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*The Canterbury Tales and  
Other Poems  
Part 6: The Miller's Tale*

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**by Geoffrey Chaucer**

Styled by **LimpidSoft**

# Contents

<b>THE PROLOGUE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>THE TALE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>NOTES</b>	<b>95</b>

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## THE PROLOGUE

When that the Knight had thus his  
    tale told  
In all the rout was neither young  
    nor old,  
That he not said it was a noble  
    story,  
And worthy to be drawn to mem-

## THE PROLOGUE

---

ory<sup>1</sup>;  
And namely the gentles<sup>2</sup> every  
one.  
Our Host then laugh'd and swore,  
"So may I gon,<sup>3</sup>  
This goes aright; unbuckled is the  
mail<sup>4</sup>;  
Let see now who shall tell another  
tale:  
For truely this game is well begun.  
Now telleth ye, Sir Monk, if that ye  
conne<sup>5</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup>recorded.

<sup>2</sup>especially the gentlefolk.

<sup>3</sup>prosper.

<sup>4</sup>the budget is opened.

<sup>5</sup>know.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

Somewhat, to quiten<sup>6</sup> with the  
    Knichte's tale."  
The Miller that fordrunken was all  
    pale,  
So that unnethes<sup>7</sup> upon his horse  
    he sat,  
He would avalen<sup>8</sup> neither hood  
    nor hat,  
Nor abide<sup>9</sup> no man for his courtesy,  
But in Pilate's voice (*Note 1*) he gan  
    to cry,  
And swore by armes, and by  
    blood, and bones,

---

<sup>6</sup>match.

<sup>7</sup>with difficulty.

<sup>8</sup>uncover.

<sup>9</sup>give way to.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

"I can a noble tale for the nones<sup>10</sup>,  
With which I will now quite<sup>11</sup> the  
    Knichte's tale."

Our Host saw well how drunk he  
    was of ale,

And said; "Robin, abide, my leve<sup>12</sup>  
    brother,

Some better man shall tell us first  
    another:

Abide, and let us worke thriftily."

By Godde's soul," quoth he, "that  
    will not I,

For I will speak, or elles go my  
    way!"

Our Host answer'd; "Tell on a devil

---

<sup>10</sup>occasion.

<sup>11</sup>match.

<sup>12</sup>dear.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

way<sup>13</sup>;  
Thou art a fool; thy wit is overcome."  
"Now hearken," quoth the Miller,  
"all and some:  
But first I make a protestatioun.  
That I am drunk, I know it by my soun':  
And therefore if that I misspeak or say,  
Wite it<sup>14</sup> the ale of Southwark, I  
you pray:  
For I will tell a legend and a life  
Both of a carpenter and of his wife,  
How that a clerk hath set the

---

<sup>13</sup>devil take you!

<sup>14</sup>blame it on.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

wrighte's cap<sup>15</sup>."

The Reeve answer'd and saide,  
"Stint thy clap<sup>16</sup>,  
Let be thy lewed drunken harlotry.  
It is a sin, and eke a great folly  
To apeiren<sup>17</sup> any man, or him de-  
fame,  
And eke to bringe wives in evil  
name.  
Thou may'st enough of other  
thinges sayn."  
This drunken Miller spake full  
soon again,  
And saide, "Leve brother Osewold,  
Who hath no wife, he is no cuck-

---

<sup>15</sup>fooled the carpenter.

<sup>16</sup>hold your tongue.

<sup>17</sup>injure.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

old.  
But I say not therefore that thou art  
one;  
There be full goode wives many  
one.  
Why art thou angry with my tale  
now?  
I have a wife, pardie, as well as  
thou,  
Yet n'old I<sup>18</sup>, for the oxen in my  
plough,  
Taken upon me more than enough,  
To deemen<sup>19</sup> of myself that I am  
one;  
I will believe well that I am none.  
An husband should not be inquisi-

---

<sup>18</sup>I would not.

<sup>19</sup>judge.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

tive  
Of Godde's privity, nor of his wife.  
So he may finde Godde's foison<sup>20</sup>  
there,  
Of the remnant needeth not to en-  
quere."  
What should I more say, but that  
this Millere  
He would his wordes for no man  
forbear,  
But told his churlish<sup>21</sup> tale in his  
mannere;  
Me thinketh, that I shall rehearse it  
here.  
And therefore every gentle wight I  
pray,

---

<sup>20</sup>treasure.

<sup>21</sup>boorish, rude.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

For Godde's love to deem not that  
I say  
Of evil intent, but that I must re-  
hearse  
Their tales all, be they better or  
worse,  
Or elles falsen<sup>22</sup> some of my mat-  
tere.  
And therefore whoso list it not to  
hear,  
Turn o'er the leaf, and choose an-  
other tale;  
For he shall find enough, both  
great and smale,  
Of storial<sup>23</sup> thing that toucheth  
gentiless,

---

<sup>22</sup>falsify.

<sup>23</sup>historical, true.

## THE PROLOGUE

---

And eke morality and holiness.  
Blame not me, if that ye choose  
    amiss.  
The Miller is a churl, ye know well  
    this,  
So was the Reeve, with many other  
    mo',  
And harlotry<sup>24</sup> they tolde bothe  
    two.  
Avise you<sup>25</sup> now, and put me out  
    of blame;  
And eke men should not make  
    earnest of game<sup>26</sup>.

---

<sup>24</sup>ribald tales.

<sup>25</sup>be warned.

<sup>26</sup>jest, fun.

## THE TALE

Whilom there was dwelling in Ox-  
enford  
A riche gnof<sup>27</sup>, that gwestes held to  
board<sup>28</sup>,

---

<sup>27</sup>miser.

<sup>28</sup>took in boarders.

And of his craft he was a carpenter.  
With him there was dwelling a  
    poor scholer,  
Had learned art, but all his fantasy  
Was turned for to learn astrology.  
He coude<sup>29</sup> a certain of conclu-  
    sions  
To deeme<sup>30</sup> by interrogations,  
If that men asked him in certain  
    hours,  
When that men should have  
    drought or elles show'rs:  
Or if men asked him what shoulde  
    fall  
Of everything, I may not reckon all.

---

<sup>29</sup>knew.

<sup>30</sup>determine.

This clerk was called Hendy<sup>31</sup>  
Nicholas;  
Of derne<sup>32</sup> love he knew and of so-  
lace;  
And therewith he was sly and full  
privy,  
And like a maiden meek for to see.  
A chamber had he in that hostelry  
Alone, withouten any company,  
Full fetisly y-dight<sup>33</sup> with herbes  
swoot<sup>34</sup>,  
And he himself was sweet as is the  
root

---

<sup>31</sup>gentle, handsome.

<sup>32</sup>secret, earnest.

<sup>33</sup>neatly decorated.

<sup>34</sup>sweet.

Of liquorice, or any setewall<sup>35</sup>.  
His Almagest, (*Note 1*) and bookes  
    great and small,  
His astrolabe, (*Note 2*) belonging to  
    his art,  
His augrim stones, (*Note 3*) layed  
    fair apart  
On shelves couched<sup>36</sup> at his  
    bedde's head,  
His press y-cover'd with a falding  
    red<sup>37</sup>.  
And all above there lay a gay  
    psalt'ry  
On which he made at nightes  
    melody,

---

<sup>35</sup>valerian.

<sup>36</sup>laid, set.

<sup>37</sup>coarse cloth.

So sweetely, that all the chamber  
rang:  
And Angelus ad virginem (*Note 4*)  
he sang.  
And after that he sung the kinge's  
note;  
Full often blessed was his merry  
throat.  
And thus this sweete clerk his time  
spent  
After his friendes finding and his  
rent<sup>38</sup>  
This carpenter had wedded new a  
wife,  
Which that he loved more than his  
life:

---

<sup>38</sup>Attending to his friends, and providing for the cost of his lodging.

Of eighteen year, I guess, she was  
of age.

Jealous he was, and held her  
narr'w in cage,

For she was wild and young, and  
he was old,

And deemed himself belike<sup>39</sup> a  
cuckold.

He knew not Cato, (*Note 5*) for his  
wit was rude,

That bade a man wed his simili-  
tude.

Men shoulde wedden after their  
estate,

For youth and eld<sup>40</sup> are often at de-  
bate.

---

<sup>39</sup>perhaps.

<sup>40</sup>age.

But since that he was fallen in the  
snare,  
He must endure (as other folk) his  
care.  
Fair was this younge wife, and  
therewithal  
As any weasel her body gent<sup>41</sup> and  
small.  
A seint<sup>42</sup> she weared, barred all of  
silk,  
A barm-cloth<sup>43</sup> eke as white as  
morning milk (*Note 6*)  
Upon her lendes<sup>44</sup>, full of many a

---

<sup>41</sup>slim, neat.

<sup>42</sup>girdle.

<sup>43</sup>apron.

<sup>44</sup>loins.

gore<sup>45</sup>

White was her smock<sup>46</sup>, and broi-  
der'd all before,  
And eke behind, on her collar  
about  
Of coal-black silk, within and eke  
without.

The tapes of her white volu-  
pere<sup>47</sup> (*Note 7*)

Were of the same suit of her collere;  
Her fillet broad of silk, and set full  
high:

And sickerly<sup>48</sup> she had a likerous<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup>plait.

<sup>46</sup>robe or gown.

<sup>47</sup>head-kerchief.

<sup>48</sup>certainly.

<sup>49</sup>lascivious.

eye.

Full small y-pulled were her  
browes two,  
And they were bent<sup>50</sup>, and black as  
any sloe.

She was well more blissful on to  
see<sup>51</sup>

Than is the newe perjenete<sup>52</sup> tree;  
And softer than the wool is of a  
wether.

And by her girdle hung a purse of  
leather,  
Tassel'd with silk, and pearled  
with latoun<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>50</sup>arched.

<sup>51</sup>pleasant to look upon

<sup>52</sup>young pear-tree.

<sup>53</sup>set with brass pearls.

In all this world to seeken up and  
down

There is no man so wise, that coude  
thenche<sup>54</sup> (*Note 8*)

So gay a popelot, or such a wench.  
Full brighter was the shining of her  
hue,

Than in the Tower the noble<sup>55</sup>  
forged new (*Note 9*)

But of her song, it was as loud and  
yern<sup>56</sup>, (*Note 10*)

As any swallow chittering on a  
bern<sup>57</sup>.

Thereto she coude skip, and make

---

<sup>54</sup>fancy, think of puppet.

<sup>55</sup>a gold coin.

<sup>56</sup>lively.

<sup>57</sup>barn.

a game<sup>58</sup>

As any kid or calf following his  
dame.

Her mouth was sweet as braket,  
(*Note 11*) or as methe<sup>59</sup>

Or hoard of apples, laid in hay or  
heath.

Wincing<sup>60</sup> she was as is a jolly colt,  
Long as a mast, and upright as a  
bolt.

A brooch she bare upon her low  
collere,

As broad as is the boss of a buck-  
lere.

Her shoon were laced on her legges

---

<sup>58</sup>also "romp".

<sup>59</sup>mead.

<sup>60</sup>skittish.

high;

She was a primerole<sup>61</sup>, a  
piggesnie, (*Note 12*)

For any lord t' have liggig<sup>62</sup> in his  
bed,

Or yet for any good yeoman to  
wed.

Now, sir, and eft<sup>63</sup> sir, so befell the  
case,

That on a day this Hendy Nicholas  
Fell with this younge wife to rage<sup>64</sup>  
and play,

While that her husband was at  
Osenev, (*Note 13*)

---

<sup>61</sup>primrose..

<sup>62</sup>lying.

<sup>63</sup>again.

<sup>64</sup>toy, play the rogue.

As clerkes be full subtile and full  
quaint.  
And privily he caught her by the  
queint<sup>65</sup>,  
And said; "Y-wis<sup>66</sup>, but if I have my  
will,  
For derne love of thee, leman, I  
spill<sup>67</sup>"  
And helde her fast by the haunche  
bones,  
And saide "Leman, love me well at  
once,  
Or I will dien, all so God me save."  
And she sprang as a colt doth in the  
trave (*Note 14*):

---

<sup>65</sup>cunt.

<sup>66</sup>assuredly.

<sup>67</sup>for earnest love of thee my mistress, I perish.

And with her head she writhed fast  
away,  
And said; "I will not kiss thee, by  
my fay<sup>68</sup>  
Why let be," quoth she, "let be,  
Nicholas,  
Or I will cry out harow and alas!  
(*Note 15*)  
Do away your handes, for your  
courtesy."  
This Nicholas gan mercy for to cry,  
And spake so fair, and proffer'd  
him so fast,  
That she her love him granted at  
the last,  
And swore her oath by Saint  
Thomas of Kent,

---

<sup>68</sup>faith.

That she would be at his commandement,  
When that she may her leisure well  
espy.

"My husband is so full of jealousy,  
That but<sup>69</sup> ye waite well, and be  
privy,  
I wot right well I am but dead,"  
quoth she.

"Ye muste be full derne<sup>70</sup> as in this  
case."

"Nay, thereof care thee nought,"  
quoth Nicholas:

"A clerk had litherly beset his  
while<sup>71</sup>,

---

<sup>69</sup>unless.

<sup>70</sup>secret.

<sup>71</sup>ill spent his time.

But if<sup>72</sup> he could a carpenter be-  
guile."

And thus they were accorded and  
y-sworn

To wait a time, as I have said be-  
forn.

When Nicholas had done thus ev-  
ery deal<sup>73</sup>,

And thwacked her about the  
lendes<sup>74</sup> well,

He kiss'd her sweet, and taketh his  
psalt'ry

And playeth fast, and maketh  
melody.

Then fell it thus, that to the parish

---

<sup>72</sup>unless.

<sup>73</sup>whit.

<sup>74</sup>loins.

church,  
 Of Christe's owen workes for to  
 wirch<sup>75</sup>,  
 This good wife went upon a holy  
 day;  
 Her forehead shone as bright as  
 any day,  
 So was it washen, when she left her  
 werk.

Now was there of that church a  
 parish clerk,  
 The which that was y-cleped Ab-  
 solon.  
 Curl'd was his hair, and as the gold  
 it shone,  
 And strutted<sup>76</sup> as a fanne large and

---

<sup>75</sup>work.

<sup>76</sup>stretched.

broad;  
Full straight and even lay his jolly  
shode<sup>77</sup>.  
His rode<sup>78</sup> was red, his eyen grey  
as goose,  
With Paule's windows carven on  
his shoes (*Note 16*)  
In hosen red he went full fetisly<sup>79</sup>.  
Y-clad he was full small and prop-  
erly,  
All in a kirtle<sup>80</sup> of a light waget<sup>81</sup>;  
Full fair and thicke be the pointes  
set,

---

<sup>77</sup>head of hair.

<sup>78</sup>complexion.

<sup>79</sup>daintily, neatly.

<sup>80</sup>girdle.

<sup>81</sup>sky blue.

And thereupon he had a gay sur-  
plice,  
As white as is the blossom on the  
rise<sup>82</sup> (*Note 17*)  
A merry child he was, so God me  
save;  
Well could he letten blood, and  
clip, and shave,  
And make a charter of land, and a  
quittance.  
In twenty manners could he trip  
and dance,  
After the school of Oxenforde  
tho<sup>83</sup>, (*Note 18*)  
And with his legges caste to and  
fro;

---

<sup>82</sup>twig.

<sup>83</sup>them.

And playen songes on a small  
ribible<sup>84</sup>;  
Thereto he sung sometimes a loud  
quinible<sup>85</sup>  
And as well could he play on a  
giterne<sup>86</sup>  
In all the town was brewhouse nor  
tavern,  
That he not visited with his solas<sup>87</sup>,  
There as that any garnard tap-  
stere<sup>88</sup> was.  
But sooth to say he was somedeal

---

<sup>84</sup>fiddle.

<sup>85</sup>treble.

<sup>86</sup>guitar.

<sup>87</sup>mirth, sport.

<sup>88</sup>licentious barmaid.

squaimous<sup>89</sup>  
Of farting, and of speeche danger-  
ous.  
This Absolon, that jolly was and  
gay,  
Went with a censer on the holy day,  
Censing<sup>90</sup> the wives of the parish  
fast;  
And many a lovely look he on  
them cast,  
And namely<sup>91</sup> on this carpenter's  
wife:  
To look on her him thought a  
merry life.  
She was so proper, and sweet, and

---

<sup>89</sup>squeamish.

<sup>90</sup>burning incense for.

<sup>91</sup>especially.

likerous.

I dare well say, if she had been a  
mouse,  
And he a cat, he would her hent  
anon<sup>92</sup>.

This parish clerk, this jolly Absolon,  
Hath in his hearte such a love-  
longing!

That of no wife took he none offer-  
ing;  
For courtesy he said he woulde  
none.

The moon at night full clear and  
bryghte shone,  
And Absolon his giterne hath y-  
taken,

---

<sup>92</sup>have soon caught her.

For paramours he thoughte for to  
waken,  
And forth he went, jolif<sup>93</sup> and  
amorous,  
Till he came to the carpentere's  
house,  
A little after the cock had y-crow,  
And dressed him<sup>94</sup> under a shot  
window (*Note 19*),  
That was upon the carpentere's  
wall.  
He singeth in his voice gentle and  
small;  
"Now, dear lady, if thy will be,  
I pray that ye will rue on me<sup>95</sup>;

---

<sup>93</sup>joyous.

<sup>94</sup>stationed himself.

<sup>95</sup>take pity.

Full well accordant to his giterning.  
This carpenter awoke, and heard  
    him sing,  
And spake unto his wife, and said  
    anon,  
What Alison, hear'st thou not Absolon,  
That chanteth thus under our  
    bower<sup>96</sup> wall?"  
And she answer'd her husband  
    therewithal;  
"Yes, God wot, John, I hear him every  
    deal."  
This passeth forth; what will ye  
    bet<sup>97</sup> than well?  
From day to day this jolly Absolon

---

<sup>96</sup>chamber.

<sup>97</sup>better.

So wooeth her, that him is woebegone.

He waketh all the night, and all the day,

To comb his lockes broad, and make him gay.

He wooeth her by means and by brocage<sup>98</sup>,

And swore he woulde be her owen page.

He singeth brokking<sup>99</sup> as a nightingale.

He sent her piment (*Note 20*), mead, and spiced ale,

And wafers<sup>100</sup> piping hot out of

---

<sup>98</sup>by presents and by agents.

<sup>99</sup>quavering.

<sup>100</sup>cakes.

the glede<sup>101</sup>:

And, for she was of town, he prof-  
fer'd meed. (*Note 21*)

For some folk will be wonnen for  
richess,

And some for strokes, and some  
with gentiless.

Sometimes, to show his lightness  
and mast'ry,

He playeth Herod (*Note 22*) on a  
scaffold high.

But what availeth him as in this  
case?

So loveth she the Hendy Nicholas,  
That Absolon may blow the  
bucke's horn<sup>102</sup>:

---

<sup>101</sup>coals.

<sup>102</sup>"go whistle".

He had for all his labour but a  
scorn.

And thus she maketh Absolon her  
ape,

And all his earnest turneth to a  
jape<sup>103</sup>.

Full sooth is this proverb, it is no  
lie;

Men say right thus alway; the  
nighe sly

Maketh oft time the far lief to be  
loth. (*Note 23*)

For though that Absolon be  
wood<sup>104</sup> or wroth

Because that he far was from her  
sight,

---

<sup>103</sup>jest.

<sup>104</sup>mad.

This nigh Nicholas stood still in his  
light.

Now bear thee well, thou Hendy  
Nicholas,  
For Absolon may wail and sing  
"Alas!"

And so befell, that on a Saturday  
This carpenter was gone to Oseney,  
And Hendy Nicholas and Alison  
Accorded were to this conclusion,  
That Nicholas shall shape him a  
wile<sup>105</sup>

The silly jealous husband to be-  
guile;  
And if so were the game went  
aright,

---

<sup>105</sup>devise a stratagem.

She shoulde sleepe in his arms all  
night;  
For this was her desire and his also.  
And right anon, withoute wordes  
mo',  
This Nicholas no longer would he  
tarry,  
But doth full soft unto his chamber  
carry  
Both meat and drinke for a day or  
tway.  
And to her husband bade her for to  
say,  
If that he asked after Nicholas,  
She shoulde say, "She wist<sup>106</sup> not  
where he was;  
Of all the day she saw him not with

---

<sup>106</sup>knew.

eye;  
She trowed<sup>107</sup> he was in some mal-  
ady,  
For no cry that her maiden could  
him call  
He would answer, for nought that  
might befall."  
Thus passed forth all thilke<sup>108</sup> Sat-  
urday,  
That Nicholas still in his chamber  
lay,  
And ate, and slept, and didde what  
him list  
Till Sunday, that<sup>109</sup> the sunne went  
to rest.

---

<sup>107</sup>believed.

<sup>108</sup>that.

<sup>109</sup>when.

This silly carpenter had great mar-  
vaill<sup>110</sup>  
Of Nicholas, or what thing might  
him ail,  
And said; "I am adrad<sup>111</sup>, by Saint  
Thomas!  
It standeth not aright with  
Nicholas:  
God shielde<sup>112</sup> that he died sud-  
denly.  
This world is now full fickle sick-  
erly<sup>113</sup>.  
I saw to-day a corpse y-borne to  
chirch,

---

<sup>110</sup>wondered greatly.

<sup>111</sup>afraid, in dread.

<sup>112</sup>heaven forbid!.

<sup>113</sup>certainly.

That now on Monday last I saw  
him wurch<sup>114</sup>.

"Go up," quod he unto his  
knave<sup>115</sup>, "anon;

Clepe<sup>116</sup> at his door, or knocke  
with a stone:

Look how it is, and tell me bold-  
ely."

This knave went him up full stur-  
dily,

And, at the chamber door while  
that he stood,

He cried and knocked as that he  
were wood<sup>117</sup>:

---

<sup>114</sup>work.

<sup>115</sup>servant.

<sup>116</sup>call.

<sup>117</sup>mad.

"What how? what do ye, Master  
Nicholay?  
How may ye sleepen all the longe  
day?"  
But all for nought, he hearde not a  
word.  
An hole he found full low upon the  
board,  
Where as the cat was wont in for to  
creep,  
And at that hole he looked in full  
deep,  
And at the last he had of him a  
sight.  
This Nicholas sat ever gaping up-  
right,  
As he had kyked<sup>118</sup> on the newe

---

<sup>118</sup>looked.

moon. (*Note 24*)

Adown he went, and told his master soon,

In what array he saw this ilke<sup>119</sup>  
man.

This carpenter to blissen him<sup>120</sup>  
began,

And said: "Now help us, Sainte  
Frideswide. (*Note 25*)

A man wot<sup>121</sup> little what shall him  
betide.

This man is fall'n with his astronomy

Into some woodness<sup>122</sup> or some

---

<sup>119</sup>same.

<sup>120</sup>bless, cross himself.

<sup>121</sup>knows.

<sup>122</sup>madness.

agony.

I thought aye well how that it  
shoulde be.

Men should know nought of  
Godde's privity<sup>123</sup>.

Yea, blessed be alway a lewed<sup>124</sup>  
man,

That nought but only his believe  
can<sup>125</sup>.

So far'd another clerk with astron-  
omy:

He walked in the fieldes for to pry  
Upon the starres<sup>126</sup>, what there  
should befall,

---

<sup>123</sup>secrets.

<sup>124</sup>unlearned.

<sup>125</sup>knows no more than his "credo."

<sup>126</sup>keep watch on.

Till he was in a marle pit y-  
fall. (*Note 26*)

He saw not that. But yet, by Saint  
Thomas!

Me rueth sore of<sup>127</sup> Hendy  
Nicholas:

He shall be rated of<sup>128</sup> his study-  
ing,

If that I may, by Jesus, heaven's  
king!

Get me a staff, that I may under-  
spore<sup>129</sup>

While that thou, Robin, hevest off  
the door:

He shall out of his studying, as I

---

<sup>127</sup>I am very sorry for.

<sup>128</sup>chidden for.

<sup>129</sup>lever up.

guess."

And to the chamber door he gan  
him dress<sup>130</sup>

His knave was a strong carl for the  
nonce,

And by the hasp he heav'd it off at  
once;

Into the floor the door fell down  
anon.

This Nicholas sat aye as still as  
stone,

And ever he gap'd upward into the  
air.

The carpenter ween'd<sup>131</sup> he were  
in despair,

---

<sup>130</sup>apply himself.

<sup>131</sup>thought.

And hent<sup>132</sup> him by the shoulders  
mightily,  
And shook him hard, and cried  
spitously<sup>133</sup>;  
"What, Nicholas? what how, man?  
look adown:  
Awake, and think on Christe's pas-  
sioun.  
I crouche thee (*Note 27*) from elves,  
and from wights<sup>134</sup>.  
Therewith the night-spell said he  
anon rights<sup>135</sup>,  
On the four halves<sup>136</sup> of the house

---

<sup>132</sup> caught.

<sup>133</sup> angrily.

<sup>134</sup> witches.

<sup>135</sup> properly.

<sup>136</sup> corners.

about,  
And on the threshold of the door  
without.  
"Lord Jesus Christ, and Sainte  
Benedight,  
Blesse this house from every  
wicked wight,  
From the night mare, the white  
Pater-noster;  
Where wonnest<sup>137</sup> thou now,  
Sainte Peter's sister?"  
And at the last this Hendy  
Nicholas  
Gan for to sigh full sore, and said;  
"Alas!  
Shall all time world be lost eft-

---

<sup>137</sup> dwellest.

soones<sup>138</sup> now?"

This carpenter answer'd; "What sayest thou?

What? think on God, as we do, men that swink<sup>139</sup>."

This Nicholas answer'd; "Fetch me a drink;

And after will I speak in privity Of certain thing that toucheth thee and me:

I will tell it no other man certain."

This carpenter went down, and came again,

And brought of mighty ale a large quart;

And when that each of them had

---

<sup>138</sup>forthwith.

<sup>139</sup>labour.

drunk his part,  
 This Nicholas his chamber door  
 fast shet<sup>140</sup>,  
 And down the carpenter by him he  
 set,  
 And saide; "John, mine host full  
 lief<sup>141</sup> and dear,  
 Thou shalt upon thy truthe swear  
 me here,  
 That to no wight thou shalt my  
 counsel wray<sup>142</sup>:  
 For it is Christes counsel that I say,  
 And if thou tell it man, thou art for-  
 lore<sup>143</sup>: (*Note 28*)

---

<sup>140</sup>shut.

<sup>141</sup>loved.

<sup>142</sup>betray.

<sup>143</sup>lost.

For this vengeance thou shalt have  
 therefor,  
 That if thou wraye<sup>144</sup> me, thou  
 shalt be wood<sup>145</sup>."

"Nay, Christ forbid it for his holy  
 blood!"

Quoth then this silly man; "I am no  
 blab<sup>146</sup>,  
 Nor, though I say it, am I lief to  
 gab<sup>147</sup>."  
 Say what thou wilt, I shall it never  
 tell  
 To child or wife, by him that har-  
 ried Hell." (*Note 29*)

---

<sup>144</sup>betray.

<sup>145</sup>mad.

<sup>146</sup>talker.

<sup>147</sup>fond of speech.

"Now, John," quoth Nicholas, "I  
will not lie,  
I have y-found in my astrology,  
As I have looked in the moone  
bright,  
That now on Monday next, at quar-  
ter night,  
Shall fall a rain, and that so wild  
and wood<sup>148</sup>,  
That never half so great was Noe's  
flood.  
This world," he said, "in less than  
half an hour  
Shall all be dreint<sup>149</sup>, so hideous is  
the shower:

---

<sup>148</sup>mad.

<sup>149</sup>drowned.

Thus shall mankinde drench<sup>150</sup>,  
and lose their life."

This carpenter answer'd; "Alas, my  
wife!

And shall she drench? alas, mine  
Alisoun!"

For sorrow of this he fell almost ad-  
own,

And said; "Is there no remedy in  
this case?"

"Why, yes, for God," quoth Hendy  
Nicholas;

"If thou wilt worken after<sup>151</sup>;

Thou may'st not worken after thine  
own head.

For thus saith Solomon, that was

---

<sup>150</sup>drown.

<sup>151</sup>learning and advice.

full true:

Work all by counsel, and thou shalt  
not rue<sup>152</sup>

And if thou worke wilt by good  
counsel,

I undertake, withoute mast or sail,  
Yet shall I save her, and thee, and  
me.

Hast thou not heard how saved  
was Noe,

When that our Lord had warned  
him beforne,

That all the world with water  
should be lorn<sup>153</sup>?"

"Yes," quoth this carpenter," full

---

<sup>152</sup>repent.

<sup>153</sup>should perish.

yore ago<sup>154</sup>."

"Hast thou not heard," quoth  
 Nicholas, "also  
 The sorrow of Noe, with his fellow-  
 ship,  
 That he had ere he got his wife to  
 ship? (*Note 30*)  
 Him had been lever, I dare well un-  
 dertake,  
 At thilke time, than all his wethers  
 black,  
 That she had had a ship herself  
 alone. (*Note 31*)  
 And therefore know'st thou what  
 is best to be done?  
 This asketh haste, and of an hasty  
 thing

---

<sup>154</sup>long since.

Men may not preach or make tar-  
rying.

Anon go get us fast into this inn<sup>155</sup>

A kneading trough, or else a  
kemelin<sup>156</sup>,

For each of us; but look that they  
be large,

In whiche we may swim<sup>157</sup> as in a  
barge:

And have therein vitaille suffisant  
But for one day; fie on the re-  
menant;

The water shall aslake<sup>158</sup> and go  
away

---

<sup>155</sup>house.

<sup>156</sup>brewing-tub.

<sup>157</sup>float.

<sup>158</sup>slacken, abate.

Aboute prime<sup>159</sup> upon the nexte  
day.

But Robin may not know of this,  
thy knave<sup>160</sup>,

Nor eke thy maiden Gill I may not  
save:

Ask me not why: for though thou  
aske me

I will not telle Godde's privity.

Sufficeth thee, but if thy wit be  
mad<sup>161</sup>,

To have as great a grace as Noe  
had;

Thy wife shall I well saven out of  
doubt.

---

<sup>159</sup>early morning.

<sup>160</sup>servant.

<sup>161</sup>unless thou be out of thy wits.

Go now thy way, and speed thee  
hereabout.  
But when thou hast for her, and  
thee, and me,  
Y-gotten us these kneading tubbes  
three,  
Then shalt thou hang them in the  
roof full high,  
So that no man our purveyance<sup>162</sup>  
espy:  
And when thou hast done thus as I  
have said,  
And hast our vitaille fair in them y-  
laid,  
And eke an axe to smite the cord in  
two  
When that the water comes, that

---

<sup>162</sup>foresight, providence.

we may go,  
 And break an hole on high upon  
 the gable  
 Into the garden-ward, over the sta-  
 ble,  
 That we may freely passe forth our  
 way,  
 When that the greate shower is  
 gone away.  
 Then shalt thou swim as merry, I  
 undertake,  
 As doth the white duck after her  
 drake:  
 Then will I clepe<sup>163</sup>, 'How, Alison?  
 How, John?  
 Be merry: for the flood will pass  
 anon.'

---

<sup>163</sup>call.

And thou wilt say, 'Hail, Master  
Nicholay,  
Good-morrow, I see thee well, for  
it is day.'  
And then shall we be lordes all our  
life  
Of all the world, as Noe and his  
wife.  
But of one thing I warne thee full  
right,  
Be well advised, on that ilke<sup>164</sup>  
night,  
When we be enter'd into shippe's  
board,  
That none of us not speak a single  
word,  
Nor clepe nor cry, but be in his

---

<sup>164</sup>same.

prayer,  
For that is Godde's owen heste<sup>165</sup>  
  dear.  
Thy wife and thou must hangen far  
  atween<sup>166</sup>,  
For that betwixte you shall be no  
  sin,  
No more in looking than there shall  
  in deed.  
This ordinance is said: go, God  
  thee speed  
To-morrow night, when men be all  
  asleep,  
Into our kneading tubbes will we  
  creep,  
And sitte there, abiding Godde's

---

<sup>165</sup>command.

<sup>166</sup>asunder.

grace.  
Go now thy way, I have no longer  
space  
To make of this no longer sermon-  
ing:  
Men say thus: Send the wise, and  
say nothing:  
Thou art so wise, it needeth thee  
nought teach.  
Go, save our lives, and that I thee  
beseech."  
This silly carpenter went forth his  
way,  
Full oft he said, "Alas! and Well-a-  
day!'  
And to his wife he told his privy,  
And she was ware, and better  
knew than he  
What all this quaintest cast was for

to say<sup>167</sup>.

But natheless she fear'd as she  
would dey,

And said: "Alas! go forth thy way  
anon.

Help us to scape, or we be dead  
each one.

I am thy true and very wedded  
wife;

Go, deare spouse, and help to save  
our life."

Lo, what a great thing is affection!

Men may die of imagination,

So deeply may impression be take.

This silly carpenter begins to  
quake:

He thinketh verily that he may see

---

<sup>167</sup>strange contrivance meand

This newe flood come weltering as  
the sea  
To drenchen<sup>168</sup> Alison, his honey  
dear.  
He weepeth, waileth, maketh sorry  
cheer<sup>169</sup>;  
He sigheth, with full many a sorry  
sough<sup>170</sup>.  
He go'th, and getteth him a knead-  
ing trough,  
And after that a tub, and a kemelin,  
And privily he sent them to his inn:  
And hung them in the roof full  
privily.  
With his own hand then made he

---

<sup>168</sup>drown.

<sup>169</sup>dismal countenance.

<sup>170</sup>groan.

ladders three,  
 To climbe by the ranges and the  
 stalks<sup>171</sup>  
 Unto the tubbes hanging in the  
 balks<sup>172</sup>;  
 And victualed them, kemelin,  
 trough, and tub,  
 With bread and cheese, and good  
 ale in a jub<sup>173</sup>,  
 Sufficing right enough as for a day.  
 But ere that he had made all this ar-  
 ray,  
 He sent his knave<sup>174</sup>, and eke his

---

<sup>171</sup>the rungs and the uprights.

<sup>172</sup>beams.

<sup>173</sup>jug.

<sup>174</sup>servant.

wench<sup>175</sup> also,  
Upon his need<sup>176</sup> to London for to  
go.

And on the Monday, when it drew  
to night,

He shut his door withoute candle  
light,

And dressed<sup>177</sup> every thing as it  
should be.

And shortly up they climbed all the  
three.

They satte stille well a furlong  
way<sup>178</sup>

"Now, Pater noster, clum," (*Note 32*)

---

<sup>175</sup>maid.

<sup>176</sup>business.

<sup>177</sup>prepared.

<sup>178</sup>the time it would take to walk a furlong.

said Nicholay,  
 And "clum," quoth John; and  
 "clum," said Alison:  
 This carpenter said his devotion,  
 And still he sat and bided his  
 prayere,  
 Awaking on the rain, if he it hear.  
 The deade sleep, for weary busi-  
 ness,  
 Fell on this carpenter, right as I  
 guess,  
 About the curfew-time, (*Note 33*) or  
 little more,  
 For travail of his ghost<sup>179</sup> he  
 groaned sore,  
 And eft he routed, for his head mis-

---

<sup>179</sup>anguish of spirit.

lay<sup>180</sup>  
 Adown the ladder stalked  
 Nicholay;  
 And Alison full soft adown she  
 sped.  
 Withoute wordes more they went  
 to bed,  
 There as<sup>181</sup> the carpenter was wont  
 to lie:  
 There was the revel, and the  
 melody.  
 And thus lay Alison and Nicholas,  
 In business of mirth and in solace,  
 Until the bell of laudes<sup>182</sup> gan to  
 ring,

---

<sup>180</sup>and then he snored, for his head lay awry.

<sup>181</sup>wgere.

<sup>182</sup>morning service, at 3.a.m..

And friars in the chancel went to  
sing.

This parish clerk, this amorous Absolon,

That is for love alway so woebegone,

Upon the Monday was at Oseney  
With company, him to disport and  
play;

And asked upon cas<sup>183</sup> a cloisterer<sup>184</sup>=

Full privily after John the carpenter;

And he drew him apart out of the  
church,

---

<sup>183</sup>occasion.

<sup>184</sup>monk.

And said, "I n'ot<sup>185</sup>; I saw him not  
here wirch<sup>186</sup>

Since Saturday; I trow that he be  
went

For timber, where our abbot hath  
him sent.

And dwellen at the Grange a day  
or two:

For he is wont for timber for to go,  
Or else he is at his own house cer-  
tain.

Where that he be, I cannot soothly  
say<sup>187</sup>."

This Absolon full jolly was and  
light,

---

<sup>185</sup>know not.

<sup>186</sup>work.

<sup>187</sup>say certainly.

And thought, "Now is the time to  
 wake all night,  
 For sickerly<sup>188</sup> I saw him not stir-  
 ring  
 About his door, since day began to  
 spring.  
 So may I thrive, but I shall at cock  
 crow  
 Full privily go knock at his win-  
 dow,  
 That stands full low upon his  
 bower<sup>189</sup> wall:  
 To Alison then will I tellen all  
 My love-longing; for I shall not  
 miss  
 That at the leaste way I shall her

---

<sup>188</sup>certainly.

<sup>189</sup>chamber.

kiss.

Some manner comfort shall I have,  
parfay<sup>190</sup>.

My mouth hath itched all this live-  
long day:

That is a sign of kissing at the least.

All night I mette<sup>191</sup> eke I was at a  
feast.

Therefore I will go sleep an hour or  
tway,

And all the night then will I wake  
and play."

When that the first cock crowed  
had, anon

Up rose this jolly lover Absolon,  
And him arrayed gay, at point de-

---

<sup>190</sup>by my faith.

<sup>191</sup>dreamt.

vise<sup>192</sup>.

But first he chewed grains (*Note 34*)  
and liquorice,

To smelle sweet, ere he had  
combed his hair.

Under his tongue a true  
love (*Note 35*) he bare,

For thereby thought he to be gra-  
cious.

Then came he to the carpentere's  
house,

And still he stood under the shot  
window;

Unto his breast it raught<sup>193</sup>, it was  
so low;

And soft he coughed with a

---

<sup>192</sup>with exact care.

<sup>193</sup>reached.

semisoun'<sup>194</sup>.

"What do ye, honeycomb, sweet  
Alisoun?

My faire bird, my sweet  
cinamom<sup>195</sup>,  
Awaken, leman<sup>196</sup> mine, and  
speak to me.

Full little thinke ye upon my woe,  
That for your love I sweat there  
as<sup>197</sup> I go.

No wonder is that I do swelt<sup>198</sup>  
and sweat.

I mourn as doth a lamb after the

---

<sup>194</sup>low tone.

<sup>195</sup>cinnamon, sweet spice.

<sup>196</sup>mistress.

<sup>197</sup>wherever.

<sup>198</sup>faint.

teat  
Y-wis<sup>199</sup>, leman, I have such love-  
longing,  
That like a turtle<sup>200</sup> true is my  
mourning.  
I may not eat, no more than a  
maid."  
"Go from the window, thou jack  
fool," she said:  
"As help me God, it will not be,  
'come ba<sup>201</sup> me.'  
I love another, else I were to  
blame",  
Well better than thee, by Jesus, Ab-  
solon.

---

<sup>199</sup>certainly.

<sup>200</sup>turtle-dove.

<sup>201</sup>kiss.

Go forth thy way, or I will cast a  
stone;

And let me sleep; a twenty devil  
way<sup>202</sup>.

"Alas!" quoth Absolon, "and well  
away!

That true love ever was so ill beset:  
Then kiss me, since that it may be  
no bet<sup>203</sup>,

For Jesus' love, and for the love of  
me."

"Wilt thou then go thy way there-  
with?" , quoth she.

"Yea, certes, leman," quoth this Ab-  
solon.

"Then make thee ready," quoth she,

---

<sup>202</sup>twenty devils take ye!

<sup>203</sup>better.

"I come anon."

(And unto Nicholas she said full  
still<sup>204</sup>:

"Now peace, and thou shalt laugh  
anon thy fill." (*Note 36*)

This Absolon down set him on his  
knees,

And said; "I am a lord at all de-  
grees:

For after this I hope there cometh  
more;

Leman, thy grace, and, sweete  
bird, thine ore<sup>205</sup>."

The window she undid, and that in  
haste.

"Have done," quoth she, "come off,

---

<sup>204</sup>in a low voice.

<sup>205</sup>favour.

and speed thee fast,  
Lest that our neighebours should  
thee espy."  
Then Absolon gan wipe his mouth  
full dry.  
Dark was the night as pitch or as  
the coal,  
And at the window she put out her  
hole,  
And Absolon him fell ne bet ne  
werse,  
But with his mouth he kiss'd her  
naked erse  
Full savourly. When he was ware  
of this,  
Aback he start, and thought it was  
amiss;  
For well he wist a woman hath no  
beard.

He felt a thing all rough, and long  
y-hair'd,  
And saide; "Fy, alas! what have I  
do?"  
"Te he!" quoth she, and clapt the  
window to;  
And Absolon went forth at sorry  
pace.  
"A beard, a beard," said Hendy  
Nicholas;  
"By God's corpus, this game went  
fair and well."  
This silly Absolon heard every  
deal<sup>206</sup>,  
And on his lip he gan for anger  
bite;  
And to himself he said, "I shall thee

---

<sup>206</sup>word.

quite<sup>207</sup>,  
Who rubbeth now, who frotteth<sup>208</sup>  
now his lips  
With dust, with sand, with straw,  
with cloth, with chips,  
But Absolon? that saith full oft,  
"Alas!  
My soul betake I unto Sathanas,  
But me were lever<sup>209</sup> than all this  
town," quoth he  
I this despite awroken<sup>210</sup> for to be.  
Alas! alas! that I have been y-  
blent<sup>211</sup>."

---

<sup>207</sup>requite, be even with.

<sup>208</sup>rubs.

<sup>209</sup>rather.

<sup>210</sup>revenged.

<sup>211</sup>deceived.

His hote love is cold, and all y-  
 quent<sup>212</sup>.

For from that time that he had  
 kiss'd her erse,

Of paramours he sette not a  
 kers<sup>213</sup>,

For he was healed of his malady;  
 Full often paramours he gan defy,  
 And weep as doth a child that hath  
 been beat.

A softe pace he went over the street  
 Unto a smith, men callen Dan<sup>214</sup>

Gerveis,  
 That in his forge smithed plough-  
 harness;

---

<sup>212</sup>quenched.

<sup>213</sup>cared not a rush.

<sup>214</sup>master.

He sharped share and culter busily.  
 This Absolon knocked all easily,  
 And said; "Undo, Gerveis, and that  
 anon."

"What, who art thou?" "It is I, Absolon."

"What? Absolon, what? Christe's  
 sweete tree<sup>215</sup> .

Why rise so rath<sup>216</sup>? hey!  
 Benedicite,

What aileth you? some gay girl,  
 (*Note 37*) God it wote,

Hath brought you thus upon the  
 viretote: (*Note 38*)

By Saint Neot, ye wot well what I  
 mean."

---

<sup>215</sup>cross.

<sup>216</sup>early.

This Absolon he raughte<sup>217</sup> not a  
bean  
Of all his play; no word again he  
gaf<sup>218</sup>.  
For he had more tow on his distaff  
(*Note 39*)  
Than Gerveis knew, and saide;  
"Friend so dear,  
That hote culter in the chimney  
here  
Lend it to me, I have therewith to  
don<sup>219</sup>:  
I will it bring again to thee full  
soon."  
Gerveis answered; "Certes, were it

---

<sup>217</sup>recked, cared.

<sup>218</sup>spoke.

<sup>219</sup>do.

gold,  
Or in a poke<sup>220</sup> nobles all untold,  
Thou shouldst it have, as I am a  
true smith.  
Hey! Christe's foot, what will ye  
do therewith?"  
"Thereof," quoth Absolon, "be as be  
may;  
I shall well tell it thee another day:"  
And caught the culter by the colde  
stele<sup>221</sup>.  
Full soft out at the door he gan to  
steal,  
And went unto the carpentere's  
wall  
He coughed first, and knocked

---

<sup>220</sup>purse.

<sup>221</sup>handle.

therewithal  
Upon the window, light as he did  
ere<sup>222</sup>. (*Note 40*)  
This Alison answered; "Who is  
there  
That knocketh so? I warrant him a  
thief."  
"Nay, nay," quoth he, "God wot, my  
sweete lefe<sup>223</sup>,  
I am thine Absolon, my own dar-  
ling.  
Of gold," quoth he, "I have thee  
brought a ring,  
My mother gave it me, so God me  
save!  
Full fine it is, and thereto well y-

---

<sup>222</sup>before.

<sup>223</sup>love.

grave<sup>224</sup>:

This will I give to thee, if thou me  
kiss."

Now Nicholas was risen up to piss,  
And thought he would amenden  
all the jape<sup>225</sup>;

He shoulde kiss his erse ere that he  
scape:

And up the window did he hastily,  
And out his erse he put full privily  
Over the buttock, to the haunche  
bone.

And therewith spake this clerk,  
this Absolon,  
"Speak, sweete bird, I know not  
where thou art."

---

<sup>224</sup>engraved.

<sup>225</sup>improve the joke.

This Nicholas anon let fly a fart,  
As great as it had been a thunder  
dent<sup>226</sup>;

That with the stroke he was well  
nigh y-blent<sup>227</sup>;

But he was ready with his iron hot,  
And Nicholas amid the erse he  
smote.

Off went the skin an handbreadth  
all about.

The hote culter burned so his  
tout<sup>228</sup>,

That for the smart he weened<sup>229</sup> he  
would die;

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<sup>226</sup>peal, clap.

<sup>227</sup>blinded.

<sup>228</sup>breech.

<sup>229</sup>thought.

As he were wood<sup>230</sup>, for woe he  
gan to cry,  
"Help! water, water, help for  
Godde's heart!"

This carpenter out of his slumber  
start,  
And heard one cry "Water," as he  
were wood<sup>231</sup>,  
And thought, "Alas! now cometh  
Noe's flood."  
He sat him up withoute wordes  
mo'  
And with his axe he smote the cord  
in two;  
And down went all; he found nei-  
ther to sell

---

<sup>230</sup>mad.

<sup>231</sup>mad.

Nor bread nor ale, till he came to  
the sell<sup>232</sup>, (*Note 41*)  
Upon the floor, and there in swoon  
he lay.  
Up started Alison and Nicholay,  
And cried out an "harow!" (*Note*  
*15*) in the street.  
The neighbours alle, bothe small  
and great  
In ranne, for to gauren<sup>233</sup> on this  
man,  
That yet in swoone lay, both pale  
and wan:  
For with the fall he broken had his  
arm.  
But stand he must unto his owen

---

<sup>232</sup>threshold,

<sup>233</sup>stare.

harm,  
 For when he spake, he was anon  
 borne down  
 With Hendy Nicholas and Alisoun.  
 They told to every man that he was  
 wood<sup>234</sup>;  
 He was aghaste<sup>235</sup> so of Noe's  
 flood,  
 Through phantasy, that of his van-  
 ity  
 He had y-bought him kneading-  
 tubbes three,  
 And had them hanged in the roof  
 above;  
 And that he prayed them for  
 Godde's love

---

<sup>234</sup>mad.

<sup>235</sup>afraid.

To sitten in the roof for company.  
 The folk gan laughen at his phan-  
 tasy.

Into the roof they kyken<sup>236</sup> and  
 they gape,

And turned all his harm into a  
 jape<sup>237</sup>

For whatsoe'er this carpenter an-  
 swer'd,

It was for nought, no man his rea-  
 son heard.

With oathes great he was so sworn  
 adown,

That he was holden wood in all the  
 town.

For every clerk anon right held

---

<sup>236</sup>peep, look.

<sup>237</sup>jest.

with other;  
They said, "The man was wood,  
my leve<sup>238</sup> brother;"  
And every wight gan laughen at  
his strife.  
Thus swived<sup>239</sup> was the carpen-  
tere's wife,  
For all his keeping<sup>240</sup> and his jeal-  
ousy;  
And Absolon hath kiss'd her  
nether eye;  
And Nicholas is scalded in the  
tout.  
This tale is done, and God save all

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<sup>238</sup> dear.

<sup>239</sup> enjoyed.

<sup>240</sup> care.

the rout<sup>241</sup>.

---

<sup>241</sup>company.

## NOTES

1. *Almagest*: The book of Ptolemy the astronomer, which formed the canon of astrological science in the middle ages.
2. *Astrolabe*: "Astrelagour," "astrelabore"; a mathematical instrument for taking the altitude of the sun or stars.
3. "Augrim" is a corruption of algorithm, the

Arabian term for numeration; "augrim stones," therefore were probably marked with numerals, and used as counters.

4. *Angelus ad virginem*: The Angel's salutation to Mary; Luke i. 28. It was the "Ave Maria" of the Catholic Church service.

5. *Cato*: Though Chaucer may have referred to the famous *Censor*, more probably the reference is merely to the "Moral Distichs," which go under his name, though written after his time; and in a supplement to which the quoted passage may be found.

6. *Barm-cloth*: apron; from Anglo-Saxon "barme," bosom or lap.

7. *Volupere*: Head-gear, kerchief; from French, "enveloppeur," to wrap up.

8. *Popelet*: Puppet; but chiefly; young wench.

9. Noble: nobles were gold coins of especial purity and brightness; "Ex auro nobilissimi, unde nobilis vocatus," (made from the noblest (purest) gold, and therefore called nobles) says Vossius.

10. Yern: Shrill, lively; German, "gern," willingly, cheerfully.

11. Braket: bragget, a sweet drink made of honey, spices, &c. In some parts of the country, a drink made from honeycomb, after the honey is extracted, is still called "bragwort."

12. Piggesnie: a fond term, like "my duck;" from Anglo-Saxon, "piga," a young maid; but Tyrwhitt associates it with the Latin, "ocellus," little eye, a fondling term, and suggests that the "pigs-eye," which is very small, was applied in the same sense. Davenport and Butler both use the word pigsnie, the first for "darling," the sec-

ond literally for "eye;" and Bishop Gardner, "On True Obedience," in his address to the reader, says: "How softly she was wont to chirpe him under the chin, and kiss him; how prettily she could talk to him (how doth my sweet heart, what saith now pig's-eye)."

13. Oseney: A once well-known abbey near Oxford.

14. Trave: travis; a frame in which unruly horses were shod.

15. Harow and Alas: Haro! was an old Norman cry for redress or aid. The "Clameur de Haro" was lately raised, under peculiar circumstances, as the prelude to a legal protest, in Jersey.

16. His shoes were ornamented like the windows of St. Paul's, especially like the old rose-window.

17. Rise: Twig, bush; German, "Reis," a twig; "Reisig," a copse.

18. Chaucer satirises the dancing of Oxford as he did the French of Stratford at Bow.

19. Shot window: A projecting or bow window, whence it was possible shoot at any one approaching the door.

20. Piment: A drink made with wine, honey, and spices.

21. Because she was town-bred, he offered wealth, or money reward, for her love.

22. Parish-clerks, like Absolon, had leading parts in the mysteries or religious plays; Herod was one of these parts, which may have been an object of competition among the amateurs of the period.

. "The nighe sly maketh oft time the far lief

to be loth": a proverb; the cunning one near at hand oft makes the loving one afar off to be odious. 1

24. Kyked: Looked; "keek" is still used in some parts in the sense of "peep."

25. Saint Frideswide was the patroness of a considerable priory at Oxford, and held there in high repute.

26. Plato, in his "Theatetus," tells this story of Thales; but it has since appeared in many other forms.

27. Crouche: protect by signing the sign of the cross.

28. Forlore: lost; german, "verloren."

29. Him that harried Hell: Christ who wasted or subdued hell: in the middle ages, some very active exploits against the prince of

darkness and his powers were ascribed by the monkish tale-tellers to the saviour after he had "descended into hell."

30. According to the old mysteries, Noah's wife refused to come into the ark, and bade her husband row forth and get him a new wife, because he was leaving her gossips in the town to drown. Shem and his brothers got her shipped by main force; and Noah, coming forward to welcome her, was greeted with a box on the ear.

31. "Him had been lever, I dare well undertake, At thilke time, than all his wethers black, That she had had a ship herself alone." i.e. "At that time he would have given all his black wethers, if she had had an ark to herself."

32. "Clum," like "mum," a note of silence; but otherwise explained as the humming sound made in repeating prayers; from the Anglo-

Saxon, "clumian," to mutter, speak in an undertone, keep silence.

33. Curfew-time: Eight in the evening, when, by the law of William the Conqueror, all people were, on ringing of a bell, to extinguish fire and candle, and go to rest; hence the word curfew, from French, "couvre-feu," cover-fire.

34. Absolon chewed grains: these were grains of Paris, or Paradise; a favourite spice.

35. Under his tongue a true love he bare: some sweet herb; another reading, however, is "a true love-knot," which may have been of the nature of a charm.

36. The two lines within brackets are not in most of the editions: they are taken from Urry; whether he supplied them or not, they serve the purpose of a necessary explanation.

37. Gay girl: As applied to a young woman of light manners, this euphemistic phrase has enjoyed a wonderful vitality.

38. Viretote: Urry reads "meritote," and explains it from Spelman as a game in which children made themselves giddy by whirling on ropes. In French, "virer" means to turn; and the explanation may, therefore, suit either reading. In modern slang parlance, Gerveis would probably have said, "on the rampage," or "on the swing" – not very far from Spelman's rendering.

39. He had more tow on his distaff: a proverbial saying: he was playing a deeper game, had more serious business on hand.

40. Ere: before; German, "eher."

41. Sell: sill of the door, threshold; French, "seuil," Latin, "solum," the ground.