

---

*The Canterbury Tales  
and Other Poems  
Part 2: Prologue*

---



by Geoffrey Chaucer

Styled by [LimpidSoft](#)

# Contents

<b>THE PROLOGUE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NOTES</b>	<b>33</b>

The present document was derived from text provided by Project Gutenberg (document 2383) which was made available free of charge. This document is also free of charge.

# THE PROLOGUE

When that Aprilis, with his showers swoot<sup>1</sup>,  
The drought of March hath pierced to the root,  
And bathed every vein in such licour,  
Of which virtue engender'd is the flower;  
When Zephyrus eke with his swoote breath  
Inspired hath in every holt<sup>2</sup> and heath  
The tender croppes<sup>3</sup> and the younge sun  
Hath in the Ram (*Note 1*) his halfe course y-run,  
And smalle fowles make melody,  
That sleepen all the night with open eye,  
(So pricketh them nature in their corages<sup>4</sup>);  
Then longe folk to go on pilgrimages,  
And palmers (*Note 2*) for to seeke strange  
strands,  
To ferne hallows couth<sup>5</sup> in sundry lands; (*Note*  
3)  
And specially, from every shire's end  
Of Engleland, to Canterbury they wend,  
The holy blissful Martyr for to seek,

---

<sup>1</sup>sweet

<sup>2</sup>grive, forest

<sup>3</sup>twigs, boughs

<sup>4</sup>hearts, inclinations

<sup>5</sup>distant saints known

That them hath holpen<sup>6</sup>, when that they were sick.

Befell that, in that season on a day,  
 In Southwark at the Tabard (*Note 4*) as I lay,  
 Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage  
 To Canterbury with devout corage,  
 At night was come into that hostelry  
 Well nine and twenty in a company  
 Of sundry folk, by aventure y-fall<sup>7</sup>  
 In fellowship<sup>8</sup>, and pilgrims were they all, (*Note 5*)

That toward Canterbury woulde ride.  
 The chamber, and the stables were wide,  
 And well we weren eased at the best<sup>9</sup>  
 And shortly, when the sunne was to rest,  
 So had I spoken with them every one,  
 That I was of their fellowship anon,  
 And made forword<sup>10</sup> early for to rise,  
 To take our way there as I you devise<sup>11</sup>.  
 But natheless, while I have time and space,  
 Ere that I farther in this tale pace,  
 Me thinketh it accordant to reason,  
 To tell you alle the condition  
 Of each of them, so as it seemed me,  
 And which they weren, and of what degree;  
 And eke in what array that they were in:  
 And at a Knight then will I first begin.  
 A *knight* there was, and that a worthy man,  
 That from the time that he first began  
 To riden out, he loved chivalry,  
 Truth and honour, freedom and courtesy.

---

<sup>6</sup>helped

<sup>7</sup>who had by chance fallen

<sup>8</sup>into company

<sup>9</sup>we were well provided with the best

<sup>10</sup>promise

<sup>11</sup>describe, relate

Full worthy was he in his Lorde's war,  
 And thereto had he ridden, no man farre<sup>12</sup>,  
 As well in Christendom as in Heatheness,  
 And ever honour'd for his worthiness  
 At Alisandre (*Note 6*) he was when it was won.  
 Full often time he had the board begun  
 Above alle nations in Prusse. (*Note 7*)  
 In Lettowe had he reysed,<sup>13</sup> and in Russe,  
 No Christian man so oft of his degree.  
 In Grenade at the siege eke had he be  
 Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie. (*Note 8*)  
 At Leyes was he, and at Satalie,  
 When they were won; and in the Greate Sea  
 At many a noble army had he be.  
 At mortal battles had he been fifteen,  
 And foughten for our faith at Tramissene.  
 In listes thries, and aye slain his foe.  
 This ilke<sup>14</sup> worthy knight had been also (*Note 9*)  
 Some time with the lord of Palatie,  
 Against another heathen in Turkie:  
 And evermore he had a sovereign price<sup>15</sup>  
 And though that he was worthy he was wise,  
 And of his port as meek as is a maid.  
 He never yet no villainy ne said  
 In all his life, unto no manner wight.  
 He was a very perfect gentle knight.  
 But for to telle you of his array,  
 His horse was good, but yet he was not gay.  
 Of fustian he weared a gipon<sup>16</sup>,  
 Alle besmotted with his habergeon<sup>17</sup>  
 For he was late y-come from his voyage,

---

<sup>12</sup>farther

<sup>13</sup>journeyed

<sup>14</sup>same

<sup>15</sup>He was held in very high esteem.

<sup>16</sup>short doublet

<sup>17</sup>soiled by his coat of mail.

And wente for to do his pilgrimage.  
 With him there was his son, a younge *squire*,  
 A lover, and a lusty bachelor,  
 With lockes crulle<sup>18</sup> as they were laid in press.  
 Of twenty year of age he was I guess.  
 Of his stature he was of even length,  
 And wonderly deliver<sup>19</sup>, and great of strength  
 And he had been some time in chevachie<sup>20</sup>  
 In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardie,  
 And borne him well, as of so little space<sup>21</sup>,  
 In hope to standen in his lady's grace.  
 Embroider'd was he, as it were a mead  
 All full of freshe flowers, white and red.  
 Singing he was, or fluting all the day;  
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
 Short was his gown, with sleeves long and wide.  
 Well could he sit on horse, and faire ride.  
 He coulde songes make, and well indite,  
 Joust, and eke dance, and well pourtray and  
 write.  
 So hot he loved, that by nightertale<sup>22</sup>  
 He slept no more than doth the nightingale.  
 Courteous he was, lowly, and serviceable,  
 And carv'd before his father at the table. (*Note*  
 10)  
 A YEOMAN had he, and servants no mo'  
 At that time, for him list ride so<sup>23</sup>  
 And he was clad in coat and hood of green.  
 A sheaf of peacock arrows (*Note 11*) bright and  
 keen  
 Under his belt he bare full thriftily.

---

<sup>18</sup>curled

<sup>19</sup>wonderfully nimble

<sup>20</sup>cavalry raids

<sup>21</sup>in such a short time

<sup>22</sup>night-time

<sup>23</sup>it pleased him so to ride

Well could he dress his tackle yeomanly:  
 His arrows drooped not with feathers low;  
 And in his hand he bare a mighty bow.  
 A nut-head (*Note 12*) had he, with a brown visi-  
 age:

Of wood-craft coud<sup>24</sup> he well all the usage:  
 Upon his arm he bare a gay bracer<sup>25</sup>,  
 And by his side a sword and a buckler,  
 And on that other side a gay dagger,  
 Harnessed well, and sharp as point of spear:  
 A Christopher on his breast of silver sheen.  
 An horn he bare, the baldric was of green:  
 A forester was he soothly<sup>26</sup> as I guess.  
 There was also a Nun, a *prioress*,  
 That of her smiling was full simple and coy;  
 Her greatest oathe was but by Saint Loy;  
 And she was cleped<sup>27</sup> Madame Eglentine.  
 Full well she sang the service divine,  
 Entuned in her nose full seemly;  
 And French she spake full fair and fetisly<sup>28</sup>  
 After the school of Stratford atte Bow,  
 For French of Paris was to her unknow.  
 At meate was she well y-taught withal;  
 She let no morsel from her lippes fall,  
 Nor wet her fingers in her sauce deep.  
 Well could she carry a morsel, and well keep,  
 That no droppe ne fell upon her breast.  
 In courtesy was set full much her lest<sup>29</sup>.  
 Her over-lippe wiped she so clean,  
 That in her cup there was no farthing<sup>30</sup> seen

---

<sup>24</sup>knew

<sup>25</sup>small shield

<sup>26</sup>certainlt

<sup>27</sup>called

<sup>28</sup>properly

<sup>29</sup>pleasure

<sup>30</sup>speck



Of grease, when she drunken had her draught;  
 Full seemly after her meat she raught<sup>31</sup>:  
 And sickerly she was of great disport<sup>32</sup>  
 And full pleasant, and amiable of port,  
 And pained her<sup>33</sup> to counterfeite cheer  
 Of court, and be estately of mannere,  
 And to be holden digne<sup>34</sup> of reverence.  
 But for to speaken of her conscience,  
 She was so charitable and so pitous<sup>35</sup>,  
 She woulde weep if that she saw a mouse  
 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.  
 Of smalle houndes had she, that she fed  
 With roasted flesh, and milk, and<sup>36</sup>.  
 But sore she wept if one of them were dead,  
 Or if men smote it with a yarde<sup>37</sup> smart:  
 And all was conscience and tender heart.  
 Full seemly her wimple y-pinched was;  
 Her nose tretis,<sup>38</sup> her eyen gray as glass; (*Note*  
 13)  
 Her mouth full small, and thereto soft and red;  
 But sickerly she had a fair forehead.  
 It was almost a spanne broad I trow;  
 For hardily she was not undergrow<sup>39</sup>.  
 Full fetis<sup>40</sup> was her cloak, as I was ware.  
 Of small coral about her arm she bare  
 A pair of beades, gauded all with green;  
 And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen,

---

<sup>31</sup>reached out her hand

<sup>32</sup>surely she was of a lively disposition

<sup>33</sup>took pains to assume a courtly disposition

<sup>34</sup>worthy

<sup>35</sup>full of pity

<sup>36</sup>finest white bread

<sup>37</sup>staff

<sup>38</sup>well-formed

<sup>39</sup>certainly she was not small

<sup>40</sup>neat

On which was first y-written a crown'd A,  
 And after, Amor vincit omnia<sup>41</sup>.  
 Another Nun also with her had she,  
 (That was her chappelleine, and *priestes* three.)  
 A *monk* there was, a fair for the mast'ry<sup>42</sup> (*Note*  
 14)  
 An out-rider, that loved venery<sup>43</sup>;  
 A manly man, to be an abbot able.  
 Full many a dainty horse had he in stable:  
 And when he rode, men might his bridle hear  
 Jingeling (*Note 15*) in a whistling wind as clear,  
 And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell,  
 There as this lord was keeper of the cell.  
 The rule of Saint Maur and of Saint Benet, (*Note*  
 16)  
 Because that it was old and somedeal strait  
 This ilke<sup>44</sup> monk let olde thinges pace,  
 And held after the newe world the trace.  
 He gave not of the text a pulled hen<sup>45</sup>,  
 That saith, that hunters be not holy men:  
 Ne that a monk, when he is cloisterless;  
 Is like to a fish that is waterless;  
 This is to say, a monk out of his cloister.  
 This ilke text held he not worth an oyster;  
 And I say his opinion was good.  
 Why should he study, and make himselfe  
 wood<sup>46</sup> (*Note 17*)  
 Upon a book in cloister always pore,  
 Or swinken<sup>47</sup> with his handes, and labour,  
 As Austin bid? how shall the world be served?

---

<sup>41</sup>love conquers all

<sup>42</sup>above all others

<sup>43</sup>hunting

<sup>44</sup>same

<sup>45</sup>he cared nothing for the text

<sup>46</sup>mad

<sup>47</sup>toil

Let Austin have his swink to him reserved.  
 Therefore he was a prickasour<sup>48</sup> aright:  
 Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl of flight;  
 Of pricking<sup>49</sup> and of hunting for the hare  
 Was all his lust<sup>50</sup>, for no cost would he spare.  
 I saw his sleeves purfil'd<sup>51</sup> at the hand  
 With gris, and that the finest of the land.  
 And for to fasten his hood under his chin,  
 He had of gold y-wrought a curious pin;  
 A love-knot in the greater end there was.  
 His head was bald, and shone as any glass,  
 And eke his face, as it had been anoint;  
 He was a lord full fat and in good point;  
 His eyen steep<sup>52</sup>, and rolling in his head  
 That steamed as a furnace of a lead.  
 His bootes supple, his horse in great estate,  
 Now certainly he was a fair prelate;  
 He was not pale as a forpined<sup>53</sup> ghost;  
 A fat swan lov'd he best of any roast.  
 His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.  
 A *friar* there was, a wanton and a merry,  
 A limitour (*Note 18*), a full solemne man.  
 In all the orders four is none that can<sup>54</sup>  
 So much of dalliance and fair language.  
 He had y-made full many a marriage  
 Of younge women, at his owen cost.  
 Unto his order he was a noble post;  
 Full well belov'd, and familiar was he  
 With franklins over all<sup>55</sup> in his country,

---

<sup>48</sup>hard rider

<sup>49</sup>riding

<sup>50</sup>pleasure

<sup>51</sup>worked at the end with a fur called "gris"

<sup>52</sup>deep-set

<sup>53</sup>wasted

<sup>54</sup>knows

<sup>55</sup>everywhere

And eke with worthy women of the town:  
 For he had power of confession,  
 As said himselve, more than a curate,  
 For of his order he was licentiate.  
 Full sweetely heard he confession,  
 And pleasant was his absolution.  
 He was an easy man to give penance,  
 There as he wist to have a good pittance<sup>56</sup>  
 For unto a poor order for to give  
 Is signe that a man is well y-shrive.  
 For if he gave, he durste make avant<sup>57</sup>,  
 He wiste<sup>58</sup> that the man was repentant.  
 For many a man so hard is of his heart,  
 He may not weep although him sore smart.  
 Therefore instead of weeping and prayeres,  
 Men must give silver to the poore freres.  
 His tippet was aye farsed<sup>59</sup> full of knives  
 And pinnes, for to give to faire wives;  
 And certainly he had a merry note:  
 Well could he sing and playen on a rote<sup>60</sup>;  
 Of yeddings<sup>61</sup> he bare utterly the prize.  
 His neck was white as is the fleur-de-lis.  
 Thereto he strong was as a champion,  
 And knew well the taverns in every town.  
 And every hosteler and gay tapstere,  
 Better than a lazar<sup>62</sup> or a beggere,  
 For unto such a worthy man as he  
 Accordeth not, as by his faculty,  
 To have with such lazars acquaintance.  
 It is not honest, it may not advance,

---

<sup>56</sup>where he know he would get good payment

<sup>57</sup>dared to boast

<sup>58</sup>knew

<sup>59</sup>stuffed

<sup>60</sup>from memory

<sup>61</sup>songs

<sup>62</sup>leper

As for to deale with no such pouraille<sup>63</sup>,  
 But all with rich, and sellers of vitail<sup>64</sup>.  
 And ov'r all there as<sup>65</sup> profit should arise,  
 Courteous he was, and lowly of service;  
 There n'as no man nowhere so virtuous.  
 He was the beste beggar in all his house:  
 And gave a certain farme for the grant, (*Note 19*)  
 None of his bretheren came in his haunt.  
 For though a widow hadde but one shoe,  
 So pleasant was his In Principio, (*Note 20*)  
 Yet would he have a farthing ere he went;  
 His purchase was well better than his rent.  
 And rage he could and play as any whelp,  
 In lovedays (*Note 21*); there could he muchel<sup>66</sup>  
 help.

For there was he not like a cloisterer,  
 With threadbare cope as is a poor scholer;  
 But he was like a master or a pope.  
 Of double worsted was his semicope<sup>67</sup>,  
 That rounded was as a bell out of press.  
 Somewhat he lisped for his wantonness,  
 To make his English sweet upon his tongue;  
 And in his harping, when that he had sung,  
 His eyen<sup>68</sup> twinkled in his head aright,  
 As do the starres in a frosty night.  
 This worthy limitour (*Note 18*) was call'd Hu-  
 berd.

*A merchant* was there with a forked beard,  
 In motley, and high on his horse he sat,  
 Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat.

---

<sup>63</sup>offal, refuse

<sup>64</sup>victuals

<sup>65</sup>in every place where

<sup>66</sup>greatly

<sup>67</sup>short cloak

<sup>68</sup>eyes

His bootes clasped fair and fetisly<sup>69</sup>,  
 His reasons aye spake he full solemnly,  
 Sounding alway th' increase of his winning.  
 He would the sea were kept (*Note 22*) for any  
 thing  
 Betwixte Middleburg and Orewell (*Note 23*)  
 Well could he in exchange shieldes<sup>70</sup> sell (*Note*  
 24)  
 This worthy man full well his wit beset<sup>71</sup>;  
 There wiste<sup>72</sup> no wight<sup>73</sup> that he was in debt,  
 So estately was he of governance<sup>74</sup>  
 With his bargains, and with his chevisance<sup>75</sup>.  
 For sooth he was a worthy man withal,  
 But sooth to say, I n'ot<sup>76</sup> how men him call.  
 A *clerk* there was of Oxenford<sup>77</sup> also,  
 That unto logic hadde long y-go<sup>78</sup>  
 As leane was his horse as is a rake,  
 And he was not right fat, I undertake;  
 But looked hollo<sup>79</sup>, and thereto soberly<sup>80</sup>.  
 Full threadbare was his overest courtepy<sup>81</sup>,  
 For he had gotten him yet no benefice,  
 Ne was not worldly, to have an office.  
 For him was lever<sup>82</sup> have at his bed's head

---

<sup>69</sup>neatly

<sup>70</sup>crowns

<sup>71</sup>employed

<sup>72</sup>knew

<sup>73</sup>man

<sup>74</sup>so well he managed

<sup>75</sup>business contract

<sup>76</sup>know not

<sup>77</sup>Oxford.

<sup>78</sup>devoted himself.

<sup>79</sup>thin.

<sup>80</sup>poorly.

<sup>81</sup>uppermost short cloak

<sup>82</sup>rather

Twenty bookes, clothed in black or red,  
Of Aristotle, and his philosophy,  
Than robes rich, or fiddle, or psalt'ry.  
But all be that he was a philosopher,  
Yet hadde he but little gold in coffer,  
But all that he might of his friendes hent<sup>83</sup>  
On bookes and on learning he it spent,  
And busily gan for the soules pray  
Of them that gave him (*Note 25*) wherewith to  
scholay<sup>84</sup>  
Of study took he moste care and heed.  
Not one word spake he more than was need;  
And that was said in form and reverence,  
And short and quick, and full of high sentence.  
Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,  
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.  
*A sergeant of the law*, wary and wise,  
That often had y-been at the Parvis, (*Note 26*)  
There was also, full rich of excellence.  
Discreet he was, and of great reverence:  
He seemed such, his wordes were so wise,  
Justice he was full often in assize,  
By patent, and by plein<sup>85</sup> commission;  
For his science, and for his high renown,  
Of fees and robes had he many one.  
So great a purchaser was nowhere none.  
All was fee simple to him, in effect  
His purchasing might not be in suspect<sup>86</sup>  
Nowhere so busy a man as he there was  
And yet he seemed busier than he was  
In termes had he case' and doomes<sup>87</sup> all  
That from the time of King Will. were fall.

---

<sup>83</sup> obtain

<sup>84</sup> study

<sup>85</sup> full.

<sup>86</sup> suspicion.

<sup>87</sup> judgements

Thereto he could indite, and make a thing  
 There coulde no wight pinch at<sup>88</sup> his writing.  
 And every statute coud<sup>89</sup> he plain by rote  
 He rode but homely in a medley<sup>90</sup> coat,  
 Girt with a seint<sup>91</sup> of silk, with barres small;  
 Of his array tell I no longer tale.  
*A Frankelin*<sup>92</sup> was in this company;  
 White was his beard, as is the daisy.  
 Of his complexion he was sanguine.  
 Well lov'd he in the morn a sop in wine.  
 To liven in delight was ever his won<sup>93</sup> ,  
 For he was Epicurus' owen son,  
 That held opinion, that plein<sup>94</sup> delight  
 Was verily felicity perfite.  
 An householder, and that a great, was he;  
 Saint Julian (*Note 27*) he was in his country.  
 His bread, his ale, was alway after one<sup>95</sup> ;  
 A better envined<sup>96</sup> man was nowhere none;  
 Withoute bake-meat never was his house,  
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,  
 It snowed in his house of meat and drink,  
 Of alle dainties that men coulde think.  
 After the sundry seasons of the year,  
 So changed he his meat and his soupere.  
 Full many a fat partridge had he in mew<sup>97</sup> , (*Note*  
 28)

---

<sup>88</sup>find fault with.

<sup>89</sup>knew.

<sup>90</sup>multicoloured

<sup>91</sup>sash

<sup>92</sup>Rich landowner.

<sup>93</sup>wont

<sup>94</sup>full

<sup>95</sup>pressed on one

<sup>96</sup>stored with wine.

<sup>97</sup>cage.



And many a bream, and many a luce<sup>98</sup> in stew<sup>99</sup>

(*Note 29*)

Woe was his cook, but if<sup>100</sup> his sauce were  
Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.

His table dormant<sup>101</sup> in his hall always  
Stood ready cover'd all the longe day.

At sessions there was he lord and sire.

Full often time he was knight of the shire<sup>102</sup>,

An anlace<sup>103</sup>, and a gipciere<sup>104</sup> all of silk,  
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.

A sheriff had he been, and a countour (*Note 30*)

Was nowhere such a worthy vavasour (*Note 31*).

An *haberdasher*, and a *carpenter*,

A *webber*<sup>105</sup>, a *dyer*, and a *tapiser*<sup>106</sup>,

Were with us eke, cloth'd in one livery,

Of a solemn and great fraternity.

Full fresh and new their gear y-picked<sup>107</sup> was.

Their knives were y-chaped<sup>108</sup> not with brass,  
But all with silver wrought full clean and well,

Their girdles and their pouches every deal<sup>109</sup>.

Well seemed each of them a fair burgess,

To sitten in a guild-hall, on the dais. (*Note 32*)

Evereach, for the wisdom that he can<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup>pike.

<sup>99</sup>fish-pond.

<sup>100</sup>unless.

<sup>101</sup>fixed.

<sup>102</sup>Member of Parliament

<sup>103</sup>dagger.

<sup>104</sup>purse.

<sup>105</sup>weaver.

<sup>106</sup>tapestry-maker.

<sup>107</sup>spruce.

<sup>108</sup>mounted.

<sup>109</sup>in every part.

<sup>110</sup>knew

Was shapely<sup>111</sup> for to be an alderman.  
 For chattels hadde they enough and rent,  
 And eke their wives would it well assent:  
 And elles certain they had been to blame.  
 It is full fair to be y-clep'd madame,  
 And for to go to vigils all before,  
 And have a mantle royally y-bore. (*Note 33*)  
 A COOK they hadde with them for the nones<sup>112</sup>,  
 To boil the chickens and the marrow bones,  
 And powder merchant tart and galingale.  
 Well could he know a draught of London ale.  
 He could roast, and stew, and broil, and fry,  
 Make mortrewes, and well bake a pie.  
 But great harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
 That, on his shin a mormal<sup>113</sup> hadde he.  
 For blanc manger, that made he with the best  
 (*Note 34*)  
 A SHIPMAN was there, wonned far by West<sup>114</sup>;  
 For ought I wot, be was of Dartemouth.  
 He rode upon a rouncy<sup>115</sup>, as he couth,  
 All in a gown of falding<sup>116</sup> to the knee.  
 A dagger hanging by a lace had he  
 About his neck under his arm adown;  
 The hot summer had made his hue all brown;  
 And certainly he was a good fellow.  
 Full many a draught of wine he had y-draw  
 From Bourdeaux-ward, while that the chapmen  
 sleep;  
 Of nice conscience took he no keep.  
 If that he fought, and had the higher hand,

---

<sup>111</sup>fitted

<sup>112</sup>occasion

<sup>113</sup>ulcer.

<sup>114</sup>who dwelt far to the West.

<sup>115</sup>hack.

<sup>116</sup>coarse cloth.

By water he sent them home to every land<sup>117</sup>  
 But of his craft to reckon well his tides,  
 His streames and his strandes him besides,  
 His herberow<sup>118</sup>, his moon, and lodemanage<sup>119</sup>,  
 There was none such, from Hull unto Carthage

(Note 35)

Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake:  
 With many a tempest had his beard been shake.  
 He knew well all the havens, as they were,  
 From Scotland to the Cape of Finisterre,  
 And every creek in Bretagne and in Spain:  
 His barge y-cleped was the Magdelain.  
 With us there was a DOCTOR OF PHYSIC;  
 In all this worlde was there none him like  
 To speak of physic, and of surgery:  
 For he was grounded in astronomy.  
 He kept his patient a full great deal  
 In houres by his magic natural.  
 Well could he fortune<sup>120</sup> the ascendent  
 Of his images for his patient.  
 He knew the cause of every malady,  
 Were it of cold, or hot, or moist, or dry,  
 And where engender'd, and of what humour.  
 He was a very perfect practisour  
 The cause y-know<sup>121</sup>, and of his harm the root,  
 Anon he gave to the sick man his boot<sup>122</sup>  
 Full ready had he his apothecaries,  
 To send his drugges and his lectuaries  
 For each of them made other for to win  
 Their friendship was not newe to begin  
 Well knew he the old Esculapius,

---

<sup>117</sup>he drowned his prisoners.

<sup>118</sup>harbourage.

<sup>119</sup>pilotage.

<sup>120</sup>make fortunate.

<sup>121</sup>known.

<sup>122</sup>remedy.

And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus;  
 Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien;  
 Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen;  
 Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin;  
 Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin. (*Note 36*)  
 Of his diet measurable was he,  
 For it was of no superfluity,  
 But of great nourishing, and digestible.  
 His study was but little on the Bible.  
 In sanguine<sup>123</sup> and in perse<sup>124</sup> he clad was all  
 Lined with taffeta, and with sendall<sup>125</sup>,  
 And yet he was but easy of dispense<sup>126</sup>;  
 He kept that he won in the pestilence<sup>127</sup>  
 For gold in physic is a cordial;  
 Therefore he loved gold in special.  
 A good *wife* was there *of* beside *bath*,  
 But she was somedeal deaf, and that was  
 scath<sup>128</sup>.  
 Of cloth-making she hadde such an haunt<sup>129</sup>,  
 She passed them of Ypres, and of Gaunt. (*Note*  
 37)  
 In all the parish wife was there none,  
 That to the off'ring<sup>130</sup> before her should gon,  
 And if there did, certain so wroth was she,  
 That she was out of alle charity  
 Her coverchiefs<sup>131</sup> were full fine of ground  
 I durste swear, they weighede ten pound (*Note*  
 38)

---

<sup>123</sup>sanguine.

<sup>124</sup>blue

<sup>125</sup>fine silk.

<sup>126</sup>he spent very little.

<sup>127</sup>the money he made during the plague.

<sup>128</sup>damage; pity.

<sup>129</sup>skill.

<sup>130</sup>the offering at mass.

<sup>131</sup>head-dresses.

That on the Sunday were upon her head.  
 Her hosen weren of fine scarlet red,  
 Full strait y-tied, and shoes full moist<sup>132</sup> and  
 new (*Note 39*)

Bold was her face, and fair and red of hue.  
 She was a worthy woman all her live,  
 Husbands at the church door had she had five,  
 Withouten other company in youth;  
 But thereof needeth not to speak as nouth<sup>133</sup>,  
 And thrice had she been at Jerusalem;  
 She hadde passed many a strange stream  
 At Rome she had been, and at Bologne,  
 In Galice at Saint James, (*Note 40*) and at  
 Cologne;

She coude<sup>134</sup> much of wand'ring by the Way.  
 Gat-toothed<sup>135</sup> was she, soothly for to say. (*Note*  
*41*)

Upon an ambler easily she sat,  
 Y-wimped well, and on her head an hat  
 As broad as is a buckler or a targe.  
 A foot-mantle about her hippes large,  
 And on her feet a pair of spurres sharp.  
 In fellowship well could she laugh and carp<sup>136</sup>  
 Of remedies of love she knew perchance  
 For of that art she coud<sup>137</sup> the olde dance.  
 A good man there was of religion,  
 That was a poore *parson* of a town:  
 But rich he was of holy thought and werk<sup>138</sup>.  
 He was also a learned man, a clerk,  
 That Christe's gospel truly woulde preach.

---

<sup>132</sup>fresh.

<sup>133</sup>now.

<sup>134</sup>knew.

<sup>135</sup>Buck-toothed.

<sup>136</sup>jest, talk.

<sup>137</sup>knew.

<sup>138</sup>work.

His parishens<sup>139</sup> devoutly would he teach.  
 Benign he was, and wonder diligent,  
 And in adversity full patient:  
 And such he was y-proved<sup>140</sup>.  
 Full loth were him to curse for his tithes,  
 But rather would he given out of doubt,  
 Unto his poore parishens about,  
 Of his off'ring, and eke of his substance.  
 He could in little thing have suffisance<sup>141</sup>.  
 Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,  
 But he ne left not, for no rain nor thunder,  
 In sickness and in mischief to visit  
 The farthest in his parish, much and lit<sup>142</sup>,  
 Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.  
 This noble ensample to his sheep he gaf<sup>143</sup>,  
 That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.  
 Out of the gospel he the wordes caught,  
 And this figure he added yet thereto,  
 That if gold ruste, what should iron do?  
 For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,  
 No wonder is a lewed<sup>144</sup> man to rust:  
 And shame it is, if that a priest take keep,  
 To see a shitten shepherd and clean sheep:  
 Well ought a priest ensample for to give,  
 By his own cleanness, how his sheep should live.  
 He sette not his benefice to hire,  
 And left his sheep eucumber'd in the mire,  
 And ran unto London, unto Saint Paul's,  
 To seeke him a chantery (*Note 42*) for souls,  
 Or with a brotherhood to be withold<sup>145</sup>:

---

<sup>139</sup>parishioners.

<sup>140</sup>oftentimes.

<sup>141</sup>he was satisfied with very little.

<sup>142</sup>great and small.

<sup>143</sup>gave.

<sup>144</sup>unlearned.

<sup>145</sup>detained.

But dwelt at home, and kepte well his fold,  
 So that the wolf ne made it not miscarry.  
 He was a shepherd, and no mercenary.  
 And though he holy were, and virtuous,  
 He was to sinful men not dispitous<sup>146</sup>  
 Nor of his speeche dangerous nor dign<sup>147</sup>  
 But in his teaching discreet and benign.  
 To drawen folk to heaven, with fairness,  
 By good ensample, was his business:  
 But it were<sup>148</sup> any person obstinate,  
 What so he were of high or low estate,  
 Him would he snibbe<sup>149</sup> sharply for the  
     nones<sup>150</sup>  
 A better priest I trow that nowhere none is.  
 He waited after no pomp nor reverence,  
 Nor maked him a spiced conscience<sup>151</sup>,  
 But Christe's lore, and his apostles' twelve,  
 He taught, and first he follow'd it himselfe.  
 With him there was a PLOUGHMAN, was his  
     brother,  
 That had y-laid of dung full many a fother<sup>152</sup>.  
 A true swinker<sup>153</sup> and a good was he,  
 Living in peace and perfect charity.  
 God loved he beste with all his heart  
 At alle times, were it gain or smart<sup>154</sup>,  
 And then his neighebour right as himselfe.  
 He woulde thresh, and thereto dike<sup>155</sup>, and

---

<sup>146</sup>severe.

<sup>147</sup>disdainful.

<sup>148</sup>but if it were.

<sup>149</sup>reprove.

<sup>150</sup>nonce, occasion.

<sup>151</sup>artificial conscience.

<sup>152</sup>ton

<sup>153</sup>hard worker.

<sup>154</sup>pain, loss.

<sup>155</sup>dig ditches.

delve,  
 For Christe's sake, for every poore wight,  
 Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.  
 His tithes payed he full fair and well,  
 Both of his proper swink<sup>156</sup>, and his chattel<sup>157</sup>  
 In a tabard<sup>158</sup> he rode upon a mare.  
 There was also a Reeve, and a Millere,  
 A Sompnour, and a Pardoner also,  
 A Manciple, and myself, there were no mo'.  
 The MILLER was a stout carle for the nones,  
 Full big he was of brawn, and eke of bones;  
 That proved well, for ov'r all where<sup>159</sup> he came,  
 At wrestling he would bear away the ram. (*Note*  
 43)  
 He was short-shouldered, broad, a thicke  
 gnarr<sup>160</sup>,  
 There was no door, that he n'old<sup>161</sup> heave off  
 bar,  
 Or break it at a running with his head.  
 His beard as any sow or fox was red,  
 And thereto broad, as though it were a spade.  
 Upon the cop<sup>162</sup> right of his nose he had (*Note*  
 44)  
 A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs  
 Red as the bristles of a sowe's ears.  
 His nose-thirles<sup>163</sup> blacke were and wide. (*Note*  
 45)  
 A sword and buckler bare he by his side.  
 His mouth as wide was as a furnace.

---

<sup>156</sup>labour.

<sup>157</sup>goods

<sup>158</sup>sleeveless jerkin.

<sup>159</sup>wheresoever.

<sup>160</sup>stump of wood.

<sup>161</sup>could not.

<sup>162</sup>head.

<sup>163</sup>nostrils.



He was a jangler, and a goliardais<sup>164</sup>. (Note 46)  
 And that was most of sin and harlotries.  
 Well could he steale corn, and tolle thrice  
 And yet he had a thumb of gold, pardie. (Note  
 47)

A white coat and a blue hood weared he  
 A baggepipe well could he blow and soun',  
 And therewithal he brought us out of town.  
 A gentle MANCIPILE (Note 48) was there of a  
 temple,

Of which achatours<sup>165</sup> mighte take ensample  
 For to be wise in buying of vitaille<sup>166</sup>  
 For whether that he paid, or took by taile<sup>167</sup>,  
 Algate<sup>168</sup> he waited so in his achate<sup>169</sup>,  
 That he was aye before in good estate.  
 Now is not that of God a full fair grace  
 That such a lewed<sup>170</sup> mannes wit shall pace<sup>171</sup>  
 The wisdom of an heap of learned men?  
 Of masters had he more than thries ten,  
 That were of law expert and curious:  
 Of which there was a dozen in that house,  
 Worthy to be stewards of rent and land  
 Of any lord that is in Engleland,  
 To make him live by his proper good,  
 In honour debtless, but if he were wood<sup>172</sup>,  
 Or live as scarcely as him list desire;  
 And able for to helpen all a shire  
 In any case that mighte fall or hap;

---

<sup>164</sup>buffoon.

<sup>165</sup>buyers.

<sup>166</sup>victuals.

<sup>167</sup>on credit

<sup>168</sup>always.

<sup>169</sup>purchase.

<sup>170</sup>unlearned.

<sup>171</sup>surpass.

<sup>172</sup>unless he were mad.

And yet this Manciple set their aller cap<sup>173</sup>.  
 The *Reeve* (*Note 49*) was a slender choleric man  
 His beard was shav'd as nigh as ever he can.  
 His hair was by his eares round y-shorn;  
 His top was docked like a priest befor  
 Full longe were his legges, and full lean  
 Y-like a staff, there was no calf y-seen  
 Well could he keep a garner and a bin<sup>174</sup>  
 There was no auditor could on him win  
 Well wist he by the drought, and by the rain,  
 The yielding of his seed and of his grain  
 His lorde's sheep, his neat<sup>175</sup>, and his dairy  
 His swine, his horse, his store, and his poultry,  
 Were wholly in this Reeve's governing,  
 And by his cov'nant gave he reckoning,  
 Since that his lord was twenty year of age;  
 There could no man bring him in arrearage  
 There was no bailiff, herd, nor other hine<sup>176</sup>  
 That he ne knew his sleight and his covine<sup>177</sup>  
 They were adrad<sup>178</sup> of him, as of the death  
 His wonning<sup>179</sup> was full fair upon an heath  
 With greene trees y-shadow'd was his place.  
 He coulde better than his lord purchase  
 Full rich he was y-stored privily  
 His lord well could he please subtilly,  
 To give and lend him of his owen good,  
 And have a thank, and yet<sup>180</sup> a coat and hood.  
 In youth he learned had a good mistere<sup>181</sup>

<sup>173</sup>outwitted them all.

<sup>174</sup>storeplaces for grain.

<sup>175</sup>cattle.

<sup>176</sup>servant.

<sup>177</sup>tricks and cheating

<sup>178</sup>in dread.

<sup>179</sup>abode.

<sup>180</sup>also.

<sup>181</sup>trade.

He was a well good wright, a carpentere  
 This Reeve sate upon a right good stot<sup>182</sup>,  
 That was all pomely<sup>183</sup> gray, and  
 highte@called.@ Scot.

A long surcoat of perse<sup>184</sup> upon he had,  
 And by his side he bare a rusty blade.  
 Of Norfolk was this Reeve, of which I tell,  
 Beside a town men clepen<sup>185</sup> Baldeswell,  
 Tucked he was, as is a friar, about,  
 And ever rode the hinderest of the rout<sup>186</sup>.

A *sompnour*<sup>187</sup> was there with us in that place,  
 (Note 50)

That had a fire-red cherubinnes face,  
 For sausefleme<sup>188</sup> he was, with eyen narrow.  
 As hot he was and lecherous as a sparrow,  
 With scalled browes black, and pilled<sup>189</sup> beard:  
 Of his visage children were sore afeard.  
 There n'as quicksilver, litharge, nor brimstone,  
 Boras, ceruse, nor oil of tartar none,  
 Nor ointement that woulde cleanse or bite,  
 That him might helpen of his whelkes<sup>190</sup> white,  
 Nor of the knobbes<sup>191</sup> sitting on his cheeks.  
 Well lov'd he garlic, onions, and leeks,  
 And for to drink strong wine as red as blood.  
 Then would he speak, and cry as he were wood;  
 And when that he well drunken had the wine,  
 Then would he speake no word but Latin.

---

<sup>182</sup>steed.

<sup>183</sup>dappled.

<sup>184</sup>sky-blue.

<sup>185</sup>call.

<sup>186</sup>hindmost of the group

<sup>187</sup>summoner.

<sup>188</sup>red or pimply.

<sup>189</sup>scanty.

<sup>190</sup>pustules.

<sup>191</sup>buttons.

A few termes knew he, two or three,  
 That he had learned out of some decree;  
 No wonder is, he heard it all the day.  
 And eke ye knowen well, how that a jay  
 Can clepen<sup>192</sup> "Wat," as well as can the Pope.  
 But whoso would in other thing him  
 grope<sup>193</sup>,earch  
 Then had he spent all his philosophy,  
 Aye, *Questio quid juris*, (*Note 51*) would he cry.  
 He was a gentle harlot<sup>194</sup> and a kind; (*Note 52*)  
 A better fellow should a man not find.  
 He woulde suffer, for a quart of wine,  
 A good fellow to have his concubine  
 A twelvemonth, and excuse him at the full.  
 Full privily a finch<sup>195</sup> eke could he pull<sup>196</sup>  
 And if he found owhere<sup>197</sup> a good fellow,  
 He woulde teache him to have none awe  
 In such a case of the archdeacon's curse;  
 But if<sup>198</sup> a manne's soul were in his purse;  
 For in his purse he should y-punished be.  
 "Purse is the archdeacon's hell," said he.  
 But well I wot, he lied right indeed:  
 Of cursing ought each guilty man to dread,  
 For curse will slay right as assoiling<sup>199</sup> saveth;  
 And also 'ware him of a significavit (*Note 53*).  
 In danger had he at his owen guise  
 The younge girles of the diocese, (*Note 54*)  
 And knew their counsel, and was of their

---

<sup>192</sup>call.

<sup>193</sup>search.

<sup>194</sup>a low fellow.

<sup>195</sup>fleece

<sup>196</sup>a man.

<sup>197</sup>anywhere.

<sup>198</sup>unless.

<sup>199</sup>absolving.

rede<sup>200</sup>.

A garland had he set upon his head,  
 As great as it were for an alestake<sup>201</sup>,  
 A buckler had he made him of a cake.  
 With him there rode a gentle PARDONERE

(*Note 55*)

Of Ronceval, his friend and his compere,  
 That straight was comen from the court of  
 Rome.

Full loud he sang, "Come hither, love, to me"  
 This Sompnour bare to him a stiff burdoun<sup>202</sup>,  
 Was never trump of half so great a soun'.  
 This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,  
 But smooth it hung, as doth a strike<sup>203</sup> of flax:  
 By ounces hung his lockes that he had,  
 And therewith he his shoulders oversprad.  
 Full thin it lay, by culpons<sup>204</sup> one and one,  
 But hood for jollity, he weared none,  
 For it was trussed up in his wallet.

Him thought he rode all of the newe get<sup>205</sup>,  
 (*Note 56*)

Dishevel, save his cap, he rode all bare.  
 Such glaring eyen had he, as an hare.

A vernicle<sup>206</sup> had he sew'd upon his cap. (*Note*  
 57)

His wallet lay before him in his lap,  
 Bretful<sup>207</sup> of pardon come from Rome all hot.  
 A voice he had as small as hath a goat.  
 No beard had he, nor ever one should have.

---

<sup>200</sup>counsel.

<sup>201</sup>The post of an alehouse sign

<sup>202</sup>sang the bass.

<sup>203</sup>strip.

<sup>204</sup>locks, shreds.

<sup>205</sup>latest fashion.

<sup>206</sup>image of Christ.

<sup>207</sup>brimful.

As smooth it was as it were new y-shave;  
 I trow he were a gelding or a mare.  
 But of his craft, from Berwick unto Ware,  
 Ne was there such another pardonere.  
 For in his mail<sup>208</sup> he had a pillowbere<sup>209</sup>, (Note  
 58)

Which, as he saide, was our Lady's veil:  
 He said, he had a gobbet<sup>210</sup> of the sail  
 That Sainte Peter had, when that he went  
 Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent<sup>211</sup>.  
 He had a cross of latoun<sup>212</sup> full of stones  
 And in a glass he hadde pigge's bones.  
 But with these relics, whenne that he fond  
 A poore parson dwelling upon lond,  
 Upon a day he got him more money  
 Than that the parson got in moneths tway;  
 And thus with feigned flattering and japes<sup>213</sup>,  
 He made the parson and the people his apes.  
 But truely to tellen at the last,  
 He was in church a noble ecclesiast.  
 Well could he read a lesson or a story,  
 But alderbest<sup>214</sup> he sang an offertory:  
 For well he wiste, when that song was sung,  
 He muste preach, and well afile<sup>215</sup> his tongue,  
 To winne silver, as he right well could:  
 Therefore he sang full merrily and loud.  
 Now have I told you shortly in a clause  
 Th' estate, th' array, the number, and eke the  
 cause

---

<sup>208</sup>bag.

<sup>209</sup>pillowcase.

<sup>210</sup>piece.

<sup>211</sup>took hold of.

<sup>212</sup>copper.

<sup>213</sup>jests.

<sup>214</sup>best of all.

<sup>215</sup>polish.

Why that assembled was this company  
In Southwark at this gentle hostelry,  
That highte the Tabard, fast by the Bell. (*Note 59*)  
But now is time to you for to tell  
How that we baren us that ilke night<sup>216</sup>,  
When we were in that hostelry alight.  
And after will I tell of our voyage,  
And all the remnant of our pilgrimage.  
But first I pray you of your courtesy,  
That ye arette it not my villainy<sup>217</sup>,  
Though that I plainly speak in this matter.  
To tellen you their wordes and their cheer;  
Not though I speak their wordes properly.  
For this ye knowen all so well as I,  
Whoso shall tell a tale after a man,  
He must rehearse, as nigh as ever he can,  
Every word, if it be in his charge,  
All speak he<sup>218</sup> ne'er so rudely and so large;  
Or elles he must tell his tale untrue,  
Or feigne things, or finde wordes new.  
He may not spare, although he were his brother;  
He must as well say one word as another.  
Christ spake Himself full broad in Holy Writ,  
And well ye wot no villainy is it.  
Eke Plato saith, whoso that can him read,  
The wordes must be cousin to the deed.  
Also I pray you to forgive it me,  
All have I<sup>219</sup> not set folk in their degree,  
Here in this tale, as that they shoulde stand:  
My wit is short, ye may well understand.  
Great cheere made our Host us every one,  
And to the supper set he us anon:  
And served us with victual of the best.

---

<sup>216</sup>what we did that same night.

<sup>217</sup>count it not rudeness in me.

<sup>218</sup>let him speak.

<sup>219</sup>although I have.

Strong was the wine, and well to drink us lest<sup>220</sup>.  
 A seemly man Our Hoste was withal  
 For to have been a marshal in an hall.  
 A large man he was with eyen steep<sup>221</sup>,  
 A fairer burgess is there none in Cheap (*Note 60*):  
 Bold of his speech, and wise and well y-taught,  
 And of manhoode lacked him right naught.  
 Eke thereto was he right a merry man,  
 And after supper playen he began,  
 And spake of mirth amonges other things,  
 When that we hadde made our reckonings;  
 And saide thus; "Now, lordinges, truly  
 Ye be to me welcome right heartily:  
 For by my troth, if that I shall not lie,  
 I saw not this year such a company  
 At once in this herberow<sup>222</sup>, am is now. (*Note 61*)  
 Fain would I do you mirth, an I wist<sup>223</sup> how.  
 And of a mirth I am right now bethought.  
 To do you ease<sup>224</sup>, and it shall coste nought.  
 Ye go to Canterbury; God you speed,  
 The blissful Martyr quite you your meed<sup>225</sup>;  
 And well I wot, as ye go by the way<sup>226</sup>;  
 Ye shapen you<sup>227</sup> to talken and to play:  
 For truely comfort nor mirth is none  
 To ride by the way as dumb as stone:  
 And therefore would I make you disport,  
 As I said erst, and do you some comfort.  
 And if you liketh all by one assent  
 Now for to standen at my judgement,

<sup>220</sup>pleased.

<sup>221</sup>deep-set.

<sup>222</sup>inn.

<sup>223</sup>.

<sup>224</sup>pleasure.

<sup>225</sup>grant you what.

<sup>226</sup>you deserve.

<sup>227</sup>intend to.



And for to worken as I shall you say  
 To-morrow, when ye riden on the way,  
 Now by my father's soule that is dead,  
 But ye be merry, smiteth off<sup>228</sup> mine head.  
 Hold up your hands withoute more speech.  
 Our counsel was not longe for to seech<sup>229</sup>;  
 Us thought it was not worth to make it wise<sup>230</sup>,  
 And granted him withoute more avise<sup>231</sup>,  
 And bade him say his verdict, as him lest.  
 Lordings (quoth he), now hearken for the best;  
 But take it not, I pray you, in disdain;  
 This is the point, to speak it plat<sup>232</sup> and plain.  
 That each of you, to shorten with your way  
 In this voyage, shall tellen tales tway,  
 To Canterbury-ward, I mean it so,  
 And homeward he shall tellen other two,  
 Of adventures that whilom have befall.  
 And which of you that bear'th him best of all,  
 That is to say, that telleth in this case  
 Tales of best sentence and most solace,  
 Shall have a supper at your aller cost<sup>233</sup>  
 Here in this place, sitting by this post,  
 When that ye come again from Canterbury.  
 And for to make you the more merry,  
 I will myselfe gladly with you ride,  
 Right at mine owen cost, and be your guide.  
 And whoso will my judgement withsay,  
 Shall pay for all we spenden by the way.  
 And if ye vouchesafe that it be so,  
 Tell me anon withoute wordes mo'<sup>234</sup> more

---

<sup>228</sup>unless you are merry, smite off my head.

<sup>229</sup>seek.

<sup>230</sup>discuss it at length.

<sup>231</sup>consideration.

<sup>232</sup>flat.

<sup>233</sup>at the cost of you all.

<sup>234</sup>more.

And I will early shape me therefore."  
 This thing was granted, and our oath we swore  
 With full glad heart, and prayed him also,  
 That he would vouchesafe for to do so,  
 And that he woulde be our governour,  
 And of our tales judge and reportour,  
 And set a supper at a certain price;  
 And we will ruled be at his device,  
 In high and low: and thus by one assent,  
 We be accorded to his judgement.  
 And thereupon the wine was fet<sup>235</sup> anon.  
 We drunken, and to reste went each one,  
 Withouten any longer tarrying  
 A-morrow, when the day began to spring,  
 Up rose our host, and was our aller cock<sup>236</sup>,  
 And gather'd us together in a flock,  
 And forth we ridden all a little space,  
 Unto the watering of Saint Thomas (*Note 62*):  
 And there our host began his horse arrest,  
 And saide; "Lordes, hearken if you lest.  
 Ye weet your forword,<sup>237</sup> and I it record.  
 If even-song and morning-song accord,  
 Let see now who shall telle the first tale.  
 As ever may I drinke wine or ale,  
 Whoso is rebel to my judgement,  
 Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.  
 Now draw ye cuts<sup>238</sup>, ere that ye farther twin<sup>239</sup>.  
 He which that hath the shortest shall begin."  
 "Sir Knight (quoth he), my master and my lord,  
 Now draw the cut, for that is mine accord.  
 Come near (quoth he), my Lady Prioress,  
 And ye, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,

---

<sup>235</sup> fetched.

<sup>236</sup> the cock to wake us all.

<sup>237</sup> know your promise.

<sup>238</sup> lots.

<sup>239</sup> go.

Nor study not: lay hand to, every man."  
Anon to drawen every wight began,  
And shortly for to tellen as it was,  
Were it by a venture, or sort<sup>240</sup>, or ca<sup>241</sup>,  
The sooth is this, the cut fell to the Knight,  
Of which full blithe and glad was every wight;  
And tell he must his tale as was reason,  
By forword, and by composition,  
As ye have heard; what needeth wordes mo'?  
And when this good man saw that it was so,  
As he that wise was and obedient  
To keep his forword by his free assent,  
He said; "Sithen<sup>242</sup> I shall begin this game,  
Why, welcome be the cut in Godde's name.  
Now let us ride, and hearken what I say."  
And with that word we ridden forth our way;  
And he began with right a merry cheer  
His tale anon, and said as ye shall hear.

---

<sup>240</sup>lot.

<sup>241</sup>chance.

<sup>242</sup>since.

## NOTES

1. Tyrwhitt points out that "the Bull" should be read here, not "the Ram," which would place the time of the pilgrimage in the end of March; whereas, in the Prologue to the Man of Law's Tale, the date is given as the "eight and twenty day of April, that is messenger to May."

2. Dante, in the "Vita Nuova," distinguishes three classes of pilgrims: palmieri - palmers who go beyond sea to the East, and often bring back staves of palm-wood; peregrini, who go the shrine of St Jago in Galicia; Romei, who go to Rome. Sir Walter Scott, however, says that palmers were in the habit of passing from shrine to shrine, living on charity - pilgrims on the other hand, made the journey to any shrine only once, immediately returning to their ordinary avocations. Chaucer uses "palmer" of all pilgrims.

3. "Hallows" survives, in the meaning here given, in All Hallows - All-Saints - day. "Couth," past participle of "conne" to know, exists in "uncouth."

4. The Tabard - the sign of the inn - was a sleeveless coat, worn by heralds. The name of the inn was, some three centuries after Chaucer, changed to the Talbot.

5. In y-fall, "y" is a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon "ge" prefixed to participles of verbs. It is used by Chaucer merely to help the metre. In German, "y-fall," or y-falle," would be "gefallen", "y-run," or "y-ronne", would be "geronnen."

6. Alisandre: Alexandria, in Egypt, captured by Pierre de

Lusignan, king of Cyprus, in 1365 but abandoned immediately afterwards. Thirteen years before, the same Prince had taken Satalie, the ancient Attalia, in Anatolia, and in 1367 he won Layas, in Armenia, both places named just below.

7. The knight had been placed at the head of the table, above knights of all nations, in Prussia, whither warriors from all countries were wont to repair, to aid the Teutonic Order in their continual conflicts with their heathen neighbours in "Lettowe" or Lithuania (German. "Litthauen"), Russia, &c.

8. Algeiras was taken from the Moorish king of Grenada, in 1344: the Earls of Derby and Salisbury took part in the siege. Belmarie is supposed to have been a Moorish state in Africa; but "Palmyrie" has been suggested as the correct reading. The Great Sea, or the Greek sea, is the Eastern Mediterranean. Tramissene, or Tremessen, is enumerated by Froissart among the Moorish kingdoms in Africa. Palatie, or Palathia, in Anatolia, was a fief held by the Christian knights after the Turkish conquests – the holders paying tribute to the infidel. Our knight had fought with one of those lords against a heathen neighbour.

9. Ilke: same; compare the Scottish phrase "of that ilk," – that is, of the estate which bears the same name as its owner's title.

10. It was the custom for squires of the highest degree to carve at their fathers' tables.

11. Peacock Arrows: Large arrows, with peacocks' feathers.

12. A nut-head: With nut-brown hair; or, round like a nut, the hair being cut short.

13. Grey eyes appear to have been a mark of female beauty in Chaucer's time.

14. "for the mastery" was applied to medicines in the sense of "sovereign" as we now apply it to a remedy.

15. It was fashionable to hang bells on horses' bridles.

16. St. Benedict was the first founder of a spiritual order in the Roman church. Maurus, abbot of Fulda from 822

to 842, did much to re-establish the discipline of the Benedictines on a true Christian basis.

17. Wood: Mad, Scottish "wud". Felix says to Paul, "Too much learning hath made thee mad".

18. Limitour: A friar with licence or privilege to beg, or exercise other functions, within a certain district: as, "the limitour of Holderness".

19. Farme: rent; that is, he paid a premium for his licence to beg.

20. In principio: the first words of Genesis and John, employed in some part of the mass.

21. Lovedays: meetings appointed for friendly settlement of differences; the business was often followed by sports and feasting.

22. He would the sea were kept for any thing: he would for anything that the sea were guarded. "The old subsidy of tonnage and poundage," says Tyrwhitt, "was given to the king 'pour la sauvgarde et custodie del mer.' – for the safeguard and keeping of the sea" (12 E. IV. C.3).

23. Middleburg, at the mouth of the Scheldt, in Holland; Orwell, a seaport in Essex.

24. Shields: Crowns, so called from the shields stamped on them; French, "ecu;" Italian, "scudo."

25. Poor scholars at the universities used then to go about begging for money to maintain them and their studies.

26. Parvis: The portico of St. Paul's, which lawyers frequented to meet their clients.

27. St Julian: The patron saint of hospitality, celebrated for supplying his votaries with good lodging and good cheer.

28. Mew: cage. The place behind Whitehall, where the king's hawks were caged was called the Mews.

29. Many a luce in stew: many a pike in his fish-pond; in those Catholic days, when much fish was eaten, no gentleman's mansion was complete without a "stew".

30. Countour: Probably a steward or accountant in the county court.

31. Vavasour: A landholder of consequence; holding of a duke, marquis, or earl, and ranking below a baron.

32. On the dais: On the raised platform at the end of the hall, where sat at meat or in judgement those high in authority, rank or honour; in our days the worthy craftsmen might have been described as "good platform men".

33. To take precedence over all in going to the evening service of the Church, or to festival meetings, to which it was the fashion to carry rich cloaks or mantles against the home-coming.

34. The things the cook could make: "marchand tart", some now unknown ingredient used in cookery; "galin-gale," sweet or long rooted cyprus; "mortrewes", a rich soup made by stamping flesh in a mortar; "Blanc manger", not what is now called blancmange; one part of it was the brawn of a capon.

35. Lodemanage: pilotage, from Anglo-Saxon "ladman," a leader, guide, or pilot; hence "lodestar," "lodestone."

36. The authors mentioned here were the chief medical text-books of the middle ages. The names of Galen and Hippocrates were then usually spelt "Gallien" and "Hypocras" or "Ypocras".

37. The west of England, especially around Bath, was the seat of the cloth-manufacture, as were Ypres and Ghent (Gaunt) in Flanders.

38. Chaucer here satirises the fashion of the time, which piled bulky and heavy waddings on ladies' heads.

39. Moist; here used in the sense of "new", as in Latin, "mustum" signifies new wine; and elsewhere Chaucer speaks of "moisty ale", as opposed to "old".

40. In Galice at Saint James: at the shrine of St Jago of Compostella in Spain.

41. Gat-toothed: Buck-toothed; goat-toothed, to signify her wantonness; or gap-toothed – with gaps between her teeth.

42. An endowment to sing masses for the soul of the donor.

43. A ram was the usual prize at wrestling matches.

44. Cop: Head; German, "Kopf".

45. Nose-thirles: nostrils; from the Anglo-Saxon, "thirlian," to pierce; hence the word "drill," to bore.

46. Goliardais: a babbler and a buffoon; Goliath was the founder of a jovial sect called by his name.

47. The proverb says that every honest miller has a thumb of gold; probably Chaucer means that this one was as honest as his brethren.

48. A Manciple – Latin, "manceps," a purchaser or contractor - - was an officer charged with the purchase of victuals for inns of court or colleges.

49. Reeve: A land-steward; still called "grieve" – Anglo-Saxon, "gerefa" in some parts of Scotland.

50. Sompnour: summoner; an apparitor, who cited delinquents to appear in ecclesiastical courts.

51. Questio quid juris: "I ask which law (applies)"; a cant law- Latin phrase.

Harlot: a low, ribald fellow; the word was used of both sexes; it comes from the Anglo-Saxon verb to hire. 1

53. Significavit: an ecclesiastical writ.

54. Within his jurisdiction he had at his own pleasure the young people (of both sexes) in the diocese.

55. Pardoner: a seller of pardons or indulgences.

56. Newe get: new gait, or fashion; "gait" is still used in this sense in some parts of the country.

57. Vernicle: an image of Christ; so called from St Veronica, who gave the Saviour a napkin to wipe the sweat from His face as He bore the Cross, and received it back with an impression of His countenance upon it.

58. Mail: packet, baggage; French, "malle," a trunk.

59. The Bell: apparently another Southwark tavern; Stowe mentions a "Bull" as being near the Tabard.

60. Cheap: Cheapside, then inhabited by the richest and most prosperous citizens of London.

61. Herberow: Lodging, inn; French, "Herberge."



62. The watering of Saint Thomas: At the second milestone on the old Canterbury road.