
*The Canterbury Tales and
Other Poems
Part 3: The Knight's Tale*



by Geoffrey Chaucer

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THE KNIGHT'S TALE

(Note 1)

*Whilom*¹, as olde stories tellen us,
There was a duke that highte² Theseus. (Note 2)
Of Athens he was lord and governor,
And in his time such a conqueror
That greater was there none under the sun.
Full many a riche country had he won.
What with his wisdom and his chivalry,
He conquer'd all the regne of Feminie, (Note 3)
That whilom was y-cleped Scythia;
And weddede the Queen Hippolyta
And brought her home with him to his country
With muchel³ glory and great solemnity,
And eke her younge sister Emily,
And thus with vict'ry and with melody
Let I this worthy Duke to Athens ride,
And all his host, in armes him beside.

And certes, if it n'ere⁴ too long to hear,
I would have told you fully the mannere,
How wonnen⁵ was the regne of Feminie, (Note 4)
By Theseus, and by his chivalry;
And of the greate battle for the nonce
Betwixt Athenes and the Amazons;
And how assieged was Hippolyta,
The faire hardy queen of Scythia;
And of the feast that was at her wedding
And of the tempest at her homecoming.
But all these things I must as now forbear.
I have, God wot, a large field to ear⁶; (Note 5)
And weake be the oxen in my plough;
The remnant of my tale is long enow.

¹formerly.

²was called.

³great.

⁴were not.

⁵won.

⁶plough.

I will not letten eke none of this rout⁷.
 Let every fellow tell his tale about,
 And let see now who shall the supper win.
 There as I left⁸, I will again begin.

This Duke, of whom I make mentioun,
 When he was come almost unto the town,
 In all his weal, and in his moste pride,
 He was ware, as he cast his eye aside,
 Where that there kneeled in the highe way
 A company of ladies, tway and tway,
 Each after other, clad in clothes black:
 But such a cry and such a woe they make,
 That in this world n'is creature living,
 That hearde such another waimenting⁹ (Note 6)
 And of this crying would they never stenten¹⁰,
 Till they the reines of his bridle henten¹¹.
 "What folk be ye that at mine homecoming
 Perturben so my feaste with crying?"
 Quoth Theseus; "Have ye so great envy
 Of mine honour, that thus complain and cry?
 Or who hath you misboden¹², or offended?
 Do telle me, if it may be amended;
 And why that ye be clad thus all in black?"

The oldest lady of them all then spake,
 When she had swooned, with a deadly cheer¹³;
 That it was ruthe¹⁴ for to see or hear.
 She saide; "Lord, to whom fortune hath given
 Vict'ry, and as a conqueror to liven,
 Nought grieveth us your glory and your honour;
 But we beseechen mercy and succour.
 Have mercy on our woe and our distress;
 Some drop of pity, through thy gentleness,
 Upon us wretched women let now fall.
 For certes, lord, there is none of us all
 That hath not been a duchess or a queen;
 Now be we caitives¹⁵, as it is well seen:
 Thanked be Fortune, and her false wheel,
 That none estate ensureth to be wele¹⁶
 And certes, lord, t'abiden your presence
 Here in this temple of the goddess Clemence

⁷hinder any of this compant.

⁸where I left off.

⁹lamenting.

¹⁰desist.

¹¹seize.

¹²wronged.

¹³countenance.

¹⁴pity.

¹⁵captives.

¹⁶assures no continuance of prosperous estate.

We have been waiting all this fortenight:
Now help us, lord, since it lies in thy might.

"I, wretched wight, that weep and waile thus,
Was whilom wife to king Capaneus,
That starf¹⁷ at Thebes, cursed be that day: (Note 7)
And alle we that be in this array,
And maken all this lamentatioun,
We losten all our husbands at that town,
While that the siege thereabouten lay.
And yet the olde Creon, wellaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the city,
Fulfilled of ire and of iniquity,
He for despite, and for his tyranny,
To do the deade bodies villainy¹⁸,
Of all our lorde's, which that been y-slaw¹⁹,
Hath all the bodies on an heap y-draw,
And will not suffer them by none assent
Neither to be y-buried, nor y-brent²⁰,
But maketh houndes eat them in despite."
And with that word, withoute more respite
They fallen groff,²¹ and cryden piteously;
"Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our sorrow sincken in thine heart."

This gentle Duke down from his courser start
With hearte piteous, when he heard them speak.
Him thoughte that his heart would all to-break,
When he saw them so piteous and so mate²²
That whilom weren of so great estate.
And in his armes he them all up hent²³,
And them comforted in full good intent,
And swore his oath, as he was true knight,
He woulde do so farforthly his might²⁴
Upon the tyrant Creon them to wreak²⁵,
That all the people of Greece shoulde speak,
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As he that had his death full well deserved.
And right anon withoute more abode²⁶
His banner he display'd, and forth he rode
To Thebes-ward, and all his, host beside:

¹⁷died.

¹⁸insult.

¹⁹slain.

²⁰burnt.

²¹grovelling

²²abased.

²³raised, took.

²⁴as far as his power went.

²⁵avenge.

²⁶delay.

No ner²⁷, Athenes would he go nor ride,
 Nor take his ease fully half a day,
 But onward on his way that night he lay:
 And sent anon Hippolyta the queen,
 And Emily her younge sister sheen²⁸
 Unto the town of Athens for to dwell:
 And forth he rit²⁹; there is no more to tell.

The red statue of Mars with spear and targe³⁰
 So shineth in his white banner large
 That all the fieldes glitter up and down:
 And by his banner borne is his pennon
 Of gold full rich, in which there was y-beat³¹
 The Minotaur (*Note 8*) which that he slew in Crete
 Thus rit this Duke, thus rit this conqueror
 And in his host of chivalry the flower,
 Till that he came to Thebes, and alight
 Fair in a field, there as he thought to fight.
 But shortly for to speaken of this thing,
 With Creon, which that was of Thebes king,
 He fought, and slew him manly as a knight
 In plain bataille, and put his folk to flight:
 And by assault he won the city after,
 And rent adown both wall, and spar, and rafter;
 And to the ladies he restored again
 The bodies of their husbands that were slain,
 To do obsequies, as was then the guise³².

But it were all too long for to devise³³
 The greate clamour, and the waimenting³⁴,
 Which that the ladies made at the brenning³⁵
 Of the bodies, and the great honour
 That Theseus the noble conqueror
 Did to the ladies, when they from him went:
 But shortly for to tell is mine intent.
 When that this worthy Duke, this Theseus,
 Had Creon slain, and wonnen Thebes thus,
 Still in the field he took all night his rest,
 And did with all the country as him lest³⁶
 To ransack in the tas³⁷ of bodies dead,

²⁷nearer.

²⁸bright, lovely.

²⁹rode.

³⁰shield.

³¹stamped.

³²custom.

³³describe.

³⁴lamenting.

³⁵burning.

³⁶pleased.

³⁷heap.

Them for to strip of harness³⁸ and of weed³⁹,
 The pillers⁴⁰ did their business and cure, (Note 9)
 After the battle and discomfiture.
 And so befell, that in the tas they found,
 Through girt with many a grievous bloody wound,
 Two younge knightes liggig by and by⁴¹
 Both in one armes⁴², wrought full richely:
 Of whiche two, Arcita hight that one,
 And he that other highte Palamon.
 Not fully quick⁴³, nor fully dead they were,
 But by their coat-armour, and by their gear,
 The heralds knew them well in special,
 As those that weren of the blood royal
 Of Thebes, and of sistren two y-born⁴⁴.
 Out of the tas the pillers have them torn,
 And have them carried soft unto the tent
 Of Theseus, and he full soon them sent
 To Athens, for to dwellen in prison
 Perpetually, he n'olde no ranson⁴⁵.
 And when this worthy Duke had thus y-done,
 He took his host, and home he rit anon
 With laurel crowned as a conquerour;
 And there he lived in joy and in honour
 Term of his life; what needeth wordes mo'?
 And in a tower, in anguish and in woe,
 Dwellen this Palamon, and eke Arcite,
 For evermore, there may no gold them quite⁴⁶.
 Thus passed year by year, and day by day,
 Till it fell ones in a morn of May
 That Emily, that fairer was to seen
 Than is the lily upon his stalke green,
 And fresher than the May with flowers new
 (For with the rose colour strove her hue;
 I n'ot⁴⁷ which was the finer of them two),
 Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,
 She was arisen, and all ready dight⁴⁸,
 For May will have no sluggardy a-night;
 The season pricketh every gentle heart,
 And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
 And saith, "Arise, and do thine observance."

³⁸armour.

³⁹clothes.

⁴⁰pillagers.

⁴¹lying side by side.

⁴²the same armour

⁴³alive.

⁴⁴born of two sisters.

⁴⁵would take no ransom.

⁴⁶set free.

⁴⁷know not.

⁴⁸dressed.

This maketh Emily have remembrance
 To do honour to May, and for to rise.
 Y-clothed was she fresh for to devise;
 Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,
 Behind her back, a yarde long I guess.
 And in the garden at the sun uprist⁴⁹
 She walketh up and down where as her list.
 She gathereth flowers, party⁵⁰ white and red,
 To make a sotel⁵¹ garland for her head,
 And as an angel heavenly she sung.
 The greate tower, that was so thick and strong,
 Which of the castle was the chief dungeon (Note 10)
 (Where as these knightes weren in prison,
 Of which I tolde you, and telle shall),
 Was even joinant⁵² to the garden wall,

Bright was the sun, and clear that morrowning,
 And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wont, by leave of his gaoler,
 Was ris'n, and roamed in a chamber on high,
 In which he all the noble city sigh⁵³,
 And eke the garden, full of branches green,
 There as this fresh Emelia the sheen
 Was in her walk, and roamed up and down.
 This sorrowful prisoner, this Palamon
 Went in his chamber roaming to and fro,
 And to himself complaining of his woe:
 That he was born, full oft he said, Alas!
 And so befell, by aventure or cas⁵⁴,
 That through a window thick of many a bar
 Of iron great, and square as any spar,
 He cast his eyes upon Emelia,
 And therewithal he blent⁵⁵ and cried, Ah!
 As though he stungen were unto the heart.
 And with that cry Arcite anon up start,
 And saide, "Cousin mine, what aileth thee,
 That art so pale and deadly for to see?
 Why cried'st thou? who hath thee done offence?
 For Godde's love, take all in patience
 Our prison⁵⁶, for it may none other be.
 Fortune hath giv'n us this adversity'.
 Some wick⁵⁷ aspect or disposition

⁴⁹sunrise.

⁵⁰mingled.

⁵¹subtle, well-arranged.

⁵²adjoining.

⁵³saw.

⁵⁴chance.

⁵⁵started aside.

⁵⁶imprisonment.

⁵⁷wicked.

Of Saturn (*Note 11*), by some constellation,
 Hath giv'n us this, although we had it sworn,
 So stood the heaven when that we were born,
 We must endure; this is the short and plain.
 This Palamon answer'd, and said again:
 "Cousin, forsooth of this opinion
 Thou hast a vain imagination.
 This prison caused me not for to cry;
 But I was hurt right now thorough mine eye
 Into mine heart; that will my bane⁵⁸ be.
 The fairness of the lady that I see
 Yond in the garden roaming to and fro,
 Is cause of all my crying and my woe.
 I n'ot wher⁵⁹ she be woman or goddess,
 But Venus is it, soothly⁶⁰ as I guess,
 And therewithal on knees adown he fill,
 And saide: "Venus, if it be your will
 You in this garden thus to transfigure
 Before me sorrowful wretched creature,
 Out of this prison help that we may scape.
 And if so be our destiny be shape
 By etern word to dien in prison,
 Of our lineage have some compassion,
 That is so low y-brought by tyranny."
 And with that word Arcita⁶¹
 Where as this lady roamed to and fro
 And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
 That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
 Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.
 And with a sigh he saide piteously:
 "The freshe beauty slay'th me suddenly
 Of her that roameth yonder in the place.
 And but⁶² I have her mercy and her grace,
 That I may see her at the leaste way,
 I am but dead; there is no more to say."
 This Palamon, when he these wordes heard,
 Dispiteously⁶³ he looked, and answer'd:
 "Whether say'st thou this in earnest or in play?"
 "Nay," quoth Arcite, "in earnest, by my fay⁶⁴.
 God help me so, me lust full ill to play⁶⁵."
 This Palamon gan knit his browes tway.
 "It were," quoth he, "to thee no great honour
 For to be false, nor for to be traitour

⁵⁸destruction.

⁵⁹know not whether.

⁶⁰truly.

⁶¹began to look forth.

⁶²unless.

⁶³angrily.

⁶⁴faith.

⁶⁵I am in no humour for jesting.

To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother
 Y-sworn full deep, and each of us to other,
 That never for to dien in the pain (*Note 12*),
 Till that the death departen shall us twain,
 Neither of us in love to hinder other,
 Nor in none other case, my leve⁶⁶ brother;
 But that thou shouldest truly farther me
 In every case, as I should farther thee.
 This was thine oath, and mine also certain;
 I wot it well, thou dar'st it not withsayn⁶⁷.
 Thus art thou of my counsel out of doubt,
 And now thou wouldest falsely be about
 To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
 And ever shall, until mine hearte sterve⁶⁸
 Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt not so
 I lov'd her first, and tolde thee my woe
 As to my counsel, and my brother sworn
 To farther me, as I have told beforen.
 For which thou art y-bounden as a knight
 To helpe me, if it lie in thy might,
 Or elles art thou false, I dare well sayn,"

This Arcite full proudly spake again:
 "Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather⁶⁹ false than I,
 And thou art false, I tell thee utterly;
 For par amour I lov'd her first ere thou.
 What wilt thou say? thou wist it not right now⁷⁰
 Whether she be a woman or goddess.
 Thine is affection of holiness,
 And mine is love, as to a creature:
 For which I tolde thee mine aventure
 As to my cousin, and my brother sworn
 I pose⁷¹, that thou loved'st her beforen:
 Wost⁷² thou not well the olde clerke's saw (*Note 13*),
 That who shall give a lover any law?
 Love is a greater lawe, by my pan,
 Than may be giv'n to any earthly man:
 Therefore positive law, and such decree,
 Is broke alway for love in each degree
 A man must needes love, maugre his head.
 He may not flee it, though he should be dead,
 All be she⁷³ maid, or widow, or else wife.
 And eke it is not likely all thy life

⁶⁶ dear.

⁶⁷ deny.

⁶⁸ die.

⁶⁹ sooner.

⁷⁰ even now thou knowest not.

⁷¹ suppose.

⁷² know'st.

⁷³ whether she be.

To standen in her grace, no more than I
 For well thou wost thyselfe verily,
 That thou and I be damned to prison
 Perpetual, us gaineth no ranson.
 We strive, as did the houndes for the bone;
 They fought all day, and yet their part was none.
 There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,
 And bare away the bone betwixt them both.
 And therefore at the kinge's court, my brother,
 Each man for himselfe, there is no other.
 Love if thee list; for I love and aye shall
 And soothly, leve brother, this is all.
 Here in this prison musten we endure,
 And each of us take his Aventure."

Great was the strife and long between these tway,
 If that I hadde leisure for to say;
 But to the effect: it happen'd on a day
 (To tell it you as shortly as I may),
 A worthy duke that hight Perithous (Note 14)
 That fellow was to the Duke Theseus
 Since thilke⁷⁴ day that they were children lite⁷⁵
 Was come to Athens, his fellow to visite,
 And for to play, as he was wont to do;
 For in this world he loved no man so;
 And he lov'd him as tenderly again.
 So well they lov'd, as olde bookes sayn,
 That when that one was dead, soothly to sayn,
 His fellow went and sought him down in hell:
 But of that story list me not to write.
 Duke Perithous loved well Arcite,
 And had him known at Thebes year by year:
 And finally at request and prayere
 Of Perithous, withoute ranson
 Duke Theseus him let out of prison,
 Freely to go, where him list over all,
 In such a guise, as I you tellen shall
 This was the forword⁷⁶, plainly to indite,
 Betwixte Theseus and him Arcite:
 That if so were, that Arcite were y-found
 Ever in his life, by day or night, one stound⁷⁷ (Note 15)
 In any country of this Theseus,
 And he were caught, it was accorded thus,
 That with a sword he shoulde lose his head;
 There was none other remedy nor rede⁷⁸.
 But took his leave, and homeward he him sped;

⁷⁴that.

⁷⁵little.

⁷⁶promise.

⁷⁷moment.

⁷⁸counsel.

Let him beware, his necke lieth to wed⁷⁹.

How great a sorrow suff'reth now Arcite!
 The death he feeleth through his hearte smite;
 He weepeth, wailleth, crieth piteously;
 To slay himself he waiteth privily.
 He said; "Alas the day that I was born!
 Now is my prison worse than befor:
 Now is me shape⁸⁰ eternally to dwell
 Not in purgatory, but right in hell.
 Alas! that ever I knew Perithous.
 For elles had I dwelt with Theseus
 Y-fettered in his prison evermo'.
 Then had I been in bliss, and not in woe.
 Only the sight of her, whom that I serve,
 Though that I never may her grace deserve,
 Would have sufficed right enough for me.
 O deare cousin Palamon," quoth he,
 "Thine is the vict'ry of this aventure,
 Full blissfully in prison to endure:
 In prison? nay certes, in paradise.
 Well hath fortune y-turned thee the dice,
 That hast the sight of her, and I th' absence.
 For possible is, since thou hast her presence,
 And art a knight, a worthy and an able,
 That by some cas⁸¹, since fortune is changeable,
 Thou may'st to thy desire sometime attain.
 But I that am exiled, and barren
 Of alle grace, and in so great despair,
 That there n'is earthe, water, fire, nor air,
 Nor creature, that of them maked is,
 That may me helpe nor comfort in this,
 Well ought I sterve in wanhope⁸² and distress.
 Farewell my life, my lust⁸³, and my gladness.
 Alas, why plainen men so in commune⁸⁴
 Of purveyance of God, or of Fortune,
 That giveth them full oft in many a guise
 Well better than they can themselves devise?
 Some man desireth for to have richness,
 That cause is of his murder or great sickness.
 And some man would out of his prison fain,
 That in his house is of his meinie⁸⁵ slain. (Note 16)
 Infinite harmes be in this mattere.
 We wot never what thing we pray for here.

⁷⁹in pledge.

⁸⁰it is fixed for me.

⁸¹chance.

⁸²die in despair.

⁸³pleasure.

⁸⁴why do men so often complain of God's providence?

⁸⁵servants.

We fare as he that drunk is as a mouse.
 A drunken man wot well he hath an house,
 But he wot not which is the right way thither,
 And to a drunken man the way is slither⁸⁶,
 And certes in this world so fare we.
 We seeke fast after felicity,
 But we go wrong full often truely.
 Thus we may sayen all, and namely⁸⁷ I,
 That ween'd⁸⁸, and had a great opinion,
 That if I might escape from prison
 Then had I been in joy and perfect heal,
 Where now I am exiled from my weal.
 Since that I may not see you, Emily,
 I am but dead; there is no remedy."

Upon that other side, Palamon,
 When that he wist Arcita was agone,
 Much sorrow maketh, that the greete tower
 Resounded of his yelling and clamour
 The pure⁸⁹ fetters on his shinnes great (Note 17)
 Were of his bitter salte teares wet.

"Alas!" quoth he, "Arcita, cousin mine,
 Of all our strife, God wot, the fruit is thine.
 Thou walkest now in Thebes at thy large,
 And of my woe thou givest little charge⁹⁰.
 Thou mayst, since thou hast wisdom and manhead⁹¹,
 Assemble all the folk of our kindred,
 And make a war so sharp on this country
 That by some aventure, or some treaty,
 Thou mayst have her to lady and to wife,
 For whom that I must needes lose my life.
 For as by way of possibility,
 Since thou art at thy large, of prison free,
 And art a lord, great is thine avantage,
 More than is mine, that sterve here in a cage.
 For I must weep and wail, while that I live,
 With all the woe that prison may me give,
 And eke with pain that love me gives also,
 That doubles all my torment and my woe."

Therewith the fire of jealousy upstart
 Within his breast, and hent⁹² him by the heart
 So woody⁹³, that he like was to behold

⁸⁶slippery.

⁸⁷especially.

⁸⁸thought.

⁸⁹very.

⁹⁰takest little heed.

⁹¹manhood, courage.

⁹²seized.

⁹³madly.

The box-tree, or the ashes dead and cold.
 Then said; "O cruel goddess, that govern
 This world with binding of your word etern⁹⁴
 And writen in the table of adamant
 Your parlement⁹⁵ and your eternal grant,
 What is mankind more unto you y-hold⁹⁶
 Than is the sheep, that rouketh⁹⁷ in the fold!
 For slain is man, right as another beast;
 And dwelleth eke in prison and arrest,
 And hath sickness, and great adversity,
 And oftentimes guilteless, pardie⁹⁸
 What governance is in your prescience,
 That guilteless tormenteth innocence?
 And yet increaseth this all my penance,
 That man is bounden to his observance
 For Godde's sake to letten of his will⁹⁹,
 Whereas a beast may all his lust fulfil.
 And when a beast is dead, he hath no pain;
 But man after his death must weep and plain,
 Though in this worlde he have care and woe:
 Withoute doubt it maye standen so.
 "The answer of this leave I to divines,
 But well I wot, that in this world great pine¹⁰⁰ is;
 Alas! I see a serpent or a thief
 That many a true man hath done mischief,
 Go at his large, and where him list may turn.
 But I must be in prison through Saturn,
 And eke through Juno, jealous and eke wood¹⁰¹,
 That hath well nigh destroyed all the blood
 Of Thebes, with his waste walles wide.
 And Venus slay'th me on that other side
 For jealousy, and fear of him, Arcite."
 Now will I stent¹⁰² of Palamon a lite¹⁰³,
 And let him in his prison stille dwell,
 And of Arcite forth I will you tell.
 The summer passeth, and the nightes long
 Increase double-wise the paines strong
 Both of the lover and the prisonere.
 I n'ot¹⁰⁴ which hath the wofuller mistere¹⁰⁵.

⁹⁴eternal.⁹⁵consultation.⁹⁶by you esteemed.⁹⁷lie huddled together.⁹⁸by God.⁹⁹restrain his desire.¹⁰⁰pain, trouble.¹⁰¹mad.¹⁰²pause.¹⁰³little.¹⁰⁴know not.¹⁰⁵condition.

For, shortly for to say, this Palamon
 Perpetually is damned to prison,
 In chaines and in fetters to be dead;
 And Arcite is exiled on his head¹⁰⁶
 For evermore as out of that country,
 Nor never more he shall his lady see.
 You lovers ask I now this question, (Note 18)
 Who lieth the worse, Arcite or Palamon?
 The one may see his lady day by day,
 But in prison he dwelle must alway.
 The other where him list may ride or go,
 But see his lady shall he never mo'.
 Now deem all as you liste, ye that can,
 For I will tell you forth as I began.

When that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
 Full oft a day he swelt¹⁰⁷, and said, "Alas!"
 For see this lady he shall never mo'.
 And shortly to concluden all his woe,
 So much sorrow had never creature
 That is or shall be while the world may dure.
 His sleep, his meat, his drink is him byraft¹⁰⁸,
 That lean he wex¹⁰⁹, and dry as any shaft.
 His eyen hollow, grisly to behold,
 His hue sallow, and pale as ashes cold,
 And solitary he was, ever alone,
 And wailing all the night, making his moan.
 And if he hearde song or instrument,
 Then would he weepen, he might not be stent¹¹⁰.
 So feeble were his spirits, and so low,
 And changed so, that no man coulde know
 His speech, neither his voice, though men it heard.
 And in his gear¹¹¹ for all the world he far'd (Note 19)
 Not only like the lovers' malady
 Of Eros, but rather y-like manie¹¹²
 Engender'd of humours melancholic,
 Before his head in his cell fantastic. (Note 20)
 And shortly turned was all upside down,
 Both habit and eke dispositioun,
 Of him, this woful lover Dan¹¹³ Arcite. (Note 21)
 Why should I all day of his woe indite?
 When he endured had a year or two
 This cruel torment, and this pain and woe,

¹⁰⁶on peril of his head

¹⁰⁷fainted.

¹⁰⁸taken away from him.

¹⁰⁹became.

¹¹⁰stopped.

¹¹¹behaviour.

¹¹²madness.

¹¹³lord.

At Thebes, in his country, as I said,
 Upon a night in sleep as he him laid,
 Him thought how that the winged god Mercury
 Before him stood, and bade him to be merry.
 His sleepy yard¹¹⁴ in hand he bare upright; (Note 22)
 A hat he wore upon his haire bright.
 Arrayed was this god (as he took keep¹¹⁵)
 As he was when that Argus (Note 23) took his sleep;
 And said him thus: "To Athens shalt thou wend¹¹⁶)
 There is thee shapen¹¹⁷ of thy woe an end."
 And with that word Arcite woke and start.
 "Now truely how sore that e'er me smart,"
 Quoth he, "to Athens right now will I fare.
 Nor for no dread of death shall I not spare
 To see my lady that I love and serve;
 In her presence I recke not to sterue."¹¹⁸
 And with that word he caught a great mirror,
 And saw that changed was all his colour,
 And saw his visage all in other kind.
 And right anon it ran him ill his mind,
 That since his face was so disfigur'd
 Of malady the which he had endur'd,
 He mighte well, if that he bare him low¹¹⁹,
 Live in Athenes evermore unknow,
 And see his lady wellnigh day by day.
 And right anon he changed his array,
 And clad him as a poore labourer.
 And all alone, save only a squier,
 That knew his privity¹²⁰ and all his cas¹²¹,
 Which was disguised poorly as he was,
 To Athens is he gone the nexte¹²² way. (Note 24)
 And to the court he went upon a day,
 And at the gate he proffer'd his service,
 To drudge and draw, what so men would devise¹²³.
 And, shortly of this matter for to sayn,
 He fell in office with a chamberlain,
 The which that dwelling was with Emily.
 For he was wise, and coulde soon espy
 Of every servant which that served her.
 Well could he hewe wood, and water bear,

¹¹⁴rod.

¹¹⁵notice.

¹¹⁶go.

¹¹⁷fixed, prepared.

¹¹⁸do not care if I die.

¹¹⁹lived in lowly fashion

¹²⁰secrets.

¹²¹fortune.

¹²²nearest.

¹²³order.

For he was young and mighty for the nones¹²⁴,
 And thereto he was strong and big of bones
 To do that any wight can him devise.

A year or two he was in this service,
 Page of the chamber of Emily the bright;
 And Philostrate he saide that he hight.
 But half so well belov'd a man as he
 Ne was there never in court of his degree.
 He was so gentle of conditioun,
 That throughout all the court was his renown.
 They saide that it were a charity
 That Theseus would enhance his degree¹²⁵,
 And put him in some worshipful service,
 There as he might his virtue exercise.
 And thus within a while his name sprung
 Both of his deedes, and of his good tongue,
 That Theseus hath taken him so near,
 That of his chamber he hath made him squire,
 And gave him gold to maintain his degree;
 And eke men brought him out of his country
 From year to year full privily his rent.
 But honestly and slyly¹²⁶ he it spent,
 That no man wonder'd how that he it had.
 And three year in this wise his life be lad¹²⁷,
 And bare him so in peace and eke in werre¹²⁸,
 There was no man that Theseus had so derre¹²⁹.
 And in this blisse leave I now Arcite,
 And speak I will of Palamon a lite¹³⁰.
 In darkness horrible, and strong prison,
 This seven year hath sitten Palamon,
 Forpined¹³¹, what for love, and for distress.
 Who feeleth double sorrow and heaviness
 But Palamon? that love distraineth¹³² so,
 That wood¹³³ out of his wits he went for woe,
 And eke thereto he is a prisonere
 Perpetual, not only for a year.
 Who coulde rhyme in English properly
 His martyrdom? forsooth¹³⁴, it is not I;
 Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.
 It fell that in the seventh year, in May

¹²⁴occasion.

¹²⁵elevate him in rank

¹²⁶discreetly, prudently.

¹²⁷led.

¹²⁸war.

¹²⁹dear.

¹³⁰little.

¹³¹pined, wasted away.

¹³²afflicts.

¹³³mad.

¹³⁴truly.

The thirde night (as olde bookes sayn,
 That all this story tellen more plain),
 Were it by a venture or destiny
 (As when a thing is shapen¹³⁵ it shall be),
 That soon after the midnight, Palamon
 By helping of a friend brake his prison,
 And fled the city fast as he might go,
 For he had given drink his gaoler so
 Of a clary (Note 25), made of a certain wine,
 With narcotise and opie¹³⁶ of Thebes fine,
 That all the night, though that men would him shake,
 The gaoler slept, he mighte not awake:
 And thus he fled as fast as ever he may.
 The night was short, and faste¹³⁷ by the day
 That needes cast he must himself to hide¹³⁸.
 And to a grove faste there beside
 With dreadful foot then stalked Palamon.
 For shortly this was his opinion,
 That in the grove he would him hide all day,
 And in the night then would he take his way
 To Thebes-ward, his friendes for to pray
 On Theseus to help him to warray¹³⁹. (Note 26)
 And shortly either he would lose his life,
 Or winnen Emily unto his wife.
 This is th' effect, and his intention plain.
 Now will I turn to Arcita again,
 That little wist how nighe was his care,
 Till that Fortune had brought him in the snare.
 The busy lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluteth in her song the morning gray;
 And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright,
 That all the orient laugheth at the sight,
 And with his streames¹⁴⁰ drieth in the greves¹⁴¹
 The silver droppes, hanging on the leaves;
 And Arcite, that is in the court royal
 With Theseus, his squier principal,
 Is ris'n, and looketh on the merry day.
 And for to do his observance to May,
 Remembering the point¹⁴² of his desire,
 He on his courser, starting as the fire,
 Is ridden to the fieldes him to play,
 Out of the court, were it a mile or tway.
 And to the grove, of which I have you told,

¹³⁵settled, decreed.

¹³⁶narcotics and opium.

¹³⁷close at hand was.

¹³⁸the day during which he must cast about, or contrive, to conceal himself.

¹³⁹make war.

¹⁴⁰rays.

¹⁴¹groves.

¹⁴²object.

By a venture his way began to hold,
 To make him a garland of the greves¹⁴³,
 Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn leaves,
 And loud he sang against the sun so sheen¹⁴⁴.
 "O May, with all thy flowers and thy green,
 Right welcome be thou, faire freshe May,
 I hope that I some green here getten may."
 And from his courser¹⁴⁵, with a lusty heart,
 Into the grove full hastily he start,
 And in a path he roamed up and down,
 There as by aventure this Palamon
 Was in a bush, that no man might him see,
 For sore afeard of his death was he.
 Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite;
 God wot he would have trowed it full lite¹⁴⁶.
 But sooth is said, gone since full many years,
 The field hath eyen¹⁴⁷, and the wood hath ears,
 It is full fair a man to bear him even¹⁴⁸,
 For all day meeten men at unset steven¹⁴⁹. (Note 27)
 Full little wot Arcite of his fellow,
 That was so nigh to hearken of his saw¹⁵⁰,
 For in the bush he sitteth now full still.
 When that Arcite had roamed all his fill,
 And sungen all the roundel¹⁵¹ lustily, (Note 28)
 Into a study he fell suddenly,
 As do those lovers in their quainte gear¹⁵²,
 Now in the crop¹⁵³, and now down in the breres¹⁵⁴, (Note 29)
 Now up, now down, as bucket in a well.
 Right as the Friday, soothly for to tell,
 Now shineth it, and now it raineth fast,
 Right so can geary¹⁵⁵ Venus overcast
 The heartes of her folk, right as her day
 Is gearful¹⁵⁶, right so changeth she array.
 Seldom is Friday all the weeke like.
 When Arcite had y-sung, he gan to sike¹⁵⁷,
 And sat him down withouten any more:

¹⁴³groves.

¹⁴⁴shining bright.

¹⁴⁵horse.

¹⁴⁶full little believed it.

¹⁴⁷eyes.

¹⁴⁸to be on his guard.

¹⁴⁹unexpected time

¹⁵⁰saying, speech.

¹⁵¹sang the roundelay.

¹⁵²odd fashions.

¹⁵³tree-top.

¹⁵⁴briars.

¹⁵⁵changeful.

¹⁵⁶changeful.

¹⁵⁷sigh.

"Alas!" quoth he, "the day that I was bore!
 How longe, Juno, through thy cruelty
 Wilt thou warrayen¹⁵⁸ Thebes the city?
 Alas! y-brought is to confusion
 The blood royal of Cadm' and Amphion:
 Of Cadmus, which that was the firste man,
 That Thebes built, or first the town began,
 And of the city first was crowned king.
 Of his lineage am I, and his offspring
 By very line, as of the stock royal;
 And now I am so caitiff and so thrall¹⁵⁹,
 That he that is my mortal enemy,
 I serve him as his squier poorely.
 And yet doth Juno me well more shame,
 For I dare not beknow¹⁶⁰ mine owen name, (Note 30)
 But there as I was wont to hight Arcite,
 Now hight I Philostrate, not worth a mite.
 Alas! thou fell Mars, and alas! Juno,
 Thus hath your ire our lineage all fordo¹⁶¹
 Save only me, and wretched Palamon,
 That Theseus martyreth in prison.
 And over all this, to slay me utterly,
 Love hath his fiery dart so brenningly¹⁶²
 Y-sticked through my true careful heart,
 That shapen was my death erst than my shert. (Note 31)
 Ye slay me with your eyen, Emily;
 Ye be the cause wherefore that I die.
 Of all the remnant of mine other care
 Ne set I not the mountance of a tare¹⁶³,
 So that I could do aught to your pleasance."
 And with that word he fell down in a trance
 A longe time; and afterward upstart
 This Palamon, that thought thorough his heart
 He felt a cold sword suddenly to glide:
 For ire he quoke¹⁶⁴, no longer would he hide.
 And when that he had heard Arcite's tale,
 As he were wood¹⁶⁵, with face dead and pale,
 He start him up out of the bushes thick,
 And said: "False Arcita, false traitor wick'¹⁶⁶,
 Now art thou hent¹⁶⁷, that lov'st my lady so,
 For whom that I have all this pain and woe,

¹⁵⁸torment.

¹⁵⁹wretched and enslaved.

¹⁶⁰acknowledge.

¹⁶¹undone, ruined.

¹⁶²burningly.

¹⁶³value of a straw.

¹⁶⁴quaked.

¹⁶⁵mad.

¹⁶⁶wicked.

¹⁶⁷caught.

And art my blood, and to my counsel sworn,
 As I full oft have told thee herebeforn,
 And hast bejaped¹⁶⁸ here Duke Theseus,
 And falsely changed hast thy name thus;
 I will be dead, or elles thou shalt die.
 Thou shalt not love my lady Emily,
 But I will love her only and no mo';
 For I am Palamon thy mortal foe.
 And though I have no weapon in this place,
 But out of prison am astart¹⁶⁹ by grace,
 I dreade¹⁷⁰ not that either thou shalt die,
 Or else thou shalt not loven Emily.
 Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not astart."
 This Arcite then, with full dispiteous¹⁷¹ heart,
 When he him knew, and had his tale heard,
 As fierce as lion pulled out a swerd,
 And saide thus; "By God that sitt'th above,
 N'ere it¹⁷² that thou art sick, and wood for love,
 And eke that thou no weap'n hast in this place,
 Thou should'st never out of this grove pace,
 That thou ne shouldest dien of mine hand.
 For I defy the surety and the band,
 Which that thou sayest I have made to thee.
 What? very fool, think well that love is free;
 And I will love her maugre¹⁷³ all thy might.
 But, for thou art a worthy gentle knight,
 And wilnest to darraine her by bataille¹⁷⁴,
 Have here my troth, to-morrow I will not fail,
 Without weeting¹⁷⁵ of any other wight,
 That here I will be founden as a knight,
 And bringe harness¹⁷⁶ right enough for thee;
 And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
 And meat and drinke this night will I bring
 Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
 And if so be that thou my lady win,
 And slay me in this wood that I am in,
 Thou may'st well have thy lady as for me."
 This Palamon answer'd, "I grant it thee."
 And thus they be departed till the morrow,
 When each of them hath laid his faith to borro¹⁷⁷.
 O Cupid, out of alle charity!

¹⁶⁸deceived, imposed upon.

¹⁶⁹escaped.

¹⁷⁰doubt.

¹⁷¹wrathful.

¹⁷²were it not.

¹⁷³despite.

¹⁷⁴will reclaim her by combat.

¹⁷⁵knowledge.

¹⁷⁶armour and arms.

¹⁷⁷pledged his faith.

O Regne¹⁷⁸ that wilt no fellow have with thee! (Note 32)
 Full sooth is said, that love nor lordship
 Will not, his thanks¹⁷⁹, have any fellowship.
 Well finden that Arcite and Palamon.
 Arcite is ridd anon unto the town,
 And on the morrow, ere it were daylight,
 Full privily two harness hath he dight¹⁸⁰,
 Both suffisant and meete to darrain¹⁸¹
 The battle in the field betwixt them twain.
 And on his horse, alone as he was born,
 He carrieth all this harness him befor;
 And in the grove, at time and place y-set,
 This Arcite and this Palamon be met.
 Then change gan the colour of their face;
 Right as the hunter in the regne¹⁸² of Thrace
 That standeth at a gappe with a spear
 When hunted is the lion or the bear,
 And heareth him come rushing in the greves¹⁸³,
 And breaking both the boughes and the leaves,
 Thinketh, "Here comes my mortal enemy,
 Withoute fail, he must be dead or I;
 For either I must slay him at the gap;
 Or he must slay me, if that me mishap:"
 So fared they, in changing of their hue
 As far as either of them other knew¹⁸⁴
 There was no good day, and no saluting,
 But straight, withoute wordes rehearsing,
 Evereach of them help to arm the other,
 As friendly, as he were his owen brother.
 And after that, with sharpe speares strong
 They foined¹⁸⁵ each at other wonder long.
 Thou mightest weene¹⁸⁶, that this Palamon
 In fighting were as a wood¹⁸⁷ lion,
 And as a cruel tiger was Arcite:
 As wilde boars gan they together smite,
 That froth as white as foam, for ire wood¹⁸⁸.
 Up to the ancle fought they in their blood.
 And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,
 And forth I will of Theseus you tell.
 The Destiny, minister general,

¹⁷⁸queen.

¹⁷⁹thanks to him.

¹⁸⁰prepared.

¹⁸¹contest.

¹⁸²kingdom.

¹⁸³groves

¹⁸⁴When they recognised each other afar off.

¹⁸⁵thrust.

¹⁸⁶think.

¹⁸⁷mad.

¹⁸⁸mad with anger.

That executeth in the world o'er all
 The purveyance¹⁸⁹, that God hath seen beforne;
 So strong it is, that though the world had sworn
 The contrary of a thing by yea or nay,
 Yet some time it shall fallen on a day
 That falleth not eft¹⁹⁰ in a thousand year.
 For certainly our appetites here,
 Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,
 All is this ruled by the sight¹⁹¹ above.
 This mean I now by mighty Theseus,
 That for to huntun is so desirous –
 And namely¹⁹² the greate hart in May –
 That in his bed there dawneth him no day
 That he n'is clad, and ready for to ride
 With hunt and horn, and houndes him beside.
 For in his hunting hath he such delight,
 That it is all his joy and appetite
 To be himself the greate harte's bane¹⁹³
 For after Mars he serveth now Diane.
 Clear was the day, as I have told ere this,
 And Theseus, with alle joy and bliss,
 With his Hippolyta, the faire queen,
 And Emily, y-clothed all in green,
 On hunting be they ridden royally.
 And to the grove, that stood there faste by,
 In which there was an hart, as men him told,
 Duke Theseus the straighte way doth hold,
 And to the laund¹⁹⁴ he rideth him full right, (Note 33)
 There was the hart y-wont to have his flight,
 And over a brook, and so forth on his way.
 This Duke will have a course at him or tway
 With houndes, such as him lust¹⁹⁵ to command.
 And when this Duke was come to the laund,
 Under the sun he looked, and anon
 He was ware of Arcite and Palamon,
 That foughte breme¹⁹⁶, as it were bulles two.
 The brighte swordes wente to and fro
 So hideously, that with the leaste stroke
 It seemed that it woulde fell an oak,
 But what they were, nothing yet he wote¹⁹⁷.
 This Duke his courser with his spurres smote,

¹⁸⁹foreordination.

¹⁹⁰again.

¹⁹¹eye, intelligence, power.

¹⁹²especially.

¹⁹³destruction

¹⁹⁴plain.

¹⁹⁵pleased.

¹⁹⁶fiercely.

¹⁹⁷knew.

And at a start¹⁹⁸ he was betwixt them two,
 And pulled out a sword and cried, "Ho!
 No more, on pain of losing of your head.
 By mighty Mars, he shall anon be dead
 That smiteth any stroke, that I may see!
 But tell to me what mister¹⁹⁹ men ye be,
 That be so hardy for to fighte here
 Withoute judge or other officer,
 As though it were in listes royally. (Note 35)
 This Palamon answered hastily,
 And saide: "Sir, what needeth wordes mo'?
 We have the death deserved bothe two,
 Two woful wretches be we, and caitives,
 That be accumbered²⁰⁰ of our own lives,
 And as thou art a rightful lord and judge,
 So give us neither mercy nor refuge.
 And slay me first, for sainte charity,
 But slay my fellow eke as well as me.
 Or slay him first; for, though thou know it lite²⁰¹,
 This is thy mortal foe, this is Arcite
 That from thy land is banisht on his head,
 For which he hath deserved to be dead.
 For this is he that came unto thy gate
 And saide, that he highte Philostrate.
 Thus hath he japed²⁰² thee full many year,
 And thou hast made of him thy chief esquier;
 And this is he, that loveth Emily.
 For since the day is come that I shall die
 I make plainly²⁰³ my confession,
 That I am thilke²⁰⁴ woful Palamon, (Note 36)
 That hath thy prison broken wickedly.
 I am thy mortal foe, and it am I
 That so hot loveth Emily the bright,
 That I would die here present in her sight.
 Therefore I aske death and my jewise²⁰⁵.
 But slay my fellow eke in the same wise,
 For both we have deserved to be slain."
 This worthy Duke answer'd anon again,
 And said, "This is a short conclusion.
 Your own mouth, by your own confession
 Hath damned you, and I will it record;
 It needeth not to pain you with the cord;
 Ye shall be dead, by mighty Mars the Red. (Note 37)

¹⁹⁸suddenly.

¹⁹⁹manner, kind.

²⁰⁰burdened.

²⁰¹little.

²⁰²deceived.

²⁰³fully, unreservedly.

²⁰⁴that same.

²⁰⁵judgement.

The queen anon for very womanhead
 Began to weep, and so did Emily,
 And all the ladies in the company.
 Great pity was it as it thought them all,
 That ever such a chance should befall,
 For gentle men they were, of great estate,
 And nothing but for love was this debate
 They saw their bloody woundes wide and sore,
 And cried all at once, both less and more,
 "Have mercy, Lord, upon us women all."
 And on their bare knees adown they fall
 And would have kissed his feet there as he stood,
 Till at the last aslaked was his mood²⁰⁶
 (For pity runneth soon in gentle heart);
 And though at first for ire he quoke and start
 He hath consider'd shortly in a clause
 The trespass of them both, and eke the cause:
 And although that his ire their guilt accused
 Yet in his reason he them both excused;
 As thus; he thoughte well that every man
 Will help himself in love if that he can,
 And eke deliver himself out of prison.
 Of women, for they wepten ever-in-one:²⁰⁷
 And eke his hearte had compassion
 And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
 And soft unto himself he saide: "Fie
 Upon a lord that will have no mercy,
 But be a lion both in word and deed,
 To them that be in repentance and dread,
 As well as-to a proud dispiteous²⁰⁸ man
 That will maintaine what he first began.
 That lord hath little of discretion,
 That in such case can no division²⁰⁹:
 But weigheth pride and humbles after one²¹⁰."
 And shortly, when his ire is thus agone,
 He gan to look on them with eyen light²¹¹,
 And spake these same wordes all on height²¹².
 "The god of love, ah! benedicite²¹³,
 How mighty and how great a lord is he!
 Against his might there gaine²¹⁴ none obstacles,
 He may be called a god for his miracles
 For he can maken at his owen guise

²⁰⁶his anger was appeased.

²⁰⁷continually.

²⁰⁸unpitying.

²⁰⁹can make no distinction.

²¹⁰alike.

²¹¹gentle, lenient.

²¹²aloud.

²¹³bless ye him.

²¹⁴avail, conquer.

Of every heart, as that him list devise.
 Lo here this Arcite, and this Palamon,
 That quietly were out of my prison,
 And might have lived in Thebes royally,
 And weet²¹⁵ I am their mortal enemy,
 And that their death li'th in my might also,
 And yet hath love, maugre their eyen two²¹⁶,
 Y-brought them hither bothe for to die.
 Now look ye, is not this an high folly?
 Who may not be a fool, if but he love?
 Behold, for Godde's sake that sits above,
 See how they bleed! be they not well array'd?
 Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
 Their wages and their fees for their service;
 And yet they weene for to be full wise,
 That serve love, for aught that may befall.
 But this is yet the beste game²¹⁷ of all,
 That she, for whom they have this jealousy,
 Can them therefor as muchel thank as me.
 She wot no more of all this hote fare²¹⁸,
 By God, than wot a cuckoo or an hare.
 But all must be assayed hot or cold;
 A man must be a fool, or young or old;
 I wot it by myself full yore ago²¹⁹,
 For in my time a servant was I one.
 And therefore since I know of love's pain,
 And wot how sore it can a man distra²²⁰,
 As he that oft hath been caught in his last²²¹, (Note 38)
 I you forgive wholly this trespass,
 At request of the queen that kneeleth here,
 And eke of Emily, my sister dear.
 And ye shall both anon unto me swear,
 That never more ye shall my country dere²²²
 Nor make war upon me night nor day,
 But be my friends in alle that ye may.
 I you forgive this trespass every deal²²³.
 And they him sware his asking²²⁴ fair and well,
 And him of lordship and of mercy pray'd,
 And he them granted grace, and thus he said:
 "To speak of royal lineage and richness,
 Though that she were a queen or a princess,

²¹⁵knew.

²¹⁶in spite of their eyes.

²¹⁷joke.

²¹⁸hot behaviour

²¹⁹long years ago.

²²⁰distress.

²²¹snare.

²²²injure.

²²³completely.

²²⁴what he asked.

Each of you both is worthy doubtless
 To wedde when time is; but nathless
 I speak as for my sister Emily,
 For whom ye have this strife and jealousy,
 Ye wot²²⁵ yourselves, she may not wed the two
 At once, although ye fight for evermo:
 But one of you, all be him loth or lief²²⁶,
 He must go pipe into an ivy leaf²²⁷:
 This is to say, she may not have you both,
 All be ye never so jealous, nor so wroth.
 And therefore I you put in this degree,
 That each of you shall have his destiny
 As him is shape²²⁸; and hearken in what wise
 Lo hear your end of that I shall devise.
 My will is this, for plain conclusion
 Withouten any replication²²⁹,
 If that you liketh, take it for the best,
 That evereach of you shall go where him lest²³⁰,
 Freely without ransom or danger;
 And this day fifty weekes, farre ne nerre²³¹,
 Evereach of you shall bring an hundred knights,
 Armed for listes up at alle rights
 All ready to darraine²³² her by bataille,
 And this behete²³³ I you withoute fail
 Upon my troth, and as I am a knight,
 That whether of you bothe that hath might,
 That is to say, that whether he or thou
 May with his hundred, as I spake of now,
 Slay his contrary, or out of listes drive,
 Him shall I given Emily to wive,
 To whom that fortune gives so fair a grace.
 The listes shall I make here in this place.
 And God so wisly on my soule rue²³⁴,
 As I shall even judge be and true.
 Ye shall none other ende with me maken
 Than one of you shalle be dead or taken.
 And if you thinketh this is well y-said,
 Say your advice²³⁵, and hold yourselves apaid²³⁶.

²²⁵know.

²²⁶whether or not he wishes.

²²⁷"go whistle."

²²⁸as is decreed for him.

²²⁹reply.

²³⁰he pleases

²³¹neither more nor less.

²³²contend for.

²³³promise.

²³⁴may God as surely have mercy on my soul.

²³⁵opinion.

²³⁶satisfied.

This is your end, and your conclusion."
 Who looketh lightly now but Palamon?
 Who springeth up for joye but Arcite?
 Who could it tell, or who could it indite,
 The joye that is maked in the place
 When Theseus hath done so fair a grace?
 But down on knees went every manner wight²³⁷,
 And thanked him with all their heartes' might,
 And namely²³⁸ these Thebans ofte sithe²³⁹.
 And thus with good hope and with hearte blithe
 They take their leave, and homeward gan they ride
 To Thebes-ward, with his old walles wide.
 I trow men woulde deem it negligence,
 If I forgot to telle the dispence²⁴⁰
 Of Theseus, that went so busily
 To maken up the listes royally,
 That such a noble theatre as it was,
 I dare well say, in all this world there n'as²⁴¹.
 The circuit a mile was about,
 Walled of stone, and ditched all without.
 Round was the shape, in manner of compass,
 Full of degrees, the height of sixty pas (*Note 39*)
 That when a man was set on one degree
 He letted²⁴² not his fellow for to see.
 Eastward there stood a gate of marble white,
 Westward right such another opposite.
 And, shortly to conclude, such a place
 Was never on earth made in so little space,
 For in the land there was no craftes-man,
 That geometry or arsmetrike²⁴³ can²⁴⁴,
 Nor pourtrayor²⁴⁵, nor carver of images,
 That Theseus ne gave him meat and wages
 The theatre to make and to devise.
 And for to do his rite and sacrifice
 He eastward hath upon the gate above,
 In worship of Venus, goddess of love,
 Done make²⁴⁶ an altar and an oratory;
 And westward, in the mind and in memory
 Of Mars, he maked hath right such another,
 That coste largely of gold a fother²⁴⁷.

²³⁷kind of person.

²³⁸especially.

²³⁹oftentimes.

²⁴⁰expenditure.

²⁴¹was not.

²⁴²hindered.

²⁴³arithmetic.

²⁴⁴knew.

²⁴⁵portrait painter.

²⁴⁶caused to be made.

²⁴⁷a great amount.

And northward, in a turret on the wall,
 Of alabaster white and red coral
 An oratory riche for to see,
 In worship of Diane of chastity,
 Hath Theseus done work in noble wise.
 But yet had I forgotten to devise²⁴⁸
 The noble carving, and the portraitures,
 The shape, the countenance of the figures
 That weren in there oratories three.
 First in the temple of Venus may'st thou see
 Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
 The broken sleepes, and the sikes²⁴⁹ cold,
 The sacred teares, and the waimentings²⁵⁰,
 The fiery strokes of the desirings,
 That Love's servants in this life endure;
 The oathes, that their covenants assure.
 Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Foolhardiness,
 Beauty and Youth, and Bawdry and Richess,
 Charms and Sorcery, Leasings²⁵¹ and Flattery,
 Dispenche, Business, and Jealousy,
 That wore of yellow goldes²⁵² a garland, (Note 40)
 And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand,
 Feasts, instruments, and caroles and dances,
 Lust and array, and all the circumstances
 Of Love, which I reckon'd and reckon shall
 In order, were painted on the wall,
 And more than I can make of mention.
 For soothly all the mount of Citheron, (Note 41)
 Where Venus hath her principal dwelling,
 Was showed on the wall in pourtraying,
 With all the garden, and the lustiness²⁵³,
 Nor was forgot the porter Idleness,
 Nor Narcissus the fair of yore agone²⁵⁴,
 Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,
 Nor yet the greate strength of Hercules,
 Th' enchantments of Medea and Circes,
 Nor of Turnus the hardy fierce courage,
 The rich Croesus caitif in servage.²⁵⁵ (Note 42)
 Thus may ye see, that wisdom nor richness,
 Beauty, nor sleight, nor strength, nor hardiness
 Ne may with Venus holde champartie²⁵⁶, (Note 43)

²⁴⁸describe.

²⁴⁹sighes.

²⁵⁰lamentings.

²⁵¹falsehoods.

²⁵²sunflowers.

²⁵³pleasantness.

²⁵⁴olden times.

²⁵⁵abased into slavery.

²⁵⁶divided possession.

For as her liste the world may she gie²⁵⁷
 Lo, all these folk so caught were in her las²⁵⁸
 Till they for woe full often said, Alas!
 Suffice these ensamples one or two,
 Although I could reckon a thousand mo'.
 The statue of Venus, glorious to see
 Was naked floating in the large sea,
 And from the navel down all cover'd was
 With waves green, and bright as any glass.
 A citole (Note 44) in her right hand hadde she,
 And on her head, full seemly for to see,
 A rose garland fresh, and well smelling,
 Above her head her doves flickering
 Before her stood her sone Cupido,
 Upon his shoulders wings had he two;
 And blind he was, as it is often seen;
 A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.
 Why should I not as well eke tell you all
 The portraiture, that was upon the wall
 Within the temple of mighty Mars the Red?
 All painted was the wall in length and brede²⁵⁹
 Like to the estres²⁶⁰ of the grisly place
 That hight the great temple of Mars in Thrace,
 In thilke²⁶¹ cold and frosty region,
 There as Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
 In which there dwelled neither man nor beast,
 With knotty gnarry²⁶² barren trees old
 Of stubbes sharp and hideous to behold;
 In which there ran a rumble and a sough²⁶³,
 As though a storm should bursten every bough:
 And downward from an hill under a bent²⁶⁴
 There stood the temple of Mars Armipotent,
 Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of which th' entry
 Was long and strait, and ghasly for to see.
 And thereout came a rage and such a vise²⁶⁵,
 That it made all the gates for to rise.
 The northern light in at the doore shone,
 For window on the walle was there none
 Through which men mighten any light discern.
 The doors were all of adamant etern,
 Y-clenched overthwart and ende-long²⁶⁶

²⁵⁷guide.

²⁵⁸snare.

²⁵⁹breadth.

²⁶⁰interior chambers.

²⁶¹that.

²⁶²gnarled.

²⁶³groaning noise.

²⁶⁴slope.

²⁶⁵such a furious voice.

²⁶⁶crossways and lengthways.

With iron tough, and, for to make it strong,
 Every pillar the temple to sustain
 Was tunne-great²⁶⁷, of iron bright and sheen.
 There saw I first the dark imagining
 Of felony, and all the compassing;
 The cruel ire, as red as any glede²⁶⁸,
 The picke-purse (Note 45), and eke the pale dread;
 The smiler with the knife under the cloak,
 The shepen²⁶⁹ burning with the blacke smoke (Note 46)
 The treason of the murd'ring in the bed,
 The open war, with woundes all be-bled;
 Conteke²⁷⁰ with bloody knife, and sharp menace.
 All full of chirking²⁷¹ was that sorry place.
 The slayer of himself eke saw I there,
 His hearte-blood had bathed all his hair:
 The nail y-driven in the shode²⁷² at night, (Note 47)
 The colde death, with mouth gaping upright.
 Amiddes of the temple sat Mischance,
 With discomfort and sorry countenance;
 Eke saw I Woodness²⁷³ laughing in his rage,
 Armed Complaint, Outhees²⁷⁴, and fierce Outrage;
 The carrain²⁷⁵ in the bush, with throat y-corve²⁷⁶
 A thousand slain, and not of qualm y-storve²⁷⁷;
 The tyrant, with the prey by force y-reft;
 The town destroy'd, that there was nothing left.
 Yet saw I brent²⁷⁸ the shippes hoppesteres, (Note 48)
 The hunter strangled with the wilde bears:
 The sow fretting²⁷⁹ the child right in the cradle; (Note 49)
 The cook scalded, for all his longe ladle.
 Nor was forgot, by th'infortune of Mart²⁸⁰
 The carter overridden with his cart;
 Under the wheel full low he lay adown.
 There were also of Mars' division,
 The armourer, the bowyer²⁸¹, and the smith,
 That forgeth sharp swordes on his stith²⁸².

²⁶⁷thick as a tun (barrel).

²⁶⁸live coal.

²⁶⁹stable.

²⁷⁰contention, discord.

²⁷¹creaking, jarring noise.

²⁷²hair of the head.

²⁷³madness.

²⁷⁴outcry.

²⁷⁵corpse.

²⁷⁶slashed.

²⁷⁷dead of sickness.

²⁷⁸burnt.

²⁷⁹devouring.

²⁸⁰through the misfortune of war.

²⁸¹maker of bows.

²⁸²anvil.

And all above depainted in a tower
 Saw I Conquest, sitting in great honour,
 With thilke²⁸³ sharpe sword over his head
 Hanging by a subtle y-twined thread.
 Painted the slaughter was of Julius, (Note 50)
 Of cruel Nero, and Antonius:
 Although at that time they were yet unborn,
 Yet was their death depainted there beforne,
 By menacing of Mars, right by figure,
 So was it showed in that portraiture,
 As is depainted in the stars above,
 Who shall be slain, or elles dead for love.
 Sufficeth one ensample in stories old,
 I may not reckon them all, though I wo'ld.
 The statue of Mars upon a carte²⁸⁴ stood
 Armed, and looked grim as he were wood²⁸⁵,
 And over his head there shone two figures
 Of starres, that be cleped in scriptures,
 That one Puella, that other Rubeus. (Note 51)
 This god of armes was arrayed thus:
 A wolf there stood before him at his feet
 With eyen red, and of a man he eat:
 With subtle pencil painted was this story,
 In redouting²⁸⁶ of Mars and of his glory.
 Now to the temple of Dian the chaste
 As shortly as I can I will me haste,
 To telle you all the descriptioun.
 Depainted be the walles up and down
 Of hunting and of shamefast chastity.
 There saw I how woful Calistope, (Note 52)
 When that Dian aggrieved was with her,
 Was turned from a woman to a bear,
 And after was she made the lodestar²⁸⁷:
 Thus was it painted, I can say no far²⁸⁸:
 Her son is eke a star as men may see.
 There saw I Dane (Note 53) turn'd into a tree,
 I meane not the goddess Diane,
 But Peneus' daughter, which that hight Dane.
 There saw I Actaeon an hart y-maked²⁸⁹,
 For vengeance that he saw Dian all naked:
 I saw how that his houndes have him caught,
 And freten²⁹⁰ him, for that they knew him not.
 Yet painted was, a little farthermore

²⁸³that.

²⁸⁴chariot.

²⁸⁵mad.

²⁸⁶reverance, fear.

²⁸⁷pole star.

²⁸⁸farther.

²⁸⁹made.

²⁹⁰devour.

How Atalanta hunted the wild boar;
 And Meleager, and many other mo',
 For which Diana wrought them care and woe.
 There saw I many another wondrous story,
 The which me list not drawn to memory.
 This goddess on an hart full high was set²⁹¹,
 With smalle houndes all about her feet,
 And underneath her feet she had a moon,
 Waxing it was, and shoulde wane soon.
 In gaudy green her statue clothed was,
 With bow in hand, and arrows in a case²⁹².
 Her eyen caste she full low adown,
 Where Pluto hath his darke region.
 A woman travailing was her beforne,
 But, for her child so longe was unborn,
 Full piteously Lucina (Note 54) gan she call,
 And saide; "Help, for thou may'st best of all."
 Well could he painte lifelike that it wrought;
 With many a florin he the hues had bought.
 Now be these listes made, and Theseus,
 That at his greate cost arrayed thus
 The temples, and the theatre every deal²⁹³, (Note 55)
 When it was done, him liked wonder well.
 But stint²⁹⁴ I will of Theseus a lite²⁹⁵,
 And speak of Palamon and of Arcite.
 The day approacheth of their returning,
 That evereach an hundred knights should bring,
 The battle to darraine²⁹⁶ as I you told;
 And to Athens, their covenant to hold,
 Hath ev'reach of them brought an hundred knights,
 Well-armed for the war at alle rights.
 And sickerly²⁹⁷ there trowed²⁹⁸ many a man, (Note 56)
 That never, sithen²⁹⁹ that the world began,
 For to speaken of knighthood of their hand,
 As far as God hath maked sea and land,
 Was, of so few, so noble a company.
 For every wight that loved chivalry,
 And would, his thanks, have a passant name³⁰⁰,
 Had prayed, that he might be of that game,
 And well was him, that thereto chosen was.
 For if there fell to-morrow such a case,

²⁹¹seated.

²⁹²quiver.

²⁹³part.

²⁹⁴cease speaking.

²⁹⁵little.

²⁹⁶contest.

²⁹⁷surely.

²⁹⁸believed.

²⁹⁹since.

³⁰⁰thanks to his own efforts, have a surpassing name.

Ye knowe well, that every lusty knight,
 That loveth par amour, and hath his might
 Were it in Engleland, or elleswhere,
 They would, their thankes, willen to be there,
 T' fight for a lady; Benedicite,
 It were a lusty³⁰¹ sighte for to see.
 And right so fared they with Palamon;
 With him there wente knightes many one.
 Some will be armed in an habergeon,
 And in a breast-plate, and in a gipon³⁰²;
 And some will have a pair of plates³⁰³ large;
 And some will have a Prusse³⁰⁴ shield, or targe;
 Some will be armed on their legges weel;
 Some have an axe, and some a mace of steel.
 There is no newe guise³⁰⁵, but it was old.
 Armed they weren, as I have you told,
 Evereach after his opinion.
 There may'st thou see coming with Palamon
 Licurgus himself, the great king of Thrace:
 Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
 The circles of his eyen in his head
 They glowed betwixte yellow and red,
 And like a griffin looked he about,
 With kemped³⁰⁶ haire on his browes stout; combed (Note 57)
 His limbs were great, his brawns were hard and strong,
 His shoulders broad, his armes round and long.
 And as the guise³⁰⁷ was in his country,
 Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
 With foure white bulles in the trace.
 Instead of coat-armour on his harness,
 With yellow nails, and bright as any gold,
 He had a beare's skin, coal-black for old³⁰⁸.
 His long hair was y-kempt behind his back,
 As any raven's feather it shone for black.
 A wreath of gold arm-great³⁰⁹, of huge weight,
 Upon his head sate, full of stones bright,
 Of fine rubies and clear diamants.
 About his car there wente white alauns³¹⁰, (Note 58)
 Twenty and more, as great as any steer,
 To hunt the lion or the wilde bear,
 And follow'd him, with muzzle fast y-bound,

³⁰¹pleasing.

³⁰²short doublet.

³⁰³back and front armour.

³⁰⁴Prussian.

³⁰⁵fashion.

³⁰⁶combed.

³⁰⁷fashion.

³⁰⁸age.

³⁰⁹thick as a man's arm.

³¹⁰greyhounds.

Collars of gold, and torettes³¹¹
 An hundred lordes had he in his rout³¹²
 Armed full well, with heartes stern and stout.
 With Arcita, in stories as men find,
 The great Emetrius the king of Ind,
 Upon a steede bay³¹³ trapped in steel,
 Cover'd with cloth of gold diapred³¹⁴ well,
 Came riding like the god of armes, Mars.
 His coat-armour was of a cloth of Tars³¹⁵,
 Couched³¹⁶ with pearls white and round and great
 His saddle was of burnish'd gold new beat;
 A mantelet on his shoulders hanging,
 Bretful³¹⁷ of rubies red, as fire sparkling.
 His crispe hair like ringes was y-run,
 And that was yellow, glittering as the sun.
 His nose was high, his eyen bright citrine³¹⁸,
 His lips were round, his colour was sanguine,
 A fewe fracknes³¹⁹ in his face y-sprent³²⁰,
 Betwixte yellow and black somedeal y-ment³²¹ (Note 59)
 And as a lion he his looking cast³²²
 Of five and twenty year his age I cast³²³
 His beard was well begunnen for to spring;
 His voice was as a trumpet thundering.
 Upon his head he wore of laurel green
 A garland fresh and lusty to be seen;
 Upon his hand he bare, for his delight,
 An eagle tame, as any lily white.
 An hundred lordes had he with him there,
 All armed, save their heads, in all their gear,
 Full richely in alle manner things.
 For trust ye well, that earles, dukes, and kings
 Were gather'd in this noble company,
 For love, and for increase of chivalry.
 About this king there ran on every part
 Full many a tame lion and leopart.
 And in this wise these lordes all and some³²⁴
 Be on the Sunday to the city come

³¹¹rings.

³¹²retinue.

³¹³bay horse.

³¹⁴decorated.

³¹⁵a kind of silk.

³¹⁶trimmed.

³¹⁷brindul.

³¹⁸pale yellow.

³¹⁹freckles.

³²⁰sprinkled.

³²¹mixed.

³²²cast about his eyes.

³²³reckon

³²⁴all and sundry.

Aboute prime (*Note 60*), and in the town alight.
 This Theseus, this Duke, this worthy knight
 When he had brought them into his city,
 And inned³²⁵ them, ev' reach at his degree,
 He feasteth them, and doth so great labour
 To easen them³²⁶, and do them all honour,
 That yet men weene³²⁷ that no mannes wit
 Of none estate could amenden³²⁸ it.
 The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
 The greate giftes to the most and least,
 The rich array of Theseus' palace,
 Nor who sate first or last upon the dais. (*Note 61*)
 What ladies fairest be, or best dancing
 Or which of them can carol best or sing,
 Or who most feelingly speaketh of love;
 What hawkes sitten on the perch above,
 What houndes ligger³²⁹ on the floor adown,
 Of all this now make I no mentioun
 But of th'effect; that thinketh me the best
 Now comes the point, and hearken if you lest³³⁰.
 The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
 When Palamon the larke hearde sing,
 Although it were not day by houres two,
 Yet sang the lark, and Palamon right tho³³¹
 With holy heart, and with an high courage,
 Arose, to wenden³³² on his pilgrimage
 Unto the blissful Cithera benign,
 I meane Venus, honourable and digne³³³.
 And in her hour (*Note 62*) he walketh forth a pace
 Unto the listes, where her temple was,
 And down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer³³⁴
 And hearte sore, he said as ye shall hear.
 "Fairest of fair, O lady mine Venus,
 Daughter to Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
 Thou gladder of the mount of Citheron! (*Note 41*)
 For thilke love thou haddest to Adon (*Note 63*)
 Have pity on my bitter teares smart,
 And take mine humble prayer to thine heart.
 Alas! I have no language to tell
 Th'effecte, nor the torment of mine hell;
 Mine hearte may mine harmes not betray;

³²⁵lodged.

³²⁶make them comfortable.

³²⁷think.

³²⁸improve.

³²⁹lie.

³³⁰please.

³³¹then.

³³²go.

³³³worthy.

³³⁴demeanour

I am so confused, that I cannot say.
 But mercy, lady bright, that knowest well
 My thought, and seest what harm that I feel.
 Consider all this, and rue upon³³⁵ my sore,
 As wisely³³⁶ as I shall for evermore
 Enforce my might, thy true servant to be,
 And holde war alway with chastity:
 That make I mine avow³³⁷, so ye me help.
 I keepe not of armes for to yelp³³⁸.
 Nor ask I not to-morrow to have victory,
 Nor renoun in this case, nor vaine glory
 Of prize of armes³³⁹, blowing up and down,
 But I would have fully possessioun
 Of Emily, and die in her service;
 Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.
 I recke not but³⁴⁰ it may better be
 To have vict'ry of them, or they of me,
 So that I have my lady in mine arms.
 For though so be that Mars is god of arms,
 Your virtue is so great in heaven above,
 That, if you list, I shall well have my love.
 Thy temple will I worship evermo',
 And on thine altar, where I ride or go,
 I will do sacrifice, and fires bete³⁴¹.
 And if ye will not so, my lady sweet,
 Then pray I you, to-morrow with a spear
 That Arcita me through the hearte bear
 Then reck I not, when I have lost my life,
 Though that Arcita win her to his wife.
 This is th' effect and end of my prayere, –
 Give me my love, thou blissful lady dear."
 When th' orison was done of Palamon,
 His sacrifice he did, and that anon,
 Full piteously, with alle circumstances,
 All tell I not as now³⁴² his observances.
 But at the last the statue of Venus shook,
 And made a signe, whereby that he took
 That his prayer accepted was that day.
 For though the signe shewed a delay,
 Yet wist he well that granted was his boon;
 And with glad heart he went him home full soon.
 The third hour unequal (Note 64) that Palamon
 Began to Venus' temple for to gon,

³³⁵take pity on.

³³⁶truly.

³³⁷vow, promise.

³³⁸boast.

³³⁹praise for valour.

³⁴⁰do not know whether.

³⁴¹make, kindle.

³⁴²although I tell not now.

Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
 And to the temple of Dian gan hie.
 Her maidens, that she thither with her lad³⁴³,
 Th' incense, the clothes, and the remnant all
 That to the sacrifice belonge shall,
 The hornes full of mead, as was the guise;
 There lacked nought to do her sacrifice.
 Smoking³⁴⁴ the temple full of clothes fair, (Note 65)
 This Emily with hearte debonnair³⁴⁵
 Her body wash'd with water of a well.
 But how she did her rite I dare not tell;
 But³⁴⁶ it be any thing in general;
 And yet it were a game³⁴⁷ to hearken all
 To him that meaneth well it were no charge:
 But it is good a man to be at large³⁴⁸,
 Her bright hair combed was, untressed all.
 A coronet of green oak cerriall (Note 66)
 Upon her head was set full fair and meet.
 Two fires on the altar gan she bete,
 And did her thinges, as men may behold
 In Stace of Thebes (Note 67), and these bookes old.
 When kindled was the fire, with piteous cheer
 Unto Dian she spake as ye may hear.
 "O chaste goddess of the woodes green,
 To whom both heav'n and earth and sea is seen,
 Queen of the realm of Pluto dark and low,
 Goddess of maidens, that mine heart hast know
 Full many a year, and wost³⁴⁹ what I desire,
 To keep me from the vengeance of thine ire,
 That Actaeon aboughte³⁵⁰ cruelly:
 Chaste goddess, well wottest thou that I
 Desire to be a maiden all my life,
 Nor never will I be no love nor wife.
 I am, thou wost³⁵¹, yet of thy company,
 A maid, and love hunting and venery³⁵²,
 And for to walken in the woodes wild,
 And not to be a wife, and be with child.
 Nought will I know the company of man.
 Now help me, lady, since ye may and can,
 For those three formes (Note 68) that thou hast in thee.
 And Palamon, that hath such love to me,

³⁴³led.

³⁴⁴draping.

³⁴⁵gentle.

³⁴⁶unless.

³⁴⁷pleasure.

³⁴⁸do as he will.

³⁴⁹knowest.

³⁵⁰earned; suffered from.

³⁵¹knowest.

³⁵²field sports.

And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
 This grace I pray thee withoute more,
 As sende love and peace betwixt them two:
 And from me turn away their heartes so,
 That all their hote love, and their desire,
 And all their busy torment, and their fire,
 Be queint³⁵³, or turn'd into another place.
 And if so be thou wilt do me no grace,
 Or if my destiny be shapen so
 That I shall needes have one of them two,
 So send me him that most desireth me.
 Behold, goddess of cleane chastity,
 The bitter tears that on my cheekes fall.
 Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,
 My maidenhead thou keep and well conserve,
 And, while I live, a maid I will thee serve.
 The fires burn upon the altar clear,
 While Emily was thus in her prayere:
 But suddenly she saw a sighte quaint³⁵⁴.
 For right anon one of the fire's queint
 And quick'd³⁵⁵ again, and after that anon
 That other fire was queint, and all agone:
 And as it queint, it made a whisteling,
 As doth a brande wet in its burning.
 And at the brandes end outran anon
 As it were bloody droppes many one:
 For which so sore aghast was Emily,
 That she was well-nigh mad, and gan to cry,
 For she ne wiste what it signified;
 But onely for feare thus she cried,
 And wept, that it was pity for to hear.
 And therewithal Diana gan appear
 With bow in hand, right as an hunteress,
 And saide; "Daughter, stint³⁵⁶ thine heaviness.
 Among the goddes high it is affirm'd,
 And by eternal word writ and confirm'd,
 Thou shalt be wedded unto one of tho³⁵⁷
 That have for thee so muche care and woe:
 But unto which of them I may not tell.
 Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell.
 The fires which that on mine altar brenn³⁵⁸
 Shall thee declaren, ere that thou go henne³⁵⁹,
 Thine aventure of love, as in this case."

³⁵³quenched.

³⁵⁴strange.

³⁵⁵went out and revived.

³⁵⁶ceasse.

³⁵⁷those.

³⁵⁸burn.

³⁵⁹hence.

And with that word, the arrows in the case³⁶⁰
 Of the goddess did clatter fast and ring,
 And forth she went, and made a vanishing,
 For which this Emily astonied was,
 And saide; "What amounteth this, alas!
 I put me under thy protection,
 Diane, and in thy disposition."
 And home she went anon the nexte³⁶¹ way.
 This is th' effect, there is no more to say.
 The nexte hour of Mars following this
 Arcite to the temple walked is
 Of fierce Mars, to do his sacrifice
 With all the rites of his pagan guise.
 With piteous³⁶² heart and high devotion
 Right thus to Mars he said his orison
 "O stronge god, that in the regnes³⁶³ old
 Of Thrace honoured art, and lord y-hold³⁶⁴
 And hast in every regne, and every land
 Of armes all the bridle in thine hand,
 And them fortunest as thee list devise³⁶⁵,
 Accept of me my piteous sacrifice.
 If so be that my youthe may deserve,
 And that my might be worthy for to serve
 Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
 Then pray I thee to rue upon my pine³⁶⁶,
 For thilke³⁶⁷ pain, and thilke hote fire,
 In which thou whilom burned'st for desire
 Whenne that thou usedest³⁶⁸ the beauty
 Of faire young Venus, fresh and free,
 And haddest her in armes at thy will:
 And though thee ones on a time misfill³⁶⁹,
 When Vulcanus had caught thee in his las³⁷⁰, (Note 69)
 And found thee liggig³⁷¹ by his wife, alas!
 For thilke sorrow that was in thine heart,
 Have ruth³⁷² as well upon my paine's smart.
 I am young and unconning³⁷³, as thou know'st,

³⁶⁰ quiver.

³⁶¹ nearest.

³⁶² pious.

³⁶³ realms.

³⁶⁴ held.

³⁶⁵ send them fortune as you please.

³⁶⁶ pity my anguish.

³⁶⁷ that.

³⁶⁸ enjoyed.

³⁶⁹ were unlucky.

³⁷⁰ net.

³⁷¹ lying.

³⁷² pity.

³⁷³ ignorant, simple.

And, as I trow³⁷⁴, with love offended most
 That e'er was any living creature:
 For she, that doth³⁷⁵ me all this woe endure,
 Ne recketh ne'er whether I sink or fleet³⁷⁶
 And well I wot, ere she me mercy hete³⁷⁷,
 I must with strengthe win her in the place:
 And well I wot, withoute help or grace
 Of thee, ne may my strengthe not avail:
 Then help me, lord, to-morr'w in my bataille,
 For thilke fire that whilom burned thee,
 As well as this fire that now burneth me;
 And do³⁷⁸ that I to-morr'w may have victory.
 Mine be the travail, all thine be the glory.
 Thy sovereign temple will I most honour
 Of any place, and alway most labour
 In thy pleasance and in thy craftes strong.
 And in thy temple I will my banner hong³⁷⁹,
 And all the armes of my company,
 And evermore, until that day I die,
 Eternal fire I will before thee find
 And eke to this my vow I will me bind:
 My beard, my hair that hangeth long adown,
 That never yet hath felt offense³⁸⁰
 Of razor nor of shears, I will thee give,
 And be thy true servant while I live.
 Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore,
 Give me the victory, I ask no more."
 The prayer stint³⁸¹ of Arcita the strong,
 The ringes on the temple door that hong,
 And eke the doores, clattered full fast,
 Of which Arcita somewhat was aghast.
 The fires burn'd upon the altar bright,
 That it gan all the temple for to light;
 A sweete smell anon the ground up gaf³⁸²,
 And Arcita anon his hand up haf³⁸³,
 And more incense into the fire he cast,
 With other rites more and at the last
 The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring;
 And with that sound he heard a murmuring
 Full low and dim, that saide thus, "Victory."
 For which he gave to Mars honour and glory.

³⁷⁴believe.

³⁷⁵causes.

³⁷⁶swim.

³⁷⁷promise, vouchsafe.

³⁷⁸cause.

³⁷⁹hang.

³⁸⁰indignity

³⁸¹ended.

³⁸²gave.

³⁸³lifted.

And thus with joy, and hope well to fare,
 Arcite anon unto his inn doth fare.
 As fain³⁸⁴ as fowl is of the brighte sun.
 And right anon such strife there is begun
 For thilke³⁸⁵ granting, in the heav'n above,
 Betwixte Venus the goddess of love,
 And Mars the sterne god armipotent,
 That Jupiter was busy it to stent³⁸⁶:
 Till that the pale Saturnus the cold, (Note 70)
 That knew so many of adventures old,
 Found in his old experience such an art,
 That he full soon hath pleased every part.
 As sooth is said, eld³⁸⁷ hath great advantage,
 In eld is bothe wisdom and usage³⁸⁸:
 Men may the old out-run, but not out-rede³⁸⁹.
 Saturn anon, to stint the strife and drede,
 Albeit that it is against his kind³⁹⁰,
 Of all this strife gan a remedy find.
 "My deare daughter Venus," quoth Saturn,
 "My course³⁹¹, that hath so wide for to turn, (Note 71)
 Hath more power than wot any man.
 Mine is the drowning in the sea so wan;
 Mine is the prison in the darke cote³⁹²,
 Mine the strangling and hanging by the throat,
 The murmur, and the churlish rebelling,
 The groyning³⁹³, and the privy poisoning.
 I do vengeance and plein³⁹⁴ correction,
 I dwell in the sign of the lion.
 Mine is the ruin of the highe halls,
 The falling of the towers and the walls
 Upon the miner or the carpenter:
 I slew Samson in shaking the pillar:
 Mine also be the maladies cold,
 The darke treasons, and the castes³⁹⁵ old:
 My looking is the father of pestilence.
 Now weep no more, I shall do diligence
 That Palamon, that is thine owen knight,
 Shall have his lady, as thou hast him right³⁹⁶.

³⁸⁴ glad.

³⁸⁵ that.

³⁸⁶ stop.

³⁸⁷ age.

³⁸⁸ experience.

³⁸⁹ outwit.

³⁹⁰ nature.

³⁹¹ orbir.

³⁹² cell.

³⁹³ discontent.

³⁹⁴ full.

³⁹⁵ plots.

³⁹⁶ promised.

Though Mars shall help his knight, yet natheless
 Betwixte you there must sometime be peace:
 All be ye not of one complexion,
 That each day causeth such division,
 I am thine ayel³⁹⁷, ready at thy will; (Note 72)
 Weep now no more, I shall thy lust³⁹⁸ fulfil."
 Now will I stenten³⁹⁹ of the gods above,
 Of Mars, and of Venus, goddess of love,
 And telle you as plainly as I can
 The great effect, for which that I began.
 Great was the feast in Athens thilke⁴⁰⁰ day;
 And eke the lusty season of that May
 Made every wight to be in such pleasance,
 That all that Monday jousten they and dance,
 And spenden it in Venus' high service.
 But by the cause that they shoulde rise
 Early a-morrow for to see that fight,
 Unto their reste wente they at night.
 And on the morrow, when the day gan spring,
 Of horse and harness⁴⁰¹ noise and clattering
 There was in the hostelries all about:
 And to the palace rode there many a rout⁴⁰²
 Of lordes, upon steedes and palfreys.
 There mayst thou see devising⁴⁰³ of harness
 So uncouth⁴⁰⁴ and so rich, and wrought so weel
 Of goldsmithy, of brouding⁴⁰⁵, and of steel;
 The shieldes bright, the testers⁴⁰⁶, and trappures⁴⁰⁷ (Note 73)
 Gold-hewen helmets, hauberks, coat-armures;
 Lordes in parements⁴⁰⁸ on their coursers, (Note 74);
 Knightes of retinue, and eke squiers,
 Nailing the spears, and helmes buckeling,
 Gniding⁴⁰⁹ of shieldes, with lainers⁴¹⁰ lacing; (Note 75)
 There as need is, they were nothing idle
 The foamy steeds upon the golden bridle
 Gnawing, and fast the armourers also
 With file and hammer pricking to and fro;

³⁹⁷grandfather.

³⁹⁸pleasure.

³⁹⁹cease speaking.

⁴⁰⁰that.

⁴⁰¹armour.

⁴⁰²train, retinue.

⁴⁰³decoration.

⁴⁰⁴unkown, rare.

⁴⁰⁵embroidery.

⁴⁰⁶helmets.

⁴⁰⁷trappings.

⁴⁰⁸ornamental garb.

⁴⁰⁹polishing.

⁴¹⁰laneyards.

Yeomen on foot, and knaves⁴¹¹ many one
 With shorte staves, thick⁴¹² as they may gon⁴¹³;
 Pipes, trumpets, nakeres⁴¹⁴, and clariouns, (Note 76)
 That in the battle blowe bloody souns;
 The palace full of people up and down,
 There three, there ten, holding their questioun,⁴¹⁵,
 Divining⁴¹⁶ of these Theban knightes two.
 Some saiden thus, some said it shall he so;
 Some helden with him with the blacke beard,
 Some with the bald, some with the thick-hair'd;
 Some said he looked grim, and woulde fight:
 He had a sparth⁴¹⁷ of twenty pound of weight.
 Thus was the halle full of divining⁴¹⁸
 Long after that the sunne gan up spring.
 The great Theseus that of his sleep is waked
 With minstrelsy, and noise that was maked,
 Held yet the chamber of his palace rich,
 Till that the Theban knightes both y-lich⁴¹⁹
 Honoured were, and to the palace fet⁴²⁰,
 Duke Theseus is at a window set,
 Array'd right as he were a god in throne:
 The people presseth thitherward full soon
 Him for to see, and do him reverence,
 And eke to hearken his hest⁴²¹ and his sentence⁴²²,
 An herald on a scaffold made an O, (Note 77)
 Till the noise of the people was y-do⁴²³:
 And when he saw the people of noise all still,
 Thus shewed he the mighty Duke's will.
 "The lord hath of his high discretion
 Considered that it were destruction
 To gentle blood, to fighten in the guise
 Of mortal battle now in this emprise:
 Wherefore to shape⁴²⁴ that they shall not die,
 He will his firste purpose modify.
 No man therefore, on pain of loss of life,
 No manner⁴²⁵ shot, nor poleaxe, nor short knife

⁴¹¹servants.

⁴¹²close.

⁴¹³walk.

⁴¹⁴drums.

⁴¹⁵conversation.

⁴¹⁶conjecturing.

⁴¹⁷double-headed axe.

⁴¹⁸conjecturing.

⁴¹⁹alike.

⁴²⁰fetchd.

⁴²¹command.

⁴²²speech.

⁴²³one.

⁴²⁴arrange, contrive.

⁴²⁵kind of.

Into the lists shall send, or thither bring.
 Nor short sword for to stick with point biting
 No man shall draw, nor bear it by his side.
 And no man shall unto his fellow ride
 But one course, with a sharp y-grounden spear:
 Foin if him list on foot, himself to wear.
 And he that is at mischief shall be take⁴²⁶,
 And not slain, but be brought unto the stake,
 That shall be ordained on either side;
 Thither he shall by force, and there abide.
 And if so fall⁴²⁷ the chiefetain be take
 On either side, or elles slay his make⁴²⁸,
 No longer then the tourneying shall last.
 God speede you; go forth and lay on fast.
 With long sword and with mace fight your fill.
 Go now your way; this is the lordes will.
 The voice of the people touched the heaven,
 So loude cried they with merry steven⁴²⁹:
 God save such a lord that is so good,
 He willeth no destruction of blood.
 Up go the trumpets and the melody,
 And to the listes rode the company
 By ordinance, throughout the city large⁴³⁰,
 Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with sarge⁴³¹ (Note 78)
 Full like a lord this noble Duke gan ride,
 And these two Thebans upon either side:
 And after rode the queen and Emily,
 And after them another company
 Of one and other, after their degree.
 And thus they passed thorough that city
 And to the listes came they by time:
 It was not of the day yet fully prime⁴³².
 When set was Theseus full rich and high,
 Hippolyta the queen and Emily,
 And other ladies in their degrees about,
 Unto the seates presseth all the rout.
 And westward, through the gates under Mart,
 Arcite, and eke the hundred of his part,
 With banner red, is enter'd right anon;
 And in the selve⁴³³ moment Palamon
 Is, under Venus, eastward in the place,

⁴²⁶He who wishes can fence on foot to defend himself, and he that is in peril shall be taken.

⁴²⁷should happen.

⁴²⁸equal, match.

⁴²⁹sound.

⁴³⁰in orderly array.

⁴³¹serge.

⁴³²between 6 & 9 a.m.

⁴³³self-same.

With banner white, and hardy cheer⁴³⁴ and face
 In all the world, to seeken up and down
 So even⁴³⁵ without variatioun
 There were such companies never tway.
 For there was none so wise that coude say
 That any had of other avantage
 Of worthiness, nor of estate, nor age,
 So even were they chosen for to guess.
 And in two ranges faire they them dress⁴³⁶
 When that their names read were every one,
 That in their number guile⁴³⁷ were there none,
 Then were the gates shut, and cried was loud;
 "Do now your devoir, younge knights proud
 The heralds left their pricking⁴³⁸ up and down
 Now ring the trumpet loud and clarioun.
 There is no more to say, but east and west
 In go the speares sadly⁴³⁹ in the rest;
 In go the sharpe spurs into the side.
 There see me who can joust, and who can ride.
 There shiver shaftes upon shieldes thick;
 He feeleth through the hearte-spoon the prick. (*Note 79*)
 Up spring the speares twenty foot on height;
 Out go the swordes as the silver bright.
 The helmes they to-hewen, and to-shred⁴⁴⁰; (*Note 80*)
 Out burst the blood, with sterne streames red.
 With mighty maces the bones they to-brest⁴⁴¹.
 He through the thickest of the throng gan threst⁴⁴². (*Note 81*)
 There stumble steedes strong, and down go all.
 He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
 He foineth⁴⁴³ on his foe with a trunchoun,
 And he him hurtleth with his horse adown.
 He through the body hurt is, and sith take⁴⁴⁴;
 Maugre his head, and brought unto the stake,
 As forword⁴⁴⁵ was, right there he must abide.
 Another led is on that other side.
 And sometime doth⁴⁴⁶ them Theseus to rest,
 Them to refresh, and drinken if them lest⁴⁴⁷.

⁴³⁴expression.

⁴³⁵equal.

⁴³⁶they arranged themselves in two rows.

⁴³⁷fraud.

⁴³⁸spurring their horses.

⁴³⁹steadily.

⁴⁴⁰strike in pieces.

⁴⁴¹burst.

⁴⁴²thrust.

⁴⁴³forces himself.

⁴⁴⁴afterwards captured.

⁴⁴⁵covenant.

⁴⁴⁶caused.

⁴⁴⁷pleased.

Full off a day have thilke⁴⁴⁸ Thebans two
 Together met and wrought each other woe:
 Unhorsed hath each other of them tway⁴⁴⁹
 There is no tiger in the vale of Galaphay, (Note 82)
 When that her whelp is stole, when it is lite⁴⁵⁰
 So cruel on the hunter, as Arcite
 For jealous heart upon this Palamon:
 Nor in Belmarie there is no fell lion, (Note 83)
 That hunted is, or for his hunger wood⁴⁵¹
 Or for his prey desireth so the blood,
 As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.
 The jealous strokes upon their helmets bite;
 Out runneth blood on both their sides red,
 Sometime an end there is of every deed
 For ere the sun unto the reste went,
 The stronge king Emetrius gan hent⁴⁵²
 This Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
 And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite,
 And by the force of twenty is he take,
 Unyielding, and is drawn unto the stake.
 And in the rescue of this Palamon
 The stronge king Licurgus is borne down:
 And king Emetrius, for all his strength
 Is borne out of his saddle a sword's length,
 So hit him Palamon ere he were take:
 But all for nought; he was brought to the stake:
 His hardy hearte might him helpe naught,
 He must abide when that he was caught,
 By force, and eke by composition⁴⁵³.
 Who sorroweth now but woful Palamon
 That must no more go again to fight?
 And when that Theseus had seen that sight
 Unto the folk that foughte thus each one,
 He cried, Ho! no more, for it is done!
 I will be true judge, and not party.
 Arcite of Thebes shall have Emily,
 That by his fortune hath her fairly won."
 Anon there is a noise of people gone,
 For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
 It seemed that the listes shoulde fall.
 What can now faire Venus do above?
 What saith she now? what doth this queen of love?
 But weepeth so, for wanting of her will,
 Till that her teares in the listes fill⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁸these.

⁴⁴⁹twice.

⁴⁵⁰little.

⁴⁵¹mad.

⁴⁵²sieze, assail.

⁴⁵³the bargain.

⁴⁵⁴fall.

She said: "I am ashamed doubtless."
 Saturnus saide: "Daughter, hold thy peace.
 Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon,
 And by mine head thou shalt be eased soon."
 The trumpeters with the loud minstrelsy,
 The heralds, that full loude yell and cry,
 Be in their joy for weal of Dan⁴⁵⁵ Arcite,
 But hearken me, and stinte noise a lite,
 What a miracle there befell anon
 This fierce Arcite hath off his helm y-done,
 And on a courser for to shew his face
 He pricketh endelong⁴⁵⁶ the large place,
 Looking upward upon this Emily;
 And she again him cast a friendly eye
 (For women, as to speaken in commune⁴⁵⁷,
 They follow all the favour of fortune),
 And was all his in cheer⁴⁵⁸, as his in heart.
 Out of the ground a fire infernal start,
 From Pluto sent, at request of Saturn
 For which his horse for fear began to turn,
 And leap aside, and founder⁴⁵⁹ as he leap
 And ere that Arcite may take any keep⁴⁶⁰.
 He pight⁴⁶¹ him on the pummel⁴⁶² of his head.
 That in the place he lay as he were dead.
 His breast to-bursten with his saddle-bow.
 As black he lay as any coal or crow,
 So was the blood y-run into his face.
 Anon he was y-borne out of the place
 With hearte sore, to Theseus' palace.
 Then was he carven⁴⁶³ out of his harness.
 And in a bed y-brought full fair and blive⁴⁶⁴
 For he was yet in mem'ry and alive,
 And always crying after Emily.
 Duke Theseus, with all his company,
 Is come home to Athens his city,
 With alle bliss and great solemnity.
 Albeit that this aventure was fall⁴⁶⁵,
 He woulde not discomforte⁴⁶⁶ them all
 Then said eke, that Arcite should not die,

⁴⁵⁵Lord.

⁴⁵⁶rides from end to end.

⁴⁵⁷generally.

⁴⁵⁸countenance.

⁴⁵⁹stumble.

⁴⁶⁰care.

⁴⁶¹pitched.

⁴⁶²top.

⁴⁶³cut.

⁴⁶⁴quickly.

⁴⁶⁵befallen.

⁴⁶⁶discourage.

He should be healed of his malady.
 And of another thing they were as fain⁴⁶⁷.
 That of them alle was there no one slain,
 All⁴⁶⁸ were they sorely hurt, and namely⁴⁶⁹ one,
 That with a spear was thirled⁴⁷⁰ his breast-bone.
 To other woundes, and to broken arms,
 Some hadden salves, and some hadden charms:
 And pharmacies of herbs, and eke save⁴⁷¹
 They dranken, for they would their lives have.
 For which this noble Duke, as he well can,
 Comforteth and honoureth every man,
 And made revel all the longe night,
 Unto the strange lordes, as was right.
 Nor there was holden no discomforting,
 But as at jousts or at a tourneying;
 For soothly there was no discomfiture,
 For falling is not but an aventure⁴⁷².
 Nor to be led by force unto a stake
 Unyielding, and with twenty knights y-take
 One person all alone, withouten mo',
 And harried⁴⁷³ forth by armes, foot, and toe,
 And eke his steede driven forth with staves,
 With footmen, bothe yeomen and eke knaves⁴⁷⁴,
 It was aretted him no villainy⁴⁷⁵:
 There may no man clepen it cowardy⁴⁷⁶.
 For which anon Duke Theseus let cry⁴⁷⁷, –
 To stenten⁴⁷⁸ alle rancour and envy, –
 The gree⁴⁷⁹ as well on one side as the other,
 And either side alike as other's brother:
 And gave them giftes after their degree,
 And held a feaste fully dayes three:
 And conveyed the kinges worthily
 Out of his town a journee⁴⁸⁰ largely
 And home went every man the righte way,
 There was no more but "Farewell, Have good day."
 Of this bataille I will no more indite
 But speak of Palamon and of Arcite.

⁴⁶⁷ glad.

⁴⁶⁸ although.

⁴⁶⁹ especially.

⁴⁷⁰ pierced.

⁴⁷¹ sage, *Salvia officinalis*.

⁴⁷² chance, accident.

⁴⁷³ dragged, hurried.

⁴⁷⁴ servants.

⁴⁷⁵ counted no disgrace to him.

⁴⁷⁶ call it cowardice.

⁴⁷⁷ caused to be proclaimed.

⁴⁷⁸ stop.

⁴⁷⁹ prize, merit.

⁴⁸⁰ day's journey.

Swelleth the breast of Arcite and the sore
 Increaseth at his hearte more and more.
 The clotted blood, for any leache-craft⁴⁸¹
 Corrupteth and is in his bouk y-laft⁴⁸²
 That neither veine blood nor ventousing⁴⁸³,
 Nor drink of herbes may be his helping.
 The virtue expulsive or animal,
 From thilke virtue called natural,
 Nor may the venom voide, nor expel
 The pipes of his lungs began to swell
 And every lacert⁴⁸⁴ in his breast adown
 Is shent⁴⁸⁵ with venom and corruption.
 Him gaineth⁴⁸⁶ neither, for to get his life,
 Vomit upward, nor downward laxative;
 All is to-bursten thilke region;
 Nature hath now no domination.
 And certainly where nature will not wirch⁴⁸⁷,
 Farewell physic: go bear the man to chirch⁴⁸⁸.
 This all and some is, Arcite must die.
 For which he sendeth after Emily,
 And Palamon, that was his cousin dear,
 Then said he thus, as ye shall after hear.
 "Nought may the woful spirit in mine heart
 Declare one point of all my sorrows' smart
 To you, my lady, that I love the most:
 But I bequeath the service of my ghost
 To you aboven every creature,
 Since that my life ne may no longer dure.
 Alas the woe! alas, the paines strong
 That I for you have suffered and so long!
 Alas the death, alas, mine Emily!
 Alas departing⁴⁸⁹ of our company!
 Alas, mine hearte's queen! alas, my wife!
 Mine hearte's lady, ender of my life!
 What is this world? what aske men to have?
 Now with his love, now in his colde grave
 Al one, withouten any company.
 Farewell, my sweet, farewell, mine Emily,
 And softly take me in your armes tway,
 For love of God, and hearken what I say.
 I have here with my cousin Palamon
 Had strife and rancour many a day agone,

⁴⁸¹surgical skill.

⁴⁸²left in his body.

⁴⁸³blood-letting or cupping.

⁴⁸⁴sinew, muscle.

⁴⁸⁵destroyed.

⁴⁸⁶availeth.

⁴⁸⁷work.

⁴⁸⁸church.

⁴⁸⁹the severance.

For love of you, and for my jealousy.
 And Jupiter so wis my soule gie⁴⁹⁰,
 To speaken of a servant properly,
 With alle circumstances truely,
 That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthed,
 Wisdom, humbles⁴⁹¹, estate, and high kindred,
 Freedom, and all that longeth to that art,
 So Jupiter have of my soul part,
 As in this world right now I know not one,
 So worthy to be lov'd as Palamon,
 That serveth you, and will do all his life.
 And if that you shall ever be a wife,
 Forget not Palamon, the gentle man."
 And with that word his speech to fail began.
 For from his feet up to his breast was come
 The cold of death, that had him overnome⁴⁹².
 And yet moreover in his armes two
 The vital strength is lost, and all ago⁴⁹³.
 Only the intellect, withoute more,
 That dwelled in his hearte sick and sore,
 Gan faile, when the hearte felte death;
 Dusked⁴⁹⁴ his eyen two, and fail'd his breath.
 But on his lady yet he cast his eye;
 His laste word was; "Mercy, Emily!"
 His spirit changed house, and wente there,
 As I came never I cannot telle where. (*Note 84*)
 Therefore I stent⁴⁹⁵, I am no divinister⁴⁹⁶;
 Of soules find I nought in this register.
 Ne me list not th' opinions to tell
 Of them, though that they writen where they dwell;
 Arcite is cold, there Mars his soule gie⁴⁹⁷.
 Now will I speake forth of Emily.
 Shriek'd Emily, and howled Palamon,
 And Theseus his sister took anon
 Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.
 What helpeth it to tarry forth the day,
 To telle how she wept both eve and morrow?
 For in such cases women have such sorrow,
 When that their husbands be from them y-go⁴⁹⁸,
 That for the more part they sorrow so,
 Or elles fall into such malady,
 That at the laste certainly they die.

⁴⁹⁰surely guides my soul.

⁴⁹¹humility.

⁴⁹²overcome.

⁴⁹³gone.

⁴⁹⁴grew dim.

⁴⁹⁵refrain.

⁴⁹⁶diviner.

⁴⁹⁷guide.

⁴⁹⁸gone.

Infinite be the sorrows and the tears
 Of olde folk, and folk of tender years,
 In all the town, for death of this Theban:
 For him there weepeth bothe child and man.
 So great a weeping was there none certain,
 When Hector was y-brought, all fresh y-slain,
 To Troy: alas! the pity that was there,
 Scratching of cheeks, and rending eke of hair.
 "Why wouldest thou be dead?" these women cry,
 "And haddest gold enough, and Emily."
 No manner man might gladden Theseus,
 Saving his olde father Egeus,
 That knew this worlde's transmutatioun,
 As he had seen it changen up and down,
 Joy after woe, and woe after gladness;
 And shewed him example and likeness.
 "Right as there died never man," quoth he,
 "That he ne liv'd in earth in some degree⁴⁹⁹.
 Right so there lived never man," he said,
 "In all this world, that sometime be not died.
 This world is but a throughfare full of woe,
 And we be pilgrims, passing to and fro:
 Death is an end of every worldly sore."
 And over all this said he yet much more
 To this effect, full wisely to exhort
 The people, that they should them recomfort.
 Duke Theseus, with all his busy cure⁵⁰⁰,
 Casteth about⁵⁰¹, where that the sepulture
 Of good Arcite may best y-maked be,
 And eke most honourable in his degree.
 And at the last he took conclusion,
 That there as first Arcite and Palamon
 Hadde for love the battle them between,
 That in that selve⁵⁰² grove, sweet and green,
 There as he had his amorous desires,
 His complaint, and for love his hote fires,
 He woulde make a fire⁵⁰³, in which th' office
 Of funeral he might all accomplice;
 And let anon command⁵⁰⁴ to hack and hew
 The oakes old, and lay them on a row⁵⁰⁵
 In culpons⁵⁰⁶, well arrayed for to brenne⁵⁰⁷.

⁴⁹⁹rank, condition.

⁵⁰⁰care.

⁵⁰¹deliberates.

⁵⁰²self-same.

⁵⁰³funeral pyre.

⁵⁰⁴immediately gave orders.

⁵⁰⁵in a row.

⁵⁰⁶logs.

⁵⁰⁷burn.

His officers with swifte feet they renne⁵⁰⁸
 And ride anon at his commandement.
 And after this, Duke Theseus hath sent
 After a bier, and it all oversprad
 With cloth of gold, the richest that he had;
 And of the same suit he clad Arcite.
 Upon his handes were his gloves white,
 Eke on his head a crown of laurel green,
 And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
 He laid him bare the visage⁵⁰⁹ on the bier,
 Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear.
 And, for the people shoulde see him all,
 When it was day he brought them to the hall,
 That roareth of the crying and the soun'.
 Then came this woful Theban, Palamon,
 With sluttery beard, and ruggy ashy hairs, (*Note 85*)
 In clothes black, y-dropped all with tears,
 And (passing over weeping Emily)
 The ruefullest of all the company.
 And inasmuch as⁵¹⁰ the service should be
 The more noble and rich in its degree,
 Duke Theseus let forth three steedes bring,
 That trapped were in steel all glittering.
 And covered with the arms of Dan Arcite.
 Upon these steedes, that were great and white,
 There satte folk, of whom one bare his shield,
 Another his spear in his handes held;
 The thirde bare with him his bow Turkeis⁵¹¹,
 Of brent⁵¹² gold was the case⁵¹³ and the harness:
 And ride forth a pace⁵¹⁴ with sorrowful cheer⁵¹⁵
 Toward the grove, as ye shall after hear.
 The noblest of the Greekes that there were
 Upon their shoulders carried the bier,
 With slacke pace, and eyen red and wet,
 Throughout the city, by the master⁵¹⁶ street,
 That spread was all with black, and wondrous high
 Right of the same is all the street y-wrie⁵¹⁷ (*Note 87*)
 Upon the right hand went old Egeus,
 And on the other side Duke Theseus,
 With vessels in their hand of gold full fine,
 All full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine;

⁵⁰⁸run.

⁵⁰⁹with face uncovered.

⁵¹⁰in order that.

⁵¹¹Turkish.

⁵¹²burnished.

⁵¹³quiver.

⁵¹⁴at a foot pace.

⁵¹⁵expression.

⁵¹⁶main.

⁵¹⁷covered.

Eke Palamon, with a great company;
 And after that came woful Emily,
 With fire in hand, as was that time the guise⁵¹⁸,
 To do th' office of funeral service.
 High labour, and full great appareling⁵¹⁹
 Was at the service, and the pyre-making,
 That with its greene top the heaven raught⁵²⁰,
 And twenty fathom broad its armes straught⁵²¹:
 This is to say, the boughes were so broad.
 Of straw first there was laid many a load.
 But how the pyre was maked up on height,
 And eke the names how the trees hight⁵²²,
 As oak, fir, birch, asp⁵²³, alder, holm, poplere,
 Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chestnut, lind⁵²⁴, laurere,
 Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew, whipul tree,
 How they were fell'd, shall not be told for me;
 Nor how the goddes⁵²⁵ rannen up and down
 Disinherited of their habitatioun,
 In which they wonned⁵²⁶ had in rest and peace,
 Nymphes, Faunes, and Hamadryades;
 Nor how the beastes and the birdes all
 Fledden for feare, when the wood gan fall;
 Nor how the ground aghast⁵²⁷ was of the light,
 That was not wont to see the sunne bright;
 Nor how the fire was couched⁵²⁸ first with stre⁵²⁹,
 And then with dry stickes cloven in three,
 And then with greene wood and spicery⁵³⁰,
 And then with cloth of gold and with pierrie⁵³¹,
 And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
 The myrrh, the incense with so sweet odour;
 Nor how Arcita lay among all this,
 Nor what richness about his body is;
 Nor how that Emily, as was the guise⁵³²,
 Put in the fire⁵³³ of funeral service; (*Note 88*)
 Nor how she swooned when she made the fire,

⁵¹⁸custom.

⁵¹⁹preparation.

⁵²⁰reached.

⁵²¹stretched.

⁵²²were called.

⁵²³aspen.

⁵²⁴linden, lime.

⁵²⁵the forest deities.

⁵²⁶dwelt.

⁵²⁷terrified.

⁵²⁸laid.

⁵²⁹straw.

⁵³⁰spices.

⁵³¹precious stones.

⁵³²custom.

⁵³³applied the torch.

Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire;
 Nor what jewels men in the fire then cast
 When that the fire was great and burned fast;
 Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,
 And of their vestiments, which that they wear,
 And cuppes full of wine, and milk, and blood,
 Into the fire, that burnt as it were wood⁵³⁴;
 Nor how the Greekes with a huge rout⁵³⁵
 Three times riden all the fire about (*Note 89*)
 Upon the left hand, with a loud shouting,
 And thries with their speares clattering;
 And thries how the ladies gan to cry;
 Nor how that led was homeward Emily;
 Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold;
 Nor how the lyke-wake⁵³⁶ (*Note 90*)
 All thilke⁵³⁷ night, nor how the Greekes play
 The wake-plays⁵³⁸, ne keep⁵³⁹ I not to say:
 Who wrestled best naked, with oil anoint,
 Nor who that bare him best in no disjoint⁵⁴⁰.
 I will not tell eke how they all are gone
 Home to Athenes when the play is done;
 But shortly to the point now will I wend⁵⁴¹,
 And maken of my longe tale an end.
 By process and by length of certain years
 All stinted⁵⁴² is the mourning and the tears
 Of Greekes, by one general assent.
 Then seemed me there was a parlement
 At Athenes, upon certain points and cas⁵⁴³;
 Amonge the which points y-spoken was
 To have with certain countries alliance,
 And have of Thebans full obeisance.
 For which this noble Theseus anon
 Let⁵⁴⁴ send after the gentle Palamon,
 Unwist⁵⁴⁵ of him what was the cause and why:
 But in his blacke clothes sorrowfully
 He came at his commandment on hie⁵⁴⁶;
 Then sente Theseus for Emily.

⁵³⁴ mad.

⁵³⁵ procession.

⁵³⁶ wake.

⁵³⁷ that.

⁵³⁸ funeral games.

⁵³⁹ care.

⁵⁴⁰ in any contest.

⁵⁴¹ come.

⁵⁴² ended.

⁵⁴³ cases.

⁵⁴⁴ caused.

⁵⁴⁵ unknown.

⁵⁴⁶ in haste.

When they were set⁵⁴⁷, and hush'd was all the place
 And Theseus abided⁵⁴⁸ had a space
 Ere any word came from his wise breast
 His eyen set he there as was his lest⁵⁴⁹,
 And with a sad visage he sighed still,
 And after that right thus he said his will.
 "The firste mover of the cause above
 When he first made the faire chain of love,
 Great was th' effect, and high was his intent;
 Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant:
 For with that faire chain of love he bond⁵⁵⁰
 The fire, the air, the water, and the lond
 In certain bondes, that they may not flee: (Note 91)
 That same prince and mover eke," quoth he,
 "Hath stablish'd, in this wretched world adown,
 Certain of dayes and duration
 To all that are engender'd in this place,
 Over the whiche day they may not pace⁵⁵¹,
 All may they yet their dayes well abridge.
 There needeth no authority to allege
 For it is proved by experience;
 But that me list declare my sentence⁵⁵²,
 Then may men by this order well discern,
 That thilke⁵⁵³ mover stable is and etern.
 Well may men know, but that it be a fool,
 That every part deriveth from its whole.
 For nature hath not ta'en its beginning
 Of no partie nor cantle⁵⁵⁴ of a thing,
 But of a thing that perfect is and stable,
 Descending so, till it be corruptable.
 And therefore of His wise purveyance⁵⁵⁵
 He hath so well beset his ordinance,
 That species of things and progressions
 Shallen endure by successions,
 And not etern, withouten any lie:
 This mayst thou understand and see at eye.
 Lo th' oak, that hath so long a nourishing
 From the time that it 'ginneth first to spring,
 And hath so long a life, as ye may see,
 Yet at the last y-wasted is the tree.
 Consider eke, how that the harde stone

⁵⁴⁷seated.

⁵⁴⁸waited.

⁵⁴⁹he cast his eyes wherever he pleased.

⁵⁵⁰bound.

⁵⁵¹pass.

⁵⁵²opinion.

⁵⁵³the same.

⁵⁵⁴part or piece.

⁵⁵⁵providence.

Under our feet, on which we tread and gon⁵⁵⁶,
 Yet wasteth, as it lieth by the way.
 The broade river some time waxeth drey⁵⁵⁷.
 The greate townes see we wane and wend⁵⁵⁸.
 Then may ye see that all things have an end.
 Of man and woman see we well also, –
 That needes in one of the termes two, –
 That is to say, in youth or else in age, –
 He must be dead, the king as shall a page;
 Some in his bed, some in the deepe sea,
 Some in the large field, as ye may see:
 There helpeth nought, all go that ilke⁵⁵⁹ way:
 Then may I say that alle thing must die.
 What maketh this but Jupiter the king?
 The which is prince, and cause of alle thing,
 Converting all unto his proper will,
 From which it is derived, sooth to tell
 And hereagainst no creature alive,
 Of no degree, availeth for to strive.
 Then is it wisdom, as it thinketh me,
 To make a virtue of necessity,
 And take it well, that we may not eschew⁵⁶⁰,
 And namely what to us all is due.
 And whoso grudgeth⁵⁶¹ ought, he doth folly,
 And rebel is to him that all may gie⁵⁶².
 And certainly a man hath most honour
 To dien in his excellence and flower,
 When he is sicker⁵⁶³ of his goode name.
 Then hath he done his friend, nor him⁵⁶⁴, no shame
 And gladder ought his friend be of his death,
 When with honour is yielded up his breath,
 Than when his name appalled is for age⁵⁶⁵;
 For all forgotten is his vassalage⁵⁶⁶.
 Then is it best, as for a worthy fame,
 To dien when a man is best of name.
 The contrary of all this is wilfulness.
 Why grudge we, why have we heaviness,
 That good Arcite, of chivalry the flower,
 Departed is, with duty and honour,
 Out of this foule prison of this life?

⁵⁵⁶walk.

⁵⁵⁷dry.

⁵⁵⁸go, disappear.

⁵⁵⁹same.

⁵⁶⁰escape.

⁵⁶¹murmurs at.

⁵⁶²direct, guide,

⁵⁶³certain.

⁵⁶⁴himself.

⁵⁶⁵decayed by old age

⁵⁶⁶valour, service.

Why grudge here his cousin and his wife
 Of his welfare, that loved him so well?
 Can he them thank? nay, God wot, neverdeal⁵⁶⁷, —
 That both his soul and eke themselves offend⁵⁶⁸,
 And yet they may their lustes⁵⁶⁹ not amend⁵⁷⁰.
 What may I conclude of this longe serie⁵⁷¹,
 But after sorrow I rede⁵⁷² us to be merry,
 And thanke Jupiter for all his grace?
 And ere that we departe from this place,
 I rede that we make of sorrows two
 One perfect joye lasting evermo':
 And look now where most sorrow is herein,
 There will I first amenden and begin.
 "Sister," quoth he, "this is my full assent,
 With all th' advice here of my parlement,
 That gentle Palamon, your owen knight,
 That serveth you with will, and heart, and might,
 And ever hath, since first time ye him knew,
 That ye shall of your grace upon him rue⁵⁷³,
 And take him for your husband and your lord:
 Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.
 Let see now of your womanly pity⁵⁷⁴.
 He is a kinge's brother's son, pardie⁵⁷⁵.
 And though he were a poore bachelere,
 Since he hath served you so many a year,
 And had for you so great adversity,
 It muste be considered, 'lieveth me⁵⁷⁶,
 For gentle mercy oweth to passen right⁵⁷⁷."
 Then said he thus to Palamon the knight;
 "I trow there needeth little sermoning
 To make you assente to this thing.
 Come near, and take your lady by the hand."
 Betwixte them was made anon the band,
 That hight matrimony or marriage,
 By all the counsel of the baronage.
 And thus with alle bliss and melody
 Hath Palamon y-wedded Emily.
 And God, that all this wide world hath wrought,
 Send him his love, that hath it dearly bought.
 For now is Palamon in all his weal,

⁵⁶⁷not a jot.

⁵⁶⁸hurt.

⁵⁶⁹desires.

⁵⁷⁰control.

⁵⁷¹string of remarks.

⁵⁷²counsel.

⁵⁷³take pity.

⁵⁷⁴make display

⁵⁷⁵by God.

⁵⁷⁶believe me.

⁵⁷⁷ought to be rightly directed.

Living in bliss, in riches, and in heal⁵⁷⁸
And Emily him loves so tenderly,
And he her serveth all so gentilly,
That never was there worde them between
Of jealousy, nor of none other teen⁵⁷⁹.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emily
And God save all this faire company.

⁵⁷⁸health.

⁵⁷⁹cause of anger.

NOTES

1. For the plan and principal incidents of the "Knight's Tale," Chaucer was indebted to Boccaccio, who had himself borrowed from some prior poet, chronicler, or romancer. Boccaccio speaks of the story as "very ancient;" and, though that may not be proof of its antiquity, it certainly shows that he took it from an earlier writer. The "Tale" is more or less a paraphrase of Boccaccio's "Theseida;" but in some points the copy has a distinct dramatic superiority over the original. The "Theseida" contained ten thousand lines; Chaucer has condensed it into less than one-fourth of the number. The "Knight's Tale" is supposed to have been at first composed as a separate work; it is undetermined whether Chaucer took it direct from the Italian of Boccaccio, or from a French translation.

2. Highte: was called; from the Anglo-Saxon "hatan", to bid or call; German, "Heissen", "heisst".

3. Feminie: The "Royaume des Femmes" – kingdom of the Amazons. Gower, in the "Confessio Amantis," styles Penthesilea the "Queen of Feminie."

4. Wonnen: Won, conquered; German "gewonnen."

5. Ear: To plough; Latin, "arare." "I have abundant matter for discourse." The first, and half of the second, of Boccaccio's twelve books are disposed of in the few lines foregoing.

6. Waimenting: bewailing; German, "wehklagen"

7. Starf: died; German, "sterben," "starb".

8. The Minotaur: The monster, half-man and half-bull, which yearly devoured a tribute of fourteen Athenian youths and maidens, until it was slain by Theseus.

9. Pillers: pillagers, strippers; French, "pilleurs."

10. The donjon was originally the central tower or "keep" of feudal castles; it was employed to detain prisoners of importance. Hence the modern meaning of the word dungeon.

11. Saturn, in the old astrology, was a most unpropitious star to be born under.

12. To die in the pain was a proverbial expression in the French, used as an alternative to enforce a resolution or a promise. Edward III., according to Froissart, declared that he would either succeed in the war against France or die in the pain – "Ou il mourroit en la peine." It was the fashion in those times to swear oaths of friendship and brotherhood; and hence, though the fashion has long died out, we still speak of "sworn friends."

13. The saying of the old scholar Boethius, in his treatise "De Consolatione Philosophiae", which Chaucer translated, and from which he has

freely borrowed in his poetry. The words are "Quis legem det amantibus? Major lex amor est sibi." ("Who can give law to lovers? Love is a law unto himself, and greater")

14. "Perithous" and "Theseus" must, for the metre, be pronounced as words of four and three syllables respectively – the vowels at the end not being diphthongated, but enunciated separately, as if the words were printed Pe-ri-tho-us, The-se-us. The same rule applies in such words as "creature" and "conscience," which are trisyllables.

15. Stound: moment, short space of time; from Anglo-Saxon, "stund;" akin to which is German, "Stunde," an hour.

16. Meinie: servants, or menials, &c., dwelling together in a house; from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning a crowd. Compare German, "Menge," multitude.

17. The pure fetters: the very fetters. The Greeks used "katharos", the Romans "purus," in the same sense.

18. In the medieval courts of Love, to which allusion is probably made forty lines before, in the word "parlement," or "parliament," questions like that here proposed were seriously discussed.

19. Gear: behaviour, fashion, dress; but, by another reading, the word is "gyre," and means fit, trance – from the Latin, "gyro," I turn round.

20. Before his head in his cell fantastic: in front of his head in his cell of fantasy. "The division of the brain into cells, according to the different sensitive faculties," says Mr Wright, "is very ancient, and is found depicted in mediæval manuscripts." In a manuscript in the Harleian Library, it is stated, "Certum est in prora cerebri esse fantasiam, in medio rationem discretionis, in puppi memoriam" (it is certain that in the front of the brain is imagination, in the middle reason, in the back memory) – a classification not materially differing from that of modern phrenologists.

21. Dan: Lord; Latin, "Dominus;" Spanish, "Don."

22. The "caduceus."

23. Argus was employed by Juno to watch Io with his hundred eyes but he was sent to sleep by the flute of Mercury, who then cut off his head.

24. Next: nearest; German, "naechste".

25. Clary: hippocras, wine made with spices.

26. Warray: make war; French "guerroyer", to molest; hence, perhaps, "to worry."

27. All day meeten men at unset steven: every day men meet at unexpected time. "To set a steven," is to fix a time, make an appointment.

28. Roundelay: song coming round again to the words with which it opened.

29. Now in the crop and now down in the breres: Now in the tree-top, now down in the briars. "Crop and root," top and bottom, is used to express the perfection or totality of anything.

30. Beknow: avow, acknowledge: German, "bekennen."

31. Shapen was my death erst than my shert: My death was decreed before my shirt was shaped – that is, before any clothes were made for me, before my birth.

32. Regne: Queen; French, "Reine;" Venus is meant. The common reading, however, is "regne," reign or power.

33. Launde: plain. Compare modern English, "lawn," and French, "Landes" – flat, bare marshy tracts in the south of France.

34. Mister: manner, kind; German "muster," sample, model.
35. In listes: in the lists, prepared for such single combats between champion and accuser, &c.
36. Thilke: that, contracted from "the ilke," the same.
37. Mars the Red: referring to the ruddy colour of the planet, to which was doubtless due the transference to it of the name of the God of War. In his "Republic," enumerating the seven planets, Cicero speaks of the propitious and beneficent light of Jupiter: "Tum (fulgor) rutilis horribilisque terris, quem Martium dicitis" – "Then the red glow, horrible to the nations, which you say to be that of Mars." Boccaccio opens the "Theseida" by an invocation to "rubicondo Marte."
38. Last: lace, leash, noose, snare: from Latin, "laceus."
39. "Round was the shape, in manner of compass, Full of degrees, the height of sixty pas" The building was a circle of steps or benches, as in the ancient amphitheatre. Either the building was sixty paces high; or, more probably, there were sixty of the steps or benches.
40. Yellow goldes: The sunflower, turnsol, or girasol, which turns with and seems to watch the sun, as a jealous lover his mistress.
41. Citheron: The Isle of Venus, Cythera, in the Aegean Sea; now called Cerigo: not, as Chaucer's form of the word might imply, Mount Cithaeron, in the south-west of Boetia, which was appropriated to other deities than Venus – to Jupiter, to Bacchus, and the Muses.
42. It need not be said that Chaucer pays slight heed to chronology in this passage, where the deeds of Turnus, the glory of King Solomon, and the fate of Croesus are made memories of the far past in the time of fabulous Theseus, the Minotaur-slayer.
43. Champartie: divided power or possession; an old law-term, signifying the maintenance of a person in a law suit on the condition of receiving part of the property in dispute, if recovered.
44. Citole: a kind of dulcimer.
45. The picke-purse: The plunderers that followed armies, and gave to war a horror all their own.
46. Shepen: stable; Anglo-Saxon, "scypen;" the word "sheppon" still survives in provincial parlance.
47. This line, perhaps, refers to the deed of Jael.
48. The shippes hoppesteres: The meaning is dubious. We may understand "the dancing ships," "the ships that hop" on the waves; "steres" being taken as the feminine adjectival termination: or we may, perhaps, read, with one of the manuscripts, "the ships upon the steres" – that is, even as they are being steered, or on the open sea – a more picturesque notion.
49. Freting: devouring; the Germans use "Fressen" to mean eating by animals, "essen" by men.
50. Julius: i.e. Julius Caesar
51. Puella and Rubeus were two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations—the one signifying Mars retrograde, the other Mars direct.
52. Calistope: or Callisto, daughter of Lycaon, seduced by Jupiter, turned into a bear by Diana, and placed afterwards, with her son, as the Great Bear among the stars.
53. Dane: Daphne, daughter of the river-god Peneus, in Thessaly; she was beloved by Apollo, but to avoid his pursuit, she was, at her own prayer, changed into a laurel-tree.

54. As the goddess of Light, or the goddess who brings to light, Diana – as well as Juno – was invoked by women in childbirth: so Horace, Odes iii. 22, says:–

"Montium custos nemorumque, Virgo, Quae laborantes utero puellas Ter vocata audis adimisque leto, Diva triformis."

("Virgin custodian of hills and groves, three-formed goddess who hears and saves from death young women who call upon her thrice when in childbirth")

55. Every deal: in every part; "deal" corresponds to the German "Theil" a portion.

56. Sikerly: surely; German, "sicher;" Scotch, "sikkar," certain. When Robert Bruce had escaped from England to assume the Scottish crown, he stabbed Comyn before the altar at Dumfries; and, emerging from the church, was asked by his friend Kirkpatrick if he had slain the traitor. "I doubt it," said Bruce. "Doubt," cried Kirkpatrick. "I'll mak sikkar;" and he rushed into the church, and despatched Comyn with repeated thrusts of his dagger.

57. Kemped: combed; the word survives in "unkempt."

58. Alauns: greyhounds, mastiffs; from the Spanish word "Alano," signifying a mastiff.

59. Y-ment: mixed; German, "mengen," to mix.

60. Prime: The time of early prayers, between six and nine in the morning.

61. On the dais: see note 32 to the Prologue.

62. In her hour: in the hour of the day (two hours before daybreak) which after the astrological system that divided the twenty-four among the seven ruling planets, was under the influence of Venus.

63. Adon: Adonis, a beautiful youth beloved of Venus, whose death by the tusk of a boar she deeply mourned.

64. The third hour unequal: In the third planetary hour; Palamon had gone forth in the hour of Venus, two hours before daybreak; the hour of Mercury intervened; the third hour was that of Luna, or Diana. "Unequal" refers to the astrological division of day and night, whatever their duration, into twelve parts, which of necessity varied in length with the season.

65. Smoking: draping; hence the word "smock;" "smokless," in Chaucer, means naked.

66. Cerial: of the species of oak which Pliny, in his "Natural History," calls "cerrus."

67. Stace of Thebes: Statius, the Roman who embodied in the twelve books of his "Thebaid" the ancient legends connected with the war of the seven against Thebes.

68. Diana was Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in hell; hence the direction of the eyes of her statue to "Pluto's dark region." Her statue was set up where three ways met, so that with a different face she looked down each of the three; from which she was called Trivia. See the quotation from Horace, note 54.

69. Las: net; the invisible toils in which Hephaestus caught Ares and the faithless Aphrodite, and exposed them to the "inextinguishable laughter" of Olympus.

70. Saturnus the cold: Here, as in "Mars the Red" we have the person of the deity endowed with the supposed quality of the planet called after his

name.

71. The astrologers ascribed great power to Saturn, and predicted "much debate" under his ascendancy; hence it was "against his kind" to compose the heavenly strife.

72. Ayel: grandfather; French "Aieul".

73. Testers: Helmets; from the French "teste", "tete", head.

74. Parements: ornamental garb, French "parer" to deck.

75. Gniding: Rubbing, polishing; Anglo-Saxon "gnidan", to rub.

76. Nakeres: Drums, used in the cavalry; Boccaccio's word is "nachere".

77. Made an O: Ho! Ho! to command attention; like "oyez", the call for silence in law-courts or before proclamations.

78. Sarge: serge, a coarse woollen cloth

79. Heart-spoon: The concave part of the breast, where the lower ribs join the cartilago ensiformis.

80. To-hewen and to-shred: "to" before a verb implies extraordinary violence in the action denoted.

81. He through the thickest of the throng etc.. "He" in this passage refers impersonally to any of the combatants.

82. Galaphay: Galapha, in Mauritania.

83. Belmarie is supposed to have been a Moorish state in Africa; but "Palmyrie" has been suggested as the correct reading.

84. As I came never I cannot telle where: Where it went I cannot tell you, as I was not there. Tyrwhitt thinks that Chaucer is sneering at Boccaccio's pompous account of the passage of Arcite's soul to heaven. Up to this point, the description of the death-scene is taken literally from the "Theseida."

85. With sluttery beard, and ruggy ashy hairs: With neglected beard, and rough hair strewn with ashes. "Flotery" is the general reading; but "sluttery" seems to be more in keeping with the picture of abandonment to grief.

86. Master street: main street; so Froissart speaks of "le souverain carrefour."

87. Y-wrie: covered, hid; Anglo-Saxon, "wrgan," to veil.

88. Emily applied the funeral torch. The "guise" was, among the ancients, for the nearest relative of the deceased to do this, with averted face.

89. It was the custom for soldiers to march thrice around the funeral pile of an emperor or general; "on the left hand" is added, in reference to the belief that the left hand was propitious – the Roman augur turning his face southward, and so placing on his left hand the east, whence good omens came. With the Greeks, however, their augurs facing the north, it was just the contrary. The confusion, frequent in classical writers, is complicated here by the fact that Chaucer's description of the funeral of Arcite is taken from Statius' "Thebaid" – from a Roman's account of a Greek solemnity.

90. Lyke-wake: watching by the remains of the dead; from Anglo-Saxon, "lice," a corpse; German, "Leichnam."

91. Chaucer here borrows from Boethius, who says: "Hanc rerum seriem ligat, Terras ac pelagus regens, Et coelo imperitans, amor." (Love ties these things together: the earth, and the ruling sea, and the imperial heavens)