

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

Poet Index

Poem Index

Random

Search

Introduction

Timeline

Calendar

Glossary

Criticism

Bibliography

RPO

Canadian Poetry

UTEL

[by Name](#)

[by Date](#)

[by Title](#)

[by First  
Line](#)

[by Last  
Line](#)

[Poet](#)

[Poem](#)

[Short  
poem](#)

[Keyword](#)

[Concordance](#)

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

---

*from Representative Poetry On-line*

Prepared by members of the Department of English at the University of Toronto  
from 1912 to the present and published by the University of Toronto Press from 1912 to 1967.

RPO Edited by Ian Lancashire

A UTEL (University of Toronto English Library) Edition

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries

© 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto

---

## Index to poems

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

Image of Geoffrey  
Chaucer

1. **The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue**
2. **The Cook's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
3. **The Friar's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
4. **The General Prologue from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
5. **The Miller's Prologue and Tale from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
6. **The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
7. **The Parlement of Fowls** (excerpt)
8. **The Reeve's Prologue and Tale from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
9. **The Shipman's Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
10. **The Summoner's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
11. **To Rosemounde**
12. **Troilus and Criseyde: Book I** (excerpt)
13. **Troilus and Criseyde: Book II** (excerpt)
14. **Troilus and Criseyde: Book V** (excerpt)
15. **Truth**
16. **The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales**
17. **Yowr Yen Two Woll Sle me Sodenly**

## Biographical information

**Given name:** Geoffrey

**Family name:** Chaucer

**Birth date:** ca. 1343

**Death date:** 1400

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

**The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue**

*Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of Caunterbury*

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

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

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

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

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

58At Lyeyes was he, and at Satalye,  
 59Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See  
 60At many a noble armee hadde he be.  
  
 61At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
 62And foughten for oure feith at Tramyssene  
 63In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.  
 64This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also  
 65Somtyme with the lord of Palatye  
 66Agayn another hethen in Turkye;  
 67And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
 68And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
 69And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
 70He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde,  
 71In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.  
 72He was a verray, parfit, gentil knyght.  
  
 73But for to tellen yow of his array,  
 74His hors weren goode, but he was nat gay;  
 75Of fustian he wered a gypon  
 76Al bismótered with his habergeon;  
 77For he was late y-come from his viage,  
 78And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.  
  
 79With hym ther was his sone, a yong Squiér,  
 80A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,  
 81With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.  
 82Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
 83Of his statúre he was of evene lengthe,  
 84And wonderly delyvere and of greet strengthe.  
 85And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie  
 86In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,  
 87And born hym weel, as of so litel space,  
 88In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
 89Embrouded was he, as it were a meede  
 90Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and reede.  
 91Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;  
 92He was as fressh as is the month of May.  
 93Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde;  
 94Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde;  
 95He koude songes make and wel endite,  
 96Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.  
 97So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale  
 98He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.  
 99Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,

**100**And carf biforn his fader at the table.

**101**A Yeman hadde he and servántz namo

**102**At that tyme, for hym liste ride soo;

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

**104**A sheef of peacock arwes bright and kene,

**105**Under his belt he bar ful thriftily--

**106**Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;

**107**His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe--

108And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.

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

110Of woodecraft wel koude he al the uságe.

**111**Upon his arm he baar a gay bracér,

**112**And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,

**113**And on that oother syde a gay daggere,

**114**Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;

**115**A Cristophere on his brest of silver sheene.

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

**117**A forster was he, soothly as I gesse.

118Ther was also a Nonne, a Prioresse,

**119**That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;

**120**Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte Loy,

121And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.

122Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,

**123**Entuned in hir nose ful semely;

**124**And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,

**125**After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,

**126**For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.

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

128She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,

**129**Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe.

130Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe

**131**Thát no drope ne fille upon hire brist;

**132**In curteisie was set ful muchel hir list.

133Hire over-lippe wyped she so clene

**134**That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene

135Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.

**136**Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.

**137**And sikerly she was of greet desport,

138And ful plesáunt and amyable of port,

**139**And peyned hire to countrefete cheere

140Of court, and been estatlich of manere,

141And to ben holden digne of reverence.

**142**But for to speken of hire conscience,

**143**She was so charitable and so pitous

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

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

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

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

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

**188**Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.

**189**Therefore he was a prikasour aright:

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

**191**Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare

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

**193**I seigh his sleves y-púrfiled at the hond

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

195And for to festne his hood under his chyn

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

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

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

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

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

**201**His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,

**202**That stemed as a forneys of a leed;

**203**His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.

204Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat.

**205**He was nat pale, as a forpyned goost:

206A fat swan loved he best of any roost.

207His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

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

**209**A lymytour, a ful solémpne man.

**210**In alle the ordres four is noon that kan

**211**So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.

212He hadde maad ful many a mariage

213Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.

**214**Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

215Ful wel biloved and famulier was he

**216**With frankeleyns over al in his contree,

217And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;

218For he hadde power of confessioun,

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

**220**For of his ordre he was licenciát.

221Ful swetely herde he confessioun,

222And plesaunt was his absolucioun.

223He was an esy man to yeve penaunce

**224**There as he wiste to have a good pitaunce;

**225**For unto a povre ordre for to yive

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

**227**For, if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt

228He wiste that a man was répentant;

229For many a man so hard is of his herte

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

231Therefore in stede of wepyng and preyéres

232Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.



233His typet was ay farsed full of knyves  
 234And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.  
 235And certainly he hadde a murye note:  
 236Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;  
 237Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.  
 238His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;  
 239Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.  
 240He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,  
 241And everich hostiler and tappestere  
 242Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;  
 243For unto swich a worthy man as he  
 244Acorded nat, as by his facultee,  
 245To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce;  
 246It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce  
 247Fór to deelen with no swich poraille,  
 248But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.  
 249And over-al, ther as profit sholde arise,  
 250Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.  
 251Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.  
 252He was the beste beggere in his hous;  
 253[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt,  
 254Noon of his brethren cam ther in his haunt;]  
 255For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,  
 256So plesaunt was his *In principio*,  
 257Yet wolde he have a ferthyng er he wente:  
 258His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.  
 259And rage he koude, as it were right a whelpe.  
 260In love-dayes ther koude he muchel helpe,  
 261For there he was nat lyk a cloysterer  
 262With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scolér,  
 263But he was lyk a maister, or a pope;  
 264Of double worstede was his semycope,  
 265That rounded as a belle, out of the presse.  
 266Somwhat he lipped for his wantownesse,  
 267To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;  
 268And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,  
 269His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght  
 270As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.  
 271This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubér.  
  
 272A Marchant was ther with a forked berd,  
 273In motteleye, and hye on horse he sat;  
 274Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bevere hat;  
 275His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.  
 276His resons he spak ful solémpnely,  
 277Sownynge alway thencrees of his wynnyng.  
 278He wolde the see were kept for any thing

279Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.

**280**Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.

**281**This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;

282Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,

**283**So estatly was he of his gouvernaunce,

**284**With his bargaynes and with his chevysaunce.

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

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

287A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,

**288**That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.

289As leene was his hors as is a rake,

290And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,

**291**But looked holwe, and ther-to sobrelly.

**292**Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;

293For he hadde gotten hym yet no benefice,

**294**Ne was so worldly for to have office;

**295**For hym was lévere háve at his beddes heed

**296**Twénty bookes, clad in blak or reed,

297Of Aristotle and his philosophie,

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

299But al be that he was a philosophre,

**300**Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;

**301**But al that he myghte of his freendes hente

302On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,

303And bisily gan for the soules preye

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

**305**Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.

306Noght o word spak he moore than was neede;

**307**And that was seyð in forme and reverence,

**308**And short and quyk and ful of hy sentéce.

**309**Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche;

310And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

**311**A Sergeant of the Lawe, war and wys,

**312**That often hadde been at the Parvys,

313Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.

314Discreet he was, and of greet reverence--

**315**He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.

**316**Justice he was ful often in assise,

**317**By patente, and by pleyn commissioun.

318For his science and for his heigh renoun,

319Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.

**320**So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:

**321**Al was fee symple to hym in effect;

**322**His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.

323Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,

**324**And yet he semed bisier than he was.

**325**In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle

326That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.

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

**328**Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;

**329**And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.

**330**He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,

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

332Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

**333**A Frankeleyn was in his compaignye.

**334**Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;

**335**Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.

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

**337**To lyven in delit was evere his wone,

**338**For he was Epicurus owene sone,

**339**That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit

**340**Was verrailly felicitee parfit.

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

**342**Seint Julian he was in his contree.

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

**344**A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.

**345**Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,

**346**Of fissh and flessch, and that so plentevous,

**347**It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,

348Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,

**349**After the sondry sesons of the year;

**350**So chaunged he his mete and his soper.

**351**Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,

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

**353**Wo was his cook but if his sauce were

**354**Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.

**355**His table dormant in his halle alway

356Stood redy covered al the longe day.

**357**At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;

**358**Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.

**359**An anlaas, and a gipser al of silk,

**360**Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.

**361**A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;

**362**Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.

363An Haberdasshere, and a Carpenter,

**364**A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapyer,--

**365**And they were clothed alle in o lyveree

**366**Of a solémpne and a greet fraternitee.  
**367**Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;  
**368**Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras,  
369But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel  
**370**Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.  
**371**Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys  
**372**To sitten in a yeldehalle, on a deys.  
**373**Éverich, for the wisdom that he kan,  
**374**Was shaply for to been an alderman;  
**375**For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,  
376And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente,  
377And elles certeyn were they to blame.  
**378**It is ful fair to been y-cleped *Madame*,  
**379**And goon to vigilies al bifore,  
**380**And have a mantel roialliche y-bore.  
  
**381**A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,  
**382**To boille the chiknes with the marybones,  
**383**And poudre-marchant tart, and galyngale.  
384Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.  
**385**He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,  
**386**Máken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.  
387But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
**388**That on his shyne a mormal hadde he;  
**389**For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.  
  
**390**A Shipman was ther, wonynge fer by weste;  
391For aught I woot he was of Dertemouthe.  
**392**He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,  
**393**In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.  
**394**A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he  
395Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.  
396The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;  
**397**And certainly he was a good felawe.  
**398**Ful many a draughte of wyn hadde he y-drawe  
399Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.  
**400**Of nyce conscience took he no keep.  
401If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,  
**402**By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.  
403But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,  
**404**His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,  
**405**His herberwe and his moone, his lode-menage,  
**406**Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.  
407Hardy he was and wys to undertake;  
408With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.  
409He knew alle the havenes, as they were,

**410**From Gootlond to the Cape of Fynystere,

**411**And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.

**412**His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne.

413With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;

414In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,

415To speke of phisik and of surgerye;

**416**For he was grounded in astronomye.

**417**He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel

418In houres, by his magyk natureel.

419Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent

420Of his ymáges for his pacient.

421He knew the cause of everich maladye,

**422**Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,

423And where they engendred and of what humour.

**424**He was a verray, parfit praktisour;

**425**The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the roote,

**426**Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.

427Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries

**428**To sende him drogges and his letuaries;

429For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,

**430**Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.

**431**Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,

**432**And De{"y} scorides, and eek Rufus,

**433**Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,

**434**Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,

**435**Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,

**436**Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.

**437**Of his diete mesurable was he,

438For it was of no superfluitee,

439But of greet norissyng and digestible.

**440**His studie was but litel on the Bible.

**441**In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,

**442**Lyned with taffata and with sendal.

**443**And yet he was but esy of dispence;

**444**He kepte that he wan in pestilence.

**445**For gold in phisik is a cordial;

**446**Therefore he lovede gold in special.

**447**A Good Wif was ther of biside Bathe,

**448**But she was som-del deef, and that was scathe.

**449**Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt

**450**She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.

451In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon

**452**That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;

453And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she

454That she was out of alle charitee.  
 455Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;  
 456I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
 457That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.  
 458Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
 459Ful streite y-teyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.  
 460Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.  
 461She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;  
 462Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,  
 463Withouten oother compaignye in youthe;  
 464But ther-of nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.  
 465And thries hadde she been at Jérusalem;  
 466She hadde passed many a straunge strem;  
 467At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,  
 468In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne.  
 469She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.  
 470Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.  
 471Upon an amblere esily she sat,  
 472Y-wympled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
 473As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;  
 474A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
 475And on hire feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
 476In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe;  
 477Of remedies of love she knew *per chauncé*,  
 478For she koude of that art the olde daunce.  
  
 479A good man was ther of religioun,  
 480And was a povre Person of a Toun;  
 481But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.  
 482He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
 483That Cristes Gospel trewely wolde preche;  
 484His parissshens devoutly wolde he teche.  
 485Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,  
 486And in adversitee ful pacient;  
 487And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.  
 488Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,  
 489But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,  
 490Unto his povre parissshens aboute,  
 491Of his offrýng and eek of his substaunce;  
 492He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.  
 493Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,  
 494But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,  
 495In siknesse nor in meschief to visíte  
 496The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,  
 497Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
 498This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,  
 499That first he wroghte and afterward he taughte.

**500**Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;  
 501And this figure he added eek therto,  
 502That if gold ruste, what shal iren doo?  
 503For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,  
**504**No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;  
**505**And shame it is, if a prest take keep,  
 506A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.  
 507Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive  
 508By his clenness how that his sheep sholde lyve.  
 509He sette nat his benefice to hyre  
 510And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,  
 511And ran to Londoun, unto Seinte Poules,  
**512**To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,  
**513**Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;  
 514But dwelte at hoom and kepte wel his folde,  
 515So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;  
 516He was a shepherde, and noght a mercenarie.  
 517And though he hooly were and vertuous,  
**518**He was to synful man nat despitous,  
**519**Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
 520But in his techyng díscreet and benygne.  
**521**To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,  
 522By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.  
 523But it were any persone obstinat,  
 524What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,  
**525**Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.  
 526A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.  
**527**He waited after no pompe and reverence,  
**528**Ne maked him a spiced conscience;  
**529**But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve  
 530He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselfe.  
  
**531**With hym ther was a Plowman, was his brother,  
**532**That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother;  
**533**A trewe swynkere and a good was he,  
 534Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.  
 535God loved he best, with al his hoolle herte,  
**536**At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.  
 537And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.  
**538**He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,  
 539For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,  
 540Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.  
 541His tithes payede he ful faire and wel,  
**542**Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.  
**543**In a tabard he rood upon a mere.  
  
 544Ther was also a Reve and a Millere,  
 545A Somnour and a Pardoner also,  
 546A Maunciple, and myself,--ther were namo.



**547**The Millere was a stout carl for the nones;  
 548Ful byg he was of brawn and eek of bones.  
 549That proved wel, for over-al, ther he cam,  
 550At wrastlyng he wolde have alwey the ram.  
**551**He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;  
**552**Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,  
**553**Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.  
**554**His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
 555And therto brood, as though it were a spade.  
**556**Upon the cop right of his nose he hade  
**557**A werte, and thereon stood a toft of herys,  
 558Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;  
**559**His nosethirles blake were and wyde.  
 560A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.  
**561**His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys;  
**562**He was a janglere and a goliardeys,  
**563**And that was moost of synne and harlotries.  
**564**Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;  
 565And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.  
 566A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.  
**567**A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,  
 568And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.  
  
**569**A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,  
**570**Of which achátours myghte take exemple  
**571**For to be wise in bynge of vitaille;  
**572**For, wheither that he payde or took by taille,  
**573**Algate he wayted so in his achaat  
 574That he was ay biforn and in good staat.  
 575Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,  
**576**That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
 577The wisdom of an heap of lerned men?  
**578**Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,  
**579**That weren of lawe expert and curious,  
**580**Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous  
**581**Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond  
 582Of any lord that is in Engeland,  
**583**To maken hym lyve by his propre good,  
**584**In honour dettelees, but if he were wood,  
**585**Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;  
 586And able for to helpen al a shire  
 587In any caas that myghte falle or happe;  
**588**And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe  
  
**589**The Reve was a sclendre colerik man.  
**590**His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;



**591**His heer was by his erys round y-shorn;  
 592His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
 593Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,  
**594**Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.  
**595**Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;  
**596**Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.  
 597Wel wiste he, by the droghte and by the reyn,  
**598**The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.  
 599His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,  
**600**His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye,  
 601Was hoolly in this reves governyng;  
**602**And by his covenant yaf the rekenyng  
**603**Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age;  
**604**There koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.  
**605**There nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,  
**606**That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;  
**607**They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.  
**608**His wonyng was ful fair upon an heeth;  
 609With grene trees shadwed was his place.  
 610He koude bettre than his lord purchace;  
**611**Ful riche he was a-stored pryvely.  
 612His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,  
**613**To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,  
 614And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.  
**615**In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;  
**616**He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.  
**617**This Reve sat upon a ful good stot,  
**618**That was al pomely grey, and highte Scot.  
**619**A long surcote of pers upon he hade,  
 620And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.  
**621**Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,  
 622Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.  
**623**Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.  
**624**And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.  
  
**625**A Somonour was ther with us in that place,  
**626**That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,  
**627**For sawcefleem he was, with eyen narwe.  
**628**As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,  
**629**With scaled browes blake and piled berd,--  
 630Of his visage children were aferd.  
**631**Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymston,  
**632**Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,  
 633Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,  
**634**That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,

635Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.  
 636Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
 637And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood.  
**638**Thanne wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.  
 639And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,  
 640Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.  
 641A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,  
 642That he had lerned out of som decree,--  
 643No wonder is, he herde it al the day;  
 644And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay  
**645**Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.  
**646**But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,  
 647Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;  
**648**Ay "*Questio quid juris*" wolde he crie.  
**649**He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;  
**650**A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.  
 651He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn  
**652**A good felawe to have his concubyn  
 653A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;  
**654**And prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.  
 655And if he foond owher a good felawe,  
 656He wolde techen him to have noon awe,  
**657**In swich caas, of the erchedekenes curs,  
 658But if a mannes soule were in his purs;  
**659**For in his purs he sholde y-punysshed be:  
 660"Purs is the erchedekenes helle," seyde he.  
 661But wel I woot he lyed right in dede.  
 662Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,  
**663**For curs wol slee, right as assoillyng savith;  
**664**And also war him of a *Significavit*.  
**665**In daunger hadde he at his owene gise  
**666**The yonge girles of the diocise,  
**667**And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.  
 668A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,  
**669**As greet as it were for an ale-stake;  
 670A bokeleer hadde he maad him of a cake.  
  
**671**With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner  
**672**Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,  
**673**That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
 674Ful loude he soong, "Com hider, love, to me!"  
**675**This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;  
 676Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.  
**677**This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,  
**678**But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;  
**679**By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,  
 680And therwith he his shuldres overspradde.  
**681**But thynne it lay, by colpons, oon and oon;

682But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,  
 683For it was trussed up in his walét.  
 684Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;  
 685Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.  
 686Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.  
 687A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.  
 688His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,  
 689Bret-ful of pardoun, comen from Rome al hoot.  
 690A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
 691No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,  
 692As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;  
 693I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.  
 694But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware,  
 695Ne was ther swich another pardoner;  
 696For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
 697Which that, he seyde, was Oure Lady veyl;  
 698He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
 699That Seinte Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
 700Upon the see, til Jesu Crist hym hente.  
 701He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,  
 702And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.  
 703But with thise reliques, whan that he fond  
 704A povre person dwellynge upon lond,  
 705Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye  
 706Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;  
 707And thus with feyned flaterye and japes  
 708He made the person and the peple his apes.  
 709But trewely to tellen atte laste,  
 710He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;  
 711Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
 712But alderbest he song an offertorie;  
 713For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
 714He moste preche, and wel affile his tonge  
 715To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;  
 716Therefore he song the murierly and loude.  
  
 717Now have I toold you shortly, in a clause,  
 718Thestaat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause  
 719Why that assembled was this compaignye  
 720In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye  
 721That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
 722But now is tyme to yow for to telle  
 723How that we baren us that ilke nyght,  
 724Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;  
 725And after wol I telle of our viage  
 726And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
  
 727But first, I pray yow, of youre curteisye,

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

745Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
**746**Al have I nat set folk in hir degree  
 747Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;  
 748My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.  
  
 749Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
 750And to the soper sette he us anon,  
 751And served us with vitaille at the beste:  
**752**Strong was the wyn and wel to drynke us leste.

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

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

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

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

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

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

820We been acorded to his juggement.  
**821**And therupon the wyn was fet anon;  
 822We dronken, and to reste wente echon,  
 823Withouten any lenger taryynge.  
  
 824Amorwe, whan that day gan for to sprynge,  
**825**Up roos oure Hoost and was oure aller cok,  
 826And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok;  
**827**And forth we riden, a litel moore than paas,  
**828**Unto the wateryng of Seint Thomas;  
 829And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste,  
**830**And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste:  
**831**Ye woot youre foreward and I it yow recorde.  
 832If even-song and morwe-song accorde,  
 833Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.  
**834**As ever mote I drynke wyn or ale,  
 835Whoso be rebel to my juggement  
 836Shal paye for all that by the wey is spent.  
**837**Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;  
 838He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.  
 839Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord  
 840Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.  
 841Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioress.  
**842**And ye, sire Clerk, lat be your shamefastnesse,  
**843**Ne studieth noght. Ley hond to, every man."  
  
 844Anon to drawen every wight bigan,  
 845And, shortly for to tellen as it was,  
**846**Were it by áventúre, or sort, or cas,  
**847**The sothe is this, the cut fil to the Knyght,  
 848Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght;  
 849And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,  
**850**By foreward and by composicioun,  
 851As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?  
 852And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,  
 853As he that wys was and obedient  
 854To kepe his foreward by his free assent,  
 855He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,  
 856What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!  
 857Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."  
 858And with that word we ryden forth oure weye;  
 859And he bigan with right a myrie cheere  
 860His tale anon, and seyde in this manére.

### Notes

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

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

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

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

**5]** Zephyrus: the west wind.

**7]** croppes: shoots.

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

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

**9]** foweles: birds.

**10]** ye: eye.

**11]** Nature so incites them in their hearts.

**13]** straunge strondes: foreign shores.

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

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

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

**19]** Bifil: it befell.

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

**22]** corage: heart.

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

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

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

**31]** everychon: everyone.



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

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

**37]** It seems to me in accordance with reason.

**38]** condicioun: character.

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

**46]** fredom: generosity.

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

**48]** thereto: besides that. ferre: farther.

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

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

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

**55]** degree: rank.

**56]** Gernade: Granada.

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

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

**59]** Grete See: the Mediterranean.

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

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

**64]** ilke: same.

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

**66]** Ygayn: against.

**67]** sovereyn prys: supreme renown.

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



**69]** port: bearing.

**70]** vileynye: discourtesy.

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

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

**74]** gay: gaily dressed.

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

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

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

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

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

**83]** event lengthe: medium height.

**84]** delyvere: active, agile.

**85]** chyvachie: cavalry raid.

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

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

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

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

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

**93]** This was the latest fashion of the time.

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

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

**97]** nyghtertale: night-time.

**98]** sleep: slept.

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

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

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

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

**105]** thriftily: carefully.

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

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

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

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

**112]** bokeler: buckler, small embossed shield.

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

**114]** Harneised: equipped.

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

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

**117]** forster: forester.

**119]** coy: quiet, modest.

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

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

**124]** fetisly: skilfully, properly.

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

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

**129]** depe: deeply.

**131]** brist: breast.

**132]** list: pleasure.

**134]** no ferthing sene: no small fragment visible.

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

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

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

**142]** conscience: sensibility.

**143]** pitous: compassionate.

**144]** saugh: saw.

**145]** bledde: were bleeding.

**147]** wastel breed: bread made of fine flour.

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

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

**152]** tretys: well-formed.

**153]** thereto: in addition.

**154]** sikerly: certainly.

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

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

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

**160]** heng: hung. sheene: bright.

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

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

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

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

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

**170]** als: as.

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

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

**174]** somdel streit: somewhat narrow, strict.

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

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

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

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

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

**182]** thilke: that same.

**184]** What: why. wood: mad.

**186]** swynke: work.

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

**188]** swynk: labour.

**189]** a prikasour aright: truly a hard rider.

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

**192]** lust: pleasure.

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

**194]** grys: gray fur.

**196]** curious: elaborate.

**199]** enoynt: anointed.

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

**201]** stepe: large, prominent.

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

**203]** estaat: condition.

**205]** forpyned: tormented.

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

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

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

**211]** So much of gossip and flattery.

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

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

**219]** curát: parish priest.

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

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

**225]** povre: poor. yive: give.

**226]** y-shryve: shriven, absolved.

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

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

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

**236]** rote: a kind of fiddle.

**237]** For songs he absolutely carried off the prize.

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

**242]** Better than a leper or a female beggar.

**244]** It was unfitting, considering his official position.

**246]** honest: becoming. avaunce: be profitable.

**247]** poraille: poor people.

**248]** vitaille: victuals.

**249]** ther as: where.

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

**251]** vertuous: efficient, capable.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**263]** Maister: a master of arts.

**264]** semycope: short cape.

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

**266]** lipsed: lisped. wantownesse: affectation.

**271]** cleped: called.

**273]** motteleye: parti-coloured cloth.

**275]** fetisly: neatly.

**276]** resons: opinions. solémpnely: impressively.

**277]** Talking always about the increase of his profit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**288]** Who had long attended lectures in logic.

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

**292]** overeste courtepy: outermost short coat.

**294]** have office: accept a secular office.

**295]** Hym was lévere: he preferred.

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

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

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

**301]** hente: get.

**304]** yaf: gave. scoleye: study.

**305]** cure: care.

**307]** in forme and reverence: formally and respectfully.

**308]** hy sentence: lofty meaning.

**309]** His speech was tending towards righteousness.

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

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

**315]** swich: such.

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

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

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

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

**322]** infect: ilidated.

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

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

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

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

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

**330]** medlee cote: coat of mixed weave.

**331]** ceint: girdle.

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

**334]** berd: beard. dayesye: daisy.

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

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

**337]** delit: delight. wone: custom.

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

**339]** pleyn: full.

**340]** parfit: perfect.

**342]** Seint Julian: the patron saint of hospitality.



**343]** after oon: according to one standard.

**344]** envyvned: stored with wine.

**345]** bake mete: meat pies.

**346]** plentevous: plenteous.

**347]** snewed: snowed.

**349]** After: according to.

**350]** soper: supper.

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

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

**353]** but if: unless.

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

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

**357]** sessionouns: of the justices of the peace.

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

**359]** anlaas: dagger. gipser: pouch.

**360]** heng: hung.

**361]** countour: accountant, auditor.

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

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

**365]** in o lyveree: in one livery.

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

**367]** Their apparel was freshly and newly trimmed.

**368]** chaped: mounted.

**370]** everydeel: every part.

**371]** burgeys: burgess, townsman.

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

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

**374]** shaply: adapted, fit.

**375]** catel: property. rente: income.

**378]** y-cleped: called.

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

**380]** roialliche Y-bore: royally borne.

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

**382]** marybones: marrowbones.

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

**385]** sethe: boil.

**386]** mortreux: stews.

**388]** mormal: ulcer.

**389]** blankmanger: creamed chicken.

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

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

**393]** faldyng: coarse woolen cloth.

**394]** laas: lace, cord.

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

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

**400]** keep: heed.

**402]** He made them walk the plank.

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

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

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

**410]** Gootlond: island of Gotland, off Sweden.

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

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

**416]** astronomye: astrology.

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

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

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

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

**426]** boote: remedy.

**428]** letuaries: electuaries, syrups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**437]** mesurable: moderate.

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

**441]** sangwyn: red. pers: blue.

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

**443]** esy of dispence: moderate in expenditure.

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

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

**446]** Ironical.

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

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

**449]** haunt: practice.

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

**452]** offrynge: offertory.

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

**455]** coverchiefs: head-coverings, kerchiefs.

**459]** moyste: soft, pliable.

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

**463]** Withouten: besides.

**464]** as nowthe: at present.

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

**466]** strem: stream.

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

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

**469]** koude: knew a great deal about.

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

**473]** targe: shield.

**474]** foot-mantel: riding skirt.

**476]** carpe: talk.

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

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

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

**484]** pariss hens: parishioners.

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

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

**494]** ne latte nat: ceased, omitted not.

**495]** meschief: mishap.

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

**498]** yaf: gave.

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

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

**505]** keep: heed.

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

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

**518]** despitous: scornful.

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

**521]** by fairnesse: by leading a good life.

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

**527]** waited after: watched for, looked for.

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

**529]** apostles: genitive case.

**531]** was his brother. The relative is omitted.

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

**533]** swynkere: worker.

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

**538]** dyke: dig ditches.

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

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

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

**551]** a thikke knarre: a thickset fellow.

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

**553]** rennyng: running.

**554]** berd: beard.

**556]** cop: top.

**557]** werte: wart.

**559]** nosethirles: nostrils.

**561]** forneys: furnace.

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

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

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

**567]** sowne: sound.

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

**570]** achetours: purchasers.

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

**572]** by taille: by tally, on credit.

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

**576]** lewed: ignorant.

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

**579]** curious: skilful.

**580]** duszeyne: dozen.

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

**583]** his propre good: his own income.

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

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

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

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

**590]** ny: nigh, close.

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

**594]** y-sene: visible.

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

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

**598]** neet: cattle.

**600]** hors: horses. stoor: farm stock.

**602]** yaf: he gave.

**603]** See note on l. 621.

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

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

**606]** Whose trickery and deceit he did not know.

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

**608]** wonyng: dwelling.

**611]** He had secretly stored up a fortune.

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

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

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

**617]** stot: stallion.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

**628]** sparwe: sparrow.

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

**631]** lytarge: litharge, protoxide of lead.

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

**634]** whelkes: pimples.

**638]** Thanne: then. wood: mad.

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

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

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

**649]** harlot: rascal.

**650]** bettre felawe: better companion.

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

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

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

**659]** By paying a fine or a bribe.

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

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

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

**666]** girles: young people of both sexes.

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

**669]** ale-stake: a pole projecting above the door of an ale-house. A garland or bush hanging from it was the sign of a drinking-place.

**671]** Pardoner: a dispenser of papal indulgences or commutations of penance in return for a money payment for charitable purposes. Some unauthorized pardoners carried forged papal licenses, exhibited bogus relics, and offered to sell absolution.

**672]** Rouncivale: the hospital of the Blessed Mary of Rouncivale, near Charing Cross, a cell or subordinate house of the convent of Our Lady of Roncesvalles in Navarre. In 1382 and 1387 unauthorized sales of pardons were made by persons professing to collect for the hospital.

**673]** Note the rhyme Rome-tó me.

**675]** burdoun: burden, bass part (Old French *bourdon*).

**677]** wex: wax.

**678]** strike of flex: hank of flax.

**679]** ounces: small bunches.

**681]** by colpons: in bundles (Old French *colpon*, modern *coupon*).

**682]** for jolitee: for smartness.

**684]** Him thoughte: it seemed to him. newe jet: new fashion.

**685]** Dischevelee: with loose hair.

**687]** vernycle: a copy of the handkerchief of St. Veronica preserved in St. Peter's at Rome. Said to have been lent to Christ as he was going to Calvary and to bear the impress of his face.

**694]** Berwyk, in Northumberland at Scottish border, extreme northern English town. Ware, in Hertfordshire, first town of importance north of London.

**696]** mak: bag. pilwe-beer: pillow-case.

**697]** Lady: Lady's. See note on l. 88.

**698]** gobet: piece.

**699]** wente: walked.

**700]** hente: caught hold of. See Matthew, xiv, 28-31.

**701]** A cross made of mixed metal set with stones.

**703]** reliques. In his cynical confession, *Pardoner's Prologue*, C.T., C, 345-390, the Pardoner describes his bogus relics more fully and explains how he wins money by exhibiting them to the people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**714]** affik: make smooth.

**716]** murierly: more merrily.

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

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

**723]** baren us: conducted ourselves.

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

**730]** cheere: appearance or bearing.

**731]** proprely: literally, exactly.

**732]** at-so wel: just as well.

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

**735]** Everich a: every single.

**736]** Although he speak never so roughly and coarsely.

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

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

**741]** brode: plainly.

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

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

prose 12. See his translation.

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

**752]** us leste: it pleased us.

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

**755]** stepe: prominent.

**756]** burgeys: townsman. Chepe: Cheapside.

**759]** Eek thereto: besides.

**763]** lordynges: sirs.

**767]** herberwe: lodging, inn.

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

**774]** You plan to tell tales and to jest.

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

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

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

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

**788]** graunted: we granted. avys: consideration.

**789]** him leste: it pleased him.

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

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

**797]** adventures: occurrences. whilom: formerly.

**800]** sentence: content. solaas: entertainment.

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

**807]** withseye: gainsay.

**811]** shape me therfore: prepare myself for it.

**812]** swore: sworn or we swore.

**818]** devys: direction.

**819]** In heigh and lough: in all respects.

**821]** fet: fetched.

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

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

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

**830]** if you leste: if it please you.

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

**834]** mote: may.

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

**842]** shamefastnesse: shyness.

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

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

**847]** fil: fell.

**850]** foreward and composicioun: agreement and compact.

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Based on *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. John Matthews Manly (London: Harrap, 1929), to judge from the annotations. PR 1866 M3 Robarts Library. *The Poetical Works of Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), may also be an influence.

**First publication date:** 1478  
**Publication date note:** Caxton's print.  
**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott  
**RP edition:** 2000  
**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/5

**Composition date:** 1387  
**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### **Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002  
RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

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

¶The prologe of the Cookes tale

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

15 But god forbede / that we stynten heere

{{hic}}

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

{{audire}}

17 A tale of me / that am a poure man

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

19 A litel iape / that fil in oure Citee

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

21 Now tel on Roger / looke that it be good

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

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

24 That hath been twies hoot/ and twies coold

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

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

27 That they han eten / with thy stubbul goos

28 ffor in thy shoppe / is many a flye loos

29 Now tel on / gentil Roger / by thy name

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

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

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

{{Folio 57r}}

33 But sooth pley quade pley / as the fflemyng seith

34 And therfore herry Bailly / by thy feith

35 Be thou nat wrooth / er we departen heer

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

37 But nathelees / I wol nat telle it yit

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

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

40 And seyde his tale / as ye shal after heere

¶Here bigynneth the Cook/ his tale

# 1 A Prentis / whilom dwelled in oure Citee

2 And of a craft/ of vitailers was he

3 Gaillard he was / as goldfynch in the shawe

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

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

6 Dauncen he koude / so wel and iolily

7 That he / was clepyd Perkyn Reuelour

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

9 As is the hyue / ful of hony swete

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

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

12 he loued bet the Tauerne / than the shoppe

13 ffor / whan ther any ridyng/ was in Chepe

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

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

16 And daunced wel / he wolde noght come ageyn

17 And gadred hym / a meynne of his sort/



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

{{Folio 57v}}

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

Of this Cokes tale  
 maked Chaucer na  
 moore

### Notes

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

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1388 - 1392

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

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

{{Folio 73v}}

¶The prologe of the ffreres tale

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

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

{{Folio 74r}}

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

¶ Here endeth the prologe of the frere

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

{{Folio 74v}}

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

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

{{Folio 75r}}

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

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

{{Folio 75v}}

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

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

{{Folio 76r}}

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



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

{{Folio 76v}}

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

{{Folio 77r}}

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



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

{{Folio 77v}}

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

279 But for thou canst nat/ as in this contree  
 280 Wynne thy cost/ taak heer enample of me  
 281 This Somnour / clappeth at the wydwe gate  
 282 Com out quod he / thou olde viritrate  
 283 I trowe thou hast / som frere / or preest with thee  
 284 ¶Who clappeth seyde this wyf / benedicitee  
 285 God saue yow sire / what is youre swete wille  
 286 ¶I haue quod he / of somonce a bille  
 287 Vp peyne of cursyng/ looke that thou be  
 288 To morn / biforn the Erchedeknes knee  
 289 Than were to the court/ of cheriteyn thynges  
 290 ¶Now lord quod she / crist Iesu kyng of kynges  
 291 So willy helpe me / as I ne may  
 292 I haue been syk/ and that ful many a day  
 293 I may nat go so fer quod she / ne ryde  
 294 But I be deed / so priketh it in my syde  
 295 May I nat axe a libel / sir Somnour  
 296 And an were there / by my procurour  
 297 To swich thyng/ as men wole opposen me  
 298 ¶Yis quod this Somnour / pay anon lat see  
 299 Twelf pens to me / and I wol thee acypte  
 300 I shal no profit han ther by / but lyte

{{Folio 78r}}

301 My Maister hath the profit / and nat I  
 302 Com of / and lat me ryden hastily  
 303 Yif me .xij. pens / I may no lenger tarye  
 304 ¶Twelf pens quod she / now lady Seinte Marie  
 305 So willy help me god / out of care and synne  
 306 This wyde world / thogh that I sholde wyne  
 307 Ne haue I nat .xij. pens / with Inne myn hoold  
 308 Ye knowen wel / that I am poure and oold  
 309 Kythe youre almesse / on me poure wrecche  
 310 ¶Nay thanne quod he / the foule feend me fecche  
 311 If I thexcuse / theigh thou shul be spilt/  
 312 ¶Allas quod she / god woot I haue no gilt/  
 313 ¶Pay me quod he / or by the swete Seinte Anne  
 314 As I wol bere away / thy newe panne  
 315 ffor dette / which thou owest me of oold  
 316 Whan thou madest / thyn household cokewold  
 317 I payde at hom / for thy correccio[n]  
 318 ¶Thou lyxt quod she / by my sauacio[n]  
 319 Ne was I neuer er now / wydwe ne wyf/  
 320 Somoned vn to youre court/ in al my lyf /  
 321 Ne neuer I nas / but of my body trewe  
 322 Vn to the deuel / blak/ and row of hewe  
 323 Yeue I thy body / and my panne al  
 324 ¶And whan the deuel / herde hir cursen so  
 325 Vp on hir knees / he seyde in this manere  
 326 Now Mabely / myn owene moder deere  
 327 Is this youre wyl in ernest / yf ye seye  
 328 ¶The deuel quod she / so fecche hym or he deye  
 329 And panne and al / but he wol hym repente  
 330 ¶Nay olde stot/ that is nat myn entente

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

{{Folio 78v}}

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

¶Here endeth / the freres tale

### Notes

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

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

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

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1966

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1392 - 1395

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

## The General Prologue from the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{ {Folio 2r} }

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

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

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

{{Folio 2v}}

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

Knyght/

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

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

{ {Folio 3r} }

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

Squyer

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

Yeman

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



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

111Vp on his arm / he bar a gay bracer

112And by his syde / a swerd and a Bokeler

{{Folio 3v}}

113And on that oother syde / a gay daggere

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

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

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

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

Priore{ss}e.

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

119That of hir smylyng/ was ful symple and coy

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

121And she was clepyd / madame Eglentyne

122fful wel she soong/ the seruyce dyuyn

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

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

125After the scole / of Stratford at the Bowe

126ffor fren{ss}h of Parys / was to hire vnknowe

127At mete / wel ytaught/ was she with alle

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

129Ne wette hir fyngres / in hir sauce deepe

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

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

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

133Hir ouer lyppe / wyped she so cleene

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

135Of grece / whan she dronken hadde hir draghte

136fful semely / after hir mete she raghte

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

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

139And peyned hire / to countrefete chiere

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

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

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

143She was so charitable / and so pitous

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

151fful semely / hir wympel pynched was

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

{{Folio 4r}}

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

154But sikerly / she hadde a fair forheed

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

156ffor hardily / she was nat vndergrowe



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

#### Nonne Chapeleyne

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

#### Monk/

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

{{Folio 4v}}

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

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

¶ffrere

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

{ {Folio 5r} }

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

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

March|an|t

272¶A Marchant was ther / with a forked berd

{{Folio 5v}}

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

¶Clerc/ of Oxenford

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

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

## ¶Sergeaunt of Lawe

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

{ {Folio 6r} }

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

## ¶ff|ran|keleyn

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

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

{{Folio 6v}}

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

Haberda{ss}he|re|

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

Carpenter

364A Webbe / a Dyere / and a Tapycer

Webbe

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

Dyere

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

Tapycer

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

Cook/

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

#### Shipman

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

{ {Folio 7r} }

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

Doct|our| of

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

Phi{s}yk/.

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

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

{{Folio 7v}}

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

The goode Wyf

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

of bi{s}yde Bathe

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



472Ywympled wel / and on hir heed an hat/

{{Folio 8r}}

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

474A foot mantel / aboute hir hypes large

475And on hir feet/ a peyre of spores sharpe

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

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

478ffor she koude of that art/ the olde daunce

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

479¶A good man / was ther / of Religioun

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

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

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

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

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

485Benygne he was / and wonder diligent

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

487And swich he was proeued / ofte sythes

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

489But rather wolde he yeuen / out of doute

490Vn to his poure pari{ss}hens aboute

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

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

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

494But he ne lafte noght/ for reyn ne thonder

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

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

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

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

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

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

501And this figure / he added eek ther to

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

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

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

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

506A shiten Shepherde / and a clene sheep

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

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

509He sette noght/. his benefice to hyre

510And leet his sheep / encombred in the Myre

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

512To seeken hym / a Chauntrye for soules

{{Folio 8v}}

513Or with a breetherede / to been withhoolde

514But dwelte at hoom / and kepte wel his foolde

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

516He was a shepherde / and noght a Mercenarye

517And thogh he hooly weere / and vertuous

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



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

#### Plowman

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

#### Millere

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

{ {Folio 9r} }

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

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

[M]aunciple

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

Reue

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

{{Folio 9v}}

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

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

## Somonour

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

## { {Folio 10r} }

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

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

#### Pardoner

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

{{Folio 10v}}

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

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

{{Folio 11r}}

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

{{Folio 11v}}

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

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

{{Folio 12r}}

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



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

{{Folio 12v}}

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

### Notes

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

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

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/6\*1:2002/6/7

**Composition date:** 1487

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

**Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.



# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

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

{{Folio 41r}}

¶The prologe of the Milleres tale

**1**Whan that the knyght/ hadde thus his tale ytoold

2In al the compaignie / nas ther yong ne oold

3That he ne seyde / it was a noble Storie

4And worthy / for to drawen to memorie

5And namely / the gentils euerichon

6¶Oure hoo{s}t lough / and swoor / {s}o moot I gon

7This gooth aright/ vnbokeled is the male

8Lat se now / who shal telle another tale

9ffor trewely / the game is wel bigonne

10Now telleth ye sire Monk / if |pt| ye konne

11Som what / to quite with the knyghtes tale

12¶The Millere / that for dronken was a pale

13So that vnnethe / vp on his hors he sat

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

{{Folio 41v}}

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

{{Folio 42r}}

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

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

¶Here bigynneth / the Millerys tale

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

{{Folio 42v}}

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

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

{{Folio 43r}}

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

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

{{Folio 43v}}

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

140Wel koude he laten blood / and clippe and shaue

{{Folio 44r}}

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

{{Folio 44v}}

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

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

Vnde Ouidi|us| Ictib|us| Agrestis

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

{{Folio 45r}}

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



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

{ {Folio 45v} }

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



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

{{Folio 46r}}

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

340¶Why yis for gode / quod Hende Nicholas

{{Folio 46v}}

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

{{Folio 47r}}

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

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

{{Folio 47v}}

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

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

{{Folio 48r}}

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

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

{{Folio 48v}}

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

{{Folio 49r}}

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

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

### No|ta| mal|um| quid

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

{{Folio 49v}}

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



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

{{Folio 50r}}

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

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

{{Folio 50v}}

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

¶Here is ended / the Millerys tale

### Notes

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

Unusual characters are identified as follows:

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

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.



**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/7

**Composition date:** 1387 - 1392

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

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

{{Folio 195r}}

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

1Oure hoo{s}t gan to swere / as he were wood

2Harrow quod he / by nayles and by blood

3This was a fals cherl / and a fals Iu{s}ti{s}e

4As shameful deeth / as herte may deuy{s}e

5Come to thi{s}e Iuges / and hir aduocatz

6Algate this sely mayde / is slayn allas

7Allas / to deere boghte she beautee

8Wherefore I seye alday / |pt| men may {s}e

9That yiftes of ffortune / and of nature

10Been cau{s}e of deeth / to many a creature

11Of bothe yiftes / |pt| I speke of now

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

{{Folio 195v}}

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

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

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

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

{{Folio 196r}}

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

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

{{Folio 196v}}

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

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

{{Folio 197r}}

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

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

{ {Folio 197v} }

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

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

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

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

¶No|ta|

31¶He seith / he kan no difference fynde

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

{ {Folio 198r} }

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

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

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

48Eet of the frut/ defended on a tree

duxit vxorem

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

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

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

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

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



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

{{Folio 198v}}

81That may go thurgh the golet/ softe and soote  
 82Of Spicerie / of lief / and bark / and roote  
 83Shal been his Sauce / ymaked by delit  
 84To make hym yet/ a newer appetit/  
 85But |cer|tes / he that haunteth swiche delices

¶qui aut|em| in delicijs e{s}t viuens/ mortuus e{s}t

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

¶luxurio{s}a res/ vinum {?}

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

¶et contumelio{s}a ebrietas

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



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

{ {Folio 199r} }

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

Noli vin|um| dare |&c'|

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

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

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

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

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

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

{{Folio 199v}}

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

¶Nolite iurare o|mn|ino / Mathei .5.

173Of sweryng/ seith the holy Ieremye

¶Jeremie .4^{0}^. Iurabis in veritate

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

in Iudicio |&| Iu{s}ticia

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

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

{{Folio 200r}}

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

{{Folio 200v}}

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

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

{ {Folio 201r} }

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

¶coram canuto capite con{s}urg[e]

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

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

{ {Folio 201v} }

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

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

{ {Folio 202r} }

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



## { {Folio 202v} }

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

## { {Folio 203r} }

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

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

{{Folio 203v}}

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



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

¶Here is ended the Pardoners tale

### Notes

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

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1392 - 1395

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

### The Parlement of Fowls

(excerpt)

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

**676** That hast this wintres wedres overshake,

677 And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

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

**679** Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:

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

681     *That hast this wintres wedres overshake.*

**682** Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,

**683** Sith ech of hem recovered hath hys make;

684 Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake:

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

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

### Notes

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

**676]** wedres: storms.  
overshake: shaken off.

**678]** on-lofte: aloft, above.

**679]** foules: birds.

**682]** han: have.

**683]** make: mate.

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** unspecified.

**First publication date:** 1382

**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott

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

**Recent editing:** 2:2002/6/7

**Composition date:** 1382

**Form:** roundel

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

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

¶The |pro|loge / of the Reues tale

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

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

{{Folio 51r}}

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

Narra|ter|

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

{{Folio 51v}}

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

{{Folio 52r}}

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

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

{{Folio 52v}}

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



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

{{Folio 53r}}

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

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

{{Folio 53v}}

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

{{Folio 54r}}

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

{{Folio 54v}}

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

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

{{Folio 55r}}

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

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

{{Folio 55v}}

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

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

{{Folio 56r}}

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

{{Folio 56v}}

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



¶Here endeth the Reues tale

## Notes

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

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset (1996).

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/7

**Composition date:** 1387 - 1392

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

## Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.



# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

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

{ {Folio 204r} }

¶Here bigynneth the Shipmannes tale

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

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

37{{Folio 204v}}

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

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

{ {Folio 205r} }

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

## { {Folio 205v} }

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

## { {Folio 206r} }

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

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

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

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

{ {Folio 206v} }

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

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

qi la.

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

{{Folio 207r}}

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

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

{ {Folio 207v} }

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



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

{ {Folio 208r} }

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

359 Vp on youre bench / she woot it wel certayn

{{Folio 208v}}

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

¶{.}i{.} obligacionem

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

{{Folio 209r}}

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

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

¶Here endeth / the Shipmannes tale

### Notes

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

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

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

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1392 - 1395

**Rhyme:** couplets

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

Poet Index

Poem Index

Random

Search

Introduction

Timeline

Calendar

Glossary

Criticism

Bibliography

RPO

Canadian Poetry

UTEL

by Name

by Date

by Title

by First  
Line

by Last  
Line

Poet

Poem

Short  
poem

Keyword

Concordance

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

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

{{Folio 78v}}

¶The Prologe of the Somnours tale

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

{{Folio 79r}}

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

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

{{Folio 79v}}

¶Here bygynneth the Somnours tale

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

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

{{Folio 80r}}

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



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

{{Folio 80v}}

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

{{Folio 81r}}

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

{{Folio 81v}}

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

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

{{Folio 82r}}

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

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

{{Folio 82v}}

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

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

{{Folio 83r}}

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

{{Folio 83v}}

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

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

.b.

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

{{Folio 84r}}

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



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

{{Folio 84v}}

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



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

{{Folio 85r}}

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

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

{{Folio 85v}}

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

{{Folio 86r}}

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

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

{{Folio 86v}}

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

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

¶Here endeth the Somnours tale

### Notes

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

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library

**First publication date:** 1866

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 1996

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1392 - 1395

**Rhyme:** couplets

## Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

### To Rosemounde

**1**Ma dame, ye ben of al beaute shryne

**2**As fer as cercled is the mapamonde;

3For as the cristall glorious ye shyne,

4And lyke ruby ben your chekys rounde.

5Therwyth ye ben so mery and so iocunde

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

7It is an oynement vnto my wounde,

**8**Thought ye to me ne do no daliance.

**9**For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,

**10**Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;

**11**Your semy voys that ye so small out twyne

**12**Makyth my thought in ioy and blys habounde.

13So curtaysly I go, wyth loue bounde,

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

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

\*Tregentil --/-- Chaucer

### Notes

1] shryne: holy shrine.

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

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

9] tyne: tub, as holding fish.

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

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

12] habounde: abundant, rich in.

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

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

18] iwounde: tied up.

19] deuyne: imagine.

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

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

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



Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Bodleian Rawlinson MS Poet. 163, fol. 114r; facsimile of original page and edition in *The Minor Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. George B. Pace and Alfred David, A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Vol. V (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982): 161-70.

**First publication date:** 1891

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 2002

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/5/13

**Composition date:** 1369 - 1396

**Rhyme:** ababbcbc

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

**Troilus and Criseyde: Book I**

**(excerpt)**

From Book I

**155**And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme

156Of Aperil, whan clothéd is the mede

**157**With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,

**158**And swote smellen floures white and rede,

159In sondry wises shewed, as I rede,

160The folk of Troie hir observaunces olde,

**161**Palladiones feste for to holde.

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

163In general ther wente many a wight,

164To herkennen of Palladion the servyse;

165And namely, so many a lusty knyght,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**209**For sodeynly he hitte him atte fulle;  
 210And yet as proud a pekok kan he pulle!  
  
 211O blynde world, O blynde entenc{.i}oun!  
 212How often falleth al the effect contraire  
**213**Of surquidrie and foul presumpc{.i}oun;  
**214**For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire.  
 215This Troilus is clomben on the staire,  
 216And litel weneth that he moot descenden;  
**217**But al-day faileth thing that fooles wenden.  
  
**218**As proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe  
 219Out of the wey, so pryketh hym his corn,  
 220Til he a lasshe have of the longe whippe;  
 221Than thynketh he, "Though I prauce al byforn  
 222First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,  
 223Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe  
**224**I moot endure, and with my feres drawe."

### Notes

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

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

**157]** Veer: Latin *Ver*, spring.

**158]** swote: sweet.

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

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

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

**172]** makeles: without a mate, peer.

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

**177]** blake wede: black garment.

**179]** brede: breadth, space.

**181]** debonaire of chere: gracious in bearing.

**183]** Troilus: a son of King Priam.

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

**188]** reven him: take away from him.

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

**190]** wayten: watch, observe.

**192]** began to sigh or let his eyes feast.

**197]** pardieux: by the gods.

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

**199]** which a: what a.

**200]** which doutaunces: what perplexities.

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

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

**205]** Ascaunces: as if to say.

**206]** rowe: angrily.

**207]** shop: planned. wroken: avenged.

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

**209]** atte: at the.

**213]** surquidrie: arrogance.

**214]** debonaire: modest.

**217]** wenden: expected.

**218]** Bayard: a bay horse.

**224]** feres: companions.

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Possibly adapted from Robert Kilburn Root, ed., *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde* (Princeton University Press, 1926). PR 1895 .R6 Robarts Library. Possibly also W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1900): II.

**First publication date:** 1483

**Publication date note:** Caxton's edition.

**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott

**RP edition:** 2RP.1.9; *RPO* 1996-2000.

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1382 - 1386

**Form:** rhyme royal

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

**Troilus and Criseyde: Book II**

**(excerpt)**

From Book II

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

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

**598**Criseyde aroos, no lenger she ne stente,

599But streght in-to hire closet wente anon,

600And set hire down as styлле as any ston,

601And every word gan up and down to wynde,

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

**603**And wex somdel astoned in hire thought,

604Right for the newe cas; but whan that she

**605**Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought



606Of peril, why she ought afered be,  
 607For man may love, of possibilite,  
**608**A womman so, his herte may to-breste,  
**609**And she naught love ayein, but-if hire leste.

610But as she sat allone and thoughte thus,  
**611**Ascry aroos at scarmuch al with-oute,  
 612And men cryde in the strete, "Se, Troilus  
 613Hath right now put to flighte the Grekes route!"  
**614**With that gan al hire meyné for to shoute,  
**615**"A! go we see; caste up the latis wyde;  
 616For thorough this strete he moot to paleys ryde;

617"For other wey is fro the yate noon  
**618**Of Dardanus, ther opyn is the cheyne."  
 619With that com he and al his folk anoon  
 620An esy pas rydyng, in routes tweyne,  
**621**Right as his happy day was, sooth to seyne,  
 622For which, men seyn, may nought distourbed be  
 623That shal bityden of necessitee.

624This Troilus sat on his baye steede,  
 625Al armed, save his hed, ful richely,  
 626And wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,  
**627**On whiche he rood a pas, ful softly,  
 628But swych a knyghtly sighte, trewely,  
 629As was on hym was nought, withouten faille,  
 630To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille.

631So lik a man of armes and a knyght  
 632He was to seen, fulfilled of heigh prowess;  
 633For bothe he hadde a body and a myght  
 634To doon that thing, as wel as hardynesse;  
 635And eek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,  
**636**So fressh, so yong, so weldy semed he,  
 637It was an heven up-on hym for to see.

**638**His helm to-hewen was in twenty places,  
**639**That by a tyssew heng, his bak byhynde;  
 640His sheld to-dasshed was with swerdes and maces,  
 641In which men myghte many an arwe fynde  
**642**That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde;  
 643And ay the peple cryde, "Here cometh oure joye,  
 644And, next his brother, holder up of Troye!"

**645**For which he wex a litel reed for shame,  
 646Whan he the peple up-on hym herde cryen,  
 647That to byholde it was a noble game,  
 648How sobreliche he caste doun his yen.  
**649**Cryseyda gan al his chere asprien,  
 650And leet it so softely yn hir herte synke,

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

652 For of hire owen thought she wex al reed,

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

**654** Which that myn uncle swerith he moot be deed,

**655** But I on hym have mercy and pitee."

**656** And with that thought, for pure ashamed, she

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

658 Whil he and all the peple forby paste.

**659** And gan to caste and rollen up and doun

660 With-inne hir thought his excellent prowesse,

**661** And his estat, and also his renown,

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

**663** But moost hir favour was, for his distresse

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

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

**666** Now myghte som envious jangle thus:

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

668 That she so lightly loved Troilus

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

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

**671** For everything, a gynnyng hath it nede

**672** Er al be wrought, with-uten any drede.

673 For I sey nought that she so sodeynly

**674** Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne

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

676 And after that, his manhod and his pyne

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

**678** For which, by proces and by good servyse,

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

### Notes

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

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

**598]** stente. Stinted, stopped, delayed.

**603]** somdel. Somewhat.

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

**608]** to-breste. Burst in pieces.

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

**611]** Ascry. Alarm.  
scarmuch. Skirmish.

**614]** meyni. Household.

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

**618]** ther. Where.

**621]** As was his good fortune.

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

**636]** weldy. Active.

**638]** to-hewen. Cut through.

**639]** lyssew. Woven cord.

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

**645]** Wex reed. Turned red.

**649]** chereAppearance.

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

**654]** moot be, deed. Must die.

**655]** But. Unless.

**656]** for pure ashamed. For very shame.

**657]** as faste. As fast as possible.

**659]** caste. Consider,

**661]** estat. Rank.

**663]** for. Because.

**664]** routhe. Pity.

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

**666]** envious. Malicious (person).

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

**671]** nede. Of necessity.

**672]** drede. Doubt.

**674]** yaf. Gave.

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

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Possibly adapted from Robert Kilburn Root, ed., *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde* (Princeton University Press, 1926). PR 1895 .R6 Robarts Library. Possibly also W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1900): II.

**First publication date:** 1483

**Publication date note:** Caxton's edition.

**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott

**RP edition:** 2RP.1.9; *RPO* 1996-2000.

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1382 - 1386

**Form:** rhyme royal

---

### Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

**Troilus and Criseyde: Book V**

**(excerpt)**

From Book V

**1030**The morwen com, and gostly for to speke,

1031This Diomedé is come un-to Criseyde;

**1032**And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,

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

**1034**That alle hire sikes soore adown he leyde.

1035And finaly, the sothe for to seyne,

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

1037And after this the storie telleth us

**1038**That she hym yaf the faire baye stede,

1039The which he ones wan of Troilus;

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

1041That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomedé.

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

**1043**She made hym were a pencil of hire sleve.

**1044**I fynde ek in the stories elles-where,

1045Whan thorough the body hurt was Diomedé

**1046**Of Troilus, tho wepte she many a teere,

1047Whan that she saugh his wyde wowndes blede;

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

1049And for to hele hym of his sorwes smerte,

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

1051But trewely, the storie telleth us,

1052Ther made nevere woman moore wo

1053Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.

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

1055My name of trouthe in love, for evere-mo!

**1056**For I have falsed oon the gentileste

1057That evere was, and oon the worthieste!

1058"Allas, of me, un-to the worldes ende,

1059Shal neyther been y-writen nor y-songe

**1060**No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.

1061O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!

1062Thorough-out the world my belle shal be ronge;

1063And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.

1064Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!

1065"Thei wol seyn, in as mucche as in me is,

1066I have hem don dishonour, weylaway!

1067Al be I nat the firste that dide amys,

**1068**What helpeth that to don my blame away?

**1069**But syn I see ther is no bettre way,

1070And that to late is now for me to rewe,

**1071**To Diomedé algate I wol be trewe.

1072"But, Troilus, syn I no bettre may,

1073And syn that thus departen ye and I,

**1074**Yet prey I God, so yeve yow right good day,

1075As for the gentileste, trewely,

**1076**That evere I say, to serven feythfully,

**1077**And best kan ay his lady honour kepe;"--

**1078**And with that word she brast anon to wepe.

1079"And certes, yow ne haten shal I nevere;

1080And frendes love, that shal ye han of me,

1081And my good word, al sholde I lyven evere.

1082And, trewely, I wolde sory be

1083For to seen yow in adversitee.

1084And giltelees, I woot wel, I yow leve;

1085But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve."

1086But trewely, how longe it was bytwene,  
1087That she forsok him for this Diomede,

**1088**Ther is non auctor telleth it, I wene.

1089Take every man now to his bokes heede;

**1090**He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.

1091For though that he bigan to wowe hire sone,

1092Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone.

**1093**Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde

1094Forther than the storye wol devyse.

**1095**Hire name, allas! is publissed so wyde

1096That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.

1097And if I myghte excuse hire any wyse,

1098For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,

**1099**I-wis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routh.

...

**1786**Go, litel book, go, litel myn tragédye,

**1787**Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,

1788So sende myght to make in som comédye!

**1789**But litel book, no makyng thou nenvie,

1790But subgit be to alle poesy;

1791And kis the steppes, whereas thou seest pace

**1792**Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.

**1793**And for ther is so gret diversité

1794In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,

1795So prey I God that noon myswrite thee,

**1796**Ne thee mysmetre for defaute of tonge.

1797And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,

**1798**That thow be understonde God I beseche!

**1799**But yet to purpos of my rather speche.--

1800The wrath, as I bigan yow for to seye,

1801Of Troilus, the Grekis boughten deere;

**1802**For thousandes his hondes maden deye,

1803As he that was with-uten any peere,

1804Save Ector, in his tyme, as I kan heere.

**1805**But weilaway, save only Goddes wille!

**1806**Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille.

**1807**And whan that he was slayn in this manére,

1808His lighte goost ful blisfully is went

**1809**Up to the holownesse of the eighthe spere,

**1810**In convers letyng everich element;

**1811**And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,

**1812**The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye



**1813**With sownes fulle of hevenyss melodie.

**1814**And doun from thennes faste he gan avyse

1815This litel spot of erthe, that with the se

1816Embraced is, and fully gan despise

1817This wrecched world, and held al vanité

**1818**To réspect of the pleyne felicité

1819That is in hevene above; and at the laste,

**1820**Ther he was slayn, his loking doun he caste;

**1821**And in hym-self he lough right at the wo

1822Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;

1823And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so

1824The blynde lust, the which that may not laste,

1825And sholden al our herte on heven caste.

1826And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,

**1827**Ther as Mercúrye sorted hym to dwelle.--

**1828**Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love,

1829Swich fyn hath al his grete worthynesse;

**1830**Swich fyn hath his estat réal above,

**1831**Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse:

**1832**Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!

1833And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,

1834As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.

1835O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,

1836In which that love up groweth with your age,

1837Repeyreth hoom fro worldly vanyté,

1838And of youre herte up-casteth the visage

**1839**To thilke God that after his ymage

1840Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire

1841This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.

1842And loveth hym, the which that right for love

**1843**Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,

**1844**First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;

**1845**For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,

1846That wol his herte al holly on him leye.

**1847**And sin he best to love is, and most meke,

1848What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?

**1849**Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites,

1850Lo here, what alle hir goddes may availle;

1851Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites;

1852Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille

**1853**Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!

1854Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche

**1855**In poetrie, if ye hir bokes seche.--

**1856**O moral Gower, this book I directe  
**1857**To the, and to the, philosophical Strode,  
 1858To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to correcte,  
 1859Of youre benignités and zeles goode.  
**1860**And to that sothfast Crist, that starf on rode,  
 1861With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye;  
 1862And to the Lord right thus I speke and seye:  
  
**1863**Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on lyve,  
 1864That regnest ay in three, and two, and oon,  
**1865**Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe,  
 1866Us from visible and invisible foon  
 1867Defende; and to thy mercy, everichon,  
**1868**So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,  
 1869For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne! Amen.

### Notes

**1030]** After Troilus and Criseyde have become secret lovers she is forced to go to her father at the Greek camp, in exchange for the Trojan Antenor, who has been taken prisoner. She promises Troilus that she will return in ten days. But the Greek Diomedes, who is her escort to the camp and who has fallen in love with her, convinces her that the city is doomed and return impossible.

morwen. Morrow.  
 gostly for to speke. To speak spiritually, that is religiously, truly.

**1032]** breke. Interrupt.

**1034]** sikes. Sighs.

**1036]** Deprived her of the great(er part) of all her pain.

**1038]** Diomedes captured a bay horse from Troilus and gave it to Criseyde. Later, when Troilus had captured the horse of Diomedes, Criseyde out of sympathy, returned his present. (From Benoit).

**1040]** ek. Also.

**1042]** the bet. The better.

**1043]** pencil. Small pennon (Old French *penoncel*). A lady's sleeve was often worn as a favour in the chivalric romances.

**1044]** In the stories elles-where. The incident that follows is also from Benoit.

**1046]** Of. By.  
 tho. Then.

**1048]** kepen. Care for, nurse.

**1050]** Men say, (though) I do not know, that she gave him her heart. Note the poet's reluctance to admit Criseyde's infidelity.

**1054]** ago. Gone.

**1056]** oon the gentileste. One of the noblest.

**1060]** shende. Disgrace.

**1068]** don. Put.

**1069]** syn. Since.

**1071]** algate. Anyway, at any rate.

**1074]** yeve. Give.

**1076]** say. Saw.

**1077]** lady. Lady's. Feminine noun without genitive ending.

**1078]** brast. Burst.

**1088]** auctor. Author.

**1090]** out of drede. Out of doubt.

**1093]** Nor does it please me (nor do I wish) to chide this poor unfortunate woman.

**1095]** publisshed. In some MSS. *punysshed*.

**1099]** I-wis. Certainly (O.E. *gewis*).  
routhe. Pity.

**1786]** These concluding lines of the poem follow the account of Troilus's gradual discovery that Criseyde had been unfaithful.

**1787]** May God yet send to thy composer, before he die, the power to write in some comedy. *Ther* at the beginning of 1787 is a mere expletive.

**1789]** no makyng thou nenvie. Envy no composition.

**1792]** Stace. P. Papinius Statius (A.D. 61-96), author of the *Thebaid*.

**1793]** for. Because.

**1796]** Nor scan thee wrongly because of defective knowledge of thy language.

**1798]** understonde. Understood.

**1799]** rather. Earlier.

**1802]** deye. Die.

**1805]** But alas! (except only that it was God's will).

**1806]** slough. Slew.

**1807]** A late addition to the poem -- not found in some MSS. Taken from another poem of Boccaccio, the *Teseide*, where the hero's soul ascends into the heavens. influenced also by Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Lucan's account of the death of Pompey in *Pharsalia*, IX, 1 ff.

**1809]** Up to the concavity or inner surface of the eighth sphere, that of the fixed stars. Up to the extreme limits of the universe; see note on Milton's *Nativity Ode*, 125.

**1810]** Leaving the four elements (earth, water, air, fire) on the other side. Boccaccio has "degli clementi i convessi lasciando", "leaving the convexities of the elements", which Chaucer has mistranslated.

**1811]** avysement. Attention, understanding.

**1812]** erratik sterres. Wandering stars, planets.

**1813]** sownes. Sounds. On the music of the spheres see the Milton note cited above under 1. 1809.

**1814]** gan avyse. Did perceive.

**1818]** In comparison with the full, complete happiness.

**1820]** Ther. Where.

**1821]** Tough. Laughed.

**1827]** Where Mercury alloted to him to dwell. (Mercury was the conductor of souls to the next world.)

**1828]** fyn. End.

**1830]** estat réal. Royal rank.

**1831]** lust. Pleasure, joy.

**1832]** brotelnesse. Brittleness, frailty.

**1839]** thilke. That ilke, that same.  
floures faire. Note the rhyming of words of the same sound but different meaning (cf. the French *rime riche*).

**1843]** beye. Buy, redeem.

**1844]** start. Died.  
sit. Contraction of sitteth.

**1845]** nyl falsen no wight. Will not deceive anyone.

**1847]** sin. Since.

**1849]** payens. Pagans'.

**1853]** rascaille. Worthless mob (usually applied to animals not worth hunting).

**1855]** seche. Seek.

**1856]** moral Gower. Gower's poetry is marked by its serious ethical outlook. Gower had power of attorney for Chaucer during his absence from England in 1378 and addresses an admonition to him at the end of his *Confessio Amantis*.

**1857]** to the, philosophical Strode. Skeat reads "to the philosophical Strode", The Globe Chaucer and Robinson, by inserting the comma, make the second personal pronoun, which seems more probable. The reference may be to Ralph Strode, a noted philosopher, or to a Ralph Strode who was a prominent London lawyer from 1373 to his death in 1387.

**1860]** sothfast. True, faithful.  
start on rode. Died on the cross.

**1863]** eterne on lyve. Eternally living.  
A close translation of Dante's *Paradiso*, XIV, 28-30.

**1865]** uncircumscrip, and al maist circumscrive. Infinite, and comprehending everything.

**1868]** digne. Worthy.

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Possibly adapted from Robert Kilburn Root, ed., *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde* (Princeton University Press, 1926). PR 1895 .R6 Roberts Library. Possibly also W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1900): II.

**First publication date:** 1483

**Publication date note:** Caxton's edition.

**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott

**RP edition:** 2RP.1.9; RPO 1996-2000.

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1382 - 1386

**Form:** rhyme royal

---

**Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

## Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)

### Truth

- 1** Fle fro the pres, and dwelle with sothefastnesse,
- 2** Suffise thin owen thing, thei it be smal;
- 3** For hord hath hate, and clymyng tykelnesse,
- 4** Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal.
- 5** Savour no more thanne the byhove schal;
- 6** Reule weel thiself, that other folk canst reede;
- 7** And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.
  
- 8** Tempest the nought al croked to redresse,
- 9** In trust of hire that tourneth as a bal.
- 10** Myche wele stant in litel besynesse;
- 11** Bywar therfore to spurne ayeyns an al;
- 12** Stryve not as doth the crokke with the wal.



13 Daunte thiself, that dauntest otheres dede;  
 14 And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

15 That the is sent, receyve in buxumnesse;  
 16 The wrestlyng for the worlde axeth a fal.  
 17 Here is non home, here nys but wyldernesse.

18 Forth, pylgryme, forth! forth, beste, out of thi stal!

19 Know thi contré! loke up! thonk God of al!

20 Hold the heye weye, and lat thi gost the lede;  
 21 And trouthe shal delyvere, it is no drede.

[*L'envoy.*]

22 Therefore, thou Vache, leve thine olde wrechednesse;

23 Unto the world leve now to be thral.

24 Crie hym mercy, that of hys hie godnesse

25 Made the of nought, and in espec{.i}al

26 Draw unto hym, and pray in general

27 For the, and eke for other, havenelyche mede;

28 And trouthe schal delyvere, it is no drede.

Notes

1] This poem consists in twenty-two MSS. and was first printed by Caxton, c. 1477-8. In the MSS. it has such titles as *The good councyl of chawcer* and *Moral balade of Chaucyre*. In the Chaucer Society reprint Furnivall entitled it *Truth*. One scribe, Shirley, heads the poem: *Balade that Chaucier made on his deeth bedde*, which would fix the date in 1400, but his statement has been questioned. The present text is from MS. Brit. Mus. Add. 10310, the only one that includes the *Envoy*. This is addressed to one Vache, probably Sir Philip de la Vache (1346- 1408), son in-law to Chaucer's friend, Sir Lewis Clifford. A prosperous courtier, he lost his offices between 1386 and 1389, but afterwards recovered favour. It has been suggested that the poem was addressed to him during the time of his misfortune. Much of the thought of this poem is from Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, which Chaucer translated.

pres. Crowd.  
 sothefastnesse. Truth.

2] Let thy property suffice thee, though it be small.

3] tykelnesse. Instability.

4] wele blent overal. Prosperity blindeth everywhere.

6] reede. Advise.

7] Cf. John, viii, 32.  
 hit is no drede. There is no doubt.

8] Tempest the nought. Do not distress thyself.

9] In trust of Fortune who continually turns her wheel.

**10]** Much happiness stands in little anxiety.

**11]** Beware of kicking against an awl (Cf. Acts, ix, 5).

**12]** crokke. Crock, pot.

**13]** Daunte. Rule, dominate.

**15]** buxumnesse. Submissiveness, obedience.

**18]** beste. Beast.

**19]** of. For.

**20]** heye weye. The main road.  
gost. Spirit. Cf. Romans, viii, 4; Gal., vi, 16.

**22]** Vache. See introductory note.  
olde wrechednesse. Long continued wretchedness (over thy misfortunes).

**23]** thral. Slave.

**24-25]** Crie hym mercy, that ... Made thee of nought. Thank him who, out of his goodness, created thee of nothing.

**27]** other. Perhaps the poet himself.  
mede. Reward.

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** British Library Additional MS 10340.

**First publication date:** 1477 - 1478

**RPO poem editor:** N. J. Endicott

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

**Recent editing:** 2:2002/6/7

**Composition date:** 1386 - 1389

**Form:** balade

---

**Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002  
RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

Poet Index

Poem Index

Random

Search

Introduction

Timeline

Calendar

Glossary

Criticism

Bibliography

RPO

Canadian Poetry

UTEL

by Name

by Date

by Title

by First  
Line

by Last  
Line

Poet

Poem

Short  
poem

Keyword

Concordance

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

## The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale in the Hengwrt Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

{{Folio 58r}}

¶Here bigynneth the prologe of the tale  
of the Wyf of Bathe

1EXperience / thogh noon Auctoritee  
2Were in this world / is right ynogh for me  
3To speke of wo / that is in mariage  
4ffor lordynges / sith |þt| I twelf yeer was of age  
5Thonked be god / that is eterne on lyue  
6Hou{s}bondes atte chirche dore / I haue had fyue  
7If I so ofte / myghte han wedded be  
8And alle were worthy men / in hir degree  
9But me was told certeyn / noght longe agon is  
10That sith |þt| Cri{s}t/ ne wente ne|uer|e but onys  
11To weddyng/ in the Cane of Galilee

12That by the same en{s}ample / taughte he me  
 13That I ne sholde / wedded be but ones  
 14¶Herke eek / lo / which a sharp word for the nones  
 15Bi{s}yde a welle / |Ihus| / god and man  
 16Spak / in repreeue of the Samaritan  
 17¶Thow ha{s}t yhad / fyue hou{s}bondes quod he  
 18And that ilke man / which that now hath thee  
 19Is nat thyn hou{s}bonde / thus he seyde |cer|teyn  
 20What that he mente ther by / I kan nat seyn  
 21But |þt| I axe / why |þt| the fifthe man  
 22Was noon hou{s}bonde / to the Samaritan  
 23How manye / myghte she han in mariage  
 24Yet herde I neuere / tellen in myn age  
 25Vp on this nombre / diffyncycioun  
 26Men may dyuyne / and glo{s}en vp |&| down  
 27But wel I woot ex|pre|{s} / with outen lye  
 28God bad vs / for to wexe and multiplye  
 29That gentil text/ kan I wel vnder{s}tonde  
 30¶Eek wel I woot/ he seyde |þt| myn hou{s}bonde  
 31Sholde lete / fader and moder/ and take to me  
 32But of {^}{{no}} nombre / mencio|un| made he  
 33Of Bigamye / or of Octogamye  
 34Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye  
 35¶Lo here / the wi{s}e kyng/ daun Salomon  
 36I trowe / he hadde wyues many oon

{{Folio 58v}}

37As wolde god / it leueful were to me  
 38To be refre{ss}hed / half {s}o ofte as he  
 39Which yifte of god hadde he / for alle hi{s}e wyuys  
 40No man hath swith / that in this world alyue is  
 41God woot/ this noble kyng/ as to my wit  
 42The fir{s}te nyght/ hadde many a murye fit  
 43With ech of hem / {s}o wel was hym on lyue  
 44Ble{ss}ed be god / that I haue wedded fyue  
 45Wel come the sixte / whan |þt| e|uer|e he shal  
 46ffor sith I wol nat kepe {^}{{me}} / chaa{s}t in al  
 47Whan myn hou{s}bonde / is fro the world agon  
 48Som cri{s}ten man / shal wedde me anon  
 49ffor thanne thapo{s}tle seith / |þt| I am free  
 50To wedde a goddes half / where it liketh me  
 51He seith / that to be wedded is no synne  
 52Bet is to be wedded / than to brynne  
 53What rekketh me / theigh folk / seye vileynye  
 54Of shrewed Lameth / and his bigamye  
 55I woot wel / Abraham was an holy man  
 56And Iacob eek/ as fer as e|uer|e I kan  
 57And ech of hem / hadde wyues mo than two  
 58And many another / holy man al{s}o  
 59¶Where kan ye seye / in any maner age  
 60That heighe god / defended mariage  
 61By expres word / I pray yow telleth me  
 62Or where comanded he virgynytee  
 63I woot as wel as ye / it is no drede

64Thapo{s}tle / whan he speketh of maydenhede  
 65He seyde / that |pre|cept ther of / hadde he noon  
 66Men may con{s}eille a womman / to be oon  
 67But con{s}eillyng/ nys no comandement/  
 68He put it/ in oure owene Iuggement/  
 69ffor hadde god / comanded maydenhede  
 70Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng/ |with| the dede  
 71And certes / if ther were no seed y{s}owe  
 72Virgynytee thanne / wher of sholde it growe  
 73Poul dor{s}te nat comanden / at the lee{s}te  
 74A thyng/ of which / his may{s}ter yaf noon hee{s}te  
 75The dart / is set vp for virgynytee  
 76Cacche who so may / who renneth be{s}t lat se

{{Folio 59r}}

77But this word / is noght take of euery wight/  
 78But ther as god / li{s}t yeue it of his myght/  
 79I woot wel / that thapo{s}tle was a mayde  
 80But nathelees / thogh |þt| he wroot/ or sayde  
 81He wolde / that euery wight/ were swich as he  
 82Al nys but con{s}eil / to virgynytee  
 83And for to been a wyf / he yaf me leue  
 84Of Indulgence / so nys it no repreue  
 85To wedde me / if that my make dye  
 86With outen excepcio|un| of bigamye  
 87Al were it good / no womman for to touche  
 88He mente / as in his bed / or in his couche  
 89ffor |per|il is / bothe fyr and tow ta{ss}emble  
 90Ye knowe / what this en{s}ample may re{s}emble  
 91This al and som / he heeld virgynytee  
 92Moore |per|fit/ than weddyng in freletee  
 93ffreletee clepe I / but if |þt| he and she  
 94Wolde leden / al hir lyf/ in cha{s}titee  
 95I graunte it wel / I haue noon enuye  
 96Thogh maydenhede / |pre|ferre bigamye  
 97It liketh hem to be clene / in body and goo{s}t/  
 98Of myn e{s}tat/ ne wol I make no boo{s}t/  
 99ffor wel ye knowe / a lord in his hou{s}hold  
 100Ne hath nat euery ve{ss}el / al of gold  
 101S|om|me been of tree / and doon hir lord s|er|uy{s}e  
 102God clepeth folk to hym / in sondry wy{s}e  
 103And euerich / hath of god a |propre| yifte  
 104Som this / som that/ as hym liketh shifte  
 105Virgynytee / is greet |per|feccio|un|  
 106And continence eek/ with deuocio|un|  
 107But Cri{s}t/ that of |per|feccion / is welle  
 108Bad nat euery wight / he sholde go selle  
 109Al that he hadde / and yeue it to the poore  
 110And in swich wi{s}e / folwe hym and his foore  
 111He spak to hem / that wol lyue |per|fitly  
 112And lordynges / by youre leue / that am nat I  
 113I wol bi{s}towe / the flour of al myn age  
 114In thactes / and in fruyt of mariage

## questio

115¶Telle me al{s}o / to what conclu{s}io|un|

116Were membres maad / of generacio|un|

{{Folio 59v}}

117And of so |per|fit/ wys a wight ywroght/  
 118Tru{s}teth right wel / they were nat maad for noght/  
 119Glo{s}e who {s}o wole / and seye bothe vp and doun  
 120That they were maad / for purgacioun  
 121Of Vryne / and oure bothe thynges smale  
 122Was eek to knowe / a femelle / from a male  
 123And for noon oother cau{s}e / sey ye / no{?.}  
 124Thex|per|ience / woot wel it is noght so  
 125So that the Clerkes / be nat with me wrothe  
 126I sey this / |pt| they maked been for bothe  
 127That is to seyn / for office and for e{s}e  
 128Of engendrure / ther we nat god di{s}ple{s}e  
 129Why sholde men ellis / in hir bokes sette  
 130That man shal yelde / to his wyf hir dette  
 131Now wherwith / sholde he make his paiement  
 132If he ne v{s}ed / his sely In{s}trument/  
 133Thanne were they maad / vp on a creature  
 134To purge vryne / and eek for engendrure  
 135¶But I seye noght/ |pt| euery wight is holde  
 136That hath swich harneys / as I to yow tolde  
 137To goon / and v{s}en hem in engendrure  
 138Thanne sholde men take / of Cha{s}titee no cure  
 139Cri{s}t was a mayde / and shapen as a man  
 140And many a Seynt/ sith that the world bigan  
 141Yet lyued they euere / in |per|fit Cha{s}titee  
 142I nyl envie / no virgynytee  
 143Lat hem be breed / of pured whete seed  
 144And lat vs wyues / hote Barlybreed  
 145And yet |with| Barly breed / Mark telle kan  
 146Oure lord |Iesu| / refre{ss}hed many a man  
 147In swich e{s}tat/ as god hath clepyd vs  
 148I wol |per|{s}euere / I nam nat |pre|cius  
 149In wifhode / wol I v{s}e myn In{s}trument/  
 150As frely / as my makere hath it sent/  
 151If I be daungerous / god yeue me sorwe  
 152Myn hou{s}bonde / shal it han / bothe eue and morwe  
 153Whan that hym li{s}t/ com forth and paye his dette  
 154And hou{s}bonde / wol I haue / I wol nat lette  
 155Which shal be / bothe / my dettour and my thral  
 156And haue / his tribulacion / with al

{{Folio 60r}}

157Vp on his fle{ss}h / whil that I am his wyf  
 158I haue the power / duryng al my lyf  
 159Vp on his |prop|re body / and nat he  
 160Right thus / thapo{s}tle / tolde it vn to me  
 161And bad oure hou{s}bondes / for to loue vs wel



162Al this sentence / me liketh euery del  
 163Vp stirte the Pardoner / and that anon  
 164Now dame quod he / by god and by Seint |Iohan|  
 165Ye been a noble Prechour/ in this cas  
 166I was aboute / to wedde a wyf allas  
 167What/ sholde I bye {^}{{it}} / on my fle{ss}h {s}o deere  
 168Yet hadde I leuere / wedde no wyf to yeere  
 169¶Abyd quod she / my tale is nat bigonne  
 170Nay /thow shalt drynken / of another tonne  
 171Er |þt| I go / shal {s}auoure wors than Ale  
 172And whan that I / haue toold thee forth my tale  
 173Of tribulacion / in maryage  
 174Of which I am expert/ in al myn age  
 175This is to seye / my self hath been the whippe  
 176Thanne may{s}tow / che{s}e / wheither |þt| thow wolt sippe  
 177Of thilke tonne / that I shal abroche  
 178Be war of it / er thow to neigh approche  
 179ffor I shal telle en{s}amples / mo than ten  
 180Who so |þt| nyle / be war/ by othere men  
 181By hym / shal othere men corrected be  
 182Thi{s}e same wordes / writeth Protholome  
 183Rede in his Almage{s}te / and take it there  
 184¶Dame I wolde pray yow / if youre wyl it were  
 185Seyde this Pardoner / as ye bigan  
 186Telle forth youre tale / spareth for no man  
 187And techeth vs yonge men / of youre praktyke  
 188¶Gladly quod she / syn it may yow lyke  
 189But that I praye / to al this compaignye  
 190If that I speke / after my fanta{s}ye  
 191As taketh nat agrief / of that I seye  
 192ffor myn entente / nys but for to pleye  
 193Now sire / thanne wol I telle yow forth my tale  
 194As euere / moot I drynke / wyn or Ale  
 195I shal seye sooth / tho hou{s}bondes |þt| I hadde  
 196As three of hem were goode / and two were badde

{{Folio 60v}}

197The thre men / were goode / and ryche / and olde  
 198Vnnethe myghte they / the Statut holde  
 199In which / that they were bounden vn to me  
 200Ye woot wel / what I mene of this |per|dee  
 201As help me god / I laughe whan I thynke  
 202How pitou{s}ly / a nyght I made hem swynke  
 203And by my fey / I tolde of it no stoor  
 204They hadde me yeuen / hir land and hir tre{s}oor  
 205Me neded nat/ do lenger diligence  
 206To wynne hir loue / or doon hem re|uer|ence  
 207They loued me so wel / by god aboue  
 208That I ne tolde / no deyntee of hir loue  
 209A wys womman / wol bi{s}ye hi|re| / e|uer|e in oon  
 210To gete hir loue / ye ther as she hath noon  
 211But sith I hadde hem / hoolly in myn hond  
 212And sith that they / hadde yeuen me al hir lond  
 213What sholde I take kepe / hem for to ple{s}e

214But it were / for my |pro|fit/ and myn e{s}e  
 215I sette hem awerk/ by my fey  
 216That many a night/ they songen weylawey  
 217The bacon / was nat fet for hem I trowe  
 218That {s}om men han / in E{ss}e|x'| at Donmowe  
 219I go|uer|ned hem / so wel after my lawe  
 220That ech of hem / ful bli{s}ful was and fawe  
 221To brynge me / gaye thynges fro the ffeyre  
 222They were ful glad / whan I spak to hem feyre  
 223ffor god it woot/ I chidde hem spitou{s}ly  
 224¶Now herkneth / how I bar me |prop|rely  
 225Ye wi{s}e wyues / that konne vnder{s}tonde  
 226Thus sholde ye speke / and bere hem wrong on honde  
 227ffor half {s}o boldely / kan ther no man  
 228Swere and lye / as a womman kan  
 229I sey nat this / by wyues |þt| ben wy{s}e  
 230But if it be / whan they hem my{s}auy{s}e  
 231A wys wyf / if that she kan hir good  
 232Shal bere hym an hond / the Cow is wood  
 233And take witne{ss}e / of hir owene mayde  
 234Of hire a{ss}ent/ but herkneth how I sayde  
 235¶Sire olde kaynard / is this thyn array  
 236Why is / my Neghebores wyf {s}o gay

{{Folio 61r}}

237She is hon|our|ed / ouer al ther she goth  
 238I sitte at hoom / I haue no thrifty cloth  
 239What do{s}tow / at my neghebores hous  
 240Is she so fair / artow so amorous  
 241What rowne ye with oure mayde / benedicite  
 242Sire olde lechour / lat thy Iapes be  
 243And if I haue / a go{ss}ib / or A freend  
 244With outen gilt/ ye chiden as a feend  
 245If that I walke / or pleye vn to his hous  
 246Thow come{s}t hoom / as dronken as a mous  
 247And |pre|che{s}t on thy bench / with yuel preef  
 248Thow sey{s}t to me / it is a greet me{s}cheef  
 249To wedde a poure womman / for co{s}tage  
 250And if that she be ryche / of heigh parage  
 251Thanne sei{s}tow / that it is a tormentrye  
 252To suffre / hir pryde / and hir malencolye  
 253And if |þt| she be fair / thow verray knaue  
 254Thow sei{s}t/ that euery holour wol hi|re| haue  
 255She may no while / in cha{s}titee abyde  
 256That is a{ss}ayled / vp on ech a syde  
 257¶Thow sey{s}t/ som folk de{s}iren vs for riche{ss}e  
 258S|om|me for oure shap / and s|om|me for oure fairne{ss}e  
 259And s|om|me / for she kan outhur synge / or daunce  
 260And s|om|me / for gentille{ss}e / and dalyaunce  
 261S|om|me for hir handes / and hir armes smale  
 262Thus goth al to the deuel / by thy tale  
 263Thow sey{s}t / men may nat kepe a Ca{s}tel wal  
 264It may so longe / a{ss}aylled been ouer al  
 265And if that she be foul / thow sey{s}t |þt| she

266Coueiteth euery man / that she may se  
 267ffor as a Spaynel / she wol on hym lepe  
 268Til that she fynde / som man hir to chepe  
 269Ne noon so grey goos / goth ther in the lake  
 270As sei{s}tow / wol be with oute make  
 271And sey{s}t/ it is an hard thyng / for to wolde  
 272A thyng / that no man wol his thankes holde  
 273Thus sei{s}tow lorel / whan thow goo{s}t to bedde  
 274And that no wys man / nedeth for to wedde  
 275Ne no man / that entendeth vn to heuene  
 276With wilde thonder dynt/ and firy leuene

{{Folio 61v}}

277Moote thy welked nekke / be to broke  
 278Thow sey{s}t/ that droppying hou{s}es / and eek smoke  
 279And chidyng wyues / maken men to flee  
 280Out of hir owene hou{s}es / a |\_bn|dicitee |?  
 281What eyleth / swich an old man for to chide  
 282Thow sey{s}t/ we wyues / wil oure vices hyde  
 283Til we be fa{s}t/ and thanne we wol hem shewe  
 284Wel may that be / a prouerbe of a Shrewe  
 285Thow sei{s}t/ |pt| Oxen / A{ss}es / hors / and houndes  
 286They been a{ss}ayed / at dy|uer|{s}e {s}toundes  
 287Bacynes / lauours / er that men hem bye  
 288Spoones / stooles / and al swich hou{s}bondrye  
 289And so be pottes / clothes / and array  
 290But folk / of wyues / maken noon a{ss}ay  
 291Til they be wedded / olde dotard shrewe  
 292And thanne sei{s}tow / we wil oure vices shewe  
 293Thow sei{s}t al{s}o / that it di{s}ple{s}eth me  
 294But if that thow / wolt prei{s}e my beautee  
 295And but thow powre / alwey vp on my face  
 296And clepe me faire dame / in e|uer|y place  
 297And but thow make a fee{s}te / on thilke day  
 298That I was born / and make me fre{ss}h and gay  
 299And but thow do / to my norice honour  
 300And to my chambrere / with Inne my bour  
 301And to my fadres folk / and his allyes  
 302Thus sei{s}tow / olde barel ful of lyes  
 303And yet/ of oure Ap|pre|tice / Iankyn  
 304ffor his crisp heer / shynyng/ as gold so fyn  
 305And for he Squyereth me / bothe vp and down  
 306Yet ha{s}tow caught/ fals su{s}peciouun  
 307I wil hym nat/ thogh thow were deed to morwe  
 308¶But tel me this / why hide{s}tow with sorwe  
 309The keyes of thy Che{s}te / away fro me  
 310It is my good / as wel as thyn pardee  
 311What wene{s}tow / make an ydiote of oure dame  
 312Now by that lord / that called is Seint Iame  
 313Thow shalt noght bothe / thogh |pt| thow were wood  
 314Be mai{s}ter / of my body / and my good  
 315That oon thow shalt forgo / maugree thyne eyen  
 316What helpeth it/ of me enquire and spyen

{{Folio 62r}}

317I trowe / thow wolde{s}t/ lok me in thy chi{s}te  
 318Thow sholde{s}t seye / wyf / go wher thee li{s}te  
 319Taak youre di{s}port/ I nyl leue no talis  
 320I knowe yow / for a trewe wyf / Dame Alis  
 321We loue no man / that taketh kepe / or charge  
 322Wher |pt| we goon / we wol been at oure large  
 323Of alle men / yble{ss}ed moote he be  
 324The wi{s}e A{s}trologen / Daun Protholome  
 325That seith this prouerbe / in his Almage{s}te  
 326Of alle men / his wi{s}dom is hye{s}te  
 327That rekketh nat/ who hath the world in honde  
 328By this |pro||uer|be / thow shalt vnder{s}tonde  
 329Haue thow ynogh / what thar thee rekke / or care  
 330How myrily / that othere folkes fare  
 331ffor |cer|tes / olde dotard / by youre leue  
 332Ye shal han queynte / right ynogh at eue  
 333He is to greet a nygard / that wil werne  
 334A man to lighte a candle / at his lanterne  
 335He shal han / neuer the la{ss}e light pardee  
 336Haue thow ynogh / thee thar nat pleyne thee  
 337¶Thow sei{s}t al{s}o / that if we make vs gay  
 338With clothyng/ and with |pre|cious array  
 339That it is peril / of oure cha{s}titee  
 340And yet with sorwe / thow mo{s}t enforce thee  
 341And seye thi{s}e wordes / in thapo{s}tles name  
 342In habit/ maad with cha{s}titee and shame  
 343Ye w|om|men / shal apparaille yow quod he  
 344And nat in tre{ss}ed heer / and gay perree  
 345As perlys / ne with gold / ne clothes ryche  
 346After thy text/ ne after thy rubryche  
 347I wol nat werke / as muche / as is a gnat/  
 348Thow seyde{s}t this / |pt| I was lyk a Cat/  
 349ffor who so wolde senge / a Cattes skyn  
 350Thanne wolde the Cat/ wel dwellen in his In  
 351And if the Cattes skyn / be slyk/ and gay  
 352She wol nat dwelle in hou{s}e / half a day  
 353But forth she wole / er any day be dawed  
 354To shewe hir skyn / and goon a Caterwawed  
 355This is to seye / if I be gay si|re| shrewe  
 356I wol renne out/ my borel for to shewe

{{Folio 62v}}

357Sire olde fool / what helpeth thee te{s}pyen  
 358Thogh thow preye Argus / |with| his hundred eyen  
 359To be my warde corps / as he kan be{s}t  
 360In feith / he shal nat kepe me / but me le{s}t/  
 361Yet koude I make his berd / as mote I thee  
 362¶Thow seyde{s}t eek/ |pt| ther ben thynges three  
 363The whiche thynges / troublen al this erthe  
 364And that no wight/ may endure the ferthe  
 365O leeue sire shrewe / |Iesu| shorte thy lyf  
 366Yet |pre|che{s}tow / and sei{s}t an hateful wyf

367Yrekened is / for oon of thi{s}e my{s}chaunces  
 368Been ther / noone othere re{s}emblaunces  
 369That ye may likne / youre |per|ables to  
 370But if a sely wyf/ be oon of tho  
 371¶Thow likne{s}t eek / w|om|manes loue to helle  
 372To bareyne lond / ther water may nat dwelle  
 373Thow likne{s}t it al{s}o / to wilde fyr  
 374The moore it brenneth / the moore it hath de{s}yr  
 375To con{s}umen euery thyng/ |pt| brent wol be  
 376Thow sei{s}t/ right as wormes shende a tree  
 377Right so a wyf / de{s}troyeth hir hou{s}bonde  
 378This knowen they / that been to wyues bonde  
 379¶Lordynges / right thus / as ye han vnder{s}tonde  
 380Bar I stifly / myne olde hou{s}bondes on honde  
 381That thus they seyden / in hir dronkene{ss}e  
 382And al was fals / but that I took witne{ss}e  
 383On Iankyn / and on my Nece al{s}o  
 384O lord / the pyne I dide hem / and the wo  
 385fful giltles / by goddes swete pyne  
 386ffor as an hors / I koude byte and whyne  
 387I koude pleyne / and I was in the gilt  
 388Or ellis / often tyme / I hadde been spilt/  
 389Who so that fir{s}t to Mille comth / fir{s}t grypt/  
 390I pleynd fir{s}t/ so was oure wer|re| stynt/  
 391They were ful glad / to excu{s}en hem ful blyue  
 392Of thyng/ of which they neuere agilde hir lyue  
 393Of wenches / wolde I bern hem on honde  
 394Whan that for syk/ they myghte vnnethe stonde  
 395Yet tikled I his herte / for that he  
 396Wende that I hadde had of hym / {s}o greet chiertee

{{Folio 63r}}

397I swoor / that my walkyng/ out by nyghte  
 398Was for to e{s}pye / wenches that he dighte  
 399Vnder that colour / hadde I many a myrthe  
 400ffor al swich wit/ is yeuen vs in oure birthe  
 401Deceite / wepyng/ spynnyng/ god hath yeue  
 402To wommen kyndely / whil they may lyue  
 403And thus / of o thyng/ I auante me  
 404At ende / I hadde the bet in ech degree  
 405By sleighte / or force / or by som maner thyng/  
 406As by continuel murmur / or grucchyng/  
 407Namely abedde / hadden they me{s}chaunce  
 408Ther wolde I chide / and do hem no ple{s}aunce  
 409I wolde no lenger / in the bed abyde  
 410If that I felte his arm / ouer my syde  
 411Til he hadde maad / his raunceon vn to me  
 412Thanne wolde I suffre hym / do his nycetee  
 413And ther fore / euery man / this tale I telle  
 414Wynne who so may / for al is for to selle  
 415With empty hond / men may none haukes lure  
 416ffor wynnyng/ wolde I al his lu{s}t endure  
 417And make me / a feyned appetit/  
 418And yet in baco|un| / hadde I ne|uer|e delit

419That made me / that euere I wolde hem chyde  
 420ffor thogh the Pope / hadde seten hem bi{s}yde  
 421I wolde noght spare hem / at hir owene bord  
 422ffor by my trouthe / I quytte hem / word for word  
 423As help me / verray god omnipotent  
 424Togh I right now / sholde make my te{s}tament/  
 425I ne owe hem nat a word / that it nys quyt/  
 426I broghte it so aboute / by my wit  
 427That they mo{s}te yeue it vp / as for the be{s}te  
 428Or ellis / hadde we ne|uer|e been in re{s}te  
 429ffor thogh he looked / as a wood leo|un|  
 430Yet sholde he faille / of his conclu{s}io|un|  
 431¶Thanne wolde I seye / good lief taak keep  
 432How mekely / looketh Wilkyn oure sheep  
 433Com neer my spou{s}e / lat me ba thy cheke  
 434Ye sholden be / al pacient / and meke  
 435And han / a swete spyced con{s}cience  
 436Sith ye so |pre|che / of Iobes pacience

{{Folio 63v}}

437Suffreth alwey / syn ye so wel kan |pre|che  
 438And but ye do / |cer|teyn we shal yow teche  
 439That it is fair / to han a wyf in pees  
 440Oon of vs two / mo{s}te bowen doutelees  
 441And sith a man / is moore re{s}onable  
 442Than womman is / ye mo{s}ten been suffrable  
 443What eyleth yow / to grucche thus and grone  
 444Is it/ for ye wolde haue / my queynte allone  
 445Wy taak it al / lo haue it euery del  
 446Peter I shrewe yow / but ye loue it wel  
 447ffor if I wolde selle / my bele cho{s}e  
 448I koude walke / as fre{ss}h as is a ro{s}e  
 449But I wol kepe it/ for youre owene tooth  
 450Ye be to blame / by god I sey yow sooth  
 451Swiche manere wordes / hadde we on honde  
 452Now wol I speke / of my ferthe hou{s}bonde  
 453My ferthe hou{s}bonde / was a reuelour  
 454This is to seyn / he hadde a |per|amour  
 455And I was yong/ and ful of ragerye  
 456Stibourne and strong/ and ioly as a pye  
 457How koude I daunce / to an harpe smale  
 458And synge ywys / as any nyghtyngale  
 459Whan I hadde dronke / a draghte of swete wyn  
 460Metellyus / the foule cherl the swyn  
 461That with a staf / birafte his wyf hir lyf  
 462ffor she drank/ wyn /. though I hadde been his wyf  
 463Ne sholde nat/ han daunted me fro drynke  
 464And after wyn / on Venus mo{s}te I thynke  
 465ffor al{s}o siker / as coold engendreth hayl  
 466A likerous mouth / mo{s}te han a likerous tayl  
 467In womman vynolent / is no defence  
 468This knowen lechours / by experience  
 469But lord cri{s}t/ whan |þt| it remembreth me  
 470Vp on my youthe / and on my iolytee



471It tikeleth me / aboute myn herte roote  
 472Vn to this day / it dooth myn herte boote  
 473That I haue had my world / as in my tyme  
 474But ageallas / that al wole enuenyme  
 475Hath me biraft/ my beautee / and my pith  
 476Lat go farwel / the deuel go ther with

{{Folio 64r}}

477The flour is goon / ther is namoore to telle  
 478The bren as I be{s}t kan / now mo{s}te I selle  
 479But yet/ to be right murye / wol I fonde  
 480Now wol I tellen / of my ferthe hou{s}bonde  
 481¶I seye I hadde in herte gret de{s}pit  
 482That he / of any oother had delit  
 483But he was quyt/ by god and by Seint Ioce  
 484I made hym / of the same wode a troce  
 485Nat of my body / in no foul manere  
 486But |cer|teynly / I made folk swich chiere  
 487That in his owene grece / I made hym frye  
 488ffor angre / and for verray Ialou{s}ye  
 489By god / in erthe / I was his purgatorie  
 490ffor which I hope / his soule be in glorie  
 491ffor god it woot/ he sat ful ofte and soong /  
 492Whan |pt| his shoo / ful bitterly hym wroong/  
 493Ther was no wight/ saue god and he / |pt| wi{s}te  
 494In many wi{s}e / how soore I hym twi{s}te  
 495He deyde / whan I cam fro |ler|\_lm|  
 496And lyth ygraue / vnder the roode beam  
 497Al is his toumbe / noght so curyus  
 498As was the sepulcre / of hym Daryus  
 499Which that Appellus / wroghte subtilly  
 500It nys but wa{s}t/ to burye hym |pre|ciou{s}ly  
 501Lat hym fare wel / god gyue his soule re{s}te

+

502He is now / in his |gra|ue / and in his che{s}te

+

503Now / of my fifthe hou{s}bonde / wol I telle  
 504God lat his soule / neuere come in helle  
 505And yet was he to me / the moo{s}te shrewe  
 506That feele I / on my rybbes al by rewe  
 507And euere shal / vn to myn endyng day  
 508But in oure bed / he was so fre{ss}h and gay  
 509And ther with al / so wel koude he me glo{s}e  
 510Whan that he wolde / han my bele cho{s}e  
 511That thogh he hadde me bet/ on euery bon  
 512He koude wyne agayn / my loue anon  
 513I trowe I loued hym be{s}t/ for that he  
 514Was of his loue / daungerous to me  
 515We wommen han / if that I shal nat lye  
 516In this matere / a queynte fanta{s}ye

## {{Folio 64v}}

517Wayte what thyng/ we may nat lightly haue  
 518Ther after / wol we crye al day / and craue  
 519fforbede vs thyng/ and that de{s}iren we  
 520Pree{ss}e on vs fa{s}te / and thanne wol we fle  
 521With daunger / oute we / al oure chaffare  
 522Greet prees at Market / maketh deere ware  
 523And to greet cheep / is holden at litel prys  
 524This knoweth euery womman / that is wys  
 525¶My fifthe hou{s}bonde / god his soule ble{ss}e  
 526Which |pt| I took for loue / and no ryche{ss}e  
 527He som tyme / was a clerk of Oxenford  
 528And hadde laft scole / and wente at hom to bord  
 529With my go{ss}yb / dwellyng in oure town  
 530God haue hir soule / hir name was Ali{s}oun  
 531She knew myn herte / and eek my pryetee  
 532Bet than oure pary{ss}he pree{s}t/ as mote I thee  
 533To hire biwreyed I / my con{s}eil al  
 534ffor hadde myn hou{s}bonde / pi{ss}ed on a wal  
 535Or doon a thyng/ that sholde haue co{s}t his lyf  
 536To hire / and to another worthy wyf  
 537And to my Nece / which |pt| I loued wel  
 538I wolde han toold / his con{s}eil euery del  
 539And so I dide / ful often / god it woot/  
 540That made his face / often reed and hoot  
 541ffor verray shame / and blamed hym self/ for he  
 542Hadde toold to me / so greet a pryetee  
 543¶And so bifel / that ones in a lente  
 544So often tymes / I to my go{ss}yb wente  
 545ffor euere yet/ I louede to be gay  
 546And for to walke / in March / Aueryll / and May  
 547ffrom hous to hous / to here sondry tales  
 548That Iankyn Clerk / and my go{ss}yb dame Alys  
 549And I my self / in to the feeldes wente  
 550Myn hou{s}bonde was at londo|un| / al that lente  
 551I hadde / the bettre ley{s}er for to pleye  
 552And for to se / and eek for to be seye  
 553Of lu{s}ty folk/ what wi{s}te {^}{{I}} wher my |gra|ce  
 554Was shapen for to be / or in what place  
 555Ther fore / I made my vi{s}itacions  
 556To vigilies / and to proce{ss}ions

## {{Folio 65r}}

557To |pre|chyng/ eek / and to thi{s}e pilgrimages  
 558To pleyes of myracles / and to mariages  
 559And wered vp on / my gaye scarlet gytes  
 560Thi{s}e wormes / ne thi{s}e moththes / ne thi{s}e Mytes  
 561Vp on my peril / frete hem neuer a del  
 562And wo{s}tow / why / for they were v{s}ed wel  
 563¶Now wol I tellen forth / what happed me  
 564I seye / that in the feeldes walked we  
 565Til trewely / we hadde swich daliaunce  
 566This clerk / and I / that of my |pur|ueiaunce



567I spak to hym / and seyde hym / how that he  
 568If I were wydewe / sholde wedde me  
 569for certeynly / I seye for no bob|\_an|ce  
 570Yet was I neuere / with outen puruei|an|ce  
 571Of mariage / nof othere thynges eek /  
 572I holde a mou{s}es herte / noght worth a leek/  
 573That hath but oon hole / for to sterte to  
 574And if that faille / thanne is al y do  
 575But now {s}ire / lat me se / what shal I seyn  
 576A .ha. by god / I haue my tale ageyn  
 577¶Whan that my fourthe hou{s}bonde / was a beere  
 578I weep algate / and made sory cheere  
 579As wyues mooten / for it is v{s}age  
 580And with my co|uer|chief / couered my vi{s}age  
 581But for that I was / purueyed of a make  
 582I wepte but smal / and that I vndertake  
 583¶To chirche was myn hou{s}bonde / born a morwe  
 584With neghebores / that for hym maden sorwe  
 585And Iankyn oure clerk / was oon of tho  
 586As help me god / whan that I saw hym go  
 587After the beere / me thoughte he hadde a payre  
 588Of legges / and of feet/ so clene and fayre  
 589That al myn herte / I yaf vn to his hooold  
 590He was I trowe / twenty wynter oold  
 591And I was fourty / if I shal seye sooth  
 592But yet I hadde alwey / a coltes tooth  
 593Gat tothed I was / |&| that bicam me weel  
 594I hadde the preente / of Seynt Venus seel  
 595As help me god / I was a lu{s}ty oon  
 596And fayr/ and ryche / and yong/ and wel bigoon

{{Folio 65v}}

597And trewely / as myne hou{s}bondes tolde me  
 598I hadde the be{s}te quonyam / myghte be  
 599Myn a{s}cendent/ was Taur / and Mars ther Inne  
 600Allas / allas / that e|uer|e loue was synne  
 601I folwed ay / myn Inclinacio|un|  
 602By vertu / of my con{s}tellacio|un|  
 603That made me / I koude noght withdrawe  
 604My chambre of Venus / from a good felawe  
 605¶What sholde I seye / but at the Monthes ende  
 606This ioly clerk / Iankyn |bt| was so hende  
 607Hath wedded me / with greet solempnytee  
 608And to hym yaf I / al the lond and fee  
 609That euere was me yeuen / ther bifore  
 610But afterward / repented me ful sore  
 611He nolde suffre / no thyng of my li{s}t/  
 612By god / he smoot me ones / on the ly{s}t/  
 613for that I rente / out of his book {^}{a}} leef  
 614That of the strook/ myn ere weex al deaf  
 615Stibourne I was as is a leone{ss}e  
 616And of my tonge / a verray Ianglere{ss}e  
 617And walke I wolde / as I hadde doon biforn  
 618ffrom hous to hous / al thogh he hadde it sworn

619ffor which / he often tymes / wolde |pre|che  
 620And me / of olde Romayn ge{s}tes teche  
 621How he Symplicius Gallus / lafte his wif  
 622And hire for{s}ook/ for terme of al his lif/  
 623Noght/ but for open heueded he hir say  
 624Lokyng out at his dore / vp on a day  
 625¶Another Romayn / tolde he me by name  
 626That for his wyf / was at a so|mer|es game  
 627With outen his wityng/ he for{s}ook hi|re| eke  
 628And thanne wolde he / vp on his Bible seke  
 629That ilke |pro||uer|be / of Eccle{s}ia{s}te  
 630Where he comandeth / and forbedeth fa{s}te  
 631Man shal nat suffre his wyf / go roule aboute  
 632Thanne wolde he seye right thus / with outen doute  
 633Who so |pt| buyldeth his hous / al of salwes }  
 634And priketh his blynde hors / ouer the falwes }

No|ta|

635And suffreth his wyf / to go seken halwes  
 636Is worthy / to ben hanged on the galwes

{{Folio 66r}}

637But al for noght/ I sette noght an hawe  
 638Of his |pro||uer|be / nof his olde sawe  
 639Ny wolde nat/ of hym corrected be  
 640I hate hym / |pt| my vices telleth me  
 641And so doon mo / god woot of vs than I  
 642This made hym / with me wood al outrely  
 643I nolde noght forbere hym / in no cas  
 644¶Now wol I sey yow sooth / by Seint Thomas  
 645Why |pt| I rente / out of his book a leef  
 646ffor which / he smoot me so / |pt| I was deef  
 647He hadde a book / |pt| gladly nyght and day  
 648ffor his di{s}port/ he wolde rede alway  
 649He clepyd it/ Valerie and Theofra{s}te  
 650At which book / he logh alwey ful fa{s}te  
 651And eek ther was / som tyme a clerk at Rome  
 652A Cardynal / that highte Seint Ierome  
 653That made a book/ agayn Iovinian  
 654In which book/ eek ther was Tertulan  
 655Cri{s}ippus / Trotula / and Helowys  
 656That was Abbe{ss}e / nat fer fro Parys  
 657And eek the parables / of Salomon  
 658Ouydes art/ and bokes many on  
 659And alle thi{s}e were bounden / in o volume  
 660And euery nyght and day / was his cu{s}tume  
 661Whan he hadde ley{s}er / and vacacio|un|  
 662ffrom oother / worldly ocupacio|un|  
 663To reden in this book/ of wikked wyues  
 664He knew of hem / mo legendes and lyues  
 665Than been of goode wyues in the Bible  
 666ffor tru{s}teth wel / it is an inpo{ss}ible  
 667That any clerk/ wol speke good of wyues

668But if it be / of holy seintes lyues  
 669Nof noon oother womman / neuer the mo  
 670Who peynted the leo|un| / tel me who  
 671By god / if w|om|men / hadden writen stories  
 672As clerkes han / with Inne hir oratories  
 673They wolde han writen of men / moore wikkedne{ss}e  
 674Than al the mark of Adam may redre{ss}e  
 675The children / of Mercurie and Venus  
 676Been in hir wirkyng / ful contrarius

{{Folio 66v}}

677Mercurie loueth / wy{s}dam and science  
 678And Venus loueth / Riot and di{s}pence  
 679And for hir di|uer|{s}e / di{s}po{s}icio|un|  
 680Ech faileth / in ootheres exaltacio|un|  
 681And thus god woot/ Mercurie is de{s}olat  
 682In pi{s}ces / wher Venus is exaltat/  
 683And Venus faileth / ther Mercurie is rey{s}ed  
 684Ther fore no w|om|man / of no clerk is prey{s}ed  
 685The clerk/ whan he is old / and may noght do  
 686Of Venus werkes / worth his olde sho  
 687Thanne sit he down / and writ in his dotage  
 688That wommen / kan nat kepe hir mariage  
 689¶But now to purpos / why I tolde thee  
 690That I was beten / for a book pardee  
 691Vp on a nyght/ Iankyn |pt| was oure sire  
 692Redde on his book / as he sat by the fire  
 693Of Eua fir{s}t / |pt| for hir wikkedne{ss}e  
 694Was al man kynde / broght to wrecchedne{ss}e  
 695¶Tho redde he me / how Samp{s}on lo{s}te his herys  
 696Slepyng / his lemman kitte it |with| hir sherys  
 697Thurgh which tre{s}o|un| / lo{s}te he bothe hi{s}e eyen  
 698¶Tho redde he me / if that I shal nat lyen  
 699Of Hercules / and of his Dianyrene  
 700That cau{s}ed hym / to sette hym self afyre  
 701¶No thyng forgat he / the sorwe and wo  
 702That Socrates / hadde with his wyues two  
 703How xantippa / ca{s}te pi{ss}e vp on his heed  
 704This sely man sat {s}tille / as he were deed  
 705He wipte his heed / namoore dor{s}te he seyn  
 706But er that thonder stynte / comth a reyn  
 707¶Of Pha{s}ifpha / that was the queene of Crete  
 708ffor shrewedne{ss}e / hym thoughte the tale swete  
 709ffy spek namoore / it is a gri{s}ly thyng/  
 710Of hi|re| horrible lu{s}t/ and hir likyng/  
 711¶Of Clitermy{s}tra / for hir lecherye  
 712That fal{s}ly / made hir hou{s}bonde for to dye  
 713He redde it/ with ful good deuocio|un|  
 714¶He tolde me eek / for what occa{s}io|un|  
 715Amphiorax / at Thebes lo{s}te his lyf  
 716Myn hou{s}bonde / hadde a legende of his wyf

{{Folio 67r}}

717¶Exiphilem / that for an Ouch of gold  
 718Hath preluely / vn to the grekys told  
 719Wher þt| hir hou{s}bonde / hidde hym in a place  
 720for which / he hadde at Thebes sory grace  
 721¶Of lyma tolde he me / and of lucie  
 722They bothe / made hir hou{s}bondes for to dye  
 723That oon for loue / that oother was for hate  
 724Lyma hir hou{s}bonde / on an euen late  
 725Empoy{s}oned hath / for þt| she was his fo  
 726Lucya likerous / loued hir hou{s}bonde so  
 727That for he sholde alwey / vp on hir thynke  
 728She yaf hym / swich a manere loue drynke  
 729That he was deed / er it were by the morwe  
 730And thus algates / hou{s}bondes han sorwe  
 731¶Thanne tolde he me / how þt| oon latumys  
 732Compleyned / vn to his felawe Arrius  
 733That in his gardyn / grewed swich a tree  
 734On which he seyde / how þt| hi{s}e wyues thre  
 735Honged hem self / for hertes de{s}pitis  
 736¶O leewe brother / quod this Arrius  
 737Yif me a plante / of thilke ble{ss}ed tree  
 738And in my gardyn / planted shal it be  
 739¶Of latter date of wyues / hath he red  
 740That s|om|me han slayn / hir hou{s}bondes in hir bed  
 741And lete hir Lechour / dighte hi|re| al the nyght/  
 742Whan þt| the corps / lay in the floor vp ryght/  
 743¶And s|om|me / han dryuen nayles in hir brayn  
 744Whil þt| they sleepe / and thus they han hem slayn  
 745¶S|om|me han hem yeuen poy{s}o|un| / in hir drynke  
 746He spak moore harm / than herte may bithynke  
 747And ther with al / he knew of mo |pro|uerbes  
 748Than in this world / ther grownen gras or herbes  
 749Bet is quod he / thyn habitacio|un|  
 750Be with a leo|un| / or a foul drago|un|  
 751Than |with| a womman / v{s}yng for to chide  
 752Bet is quod he / hye in the roof abyde  
 753Than with an angry wyf / down in the hous  
 754They been {s}o wikked / and contrarious  
 755They haten / that hir hou{s}bondes loueth ay  
 756He seyde / a womman / ca{s}t hir shame away

{{Folio 67v}}

757Whan she ca{s}t of hir smok/ and forther mo  
 758A fair w|om|man / but she be chaa{s}t al{s}o  
 759Is lyk a gold ryng/ in a sowes no{s}e  
 760Who wolde wene / or who wolde suppo{s}e  
 761The wo / that in myn herte was and pyne  
 762¶And whan I say / he wolde ne|uer|e fyne  
 763To reden / on this cur{s}ed book al nyght/  
 764Al {s}odeynly / thre leues / haue I plyght/  
 765Out of his book/ right as he radde / and eke  
 766I with my fi{s}t/ so took on the cheke  
 767That in oure fyr / he fil bakward adown  
 768And he vp {s}tirte / as dooth a wood leoun

769And with his fe{s}t / he smoot me on the heed  
 770That in the floor / I lay as I were deed  
 771And whan he say / how stille |pt| I lay  
 772He was aga{s}t/ and wolde haue fled his way  
 773Til atte la{s}te / out of my swowgh I brayde  
 774O ha{s}tow slayn me / fal{s}e thief I sayde  
 775And for my land / thus ha{s}tow mordred me  
 776Er I be deed / yet wol I ki{ss}e thee  
 777¶And neer he cam / and kneled faire adown  
 778And seyde / deere su{s}ter Ali{s}oun  
 779As help me god / I shal thee ne|uer|e smyte  
 780That I haue doon / it is thy self to wyte  
 781fforyeue it me / and that I thee bi{s}eke  
 782And yet eft {s}oones / I hitte hym on the cheke  
 783And seyde thief / thus muchel am I wreke  
 784Now wol I dye / I may no lenger speke  
 785¶But at the la{s}te / with muchel care and wo  
 786We fille acorded / by vs seluen two  
 787He yaf me / al the brydel in myn hond  
 788To han the gouernance / of hous and lond  
 789And of his tonge / and his hond al{s}o  
 790And made hym brenne his book/ anon right tho  
 791And whan that I hadde / geten vn to me  
 792By mai{s}trye / al the soueraynetee  
 793And |pt| he seyde / myn owene trewe wyf  
 794Do as thee lu{s}t/ the |ter|me of al thy lyf  
 795Keep thyn honour / and keep eek myn e{s}taat  
 796After that day / we hadden ne|uer|e debaat /

{{Folio 68r}}

797God help me {s}o / I was to hym as kynde  
 798As any wyf / from Denmark/ vn to Inde  
 799And al{s}o trewe / and so was he to me  
 800I pray to god / that sit in mage{s}tee  
 801So ble{ss}e his soule / for his |mer|cy deere  
 802Now wol I seye my tale / if ye wol heere  
 803The frere logh / whan he hadde herd al this  
 804Now dame quod he / so haue I ioye / or blys  
 805This is a long |pre|amble / of a tale  
 806And whan the Somnour / herde the frere gale  
 807¶Lo quod the Somnour / goddes armes two  
 808A frere / wol entremette hym e|uer|e mo  
 809Loo goode men / a flye / and eek a frere  
 810Wol falle in euery dy{ss}h and matere  
 811What speke{s}tow / of preambulacioun  
 812What amble / or trotte / or pees / or go sit doun  
 813Thow lette{s}t oure di{s}port/ in this manere  
 814¶Ye woltow so / sir Somnour / quod the frere  
 815Now by my feith / I shal er that I go  
 816Telle of a Somnour / swich a tale / or two  
 817That al the folk / shal laughen in this place  
 818¶Now ellis frere / I wol bi{s}hrew thy face  
 819Quod this Somnour / and I bi{s}hrew me  
 820But if I telle tales / two or thre

821Of freres / er I come to Sydyngborne  
 822That I shal make thyn herte for to morne  
 823ffor wel I woot/ thy pacience is gon  
 824¶Oure hoo{s}t/ cryde pees / and that anon  
 825And seyde / lat the womman / telle hir tale  
 826Ye fare as folk / that dronken ben of Ale  
 827Do dame / tel forth youre tale / and that is be{s}t/  
 828¶Al reddy sire quod she / right as yow le{s}t/  
 829If I haue licence / of this worthy frere  
 830¶Yis dame quod he / tel forth / and I wol heere

¶Here endeth the prologe of the Wyf of Bathe

{{Folio 68v}}

¶Here bigynneth the tale / of the Wyf of Bathe

1IN tholde dayes / of the kyng Arthour  
 2Of which that Britons / speken greet honour  
 3Al was this land / fulfild of ffairye  
 4The Elf queene / with hir ioly compaignye  
 5Daunced ful ofte / in many a grene mede  
 6This was / the olde opynyoun / as I rede  
 7I speke / of many hundred yerys ago  
 8But now kan no man / se none Elues mo  
 9ffor now the grete charitee / and prayeres  
 10Of lymytours / and othere holy freres  
 11That serchen / euery lond and euery stream  
 12As thikke / as motes in the sonne beam  
 13Ble{ss}ynge halles / chambres / kichenen boures  
 14Citees / Burghes / Ca{s}tels / hye Toures  
 15Thropes / Bernes / Shipnes / Dayeryes  
 16This maketh / |bt| ther been no fairyes  
 17ffor ther as wont/ to walken was an Elf  
 18Ther walketh now / the lymytour hym self  
 19In vndermelys / and in morwenynges  
 20And seith his matyns / and his holy thynges  
 21As he gooth / in his lymytacioun  
 22Wommen / may go saufly vp and down  
 23In euery bu{ss}h / or vnder euery tree  
 24Ther is noon oother Incubus / but he  
 25And he ne wol doon hem / but di{s}honour  
 26¶And so bifel / that this kyng Arthour  
 27Hadde in his hous / a lu{s}ty Bachiler  
 28That on a day / cam ridyng fro Ryuer  
 29And happed that allone / as he was born  
 30He say a mayde / walkynge hym biforn  
 31Of which mayde / anon maugree hir hed  
 32By verray force / he rafte hir maydenhed  
 33ffor which o|pp'|{ss}io|un| / was swich clamour  
 34And swich pur{s}uyte / vn to the kyng Arthour  
 35That dampned was this knyght / for to be deed  
 36By cours of lawe / and sholde han lo{s}t his heed

{{Folio 69r}}



37Par aventure / swich was the statut tho  
 38But that the queene / and othere ladyes mo  
 39So longe preyden / the kyng of grace  
 40Til he his lyf / hym graunted in the place  
 41And yaf hym to the queene / al at hir wille  
 42To che{s}e / wheither she wolde / hym saue or spille  
 43And after this / thus spak she to the knyght  
 44Whan that she saw / hir tyme vp on a day  
 45Thow stande{s}t yet quod she / in swich array  
 46That of thy lyf / yet ha{s}tow no {s}uretee  
 47I graunte thee lyf / if thow kan{s}t tellen me  
 48What thyng is it/ |pt| wommen moo{s}t de{s}iren  
 49Be war / and keep thy nekke boon from Iren  
 50And if thow kan{s}t nat / tellen me anon  
 51Yet/ wol I yeue thee leue / for to gon  
 52A twelf monthe and a day / to seche and lere  
 53An an{s}were suffi{s}ant/ in this matere  
 54And {s}uretee wol I han / er that thow pace  
 55Thy body / for to yelden / in this place  
 56¶Wo was this knyght/ and sorwefully he siketh  
 57But what/ he may nat doon / al as hym liketh  
 58And atte la{s}te / he chees hym for to wende  
 59And come agayn / right at the yeres ende  
 60With swich an{s}were / as god wolde hym |pur|ueye  
 61And taketh his leue / and wendeth forth his weye  
 62He seketh euery hous / and euery place  
 63Where as he hopeth / for to fynde grace  
 64To lerne / what thyng/ wommen loue moo{s}t  
 65But he ne koude / arryuen in no coo{s}t/  
 66Where as he myghte fynde / in this matere  
 67Two creatures / acordyng/ in feere  
 68¶S|om|me seyden / wommen louen be{s}t riche{ss}e  
 69S|om|me seyde honour / s|om|me seyde Iolifne{ss}e  
 70S|om|me riche array / s|om|me lu{s}t abedde  
 71And ofte tyme / to be widwe and wedde  
 72S|om|me seyde / that oure herte / is moo{s}t e{s}ed  
 73Whan that we been / yflatered and yple{s}ed  
 74He gooth ful ny the sothe / I wol nat lye  
 75A man shal wyne vs be{s}t / with flaterye

{{Folio 69v}}

76And with attendaunce / and with bi{s}yne{ss}e  
 77Been we ylymed / bothe moore and le{ss}e  
 78¶And s|om|me seyn / |pt| we louen be{s}t  
 79ffor to be free / and do right as vs le{s}t/  
 80And that no man / repreue vs of oure vice  
 81But seye |pt| we be wi{s}e / and no thyng nyce  
 82ffor trewely / ther is noon of vs alle  
 83If any wight/ wolde clawe vs on the galle  
 84That we nyl kike / for he weith vs sooth  
 85A{ss}ay / and he shal fynde it/ that so dooth  
 86ffor be we / ne|uer| {s}o vicious / with Inne  
 87We wol be holden wi{s}e / and clene of synne



88¶And s|om|me seyn / that greet delit han we  
 89ffor to be holden / stable and eek secree  
 90And in o purpos / {s}tedefa{s}tly to dwelle  
 91And nat biwreye thyng/ that men vs telle  
 92But that tale / is nat worth a Rake stele  
 93Pardee / we wommen / konne no thyng hele  
 94Witne{ss}e on Mida / wol ye heere the tale  
 95¶Ouyde / amonges othere thynges smale  
 96Seyde / Mida / hadde vnder his longe herys  
 97Growynge vp on his heed / two A{ss}es erys  
 98The which vice he hidde / as he be{s}t myghte  
 99fful sotilly / from euery mannes sighte  
 100That {s}aue his wyf / ther wi{s}te of it na mo  
 101He loued hi|re| moo{s}t/ and tru{s}ted hi|re| al{s}o  
 102He preyed hi|re| / that to no creature  
 103SHe sholde tellen / of his diffigure  
 104¶She swoor hym nay / for al this world to wynne  
 105She nolde do / that vileynye / or syn  
 106To make hir hou{s}bonde / han {s}o foul a name  
 107She nolde nat telle it/ for hir owene shame  
 108But nathelees / hir thoughte |pt| she dyde  
 109That she {s}o longe / sholde a con{s}eil hyde  
 110Hir thoughte / it swal {s}o {s}oore aboute hir herte  
 111That nedely / som word / hir mo{s}te a{s}terte  
 112And sith / she dor{s}te nat telle it to no man  
 113Doun to a Marys / fa{s}te by she ran  
 114Til she cam there / hir herte was a fyre  
 115And as a Bitore / bombleth in the Myre

{{Folio 70r}}

116She leyde hir mouth / vn to the water down  
 117Biwrey me nat/ thow water with thy sown  
 118Quod she / to thee I telle it and namo  
 119Myn hou{s}bonde / hath longe A{ss}es erys two  
 120Now is myn herte al hool / now it is oute  
 121I myghte no lenger / kepe it out of doute  
 122Heere may ye see / thogh we a tyme abyde  
 123Yet out it moot/ we kan no con{s}eil hyde  
 124The remenant of the tale / if ye wol heere  
 125Redeth Ouyde / and ther ye may it leere  
 126¶This knyght/ of which my tale is specially  
 127Whan that he say / he myghte nat come ther by  
 128This is to seye / what wommen louen moo{s}t/  
 129With Inne his bre{s}t/ ful sorweful was the goo{s}t /  
 130But hom he gooth / he myghte nat soiorne  
 131The day was come / that homward mo{s}te he torne  
 132And in his wey / it happed hym to ryde  
 133In al this care / vnder a ffore{s}t syde  
 134Wher as he say / vp on a daunce go  
 135Of ladyes .xxiiij. and yet mo  
 136Toward the whiche daunce / he drow ful yerne  
 137In hope / that som wi{s}dom sholde he lerne  
 138But |cer|teynly / er he cam fully there  
 139Vany{ss}hed was this daunce / he ny{s}te where

140No creature say he / that bar lyf  
 141Saue on the grene / he say sittynge a wyf  
 142A fouler wight/ ther may no man deuy{s}e  
 143Agayn the knyght/ this olde wyf gan ry{s}e  
 144And seyde sire knyght/ heer forth ne lyth no wey  
 145Tel me / what |pt| ye seken by youre fey  
 146Par auenture / it may the bettre be  
 147This olde folk/ konne muchel thyng quod she  
 148¶My leue moder / quod this knyght |cer|teyn  
 149I nam but deed / but if that I kan seyn  
 150What thyng it is / that wommen moo{s}t de{s}ire  
 151Koude ye me wi{ss}e / I wolde wel quyte youre hyre  
 152¶Plight me thy trouthe / here in myn hand quod she  
 153The nexte thyng/ that I requere thee  
 154Thow shalt it do / if it lye in thy myght/  
 155And I wol telle it yow / er it be nyght/

{{Folio 70v}}

156[¶]Haue here my trouthe / quod the knyght I graunte  
 157¶Thanne quod she / I dar me wel auaunte  
 158Thy lyf is sauf / for I wole {s}tonde ther by  
 159Vp on my lyf / the queene wol {s}eye as I  
 160Lat see / which is the prouddes{t}e of hem alle  
 161That wereth on / a co|uer|chief / or a calle  
 162That dar weye nay / of that I shal thee teche  
 163Lat vs go forth / with outen lenger speche  
 164Tho rowned she / a pi{s}tel in his ere  
 165And bad hym to be glad / and haue no fere  
 166¶Whan they be comen to the Court/ this knyght/  
 167Seyde / he hadde holde his day / as he had hight/  
 168And redy was his an{s}were / as he sayde  
 169fful many a noble wyf/ and many a mayde  
 170And many a widwe / for |pt| they ben wi{s}e  
 171The queene hir self / sittynge as Iu{s}ti{s}e  
 172A{ss}embled been / this an{s}were for to here  
 173And afterward / this knyght was bode appere  
 174To every wight/ comanded was silence  
 175And that the knyght/ sholde telle in audience  
 176What thyng/ that worldly wommen louen be{s}t/  
 177This knyght/ ne stood nat {s}tille as dooth a be{s}t/  
 178But to his que{s}tion / anon an{s}werde  
 179With manly voys / that al the court it herde  
 180¶My lige lady / generally quod he  
 181Wommen de{s}ire / to haue souereyntee  
 182As wel / ouer hir hou{s}bonde / as hir loue  
 183And for to been in mai{s}trie / hym aboue  
 184This is youre moo{s}te de{s}ir / thogh ye me kille  
 185Dooth as yow li{s}t/ I am here at youre wille  
 186¶In al the Court/ ne was ther wyf ne mayde  
 187Ne wydwe / that contraryed that he sayde  
 188But seyden / he was worthy han his lyf  
 189¶And with that word / vp {s}tirte that olde wyf  
 190Which that the knyght/ say sittynge on the grene  
 191Mercy quod she / my so|uer|eyn lady queene

192Er that youre Court departe / do me right/  
 193I taughte this an{s}were / vn to the knyght/  
 194ffor which / he plighte me his trouthe there  
 195The fir{s}te thyng/ I wolde hym requere

{{Folio 71r}}

196He wolde it do / if it laye in his myght/  
 197Bifore the court/ thanne preye I thee sire knyght/  
 198Quod she / that thow me take vn to thy wyf  
 199ffor wel thow woo{s}t/ that I haue kept thy lyf  
 200If I seye fals / sey nay vp on thy fey  
 201¶This knyght an{s}werde / allas and weilawey  
 202I woot right wel / that swich was my bihe{s}te  
 203ffor goddes loue / as chees a newe reque{s}te  
 204Taak al my good / and lat my body go  
 205¶Nay thanne quod she / I shrewe vs bothe two  
 206ffor thogh |pt| I be foul / old / and poore  
 207I nolde for al the metal / ne for oore  
 208That vnder erthe is graue / / or lith aboue  
 209But if thy wyf I were / and eek thy loue  
 210¶My loue quod he / nay my dampnacio|un|  
 211Allas / that any of my nacio|un|  
 212Sholde euere / so foule dis|per|aged be  
 213But al for noght/ thende is this / that he  
 214Con{s}treyned was / he nedes mo{s}te hir wedde  
 215And taketh his olde wyf / and goth to bedde  
 216¶Now wolden som men / seye |per| auenture  
 217That for my negligence / I do no cure  
 218To tellen yow / the ioye / and al tharray  
 219That at the fe{s}te / was that ilke day  
 220To which thyng/ shortly / an{s}were I shal  
 221I seye / ther nas no ioye / ne fe{s}te at al  
 222Ther nas but heuyne{ss}e / and mucche sorwe  
 223ffor |pri|uely / he wedded hi|re| on morwe  
 224And al day after/ hidde hym as an Owle  
 225So wo was hym / his wyf looked {s}o foule  
 226¶Greet was the wo / the knyght hadde in his thought/  
 227Whan he was with his wyf / a bedde ybrought/  
 228He walweth / and he turneth to and fro  
 229His olde wyf / lay smylyng e|uer|e mo  
 230And seyde / o deere hou{s}bonde benedicite  
 231ffareth euery knyght thus with his wyf / as ye  
 232Is this the lawe / of kyng Arthures hous  
 233Is euery knyght of his/ thus daungerous  
 234I am youre owene loue / and youre wyf  
 235I am she / which that saued hath youre lyf

{{Folio 71v}}

236And |cer|tes / yet ne dide I yow ne|uer|e vnright/  
 237Why fare ye thus with me / this fir{s}te nyght/  
 238Ye faren lyk a man / hadde lo{s}t his wit  
 239What is my gilt / for goddes loue tel it  
 240And it shal ben amended / if I may

241¶Amended quod this knyght/ allas nay / nay  
 242It wol nat ben amended ne|uer|e mo  
 243Thow art so loothly / and {s}o old al{s}o  
 244And ther to comen / of {s}o lowe a kynde  
 245That litel wonder is / thogh I walwe and wynde  
 246So wolde god / myn herte wolde bre{s}te  
 247¶Is this quod she / the cau{s}e of youre vnre{s}te  
 248¶Ye |cer|teynly quod he / no wonder is  
 249¶Now sire quod she / I koude amende al this  
 250If that me li{s}te / er it were dayes thre  
 251So wel ye myghte / bere yow vn to me

¶No|ta| bene

252¶But for ye speken / of swich gentile{ss}e  
 253As is de{s}cended / out of old riche{ss}e  
 254That therfore / sholden ye be gentil men  
 255Swich erroga|un|ce / is nat worth an hen  
 256Looke who |pt| is / moo{s}t |ver|tuous alway  
 257Pryuee and apert/ and moo{s}t entendeth ay  
 258To do / the gentil dedes / |pt| he kan  
 259Taak hym / for the gentile{s}te man  
 260Cri{s}t / wol we clayme of hym oure gentile{ss}e  
 261Nat of oure eldres / for hir old riche{ss}e  
 262ffor thogh they yeue vs / al hir heritage  
 263ffor which we clame / to been of hir parage  
 264Yet may they nat biquethe / for no thyng/  
 265To noon of vs / hir vertuous lyuyng/  
 266That made hem / gentil men ycalled be  
 267And bad vs / folwen hem in swich degree  
 268¶Wel kan / the wi{s}e poete of fflorence  
 269That highte Dant/ speken in this {s}entence  
 270Lo / in swich maner rym / is Dantes tale  
 271fful selde vp ri{s}eth / by his bra|un|ches smale  
 272Prowe{ss}e of man / for god of his prow{ss}e  
 273Wole / . that of hym / we clayme oure gentile{ss}e  
 274ffor of oure eldres / may we no thyng clayme  
 275But temporel thyng/ that man may hurte and mayme

{{Folio 72r}}

276Eek e|uer|y wight/ woot this as wel I  
 277If gentile{ss}e / were planted naturelly  
 278Vn to a |cer|teyn lynage / doun the lyne  
 279Pryuee and apert/ thanne wolde they ne|uer|e fyne  
 280To doon / of gentile{ss}e / the faire office  
 281They myghte do / no vileynye or vice  
 282¶Taak fyr / and bere it in the derke{s}te hous  
 283Bitwix this / and the mount of kauka{s}ous  
 284And lat men shette the dores / and go thenne  
 285Yet wol the fyr / as faire lye and brenne  
 286As twenty thou{s}and men / myghte it biholde  
 287His office naturel / ay wol it holde  
 288Vp |per|il of my lyf/ til that it dye  
 289Here may ye se wel / how |pt| genterye

290Is nat annexed / to po{ss}e{ss}io|un|  
 291Sith folk/ ne doon hir o|per|acio|un|  
 292Alwey / as dooth the fyr lo in his kynde  
 293ffor god it woot/ men may wel often fynde  
 294A lordes sone / do shame and vileynye  
 295And he |pt| wol han prys / of his gentrye  
 296ffor he was born / of a gentil hous  
 297And hadde hi{s}e eldres / noble and |ver|tuous  
 298And nyl hym seluen / do no gentil dedis  
 299Ne folwen his gentil Aunce{s}tre / that deed is  
 300He nys nat gentil / be he Duc/ or Erl  
 301ffor vileynes synful dedes / maken a cherl  
 302ffor gentile{ss}e / nys but renomee  
 303Of thyne Aunce{s}tres / for hir hye bo|un|tee  
 304Which is straunge thyng/ for thy |per|{s}one  
 305Thy gentile{ss}e / cometh fro god allone  
 306Thanne comth / oure verray gentile{ss}e of |gra|ce  
 307It was no thyng/ biquethe vs / with oure place  
 308¶Thenketh how noble / as seith Valerius  
 309Was thilke / Tullius ho{s}tillius  
 310That out of pouerte / roos to heigh noble{ss}e  
 311Redeth Senek/ and redeth eek Boece  
 312Ther shul ye {s}een expres / |pt| no drede is  
 313That he is gentil / that dooth gentil dedis  
 314And ther fore / leue hou{s}bonde / I thus conclude  
 315Al were it/ that myne Aunce{s}tres weren rude

{{Folio 72v}}

316Yet may the hye god / and {s}o hope I /  
 317Graunte me grace / to lyuen |ver|tuou{s}ly  
 318Thanne am I gentil / whan |pt| I bigynne  
 319To lyuen |ver|tuou{s}ly / and weyue synne  
 320¶And ther as ye / of po|uer|te me repreue  
 321The hye god / on whom |pt| we bileue  
 322In wilful po|uer|te / chees to lyue his lyf

...

323And certes euery man / mayden / or wyf  
 324May vnder{s}tonde / |pt| |Iesus| heuene kyng/  
 325Ne wolde nat che{s}e / a vicious lyuynge/  
 326Glad po|uer|te / is an hone{s}te thyng |cer|teyn  
 327This wol Senek/ and othere clerkes seyn  
 328Who {s}o |pt| halt hym payd / of his pouerte  
 329I holde hym riche / al hadde he nat a sherte  
 330He that coueiteth / is a poure wight/  
 331ffor he wolde han / that is nat in his myght/  
 332But he |pt| noght hath / ne coueiteth haue  
 333Is riche / al thogh we holde hym but a knaue  
 334Verray pouerte / is synne |prop|rely  
 335Iuuenal seith / of pouerte myrily  
 336¶The poure man / whan he gooth by the weye  
 337Biforn the theues / he may synge and pleye  
 338Pouerte is hateful good / and as I ge{ss}e

339A ful greet brynge|re| / out of bi{s}yne{ss}e  
 340A greet amendere eek/ of Sapience  
 341To hym / that taketh it in pacience  
 342Pouerte is thyng/ al thogh it {s}eme elenge  
 343Po{ss}e{ss}io|un| / that no wight wol challenge  
 344Pouerte ful often / whan a man is lowe  
 345Maketh hym self / and eek his god to knowe  
 346Pouerte / a spectacle is / as thynketh me  
 347Thurgh which he may / his verray freendes se  
 348And ther fore sire / syn |pt| I noght yow greue  
 349Of my pouerte / namoore ye me repreue  
 350¶Now sire / of elde ye repreue me  
 351And certes sire / thogh noon auctoritee  
 352Were in no book / ye gentils of honour  
 353Seyn / |pt| men an old wight/ sholde doon fauour  
 354And clepe hym fader / for youre gentile{ss}e  
 355And Auctours / shal I fynden / as I ge{ss}e

{{Folio 73r}}

356¶Now ther ye seye / that I am foul and old  
 357Thanne drede yow noght/ to been a Cokewold  
 358ffor filthe and elde / al {s}o mote I thee  
 359Been grete wardeyns / vp on cha{s}titee  
 360But nathelees / syn I knowe youre delit /  
 361I shal fulfille / youre worldly appetit/  
 362¶Chees now quod she / oon of thi{s}e thynges tweye  
 363To han me foul and old / til that I deye  
 364And be to yow / a trewe humble wyf  
 365And ne|uer|e yow di{s}ple{s}e / in al my lyf  
 366Or ellis / ye wol han me / yong and fair  
 367And take youre auenture / of the repair  
 368That shal be to youre hous / by cau{s}e of me  
 369Or in {s}om oother place / may wel be  
 370Now chees your seluen / wheither |pt| yow liketh  
 371¶This knyght auy{s}eth hym / and {s}oore siketh  
 372But atte la{s}te / he seyde in this manere  
 373My lady and my loue / and wyf {s}o deere  
 374I putte me / in youre wi{s}e gouerna|un|ce  
 375Che{s}eth you|re| self/ which |pt| may be moo{s}t ple{s}|\_an|ce  
 376And moo{s}t honour to yow / and me al{s}o  
 377I do no fors / the wheither of the two  
 378ffor as yow liketh / it suffi{s}eth me  
 379¶Thanne haue I gete / of yow mai{s}trye / quod she  
 380Syn I may che{s}e / and gouerne as me le{s}t/  
 381¶Ye |cer|tes wyf quod he / I holde it be{s}t/  
 382¶Kys me quod she / we be no lenger wrothe  
 383ffor by my trouthe / I wol be to yow bothe  
 384This is to seyn / ye bothe fair and good  
 385I pray to god / that I mote {s}teruen wood  
 386But I to yow / be al {s}o good and trewe  
 387As euere was wyf / syn |pt| the world was newe  
 388And but I be to morn / as fair to sene  
 389As any lady / Emperice / or Queene  
 390That is bitwix the E{s}t/ and eek the We{s}t/



391Do with my lyf/ and deth / right as yow le{s}t/  
 392Ca{s}t vp the Curtyn / looke how |pt| it is  
 393And whan the knyght/ say verrailly al this  
 394That she {s}o fair was / and so yong ther to  
 ...

395ffor ioye he hente hi|re| / in his armes two

{{Folio 73v}}

396His herte bathed / in a bath of bli{ss}e  
 397A thou{s}and tyme a rewe / he gan hir ki{ss}e  
 398And she obeyed hym / in euery thyng/  
 399That myghte do hym ple{s}ance / or likyng/  
 400And thus they lyue / vn to hir lyues ende  
 401In |per|fit ioye / and |Iesu| cri{s}t vs sende  
 402Hou{s}bondes meke / yonge / and fre{ss}h a bedde  
 403And grace / to|uer|byde hem that we wedde  
 404And eek / I praye |Iesu| shorte hir lyues  
 405That noght wol be go|uer|ned / by hir wyues  
 406And olde / and angry nygardes of di{s}pence  
 407God sende hem {s}oone / verray pe{s}tilence

¶Here endeth the Wyues tale of Bathe

### Notes

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

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

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of Toronto.

Assisted by Nancy Misener and Alex Bisset.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Nat. Lib. Wales Peniarth 392. From Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales: A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers, introduction by Donald C. Baker, A. I. Doyle, and M. B. Parkes. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979. PR 1866 .R8 1979 Robarts Library



**First publication date:** 1866  
**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire  
**RP edition:** 1966  
**Recent editing:** 1:2002/6/8

**Composition date:** 1392 - 1395  
**Rhyme:** couplets

---

**Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.

# REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ONLINE

[Poet Index](#)
[Poem Index](#)
[Random](#)
[Search](#)
[Introduction](#)
[Timeline](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Criticism](#)
[Bibliography](#)
[RPO](#)
[Canadian Poetry](#)
[UTEL](#)
[by Name](#)
[by Date](#)
[by Title](#)
[by First  
Line](#)
[by Last  
Line](#)
[Poet](#)
[Poem](#)
[Short  
poem](#)
[Keyword](#)
[Concordance](#)

**Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343-1400)**

**Yowr Yen Two Woll Sle me Sodenly**

**1**Yowr yen two woll sle me sodenly.

2I may the Beaute of them not sustene

3So wondeth it thorow out my herte kene.

4And but your word woll helen hastily

5Mi hertis wound while that it is grene

6 Your yen [two woll sle me sodenly.

7 I may the Beaute of them not sustene.]

8Vpon my trouth I sey yow feithfully

9That ye ben of my liffe and deth the quene,

10For with my deth the trouth shalbe sene.

11 Your yen [two woll sle me sodenly.

12 I may the Beaute of them not sustene

13 So wondeth it thorow out my herte kene.]

14So hath yowr Beaute fro your herte chased

15Pitee that me nauaillleth not to pleyn  
16For danger halt your mercy in his cheyne.

17Giltles my deth thus han ye me purchaced,  
18I sey yow soth, me nedeth not to fayn,  
19 So hath your beaute [fro your herte chased  
20 Pitee that me nauaillleth not to pleyn.]

21Alas that nature hath in yow compased  
22So grete beaute that no man may atteyn  
23To mercy though he sterue for the peyn.  
24 So hath your beaute [fro your herte chased  
25 Pitee that me nauaillleth not to pleyn  
26 For danger halt your mercy in his cheyne.]

27Syn I fro loue escaped am so fat  
28I neuere thenk to ben in his prison lene.  
29Syn I am fre, I counte hym not a bene.

30He may answer and sey this and that.  
31I do no fors, I speke ryght as I mene,  
32 Syn I fro loue [escaped am so fat  
33 I neuere thenk to ben in his prison lene.

34Loue hath my name istrike out of his sclat,  
35And he is strike out of my bokes clene.

**36**For euer mo ther is non other mene,  
37 Syn I fro loue [escaped am so fat  
38 I neuere thenk to ben in his prison lene.  
39 Syn I am fre, I counte hym not a bene.]

Explicit

### Notes

**1]** Attributed to Chaucer in its first printing and usually entitled "Merciles Beaute," after a 17th-century MS copy of the second, and earlier text. yen two: "two yen" in the MS, but the refrain gives this, the metrically correct reading.

Translated into modern English,

Your two eyes will slay me suddenly.  
I cannot endure their beauty  
So deeply does it wound my eager heart.

And unless your word will heal, without delay,  
My heart's wound while it is new ...

On my oath, I tell you faithfully  
That you're the queen of my life and death,  
And in my dying will that truth be seen.

So has your beauty driven pity from your heart  
That there's no good in me complaining,  
So does disdain in his chain bind your mercy.

Just in this way you've paid for my innocent death,  
I'm telling you the truth, I don't need to pretend.

Alas, how nature has drawn with compasses  
In you such great beauty that no man may find  
Mercy, even though he dies in pain.

Because I've escaped so plump from love,  
I don't expect to be in his lean prison.  
Being free, I don't give a pea for him.

He may reply and say this and that,  
I don't care, I'm saying what I think.

Love has struck my name from his slate,  
And he is stricken utterly from my books.  
For evermore there is no other way.

**36]** ther: "this" in MS.

---

Online text copyright © 2003, Ian Lancashire for the Department of English, University of  
Toronto.

Published by the Web Development Group, Information Technology Services, University of  
Toronto Libraries.

**Original text:** Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys Library MS 2006, fols. 390-91. Facsimile  
in *Manuscript Pepys 2006*, intro. A. S. G. Edwards, Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey  
Chaucer, Vol. VI (Norman: Pilgrim Books); and *The Minor Poems*, ed. George B. Pace and  
Alfred David, Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Vol. V (Norman: Univerity  
of Oklahoma Press, 1982): 171-78.

**First publication date:** 1886

**RPO poem editor:** Ian Lancashire

**RP edition:** 2002

**Recent editing:** 1:2002/5/13

**Composition date:** 1389

**Form:** triple roundel

**Rhyme:** ABB abAB abbABB

**Form note:** Each of the three roundels has only two rhymes (a and b), but each roundel's first  
three lines (ABB) are reused at the end of the second and third stanzas.

---

**Other poems by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Your **comments and questions** are welcomed.

All contents copyright © **RPO Editors, Department of English, and University of Toronto Press** 1994-2002

RPO is hosted by the **University of Toronto Libraries**.