes many one:
For which so sore aghast was Emily,

That she was well-nigh mad, and gan to cry,
For she ne wiste what it signified;
But onely for feare thus she cried,
And wept, that it was pity for to hear.
And therewithal Diana gan appear
With bow in hand, right as an hunteress,
And saide; “Daughter, stint¹ thine heaviness. ¹cease
Among the goddes high it is affirm’d,
And by eternal word writ and confirm’d,
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho¹ ¹those
That have for thee so mucche care and woe:
But unto which of them I may not tell.
Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell.
The fires which that on mine altar brenn¹, ¹burn
Shall thee declaren, ere that thou go henne¹, ¹hence
Thine aventure of love, as in this case.”
And with that word, the arrows in the case¹ ¹quiver
Of the goddess did clatter fast and ring,
And forth she went, and made a vanishing,
For which this Emily astonied was,
And saide; “What amounteth this, alas!
I put me under thy protection,
Diane, and in thy disposition.”
And home she went anon the nexte¹ way. ¹nearest
This is th’ effect, there is no more to say.

The nexte hour of Mars following this
Arcite to the temple walked is
Of fierce Mars, to do his sacrifice
With all the rites of his pagan guise.
With piteous¹ heart and high devotion ¹pious
Right thus to Mars he said his orison
“O stronge god, that in the regnes¹ old ¹realms
Of Thrace honoured art, and lord y-hold¹ ¹held
And hast in every regne, and every land
Of armes all the bridle in thine hand,
And ¹them fortunest as thee list devise¹, ¹send them fortune
Accept of me my piteous sacrifice. as you please¹
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
Then pray I thee to ¹rue upon my pine¹, ¹pity my anguish¹
For thilke¹ pain, and thilke hote fire, ¹that
In which thou whilom burned’st for desire

Whenne that thou usedest¹ the beauty ¹enjoyed
Of faire young Venus, fresh and free,
And haddest her in armes at thy will:
And though thee ones on a time misfill¹, ¹were unlucky
When Vulcanus had caught thee in his las¹, ¹net
And found thee ligg¹ by his wife, alas! ¹lying
For thilke sorrow that was in thine heart,
Have ruth¹ as well upon my paine's smart. ¹pity
I am young and unconning¹, as thou know'st, ¹ignorant, simple
And, as I trow¹, with love offended most ¹believe
That e'er was any living creature:
For she, that doth¹ me all this woe endure, ¹causes
Ne recketh ne'er whether I sink or fleet¹ ¹swim
And well I wot, ere she me mercy hete¹, ¹promise, vouchsafe
I must with strengthe win her in the place:
And well I wot, withoute help or grace
Of thee, ne may my strengthe not avail:
Then help me, lord, to-morr'w in my bataille,
For thilke fire that whilom burned thee,
As well as this fire that now burneth me;
And do¹ that I to-morr'w may have victory. ¹cause
Mine be the travail, all thine be the glory.
Thy sovereign temple will I most honour
Of any place, and alway most labour
In thy pleasance and in thy craftes strong.
And in thy temple I will my banner hong¹, ¹hang
And all the armes of my company,
And evermore, until that day I die,
Eternal fire I will before thee find
And eke to this my vow I will me bind:
My beard, my hair that hangeth long adown,
That never yet hath felt offense¹ ¹indignity
Of razor nor of shears, I will thee give,
And be thy true servant while I live.
Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore,
Give me the victory, I ask no more.”

The prayer stint¹ of Arcita the strong, ¹ended
The ringes on the temple door that hong,
And eke the doores, clattered full fast,
Of which Arcita somewhat was aghast.
The fires burn'd upon the altar bright,
That it gan all the temple for to light;

A sweete smell anon the ground up gaf¹, ¹gave
And Arcita anon his hand up haf¹, ¹lifted
And more incense into the fire he cast,
With other rites more and at the last
The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring;
And with that sound he heard a murmuring
Full low and dim, that saide thus, "Victory."
For which he gave to Mars honour and glory.
And thus with joy, and hope well to fare,
Arcite anon unto his inn doth fare.
As fain¹ as fowl is of the brighte sun. ¹glad

And right anon such strife there is begun
For thilke¹ granting, in the heav'n above, ¹that
Betwixte Venus the goddess of love,
And Mars the sterne god armipotent,
That Jupiter was busy it to stent¹: ¹stop
Till that the pale Saturnus the cold,
That knew so many of adventures old,
Found in his old experience such an art,
That he full soon hath pleased every part.
As sooth is said, eld¹ hath great advantage, ¹age
In eld is bothe wisdom and usage¹: ¹experience
Men may the old out-run, but not out-rede¹. ¹outwit
Saturn anon, to stint the strife and drede,
Albeit that it is against his kind,¹ ¹nature
Of all this strife gan a remedy find.
"My deare daughter Venus," quoth Saturn,
"My course¹, that hath so wide for to turn, ¹orbit
Hath more power than wot any man.
Mine is the drowning in the sea so wan;
Mine is the prison in the darke cote¹, ¹cell
Mine the strangling and hanging by the throat,
The murmur, and the churlish rebelling,
The groyning¹, and the privy poisoning. ¹discontent
I do vengeance and plein¹ correction, ¹full
I dwell in the sign of the lion.
Mine is the ruin of the highe halls,
The falling of the towers and the walls
Upon the miner or the carpenter:
I slew Samson in shaking the pillar:
Mine also be the maladies cold,
The darke treasons, and the castes¹ old: ¹plots
My looking is the father of pestilence.

Now weep no more, I shall do diligence
That Palamon, that is thine owen knight,
Shall have his lady, as thou hast him hight¹. ¹promised
Though Mars shall help his knight, yet nathelless
Betwixte you there must sometime be peace:
All be ye not of one complexion,
That each day causeth such division,
I am thine ayel¹, ready at thy will; ¹grandfather
Weep now no more, I shall thy lust¹ fulfil.” ¹pleasure
Now will I stenten¹ of the gods above, ¹cease speaking
Of Mars, and of Venus, goddess of love,
And telle you as plainly as I can
The great effect, for which that I began.

Great was the feast in Athens thilke¹ day; ¹that
And eke the lusty season of that May
Made every wight to be in such pleasance,
That all that Monday jousten they and dance,
And spenden it in Venus' high service.
But by the cause that they shoulde rise
Early a-morrow for to see that fight,
Unto their reste wente they at night.
And on the morrow, when the day gan spring,
Of horse and harness¹ noise and clattering ¹armour
There was in the hostelries all about:
And to the palace rode there many a rout¹ ¹train, retinue
Of lordes, upon steedes and palfreys.
There mayst thou see devising¹ of harness ¹decoration
So uncouth¹ and so rich, and wrought so weel ¹unkown, rare
Of goldsmithry, of brouding¹, and of steel; ¹embroidery
The shieldes bright, the testers¹, and trappures² ¹helmets
Gold-hewen helmets, hauberks, coat-armures; ²trappings
Lordes in parements¹ on their coursers, ¹ornamental garb ;
Knightes of retinue, and eke squiers,
Nailing the spears, and helmes buckeling,
Gniding¹ of shieldes, with lainers² lacing; ¹polishing
There as need is, they were nothing idle: ²lanyards
The foamy steeds upon the golden bridle
Gnawing, and fast the armourers also
With file and hammer pricking to and fro;
Yeomen on foot, and knaves¹ many one ¹servants
With shorte staves, thick¹ as they may gon²; ¹close ²walk
Pipes, trumpets, nakeres¹, and clariouns, ¹drums

That in the battle blowe bloody souns;
 The palace full of people up and down,
 There three, there ten, holding their questioun¹, ¹conversation
 Divining¹ of these Theban knightes two. ¹conjecturing
 Some saiden thus, some said it shall he so;
 Some helden with him with the blacke beard,
 Some with the bald, some with the thick-hair'd;
 Some said he looked grim, and woulde fight:
 He had a sparth¹ of twenty pound of weight. ¹double-headed axe
 Thus was the halle full of divining¹ ¹conjecturing
 Long after that the sunne gan up spring.
 The great Theseus that of his sleep is waked
 With minstrelsy, and noise that was maked,
 Held yet the chamber of his palace rich,
 Till that the Theban knightes both y-lich¹ ¹alike
 Honoured were, and to the palace fet¹. ¹fetched
 Duke Theseus is at a window set,
 Array'd right as he were a god in throne:
 The people presseth thitherward full soon
 Him for to see, and do him reverence,
 And eke to hearken his hest¹ and his sentence². ¹command ²speech
 An herald on a scaffold made an O,
 Till the noise of the people was y-do¹: ¹done
 And when he saw the people of noise all still,
 Thus shewed he the mighty Duke's will.
 "The lord hath of his high discretion
 Considered that it were destruction
 To gentle blood, to fighten in the guise
 Of mortal battle now in this emprise:
 Wherefore to shape¹ that they shall not die, ¹arrange, contrive
 He will his firste purpose modify.
 No man therefore, on pain of loss of life,
 No manner¹ shot, nor poleaxe, nor short knife ¹kind of
 Into the lists shall send, or thither bring.
 Nor short sword for to stick with point biting
 No man shall draw, nor bear it by his side.
 And no man shall unto his fellow ride
 But one course, with a sharp y-grounden spear:
¹Foin if him list on foot, himself to wear. ¹He who wishes can
 And he that is at mischief shall be take¹, fence on foot to defend
 And not slain, but be brought unto the stake, himself, and he that
 That shall be ordained on either side; is in peril shall be taken¹
 Thither he shall by force, and there abide.
 And if ¹so fall¹ the chiefetain be take ¹should happen¹

On either side, or elles slay his make¹, ¹equal, match
No longer then the tourneying shall last.
God speede you; go forth and lay on fast.
With long sword and with mace fight your fill.
Go now your way; this is the lordes will.
The voice of the people touched the heaven,
So loude cried they with merry steven¹: ¹sound
God save such a lord that is so good,
He willeth no destruction of blood.

Up go the trumpets and the melody,
And to the listes rode the company
¹By ordinance¹, throughout the city large, ¹in orderly array¹
Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with sarge¹. ¹serge
Full like a lord this noble Duke gan ride,
And these two Thebans upon either side:

And after rode the queen and Emily,
And after them another company
Of one and other, after their degree.
And thus they passed thorough that city
And to the listes came they by time:
It was not of the day yet fully prime¹. ¹between 6 & 9 a.m.
When set was Theseus full rich and high,
Hippolyta the queen and Emily,
And other ladies in their degrees about,
Unto the seates presseth all the rout.
And westward, through the gates under Mart,
Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
With banner red, is enter'd right anon;
And in the selve¹ moment Palamon ¹self-same
Is, under Venus, eastward in the place,
With banner white, and hardy cheer¹ and face ¹expression
In all the world, to seeken up and down
So even¹ without variatioun ¹equal
There were such companies never tway.
For there was none so wise that coulde say
That any had of other avantage
Of worthiness, nor of estate, nor age,
So even were they chosen for to guess.
And ¹in two ranges faire they them dress¹. ¹they arranged
themselves
When that their names read were every one, in two rows¹
That in their number guile¹ were there none, ¹fraud

Then were the gates shut, and cried was loud;
“Do now your devoir, younge knights proud
The heralds left their pricking¹ up and down ¹spurring their horses
Now ring the trumpet loud and clarioun.
There is no more to say, but east and west
In go the speares sadly¹ in the rest; ¹steadily
In go the sharpe spurs into the side.
There see me who can joust, and who can ride.
There shiver shaftes upon shieldes thick;
He feeleth through the heartespoon the prick.
Up spring the speares twenty foot on height;
Out go the swordes as the silver bright.
The helmes they to-hewen, and to-shred¹; ¹strike in pieces
Out burst the blood, with sterne streames red.
With mighty maces the bones they to-brest¹. ¹burst
He through the thickest of the throng gan threst¹. ¹thrust
There stumble steedes strong, and down go all.
He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
He foineth¹ on his foe with a trunchoun, ¹forces himself
And he him hurtleth with his horse adown.
He through the body hurt is, and ¹sith take¹, ¹afterwards captured¹
Maugre his head, and brought unto the stake,
As forword¹ was, right there he must abide. ¹covenant
Another led is on that other side.
And sometime doth¹ them Theseus to rest, ¹caused
Them to refresh, and drincken if them lest¹. ¹pleased
Full oft a day have thilke Thebans two ¹these
Together met and wrought each other woe:
Unhorsed hath each other of them tway¹ ¹twice
There is no tiger in the vale of Galaphay,
When that her whelp is stole, when it is lite¹ ¹little
So cruel on the hunter, as Arcite
For jealous heart upon this Palamon:
Nor in Belmarie there is no fell lion,
That hunted is, or for his hunger wood¹ ¹mad
Or for his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.
The jealous strokes upon their helmets bite;
Out runneth blood on both their sides red,
Sometime an end there is of every deed
For ere the sun unto the reste went,
The stronge king Emetrius gan hent¹ ¹sieze, assail
This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,

And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite,
 And by the force of twenty is he take,
 Unyielding, and is drawn unto the stake.
 And in the rescue of this Palamon
 The stronge king Licurgus is borne down:
 And king Emetrius, for all his strength
 Is borne out of his saddle a sword's length,
 So hit him Palamon ere he were take:
 But all for nought; he was brought to the stake:
 His hardy hearte might him helpe naught,
 He must abide when that he was caught,
 By force, and eke by composition¹. ¹the bargain
 Who sorroweth now but woful Palamon
 That must no more go again to fight?
 And when that Theseus had seen that sight
 Unto the folk that foughte thus each one,
 He cried, Ho! no more, for it is done!
 I will be true judge, and not party.
 Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily,
 That by his fortune hath her fairly won.”
 Anon there is a noise of people gone,
 For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
 It seemed that the listes shoulde fall.

What can now faire Venus do above?
 What saith she now? what doth this queen of love?
 But weepeth so, for wanting of her will,
 Till that her teares in the listes fill¹ ¹fall
 She said: “I am ashamed doubtless.”
 Saturnus saide: “Daughter, hold thy peace.
 Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon,
 And by mine head thou shalt be eased soon.”
 The trumpeters with the loud minstrelsy,
 The heralds, that full loude yell and cry,
 Be in their joy for weal of Dan¹ Arcite. ¹Lord
 But hearken me, and stinte noise a lite,
 What a miracle there befell anon
 This fierce Arcite hath off his helm y-done,
 And on a courser for to shew his face
 He ¹pricketh endelong¹ the large place, ¹rides from end to end¹
 Looking upward upon this Emily;
 And she again him cast a friendly eye
 (For women, as to spoken ¹in commune¹, ¹generally¹
 They follow all the favour of fortune),
 And was all his in cheer¹, as his in heart. ¹countenance

Out of the ground a fire infernal start,
From Pluto sent, at request of Saturn
For which his horse for fear began to turn,
And leap aside, and founder¹ as he leap ¹stumble
And ere that Arcite may take any keep¹, ¹care
He pight¹ him on the pummel² of his head. ¹pitched ²top
That in the place he lay as he were dead.
His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow.
As black he lay as any coal or crow,
So was the blood y-run into his face.
Anon he was y-borne out of the place
With hearte sore, to Theseus' palace.
Then was he carven¹ out of his harness. ¹cut
And in a bed y-brought full fair and blive¹ ¹quickly
For he was yet in mem'ry and alive,
And always crying after Emily.

Duke Theseus, with all his company,
Is come home to Athens his city,
With alle bliss and great solemnity.
Albeit that this aventure was fall¹, ¹befallen
He woulde not discomforte¹ them all ¹discourage
Then said eke, that Arcite should not die,
He should be healed of his malady.
And of another thing they were as fain¹. ¹glad
That of them alle was there no one slain,
All¹ were they sorely hurt, and namely² one, ¹although ²especially
That with a spear was thirled¹ his breast-bone. ¹pierced
To other woundes, and to broken arms,
Some hadden salves, and some hadden charms:
And pharmacies of herbs, and eke save¹ ¹sage, *Salvia officinalis*
They dranken, for they would their lives have.
For which this noble Duke, as he well can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel all the longe night,
Unto the strange lordes, as was right.
Nor there was holden no discomforting,
But as at jousts or at a tourneying;
For soothly there was no discomfiture,
For falling is not but an aventure¹. ¹chance, accident
Nor to be led by force unto a stake
Unyielding, and with twenty knights y-take
One person all alone, withouten mo',
And harried¹ forth by armes, foot, and toe, ¹dragged, hurried

And eke his steede driven forth with staves,
With footmen, bothe yeomen and eke knaves¹, ¹servants
It was ¹aretted him no villainy:¹ ¹counted no disgrace to him¹
There may no man ¹clepen it cowardy¹. ¹call it cowardice¹
For which anon Duke Theseus ¹let cry¹, — ¹caused to be
proclaimed¹

To stenten¹ alle rancour and envy, — ¹stop
The gree¹ as well on one side as the other, ¹prize, merit
And either side alike as other's brother:
And gave them giftes after their degree,
And held a feaste fully dayes three:
And conveyed the kinges worthily
Out of his town a journee¹ largely ¹day's journey
And home went every man the righte way,
There was no more but "Farewell, Have good day."
Of this bataille I will no more indite
But speak of Palamon and of Arcite.

Swelleth the breast of Arcite and the sore
Increaseth at his hearte more and more.
The clotted blood, for any leache-craft¹ ¹surgical skill
Corrupteth and is ¹in his bouk y-laft¹ ¹left in his body¹
That neither ¹veine blood nor ventousing¹, ¹blood-letting or
cupping¹
Nor drink of herbes may be his helping.
The virtue expulsive or animal,
From thilke virtue called natural,
Nor may the venom voide, nor expel
The pipes of his lungs began to swell
And every lacert¹ in his breast adown ¹sinew, muscle
Is shent¹ with venom and corruption. ¹destroyed
Him gaineth¹ neither, for to get his life, ¹availeth
Vomit upward, nor downward laxative;
All is to-bursten thilke region;
Nature hath now no domination.
And certainly where nature will not wirch,¹ ¹work
Farewell physic: go bear the man to chirch.¹ ¹church
This all and some is, Arcite must die.
For which he sendeth after Emily,
And Palamon, that was his cousin dear,
Then said he thus, as ye shall after hear.

“Nought may the woful spirit in mine heart
Declare one point of all my sorrows’ smart
To you, my lady, that I love the most:
But I bequeath the service of my ghost
To you aboven every creature,
Since that my life ne may no longer dure.
Alas the woe! alas, the paines strong
That I for you have suffered and so long!
Alas the death, alas, mine Emily!
Alas departing¹ of our company! ¹the severance
Alas, mine hearte’s queen! alas, my wife!
Mine hearte’s lady, ender of my life!
What is this world? what aske men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Al one, withouten any company.
Farewell, my sweet, farewell, mine Emily,
And softly take me in your armes tway,
For love of God, and hearken what I say.
I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day agone,
For love of you, and for my jealousy.
And Jupiter so ¹wis my soule gie¹, ¹surely guides my soul¹
To speaken of a servant properly,
With alle circumstances truely,
That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthed,
Wisdom, humbles¹, estate, and high kindred, ¹humility
Freedom, and all that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soul part,
As in this world right now I know not one,
So worthy to be lov’d as Palamon,
That serveth you, and will do all his life.
And if that you shall ever be a wife,
Forget not Palamon, the gentle man.”

And with that word his speech to fail began.
For from his feet up to his breast was come
The cold of death, that had him overnome¹. ¹overcome
And yet moreover in his armes two
The vital strength is lost, and all ago¹. ¹gone
Only the intellect, withoute more,
That dwelled in his hearte sick and sore,
Gan faile, when the hearte felte death;
Dusked¹ his eyen two, and fail’d his breath. ¹grew dim
But on his lady yet he cast his eye;
His laste word was; “Mercy, Emily!”

His spirit changed house, and wente there,
As I came never I cannot telle where.
Therefore I stent¹, I am no divinister²; ¹refrain ²diviner
Of soules find I nought in this register.
Ne me list not th' opinions to tell
Of them, though that they writen where they dwell;
Arcite is cold, there Mars his soule gie.¹ ¹guide
Now will I speake forth of Emily.

Shriek'd Emily, and howled Palamon,
And Theseus his sister took anon
Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.
What helpeth it to tarry forth the day,
To telle how she wept both eve and morrow?
For in such cases women have such sorrow,
When that their husbands be from them y-go¹, ¹gone
That for the more part they sorrow so,
Or elles fall into such malady,
That at the laste certainly they die.
Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
Of olde folk, and folk of tender years,
In all the town, for death of this Theban:
For him there weepeth bothe child and man.
So great a weeping was there none certain,
When Hector was y-brought, all fresh y-slain,
To Troy: alas! the pity that was there,
Scratching of cheeks, and rending eke of hair.
"Why wouldest thou be dead?" these women cry,
"And haddest gold enough, and Emily."
No manner man might gladden Theseus,
Saving his olde father Egeus,
That knew this worlde's transmutatioun,
As he had seen it changen up and down,
Joy after woe, and woe after gladness;
And shewed him example and likeness.
"Right as there died never man," quoth he,
"That he ne liv'd in earth in some degree¹, ¹rank, condition
Right so there lived never man," he said,
"In all this world, that sometime be not died.
This world is but a throughfare full of woe,
And we be pilgrims, passing to and fro:
Death is an end of every worldly sore."
And over all this said he yet much more
To this effect, full wisely to exhort
The people, that they should them recomfort.

Duke Theseus, with all his busy cure¹, ¹care
¹Casteth about¹, where that the sepulture ¹deliberates¹
Of good Arcite may best y-maked be,
And eke most honourable in his degree.
And at the last he took conclusion,
That there as first Arcite and Palamon
Hadde for love the battle them between,
That in that selve¹ grove, sweet and green, ¹self-same
There as he had his amorous desires,
His complaint, and for love his hote fires,
He woulde make a fire¹, in which th' office ¹funeral pyre
Of funeral he might all accomplice;
And ¹let anon command¹ to hack and hew ¹immediately gave
orders¹
The oakes old, and lay them ¹on a rew¹ ¹in a row¹
In culpons¹, well arrayed for to brenne². ¹logs ²burn
His officers with swifte feet they renne¹ ¹run
And ride anon at his commandement.
And after this, Duke Theseus hath sent
After a bier, and it all oversprad
With cloth of gold, the richest that he had;
And of the same suit he clad Arcite.
Upon his handes were his gloves white,
Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
He laid him ¹bare the visage¹ on the bier, ¹with face uncovered¹
Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear.
And, for the people shoulde see him all,
When it was day he brought them to the hall,
That roareth of the crying and the soun'.
Then came this woful Theban, Palamon,
With sluttery beard, and ruggy ashy hairs,
In clothes black, y-dropped all with tears,
And (passing over weeping Emily)
The ruefullest of all the company.
And ¹inasmuch as¹ the service should be ¹in order that¹
The more noble and rich in its degree,
Duke Theseus let forth three steedes bring,
That trapped were in steel all glittering.
And covered with the arms of Dan Arcite.
Upon these steedes, that were great and white,
There satte folk, of whom one bare his shield,
Another his spear in his handes held;
The thirde bare with him his bow Turkeis¹, ¹Turkish.

Of brent¹ gold was the case² and the harness: ¹burnished ²quiver
And ride forth ¹a pace¹ with sorrowful cheer² ¹at a foot pace¹
Toward the grove, as ye shall after hear. ²expression

The noblest of the Greekes that there were
Upon their shoulders carried the bier,
With slacke pace, and eyen red and wet,
Throughout the city, by the master¹ street, ¹main
That spread was all with black, and wondrous high
Right of the same is all the street y-wrie.¹ ¹covered
Upon the right hand went old Egeus,
And on the other side Duke Theseus,
With vessels in their hand of gold full fine,
All full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine;
Eke Palamon, with a great company;
And after that came woful Emily,
With fire in hand, as was that time the guise¹, ¹custom
To do th' office of funeral service.

High labour, and full great appareling¹ ¹preparation
Was at the service, and the pyre-making,
That with its greene top the heaven raught¹, ¹reached
And twenty fathom broad its armes straught¹: ¹stretched
This is to say, the boughes were so broad.
Of straw first there was laid many a load.
But how the pyre was maked up on height,
And eke the names how the trees hight¹, ¹were called
As oak, fir, birch, asp¹, alder, holm, poplere, ¹aspen
Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestnut, lind¹, laurere, ¹linden, lime
Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whipul tree,
How they were fell'd, shall not be told for me;
Nor how the goddes¹ rannen up and down ¹the forest deities
Disinherited of their habitatioun,
In which they wonned¹ had in rest and peace, ¹dwelt
Nymphes, Faunes, and Hamadryades;
Nor how the beastes and the birdes all
Fledden for feare, when the wood gan fall;
Nor how the ground aghast¹ was of the light, ¹terrified
That was not wont to see the sunne bright;
Nor how the fire was couched¹ first with stre², ¹laid ²straw
And then with dry stickes cloven in three,
And then with greene wood and spicery¹, ¹spices
And then with cloth of gold and with pierrie¹, ¹precious stones

And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
The myrrh, the incense with so sweet odour;
Nor how Arcita lay among all this,
Nor what richness about his body is;
Nor how that Emily, as was the guise¹, ¹custom
¹Put in the fire¹ of funeral service; ¹applied the torch¹
Nor how she swooned when she made the fire,
Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire;
Nor what jewels men in the fire then cast
When that the fire was great and burned fast;

Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,
And of their vestiments, which that they wear,
And cuppes full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that burnt as it were wood¹; ¹mad
Nor how the Greekes with a huge rout¹ ¹procession
Three times riden all the fire about
Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
And thries with their speares clattering;
And thries how the ladies gan to cry;
Nor how that led was homeward Emily;
Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold;
Nor how the lyke-wake¹ was y-hold ¹wake
All thilke¹ night, nor how the Greekes play ¹that
The wake-plays¹, ne keep² I not to say: ¹funeral games ²care
Who wrestled best naked, with oil anoint,
Nor who that bare him best ¹in no disjoint¹. ¹in any contest¹
I will not tell eke how they all are gone
Home to Athenes when the play is done;
But shortly to the point now will I wend¹, ¹come
And maken of my longe tale an end.

By process and by length of certain years
All stinted¹ is the mourning and the tears ¹ended
Of Greekes, by one general assent.
Then seemed me there was a parlement
At Athens, upon certain points and cas¹: ¹cases
Amonge the which points y-spoken was
To have with certain countries alliance,
And have of Thebans full obeisance.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let¹ send after the gentle Palamon, ¹caused
Unwist¹ of him what was the cause and why: ¹unknown
But in his blacke clothes sorrowfully

He came at his commandment ¹on hie¹; ¹in haste¹
Then sente Theseus for Emily.

When they were set¹, and hush'd was all the place ¹seated
And Theseus abided¹ had a space ¹waited
Ere any word came from his wise breast
¹His eyen set he there as was his lest¹, ¹he cast his eyes
And with a sad visage he sighed still, wherever he pleased¹
And after that right thus he said his will.

“The firste mover of the cause above
When he first made the faire chain of love,
Great was th' effect, and high was his intent;
Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant:
For with that faire chain of love he bond¹ ¹bound
The fire, the air, the water, and the lond
In certain bondes, that they may not flee:
That same prince and mover eke,” quoth he,
“Hath stablsh'd, in this wretched world adown,
Certain of dayes and duration
To all that are engender'd in this place,
Over the whiche day they may not pace¹, ¹pass
All may they yet their dayes well abridge.
There needeth no authority to allege
For it is proved by experience;
But that me list declare my sentence¹. ¹opinion
Then may men by this order well discern,
That thilke¹ mover stable is and etern. ¹the same
Well may men know, but that it be a fool,
That every part deriveth from its whole.
For nature hath not ta'en its beginning
Of no ¹partie nor cante¹ of a thing, ¹part or piece¹
But of a thing that perfect is and stable,
Descending so, till it be corruptable.
And therefore of His wise purveyance¹ ¹providence
He hath so well beset¹ his ordinance,
That species of things and progressions
Shallen endure by successions,
And not etern, withouten any lie:
This mayst thou understand and see at eye.
Lo th' oak, that hath so long a nourishing
From the time that it 'ginneth first to spring,
And hath so long a life, as ye may see,
Yet at the last y-wasted is the tree.
Consider eke, how that the harde stone
Under our feet, on which we tread and gon¹, ¹walk

Yet wasteth, as it lieth by the way.
The broade river some time waxeth drey¹. ¹dry
The greate townes see we wane and wend¹. ¹go, disappear
Then may ye see that all things have an end.
Of man and woman see we well also, —
That needes in one of the termes two, —
That is to say, in youth or else in age,-
He must be dead, the king as shall a page;
Some in his bed, some in the deepe sea,
Some in the large field, as ye may see:
There helpeth nought, all go that ilke¹ way: ¹same
Then may I say that alle thing must die.
What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
The which is prince, and cause of alle thing,
Converting all unto his proper will,
From which it is derived, sooth to tell
And hereagainst no creature alive,
Of no degree, availeth for to strive.
Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
To make a virtue of necessity,
And take it well, that we may not eschew¹, ¹escape
And namely what to us all is due.
And whoso grudgeth¹ ought, he doth folly, ¹murmurs at
And rebel is to him that all may gie¹. ¹direct, guide
And certainly a man hath most honour
To dien in his excellence and flower,
When he is sicker¹ of his goode name. ¹certain
Then hath he done his friend, nor him¹, no shame ¹himself
And gladder ought his friend be of his death,
When with honour is yielded up his breath,
Than when his name ¹appalled is for age¹; ¹decayed by old age¹
For all forgotten is his vassalage¹. ¹valour, service
Then is it best, as for a worthy fame,
To dien when a man is best of name.
The contrary of all this is wilfulness.
Why grudge we, why have we heaviness,
That good Arcite, of chivalry the flower,
Departed is, with duty and honour,
Out of this foule prison of this life?
Why grudge here his cousin and his wife
Of his welfare, that loved him so well?
Can he them thank? nay, God wot, neverdeal¹, — ¹not a jot
That both his soul and eke themselves offend¹, ¹hurt
And yet they may their lustes¹ not amend². ¹desires ²control

What may I conclude of this longe serie¹, ¹string of remarks
 But after sorrow I rede¹ us to be merry, ¹counsel
 And thanke Jupiter for all his grace?
 And ere that we departe from this place,
 I rede that we make of sorrows two
 One perfect joye lasting evermo':
 And look now where most sorrow is herein,
 There will I first amenden and begin.
 "Sister," quoth he, "this is my full assent,
 With all th' advice here of my parlement,
 That gentle Palamon, your owen knight,
 That serveth you with will, and heart, and might,
 And ever hath, since first time ye him knew,
 That ye shall of your grace upon him rue¹, ¹take pity
 And take him for your husband and your lord:
 Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.
¹Let see¹ now of your womanly pity. ¹make display¹
 He is a kinge's brother's son, pardie¹. ¹by God
 And though he were a poore bachelere,
 Since he hath served you so many a year,
 And had for you so great adversity,
 It muste be considered, ¹lieveth me¹. ¹believe me¹
 For gentle mercy ¹oweth to passen right¹. ¹ought to be rightly
 Then said he thus to Palamon the knight; directed¹
 "I trow there needeth little sermoning
 To make you assente to this thing.
 Come near, and take your lady by the hand."
 Betwixte them was made anon the band,
 That hight matrimony or marriage,
 By all the counsel of the baronage.
 And thus with alle bliss and melody
 Hath Palamon y-wedded Emily.
 And God, that all this wide world hath wrought,
 Send him his love, that hath it dearly bought.
 For now is Palamon in all his weal,
 Living in bliss, in riches, and in heal¹. ¹health
 And Emily him loves so tenderly,
 And he her serveth all so gentilly,
 That never was there worde them between
 Of jealousy, nor of none other teen¹. ¹cause of anger
 Thus endeth Palamon and Emily
 And God save all this faire company.

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List of Poets in Alphabetical Order

The Miller's Tale

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

THE PROLOGUE.

When that the Knight had thus his tale told
In all the rout was neither young nor old,
That he not said it was a noble story,
And worthy to be ¹drawen to memory¹; ¹recorded¹
And ¹namely the gentles¹ every one. ¹especially the gentlefolk¹
Our Host then laugh'd and swore, "So may I gon,¹ ¹prosper
This goes aright; ¹unbuckled is the mail;¹ ¹the budget is opened¹
Let see now who shall tell another tale:
For truly this game is well begun.
Now telleth ye, Sir Monk, if that ye conne¹, ¹know
Somewhat, to quiten¹ with the Knighte's tale." ¹match
The Miller that fordrunken was all pale,
So that unnethes¹ upon his horse he sat, ¹with difficulty
He would avalen¹ neither hood nor hat, ¹uncover
Nor abide¹ no man for his courtesy, ¹give way to
But in Pilate's voice he gan to cry,
And swore by armes, and by blood, and bones,
"I can a noble tale for the nones¹ ¹occasion,
With which I will now quite¹ the Knighte's tale." ¹match
Our Host saw well how drunk he was of ale,
And said; "Robin, abide, my leve¹ brother, ¹dear
Some better man shall tell us first another:
Abide, and let us worke thriftily."
By Godde's soul," quoth he, "that will not I,
For I will speak, or elles go my way!"
Our Host answer'd; "¹Tell on a devil way¹; ¹devil take you!¹
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome."
"Now hearken," quoth the Miller, "all and some:
But first I make a protestatioun.
That I am drunk, I know it by my soun':
And therefore if that I misspeak or say,
¹Wite it¹ the ale of Southwark, I you pray: ¹blame it on¹
For I will tell a legend and a life
Both of a carpenter and of his wife,
How that a clerk hath ¹set the wrighte's cap¹." ¹fooled the
carpenter¹

The Reeve answer'd and saide, “¹Stint thy clap¹, ¹hold your tongue¹

Let be thy lewed drunken harlotry.

It is a sin, and eke a great folly

To apeiren¹ any man, or him defame, ¹injure

And eke to bringe wives in evil name.

Thou may'st enough of other thinges sayn.”

This drunken Miller spake full soon again,

And saide, “Leve brother Osewold,

Who hath no wife, he is no cuckold.

But I say not therefore that thou art one;

There be full goode wives many one.

Why art thou angry with my tale now?

I have a wife, pardie, as well as thou,

Yet ¹n'old I¹, for the oxen in my plough, ¹I would not¹

Taken upon me more than enough,

To deemen¹ of myself that I am one; ¹judge

I will believe well that I am none.

An husband should not be inquisitive

Of Godde's privity, nor of his wife.

So he may finde Godde's foison¹ there, ¹treasure

Of the remnant needeth not to enquire.”

What should I more say, but that this Millere

He would his wordes for no man forbear,

But told his churlish¹ tale in his mannere; ¹boorish, rude

Me thinketh, that I shall rehearse it here.

And therefore every gentle wight I pray,

For Godde's love to deem not that I say

Of evil intent, but that I must rehearse

Their tales all, be they better or worse,

Or elles falsen¹ some of my mattere. ¹falsify

And therefore whoso list it not to hear,

Turn o'er the leaf, and choose another tale;

For he shall find enough, both great and smale,

Of storial¹ thing that toucheth gentiless, ¹historical, true

And eke morality and holiness.

Blame not me, if that ye choose amiss.

The Miller is a churl, ye know well this,

So was the Reeve, with many other mo',

And harlotry¹ they tolde bothe two. ¹ribald tales

¹Avise you¹ now, and put me out of blame; ¹be warned¹

And eke men should not make earnest of game¹. ¹jest, fun

THE TALE.

Whilom there was dwelling in Oxenford
A riche gnof¹, that ¹gwestes held to board¹, ¹miser ¹took in
boarders¹
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him there was dwelling a poor scholer,
Had learned art, but all his fantasy
Was turned for to learn astrology.
He coude¹ a certain of conclusions ¹knew
To deeme¹ by interrogations, ¹determine
If that men asked him in certain hours,
When that men should have drought or elles show'rs:
Or if men asked him what shoulde fall
Of everything, I may not reckon all.

This clerk was called Hendy¹ Nicholas; ¹gentle, handsome
Of derne¹ love he knew and of solace; ¹secret, earnest
And therewith he was sly and full privy,
And like a maiden meek for to see.
A chamber had he in that hostelry
Alone, withouten any company,
Full ¹fetisly y-dight¹ with herbes swoot¹, ¹neatly decorated¹
And he himself was sweet as is the root ¹sweet
Of liquorice, or any setewall¹. ¹valerian
His Almagest, and bookes great and small,
His astrolabe, belonging to his art,
His augrim stones, layed fair apart
On shelves couched¹ at his bedde's head, ¹laid, set
His press y-cover'd with a falding¹ red. ¹coarse cloth
And all above there lay a gay psalt'ry
On which he made at nightes melody,
So sweetely, that all the chamber rang:
And Angelus ad virginem he sang.
And after that he sung the kinge's note;
Full often blessed was his merry throat.
And thus this sweete clerk his time spent
After ¹his friendes finding and his rent.¹ ¹Attending to his friends,
and providing for the
cost of his lodging¹

This carpenter had wedded new a wife,
Which that he loved more than his life:
Of eighteen year, I guess, she was of age.
Jealous he was, and held her narr'w in cage,

For she was wild and young, and he was old,
 And deemed himself belike¹ a cuckold. ¹perhaps
 He knew not Cato, for his wit was rude,
 That bade a man wed his similitude.
 Men shoulde wedden after their estate,
 For youth and eld¹ are often at debate. ¹age
 But since that he was fallen in the snare,
 He must endure (as other folk) his care.
 Fair was this younge wife, and therewithal
 As any weasel her body gent¹ and small. ¹slim, neat
 A seint¹ she weared, barred all of silk, ¹girdle
 A barm-cloth¹ eke as white as morning milk ¹apron
 Upon her lendes¹, full of many a gore². ¹loins ²plait
 White was her smock¹, and broider'd all before, ¹robe or gown
 And eke behind, on her collar about
 Of coal-black silk, within and eke without.
 The tapes of her white volupere¹ ¹head-kerchief
 Were of the same suit of her collere;
 Her fillet broad of silk, and set full high:
 And sickerly¹ she had a likerous² eye. ¹certainly ²lascivious
 Full small y-pulled were her browes two,
 And they were bent¹, and black as any sloe. ¹arched
 She was well more ¹blissful on to see¹ ¹pleasant to look upon¹
 Than is the newe perjenete¹ tree; ¹young pear-tree
 And softer than the wool is of a wether.
 And by her girdle hung a purse of leather,
 Tassel'd with silk, and ¹pearled with latoun¹. ¹set with brass pearls¹
 In all this world to seeken up and down
 There is no man so wise, that coude thenche¹ ¹fancy, think of
 So gay a popelot¹, or such a wench. ¹puppet
 Full brighter was the shining of her hue,
 Than in the Tower the noble¹ forged new. ¹a gold coin
 But of her song, it was as loud and yern¹, ¹lively
 As any swallow chittering on a bern¹. ¹barn
 Thereto¹ she coulde skip, and ¹make a game¹ ¹also ¹romp¹
 As any kid or calf following his dame.
 Her mouth was sweet as braket, or as methe¹ ¹mead
 Or hoard of apples, laid in hay or heath.
 Wincing¹ she was as is a jolly colt, ¹skittish
 Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
 A brooch she bare upon her low collere,
 As broad as is the boss of a bucklere.
 Her shoon were laced on her legges high;

She was a primerole,¹ a piggesnie , ¹primrose
For any lord t' have ligging¹ in his bed, ¹lying
Or yet for any good yeoman to wed.

Now, sir, and eft¹ sir, so befell the case, ¹again
That on a day this Hendy Nicholas
Fell with this younge wife to rage¹ and play, ¹toy, play the rogue
While that her husband was at Oseney,
As clerkes be full subtle and full quaint.
And privily he caught her by the queint,¹ ¹cunt
And said; “Y-wis,¹ but if I have my will, ¹assuredly
For ¹derne love of thee, leman, I spill.”¹ ¹for earnest love of thee
And helde her fast by the haunche bones, my mistress, I perish¹
And saide “Leman, love me well at once,
Or I will dien, all so God me save.”
And she sprang as a colt doth in the trave:
And with her head she writhed fast away,
And said; “I will not kiss thee, by my fay¹. ¹faith
Why let be,” quoth she, “let be, Nicholas,
Or I will cry out harow and alas!
Do away your handes, for your courtesy.”
This Nicholas gan mercy for to cry,
And spake so fair, and proffer'd him so fast,
That she her love him granted at the last,
And swore her oath by Saint Thomas of Kent,
That she would be at his commandement,
When that she may her leisure well espy.
“My husband is so full of jealousy,
That but¹ ye waite well, and be privy, ¹unless
I wot right well I am but dead,” quoth she.
“Ye muste be full derne¹ as in this case.” ¹secret
“Nay, thereof care thee nought,” quoth Nicholas:
“A clerk had ¹litherly beset his while¹, ¹ill spent his time¹
¹But if¹ he could a carpenter beguile.” ¹unless
And thus they were accorded and y-sworn
To wait a time, as I have said befor.
When Nicholas had done thus every deal¹, ¹whit
And thwacked her about the lendes¹ well, ¹loins
He kiss'd her sweet, and taketh his psalt'ry
And playeth fast, and maketh melody.
Then fell it thus, that to the parish church,
Of Christe's owen workes for to wirch¹, ¹work
This good wife went upon a holy day;

Her forehead shone as bright as any day,
So was it washen, when she left her werk.

Now was there of that church a parish clerk,
The which that was y-cleped Absolon.
Curl'd was his hair, and as the gold it shone,
And strutted¹ as a fanne large and broad; ¹stretched
Full straight and even lay his jolly shode¹. ¹head of hair
His rode¹ was red, his eyen grey as goose, ¹complexion
With Paule's windows carven on his shoes
In hosen red he went full fetisly¹. ¹daintily, neatly
Y-clad he was full small and properly,
All in a kirtle¹ of a light waget¹; ¹girdle ²sky blue
Full fair and thicke be the pointes set,
And thereupon he had a gay surplice,
As white as is the blossom on the rise¹. ¹twig
A merry child he was, so God me save;
Well could he letten blood, and clip, and shave,
And make a charter of land, and a quittance.
In twenty manners could he trip and dance,
After the school of Oxenforde tho¹, ¹then
And with his legges caste to and fro;
And playen songes on a small ribible¹; ¹fiddle
Thereto he sung sometimes a loud quinible¹ ¹treble
And as well could he play on a giterne.¹ ¹guitar
In all the town was brewhouse nor tavern,
That he not visited with his solas¹, ¹mirth, sport
There as that any ¹garnard tapstere¹ was. ¹licentious barmaid¹
But sooth to say he was somedeal squaimous¹ ¹squeamish
Of farting, and of speeche dangerous.
This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
Went with a censer on the holy day,
Censing¹ the wives of the parish fast; ¹burning incense for
And many a lovely look he on them cast,
And namely¹ on this carpenter's wife: ¹especially
To look on her him thought a merry life.
She was so proper, and sweet, and likerous.
I dare well say, if she had been a mouse,
And he a cat, he would ¹her hent anon¹. ¹have soon caught her¹
This parish clerk, this jolly Absolon,
Hath in his hearte such a love-longing!
That of no wife took he none offering;
For courtesy he said he woulde none.

The moon at night full clear and brighte shone,
And Absolon his giterne hath y-taken,
For paramours he thoughte for to waken,
And forth he went, jolif¹ and amorous, ¹joyous
Till he came to the carpentere's house,
A little after the cock had y-crow,
And ¹dressed him¹ under a shot window, ¹stationed himself.¹
That was upon the carpentere's wall.
He singeth in his voice gentle and small;
“Now, dear lady, if thy will be,
I pray that ye will rue¹ on me;” ¹take pity
Full well accordant to his giterning.
This carpenter awoke, and heard him sing,
And spake unto his wife, and said anon,
What Alison, hear'st thou not Absolon,
That chanteth thus under our bower¹ wall?” ¹chamber
And she answer'd her husband therewithal;
“Yes, God wot, John, I hear him every deal.”
This passeth forth; what will ye bet¹ than well? ¹better

From day to day this jolly Absolon
So wooeth her, that him is woebegone.
He waketh all the night, and all the day,
To comb his lockes broad, and make him gay.
He wooeth her ¹by means and by brocage¹, ¹by presents and by
agents¹
And swore he woulde be her owen page.
He singeth brokking¹ as a nightingale. ¹quavering
He sent her piment, mead, and spiced ale,
And wafers¹ piping hot out of the glede²: ¹cakes ²coals
And, for she was of town, he proffer'd meed.
For some folk will be wonnen for richness,
And some for strokes, and some with gentiless.
Sometimes, to show his lightness and mast'ry,
He playeth Herod on a scaffold high.
But what availeth him as in this case?
So loveth she the Hendy Nicholas,
That Absolon may ¹blow the bucke's horn¹: ¹“go whistle”¹
He had for all his labour but a scorn.
And thus she maketh Absolon her ape,
And all his earnest turneth to a jape¹. ¹jest
Full sooth is this proverb, it is no lie;
Men say right thus alway; the nighe sly
Maketh oft time the far lief to be loth.

For though that Absolon be wood¹ or wroth¹ mad
Because that he far was from her sight,
This nigh Nicholas stood still in his light.
Now bear thee well, thou Hendy Nicholas,
For Absolon may wail and sing “Alas!”

And so befell, that on a Saturday
This carpenter was gone to Oseney,
And Hendy Nicholas and Alison
Accorded were to this conclusion,
That Nicholas shall¹ shape him a wile¹ ¹devise a stratagem¹
The silly jealous husband to beguile;
And if so were the game went aright,
She shoulde sleepen in his arms all night;
For this was her desire and his also.
And right anon, withoute wordes mo’,
This Nicholas no longer would he tarry,
But doth full soft unto his chamber carry
Both meat and drinke for a day or tway.
And to her husband bade her for to say,
If that he asked after Nicholas,
She shoulde say, “She wist¹ not where he was; ¹knew
Of all the day she saw him not with eye;
She trowed¹ he was in some malady, ¹believed
For no cry that her maiden could him call
He would answer, for nought that might befall.”
Thus passed forth all thilke¹ Saturday, ¹that
That Nicholas still in his chamber lay,
And ate, and slept, and didde what him list
Till Sunday, that¹ the sunne went to rest. ¹when
This silly carpenter ¹had great marvaill¹ ¹wondered greatly¹
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him ail,
And said; “I am adrad¹, by Saint Thomas! ¹afraid, in dread
It standeth not aright with Nicholas:
¹God shielde¹ that he died suddenly. ¹heaven forbid!¹
This world is now full fickle sickerly¹. ¹certainly
I saw to-day a corpse y-borne to chirch,
That now on Monday last I saw him wirch¹. ¹work
“Go up,” quod he unto his knave¹, “anon; ¹servant.
Clepe¹ at his door, or knocke with a stone: ¹call
Look how it is, and tell me boldely.”
This knave went him up full sturdily,
And, at the chamber door while that he stood,
He cried and knocked as that he were wood:¹ ¹mad

“What how? what do ye, Master Nicholay?
How may ye sleepen all the longe day?”
But all for nought, he hearde not a word.
An hole he found full low upon the board,
Where as the cat was wont in for to creep,
And at that hole he looked in full deep,
And at the last he had of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gaping upright,
As he had kyked¹ on the newe moon. ¹looked
Adown he went, and told his master soon,
In what array he saw this ilke¹ man. ¹same

This carpenter to ¹blissen him¹ began, ¹bless, cross himself¹
And said: “Now help us, Sainte Frideswide.
A man wot¹ little what shall him betide. ¹knows
This man is fall’n with his astronomy
Into some woodness¹ or some agony. ¹madness
I thought aye well how that it shoulde be.
Men should know nought of Godde’s privity¹. ¹secrets
Yea, blessed be alway a lewed¹ man, ¹unlearned
That ¹nought but only his believe can¹. ¹knows no more
So far’d another clerk with astronomy: than his “credo.”¹
He walked in the fieldes for to ¹pry
Upon¹ the starres, what there should befall, ¹keep watch on¹
Till he was in a marle pit y-fall.
He saw not that. But yet, by Saint Thomas!
¹Me rueth sore of¹ Hendy Nicholas: ¹I am very sorry for¹
He shall be ¹rated of¹ his studying, ¹chidden for¹
If that I may, by Jesus, heaven’s king!
Get me a staff, that I may underspore¹ ¹lever up
While that thou, Robin, heavest off the door:
He shall out of his studying, as I guess.”
And to the chamber door he gan him dress¹ ¹apply himself.
His knave was a strong carl for the nonce,
And by the hasp he heav’d it off at once;
Into the floor the door fell down anon.
This Nicholas sat aye as still as stone,
And ever he gap’d upward into the air.
The carpenter ween’d¹ he were in despair, ¹thought
And hent¹ him by the shoulders mightily, ¹caught
And shook him hard, and cried spitously;¹ ¹angrily
“What, Nicholas? what how, man? look adown:
Awake, and think on Christe’s passioun.

I crouche thee from elves, and from wights¹. ¹witches
Therewith the night-spell said he anon rights¹, ¹properly
On the four halves¹ of the house about, ¹corners
And on the threshold of the door without.
“Lord Jesus Christ, and Sainte Benedight,
Blesse this house from every wicked wight,
From the night mare, the white Pater-noster;
Where wonest¹ thou now, Sainte Peter’s sister?” ¹dwellest
And at the last this Hendy Nicholas
Gan for to sigh full sore, and said; “Alas!
Shall all time world be lost eftsoones¹ now?” ¹forthwith
This carpenter answer’d; “What sayest thou?
What? think on God, as we do, men that swink.¹” ¹labour
This Nicholas answer’d; “Fetch me a drink;
And after will I speak in privity
Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:
I will tell it no other man certain.”

This carpenter went down, and came again,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart;
And when that each of them had drunk his part,
This Nicholas his chamber door fast shet¹, ¹shut
And down the carpenter by him he set,
And saide; “John, mine host full lief¹ and dear, ¹loved
Thou shalt upon thy truthe swear me here,
That to no wight thou shalt my counsel wray¹: ¹betray
For it is Christes counsel that I say,
And if thou tell it man, thou art forlore:¹ ¹lost
For this vengeance thou shalt have therefor,
That if thou wraye¹ me, thou shalt be wood².” ¹betray ²mad
“Nay, Christ forbid it for his holy blood!”
Quoth then this silly man; “I am no blab,¹ ¹talker
Nor, though I say it, am I ¹lief to gab¹. ¹fond of speech¹
Say what thou wilt, I shall it never tell
To child or wife, by him that harried Hell.”

“Now, John,” quoth Nicholas, “I will not lie,
I have y-found in my astrology,
As I have looked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Shall fall a rain, and that so wild and wood¹, ¹mad
That never half so great was Noe’s flood.
This world,” he said, “in less than half an hour

Shall all be dreint¹, so hideous is the shower: ¹drowned
 Thus shall mankinde drench¹, and lose their life.” ¹drown
 This carpenter answer'd; “Alas, my wife!
 And shall she drench? alas, mine Alisoun!”
 For sorrow of this he fell almost adown,
 And said; “Is there no remedy in this case?”
 “Why, yes, for God,” quoth Hendy Nicholas;
 “If thou wilt worken after ¹lore and rede¹; ¹learning and advice¹
 Thou may'st not worken after thine own head.
 For thus saith Solomon, that was full true:
 Work all by counsel, and thou shalt not rue¹. ¹repent
 And if thou worke wilt by good counsel,
 I undertake, withoute mast or sail,
 Yet shall I save her, and thee, and me.
 Hast thou not heard how saved was Noe,
 When that our Lord had warned him beforne,
 That all the world with water ¹should be lorn¹?” ¹should perish¹
 “Yes,” quoth this carpenter,” ¹full yore ago¹.” ¹long since¹
 “Hast thou not heard,” quoth Nicholas, “also
 The sorrow of Noe, with his fellowship,
 That he had ere he got his wife to ship?
¹Him had been lever, I dare well undertake,
 At thilke time, than all his wethers black,
 That she had had a ship herself alone.¹ ¹see note
 And therefore know'st thou what is best to be done?
 This asketh haste, and of an hasty thing
 Men may not preach or make tarrying.
 Anon go get us fast into this inn¹ ¹house
 A kneading trough, or else a kemelin¹, ¹brewing-tub
 For each of us; but look that they be large,
 In whiche we may swim¹ as in a barge: ¹float
 And have therein vitaille suffisant
 But for one day; fie on the remenant;
 The water shall aslake¹ and go away ¹slacken, abate
 Aboute prime¹ upon the nexte day. ¹early morning
 But Robin may not know of this, thy knave¹, ¹servant
 Nor eke thy maiden Gill I may not save:
 Ask me not why: for though thou aske me
 I will not telle Godde's privity.
 Sufficeth thee, ¹but if thy wit be mad¹, ¹unless thou be
 To have as great a grace as Noe had; out of thy wits¹
 Thy wife shall I well saven out of doubt.
 Go now thy way, and speed thee hereabout.

But when thou hast for her, and thee, and me,
Y-gotten us these kneading tubbes three,
Then shalt thou hang them in the roof full high,
So that no man our purveyance¹ espy: ¹foresight, providence
And when thou hast done thus as I have said,
And hast our vitaille fair in them y-laid,
And eke an axe to smite the cord in two
When that the water comes, that we may go,
And break an hole on high upon the gable
Into the garden-ward, over the stable,
That we may freely passe forth our way,
When that the greate shower is gone away.
Then shalt thou swim as merry, I undertake,
As doth the white duck after her drake:
Then will I clepe,¹ ‘How, Alison? How, John? ¹call
Be merry: for the flood will pass anon.’
And thou wilt say, ‘Hail, Master Nicholay,
Good-morrow, I see thee well, for it is day.’
And then shall we be lordes all our life
Of all the world, as Noe and his wife.
But of one thing I warne thee full right,
Be well advised, on that ilke¹ night, ¹same
When we be enter’d into shippe’s board,
That none of us not speak a single word,
Nor clepe nor cry, but be in his prayere,
For that is Godde’s owen heste¹ dear. ¹command
Thy wife and thou must hangen far atween¹, ¹asunder
For that betwixte you shall be no sin,
No more in looking than there shall in deed.
This ordinance is said: go, God thee speed
To-morrow night, when men be all asleep,
Into our kneading tubbes will we creep,
And sitte there, abiding Godde’s grace.
Go now thy way, I have no longer space
To make of this no longer sermoning:
Men say thus: Send the wise, and say nothing:
Thou art so wise, it needeth thee nought teach.
Go, save our lives, and that I thee beseech.”

This silly carpenter went forth his way,
Full oft he said, “Alas! and Well-a-day!,”
And to his wife he told his privity,
And she was ware, and better knew than he
What all this ¹quainte cast was for to say¹. ¹strange contrivance

But nathless she fear'd as she would dey, meant¹
And said: "Alas! go forth thy way anon.
Help us to scape, or we be dead each one.
I am thy true and very wedded wife;
Go, deare spouse, and help to save our life."
Lo, what a great thing is affection!
Men may die of imagination,
So deeply may impression be take.
This silly carpenter begins to quake:
He thinketh verily that he may see
This newe flood come weltering as the sea
To drenchen¹ Alison, his honey dear. ¹drown
He weepeth, waileth, maketh ¹sorry cheer¹; ¹dismal countenance¹
He sigheth, with full many a sorry sough.¹ ¹groan
He go'th, and getteth him a kneading trough,
And after that a tub, and a kemelin,
And privily he sent them to his inn:
And hung them in the roof full privily.
With his own hand then made he ladders three,
To climbe by ¹the ranges and the stalks¹ ¹the rungs and the
uprights¹
Unto the tubbes hanging in the balks¹; ¹beams
And victualed them, kemelin, trough, and tub,
With bread and cheese, and good ale in a jub¹, ¹jug
Sufficing right enough as for a day.
But ere that he had made all this array,
He sent his knave¹, and eke his wench² also, ¹servant ²maid
Upon his need¹ to London for to go. ¹business
And on the Monday, when it drew to night,
He shut his door withoute candle light,
And dressed¹ every thing as it should be. ¹prepared
And shortly up they climbed all the three.
They satte stille well ¹a furlong way¹. ¹the time it would take
"Now, Pater noster, clum," said Nicholay, to walk a furlong¹
And "clum," quoth John; and "clum," said Alison:
This carpenter said his devotion,
And still he sat and bided his prayere,
Awaking on the rain, if he it hear.
The deade sleep, for weary business,
Fell on this carpenter, right as I guess,
About the curfew-time, or little more,
For ¹travail of his ghost¹ he groaned sore, ¹anguish of spirit¹
¹And eft he routed, for his head mislay.¹ ¹and then he snored,

Adown the ladder stalked Nicholay; for his head lay awry¹
And Alison full soft adown she sped.
Withoute wordes more they went to bed,
¹There as¹ the carpenter was wont to lie: ¹where¹
There was the revel, and the melody.
And thus lay Alison and Nicholas,
In business of mirth and in solace,
Until the bell of laudes¹ gan to ring, ¹morning service, at 3.a.m.
And friars in the chancel went to sing.

This parish clerk, this amorous Absolon,
That is for love alway so woebegone,
Upon the Monday was at Oseney
With company, him to disport and play;
And asked upon cas¹ a cloisterer² ¹occasion ²monk
Full privily after John the carpenter;
And he drew him apart out of the church,
And said, “I n’ot;¹ I saw him not here wirch² ¹know not ²work
Since Saturday; I trow that he be went
For timber, where our abbot hath him sent.
And dwellen at the Grange a day or two:
For he is wont for timber for to go,
Or else he is at his own house certain.
Where that he be, I cannot ¹soothly sayn.¹” ¹say certainly¹
This Absolon full jolly was and light,
And thought, “Now is the time to wake all night,
For sickerly¹ I saw him not stirring ¹certainly
About his door, since day began to spring.
So may I thrive, but I shall at cock crow
Full privily go knock at his window,
That stands full low upon his bower¹ wall: ¹chamber
To Alison then will I tellen all
My love-longing; for I shall not miss
That at the leaste way I shall her kiss.
Some manner comfort shall I have, parfay¹, ¹by my faith
My mouth hath itched all this livelong day:
That is a sign of kissing at the least.
All night I mette¹ eke I was at a feast. ¹dreamt
Therefore I will go sleep an hour or tway,
And all the night then will I wake and play.”
When that the first cock crowed had, anon
Up rose this jolly lover Absolon,
And him arrayed gay, ¹at point devise. ¹with exact care¹
But first he chewed grains and liquorice,

To smelle sweet, ere he had combed his hair.
Under his tongue a true love he bare,
For thereby thought he to be gracious.

Then came he to the carpentere's house,
And still he stood under the shot window;
Unto his breast it raught¹, it was so low; ¹reached
And soft he coughed with a semisoun'.¹ ¹low tone
“What do ye, honeycomb, sweet Alisoun?
My faire bird, my sweet cinamome¹, ¹cinnamon, sweet spice
Awaken, leman¹ mine, and speak to me. ¹mistress
Full little thinke ye upon my woe,
That for your love I sweat ¹there as¹ I go. ¹wherever
No wonder is that I do swelt¹ and sweat. ¹faint
I mourn as doth a lamb after the teat
Y-wis¹, leman, I have such love-longing, ¹certainly
That like a turtle¹ true is my mourning. ¹turtle-dove
I may not eat, no more than a maid.”
“Go from the window, thou jack fool,” she said:
“As help me God, it will not be, ‘come ba¹ me.’ ¹kiss
I love another, else I were to blame”,
Well better than thee, by Jesus, Absolon.
Go forth thy way, or I will cast a stone;
And let me sleep; ¹a twenty devil way¹. ¹twenty devils take ye!¹
“Alas!” quoth Absolon, “and well away!
That true love ever was so ill beset:
Then kiss me, since that it may be no bet¹, ¹better
For Jesus' love, and for the love of me.”
“Wilt thou then go thy way therewith?” , quoth she.
“Yea, certes, leman,” quoth this Absolon.
“Then make thee ready,” quoth she, “I come anon.”
[And unto Nicholas she said ¹full still¹: ¹in a low voice¹
“Now peace, and thou shalt laugh anon thy fill.”]
This Absolon down set him on his knees,
And said; “I am a lord at all degrees:
For after this I hope there cometh more;
Leman, thy grace, and, sweete bird, thine ore.¹” ¹favour
The window she undid, and that in haste.
“Have done,” quoth she, “come off, and speed thee fast,
Lest that our neigheighbours should thee espy.”
Then Absolon gan wipe his mouth full dry.
Dark was the night as pitch or as the coal,
And at the window she put out her hole,
And Absolon him fell ne bet ne werse,

But with his mouth he kiss'd her naked erse
 Full savourly. When he was ware of this,
 Aback he start, and thought it was amiss;
 For well he wist a woman hath no beard.
 He felt a thing all rough, and long y-hair'd,
 And saide; "Fy, alas! what have I do?"
 "Te he!" quoth she, and clapt the window to;
 And Absolon went forth at sorry pace.
 "A beard, a beard," said Hendy Nicholas;
 "By God's corpus, this game went fair and well."
 This silly Absolon heard every deal¹, ¹word
 And on his lip he gan for anger bite;
 And to himself he said, "I shall thee quite¹. ¹requite, be even with
 Who rubbeth now, who frotteth¹ now his lips ¹ rubs
 With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chips,
 But Absolon? that saith full oft, "Alas!
 My soul betake I unto Sathanas,
 But me were lever¹ than all this town," quoth he ¹rather
 I this despite awroken¹ for to be. ¹revenged
 Alas! alas! that I have been y-blent¹." ¹deceived
 His hote love is cold, and all y-quent.¹ ¹quenched
 For from that time that he had kiss'd her erse,
 Of paramours he ¹sette not a kers,¹ ¹cared not a rush¹
 For he was healed of his malady;
 Full often paramours he gan defy,
 And weep as doth a child that hath been beat.
 A soft pace he went over the street
 Unto a smith, men callen Dan¹ Gerveis, ¹master
 That in his forge smithed plough-harness;
 He sharped share and culter busily.
 This Absolon knocked all easily,
 And said; "Undo, Gerveis, and that anon."
 "What, who art thou?" "It is I, Absolon."
 "What? Absolon, what? Christe's sweete tree¹, ¹cross
 Why rise so rath¹? hey! Benedicite, ¹early
 What aileth you? some gay girl, God it wote,
 Hath brought you thus upon the viretote:
 By Saint Neot, ye wot well what I mean."
 This Absolon he raughte¹ not a bean ¹recked, cared
 Of all his play; no word again he gaf¹, ¹spoke
 For he had more tow on his distaff
 Than Gerveis knew, and saide; "Friend so dear,
 That hote culter in the chimney here
 Lend it to me, I have therewith to don¹: ¹do

I will it bring again to thee full soon.”
Gerveis answered; “Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke¹ nobles all untold, ¹purse
Thou shouldst it have, as I am a true smith.
Hey! Christe’s foot, what will ye do therewith?”
“Thereof,” quoth Absolon, “be as be may;
I shall well tell it thee another day:”
And caught the culter by the colde stele¹. ¹handle
Full soft out at the door he gan to steal,
And went unto the carpentere’s wall
He coughed first, and knocked therewithal
Upon the window, light as he did ere¹. ¹before
This Alison answered; “Who is there
That knocketh so? I warrant him a thief.”
“Nay, nay,” quoth he, “God wot, my sweete lefe¹, ¹love
I am thine Absolon, my own darling.
Of gold,” quoth he, “I have thee brought a ring,
My mother gave it me, so God me save!
Full fine it is, and thereto well y-grave¹: ¹engraved
This will I give to thee, if thou me kiss.”
Now Nicholas was risen up to piss,
And thought he would ¹amenden all the jape¹; ¹improve the joke¹
He shoulde kiss his erse ere that he scape:
And up the window did he hastily,
And out his erse he put full privily
Over the buttock, to the haunche bone.
And therewith spake this clerk, this Absolon,
“Speak, sweete bird, I know not where thou art.”
This Nicholas anon let fly a fart,
As great as it had been a thunder dent¹; ¹peal, clap
That with the stroke he was well nigh y-blent¹; ¹blinded
But he was ready with his iron hot,
And Nicholas amid the erse he smote.
Off went the skin an handbreadth all about.
The hote culter burned so his tout¹, ¹breech
That for the smart he weened¹ he would die; ¹thought
As he were wood¹, for woe he gan to cry, ¹mad
“Help! water, water, help for Godde’s heart!”

This carpenter out of his slumber start,
And heard one cry “Water,” as he were wood¹, ¹mad
And thought, “Alas! now cometh Noe’s flood.”
He sat him up withoute wordes mo’
And with his axe he smote the cord in two;

And down went all; he found neither to sell
 Nor bread nor ale, till he came to the sell¹, ¹threshold
 Upon the floor, and there in swoon he lay.
 Up started Alison and Nicholay,
 And cried out an “harow!” in the street.
 The neighbours alle, bothe small and great
 In ranne, for to gauren¹ on this man, ¹stare
 That yet in swoone lay, both pale and wan:
 For with the fall he broken had his arm.
 But stand he must unto his owen harm,
 For when he spake, he was anon borne down
 With Hendy Nicholas and Alisoun.
 They told to every man that he was wood¹; ¹mad
 He was aghaste¹ so of Noe’s flood, ¹afraid
 Through phantasy, that of his vanity
 He had y-bought him kneading-tubbes three,
 And had them hanged in the roof above;
 And that he prayed them for Godde’s love
 To sitten in the roof for company.
 The folk gan laughen at his phantasy.
 Into the roof they kyken¹ and they gape, ¹peep, look.
 And turned all his harm into a jape¹. ¹jest
 For whatso’er this carpenter answer’d,
 It was for nought, no man his reason heard.
 With oathes great he was so sworn adown,
 That he was holden wood in all the town.
 For every clerk anon right held with other;
 They said, “The man was wood, my leve¹ brother;” ¹dear
 And every wight gan laughen at his strife.
 Thus swived¹ was the carpentere’s wife, ¹enjoyed
 For all his keeping¹ and his jealousy; ¹care
 And Absolon hath kiss’d her nether eye;
 And Nicholas is scalded in the tout.
 This tale is done, and God save all the rout¹. ¹company

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The Wife of Bath's Tale

THE PROLOGUE.

Experience, though none authority¹ ¹authoritative texts
Were in this world, is right enough for me
To speak of woe that is in marriage:
For, lordings, since I twelve year was of age,
(Thanked be God that ¹is etern on live),¹ ¹lives eternally¹
Husbands at the church door have I had five,
For I so often have y-wedded be,
And all were worthy men in their degree.
But me was told, not longe time gone is
That sithen¹ Christe went never but ones ¹since
To wedding, in the Cane¹ of Galilee, ¹Cana
That by that ilk¹ example taught he me, ¹same
That I not wedded shoulde be but once.
Lo, hearken eke a sharp word for the nonce,¹ ¹occasion
Beside a welle Jesus, God and man,
Spake in reproof of the Samaritan:
“Thou hast y-had five husbandes,” said he;
“And thilke¹ man, that now hath wedded thee, ¹that
Is not thine husband:” thus said he certain;
What that he meant thereby, I cannot sayn.
But that I aske, why the fifthe man
Was not husband to the Samaritan?
How many might she have in marriage?
Yet heard I never tellen ¹in mine age¹ ¹in my life¹
Upon this number definitioun.
Men may divine, and glosen¹ up and down; ¹comment
But well I wot, express without a lie,
God bade us for to wax and multiply;
That gentle text can I well understand.
Eke well I wot, he said, that mine husband
Should leave father and mother, and take to me;
But of no number mention made he,
Of bigamy or of octogamy;
Why then should men speak of it villainy?¹ ¹as if it were a disgrace

Lo here, the wise king Dan¹ Solomon, ¹Lord
I trow that he had wives more than one;
As would to God it lawful were to me
To be refreshed half so oft as he!

What gift¹ of God had he for all his wives? ¹special favour, licence
 No man hath such, that in this world alive is.
 God wot, this noble king, ¹as to my wit, ¹as I understand¹
 The first night had many a merry fit
 With each of them, so ¹well was him on live. ¹so well he lived¹
 Blessed be God that I have wedded five!
 Welcome the sixth whenever that he shall.
 For since I will not keep me chaste in all,
 When mine husband is from the world y-gone,
 Some Christian man shall wedde me anon.
 For then th' apostle saith that I am free
 To wed, ¹a' God's half, ¹ where it liketh me. ¹on God's part¹
 He saith, that to be wedded is no sin;
 Better is to be wedded than to brin. ¹burn
 What reckoneth¹ me though folk say villainy² ¹care ²evil
 Of shrewed¹ Lamech, and his bigamy? ¹impious, wicked
 I wot well Abraham was a holy man,
 And Jacob eke, as far as ev'r I can. ¹know
 And each of them had wives more than two;
 And many another holy man also.
 Where can ye see, ¹in any manner age, ¹in any period¹
 That highe God defended¹ marriage ¹forbade
 By word express? I pray you tell it me;
 Or where commanded he virginity?
 I wot as well as you, it is no dread, ¹doubt
 Th' apostle, when he spake of maidenhead,
 He said, that precept thereof had he none:
 Men may counsel a woman to be one, ¹a maid
 But counseling is no commandement;
 He put it in our owen judgement.
 For, hadde God commanded maidenhead,
 Then had he damned¹ wedding out of dread; ²condemned ²doubt
 And certes, if there were no seed y-sow, ¹sown
 Virginity then whereof should it grow?
 Paul durste not commanden, at the least,
 A thing of which his Master gave no hest. ¹command
 The dart¹ is set up for virginity; ¹goal
 Catch whoso may, who runneth best let see.
 But this word is not ta'en of every wight,
¹But there as¹ God will give it of his might. ¹except where¹
 I wot well that th' apostle was a maid,
 But natheless, although he wrote and said,
 He would that every wight were such as he,

All is but counsel to virginity.
And, since to be a wife he gave me leave
Of indulgence, so is it no reprove¹ ¹scandal, reproach
To wedde me, if that my make¹ should die, ¹mate, husband
Without exception¹ of bigamy; ¹charge, reproach
¹All were it¹ good no woman for to touch ¹though it might be¹
(He meant as in his bed or in his couch),
For peril is both fire and tow t' assemble
Ye know what this example may resemble.
This is all and some, he held virginity
More profit than wedding in frailty:
(¹Frailty clepe I, but if¹ that he and she ¹frailty I call it,
Would lead their lives all in chastity), unless¹
I grant it well, I have of none envy
Who maidenhead prefer to bigamy;
It liketh them t' be clean in body and ghost;¹ ¹soul
Of mine estate¹ I will not make a boast. ¹condition

For, well ye know, a lord in his household
Hath not every vessel all of gold;
Some are of tree, and do their lord service.
God calleth folk to him in sundry wise,
And each one hath of God a proper gift,
Some this, some that, as liketh him to shift.¹ ¹appoint, distribute
Virginity is great perfection,
And continence eke with devotion:
But Christ, that of perfection is the well,¹ ¹fountain
Bade not every wight he should go sell
All that he had, and give it to the poor,
And in such wise follow him and his lore:¹ ¹doctrine
He spake to them that would live perfectly, —
And, lordings, by your leave, that am not I;
I will bestow the flower of mine age
In th' acts and in the fruits of marriage.
Tell me also, to what conclusion¹ ¹end, purpose
Were members made of generation,
And of so perfect wise a wight¹ y-wrought? ¹being
Trust me right well, they were not made for nought.
Glose whoso will, and say both up and down,
That they were made for the purgatioun
Of urine, and of other thinges smale,
And eke to know a female from a male:
And for none other cause? say ye no?
Experience wot well it is not so.

So that the clerkes¹ be not with me wroth, ¹scholars
I say this, that they were made for both,
That is to say, ¹for office, and for ease¹ ¹for duty and
Of engendrure, there we God not displease. for pleasure¹
Why should men elles in their bookes set,
That man shall yield unto his wife her debt?
Now wherewith should he make his payement,
If he us'd not his silly instrument?
Then were they made upon a creature
To purge urine, and eke for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is hold,¹ ¹obliged
That hath such harness¹ as I to you told, ¹equipment
To go and use them in engendrure;
Then should men take of chastity no cure.¹ ¹care
Christ was a maid, and shapen¹ as a man, ¹fashioned
And many a saint, since that this world began,
Yet ever liv'd in perfect chastity.
I will not vie¹ with no virginity. ¹contend
Let them with bread of pured¹ wheat be fed, ¹purified
And let us wives eat our barley bread.
And yet with barley bread, Mark tell us can,
Our Lord Jesus refreshed many a man.
In such estate as God hath ¹cleped us,¹ ¹called us to
I'll persevere, I am not precious,¹ ¹over-dainty
In wifehood I will use mine instrument
As freely as my Maker hath it sent.
If I be dangerous¹ God give me sorrow; ¹sparing of my favours
Mine husband shall it have, both eve and morrow,
When that him list come forth and pay his debt.
A husband will I have, I ¹will no let,¹ ¹will bear no hindrance¹
Which shall be both my debtor and my thrall,¹ ¹slave
And have his tribulation withal
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife.
I have the power during all my life
Upon his proper body, and not he;
Right thus th' apostle told it unto me,
And bade our husbands for to love us well;
All this sentence me liketh every deal.¹ ¹whit

Up start the Pardoner, and that anon;
“Now, Dame,” quoth he, “by God and by Saint John,
Ye are a noble preacher in this case.
I was about to wed a wife, alas!

What? should I bie¹ it on my flesh so dear? ¹suffer for
Yet had I lever¹ wed no wife this year.” ¹rather
“Abide,”¹ quoth she; “my tale is not begun ¹wait in patience
Nay, thou shalt drinke of another tun
Ere that I go, shall savour worse than ale.
And when that I have told thee forth my tale
Of tribulation in marriage,
Of which I am expert in all mine age,
(This is to say, myself hath been the whip),
Then mayest thou choose whether thou wilt sip
Of ¹thilke tunne,¹ that I now shall broach. ¹that tun¹
Beware of it, ere thou too nigh approach,
For I shall tell examples more than ten:
Whoso will not beware by other men,
By him shall other men corrected be:
These same wordes writeth Ptolemy;
Read in his Almagest, and take it there.”
“Dame, I would pray you, if your will it were,”
Saide this Pardoner, “as ye began,
Tell forth your tale, and spare for no man,
And teach us younge men of your practique.”
“Gladly,” quoth she, “since that it may you like.
But that I pray to all this company,
If that I speak after my fantasy,
To take nought agrief¹ what I may say; ¹to heart
For mine intent is only for to play.

Now, Sirs, then will I tell you forth my tale.
As ever may I drinke wine or ale
I shall say sooth; the husbands that I had
Three of them were good, and two were bad
The three were goode men, and rich, and old
¹Unnethes mighte they the statute hold¹ ¹they could with difficulty
In which that they were bounden unto me. obey the law¹
Yet wot well what I mean of this, pardie.¹ ¹by God
As God me help, I laugh when that I think
How piteously at night I made them swink,¹ ¹labour
But, ¹by my fay, I told of it no store:¹ ¹by my faith, I held it
They had me giv’n their land and their treasure, of no account¹
Me needed not do longer diligence
To win their love, or do them reverence.
They loved me so well, by God above,
That I ¹tolde no dainty¹ of their love. ¹cared nothing for¹
A wise woman will busy her ever-in-one¹ ¹constantly

To get their love, where that she hath none.
But, since I had them wholly in my hand,
And that they had me given all their land,
Why should I take keep¹ them for to please, ¹care
But¹ it were for my profit, or mine ease? ¹unless
I set them so a-worke, by my fay,
That many a night they sange, well-away!
The bacon was not fetched for them, I trow,
That some men have in Essex at Dunmow.
I govern'd them so well after my law,
That each of them full blissful was and fawe¹ ¹fain
To bringe me gay thinges from the fair.
They were full glad when that I spake them fair,
For, God it wot, I ¹chid them spiteously. ¹rebuked them angrily¹
Now hearken how I bare me properly.

Ye wise wives, that can understand,
Thus should ye speak, and ¹bear them wrong on hand,¹ ¹make them
For half so boldly can there no man believe falsely¹
Swearen and lien as a woman can.
(I say not this by wives that be wise,
¹But if¹ it be when they them misadvise.)¹ ¹unless¹ ¹act unadvisedly
A wise wife, if that she can¹ her good, ¹knows
Shall ¹beare them on hand¹ the cow is wood, ¹make them believe¹
And take witness of her owen maid
Of their assent: but hearken how I said.
“Sir olde kaynard, is this thine array?
Why is my neigheboure’s wife so gay?
She is honour’d ¹over all where¹ she go’th, ¹wheresoever
I sit at home, I have no ¹thrifty cloth.¹ ¹good clothes¹
What dost thou at my neigheboure’s house?
Is she so fair? art thou so amorous?
What rown’s¹ thou with our maid? benedicite, ¹whisperest
Sir olde lechour, let thy japes¹ be. ¹tricks
And if I have a gossip, or a friend
(Withoute guilt), thou chidest as a fiend,
If that I walk or play unto his house.
Thou comest home as drunken as a mouse,
And preachest on thy bench, with evil prefe:¹ ¹proof
Thou say’st to me, it is a great mischief
To wed a poore woman, for costage:¹ ¹expense
And if that she be rich, of high parage;¹ ¹birth
Then say’st thou, that it is a tormentry

To suffer her pride and melancholy.
 And if that she be fair, thou very knave,
 Thou say'st that every honour¹ will her have; ¹whoremonger
 She may no while in chastity abide,
 That is assailed upon every side.
 Thou say'st some folk desire us for richness,
 Some for our shape, and some for our fairness,
 And some, for she can either sing or dance,
 And some for gentleness and dalliance,
 Some for her handes and her armes smale:
 Thus goes all to the devil, by thy tale;
 Thou say'st, men may not keep a castle wall
 That may be so assailed ¹over all.¹ ¹everywhere¹
 And if that she be foul, thou say'st that she
 Coveteth every man that she may see;
 For as a spaniel she will on him leap,
 Till she may finde some man her to cheap;¹ ¹buy
 And none so grey goose goes there in the lake,
 (So say'st thou) that will be without a make.¹ ¹mate
 And say'st, it is a hard thing for to weld ¹wield, govern
 A thing that no man will, ¹his thankes, held.¹ ¹hold with his
 goodwill¹
 Thus say'st thou, lovel,¹ when thou go'st to bed, ¹good-for-nothing
 And that no wise man needeth for to wed,
 Nor no man that intendeth unto heaven.
 With wilde thunder dint¹ and fiery leven² ¹stroke ²lightning
 Mote¹ thy wicked necke be to-broke. ¹may
 Thou say'st, that dropping houses, and eke smoke,
 And chiding wives, make men to flee
 Out of their owne house; ah! ben'dicite,
 What aileth such an old man for to chide?
 Thou say'st, we wives will our vices hide,
 Till we be fast,¹ and then we will them shew. ¹wedded
 Well may that be a proverb of a shrew.¹ ¹ill-tempered wretch
 Thou say'st, that oxen, asses, horses, hounds,
 They be ¹assayed at diverse stounds,¹ ¹tested at various
 Basons and lavers, ere that men them buy, seasons
 Spoones, stooles, and all such husbandry,
 And so be pots, and clothes, and array,¹ ¹raiment
 But folk of wives make none assay,
 Till they be wedded, — olde dotard shrew! —
 And then, say'st thou, we will our vices shew.
 Thou say'st also, that it displeaseth me,

But if ¹ that thou wilt praise my beauty, ¹unless
 And but ¹ thou pore alway upon my face, ¹unless
 And call me faire dame in every place;
 And but ¹ thou make a feast on thilke² day ¹unless ²that
 That I was born, and make me fresh and gay;
 And but thou do to my norice¹ honour, ¹nurse
 And to my chamberere¹ within my bow'r, ¹chamber-maid
 And to my father's folk, and mine allies;¹ ¹relations
 Thus sayest thou, old barrel full of lies.
 And yet also of our prentice Jenkin,
 For his crisp hair, shining as gold so fine,
 And for he squireth me both up and down,
 Yet hast thou caught a false suspicioun:
 I will him not, though thou wert dead to-morrow.
 But tell me this, why hidest thou, ¹with sorrow,¹ ¹sorrow on thee!¹
 The keyes of thy chest away from me?
 It is my good¹ as well as thine, pardie. ¹property
 What, think'st to make an idiot of our dame?
 Now, by that lord that called is Saint Jame,
 Thou shalt not both, although that thou wert wood,¹ ¹furious
 Be master of my body, and my good,¹ ¹property
 The one thou shalt forego, maugre¹ thine eyen. ¹in spite of
 What helpeth it of me t'inquire and spyen?
 I trow thou wouldest lock me in thy chest.
 Thou shouldest say, 'Fair wife, go where thee lest;
 Take your disport; I will believe no tales;
 I know you for a true wife, Dame Ales.'¹ ¹Alice
 We love no man, that taketh keep¹ or charge ¹care
 Where that we go; we will be at our large.
 Of alle men most blessed may he be,
 The wise astrologer Dan¹ Ptolemy, ¹Lord
 That saith this proverb in his Almagest:
 'Of alle men his wisdom is highest,
 That recketh not who hath the world in hand.
 By this proverb thou shalt well understand,
 Have thou enough, what thar¹ thee reck or care ¹needs, behoves
 How merrily that other folkes fare?
 For certes, olde dotard, by your leave,
 Ye shall have [pleasure] right enough at eve.
 He is too great a niggard that will werne¹ ¹forbid
 A man to light a candle at his lantern;
 He shall have never the less light, pardie.
 Have thou enough, thee thar¹ not plaine² thee ¹need ²complain

Thou say'st also, if that we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastity.
And yet, — with sorrow! — thou enforcest thee,
And say'st these words in the apostle's name:
'In habit made with chastity and shame¹ ¹modesty
Ye women shall apparel you,' quoth he,
'And not in tressed hair and gay perrie,¹ ¹jewels
As pearles, nor with gold, nor clothes rich.'
After thy text nor after thy rubrich
I will not work as muchel as a gnat.
Thou say'st also, I walk out like a cat;
For whoso woulde singe the catte's skin
Then will the catte well dwell in her inn;¹ ¹house
And if the catte's skin be sleek and gay,
She will not dwell in house half a day,
But forth she will, ere any day be daw'd,
To shew her skin, and go a caterwaw'd.¹ ¹caterwauling
This is to say, if I be gay, sir shrew,
I will run out, my borel¹ for to shew. ¹apparel, fine clothes
Sir olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?
Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyen
To be my wardecorps,¹ as he can best ¹body-guard
In faith he shall not keep me, ¹but me lest:¹ ¹unless I please¹
Yet could I ¹make his beard,¹ so may I the. ¹make a jest of him¹

“Thou sayest eke, that there be thinges three, ¹thrive
Which thinges greatly trouble all this earth,
And that no wighte may endure the ferth:¹ ¹fourth
O lefe¹ sir shrew, may Jesus short² thy life. ¹pleasant ²shorten
Yet preachest thou, and say'st, a hateful wife
Y-reckon'd is for one of these mischances.
Be there ¹none other manner resemblances¹ ¹no other kind of
That ye may liken your parables unto, comparison¹
But if a silly wife be one of tho?¹ ¹those
Thou likenest a woman's love to hell;
To barren land where water may not dwell.
Thou likenest it also to wild fire;
The more it burns, the more it hath desire
To consume every thing that burnt will be.
Thou sayest, right as wormes shend¹ a tree, ¹destroy
Right so a wife destroyeth her husband;
This know they well that be to wives bond.”

Lordings, right thus, as ye have understand,
¹Bare I stiffly mine old husbands on hand,¹ ¹made them believe¹
That thus they saiden in their drunkenness;
And all was false, but that I took witness
On Jenkin, and upon my niece also.
O Lord! the pain I did them, and the woe,
'Full guileless, by Godde's sweete pine;¹ ¹pain
For as a horse I coulde bite and whine;
I coulde plain,¹ an² I was in the guilt, ¹complain ²even though
Or elles oftentime I had been spilt¹ ¹ruined
Whoso first cometh to the nill, first grint;¹ ¹is ground
I plained first, so was our war y-stint.¹ ¹stopped
They were full glad to excuse them full blive¹ ¹quickly
Of things that they never ¹aguilt their live.¹ ¹were guilty in their
lives¹

Of wenches would I ¹beare them on hand,¹ ¹falsely accuse them¹
When that for sickness scarcely might they stand,
Yet tickled I his hearte for that he
Ween'd¹ that I had of him so great cherte:² ¹though ²affection
I swore that all my walking out by night
Was for to espy wenches that he dight:¹ ¹adorned
Under that colour had I many a mirth.
For all such wit is given us at birth;
Deceit, weeping, and spinning, God doth give
To women kindly, while that they may live. ¹naturally
And thus of one thing I may vaunte me,
At th' end I had the better in each degree,
By sleight, or force, or by some manner thing,
As by continual murmur or grudging,¹ ¹complaining
Namely¹ a-bed, there hadde they mischance, ¹especially
There would I chide, and do them no pleasance:
I would no longer in the bed abide,
If that I felt his arm over my side,
Till he had made his ransom unto me,
Then would I suffer him do his nicety.¹ ¹folly
And therefore every man this tale I tell,
Win whoso may, for all is for to sell;
With empty hand men may no hawkes lure;
For winning would I all his will endure,
And make me a feigned appetite,
And yet in bacon¹ had I never delight: ¹i.e. of Dunmow
That made me that I ever would them chide.
For, though the Pope had sitten them beside,

I would not spare them at their owen board,
 For, by my troth, I quit¹ them word for word ¹repaid
 As help me very God omnipotent,
 Though I right now should make my testament
 I owe them not a word, that is not quit¹ ¹repaid
 I brought it so aboute by my wit,
 That they must give it up, as for the best
 Or elles had we never been in rest.
 For, though he looked as a wood¹ lion, ¹furious
 Yet should he fail of his conclusion.
 Then would I say, “Now, goode lefe¹ tak keep² ¹dear ²heed
 How meekly looketh Wilken oure sheep!
 Come near, my spouse, and let me ba¹ thy cheek ¹kiss
 Ye shoulde be all patient and meek,
 And have a ¹sweet y-spiced¹ conscience, ¹tender, nice¹
 Since ye so preach of Jobe’s patience.
 Suffer alway, since ye so well can preach,
 And but¹ ye do, certain we shall you teach¹ ¹unless
 That it is fair to have a wife in peace.
 One of us two must bowe¹ doubteless: ¹give way
 And since a man is more reasonable
 Than woman is, ye must be suff’rable.
 What aileth you to grudge¹ thus and groan? ¹complain
 Is it for ye would have my [love] alone?
 Why, take it all: lo, have it every deal,¹ ¹whit
 Peter! shrew¹ you but ye love it well ¹curse
 For if I woulde sell my ¹belle chose¹, ¹beautiful thing¹
 I coulde walk as fresh as is a rose,
 But I will keep it for your owen tooth.
 Ye be to blame, by God, I say you sooth.”
 Such manner wordes hadde we on hand.

Now will I spoken of my fourth husband.
 My fourthe husband was a revellour;
 This is to say, he had a paramour,
 And I was young and full of ragerie, ¹ ¹wantonness
 Stubborn and strong, and jolly as a pie.¹ ¹magpie
 Then could I dance to a harpe smale,
 And sing, y-wis,¹ as any nightingale, ¹certainly
 When I had drunk a draught of sweete wine.
 Metellius, the foule churl, the swine,
 That with a staff bereft his wife of life
 For she drank wine, though I had been his wife,

Never should he have daunted me from drink:
And, after wine, of Venus most I think.
For all so sure as cold engenders hail,
A liquorish mouth must have a liquorish tail.
In woman vinolent¹ is no defence,² ¹full of wine ¹resistance
This knowe lechours by experience.
But, lord Christ, when that it rememb'reth me
Upon my youth, and on my jollity,
It tickleth me about mine hearte-root;
Unto this day it doth mine hearte boot,¹ ¹good
That I have had my world as in my time.
But age, alas! that all will envenime,¹ ¹poison, embitter
Hath me bereft my beauty and my pith:¹ ¹vigour
Let go; farewell; the devil go therewith.
The flour is gon, there is no more to tell,
The bran, as I best may, now must I sell.
But yet to be right merry will I fand.¹ ¹try
Now forth to tell you of my fourth husband,
I say, I in my heart had great despite,
That he of any other had delight;
But he was quit,¹ by God and by Saint Joce: ¹requited, paid back
I made for him of the same wood a cross;
Not of my body in no foul mannere,
But certainly I made folk such cheer,
That in his owen grease I made him fry
For anger, and for very jealousy.
By God, in earth I was his purgatory,
For which I hope his soul may be in glory.
For, God it wot, he sat full oft and sung,
When that his shoe full bitterly him wrung.¹ ¹pinched
There was no wight, save God and he, that wist
In many wise how sore I did him twist.
He died when I came from Jerusalem,
And lies in grave under the ¹roode beam:¹ ¹cross¹
Although his tomb is not so curious
As was the sepulchre of Darius,
Which that Apelles wrought so subtly.
It is but waste to bury them preciously.
Let him fare well, God give his soule rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.

Now of my fifthe husband will I tell:
God let his soul never come into hell.
And yet was he to me the moste shrew;¹ ¹cruel, ill-tempered

That feel I on my ribbes all ¹by rew,¹ ¹in a row
 And ever shall, until mine ending day.
 But in our bed he was so fresh and gay,
 And therewithal so well he could me glose,¹ ¹flatter
 When that he woulde have my belle chose,
 Though he had beaten me on every bone,
 Yet could he win again my love anon.
 I trow, I lov'd him better, for that he
 Was of his love so dangerous¹ to me. ¹sparing, difficult
 We women have, if that I shall not lie,
 In this matter a quaint fantasy.
 Whatever thing we may not lightly have,
 Thereafter will we cry all day and crave.
 Forbid us thing, and that desire we;
 Press on us fast, and thenne will we flee.
 With danger¹ utter we all our chaffare;² ¹difficulty ²merchandise
 Great press at market maketh deare ware,
 And too great cheap is held at little price;
 This knoweth every woman that is wise.
 My fifthe husband, God his soule bless,
 Which that I took for love and no richness,
 He some time was ¹a clerk of Oxenford,¹ ¹a scholar of Oxford¹
 And had left school, and went at home to board
 With my gossip,¹ dwelling in oure town: ¹godmother
 God have her soul, her name was Alisoun.
 She knew my heart, and all my privity,
 Bet than our parish priest, so may I the.¹ ¹thrive
 To her betrayed I my counsel all;
 For had my husband pissed on a wall,
 Or done a thing that should have cost his life,
 To her, and to another worthy wife,
 And to my niece, which that I loved well,
 I would have told his counsel every deal.¹ ¹jot
 And so I did full often, God it wot,
 That made his face full often red and hot
 For very shame, and blam'd himself, for he
 Had told to me so great a privity.¹ ¹secret
 And so befell that ones in a Lent
 (So oftentimes I to my gossip went,
 For ever yet I loved to be gay,
 And for to walk in March, April, and May
 From house to house, to heare sundry tales),
 That Jenkin clerk, and my gossip, Dame Ales,
 And I myself, into the fieldes went.

Mine husband was at London all that Lent;
 I had the better leisure for to play,
 And for to see, and eke for to be sey¹ ¹seen
 Of lusty folk; what wist I where my grace¹ ¹favour
 Was shapen for to be, or in what place? ¹appointed
 Therefore made I my visitations
 To vigilies,¹ and to processions, ¹festival-eves
 To preachings eke, and to these pilgrimages,
 To plays of miracles, and marriages,
 And weared upon me gay scarlet gites.¹ ¹gowns
 These wormes, nor these mothes, nor these mites
 On my apparel frett¹ them never a deal² ¹fed ²whit
 And know'st thou why? for they were used¹ well. ¹worn
 Now will I telle forth what happen'd me:
 I say, that in the fieldes walked we,
 Till truely we had such dalliance,
 This clerk and I, that of my purveyance¹ ¹foresight
 I spake to him, and told him how that he,
 If I were widow, shoulde wedde me.
 For certainly, I say for no bobance,¹ ¹boasting
 Yet was I never without purveyance¹ ¹foresight
 Of marriage, nor of other thinges eke:
 I hold a mouse's wit not worth a leek,
 That hath but one hole for to starte¹ to, ¹escape
 And if that faile, then is all y-do.¹ ¹done
 [I bare him on hand¹ he had enchanted me ¹falsely assured him¹
 (My dame taughte me that subtilty);
 And eke I said, I mette¹ of him all night, ¹dreamed
 He would have slain me, as I lay upright,
 And all my bed was full of very blood;
 But yet I hop'd that he should do me good;
 For blood betoken'd gold, as me was taught.
 And all was false, I dream'd of him right naught,
 But as I follow'd aye my dame's lore,
 As well of that as of other things more.]
 But now, sir, let me see, what shall I sayn?
 Aha! by God, I have my tale again.
 When that my fourthe husband was on bier,
 I wept algate¹ and made a sorry cheer,² ¹always ²countenance
 As wives must, for it is the usage;
 And with my kerchief covered my visage;
 But, for I was provided with a make,¹ ¹mate
 I wept but little, that I undertake¹ ¹promise

To church was mine husband borne a-morrow
With neighbours that for him made sorrow,
And Jenkin, our clerk, was one of those:¹ ¹those
As help me God, when that I saw him go
After the bier, methought he had a pair
Of legges and of feet so clean and fair,
That all my heart I gave unto his hold.¹ ¹keeping
He was, I trow, a twenty winter old,
And I was forty, if I shall say sooth,
But yet I had always a colt's tooth.
Gat-toothed¹ I was, and that became me well, ¹see note
I had the print of Sainte Venus' seal.
[As help me God, I was a lusty one,
And fair, and rich, and young, and ¹well begone:¹ ¹in a good way¹
For certes I am all venerian¹ ¹under the influence of Venus
In feeling, and my heart is martian;¹ ¹under the influence of Mars
Venus me gave my lust and liquorishness,
And Mars gave me my sturdy hardiness.]
Mine ascendant was Taure,¹ and Mars therein: ¹Taurus
Alas, alas, that ever love was sin!
I follow'd aye mine inclination
By virtue of my constellation:
That made me that I coulde not withdraw
My chamber of Venus from a good fellow.
[Yet have I Marte's mark upon my face,
And also in another privy place.
For God so wisly¹ be my salvation, ¹certainly
I loved never by discretion,
But ever follow'd mine own appetite,
All¹ were he short, or long, or black, or white, ¹whether
I took no keep,¹ so that he liked me, ¹heed
How poor he was, neither of what degree.]
What should I say? but that at the month's end
This jolly clerk Jenkin, that was so hend,¹ ¹courteous
Had wedded me with great solemnity,
And to him gave I all the land and fee
That ever was me given therebefore:
But afterward repented me full sore.
He woulde suffer nothing of my list.¹ ¹pleasure
By God, he smote me ones with his fist,
For that I rent out of his book a leaf,
That of the stroke mine eare wax'd all deaf.
Stubborn I was, as is a lioness,
And of my tongue a very jangleress,¹ ¹prater

And walk I would, as I had done befor,
From house to house, although he had it sworn:¹ ¹had sworn to
For which he oftentimes woulde preach prevent it
And me of olde Roman gestes¹ teach ¹stories
How that Sulpitius Gallus left his wife
And her forsook for term of all his
For nought but open-headed¹ he her say² ¹bare-headed ²saw
Looking out at his door upon a day.
Another Roman told he me by name,
That, for his wife was at a summer game
Without his knowing, he forsook her eke.
And then would he upon his Bible seek
That ilke¹ proverb of Ecclesiast, ¹same
Where he commandeth, and forbiddeth fast,
Man shall not suffer his wife go roll about.
Then would he say right thus withoute doubt:
“Whoso that buildeth his house all of sallows,¹ ¹willows
And pricketh his blind horse over the fallows,
And suff'reth his wife to ¹go seeke hallows,¹ ¹make pilgrimages¹
Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows.”
But all for nought; I ¹sette not a haw¹ ¹cared nothing for¹
Of his proverbs, nor of his olde saw;
Nor would I not of him corrected be.
I hate them that my vices telle me,
And so do more of us (God wot) than I.
This made him wood¹ with me all utterly; ¹furious
I woulde not forbear¹ him in no case. ¹endure
Now will I say you sooth, by Saint Thomas,
Why that I rent out of his book a leaf,
For which he smote me, so that I was deaf.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his disport he would it read alway;
He call'd it Valerie, and Theophrast,
And with that book he laugh'd alway full fast.
And eke there was a clerk sometime at Rome,
A cardinal, that highte Saint Jerome,
That made a book against Jovinian,
Which book was there; and eke Tertullian,
Chrysippus, Trotula, and Heloise,
That was an abbess not far from Paris;
And eke the Parables¹ of Solomon, ¹Proverbs
Ovide's Art, and bourdes¹ many one; ¹jests
And alle these were bound in one volume.
And every night and day was his custume

(When he had leisure and vacation
From other worldly occupation)
To readen in this book of wicked wives.
He knew of them more legends and more lives
Than be of goodde wives in the Bible.
For, trust me well, it is an impossible
That any clerk will speake good of wives,
(¹But if¹ it be of holy saintes' lives) ¹unless
Nor of none other woman never the mo'.
Who painted the lion, tell it me, who?
By God, if women haddde written stories,
As clerkes have within their oratories,
They would have writ of men more wickedness
Than all the mark of Adam may redress
The children of Mercury and of Venus,
Be in their working full contrarious.
Mercury loveth wisdom and science,
And Venus loveth riot and dispen¹. ¹extravagance
And for their diverse disposition,
Each falls in other's exaltation.
As thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate
In Pisces, where Venus is exaltate,
And Venus falls where Mercury is raised.
Therefore no woman by no clerk is praised.
The clerk, when he is old, and may not do
Of Venus' works not worth his olde shoe,
Then sits he down, and writes in his dotage,
That women cannot keep their marriage.
But now to purpose, why I tolde thee
That I was beaten for a book, pardie.

Upon a night Jenkin, that was our sire, ¹ ¹goodman
Read on his book, as he sat by the fire,
Of Eva first, that for her wickedness
Was all mankind brought into wretchedness,
For which that Jesus Christ himself was slain,
That bought us with his hearte-blood again.
Lo here express of women may ye find
That woman was the loss of all mankind.
Then read he me how Samson lost his hairs
Sleeping, his leman cut them with her shears,
Through whiche treason lost he both his eyen.
Then read he me, if that I shall not lien,
Of Hercules, and of his Dejanire,
That caused him to set himself on fire.

Nothing forgot he of the care and woe
That Socrates had with his wives two;
How Xantippe cast piss upon his head.
This silly man sat still, as he were dead,
He wip'd his head, and no more durst he sayn,
But, "Ere the thunder stint¹ there cometh rain." ¹ceases
Of Phasiphae, that was queen of Crete,
For shrewedness¹ he thought the tale sweet. ¹wickedness
Fy, speak no more, it is a grisly thing,
Of her horrible lust and her liking.
Of Clytemnestra, for her lechery
That falsely made her husband for to die,
He read it with full good devotion.
He told me eke, for what occasion
Amphiorax at Thebes lost his life:
My husband had a legend of his wife
Eryphile, that for an ouche¹ of gold ¹clasp, collar
Had privily unto the Greekes told,
Where that her husband hid him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sorry grace.
Of Luna told he me, and of Lucie;
They bothe made their husbands for to die,
That one for love, that other was for hate.
Luna her husband on an ev'ning late
Empoison'd had, for that she was his foe:
Lucia liquorish lov'd her husband so,
That, for he should always upon her think,
She gave him such a manner¹ love-drink, ¹sort of
That he was dead before it were the morrow:
And thus algates¹ husbands hadde sorrow. ¹always
Then told he me how one Latumeus
Complained to his fellow Arius
That in his garden grewed such a tree,
On which he said how that his wives three
Hanged themselves for heart dispiteous.
"O leve¹ brother," quoth this Arius, ¹dear
"Give me a plant of thilke¹ blessed tree, ¹that
And in my garden planted shall it be."
Of later date of wives hath he read,
That some have slain their husbands in their bed,
And let their ¹lechour dight them¹ all the night, ¹lover ride them¹
While that the corpse lay on the floor upright:
And some have driven nails into their brain,
While that they slept, and thus they have them slain:

Some have them given poison in their drink:
He spake more harm than hearte may bethink.
And therewithal he knew of more proverbs,
Than in this world there groweth grass or herbs.
“Better (quoth he) thine habitation
Be with a lion, or a foul dragon,
Than with a woman using for to chide.
Better (quoth he) high in the roof abide,
Than with an angry woman in the house,
They be so wicked and contrarious:
They hate that their husbands loven aye.”
He said, “A woman cast her shame away
When she cast off her smock;” and farthermo’,
“A fair woman, but¹ she be chaste also, ¹except
Is like a gold ring in a sowe’s nose.
Who coulde ween,¹ or who coulde suppose ¹think
The woe that in mine heart was, and the pine?¹ ¹pain
And when I saw that he would never fine¹ ¹finish
To readen on this cursed book all night,
All suddenly three leaves have I plight¹ ¹plucked
Out of his book, right as he read, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheek,
That in our fire he backward fell adown.
And he up start, as doth a wood¹ lion, ¹furious
And with his fist he smote me on the head,
That on the floor I lay as I were dead.
And when he saw how still that there I lay,
He was aghast, and would have fled away,
Till at the last out of my swoon I braid,¹ ¹woke
“Oh, hast thou slain me, thou false thief?” I said
“And for my land thus hast thou murder’d me?
Ere I be dead, yet will I kisse thee.”
And near he came, and kneeled fair adown,
And saide”, “Deare sister Alisoun,
As help me God, I shall thee never smite:
That I have done it is thyself to wite,¹ ¹blame
Forgive it me, and that I thee beseek.”¹ ¹beseech
And yet eftsoons¹ I hit him on the cheek, ¹immediately; again
And saidde, “Thief, thus much am I awreak.¹ ¹avenged
Now will I die, I may no longer speak.”

But at the last, with mucche care and woe
We fell accorded¹ by ourselves two: ¹agreed
He gave me all the bridle in mine hand

To have the governance of house and land,
And of his tongue, and of his hand also.
I made him burn his book anon right tho.¹ ¹then
And when that I had gotten unto me
By mast'ry all the sovereignty,
And that he said, "Mine owen true wife,
Do ¹as thee list,¹ the term of all thy life, ¹as pleases thee¹
Keep thine honour, and eke keep mine estate;
After that day we never had debate.
God help me so, I was to him as kind
As any wife from Denmark unto Ind,
And also true, and so was he to me:
I pray to God that sits in majesty
So bless his soule, for his mercy dear.
Now will I say my tale, if ye will hear. —

The Friar laugh'd when he had heard all this:
"Now, Dame," quoth he, "so have I joy and bliss,
This is a long preamble of a tale."
And when the Sompnour heard the Friar gale,¹ ¹speak
"Lo," quoth this Sompnour, "Godde's armes two,
A friar will intermete¹ him evermo': ¹interpose
Lo, goode men, a fly and eke a frere
Will fall in ev'ry dish and eke mattere.
What speak'st thou of perambulation?¹ ¹preamble
What? amble or trot; or peace, or go sit down:
Thou lettest¹ our disport in this mattere." ¹hinderesst
"Yea, wilt thou so, Sir Sompnour?" quoth the Frere;
"Now by my faith I shall, ere that I go,
Tell of a Sompnour such a tale or two,
That all the folk shall laughen in this place."
"Now do, else, Friar, I beshrew¹ thy face," ¹curse
Quoth this Sompnour; "and I beshrewe me,
But if¹ I telle tales two or three ¹unless
Of friars, ere I come to Sittingbourne,
That I shall make thine hearte for to mourn:
For well I wot thy patience is gone."
Our Hoste cried, "Peace, and that anon;"
And saide, "Let the woman tell her tale.
Ye fare¹ as folk that drunken be of ale. ¹behave
Do, Dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best."
"All ready, sir," quoth she, "right as you lest,¹ ¹please
If I have licence of this worthy Frere."
"Yes, Dame," quoth he, "tell forth, and I will hear."

THE TALE.

In olde dayes of the king Arthour,
Of which that Britons speake great honour,
All was this land full fill'd of faerie;¹ ¹fairies
The Elf-queen, with her jolly company,
Danced full oft in many a green mead
This was the old opinion, as I read;
I speak of many hundred years ago;
But now can no man see none elves mo',
For now the great charity and prayeres
Of limitours,¹ and other holy freres, ¹begging friars
That search every land and ev'ry stream
As thick as motes in the sunne-beam,
Blessing halls, chambers, kitchenes, and bowers,
Cities and burghes, castles high and towers,
Thorpes¹ and barnes, shepens² and dairies, ¹villages ²stables
This makes that there be now no faeries:
For ¹there as¹ went to walke was an elf, ¹where¹
There walketh now the limitour himself,
In undermeles¹ and in morrowings², ¹evenings ²mornings
And saith his matins and his holy things,
As he goes in his limitatioun.¹ ¹begging district
Women may now go safely up and down,
In every bush, and under every tree;
There is none other incubus but he;
And he will do to them no dishonour.

And so befell it, that this king Arthour
Had in his house a lusty bachelor,
That on a day came riding from river:
And happen'd, that, alone as she was born,
He saw a maiden walking him beforne,
Of which maiden anon, maugre¹ her head, ¹in spite of
By very force he reft her maidenhead:
For which oppression was such clamour,
And such pursuit unto the king Arthour,
That damned¹ was this knight for to be dead ¹condemned
By course of law, and should have lost his head;
(Paraventure such was the statute tho),¹ ¹then
But that the queen and other ladies mo'
So long they prayed the king of his grace,
Till he his life him granted in the place,
And gave him to the queen, all at her will

To choose whether she would him save or spill¹ ¹destroy
The queen thanked the king with all her might;
And, after this, thus spake she to the knight,
When that she saw her time upon a day.
“Thou standest yet,” quoth she, “in such array,¹ ¹a position
That of thy life yet hast thou no surety;
I grant thee life, if thou canst tell to me
What thing is it that women most desiren:
Beware, and keep thy neck-bone from the iron¹ ¹executioner’s axe
And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
Yet will I give thee leave for to gon
A twelvemonth and a day, to seek and lear¹ ¹learn
An answer suffisant¹ in this mattere. ¹satisfactory
And surety will I have, ere that thou pace,¹ ¹go
Thy body for to yelden in this place.”
Woe was the knight, and sorrowfully siked;¹ ¹sighed
But what? he might not do all as him liked.
And at the last he chose him for to wend,¹ ¹depart
And come again, right at the yeare’s end,
With such answer as God would him purvey:¹ ¹provide
And took his leave, and wended forth his way.

He sought in ev’ry house and ev’ry place,
Where as he hoped for to finde grace,
To learne what thing women love the most:
But he could not arrive in any coast,
Where as he mighte find in this mattere
Two creatures ¹according in fere.¹ ¹agreeing together¹
Some said that women loved best richness,
Some said honour, and some said jolliness,
Some rich array, and some said lust¹ a-bed, ¹pleasure
And oft time to be widow and be wed.
Some said, that we are in our heart most eased
When that we are y-flatter’d and y-praised.
He ¹went full nigh the sooth,¹ I will not lie; ¹came very near
A man shall win us best with flattery; the truth¹
And with attendance, and with business
Be we y-limed,¹ bothe more and less. ¹caught with bird-lime
And some men said that we do love the best
For to be free, and do ¹right as us lest,¹ ¹whatever we please¹
And that no man reprove us of our vice,
But say that we are wise, and nothing nice,¹ ¹foolish
For truly there is none among us all,

If any wight will ¹claw us on the gall,¹ ¹see note ¹
 That will not kick, for that he saith us sooth:
 Assay,¹ and he shall find it, that so do'th. ¹try
 For be we never so vicious within,
 We will be held both wise and clean of sin.
 And some men said, that great delight have we
 For to be held stable and eke secre,¹ ¹discreet
 And in one purpose steadfastly to dwell,
 And not bewray¹ a thing that men us tell. ¹give away
 But that tale is not worth a rake-stele.¹ ¹rake-handle
 Pardie, we women canne nothing hele,¹ ¹hide
 Witness on Midas; will ye hear the tale?
 Ovid, amonges other thinges smale¹ ¹small
 Saith, Midas had, under his longe hairs,
 Growing upon his head two ass's ears;
 The whiche vice he hid, as best he might,
 Full subtly from every man's sight,
 That, save his wife, there knew of it no mo';
 He lov'd her most, and trusted her also;
 He prayed her, that to no creature
 She woulde tellen of his disfigure.
 She swore him, nay, for all the world to win,
 She would not do that villainy or sin,
 To make her husband have so foul a name:
 She would not tell it for her owen shame.
 But natheless her thoughte that she died,
 That she so longe should a counsel hide;
 Her thought it swell'd so sore about her heart
 That needes must some word from her astart
 And, since she durst not tell it unto man
 Down to a marish fast thereby she ran,
 Till she came there, her heart was all afire:
 And, as a bittern bumbles¹ in the mire, ¹makes a humming noise
 She laid her mouth unto the water down
 "Bewray me not, thou water, with thy soun"
 Quoth she, "to thee I tell it, and no mo',
 Mine husband hath long ass's eares two!
 Now is mine heart all whole; now is it out;
 I might no longer keep it, out of doubt."
 Here may ye see, though we a time abide,
 Yet out it must, we can no counsel hide.
 The remnant of the tale, if ye will hear,
 Read in Ovid, and there ye may it lear.¹ ¹learn

This knight, of whom my tale is specially,
When that he saw he might not come thereby,
That is to say, what women love the most,
Within his breast full sorrowful was his ghost.¹ ¹spirit
But home he went, for he might not sojourn,
The day was come, that homeward he must turn.
And in his way it happen'd him to ride,
In all his care,¹ under a forest side, ¹trouble, anxiety
Where as he saw upon a dance go
Of ladies four-and-twenty, and yet mo',
Toward this ilke¹ dance he drew full yern,² ¹same ²eagerly
The hope that he some wisdom there should learn;
But certainly, ere he came fully there,
Y-vanish'd was this dance, he knew not where;
No creature saw he that bare life,
Save on the green he sitting saw a wife,
A fouler wight there may no man devise.¹ ¹imagine, tell
Against¹ this knight this old wife gan to rise, ¹to meet
And said, "Sir Knight, hereforth¹ lieth no way. ¹from here
Tell me what ye are seeking, by your fay.
Paraventure it may the better be:
These olde folk know mucche thing." quoth she.
My leve¹ mother," quoth this knight, "certain, ¹dear
I am but dead, but if¹ that I can sayn ¹unless
What thing it is that women most desire:
Could ye me wiss,¹ I would well ¹quite your hire."¹ ¹instruct
"Plight me thy troth here in mine hand," quoth she, ¹reward you¹
"The nexte thing that I require of thee
Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might,
And I will tell it thee ere it be night."
"Have here my trothe," quoth the knight; "I grant."
"Thenne," quoth she, "I dare me well avaunt,¹ ¹boast, affirm
Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,
Upon my life the queen will say as I:
Let see, which is the proudest of them all,
That wears either a kerchief or a caul,
That dare say nay to that I shall you teach.
Let us go forth withoute longer speech
Then ¹rownd she a pistel¹ in his ear, ¹she whispered a secret¹
And bade him to be glad, and have no fear.

When they were come unto the court, this knight
Said, he had held his day, as he had hight,¹ ¹promised
And ready was his answer, as he said.

Full many a noble wife, and many a maid,
And many a widow, for that they be wise, —
The queen herself sitting as a justice, —
Assembled be, his answer for to hear,
And afterward this knight was bid appear.
To every wight commanded was silence,
And that the knight should tell in audience,
What thing that worldly women love the best.
This knight he stood not still, as doth a beast,
But to this question anon answer'd
With manly voice, that all the court it heard,
“My liege lady, generally,” quoth he,
“Women desire to have the sovereignty
As well over their husband as their love
And for to be in mast’ry him above.
This is your most desire, though ye me kill,
Do as you list, I am here at your will.”
In all the court there was no wife nor maid
Nor widow, that contraried what he said,
But said, he worthy was to have his life.
And with that word up start that olde wife
Which that the knight saw sitting on the green.

“Mercy,” quoth she, “my sovereign lady queen,
Ere that your court departe, do me right.
I taughte this answer unto this knight,
For which he plighted me his trothe there,
The firste thing I would of him requere,
He would it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I thee, Sir Knight,”
Quoth she, “that thou me take unto thy wife,
For well thou know’st that I have kept¹ thy life. ¹preserved
If I say false, say nay, upon thy fay.”¹ ¹faith
This knight answer’d, “Alas, and well-away!
I know right well that such was my behest.¹ ¹promise
For Godde’s love choose a new request
Take all my good, and let my body go.”
“Nay, then,” quoth she, “I shrew¹ us bothe two, ¹curse
For though that I be old, and foul, and poor,
I n’ould¹ for all the metal nor the ore, ¹would not
That under earth is grave,¹ or lies above ¹buried
But if thy wife I were and eke thy love.”
“My love?” quoth he, “nay, my damnation,
Alas! that any of my nation
Should ever so foul disparaged be.

But all for nought; the end is this, that he
Constrained was, that needs he muste wed,
And take this olde wife, and go to bed.

Now woulde some men say paraventure
That for my negligence I do no cure¹ ¹take no pains
To tell you all the joy and all th' array
That at the feast was made that ilke¹ day. ¹same
To which thing shortly answeren I shall:
I say there was no joy nor feast at all,
There was but heaviness and mucche sorrow:
For privily he wed her on the morrow;
And all day after hid him as an owl,
So woe was him, his wife look'd so foul
Great was the woe the knight had in his thought
When he was with his wife to bed y-brought;
He wallow'd, and he turned to and fro.
This olde wife lay smiling evermo',
And said, "Dear husband, benedicite,
Fares every knight thus with his wife as ye?
Is this the law of king Arthoures house?
Is every knight of his thus dangerous?¹ ¹fastidious, niggardly
I am your owen love, and eke your wife
I am she, which that saved hath your life
And certes yet did I you ne'er unright.
Why fare ye thus with me this firste night?
Ye fare like a man had lost his wit.
What is my guilt? for God's love tell me it,
And it shall be amended, if I may."
"Amended!" quoth this knight; "alas, nay, nay,
It will not be amended, never mo';
Thou art so loathly, and so old also,
And thereto¹ comest of so low a kind, ¹in addition
That little wonder though I wallow and wind;¹ ¹writhe, turn about
So woulde God, mine hearte woulde brest!"¹ ¹burst
"Is this," quoth she, "the cause of your unrest?"
"Yea, certainly," quoth he; "no wonder is."
"Now, Sir," quoth she, "I could amend all this,
If that me list, ere it were dayes three,
¹So well ye mighte bear you unto me.¹ ¹if you could conduct
But, for ye spoken of such gentleness yourself well
As is descended out of old richness, towards me¹
That therefore shalle ye be gentlemen;
Such arrogancy is ¹not worth a hen.¹ ¹worth nothing

Look who that is most virtuous alway,
¹Prive and apert,¹ and most intendeth aye ¹in private and public¹
 To do the gentle deedes that he can;
 And take him for the greatest gentleman.
 Christ will,¹ we claim of him our gentleness, ¹wills, requires
 Not of our elders¹ for their old richness. ¹ancestors
 For though they gave us all their heritage,
 For which we claim to be of high parage,¹ ¹birth, descent
 Yet may they not bequeathe, for no thing,
 To none of us, their virtuous living
 That made them gentlemen called to be,
 And bade us follow them in such degree.
 Well can the wise poet of Florence,
 That highte Dante, speak of this sentence:¹ ¹sentiment
 Lo, in such manner¹ rhyme is Dante's tale. ¹kind of
 'Full seld'¹ upriseth by his branches smale ¹seldom
 Prowess of man, for God of his goodness
 Wills that we claim of him our gentleness;
 For of our elders may we nothing claim
 But temp'ral things that man may hurt and maim.
 Eke every wight knows this as well as I,
 If gentleness were planted naturally
 Unto a certain lineage down the line,
 Prive and apert, then would they never fine¹ ¹cease
 To do of gentleness the fair office
 Then might they do no villainy nor vice.
 Take fire, and bear it to the darkest house
 Betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus,
 And let men shut the doores, and go thenne,¹ ¹thence
 Yet will the fire as fair and lighte brenne¹ ¹burn
 As twenty thousand men might it behold;
¹Its office natural aye will it hold,¹ ¹it will perform its
 On peril of my life, till that it die. natural duty¹
 Here may ye see well how that gentry¹ ¹gentility, nobility
 Is not annexed to possession,
 Since folk do not their operation
 Alway, as doth the fire, lo, ¹in its kind¹ ¹from its very nature¹
 For, God it wot, men may full often find
 A lorde's son do shame and villainy.
 And he that will have price¹ of his gent'ry, ¹esteem, honour
 For¹ he was boren of a gentle house, ¹because
 And had his elders noble and virtuous,
 And will himselfe do no gentle deedes,

Nor follow his gentle ancestry, that dead is,
He is not gentle, be he duke or earl;
For villain sinful deedes make a churl.
For gentleness is but the renomee¹ ¹renown
Of thine ancestors, for their high bounte,¹ ¹goodness, worth
Which is a strange thing to thy person:
Thy gentleness cometh from God alone.
Then comes our very¹ gentleness of grace; ¹true
It was no thing bequeath'd us with our place.
Think how noble, as saith Valerius,
Was thilke¹ Tullius Hostilius, ¹that
That out of povert' rose to high
Read in Senec, and read eke in Boece,
There shall ye see express, that it no drede¹ is, ¹doubt
That he is gentle that doth gentle deedes.
And therefore, leve¹ husband, I conclude, ¹dear
Albeit that mine ancestors were rude,
Yet may the highe God, — and so hope I, —
Grant me His grace to live virtuously:
Then am I gentle when that I begin
To live virtuously, and waive¹ sin. ¹forsake

“And whereas ye of povert' me reprove,¹ ¹reproach
The highe God, on whom that we believe,
In wilful povert' chose to lead his life:
And certes, every man, maiden, or wife
May understand that Jesus, heaven's king,
Ne would not choose a virtuous living.
¹Glad povert'¹ is an honest thing, certain; ¹poverty cheerfully
This will Senec and other clerkes sayn endured¹
Whoso that ¹holds him paid of¹ his povert', ¹is satisfied with¹
I hold him rich though he hath not a shirt.
He that coveteth is a poore wight
For he would have what is not in his might
But he that nought hath, nor coveteth to have,
Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.¹ ¹slave, abject wretch
¹Very povert' is sinne,¹ properly. ¹the only true poverty is sin¹
Juvenal saith of povert' merrily:
The poore man, when he goes by the way
Before the thieves he may sing and play
Povert' is hateful good, and, as I guess,
A full great ¹bringer out of business;¹ ¹deliver from trouble¹
A great amender eke of sapience
To him that taketh it in patience.

Povert' is this, although it seem elenge¹ ¹strange
 Possession that no wight will challenge
 Povert' full often, when a man is low,
 Makes him his God and eke himself to know
 Povert' a spectacle¹ is, as thinketh me ¹a pair of spectacles
 Through which he may his very¹ friendes see. ¹true
 And, therefore, Sir, since that I you not grieve,
 Of my povert' no more me reprove.¹ ¹reproach
 "Now, Sir, of elde¹ ye reprove me: ¹age
 And certes, Sir, though none authority¹ ¹text, dictum
 Were in no book, ye gentles of honour
 Say, that men should an olde wight honour,
 And call him father, for your gentleness;
 And authors shall I finden, as I guess.
 Now there ye say that I am foul and old,
 Then dread ye not to be a cokewold.¹ ¹cuckold
 For filth, and elde, all so may I the,¹ ¹thrive
 Be greate wardens upon chastity.
 But nathless, since I know your delight,
 I shall fulfil your wordly appetite.
 Choose now," quoth she, "one of these things tway,
 To have me foul and old till that I dey,¹ ¹die
 And be to you a true humble wife,
 And never you displease in all my life:
 Or elles will ye have me young and fair,
 And take your aventure of the repair¹ ¹resort
 That shall be to your house because of me, —
 Or in some other place, it may well be?
 Now choose yourselfe whether that you liketh.

This knight adviseth¹ him and sore he siketh,² ¹considered ²sighed
 But at the last he said in this mannere;
 "My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
 I put me in your wise governance,
 Choose for yourself which may be most pleasance
 And most honour to you and me also;
 I ¹do no force¹ the whether of the two: ¹care not
 For as you liketh, it sufficeth me."
 "Then have I got the mastery," quoth she,
 "Since I may choose and govern as me lest."¹ ¹pleases
 "Yea, certes wife," quoth he, "I hold it best."
 "Kiss me," quoth she, "we are no longer wroth,¹ ¹at variance
 For by my troth I will be to you both;
 This is to say, yea, bothe fair and good.

I pray to God that I may ¹sterve wood, ¹ ¹die mad¹
But¹ I to you be all so good and true, ¹unless
As ever was wife since the world was new;
And but¹ I be to-morrow as fair to seen, ¹unless
As any lady, emperess or queen,
That is betwixt the East and eke the West
Do with my life and death right as you lest.¹ ¹please
Cast up the curtain, and look how it is.”

And when the knight saw verily all this,
That she so fair was, and so young thereto,
For joy he hent¹ her in his armes two: ¹took
His hearte bathed in a bath of bliss,
A thousand times ¹on row¹ he gan her kiss: ¹in succession¹
And she obeyed him in every thing
That mighte do him pleasance or liking.
And thus they live unto their lives' end
In perfect joy; and Jesus Christ us send
Husbandes meek and young, and fresh in bed,
And grace to overlive them that we wed.
And eke I pray Jesus to short their lives,
That will not be governed by their wives.
And old and angry niggards of dispence,¹ ¹expense
God send them soon a very pestilence!

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The Friar's Tale

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

THE PROLOGUE.

This worthy limitour, this noble Frere,
He made always a manner louring cheer¹ ¹countenance
Upon the Sompnour; but for honesty¹ ¹courtesy
No villain word as yet to him spake he:
But at the last he said unto the Wife:
“Dame,” quoth he, “God give you right good life,
Ye have here touched, all so may I the,¹ ¹thrive
In school matter a greate difficulty.
Ye have said mucche thing right well, I say;
But, Dame, here as we ride by the way,
Us needeth not but for to speak of game,
And leave authorities, in Godde’s name,
To preaching, and to school eke of clergy.
But if it like unto this company,
I will you of a Sompnour tell a game;
Pardie, ye may well knowe by the name,
That of a Sompnour may no good be said;
I pray that none of you be ¹evil paid;¹ ¹dissatisfied¹
A Sompnour is a runner up and down
With mandements¹ for fornicatioun, ¹mandates, summonses¹
And is y-beat at every towne’s end.”
Then spake our Host; “Ah, sir, ye should be hend¹ ¹civil, gentle
And courteous, as a man of your estate;
In company we will have no debate:
Tell us your tale, and let the Sompnour be.”
“Nay,” quoth the Sompnour, “let him say by me
What so him list; when it comes to my lot,
By God, I shall him quiten¹ every groat! ¹pay him off
I shall him telle what a great honour
It is to be a flattering limitour
And his office I shall him tell y-wis”.
Our Host answered, “Peace, no more of this.”
And afterward he said unto the frere,
“Tell forth your tale, mine owen master dear.”

THE TALE.

Whilom¹ there was dwelling in my country ¹once on a time
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,
That boldely did execution,
In punishing of fornication,
Of witchcraft, and eke of bawdery,
Of defamation, and adultery,
Of churche-reeves,¹ and of testaments, ¹churchwardens
Of contracts, and of lack of sacraments,
And eke of many another manner¹ crime, ¹sort of
Which needeth not rehearse at this time,
Of usury, and simony also;
But, certes, lechours did he greatest woe;
They shoulde singen, if that they were hent;¹ ¹caught
And smale tithers were foul y-shent,¹ ¹troubled, put to shame
If any person would on them complain;
There might astert them no pecunial pain.
For smalle tithes, and small offering,
He made the people piteously to sing;
For ere the bishop caught them with his crook,
They weren in the archdeacon's book;
Then had he, through his jurisdiction,
Power to do on them correction.

He had a Sompnour ready to his hand,
A slier boy was none in Engleland;
For subtley he had his espaille,¹ ¹espionage
That taught him well where it might aught avail.
He coulde spare of lechours one or two,
To teache him to four and twenty mo'.
For, — though this Sompnour wood¹ be as a hare, — ¹furious, mad
To tell his harlotry I will not spare,
For we be out of their correction,
They have of us no jurisdiction,
Ne never shall have, term of all their lives.

“Peter; so be the women of the stives,”¹ ¹stews
Quoth this Sompnour, “y-put out of our cure.”¹ ¹care

“Peace, with mischance and with misaventure,”
Our Hoste said, “and let him tell his tale.
Now telle forth, and let the Sompnour gale,¹ ¹whistle; bawl
Nor spare not, mine owen master dear.”

This false thief, the Sompnour (quoth the Frere),
 Had always bawdes ready to his hand,
 As any hawk to lure in Engleland,
 That told him all the secrets that they knew, —
 For their acquaintance was not come of new;
 They were his approvers¹ privily. ¹informers
 He took himself at great profit thereby:
 His master knew not always what he wan.¹ ¹won
 Withoute mandement, a lewed¹ man ¹ignorant
 He could summon, on pain of Christe's curse,
 And they were inly glad to fill his purse,
 And make him greate feastes at the nale.¹ ¹alehouse
 And right as Judas hadde purses smale,¹ ¹small
 And was a thief, right such a thief was he,
 His master had but half ¹his duety.¹ ¹what was owing him¹
 He was (if I shall give him his laud)
 A thief, and eke a Sompnour, and a bawd.
 And he had wenches at his retinue,
 That whether that Sir Robert or Sir Hugh,
 Or Jack, or Ralph, or whoso that it were
 That lay by them, they told it in his ear.
 Thus were the wench and he of one assent;
 And he would fetch a feigned mandement,
 And to the chapter summon them both two,
 And pill¹ the man, and let the wenche go. ¹plunder, pluck
 Then would he say, "Friend, I shall for thy sake
 Do strike thee out of oure letters blake;¹ ¹black
 Thee thar¹ no more as in this case travail; ¹need
 I am thy friend where I may thee avail."
 Certain he knew of bribers many mo'
 Than possible is to tell in yeare's two:
 For in this world is no dog for the bow,
 That can a hurt deer from a whole know,
 Bet¹ than this Sompnour knew a sly lechour, ¹better
 Or an adult'rer, or a paramour:
 And, for that was the fruit of all his rent,
 Therefore on it he set all his intent.

And so befell, that once upon a day.
 This Sompnour, waiting ever on his prey,
 Rode forth to summon a widow, an old ribibe,
 Feigning a cause, for he would have a bribe.
 And happen'd that he saw before him ride
 A gay yeoman under a forest side:

A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen,
He had upon a courtesy¹ of green, ¹short doublet
A hat upon his head with fringes blake.¹ ¹black
“Sir,” quoth this Sompnour, “hail, and well o’ertake.”
“Welcome,” quoth he, “and every good fellow;
Whither ridest thou under this green shaw?”¹ shade
Saide this yeoman; “wilt thou far to-day?”
This Sompnour answer’d him, and saide, “Nay.
Here faste by,” quoth he, “is mine intent
To ride, for to raisen up a rent,
That longeth to my lorde’s duety.”
“Ah! art thou then a bailiff?” “Yea,” quoth he.
He durste not for very filth and shame
Say that he was a Sompnour, for the name.
“De par dieux,” quoth this yeoman, “leve¹ brother, ¹dear
Thou art a bailiff, and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this country.
Of thine acquaintance I will praye thee,
And eke of brotherhood, if that thee list.¹ ¹please
I have gold and silver lying in my chest;
If that thee hap to come into our shire,
All shall be thine, right as thou wilt desire.”
“Grand mercy,”¹ quoth this Sompnour, “by my faith.” ¹great
thanks
Each in the other’s hand his trothe lay’th,
For to be sworne brethren till they dey.¹ ¹die
In dalliance they ride forth and play.

This Sompnour, which that was as full of jangles,¹ ¹chattering
As full of venom be those wariangles,¹ ¹butcher-birds
And ev’r inquiring upon every thing,
“Brother,” quoth he, “where is now your dwelling,
Another day if that I should you seech?”¹ ¹seek, visit
This yeoman him answered in soft speech;
Brother,” quoth he, “far in the North country,
Where as I hope some time I shall thee see
Ere we depart I shall thee so well wiss,¹ ¹inform
That of mine house shalt thou never miss.”
Now, brother,” quoth this Sompnour, “I you pray,
Teach me, while that we ride by the way,
(Since that ye be a bailiff as am I,
Some subtilty, and tell me faithfully
For mine office how that I most may win.
And ¹spare not¹ for conscience or for sin, ¹conceal nothing¹

But, as my brother, tell me how do ye.”
Now by my trothe, brother mine,” said he,
As I shall tell to thee a faithful tale:
My wages be full strait and eke full smale;
My lord is hard to me and dangerous,¹ ¹niggardly
And mine office is full laborious;
And therefore by extortion I live,
Forsooth I take all that men will me give.
Algate¹ by sleighte, or by violence, ¹whether
From year to year I win all my dispençe;
I can no better tell thee faithfully.”
Now certes,” quoth this Sompnour, “so fare¹ I; ¹do
I spare not to take, God it wot,
¹But if¹ it be too heavy or too hot. ¹unless¹
What I may get in counsel privily,
No manner conscience of that have I.
N’ere¹ mine extortion, I might not live, ¹were it not for
For of such japes¹ will I not be shrive.² ¹tricks ²confessed
Stomach nor conscience know I none;
I shrew¹ these shrifte-fathers² every one. ¹curse ²confessors
Well be we met, by God and by St Jame.
But, leve brother, tell me then thy name,”
Quoth this Sompnour. Right in this meane while
This yeoman gan a little for to smile.

“Brother,” quoth he, “wilt thou that I thee tell?
I am a fiend, my dwelling is in hell,
And here I ride about my purchasing,
To know where men will give me any thing.
¹My purchase is th’ effect of all my rent¹ ¹what I can gain is my
Look how thou ridest for the same intent sole revenue¹
To winne good, thou reckest never how,
Right so fare I, for ride will I now
Into the worlde’s ende for a prey.”

“Ah,” quoth this Sompnour, “benedicite! what say y’?
I weened ye were a yeoman truly. ¹thought
Ye have a manne’s shape as well as I
Have ye then a figure determinate
In helle, where ye be in your estate?”¹ ¹at home
“Nay, certainly,” quoth he, there have we none,
But when us liketh we can take us one,
Or elles make you seem¹ that we be shape ¹believe
Sometime like a man, or like an ape;

Or like an angel can I ride or go;
 It is no wondrous thing though it be so,
 A lousy juggler can deceive thee.
 And pardie, yet can I more craft¹ than he.” ¹skill, cunning
 “Why,” quoth the Sompnour, “ride ye then or gon
 In sundry shapes and not always in one?”
 “For we,” quoth he, “will us in such form make.
 As most is able our prey for to take.”
 “What maketh you to have all this labour?”
 “Full many a cause, leve Sir Sompnour,”
 Saide this fiend. “But all thing hath a time;
 The day is short and it is passed prime,
 And yet have I won nothing in this day;
 I will intend¹ to winning, if I may, ¹apply myself
 And not intend our thinges to declare:
 For, brother mine, thy wit is all too bare
 To understand, although I told them thee.
¹But for¹ thou askest why labour we: ¹because¹
 For sometimes we be Godde’s instruments
 And meanes to do his commandements,
 When that him list, upon his creatures,
 In divers acts and in divers figures:
 Withoute him we have no might certain,
 If that him list to stande thereagain.¹ ¹against it
 And sometimes, at our prayer have we leave
 Only the body, not the soul, to grieve:
 Witness on Job, whom that we did full woe,
 And sometimes have we might on both the two, —
 This is to say, on soul and body eke,
 And sometimes be we suffer’d for to seek
 Upon a man and do his soul unrest
 And not his body, and all is for the best,
 When he withstandeth our temptation,
 It is a cause of his salvation,
 Albeit that it was not our intent
 He should be safe, but that we would him hent.¹ ¹catch
 And sometimes be we servants unto man,
 As to the archbishop Saint Dunstan,
 And to th’apostle servant eke was I.”
 “Yet tell me,” quoth this Sompnour, “faithfully,
 Make ye you newe bodies thus alway
 Of th’ elements?” The fiend answered, “Nay:
 Sometimes we feign, and sometimes we arise
 With deade bodies, in full sundry wise,
 And speak as reas’nably, and fair, and well,

As to the Pythoness did Samuel:
 And yet will some men say it was not he.
 I ¹do no force of¹ your divinity. ¹set no value upon¹
 But one thing warn I thee, I will not jape,¹ jest
 Thou wilt ¹algates weet¹ how we be shape: ¹assuredly know¹
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother dear,
 Come, where thee needeth not of me to lear.¹ ¹learn
 For thou shalt by thine own experience
¹Conne in a chair to rede of this sentence,¹ ¹learn to understand
 Better than Virgil, while he was alive, what I have said¹
 Or Dante also. Now let us ride blive,¹ ¹briskly
 For I will holde company with thee,
 Till it be so that thou forsake me.”
 “Nay,” quoth this Sompnour, “that shall ne’er betide.
 I am a yeoman, that is known full wide;
 My trothe will I hold, as in this case;
 For though thou wert the devil Satanas,
 My trothe will I hold to thee, my brother,
 As I have sworn, and each of us to other,
 For to be true brethren in this case,
 And both we go ¹abouten our purchase.¹ ¹seeking what we
 Take thou thy part, what that men will thee give, may pick up¹
 And I shall mine, thus may we bothe live.
 And if that any of us have more than other,
 Let him be true, and part it with his brother.”
 “I grante,” quoth the devil, “by my fay.”
 And with that word they rode forth their way,
 And right at th’ent’ring of the towne’s end,
 To which this Sompnour shope¹ him for to wend,² ¹shaped ²go
 They saw a cart, that charged was with hay,
 Which that a carter drove forth on his way.
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood:
 The carter smote, and cried as he were wood,¹ ¹mad
 “Heit Scot! heit Brok! what, spare ye for the stones?
 The fiend (quoth he) you fetch body and bones,
 As farforthly¹ as ever ye were foal’d, ¹sure
 So muche woe as I have with you tholed.¹ ¹endured
 The devil have all, horses, and cart, and hay.”
 The Sompnour said, “Here shall we have a prey,”
 And near the fiend he drew, ¹as nought ne were,¹ ¹as if nothing
 Full privily, and rowned¹ in his ear: were the matter¹
 “Hearken, my brother, hearken, by thy faith, ¹whispered
 Hearst thou not, how that the carter saith?

Hent¹ it anon, for he hath giv'n it thee, ¹seize
Both hay and cart, and eke his capels¹ three." ¹horses
"Nay," quoth the devil, "God wot, never a deal,¹ whit
It is not his intent, trust thou me well;
Ask him thyself, if thou not trowest¹ me, ¹believest
Or elles stint¹ a while and thou shalt see." ¹stop
The carter thwack'd his horses on the croup,
And they began to drawn and to stoop.
"Heit now," quoth he; "there, Jesus Christ you bless,
And all his handiwork, both more and less!
That was well twight,¹ mine owen liart,² boy, ¹pulled ²grey
I pray God save thy body, and Saint Loy!
Now is my cart out of the slough, pardie."
"Lo, brother," quoth the fiend, "what told I thee?
Here may ye see, mine owen deare brother,
The churl spake one thing, but he thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our voyage;
Here win I nothing upon this carriage."

When that they came somewhat out of the town,
This Sompnour to his brother gan to rown;
"Brother," quoth he, "here wons¹ an old rebeck, ¹dwells
That had almost as lief to lose her neck.
As for to give a penny of her good.
I will have twelvecence, though that she be wood,¹ ¹mad
Or I will summon her to our office;
And yet, God wot, of her know I no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this country,
Winne thy cost, take here example of me."
This Sompnour clapped at the widow's gate:
"Come out," he said, "thou olde very trate;¹ ¹trot
I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee."
"Who clappeth?" said this wife; "benedicite,
God save you, Sir, what is your sweete will?"
"I have," quoth he, "of summons here a bill.
Up¹ pain of cursing, looke that thou be ¹upon
To-morrow before our archdeacon's knee,
To answer to the court of certain things."
"Now Lord," quoth she, "Christ Jesus, king of kings,
So wis1y¹ helpe me, ¹as I not may.¹ ¹surely ¹as I cannot¹
I have been sick, and that full many a day.
I may not go so far," quoth she, "nor ride,
But I be dead, so pricketh it my side.
May I not ask a libel, Sir Sompnour,

And answer there by my procuratour
To such thing as men would appose¹ me?” ¹accuse
“Yes,” quoth this Sompnour, “pay anon, let see,
Twelvepence to me, and I will thee acquit.
I shall no profit have thereby but lit:¹ ¹little
My master hath the profit and not I.
Come off, and let me ride hastily;
Give me twelvepence, I may no longer tarry.”

“Twelvepence!” quoth she; “now lady Sainte Mary
So wisely¹ help me out of care and sin, ¹surely
This wide world though that I should it win,
No have I not twelvepence within my hold.
Ye know full well that I am poor and old;
¹Kithe your almes¹ upon me poor wretch.” ¹show your charity¹
“Nay then,” quoth he, “the foule fiend me fetch,
If I excuse thee, though thou should’st be spilt.”¹ ¹ruined
“Alas!” quoth she, “God wot, I have no guilt.”
“Pay me,” quoth he, “or, by the sweet Saint Anne,
As I will bear away thy newe pan
For debte, which thou owest me of old, —
When that thou madest thine husband cuckold, —
I paid at home for thy correction.”
“Thou liest,” quoth she, “by my salvation;
Never was I ere now, widow or wife,
Summon’d unto your court in all my life;
Nor never I was but of my body true.
Unto the devil rough and black of hue
Give I thy body and my pan also.”
And when the devil heard her curse so
Upon her knees, he said in this mannere;
“Now, Mabily, mine owen mother dear,
Is this your will in earnest that ye say?”
“The devil,” quoth she, “so fetch him ere he dey,¹ ¹die
And pan and all, but¹ he will him repent.” ¹unless
“Nay, olde stoat,¹ that is not mine intent,” ¹polecat
Quoth this Sompnour, “for to repente me
For any thing that I have had of thee;
I would I had thy smock and every cloth.”
“Now, brother,” quoth the devil, “be not wroth;
Thy body and this pan be mine by right.
Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight,
Where thou shalt knowen of our privity¹ ¹secrets
More than a master of divinity.”

And with that word the foule fiend him hent.¹ ¹seized
Body and soul, he with the devil went,
Where as the Sompnours have their heritage;
And God, that maked after his image
Mankinde, save and guide us all and some,
And let this Sompnour a good man become.
Lordings, I could have told you (quoth this Frere),
Had I had leisure for this Sompnour here,
After the text of Christ, and Paul, and John,
And of our other doctors many a one,
Such paines, that your heartes might agrise,¹ ¹be horrified
Albeit so, that no tongue may devise,¹ — ¹relate
Though that I might a thousand winters tell, —
The pains of thilke¹ cursed house of hell ¹that
But for to keep us from that cursed place
Wake we, and pray we Jesus, of his grace,
So keep us from the tempter, Satanas.
Hearken this word, beware as in this case.
The lion sits ¹in his await¹ alway ¹on the watch¹
To slay the innocent, if that he may.
Disposen aye your heartes to withstond
The fiend that would you make thrall and bond;
He may not tempte you over your might,
For Christ will be your champion and your knight;
And pray, that this our Sompnour him repent
Of his misdeeds ere that the fiend him hent.¹ ¹seize

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The Pardoner's Tale

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

Lordings (quoth he), in churche when I preach,
I paine me to have an hautein¹ speech, ¹take pains ²loud
And ring it out, as round as doth a bell,
For I know all by rote that I tell.
My theme is always one, and ever was;
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
First I pronounce whence that I come,
And then my bulles shew I all and some;
Our liege lorde's seal on my patent,
That shew I first, ¹my body to warrent,¹ ¹for the protection
That no man be so hardy, priest nor clerk, of my person¹
Me to disturb of Christe's holy werk.
And after that then tell I forth my tales.
Bulles of popes, and of cardinales,
Of patriarchs, and of bishops I shew,
And in Latin I speak a wordes few,
To savour with my predication,
And for to stir men to devotion
Then show I forth my longe crystal stones,
Y-crammed fall of cloutes¹ and of bones; ¹rags, fragments
Relics they be, as ¹weene they¹ each one. ¹as my listeners think¹
Then have I in latoun¹ a shoulder-bone ¹brass
Which that was of a holy Jewe's sheep.
“Good men,” say I, “take of my wordes keep;¹ ¹heed
If that this bone be wash'd in any well,
If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxe swell,
That any worm hath eat, or worm y-stung,
Take water of that well, and wash his tongue,
And it is whole anon; and farthermore
Of pokes, and of scab, and every sore
Shall every sheep be whole, that of this well
Drinketh a draught; take keep¹ of that I tell. ¹heed

“If that the goodman, that the beastes oweth,¹ ¹owneth
Will every week, ere that the cock him croweth,
Fasting, y-drinken of this well a draught,
As thilke holy Jew our elders taught,
His beastes and his store shall multiply.
And, Sirs, also it healeth jealousy;

For though a man be fall'n in jealous rage,
Let make with this water his pottage,
And never shall he more his wife mistrust,¹ ¹mistrust
¹Though he the sooth of her defaulte wist;¹ ¹though he truly
All had she taken priestes two or three. knew her sin¹
Here is a mittain¹ eke, that ye may see; ¹glove, mitten
He that his hand will put in this mittain,
He shall have multiplying of his grain,
When he hath sowed, be it wheat or oats,
So that he offer pence, or elles groats.
And, men and women, one thing warn I you;
If any wight be in this churche now
That hath done sin horrible, so that he
Dare not for shame of it y-shriven¹ be; ¹confessed
Or any woman, be she young or old,
That hath y-made her husband cokewold,¹ ¹cuckold
Such folk shall have no power nor no grace
To offer to my relics in this place.
And whoso findeth him out of such blame,
He will come up and offer in God's name;
And I assoil¹ him by the authority ¹absolve
Which that by bull y-granted was to me."

By this gaud¹ have I wonne year by year ¹jest, trick
A hundred marks, since I was pardonere.
I stande like a clerk in my pulpit,
And when the lewed¹ people down is set, ¹ignorant
I preache so as ye have heard before,
And telle them a hundred japes¹ more. ¹jests, deceits
Then pain I me to stretche forth my neck,
And east and west upon the people I beck,
As doth a dove, sitting on a bern;¹ ¹barn
My handes and my tongue go so yern,¹ ¹briskly
That it is joy to see my business.
Of avarice and of such cursedness¹ ¹wickedness
Is all my preaching, for to make them free
To give their pence, and namely¹ unto me. ¹especially
For mine intent is not but for to win,
And nothing for correction of sin.
I recke never, when that they be buried,
Though that their soules go a blackburied.
For certes ¹many a predication ¹preaching is often inspired
Cometh oft-time of evil intention;¹ ¹by evil motives¹

Some for plesance of folk, and flattery,
To be advanced by hypocrisy;
And some for vainglory, and some for hate.
For, when I dare not otherwise debate,
Then will I sting him with my tongue smart¹ sharply
In preaching, so that he shall not astart¹ escape
To be defamed falsely, if that he
Hath trespass'd¹ to my brethren or to me. ¹offended
For, though I telle not his proper name,
Men shall well knowe that it is the same
By signes, and by other circumstances.
Thus ¹quite I¹ folk that do us displeasances: ¹I am revenged on¹
Thus spit I out my venom, under hue
Of holiness, to seem holy and true.
But, shortly mine intent I will devise,
I preach of nothing but of covetise.
Therefore my theme is yet, and ever was, —
Radix malorum est cupiditas.
Thus can I preach against the same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice.
But though myself be guilty in that sin,
Yet can I maken other folk to twin¹ depart
From avarice, and sore them repent.
But that is not my principal intent;
I preache nothing but for covetise.
Of this mattere it ought enough suffice.
Then tell I them examples many a one,
Of olde stories longe time gone;
For lewed¹ people love tales old; ¹unlearned
Such thinges can they well report and hold.
What? trowe ye, that whiles I may preach
And winne gold and silver for¹ I teach, ¹because
That I will live in povert' wilfully?
Nay, nay, I thought it never truely.
For I will preach and beg in sundry lands;
I will not do no labour with mine hands,
Nor make baskets for to live thereby,
Because I will not beggen idly.
I will none of the apostles counterfeit;¹ ¹imitate (in poverty)
I will have money, wool, and cheese, and wheat,
All¹ were it given of the poorest page, ¹even if
Or of the poorest widow in a village:
All should her children sterve¹ for famine. ¹die
Nay, I will drink the liquor of the vine,

And have a jolly wench in every town.
But hearken, lordings, in conclusioun;
Your liking is, that I shall tell a tale
Now I have drunk a draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope I shall you tell a thing
That shall by reason be to your liking;
For though myself be a full vicious man,
A moral tale yet I you telle can,
Which I am wont to preache, for to win.
Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin.

In Flanders whilom was a company
Of younge folkes, that haunted folly,
As riot, hazard, stewes,¹ and taverns; ¹brothels
Where as with lutes, harpes, and giterns,¹ ¹guitars
They dance and play at dice both day and night,
And eat also, and drink over their might;
Through which they do the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluity abominable.
Their oathes be so great and so damnable,
That it is grisly¹ for to hear them swear. ¹dreadful
Our blissful Lorde's body they to-tear;¹ ¹tore to pieces
Them thought the Jewes rent him not enough,
And each of them at other's sinne lough.¹ ¹laughed
And right anon in come tombesteres
Fetis¹ and small, and younge fruitesteres.² ¹dainty ²fruit-girls
Singers with harpes, baudes,¹ waferers,² ¹revellers ²cake-sellers
Which be the very devil's officers,
To kindle and blow the fire of lechery,
That is annexed unto gluttony.
The Holy Writ take I to my witness,
That luxury is in wine and drunkenness.
Lo, how that drunken Lot unkindely¹ ¹unnaturally
Lay by his daughters two unwittingly,
So drunk he was he knew not what he wrought.
Herodes, who so well the stories sought,
When he of wine replete was at his feast,
Right at his owen table gave his hest¹ ¹command
To slay the Baptist John full guileless.
Seneca saith a good word, doubtless:
He saith he can no difference find
Betwixt a man that is out of his mind,
And a man whiche that is drunkelew.¹ ¹a drunkard

But that woodness,¹ y-fallen in a shrew,¹ ¹madness ²one evil-tempered
Persevereth longer than drunkenness.

O gluttony, full of all cursedness;
O cause first of our confusion,
Original of our damnation,
Till Christ had bought us with his blood again!
Looke, how deare, shortly for to sayn,
Abought¹ was first this cursed villainy: ¹atoned for
Corrupt was all this world for gluttony.
Adam our father, and his wife also,
From Paradise, to labour and to woe,
Were driven for that vice, it is no dread.¹ ¹doubt
For while that Adam fasted, as I read,
He was in Paradise; and when that he
Ate of the fruit defended¹ of the tree, ¹forbidden
Anon he was cast out to woe and pain.
O gluttony! well ought us on thee plain.
Oh! wist a man how many maladies
Follow of excess and of gluttonies,
He woulde be the more measurable¹ ¹moderate
Of his diete, sitting at his table.
Alas! the shorte throat, the tender mouth,
Maketh that east and west, and north and south,
In earth, in air, in water, men do swink¹ ¹labour
To get a glutton dainty meat and drink.
Of this mattere, O Paul! well canst thou treat
Meat unto womb,¹ and womb eke unto meat, ¹belly
Shall God destroye both, as Paulus saith.
Alas! a foul thing is it, by my faith,
To say this word, and fouler is the deed,
When man so drinketh of the ¹white and red,¹ ¹i.e. wine¹
That of his throat he maketh his privy
Through thilke cursed superfluity
The apostle saith, weeping full piteously,
There walk many, of which you told have I, —
I say it now weeping with piteous voice, —
That they be enemies of Christe's crois;¹ ¹cross
Of which the end is death; womb¹ is their God. ¹belly
O womb, O belly, stinking is thy cod,¹ ¹bag
Full fill'd of dung and of corruptioun;
At either end of thee foul is the soun.
How great labour and cost is thee to find!¹ ¹supply

These cookes how they stamp, and strain, and grind,
And turne substance into accident,
To fulfill all thy likerous talent!
Out of the harde bones knocke they
The marrow, for they caste naught away
That may go through the gullet soft and swoot¹ ¹sweet
Of spicery and leaves, of bark and root,
Shall be his sauce y-maked by delight,
To make him have a newer appetite.
But, certes, he that haunteth such delices
Is dead while that he liveth in those vices.

A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness
Is full of striving and of wretchedness.
O drunken man! disfigur'd is thy face,
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace:
And through thy drunken nose sowneth the soun',
As though thous saidest aye, Samsoun! Samsoun!
And yet, God wot, Samson drank never wine.
Thou fallest as it were a sticked swine;
Thy tongue is lost, and all thine honest cure;¹ ¹care
For drunkenness is very sepulture¹ ¹tomb
Of manne's wit and his discretion.
In whom that drink hath domination,
He can no counsel keep, it is no dread.¹ ¹doubt
Now keep you from the white and from the red,
And namely¹ from the white wine of Lepe, ¹especially
That is to sell in Fish Street and in Cheap.
This wine of Spaine creepeth subtilly —
In other wines growing faste by,
Of which there riseth such fumosity,
That when a man hath drunken draughtes three,
And weeneth that he be at home in Cheap,
He is in Spain, right at the town of Lepe,
Not at the Rochelle, nor at Bourdeaux town;
And thenne will he say, Samsoun! Samsoun!
But hearken, lordings, one word, I you pray,
That all the sovrein actes, dare I say,
Of victories in the Old Testament,
Through very God that is omnipotent,
Were done in abstinence and in prayere:
Look in the Bible, and there ye may it lear.¹ ¹learn
Look, Attila, the greate conqueror,
Died in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,
Bleeding aye at his nose in drunkenness:

A captain should aye live in soberness
And o'er all this, advise¹ you right well ¹consider, bethink
What was commanded unto Lemuel;
Not Samuel, but Lemuel, say I.
Reade the Bible, and find it expressly
Of wine giving to them that have justice.
No more of this, for it may well suffice.

And, now that I have spoke of gluttony,
Now will I you ¹defende hazardry.¹ ¹forbid gambling¹
Hazard is very mother of leasings,¹ ¹lies
And of deceit, and cursed forswearings:
Blasphem' of Christ, manslaughter, and waste also
Of chattel¹ and of time; and furthermo' ¹property
It is reprove,¹ and contrar' of honour, ¹reproach
For to be held a common hazardour.
And ever the higher he is of estate,
The more he is holden desolate.¹ ¹undone, worthless
If that a prince use hazardry,
In alle governance and policy
He is, as by common opinion,
Y-hold the less in reputation.

Chilon, that was a wise ambassador,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honor
From Lacedemon, to make alliance;
And when he came, it happen'd him, by chance,
That all the greatest that were of that land,
Y-playing atte hazard he them fand.¹ ¹found
For which, as soon as that it mighte be,
He stole him home again to his country
And saide there, "I will not lose my name,
Nor will I take on me so great diffame,¹ ¹reproach
You to ally unto no hazardors.¹ ¹gamblers
Sende some other wise ambassadors,
For, by my troth, me were lever¹ die, ¹rather
Than I should you to hazardors ally.
For ye, that be so glorious in honours,
Shall not ally you to no hazardours,
As by my will, nor as by my treaty."
This wise philosopher thus said he.
Look eke how to the King Demetrius
The King of Parthes, as the book saith us,
Sent him a pair of dice of gold in scorn,

For he had used hazard therebeforn:
For which he held his glory and renown
At no value or reputatioun.
Lordes may finden other manner play
Honest enough to drive the day away.

Now will I speak of oathes false and great
A word or two, as olde bookes treat.
Great swearing is a thing abominable,
And false swearing is more reprovabale.
The highe God forbade swearing at all;
Witness on Matthew: but in special
Of swearing saith the holy Jeremie,
Thou thalt swear sooth thine oathes, and not lie:
And swear in doom¹ and eke in righteousness; ¹judgement
But idle swearing is a cursedness.¹ ¹wickedness
Behold and see, there in the firste table
Of highe Godde's hestes¹ honourable, ¹commandments
How that the second best of him is this,
Take not my name in idle¹ or amiss. ¹in vain
Lo, rather¹ he forbiddeth such swearing, ¹sooner
Than homicide, or many a cursed thing;
I say that as by order thus it standeth;
This knoweth he that his hests¹ understandeth, ¹commandments
How that the second hest of God is that.
And farthermore, I will thee tell all plat,¹ ¹flatly, plainly
That vengeance shall not parte from his house,
That of his oathes is outrageous.
"By Godde's precious heart, and by his nails,
And by the blood of Christ, that is in Hailes,
Seven is my chance, and thine is cinque and trey:
By Godde's armes, if thou falsely play,
This dagger shall throughout thine heart go."
This fruit comes of the ¹bicched bones two,¹ ¹two cursed bones
(dice)¹
Forswearing, ire, falseness, and homicide.
Now, for the love of Christ that for us died,
Leave your oathes, bothe great and smale.
But, Sirs, now will I ell you forth my tale.

These riotoures three, of which I tell,
Long ¹erst than¹ prime rang of any bell, ¹before
Were set them in a tavern for to drink;
And as they sat, they heard a belle clink

Before a corpse, was carried to the grave.
That one of them gan calle to his knave,¹ ¹servant
“Go bet,” quoth he, “and aske readily
What corpse is this, that passeth here forth by;
And look that thou report his name well.”
“Sir,” quoth the boy, “it needeth never a deal;¹ ¹whit
It was me told ere ye came here two hours;
He was, pardie, an old fellow of yours,
And suddenly he was y-slain to-night;
Fordrunk¹ as he sat on his bench upright, ¹completely drunk
There came a privy thief, men clepe Death,
That in this country all the people slay’th,
And with his spear he smote his heart in two,
And went his way withoute wordes mo’.
He hath a thousand slain this pestilence;
And, master, ere you come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were full necessary
For to beware of such an adversary;
Be ready for to meet him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame; I say no more.”
“By Sainte Mary,” said the tavernere,
“The child saith sooth, for he hath slain this year,
Hence ov’r a mile, within a great village,
Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page;
I trow his habitation be there;
To be advised¹ great wisdom it were, ¹watchful, on one’s guard
Ere¹ that he did a man a dishonour.” ¹lest

“Yea, Godde’s armes,” quoth this riotour,
“Is it such peril with him for to meet?
I shall him seek, by stile and eke by street.
I make a vow, by Godde’s digne¹ bones.” ¹worthy
Hearken, fellows, we three be alle ones:¹ ¹at one
Let each of us hold up his hand to other,
And each of us become the other’s brother,
And we will slay this false traitor Death;
He shall be slain, he that so many slay’th,
By Godde’s dignity, ere it be night.”
Together have these three their trothe plight
To live and die each one of them for other
As though he were his owen sworn brother.
And up they start, all drunken, in this rage,
And forth they go towardses that village
Of which the taverner had spoke befor,

And many a grisly¹ oathe have they sworn, ¹dreadful
And Christe's blessed body they to-rent;¹ ¹tore to pieces
"Death shall be dead, if that we may him hent."¹ ¹catch
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
Right as they would have trodden o'er a stile,
An old man and a poore with them met.
This olde man full meekely them gret,¹ ¹greeted
And saide thus; "Now, lordes, God you see!"¹ ¹look on graciously
The proudest of these riotoures three
Answer'd again; "What? churl, with sorry grace,
Why art thou all forwrapped¹ save thy face? ¹closely wrapt up
Why livest thou so long in so great age?"
This olde man gan look on his visage,
And saide thus; "For that I cannot find
A man, though that I walked unto Ind,
Neither in city, nor in no village go,
That woulde change his youthe for mine age;
And therefore must I have mine age still
As longe time as it is Godde's will.
And Death, alas! he will not have my life.
Thus walk I like a resteless caitife,¹ ¹miserable wretch
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knocke with my staff, early and late,
And say to her, 'Leve¹ mother, let me in. ¹dear
Lo, how I wane, flesh, and blood, and skin;
Alas! when shall my bones be at rest?
Mother, with you I woulde change my chest,
That in my chamber longe time hath be,
Yea, for an hairy clout to ¹wrap in me.'¹ ¹wrap myself in¹
But yet to me she will not do that grace,
For which fall pale and welked¹ is my face. ¹withered
But, Sirs, to you it is no courtesy
To speak unto an old man villainy,
But¹ he trespass in word or else in deed. ¹except
In Holy Writ ye may yourselves read;
'Against¹ an old man, hoar upon his head, ¹to meet
Ye should arise:' therefore I you rede,¹ ¹advise
Ne do unto an old man no harm now,
No more than ye would a man did you
In age, if that ye may so long abide.
And God be with you, whether ye go or ride
I must go thither as I have to go."

“Nay, olde churl, by God thou shalt not so,”
 Saide this other hazardor anon;
 “Thou partest not so lightly, by Saint John.
 Thou spakest right now of that traitor Death,
 That in this country all our friendes slay’th;
 Have here my troth, as thou art his espy;¹ ¹spy
 Tell where he is, or thou shalt it abie,¹ ¹suffer for
 By God and by the holy sacrament;
 For soothly thou art one of his assent
 To slay us younge folk, thou false thief.”
 “Now, Sirs,” quoth he, “if it be you so lief¹ ¹desire
 To finde Death, turn up this crooked way,
 For in that grove I left him, by my fay,
 Under a tree, and there he will abide;
 Nor for your boast he will him nothing hide.
 See ye that oak? right there ye shall him find.
 God save you, that bought again mankind,
 And you amend!” Thus said this olde man;
 And evereach of these riotoures ran,
 Till they came to the tree, and there they found
 Of florins fine, of gold y-coined round,
 Well nigh a seven bushels, as them thought.
 No longer as then after Death they sought;
 But each of them so glad was of the sight,
 For that the florins were so fair and bright,
 That down they sat them by the precious hoard.
 The youngest of them spake the firste word:
 “Brethren,” quoth he, “¹take keep¹ what I shall say; ¹heed¹
 My wit is great, though that I bourde¹ and play ¹joke, frolic
 This treasure hath Fortune unto us given
 In mirth and jollity our life to liven;
 And lightly as it comes, so will we spend.
 Hey! Godde’s precious dignity! who wend¹ ¹weened, thought
 Today that we should have so fair a grace?
 But might this gold he carried from this place
 Home to my house, or elles unto yours
 (For well I wot that all this gold is ours),
 Then were we in high felicity.
 But truely by day it may not be;
 Men woulde say that we were thieves strong,
 And for our owen treasure do us hong.¹ ¹have us hanged
 This treasure muste carried be by night,
 As wisely and as slily as it might.
 Wherefore I rede,¹ that cut² among us all ¹advise ²lots

We draw, and let see where the cut will fall:
 And he that hath the cut, with hearte blithe
 Shall run unto the town, and that full swithe,¹ ¹quickly
 And bring us bread and wine full privily:
 And two of us shall keepe subtilly
 This treasure well: and if he will not tarry,
 When it is night, we will this treasure carry,
 By one assent, where as us thinketh best.”
 Then one of them the cut brought in his fist,
 And bade them draw, and look where it would fall;
 And it fell on the youngest of them all;
 And forth toward the town he went anon.
 And all so soon as that he was y-gone,
 The one of them spake thus unto the other;
 “Thou knowest well that thou art my sworn brother,
¹Thy profit¹ will I tell thee right anon. ¹what is for thine
 Thou knowest well that our fellow is gone, advantage¹
 And here is gold, and that full great plenty,
 That shall departed¹ he among us three. ¹divided
 But natheless, if I could shape¹ it so ¹contrive
 That it departed were among us two,
 Had I not done a friende’s turn to thee?”
 Th’ other answer’d, “I n’ot¹ how that may be; ¹know not
 He knows well that the gold is with us tway.
 What shall we do? what shall we to him say?”
 “Shall it be counsel?”¹ said the firste shrew;² ¹secret ²wretch
 “And I shall tell to thee in wordes few
 What we shall do, and bring it well about.”
 “I grante,” quoth the other, “out of doubt,
 That by my truth I will thee not bewray.”¹ ¹betray
 “Now,” quoth the first, “thou know’st well we be tway,
 And two of us shall stronger be than one.
 Look; when that he is set,¹ thou right anon ¹sat down
 Arise, as though thou wouldest with him play;
 And I shall rive¹ him through the sides tway, ¹stab
 While that thou strugglest with him as in game;
 And with thy dagger look thou do the same.
 And then shall all this gold departed¹ be, ¹divided
 My deare friend, betwixte thee and me:
 Then may we both our lustes¹ all fulfil, ¹pleasures
 And play at dice right at our owen will.”
 And thus accorded¹ be these shrewes² tway ¹agreed ²wretches
 To slay the third, as ye have heard me say.

The youngest, which that wente to the town,
Full oft in heart he rolled up and down
The beauty of these florins new and bright.
“O Lord!” quoth he, “if so were that I might
Have all this treasure to myself alone,
There is no man that lives under the throne
Of God, that shoulde have so merry as I.”
And at the last the fiend our enemy
Put in his thought, that he should poison buy,
With which he mighte slay his fellows twy.¹ ¹two
For why, the fiend found him ¹in such living,¹ ¹leading such a
That he had leave to sorrow him to bring. (bad) life¹
For this was utterly his full intent
To slay them both, and never to repent.
And forth he went, no longer would he tarry,
Into the town to an apothecary,
And prayed him that he him woulde sell
Some poison, that he might ¹his rattes quell,¹ ¹kill his rats¹
And eke there was a polecat in his haw,¹ ¹farm-yard, hedge
That, as he said, his eapons had y-slaw:¹ ¹slain
And fain he would him wreak,¹ if that he might, ¹revenge
Of vermin that destroyed him by night.
Th’apothecary answer’d, “Thou shalt have
A thing, as wisly¹ God my soule save, ¹surely
In all this world there is no creature
That eat or drank hath of this confecture,
Not but the mountance¹ of a corn of wheat, ¹amount
That he shall not his life ¹anon forlete;¹ ¹immediately lay down¹
Yea, sterve¹ he shall, and that in lesse while ¹die
Than thou wilt go ¹apace¹ nought but a mile: ¹quickly¹
This poison is so strong and violent.”
This cursed man hath in his hand y-hent¹ ¹taken
This poison in a box, and swift he ran
Into the nexte street, unto a man,
And borrow’d of him large bottles three;
And in the two the poison poured he;
The third he kepte clean for his own drink,
For all the night he shope him¹ for to swink² ¹purposed ²labour
In carrying off the gold out of that place.
And when this riotour, with sorry grace,
Had fill’d with wine his greate bottles three,

To his fellows again repaired he.
What needeth it thereof to sermon¹ more? ¹talk, discourse
For, right as they had cast¹ his death before, ¹plotted
Right so they have him slain, and that anon.
And when that this was done, thus spake the one;
“Now let us sit and drink, and make us merry,
And afterward we will his body bury.”
And with that word it happen'd him ¹par cas¹ ¹by chance
To take the bottle where the poison was,
And drank, and gave his fellow drink also,
For which anon they sterved¹ both the two. ¹died
But certes I suppose that Avicen
Wrote never in no canon, nor no fen,
More wondrous signes of empoisoning,
Than had these wretches two ere their ending.
Thus ended be these homicides two,
And eke the false empoisoner also.

O cursed sin, full of all cursedness!
O trait'rous homicide! O wickedness!
O glutt'ny, luxury, and hazardry!
Thou blasphemer of Christ with villany,¹ ¹outrage, impiety
And oathes great, of usage and of pride!
Alas! mankinde, how may it betide,
That to thy Creator, which that thee wrought,
And with his precious hearte-blood thee bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind,¹ alas! ¹unnatural
Now, good men, God forgive you your trespass,
And ware¹ you from the sin of avarice. ¹keep
Mine holy pardon may you all warice,¹ ¹heal
So that ye offer ¹nobles or sterlings,¹ ¹gold or silver coins¹
Or elles silver brooches, spoons, or rings.
Bowe your head under this holy bull.
Come up, ye wives, and offer of your will;
Your names I enter in my roll anon;
Into the bliss of heaven shall ye gon;
I you assoil¹ by mine high powere, ¹absolve
You that will offer, as clean and eke as clear
As ye were born. Lo, Sires, thus I preach;
And Jesus Christ, that is our soules' leech,¹ ¹healer
So grante you his pardon to receive;
For that is best, I will not deceive.

But, Sirs, one word forgot I in my tale;
I have relics and pardon in my mail,
As fair as any man in Engleland,
Which were me given by the Pope's hand.
If any of you will of devotion
Offer, and have mine absolution,
Come forth anon, and kneele here adown
And meekely receive my pardoun.
Or elles take pardon, as ye wend,¹ ¹go
All new and fresh at every towne's end,
So that ye offer, always new and new,
Nobles or pence which that be good and true.
'Tis an honour to evereach¹ that is here, ¹each one
That ye have a suffisant¹ pardonere ¹suitable
T'assoile¹ you in country as ye ride, ¹absolve
For adventures which that may betide.
Paraventure there may fall one or two
Down of his horse, and break his neck in two.
Look, what a surety is it to you all,
That I am in your fellowship y-fall,
That may assoil¹ you bothe ¹more and lass, ¹absolve
When that the soul shall from the body pass. ¹great and small¹
I rede¹ that our Hoste shall begin, ¹advise
For he is most enveloped in sin.
Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first anon,
And thou shalt kiss; the relics every one,
Yea, for a groat; unbuckle anon thy purse.

"Nay, nay," quoth he, "then have I Christe's curse!
Let be," quoth he, "it shall not be, ¹so the'ch. ¹so may I thrive¹
Thou wouldest make me kiss thine olde breech,
And swear it were a relic of a saint,
Though it were with thy ¹fundament depaint'. ¹stained by your
bottom¹

But, by the cross which that Saint Helen fand, ¹found
I would I had thy coilons¹ in mine hand, ¹testicles
Instead of relics, or of sanctuary.
Let cut them off, I will thee help them carry;
They shall be shrined in a hogge's turd."
The Pardoner answered not one word;
So wroth he was, no worde would he say.

"Now," quoth our Host, "I will no longer play
With thee, nor with none other angry man."

But right anon the worthy Knight began
(When that he saw that all the people lough¹), ¹laughed
“No more of this, for it is right enough.
Sir Pardoner, be merry and glad of cheer;
And ye, Sir Host, that be to me so dear,
I pray you that ye kiss the Pardoner;
And, Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee ner,¹ ¹nearer
And as we didde, let us laugh and play.”
Anon they kiss’d, and rode forth their way.

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The Nun's Priest's Tale

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400)

A poor widow, ¹somedel y-stept¹ in age, ¹somewhat advanced¹
Was whilom dwelling in a poor cottage,
Beside a grove, standing in a dale.
This widow, of which I telle you my tale,
Since thilke day that she was last a wife,
In patience led a full simple life,
For little was ¹her chattel and her rent.¹ ¹her goods and her income¹
By husbandry¹ of such as God her sent, ¹thrifty management
She found¹ herself, and eke her daughters two. ¹maintained
Three large sowes had she, and no mo';
Three kine, and eke a sheep that highte Mall.
Full sooty was her bow'r,¹ and eke her hall, ¹chamber
In which she ate full many a slender meal.
Of poignant sauce knew she never a deal.¹ ¹whit
No dainty morsel passed through her throat;
Her diet was ¹accordant to her cote.¹ ¹in keeping with her cottage¹
Repletion her made never sick;
Attemper¹ diet was all her physic, ¹moderate
And exercise, and ¹hearte's suffisance.¹ ¹contentment of heart¹
The goute ¹let her nothing for to dance,¹ ¹did not prevent her
Nor apoplexy shente¹ not her head. from dancing¹ ¹hurt
No wine drank she, neither white nor red:
Her board was served most with white and black,
Milk and brown bread, in which she found no lack,
Seind¹ bacon, and sometimes an egg or tway; ¹singed
For she was as it were ¹a manner dey.¹ ¹kind of day labourer¹
A yard she had, enclosed all about
With stickes, and a drye ditch without,
In which she had a cock, hight Chanticleer;
In all the land of crowing ¹n'as his peer.¹ ¹was not his equal¹
His voice was merrier than the merry organ,¹ ¹organ
On masse days that in the churches gon.
Well sickerer¹ was his crowing in his lodge, ¹more punctual¹
Than is a clock, or an abbay horloge.¹ ¹clock
By nature he knew each ascension
Of th' equinoctial in thilke town;
For when degrees fiftene were ascended,
Then crew he, that it might not be amended.

His comb was redder than the fine coral,
Embattell'd as it were a castle wall.
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone;
Like azure were his legges and his tone;¹ ¹toes
His nailes whiter than the lily flow'r,
And like the burnish'd gold was his colour,
This gentle cock had in his governance
Sev'n hennes, for to do all his pleasance,
Which were his sisters and his paramours,
And wondrous like to him as of colours.
Of which the fairest-hued in the throat
Was called Damoselle Partelote,
Courteous she was, discreet, and debonair,
And companiable,¹ and bare herself so fair, ¹sociable
Since the day that she sev'n night was old,
That truely she had the heart in hold
Of Chanticleer, locked in every lith;¹ ¹limb
He lov'd her so, that well was him therewith,
But such a joy it was to hear them sing,
When that the brighte sunne gan to spring,
In sweet accord, ¹"My lefe is fare in land."¹ ¹my love is
For, at that time, as I have understand, gone abroad¹
Beastes and birdes coulde speak and sing.

And so befell, that in a dawening,
As Chanticleer among his wives all
Sat on his perche, that was in the hall,
And next him sat this faire Partelote,
This Chanticleer gan groanen in his throat,
As man that in his dream is dretched¹ sore, ¹oppressed
And when that Partelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast,¹ and saide, "Hearte dear, ¹afraid
What aileth you to groan in this mannere?
Ye be a very sleeper, fy for shame!"
And he answer'd and saide thus; "Madame,
I pray you that ye take it not agrief;¹ ¹amiss, in umbrage
By God, ¹me mette¹ I was in such mischief,² ¹I dreamed¹ ²trouble
Right now, that yet mine heart is sore affright'.
Now God," quoth he, "my sweven¹ read aright ¹dream, vision.
And keep my body out of foul prisoun.
¹Me mette,¹ how that I roamed up and down ¹I dreamed¹
Within our yard, where as I saw a beast
Was like an hound, and would have ¹made arrest¹ ¹siezed¹
Upon my body, and would have had me dead.

His colour was betwixt yellow and red;
And tipped was his tail, and both his ears,
With black, unlike the remnant of his hairs.
His snout was small, with glowing eyen tway;
Yet of his look almost for fear I dey;¹ ¹died
This caused me my groaning, doubtless.”

“Away,” quoth she, “fy on you, hearteless!¹ ¹coward
Alas!” quoth she, “for, by that God above!
Now have ye lost my heart and all my love;
I cannot love a coward, by my faith.
For certes, what so any woman saith,
We all desiren, if it mighte be,
To have husbandes hardy, wise, and free,
And secret,¹ and no niggard nor no fool, ¹discreet
Nor him that is aghast¹ of every tool,² ¹afraid ²rag, trifle
Nor no avantour,¹ by that God above! ¹braggart
How durste ye for shame say to your love
That anything might make you afear’d?
Have ye no manne’s heart, and have a beard?
Alas! and can ye be aghast of swevenes?¹ ¹dreams
Nothing but vanity, God wot, in sweven is,
Swevens ¹engender of repletions,¹ ¹are caused by over-eating¹
And oft of fume,¹ and of complexions, ¹drunkenness
When humours be too abundant in a wight.
Certes this dream, which ye have mette tonight,
Cometh of the great supefluity
Of youre rede cholera,¹ pardie, ¹bile
Which causeth folk to dreaden in their dreams
Of arrows, and of fire with redde beams,
Of redde beastes, that they will them bite,
Of conteke,¹ and of whelpes great and lite;² ¹contention ²little
Right as the humour of melancholy
Causeth full many a man in sleep to cry,
For fear of bulles, or of beares blake,
Or elles that black devils will them take,
Of other humours could I tell also,
That worke many a man in sleep much woe;
That I will pass as lightly as I can.
Lo, Cato, which that was so wise a man,
Said he not thus, ¹Ne do no force of¹ dreams,’ ¹attach no weight
to¹
Now, Sir,” quoth she, “when we fly from these beams,
For Godde’s love, as take some laxatife;

On peril of my soul, and of my life,
I counsel you the best, I will not lie,
That both of choler, and melancholy,
Ye purge you; and, for ye shall not tarry,
Though in this town is no apothecary,
I shall myself two herbes teache you,
That shall be for your health, and for your prow;¹ ¹profit
And in our yard the herbes shall I find,
The which have of their property by kind¹ ¹nature
To purge you beneath, and eke above.
Sire, forget not this for Godde's love;
Ye be full choleric of complexion;
Ware that the sun, in his ascension,
You finde not replete of humours hot;
And if it do, I dare well lay a groat,
That ye shall have a fever tertiane,
Or else an ague, that may be your bane,
A day or two ye shall have digestives
Of wormes, ere ye take your laxatives,
Of laurel, centaury, and fumeterere,
Or else of elder-berry, that groweth there,
Of catapuce, or of the gaitre-berries,
Or herb ivy growing in our yard, that merry is:
Pick them right as they grow, and eat them in,
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin;
Dreade no dream; I can say you no more."

"Madame," quoth he, "grand mercy of your lore,
But natheless, as touching ¹Dan Catoun,¹ ¹Cato
That hath of wisdom such a great renown,
Though that he bade no dreames for to dread,
By God, men may in olde bookes read
Of many a man more of authority
Than ever Cato was, so may I the,¹ ¹thrive
That all the reverse say of his sentence,¹ ¹opinion
And have well founden by experience
That dreames be significations
As well of joy, as tribulations
That folk endure in this life present.
There needeth make of this no argument;
The very preve¹ sheweth it indeed. ¹trial, experience
One of the greatest authors that men read
Saith thus, that whilom two fellowes went
On pilgrimage in a full good intent;
And happen'd so, they came into a town

Where there was such a congregatioun
Of people, and eke so ¹strait of herbergage,¹ ¹without lodging¹
That they found not as much as one cottage
In which they bothe might y-lodged be:
Wherefore they musten of necessity,
As for that night, departe company;
And each of them went to his hostelry,¹ ¹inn
And took his lodging as it woulde fall.
The one of them was lodged in a stall,
Far in a yard, with oxen of the plough;
That other man was lodged well enow,
As was his aventure, or his fortune,
That us governeth all, as in commune.
And so befell, that, long ere it were day,
This man mette¹ in his bed, there: as he lay, ¹dreamed
How that his fellow gan upon him call,
And said, ‘Alas! for in an ox’s stall
This night shall I be murder’d, where I lie
Now help me, deare brother, or I die;
In alle haste come to me,’ he said.
This man out of his sleep for fear abraid;¹ ¹started
But when that he was wak’d out of his sleep,
He turned him, and ¹took of this no keep;¹ ¹paid this no attention¹
He thought his dream was but a vanity.
Thus twies¹ in his sleeping dreamed he, ¹twice
And at the thirde time yet his fellow again
Came, as he thought, and said, ‘I am now slaw;¹ ¹slain
Behold my bloody woundes, deep and wide.
Arise up early, in the morning, tide,
And at the west gate of the town,’ quoth he,
‘A carte full of dung there shalt: thou see,
In which my body is hid privily.
Do thilke cart arroste¹ boldely. ¹stop
My gold caused my murder, sooth to sayn.’
And told him every point how he was slain,
With a full piteous face, and pale of hue.

“And, truste well, his dream he found full true;
For on the morrow, as soon as it was day,
To his fellowes inn he took his way;
And when that he came to this ox’s stall,
After his fellow he began to call.
The hostelere answered him anon,
And saide, ‘Sir, your fellow is y-gone,

As soon as day he went out of the town.
This man gan fallen in suspicioun,
Rememb'ring on his dreames that he mette,¹ ¹dreamed
And forth he went, no longer would he let,¹ ¹delay
Unto the west gate of the town, and fand¹ ¹found
A dung cart, as it went for to dung land,
That was arrayed in the same wise
As ye have heard the deade man devise;¹ ¹describe
And with an hardy heart he gan to cry,
'Vengeance and justice of this felony:
My fellow murder'd in this same night
And in this cart he lies, gaping upright.
I cry out on the ministers,' quoth he.
'That shoulde keep and rule this city;
Harow! alas! here lies my fellow slain.'
What should I more unto this tale sayn?
The people out start, and cast the cart to ground
And in the middle of the dung they found
The deade man, that murder'd was all new.
O blissful God! that art so good and true,
Lo, how that thou bewray'st murder alway.
Murder will out, that see we day by day.
Murder is so wlatson¹ and abominable ¹loathsome
To God, that is so just and reasonable,
That he will not suffer it heled¹ be; ¹concealed
Though it abide a year, or two, or three,
Murder will out, this is my conclusioun,
And right anon, the ministers of the town
Have hent¹ the carter, and so sore him pined,² ¹seized ²tortured
And eke the hostelere so sore engined,¹ ¹racked
That they beknew¹ their wickedness anon, ¹confessed
And were hanged by the necke bone.

"Here may ye see that dreames be to dread.
And certes in the same book I read,
Right in the nexte chapter after this
(I gabbe¹ not, so have I joy and bliss), ¹talk idly
Two men that would, have passed over sea,
For certain cause, into a far country,
If that the wind not hadde been contrary,
That made them in a city for to tarry,
That stood full merry upon an haven side;
But on a day, against the even-tide,
The wind gan change, and blew right ¹as them lest.¹ ¹as they

wished¹

Jolly and glad they wente to their rest,
And caste¹ them full early for to sail. ¹resolved
But to the one man fell a great marvail
That one of them, in sleeping as he lay,
He mette¹ a wondrous dream, against the day: ¹dreamed
He thought a man stood by his bedde's side,
And him commanded that he should abide;
And said him thus; 'If thou to-morrow wend,
Thou shalt be drown'd; my tale is at an end.'
He woke, and told his follow what he mette,
And prayed him his voyage for to let;¹ ¹delay
As for that day, he pray'd him to abide.
His fellow, that lay by his bedde's side,
Gan for to laugh, and scorned him full fast.
'No dream,' quoth he, 'may so my heart aghast,¹ ¹frighten
That I will lette¹ for to do my things.¹ ¹delay
I sette not a straw by thy dreamings,
For swevens¹ be but vanities and japes.² ¹dreams ²jokes,deceits
Men dream all day of owles and of apes,
And eke of many a maze¹ therewithal; ¹wild imagining
Men dream of thing that never was, nor shall.
But since I see, that thou wilt here abide,
And thus forslothe¹ wilfully thy tide,² ¹idle away ²time
God wot, ¹it rueth me;¹ and have good day.'¹ I am sorry for it¹
And thus he took his leave, and went his way.
But, ere that he had half his course sail'd,
I know not why, nor what mischance it ail'd,
But casually¹ the ship's bottom rent, ¹by accident
And ship and man under the water went,
In sight of other shippes there beside
That with him sailed at the same tide.

"And therefore, faire Partelote so dear,
By such examples olde may'st thou lear,¹ ¹learn
That no man shoulde be too reckeless
Of dreames, for I say thee doubtless,
That many a dream full sore is for to dread.
Lo, in the life of Saint Kenelm I read,
That was Kenulphus' son, the noble king
Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thing.
A little ere he was murder'd on a day,
His murder in his vision he say.¹ ¹saw
His norice¹ him expounded every deal² ¹nurse ²part

His sweven, and bade him to keep¹ him well ¹guard
 For treason; but he was but seven years old,
 And therefore ¹little tale hath he told¹ ¹he attached little
 Of any dream, so holy was his heart. significance to¹
 By God, I hadde lever than my shirt
 That ye had read his legend, as have I.
 Dame Partelote, I say you truely,
 Macrobius, that wrote the vision
 In Afric' of the worthy Scipion,
 Affirmeth dreames, and saith that they be
 'Warnings of thinges that men after see.
 And furthermore, I pray you looke well
 In the Old Testament, of Daniel,
 If he held dreames any vanity.
 Read eke of Joseph, and there shall ye see
 Whether dreams be sometimes (I say not all)
 Warnings of thinges that shall after fall.
 Look of Egypt the king, Dan Pharaoh,
 His baker and his buteler also,
 Whether they felte none effect¹ in dreams. ¹significance
 Whoso will seek the acts of sundry remes¹ ¹realms
 May read of dreames many a wondrous thing.
 Lo Croesus, which that was of Lydia king,
 Mette he not that he sat upon a tree,
 Which signified he shoulde hanged be?
 Lo here, Andromache, Hectore's wife,
 That day that Hector shoulde lose his life,
 She dreamed on the same night befor,
 How that the life of Hector should be lorn,¹ ¹lost
 If thilke day he went into battaile;
 She warned him, but it might not avail;
 He wente forth to fighte natheless,
 And was y-slain anon of Achilles.
 But thilke tale is all too long to tell;
 And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwell.
 Shortly I say, as for conclusion,
 That I shall have of this avision
 Adversity; and I say furthermore,
 That I ne ¹tell of laxatives no store,¹ ¹hold laxatives
 For they be venomous, I wot it well; of no value¹
 I them defy,¹ I love them never a del.² ¹distrust ²whit

"But let us speak of mirth, and stint¹ all this; ¹cease
 Madame Partelote, so have I bliss,

Of one thing God hath sent me large¹ grace; liberal
For when I see the beauty of your face,
Ye be so scarlet-hued about your eyen,
I maketh all my drede for to dien,
For, all so sicker¹ as In principio, ¹certain
Mulier est hominis confusio.

Madam, the sentence¹ of of this Latin is, ¹meaning
Woman is manne's joy and manne's bliss.

For when I feel at night your softe side, —
Albeit that I may not on you ride,
For that our perch is made so narrow, Alas!

I am so full of joy and of solas,¹ ¹delight
That I defy both sweven and eke dream.”

And with that word he flew down from the beam,
For it was day, and eke his hennes all;

And with a chuck he gan them for to call,
For he had found a corn, lay in the yard.

Royal he was, he was no more afear'd;
He feather'd Partelote twenty time,
And as oft trode her, ere that it was prime.

He looked as it were a grim lion,
And on his toes he roamed up and down;
He deigned not to set his feet to ground;

He chucked, when he had a corn y-found,
And to him ranne then his wives all.

Thus royal, as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticleer in his pasture;

And after will I tell his aventure.

When that the month in which the world began,
That highte March, when God first maked man,

Was complete, and y-passed were also,
Since March ended, thirty days and two,

Befell that Chanticleer in all his pride,
His seven wives walking him beside,

Cast up his eyen to the brighte sun,
That in the sign of Taurus had y-run

Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more;

He knew by kind,¹ and by none other lore,² ¹nature ²learning
That it was prime, and crew with blissful steven.¹ ¹voice

“The sun,” he said, “is clomben up in heaven

Twenty degrees and one, and more y-wis.¹ ¹assuredly

Madame Partelote, my worlde's bliss,

Hearken these blissful birdes how they sing,

And see the freshe flowers how they spring;
Full is mine heart of revel and solace.”
But suddenly him fell a sorrowful case;¹ ¹casualty
For ever the latter end of joy is woe:
God wot that worldly joy is soon y-go:
And, if a rhetor¹ coude fair indite, ¹orator
He in a chronicle might it safely write,
As for ¹a sov' reign notability¹ ¹a thing supremely notable¹
Now every wise man, let him hearken me;
This story is all as true, I undertake,
As is the book of Launcelot du Lake,
That women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn again to my sentence.

A col-fox, full of sly iniquity,
That in the grove had wonned¹ yeares three, ¹dwelt
By high imagination forecast,
The same night thorough the hedges brast¹ ¹burst
Into the yard, where Chanticleer the fair
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repair;
And in a bed of wortes¹ still he lay, ¹cabbages
Till it was passed undern of the day,
Waiting his time on Chanticleer to fall:
As gladly do these homicides all,
That in awaite lie to murder men.
O false murd' rer! Rouking¹ in thy den! ¹crouching, lurking
O new Iscariot, new Ganilion!
O false dissimuler, O Greek Sinon,
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow!
O Chanticleer! accursed be the morrow
That thou into thy yard flew from the beams;¹ ¹rafters
Thou wert full well y-warned by thy dreams
That thilke day was perilous to thee.
But what that God forewot¹ must needes be, ¹foreknows
After th' opinion of certain clerkes.
Witness on him that any perfect clerk is,
That in school is great altercation
In this matter, and great disputation,
And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
But I ne cannot ¹boult it to the bren,¹ ¹examine it thoroughly ¹
As can the holy doctor Augustine,
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardine,
Whether that Godde's worthy foreweeting¹ ¹foreknowledge
¹Straineth me needly¹ for to do a thing ¹forces me¹

(Needly call I simple necessity),
Or elles if free choice be granted me
To do that same thing, or do it not,
Though God forewot¹ it ere that it was wrought; ¹knew in advance
Or if ¹his weeting straineth never a deal, ¹ his knowing constrains
But by necessity conditionel. not at all¹
I will not have to do of such mattere;
My tale is of a cock, as ye may hear,
That took his counsel of his wife, with sorrow,
To walken in the yard upon the morrow
That he had mette the dream, as I you told.
Womane's counsels be full often cold;¹ ¹mischievous, unwise
Womane's counsel brought us first to woe,
And made Adam from Paradise to go,
There as he was full merry and well at case.
But, for I n'ot¹ to whom I might displease ¹know not
If I counsel of women woulde blame,
Pass over, for I said it in my game.¹ ¹jest
Read authors, where they treat of such mattere
And what they say of women ye may hear.
These be the cocke's wordes, and not mine;
I can no harm of no woman divine.¹ ¹conjecture, imagine
Fair in the sand, to bathe¹ her merrily, ¹bask
Lies Partelote, and all her sisters by,
Against the sun, and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;
For Physiologus saith sickerly,¹ ¹certainly
How that they singe well and merrily.
And so befell that, as he cast his eye
Among the wortes,¹ on a butterfly, ¹cabbages
He was ware of this fox that lay full low.
Nothing ¹ne list him thenne¹ for to crow, ¹he had no inclination¹
But cried anon "Cock! cock!" and up he start,
As man that was affrayed in his heart.
For naturally a beast desireth flee
From his contrary,¹ if be may it see, ¹enemy
Though he ¹ne'er erst¹ had soon it with his eye ¹never before¹
This Chanticleer, when he gan him espy,
He would have fled, but that the fox anon
Said, "Gentle Sir, alas! why will ye gon?
Be ye afraid of me that am your friend?
Now, certes, I were worse than any fiend,
If I to you would harm or villainy.
I am not come your counsel to espy.

But truly the cause of my coming
Was only for to hearken how ye sing;
For truly ye have as merry a steven,¹ ¹voice
As any angel hath that is in heaven;
Therewith ye have of music more feeling,
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.
My lord your father (God his soule bless)
And eke your mother of her gentleness,
Have in myne house been, to my great ease:¹ ¹satisfaction
And certes, Sir, full fain would I you please.
But, for men speak of singing, I will say,
So may I brooke¹ well mine eyen tway, ¹enjoy, possess, or use
Save you, I hearde never man so sing
As did your father in the morrowning.
Certes it was of heart all that he sung.
And, for to make his voice the more strong,
He would ¹so pain him,¹ that with both his eyen ¹make such an
exertion¹
He muste wink, so loud he woulde cryen,
And standen on his tiptoes therewithal,
And stretche forth his necke long and small.
And eke he was of such discretion,
That there was no man, in no region,
That him in song or wisdom mighte pass.
I have well read in Dan Burnel the Ass,
Among his verse, how that there was a cock
That, for¹ a prieste's son gave him a knock ¹because
Upon his leg, while he was young and nice,¹ ¹foolish
He made him for to lose his benefice.
But certain there is no comparison
Betwixt the wisdom and discretion
Of youre father, and his subtilty.
Now singe, Sir, for sainte charity,
Let see, can ye your father counterfeit?"

This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,
As man that could not his treason espy,
So was he ravish'd with his flattery.
Alas! ye lordes, many a false flattour¹ ¹flatterer
Is in your court, and many a losengeour, ¹ ¹deceiver
That please you well more, by my faith,
Than he that soothfastness¹ unto you saith. ¹truth
Read in Ecclesiast' of flattery;
Beware, ye lordes, of their treachery.

This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck, and held his eyen close,
And gan to crowe loude for the nonce
And Dan Russel the fox start up at once,
And ¹by the gorge hente¹ Chanticleer, ¹seized by the throat¹
And on his back toward the wood him bare.
For yet was there no man that him pursu'd.
O destiny, that may'st not be eschew'd!¹ ¹escaped
Alas, that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
Alas, his wife raughte¹ nought of dreams! ¹regarded
And on a Friday fell all this mischance.
O Venus, that art goddess of pleasance,
Since that thy servant was this Chanticleer
And in thy service did all his powere,
More for delight, than the world to multiply,
Why wilt thou suffer him on thy day to die?
O Gaufrid, deare master sovereign,
That, when thy worthy king Richard was slain
With shot, complainedest his death so sore,
Why n'had I now thy sentence and thy lore,
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?
(For on a Friday, soothly, slain was he),
Then would I shew you how that I could plain¹ ¹lament
For Chanticleere's dread, and for his pain.

Certes such cry nor lamentation
Was ne'er of ladies made, when Ilion
Was won, and Pyrrhus with his straighte sword,
When he had hent¹ king Priam by the beard, ¹seized
And slain him (as saith us Eneidos¹), ¹The Aeneid
As maden all the hennes in the close,¹ ¹yard
When they had seen of Chanticleer the sight.
But sov'reignly¹ Dame Partelote shrigh², ² ¹above all others
Full louder than did Hasdrubale's wife, ²shrieked
When that her husband hadde lost his life,
And that the Romans had y-burnt Carthage;
She was so full of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she start,
And burnt herselfe with a steadfast heart.
O woeful hennes! right so cried ye,
As, when that Nero burned the city
Of Rome, cried the senatores' wives,
For that their husbands losten all their lives;

Withoute guilt this Nero hath them slain.
Now will I turn unto my tale again;

The sely¹ widow, and her daughters two, ¹simple, honest
Hearde these hennes cry and make woe,
And at the doors out started they anon,
And saw the fox toward the wood is gone,
And bare upon his back the cock away:
They cried, “Out! harow! and well-away!
Aha! the fox!” and after him they ran,
And eke with staves many another man
Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot, and Garland;
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand
Ran cow and calf, and eke the very hogges
So fear’d they were for barking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke.
They ranne so, them thought their hearts would break.
They yelled as the fiendes do in hell;
The duckes cried as men would them quell;¹ ¹kill, destroy
The geese for feare flewen o’er the trees,
Out of the hive came the swarm of bees,
So hideous was the noise, ben’dicite!
Certes he, Jacke Straw, and his meinie,¹ ¹followers
Ne made never shoutes half so shrill
When that they woulden any Fleming kill,
As thilke day was made upon the fox.
Of brass they broughte beames¹ and of box, ¹trumpets
Of horn and bone, in which they blew and pooped,¹ ²tooted
And therewithal they shrieked and they hooped;
It seemed as the heaven shoulde fall

Now, goode men, I pray you hearken all;
Lo, how Fortune turneth suddenly
The hope and pride eke of her enemy.
This cock, that lay upon the fox’s back,
In all his dread unto the fox he spake,
And saide, “Sir, if that I were as ye,
Yet would I say (as wisly¹ God help me), ¹surely
‘Turn ye again, ye proude churles all;
A very pestilence upon you fall.
Now am I come unto the woode’s side,
Maugre your head, the cock shall here abide;
I will him eat, in faith, and that anon.’”
The fox answer’d, “In faith it shall be done:”
And, as he spake the word, all suddenly

The cock brake from his mouth deliverly,¹ ¹nimble
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw that the cock was gone,
“Alas!” quoth he, “O Chanticleer, alas!
I have,” quoth he, “y-done to you trespass,¹ ¹offence
Inasmuch as I maked you afear’d,
When I you hent,¹ and brought out of your yard; ¹took
But, Sir, I did it in no wick’ intent;
Come down, and I shall tell you what I meant.
I shall say sooth to you, God help me so.”
“Nay then,” quoth he, “I shrew¹ us both the two, ¹curse
And first I shrew myself, both blood and bones,
If thou beguile me oftener than once.
Thou shalt no more through thy flattery
Do¹ me to sing and winke with mine eye; ¹cause
For he that winketh when he shoulde see,
All wilfully, God let him never the.”¹ ¹thrive
“Nay,” quoth the fox; “but God give him mischance
That is so indiscreet of governance,
That jangleth¹ when that he should hold his peace.” ¹chatters

Lo, what it is for to be reckeless
And negligent, and trust on flattery.
But ye that holde this tale a folly,
As of a fox, or of a cock or hen,
Take the morality thereof, good men.
For Saint Paul saith, That all that written is,
¹To our doctrine it written is y-wis.¹ ¹is surely written for
Take the fruit, and let the chaff be still. our instruction¹

Now goode God, if that it be thy will,
As saith my Lord, so make us all good men;
And bring us all to thy high bliss. Amen.

THE EPILOGUE

“Sir Nunne’s Priest,” our hoste said anon,
“Y-blessed be thy breech, and every stone;
This was a merry tale of Chanticleer.
But by my truth, if thou wert seculere,¹ ¹a layman
Thou wouldest be a treadefowl¹ aright; ¹cock
For if thou have courage as thou hast might,
Thee were need of hennes, as I ween,
Yea more than seven times seventeen.

See, whate brawnes¹ hath this gentle priest, ¹muscles, sinews
So great a neck, and such a large breast
He looketh as a sperhawk with his eyen
Him needeth not his colour for to dyen
With Brazil, nor with grain of Portugale.
But, Sir, faire fall you for your tale’.”
And, after that, he with full merry cheer
Said to another, as ye shall hear.

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Troilus and Criseyde: Opening of Book II

Owt of this blake wawes for to saylle,
O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere;
For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle,
Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere.
This see clepe I the tempestous matere
Of disespere that Troilus was inne;
But now of hope the kalendes bygynne.
O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
10 To ryme wel this book til I have do;
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.
Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse,
That of no sentement I this endite,
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write.
Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame
Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,
Disblameth me if any word be lame,
For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.
Ek though I speke of love unfelyngly,
20 No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is.
A bynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis.
Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.
And forthi if it happe in any wyse,
30 That here be any lovere in this place
That herketh, as the storie wol devise,
How Troilus com to his lady grace,
And thenketh, “So nold I nat love purchase,”
Or wondreth on his speche or his doynge,
I noot; but it is me no wonderynge.
For every wight which that to Rome went
Halt nat o path, or alwey o manere;
Ek in som lond were al the game shent,
If that they ferde in love as men don here,
40 As thus, in opyn doynge or in chere,
In visyng in forme, or seyde hire sawes;
Forthi men seyn, “Ecch contree hath his lawes.”

Ek scarsly ben ther in this place thre
That have in love seid lik, and don, in al;
For to thi purpos this may liken the,
And the right nought; yet al is seid or schal;
Ek som men grave in tree, some in ston wal,
As it bitit. But syn I have bigonne,
Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne.

50 In May, that moder is of monthes glade,
That fresshe floures, blew and white and rede,
Ben quike agayn, that wynter dede made,
And ful of bawme is fletyng every mede,
Whan Phebus doth his bryghte bemes sprede
Right in the white Bole, it so bitidde,
As I shal synge, on Mayes day the thrydde,
That Pandarus, for al his wise speche,
Felt ek his part of loves shotes keene,
That, koude he nevere so wel of lovyng preche,
60 It made his hewe a-day ful ofte greene.

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John Gower

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Concerning the Philosophers Stone

John Gower (c. 1330-1408)

And also with great diligence,
Thei fonde thilke Experience:
Which cleped is Alconomie,
Whereof the Silver multiplie;
Thei made, and eke the Gold also.
And for to telle howe itt is so:
Of bodies seven in Speciall,
With fowre Spirites joynt withall;
Stant the substance of this matere,
The bodies which I speke of here,
Of the Plannets ben begonne,
The Gold is titled to the Sonne:
The Moone of Silver hath hi part,
And Iron that stonde uppon Mart:
The Leed after Saturne groweth,
And Jupiter the Brasse bestoweth;
The Copper sette is to Venus:
And to his part Mercurius
Hath the Quicksilver, as it falleth,
The which after the Boke it calleth,
Is first of thilke foure named
Of Spirits, which be proclymed,
And the Spirite which is seconde,
In Sal Armoniake is founde:
The third Spirite Sulphur is,
The fourth Sewende after this,
Arcennium by name is hotte
With blowyng, and with fires hote:
In these things which I say,
Thei worchen by divers waye.
For as the Philosopher tolde,
Of Gold and Sylver thei ben holde,
Two Principall extremittees,
To which all other by degrees,
Of the mettals ben accordant,
And so through kinde resemblant:
That what man couth awaie take,
The rust, of which they waxen blake,
And And the favour of the hardnes;
Thei shulden take the likeness;

Of Gold or Silver perfectly,
Bot for to worche it sykerly;
Between the Corps and the Spirite,
Er that the Metall be parfite,
In seven forms itt is sette
Of all, and if one be lette,
The remnant may not avayle,
But otherwise it maie nought fayle;
For thei by whome this Arte was founde,
To every poynt a certayne bounde,
Ordeinen that a man may finde,
This Craft is wrought by wey of kinde;
So that there is no fallace in;
But what man that this werke begyn;
He mote awaite at every tyde,
So that nothyng be left asyde.
Fyrst of Distillacion,
Forth with the Cogelacion,
Solucion, Disscencion,
And kepe in his entencion,
The poynt of Sublimacion,
And forthwith Calcinacion,
Of very Approbacion,
So that there be Fixacion,
With temperate hetes of fyer,
Tyll he the perfite Elixer,
Of thilke Philosophers Stone,
Maie gette, of which that many one
Of Philosophers, whilome write,
Of thilke Stone with other two,
Which as the Clerkes maden tho;
So as the Bokes itt recorden,
The kinde of hem I shall recorden.
These old Philosophers wise,
By wey of kynde in sondry wise;
Thre Stones made through Clergie,
The fyrst I shall specifie,
Was cleped Vegetabilis;
Of which the proper vertue is,
To mans heale to serve,
As for to keepe, and to preserve,
The body fro sickness all,
Till death of kinde upon hym fall.
The second Stone I the behote,
Is Lapis Animalis hote:

The whose vertue, is proper and couth,
For Eare and Eye, Nose and Mouth;
Whereof a man may here, and see,
And smell and tast, in his degree,
And for to feele and for to goe,
Itt helpeth a man of both two:
The witts five he undersongeth
To keepe, as it to hym belongeth.
The third Stone in speciall
by name is cleped Minerall,
Which the Mettalls of every myne,
Attempreth, till that thei ben fyne;
And pureth hem by such a wey,
That all the vice goth away,
Of Rust, of Stynke, and of Hardnes:
And when they ben of such clenness,
This minerall so as I fynde,
Transformeth all the fyrst kynde,
And maketh hem able to conceive,
Through his vertue and receive
Both in substance and in figure,
Of Gold and Silver the nature.
For thei two ben the extremittees,
To which after the propertees,
Hath every mettall his desire,
With helpe and comforte of the fyre.
Forth with this Stone as it is said,
Which to the Sonne and Moone is laide:
For to the Red, and to the White,
This Stone hath power to profite;
It maketh Multiplicacion
Of Gold and the fixacion,
It causeth and of this babite,
He doth the werke to be parfite:
Of thilke Elixer which me call
Alconomy, as is befalle
To hem, that whilome were wise;
But now it stant all otherwise:
Thei speken fast of thilke Stone,
But how to make it now wote none.
After the sooth Experience,
And nathles greate diligence,
Thei setten up thilke dede,
And spillen more then thei spede;
For alwey thei fynde a lette,

Which bringeth in povertie and Dette;
To hem that rich were to fore,
The Losse is had the Lucre is lore:
To gette a pound thei spendeth five,
I not how such a Craft shall thrive:
In the manner as it is used,
It were better be refused,
Then for to worchen upon wene,
In thinge which stant not ast thei wene:
But not for thy who that it knew,
The Science of himselfe is trew:
Upon the forme as it was founded,
Whereof the names yett be grounded;
Of hem, that first it founden out:
And thus the fame goth all about,
To such as soughten besines,
Of vertue and worthines,
Of whom if I the names call,
Hermes was one the first of all,
To whom this Art is most applied,
Geber thereof was magnified,
And Ortolane and Morien,
Among the which is Avicen.
Which founde and wrote and greate partie,
The practicke of Alconomie,
Whose bokes plainlie as thei stonde,
Upon this Craft few understonde.
But yet to put hem in assay,
There be full manie now a day,
That knowen litle that thei mene,
It is not one to wite and wene,
In forme of words thei it trete;
But yet thei failen of beyet.
For of to much, or of to lite,
There is algate found a wite:
So that thei follow not the line,
Of the perfect Medicine,
Which grounded is upon nature;
But thei that written the Scripture;
Of Greke, Arabe, and Caldee,
Thei were of such Auctoritee,
That thei firste founden out the wey,
Of all that thou hast herd me sey,
Whereof the Cronicke of her Lore,

Shall stonde in price for evermore.

List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

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Confessio Amantis. Incipit Liber Primus

John Gower (c. 1330-1408)

Naturatus amor nature legibus orbem
Subdit, et vnanimes concitat esse feras:
Huius enim mundi Princeps amor esse videtur,
Cuius eget diues, pauper et omnis ope.
Sunt in agone pares amor et fortuna, que cecas
Plebis ad insidias vertit vterque rotas.
Est amor egra salus, vexata quies, pius error,
Bellica pax, vulnus dulce, suaue malum.
I may noght strecche up to the hevene
Min hand, ne setten al in evene
This world, which evere is in balance:
It stant noght in my sufficance
So grete thinges to compasse,
Bot I mot lete it overpasse
And treten upon othre thinges.
Forthi the Stile of my writinges
Fro this day forth I thenke change
And speke of thing is noght so strange, 10
Which every kinde hath upon honde,
And wherupon the world mot stonde,
And hath don sithen it began,
And schal whil ther is any man;
And that is love, of which I mene
To trete, as after schal be sene.
In which ther can noman him reule,
For loves lawe is out of reule,
That of tomoche or of tolite
Welnyh is every man to wyte, 20
And natheles ther is noman
In al this world so wys, that can
Of love tempre the mesure,
Bot as it falth in aventure:
For wit ne strengthe may noght helpe,
And he which elles wolde him yelpe
Is rathest throwen under fote,
Ther can no wiht therof do bote.
For yet was nevere such covine,
That couthe ordeine a medicine 30
To thing which god in lawe of kinde
Hath set, for ther may noman finde

The rihte salve of such a Sor.
It hath and schal ben everemor
That love is maister wher he wile,
Ther can no lif make other skile;
For wher as evere him lest to sette,
Ther is no myht which him may lette.
Bot what schal fallen ate laste,
The sothe can no wisdom caste, 40
Bot as it falleth upon chance;
For if ther evere was balance
Which of fortune stant governed,
I may wel lieve as I am lerned
That love hath that balance on honde,
Which wol no reson understonde.
For love is blind and may nocht se,
Forthi may no certeinete
Be set upon his jugement,
Bot as the whiel aboute went 50
He yifh his graces undeserved,
And fro that man which hath him served
Fulofte he takth awaye his fees,
As he that pleieth ate Dees,
And therupon what schal befall
He not, til that the chance falle,
Wher he schal lese or he schal winne.
And thus fulofte men beginne,
That if thei wisten what it mente,
Thei wolde change al here entente. 60
And forto proven it is so,
I am miselven on of tho,
Which to this Scole am underfonge.
For it is siththe go nocht longe,
As forto speke of this matiere,
I may you telle, if ye woll hiere,
A wonder hap which me befell,
That was to me bothe hard and fell,
Touchende of love and his fortune,
The which me liketh to comune 70
And pleinely forto telle it oute.
To hem that ben lovers aboute
Fro point to point I wol declare
And wryten of my woful care,
Mi wofull day, my wofull chance,
That men mowe take remembrance
Of that thei schall hierafter rede:

For in good feith this wolde I rede,
That every man ensample take
Of wisdom which him is betake, 80
And that he wot of good aprise
To teche it forth, for such emprise
Is forto preise; and therfore I
Woll wryte and schewe al openly
How love and I togedre mette,
Wherof the world ensample fette
Mai after this, whan I am go,
Of thilke unsely jolif wo,
Whos reule stant out of the weie,
Nou glad and nou gladnesse aweie, 90
And yet it may nocht be withstonde
For oght that men may understonde.
Upon the point that is befall
Of love, in which that I am falle,
I thenke telle my matiere:
Now herkne, who that wol it hiere,
Of my fortune how that it ferde.
This enderday, as I forthferde
To walke, as I yow telle may,-
And that was in the Monthe of Maii, 100
Whan every brid hath chose his make
And thenkth his merthes forto make
Of love that he hath achieved;
Bot so was I nothing relieved,
For I was further fro my love
Than Erthe is fro the hevne above,
As forto speke of eny sped:
So wiste I me non other red,
Bot as it were a man forfare
Unto the wode I gan to fare, 110
Nocht forto singe with the briddes,
For whanne I was the wode amiddes,
I fond a swote grene pleine,
And ther I gan my wo compleigne
Wisshinge and wepinge al myn one,
For other merthes made I none.
So hard me was that ilke throwe,
That ofte sithes overthrowe
To grounde I was withoute breth;
And evere I wisshide after deth, 120
Whanne I out of my peine awok,
And caste up many a pitous lok

Unto the hevене, and seide thus:
 “O thou Cupide, O thou Venus,
 Thou god of love and thou goddesse,
 Wher is pite? wher is meknesse?
 Now doth me plainly live or dye,
 For certes such a maladie
 As I now have and longe have hadd,
 It myhte make a wisman madd, ¹³⁰
 If that it scholde longe endure.
 O Venus, queene of loves cure,
 Thou lif, thou lust, thou mannes hele,
 Behold my cause and my querele,
 And yif me som part of thi grace,
 So that I may finde in this place
 If thou be gracious or non.”
 And with that word I sawh anon
 The kyng of love and qweene bothe;
 Bot he that kyng with yhen wrothe ¹⁴⁰
 His chiere aweiward fro me caste,
 And forth he passede ate laste.
 Bot natheles er he forth wente
 A firy Dart me thoghte he hente
 And threw it thurgh myn herte rote:
 In him fond I non other bote,
 For lenger list him noght to duelle.
 Bot sche that is the Source and Welle
 Of wel or wo, that schal betide
 To hem that loven, at that tide ¹⁵⁰
 Abod, bot forto tellen hiere
 Sche cast on me no goodly chiere:
 Thus natheles to me sche seide,
 “What art thou, Sone?” and I abreide
 Riht as a man doth out of slep,
 And therof tok sche riht good kep
 And bad me nothing ben adrad:
 Bot for al that I was noght glad,
 For I ne sawh no cause why.
 And eft scheo asketh, what was I: ¹⁶⁰
 I seide, “A Caitif that lith hiere:
 What wolde ye, my Ladi diere?
 Schal I ben hol or elles dye?”
 Sche seide, “Tell thi maladie:
 What is thi Sor of which thou pleignest?
 Ne hyd it noght, for if thou feignest,
 I can do the no medicine.”

“Ma dame, I am a man of thyne,
 That in thi Court have longe served,
 And aske that I have deserved, ¹⁷⁰
 Some wele after my longe wo.”
 And sche began to loure tho,
 And seide, “Ther is manye of yow
 Faitours, and so may be that thow
 Art riht such on, and be feintise
 Seist that thou hast me do servise.”
 And natheles sche wiste wel,
 Mi world stod on an other whiel
 Withouten eny faiterie:
 Bot algate of my maladie ¹⁸⁰
 Sche bad me telle and seie hir trowthe.
 “Ma dame, if ye wolde have rowthe,”
 Quod I, “than wolde I telle yow.”
 “Sey forth,” quod sche, “and tell me how;
 Schew me thi seknesse everydiel.”
 “Ma dame, that can I do wel,
 Be so my lif therto wol laste.”
 With that hir lok on me sche caste,
 And seide: “In aunter if thou live,
 Mi will is ferst that thou be schrive; ¹⁹⁰
 And natheles how that it is
 I wot miself, bot for al this
 Unto my prest, which comth anon,
 I woll thou telle it on and on,
 Bothe all thi thoght and al thi werk.
 O Genius myn oghne Clerk,
 Com forth and hier this mannes schrifte,”
 Quod Venus tho; and I uplifte
 Min hefd with that, and gan beholde
 The selve Prest, which as sche wolde ²⁰⁰
 Was redy there and sette him down
 To hierre my confessioun.
 This worthi Prest, this holy man
 To me spekende thus began,
 And seide: “Benedicite,
 Mi Sone, of the felicite
 Of love and ek of all the wo
 Thou schalt thee schrive of bothe tuo.
 What thou er this for loves sake
 Hast felt, let nothing be forsake, ²¹⁰
 Tell pleinliche as it is befalle.”
 And with that word I gan doun falle

On knees, and with devocioun
And with full gret contricioun
I seide thanne: “Dominus,
Min holi fader Genius,
So as thou hast experience
Of love, for whos reverence
Thou schalt me schriuen at this time,
I prai the let me noght mistime ²²⁰
Mi schrifte, for I am destourbed
In al myn herte, and so contourbed,
That I ne may my wittes gete,
So schal I moche thing foryete:
Bot if thou wolt my schrifte oppose
Fro point to point, thanne I suppose,
Ther schal nothing be left behinde.
Bot now my wittes ben so blinde,
That I ne can miselven teche.”
Tho he began anon to preche, ²³⁰
And with his wordes debonaire
He seide tome softe and faire:
“Thi schrifte to oppose and hierie,
My Sone, I am assigned hierie
Be Venus the godesse above,
Whos Prest I am touchende of love.
Bot natheles for certein skile
I mot algate and nedes wile
Noght only make my spekynges
Of love, bot of othre thinges, ²⁴⁰
That touchen to the cause of vice.
For that belongeth to thoffice
Of Prest, whos ordre that I bere,
So that I wol nothing forbere,
That I the vices on and on
Ne schal thee schewen everychon;
Wherof thou myht take evidence
To reule with thi conscience.
Bot of conclusion final
Conclude I wol in special ²⁵⁰
For love, whos servant I am,
And why the cause is that I cam.
So thenke I to don bothe tuo,
Ferst that myn ordre longeth to,
The vices forto telle arewe,
Bot next above alle othre schewe
Of love I wol the propretes,

How that thei stonde be degrees
 After the disposicioun
 Of Venus, whos condicioun 260
 I moste folwe, as I am holde.
 For I with love am al withholde,
 So that the lasse I am to wyte,
 Thogh I ne conne bot a lyte
 Of othre thinges that ben wise:
 I am noght tawht in such a wise;
 For it is noght my comun us
 To speke of vices and vertus,
 Bot al of love and of his lore,
 For Venus bokes of nomore 270
 Me techen nowther text ne glose.
 Bot for als moche as I suppose
 It sit a prest to be wel thewed,
 And schame it is if he be lewed,
 Of my Presthode after the forme
 I wol thi schrifte so enforme,
 That ate leste thou schalt hiere
 The vices, and to thi matiere
 Of love I schal hem so remene,
 That thou schalt knowe what thei mene. 280
 For what a man schal axe or sein
 Touchende of schrifte, it mot be plein,
 It nedeth noght to make it queinte,
 For trowthe hise wordes wol noght peinte:
 That I wole axe of the forthi,
 My Sone, it schal be so plainly,
 That thou schalt knowe and understonde
 The pointz of schrifte how that thei stonde.”
 Between the lif and deth I herde
 This Prestes tale er I answerde, 290
 And thanne I preide him forto seie
 His will, and I it wolde obeie
 After the forme of his apprise.
 Tho spak he tome in such a wise,
 And bad me that I scholde schrive
 As touchende of my wittes fyve,
 And schape that thei were amended
 Of that I hadde hem misdispended.
 For tho be proprely the gates,
 Thurgh whiche as to the herte algates 300
 Comth alle thing unto the feire,
 Which may the mannes Soule empeire.

And now this matiere is broght inne,
Mi Sone, I thenke ferst beginne
To wite how that thin yhe hath stonde,
The which is, as I understonde,
The moste principal of alle,
Thurgh whom that peril mai befalle.
And forto speke in loves kinde,
Ful manye suche a man mai finde, ³¹⁰
Whiche evere caste aboute here yhe,
To loke if that thei myhte asprie
Fulofte thing which hem ne toucheth,
Bot only that here herte soucheth
In hindringe of an other wiht;
And thus ful many a worthi knyht
And many a lusti lady bothe
Have be fulofte sythe wrothe.
So that an yhe is as a thief
To love, and doth ful gret meschief; ³²⁰
And also for his oghne part
Fulofte thilke firy Dart
Of love, which that evere brenneth,
Thurgh him into the herte renneth:
And thus a mannes yhe ferst
Himselfe grieveth alther werst,
And many a time that he knoweth
Unto his oghne harm it groweth.
Mi Sone, herkne now forthi
A tale, to be war therby ³³⁰
Thin yhe forto kepe and warde,
So that it passe nocht his warde.
Ovide telleth in his bok
Ensample touchende of mislok,
And seith hou whilom ther was on,
A worthi lord, which Acteon
Was hote, and he was cousin nyh
To him that Thebes ferst on hyh
Up sette, which king Cadme hyhte.
This Acteon, as he wel myhte, ³⁴⁰
Above alle othre caste his chiere,
And used it fro yer to yere,
With Houndes and with grete Hornes
Among the wodes and the thornes
To make his hunting and his chace:
Where him best thoghte in every place
To finde gamen in his weie,

Ther rod he forto hunte and pleie.
So him befell upon a tide
On his hunting as he cam ride, 350
In a Forest al one he was:
He syh upon the grene gras
The faire freisshe floures springe,
He herde among the leves singe
The Throstle with the nyhtingale:
Thus er he wiste into a Dale
He cam, wher was a litel plein,
All round aboute wel besein
With buissches grene and Cedres hyhe;
And ther withinne he caste his yhe. 360
Amidd the plein he syh a welle,
So fair ther myhte noman telle,
In which Diana naked stod
To bathe and pleie hire in the flod
With many a Nimphe, which hire serveth.
Bot he his yhe away ne swerveth
Fro hire, which was naked al,
And sche was wonder wroth withal,
And him, as sche which was godesse,
Forschop anon, and the liknesse 370
Sche made him taken of an Hert,
Which was tofore hise houndes stert,
That ronne besiliche aboute
With many an horn and many a route,
That maden mochel noise and cry:
And ate laste unhappely
This Hert his oghne houndes slowhe
And him for vengance al todrowhe.
Lo now, my Sone, what it is
A man to caste his yhe amis, 380
Which Acteon hath dere aboght;
Be war forthi and do it nocht.
For ofte, who that hiede toke,
Betre is to winke than to loke.
And forto proven it is so,
Ovide the Poete also
A tale which to this matiere
Acordeth seith, as thou schalt hier.
In Metamor it telleth thus,
How that a lord which Phorce.s 390
Was hote, hadde dowhtres thre.
Bot upon here nativite

Such was the constellacion,
 That out of mannes nacion
 Fro kynde thei be so miswent,
 That to the liknesse of Serpent
 Thei were bore, and so that on
 Of hem was cleped Stellibon,
 That other soster Suriale,
 The thridde, as telleth in the tale, 400
 Medusa hihte, and natheles
 Of comun name Gorgones
 In every contre ther aboute,
 As Monstres whiche that men doute,
 Men clepen hem; and bot on yhe
 Among hem thre in pourpartie
 Thei hadde, of which thei myhte se,
 Now hath it this, now hath it sche;
 After that cause and nede it ladde,
 Be throwes ech of hem it hadde. 410
 A wonder thing yet more amis
 Ther was, wherof I telle al this:
 What man on hem his chiere caste
 And hem behield, he was als faste
 Out of a man into a Ston
 Forschape, and thus ful manyon
 Deceived were, of that thei wolde
 Misloke, wher that thei ne scholde.
 Bot Perse.s that worthi knyht,
 Whom Pallas of hir grete myht 420
 Halp, and tok him a Schield therto,
 And ek the god Mercurie also
 Lente him a swerd, he, as it fell,
 Beyende Athlans the hihe hell
 These Monstres soghte, and there he fond
 Diverse men of thilke lond
 Thurgh sihte of hem mistorned were,
 Stondende as Stones here and there.
 Bot he, which wisdom and prouesse
 Hadde of the god and the godesse, 430
 The Schield of Pallas gan embrace,
 With which he covereth sauf his face,
 Mercuries Swerd and out he drowh,
 And so he bar him that he slowh
 These dredful Monstres alle thre.
 Lo now, my Sone, advise the,
 That thou thi sihte nocht misuse:

Cast noght thin yhe upon Meduse,
That thou be torned into Ston:
For so wys man was nevere non, 440
Bot if he wel his yhe kepe
And take of fol delit no kepe,
That he with lust nys ofte nome,
Thurgh strengthe of love and overcome.
Of mislokyng how it hath ferd,
As I have told, now hast thou herd,
My goode Sone, and tak good hiede.
And overthis yet I thee rede
That thou be war of thin heringe,
Which to the Herte the tidinge 450
Of many a vanite hath broght,
To tarie with a mannes thoght.
And natheles good is to hiere
Such thing wherof a man may lere
That to vertu is acordant,
And toward al the remenant
Good is to torne his Ere fro;
For elles, bot a man do so,
Him may fulofte mysbefalle.
I rede ensample amonges alle, 460
Wherof to kepe wel an Ere
It oghte pute a man in fere.
A Serpent, which that Aspidis
Is cleped, of his kynde hath this,
That he the Ston noblest of alle,
The which that men Carbuncle calle,
Berth in his hed above on heihte.
For which whan that a man be sleyhte,
The Ston to winne and him to daunte,
With his carecte him wolde enchaunte, 470
Anon as he perceiveth that,
He leith doun his on Ere al plat
Unto the ground, and halt it faste,
And ek that other Ere als faste
He stoppeth with his tail so sore,
That he the wordes lasse or more
Of his enchantement ne hiereth;
And in this wise himself he skiereth,
So that he hath the wordes weyved
And thurgh his Ere is noght deceived. 480
An othre thing, who that recordeth,
Lich unto this ensample acordeth,

Which in the tale of Troie I finde.
Sirenes of a wonder kynde
Ben Monstres, as the bokes tellen,
And in the grete Se thei duellen:
Of body bothe and of visage
Lik unto wommen of yong age
Up fro the Navele on hih thei be,
And doun benethe, as men mai se, 490
Thei bere of fisshes the figure.
And overthis of such nature
Thei ben, that with so swete a stevene
Lik to the melodie of hevene
In wommanysshe vois thei singe,
With notes of so gret likinge,
Of such mesure, of such musike,
Wherof the Schipes thei beswike
That passen be the costes there.
For whan the Schipmen leie an Ere 500
Unto the vois, in here avys
Thei wene it be a Paradys,
Which after is to hem an helle.
For reson may nocht with hem duelle,
Whan thei tho grete lustes hiere;
Thei conne nocht here Schipes stiere,
So besiliche upon the note
Thei herkne, and in such wise assote,
That thei here rihte cours and weie
Foryete, and to here Ere obeie, 510
And seilen til it so befalle
That thei into the peril falle,
Where as the Schipes be todrawe,
And thei ben with the Monstres slawe.
Bot fro this peril natheles
With his wisdom king Uluxes
Ascapeth and it overpasseth;
For he tofor the hond compasseth
That noman of his compaignie
Hath pouer unto that folie 520
His Ere for no lust to caste;
For he hem stoppede alle faste,
That non of hem mai hiere hem singe.
So whan they comen forth seilinge,
Ther was such governance on honde,
That thei the Monstres have withstonde
And slain of hem a gret partie.

Thus was he sauf with his navie,
 This wise king, thurgh governance.
 Wherof, my Sone, in remembrance 530
 Thou myht ensample taken hiere,
 As I have told, and what thou hiere
 Be wel war, and yif no credence,
 Bot if thou se more evidence.
 For if thou woldest take kepe
 And wisly cowthest warde and kepe
 Thin yhe and Ere, as I have spoke,
 Than haddest thou the gates stoke
 Fro such Sotie as comth to winne
 Thin hertes wit, which is withinne, 540
 Wherof that now thi love exceedeth
 Measure, and many a peine bredeth.
 Bot if thou cowthest sette in reule
 Tho tuo, the thre were eth to reule:
 Forthi as of thi wittes five
 I wole as now nomore schryve,
 Bot only of these ilke tuo.
 Tell me therfore if it be so,
 Hast thou thin yhen oght mistorowe?
 Mi fader, ye, I am beknowe, 550
 I have hem cast upon Meduse,
 Therof I may me nocht excuse:
 Min herte is growen into Ston,
 So that my lady therupon
 Hath such a priente of love grave,
 That I can nocht miselve save.
 What seist thou, Sone, as of thin Ere?
 Mi fader, I am gultyf there;
 For whanne I may my lady hiere,
 Mi wit with that hath lost his Stiere: 560
 I do nocht as Uluxes dede,
 Bot falle anon upon the stede,
 Wher as I se my lady stonde;
 And there, I do yow understonde,
 I am topulled in my thought,
 So that of reson leveth nocht,
 Wherof that I me mai defende.
 My goode Sone, god thamende:
 For as me thenketh be thi speche
 Thi wittes ben riht feer to seche. 570
 As of thin Ere and of thin yhe
 I woll nomore specefie,

Bot I woll axen overthis
Of othre thing how that it is.
Mi Sone, as I thee schal enforme,
Ther ben yet of an other forme
Of dedly vices sevene applied,
Wherof the herte is ofte plied
To thing which after schal him grieve.
The ferste of hem thou schalt believe 580
Is Pride, which is principal,
And hath with him in special
Ministres five ful diverse,
Of whiche, as I the schal reherse,
The ferste is seid Ypocrisie.
If thou art of his compaignie,
Tell forth, my Sone, and schrif the clene.
I wot noght, fader, what ye mene:
Bot this I wolde you beseche,
That ye me be som weie teche 590
What is to ben an ypocrite;
And thanne if I be forto wyte,
I wol beknowen, as it is.
Mi Sone, an ypocrite is this,-
A man which feigneth conscience,
As thogh it were al innocence,
Withoute, and is noght so withinne;
And doth so for he wolde winne
Of his desir the vein astat.
And whanne he comth anon therat, 600
He scheweth thanne what he was,
The corn is torned into gras,
That was a Rose is thanne a thorn,
And he that was a Lamb befor
Is thanne a Wolf, and thus malice
Under the colour of justice
Is hid; and as the poeple telleth,
These ordres witen where he duelleth,
As he that of here conseil is,
And thilke world which thei er this 610
Forsoken, he drawth in ayein:
He clotheth richesse, as men sein,
Under the simplesce of poverte,
And doth to seme of gret decerte
Thing which is litel worth withinne:
He seith in open, fy! to Sinne,
And in secre ther is no vice

Of which that he nis a Norrice:
And evere his chiere is sobre and softe,
And where he goth he blesseth ofte, 620
Wherof the blinde world he dreccheth.
Bot yet al only he ne streccheth
His reule upon religioun,
Bot next to that condicioun
In suche as clepe hem holy cherche
It scheweth ek how he can werche
Among tho wyde furred hodes,
To geten hem the worldes goodes.
And thei hemself ben thilke same
That setten most the world in blame, 630
Bot yet in contraire of her lore
Ther is nothing thei loven more;
So that semende of liht thei werke
The dedes whiche are inward derke.
And thus this double Ypocrisie
With his devolte apparantie
A viser set upon his face,
Wherof toward this worldes grace
He semeth to be riht wel thewed,
And yit his herte is al beschrewed. 640
Bot natheles he stant believed,
And hath his pourpos ofte achieved
Of worschipe and of worldes welthe,
And takth it, as who seith, be stelthe
Thurgh coverture of his fallas.
And riht so in semblable cas
This vice hath ek his officers
Among these othre seculers
Of grete men, for of the smale
As for tacompte he set no tale, 650
Bot thei that passen the comune
With suche him liketh to comune,
And where he seith he wol socoure
The poeple, there he woll devoure;
For now aday is manyon
Which spekth of Peter and of John
And thenketh Judas in his herte.
Ther schal no worldes good asterte
His hond, and yit he yifthe almesse
And fasteth ofte and hiereth Messe: 660
With mea culpa, which he seith,
Upon his brest fullofte he leith

His hond, and cast upward his yhe,
As thogh he Cristes face syhe;
So that it seemeth ate syhte,
As he al one alle othre myhte
Rescoue with his holy bede.
Bot yet his herte in other stede
Among hise bedes most devoute
Goth in the worldes cause aboute, 670
How that he myhte his warisoun
Encresce. And in comparisoun
Ther ben lovers of such a sort,
That feignen hem an humble port,
And al is bot Ypocrisie,
Which with deceipte and flaterie
Hath many a worthi wif beguiled.
For whanne he hath his tunge affiled,
With softe speche and with lesinge,
Forth with his fals pitous lokynge, 680
He wolde make a womman wene
To gon upon the faire grene,
Whan that sche falleth in the Mir.
For if he may have his desir,
How so falle of the remenant,
He halt no word of covenant;
Bot er the time that he spede,
Ther is no sleihte at thilke nede,
Which eny loves faitour mai,
That he ne put it in assai, 690
As him belongeth forto done.
The colour of the reyni Mone
With medicine upon his face
He set, and thanne he axeth grace,
As he which hath sieknesse feigned.
Whan his visage is so desteigned,
With yhe upcast on hire he siketh,
And many a contenance he piketh,
To bringen hire in to believe
Of thing which that he wolde achieve, 700
Wherof he berth the pale hewe;
And for he wolde seme trewe,
He makth him siek, whan he is heil.
Bot whanne he berth lowest the Seil,
Thanne is he swiftest to beguile
The womman, which that ilke while
Set upon him feith or credence.

Mi Sone, if thou thi conscience
Entamed hast in such a wise,
In schrifte thou thee myht advise 710
And telle it me, if it be so.
Min holy fader, certes no.
As forto feigne such sieknesse
It nedeth noght, for this witesse
I take of god, that my corage
Hath ben mor siek than my visage.
And ek this mai I wel avowe,
So lowe cowthe I nevere bowe
To feigne humilite withoute,
That me ne leste betre loute 720
With alle the thoghtes of myn herte;
For that thing schal me nevere asterte,
I speke as to my lady diere,
To make hire eny feigned chiere.
God wot wel there I lye noght,
Mi chiere hath be such as my thoght;
For in good feith, this lieveth wel,
Mi will was betre a thousandel
Than eny chiere that I cowthe.
Bot, Sire, if I have in my yowthe 730
Don other wise in other place,
I put me therof in your grace:
For this excusen I ne schal,
That I have elles overal
To love and to his compaignie
Be plein withoute Ypocrisie;
Bot ther is on the which I serve,
Although I may no thonk deserve,
To whom yet nevere into this day
I seide onlyche or ye or nay, 740
Bot if it so were in my thoght.
As touchende othre seie I noght
That I nam somdel forto wyte
Of that ye clepe an ypocrite.
Mi Sone, it sit wel every wiht
To kepe his word in trowthe upryht
Towardes love in alle wise.
For who that wolde him wel advise
What hath befalle in this matiere,
He scholde noght with feigned chiere 750
Deceive Love in no degre.
To love is every herte fre,

Bot in deceipte if that thou feignest
 And therupon thi lust atteignest,
 That thou hast wonne with thi wyle,
 Thogh it thee like for a whyle,
 Thou schalt it afterward repente.
 And forto prove myn entente,
 I finde ensample in a Cronique
 Of hem that love so beswike. 760
 It fell be olde daies thus,
 Whil themperour Tiberius
 The Monarchie of Rome ladde,
 Ther was a worthi Romein hadde
 A wif, and sche Pauline hihte,
 Which was to every mannes sihte
 Of al the Cite the faireste,
 And as men seiden, ek the beste.
 It is and hath ben evere yit,
 That so strong is no mannes wit, 770
 Which thurgh beaute ne mai be drawe
 To love, and stonde under the lawe
 Of thilke bore frele kinde,
 Which makth the hertes yhen blinde,
 Wher no reson mai be comuned:
 And in this wise stod fortunéd
 This tale, of which I wolde mene;
 This wif, which in hire lustes grene
 Was fair and freissh and tendre of age,
 Sche may nocht lette the corage 780
 Of him that wole on hire assote.
 Ther was a Duck, and he was hote
 Mundus, which hadde in his baillie
 To lede the chivalerie
 Of Rome, and was a worthi knyht;
 Bot yet he was nocht of such myht
 The strengthe of love to withstonde,
 That he ne was so broght to honde,
 That malgre wher he wole or no,
 This yonge wif he loveth so, 790
 That he hath put al his assay
 To wyne thing which he ne may
 Gete of hire graunt in no manere,
 Be yifte of gold ne be preiere.
 And whanne he syh that be no mede
 Toward hir love he myhte spede,
 Be sleyhte feigned thanne he wroghte;

And therupon he him bethoghte
How that ther was in the Cite
A temple of such auctorite, 800
To which with gret Devocioun
The noble wommen of the toun
Most comunliche a pelrinage
Gon forto preie thilke ymage
Which the godesse of childinge is,
And cleped was be name Ysis:
And in hire temple thanne were,
To reule and to ministre there
After the lawe which was tho,
Above alle othre Prestes tuo. 810
This Duck, which thoghte his love gete,
Upon a day hem tuo to mete
Hath bede, and thei come at his heste;
Wher that thei hadde a riche feste,
And after mete in prive place
This lord, which wolde his thonk purchase,
To ech of hem yaf thanne a yifte,
And spak so that be weie of schrifte
He drowh hem unto his covine,
To helpe and schape how he Pauline 820
After his lust deceive myhte.
And thei here trowthes bothe plyhte,
That thei be nyhte hire scholden wynne
Into the temple, and he therinne
Schal have of hire al his entente:
And thus acorded forth thei wente.
Now lest thurgh which ypocrisie
Ordeigned was the tricherie,
Wherof this ladi was deceived.
These Prestes hadden wel conceived 830
That sche was of gret holinesse;
And with a contrefet simplesse,
Which hid was in a fals corage,
Feignende an hevenely message
Thei come and seide unto hir thus:
“Pauline, the god Anubus
Hath sent ous bothe Prestes hierre,
And seith he woll to thee appiere
Be nyhtes time himself alone,
For love he hath to thi persone: 840
And therupon he hath ous bede,
That we in Ysis temple a stede

Honestely for thee pourveie,
Wher thou be nyhte, as we thee seie,
Of him schalt take avisioun.
For upon thi condicioun,
The which is chaste and ful of feith,
Such pris, as he ous tolde, he leith,
That he wol stonde of thin acord;
And forto bere hierof record ⁸⁵⁰
He sende ous hider bothe tuo.”
Glad was hire innocence tho
Of suche wordes as sche herde,
With humble chiere and thus answerde,
And seide that the goddes wille
Sche was al redy to fulfille,
That be hire housebondes leve
Sche wolde in Ysis temple at eve
Upon hire goddes grace abide,
To serven him the nyhtes tide. ⁸⁶⁰
The Prestes tho gon hom ayein,
And sche goth to hire sovereign,
Of goddes wille and as it was
Sche tolde him al the pleine cas,
Wherof he was deceived eke,
And bad that sche hire scholde meke
Al hol unto the goddes heste.
And thus sche, which was al honeste
To godward after hire entente,
At nyht unto the temple wente, ⁸⁷⁰
Wher that the false Prestes were;
And thei receiven hire there
With such a tokne of holinesse,
As thogh thei syhen a godesse,
And al withinne in prive place
A softe bedd of large space
Thei hadde mad and encourtined,
Wher sche was afterward engined.
Bot sche, which al honour supposeth,
The false Prestes thanne opposeth, ⁸⁸⁰
And axeth be what observance
Sche myhte most to the plesance
Of godd that nyhtes reule kepe:
And thei hire bidden forto slepe
Liggende upon the bedd alofte,
For so, thei seide, al stille and softe
God Anubus hire wolde awake.

The conseil in this wise take,
The Prestes fro this lady gon;
And sche, that wiste of guile non, 890
In the manere as it was seid
To slepe upon the bedd is leid,
In hope that sche scholde achieve
Thing which stod thanne upon bilieve,
Fulfilde of alle holinesse.
Bot sche hath failed, as I gesse,
For in a closet faste by
The Duck was hid so prively
That sche him myhte nocht perceive;
And he, that thoghte to deceive, 900
Hath such arrai upon him nome,
That whanne he wolde unto hir come,
It scholde semen at hire yhe
As thogh sche verrailiche syhe
God Anubus, and in such wise
This ypocrite of his queintise
Awaiteth evere til sche slepte.
And thanne out of his place he crepte
So stille that sche nothing herde,
And to the bedd stalkende he ferde, 910
And sodeinly, er sche it wiste,
Beclipt in armes he hire kiste:
Wherof in wommanysshe drede
Sche wok and nyste what to rede;
Bot he with softe wordes milde
Conforteth hire and seith, with childe
He wolde hire make in such a kynde
That al the world schal have in mynde
The worschipe of that ilke Sone;
For he schal with the goddes wone, 920
And ben himself a godd also.
With suche wordes and with mo,
The whiche he feigneth in his speche,
This lady wit was al to seche,
As sche which alle trowthe weneth:
Bot he, that alle untrowthe meneth,
With blinde tales so hire ladde,
That all his wille of hire he hadde.
And whan him thoghte it was ynowh,
Ayein the day he him withdrowh 930
So prively that sche ne wiste
Wher he becom, bot as him liste

Out of the temple he goth his weie.
 And sche began to bidde and preie
 Upon the bare ground knelende,
 And after that made hire offrende,
 And to the Prestes yiftes grete
 Sche yaf, and homward be the Strete.
 The Duck hire mette and seide thus:
 “The myhti godd which Anubus ⁹⁴⁰
 Is hote, he save the, Pauline,
 For thou art of his discipline
 So holy, that no mannes myht
 Mai do that he hath do to nyht
 Of thing which thou hast evere eschuiet.
 Bot I his grace have so poursuiet,
 That I was mad his lieutenant:
 Forthi be weie of covenant
 Fro this day forth I am al thin,
 And if thee like to be myn, ⁹⁵⁰
 That stant upon thin oghne wille.”
 Sche herde his tale and bar it stille,
 And hom sche wente, as it befell,
 Into hir chambre, and ther sche fell
 Upon hire bedd to wepe and crie,
 And seide: “O derke ypocrisie,
 Thurgh whos dissimilacion
 Of fals ymaginacion
 I am thus wickedly deceived!
 Bot that I have it aperceived ⁹⁶⁰
 I thonke unto the goddes alle;
 For thogh it ones be befalle,
 It schal nevere eft whil that I live,
 And thilke avou to godd I yive.”
 And thus wepende sche compleigneth,
 Hire faire face and al desteigneth
 With wofull teres of hire ije,
 So that upon this agonie
 Hire housebonde is inne come,
 And syh how sche was overcome ⁹⁷⁰
 With sorwe, and axeth what hire eileth.
 And sche with that herself beweileth
 Welmore than sche dede afore,
 And seide, “Helas, wifhode is lore
 In me, which whilom was honeste,
 I am non other than a beste,
 Now I defouled am of tuo.”

And as sche myhte speke tho,
Aschamed with a pitous onde
Sche tolde unto hir housebonde 980
The sothe of al the hole tale,
And in hire speche ded and pale
Sche swouneth welnyh to the laste.
And he hire in hise armes faste
Uphield, and ofte swor his oth
That he with hire is nothing wroth,
For wel he wot sche may ther noght:
Bot natheles withinne his thoght
His herte stod in sori plit,
And seide he wolde of that despit 990
Be venged, how so evere it falle,
And sende unto hise frendes alle.
And whan thei weren come in fere,
He tolde hem upon this matiere,
And axeth hem what was to done:
And thei avised were sone,
And seide it thoghte hem for the beste
To sette ferst his wif in reste,
And after pleigne to the king
Upon the matiere of this thing. 1000
Tho was this wofull wif confortid
Be alle weies and desported,
Til that sche was somdiel amended;
And thus a day or tuo despended,
The thridde day sche goth to pleigne
With many a worthi Citezeine,
And he with many a Citezein.
Whan themperour it herde sein,
And knew the falshed of the vice,
He seide he wolde do justice: 1010
And ferst he let the Prestes take,
And for thei scholde it noght forsake,
He put hem into questioun;
Bot thei of the suggestioun
Ne couthen noght a word refuse,
Bot for thei wolde hemself excuse,
The blame upon the Duck thei leide.
Bot therayein the conseil seide
That thei be noght excused so,
For he is on and thei ben tuo, 1020
And tuo han more wit then on,
So thilke excusement was non.

And over that was seid hem eke,
That whan men wolden vertu seke,
Men scholde it in the Prestes finde;
Here ordre is of so hyh a kinde,
That thei be Duistres of the weie:
Forthi, if eny man forsueie
Thurgh hem, thei be nocht excusable.
And thus be lawe resonable 1030
Among the wise jugges there
The Prestes bothe dampned were,
So that the prive tricherie
Hid under fals Ipocrisie
Was thanne al openliche schewed,
That many a man hem hath beschrewed.
And whan the Prestes weren dede,
The temple of thilke horrible dede
Thei thoghten purge, and thilke ymage,
Whos cause was the pelrinage, 1040
Thei drowen out and als so faste
Fer into Tibre thei it caste,
Wher the Rivere it hath defied:
And thus the temple purified
Thei have of thilke horrible Sinne,
Which was that time do therinne.
Of this point such was the juisse,
Bot of the Duck was other wise:
For he with love was bestad,
His dom was nocht so harde lad; 1050
For Love put reson aweie
And can nocht se the rihte weie.
And be this cause he was respited,
So that the deth him was acquitted,
Bot for al that he was exiled,
For he his love hath so beguiled,
That he schal nevere come ayein:
For who that is to trowthe unplein,
He may nocht failen of vengance.
And ek to take remembrance 1060
Of that Ypocrisie hath wrought
On other half, men scholde nocht
To lihtly lieve al that thei hiere,
Bot thanne scholde a wisman stiere
The Schip, whan suche wyndes blowe:
For ferst thogh thei beginne lowe,
At ende thei be nocht menable,

Bot al tobreken Mast and Cable,
 So that the Schip with sodein blast,
 Whan men lest wene, is overcast; 1070
 As now fulofte a man mai se:
 And of old time how it hath be
 I finde a gret experience,
 Wherof to take an evidence
 Good is, and to be war also
 Of the peril, er him be wo.
 Of hem that ben so derk withinne,
 At Troie also if we beginne,
 Ipocrisie it hath betrayed:
 For whan the Greks hadde al assaied, 1080
 And founde that be no bataille
 Ne be no Siege it myhte availe
 The toun to winne thurgh prouesse,
 This vice feigned of simplesce
 Thurgh sleyhte of Calcas and of Crise
 It wan be such a maner wise.
 An Hors of Bras thei let do forge
 Of such entaile, of such a forge,
 That in this world was nevere man
 That such an other werk began. 1090
 The crafti werkman Epius
 It made, and forto telle thus,
 The Greks, that thoghten to beguile
 The kyng of Troie, in thilke while
 With Anthenor and with Enee,
 That were bothe of the Cite
 And of the conseil the wiseste,
 The richeste and the myhtieste,
 In prive place so thei trete
 With fair beheste and yiftes grete 1100
 Of gold, that thei hem have engined;
 Tokedre and whan thei be covined,
 Thei feignen forto make a pes,
 And under that yit natheles
 Thei schopen the destruccioun
 Bothe of the kyng and of the toun.
 And thus the false pees was take
 Of hem of Grece and undertake,
 And therupon thei founde a weie,
 Wher strengthe myhte noght aweie, 1110
 That sleihte scholde helpe thanne;
 And of an ynche a large spanne

Be colour of the pees thei made,
 And tolden how thei weren glade
 Of that thei stoden in acord;
 And for it schal ben of record,
 Unto the kyng the Gregois seiden,
 Be weie of love and this thei preiden,
 As thei that wolde his thonk deserve,
 A Sacrifice unto Minerve, ¹¹²⁰
 The pes to kepe in good entente,
 Thei mosten offre er that thei wente.
 The kyng conseiled in this cas
 Be Anthenor and Eneas
 Therto hath yoven his assent:
 So was the pleine trowthe blent
 Thurgh contrefet Ipocrisie
 Of that thei scholden sacrificie.
 The Greks under the holinesse
 Anon with alle besinesse ¹¹³⁰
 Here Hors of Bras let faire dihte,
 Which was to sen a wonder sihte;
 For it was trapped of himselfe,
 And hadde of smale whieles twelve,
 Upon the whiche men ynowe
 With craft toward the toun it drowe,
 And goth glistrende ayein the Sunne.
 Tho was ther joie ynowh begunne,
 For Troie in gret devocioun
 Cam also with processiou ¹¹⁴⁰
 Ayein this noble Sacrifise
 With gret honour, and in this wise
 Unto the gates thei it broghte.
 Bot of here entre whan thei soghte,
 The gates weren al to smale;
 And therupon was many a tale,
 Bot for the worschipe of Minerve,
 To whom thei comen forto serve,
 Thei of the toun, whiche understode
 That al this thing was do for goode, ¹¹⁵⁰
 For pes, wherof that thei ben glade,
 The gates that Neptunus made
 A thousand wynter ther tofore,
 Thei have anon tobroke and tore;
 The stronge walles doun thei bete,
 So that in to the large strete
 This Hors with gret solempnite

Was broght withinne the Cite,
And offred with gret reverence,
Which was to Troie an evidence 1160
Of love and pes for everemo.
The Gregois token leve tho
With al the hole felaschipe,
And forth thei wenten into Schipe
And crossen seil and made hem yare,
Anon as thogh thei wolden fare:
Bot whan the blake wynter nyht
Withoute Mone or Sterre lyht
Bederked hath the water Stronde,
Al prively thei gon to londe 1170
Ful armed out of the navie.
Synon, which mad was here aspie
Withinne Troie, as was conspired,
Whan time was a tokne hath fired;
And thei with that here weie holden,
And comen in riht as thei wolden,
Ther as the gate was tobroke.
The pourpos was full take and spoke:
Er eny man may take kepe,
Whil that the Cite was aslepe, 1180
Thei slowen al that was withinne,
And token what thei myhten wynne
Of such good as was sufficant,
And brenden up the remenant.
And thus cam out the tricherie,
Which under fals Ypocrisie
Was hid, and thei that wende pees
Tho myhten finde no rele
Of thilke swerd which al devoureth.
Fulofte and thus the swete soureth, 1190
Whan it is knowe to the tast:
He spilleth many a word in wast
That schal with such a poeple trete;
For whan he weneth most beyete,
Thanne is he schape most to lese.
And riht so if a womman chese
Upon the wordes that sche hiereth
Som man, whan he most trewe appiereth,
Thanne is he forthest fro the trowthe:
Bot yit fulofte, and that is rowthe, 1200
Thei speden that ben most untrew
And loven every day a newe,

Wherof the lief is after loth
And love hath cause to be wroth.
Bot what man that his lust desireth
Of love, and therupon conspireth
With wordes feigned to deceive,
He schal nocht faile to receive
His peine, as it is ofte sene.
Forthi, my Sone, as I thee mene, ¹²¹⁰
It sit the wel to taken hiede
That thou eschuie of thi manhiede
Ipocrisie and his semblant,
That thou ne be nocht deceivant,
To make a womman to believe
Thing which is nocht in thi bilieve:
For in such feint Ipocrisie
Of love is al the tricherie,
Thurgh which love is deceived ofte;
For feigned semblant is so softe, ¹²²⁰
Unethes love may be war.
Forthi, my Sone, as I wel dar,
I charge thee to fle that vice,
That many a womman hath mad nice;
Bot lok thou dele nocht withal.
Iwiss, fader, nomor I schal.
Now, Sone, kep that thou hast swore:
For this that thou hast herd before
Is seid the ferste point of Pride:
And next upon that other side, ¹²³⁰
To schryve and speken overthis
Touchende of Pride, yit ther is
The point seconde, I thee behote,
Which Inobedience is hote.
This vice of Inobedience
Ayein the reule of conscience
Al that is humble he desalloweth,
That he toward his god ne boweth
After the lawes of his heste.
Nocht as a man bot as a beste, ¹²⁴⁰
Which goth upon his lustes wilde,
So goth this proude vice unmylde,
That he desdeigneth alle lawe:
He not what is to be felawe,
And serve may he nocht for pride;
So is he badde on every side,
And is that selve of whom men speke,

Which wol noght bowe er that he breke.
I not if love him myhte plie,
For elles forto justefie ¹²⁵⁰
His herte, I not what mihte availe.
Forthi, my Sone, of such entaile
If that thin herte be disposed,
Tell out and let it noght be glosed:
For if that thou unbuxom be
To love, I not in what degree
Thou schalt thi goode world achieve.
Mi fader, ye schul wel believe,
The yonge whelp which is affaited
Hath noght his Maister betre awaited, ¹²⁶⁰
To couche, whan he seith “Go lowe,”
That I, anon as I may knowe
Mi ladi will, ne bowe more.
Bot other while I grucche sore
Of some thinges that sche doth,
Wherof that I woll telle soth:
For of tuo pointz I am bethoght,
That, thogh I wolde, I myhte noght
Obeie unto my ladi heste;
Bot I dar make this beheste, ¹²⁷⁰
Save only of that ilke tuo
I am unbuxom of no mo.
Whan ben tho tuo? tell on, quod he.
Mi fader, this is on, that sche
Comandeth me my mowth to close,
And that I scholde hir noght oppose
In love, of which I ofte preche,
Bot plenerliche of such a speche
Forbere, and soffren hire in pes.
Bot that ne myhte I natheles ¹²⁸⁰
For al this world obeie ywiss;
For whanne I am ther as sche is,
Though sche my tales noght alowe,
Ayein hir will yit mot I bowe,
To seche if that I myhte have grace:
Bot that thing may I noght enbrace
For ought that I can speke or do;
And yit fulofte I speke so,
That sche is wroth and seith, “Be stille.”
If I that heste schal fulfille ¹²⁹⁰
And therto ben obedient,
Thanne is my cause fully schent,

For specheles may noman spede.
So wot I noght what is to rede;
Bot certes I may noght obeie,
That I ne mot algate seie
Somwhat of that I wolde mene;
For evere it is aliche grene,
The grete love which I have,
Wherof I can noght bothe save 1300
My speche and this obedience:
And thus fulofte my silence
I breke, and is the ferste point
Wherof that I am out of point
In this, and yit it is no pride.
Now thanne upon that other side
To telle my desobeissance,
Ful sore it stant to my grevance
And may noght sinke into my wit;
For ofte time sche me bit 1310
To leven hire and chese a newe,
And seith, if I the sothe knewe
How ferr I stonde from hir grace,
I scholde love in other place.
Bot therof woll I desobeie;
For also wel sche myhte seie,
“Go tak the Mone ther it sit,”
As bringe that into my wit:
For ther was nevere rooted tre,
That stod so faste in his degre, 1320
That I ne stonde more faste
Upon hire love, and mai noght caste
Min herte away, although I wolde.
For god wot, thogh I nevere scholde
Sen hir with yhe after this day,
Yit stant it so that I ne may
Hir love out of my brest remue.
This is a wonder retenue,
That malgre wher sche wole or non
Min herte is everemore in on, 1330
So that I can non other chese,
Bot whether that I winne or lese,
I moste hire loven til I deie;
And thus I breke as be that weie
Hire hestes and hir comandinges,
Bot trewliche in non othre thinges.
Forthi, my fader, what is more

Touchende to this ilke lore
I you beseche, after the forme
That ye plainly me wolde enforme, 1340
So that I may myn herte reule
In loves cause after the reule.
Toward this vice of which we trete
Ther ben yit tweie of thilke estrete,
Here name is Murmur and Compleignte:
Ther can noman here chiere peinte,
To sette a glad semblant therinne,
For thogh fortune make hem wynne,
Yit grucchen thei, and if thei lese,
Ther is no weie forto chese, 1350
Wherof thei myhten stonde appesed.
So ben thei comunly desesed;
Ther may no welthe ne poverte
Attempren hem to the decerte
Of buxomnesse be no wise:
For ofte time thei despise
The goode fortune as the badde,
As thei no mannes reson hadde,
Thurgh pride, wherof thei be blinde.
And ryht of such a maner kinde 1360
Ther be lovers, that thogh thei have
Of love al that thei wolde crave,
Yit wol thei grucche be som weie,
That thei wol noght to love obeie
Upon the trowthe, as thei do scholde;
And if hem lacketh that thei wolde,
Anon thei falle in such a peine,
That evere unbuxomly thei pleigne
Upon fortune, and curse and crie,
That thei wol noght here hertes plie 1370
To soffre til it betre falle.
Forthi if thou amonges alle
Hast used this condicioun,
Mi Sone, in thi Confessioun
Now tell me plainly what thou art.
Mi fader, I beknowe a part,
So as ye tolden hier above
Of Murmur and Compleignte of love,
That for I se no sped comende,
Ayein fortune compleignende 1380
I am, as who seith, everemo:
And ek fulofte tyme also,

Whan so is that I se and hiere
Or hevy word or hevy chiere
Of my lady, I grucche anon;
Bot wordes dar I speke non,
Wherof sche myhte be desplesed,
Bot in myn herte I am desesed:
With many a Murmur, god it wot,
Thus drinke I in myn oghne swot, 1390
And thogh I make no semblant,
Min herte is al desobeissant;
And in this wise I me confesse
Of that ye clepe unbuxomnesse.
Now telleth what youre conseil is.
Mi Sone, and I thee rede this,
What so befall of other weie,
That thou to loves heste obeie
Als ferr as thou it myht suffise:
For ofte sithe in such a wise 1400
Obedience in love availeth,
Wher al a mannes strengthe failleth;
Wherof, if that the list to wite
In a Cronique as it is write,
A gret ensample thou myht fynde,
Which now is come to my mynde.
Ther was whilom be daies olde
A worthi knyht, and as men tolde
He was Nevoeu to themperour
And of his Court a Courteour: 1410
Wifles he was, Florent he hihte,
He was a man that mochel myhte,
Of armes he was desirous,
Chivalerous and amorous,
And for the fame of worldes speche,
Strange adventures forto seche,
He rod the Marches al aboute.
And fell a time, as he was oute,
Fortune, which may every thred
Tobreke and knette of mannes sped, 1420
Schop, as this knyht rod in a pas,
That he be strengthe take was,
And to a Castell thei him ladde,
Wher that he fewe frendes hadde:
For so it fell that ilke stounde
That he hath with a dedly wounde
Feihtende his oghne hondes slain

For that is a point of his oth,
He seith, that noman schal him wreke,
Thogh afterward men hiere speke 1520
That he par aventure deie.
And thus he wente forth his weie
Alone as knyht adventurous,
And in his thoght was curious
To wite what was best to do:
And as he rod al one so,
And cam nyh ther he wolde be,
In a forest under a tre
He syh wher sat a creature,
A lothly wommannysch figure, 1530
That forto speke of fleisch and bon
So foul yit syh he nevere non.
This knyht behield hir redely,
And as he wolde have passed by,
Sche cleped him and bad abide;
And he his horse heved aside
Tho torneth, and to hire he rod,
And there he hoveth and abod,
To wite what sche wolde mene.
And sche began him to bemene, 1540
And seide: "Florent be thi name,
Thou hast on honde such a game,
That bot thou be the betre avised,
Thi deth is schapen and devised,
That al the world ne mai the save,
Bot if that thou my conseil have."
Florent, whan he this tale herde,
Unto this olde wyht answerde
And of hir conseil he hir preide.
And sche ayein to him thus seide: 1550
"Florent, if I for the so schape,
That thou thurgh me thi deth ascape
And take worschipe of thi dede,
What schal I have to my mede?"
"What thing," quod he, "that thou wolt axe."
"I bidde nevere a betre taxe,"
Quod sche, "bot ferst, er thou be sped,
Thou schalt me leve such a wedd,
That I wol have thi trowthe in honde
That thou schalt be myn housebonde." 1560
"Nay," seith Florent, "that may nocht be."
"Ryd thanne forth thi wey," quod sche,

Bot godd wot how that sche him pleseth
 Of suche wordes as sche spekth:
 Him thenkth welnyh his herte brekth 1700
 For sorwe that he may noght fle,
 Bot if he wolde untrewē be.
 Loke, how a sek man for his hele
 Takth baldemoine with Canele,
 And with the Mirre takth the Sucre,
 Ryht upon such a maner lucre
 Stant Florent, as in this diete:
 He drinkth the bitre with the swete,
 He medleth sorwe with likyngē,
 And liveth, as who seith, deyngē; 1710
 His youthe schal be cast aweie
 Upon such on which as the weie
 Is old and lothly overal.
 Bot nede he mot that nede schal:
 He wolde algate his trowthe holde,
 As every knyght therto is holde,
 What happ so evere him is befalle:
 Thogh sche be the fouleste of alle,
 Yet to thonour of wommanhiede
 Him thoghte he scholde taken hiede; 1720
 So that for pure gentillesse,
 As he hire couthe best adresce,
 In ragges, as sche was totore,
 He set hire on his hors tofore
 And forth he takth his weie softē;
 No wonder thogh he siketh ofte.
 Bot as an oule fleth be nyhte
 Out of alle othre briddes syhte,
 Riht so this knyght on daies brode
 In clos him hield, and schop his rode 1730
 On nyhtes time, til the tyde
 That he cam there he wolde abide;
 And prively withoute noise
 He bringth this foule grete Coise
 To his Castell in such a wise
 That noman myhte hire schappe avise,
 Til sche into the chambre cam:
 Wher he his prive conseil nam
 Of suche men as he most troste,
 And tolde hem that he nedes moste 1740
 This beste wedde to his wif,
 For elles hadde he lost his lif.

The prive wommen were asent,
 That scholden ben of his assent:
 Hire ragges thei anon of drawe,
 And, as it was that time lawe,
 She hadde bath, sche hadde reste,
 And was arraied to the beste.
 Bot with no craft of combes brode
 Thei myhte hire hore lockes schode, 1750
 And sche ne wolde nocht be schore
 For no conseil, and thei therfore,
 With such atyr as tho was used,
 Ordeinen that it was excused,
 And hid so crafteliche aboute,
 That noman myhte sen hem oute.
 Bot when sche was fulliche arraied
 And hire atyr was al assaied,
 Tho was sche foulere on to se:
 Bot yit it may non other be, 1760
 Thei were wedded in the nyht;
 So wo begon was nevere knyht
 As he was thanne of mariage.
 And sche began to pleie and rage,
 As who seith, I am wel ynowh;
 Bot he therof nothing ne lowh,
 For sche tok thanne chiere on honde
 And clepeth him hire housebonde,
 And seith, "My lord, go we to bedde,
 For I to that entente wedde, 1770
 That thou schalt be my worldes blisse:"
 And profreth him with that to kisse,
 As sche a lusti Lady were.
 His body myhte wel be there,
 Bot as of thought and of memoire
 His herte was in purgatoire.
 Bot yit for strengthe of matrimoine
 He myhte make non essoine,
 That he ne mot algates plie
 To gon to bedde of compaignie: 1780
 And whan thei were abedde naked,
 Withoute slep he was awaked;
 He torneth on that other side,
 For that he wolde hise yhen hyde
 Fro lokynge on that foule wyht.
 The chambre was al full of lyht,
 The courtins were of cendal thinne,

For of this word that ye now sein,
 That ye have mad me sovereign,
 Mi destine is overpassed,
 That nevere hierafter schal be lassed
 Mi beaute, which that I now have,
 Til I be take into my grave;
 Bot nyht and day as I am now
 I schal alwey be such to yow. 1840
 The kinges dowhter of Cizile
 I am, and fell bot siththe awhile,
 As I was with my fader late,
 That my Stepmoder for an hate,
 Which toward me sche hath begonne,
 Forschop me, til I hadde wonne
 The love and sovereignete
 Of what knyht that in his degre
 Alle othre passeth of good name:
 And, as men sein, ye ben the same, 1850
 The dede proeveth it is so;
 Thus am I youres evermo.”
 Tho was plesance and joye ynowh,
 Echon with other pleide and lowh;
 Thei live longe and wel thei ferde,
 And clerkes that this chance herde
 Thei writen it in evidence,
 To teche how that obedience
 Mai wel fortune a man to love
 And sette him in his lust above, 1860
 As it befell unto this knyht.
 Forthi, my Sone, if thou do ryht,
 Thou schalt unto thi love obeie,
 And folwe hir will be alle weie.
 Min holy fader, so I wile:
 For ye have told me such a skile
 Of this ensample now tofore,
 That I schal evermo therfore
 Hierafterward myn observance
 To love and to his obeissance 1870
 The betre kepe: and over this
 Of pride if ther oght elles is,
 Wherof that I me schryve schal,
 What thing it is in special,
 Mi fader, axeth, I you preie.
 Now lest, my Sone, and I schal seie:
 For yit ther is Surquiderie,

Which stant with Pride of compaignie;
 Wherof that thou schalt hiere anon,
 To knowe if thou have gult or non 1880
 Upon the forme as thou schalt hiere:
 Now understand wel the matiere.
 Surquiderie is thilke vice
 Of Pride, which the thridde office
 Hath in his Court, and wol nocht knowe
 The trowthe til it overthrowe.
 Upon his fortune and his grace
 Comth "Hadde I wist" fulofte aplace;
 For he doth al his thing be gesse,
 And voideth alle sikernesse. 1890
 Non other conseil good him siemeth
 Bot such as he himselve diemeth;
 For in such wise as he compasseth,
 His wit al one alle othre passeth;
 And is with pride so thurghsoght,
 That he alle othre set at nocht,
 And weneth of himselven so,
 That such as he ther be nomo,
 So fair, so semly, ne so wis;
 And thus he wolde bere a pris 1900
 Above alle othre, and nocht forthi
 He seith nocht ones "grant mercy"
 To godd, which alle grace sendeth,
 So that his wittes he despendeth
 Upon himself, as thogh ther were
 No godd which myhte availe there:
 Bot al upon his oghne witt
 He stant, til he falle in the pitt
 So ferr that he mai nocht arise.
 And riht thus in the same wise 1910
 This vice upon the cause of love
 So proudly set the herte above,
 And doth him pleinely forto wene
 That he to loven eny qwene
 Hath worthinesse and sufficance;
 And so withoute pourveance
 Fulofte he heweth up so hihe,
 That chippes fallen in his yhe;
 And ek ful ofte he weneth this,
 Ther as he nocht beloved is, 1920
 To be beloved alther best.
 Now, Sone, tell what so thee lest

Whan al was failed that I wende.
 Forthi, my fader, as of this,
 That my wenyng hath gon amis 1970
 Touchende to Surquiderie,
 Yif me my penance er I die.
 Bot if ye wolde in eny forme
 Of this matiere a tale enforme,
 Which were ayein this vice set,
 I scholde fare wel the bet.
 Mi Sone, in alle maner wise
 Surquiderie is to despise,
 Wherof I finde write thus.
 The proude knyht Capane.s 1980
 He was of such Surquiderie,
 That he thurgh his chivalerie
 Upon himself so mochel triste,
 That to the goddes him ne liste
 In no querele to beseche,
 Bot seide it was an ydel speche,
 Which caused was of pure drede,
 For lack of herte and for no nede.
 And upon such presumpcioun
 He hield this proude opinioun, 1990
 Til ate laste upon a dai,
 Aboute Thebes wher he lay,
 Whan it of Siege was belein,
 This knyht, as the Croniques sein,
 In alle mennes sihte there,
 Whan he was proudest in his gere,
 And thoghte how nothing myhte him dere,
 Ful armed with his schield and spere
 As he the Cite wolde assaile,
 Godd tok himselve the bataille 2000
 Ayein his Pride, and fro the sky
 A firy thonder sodeinly
 He sende, and him to pouldre smot.
 And thus the Pride which was hot,
 Whan he most in his strengthe wende,
 Was brent and lost withouten ende:
 So that it proeveth wel therefore,
 The strengthe of man is sone lore,
 Bot if that he it wel governe.
 And over this a man mai lerne 2010
 That ek fulofte time it grieveth,
 Whan that a man himself believeth,

As thogh it scholde him wel beseme
That he alle othre men can deme,
And hath foryete his oghne vice.
A tale of hem that ben so nyce,
And feigne hemself to be so wise,
I schal thee telle in such a wise,
Wherof thou schalt ensample take
That thou no such thing undertake. 2020
I finde upon Surquiderie,
How that whilom of Hungarie
Be olde daies was a King
Wys and honeste in alle thing:
And so befell upon a dai,
And that was in the Monthe of Maii,
As thilke time it was usance,
This kyng with noble pourveance
Hath for himself his Charr araied,
Wher inne he wolde ride amaied 2030
Out of the Cite forto pleie,
With lordes and with gret nobleie
Of lusti folk that were yonge:
Wher some pleide and some songe,
And some gon and some ryde,
And some prike here hors aside
And bridlen hem now in now oute.
The kyng his yhe caste aboute,
Til he was ate laste war
And syh comende ayein his char 2040
Two pilegrins of so gret age,
That lich unto a dreie ymage
Thei weren pale and fade hewed,
And as a bussh which is besnewed,
Here berdes weren hore and whyte;
Ther was of kinde bot a lite,
That thei ne semen fulli dede.
Thei comen to the kyng and bede
Som of his good par charite;
And he with gret humilite 2050
Out of his Char to grounde lepte,
And hem in bothe hise armes kepte
And keste hem bothe fot and hond
Before the lordes of his lond,
And yaf hem of his good therto:
And whanne he hath this dede do,
He goth into his char ayein.

Tho was Murmur, tho was desdeign,
 Tho was compleignte on every side,
 Thei seiden of here oghne Pride 2060
 Eche until othre: "What is this?
 Oure king hath do this thing amis,
 So to abesse his realte
 That every man it myhte se,
 And humbled him in such a wise
 To hem that were of non emprise."
 Thus was it spoken to and fro
 Of hem that were with him tho
 Al prively behinde his bak;
 Bot to himselven noman spak. 2070
 The kinges brother in presence
 Was thilke time, and gret offence
 He tok therof, and was the same
 Above alle othre which most blame
 Upon his liege lord hath leid,
 And hath unto the lordes seid,
 Anon as he mai time finde,
 Ther schal nothing be left behinde,
 That he wol speke unto the king.
 Now lest what fell upon this thing. 2080
 The day was merie and fair ynowh,
 Echon with othre pleide and lowh,
 And fellen into tales newe,
 How that the freisshe floures grewe,
 And how the grene leves spronge,
 And how that love among the yonge
 Began the hertes thanne awake,
 And every bridd hath chose hire make:
 And thus the Maies day to thende
 Thei lede, and hom ayein thei wende. 2090
 The king was noght so sone come,
 That whanne he hadde his chambre nome,
 His brother ne was redi there,
 And broghte a tale unto his Ere
 Of that he dede such a schame
 In hindringe of his oghne name,
 Whan he himself so wolde drecche,
 That to so vil a povere wrecche
 Him deigneth schewe such simplesce
 Ayein thastat of his noblesce: 2100
 And seith he schal it nomor use,
 And that he mot himself excuse

It oghte ben wel lasse wonder
 Than thou, which art withoute nede
 For lawe of londe in such a drede, ²²⁴⁰
 Which for tacompte is bot a jape,
 As thing which thou miht overscape.
 Forthi, mi brother, after this
 I rede, sithen that so is
 That thou canst drede a man so sore,
 Dred god with al thin herte more:
 For al schal deie and al schal passe,
 Als wel a Leoun as an asse,
 Als wel a beggere as a lord,
 Towardes deth in on acord ²²⁵⁰
 Thei schullen stonde.” And in this wise
 The king hath with hise wordes wise
 His brother tawht and al foryive.
 Forthi, mi Sone, if thou wolt live
 In vertu, thou most vice eschuie,
 And with low herte humblesce suie,
 So that thou be nocht surquidous.
 Mi fader, I am amorous,
 Wherof I wolde you beseche
 That ye me som ensample teche, ²²⁶⁰
 Which mihte in loves cause stonde.
 Mi Sone, thou schalt understonde,
 In love and othre thinges alle
 If that Surquiderie falle,
 It may to him nocht wel betide
 Which useth thilke vice of Pride,
 Which torneth wisdom to wenyng
 And Sothfastnesse into lesyng
 Thurgh fol ymaginacion.
 And for thin enformacion, ²²⁷⁰
 That thou this vice as I the rede
 Eschuie schalt, a tale I rede,
 Which fell whilom be daies olde,
 So as the clerk Ovide tolde.
 Ther was whilom a lordes Sone,
 Which of his Pride a nyce wone
 Hath cawht, that worthi to his liche,
 To sechen al the worldes riche,
 Ther was no womman forto love.
 So hihe he sette himselfe above ²²⁸⁰
 Of stature and of beaute bothe,
 That him thoghte alle wommen lothe:

In werre ayein diverse kinges.
So fell amonges othre thinges,
That he that time a werre hadde
With Gurmond, which the Geptes ladde,
And was a myhti kyng also:
Bot natheles it fell him so,
Albinus slowh him in the feld,
Ther halp him nowther swerd ne scheld, 2470
That he ne smot his hed of thanne,
Wherof he tok away the Panne,
Of which he seide he wolde make
A Cuppe for Gurmoundes sake,
To kepe and drawe into memoire
Of his bataille the victoire.
And thus whan he the feld hath wonne,
The lond anon was overronne
And sesed in his oghne hond,
Wher he Gurmondes dowhter fond, 2480
Which Maide Rosemounde hihte,
And was in every mannes sihte
A fair, a freissh, a lusti on.
His herte fell to hire anon,
And such a love on hire he caste,
That he hire weddeth ate laste;
And after that long time in reste
With hire he duelte, and to the beste
Thei love ech other wonder wel.
Bot sche which kepth the blinde whel, 2490
Venus, whan thei be most above,
In al the hoteste of here love,
Hire whiel sche torneth, and thei felle
In the manere as I schal telle.
This king, which stod in al his welthe
Of pes, of worschipe and of helthe,
And felte him on no side grieved,
As he that hath his world achieved,
Tho thoghte he wolde a feste make;
And that was for his wyves sake, 2500
That sche the lordes ate feste,
That were obeissant to his heste,
Mai knowe: and so forth therupon
He let ordeine, and sende anon
Be lettres and be messagiers,
And warnede alle hise officers
That every thing be wel arraied: