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

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**by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Styled by **LimpidSoft**

# Contents

<b>THE KNIGHT'S TALE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NOTES</b>	<b>265</b>

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# THE KNIGHT'S TALE

(*Note 1*)

*Whilom*<sup>1</sup>, as olde stories tellen us,  
There was a duke that highte<sup>2</sup>  
Theseus. (*Note 2*)

---

<sup>1</sup>formerly.

<sup>2</sup>was called.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Of Athens he was lord and gover-  
nor,

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 Hip-  
polyta

And brought her home with him to  
his country

With muchel<sup>3</sup> glory and great

---

<sup>3</sup>great.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 be-  
side.

And certes, if it n'ere<sup>4</sup> too long to  
hear,  
I would have told you fully the  
mannere,  
How wonnen<sup>5</sup> was the regne of  
Feminie, (*Note 4*)  
By Theseus, and by his chivalry;  
And of the greate battle for the

---

<sup>4</sup>were not.

<sup>5</sup>won.

# THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 home-  
coming.

But all these things I must as now  
forbear.

I have, God wot, a large field to  
ear<sup>6</sup>; (*Note 5*)

And weake be the oxen in my  
plough;

The remnant of my tale is long  
enow.

I will not letten eke none of this

---

<sup>6</sup>plough.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

rout<sup>7</sup>.

Let every fellow tell his tale about,  
And let see now who shall the supper win.

There as I left<sup>8</sup>, I will again begin.

This Duke, of whom I make mention,  
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

---

<sup>7</sup>hinder any of this compant.

<sup>8</sup>where I left off.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 liv-  
ing,  
That hearde such another wai-  
menting<sup>9</sup> (*Note 6*)  
And of this crying would they  
never stenten<sup>10</sup>,  
Till they the reines of his bridle  
henten<sup>11</sup>.  
"What folk be ye that at mine  
homecoming

---

<sup>9</sup>lamenting.

<sup>10</sup>desist.

<sup>11</sup>seize.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Perturben so my feaste with cry-  
ing?"

Quoth Theseus; "Have ye so great  
envy

Of mine honour, that thus com-  
plain and cry?

Or who hath you misboden<sup>12</sup>, 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 cheer<sup>13</sup>;

---

<sup>12</sup>wronged.

<sup>13</sup>countenance.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That it was ruthe<sup>14</sup> 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 suc-  
cour.

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

---

<sup>14</sup>pity.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That hath not been a duchess or a  
queen;  
Now be we caitives<sup>15</sup>, as it is well  
seen:  
Thanked be Fortune, and her false  
wheel,  
That none estate ensureth to be  
wele<sup>16</sup>  
And certes, lord, t'abiden your  
presence  
Here in this temple of the goddess  
Clemence  
We have been waiting all this  
fortenight:  
Now help us, lord, since it lies in  
thy might.

---

<sup>15</sup>captives.

<sup>16</sup>assures no continuance of prosperous estate.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

"I, wretched wight, that weep and  
waile thus,  
Was whilom wife to king Capa-  
neus,  
That starf<sup>17</sup> 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,

---

<sup>17</sup>died.

To do the deade bodies villainy<sup>18</sup>,  
Of all our lorde's, which that been  
y-slaw<sup>19</sup>,  
Hath all the bodies on an heap y-  
draw,  
And will not suffer them by none  
assent  
Neither to be y-buried, nor y-  
brent<sup>20</sup>,  
But maketh houndes eat them in  
despite."  
And with that word, withoute  
more respite  
They fallen groff,<sup>21</sup> and cryden

---

<sup>18</sup>insult.

<sup>19</sup>slain.

<sup>20</sup>burnt.

<sup>21</sup>grovelling

piteously;  
"Have on us wretched women  
some mercy,  
And let our sorrow sinken 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 mate<sup>22</sup>  
That whilom weren of so great es-  
tate.  
And in his armes he them all up

---

<sup>22</sup>abased.

hent<sup>23</sup>,  
And them comforted in full good  
intent,  
And swore his oath, as he was true  
knight,  
He woulde do so farforthly his  
might<sup>24</sup>  
Upon the tyrant Creon them to  
wreak<sup>25</sup>,  
That all the people of Greece  
shoulde speak,  
How Creon was of Theseus y-  
served,  
As he that had his death full well  
deserved.

---

<sup>23</sup>raised, took.

<sup>24</sup>as far as his power went.

<sup>25</sup>avenge.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

And right anon withoute more  
abode<sup>26</sup>  
His banner he display'd, and forth  
he rode  
To Thebes-ward, and all his, host  
beside:  
No ner<sup>27</sup>, 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  
sheen<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>delay.

<sup>27</sup>nearer.

<sup>28</sup>bright, lovely.

Unto the town of Athens for to  
dwell:  
And forth he rit<sup>29</sup>; there is no more  
to tell.

The red statue of Mars with spear  
and targe<sup>30</sup>  
So shineth in his white banner  
large  
That all the fieldes glitter up and  
down:  
And by his banner borne is his pen-  
non  
Of gold full rich, in which there  
was y-beat<sup>31</sup>  
The Minotaur (*Note 8*) which that

---

<sup>29</sup>rode.

<sup>30</sup>shield.

<sup>31</sup>stamped.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

he slew in Crete  
Thus rit this Duke, thus rit this con-  
queror  
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 af-  
ter,

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  
guise<sup>32</sup>.

But it were all too long for to de-  
vise<sup>33</sup>

The greate clamour, and the wai-  
menting<sup>34</sup>,  
Which that the ladies made at the  
brenning<sup>35</sup>  
Of the bodies, and the great honour

---

<sup>32</sup>custom.

<sup>33</sup>describe.

<sup>34</sup>lamenting.

<sup>35</sup>burning.

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 lest<sup>36</sup>  
To ransack in the tas<sup>37</sup> of bodies  
dead,  
Them for to strip of harness<sup>38</sup> and

---

<sup>36</sup>pleased.

<sup>37</sup>heap.

<sup>38</sup>armour.

of weed<sup>39</sup>,  
The pillers<sup>40</sup> 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 ligging by  
and by<sup>41</sup>  
Both in one armes<sup>42</sup>, wrought full  
richely:  
Of whiche two, Arcita hight that  
one,

---

<sup>39</sup>clothes.

<sup>40</sup>pillagers.

<sup>41</sup>lying side by side.

<sup>42</sup>the same armour

And he that other highte Palamon.  
Not fully quick<sup>43</sup>, 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-  
born<sup>44</sup>.  
Out of the tas the pillers have them  
torn,  
And have them carried soft unto  
the tent  
Of Theseus, and he full soon them

---

<sup>43</sup>alive.

<sup>44</sup>born of two sisters.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

sent  
To Athens, for to dwellen in prison  
Perpetually, he n'olde no ranson<sup>45</sup>.  
And when this worthy Duke had  
thus y-done,  
He took his host, and home he rit  
anon  
With laurel crowned as a conquer-  
our;  
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,

---

<sup>45</sup>would take no ransom.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

For evermore, there may no gold  
them quite<sup>46</sup>.

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;

In'ot<sup>47</sup> which was the finer of them  
two),

Ere it was day, as she was wont to  
do,

---

<sup>46</sup>set free.

<sup>47</sup>know not.

She was arisen, and all ready  
dight<sup>48</sup>,  
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 ob-  
servance."

This maketh Emily have remem-  
brance  
To do honour to May, and for to  
rise.  
Y-clothed was she fresh for to de-  
vise;

---

<sup>48</sup>dressed.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Her yellow hair was braided in a  
tress,  
Behind her back, a yarde long I  
guess.  
And in the garden at the sun up-  
rist<sup>49</sup>  
She walketh up and down where  
as her list.  
She gathereth flowers, party<sup>50</sup>  
white and red,  
To make a sotel<sup>51</sup> garland for her  
head,  
And as an angel heavenly she  
sung.  
The greate tower, that was so thick

---

<sup>49</sup>sunrise.

<sup>50</sup>mingled.

<sup>51</sup>subtle, well-arranged.

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 joinant<sup>52</sup> 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 cham-  
ber on high,  
In which he all the noble city

---

<sup>52</sup>adjoining.

sigh<sup>53</sup>,  
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 Pala-  
mon  
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 cas<sup>54</sup>,  
That through a window thick of

---

<sup>53</sup>saw.

<sup>54</sup>chance.

many a bar  
Of iron great, and square as any  
spar,  
He cast his eyes upon Emelia,  
And therewithal he blent<sup>55</sup> 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 pa-

---

<sup>55</sup>started aside.

tience

Our prison<sup>56</sup>, for it may none other  
be.

Fortune hath giv'n us this adver-  
sity'.

Some wick'<sup>57</sup> aspect or disposition  
Of Saturn (*Note 11*), by some con-  
stellation,

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:

---

<sup>56</sup>imprisonment.

<sup>57</sup>wicked.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

"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  
bane<sup>58</sup> 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 wher<sup>59</sup> she be woman or  
goddess,

---

<sup>58</sup>destruction.

<sup>59</sup>know not whether.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

But Venus is it, soothly<sup>60</sup> as I guess,  
And therewithal on knees adown  
    he fill,  
And saide: "Venus, if it be your will  
You in this garden thus to transfig-  
    ure  
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 compas-  
    sion,  
That is so low y-brought by  
    tyranny."

---

<sup>60</sup>truly.

And with that word Arcita<sup>61</sup>  
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 sud-  
denly  
Of her that roameth yonder in the  
place.  
And but<sup>62</sup> I have her mercy and  
her grace,

---

<sup>61</sup>began to look forth.

<sup>62</sup>unless.

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,

Dispiteously<sup>63</sup> he looked, and an-  
swer'd:

"Whether say'st thou this in  
earnest or in play?"

"Nay," quoth Arcite, "in earnest, by  
my fay<sup>64</sup> .

God help me so, me lust full ill to  
play<sup>65</sup> ."

This Palamon gan knit his browes  
tway.

---

<sup>63</sup>angrily.

<sup>64</sup>faith.

<sup>65</sup>I am in no humour for jesting.

"It were," quoth he, "to thee no  
great honour  
For to be false, nor for to be traitour  
To me, that am thy cousin and thy  
brother  
Y-sworn full deep, and each of us  
to other,  
That never for to dien in the  
pain (*Note 12*),  
Till that the death departen shall us  
twain,  
Neither of us in love to hinder  
other,  
Nor in none other case, my leve<sup>66</sup>  
brother;  
But that thou shouldest truly far-  
ther me

---

<sup>66</sup>dear.

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  
withsayn<sup>67</sup>.

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  
sterve<sup>68</sup>

Now certes, false Arcite, thou shalt  
not so

---

<sup>67</sup> deny.

<sup>68</sup> die.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

I lov'd her first, and tolde thee my  
woe  
As to my counsel, and my brother  
sworn  
To farther me, as I have told beforne.  
For which thou art y-bounden as a  
knight  
To helpe me, if it lie in thy might,  
Or elles art thou false, I dare well  
sayn,"

This Arcita full proudly spake  
again:  
"Thou shalt," quoth he, "be rather<sup>69</sup>  
false than I,  
And thou art false, I tell thee ut-  
terly;

---

<sup>69</sup>sooner.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

For par amour I lov'd her first ere  
thou.

What wilt thou say? thou wist it  
not right now<sup>70</sup>

Whether she be a woman or god-  
dess.

Thine is affection of holiness,  
And mine is love, as to a creature:  
For which I tolde thee mine aven-  
ture

As to my cousin, and my brother  
sworn

I pose<sup>71</sup>, that thou loved'st her be-  
fore:

Wost<sup>72</sup> thou not well the olde

---

<sup>70</sup>even now thou knowest not.

<sup>71</sup>suppose.

<sup>72</sup>know'st.

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 de-  
gree  
A man must needes love, maugre  
his head.  
He may not flee it, though he  
should be dead,  
All be she<sup>73</sup> maid, or widow, or  
else wife.  
And eke it is not likely all thy life

---

<sup>73</sup>whether she be.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 en-  
dure,  
And each of us take his Aventure."  
Great was the strife and long be-  
tween 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 The-  
seus  
Since thilke<sup>74</sup> day that they were

---

<sup>74</sup>that.

children lite<sup>75</sup>

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.

---

<sup>75</sup>little.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 forword<sup>76</sup>, 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

---

<sup>76</sup>promise.

stound<sup>77</sup> (*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  
rede<sup>78</sup>.

But took his leave, and homeward  
he him sped;

Let him beware, his necke lieth to  
wed<sup>79</sup>.

How great a sorrow suff'reth now  
Arcite!

The death he feeleth through his

---

<sup>77</sup>moment.

<sup>78</sup>counsel.

<sup>79</sup>in pledge.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

hearte smite;  
He weepeth, waileth, crieth  
piteously;  
To slay himself he waiteth privily.  
He said; "Alas the day that I was  
born!  
Now is my prison worse than be-  
forn:  
Now is me shape<sup>80</sup> 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

---

<sup>80</sup>it is fixed for me.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 aven-  
ture,  
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,

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That by some cas<sup>81</sup>, since fortune is  
changeable,  
Thou may'st to thy desire some-  
time attain.  
But I that am exiled, and barren  
Of alle grace, and in so great de-  
spair,  
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 wanhope<sup>82</sup>  
and distress.

---

<sup>81</sup>chance.

<sup>82</sup>die in despair.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Farewell my life, my lust<sup>83</sup>, and  
my gladness.

Alas, why plainen men so in com-  
mune<sup>84</sup>

Of purveyance of God, or of For-  
tune,

That giveth them full oft in many a  
guise

Well better than they can them-  
selves devise?

Some man desireth for to have  
richess,

That cause is of his murder or great  
sickness.

And some man would out of his

---

<sup>83</sup>pleasure.

<sup>84</sup>why do men so often complain of God's provi-  
dence?

prison fain,  
That in his house is of his meinie<sup>85</sup>  
slain. (*Note 16*)  
Infinite harmes be in this mattere.  
We wot never what thing we pray  
for here.  
We fare as he that drunk is as a  
mouse.  
A drunken man wot well he hath  
an house,  
But he wot not which is the right  
way thither,  
And to a drunken man the way is  
slither<sup>86</sup>,  
And certes in this world so fare we.  
We seeke fast after felicity,

---

<sup>85</sup>servants.

<sup>86</sup>slippery.

But we go wrong full often truely.  
Thus we may sayen all, and  
namely<sup>87</sup> I,  
That ween'd<sup>88</sup>, 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,

---

<sup>87</sup>especially.

<sup>88</sup>thought.

Much sorrow maketh, that the  
    greate tower  
Resounded of his yelling and clam-  
    our  
The pure<sup>89</sup> 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  
    charge<sup>90</sup> .

---

<sup>89</sup>very.

<sup>90</sup>takest little heed.

Thou mayst, since thou hast wisdom and manhead<sup>91</sup>,  
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 needs 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 advantage,

---

<sup>91</sup>manhood, courage.

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 up-  
start  
Within his breast, and hent<sup>92</sup> him  
by the heart  
So woodly<sup>93</sup>, that he like was to be-  
hold

---

<sup>92</sup>seized.

<sup>93</sup>madly.

The box-tree, or the ashes dead and  
cold.

Then said; "O cruel goddess, that  
govern

This world with binding of your  
word etern<sup>94</sup>

And writen in the table of adamant  
Your parlement<sup>95</sup> and your eternal  
grant,

What is mankind more unto you y-  
hold<sup>96</sup>

Than is the sheep, that rouketh<sup>97</sup> in  
the fold!

For slain is man, right as another

---

<sup>94</sup>eternal.

<sup>95</sup>consultation.

<sup>96</sup>by you esteemed.

<sup>97</sup>lie huddled together.

beast;  
And dwelleth eke in prison and ar-  
rest,  
And hath sickness, and great ad-  
versity,  
And oftentimes guileless, pardie<sup>98</sup>  
What governance is in your pre-  
science,  
That guileless tormenteth inno-  
cence?  
And yet increaseth this all my  
penance,  
That man is bounden to his obser-  
vance  
For Godde's sake to letten of his  
will<sup>99</sup>,

---

<sup>98</sup>by God.

<sup>99</sup>restrain his desire.

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 di-  
vines,

But well I wot, that in this world  
great pine<sup>100</sup> is;

Alas! I see a serpent or a thief

That many a true man hath done  
mischief,

---

<sup>100</sup>pain, trouble.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 wood<sup>101</sup>,

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 stent<sup>102</sup> of Palamon a

---

<sup>101</sup>mad.

<sup>102</sup>pause.

lite<sup>103</sup>,  
And let him in his prison stille  
dwell,  
And of Arcita forth I will you tell.  
The summer passeth, and the  
nightes long  
Increase double-wise the paines  
strong  
Both of the lover and the prisonere.  
I n'ot<sup>104</sup> which hath the wofuller  
mistere<sup>105</sup>.  
For, shortly for to say, this Palamon  
Perpetually is damned to prison,  
In chaines and in fetters to be dead;

---

<sup>103</sup>little.

<sup>104</sup>know not.

<sup>105</sup>condition.

And Arcite is exiled on his head<sup>106</sup>  
For evermore as out of that coun-  
try,  
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 al-  
way.  
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

---

<sup>106</sup>on peril of his head

can,  
For I will tell you forth as I began.  
When that Arcite to Thebes comen  
was,  
Full oft a day he swelt<sup>107</sup>, and said,  
"Alas!"  
For see this lady he shall never mo'.  
And shortly to concluden all his  
woe,  
So much sorrow had never crea-  
ture  
That is or shall be while the world  
may dure.  
His sleep, his meat, his drink is him  
byraft<sup>108</sup>,

---

<sup>107</sup>fainted.

<sup>108</sup>taken away from him.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That lean he wex<sup>109</sup>, 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 instru-  
ment,

Then would he weepen, he might  
not be stent<sup>110</sup>.

So feeble were his spirits, and so  
low,

And changed so, that no man  
coulede know

---

<sup>109</sup>became.

<sup>110</sup>stopped.

His speech, neither his voice,  
though men it heard.

And in his gear<sup>111</sup> for all the world  
he far'd (Note 19)

Not only like the lovers' malady  
Of Eros, but rather y-like manie<sup>112</sup>  
Engender'd of humours melan-  
cholic,

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 Dan<sup>113</sup>  
Arcite. (Note 21)

---

<sup>111</sup>behaviour.

<sup>112</sup>madness.

<sup>113</sup>lord.

Why should I all day of his woe in-  
dite?

When he endured had a year or  
two

This cruel torment, and this pain  
and woe,

At Thebes, in his country, as I said,  
Upon a night in sleep as he him  
laid,

Him thought how that the winged  
god Mercury

Before him stood, and bade him to  
be merry.

His sleepy yard<sup>114</sup> in hand he bare  
upright; (*Note 22*)

A hat he wore upon his haire  
bright.

---

<sup>114</sup>rod.

Arrayed was this god (as he took  
keep<sup>115</sup>)

As he was when that Argus (*Note*  
23) took his sleep;

And said him thus: "To Athens  
shalt thou wend<sup>116</sup>)

There is thee shapen<sup>117</sup> 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

---

<sup>115</sup>notice.

<sup>116</sup>go.

<sup>117</sup>fixed, prepared.

not spare  
To see my lady that I love and  
serve;  
In her presence I recke not to  
sterve.<sup>118</sup>"  
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 dis-  
figur'd  
Of malady the which he had en-  
dur'd,

---

<sup>118</sup>do not care if I die.

He mighte well, if that he bare him  
low<sup>119</sup>,  
Live in Athenes evermore unknow,  
And see his lady wellnigh day by  
day.  
And right anon he changed his ar-  
ray,  
And clad him as a poore labourer.  
And all alone, save only a squier,  
That knew his privity<sup>120</sup> and all his  
cas<sup>121</sup>,  
Which was disguised poorly as he  
was,  
To Athens is he gone the nexte<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup>lived in lowly fashion

<sup>120</sup>secrets.

<sup>121</sup>fortune.

<sup>122</sup>nearest.

way. (*Note 24*)  
And to the court he went upon a  
day,  
And at the gate he proffer'd his ser-  
vice,  
To drudge and draw, what so men  
would devise<sup>123</sup>.  
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 coulede soon  
espy  
Of every servant which that served  
her.  
Well could he hewe wood, and wa-

---

<sup>123</sup>order.

ter bear,  
For he was young and mighty for  
the nones<sup>124</sup>,  
And thereto he was strong and big  
of bones  
To do that any wight can him de-  
vise.  
A year or two he was in this ser-  
vice,  
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.

---

<sup>124</sup>occasion.

He was so gentle of condition,  
That throughout all the court was  
his renown.

They saide that it were a charity  
That Theseus would enhance his  
degree<sup>125</sup>,

And put him in some worshipful  
service,

There as he might his virtue exer-  
cise.

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

---

<sup>125</sup>elevate him in rank

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 slyly<sup>126</sup> he it  
spent,  
That no man wonder'd how that  
he it had.  
And three year in this wise his life  
be lad<sup>127</sup>,  
And bare him so in peace and eke  
in werre<sup>128</sup>,

---

<sup>126</sup> discreetly, prudently.

<sup>127</sup> led.

<sup>128</sup> war.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

There was no man that Theseus  
had so derre<sup>129</sup>.

And in this blisse leave I now  
Arcite,

And speak I will of Palamon a  
lite<sup>130</sup>.

In darkness horrible, and strong  
prison,

This seven year hath sitten Pala-  
mon,

Forpined<sup>131</sup>, what for love, and for  
distress.

Who feeleth double sorrow and  
heaviness

But Palamon? that love dis-

---

<sup>129</sup> dear.

<sup>130</sup> little.

<sup>131</sup> pined, wasted away.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

traineth<sup>132</sup> so,  
That wood<sup>133</sup> 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? forsooth<sup>134</sup>, it is  
not I;  
Therefore I pass as lightly as I may.  
It fell that in the seventh year, in  
May  
The thirde night (as olde bookes  
sayn,  
That all this story tellen more

---

<sup>132</sup>afflicts.

<sup>133</sup>mad.

<sup>134</sup>truly.

plain),  
Were it by a venture or destiny  
(As when a thing is shapen<sup>135</sup> it  
shall be),  
That soon after the midnight, Pala-  
mon  
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 opie<sup>136</sup> of  
Thebes fine,

---

<sup>135</sup>settled, decreed.

<sup>136</sup>narcotics and opium.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 faste<sup>137</sup>  
by the day

That needes cast he must himself to  
hide<sup>138</sup>.

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

---

<sup>137</sup>close at hand was.

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

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 war-  
ray<sup>139</sup>. (*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.

---

<sup>139</sup>make war.

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 streames<sup>140</sup> drieth in  
the greves<sup>141</sup>  
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

---

<sup>140</sup>rays.

<sup>141</sup>groves.

day.  
And for to do his observance to  
May,  
Remembering the point<sup>142</sup> 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,  
By a venture his way began to  
hold,  
To make him a garland of the  
greves<sup>143</sup>,

---

<sup>142</sup>object.

<sup>143</sup>groves.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Were it of woodbine, or of  
hawthorn leaves,  
And loud he sang against the sun  
so sheen<sup>144</sup>.

"O May, with all thy flowers and  
thy green,

Right welcome be thou, faire freshe  
May,

I hope that I some green here get-  
ten may."

And from his courser<sup>145</sup>, 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

---

<sup>144</sup>shining bright.

<sup>145</sup>horse.

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 lite<sup>146</sup>.  
But sooth is said, gone since full  
many years,  
The field hath eyen<sup>147</sup>, and the  
wood hath ears,  
It is full fair a man to bear him  
even<sup>148</sup>,  
For all day meeten men at unset

---

<sup>146</sup>full little believed it.

<sup>147</sup>eyes.

<sup>148</sup>to be on his guard.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

steven<sup>149</sup>. (*Note 27*)

Full little wot Arcite of his fellow,  
That was so nigh to hearken of his

saw<sup>150</sup>,

For in the bush he sitteth now full  
still.

When that Arcite had roamed all  
his fill,

And sungen all the roundel<sup>151</sup>  
lustily, (*Note 28*)

Into a study he fell suddenly,  
As do those lovers in their quaint  
gear<sup>152</sup>,

---

<sup>149</sup>unexpected time

<sup>150</sup>saying, speech.

<sup>151</sup>sang the roundelay.

<sup>152</sup>odd fashions.

Now in the crop<sup>153</sup>, and now down  
in the breres<sup>154</sup>, (*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 geary<sup>155</sup> Venus over-  
cast  
The heartes of her folk, right as her  
day  
Is gearful<sup>156</sup>, right so changeth she  
array.

---

<sup>153</sup>tree-top.

<sup>154</sup>briars.

<sup>155</sup>changeful.

<sup>156</sup>changeful.

Seldom is Friday all the weeke like.  
When Arcite had y-sung, he gan to  
sike<sup>157</sup>,  
And sat him down withouten any  
more:  
"Alas!" quoth he, "the day that I  
was bore!  
How longe, Juno, through thy cru-  
elty  
Wilt thou warrayen<sup>158</sup> Thebes the  
city?  
Alas! y-brought is to confusion  
The blood royal of Cadm' and Am-  
phion:  
Of Cadmus, which that was the  
firste man,

---

<sup>157</sup>sigh.

<sup>158</sup>torment.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That Thebes built, or first the town  
began,  
And of the city first was crowned  
king.  
Of his lineage am I, and his off-  
spring  
By very line, as of the stock royal;  
And now I am so caitiff and so  
thrall<sup>159</sup>,  
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 beknow<sup>160</sup> mine  
owen name, (*Note 30*)  
But there as I was wont to hight

---

<sup>159</sup>wretched and enslaved.

<sup>160</sup>acknowledge.

Arcite,  
Now hight I Philostrate, not worth  
a mite.  
Alas! thou fell Mars, and alas!  
Juno,  
Thus hath your ire our lineage all  
fordo<sup>161</sup>  
Save only me, and wretched Pala-  
mon,  
That Theseus martyreth in prison.  
And over all this, to slay me utterly,  
Love hath his fiery dart so bren-  
ningly<sup>162</sup>  
Y-sticked through my true careful  
heart,  
That shapen was my death erst

---

<sup>161</sup>undone, ruined.

<sup>162</sup>burningly.

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  
tare<sup>163</sup>,  
So that I could do aught to your  
pleasance."  
And with that word he fell down in  
a trance  
A longe time; and afterward up-  
start  
This Palamon, that thought thor-  
ough his heart  
He felt a cold sword suddenly to

---

<sup>163</sup>value of a straw.

glide:

For ire he quoke<sup>164</sup>, no longer  
would he hide.

And when that he had heard  
Arcite's tale,

As he were wood<sup>165</sup>, with face  
dead and pale,

He start him up out of the bushes  
thick,

And said: "False Arcita, false  
traitor wick'<sup>166</sup>,

Now art thou hent<sup>167</sup>, that lov'st  
my lady so,

For whom that I have all this pain

---

<sup>164</sup>quaked.

<sup>165</sup>mad.

<sup>166</sup>wicked.

<sup>167</sup>caught.

and woe,  
And art my blood, and to my coun-  
sel sworn,  
As I full oft have told thee herebe-  
forn,  
And hast bejaped<sup>168</sup> 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,

---

<sup>168</sup>deceived, imposed upon.

But out of prison am astart<sup>169</sup> by  
    grace,  
I drede<sup>170</sup> 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 dispi-  
    teous<sup>171</sup> 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,

---

<sup>169</sup>escaped.

<sup>170</sup>doubt.

<sup>171</sup>wrathful.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

N'ere it<sup>172</sup> 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 maugre<sup>173</sup> all  
thy might.  
But, for thou art a worthy gentle

---

<sup>172</sup>were it not.

<sup>173</sup>despite.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

knight,  
And wilnest to darraine her by  
bataille<sup>174</sup>,  
Have here my troth, to-morrow I  
will not fail,  
Without weeting<sup>175</sup> of any other  
wight,  
That here I will be founden as a  
knight,  
And bringe harness<sup>176</sup> right  
enough for thee;  
And choose the best, and leave the  
worst for me.  
And meat and drinke this night  
will I bring

---

<sup>174</sup>will reclaim her by combat.

<sup>175</sup>knowledge.

<sup>176</sup>armour and arms.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 borro<sup>177</sup>.

O Cupid, out of alle charity!

O Regne<sup>178</sup> that wilt no fellow  
have with thee! (*Note 32*)

---

<sup>177</sup>pledged his faith.

<sup>178</sup>queen.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Full sooth is said, that love nor  
lordeship

Will not, his thanks<sup>179</sup>, have any  
fellowship.

Well finden that Arcite and Pala-  
mon.

Arcite is ridd anon unto the town,  
And on the morrow, ere it were  
daylight,

Full privily two harness hath he  
dight<sup>180</sup>,

Both suffisant and meete to dar-  
rain<sup>181</sup>

The battle in the field betwixt them  
twain.

---

<sup>179</sup>thanks to him.

<sup>180</sup>prepared.

<sup>181</sup>contest.

And on his horse, alone as he was  
born,  
He carrieth all this harness him be-  
fore;  
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 regne<sup>182</sup>  
of Thrace  
That standeth at a gappe with a  
spear  
When hunted is the lion or the bear,  
And heareth him come rushing in

---

<sup>182</sup>kingdom.

the greves<sup>183</sup>,  
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  
knew<sup>184</sup>  
There was no good day, and no  
saluting,

---

<sup>183</sup>groves

<sup>184</sup>When they recognised each other afar off.

But straight, withoute wordes re-  
hearsing,  
Evereach of them help to arm the  
other,  
As friendly, as he were his owen  
brother.  
And after that, with sharpe speares  
strong  
They foined<sup>185</sup> each at other won-  
der long.  
Thou mightest weene<sup>186</sup>, that this  
Palamon  
In fighting were as a wood<sup>187</sup> lion,  
And as a cruel tiger was Arcite:  
As wilde boars gan they together

---

<sup>185</sup> thrust.

<sup>186</sup> think.

<sup>187</sup> mad.

smite,  
That froth as white as foam, for ire  
wood<sup>188</sup>.  
Up to the ancle fought they in their  
blood.  
And in this wise I let them fighting  
dwell,  
And forth I will of Theseus you tell.  
The Destiny, minister general,  
That executeth in the world o'er all  
The purveyance<sup>189</sup>, that God hath  
seen beforne;  
So strong it is, that though the  
world had sworn  
The contrary of a thing by yea or  
nay,

---

<sup>188</sup>mad with anger.

<sup>189</sup>foreordination.

Yet some time it shall fallen on a  
day

That falleth not eft<sup>190</sup> in a thou-  
sand year.

For certainly our appetites here,  
Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or  
love,

All is this ruled by the sight<sup>191</sup>  
above.

This mean I now by mighty The-  
seus,

That for to hunten is so desirous –  
And namely<sup>192</sup> the greate hart in  
May –

That in his bed there dawneth him

---

<sup>190</sup>again.

<sup>191</sup>eye, intelligence, power.

<sup>192</sup>especially.

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 de-  
light,  
That it is all his joy and appetite  
To be himself the greate harte's  
bane<sup>193</sup>  
For after Mars he serveth now Di-  
ane.  
Clear was the day, as I have told ere  
this,  
And Theseus, with alle joy and  
bliss,  
With his Hippolyta, the faire

---

<sup>193</sup>destruction

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 laund<sup>194</sup> 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

---

<sup>194</sup>plain.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

With houndes, such as him lust<sup>195</sup>  
to command.  
And when this Duke was come to  
the laund,  
Under the sun he looked, and anon  
He was ware of Arcite and Pala-  
mon,  
That foughte breme<sup>196</sup>, 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

---

<sup>195</sup>pleased.

<sup>196</sup>fiercely.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

wote<sup>197</sup>.

This Duke his courser with his  
spurres smote,

And at a start<sup>198</sup> 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 mister<sup>199</sup> men  
ye be,

---

<sup>197</sup>knew.

<sup>198</sup>suddenly.

<sup>199</sup>manner, kind.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 accumbered<sup>200</sup> of our own  
lives,

And as thou art a rightful lord and  
judge,

So give us neither mercy nor  
refuge.

---

<sup>200</sup>burdened.

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 lite<sup>201</sup>,

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 japed<sup>202</sup> thee full  
many year,

---

<sup>201</sup>little.

<sup>202</sup>deceived.

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 pleinely<sup>203</sup> my confession,  
That I am thilke<sup>204</sup> 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 je-

---

<sup>203</sup>fully, unreservedly.

<sup>204</sup>that same.

wise<sup>205</sup>.

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 conclu-  
sion.

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*)

---

<sup>205</sup>judgement.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

The queen anon for very woman-  
head  
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 be-  
fall,  
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  
mood<sup>206</sup>  
(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 ex-  
cused;

---

<sup>206</sup>his anger was appeased.

As thus; he thoughte well that ev-  
ery 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:<sup>207</sup>  
And eke his hearte had compas-  
sion  
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

---

<sup>207</sup>continually.

deed,  
To them that be in repentance and  
dread,  
As well as-to a proud dispiteous<sup>208</sup>  
man  
That will maintaine what he first  
began.  
That lord hath little of discretion,  
That in such case can no divi-  
sion<sup>209</sup>:  
But weigheth pride and humbless  
after one<sup>210</sup>."  
And shortly, when his ire is thus  
agone,  
He gan to look on them with eyen

---

<sup>208</sup>unpitying.

<sup>209</sup>can make no distinction.

<sup>210</sup>alike.

light<sup>211</sup>,  
And spake these same wordes all  
on height<sup>212</sup>.  
"The god of love, ah! benedicite<sup>213</sup>,  
How mighty and how great a lord  
is he!  
Against his might there gaine<sup>214</sup>  
none obstacles,  
He may be called a god for his mir-  
acles  
For he can maken at his owen guise  
Of every heart, as that him list de-  
vise.  
Lo here this Arcite, and this Pala-

---

<sup>211</sup>gentle, lenient.

<sup>212</sup>aloud.

<sup>213</sup>bless ye him.

<sup>214</sup>avail, conquer.

mon,  
That quietly were out of my prison,  
And might have lived in Thebes  
royally,  
And weet<sup>215</sup> I am their mortal en-  
emy,  
And that their death li'th in my  
might also,  
And yet hath love, maugre their  
eyen two<sup>216</sup>,  
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?

---

<sup>215</sup>knew.

<sup>216</sup>in spite of their eyes.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 game<sup>217</sup> of  
all,  
That she, for whom they have this  
jealousy,  
Can them therefor as muchel thank

---

<sup>217</sup>joke.

as me.

She wot no more of all this hote  
fare<sup>218</sup>,

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  
agone<sup>219</sup>,

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 dis-  
train<sup>220</sup>,

---

<sup>218</sup>hot behaviour

<sup>219</sup>long years ago.

<sup>220</sup>distress.

As he that oft hath been caught in  
his last<sup>221</sup>, (*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 coun-  
try dere<sup>222</sup>  
Nor make war upon me night nor  
day,  
But be my friends in alle that ye  
may.  
I you forgive this trespass every

---

<sup>221</sup>snare.

<sup>222</sup>injure.

deal<sup>223</sup>.  
And they him sware his asking<sup>224</sup>  
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,  
Each of you both is worthy doubt-  
less  
To wedde when time is; but nathe-  
less  
I speak as for my sister Emily,

---

<sup>223</sup>completely.

<sup>224</sup>what he asked.

For whom ye have this strife and  
jealousy,  
Ye wot<sup>225</sup> yourselves, she may not  
wed the two  
At once, although ye fight for ev-  
ermo:  
But one of you, all be him loth or  
lief<sup>226</sup>,  
He must go pipe into an ivy leaf<sup>227</sup>:  
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 de-  
gree,

---

<sup>225</sup>know.

<sup>226</sup>whether or not he wishes.

<sup>227</sup>"go whistle."

That each of you shall have his destiny

As him is shape<sup>228</sup>; and hearken in what wise

Lo hear your end of that I shall devise.

My will is this, for plain conclusion Withouten any replication<sup>229</sup>,

If that you liketh, take it for the best,

That evereach of you shall go where him lest<sup>230</sup>,

Freely without ransom or danger; And this day fifty weekes, farre ne

---

<sup>228</sup>as is decreed for him.

<sup>229</sup>reply.

<sup>230</sup>he pleases

nerre<sup>231</sup>,  
Evereach of you shall bring an  
hundred knights,  
Armed for listes up at alle rights  
All ready to darraine<sup>232</sup> her by  
bataille,  
And this behete<sup>233</sup> 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

---

<sup>231</sup>neither more nor less.

<sup>232</sup>contend for.

<sup>233</sup>promise.

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  
rue<sup>234</sup>,  
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,

---

<sup>234</sup>may God as surely have mercy on my soul.

Say your advice<sup>235</sup>, and hold yourselves apaid<sup>236</sup>.

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 wight<sup>237</sup>,

---

<sup>235</sup>opinion.

<sup>236</sup>satisfied.

<sup>237</sup>kind of person.

And thanked him with all their  
heartes' might,  
And namely<sup>238</sup> these Thebans ofte  
sithe<sup>239</sup>.  
And thus with good hope and with  
hearte blithe  
They take their leave, and home-  
ward gan they ride  
To Thebes-ward, with his old  
walles wide.  
I trow men woulde deem it negli-  
gence,  
If I forgot to telle the dispence<sup>240</sup>  
Of Theseus, that went so busily  
To maken up the listes royally,

---

<sup>238</sup> especially.

<sup>239</sup> oftentimes.

<sup>240</sup> expenditure.

That such a noble theatre as it was,  
I dare well say, in all this world  
there n'as<sup>241</sup>.

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 letted<sup>242</sup> not his fellow for to  
see.

Eastward there stood a gate of mar-  
ble white,

---

<sup>241</sup>was not.

<sup>242</sup>hindered.

Westward right such another op-  
posite.  
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 arsmetrike<sup>243</sup>  
can<sup>244</sup>,  
Nor pourtrayor<sup>245</sup>, nor carver of  
images,  
That Theseus ne gave him meat  
and wages  
The theatre to make and to devise.

---

<sup>243</sup>arithmetic.

<sup>244</sup>knew.

<sup>245</sup>portrait painter.

And for to do his rite and sacrifice  
He eastward hath upon the gate  
    above,  
In worship of Venus, goddess of  
    love,  
Done make<sup>246</sup> an altar and an ora-  
    tory;  
And westward, in the mind and in  
    memory  
Of Mars, he maked hath right such  
    another,  
That coste largely of gold a  
    fother<sup>247</sup>.  
And northward, in a turret on the  
    wall,  
Of alabaster white and red coral

---

<sup>246</sup>caused to be made.

<sup>247</sup>a great amount.

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 devise<sup>248</sup>  
The noble carving, and the portrai-  
tures,  
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  
sikes<sup>249</sup> cold,

---

<sup>248</sup>describe.

<sup>249</sup>sighes.

The sacred teares, and the wai-  
mentings<sup>250</sup>,  
The fiery strokes of the desirings,  
That Love's servants in this life en-  
dure;  
The oathes, that their covenants as-  
sure.  
Pleasance and Hope, Desire, Fool-  
hardiness,  
Beauty and Youth, and Bawdry  
and Richess,  
Charms and Sorc'ry, Leasings<sup>251</sup>  
and Flattery,  
Dispence, Business, and Jealousy,  
That wore of yellow goldes<sup>252</sup> a

---

<sup>250</sup>lamentings.

<sup>251</sup>falsehoods.

<sup>252</sup>sunflowers.

garland, (*Note 40*)  
And had a cuckoo sitting on her  
hand,  
Feasts, instruments, and caroles  
and dances,  
Lust and array, and all the circum-  
stances  
Of Love, which I reckon'd and  
recker shall  
In order, were painted on the wall,  
And more than I can make of men-  
tion.  
For soothly all the mount of  
Citheron, (*Note 41*)  
Where Venus hath her principal  
dwelling,  
Was showed on the wall in pour-  
traying,  
With all the garden, and the lusti-

ness<sup>253</sup>,  
Nor was forgot the porter Idleness,  
Nor Narcissus the fair of yore  
agone<sup>254</sup>,  
Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,  
Nor yet the greate strength of Her-  
cules,  
Th' enchantments of Medea and  
Circes,  
Nor of Turnus the hardy fierce  
courage,  
The rich Croesus caitif in ser-  
vage.<sup>255</sup> (*Note 42*)  
Thus may ye see, that wisdom nor  
richess,

---

<sup>253</sup>pleasantness.

<sup>254</sup>olden times.

<sup>255</sup>abased into slavery.

Beauty, nor sleight, nor strength,  
nor hardiness

Ne may with Venus holde cham-  
partie<sup>256</sup>, (*Note 43*)

For as her liste the world may she  
gie<sup>257</sup>

Lo, all these folk so caught were in  
her las<sup>258</sup>

Till they for woe full often said,  
Alas!

Suffice these ensamples one or two,  
Although I could reckon a thou-  
sand mo'.

The statue of Venus, glorious to see  
Was naked floating in the large sea,

---

<sup>256</sup>divided possession.

<sup>257</sup>guide.

<sup>258</sup>snare.

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 flicker-  
ing  
Before her stood her sone Cupido,  
Upon his shoulders winges had he  
two;  
And blind he was, as it is often  
seen;  
A bow he bare, and arrows bright  
and keen.

Why should I not as well eke tell  
you all  
The portraiture, that was upon the  
wall  
Within the temple of mighty Mars  
the Red?  
All painted was the wall in length  
and brede<sup>259</sup>  
Like to the estres<sup>260</sup> of the grisly  
place  
That hight the great temple of Mars  
in Thrace,  
In thilke<sup>261</sup> cold and frosty region,  
There as Mars hath his sovereign  
mansion.

---

<sup>259</sup>breadth.

<sup>260</sup>interior chambers.

<sup>261</sup>that.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

In which there dwelled neither  
man nor beast,  
With knotty gnarry<sup>262</sup> barren trees  
old  
Of stubbes sharp and hideous to  
behold;  
In which there ran a rumble and a  
sough<sup>263</sup> ,  
As though a storm should bursten  
every bough:  
And downward from an hill under  
a bent<sup>264</sup>  
There stood the temple of Mars  
Armipotent,  
Wrought all of burnish'd steel, of

---

<sup>262</sup>gnarled.

<sup>263</sup>groaning noise.

<sup>264</sup>slope.

which th' entry  
Was long and strait, and ghastly for  
to see.  
And thereout came a rage and such  
a vise<sup>265</sup>,  
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-  
long<sup>266</sup>

---

<sup>265</sup>such a furious voice.

<sup>266</sup>crossways and lengthways.

With iron tough, and, for to make  
 it strong,  
 Every pillar the temple to sustain  
 Was tunne-great<sup>267</sup>, of iron bright  
 and sheen.

There saw I first the dark imagin-  
 ing  
 Of felony, and all the compassing;  
 The cruel ire, as red as any  
 glede<sup>268</sup>,  
 The picke-purse (*Note 45*), and  
 eke the pale dread;  
 The smiler with the knife under the  
 cloak,  
 The shepen<sup>269</sup> burning with the

---

<sup>267</sup> thick as a tun (barrel).

<sup>268</sup> live coal.

<sup>269</sup> stable.

blacke smoke (Note 46)  
The treason of the murd'ring in the  
bed,  
The open war, with woundes all  
be-bled;  
Conteke<sup>270</sup> with bloody knife, and  
sharp menace.  
All full of chirking<sup>271</sup> 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 shode<sup>272</sup> at  
night, (Note 47)

---

<sup>270</sup>contention, discord.

<sup>271</sup>creaking, jarring noise.

<sup>272</sup>hair of the head.

The colde death, with mouth gap-  
ing upright.  
Amiddes of the temple sat Mis-  
chance,  
With discomfort and sorry counte-  
nance;  
Eke saw I Woodness<sup>273</sup> laughing in  
his rage,  
Armed Complaint, Outhees<sup>274</sup>,  
and fierce Outrage;  
The carrain<sup>275</sup> in the bush, with  
throat y-corve<sup>276</sup>  
A thousand slain, and not of qualm

---

<sup>273</sup>madness.

<sup>274</sup>outcry.

<sup>275</sup>corpse.

<sup>276</sup>slashed.

y-storve<sup>277</sup>;  
The tyrant, with the prey by force  
y-reft;  
The town destroy'd, that there was  
nothing left.  
Yet saw I brent<sup>278</sup> the shippes  
hopperes, (*Note 48*)  
The hunter strangled with the  
wilde bears:  
The sow freting<sup>279</sup> the child right  
in the cradle; (*Note 49*)  
The cook scalded, for all his longe  
ladle.  
Nor was forgot, by th'infortune of

---

<sup>277</sup> dead of sickness.

<sup>278</sup> burnt.

<sup>279</sup> devouring.

Mart<sup>280</sup>

The carter overridden with his cart;  
Under the wheel full low he lay ad-  
own.

There were also of Mars' division,  
The armourer, the bowyer<sup>281</sup>, and  
the smith,

That forgeth sharp swordes on his  
stith<sup>282</sup>.

And all above depainted in a tower  
Saw I Conquest, sitting in great  
honour,

With thilke<sup>283</sup> sharpe sword over  
his head

---

<sup>280</sup>through the misfortune of war.

<sup>281</sup>maker of bows.

<sup>282</sup>anvil.

<sup>283</sup>that.

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  
beforn,  
By menacing of Mars, right by fig-  
ure,  
So was it showed in that portrai-  
ture,  
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 carte<sup>284</sup>  
stood  
Armed, and looked grim as he  
were wood<sup>285</sup>,  
And over his head there shone two  
figures  
Of starres, that be cleped in scrip-  
tures,  
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:

---

<sup>284</sup>chariot.

<sup>285</sup>mad.

With subtle pencil painted was this  
story,  
In redouting<sup>286</sup> 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

---

<sup>286</sup>reverance, fear.

bear,  
And after was she made the  
    lodestar<sup>287</sup>;  
Thus was it painted, I can say no  
    far<sup>288</sup>;  
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-  
    maked<sup>289</sup>,  
For vengeance that he saw Dian all

---

<sup>287</sup>pole star.

<sup>288</sup>farther.

<sup>289</sup>made.

naked:

I saw how that his houndes have  
him caught,

And freten<sup>290</sup> him, for that they  
knew him not.

Yet painted was, a little farther-  
more

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 won-  
drous story,

The which me list not drawn to  
memory.

---

<sup>290</sup>devour.

This goddess on an hart full high  
was set<sup>291</sup>,  
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  
case<sup>292</sup>.  
Her eyen caste she full low adown,  
Where Pluto hath his darke re-  
gioun.  
A woman travailing was her be-

---

<sup>291</sup>seated.

<sup>292</sup>quiver.

forn,  
 But, for her child so longe was un-  
 born,  
 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 The-  
 seus,  
 That at his greate cost arrayed thus  
 The temples, and the theatre every  
 deal<sup>293</sup>, (*Note 55*)  
 When it was done, him liked won-

---

<sup>293</sup>part.

der well.  
But stint<sup>294</sup> I will of Theseus a  
lite<sup>295</sup>,  
And speak of Palamon and of  
Arcite.  
The day approacheth of their re-  
turning,  
That evereach an hundred knights  
should bring,  
The battle to darraine<sup>296</sup> as I you  
told;  
And to Athens, their covenant to  
hold,  
Hath ev'reach of them brought an  
hundred knights,

---

<sup>294</sup>cease speaking.

<sup>295</sup>little.

<sup>296</sup>contest.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

Well-armed for the war at alle  
rights.  
And sickerly<sup>297</sup> there trowed<sup>298</sup>  
many a man, (*Note 56*)  
That never, sithen<sup>299</sup> 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 thankes, have a

---

<sup>297</sup>surely.

<sup>298</sup>believed.

<sup>299</sup>since.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

passant name<sup>300</sup>,  
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,  
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 lusty<sup>301</sup> sighte for to see.

---

<sup>300</sup>thanks to his own efforts, have a surpassing name.

<sup>301</sup>pleasing.

And right so fared they with Pala-  
mon;  
With him there wente knightes  
many one.  
Some will be armed in an haber-  
geon,  
And in a breast-plate, and in a  
gipon<sup>302</sup>;  
And some will have a pair of  
plates<sup>303</sup> large;  
And some will have a Prusse<sup>304</sup>  
shield, or targe;  
Some will be armed on their legges  
weel;  
Some have an axe, and some a

---

<sup>302</sup>short doublet.

<sup>303</sup>back and front armour.

<sup>304</sup>Prussian.

mace of steel.

There is no newe guise<sup>305</sup>, 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,

---

<sup>305</sup> fashion.

With kemped<sup>306</sup> 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 guise<sup>307</sup> 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 har-  
ness,

With yellow nails, and bright as

---

<sup>306</sup>combed.

<sup>307</sup>fashion.

any gold,  
He had a beare's skin, coal-black  
for old<sup>308</sup>.  
His long hair was y-kempt behind  
his back,  
As any raven's feather it shone for  
black.  
A wreath of gold arm-great<sup>309</sup>, of  
huge weight,  
Upon his head sate, full of stones  
bright,  
Of fine rubies and clear diamants.  
About his car there wente white  
alauns<sup>310</sup>, (*Note 58*)  
Twenty and more, as great as any

---

<sup>308</sup>age.

<sup>309</sup>thick as a man's arm.

<sup>310</sup>greyhounds.

steer,  
To hunt the lion or the wilde bear,  
And follow'd him, with muzzle  
fast y-bound,  
Collars of gold, and torettes<sup>311</sup>  
An hundred lordes had he in his  
rout<sup>312</sup>  
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 bay<sup>313</sup> trapped in  
steel,  
Cover'd with cloth of gold di-

---

<sup>311</sup>rings.

<sup>312</sup>retinue.

<sup>313</sup>bay horse.

apred<sup>314</sup> well,  
Came riding like the god of armes,  
Mars.  
His coat-armour was of a cloth of  
Tars<sup>315</sup>,  
Couched<sup>316</sup> with pearls white and  
round and great  
His saddle was of burnish'd gold  
new beat;  
A mantelet on his shoulders hang-  
ing,  
Bretful<sup>317</sup> of rubies red, as fire  
sparkling.  
His criske hair like ringes was y-

---

<sup>314</sup>decorated.

<sup>315</sup>a kind of silk.

<sup>316</sup>trimmed.

<sup>317</sup>brimdul.

run,  
And that was yellow, glittering as  
the sun.  
His nose was high, his eye bright  
citrine<sup>318</sup>,  
His lips were round, his colour was  
sanguine,  
A few freckles<sup>319</sup> in his face y-  
sprinkled<sup>320</sup>,  
Betwixte yellow and black  
somedal y-mixed<sup>321</sup> (Note  
59)  
And as a lion he his looking cast<sup>322</sup>

---

<sup>318</sup>pale yellow.

<sup>319</sup>freckles.

<sup>320</sup>sprinkled.

<sup>321</sup>mixed.

<sup>322</sup>cast about his eyes.

Of five and twenty year his age I  
cast<sup>323</sup>  
His beard was well begunnen for  
to spring;  
His voice was as a trumpet thun-  
dering.  
Upon his head he wore of laurel  
green  
A garland fresh and lusty to be  
seen;  
Upon his hand he bare, for his de-  
light,  
An eagle tame, as any lily white.  
An hundred lordes had he with  
him there,  
All armed, save their heads, in all  
their gear,

---

<sup>323</sup>reckon

Full richely in alle manner things.  
For trust ye well, that earles, dukes,  
and kings  
Were gather'd in this noble com-  
pany,  
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 some<sup>324</sup>  
Be on the Sunday to the city come  
Aboute prime (*Note 60*), and in  
the town alight.  
This Theseus, this Duke, this wor-  
thy knight

---

<sup>324</sup>all and sundry.

When he had brought them into his  
city,  
And inned<sup>325</sup> them, ev' reach at his  
degree,  
He feasteth them, and doth so great  
labour  
To easen them<sup>326</sup>, and do them all  
honour,  
That yet men weene<sup>327</sup> that no  
mannes wit  
Of none estate could amenden<sup>328</sup>  
it.  
The minstrelsy, the service at the  
feast,

---

<sup>325</sup>lodged.

<sup>326</sup>make them comfortable.

<sup>327</sup>think.

<sup>328</sup>improve.

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 danc-  
ing  
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 ligger<sup>329</sup> on the  
floor adown,  
Of all this now make I no mentioun  
But of th'effect; that thinketh me

---

<sup>329</sup>lie.

the best  
Now comes the point, and hearken  
if you lest<sup>330</sup>.  
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 tho<sup>331</sup>  
With holy heart, and with an high  
courage,  
Arose, to wenden<sup>332</sup> on his pil-  
grimage

---

<sup>330</sup> please.

<sup>331</sup> then.

<sup>332</sup> go.

Unto the blissful Cithera benign,  
I meane Venus, honourable and  
digne<sup>333</sup>.

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 cheer<sup>334</sup>

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*)

---

<sup>333</sup>worthy.

<sup>334</sup>demeanour

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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;  
I am so confused, that I cannot say.  
But mercy, lady bright, that know-  
est well  
My thought, and seest what harm  
that I feel.  
Consider all this, and rue upon<sup>335</sup>

---

<sup>335</sup>take pity on.

my sore,  
As wisely<sup>336</sup> as I shall for evermore  
Enforce my might, thy true servant  
to be,  
And holde war alway with  
chastity:  
That make I mine avow<sup>337</sup>, so ye  
me help.  
I keepe not of armes for to yelp<sup>338</sup>.  
Nor ask I not to-morrow to have  
victory,  
Nor renown in this case, nor vaine  
glory  
Of prize of armes<sup>339</sup>, blowing up

---

<sup>336</sup>truly.

<sup>337</sup>vow, promise.

<sup>338</sup>boast.

<sup>339</sup>praise for valour.

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 but<sup>340</sup> 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',

---

<sup>340</sup>do not know whether.

And on thine altar, where I ride or  
go,  
I will do sacrifice, and fires bete<sup>341</sup>.  
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  
prayer, -  
Give me my love, thou blissful  
lady dear."

---

<sup>341</sup>make, kindle.

When th' orison was done of Pala-  
mon,  
His sacrifice he did, and that anon,  
Full piteously, with alle circum-  
stances,  
All tell I not as now<sup>342</sup> his obser-  
vances.  
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 de-  
lay,  
Yet wist he well that granted was  
his boon;

---

<sup>342</sup>although I tell not now.

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,  
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,  
And to the temple of Dian gan hie.  
Her maidens, that she thither with  
her lad<sup>343</sup>,

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 sac-  
rifice.

---

<sup>343</sup>led.

Smoking<sup>344</sup> the temple full of  
clothes fair, (*Note 65*)

This Emily with hearte debon-  
nair<sup>345</sup>

Her body wash'd with water of a  
well.

But how she did her rite I dare not  
tell;

But<sup>346</sup> it be any thing in general;

And yet it were a game<sup>347</sup> to  
hearken all

To him that meaneth well it were  
no charge:

But it is good a man to be at

---

<sup>344</sup>draping.

<sup>345</sup>gentle.

<sup>346</sup>unless.

<sup>347</sup>pleasure.

large<sup>348</sup>,  
Her bright hair combed was, un-  
tressed 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

---

<sup>348</sup>do as he will.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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 wost<sup>349</sup> what  
I desire,  
To keep me from the vengeance of  
thine ire,  
That Actaeon aboughte<sup>350</sup> cruelly:  
Chaste goddess, well wottest thou  
that I  
Desire to be a maiden all my life,  
Nor never will I be no love nor

---

<sup>349</sup>knowest.

<sup>350</sup>earned; suffered from.

wife.

I am, thou wost<sup>351</sup>, yet of thy company,

A maid, and love hunting and ventry<sup>352</sup>,

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

---

<sup>351</sup>knowest.

<sup>352</sup>field sports.

to me,  
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so  
sore,  
This grace I pray thee withoute  
more,  
As sende love and peace betwixt  
them two:  
And from me turn away their  
heartes so,  
That all their hote love, and their  
desire,  
And all their busy torment, and  
their fire,  
Be queint<sup>353</sup>, or turn'd into another  
place.  
And if so be thou wilt do me no  
grace,

---

<sup>353</sup>quenched.

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  
    prayer:

But suddenly she saw a sighte

quaint<sup>354</sup>.

For right anon one of the fire's  
queint

And quick'd<sup>355</sup> again, and after  
that anon

That other fire was queint, and all  
agone:

And as it queint, it made a whistel-  
ing,

As doth a brande wet in its burn-  
ing.

And at the brandes end outran  
anon

As it were bloody droppes many  
one:

For which so sore aghast was

---

<sup>354</sup>strange.

<sup>355</sup>went out and revived.

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, stint<sup>356</sup>  
thine heaviness.  
Among the goddes high it is af-  
firm'd,  
And by eternal word writ and con-  
firm'd,  
Thou shalt be wedded unto one of

---

<sup>356</sup>ceasse.

tho<sup>357</sup>

That have for thee so much 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  
brenn<sup>358</sup>,

Shall thee declaren, ere that thou  
go henne<sup>359</sup>,

Thine aventure of love, as in this  
case."

And with that word, the arrows in

---

<sup>357</sup>those.

<sup>358</sup>burn.

<sup>359</sup>hence.

the case<sup>360</sup>  
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  
nexte<sup>361</sup> way.  
This is th' effect, there is no more to  
say.  
The nexte hour of Mars following  
this

---

<sup>360</sup>quiver.

<sup>361</sup>nearest.

Arcite to the temple walked is  
Of fierce Mars, to do his sacrifice  
With all the rites of his pagan guise.  
With piteous<sup>362</sup> heart and high de-  
votion  
Right thus to Mars he said his ori-  
son  
"O stronge god, that in the reg-  
nes<sup>363</sup> old  
Of Thrace honoured art, and lord  
y-hold<sup>364</sup>  
And hast in every regne, and every  
land  
Of armes all the bridle in thine  
hand,

---

<sup>362</sup>pious.

<sup>363</sup>realms.

<sup>364</sup>held.

And them fortunest as thee list devise<sup>365</sup>,  
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 pine<sup>366</sup>,  
For thilke<sup>367</sup> pain, and thilke hote fire,  
In which thou whilom burned'st for desire

---

<sup>365</sup>send them fortune as you please.

<sup>366</sup>pity my anguish.

<sup>367</sup>that.

Whenne that thou usedest<sup>368</sup> the  
    beauty  
Of faire young Venus, fresh and  
    free,  
And haddest her in armes at thy  
    will:  
And though thee ones on a time  
    misfill<sup>369</sup> ,  
When Vulcanus had caught thee in  
    his las<sup>370</sup> , (*Note 69*)  
And found thee ligging<sup>371</sup> by his  
    wife, alas!  
For thilke sorrow that was in thine  
    heart,

---

<sup>368</sup>enjoyed.

<sup>369</sup>were unlucky.

<sup>370</sup>net.

<sup>371</sup>lying.

Have ruth<sup>372</sup> as well upon my  
 paine's smart.  
 I am young and unconning<sup>373</sup>, as  
 thou know'st,  
 And, as I trow<sup>374</sup>, with love of-  
 fended most  
 That e'er was any living creature:  
 For she, that doth<sup>375</sup> me all this  
 woe endure,  
 Ne recketh ne'er whether I sink or  
 fleet<sup>376</sup>  
 And well I wot, ere she me mercy

---

<sup>372</sup>pity.

<sup>373</sup>ignorant, simple.

<sup>374</sup>believe.

<sup>375</sup>causes.

<sup>376</sup>swim.

hete<sup>377</sup>,  
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 bur-  
neth me;  
And do<sup>378</sup> that I to-morr'w may  
have victory.  
Mine be the travail, all thine be the

---

<sup>377</sup>promise, vouchsafe.

<sup>378</sup>cause.

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  
 hong<sup>379</sup>,  
 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 offen-

---

<sup>379</sup>hang.

sion<sup>380</sup>  
Of razor nor of shears, I will thee  
give,  
And be thy true servant while I  
live.  
Now, lord, have ruth upon my sor-  
rows sore,  
Give me the victory, I ask no more."  
The prayer stint<sup>381</sup> 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.

---

<sup>380</sup>indignity

<sup>381</sup>ended.

The fires burn'd upon the altar  
bright,  
That it gan all the temple for to  
light;  
A sweete smell anon the ground up  
gaf<sup>382</sup>,  
And Arcita anon his hand up  
haf<sup>383</sup>,  
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

---

<sup>382</sup>gave.

<sup>383</sup>lifted.

Full low and dim, that saide thus,  
"Victory."  
For which he gave to Mars honour  
and glory.  
And thus with joy, and hope well  
to fare,  
Arcite anon unto his inn doth fare.  
As fain<sup>384</sup> as fowl is of the brighte  
sun.  
And right anon such strife there is  
begun  
For thilke<sup>385</sup> granting, in the  
heav'n above,  
Betwixte Venus the goddess of  
love,  
And Mars the sterne god armipo-

---

<sup>384</sup>glad.

<sup>385</sup>that.

tent,  
 That Jupiter was busy it to stent<sup>386</sup>:  
 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 ev-  
 ery part.  
 As sooth is said, eld<sup>387</sup> hath great  
 advantage,  
 In eld is bothe wisdom and us-  
 age<sup>388</sup>:  
 Men may the old out-run, but not

---

<sup>386</sup>stop.

<sup>387</sup>age.

<sup>388</sup>experience.

out-rede<sup>389</sup> .

Saturn anon, to stint the strife and  
drede,

Albeit that it is against his kind<sup>390</sup> ,  
Of all this strife gan a remedy find.

"My deare daughter Venus," quoth  
Saturn,

"My course<sup>391</sup> , 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

---

<sup>389</sup>outwit.

<sup>390</sup>nature.

<sup>391</sup>orbir.

cote<sup>392</sup>,  
Mine the strangling and hanging  
by the throat,  
The murmur, and the churlish re-  
belling,  
The groyning<sup>393</sup>, and the privy  
poisoning.  
I do vengeance and plein<sup>394</sup> correc-  
tion,  
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:

---

<sup>392</sup>cell.

<sup>393</sup>discontent.

<sup>394</sup>full.

Mine also be the maladies cold,  
The darke treasons, and the  
castes<sup>395</sup> old:

My looking is the father of pesti-  
lence.

Now weep no more, I shall do dili-  
gence

That Palamon, that is thine owen  
knight,

Shall have his lady, as thou hast  
him hight<sup>396</sup>.

Though Mars shall help his knight,  
yet natheless

Betwixte you there must sometime  
be peace:

All be ye not of one complexion,

---

<sup>395</sup>plots.

<sup>396</sup>promised.

That each day causeth such division,  
I am thine ayel<sup>397</sup>, ready at thy will;  
(*Note 72*)  
Weep now no more, I shall thy lust<sup>398</sup> fulfil."  
Now will I stenten<sup>399</sup> 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

---

<sup>397</sup>grandfather.

<sup>398</sup>pleasure.

<sup>399</sup>cease speaking.

thilke<sup>400</sup> 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 ser-  
vice.  
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,

---

<sup>400</sup>that.

Of horse and harness<sup>401</sup> noise and  
clattering  
There was in the hostelries all  
about:  
And to the palace rode there many  
a rout<sup>402</sup>  
Of lordes, upon steedes and pal-  
freys.  
There mayst thou see devising<sup>403</sup>  
of harness  
So uncouth<sup>404</sup> and so rich, and  
wrought so weel  
Of goldsmithry, of brouding<sup>405</sup>,

---

<sup>401</sup> armour.

<sup>402</sup> train, retinue.

<sup>403</sup> decoration.

<sup>404</sup> unknown, rare.

<sup>405</sup> embroidery.

and of steel;  
 The shieldes bright, the testers<sup>406</sup>,  
 and trappures<sup>407</sup> (*Note 73*)  
 Gold-hewen helmets, hauberks,  
 coat-armures;  
 Lordes in parements<sup>408</sup> on their  
 coursers, (*Note 74*);  
 Knightes of retinue, and eke  
 squiers,  
 Nailing the spears, and helmes  
 buckeling,  
 Gniding<sup>409</sup> of shieldes, with lain-  
 ers<sup>410</sup> lacing; (*Note 75*)

---

<sup>406</sup>helmets.

<sup>407</sup>trappings.

<sup>408</sup>ornamental garb.

<sup>409</sup>polishing.

<sup>410</sup>lanyards.

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;  
Yeomen on foot, and knaves<sup>411</sup>  
many one  
With shorte staves, thick<sup>412</sup> as they  
may gon<sup>413</sup>;  
Pipes, trumpets, nakeres<sup>414</sup>, and  
clarious, (*Note 76*)

---

<sup>411</sup>servants.

<sup>412</sup>close.

<sup>413</sup>walk.

<sup>414</sup>drums.

That in the battle blowe bloody  
souns;  
The palace full of people up and  
down,  
There three, there ten, holding  
their questioun,<sup>415</sup>,  
Divining<sup>416</sup> 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:

---

<sup>415</sup>conversation.

<sup>416</sup>conjecturing.

He had a sparth<sup>417</sup> of twenty  
pound of weight.  
Thus was the halle full of divin-  
ing<sup>418</sup>  
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-lich<sup>419</sup>  
Honoured were, and to the palace

---

<sup>417</sup>double-headed axe.

<sup>418</sup>conjecturing.

<sup>419</sup>alike.

fet<sup>420</sup>,  
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 rever-  
ence,  
And eke to hearken his hest<sup>421</sup> and  
his sentence<sup>422</sup>,  
An herald on a scaffold made an  
O, (*Note 77*)  
Till the noise of the people was y-  
do<sup>423</sup>:

---

<sup>420</sup> fetched.

<sup>421</sup> command.

<sup>422</sup> speech.

<sup>423</sup> one.

And when he saw the people of  
noise all still,  
Thus shewed he the mighty Duke's  
will.

"The lord hath of his high discre-  
tion

Considered that it were destruc-  
tion

To gentle blood, to fighten in the  
guise

Of mortal battle now in this em-  
prise:

Wherefore to shape<sup>424</sup> that they  
shall not die,

He will his firste purpose modify.

No man therefore, on pain of loss  
of life,

---

<sup>424</sup>arrange, contrive.

No manner<sup>425</sup> shot, nor poleaxe,  
nor short knife  
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  
take<sup>426</sup>,

---

<sup>425</sup>kind of.

<sup>426</sup>He who wishes can fence on foot to defend himself,

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 fall<sup>427</sup> the chiefetain be  
take  
On either side, or elles slay his  
make<sup>428</sup>,  
No longer then the tourneying  
shall last.  
God speede you; go forth and lay  
on fast.  
With long sword and with mace

---

and he that is in peril shall be taken.

<sup>427</sup>should happen.

<sup>428</sup>equal, match.

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  
steven<sup>429</sup>:

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  
large<sup>430</sup>,

Hanged with cloth of gold, and not

---

<sup>429</sup>sound.

<sup>430</sup>in orderly array.

with sarge<sup>431</sup> (*Note 78*)  
Full like a lord this noble Duke gan  
ride,  
And these two Thebans upon ei-  
ther side:  
And after rode the queen and  
Emily,  
And after them another company  
Of one and other, after their de-  
gree.  
And thus they passed thorough  
that city  
And to the listes came they by time:  
It was not of the day yet fully  
prime<sup>432</sup>.  
When set was Theseus full rich and

---

<sup>431</sup>serge.

<sup>432</sup>between 6 & 9 a.m.

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 selve<sup>433</sup> moment Pala-  
 mon  
 Is, under Venus, eastward in the  
 place,  
 With banner white, and hardy

---

<sup>433</sup>self-same.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

cheer<sup>434</sup> and face  
In all the world, to seeken up and  
down  
So even<sup>435</sup> without variatioun  
There were such companies never  
tway.  
For there was none so wise that  
coulede 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  
dress<sup>436</sup>

---

<sup>434</sup>expression.

<sup>435</sup>equal.

<sup>436</sup>they arranged themselves in two rows.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

When that their names read were  
every one,  
That in their number guile<sup>437</sup> were  
there none,  
Then were the gates shut, and cried  
was loud;  
"Do now your devoir, younge  
knights proud  
The heralds left their pricking<sup>438</sup>  
up and down  
Now ring the trumpet loud and  
clarioun.  
There is no more to say, but east  
and west  
In go the speares sadly<sup>439</sup> in the

---

<sup>437</sup> fraud.

<sup>438</sup> spurring their horses.

<sup>439</sup> steadily.

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-  
    shred<sup>440</sup>; (*Note 80*)  
Out burst the blood, with sterne  
    streames red.  
With mighty maces the bones they

---

<sup>440</sup>strike in pieces.

to-brest<sup>441</sup>.

He through the thickest of the  
throng gan threst<sup>442</sup>. (*Note 81*)

There stumble steedes strong, and  
down go all.

He rolleth under foot as doth a ball.

He foineth<sup>443</sup> on his foe with a  
trunchoun,

And he him hurtleth with his horse  
adown.

He through the body hurt is, and  
sith take<sup>444</sup>;

Maugre his head, and brought  
unto the stake,

---

<sup>441</sup>burst.

<sup>442</sup>thrust.

<sup>443</sup>forces himself.

<sup>444</sup>afterwards captured.

As forword<sup>445</sup> was, right there he  
must abide.

Another led is on that other side.

And sometime doth<sup>446</sup> them The-  
seus to rest,

Them to refresh, and drinken if  
them lest<sup>447</sup>.

Full oft a day have thilke<sup>448</sup> The-  
bans two

Together met and wrought each  
other woe:

Unhorsed hath each other of them  
tway<sup>449</sup>

---

<sup>445</sup>covenant.

<sup>446</sup>caused.

<sup>447</sup>pleased.

<sup>448</sup>these.

<sup>449</sup>twice.

There is no tiger in the vale of  
Galaphay, (*Note 82*)  
When that her whelp is stole, when  
it is lite<sup>450</sup>  
So cruel on the hunter, as Arcite  
For jealous heart upon this Pala-  
mon:  
Nor in Belmarie there is no fell lion,  
(*Note 83*)  
That hunted is, or for his hunger  
wood<sup>451</sup>  
Or for his prey desireth so the  
blood,  
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.  
The jealous strokes upon their hel-  
mets bite;

---

<sup>450</sup>little.

<sup>451</sup>mad.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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  
hent<sup>452</sup>

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

---

<sup>452</sup>sieze, assail.

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 composi-  
tion<sup>453</sup>.  
Who sorroweth now but woful

---

<sup>453</sup>the bargain.

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.

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

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  
fill<sup>454</sup>

She said: "I am ashamed doubt-  
less."

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 min-

---

<sup>454</sup>fall.

strelsy,  
The heralds, that full loude yell  
and cry,  
Be in their joy for weal of Dan<sup>455</sup>  
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 endelong<sup>456</sup> the large  
place,  
Looking upward upon this Emily;  
And she again him cast a friendly

---

<sup>455</sup>Lord.

<sup>456</sup>rides from end to end.

eye  
(For women, as to spoken in com-  
mune<sup>457</sup>,  
They follow all the favour of for-  
tune),  
And was all his in cheer<sup>458</sup>, as his  
in heart.  
Out of the ground a fire infernal  
start,  
From Pluto sent, at request of Sat-  
urn  
For which his horse for fear began  
to turn,  
And leap aside, and founder<sup>459</sup> as  
he leap

---

<sup>457</sup>generally.

<sup>458</sup>countenance.

<sup>459</sup>stumble.

And ere that Arcite may take any  
keep<sup>460</sup>.

He pight<sup>461</sup> him on the pummel<sup>462</sup>  
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.

---

<sup>460</sup>care.

<sup>461</sup>pitched.

<sup>462</sup>top.

Then was he carven<sup>463</sup> out of his  
harness.  
And in a bed y-brought full fair  
and blive<sup>464</sup>  
For he was yet in mem'ry and  
alive,  
And always crying after Emily.  
Duke Theseus, with all his com-  
pany,  
Is come home to Athens his city,  
With alle bliss and great solemnity.  
Albeit that this aventure was  
fall<sup>465</sup>,  
He woulde not discomforte<sup>466</sup>

---

<sup>463</sup>cut.

<sup>464</sup>quickly.

<sup>465</sup>befallen.

<sup>466</sup>discourage.

them all  
Then said eke, that Arcite should  
not die,  
He should be healed of his malady.  
And of another thing they were as  
fain<sup>467</sup>.  
That of them alle was there no one  
slain,  
All<sup>468</sup> were they sorely hurt, and  
namely<sup>469</sup> one,  
That with a spear was thirled<sup>470</sup>  
his breast-bone.  
To other woundes, and to broken  
arms,

---

<sup>467</sup> glad.

<sup>468</sup> although.

<sup>469</sup> especially.

<sup>470</sup> pierced.

Some hadden salves, and some  
hadden charms:  
And pharmacies of herbs, and eke  
save<sup>471</sup>  
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 discom-  
forting,  
But as at jousts or at a tourneying;  
For soothly there was no discomfi-

---

<sup>471</sup>sage, *Salvia officinalis*.

ture,  
 For falling is not but an aven-  
 ture<sup>472</sup>.  
 Nor to be led by force unto a stake  
 Unyielding, and with twenty  
 knights y-take  
 One person all alone, withouten  
 mo',  
 And harried<sup>473</sup> forth by armes,  
 foot, and toe,  
 And eke his steede driven forth  
 with staves,  
 With footmen, bothe yeomen and  
 eke knaves<sup>474</sup>,

---

<sup>472</sup>chance, accident.

<sup>473</sup>dragged, hurried.

<sup>474</sup>servants.

It was aretted him no villainy<sup>475</sup>:  
 There may no man clepen it cowardy<sup>476</sup>.  
 For which anon Duke Theseus let  
 cry<sup>477</sup>, –  
 To stenten<sup>478</sup> alle rancour and  
 envy, –  
 The gree<sup>479</sup> as well on one side as  
 the other,  
 And either side alike as other's  
 brother:  
 And gave them giftes after their  
 degree,

---

<sup>475</sup>counted no disgrace to him.

<sup>476</sup>call it cowardice.

<sup>477</sup>caused to be proclaimed.

<sup>478</sup>stop.

<sup>479</sup>prize, merit.

And held a feaste fully dayes three:  
And conveyed the kinges worthily  
Out of his town a journee<sup>480</sup>  
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.  
Swelleth the breast of Arcite and  
the sore  
Increaseth at his hearte more and  
more.  
The clotted blood, for any leache-

---

<sup>480</sup>day's journey.

craft<sup>481</sup>

Corrupteth and is in his bouk y-  
laft<sup>482</sup>

That neither veine blood nor ven-  
tousing<sup>483</sup>,

Nor drink of herbes may be his  
helping.

The virtue expulsive or animal,  
From thilke virtue called natural,  
Nor may the venom voide, nor ex-  
pel

The pipes of his lungs began to  
swell

And every lacert<sup>484</sup> in his breast

---

<sup>481</sup>surgical skill.

<sup>482</sup>left in his body.

<sup>483</sup>blood-letting or cupping.

<sup>484</sup>sinew, muscle.

adown  
Is shent<sup>485</sup> with venom and corruption.  
Him gaineth<sup>486</sup> 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 wurch<sup>487</sup>,  
Farewell physic: go bear the man to chirch<sup>488</sup>.  
This all and some is, Arcite must

---

<sup>485</sup>destroyed.

<sup>486</sup>availeth.

<sup>487</sup>work.

<sup>488</sup>church.

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 sor-  
rows' 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

## THE KNIGHT'S TALE

---

That I for you have suffered and so  
long!  
Alas the death, alas, mine Emily!  
Alas departing<sup>489</sup> 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,

---

<sup>489</sup>the severance.

For love of God, and hearken what  
I say.

I have here with my cousin Pala-  
mon

Had strife and rancour many a day  
agone,

For love of you, and for my jeal-  
ousy.

And Jupiter so wis my soule gie<sup>490</sup>,

To speaken of a servant properly,

With alle circumstances truely,

That is to say, truth, honour, and  
knighthead,

Wisdom, humbless<sup>491</sup>, estate, and  
high kindred,

Freedom, and all that longeth to

---

<sup>490</sup>surely guides my soul.

<sup>491</sup>humility.

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  
overcome<sup>492</sup>.  
And yet moreover in his armes two

---

<sup>492</sup>overcome.

The vital strength is lost, and all  
ago<sup>493</sup>.

Only the intellect, without more,  
That dwelled in his hearte sick and  
sore,

Gan faile, when the hearte felte  
death;

Dusked<sup>494</sup> 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*)

---

<sup>493</sup>gone.

<sup>494</sup>grew dim.

Therefore I stent<sup>495</sup>, I am no divin-  
ister<sup>496</sup>;

Of soules find I nought in this reg-  
ister.

Ne me list not th' opinions to tell  
Of them, though that they writen  
where they dwell;

Arcite is cold, there Mars his soule  
gie<sup>497</sup>.

Now will I speake forth of Emily.  
Shriek'd Emily, and howled Pala-  
mon,

And Theseus his sister took anon  
Swooning, and bare her from the  
corpse away.

---

<sup>495</sup>refrain.

<sup>496</sup>diviner.

<sup>497</sup>guide.

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-go<sup>498</sup> ,  
That for the more part they sorrow  
so,  
Or elles fall into such malady,  
That at the laste certainly they die.  
Infinite be the sorrows and the  
tears  
Of olde folk, and folk of tender  
years,  
In all the town, for death of this

---

<sup>498</sup>gone.

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 transmu-

tatioun,  
As he had seen it changen up and  
down,  
Joy after woe, and woe after glad-  
ness;  
And shewed him example and  
likeness.  
"Right as there died never man,"  
quoth he,  
"That he ne liv'd in earth in some  
degree<sup>499</sup>.  
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,

---

<sup>499</sup>rank, condition.

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  
cure<sup>500</sup>,

Casteth about<sup>501</sup>, where that the  
sepulture

Of good Arcite may best y-maked  
be,

And eke most honourable in his

---

<sup>500</sup>care.

<sup>501</sup>deliberates.

degree.  
 And at the last he took conclusion,  
 That there as first Arcite and Pala-  
     mon  
 Hadde for love the battle them be-  
     tween,  
 That in that selve<sup>502</sup> grove, sweet  
     and green,  
 There as he had his amorous de-  
     sires,  
 His complaint, and for love his  
     hote fires,  
 He woulde make a fire<sup>503</sup>, in which  
     th' office  
 Of funeral he might all accomplice;

---

<sup>502</sup>self-same.

<sup>503</sup>funeral pyre.

And let anon command<sup>504</sup> to hack  
and hew  
The oakes old, and lay them on a  
rew<sup>505</sup>  
In culpons<sup>506</sup>, well arrayed for to  
brenne<sup>507</sup>.  
His officers with swifte feet they  
renne<sup>508</sup>  
And ride anon at his commande-  
ment.  
And after this, Duke Theseus hath  
sent  
After a bier, and it all oversprad

---

<sup>504</sup>immediately gave orders.

<sup>505</sup>in a row.

<sup>506</sup>logs.

<sup>507</sup>burn.

<sup>508</sup>run.

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 visage<sup>509</sup> 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,

---

<sup>509</sup>with face uncovered.

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 as<sup>510</sup> the service  
should be  
The more noble and rich in its de-  
gree,  
Duke Theseus let forth three  
steedes bring,  
That trapped were in steel all glit-

---

<sup>510</sup>in order that.

tering.  
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  
Turkeis<sup>511</sup>,  
Of brent<sup>512</sup> gold was the case<sup>513</sup>  
and the harness:  
And ride forth a pace<sup>514</sup> with sor-

---

<sup>511</sup>Turkish.

<sup>512</sup>burnished.

<sup>513</sup>quiver.

<sup>514</sup>at a foot pace.

rowful cheer<sup>515</sup>

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 mas-  
ter<sup>516</sup> street,

That spread was all with black, and  
wondrous high

Right of the same is all the street y-  
wrie<sup>517</sup> (*Note 87*)

---

<sup>515</sup>expression.

<sup>516</sup>main.

<sup>517</sup>covered.

Upon the right hand went old  
     Egeus,  
 And on the other side Duke The-  
     seus,  
 With vessels in their hand of gold  
     full fine,  
 All full of honey, milk, and blood,  
     and wine;  
 Eke Palamon, with a great com-  
     pany;  
 And after that came woful Emily,  
 With fire in hand, as was that time  
     the guise<sup>518</sup>,  
 To do th' office of funeral service.  
 High labour, and full great appar-  
     eling<sup>519</sup>

---

<sup>518</sup>custom.

<sup>519</sup>preparation.

Was at the service, and the pyre-  
making,  
That with its greene top the heaven  
raught<sup>520</sup>,  
And twenty fathom broad its  
armes straught<sup>521</sup>:  
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  
hight<sup>522</sup>,

---

<sup>520</sup>reached.

<sup>521</sup>stretched.

<sup>522</sup>were called.

As oak, fir, birch, asp<sup>523</sup>, alder,  
 holm, poplere,  
 Willow, elm, plane, ash, box, chest-  
 nut, lind<sup>524</sup>, laurere,  
 Maple, thorn, beech, hazel, yew,  
 whipul tree,  
 How they were fell'd, shall not be  
 told for me;  
 Nor how the goddes<sup>525</sup> rannen up  
 and down  
 Disinherited of their habitatioun,  
 In which they wonned<sup>526</sup> had in  
 rest and peace,  
 Nymphes, Faunes, and

---

<sup>523</sup>aspen.

<sup>524</sup>linden, lime.

<sup>525</sup>the forest deities.

<sup>526</sup>dwelt.

Hamadryades;  
Nor how the beastes and the birdes  
all  
Fledden for feare, when the wood  
gan fall;  
Nor how the ground aghast<sup>527</sup> was  
of the light,  
That was not wont to see the sunne  
bright;  
Nor how the fire was couched<sup>528</sup>  
first with stre<sup>529</sup>,  
And then with dry stickes cloven in  
three,  
And then with greene wood and

---

<sup>527</sup>terrified.

<sup>528</sup>laid.

<sup>529</sup>straw.

spicery<sup>530</sup>,  
 And then with cloth of gold and  
 with pierrie<sup>531</sup>,  
 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  
 guise<sup>532</sup>,  
 Put in the fire<sup>533</sup> of funeral service;  
 (*Note 88*)  
 Nor how she swooned when she

---

<sup>530</sup>spices.

<sup>531</sup>precious stones.

<sup>532</sup>custom.

<sup>533</sup>applied the torch.

made the fire,  
Nor what she spake, nor what was  
her desire;  
Nor what jewels men in the fire  
then cast  
When that the fire was great and  
burned fast;  
Nor how some cast their shield,  
and some their spear,  
And of their vestiments, which that  
they wear,  
And cuppes full of wine, and milk,  
and blood,  
Into the fire, that burnt as it were  
wood<sup>534</sup>;  
Nor how the Greekes with a huge

---

<sup>534</sup>mad.

rout<sup>535</sup>

Three times riden all the fire about  
(*Note 89*)

Upon the left hand, with a loud  
shouting,

And thries with their speares clat-  
tering;

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-wake<sup>536</sup> (*Note*  
90)

---

<sup>535</sup>procession.

<sup>536</sup>wake.

All thilke<sup>537</sup> night, nor how the  
Greekes play  
The wake-plays<sup>538</sup>, ne keep<sup>539</sup> I  
not to say:  
Who wrestled best naked, with oil  
anoint,  
Nor who that bare him best in no  
disjoint<sup>540</sup>.  
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

---

<sup>537</sup>that.

<sup>538</sup>funeral games.

<sup>539</sup>care.

<sup>540</sup>in any contest.

wend<sup>541</sup>,  
And maken of my longe tale an  
end.  
By process and by length of certain  
years  
All stinted<sup>542</sup> is the mourning and  
the tears  
Of Greekes, by one general assent.  
Then seemed me there was a par-  
lement  
At Athens, upon certain points and  
cas<sup>543</sup>;  
Amonge the which points y-  
spoken was  
To have with certain countries al-

---

<sup>541</sup>come.

<sup>542</sup>ended.

<sup>543</sup>cases.

liance,  
 And have of Thebans full obei-  
 sance.  
 For which this noble Theseus anon  
 Let<sup>544</sup> send after the gentle Pala-  
 mon,  
 Unwist<sup>545</sup> of him what was the  
 cause and why:  
 But in his blacke clothes sorrow-  
 fully  
 He came at his commandment on  
 hie<sup>546</sup>;  
 Then sente Theseus for Emily.  
 When they were set<sup>547</sup>, and hush'd

---

<sup>544</sup>caused.

<sup>545</sup>unknown.

<sup>546</sup>in haste.

<sup>547</sup>seated.

was all the place  
And Theseus abided<sup>548</sup> had a  
space  
Ere any word came from his wise  
breast  
His eye set he there as was his  
lest<sup>549</sup>,  
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

---

<sup>548</sup>waited.

<sup>549</sup>he cast his eyes wherever he pleased.

his intent;  
Well wist he why, and what thereof  
he meant:  
For with that faire chain of love he  
bond<sup>550</sup>  
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

---

<sup>550</sup>bound.

pace<sup>551</sup>,  
All may they yet their dayes well  
abridge.  
There needeth no authority to al-  
lege  
For it is proved by experience;  
But that me list declare my sen-  
tence<sup>552</sup>,  
Then may men by this order well  
discern,  
That thilke<sup>553</sup> mover stable is and  
etern.  
Well may men know, but that it be  
a fool,  
That every part deriveth from its

---

<sup>551</sup>pass.

<sup>552</sup>opinion.

<sup>553</sup>the same.

whole.

For nature hath not ta'en its begin-  
ning

Of no partie nor cante<sup>554</sup> of a  
thing,

But of a thing that perfect is and  
stable,

Descending so, till it be corrupt-  
able.

And therefore of His wise pur-  
veyance<sup>555</sup>

He hath so well beset his ordi-  
nance,

That species of things and progres-  
sions

Shallen endure by successions,

---

<sup>554</sup>part or piece.

<sup>555</sup>providence.

And not etern, withouten any lie:  
This mayst thou understand and  
see at eye.  
Lo th' oak, that hath so long a nour-  
ishing  
From the time that it 'ginneth first  
to spring,  
And hath so long a life, as ye may  
see,  
Yet at the last y-wasted is the tree.  
Consider eke, how that the harde  
stone  
Under our feet, on which we tread  
and gon<sup>556</sup>,  
Yet wasteth, as it lieth by the way.  
The broade river some time waxeth

---

<sup>556</sup>walk.

drey<sup>557</sup>.

The greate townes see we wane  
and wend<sup>558</sup>.

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

---

<sup>557</sup> dry.

<sup>558</sup> go, disappear.

see:

There helpeth nought, all go that  
ilke<sup>559</sup> 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,

---

<sup>559</sup>same.

And take it well, that we may not  
eschew<sup>560</sup>,  
And namely what to us all is due.  
And whoso grudgeth<sup>561</sup> ought, he  
doth folly,  
And rebel is to him that all may  
gie<sup>562</sup>.  
And certainly a man hath most  
honour  
To dien in his excellence and  
flower,  
When he is sicker<sup>563</sup> of his goode  
name.  
Then hath he done his friend, nor

---

<sup>560</sup>escape.

<sup>561</sup>murmurs at.

<sup>562</sup>direct, guide,

<sup>563</sup>certain.

him<sup>564</sup>, 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 age<sup>565</sup>;  
For all forgotten is his vas-  
salage<sup>566</sup>.  
Then is it best, as for a worthy  
fame,  
To dien when a man is best of  
name.  
The contrary of all this is wilful-  
ness.

---

<sup>564</sup>himself.

<sup>565</sup>decayed by old age

<sup>566</sup>valour, service.

Why grudge we, why have we  
     heaviness,  
 That good Arcite, of chivalry the  
     flower,  
 Departed is, with duty and honour,  
 Out of this foule prison of this life?  
 Why grudge here his cousin and  
     his wife  
 Of his welfare, that loved him so  
     well?  
 Can he them thank? nay, God wot,  
     neverdeal<sup>567</sup>, –  
 That both his soul and eke them-  
     selves offend<sup>568</sup>,  
 And yet they may their lustes<sup>569</sup>

---

<sup>567</sup>not a jot.

<sup>568</sup>hurt.

<sup>569</sup>desires.

not amend<sup>570</sup> .  
 What may I conclude of this longe  
 serie<sup>571</sup> ,  
 But after sorrow I rede<sup>572</sup> 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 be-  
 gin.

---

<sup>570</sup>control.

<sup>571</sup>string of remarks.

<sup>572</sup>counsel.

"Sister," quoth he, "this is my full  
assent,  
With all th' advice here of my par-  
lement,  
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 rue<sup>573</sup>,  
And take him for your husband  
and your lord:  
Lend me your hand, for this is our  
accord.  
Let see now of your womanly

---

<sup>573</sup>take pity.

pity<sup>574</sup>.

He is a king's brother's son, par-  
die<sup>575</sup>.

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  
me<sup>576</sup>,

For gentle mercy oweth to passen  
right<sup>577</sup>."

Then said he thus to Palamon the  
knight;

---

<sup>574</sup>make display

<sup>575</sup>by God.

<sup>576</sup>believe me.

<sup>577</sup>ought to be rightly directed.

"I trow there needeth little sermon-  
ing  
To make you assente to this thing.  
Come near, and take your lady by  
the hand."

Betwixte them was made anon the  
band,

That hight matrimony or marriage,  
By all the counsel of the baronage.  
And thus with alle bliss and  
melody

Hath Palamon y-wedded Emily.  
And God, that all this wide world  
hath wrought,  
Send him his love, that hath it  
dearly bought.

For now is Palamon in all his weal,  
Living in bliss, in riches, and in

heal<sup>578</sup>

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  
teen<sup>579</sup>.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily  
And God save all this faire com-  
pany.

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<sup>578</sup>health.

<sup>579</sup>cause 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 ear-

lier 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 Ger-

man, "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 mediaeval 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, "sikker," 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 Boccacio'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, "wrigan," 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)