The Romance of the Rose
(Le Roman de la Rose)
The Continuation

Jean de Meung

A Translation into English by

A. S. Kline

With illuminations, courtesy of the British Library, from an edition dated c.1490–c.1500, originating from Bruges, the Netherlands. Prepared for Engelbert II, count of Nassau and Vianden (d. 1504).

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About This Work

ean de Meung (c1240-c1305) wrote this long continuation (dated to between 1268 and 1285 by internal references) of the original Roman de la Rose. Jean claimed that the original work had been conceived by Guillaume de Lorris (c1200?-c1240?) some forty years earlier. Guillaume had penned a development of the courtly love poem, allegorical in content, to act as an 'Art of Love' (*Ovid*) for his own age. Jean's continuation is an encyclopaedic moral commentary on his world, the seeds of which lie in Guillaume's work, but whose content and style of delivery is Jean's own. Jean appears to have excised the last eighty lines of Guillaume's work (see my previous translation) in order to commence his own from that point. This translation reflects that assumption, but begins from Chapter XXXIII to provide continuity with Guillaume's original.

> *'Nor shall I find comfort again*
> *If I have lost all your good-will;*
> *Small faith I have in others still;*
> *If, perchance, tis lost to me there,*
> *Then will my ending be despair.'*

Guillaume de Lorris:
Romance de la Rose: Chapter XXXII

CHAPTER XXXIII: THE LOVER SPEAKS OF HOPE

(Lines 4283-4450)

Guillaume de Lorris having died,
His fair Romance is laid aside,
But after more than forty years
Master Jean de Meung appears;
He doth continue it, and thence
Pens the work we now commence.

DESPAIR, alas? I'll ne'er do so,
No, I'll despair not, for I know
That if Hope proves of no avail,
Tis but courage in me doth fail.
I'll take strength from the thought
That, to better my ills, Love taught
That Hope would be my surety,
And she would ever go with me.
Yet what must I do in this affair?
Though she's courteous and debonair,
She doth prove certain in naught,
So lovers' lives are but fraught;
She, as their lady, their mistress,
With promises doth oft distress.
For often she doth promise them,
Yet doth break her promise then.
God love me, there is the danger,
For in such torment many a lover
She doth keep, and will maintain,

Who their love shall ne'er attain.
None knows on what they can depend,
For none knows how all this may end.
Mere fools endure her despotism;
If she constructs some syllogism,
Men must fear, in their confusion,
She will draw the wrong conclusion;
For, she will, as we oft do see,
Deceive full many, utterly;
Yet her wish she doth not hide
That whoever takes her side
Shall have the best of the dispute;
I'd be mad not to follow suit.
Yet what's a wish worth to me
If it doth not end my misery?
Too little, for she's no help in this
Except in the forging of a promise;
Promise without gain's worth naught;
So many obstacles she's brought,
That none can count their number.
Resistance and Shame encumber
Me, and Ill-Talk, and Jealousy.
Ill-Talk poisons and taints all he
Encounters, and his evil tongue
Delivers them to martyrdom.
Fair-Welcome in prison do they
Hold; he is in my thoughts alway,
And if he's not with me, I know,
In a brief while, to death I'll go.
Above all, I waste away because
Of that old crone, foul and coarse,
Who's set to guard him so closely,
Not a soul will she let him see.

CHAPTER XXXIII: HE CONSIDERS HIS SITUATION

FROM now on my woes will deepen;
Tis true the God of Love has given
Three gifts to me, of his good grace,
Yet gifts all lost to me in this place:
Sweet-Thought, who aids me not at all;
Sweet-Speech, whose help proves gall;
Sweet-Glances, he's the third by name;
God help me, I have lost those same.
Doubtless fair gifts they are, and yet
Of no worth to me, unless they let
Fair-Welcome forth from his prison,
Where he's held for no good reason.
I shall die for lack of him, I fear,
For that he'll ne'er escape is clear.
Escape! No, for by what prowess,
Could he win free of that fortress?
It will not be achieved through me,
In truth, small sense, rather folly
And madness, did I there display,
When homage to Love I did pay.
That Lady Idleness made me do,
And shame be on her for it too,
Who let me into the garden fair,
When I did beg for shelter there!
For if she had sought my good,
My plea she'd not have understood;
Never grant a hearing to a fool,
For an instant, such is my rule;

He should be swiftly reproved,
Before his folly can been proved.
I was a fool, yet she gave ear,
But not for my own good, I fear;
She did accomplish all my wish,
And yet I must lament like this.
And Reason advised me, in my need;
I may count myself a fool, indeed,
Choosing neither to renounce love,
Nor yet Reason's counsel approve.
Reason was right so to blame me,
Who would a foolish lover be,
And now it is right that I lament,
I'faith, since now I would repent.
Repent! Alas, why should I though?
As a false traitor I would show,
For the devil thus I'd have obeyed,
And so seen my master betrayed.
Is Fair-Welcome a traitor too?
Must he attract my hatred who,
By doing me a courtesy,
Languishes, trapped by Jealousy?
The courtesy that he did me, too,
None would expect a man to do,
In thus desiring me to oppose
The thorny hedge, and kiss the Rose.
He deserves no ingratitude,
From me, nor shall I prove so rude.
Never, God please, will I approve
Murmurs against the God of Love,
Nor against Hope, nor Idleness,
Right gracious to me, I confess;
For it would be wrong, tis plain,
If of their fair deeds I complain.
So there is naught to do but suffer,

My body to martyrdom offer,
And wait in hope, despite my grief,
Till Love do send me some relief.

CHAPTER XXXIII: HE REMEMBERS THE GOD OF LOVE'S PROMISE

I MUST wait upon his mercy,
For I recall how he said to me:
'You, for your service, I do thank;
I'll raise you to the highest rank,
If base acts steal it not from you.
Expect it not soon; for tis true,
Great fortune comes not in an hour;
O'er time and woe we lack power.'
Word for word, so he spoke to me,
Clearly he loves me tenderly;
I needst but serve, and mind my place,
If I wish to deserve his grace;
For any fault would lie in me,
Not in the God of Love, for he,
As a God, can never fail, say I.
Surely in me the fault doth lie,
And yet I know not why tis so,
Nor, perchance, shall I ever know.
So let things go on, as they may,
Let the God of Love have his way,
Let me escape, or continue still,
Or let me die, if that be his will.
I shall ne'er reach the end of this,
Yet I'll die if I win not my wish,
Or some other wins it not for me.
But if Love who wounds me deeply,
Would wish to achieve it for me,
Then no ill could ever grieve me,

That comes about through serving him.
No, let all happen, at his whim.
Let him guide me now, as before,
For I, indeed, can do no more.
But whatever happens further,
I pray that he will remember
Fair-Welcome, who doth me kill,
And yet to me hath done no ill,
After my death; and, for his ease,
To you, Amor, ere my life cease,
Since I cannot bear his burden, I,
Without regret, confess, and sigh,
(It being every lover's intent,
Thus to make their last testament)
That to him my heart I do leave,
For I have naught else to bequeath.

CHAPTER XXXIV: REASON DESCENDS AGAIN FROM HER TOWER

(Lines 4451-4592)

Here that most beauteous Reason,
Returns, she, who in every season,
With her wise counsel, doth correct
Those who their true good neglect.

WHILE I complained, sorrowfully,
Of the great ills that troubled me,
Not knowing where to seek relief
For all of my anger and my grief,
I saw Reason, the fair, descending
From her tower, straight returning;
On hearing my plaint, she swiftly,
Came toward me, and that directly.
Could she but gladly do me good,
According to her power, she would.
'Dear Friend', said Reason, the fair,
'What progress now in your affair?
Are you not weary yet of loving?
Nor have had enough of grieving?
How do Love's ills suit the lover?
Are they too sweet now, or bitter?
Know you not yet to choose the wise,
All that might aid you, and suffice?
For have you found a kind master
In him who achieved your capture,
He who torments you without cease?

Ill was the day you sought to please
Your lord, paying homage to him;
A fine fool, thus did you begin.
But doubtless you knew not who
It was with whom you had to do;
For you, if you'd but known him well,
Had ne'er succumbed thus to his spell;
Or if he had become your master,
You'd not have served him a summer,
Nor even a day, nor yet an hour;
You would have scorned his power
I think, and instantly removed,
Nor been bound to him through love.
Claim you to know him?' 'Yes, lady.'
'How? In your soul?' 'No, because he
Instructed me: "You should delight
In serving such a master aright,
A lord who is of such renown."'
'Know you more?' 'No, for I found
That, after he had commanded me,
Swift as an eagle, he did flee,
While I remained in peril here.'
'A poor acquaintance then, I fear.
But now I would have you gain
Knowledge, after all this pain
That sets awry all your affair;
No wretched fellow anywhere,
Doth bear a burden any greater;
It is good to know one's master.
If you knew the God of Love well
You could escape and flee this cell,
This prison where you waste away.'
'Lady, since he's my lord today,
And I his liegeman completely,

My heart would listen willingly,
And learn more, I gladly admit,
If there was one here to teach it.'
'Upon my life then, I shall do so,
Since your heart doth seek to know.
Now, without a lie, will be known
A thing which can ne'er be shown;
You'll win to it, without science,
Gather, without your cognisance,
What has ne'er before been seen,
Nor could it be revealed, I mean;
Though, even if a man doth know,
Who fixes his heart on loving so,
Shall not through it suffer the less,
Unless he'd flee from love's duress.
Yet thus the knot I'll have untied,
You must else find forever tied.
Now grant me your full attention.
Of Love, I'll yield my description.'

CHAPTER XXXIV: REASON'S DESCRIPTION OF LOVE

'LOVE is peace yet filled with hate;
Love is hatred though love's its state;
Love is a faithless faithfulness,
Love is a faithful faithlessness;
A state of fear, and is yet secure,
Despairs, and yet doth hope the more;
Love is reason lost to madness,
Yet is a mad reasonableness;
It is the sweet risk of drowning,
A great load, and yet easy lifting;
It's Charybdis, the perilous,
Disagreeable and yet gracious;
It is a most healthful languor,
And yet a health that doth rancour;
A hunger sated abundantly,
And a covetous sufficiency;
It is thirst, in drink e'er sunk,
And a thirst-intoxicated drunk;
Tis false delight, delighted woe,
Tis happiness enraged also;
Sweet ill, ill-seeming sweetness,
An ill-flavoured flavourfulness;
A pardon and yet stained by sin,
A sin by pardon touched within;
Love is pain, yet all too joyous,
A cruelty most piteous;
Tis movement, yet all unstable,
A state too fixed, yet mutable;

A frail strength, but strong frailness,
That moves all by its forcefulness;
Tis foolish sense, and wise folly,
Prosperity both sad and happy;
Tis laughter filled with many a tear,
Tis rest that labours many a year;
Love is a hell filled with sweetness,
And a paradise of sore distress;
Tis the prison that brings solace,
Tis spring-time with winter's face;
Love's the moth that naught doth spare,
Eats at the fine, and the threadbare,
For lovers drink as good a wine
Beneath the threadbare as the fine;
And none's of such high lineage
And none's so skilful, none so sage,
Nor exerts such proven strength,
Nor is so brave, nor owns at length
To so many virtues, that he
Is not vulnerable to Love, you see;
For the whole world travels his way,
He's the God who leads all astray,
Except for those folk in evil state
That Nature doth excommunicate,
Because they do great wrong to her:
I care naught for them; however
I'd not wish purer lovers to love
With such a love that they but prove
Wretched, at last, and full of sorrow,
Because the love-god fools them so.
Yet if that state you would achieve
Where Love can never make you grieve,
Where you are cured of all such rage,
You can drink no sweeter beverage

Than thoughts of fleeing him today,
For you'll find relief no other way.
Choose to follow him, he'll pursue;
Yet if you flee, he'll flee from you.'
When I had heard Reason through,
Though she spoke in vain, as I knew,
I said: 'Lady, I know no more,
I declare, than I did before,
Of how I might withdraw from love.
So many contraries you approve,
I've learnt naught from all your art,
Though I can speak the text, by heart,
For my heart remembers all of it;
Indeed I could speak of it with wit,
Before the public, or such I own,
Though it say naught to me alone.
Since you've described Love to me,
Both praising and blaming equally,
Please tell of it now in such a way
That I may remember it alway;
For I've ne'er heard it so described.'
'Willingly', Reason then replied,
'Listen; if its essence I've caught,
Then Love is a frailty of thought,
Shared by two, they of any gender,
When they are close to one another,
Rising in them as a longing, born
Of a disordered vision one morn,
To embrace and kiss each other,
Find bodily solace in one another.
And lovers do think of nothing else,
But burn with joy within themselves;
They care but little for fruitfulness,
Delighting themselves in fond excess.

Yet there are those though, tis clear,
Who do not hold such true love dear,
Though true love they feign to make;
They deign not to love for love's sake,
And so deceive the ladies in this,
For heart and soul they'll promise,
Indulging in every lie and fable,
With those they find most tractable,
Until their pleasure they've received;
They thus prove the less-deceived:
For tis best to play the deceiver,
Than the one deceived, my master,
Especially in such a battle where we,
Know not where the mean might be.
I'll speak though of Love's other nature,
That doth accord with Holy Scripture;
Since, without divination, I know
The Divine Being continues so.
He who with some woman doth lie,
Should long, with all his might, say I,
To preserve his own likeness alway,
Since all is subject to decay,
And by means of true succession
Ensure the following generation.
Since parents must vanish from here,
Nature wills that a child appear,
To carry on the parents' labour,
One life continuing in the other.
For this did Nature create delight
And so ensured the task seems light,
So that the maker doth not shirk,
But finds fulfilment in the work;
For many would seek to avoid it,
If pleasure drew them not toward it.

In this, Nature is wise and subtle:
No man doth the right road travel,
Nor right intention doth possess,
Who only pleasure doth address.
For, know you what they engender
Who do such? They but surrender
Themselves, like slaves, in a trice,
To the Prince of all earthly vice.
For such is the root of all malaise,
As Cicero in his writing says,
Where he speaks about Old Age,
Which he, more than Youth, doth praise.'

CHAPTER XXXIV: REASON ON YOUTH AND AGE

'YOUTH drives the young folk, sadly,
To risk both their soul and body;
Tis too perilous to pass through
Without breaking a limb or two,
Meeting death, or bringing shame
And dishonour on the family name.
In Youth a man's life's all confusion,
Spent in all kinds of dissolution,
In pursuing evil company,
And manners most disorderly.
Often, changeable, as we see,
He may join some monastery,
Through not knowing how to behave,
Or use the freedom Nature gave;
Thinking to find himself anew,
By placing himself in such a mew;
There he remains till he doth profess,
Or, if he finds his vows no less
A bind, and repents of the affair,
He'll leave, or yet may end life there,
Because he dare not quit the same,
Held there by a sense of Shame,
And stay, opposing his own heart,
Immured from the world, apart,
Weeping, and lamenting the cost,
All the freedom that he has lost,
That cannot be rendered him again,
Unless God's grace he should gain,
Easing all through obedience,

Learning the virtue of patience.
Youth drives young men to folly,
To ribaldry, debauchery,
To lechery, and wild excess,
Exposing the heart's fickleness;
Given such disorder, never
Can order be regained ever.
Youth doth lead those into danger,
Who fix all their heart on Pleasure;
Thus Pleasure doth snare and command
The body and the mind of man,
By means of Youth his hand-maiden,
Whose custom tis to do ill to men,
And draw them to delight; and true,
Tis the only task she seeks to do.
But Age leads men from pleasure,
Who know it not; so, at leisure,
Learn it here, or ask of the old
Whom Youth once had in her hold,
And they will then recall for you
All of the peril they passed through;
And all the madness of those hours
When she diminished their powers,
And all those follies of desire
To which they would once aspire.
Age, who is the good companion,
At their side, as they travel on,
Leads them back to the truer way,
And to their end doth them convey;
And yet her service is ill-advised,
For she is neither loved nor prized,
At least to the extent that none
Would have her for himself anon;
For none wish ever to grow old,

Nor Youth her ending to behold.
The old marvel, sore dismayed,
All their memories on parade,
At their follies, turned to dust,
For remember them they must,
All that they did in life's course,
Blind to shame or true remorse;
Or if they felt or hurt or shame,
At how they might escape the same,
Without incurring a worse fate
For soul, or body, or estate.
And know you then where Youth dwells,
That joy to men and women spells?
Pleasure has her in his household.
And when she's sufficiently old
Then he'll have her serve his court;
For she would serve him for naught,
And therefore does so willingly,
Seeking to tread his path gladly,
Abandoning her body to him,
Not wishing to live without him.
And would you know where Age resides?
I'll tell you without fail, besides
Tis there you are obliged to go,
If death summon you not below
When you are young, to his cave,
Brimful of shadows is the grave.
Toil and Sadness grant Age space,
And they chain her, and so debase
And beat her, and torment her so,
Reminding her where she must go,
They rouse desire for repentance;
Flails and whips are her sentence.
And late it comes into her mind,

As she recalls the years behind,
Seeing herself worn, white-haired,
That Youth deceived her, ever snared
Her, and did fill her life always
With vanity, in former days;
And then that her life is lost,
Unless her future pays the cost,
Sustaining her, in penitence,
For the sins of Youth fled hence,
And by good works, amidst the pain,
Leads her to sovereign good again,
From which Youth parted her when she
Was plunged so deep in vanity;
Her present time so brief a treasure,
Now, it lacks or count or measure.'

CHAPTER XXXIV: REASON SCORNS MERE CARNAL PLEASURE

'AND yet, howe'er the wind doth blow,
Those who the joy of love would know
Should seek its fruit, both he and she,
And that of whate'er rank she be,
And seek it gladly, but not despite
A share of that which doth delight;
And yet I know that there are many
Who would not conceive at any
Price, and if they do, grow faint,
But make no noise or complaint,
Unless it be in some foolish game,
When they're indifferent to shame.
In short then, all turn to Pleasure
All those who at this work do labour,
Except for those who value naught,
Who with coins are vilely bought,
And who are subject to no law,
Their lives indeed a running sore;
Surely, for coins, no decent woman
Would her own good name abandon.
Nor should a man be over-ready
To marry one who sells her body.
Why then should he hold that dear
She's let men pummel many a year?
A poor maltreated wretch is he
Who is deceived so vilely,
Thinking she loves him, moreover,
Because she claims he is her lover,
Smiles at him and treats him nicely;

For surely no creature such as she
Should, as one's lover, be approved,
Or proves worthy of being loved?
One who would ruin a man's life,
She should ne'er be taken to wife.
I do not say a woman should not
Wear a trinket her lover's bought,
And for pleasure and solace bear
Whate'er her lover has gifted her;
But not because she did demand
The gift, or that she had so planned;
Such is vile; she should do the same
As him, and so avoid all shame.
Thus their hearts are joined together,
They love, and so pledge each other.
Think not that I would part the two,
I would have them unite, and do
Whate'er they ought that is fair,
And courteous and debonair,
And thus avoid that Love whose arts
But inflame and scorch their hearts,
Free of the longing to possess,
That in false hearts stirs covetousness.
Love should be born of a true heart,
And gifts should only play a part,
As indeed should bodily pleasure.
But the Love that has your measure
Mere carnal ease doth represent,
So that you lack all other intent;
That is why you desired the Rose,
Why dreams of naught else arose;
Yet she lies not within your reach,
Tis what makes your strength to leach
Away, your skin waste on your frame.

When you received Amor, that same
Fractious guest, and gave him lodging,
All ill was in your welcoming;
Drive him forth now from your courts,
Lest he should rob you of those thoughts
That yet may work to your own good;
Expel him swiftly, as you should.
Great mischief in hearts doth move,
Whene'er they are drunk with Love.
In the end, you'll know the cost,
When the time has all been lost,
And your youth has been wasted,
In those pleasures briefly tasted.
And should you live long enough
To see yourself win free of Love,
For the time so lost you'll grieve,
Time that you can ne'er retrieve;
Win, I mean, all that you sought,
For in that Love where you are caught
Men lose sense, time, rank and station,
Body and soul, and reputation.'

CHAPTER XXXIV: REASON SPEAKS OF FRIENDSHIP

ALL this did Reason teach to me.
But then the God of Love did see
That none of it was put in play.
Although I had learnt, I may say,
Word for word, all of that matter,
For Love still drew me on farther,
Through my thoughts went chasing there,
A raptor who hunts everywhere,
And gripped my heart lest it stray.
Behind my head, he worked away,
As I sat there to hear her sermon,
For, in the course of it, when Reason
Stuffed words, all wasted, in my ear,
Into the other his words he'd steer,
And leave me full of pain and anger:
Thus, full of ire, I called to her:
'Lady, would you betray me? Must
I then detest all others, thus?
If love doth harm me, as you say,
Should I then hate all folk alway,
Never thus with true love to love,
But rather in hatred live and move?
Then I would be a mortal sinner,
A thief, my God, or little better.
I'll not be prey to this malaise,
I'll win free in one of two ways,
For either I'll love, or I will hate.
Perchance hatred pays a better rate

In the end, if a man, though true,
Finds that love's not worth a sou.
If so, then good is your advice,
All that you have told me, twice:
That I should now renounce Amor;
And he's a fool who'd ask for more.
And yet you've reminded me of
Another and a little-known love,
Which I've not heard you yet decry,
That between folk doth form a tie:
If you would speak of that to me,
Then a fool I'd prove to be
If I listened not, right willingly,
For at least then, and presently,
Knowledge of Love I should gain,
Should you be pleased to explain.'
'A fool you surely are, fair friend,
If your ear you failed to extend
To the speech I gave for your good.
Another I'll give you, as I should,
For I am ready, at your behest,
To answer your honest request;
Yet know not if such will aid you.
Love takes then many forms, tis true,
Other than that which has so moved
Your heart, and your sense removed.
In an evil hour came that encounter,
For God's sake, pursue it no further.
Thus, Friendship is one kind of love,
Tis mutual goodwill, all free of
Discord, between men of sense,
In accord with God's benevolence,
For amongst them is community
Of all their goods, in charity;

And such is their fair intention
They'll allow of no exception.
No friend proves slow to aid another;
They're wise and secret with each other,
And loyal, for little worth has he
The man whose mind lacks loyalty.
What a man dares to think of, he
May share with his friend as freely
As if to himself he spoke, alone;
Here denunciation is all unknown.
Such manners, then, are customary
To those who would love perfectly.
No man's truly amiable
Unless he proves reliable
And changes not as fortune moves;
Thus to his friend he ever proves
His worth, in wealth or poverty;
That friend who trusts him utterly.
And if he sees his friend, of late,
In need at all, he does not wait
Until at last his aid is sought,
For a favour begged seems bought
At a price that seems all too dear
To worthy hearts that prove sincere.

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON SPEAKS OF AID BETWEEN FRIENDS

(Lines 4953-5838)

Here the Supplicant doth suggest
To his true friend, and so request,
That he doth aid him in his need,
Sharing his wealth, as is agreed.

'**THE** worthy man is filled with shame,
Whene'er he must request that same:
He thinks about it anxiously,
Troubled at asking, certainly,
Ashamed to say what he must say,
Lest a refusal comes his way.
But when the friend is truly known,
A friend whose love has been shown
Before, and has been well-proven
On all occasions thereby given,
All must turn to joy and gladness,
Free from any shame or sadness.
For how should a man feel shame
Before a friend in more than name?
When a secret such friends do learn
No third shall hear of it in turn.
Nor shall you fear a friend's reproach,
For a wise man doth not broach
Any business except his own,
Unlike a fool, as is well-known.
And will do more, for he'll succour
You, and do all in his power,

Happy to do so, to speak true,
Helping a friend by aiding you.
If he must refuse the request,
He is troubled by that no less
Than him who made it for, you see,
Full mighty is love's mastery:
He will bear half of his sorrows,
Comforting him as best he knows,
And play his part in his joy too,
If the love that they share is true.
By the law of such amity,
Says Cicero somewhere, then he
Who is in need should make request
Of his friends, if such be honest,
And receive the same, in season,
If tis made for a good reason;
Rejecting any other request
Other than two that he excepts,
The first: to save a friend from death,
We ought to fight to our last breath;
The second: if men attack his name,
A friend should then defend the same.
These two cases demand our action,
Without concern for right or reason;
No friend, in such case, should refuse it,
In so far as love doth excuse it.
This love, which I expound to you,
This is not contrary to my view,
Tis a love I'd have you follow,
Not that other that rings hollow;
Virtue is in its every breath,
While the other leads men to death.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON SPEAKS OF FALSE LOVE, FOR GAIN

'OF another love I would speak
Opposed to the love we should seek,
And one which we should ever blame,
It is a false love that I name,
In hearts Covetousness doth pain,
Hearts sick with the desire for gain;
A love that wavers in this way,
As soon as it loses the hope, I say,
Of the profit it would attain,
It doth flicker and fade again.
The loving hearts, the true lovers,
They for themselves value others.
A false heart doth flatter and feign
For the profit it might obtain,
Such its love, a child of Fortune,
Swiftly eclipsed as is the moon,
Which Earth darkens as we know
When the moon is in its shadow;
For all of its brightness is gone,
Once it loses sight of the sun.
But then when the shadow is past,
Its orb shines clear again at last,
Lit by the sun's rays that abide,
Shining from Earth's other side.
This love then is of such a nature,
Now it shows clear, now fainter;
For once tis shrouded by Poverty
In her cloak, both dark and ugly,
And so is lit by Wealth no more,

It must flee, rendered obscure,
Yet when Wealth lights it again
It shines forth before all men;
When Wealth fails, it fails too,
Yet shines forth with Wealth anew.
All rich men are loved the same
By such Love as thus I name,
Especially the miserly
Who will ne'er the heart set free
From their desire, from the vice
That goes with covetous Avarice.
A rich man that of love doth brag,
Bears more points than a horned stag,
Is this not a fine show of folly?
For he loves not, most certainly;
Why believe then that he is loved?
In doing so his folly's proved.
In such a case he is not wise,
Merely a branched stag in disguise:
Lord, tis friendship we must show
If true friends we'd seek to know.
I will prove such a man loves not,
For when he poor friends has got,
He only guards his wealth the more,
Keeps the poor man from his door,
And plans to keep his wealth forever,
Until his mouth is closed, whenever
Vile Death comes to strike him down;
For he himself would rather drown,
Or see himself torn limb from limb,
Than have his wealth part from him,
And so be shared among his friends.
There is no way that Love extends
To such, for where is amity

In the heart that lacks all pity?
Yet he knows what he does, indeed,
For every man knows his own deed.
Much to be blamed he who's proved
A man who loves not, nor is loved.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON FORTUNE

'NOW, since Fortune I've chanced upon,
In speaking of Love, in my sermon,
I'd like to mention a great marvel,
Of which I doubt you've heard the equal;
I don't know whether I'll convince you,
But nonetheless the thing is true,
And in the books one finds it writ:
That there's greater worth and profit,
When Fortune's hostile and perverse;
For kindly Fortune doth prove worse.
And if to you that seems doubtful,
By reasoned thought, tis provable.
When sweet and kind, then Fortune
Deceives, promising men the moon,
Makes fools of them, for like a mother
Her milk to them ne'er seems bitter.
She grants a seeming loyalty,
Sharing her delights all freely,
Such as wealth that most men treasure,
Power, authority, and honour,
Promising them stability,
Despite their mutability,
Feeding them then on vainglory,
While they enjoy prosperity.
When she lifts them on her wheel,
Masters of the world they feel,
And themselves so safe in all
They ne'er can meet with a fall.

And when she has set them there,
They believe they've friends to spare,
So many friends that they lose count,
Nor can they lessen the amount.
Men gather in swarms about them,
And as their master accept them,
Pledge them their service, with relish,
The shirt from their back if they wish,
Swearing that they'd spend their blood,
To save them, if ever they could,
Ready to follow and obey,
All their lives, till their dying day.
And those who do such words receive,
They bask in glory, and believe,
Just as if they were Gospel truth,
While all is flattery forsooth
And guile, they'll find, to their cost,
Should their prosperity be lost,
Without means of recovery;
Then their friends they'll truly see:
For if of a hundred loyal 'friends',
Kin, companions, Fortune lends
Them one who chooses to remain,
God be thanked then, for that same.
It is Fortune, I say again,
Who, when she dwells with men,
Troubles their common-sense,
Nourishing them on ignorance.
But when perverse and contrary
Fortune doth end prosperity,
And the wheel doth them displace,
Down from the summit to the base,
Into the mire, on a heart full sore
She places, like a mother-in-law,

An unpleasant plaster, not dipped
In vinegar but in poverty, stripped
Of former wealth, all thin and sere;
A witness that she is most severe.
Trust not in Fortune's gifts for she
Denies all things security.
Perverse hostile Fortune teaches,
As soon as men lose their riches,
With what love they were loved,
By all the 'friends' they approved.
For all those good Fortune sees
Are so shocked by adversities,
True enemies they all become,
Not one remains, nor half a one!
Friendship they renounce and flee,
As soon as Poverty they see.
Not for a moment do they stay,
But everywhere they go, alway,
Blame their former friend and claim
As wretched fools those they defame.
Even those who were granted most,
When their friend of wealth did boast,
Testify in their gleeful voices,
That his loss comes of foolish choices;
They'll not help, for now they flee him;
Yet his true friends will stand by him,
Possessing hearts of such nobleness
They love him not for his largesse,
Nor any gain they might hope for;
They defend him, bring him succour:
Fortune plays no part there ever,
For a true friend loves forever.
Doth a man who attacks a friend,
Not show that love is at an end?

Yet in those cases, of which I tell,
Love may be validly lost, as well,
Through reproach, anger or pride,
Or speaking what one should hide,
Or through complaint at some action,
That smacks of venomous detraction.
The friend, in such a case, should flee;
But naught else provoke his enmity.
To a man's honour it would redound,
If in a thousand, one was found,
For not even wealth without end
Can equal the worth of a friend,
Nor a value attain, indeed,
That a friend's doth not exceed;
Likewise a friend, along the way,
Proves better than wealth any day.
So when Fortune, that miscreant,
Ruins men, in scarce an instant,
Then in their misery doth she
Bring to those men such clarity
That they their true friends discover
And through such trial see moreover
That they are worth more than aught
That they have e'er wrought or bought;
Thus they gain, in adversity,
More than from their prosperity;
Ignorance dwells with the latter,
Knowledge rises from the former.
And that man, who now doth view
Both the false friend and the true
And sees which is which, when he
Was rich as ever a man could be,
And all men offered him, alway,
Heart and body, and all, each day,

What would he not have paid, I say,
To know then what he knows today?
He'd have been the less deceived,
If the sad truth he'd then perceived.
Thus he wins the more advantage,
Being changed from a fool to a sage,
Through all the ill that he's received,
Than from his riches that deceived.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON WEALTH

'THAT wealth makes no man wealthy,
That's locked away in his treasury.
Simply a bare sufficiency
Allows a man to live richly:
He who is not worth two loaves here
Is more at ease and wealthier
Than one with a hundred sacks of grain.
And the reason why I'll now explain:
For he's likely a merchant the latter,
With a heart so foolish in this matter,
That he is filled with care and woe
Seeking to make a fortune so;
And never stops his worrying
His adding, and his multiplying;
He'll never have enough, you see,
Nor knows not what enough might be.
But one who simply trusts that he,
Each day, has a sufficiency,
Is satisfied with all he attains,
Since he lives on what he gains,
He lacks naught, that is his view,
Although he's barely worth a sou,
Yet knows that should the need arise
He'll win enough to eat; he buys
No shoes until the old are done,
His clothes they suit such a one;
And if he happens to fall ill,
And finds his food tasteless, still
He reflects that, howe'er he feels,

He needs but little for his meals
To hold himself to the true way,
And into danger need not stray;
Or if carried to some hospital,
There he'll find solace till he's well.
Perchance he rarely thinks of such,
Nor dwells on illness overmuch,
And thinks, if it should come to be,
Before that day arrived, then he
Would have savings, so he could
Support himself if e'er it should.
And if saving till he grows old
To keep away the heat and cold
Or stave off death by starvation
Matters not, thinks of salvation;
His balm is, the sooner he dies,
The sooner he'll see Paradise,
Believing such his God will give,
When here he doth cease to live.
Pythagoras, he says as much;
If you've read him, he doth touch
On all this in the Golden Verses,
For these fair words he disburses:
"And when you depart this body,
In the pure aether, moving freely,
The human you will leave behind
And live on, then, in the Divine."
A captive, a born fool, is he,
Who takes this to be his country;
Our country is not here on Earth.
Learn from the clerks, the worth
Of Boethius' Consolation,
All the thoughts it doth occasion;
Who translated it, he truly

Would benefit the laity.
The man who knows how to live
On what his income doth give,
Nor doth wish that he had more,
Ne'er thinks himself to be poor;
For no one, as our teachers know,
Is trapped here, but by thinking so,
Be he king, or slave, or knight;
Many a lad, whose heart is light,
Lifting sacks of charcoal all day,
Sorrows not, whate'er they weigh.
For he'll work patiently, alway,
And dance and skip about for pay,
Thinking wealth not worth a candle.
He'll go eat tripe at Saint-Marcel,
Spend all his coins in the tavern,
Every last penny he doth earn,
And then return to his labour
With joy, as if it were an honour,
And gain his bread there lawfully,
Nor deign to stoop to thievery:
Then return to the tavern, anew,
And live life as they ought to do.
All who possess a sufficiency
Are blessed with wealth abundantly,
More, as the God of Justice knows,
Than the usurer could e'er suppose;
For a usurer, be assured of this,
Can ne'er be rich, for such he is,
So miserly, so covetous,
He proves poor, tormented thus.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON COVETOUSNESS

'AND no matter whom it displease,
Tis true no merchant lives at ease;
His heart's in such a state of war,
Each day he strives to garner more,
Nor will acquire enough, forever
Fearing to lose what he has, ever
Seeking after what doth remain,
The 'all' that he can never gain;
For he doth desire naught less than
The wealth owned by some other man.
He has set himself a task, he'd fain
Drink the whole of the River Seine,
Of which though he drinks his fill,
Yet more of it remains there, still.
This the distress, this the ardour,
This the conflict, this the dolour,
This the pain that lasts forever,
Which tears at his innards ever,
And torments him, in his greed;
The more the gain, the more the need.
Your advocate and your physician
They too are in the same position,
Selling their knowledge for a fee,
Hung by the same rope, both unfree,
Finding their profits so pleasant
The latter for the one patient
That he has would wish for forty,
The former for his one case, thirty,

Or two hundred, or two thousand,
Such is their greed, you understand.
The same is true of that holy choir
Forever preaching, who so aspire
To honours, favours, or largesse,
That hearts in torment they possess.
Such men, they live not decently,
Above all, they chase vainglory,
Which they pursue, to which they're wed,
Yet purchase the soul's death instead.
The deceiver but himself deceives;
However much the hearer believes,
Or doth profit by what is taught;
The preacher himself profits naught;
For clever teaching whose advent
Doth flow in truth from ill-intent,
Provides no value to the preacher,
Though it may well save another:
While his examples stir the hearer,
Yet vainglory fills the preacher.
But such teachers I'll o'erpass,
And speak of those folk who amass
Treasure, nor love God, nor fear;
Who their piles of coins hold dear,
Filling their coffers beyond all need,
Giving the poor outside no heed
Who die of hunger, and shiver so;
The miser's reward, God doth know.
Three great misfortunes appertain
To those who such lives maintain:
First, vast effort they must expend,
Next, over them fear doth extend
Its grip, while they guard their haul,
Then, at last, they must leave it all.

In such torment they live and die,
All those who for great riches sigh.
All this is brought about by a lack
Of love, that all the world doth lack;
For if those who riches so approve
Were only loved, and they did love,
And true love reigned everywhere,
Evil would not the world impair.
If those who own most gave the most
To those who little wealth do boast,
Or made them loans, not at usury,
But purely out of charity;
If good intent they did express,
Guarding themselves from Idleness,
Then in this world none would be poor,
Nor should they be so, evermore.
But now the world is grown so stale
That they make love a thing for sale;
None loves but to achieve their aim,
Gifts, service, profit, such their game;
And women hawk themselves for sale:
An ill end may such sales entail!
Thus Fraud dishonours everyone,
Whereby all once held in common
Is owned now by that man or this;
They are so bound by Avarice,
That inborn freedom is eschewed,
And lost to a vile servitude;
All slaves to riches, as we see,
Wealth captured by their treasury:
Captured! Tis they themselves are caught,
Who are to such sad error brought;
Those earthly captives have rather
Sought to make wealth their master;

Yet wealth is naught until tis spent;
They understand not; their intent
Is shown by their response, the cry
That wealth is meant to be put by;
Untrue, tis they who do conceal it
And never give, spend or reveal it;
Yet nonetheless it shall be spent,
Whether or not tis their intent,
For in the end they all will die,
And leave it to some passer-by,
Who'll disburse it, cheerfully,
And not a penny will they see.
Nor are they even sure that they
Can keep it all till that sad day;
Some thief may seize it by stealth,
And carry away all their wealth.
They make wrong use of treasure
Who thus divert it from its nature,
Its nature is that it should hasten
To aid and succour all poor men,
Not be laid up in some dark den;
For God provides it to this end,
Although men do Wealth imprison.
Yet Wealth that ought, by reason,
To follow them, such her destiny,
Supporting them where'er they be,
Takes her revenge, most honourably,
Drags them behind, all shamefully,
And rends them, and tears them apart,
Her triple blade piercing the heart.
The first blade is the effort of getting,
The second blade the fear of losing;
For thieves may their wealth uncover,
When they have gathered it together;

This fear torments them endlessly.
The third is the blade of mortality,
All's left behind; as I said before,
Their guile brings ill to every door.
Thus Wealth takes revenge, you see,
Like a lady, sovereign and free,
On the slaves who imprison her,
And in peace doth rest and slumber,
While those poor wretches wake,
And toil and trouble, for her sake;
Beneath her feet treading the same,
Hers the honour, theirs the shame;
Their torment and their pain renewed,
As they languish there in servitude.
There's no profit in such a state,
For those for whom such is their fate;
Yet without fail she will dwell,
When they are dead, who as I tell
Dare not mount her or make her
Course or leap, with the next comer.
But valiant men will her assail,
Ride her, spur o'er hill and dale,
And use their spurs and at leisure
Win their ease and take their pleasure,
Their hearts generous and ample.
Daedalus is the prime example,
Who made wings for his son;
Then with art, and not by custom,
He and Icarus flew o'er the sea.
With Wealth these men, valiantly,
Do likewise; make her wings to fly,
Gain glory and esteem thereby,
Rather than be thus commanded,
Scorning to be reprimanded

For that great longing, that vice
That goes with covetous Avarice;
Such men, who deal in courtesies
Through which their fine qualities
Are praised at length by one and all,
On superabundant virtues call;
For God finds them agreeable,
Hearts generous and charitable:
For as much as God hates Avarice,
He who did with His kindnesses
Nourish this world below, once He
(And none has taught you this but me)
Had wrought it, so Generosity
Pleases Him with her courtesy
And beneficence; God hates misers,
And condemns them as idolaters,
Each but a miserable slave
To fear, who an excess doth crave,
Who thinks, and doth as truth maintain,
That he but binds himself to gain
Purely to win security,
Find happiness and certainty.
Ah then, sweet earthly Riches, say,
If you are such as doth repay
Those misers who have shut you in,
By gladdening their hearts within?
For the more they garner here
Of you, the more they shake with fear,
And how can a man who's insecure
Find happiness by gathering more?
Shall blessings fall upon him, here,
Who is a slave to doubt and fear?'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON WEALTHY MONARCHS

'NOW one who listens to all I say
Might scorn my words, in that they
May speak of wealthy monarchs who
Would enhance their status anew,
From pride the common man believes,
For an armed force each king conceives,
Five hundred, or a thousand men,
He'll gather about him, for then
His subjects commonly will say
Tis thus his worth he doth display:
But God knows, on the contrary,
Tis simply fear, that constantly
Torments him, making him do so.
Yet a lad from the docks may go
About alone, and in more safety,
Scorning robbers and thievery,
Without fearing aught men do,
Than the king in his robes of blue;
Though the king could bear to Mass
All the treasure he might amass,
All the gold and gems he could wear,
Every robber might take his share.
Whate'er he brought they might steal,
And seek to kill him as he doth kneel;
And would kill him too, I do believe,
Before he could arise and leave;
For the thieves that did so connive
Would know, if they left him alive,

They'd be pursued, in due course,
And then taken, and hung by force.
By force! By his men good and true;
His own strength isn't worth a sou,
Compared with that bold lad I say,
Who travels lightly on his way.
By his good men? I'faith I lie,
Or else my words have gone awry,
For they are not 'his' men, I say,
Though his authority they obey.
For the king must leave them free,
And grant those men the liberty
To cease their aid when they wish;
Their own men, and no longer his;
Leaving the king powerless there,
As soon as the people so declare.
Their virtues, and their every skill,
Their bodies, strength, wisdom, will,
Are not his, he owns naught there,
For Nature denies him any share;
However kind Fortune is to men,
Know she may ne'er allow them
To own those things to which Nature
Has made them utterly a stranger,
Howe'er indeed they were gained.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON TRUE POSSESSIONS

'AH, lady! If it might be explained,
For the King of Angels sake, teach me,'
Said I, 'what might belong to me,
If I could but have aught of my own;
For I would know: if such be known.'
Reason replied: You shall understand,
But expect neither house nor land,
Nor robes, nor any such adornment,
Hope not for an earthly tenement,
Or its furnishing in any manner.
You own things dearer and better,
All things within that lie to hand,
The which you readily understand,
That remain with you constantly;
Nor can they flee from you, to be
Of service to some other man;
They are rightly at your command:
The other things you might possess,
Like worn-out shoes, are valueless,
Neither you nor any person living
Owns anything worth the selling:
For, know that which you truly own
Is enclosed within you alone.
All the rest is Fortune's prey,
She ever gives and takes away,
Grants us what we cannot keep,
Making fools to laugh and weep.
But naught that Fortune can do

Will ensnare the wise man, who
Is not bound by, nor doth feel,
The motion of her turning wheel:
Uncertain, all that she doth enable,
For what she does is so unstable
That there's no joy in love of her;
She yields the virtuous no pleasure,
Nor could any pleasure be right
That is so soon eclipsed by night.
Therefore I would have you know,
Let not your heart cling there, so
You're still untainted by it all.
For a great sin would yet befall,
If you felt desire for possessions,
And thus sinned gainst anyone,
By calling yourself their friend
But to gain by them in the end,
Or win from them their esteem.
None would that a virtue deem.
From the love I speak of so,
Flee as from the vile and low,
And from amorous love be free;
Be wise now, and believe in me.
And yet you're but a foolish thing,
Reproaching me now, for saying,
That I commanded you to hate;
Now where, when, did I so state?'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON TRUE LOVE

'EVER you sound a single chord:
That I should scorn Amor, my lord,
And turn to a love that's strange.
Yet one who did to Carthage range,
And from Orient to Occident,
And did so till his years were spent,
And he had lapsed into old age,
Made everywhere a pilgrimage,
Moving as fast as e'er he might,
His skirts gathered, day and night,
Extended his visits, striding forth
From farthest south to farthest north,
Till throughout the world he'd been,
Not a trace would he have seen
Of this love, you reveal to me.
Indeed, since the gods did flee,'
I said, 'whom the giants assailed,
Tis amorous love that has prevailed;
Right, Chastity, and Faith sped too,
At that same moment, for the true
Love I speak of, fled, was lost
From this Earth, to its sore cost;
Justice, the weightiest, fled last.
All their residence now past,
Earth they abandoned, everywhere,
War and strife they could not bear;
In the heavens they chose to dwell,
Nor since, but by some miracle,

Have they dared descend again.
Fraud drove them out, who did gain
Mastery of the world, at length,
Through his insolence and strength.
Not even Cicero, who read all
The obscure writings could recall,
For all his ingenuity,
More than two pairs, or is it three,
Or perchance four, from ages past
Of such true lovers, at the last;
Not since this world was created.
And then he found least, he stated,
Among the folk of his own time
Among those who with him did dine:
For I've not read, anywhere,
That he found such people there.
And am I wiser than Cicero?
I'd be a fool if I searched so,
For examples of equal worth,
For there are none now, on Earth.
To find them, where should I go,
Since there are none here below?
With the cranes there should I fly,
Or, beyond the clouds, leap high,
Like that swan of Socrates?
Of such I'll speak no more; I cease
To set my hopes on such folly,
Perchance the gods thought, of me,
That, like the gods of old, I would
Attack the heavens; thus I should
In turn be dealt a lightning blow;
I know not if you'd wish it so,
But leave me not in any doubt.'
'Fair friend,' she said, 'now hear me out;

Tis not fitting you seek to fly;
Wish it, and all will seek to try.
Believe me; without more ado,
What you hear me say, then do.
If such true love you can't attain,
Since the failure, I should explain,
May rest with you not some other,
Then I will teach you of another.
Another love? No, tis the same,
Which all folk can indeed attain,
As long as they can comprehend
A love that widely doth extend,
If they seek love more generally,
Forsaking specificity,
Seeking no other communion
Than that of true participation.
You may love, though generally,
All folk, and love them sincerely;
Show love to all, as if to one,
At least a love held in common;
Act towards all, in what you do,
As you'd have them act towards you.
Do naught to others, naught pursue,
Except you'd wish it done to you;
And if tis thus you'd seek to love
None should jibe or disapprove;
This love you're bound to follow,
For none alive should such forgo.
And because they shun this love
Who strive in evil paths to move,
Judges are named, men of worth,
To save and protect all on earth
Gainst whom the world acts amiss,
Judges who shall right injustice,

And punish and chastise all those
Who, denying this love, suppose
Tis right to wound or even kill,
Rape, or rob, or plunder at will,
Or seek to harm by detraction,
Or accuse in some false action,
Or by some ill-doing, openly,
Cause damage or, worse, secretly.
All such shall be brought to justice.'

CHAPTER XXXV: REASON ON JUSTICE

'AH, lady, since you mention this,
Speaking of she who wore a crown,
And was once held in high renown,
And since such fond pains you seek
To take with me; then of her speak.'
'Say; of whom?' 'Willingly I'd hear
If you so please, a judgement here
Concerning both Justice and Love;
Of which do you the more approve?'
'Of which love do you speak?' 'The one
You'd have me follow, for the one
That lives in me I'd not submit
To judgement, unless you see fit.'
'That, foolish man, I do believe,
If my judgement you'd receive:
The truer Love is far the greater.'
'The proof?' 'Certainly; consider,
Of two things both compatible
Each necessary and profitable,
That which is most necessary
Is that not better?' 'Assuredly.'
'Well then, in the case of these two
Try to keep their nature in view.
These two things where'er they be
Are they profitable and necessary?'
'Tis true.' And I should consider
The more necessary to be better?'
'Yes.' 'Then I'll say no more to you

Of whatever profit may accrue;
But Love that comes of Charity
Holds more to true necessity
By far, than Justice doth do.'
'Prove it lady, ere you continue.'
'Willingly, I say then, as proof,
That the more necessary, in truth,
Is the good unto itself sufficient,
And the worthier of true assent,
Than the good that requires aid.
Do you agree with all I've said?'
'Why not continue, such that I
May know if I should answer 'aye'?
For an example I would hear
Ere I agree, so all prove clear.'
'I'faith, here is a burden new,
The proof and an example too;
Yet an example you shall hear,
So the truth may sooner appear.
If a man hauls a barge, readily,
Without aid, that you can hardly
Move, is he not better than you?'
'Yes lady, at hauling, that is true.'
'Then take from it your example.
Listen, and my reasoning sample,
And what you garner try to keep.
If Justice were always asleep,
This Love that you so despise
Would nonetheless suffice,
To live a good life and true,
Without judgment on the few;
But Justice without Love, no;
Love is better, and proven so.'
'Explain your reasoning to me.'

'Silence, and I shall, willingly.
Now Justice reigned once, long ago,
When Uranus lived, and we know
That Cronos who was his son,
(No more harsh and bitter a one),
Castrating his father savagely,
Hurled his testes into the sea,
And thence Aphrodite arose,
As the most ancient books disclose;
And yet if Justice returned to Earth,
And was valued at the same worth
As she was then, still there would be
The need, as you'll see presently,
For all folk to love one another,
Though dealing justly with each other.
If Love should ever choose to flee,
Justice would perish utterly,
But if all folk loved each other
They'd ne'er harm one another;
And since crime would thus depart,
What then would be Justice's part?'
'Lady, I know not.' 'That I believe,
For all the world, as I conceive,
Would then be tranquil and at peace,
The titles 'king' and 'prince' would cease,
No bailiff, no provost would we see,
For the people would live honestly,
No judges there, where no evils stir.
Hence I say that Love is greater
In itself than is mere Justice,
Though the latter counters Malice,
Mother of Lordship, who doth cost
Men all those freedoms swiftly lost.
For if no evil or sin remained,

By which all the world is stained,
Ne'er a king would men have seen,
Nor e'er a judge on earth had been.
Since in them men place their trust
Judges should themselves be just,
Not issue judgements in their court
Corruptly that are good for naught;
Observe the law, be diligent,
Not lazy, nor prove negligent
Nor covetous, nor deceitful, if
They'd do right by every plaintiff.
But they hawk judgements around,
And turn the process upside down,
Count, recount, and tally, each day,
Then make sure that poor men pay.
All strive to gain from some other;
Such judges will condemn a robber,
Yet would deserve to hang instead,
If judgement were upon their head,
For all the ills that they conceive,
And wield their power to achieve.'

Chapter XXXVI: Reason recalls the case of Virginius and his daughter

How Virginius made his plea,
To Appius, who judged, vilely,
That Virginia, the virtuous,
Should be given to Claudius.

'Virginius and Appius'

'TWAS well if Appius had been hanged,
Who had Claudius, his own man,
Swear falsely, in bringing a case,
Against Virginia, the chaste,
The daughter of Virginius.
So declares Titus Livius,
Who to this action doth refer.
For Appius failing to win her,
She caring not for him, nor for
That lechery she did so abhor,
Claudius in open court did say:
'My lord, give sentence now, this day;
That the girl is mine, I move;
That she's my slave I will prove,
To any man here now I tell,
That where'er she now may dwell,
From my house was she stolen,
After her birth, and then was given
To that man there, Virginius.
I ask of you, Lord Appius,
That you grant what I deserve,
For it is right that she should serve
Me, not the man whom I accuse.
And should Virginius refuse
Then I will prove all that I say,
And show sound witnesses this day.'
So spoke the wicked traitor,
To that false judge, his master.
And then, before Virginius,
Who was ready with a counter-thrust
Against his enemies, could speak,
And justice in this matter seek,
Appius straight rushed to judgement,
Without considering it a moment,

Saying she should be surrendered.
When Virginius comprehended
What had been said, that worthy man,
That most virtuous knight, whose name
Was widely renowned, then that same,
That is to say, Virginius,
Seeing that gainst Appius
He could not defend his daughter,
But must render her, and deliver
Her body, it seemed, to infamy,
Exchanged the shame for injury,
Through his own deliberate action,
If Livy's tale is no fiction.'

Chapter XXXVII: Reason attacks the misuse of judges' powers

How after this wicked judgement
Virginius did, in an instant,
Strike off his fair daughter's head,
So yielding naught but the dead.
The girl he chose thus to deliver,
Rather than to vileness give her,
Presenting her head to Appius,
Who of his lust was thwarted thus.

'Virginius and Virginia'

'FOR he through love, not through hate,
Deciding his Virginia's fate,
Struck her head from her body,
And then to Appius did he
Present her head, before the court.
Then that judge, so Livy taught,
Had him seized and, in a breath,
Commanded he be put to death.
And yet he suffered no such end,
The people did his life defend.
They being moved by sympathy,
On hearing of such infamy.
Twas Appius they imprisoned
For the wrong he'd occasioned.
Who then committed suicide,
Ere punishment could be applied.
And Claudius, who prosecuted,
Would now have been executed,
If Virginius had not saved him,
Who, nobly taking pity on him,
Asked of the people that his fate
Be banishment from the state;
But all the false witnesses they
Condemned to die that very day.
Judges will perpetrate injustice.
Lucan says, who was wise in this:
That virtue and excessive power
Cannot keep company an hour.
Yet though no remorse they feel,
Nor render again what they steal,
The mighty Judge who doth endure,
Will set them in hell for evermore,
Amongst the devils, at their beck
And call; a rope around their neck.

Kings I include and those churchmen
Who act as judges; power over men
Is not granted for such, for they
Should judge all cases without pay,
Open the door to plaintiffs, hear
Pleas in person, confused or clear.
Their honours are not for idle show,
Whether secular or not, and know
They are to serve the great and small,
Who people the land, and enrich all.
They should swear justice to give,
And act aright as long as they live,
That the people might live in peace,
And their work should never cease
In their pursuit of malefactors,
In arresting thieves and robbers,
With their own hands, if needs be,
Such is their office and their duty.
And this should be all their intent,
For this men yield them their assent,
And salaries, and this they promise,
When they first assume their office.
Now, if you have listened closely,
You've won your answer from me.
And witnessed all the reasoning,
Which seems to me to be fitting.'

CHAPTER XXXVII: REASON ARGUES FOR MODERATION

'LADY, now I am well content,
I thank you for your fair intent,
For you've repaid me well this day;
Yet at one point I heard you say
Some words, of seeming folly
Such that, if any sought idly
Here to challenge and accuse you,
Scant defence were open to you.'
'I know that of which you speak.
If, at another time, you'd seek
An explanation you shall have it,
Should you be pleased to recall it.'
'I will remember it most truly,
And remind you of it clearly,
The very word that you have said.
For my master taught me instead
(And I listened to him closely)
That naught approaching infamy
Should ever issue from my lips;
But I might repeat others' slips,
So I shall speak of it outright.
For to speak of a folly is right
If tis to one who commits folly.
I'll chide you then, certainly,
To the extent that you'll realise
Your fault, who feign to be so wise.'
'That I will await, with pleasure,'
Said she,' yet now I am at leisure

To answer you concerning hate;
I wonder you dared contemplate
Raising such, for it follows not
That for one folly to be forgot
One must then commit a greater.
If I wish to set you on a straighter
Path, and quench your mad desire,
Is't to hatred I'd bid you aspire?
Do you not recall your Horace,
Who possessed both sense and grace?
Now he, a man of sound advice,
Said, when the foolish flee a vice,
They seek the opposite excess,
And yet their troubles are no less.
It is not Love that I would ban,
Which is a good, you understand,
But that which does harm to men.
I seek not to ban drink, again,
Because I censure drunkenness;
To do so would be foolishness.
If wild Largesse in excess
I scorned, it would yet be madness,
If I commended Avarice,
For each constitutes a vice.
I offer not such argument.'
'Indeed, you do.' 'No my intent,
Despite your lies, is not to flatter,
And if you would be the master
You start from a worse position;
Read the wise, you're no logician.
The ancients write not of Love so,
Nor do the lips of those who know
Preach hatred gainst aught, I ween;
But one must rather seek the mean.

It is that Love, I prize and love,
That I have taught you to approve.
Another, innate, love has Nature
Bestowed upon the wild creature,
Which leads them to rear their young,
Suckling and nourishing each one.
If you would have me speak as well
About this love of which I tell,
Then this must be its definition,
It is a natural inclination,
To wish to produce one's likeness
And so, with right intent, address
The given path of procreation,
And nurture the next generation.
For this love folk are by Nature
Prepared, just as is the creature.
And this love, whate'er the profit
Acquires no praise, blame or merit;
For it deserves not blame or praise,
Nature drives them to it, always.
Driven to it, by Nature's device,
It brings not victory over vice,
Yet if they do not do the same,
Then they do deserve her blame.
If a man eats, and thus grows fat,
What praise does he deserve for that?
But if all food he doth forgo,
He should be shamed, and rightly so.
But I know this love, I dwell upon,
Interests you not, so I'll pass on:
Yours is a much more foolish love,
The love you've chosen to approve.
Twould be better to forgo it,
If you'd act now to your profit.'

CHAPTER XXXVII: REASON SPEAKS OF HER OWN MERITS

'YET I'd desire not, in the end,
That you should live without a friend;
So grant me your whole attention,
For am I not worthy of mention,
Fair, noble, fit for a lordly home,
E'en that of the Emperor of Rome?
I wish I might become your friend;
If you'd hold to me to the end,
Know that the value of my love
Is such that it will always prove
Able to meet your every need
Wherever your path should lead.
Thus you will be a lord so great
No greater did folk e'er celebrate.
I will do whate'er you desire;
Nor can you e'er seek to aspire
To aught that is too high, if you
My work and none other pursue.
You'd win too to your advantage
A friend of highest parentage;
None can compare with the daughter,
Of God, He the sovereign Father,
Who made me and did form me so.
His form in me you here may know,
And see yourself in my clear face,
For no maid born to equal place,
Has such powers to conceive
Of love, for I've my Father's leave,
To take a lover and be loved,

Yet still be forever approved,
Nor indeed need you fear blame,
For my Father will guard your name,
And nurture us both together,
Do I say well? Speak your answer.
Does that god who maddened you,
Dress his people with such virtue,
And adorn them as well each day,
Those fools who him do homage pay?
God help you, if you'd refuse me.
Tis confusion and misery
For those poor maids who are refused
And to begging are all unused;
This indeed you yourself may prove
By the tale of Echo, and her love.'
'Then speak, not in Latin, of this,
But rather in French state your wish
As to the way I should serve you.'
'Let me serve you; and you a true
And loyal friend shall be to me.
Quit the god who leaves you unfree,
Give not a sou, nor late nor soon,
For the fickle wheel of Fortune.
You shall be like to Socrates,
Who was so stable, and at ease,
He joyed not at prosperity
Nor proved sad in adversity.
All things he maintained in balance,
Great good luck, and dire mischance,
Treating them as of equal weight,
Neither joyous nor sad his state;
So whate'er occurred he might
Treat it as nor weighty nor light.
He was, as Solinus doth tell,

According to the oracle
Of Apollo, wisest of all;
He was a man who looked on all
With the same calm expression,
Whatever might be seen or done;
Nor was found otherwise, say I,
By those who sentenced him to die
By means of hemlock, because he
Believed in one God not many,
And believed men should not swear
By many gods, such was his prayer.
And Heraclitus, in his day,
And Diogenes, did display
Hearts unmoved by poverty,
Nor saddened by adversity,
And firm in their resolution,
Thus they withstood all misfortune.
And you shall now serve me likewise,
Nor serve in any other guise.
Let not Fortune overcome you,
Howe'er she strikes and torments you.
That man is neither strong nor true
Who when Fortune strives anew
To trouble him by her attack
Finds not the heart to answer back.
One must oneself ever defend,
Nor be made captive in the end.
She knows so little of how to fight,
That he who strives with all his might,
Whether in robes or ragged cloak,
Can conquer her at the first stroke.
He is not brave who doubts the hour,
For he who comprehends her power
And understands her completely,

Unless he choose to bend the knee,
Can ne'er be forced to surrender.
Tis shameful to see men render
Themselves to death, when they
Might defend themselves any day.
He's wrong who seeks to complain,
Then unresistingly suffers pain.
Take care; accept naught of hers,
Nor her service nor her honours.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII: THE HOUSE OF FORTUNE

How Reason doth to him reveal
Fortune and her turning wheel,
Saying that, if he wills, her power
Can ne'er grieve him for an hour.

'LET her turn her wheel forever,
From turning it she ceases never,
There at the centre you will find
Her blind-folded, for she doth blind
Some with wealth and authority,
Others she blinds with poverty,
And when she pleases, alters all.
He's a fool who when aught befall
Delights in it, or shows dismay,
For guard himself wisely he may;
Of a surety, he may so do
But only if he wishes to.
Beyond this, shun all your excess,
In making of Fortune a goddess,
And raising her toward the skies,
You should not seek to so devise.
For tis not reasonable nor wise
To have her dwell in paradise;
In that, she is less than joyous,
Rather her house is perilous.
A rocky islet lies, you see,
In the midst of the open sea,
Rising from it there, on high;
Gainst it the waves rage and cry,

Pounding upon it furiously,
Worrying, toiling, endlessly,
And many a time soaring so
As to drown that rock below,
Till the water away doth drain,
And the isle shows clear again.
As the water backward heaves,
So the isle lifts free, and breathes;
Yet it keeps not a single form,
Rather doth alter and transform,
Disguises itself and doth change,
So all its dress is new and strange.
For when tis open to the air,
It is all clothed in flowers fair,
That like the stars above do sheen,
And the grass grows rich and green,
For Zephyrus doth ride the sea;
But when Boreas blows then he
Strikes the flowers and the grass,
For his freezing sword doth pass,
And as the flowerets are born
They are in a moment shorn.
The grove it bears is marvellous,
The trees within are wondrous;
One is barren and bears naught,
The next ripening fruit doth sport,
The next grows leaves endlessly,
The next of foliage is free,
For while one tree remains green,
Its neighbours without leaves are seen.
And if one starts to bear a flower,
Others lose theirs within the hour.
One raises itself toward the sky,
Others close to the ground do lie.

If buds appear on one, on high,
On others they do fade and die.
There the broom is huge and tall,
The pine and cedar slight and small;
And every tree doth thus deform,
Each one takes on another's form.
The laurel leaf that should be green,
There all withered may be seen,
Whereas the olive's parched and dry
That should be verdant neath the sky;
The willow that should be barren
Yet bears flower and fruit in season;
The elm strives against the vine,
The vine's shape doth it define.
The nightingale doth rarely sing,
But the bearded screech-owl, calling,
Screams in rage as is its nature,
The prophet of misadventure,
Hideous messenger of dolour,
In its cry, and form, and colour.
There two diverse rivers spring,
All summer and winter issuing
From two founts of diverse guise,
That from two diverse sources rise
The one's water is sweet in nature,
So honeyed and so full of savour
That there are none who taste of it
But drink more than they ought of it,
For none their thirst can thus defeat;
The water is so fine and sweet,
They must drink yet more and more,
Their thirst still greater than before.
None drink but are inebriated,
Yet their thirst cannot be sated,

For the overpowering sweetness
Is such that those who it address
Cannot take a single swallow
Without wishing more would follow,
For that sweet savour piques them so,
As with dropsy, rare thirst they know.
That river flows so pleasantly
With such a murmur running free,
It sounds and doth chime that stream,
Softer than drum, or tambourine.
There is none goes by whose heart
Is not thus brightened by its art.
Many who'd wish to enter in,
Are halted there as they begin,
And find they can go no further;
Their feet un-wetted by the water,
They all fail to touch its sweetness,
However close to it they press.
They sip a little of it, no more,
Yet willingly would leave the shore,
When they've tasted of its sweetness,
And plunge beneath its wave no less.
And yet others wade out further,
And go where the flow is deeper,
Praise the pleasure they encounter,
And swim, and bathe in the water.
And yet a gentle wave's on hand
To push them backward to the land,
And thus return them to the shore,
Where parched lips burn once more.
I'll speak now of the other river,
You'd find there, and of its nature.
The current there is sulphurous,
And dark, the savour odious,

Like a blocked chimney smoking,
Topped above with scum, and stinking.
The water there flows not sweetly,
But tumbles down so hideously,
It troubles the air as it moves,
More than ever the thunder does.
Over these waters, I tell no lie,
Sweet Zephyrus doth never sigh,
Nor ruffle the waves as he goes by,
Which, all unlovely, swell on high.
Yet the cold wind from the north,
Boreas, when he issues forth,
Fights against them, from above,
Forcing all the waves to move,
The depths to rise, till each oblique
Valley becomes a mountain peak,
And they fight against each other,
So fiercely do the currents labour.
There many dwell, upon the shore,
Who sigh there, and weep full sore,
And set no bounds to all their tears
But bathe in them, and full of fears,
Ne'er cease to wonder if they could
Be forced to drown there in the flood.
Yet many do that torrent enter,
Not only to the waist but deeper,
Plunging down into the water,
Until the waves do them cover;
There they're driven to and fro
By the frightful currents below.
Many emerge from out the flow;
Many doth the torrent swallow,
So many do the waves smother,
Driven deep beneath the water,

Till they, engulfed, know no way
They may retrieve the light of day,
And there they're forced to remain;
For ne'er can they return again.
This river winds, as on it flows,
And through so many channels goes,
That, with its waters, venomous,
It joins the river of sweetness,
Thus altering the other's nature
With all its foul stench and ordure;
And shares with it its pestilence
That breeds every ill mischance,
Rendering it troubled and bitter,
It doth so poison all the water,
And with its intemperate heat
The other's coolness doth defeat,
Stealing all its pleasant savour
With the assault of its foul odour.
On a high mountain slope is found,
Poised there, on un-level ground,
Threatening ruin, from day to day,
And ready for mischance alway,
The uncertain House of Fortune:
There's no storm-wind, monsoon,
Nor aught the hurricane can offer
That this building doth not suffer.
The tempests' blows it doth receive,
At their assault the place doth heave,
Nor does sweet and peerless Zephyr
Travel to that site to counter
The fierce winds' attacks he sees,
With his calm and gentle breeze.
One side slopes up within that hall,
The other side doth downward fall,

And thus tis seen to tilt so sharply
It must meet disaster, surely.
No one I think has seen, ever,
A house so various in nature.
One half doth brightly quiver,
Its walls are of gold and silver;
And the roof that is its cover
Doth the same two metals feature.
It gleams with precious stones, also,
For strong and clear, they do glow:
All praise this half as a wonder.
Yet walls of mud adorn the other,
Not a palm's width in thickness,
And there is thatch above, no less.
One half the house proudly shows,
And wondrous beauty doth disclose,
The other half trembles with fright,
Torn, fragile, open to the light,
Cracked and creviced, ruin it faces,
Pierced in half a million places.
If aught that doth prove unstable,
Aught that's mutable and fickle,
Can grant settled habitation,
There doth Fortune take her station.
When she wishes to be honoured,
She withdraws into the gilded
Portion of her house, awhile,
And there adorns herself in style;
Like a queen there she doth sail,
In long dresses, that gently trail
Along the floor about the rooms;
In silks, yielding rare perfumes,
In wool, dyed in many colours,
Patterned o'er with herbs and flowers,

And every other kind of thing
That art to great wealth doth bring;
All that fashion may conceive,
So that honour they may receive.
Thus Fortune doth herself disguise;
And I can tell you she decries
All others as not worth a sou,
When she beholds her own value,
And is so proud of her body,
No pride ever proved so haughty;
For viewing her wealth and glory,
Her honours, and nobility,
She is in such a foolish fever
She considers there was never
A man or woman worth as much,
Or ever like to be worth such.
This way and that she doth face,
Till she enters that other place,
The frail part, cracked and crazed,
While her wheel, it turns always.
There like one blind, she stumbles
And thus to the ground she tumbles.
As soon as she meets the floor
She alters herself once more,
Changing all her look and dress,
For instantly she doth undress,
And naked she appears worth naught,
No longer now possessed of aught.
And when she sees all her mischance,
Full of sighs, and woes, perchance,
From bare necessity, and shameful,
She then finds lodging in a brothel,
Where she weeps expansively
For all she lost but recently,

All the delights she once possessed,
When in glorious robes she dressed.
And since she's so perverse she doth
Upend in the mire the virtuous,
Dishonours them and doth grieve them,
Raises the wicked, and receives them,
And grants them dignity and honour,
In abundance, yields them power,
Then robs them; it seems from this
She knows not what she doth wish;
Thus the ancients, who did know her,
With bandaged eyes they did show her.'

Chapter XXXIX: Reason speaks of how Fortune may exalt the wicked

How that the wicked Emperor,
Nero, his madness without cure,
Had them dismember his mother,
Did her to bitter death deliver,
So as to view, all Rome believed,
That place where he was conceived.

'Nero and Agrippina'

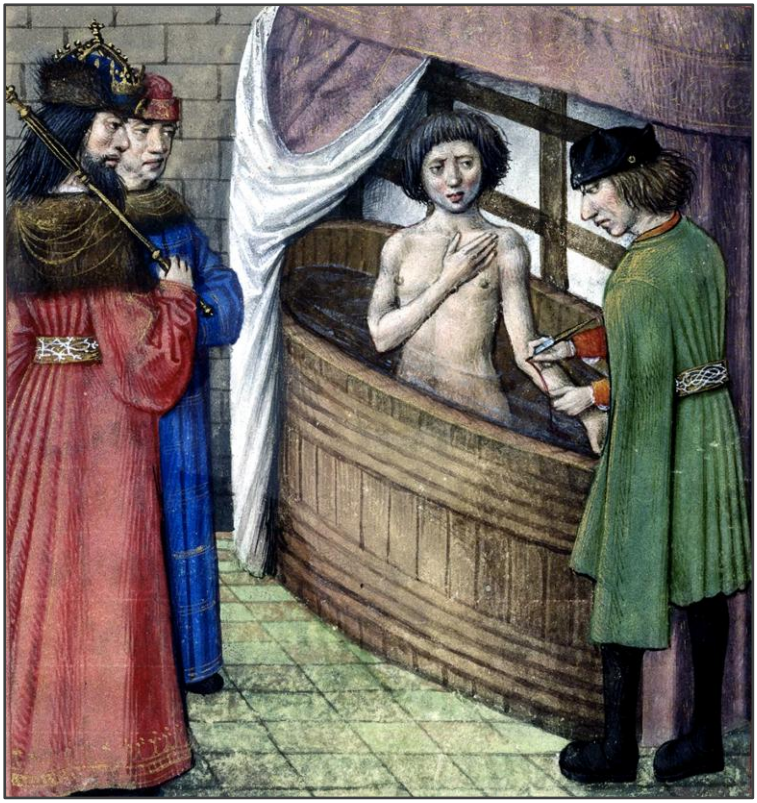
'THAT Fortune acts in such manner,
Degrades, destroys the virtuous ever,
Yet holds the wicked in high honour,
I would have you now remember;
And thus I spoke to you before
Of Socrates whom I loved more
Than all, and he indeed loved me,
As from his actions you can see.
Many an example I can find
To prove to you that Fortune's blind;
Consider Seneca and Nero,
Who I will treat of swiftly though,
Given the extent of our matter.
It would take too long to utter
The tale of Nero's cruelty,
How he set fire to Rome, how he
Had the senators killed, tis known
His was a heart as hard as stone,
Ordering his step-brother's murder,
Having them dismember his mother,
So as to view, all Rome believed,
That place where he was conceived:
And after he did her dismember,
Then, as the histories remember,
He judged if her limbs were fair.
Ah, what a wicked judge was there!
Not a tear flowed from his eyes,
Declare the writings of the wise.
But as he was judging her limbs,
He ordered wine brought to him,
Which they brought in measure,
There he took his drink at leisure.
Yet before then he had known her,
And he had ravished his sister,

And given himself to other men,
That treacherous ruler, and then
Of his former tutor, Seneca,
This vile Nero made a martyr,
Forcing him to choose the manner
Of his own death; he'd no other
Means to escape such cruelty:
"And since there is none, said he,
"Pour me a warm bath, that I,
May there be bled and so may die,
And blood and water so be blent,
And my soul, joyous and content,
Thus return to God that made it,
Who, in its torment, will aid it.'"

CHAPTER XL: THE DEATH OF SENECA

(*Lines 6495-6710*)

How Seneca the wise tutor
To a vile Roman emperor,
Into his bath, to die did go,
Nero making him perish so.



'The death of Seneca'

'AFTER those words, that very day,
His bath was brought; without delay,
The good man was placed inside,
On Nero's orders, and so he died,
Being bled such blood did render,
That his soul he must surrender.
And Nero gave no other reason,
Except that he had by custom
Since his years of innocence,
Shown his good tutor reverence,
As a disciple doth his master;
'But once proclaimed emperor,'
He said, 'no further reverence,
No, not the slightest pretence,
Should a man show another,
Not his tutor, nor his mother.
So because it had grieved him,
Whenever Nero received him,
Though he rose for his tutor,
And could not cease thereafter
To show the man due reverence,
From habit, when in his presence,
He now destroyed that wise man.
And yet he oversaw the Roman
Empire, this treacherous creature.
Of all the east and west, therefore,
North and south, sans contradiction,
This Nero held the jurisdiction.
And if you know how to attend
And to my words an ear extend,
You'll learn that riches, reverence,
Dignity, honour, power, and hence
The rest of Fortune's gifts, for I
Exclude none, cannot aim so high

As to make their owners virtuous,
Nor worthy of all I here discuss.
Yet if they show harshness, pride,
Or more, it cannot be denied
The great estate to which they rise,
Reveals it sooner to men's eyes
Than if they're of lower station,
So less open to temptation.
For when they wield authority
Their deeds reveal, outwardly,
Their desires, and then men see
They are neither good, nor worthy
Of riches, or of dignities,
Or honours, or authority.
Thus there is a common saying,
A foolish one, for false reasoning
Leads men to call it true, though they
Are but confused, and led astray:
That honours do alter manners.
Yet no change flows from honours,
Thus they reason less than well,
Though tis a sign by which we tell
They owned to the same manners when
They were far less powerful men,
Those who have a path maintained,
By which honours they so gained.
If they now are proud and vicious
Full of spite thus, and malicious,
Owning honours they now claim,
Yet they would have proved the same
As you see them at this later hour,
If they'd but earlier had the power.'

CHAPTER XL: WICKEDNESS VIEWED AS THE ABSENCE OF GOOD

'AND yet I do not call that power
That sins; and order doth devour:
From Scripture tis well understood
That power flows from the good.
None fail to do the good they ought,
Except through weakness and default;
Who sees with true and clear thought,
Doth see that evil is but naught.
For this doth Scripture say, clearly.
And should you doubt authority,
Because tis not believed by you
That all authority doth ring true,
I'm ready with my reasons too;
There is naught God cannot do;
And if the truth of it you'd see,
God can do no evil, and He
Is omnipotent as you know,
So that I may readily show,
And you can see, if you but will,
That, since the Lord can do no ill,
Whoe'er all things doth number,
Evil adds naught to that number.
Just as a shadow doth not throw
Darkness into the air, we know,
Tis a lack of light falling there,
So we can reasonably compare
This to sin within the creature:
Evil added naught to its nature;

Tis lack of good, nothing more.
So Scripture states, which to be sure
Grasps the sum of evil, and then
Says the wicked are less than men,
And lively reasoning doth follow.
But I will not take pains to show
You now, or prove all that I say,
You may read it there any day.
However, if it troubles you not,
I can in the brief time we've got
Speak a little of the reasoning.
For all things that have their being
Do tend towards a common end
The wicked shun, and must so tend,
For tis, of all, the sovereign good;
The first we name it, as we should.
And further reasoning I bring,
As to why the wicked lack being,
If you'd hear what is consequent
Upon my words; they are absent
From that order wherein all who
Have being set themselves; so you
Can clearly see that, as to being,
The wicked indeed are nothing.'

Chapter XL: Reason calls for self-restraint

'SO you see how Fortune doth go,
Here in this barren world below,
And how spitefully she worked then,
Choosing Nero, the worst of men,
Rendering him, of all there were,
Of that world, the lord and master,
Who brought Seneca misery.
Her favour one doth well to flee,
If none, whatever good they see,
Succeed in holding it securely.
Fortune I tell you to despise,
Naught of her favours should you prize.
Claudian never ceased to wonder
Or blame the gods for their blunder,
In seeming to grant their consent
To the wicked in their high ascent
To great riches and great honour,
And great authority and power;
Yet he himself gives the answer,
Explains his reasoning, moreover,
As one who knows well how to use
His reason, for he doth excuse
The gods, saying that their consent
Was given that they might torment
Men later for their wickedness,
Raising them high in their success,
So that they might be seen by all
Down from a greater height to fall.

If you do me service as I advise
And show to you, and here devise,
Then you will ne'er find any who
Prove truly wealthier than you;
Nor of anger will you show sign,
No matter how your state decline,
In body, friends, or possessions,
Rather you'll seek for patience;
And you'll be patient instantly,
If, my friend, you seek to be.
Why to sorrow must you keep?
Many a time I've seen you weep,
Like an alembic, a glass vessel;
I'll go soak you in that puddle,
Like some rag in a muddy pool,
And take that person for a fool,
Who e'er took you for a man;
Because no man who is a man,
And has the use of his reason,
Aids sorrow, for e'en a season.
Those living devils, I despise,
Have now so inflamed your eyes
That they are all drenched with tears.
Yet you would forgo your fears,
Ne'er weep at what doth happen,
If you'd make use of your reason.
It is your god who does this, rather,
Love, your good friend and master;
Tis he now, kindling, by his art,
Those coals he placed in your heart,
Who makes your eyes so to weep;
Costly his company to keep.
Tis not befitting for a grown
Man thus to have his feelings known.

You'll but discredit yourself again.
Leave tears to women and children,
To feeble and inconstant creatures;
Be strong where'er Fortune features.
If Fortune's snapping at your heel,
Would you then reverse her wheel,
That can ne'er be turned back so,
Not by the great, nor those below?
Nero himself, that high emperor,
Whom we have spoken of before,
Who of all the world was master
Such bounds did his empire cover,
Could not Fortune's wheel arrest,
For all the honours he professed.
Thus he, if the histories are true,
Came to an ill end; for he knew
His people's hatred, and did fear
For his own safety, many a year;
He asked for his friends, at the end,
And yet the messengers he did send
Found not one, where'er they cried,
Who would open their portals wide.
Then Nero came, most secretly,
And pounded away, fearfully,
On their doors with his own fist,
But they'd have naught to do with this,
For the more he called out to them,
The more they kept themselves hidden,
And never a one of them replied;
Thus he was forced to run and hide.'

CHAPTER XLI: NERO'S FATE

(*Lines 6711-6796*)

How the mighty emperor Nero,
He who yet feared the people so,
Was slain by two slaves, as bidden,
In a garden, where he'd hidden.

'The death of Nero'

'LODGED in a garden then was he,
With but two slaves for company,
For several men now sought him out,
To slay him, and he heard the shout,
"Nero, Nero, who has seen him?
Tell us quickly where to seek him."
Even though he had clearly heard,
Fearful, he dared not say a word,
And was astounded yet, to know
That he himself was hated so.
But when he realised hope was lost,
And that he now must pay the cost,
He begged his two slaves to kill him;
He'd kill himself if they'd aid him.
And so he did; but first requested
That his corpse be not molested,
The body burned, the head with it,
So that none might recognise it;
And he asked that this be done,
Ere it was seen by anyone.
And the ancient text doth claim,
(The Twelve Caesars is its name,
As penned by Suetonius,
Who describes his ending thus,
And calls the Christian religion
A false and a most wicked one;
Such this pagan calls it indeed,
As you may see there if you read)
That Nero's death did thus define
An end to all the Caesars' line;
He by his death turned the page
On that whole powerful lineage.
Nonetheless, in his first five years
He wrought good deeds it appears;

For not a prince that you could find
Would govern better, for both kind
And valiant he great Rome did bless;
Though later cruel and merciless.
In audience, condemning a man,
When once required to set his hand
To the order that the man should die,
He said he wished, and gave a sigh,
He knew not how to write his name,
Rather than do so, and felt no shame
In saying so. Nero did hold
The empire (in the book tis told)
For some seventeen years or so,
And he lived thirty-two, we know,
But his great pride and cruelty
Destroyed that prince so utterly,
That he fell earthward from the skies,
Fortune thus causing him to rise,
Then afterwards to so descend,
As you have heard and comprehend.'

CHAPTER XLI: HOW FORTUNE DEALT WITH CROESUS

'CROESUS could not stay her wheel
From turning so, from head to heel,
Though he was king of all Lydia,
For on his neck men set a halter;
He to be burned alive was fated,
Yet by the rain it was frustrated,
For thus extinguished was the fire,
And none dared linger by the pyre;
All did flee the fierce downpour,
And soon Croesus made one more,
For left alone in that vile place,
He fled, with no man giving chase.
But, lord of his lands once more,
He brought about a second war,
And captured yet again, was killed.
They hung him; the dream fulfilled
Of two gods who appeared to him,
And on a high tree did serve him,
Jupiter washing him, so they say,
As Phoebus wiped the dust away,
Then took pains to towel him dry.
On that dream he chose to rely,
Such that his trust in it grew so
His foolish pride did likewise grow.
His daughter, Phania, who was wise
And subtle, then sought to advise
Her father and the dream expound,
And she its truer meaning found.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DREAM

(*Lines 6797-7526*)

How Phania told King Croesus,
A day would come when fall he must,
And be hung from a tree she deemed;
So she expounded all he'd dreamed.

'Croesus and Phania'

"'FAIR sire, 'said Croesus' daughter,
'Here's sorrowful news, my father.
Your great pride's not worth a bean,
Fortune mocks you, so doth mean
This dream, wherein I find that she
Will see you hang from a tall tree;
And when you're swaying in the air,
With ne'er a covering for you there,
The rain will fall on you, fair king,
And the sun's bright rays, burning,
Will bathe your face and body too.
To that end, Fortune pursues you,
Who honour gives and then doth take,
And lowly men doth often make
Great, rendering the great lowly,
Thus showing her authority.
Why should I conceal your fate?
At the gibbet, she doth await,
And when the gibbet you shall see,
A halter round your neck, then she
Will take away that crown of gold,
That on your brow all men behold,
And twill be crowned with another,
You'll think less of than any other.
And so that I might yet explain,
More clearly, all that dream again,
Jupiter there who poured the water,
He rules the sky, rain and thunder;
And Phoebus, who towelled you dry.
He is the burning sun on high;
The tall tree for a gibbet I take,
Such is the truth, and no mistake.
You must then that journey make,
So Fortune, for the people's sake,

Takes vengeance on your haughtiness,
Your mad pride in your high success.
So many a great man she destroys;
She cares naught for, counts as toys,
Men's treachery or loyalty,
Their low estate or royalty,
But rather dallies with them all,
As a little child plays at ball,
Tossing about, in great disorder,
Wealth and reverence and honour,
Giving out dignities and powers,
Regardless of whom she dowers;
And when she extends her grace
She extends it to every place,
Scattering it about like dust;
To mire or mead doth it entrust,
Caring naught for all about her,
Except Nobility her daughter,
Cousin to nearby Sudden Fall;
She's forever at Fortune's call.
And yet of her tis true, this one,
Fortune doth grant her to none
Who seeks to win her by his art,
If he doth not amend his heart,
Proving worthy, courteous, noble,
For none is so skilled in battle,
That Nobility will not scorn him,
If Baseness doth yet suborn him.
Nobility with my love I'll grace;
She'll not enter a heart that's base:
Therefore I beg of you, dear father,
Let not Baseness touch you, rather
Be a guide to those with riches,
Neither proud nor avaricious;

Let your heart be generous, noble,
Take pity on the poorest people.
Indeed all princes should act thus;
A heart that's debonair, courteous,
Generous, all need, and kind within,
If the people's friendship they'd win;
For lacking this, you understand,
A prince is but a common man."
So Phania spoke, all chidingly,
Yet fools see naught in their folly,
But sense and reason do impart
As they appear to the foolish heart.
Croesus showed scant humility,
Full yet of all his pride and folly,
Thinking his actions to be wise,
However great the people's cries.
"Daughter,' he said, 'teach not me
About good sense and courtesy,
For I know more than you do know,
Who, in this manner, chide me so.
And since you interpret my dream
In this foolish way, it would seem
You seek to trouble me with lies;
I understand it otherwise.
According to the letter I read,
All you gloss falsely, indeed,
And understand it so, my lass,
As we shall see it come to pass.
Ne'er did such a noble vision
E'er have so vile an exposition.
Know, the gods will come to me,
And serve me then as readily
As they showed me in the dream;
A friend to me, each thus I deem,

And long have I deserved it so."
See how Fortune served him though:
For he could not her power deny,
She hung him from the gibbet high.
Have I not thus the proof displayed,
That her wheel cannot be stayed,
And none can hold back their fate,
Howe'er they rise to great estate?
And if of logic you know aught,
A true science, such as is taught,
You may see, if great lords so fail,
Then lesser folk will ne'er prevail.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE FATE OF MANFRED

'AND if you think tis casuistry,
Such proof from ancient history,
There is proof from this age too,
From battles, beautiful and new,
Their beauty only such, I mean,
As ever can in battle be seen.
I speak of Manfred, Sicily's king,
Who by force and guile did bring
Peace to that island a long while,
Till Charles came, whom men did style
The Count of Anjou and Provence,
And is, through Divine Providence,
Now the King of Sicily, also,
For the true God, He wished it so,
Who e'er sustains that good king.
He, from Manfred, won the thing,
Not only seized his sovereignty,
But drove the life from his body.
When in the forefront of the battle
With his sword that sang so well,
Charging, aloft his great warhorse,
Charles did beset him, in due course
"Checkmate" he cried aloud, that morn,
Advancing, like an attacking pawn
In the midst of the chessboard there.
Of Conradin, in a later affair,
Manfred's nephew, I need not speak,
A ready example, for such you seek;

Charles took his head, despite a train
Of German princes; the King of Spain's
Brother, Henry, so full of treason
And pride, he sent to die in prison.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE GAME OF CHESS

'THAT pair, indeed, as foolish boys
Treat rooks, pawns, bishops as toys,
And brave knights too, in their game,
And lose from the board those same,
Played so, though afeared, that day
In the game they'd set out to play:
Yet no defence against checkmate,
Did they need, in truth, their fate
Being to play without a king,
So checkmate was not a thing
Within the power of those who warred
Against them on that chessboard,
Whether on foot or on horse-back;
One checkmates not, in such attack,
Pawn or bishop, rook or knight;
For, if the truth we keep in sight,
Since I wish not to lie, or flatter
Any, in speaking of this matter,
When I recall the rules of chess,
If you know aught of it, success
Involves the king whom you need
To put in check; tis mate agreed,
If none of his men help can lend,
Nor he, alone, himself defend;
Weakened, naught him can please,
Thus put to flight by his enemies.
One checkmates in no other guise,
The generous know; the mean likewise.

So Pergamum's King Athalus,
It says in "Policraticus",
When of Arithmetic he wrote,
Defined the rules here, that I quote,
Though digressing from his matter,
When meaning to write of number,
So inventing this pleasant game,
And gave examples of the same.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE FATE OF CONRADIN AND HENRY OF CASTILE

'THUS Conradin and Henry fled,
For capture they did sorely dread.
What say I? To escape capture?
Twas on account of death rather,
Which might trouble them the more,
Yet add but little to the score,
For the game was going badly,
At least as concerned their party,
That was lost, in truth, from God's sight,
And there gainst Holy Church did fight.
If any had cried out "checkmate"
There was scant need for debate,
The Queen had been taken, alack,
When Manfred fell to Charles' attack,
In that former battle; Charles took,
Each bishop, knight, pawn and rook.
And though the Queen was not there,
Once captive, grieving, in despair,
She'd no means of defence at hand,
For, she was made to understand,
Checkmated, dead, Manfred did lie,
His corpse now cold beneath the sky.
And likewise, King Charles, tis said,
When Conradin and Henry fled,
Captured them, war having ceased,
And so did with them as he pleased,
And with many another prisoner,

Their accomplices in that affair.
This valiant king, in my account,
Whom men then addressed as Count,
Whom morn and eve, night and day
May God defend and guide alway,
His soul and body and all his heirs,
Earlier settled Marseilles' affairs,
Conquering the pride of that city,
Beheading the nobles, ere Sicily
Was granted him, this preceding
His being, of that isle, crowned king,
And vicar of the whole Empire.
To tell you more, I'll not aspire,
For who would tell his every deed,
A mighty book must make indeed.'

CHAPTER XLII: REASON ADMONISHES THE LOVER

'Reason admonishes the Lover'

'THUS men you've seen possessed of fame,
And know, now, to what end they came.
For Fortune's hold proves insecure,
And he's a fool who thinks her sure;
Who she anoints in front, I fear,
She'll happily stab in the rear;
And you who have kissed the Rose,

And by that act such sorrow chose,
That you know not how to assuage,
Think you that you can kiss always,
Ever at ease, and free from strife?
A fool you are, upon my life!
So that woe holds you no longer,
Manfred I'd have you remember;
Henry of Spain, and Conradin,
Who acted worse than Saladin,
In choosing to make war together,
Against Holy Church their mother;
And those noblemen of Marseilles;
And the great men of ancient days,
Like Nero, and like Croesus,
Whom I did previously discuss,
Who failed Fortune to restrain
Despite the power such men obtain.
I'faith, the free man who doth rate
Himself so highly he doth prate
Of his freedom, does he know naught
Of Croesus or how he was brought
To ruin, nor think of Hecuba,
Who was Priam's widow, nor
Retain there in his memory
Aught of Sisygambis' story,
She Darius of Persia's mother;
Those to whom Fortune did offer
Royalty and freedom extend,
Yet proved her slaves in the end?
It is a great shame on your part,
That though you know in your heart,
Reading's worth, and likewise study,
You neglect Homer utterly;
For though you may have studied him,

Yet seem to have forgotten him,
Rendering all your effort vain.
You study hard but then, again,
Lose it all through negligence!
Why study if the subject's sense
Fails you in your hour of need;
And through your own fault indeed?
Instead, through close remembrance
You should treasure every sentence,
As should all those who are wise,
And fix it in their hearts likewise,
So that it will ne'er forsake them
Till death finally doth take them:
For those who know truth's ways,
And in their heart are true always,
And know how that truth to weigh,
Will ne'er be burdened here, I say,
By all the happenings that occur.
For they'll hold firm, so I aver,
Gainst all events that then may come,
Good or ill, or harsh or welcome.
And tis as true as tis common
That all the workings of Fortune,
Each could see, and every day,
If but attention they did pay.
And so tis wondrous you do not,
That all your study is forgot,
And your attention now elsewhere,
Upon a love that brings despair.
Thus, I'd have you now remember,
So you may perceive the better,
Zeus doth keep, in every season,
At the threshold of his mansion,
So says Homer, two full barrels.

No ladies fine, no demoiselles,
No valiant man, no brave fool,
Old, young, ugly or beautiful,
Doth life in this world pursue,
Except they drink of those two.
For life's a tavern where all fare,
And Fortune is the taverner,
And she draws sweet wine in a cup
And sees that all there have their sup,
All there she with drink doth bless,
But some get more, and some get less,
There's none who doth not, every day,
Put a pint, or a quart away,
A hogshead, a pail, a beaker,
Just as Fortune doth deliver,
With open hand, or drop by drop,
Till she herself decides to stop;
Good or ill she doth disburse,
As she is sweet or perverse.
There are none prove so content
Nor are so free of all dissent,
That they find not, amidst their ease,
Something that doth them displease.
Nor prove so full of discontent,
That they're reluctant to assent,
Amidst the depths of their discomfort
To some small thing yielding comfort,
Something done, or that's now to do,
If they think for a moment or two,
And lapse not into that despair,
That oft the sinner doth ensnare;
No counsel may address that ill
No matter the counsellor's skill.
What good may your anger do you,

Your weeping, or complaining to
The skies? Rather be of good heart,
Go on, receive whatever dart
Fortune hurls, or gift she bestows,
For ill or good, the thorn or rose.
No man could count every turn
Of sly Fortune's wheel, or learn
All its perils, the tangle unpick.
It is an endless confidence trick,
That Fortune knows how to work,
Such that none knows every quirk
Of hers, nor knows, if he choose,
If he'll win all, or all shall lose.
But I'll say no more about her,
Except that I must now recall her
In making of you a request,
Three, in fact, all plain and honest;
For the lips will willingly part
To speak of aught touching the heart;
And if you would seek to refuse,
There is naught that can excuse
You doing what reflects so badly:
They are that you seek to love me,
And that you should Amor despise,
And should not ever Fortune prize.
And if you are too weak to meet
The burden of this triple feat,
I'm here to make that burden less
So you may bear it with success.
Perform the first request solely
And if you understand me clearly,
You'll be delivered of the rest,
If free of folly and drunkenness.
For you should know, this truth record,

Whoe'er with Reason doth accord,
Seeks not to dally with Amor,
Nor values Fortune anymore;
Tis why Socrates did extend
His hand to me as his true friend;
He ne'er feared the God of Love,
Nor for Fortune would he move;
Tis he whom I'd have you resemble,
And your heart with mine assemble,
For if beside mine you set yours,
I shall be satisfied, in due course.
Thus I have but the one request,
Perform the first, and the best,
Of those I asked, in this matter,
And I'll quit you of those others.
Now speak, and look me in the eye,
Will you perform my wish? Reply!
Naught else shall I ask, I say,
Serve me solely in this way,
Forsake thoughts foolish and untrue,
And that mad God who maddens you,
Amor, who'd have you yet believe,
Who sense and memory doth deceive,
Steals the eyes from heart and mind,
That you might dwell among the blind.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE LOVER IN TURN ADMONISHES REASON AND SHE REPLIES

'The Lover admonishes Reason'

'**LADY**, I can be no other
Than myself, and serve my master,
He who a thousand times richer
Will render me, at his leisure;
For he to me must grant the Rose,

If I thus strive, for her I chose;
And, if he did so, then I would
Possess no need for other good.
Indeed, I'd not give three chick-peas
For the riches of Socrates,
Nor hear of him a word further.
I should seek to join my master,
And keep my covenant with him,
For such is right, and is pleasing.
Though to Hell it lead me, amain,
I cannot my poor heart restrain.
And then my heart is never mine,
I'll ne'er a covenant undermine,
Nor e'er will, then love another,
That I've made with some other.
I know by heart my legacy,
To Fair-Welcome left it wholly,
And in my intense impatience
Made confession ere repentance:
Thus I would not, you should suppose,
Exchange aught with you for the Rose;
That indeed you must surely see.
Moreover you show scant courtesy
In using the word 'testes', one
Scarcely fitting if it should come
From the lips of a fair lady.
You who are so wise and lovely,
I know not how you dared to name,
And not gloss over all that same,
By using some more decent word,
Like the good women I have heard.
Even when nurses, of whom many
Are coarse, and indulge in bawdy,
Set out to bathe their children,

And do kiss them and caress them,
They give those things another name;
You know tis true what I do claim.'
Then Reason did begin to smile,
And, smiling still, after a while,
Said: 'Fair friend tis fine to name
Without incurring the least blame,
And openly, anything we would
Consider to be naught but good.
Indeed, I can speak properly
Of things that are bad; certainly
I cannot be ashamed of aught
Unless by it sin may be brought;
Though whate'er involves sin
Is naught that I e'er dabble in.
I have in my life naught sinful;
And sin not, in any way at all,
If noble things I choose to name,
Free of gloss, the meaning plain,
That my Father in paradise
With His own hands did realise,
With all the other instruments
All the pillars and arguments
That human nature do sustain,
Lacking which all were in vain.
God grants you penis and testes,
Wittingly, within you he frees
All the powers of generation,
With that marvellous invention,
So that the species might live on,
And through renewal be reborn.
Tis liable, through birth, to fall,
Tis, through that fall, renewable,
So that God makes it to endure;

It doth suffer death nevermore.
He did the same for any creature,
Which is maintained by Nature,
For, though a creature dies, again
Its form in another doth remain.'
'Your speech is worse than twas before,
Tis much too obvious to ignore,'
I said 'the fact, that all this bawdy,
Shows you deep in obscene folly.
For e'en if God those things made
Whose use but now you conveyed,
It was not Him gave each a name;
The things are base, I would claim.'

CHAPTER XLII: REASON DENIES THE USE OF BAWDY

'FAIR friend,' said Reason the wise,
'Courage is not folly, likewise
It ne'er was such, and ne'er shall be.
You may say whate'er you please,
For I do grant you time and space,
Who wish for all your good grace
And love; so you have naught to fear,
For I am ready thus to hear
And suffer as you wish in silence.
Take care to shun the same offence
Though, since now you denigrate me;
I'faith it seems tis some folly,
You would seek from me in reply,
Yet you shall have it not, say I.
I chastise you for your own good,
Nor am I a person who would
Commence some form of villainy,
By speaking to you maliciously.
Tis true, let it not displease you,
Vengeance were ill between us two.
And know that worse than vengeance is
A tongue, that's ever full of malice.
If I wished revenge in any guise,
I'd seek revenge quite otherwise,
For if through what I do or say
You misspeak or misbehave,
I may privately correct you,
So as to chastise and teach you,

Without slander or casting blame;
Or I may otherwise seek the same,
If you should choose not to believe
The good true counsel you receive,
By timely pleading before the might
Of a judge who upholds the right;
Or by some reasonable deed
An honourable vengeance breed.
For I'd not wish malice to anyone
Nor would harm them by my tongue,
Nor would defame a single person,
Whether good or evil; no not none.
Each bears the burden of his deeds,
Let him confess, if such he needs,
Or, should he choose so, ne'er confess;
I'll not for such confession press.
I've no wish to commit a folly,
Thus I may declare quite truly,
None will be uttered here by me.
Silence is but small virtue, but she
Who speaks without proper need,
Does thus commit a devilish deed.
The tongue should always be restrained,
As Ptolemy long ago maintained
At the start of his "Almagest",
His honest view he there expressed:
That he is wise who takes great pain
His tongue's eloquence to restrain,
Except if he of God should speak,
For of such speech one cannot seek
Too much, nor sufficiently praise,
God who is our master always,
Nor fear too much, too much obey
Or love, or bless Him, every day.

Or pray mercy, or thanks render;
None can too much praise engender,
For we should ever invoke his name
For all His blessings we acclaim.
Cato, you'll find, is in accord,
If ere his writings you've explored,
For there, if you seek it, writ true,
He says that the very first virtue
Is ever one's tongue to restrain;
So curb yours then, and so refrain
From bringing foolish words to birth;
And do what's wise and of true worth.
Tis good for such pagans to be read,
For we benefit from what they said.
And one thing I might say in answer
To you, without malice or anger,
Without blaming or vexing you,
For only a fool seeks so to do,
Which is, saving your grace and peace,
That gainst me, who but seek your ease
And love you, you commit great wrong,
Claiming twas bawdy, in such strong
Terms, rebelling decrying me, thus
When God, the noble and courteous,
The King of Angels, and my Father,
From whom all courtesy does ever
Flow, both nourished and tutored me.
Nor badly raised does He think me;
Rather He taught me this manner,
By his grace, tis my custom ever
To speak openly of all He taught,
And without glossing over aught.
Yet wishing to fault what I say,
You'd require me to gloss alway.

Wish to fault me? Rather, you do,
By saying to me that God who
Made these things at least named them not.
I reply: perchance, He did not,
At least with the names they hold now,
Yet could have done so, I avow,
When first He did the world create,
And all things in it did orchestrate;
But He wished me to find each name,
At my leisure, apply the same,
Individually and collectively,
To increase our knowledge, you see.
And speech, a gift, He gave to me,
One which is most precious to me;
And all that I have told to you,
You can find in the ancients too;
For Plato taught, in the Academy,
That speech was granted humanity
So wishes might be understood,
And we might teach all we would.
The words, wrought here in rhyme,
You may discover, at any time,
Written in Plato's "Timaeus".
Thus when you claim as odious
That word, and say tis ugly, base,
Before God, I say tis not the case,
And if I gave to aught some name
You choose to criticise and blame,
Well, if I'd chosen to call these
Testes relics, and relics, testes,
You who goad me and criticise
No doubt of "relics" would likewise
Claim the word was vile and base.
"Testes" is fine, and to my taste,

And "testicles", and "penis" too,
And none more fair, in my view.
I made the words and tis the case
I ne'er made any that were base;
If I'd named holy relics so,
Calling them testes, you'd bestow
The name of beauty on that word,
Such that to the church you'd herd,
And kiss and worship, set in gold
And silver, the testes you behold.
Now God, who is wisdom supreme,
Found all I made did goodly seem;
And, by the body of Saint Omer,
How indeed, my friend, could I dare,
Not thus to name my Father's work
Fittingly; repayment should I shirk?
Each work of his needs have a name,
So men knew how to name that same,
And such that everything might claim,
And so be named by, its true name.
If women in France do not do so,
Tis but custom that tells them no,
For the true names too would please them,
If they were accustomed to them;
And if they should name things truly,
Then never a sin could that be.
Custom is all too powerful,
And if I know such custom well,
Many a thing that's new displeases,
That by custom is fair and pleases.
Every woman sets out to name
Them by I know not what name,
Purse, tackle, thing, part, prickle,
As if they were thorny and tickle,

Yet when they feel them close by
Find they'll never pierce a thigh.
They name them as is customary,
Not wishing to name them truly.
I'd ne'er force any to do so,
But I give way to no one, though,
In wishing to talk more openly,
That I may speak more accurately.'

CHAPTER XLII: REASON SPEAKS OF COVERT MEANING

'THEY lecture well in our schools
By talking of things in parables,
Which are most beautiful to hear;
Thus one should not take all here
According to the letter; in my
Speeches another sense doth lie,
At least when of "testes" you heard,
Than you would give to my word,
And of that I would briefly speak.
He who the meaning shall seek,
Will find the text's deeper sense,
And bring to light hidden intent.
The truth that therein is concealed
Would be clear if twere revealed:
You'll understand if you review
The thoughts of the poets anew,
For there in great part you may see
The secrets of philosophy,
Which must delight you greatly,
And would serve you profitably.
In your delight, you'd benefit,
Benefiting, delight in it.
Within many a play and fable,
Lies delight, and what's profitable;
Beneath them poets hide their thought,
Thus truth in fable may be sought.
If you would seek to understand
You must take up the work in hand.

Yet, later on, I spoke that word,
And another, you clearly heard,
To be read according to the letter,
Without gloss, naught lying deeper.'

CHAPTER XLII: THE LOVER APOLOGISES AND MAKES A PLEA

'LADY, I grasped them, as I should,
The words were easily understood,
As any man who knows French ought
To grasp them, that the meaning sought;
They need no further explanation,
But of the poets, the fine oration,
The fable, phrase, and metaphor,
I know little more than before.
Yet if indeed I may be cured,
And if my service finds reward,
As I do hope, though now I fail
To know, I shall in time prevail;
At least as far as such can be,
So every man can clearly see.
And I accept your fair excuse,
Regarding that word whose use
I queried, and for the other two
Which you employed correctly too,
Upon which I need not dwell,
Nor seek their meaning to tell.
But I beg you, in God's mercy,
For loving no longer blame me.
If I'm a fool, mine are the sighs,
And I do, at least, something wise,
Though I think myself to flatter,
In paying homage to my master.
And tis no matter if I'm a fool,
For no matter how Fortune rule,

I love, am pledged to, the Rose,
For tis none other my heart chose;
Thus if I promised you my love,
My promise would worthless prove,
And I would deceive you, rather,
Seeking to steal from my master.
I would not wish to think on aught
Except the Rose where is my thought;
And if you draw my thought elsewhere
With all these speeches that we share,
Till I've grown too tired to listen,
You will find it still my mission
To urge your silence, and depart;
For that other doth hold my heart.'

CHAPTER XLIII: REASON DEPARTS, AND THE LOVER MEETS FRIEND

(*Lines 7527-8096*)

How Reason doth leave the Lover
Sad and Melancholy; however,
He doth turn then to his Friend
Who to him doth comfort lend.

'The Lover meets Friend'

REASON, turned away on hearing
All, and left me quietly grieving.
Then it was, I remembered Friend,
And knew I must, howe'er it end,
Run, and seek him out, instantly;
Yet God had brought him to me;
And when he saw me there, apart,
Such sadness harrowing my heart:
'Fair sweet friend,' said he, 'what ails you?
Who with such torment assails you?
I see some ill on you doth weigh,
Finding you here in such dismay,
Tell me the state of your affairs.'
'God help me, neither good nor fair.'
'Tell me,' said he; and I did so,
Spoke of what you already know,
Which I shall not repeat again.
'By the body of God, I maintain,
Now that Resistance doth desist,
And the Rosebud you have kissed,
You are not hindered in any way,
Though Fair-Welcome's locked away.
For he conceded,' said Friend anew,
'That the sweet kiss be granted you;
He'll not be confined forever.
But you must now seek another
And a wiser course of action,
Since your goal is satisfaction.
Be comforted, for he will soon
Be released from out that prison
Where he was placed, for your sake.'
'Strong is the foe, and no mistake,
I cried, 'if it were but Ill-Talk;
Tis he at whom my heart doth balk,

Who then incited every other.
There's no way that they would ever
Have caught me if he'd not told all.
Fear and Shame hid me, I recall,
Most gladly, even Resistance,
Had ceased, at their insistence.
All three were holding their tongues,
Till those cruel devils came along
That the wretch did there assemble.
He, who saw Fair-Welcome tremble
When Jealousy did shout at will,
(For the crone spoke a deal of ill)
Would have taken pity on him.
I fled, without waiting for him.
Then the tower masons fashioned,
Where the sweet lad is imprisoned.
Now therefore, Friend, counsel me,
I am dead if you'll not advise me.'
Then said Friend, all skilled in such,
For of Love he had learned much:
'My dear companion, comfort take
In loving well, and woe forsake.
Serve the God of Love, day and night,
Serve loyally, without respite.
Never deceive him, traitorously;
Too great a treachery twould be,
Were you to prove a recreant;
Too cruel the blow if you recant,
Once by him you've been received,
Whom no true heart e'er deceived.
And so keep each commandment,
To his demands give your assent;
However tardy they may prove,
None fail of their intent that do,

If ill comes not from another part,
As twill when Fortune doth depart.
Think then to serve the God of Love,
Let all your thought of him so prove,
For such thought is sweet and fair;
Folly twould be to seek elsewhere,
For he'll not seek to part from you;
Yet he holds tight the leash anew,
And they must yield to his power,
Who cannot quit him for an hour.
I'll tell you next what you must do,
Wait now before you seek to view
The castle and the tower again;
Don't go there yet, for tis in vain;
Let no one see or hear you there,
More than seems usual; take care.
However much you'd wish to go,
While yet that tempest doth blow,
Scorn the walls, avoid the gate;
And if you're driven there by fate,
Make pretence, as best you may,
Never look Fair-Welcome's way.
Yet if you see him, from afar,
At some crenel or window-bar,
You may look on him with pity,
Though be sure to act covertly.
Twould bring him joy to see you there,
But he cannot, of his guard aware,
Show the least sign of it, nor, anew,
Except by stealth, acknowledge you.
Perchance he may close his window,
Hearing you speaking there below
To some other, and through the crack
Gaze upon you, ere you turn back,

And from the castle take your way,
Or he may be forced to turn away.
Take care however, as you do,
Ill-Talk catches no glimpse of you.
If he does, greet him, but be sure
That your expression is as before,
And on your face show ne'er a sign
Of hate, by chance or by design,
Or rancour; likewise if elsewhere
You meet him, no ill-feeling bare;
A wise-man conceals ill humour.
Those who deceive the deceiver,
Do a fair deed, and every lover
Doth hide their feelings moreover,
At least, that is, if they are wise.'

CHAPTER XLIII: FRIEND SPEAKS OF ILL-TALK

'THOUGH he seeks your ruin, disguise
Your thoughts, and serve, honourably,
Ill-Talk, and all his company.
Feign to offer all you possess,
Heart and body, and all the rest,
For men do say, indeed tis true:
Against the cunning be cunning too.
Tis no sin to trick those, you see,
Who are ever full of trickery.
And Ill-Talk is such a trickster;
Take away their tricks, and ever
A thief remains, and such is he,
And you indeed can readily see
The he doth deserve that same,
Who robs men of their good name,
Yet lacks the power to return it.
He's more worthy of the gibbet,
Than all those other petty thieves
Who steal but cash; one who deceives
You, and your coins would gain,
A perch of cloth, a sack of grain,
Four times as much, at least, must pay
According to the law of the day,
If he should be taken in the act;
Yet Ill-Talk's sin is, in fact,
Much greater, that of his vile tongue,
Which can never once it has sung
Its foul slanders requite the same,
By restoring a man's good name;

Nor can e'er a single word reclaim,
Of all that from his vile lips came.
Tis good though to appease Ill-Talk;
To kiss that hand we must not balk
That oft we'd see burned before us;
Would that the wretch were in Tarsus!
There let him utter all his slanders,
So long as he steals not from lovers.
Tis good though to stop up his lips,
Blame and reproach to thus eclipse.
Ill-Talk, and all his kin, should be,
May God ne'er stand them surety,
Tricked by our trickery, for the rest,
Served, blandished, flattered, and caressed,
With cunning, and adulation,
Deceit, and false simulation,
Saluted too, as you bow low;
Tis well to stroke a watchdog, so,
While you swiftly pass on by.
To Ill-Talk slanders you'll deny
If he be brought but to believe
You've no intention to deceive,
Or steal the bud he doth secure,
Then shall you triumph for sure.
That old crone, Fair-Welcome's warder,
Serve her too, may Hell-Fire burn her!
Take the same path with Jealousy,
Whom may the Lord curse, for she,
That fierce unhappy wretch, is ever
Enraged by others' joy and pleasure!
She's so cruel and driven by greed,
Of all such she will naught concede,
Nor let another take what's fair,
Lest she should have the smaller share.

Yet tis a fool who would take all;
Tis like a lantern's candle, withal;
Who doth with light a thousand bless,
Will never find its flame the less.
All whose intellect proves ample,
Do know the truth of that example.
If those two bid you do their will,
Serve them both with all your skill,
Treat them both with courtesy,
Tis valued, universally,
But such that neither can perceive
Tis your intention to deceive.
Tis the way one should proceed;
Arms about their neck, so lead
One's enemy to hang or drown.
Let flattery's caresses abound,
If you can find no other way.
In this case, I can truly say
There is no other means in view,
Of such great power are those two;
He who attacks them openly,
Must fail of his intent, you see.'

Chapter XLIII: Friend explains how to win favour with the keepers

'Friend speaks of the keepers'

'**AFTER** contending thus when you
Come to the other guards, if you
Can reach them after your foray,
Give them gifts, then do as I say:
A wreath of flowers tightly woven,
A purse, or some head-decoration,
Or some little jewel, that yet

Is fine and lovely and well-set,
Such will render you their master,
Without tending to disaster.
Appease them thus with a present,
Then complain, and make lament,
Speak of your toils, the pain, the fear,
Amor has brought, who led you here.
And if you have no gifts to give,
Make a promise, as you do live
And love; swear to it, sans delay,
No matter what you have to pay.
Swear loudly, pledge your word,
Rather than go from there unheard.
Beg them thus to grant their aid.
If tearful eyes are then displayed,
It will work to your advantage;
Weep, if you're wise as a sage,
Fall before them, on your knees,
Clasp your hands, and let your eyes squeeze
Out hot tears that shall fall apace,
And trickle swiftly down your face,
Such that they may behold them all,
A piteous sight, and see them fall.
Those tears are not to be despised
That fall from a sad lover's eyes.
Or if you find it hard to cry,
Touch your saliva to your eye,
Or covertly, without delay,
Let an onion come its way,
Tis one of garlic's many uses,
And that of many other juices;
Wet your lids, and weep away,
As oft as you wish, all the day.
Many a trickster has done so,

Yet made a good lover, I know,
Viewed by the ladies, suspended,
In the web for themselves intended,
Till pity triumph and yield hope,
And from his neck they take the rope.
Tears, by such tricks, many move,
Who never loved with a true love,
Rather some young girl deceiving
With their tales, and their grieving.
Tears draw the heart of a young maid,
If she believes no snare is laid,
But if she knows tis all a lie,
You'll see no pity in her eye.
Crying mercy would prove in vain,
You'll not entice her heart again.
Now, if you cannot go to them
By messenger send word to them,
By voice perchance, or by letter,
Or wax tablet if that serves better.
But never sign with your true name,
Then he and she may hide the same,
She may pose as he, he as she,
And truth be hid more easily;
He a lady, she a sir may feign.
Now only thus convey your pain;
For many a lover's been deceived
By many a thief who has retrieved
Their letters, accusation made,
And all the joys of love betrayed.
Never in children place your trust,
For you'll fare ill, if so you must;
A child's a hopeless messenger,
Since the child is oft a chatterer,
Will play, or show what they bear

To any traitor who asks, and care
Not how stupidly they relay it,
Knowing not the meaning of it.
All will be known, and instantly,
If you deceive not; use trickery.
And these keepers are, certainly
So merciful by nature, you see,
That if your gifts they will receive,
Then they'll not trick you, or deceive.
Know that if they do accept them
Then you'll be accepted by them.
And once they do, the thing is done;
As a lure is used by many a one,
At morn or eve, you understand,
To bring a noble hawk to hand,
Lured by gifts, a keeper offers
Grace and pardon to true lovers.
By gifts we conquer the warden
Who guards many a fair garden.
If it so happens that you discover
They are proud, though you offer
Gifts and prayers; and never waver
Despite you tears, or whatever
Else you think of; and reject you,
With fierce words, and harsh deeds too,
And slander you most cruelly;
Yet part from them courteously,
And leave the wretches there to stew.
No rich cheese doth melt, I tell you,
Faster than they will melt, because
If you should flee, they will, of course,
Grow used to chasing after you,
And you will gain, if they pursue;
For base hearts such haughtiness

Towards their lovers do possess,
The more they beg the less they're prized,
The more attentive, the more despised;
But if their lovers leave them be,
Their pride will take a fall, you see,
Those whom they despised, now please,
They are conquered then with ease;
When the lover leaves, naught is fine,
But all is harsh, on nettles they dine.
The mariner who sails the sea
Seeking many a strange country,
On the fixed star will keep his eye,
But changes tack as the wind doth lie;
He must shorten or lengthen sail,
And ever flees before the gale.
The heart that ceases not to love,
On more than one course must move,
Now must pursue, and now must flee,
If it would love most joyfully.
Then again, tis more than clear,
And no mere gloss I give you here,
But in the text you may have trust,
Tis fine to plead with them; you must;
For the lover there's naught to lose;
He who pleads and doth not refuse,
May advance by it, assuredly,
However arrogant they may be.
He may plead with them, in safety,
Since he must, tis a certainty,
Or be refused, or be received,
And thus can hardly be deceived.
Naught's lost if they will not consent,
Except the time the lover's spent.
Nor will the keepers ere resent

The lover's pleas and his intent,
Rather they will be grateful when
He has forged a way to them,
For on hearing a pleading voice,
None's so harsh as not to rejoice.
Within, they think that they must be
Brave and pleasant, and fair to see,
Possessed of every rare quality,
Since the lover doth make his plea,
Whether they choose to deny him,
Excuse themselves or allow him.
If he's welcomed, then all is fine,
He has what he has sought to find.
And if tis his misfortune to fail,
Free as a bird, he away doth sail.
If in failure may lie envy, spite,
Tis equally open to fresh delight.
But let the lover not blithely say
To the guardians, straight away,
That he doth seek their acquaintance
To pluck the rose from off its branch,
But speak of love, lawful and true,
And pure thought; and so should you.
Without a shadow of a lie,
The guards may be won, by and by,
If they are asked graciously;
Such a lover will never be
Refused, nor ought he to be so.
If you follow my counsel, though,
Don't set out to make your plea,
Unless you do things thoroughly;
For before they are won, you see,
They'll pride themselves on your plea,
But once they're your accomplices,

They'll value it a good deal less.
Yet they are all of such a kind
However harsh the face, behind
It lies one, who if no plea's made,
Yet still doth seek one, I'm afraid,
And might yet have granted for naught
That which was so fittingly sought.
But those with impetuous demands,
Or those who give with open hands,
Fill the keepers with foolish pride,
Their Roses will seem magnified;
In seeking to win some benefit,
Such lovers end by losing it,
Who might have had all for naught
If no such request they'd sought.
If only such lovers had made sure
Never to act in that way, before;
For if they had sought for praise,
Indeed they'd have won fair praise,
If they had but set out to agree,
And made a covenant mutually,
That none there should make demand,
Nor give gifts with so free a hand,
And better the guards to conquer
Should suffer the Roses to wither;
Though any man sworn so to do
Would not please me, nor ought he to;
At least, for no man would I care,
Who was bound to such an affair.'

CHAPTER XLIII: FRIEND URGES THE LOVER TO SEIZE THE MOMENT

'YET, on that account, do not wait,
Plead away, and thus set your bait,
Stretch your net now, and take the prey,
For perchance you could so delay,
That one, two, three four, or more,
Indeed fifty-two dozen might bore
Their way through, and win the day,
In less than fifty-two weeks I'd say:
All must be lost to some other,
If you wait here, a hapless lover;
You will scarce be there in time,
If you but stick here in the lime.
I'd tell no man to wait to move
Till a woman demands his love;
He's too much faith in his merit,
Who waits for her to commence it.
And whoever doth seek romance,
And his wishes would so advance,
Need not fear she will strike him,
However proud, if she like him,
Nor his ship not harbour safely,
If he conducts himself wisely.
So, my friend, you may exploit them,
Those keepers, when you reach them.
Yet never make such a request
Of them when at their angriest.
Look for when they're joyful, glad,
Make no request when they're sad,

Unless it is the sadness born
Of Jealousy, by madness torn,
Who punished them because of you,
Since they had angered her anew.'

CHAPTER XLIII: ON HOW TO BEHAVE TOWARDS FAIR-WELCOME

'AND if you reach the point, I say,
Where you can hold them all at bay,
And a convenient place have sought
And bear no risk of being caught,
And if Fair-Welcome dare forsake
His cell, who suffers for your sake,
Then when he doth turn toward you
His fair seeming, as he shall do,
For he knows how to greet others,
Then the Rose you should gather.
Even though you meet Resistance,
He who keeps you at a distance,
To abuse you; though Shame and Fear
Complain, who only feign anger,
And defend themselves but idly,
And, in defending, yield easily,
Or so it will then seem to you;
Though you see Fear tremble too,
Shame blush, Resistance shudder;
Though all three groan and shiver,
Treat it all as not worth a sou,
Gather the Rose by force, and you
Will show yourself a man, if done
At the right place, hour, and season.
Naught pleases them more, you see,
Than such force, if used properly.
The practice is quite customary,
Since folk are oft so contrary,

That they would wish to surrender,
What they themselves dare not offer.
They'll feign that a thing was stolen,
That they've allowed to be taken.
Know that they'll be sad, moreover,
If they do escape surrender,
Whatever joy they might express,
And they will hate you to excess,
However much they complained,
Being, in fact, greatly pained.
Yet if you find, by what they cry,
That the guards are angered thereby,
And defend the Rose, vigorously,
Restrain your hand, with honesty,
And yield yourself, don't hesitate;
Cry mercy, then stand and wait,
Until those three keepers depart,
Who so grieve and vex your heart;
Fair-Welcome yet remains there, who
Deigns to abandon all for you.
Thus strive against them all, as one
Who is a brave, wise, worthy man.
Pay attention to Fair-Welcome too,
And note how he doth look to you,
Consider how he appears, ever,
And then conform to his manner:
If he looks mature and serious,
Set all your aim on seeming thus,
Conduct yourself most seriously;
And yet if he acts foolishly,
Be foolish too in how you act;
Take pains to act like him in fact.
If he's happy, wear a happy face,
If angry, let anger joy replace;

If he laughs, laugh; if he weeps, weep;
Do thus, except when you're asleep:
Whate'er he loves, then love that too,
Whate'er he blames, blame that anew,
And praise whate'er he likes to praise.
Then he'll have faith in you always.
Think you a noble-hearted lady
Will love a lad foolish and flighty,
Who wanders dreamily at night,
And seems to all the maddest sight,
And sings at midnight, this boy,
No matter whom he may annoy?
She'd be fearful of being blamed,
Of being vilified, and shamed;
Such loves, fluted through the street,
Are soon known to the more discrete.
Foolish lovers care not who knows;
A fool is she who with them goes.
Likewise if one wise in Love's ways
Speaks to a foolish girl, and plays
The serious role, appearing wise,
He shall never her heart surprise;
He will never succeed, you see,
Simply because he loves wisely.
He must suit his manner to hers,
Or shame and woe are his deserts,
She'll suspect he's a sorcerer,
A sly fox, a cunning trickster;
The wretched girl will soon depart,
And grant another man her heart,
And before him herself abase,
Leaving the worthy for the base;
And there she will nourish her love
And, in brooding, a she-wolf prove,

Whose foolishness dictates her fate,
With the worst of wolves as mate.
Now, if you can find Fair-Welcome,
And play chess, dice, or backgammon,
With him, or another pleasant game,
Then always take care, at that same,
That you are forever the loser;
Always seem the lesser player.
Whenever you do play together,
Let Fair-Welcome be the winner,
Let him master you the while,
Let him mock your losses, and smile.
Praise all his shades of countenance,
His turns of phrase, and appearance;
Serve him too with all your might.
When he would on a seat alight,
Then bring to him a stool or chair,
And friendship will prosper there.
If you can see a speck of dust
Somewhere on his clothes, you must
Brush that speck of dust away,
Even if there's no dust in play;
If there's powder on his shoulder,
Be careful to remove that powder.
In short, wherever you may be
Do whatever you think will please.
Do as I say, and feel no doubt,
And he will never turn you out,
And your aim you'll make good,
Just as I've proposed you should.'

CHAPTER XLIV: FRIEND ADVISES ON HOW TO DEAL WITH ILL-TALK

(*Lines 8097-8266*)

How Lover doth reveal to Friend
His enemies, and doth contend
That soon he will bring the three
Before a judge, and justice see.

'SWEET Friend,' I cried, 'fie upon it,
No man but some false hypocrite,
Would perpetrate such devilry;
No greater evil could there be.
Would you have me flatter the while,
Folk who are themselves servile?
Servile and false are they, truly,
Except for Fair-Welcome only.
Is such then your counsel now?
I'd be a deadly traitor, I vow,
If I did serve but to deceive.
For I must say and you believe,
That ere I spy on an enemy,
I first defy them openly,
At least allow me to defy
Ill-Talk, who on me doth spy,
Rather than set out to deceive;
Or beg him to abate the gale
He hath raised against my sail,
Or let me beat him for doing so;
Or if he pleases, make amends

For this tempest that he sends;
Or if he will, let me complain
To a judge who'll prove his bane.'
'My good companion, such is for
All those who are at open war,
But Ill-Talk doth work covertly,
He is not here an open enemy,
Those whom he hates he doth defame
Behind their backs, and put to shame.
God shame him then, as a traitor!
No choice but to play the betrayer.
Fie then upon traitors such as he,
I'll ne'er trust the untrustworthy.
He hates others within his heart,
Scorns them, ere his lips do part.
No such man has e'er pleased me;
Let him beware, and I, equally.
Tis right he dies through treachery
Who gives himself to treachery,
Since vengeance can employ, it seems,
No more honourable means.
And if of him you would complain
Think you his slanders to contain?
Perchance you would lack the proof,
Nor find sound witnesses, forsooth,
And even had you the proof here,
He'd still not keep silence, I fear.
The more the proof, the more he'll spread
His slanders about you instead;
And you will lose much more than he,
As the thing is known more widely,
And your shame; those who'd abate their
Shame through vengeance make it greater,
Seeking to beat their enemy, when

Instead they find themselves beaten.
Scandal will not be beaten, no,
No matter who may wish it so.
And, God save me, you may wait
Forever for him to mend your state.
In truth, I'd not accept reparation,
I would sooner grant him pardon.
While if you show him defiance,
He'll have Fair Welcome in irons,
By all the saints, burnt on a pyre,
Or drowned or, failing death by fire,
Locked away for eternity;
Fair-Welcome no more shall you see.
Your heart then will sorrow more
Than Charles for Roland in that war,
Who, at Roncesvalles, did suffer
Death, through Ganelon the traitor.'
'Such things I'll ne'er seek to do.
Send Ill-Talk to the devil anew!
For I'd wish to see him hang, he
Who has rendered me so angry.'
'My companion, you must take,
Another path, and no mistake,
Hanging the man is not for you,
But for the judges, good and true.
Yet if you'd have counsel of me,
You might beat him by treachery.'
'My dear companion, I agree,
You shall hear naught else from me.
If you perchance possess the art,
And can show me how to start
To contrive a means to conquer
The tower more easily, however,
I would hear it, most eagerly,
If you but choose to tell it me.'

CHAPTER XLIV: FRIEND WARNS OF A DANGEROUS ROAD TO THE CASTLE

'HARK, there's a fine and noble way,
Not fit for a poor man though, I say.
For to win the tower, dear companion,
Without my art, then in my opinion,
There's a shorter road, you can take,
And into the castle you shall break,
Right into the heart of that fortress,
The gate would never hold, the rest
Would allow itself to be conquered;
And nothing there could be defended,
And none there dare speak overmuch.
That road is named Give-Too-Much,
Foolish-Largesse made it, moreover,
Who has ruined many a lover;
And right well do I know that way,
For I left it but yesterday.
There have I been a traveller,
More than one winter and summer.
You leave Largesse there on the right,
Then take the first left turn in sight,
Little more than a bowshot too
Along the beaten road need you
Journey, nor wear your shoe-leather,
Before you'll see the walls quiver,
The towers and the turrets tremble,
Though built so strong and durable,
And of themselves the gates will ope,

Needing no aid from mortal folk.
At that time the castle's so weak
Twould be harder for you to seek
Some piece of dry toast to quarter,
Than the castle's stone and mortar.
You'll have won it in an hour at most,
Having needed no greater a host
Than Charlemagne had need of, if he
Had wished to conquer Germany!
Yet no man who is poor, I'd say,
Could ever enter on that way;
He himself could not do so, nor
Another lead him to, what's more.
And yet, if he did so once, then he
Has learned as much of it as me;
He's as able its nature to tell,
As ever I am, who learned it well.
But you may know it, if you would,
And just as soon, though you should
Do little more here than possess
Great wealth and spend it to excess.
Yet tis not I shall lead you there,
Poverty prevents it, she took care
To forbid me to return, my friend.
Whate'er I had, that I did spend,
With all from others I received;
All who trusted me I deceived,
Such that not one could I repay,
Were I threatened with death this day.
"Come not again", cried Poverty,
"For you have naught to spend", said she.
Along that road you may not fare,
Unless Wealth chooses to lead you there.
And all those she leads on, moreover,

As they return, are made to suffer.
For in going she'll accompany you,
Yet, as you return, vanish from view.
And of this truth be sure, I say,
No matter when you take that way,
You'll not leave it, you understand,
Till Poverty takes you by the hand,
Who doth bring, to many, distress;
Left behind is Foolish-Largesse,
Who thinks of naught but gaming,
Or ways of outrageous spending.
Thus it is she spends her money,
As if it flowed from some granary,
All without account or measure,
No matter how she needs her treasure.'

CHAPTER XLV: FRIEND SPEAKS OF POVERTY

(*Lines 8267-8374*)

How Poverty did make request
Of Wealth, who is hardly honest,
And listens not to what is said,
But cruelly leads one on instead.

'AT its end doth Poverty wait,
In shameful and unhappy state,
Whose heart doth suffer woefully,
So many shameful prayers is she
Forced to make; and she receives
Such harsh refusal; few kind deeds,
Few kind words, none fair or pleasant,
And none do ever seek contentment
In her works, but blame her ever,
With hatred and scorn do treat her.
But think not on Poverty, rather
Think of how you may avoid her,
Where'er you go, whate'er you do.
Naught troubles a man such as you
More than descending to poverty.
And all those who spendthrifts be
Know this for a truth; moreover
Many have been hanged for her.
Well they know it, and say so too,
Who are forced to beg and who
Are made to suffer great distress,
Ere they win aught from the rest.

And such do all those lovers prove
Who seek out the delights of love;
His love a poor man cannot feed,
So Ovid doth confess indeed.
Poverty makes men hate, and scorn,
Suffering martyrdom, eve and morn,
And e'en steals men's intelligence.
For God's sake make a bold defence
Against it, and strive to believe
The truth of all my words; receive
All that I deem self-evident,
Or have proved by experiment,
Myself and in my own person;
As I've covered in my sermon.
I know how Poverty acts, you see,
Because of my shame and misery,
Better, my friend, than you can know,
Who have ne'er suffered such woe.
Thus you should have faith in me,
For tis to counsel you that I speak;
A blessed life doth he discover,
Who is well-counselled by another.
A valiant man was I once called,
Loved by my friends, one and all,
And in every place I spent freely,
Acted more than generously,
And was taken for a wealthy man.
Now I'm poor as a beggar man,
All because of Foolish-Largesse,
Who has brought me such distress
That only by cunning and deceit,
Do I have aught to drink or eat,
Clothes to wear, shoes on my feet;
Poverty's conquest is so complete,

Who stole from me all my friends.
For, my companion, comprehend
This, that when Fortune acted so,
All of my friends did up and go,
Except for one, I recount this truly,
The only one that remained to me.
Fortune had stolen them away,
Because Poverty came to stay,
Stolen? No, she had not, I own,
Rather she took what was her own:
For if they had been truly mine,
They'd not have left me by design.
She wronged me not in any way
By stealing her own friends away:
Hers in truth, though I knew it not,
For I had imagined I had bought
With my heart, soul, and largesse
Their all, and so did them possess.
And yet I discovered, my friend,
I was left with naught, in the end.
For now my friends, finding that I
Was destitute, away did fly.
And they mocked me, my friend,
When they witnessed me descend,
Beaten, beneath Fortune's wheel,
Struck by Poverty, down at heel.
Yet, I should not complain, for she,
Fortune, did me a courtesy,
That I'd deserved of her never,
For I could see clearer than ever.
With pure ointment, I realise,
She had so anointed my eyes,
(Having compounded the same
The moment that Poverty came)

I found she'd stolen not twenty,
But rather four hundred and fifty,
Of my good friends; no lynx's eye
Could have seen it clearer than I.
For Fortune showed me instantly
The faithful love I now could see
Revealed in my true friend's face,
Whom Poverty brought to that place,
For I should never have known him,
If my need had not been shown him.
Seeing it, he rushed to my side,
Did all he could, and naught denied,
In offering all that he possessed,
For my dire need he had assessed.'

Chapter XLVI: Friendship in time of need

(*Lines 8375-8712*)

How Friend doth readily recall,
For the Lover, that he could call
On but one friend, in misery,
Who oped to him his treasury.

'Friendship in time of need'

"**MY** Friend," said he, "here, truly,
I bring you my wealth and my body,
For they are yours as much as mine,
Fear not, take what love doth resign."
"How much, though?" "If you're unsure,
Take all, if you need all, being poor;
For the gifts of Fortune, in the end,
Are worth naught compared to a friend,
The same is true of those of Nature;
For we have searched one another,
And then joined our hearts together,
Such that we understand each other,
Or rather we have proved ourselves
And thus true friends find ourselves;
For none knows if a friend be true,
Till they be proven; as I and you.
I'm ever obliged to you, I find;
So the power of love doth bind.
If it would prove your salvation,
You can surrender me to prison,
As a hostage, your guarantor,
Pledge or sell my treasure, and more."
Not once did my friend hesitate,
He sought not to flatter my state,
Rather he forced me to accept,
Even though I sought to reject
His helping hand, shamed indeed,
Like the beggar man in dire need,
Whose lips are so sealed by shame
He hardly dares to speak his name,
But suffering hides the truth away
So his need he might not betray,
And so shows his best face to all,
And so did I, as I now recall.

Some beggars of sound body though
As I know well, do not do so,
They go limping along the street
Flattering every man they meet;
And their ugliest state they show
To all those they encounter so,
Keeping their true selves concealed,
So as to deceive the better-heeled;
Crying aloud how poor they are,
Yet reaping alms near and far,
While their harvest away they store.
But of them I will speak no more,
Since I could say so much, you see,
That all might then go ill with me,
For hypocrites hate men to reveal
The truth about them they conceal.
Thus before seeming friends I set
My foolish heart, that's foolish yet;
And was by foolishness betrayed,
Scorned, defamed, hatred displayed
(Yet the only reason, to my cost,
Was telling them of all I'd lost)
By all of them, communally,
But you, who keep me company,
You, who offer love, unceasing,
Ever to this poor heart clinging
Whose love for you doth never cease;
And shall cling so, if God so please,
For ever and a day, I believe,
Although this truth we receive,
That this, my bodily company,
You'll lose, as we find it to be
In this earthly life, when Death,
Doth claim his right to my flesh,

(Though that sad day, as we know well,
For body alone sounds the knell,
And all that to flesh appertains,
The appurtenances it sustains);
And both of us, I know, must die,
Sooner than we may wish yet, I
Think, not together; thus time runs,
And Death parts true companions.
And yet I know that if I die,
And if true love doth prove no lie,
And you live on, I too shall live
In your heart, that life doth give;
Or if you find death before me,
You will live on, a memory
Within my heart, and ne'er grow stale,
Just as, according to the tale,
Pirithous, much loved by Theseus,
After his death did live on thus.
Theseus sought him, and did depart
(For he lived on within his heart)
To look for him in Hell, such love
He held for him in the world above.'

Chapter XLVI: On giving in moderation

'YET Poverty is worse than Death,
For she torments our every breath,
Soul and body, not for an hour,
But as long as flesh doth soul embower,
And she adds to that misery,
Both larceny and perjury,

And a host of other evils too,
With which a poor man has to do;
She does what Death doth not desire,
For Death removes them all entire,
And, in his coming, ease doth lend,
And doth all temporal torment end.
For he but toys with us an hour,
However great may be his power.
So, I urge, my dear companion,
That you remember Solomon,
Who of Jerusalem was king,
For we may learn much from him.
He says, and note this carefully,
"Dear son, guard against Poverty
Through all the days of your life,"
And in his book he doth say why,
"Given this life we here endure,
Tis better to die, than to be poor.
For those who appear to be poor,
E'en their own brothers do abhor."
And he, regarding Poverty,
Speaks of one who is so needy,
Indigence is the name we give her,
Who her guests doth make to suffer.
We treat none with such ill intent,
As those whom we call indigent;
They allow them not as witnesses,
Those who the true texts address,
For in law the indigent are said
To be one with the discredited.
Poverty then proves an ugly thing,
While if you set about amassing
Coins and gems enough, I dare say,
So long as you gave it all away,

Or as much of it as you chose,
You could have both bud and rose,
No matter how closely guarded.
If not so rich as I've suggested,
Nor seeking to seem miserly,
Give little gifts appropriately;
Act pleasantly, but reasonably,
So as not to end in poverty,
For there lies loss and misery.
Most men then would mock you,
And in no way would help you,
As having paid more for a thing
Than if resold its sale would bring.'

CHAPTER XLVI: ON APPROPRIATE GIFTS

'TIS appropriate to make a present,
To this I grant my full consent,
Of fresh fruit in a cloth or basket;
Be swift to give it, ere folk ask it;
Apples, nuts, pears, or cherries,
Plums, sorb-apples, raspberries,
Chestnuts, quinces, tart barberries,
Damsons, or service-berries,
Your grafted medlars, strawberries,
Figs and peaches, and mulberries,
And if they were bought by you
Then say that they were given you
By a friend visiting from afar,
Though they but come from the bazaar.
Or make your gift crimson Roses,
Sweet violets, or primroses,
In wicker baskets, in season
Give naught that is beyond reason.
Such gifts will seem fine to others,
And you'll evade scandalmongers;
Even if they know ill of the lover,
They'll yet speak well of the giver.
Many a bailiff doth gifts sustain,
Who of ill-fortune doth complain;
Fine gifts of wine, or things to eat,
Make many a stipend complete;
And fine gifts, if nothing other
Bear witness to fine character:
Gifts have their place everywhere;

He's deemed worthy whose gifts are fair.
Thus gifts grant praise to the giver,
And obligate the receiver,
Saying, despite innate freedom,
That one should serve another man.
What, in sum, should I say of them?
That gifts capture both Gods and men.'

CHAPTER XLVI: ON HOW TO RETAIN THE BELOVED

'**MY** friend, list to my admonitions,
Take note of all my observations;
Know that if you set out to do
All that I've explained to you,
The God of Love, he will not fail
The mightiest castle to assail,
And grant all that he promised thus.
For he and the Goddess Venus,
Will fight against the keepers so,
The fortress they will overthrow.
Then shall you gather your rose,
Whatever thorns do her enclose.
But when one has acquired a thing
Great skill is needed in keeping
It safe; and wisdom needs belong,
To one who would enjoy it long.
For tis no less a virtue to
Keep and defend, in my view,
Such things, once they are acquired
Than to gain them, as you desired.
Tis right for a lover to be called
A wretch, who through his own fault
Loses that which he claims to love.
Tis a worthy thing, one I approve,
To know how to keep one's love,
So she from you doth not remove,
Especially when God hath made her,
Wise, courteous, good; who, further,
Grants her love, and doth sell it not.

For love in search of gain is not
Contrived by woman unless she
Is one who's wedded to infamy;
Nor is there any love, I maintain,
In one who gives herself for gain.
Such a lover may hell-fire burn!
Keeping her is not your concern.
In truth almost all women though
Are over-eager to take, and so
Readily plunder, consuming too,
Till naught is left to those men who
Most as theirs themselves proclaim,
And do most loyally love the same.
For Juvenal said as much, when he
Spoke of Hiberina, saying that she
Indeed, would rather lose an eye
Than on one man alone rely.
For she was of so hot a nature,
That no one man could e'er sate her.
No woman will e'er seem so ardent,
Nor with her love so well content,
That she'll seek not, of her lover,
All his spoils and all his treasure.
Consider how those others live,
Who for gifts themselves do give;
Not one among them could you name
Who doth not seek to do the same;
To place the man in subjection,
All have that as their intention.
Such is the rule that Juvenal
Gives, yet no rule's infallible,
Twas of the wicked ones he thought,
When such a judgement he taught.
For if, I say, God did her grace

With loyal heart and honest face,
Then I will tell you what to do;
A courteous fellow, such as you,
And debonair, must not flatter
Himself, nor trust, in this matter,
Overmuch to his face and figure:
Tis right to study and consider
Manners, arts, and sciences too.
The ends that Beauty doth pursue,
If you do think on them aright,
Mean Beauty must soon take flight:
Soon to time must Beauty yield,
As will the flowers of the field;
For beauty is of such stuff made,
As it doth live, so doth it fade.
But Wisdom, if wise you'd be,
Doth keep its master company,
As long as he's alive on earth,
And in the end Wisdom is worth
More than twas at the beginning;
Tis always seeking new learning,
Thus diminishes not with time;
And a young man of noble mind,
If he uses his knowledge wisely,
Will be loved and valued highly;
For a woman should take delight
In loving a handsome man whose sight
Is set on grace and wisdom, hence
Gives witness to his great good sense.
Nonetheless, if he sought my counsel,
As to whether twould serve him well
To pen pretty rhymes and sonnets,
Compose tales, write sweet motets,
That he would despatch to his love,

For her to consider and approve,
Alas! I can do naught but declare
That little are they valued there.
The words perchance may win some praise,
But small the profit in that these days,
While if she saw a heavy purse,
Full ready its gold coins to disburse,
Rise up in place of poetry's charms,
She'd run to it with open arms;
For women are so base in their ways,
Tis only purses they chase these days.
Once it used to be otherwise,
But all now seeks its own demise.'

CHAPTER XLVI: ON THE GOLDEN AGE

'ONCE in the days of our first fathers,
Long ago, and of our first mothers,
(As the old writings witnessed so
That of these things we might know)
Lovers were loyal and proved true,
Free of covetousness, and lust too;
The age then was an age of gold.
Both food and clothing, we are told,
Were less luxurious than in this;
They gathered acorns, ate no fish,
Or meat, searching the woods instead,
And hill-slopes, for their daily bread,
Scouring all the peaks and valleys,
For apples, pears, sloes, mulberries,
For hips and haws, and raspberries,
Chestnuts, hazelnuts, strawberries,
Full all the many kinds of fruits,
And all the grasses, herbs and roots.
Thus they ground their ears of grain,
And gathered berries, in the plain,
And stole their honey from the bees
That built their nests in hollow trees,
Hives that granted treasure for free,
That nourished them abundantly;
While knowing naught of wine or mead,
They drank but clear water, indeed,
Naught that was distilled or brewed,
Or pressed, or stored in vats; all crude
Their husbandry, the earth unploughed,

That bore, as God and Nature allowed,
Many a thing that could still deliver,
Sweet comfort to every creature.
They fished not for pike or salmon,
And they dressed, each man and woman,
In shaggy skins, and robes of wool,
Not stained with dyes, but rough and dull,
Just as it came from the creature.
Their huts too were pieces of nature,
Covered o'er with branches and leaves,
Arms of broom, and grass in sheaves,
And these they'd dig a ditch around;
And if a tempest shook the ground
They'd hide among the rocks, or in
Deep-rooted trees, hollow within.'

Chapter XLVII: On primal innocence

(*Lines 8713-8772*)

How that the people, in times past,
No treasure of their own amassed,
But held in common everything,
And did without a prince or king.

'Primal innocence'

'AND when at night their sleep they sought,
In place of feather-beds, they brought
Into their huts great piles of leaves,
And grass and moss tied up in sheaves.
And when calm was the firmament,
The weather clear and all pleasant,
And the wind was soft and gentle,
As in a spring-time made eternal,
And the birds did sing their matins,
And strove, in their own sweet Latin,
To welcome thus the dawn of day,
Which brings joy to the heart alway,
Then Zephyrus and his spouse Flora,
Fair goddess of the flowery order,
(For these two the flowers do nurture,
The flowers know no other master)
Passed through the world, far and wide.
They went sowing flowers beside,
Granting them form and colour,
Hues with which the flowers honour
Young lads and girls in garlands,
Lovely, joyful, and beribboned,
Honouring the love of true lovers,
Loving them above all others.
Thus with flowers the pair extended
Their counterpanes, and hues blended,
Lending such splendour to the grass,
The fields, and meadows, as they passed,
That you would think then that Earth
Might to strife and war give birth,
Proving more starry than the sky,
Her flowers bright in heaven's eye.
Flowery couches those who joyed
In Love's fair games thus employed,

And without covetousness or lust
Clasped and kissed, as lovers must.
The green pavilions of the trees
Stretched over them their canopies,
Protecting them all from the sun,
And curtaining them, every one.
There they danced, and did play
Their games, in leisurely display;
True folk, in calm security,
From every care and trouble free,
Living a life of happiness,
One with loyal friendship blessed.
Not yet had any prince or king
Erred, by from another stealing;
All were equal, twas well-known,
None sought possessions of their own;
For this wise saying they all knew,
No folly in this, for it rings true:
That Love and Lordship ne'er agree,
And ne'er shall keep good company.
Nor ever dwell in peace together;
The stronger shall them dissever.'

Chapter XLVIII: On Lordship and Love being at variance

(*Lines 8773-8848*)

Here the jealous spouse begins,
To scold his wife for her sins,
Before all; cries she's too bold,
A false bawd when all is told.

'The jealous man and his wife'

'THUS in marriage conflict lies,
Where the husband thinks he's wise,
And doth scold and beat his wife,
Such that she lives a life of strife;
Crying out at how she doth prance,
Staying out late, at the round dance,
Keeping ill company again,
With all the young and handsome men;
Such that true love cannot endure,
And suffering she knows full sore,
For he desires lordship no less
Over her, and all she doth possess.
"It is", he cries, "pure giddiness,
And you a thing of foolishness.
For you, when I'm away working
You are off leaping and dancing,
Living a life of sheer bawdy,
Given to riot and ribaldry;
Singing like the Sirens, or worse;
God curse you, then, with the curse!
When I'm in Rome or in Friesland,
Our sale of merchandise in hand,
Then the pretty coquette you play.
Oh, I know well what folk do say,
A friend of mine doth it recall.
And if you're asked about it all,
Why you dress so elegantly
In every place you choose to be,
You reply: 'Come, come, tis for
My husband whom I do adore!'
For me alas? This poor fellow?
Who cares if I'm at the bellows
Or at the loom, alive or dead?
Come, strike me in the face instead,

With a Fool's sheep's-bladder too!
I'd not think myself worth a sou,
If I failed to scold you for it now.
Oh, tis a fine reputation, I vow,
That you grant me in boasting so;
All folk know you're lying though.
For me, sad wretch, this is for me!
Ill gloves for my hands, certainly,
I fashioned; fooled myself, cruelly,
When I received you, trustingly,
On that day when we were wed.
For me, tis to that life you're led?
For me, you do what you're doing?
Who do you think you are fooling?
When I have not the power to see
You flaunting yourself in finery,
While those hot greedy libertines
Who wander, spying out the queans,
Can look you o'er from head to toe
As through the streets you blithely go.
Who do you peel those chestnuts for?
Than you, who could cheat me more?
A cape to keep off the rain, that's me,
Whene'er I would keep you company.
I see you looking more innocent
In that coat, that wimple, of ill-intent
Than the meekest turtle-dove appears.
You care not if tis hours or years
We chance to spend alone together,
Howe'er placid may be my temper,
Though four bezants I might claim,
(Or scorn them perchance, from shame!)
I'll not hold back from beating you,
That pride of yours to thus subdue.

You should know it pleases me not
For you to dress in who knows what
Fripperies, there, in the round dance;
Do so only in my presence."

Chapter XLIX: The jealous husband's tirade

(*Lines 8849-8967*)

How the jealous spouse reprehends
His wife, and tells her that she spends
Too much time in frivolities,
And thus is costing him his ease.

'The jealous husband's tirade'

"**AND** then (to hide this no longer)
Is it that you've land to squander
On that young bachelor, mayhap,
Robichonnet of the green cap,
Who comes so quickly when you call?
They say you're scarce apart at all,
But forever laughing together.
I don't know what you discover
In him to merit your chatting so?
Your folly doth anger me though,
Your flagrant conduct; thus say I,
By that God who doth never lie,
I swear if you speak to him more,
Your face will be paler than before,
Then black and blue as a mulberry.
More than a few blows, God help me,
I'll give you on that pretty visage,
That pleases libertines these days,
And drag you from the life you seek;
Then we'll see you quiet and meek.
You'll not go out except with me,
For toiling in the house you'll be,
On a ball and chain; that's your fate.
The devil has made you intimate
With those rascals so full of lies,
Men whom you ought to despise.
Did I not marry you to serve me?
Are you worthy of love from me,
When you run with pimps and tarts,
Because they do possess mad hearts,
And you find madness there in turn?
You're a true whore, and fit to burn;
And I'll trust you no more, tis true,
Twas the devil made me marry you.

If I'd listened to Theophrastus,
I'd not have taken a wife thus;
For he doth hold that man unwise,
Who himself to a woman ties,
Whether fair or ugly, rich or poor,
And he says tis true, what's more,
(In his noble book 'Aureolus';
Read in school, twould benefit us)
That he must lead a grievous life,
Full indeed of trouble and strife,
And all the quarrels and fights that come
From the foolish pride of woman,
The difficulties and reproaches,
That a woman's mouth e'er broaches,
And those demands and complaints,
That would test the patience of saints;
So hard it is to contain them,
From mad folly to restrain them.
And that man who would seek a wife,
Agrees to feed her all her life,
And to clothe her, and to shoe her,
And if he thinks it would be better
To make a rich woman an offer,
Then great the torment he'll suffer.
He'll find her overweening, proud,
Arrogant, haughty midst the crowd,
Not praising her husband in aught,
While disparaging, as worth naught,
His parents and his whole lineage,
In the most presumptuous language.
If she's fair, then all will chase her,
All will honour her, all court her,
All will labour, all will quarrel,
All will strive, and all wage battle,

In studying how best to serve her;
All surround her, all desire her,
All seek favour, all beg of her,
Such that, in the end, they'll win her;
Besiegers will not be denied
A tower attacked on every side.
If ugly, she'd solace one and all,
And how could any build a wall
Against all those who do appear,
If she desires all who come near?
No man can in this world exist,
Who wages war on all that is.
For given that she's asked politely,
None will stop her being flighty.
Who knows how to take a prize,
Wins e'en a Penelope's demise,
None was truer in Greece than her;
And do the same with Lucretia,
She who killed herself indeed,
When force was used in the deed,
By the king's son, Tarquinius;
Yet none, says Titus Livius,
Her husband, father, kith or kin,
Could prevent her, for that sin,
Committing suicide, however
Hard they tried to dissuade her.
They all sought her tears to lave,
Many a good reason they gave,
Her husband most particularly
Sought to act right mercifully,
And with kind heart pardoned her,
Utterly, and then spoke with her,
And sought, with all his strength,
To prove, by reason and at length,

Her body had incurred no sin,
Since her heart willed not the sin;
For the body proves innocent
If the heart withholds consent.
A knife against her breast, though,
Still clinging tightly to her woe,
She held, so none might see her,
When the blow she did deliver;
And she replied, with modesty,
'Fair lords, whoe'er pardons me
For the sin burdening my heart,
No matter the pardoner's art,
Myself indeed I cannot pardon.'"

CHAPTER L: OF LUCRETIA'S FATE, AND OF WOMEN IN GENERAL

(*Lines 8968-9307*)

How Lucretia, in great despair,
Pierced her heart, and fell there
Before husband, kith and kin,
Thus expiating Tarquin's sin.

'The suicide of Lucretia'

"**AND** thus, anguished by her burden,
As with the knife her heart she found,
Fell dead before them, on the ground;
Yet ere she did she begged and prayed
That retribution might be made,
Thus, by example, to ensure
That such vile force be used no more;
With death the sentence for that sin.
So the king, and his son Tarquin,
Were banished, and in exile died,
And honour thus was satisfied.
Nor did the Romans from that date
Seek a king as Rome's head of state.
And yet there is no Lucretia,
No Penelope as in Homer,
Not one honest woman in sight,
If one knows how to ask aright.
So said the pagans, who were wise;
And none e'er found it otherwise.
If women lack suitors for a day,
Then they give themselves away.
And men who do wed a woman,
Obey a most marvellous custom,
For the ill affair their folk arrange,
Which strikes me as passing strange.
I know not whence comes this folly,
If tis not a bout of pure lunacy;
For I see a man who buys a horse,
Is not such a fool but, in due course,
Ere he puts money down, views it
Thoroughly, for he might refuse it.
He looks it over and tries it out,
But a bride is so wrapped about
That naught can a man discover;

And yet not gain or loss, however,
Is their aim, comfort or unease,
But simply that she not displease
Before she is good and married.
And then, when the day is carried,
Comes the first show of malice,
And ever a vice and ne'er a kiss;
And the fool finds her true vein,
Now, with repentance all in vain.
Thus I know, and most certainly,
No man, no matter how prudently
She acts, can to marriage assent,
Other than fools, and not repent.
Honest women, by Saint Denis,
Are scarcer than phoenixes be,
As Valerius bears witness,
Nor can one love such a mistress,
Without a burden of fear and care,
And whatever mischance be there.
Scarcer than phoenixes? My life,
A better thought would be a wife,
Like that, is rare as a white crow!
And tis not beauty makes her so.
In spite of all that may be said,
(And lest all here on earth be led
To say that I wage war on the lot,
With impunity, for I say not)
He who'd a worthy one encounter,
Whether at large, or in the cloister,
And searches hard, will find a dearth;
Tis a rare enough bird on earth,
And as easy to recognise,
As a black swan, to mortal eyes.
Juvenal doth confirm the same,

When he doth make this solid claim:
'If you a chaste wife should reveal,
Off to the temple run, there kneel;
Bow down, and worship Jupiter,
Then you a sacrifice should offer,
To the honoured Lady Juno; slay
A cow with gilded horns, that day;
For no more marvellous adventure
Will have befallen any creature.'
And who would love the wicked kind,
Who, here and overseas, you'll find,
(As Valerius recounts, forsooth,
Who's not ashamed to tell the truth)
Swarm more thickly than the bees,
That cluster deep in hollow trees,
To what end doth he think to come?
He doth himself ill who will plumb
Such depths for, swallowed whole,
He must lose both body and soul.
Valerius who was sorely grieved
When his friend Rufinus conceived
The idea that he should marry,
Spoke thus to Rufinus, sternly:
'May all-powerful God, my friend,
From falling into her snare defend
You; that woman who, with her art,
Will ruin all, and break your heart.'
And Juvenal wrote much the same,
To Postumus when marriage came:
'Postumus would you take a wife?
Is there no rope, upon my life,
For sale, some strong belt, some halter?
Go leap from a window, rather,
One of those high ones I can see,

Or from a tall cliff into the sea.
What is it tempts you, I say again,
To such great torment, to such pain?
King Phoroneus himself, who,
As we learn, did grant laws to
The Greek people, spoke when he
Was on his deathbed, fervently,
To Leonce who was his brother:
'Brother', said he, 'far happier
Would I prove in dying if I
Had ne'er taken a wife. And why?'
(Expecting Leonce's question
And so giving him the reason)
'All husbands find it thus, I know,
And by experiment prove it so.
And when you have taken a wife,
You'll know it too, upon my life."

CHAPTER L: OF ABELARD AND HELOISE

"**PIERRE** Abelard doth confess
That Sister Eloise, the Abbess,
Of the Paraclete, his lover,
Would not have him take her
As his wedded wife for aught.
For that noble lady, well-taught,
Well-lettered, and knowledgeable,
And loving, and most loveable,
Had raised many an argument
Decrying any such intent,
Proving to him that, by reason
And precedent, the condition
Of marriage made for a hard life,
No matter how prudent the wife.
For she had read the books through,
And studied them, also she knew
All of the ways of womankind,
She'd exercised in body and mind.
And so she asked him to love her,
And yet make no claims upon her,
Except those of grace and liberty,
All free of lordship and mastery,
And so be able then to study
Unbound, be his own man, freely;
And told him that, in any case,
A greater pleasure they would taste,
Greater solace would discover,
If they rarely saw each other.

But, he tells us, he loved her so
He did espouse her, even though
Twas counter to her admonition,
And led to sorrow and perdition:
For after she'd taken the habit
At Argenteuil, as seemed fit,
(By joint accord, it seems to me)
Pierre was castrated, forcibly,
In Paris, in his bed, at night,
And woeful then was his plight.
He became, after this mischance,
A monk at Saint Denis in France,
Then abbot of a second abbey,
And founded a famous abbey,
That he named, when twas complete,
The Oratory of the Paraclete,
Of which Eloise became abbess,
Who the nun's calling did profess.
Yet she herself, without shame,
Did both recount and write this same,
To him she'd taken as her lover,
Calling him her lord and father,
This passage, in content wondrous,
That many folk think pure madness,
Which appears among her letters,
If you search their many chapters,
Where her thought she did express,
And sent to him, though an abbess:
'If the Emperor of Rome, to whom
All should be subject, I presume,
Deigned to wish to take a wife,
And make me mistress of his life,
And the world, I'd rather,' said she,
'Be called your whore, eternally,

As God Himself is my witness,
Than be crowned as his empress.'
Yet, upon my soul, I think never
Lived such a woman as her ever.
I believe her learning placed her
In such a position that thereafter,
She was better able to conquer,
And subdue, a woman's nature.
And had Pierre but listened to her,
Then he would never have wed her."

CHAPTER L: THE JEALOUS HUSBAND CONTINUES TO RANT AGAINST MARRIAGE

"**FOR** marriage is an evil bond,
By Saint Julian, he who's fond
Of granting wandering pilgrims ease,
And by Saint Leonard, he who frees
Prisoners who do in truth repent,
When he hears their sad lament.
If the hangman had robbed me of life
That day I had to take me a wife,
Twould have been better, instead
Of wedding one who strikes me dead.
For, by the Son of Blessed Mary,
What's your elegance worth to me,
In that fine and costly dress, there,
You with your nose stuck in the air,
That dress that after you doth flow,
If it irks me, and vexes so?
Why with such pride tread the stage,
Only to drive me mad with rage?
Where is the gain to me from it,
When tis others alone who profit?
In truth it brings me naught but harm.
For when I'd sample of your charm,
I find your dress so encumbering,
I can ne'er get hold of the thing;
Tis troublesome, tis frustrating,
I can't touch you, so irritating
How you parry, and whirl about,
With arms and hips keep me out,

Twisting and turning from me so,
I don't know why, and yet I know,
Full well, that all my love for you
Comforts you not nor pleases you.
Even at night when I'm in bed,
And ready to welcome you, instead
There you are, forever undressing,
While I'm lying there doing nothing.
You've an oh so delicate coif in white,
On your head, and your rich lace might
In blue or green, conceal your body,
Beneath the coif so sweet and pretty,
And all those robes with fur lining
From all the poles there are hanging,
All through the night, so they can air.
What worth have they to me, I swear,
Except to sell or pawn some day?
Let me be burned, and melt away,
Or die of spleen, and raging fall,
If I don't sell and pawn them all;
For since they vex me in the light,
And bring me scant delight at night,
What profit can I have from them
Except to sell or to pawn them?
And, if the truth you'd but admit,
You are worth no more by it.
In intellect or loyalty,
Nor even, by God, in beauty.
If one, by way of contradiction,
Wished to express the opinion
That various things are suitable
Often for quite different people,
And that fine clothes are lovely
For a young girl, or fair lady,

Then whoe'er said it was true
I would say they lied to you,
For the beauty one supposes
To accrue from violets, roses,
Silken drapes or fleur-de-lis,
So the learned books tell me,
Are in them, not in the lady.
Naught but her natural beauty
Will any woman own in life,
And that is true of every wife.
And I claim the same, as I do
Of beauty, in regard to virtue;
And say, to justify my claim,
That if one possessed the aim
Of covering a midden in silk,
Or little flowers, twere all in vain,
A midden it would still remain
And with the customary smell,
That it possessed before, as well.
And if some person choose to say
That though the midden's ill within,
Without, new beauty it doth win;
And thus do ladies seek apparel,
To show as yet more beautiful,
Or hide ugliness from the eye.
I'faith, I know no good reply,
Except to say that such deception,
Is born of that most foolish vision
Owned by those who see them so,
And whose hearts madly follow,
That oh-so-pleasant impression,
Created by imagination;
Nor do they know how to tell,
Truth from lie, not seeing well

Enough to counter the sophism,
Due to their deluded vision.
Yet if they had a lynx's eyes,
Beauty they would not surmise
In woman, from sable mantles,
Cunning sur-coats, pretty kirtles,
Kerchiefs, and fine headpieces,
Silk chemises, fair pelisses,
Nor their gems, and jewellery,
Nor their disguised coquetry,
All that gleams, the superficial
Which makes them but artificial,
Nor let chaplets of fresh flowers,
Be confused with Beauty's powers.
For however well Nature,
Had formed once, in hue and feature,
Alcibiades' fair body,
Which did ever own to beauty,
Whoe'er within the man could see,
Would have thought him truly ugly.
For so declares Boethius,
A man both wise and virtuous;
And quotes, as his authority,
Aristotle, who, reliably,
Notes the lynx-eye's clear gaze
So strong, so piercing, always,
That it sees all, inside and out,
Of all it views, without a doubt.
Thus not even in ancient Greece,
Were Beauty and Chastity at peace,
Always there was such great strife
That ne'er in story, upon my life,
Or in song, have I heard of them,
Aught could ever reconcile them.

And such are they at mortal war,
That the one will yield what's more
Nor a foot of ground to the other,
If it means that she may conquer.
Yet they are matched so unfairly,
That with Chastity it goes hardly;
Whether she doth fight or defend,
She knows so little, in the end,
Of thrust and parry, she must yield,
Lacking the power to win the field,
Against Beauty's trenchant blade.
Even Ugliness, her chambermaid,
Who owes her service and honour,
Too little values her, or loves her,
Not to chase her from her dwelling."

Chapter LI: The jealous husband on Chastity and woman

(*Lines 9308-9696*)

Beauty wars with Chastity so,
And Ugliness drives her also
To serve, perforce, Venus on high,
Whom chaste women do deny.

'Beauty wars with Chastity'

"**SO** Ugliness, as we see, goes chasing
Chastity away, with so heavy
A club, it vexes wondrously,
If Chastity remains in power,
For the span of a single hour.
Now Chastity is in ill plight,
She's assailed from left and right,
And has no help from anywhere,
And so must flee the field there
For she doth see that she's alone;
Even if she swear not, I'd own
That she knows enough of battle,
When any with her do struggle,
Not to dare to contest a fight
Where she cannot win outright.
Let Ugliness be cursed, for she
Doth now attack poor Chastity,
Whom she should succour and defend.
Though all she might do, in the end,
Were set Chastity twixt her chemise
And her body, she should at least
Do so. And Beauty's much to blame,
Who should honour Chastity's name,
And ensure, if she's able to,
That peace is forged between the two.
She should, at least, do all she may
To win her good graces alway,
If she'd be noble, courteous, wise;
And pay her true homage, likewise,
Not bring on her disgrace and shame;
For even the ancient text doth claim,
There, in the sixth book of Virgil,
Upon the authority of the Sibyl,
That none whose life is lived chastely,

Will come to damnation. Hear me,
I swear by God, the Celestial King,
That she who to beauty doth cling,
Or makes efforts to seem beautiful,
Admires herself, and doth trouble
To dress herself, and richly too,
Is waging war on Chastity, who
Indeed has many an enemy;
In the cloister and the abbey
Even they do take against her,
They are not so immured ever
That they fail to hate her truly,
Seeking to shame poor Chastity.
To Venus women pay homage,
All, regardless of the damage,
And paint with coquettish display,
And fool onlookers on the way,
And go wandering down the street
Just to be seen by those they meet,
To rouse in the company of men
A fierce desire to sleep with them.
For this they wear their finery
In church, and dress for revelry,
For none of them would e'er do so,
If they thought that none would know;
And please, by this, they do believe,
Those whom they're seeking to deceive.
If to honesty we'd lay claim,
On God do women bring great shame.
Misguided, foolish, they see not
That, when considering their lot,
They should thank God for the beauty
That he gave them; their coquetry
Extends to chaplets all of flowers,

In silk or gilded; thus, for hours,
They proudly flaunt themselves in town,
Lower themselves, their flowery crown
An object lower and baser still,
That these sad wretches, dressed to kill,
Upon their foolish heads must set,
To think themselves more lovely yet.
And God by them is much despised,
Who has but failed them in their eyes,
For, as their foolish hearts conceive,
God did them an outrage, they believe,
Who, in encompassing their beauty,
Proved but negligent in His duty.
So they seek beauty in creations,
That God made, in various fashions,
Perchance flowers, or bright metal,
Or for some rarity they'll settle.
The same's true of men, certainly,
If, to appear more handsome, we
Add chaplets and adornments thus,
To those beauties God did give us,
For we act towards Him wrongly
If we think ourselves treated badly
By Him, regarding those features,
With which He gifts living creatures.
I care not for such games as these;
Sufficient not to burn or freeze,
Is all the clothing that I need;
My protection is guaranteed,
From rain and wind and misery,
If God doth keep me company,
By homespun, every bit as well
As purple robes lined with squirrel.
It seems but money lost, to me,

Your purchases of finery,
Robes of blue, brown, camelot,
Green, and scarlet, the whole lot
Lined with fine grey fur, or vair,
That see you scamper everywhere,
Posturing, and simpering so,
As through the dust and dirt you go,
While prizing neither God, nor me.
Even at night, when lying quietly
Beside me naked, I can't hold you,
For when I'd seek to embrace you,
And would comfort you, all's amiss,
I may not steal a single kiss,
And even though I'm warm enough,
You sulk, a devil in a huff,
And will not turn your face to me,
Whate'er I do, but wriggle free.
And then a headache you will feign
And sigh, and murmur, and complain,
Struggling there so, and resisting,
That I grow fearful of insisting,
Nor dare your shores then to assail,
So great the fear that I may fail."

CHAPTER LI: THE JEALOUS HUSBAND ON LOOSE BEHAVIOUR

"WHEN I wake from sleeping thus,
It seems to me quite wondrous
How those wild lads win anything,
By pawing daily at your clothing,
If you do twitch away your hem,
When you disport yourself with them,
And do annoy those fellows quite
As much as you do me at night.
You give no thought to anything,
Away you flee, to dance and sing,
Through the gardens and the meadows,
With all those mad faithless fellows,
Who'll drag a married woman through
The green grass, in the morning dew;
Fools, who despise me altogether,
Whispering, to one another:
'Tis but to spite that jealous wretch.'
To the wolves be given that flesh!
Those bones let the wild curs claim!
What else brings on me such shame?
Tis through you, my scarlet lady,
Through you, and their tomfoolery;
Foul bitch, vile bawd, base whore;
Delivered to those dogs, I'm sure
Your body ne'er will last the year;
Through you, shame is mine I fear;
I've joined, through all your lechery,
Saint Arnold's vast fraternity,
The patron saint of cuckolds he;

No man is safe from cuckoldry,
Who has a wife, he'll discover,
Howe'er he doth guard and watch her,
Not though he has a thousand eyes.
All women seek their own demise,
No guard or keeper's worth a sou,
And if the deed they do not do
The wish within doth never sleep,
From which, if they but can, they leap
To the deed, the wish ever there.
Juvenal would ease our despair,
By saying, of this innate need
We name carnality, that, indeed,
It is the very lightest sin
That stains a woman's heart within,
For their nature doth demand
Of them far worse, you understand.
See now how the mother-in-law
Brews poison for the son-in-law,
Devising charms and sorceries
And other hidden devilries;
No man could total their amount,
No matter how well he doth count.
You're all, or were, or will be whores
By deed, or wish which is the cause,
For he who may the deed contain,
The wish itself cannot restrain;
Thus he who doth search your mind,
The whore within will ever find.
This advantage you all possess,
Of your desires you are mistress;
For not by beating or admonition
Can any man change your position;
Yet the man who can change your heart,
He doth win lordship by his art."

CHAPTER LI: THE JEALOUS HUSBAND ON YOUNG BLOODS AND A FAITHLESS WIFE

"THOUGH that's an impossible thing;
But O Sweet Lord, Celestial King,
With these rascals what shall I do,
Opposing me, who shame me too!
If to threaten them I would seek,
They would merely think me weak;
Yet if with them I sought to fight
They'd beat me, or kill me outright.
They're cruel, their deeds outrageous,
For every ill deed, they're rapacious;
Young, headstrong, wild, yet handsome too,
Thus they think me not worth a sou.
For youth doth so their hearts inflame,
Filling them all with fire and flame,
That they must, of necessity,
Indulge in every kind of folly,
Though so fantastic, so flighty,
Each a Roland desires to be,
A Samson, or a Hercules;
The latter two, as men do say,
Or I've read as much anyway,
Resembled each other bodily,
As like as any men could be.
For Hercules was seven feet tall,
Solinus writes, as I recall,
And he says that not another
In his height was ever greater.
At twelve tasks did he labour,

Therein slew many a monster;
Yet, though he completed twelve,
A thirteenth he could not resolve.
That came about through Deianira,
His love, who destroyed her lover,
Poisoning him with the venom
On the shirt that she'd been given,
For he was taken with Iole,
His heart mad with love already;
Thus Hercules, a mighty man,
Was conquered, and by a woman.
And Samson likewise, who feared
No man at all and yet was sheared,
Being deceived by Delilah,
Who his flowing locks did gather.
Tis folly I breed, by speaking so,
For you'll repeat, as well I know,
All my words, one upon another,
When you depart, to some other;
You'll go crying to those fools,
And I'll be taught a lesson too,
My head and thighs sorely lashed,
Or my shoulder torn and gashed;
If you can seek them anymore,
For if I should hear of it before,
As soon as I can, why there I'll be,
And as long as my arms are free,
And my pestle's not been taken,
Your ribs will soon be aching.
Friend nor neighbour, kith nor kin,
Will save you from the mess you're in,
Nor those lechers who pursue you;
Why did you meet me, and I you,
Alas? In what ill hour I was born,

That you do hold me in such scorn,
And let each rabid stinking cur
Flatter, caress, cling like a burr,
Till he's your lord and your master
When I should play that role, rather,
By whom your life is now sustained.
Food and shoes and clothes, you've gained,
While you'd have me share with rascals,
Layabouts, and evil scoundrels,
Who will bring you naught but shame,
Who've robbed you of your good name,
That name you care not who harms,
While you hold them in your arms.
To your face, they cry they love you,
And yet, behind, 'whore' they dub you,
And say what's worse of their lover,
When they assemble together,
How each vile scoundrel's served you;
For I know well what tis they do.
Tis true, tis certain, without fail,
That when you let them so prevail,
They know full well how to insist,
Since you've no power to resist.
And when that crowd has swallowed you
Midst which all do squeeze and press you,
I'faith my envy then is great
Of their life, and pleasant state.
But know this now, and learn it well,
Tis not your body casts a spell,
Nor your pleasant conversation,
Tis solely that it gives occasion,
For them to joy and find delight
In your gold buttons, and have sight
Of your robes and your pelisses,

That I, the fool, buy; all that pleases.
For when you're off to sing and dance,
Or to your foolish gatherings prance,
And I stay home, a fool, and drink,
A hundred pounds in weight doth clink,
Pure gold and silver, on your head.
Then, you choose to dress, instead
Of wool, in camelot and vair,
Such that I melt away with care,
With anger and anxiety,
Such pain and chagrin torments me.
What worth to me do these things hold,
These pretty coifs with bands of gold,
These woven head-dresses in silver,
That bright gleaming ivory mirror,
Those gold bracelets, made so well,
And all adorned with fine enamel;
And each rare precious gilded crown,
That has me pacing up and down,
It is so rich and shines so fair,
With all the costly jewels there,
Sapphires, rubies, emeralds, more,
All that makes you so fine a whore,
Gold ties, with rare gems blessed,
At your sides, and at your breast,
And those dresses, and that cincture,
With clasps of so rich a nature,
All those seed-pearls and that gold;
Yet what worth do such baubles hold?
See, you do wear your shoes so tight,
And so adjust your dress's height,
That both your ankles are on show;
Oh, comfort me thus, Saint Thibaut,
Within three days tis sold, complete!

You're base as dust beneath my feet;
God's body, you'll have but a coat
From me, and then a coarse surcoat;
A hempen kerchief you'll be given,
Plain, not fine, and badly woven,
One that's torn, its life extended,
Sewn about, and roughly mended,
No matter how great your complaint;
And you'll be belted, like a saint.
Would you know what your belt will be?
Plain leather, and no clasp; you'll see.
And from my ancient worn-out boots
You shall have shoes as tough as roots,
Ample enough to stuff with cloth;
While all those trinkets you can doff,
Which merely provide occasion
To commit your fornication;
No, you'll flaunt yourself no more
And seek to play the willing whore.
Come tell me now, without a lie,
That other rich new dress I spy,
That you appeared in yesterday,
When you went off to dance and play
For love's sake, where did you get it?
(For I know I never bought it;
You never had that dress from me)
You swore to me by Saint Denis,
Saint Philibert, then Saint Peter,
That you had it from your mother,
Who sent you all the cloth, indeed;
For so great is her love for me,
Or so you'd have me understand,
She'd shed coins from her grasping hand,
So I need spend not one of mine.

May she be grilled alive, that fine
Priest's whore, that foul old bitch
That mackerel, that dried-up witch;
And you'll merit a roasting too,
If what you tell me proves untrue!
Oh, and I could go and ask her,
But then, like mother, like daughter;
Tis labour in vain so to do,
I know twould yield nary a sou;
I know you'll have talked together.
Your heart and that of your mother
If I know aught, will speak as one;
I know where you're coming from.
For that old painted whore will be
In accord with what you agreed.
Many a time they've beaten her,
She's been bitten by many a cur,
So many roads has she been down,
But now she's as ugly as a clown,
Her looks all gone, can't earn a sou,
And so, I know, she's selling you.
Three or four times a week she's here,
And leads you away, that old dear,
Off to make some fresh pilgrimage,
Her old-accustomed war to wage,
(For I know all her foul design)
And walk you slowly down the line
As if you were a fine filly for sale,
And see you're paid for on the nail.
Think you that I'm too blind to see?
What stops me breaking every
Bone in your body, with this pestle?
Like a chick in pâté may you nestle.'"

CHAPTER LII: THE JEALOUS HUSBAND BEATS HIS WIFE

(*Lines 9697-9842*)

How the jealous spouse doth beat
His wife, the beating so complete
He tears her very tresses from her,
In his jealousy and anger.

'The jealous husband beats his wife'

'THEN her spouse, sweating with rage,
As if it be war that he doth wage,
Will pull and tug her by the hair,
And at those tresses rip and tear,
In jealousy, mad at her there;
Like a lion, or a savage bear.
Then around the house he drags her,
In bitter rage, possessed by anger,
And slanders her most evilly,
Nor though she swear, most faithfully,
Will he forgive her, or relent
Such is the power of his intent;
He slaps her, beats her, hits her, thumps her,
While she screams, howls, weeps, and sends her
Lamentations to the skies,
Through every window, with her cries.
She reproaches him in every manner
She knows, just as it comes to her,
In front of the neighbours who arrive,
And think them the greatest fools alive,
And save her, ere she meets her death,
While he's there still catching his breath.
And when his lady meets with this,
Words and blows that send all amiss,
With this diverting viol he plays,
With which our jongleur fills her days,
Think you she'll love him the more?
At Meaux she'd rather see him, or,
Much further off in the Romagna.
I'll go further, so great her anger,
She'll love him not, such is her plight.
Seem to do so? Perchance she might;
But if he could fly through the sky,

And see the view from up on high,
And observe, without him falling,
All their deeds, in every calling,
And, at ease, consider them all,
Then he will know what may befall,
And all the dangers that lie at hand,
And yet will never understand
All the tricks that women may use,
To defend themselves from abuse.
If he and she then sleep together,
He himself is in great danger.
Indeed in sleeping or in waking,
He should fear the steps she's taking
To poison him, her pain avenge,
Or cut his throat now, in revenge,
Or grant him vast anxieties,
Through desperate infidelities;
Or let him think that she will flee,
If she can't otherwise be free.
Women lack all honour and shame,
When they choose to play a game,
For here's the truth: though full of sense,
They have not an ounce of conscience
Where love or hatred are concerned;
Valerius himself discerned,
That women are bold and clever
In doing harm, studious ever.'

Chapter LII: Friend condemns jealousy, praising equality in marriage

'MY companion; this oaf, this fool,
Over whose flesh may mad wolves drool,
Who fills his heart with jealousy,
As I've described him honestly,
Would have lordship over his wife,
Who should be the love of his life,
His equal, and his companion;
Thus the law views their union.
And he her companion, rather
Than her jealous lord and master.
When he makes her cringe with fear,
And fails to treat her as his peer,
But grants her a life of unease,
Think you then that he doth please?
Or that their love will thus endure?
What does she say? No, no more!
He shall have no more of her love,
Who his lordship seeks to prove.
For love will die, nor can it be
Where lovers do claim sovereignty.
Love cannot live and last apart
From a free and an honest heart.
This reason, too little rehearsed,
Is why, of those who do, at first,
Love each other for love's sake,
Then in marriage each other take,
Many find "true love" fails to be

A bond that binds enduringly.
For he who once loved for love's sake,
He, whom his lady her lord did make,
She, who was his mistress rather,
Now calls himself lord and master,
Over her, whom he called his lady
When he did love previously.'
'Loved her!' 'Truly.' 'In what manner?'
'In such a manner, that if his lover
Said to him: "My love, leap to it."
Or "Pass me that thing, just do it."
He'd pass it to her, without fail,
Or through the air he would sail.
In truth, whate'er she might say,
Why, he'd leap to it, right away,
Hoping she'd approve the measure,
For her wish was all his pleasure;
But once they were married, oh,
As I have told you, twas not so,
For once the wheel of fate had turned,
He who to serve her once had yearned,
Commanded her to serve instead,
As if she were his slave, and led
Her on a tight leash, and told her
Of her work account to render.
Yet his lady he used to call her;
She dies inside, at what befalls her.
For she doth think herself ill-used,
On finding herself now so abused
By this fellow, of proven worth,
The best that she had found on earth,
Who now would grind her in the dust.
Now she knows not in whom to trust,
Under the yoke of this new master,

With no one there to defend her.
Now the game's changed for the worse,
Now the rules seem all adverse;
She cannot, and she dare not play.
What pleasure now will she display?
If she obeys not, hear him moan,
Angry with her; while she doth groan;
Both thus will murmur angrily,
Each now the other's enemy.
Tis why in ancient times, my friend,
Men did ever friendship extend
Free of the bonds of servitude,
Peaceably, and with gratitude,
Nor would relinquish liberty
For all the gold of Araby;
Though if any had sought to try,
He'd have found none could buy,
For this was long ere pilgrimage,
To other lands none took passage
To adventure in strange countries,
No man had e'er traversed the seas.'

CHAPTER LIII: THE END OF THE GOLDEN AGE

(*Lines 9843-9948*)

How Jason set sail from Greece,
All to seek the Golden Fleece,
And did many a marvellous
Deed for it, and most perilous.

'Jason and the Golden Fleece'

'JASON was first to sail abroad,
When he, the very first sea-lord,
Sought to win the Golden Fleece,
By shattering the Ocean's peace,
As Neptune thought, who saw him sail;
While Triton, raging, roused a gale,
And Doris, and all her daughters,
At this trick played by Ocean's waters,
Were by that cunning so dismayed
They all thought themselves betrayed,
Viewing these ships that sailed the seas
Where'er the mariners did please.
Yet those earlier folk I mention,
Knew not the art of navigation.
When they sought all that was good
They found it in their neighbourhood;
All folk were wealthy equally,
And loved each other mutually.
Those simple folk of honest ways,
Loved without lordship all their days.
Living peacefully with each other,
None sought aught from another,
Till Fraud came with couched lance,
Sin, and Ill-Fortune, did advance,
(This last cares not for sufficiency)
And Pride, who disdains equality,
Covetousness and Avarice,
Envy, with every vice there is.
And they roused Poverty from Hell,
So long there, that none could tell
Aught of her, her ways, her birth,
For none saw her before on earth.
Ill was it that she came so quickly,
Her coming brought evil swiftly.

Poverty, her intentions wrong,
Brought Larceny, her son, along,
Who'll beat a path to the gibbet
To bring aid to his mother, yet
She cannot help his being hung
Time and again, the death-knell rung,
No more than his father, Faint-Heart,
Who doth in sorrow grieve apart.
Not even that young lady, Laverna,
Goddess of thieves, who doth ever
Govern robbers, and guides their way,
Who hides the sins of night away,
And with dark clouds conceals deceit,
So their work no eyes might greet,
Until by Fortune they're forsaken,
Caught in the act, and thus taken,
Not even she's sufficient pity
When their neck the rope doth see,
That she'd declare them innocent,
No matter how much they repent.
At once those evils, in a body,
Roused by some elemental fury,
By grief, by anger, and envy,
On viewing men's fraternity,
Scattered throughout every land,
Sowing discord on every hand,
Slander, hatred, and discontent,
Through annoyance and ill-intent.
As they held yellow gold most dear,
They scoured the earth till it appear,
Searching earth's entrails for gold
And other metals, formed of old,
Such that all hearts grew envious,
Mining the rock for aught precious.

So Covetousness and Avarice,
Fuelled mortal desire, with this,
That greed for possession moulds;
The former wins, the latter holds.
And yet the latter ne'er will spend
One piece till her existence end;
Her heirs and her executors,
Of her wealth shall prove the masters,
Unless, ere that, comes some mischance;
And, if her wealth is lost to chance,
Why none I think will weep for her,
And if not, tis they will prosper.
As soon as all this wicked band
Had troubled folk through every land,
Man's former life was scorned, until
Men never ceased from doing ill.
False and treacherous they became,
Possession now was all their game,
They even parcelled out the earth,
And thus to boundaries gave birth,
And once they'd set their boundaries,
Then they waged battle over these,
And then they of their spoils did boast.
The strongest men acquired the most,
Yet when they ran to seek out more,
Those who'd proven idle before
Their caves and their shelters entered,
And stole all that they had gathered.
So then they all were forced to find
One person who their goods would mind,
And seize upon such malefactors,
And justice grant to their accusers,
Without fear of opposition;
And gathered then for his election.'

CHAPTER LIV: THE ORIGINS OF KINGSHIP AND POSSESSION

(*Lines 9949-10358*)

Here you may see, for here is weighed,
The truth of how their king was made,
Who swore on oath, then, instantly,
To guard them, and their property.

'THEY chose, in concert, a villain,
One who was to battle given,
Biggest, strongest, of all their horde,
And made him their prince and lord.
He swore he would maintain the right,
And to defend their goods would fight,
If they as king would proclaim him
And grant all needed to sustain him.
Among themselves they so agreed,
And gave him all that he might need,
And long term he held this office.
Yet when robbers, full of malice,
Saw him alone, they did gather,
And attacked him, all together,
Whenever they set out to steal.
Then there arose a loud appeal
For taxes to support the prince,
And raise an army, and then, since
They all agreed, they paid the tax
One and all, to dissuade attacks,
And gave the king great tracts of land.
Here, from the texts, we understand

Was, as they tell, the true beginning
Of earthly princes, this first king;
For all those ancient deeds of men
The old texts tell us; and the pen
That wrote them we should ever praise
And thank, and treasure them always.
Then the people amassed treasure,
In precious gems, gold and silver,
Silver and gold being workable,
And they made of them valuable
Vessels, belts, buttons and rings,
Coins, and clasps, and other things.
Out of tough iron they forged arms,
Knives, swords, whatever harms,
Pikes and axes; and coats of mail,
All to make their neighbours quail.
They built towers and palisades,
And crenellated walls they made;
Those with treasure, unopposed,
Their castles and cities enclosed,
And gated their great palaces,
Fearful lest aught went amiss
Of all the treasure they had won,
For indeed it might be stolen,
Or taken from them yet, by force.
Thus anxiety took its course,
In all those hostages to Fortune,
Who proved sadly out of tune.
For all they'd held before as one,
Unowned as is the moon and sun,
Once to riches they were fated,
They severally appropriated,
Till one indeed might own more,
Than could be hoarded by a score.

Yet I'd not give you two sous for
Such greedy scoundrels and, what's more,
Though they lack hearts I care not,
What care I if they do or not?
Let them love or hate each other,
Or rent their love to one another;
But tis a great grief, a disgrace,
That these ladies, bright of face,
Who charm and joyfulness display,
Who ought to prize love, so I say,
And defend it, should yet be sold
Into such vileness; bought for gold.
Tis an ugly thing to hear and know,
How true hearts sell themselves so.'

CHAPTER LIV: HOW YOUNG MEN SHOULD BEHAVE TOWARDS THEIR LOVER

'YET, be that as it may, trust me,
A young man should seek to study;
On arts and sciences doth depend
His power to guard and to defend,
Himself and his true love, at need;
So she not go from him, indeed.
Such may advance a youth truly,
Besides, it won't harm him any.
And then, that youth should remember
To heed this, my counsel, ever:
If he doth love her, young or old,
And thinks, or knows, or is told
She seeks or has sought another,
He should never blame his lover
For seeking or acquiring any,
But should recapture, amiably,
His love without reproaching her;
And then, the less to estrange her,
Though tis in the act he catch her,
His eyes should not fix upon her,
Rather should he be as one blind,
Or as one blessed with half a mind,
So she believes that he hath not
In truth had sight or sound of aught.
And if some man sends her a letter,
He ought not then to upset her
By feverishly glancing through it,

To find their secrets, nor undo it.
His heart should harbour no desire,
To go against her will entire,
But welcome her whene'er they meet,
As she appears from some side street,
And let her go where'er she wish,
As she desires, that way or this,
For she has no wish to be tied;
And I'd have you know, beside,
This that I tell you, for it ought
In scholars' textbooks to be taught:
If he would have his lady grace
All his days, he should grant her space,
Not cloister her, nor pen her in,
But let her come and go at whim:
For he who would confine her so,
Such that she cannot come and go,
Be it his lover or his wife,
Will lose her love from out his life.
He must believe naught against her,
However sure of what's said of her,
But he should tell that he, or she,
Who brings such news, most forcefully,
Tis all foolishness what they say,
None finer saw the light of day;
At her good works unceasingly,
Nor ever found untrustworthy.
He should not seek to accuse her
Of sin, or beat her, or strike her:
For he who doth strike a woman
Thinking thus to strengthen his hand
In love, and subdue her through that,
Resembles one who'd tame a cat
Beats it, but then will call to it,

So he can collar it, and cage it;
And yet he is most likely to fail,
For an angry cat away will sail.
But should she strike him, or scorn him,
He should beware the love in him
Alters not; if he's struck or scorned,
Though she torment him, be warned,
He should not try to seek revenge,
For there is naught here to avenge,
Rather he should thank her kindly,
And say such martyrdom would he
Gladly embrace, and without cease,
If he thought his service did please;
Saying that he would die rather
Than be forced to live without her.
And if perchance he does strike her
For seeming too proud, in anger,
Or because she has riled him so
By nagging at him; or doth throw
Out menaces, and threaten freely;
Then to purchase peace, must he
Make love to her, to end the fight,
Ere ever she doth leave his sight;
Especially if he's poor; abuse
In a poor man finds less excuse;
For she'll soon flee, he'll discover,
If he fails to bow down before her.
The poor man must love wisely,
And must learn to suffer humbly,
And suppress any anger too,
Whatever she may say or do;
More than the rich man, in my view,
Who perchance cares not a sou
About her stubbornness or pride,

So long as he is free to chide;
Or is such that he no longer
Wishes to be faithful to her,
And while wishing not to lose her,
Seeks to take another lover;
Though if he give to his new love,
A handkerchief, a pair of gloves,
A chaplet, belt, a clasp, or ring,
Or a jewel, some precious thing,
He must take care that the other
Sees them not; if she discover
Aught, then pain will flood her heart,
And naught can make that pain depart.
Nor must they come face to face
With the first, in the very place
Where this lover he doth greet,
Where they're accustomed to meet,
For if she comes, and finds them there,
No counsel may that fault repair.
For there's no cunning wild sow,
Will e'er prove so lethal, I vow,
When cornered; nor no lioness,
So fierce, if she's under duress,
The dogs, the huntsmen at her back,
Pressing home some fierce attack,
She with her cubs, none so vicious;
Nor any serpent as malicious
When someone treads upon its tail,
For then its anger will prevail,
As a woman, should she discover
Her true love with some new lover;
Then she'll spit out fire and flame,
Ready her body and soul to maim.
And if she's not yet caught the pair

In their nest, clasped tightly there,
But is consumed by jealousy,
Thinking or believing that she
Is deceived, whate'er she believes
Or thinks, he must act as thieves
Do, and deny completely
Whate'er she knows, lie blatantly,
And be quick to swear so, on oath;
Then he must ensure they both
Make love again upon the spot,
Thus her clamour will be forgot.
Yet if she tortures him no less,
And he's obliged then to confess,
Scarcely knowing how to defend
Himself, let him strive in the end,
To make her believe his offence
Was committed in self-defence;
For the woman held him so tight
That struggle as hard as he might
There was no way he could escape,
In fact twas nothing short of rape;
And then, it only happened once.
Let him promise on oath, the dunce,
That it will never happen again,
And so faithful will he remain,
That if she hears a single breath
Of such, let her beat him to death;
Yet he'd prefer if it was that other,
The faithless wrecker and destroyer,
Who was killed, so she might not
Return and clasp him, in that spot;
And if, of him, she did so demand,
Then he'd go not at her command,
Nor allow her to meet him there,

He'd shun the woman everywhere.
Next, he must embrace his lover,
Kiss and coax her, and comfort her,
And beg mercy for his error,
Which shall be repeated never,
And claim he's full of repentance
And ready to perform the penance
That she choose to impose on him,
If only she will pardon him.
And, if she does pardon him, then
Let him make love to her again.
Next, let him not boast about her,
Such that it doth make her suffer.
For many men boast of women,
With false and feigning words often,
Whose bodies they cannot win,
Blackening their names with sin.
Goodness of heart such men want,
Nor courteous they, nor valiant,
For boasting is a vice most base,
Who boasts is a fool, in any case,
For, if tis true, whate'er he did
Then he should seek to keep it hid,
For Love his treasures doth conceal.
To loyal friends he may reveal
All his secrets, they will keep them;
To them only so display them.
Now, if she fall ill, then tis right
For him to study how he might
Be to her most serviceable,
That he may seem agreeable.
Let him show no sign of ennui
If tis a tedious malady;
He should stay close beside her,

And, in tears, he should kiss her,
And he should vow, if he be wise,
A pilgrimage, neath foreign skies,
As long as she that vow can hear.
And let her favourite foods appear,
Naught bitter that might offend her,
But all should be sweet and tender.
He should tell her his strange dreams,
All stuffed full of pleasant themes;
Claim that at night, when he doth lie
Alone in bed, to his sleeping eye
It seems that in his dream, he takes
(Though he scarce sleeps, but often wakes)
Her in his arms, and all night through
Naked, clasped in his arms, all new
And cured now, and fit and healthy,
Solaced by love-making is she;
In pleasant places all day too;
Such, or similar tales, will do.
Up to this point I have spoken
Of how he should treat a woman
In health and sickness, whose case
Is that he wishes to seek her grace,
And continue his love to prove,
Who might easily lose her love,
Should he fail of his intent to do
Whatever it is she wants him to.
No woman knows her own mind so,
Nor so constant a heart doth show,
Nor proves so true and serious,
That a man can be certain thus
Will he hold her, howe'er he strain,
No more than if he, in the Seine,
Held a wriggling eel by its tail;

Trying to stop her won't avail,
For she'll escape quite easily,
Howe'er strong his grip might be.
No creature's tamed so completely
That it won't seek to up and flee;
And she is of such diverse nature,
None can be certain of the creature.
I do not claim this of good wives,
Who on virtue found their lives,
Though I myself have found none
And yet have tested many a one.
Nor could Solomon find any,
Though he too had tested many,
For he himself was despondent,
On finding none he deemed constant.
If you trouble yourself to seek her,
And find one such then seize her;
For she's one of the true elite,
One who will be yours complete.
If disinclined to run around
And find a better than she's found,
Or meet a man who'll seduce her.
To Chastity, herself she'll offer.
One more brief word yet I'll utter,
Ere I do forsake this matter:
In short, whoe'er desires that he
Might keep his love, whoe'er she be,
Whether she's ugly, or looks fine,
Should observe this rule of mine;
He should remember it always,
And hold it precious all his days:
Let him make it quite clear to her,
He can't defend himself from her,
So startled is he, and so amazed

By her beauty, may she be praised.
Howe'er good she is, there's none,
Young, old, right worldly, or a nun,
Ne'er so religious a lady,
Howe'er chaste in soul and body,
Who is not pleased (tis her duty),
When a man doth praise her beauty.
And, if ugly she's said to be,
Swear she's lovely as a fairy,
For one may do so securely,
Since she believes it wholly.
For every woman, as they say,
Thinks herself a beauty, alway,
And worthy of the fairest love,
However ugly she doth prove.
All fine noble handsome young men
Should take care to be diligent,
In keeping hold of their ladies,
While condemning not their follies.
Women hate being criticised;
The way their minds are organised,
It seems to them that nary a maid
Has need of being taught her trade;
And he who seeks not to displease,
Should let them do just as they please.
As a cat doth know by nature
How to pounce upon a creature,
And can ne'er be turned from it,
Since this skill it doth exhibit,
From its birth, without a lesson;
However foolish is her person,
By using her innate judgement
A woman knows, though her intent
Be bad or good, or wrong or right,

Or whate'er else it doth invite,
She does only what she ought,
And hates to be rebuked for naught.
She learns this art from no teacher,
Has it from the womb that bore her,
And thus cannot be turned from it,
Since indeed she was born with it,
And he who wishes to correct her
Will ne'er enjoy her as his lover.
So tis, my comrade, with your Rose,
That doth such precious worth enclose
That if you had possession of her,
You would ne'er take aught for her.
And when you have her in the end,
As your most fervent hopes portend,
And you are brimming then with joy,
Why then, great care you must employ,
As one should with so sweet a flower,
Then you'll enjoy, in that fair hour,
Your love with whom naught doth compare,
Whose peer you shall find nowhere,
No not in fourteen mighty cities.'
'Indeed,' said I, 'for true it is;
Nor in the world find such a thing,
So sweet the joy that it doth bring.'

CHAPTER LIV: SWEET-THOUGHTS AND SWEET-SPEECH RETURN

FRIEND brought me solace, thereby;
Great comfort in his words had I;
It seemed, without speaking treason,
That he knew far more than Reason;
Yet now, ere he had reached the end
Of his advice, which I commend,
Sweet-Thoughts and Sweet-Speech came to me,
Who then kept me close company,
And afterwards scarce left my side.
Sweet-Glances came not so allied,
Yet I blamed them not for anything,
For him I knew they could not bring.

CHAPTER LV: THE LOVER TAKES LEAVE OF FRIEND

(*Lines 10359-10398*)

How the Lover, without delay,
Takes leave of Friend, and goes his way,
Seeking a road that might indeed,
At length, to his Fair-Welcome lead.

'The Lover takes leave of Friend'

TAKING leave of Friend, we parted,
And, pleasing myself alone, I started
Down the meadow all bright with grass,
And sweet wild-flowers, where I passed,
Listening to the sweet birds sing
Their new songs that joy did bring;
My heart they filled, as they did so,
For their sweet notes did please me so.
Yet Friend had a burden handed
To me, when he thus commanded,
That I shun the castle, keep out,
And scorn to linger thereabout:
I knew not if I could keep to this,
For ever to go there was my wish.
And so once Friend was lost from sight,
Shunning the path toward the right,
Along the left-hand track I strode,
Seeking ever the shortest road.
Willingly, that road I would take
If I but found it, and would make
Every effort, nor be denied,
Unless with aught stronger I vied,
And liberate Fair-Welcome there,
The free, the frank, the debonair;
Once I saw that castle, almost
As soft as a piece of buttered toast,
With all its gateways open wide,
Naught would stop me going inside.
There'd be the devil to pay if I
Did not take it, enter on high,
And swiftly free Fair-Welcome so,
Though a hundred thousand I forego,
In bright gold coins, of a surety,
If that road were but shown to me;

Yet from the castle I now did stray,
But stopped indeed not far away.

CHAPTER LVI: THE LOVER ENCOUNTERS WEALTH

(*Lines 10399-10662*)

How the Lover found Wealth guarding
All that road; the path defending
By which the castle could be taken,
By Lovers rich in possessions.

'The Lover encounters Wealth'

AS of the budding Rose I thought,
Close by a clear fountain where naught
But joy did that sweet place provide,
Beneath an oak tree, there, I spied
A fine and a most pleasing lady,
Of lovely form, and noble body,
And at her side was her lover.
His name I could not discover,
But Wealth was the fair lady's name,
Of noble parentage that same.
The opening to a road behind she
Guarded, without seeking entry.
I bowed, at once, on seeing them,
With head bent low, saluted them,
And they saluted me in turn
Though little from it did I earn.
I asked of them how I might touch
Upon the road called Give-Too-Much.
Wealth who was the first to speak
Said haughtily: 'The road you seek,
Which I guard, you see before you.'
'Oh, Lady, may God protect you,
If it trouble you not, then, pray
Allow me to travel that way,
To the castle that Jealousy
Had built for her but recently.'
'My lad, for now that thought forget,
For I know naught of you as yet,
You are not welcome, as you see,
For you are not of my company;
And ten whole years might pass, perchance,
Ere I allowed you to advance;
There none not of my court go,
Though Paris or Amiens they know.

I let my friends travel there freely,
To dance and to sing most sweetly,
There they live a while, pleasantly,
Yet them the wise do never envy,
Though every pleasure is on hand,
The farandole, and sarabande,
And tabors, and viols, and flutes,
To company their fresh pursuits,
And games of dice, backgammon, chess
And other such pastimes, to excess,
With every pleasant luxury;
All filled with amorous gaiety.
There go men and maids in hordes,
All paired together by old bawds,
Through every meadow, garden, grove,
Gayer than parrots, they do rove,
And then return, by gentle paths,
To steam together in hot baths,
Flowery crowns upon their brows,
All ready for them thus to souse,
In the house of Foolish-Largesse.
She impoverishes them, distress
She brings, and dire wounds hard to cure,
She knows how to charge, what's more,
Squeezing them for their fair lodging,
Taking from them cruel reckoning,
So they're forced to sell their land,
To place full payment in her hand.
I lead them there, no joy they lack,
Yet Poverty doth bring them back,
Cold and trembling and quite bare;
Hers the exit, mine the road there.
And I can never intervene,
No matter how wise they may seem.

Away in their thousands they go
To the Devil there, fast or slow.
I will not say, if I should see
Any re-established with me,
(Though tis very hard to attain)
That I would not once again
Allow them to travel that way,
If it pleased them to, some day;
But know, the more that they frequent
That road, the more they then repent.
They dare not look at me for shame;
Such chagrin, such anger they claim,
They could slay themselves easily;
I quit them, because they quit me.
Without promise of a lie, I say
You'll repent, too late, some day,
If e'er you set foot on that road.
No bear that they bait and goad,
Is e'er so wretched, so far gone,
As you'll be if you tread thereon.'

Chapter LVI: Wealth speaks of Poverty and Hunger

'Wealth speaks of Poverty and Hunger'

'**IF** Poverty has you in her power,
She'll see you dine so ill, that hour,
On naught but a little straw or hay,
That from Hunger you'll waste away.
For she was Poverty's chambermaid,
Upon a time, and did all she bade,

So Poverty, for that true service,
Taught her every form of malice,
Ardent and eager was she too,
And made her nurse and mistress to
That horrid young scamp, Larceny.
She gave him her own milk, for she
Had nothing else to feed him on.
Would you know her situation?
This Hunger lives on stony ground,
No fertile soil can there be found,
No bush, or tree, or grain grows there,
At Scotland's end, where all is bare,
So cold tis almost made of marble.
Hunger, with an empty table,
Tears at the weeds with trenchant nails,
And broken teeth, yet all grass fails,
On account of the scattered stones;
Naught is there but earth's bare bones.
Would you have me now describe her?
That's a short and easy labour:
She's long and lean, and gaunt and weak,
From the few poor scraps she doth seek;
Her hair doth wild and tangled grow,
Her eyes are fixed, the sockets hollow,
Her face is pale, her lips are dry,
Her cheeks are soiled with dirt, say I,
And through her taut skin, readily,
What is within her, you can see,
The bones protruding at each side,
Where firmer flesh will not abide.
No stomach doth she have, it seems,
Except the skin at its extremes,
The centre so hollow her breast
Hangs from her backbone, with the rest.

Leanness has made her fingers long,
Her knees to meagreness belong,
Her heels are sharp and prominent;
What flesh is there, impermanent,
So tight her skin the bone doth press.
Ceres, who is plenty's Goddess,
She who makes the grain to grow,
The road to Hunger doth not know,
Nor does Triptolemus who steers
Her dragon-car when she appears.
Destiny keeps them poles apart,
Prevents their meeting, from the start,
The Goddess of the Grain, and Hunger,
Who so wretchedly doth suffer;
They cannot ever be together,
For Poverty doth them dissever.
Yet Poverty will take you there
And right quickly, if you care
To go that way, and wander idly,
As with you seems customary.
For one may, of a certainty,
Find other ways to Poverty
Than this fair road that I guard here;
An idle life will do, I fear,
Twill lead you straight to Poverty.
And yet if you hark not to me,
And take the road of which I tell,
To weary Poverty, you may well,
When that great castle you assail,
Find that you are doomed to fail.
For I think, without much labour,
Hunger will prove your close neighbour.
Poverty knows the road by heart,
Better than learning's lesser art.

Wretched Hunger, you must know,
Is ever towards her mistress so
Attentive, and courteous, in all,
(Though she loves her not at all,
Yet is sustained by her clearly
Whene'er she is tired and weary)
That she doth visit her each day,
And sits beside her, and doth stay,
Despite discomfort, and unease,
And kisses her as she doth please;
If she finds that Larceny sleeps,
She tugs his ear, till up he leaps,
And in distress inclines to him
So that she may thus counsel him
As to all that he should procure,
Whatever ills he might endure;
And Faint-Heart doth support her hope,
Whose dreams each day are of the rope,
Who dreams till his hair stands on end,
Lest Larceny they there suspend,
His trembling son; if any should
Catch him they'll do him little good.'

CHAPTER LVI: WEALTH DISMISSES THE LOVER

'BUT you shall never enter where
I guard the road, go seek elsewhere.
Should you wish to follow that road
You must yield all on you bestowed,
And you must by your service prove,
That you are worthy of my love.'
'Ah, Lady, by God's grace, I would
Win your favour if e'er I could.
If I could but enter on that way
I might free Fair-Welcome this day,
He who languishes in prison;
Grant me this gift, let me walk on.'
'I know you very well,' said she,
'You've failed to sell, it seems to me,
All your lands, both great and small,
One folly you've kept there after all;
For without folly a man can't live,
If all his time to Love he'd give.
Those that live so, in their own eyes
They see themselves as very wise,
Though how can one call it living,
Their madness is so unforgiving?
Reason knew how to set you right
But failed to lead you to the light.
By scorning all belief in her,
You but prove your own deceiver.
Ere Reason spoke in your affair,
Naught you found to hold you there,

Nor notice of me do you e'er take,
Since you sought love for love' sake;
For lovers think me of no worth,
Rather, all that I own on earth
They disparage when I depart,
And reject it, with all their heart.
Where the devil could one obtain
What a Lover would long retain?
Go from here now, and let me be.'

CHAPTER LVI: THE LOVER PARTS FROM WEALTH

AS there was nothing there for me,
I left her there, though sadly pained.
The lady with her lover remained,
He who was dressed in fine array.
With all my thoughts in disarray,
I passed on, through the garden fair,
That precious and lovely affair,
That you have heard about before,
But found no joy in what I saw,
For all my thought was now elsewhere.
My thought at all times, everywhere
Was how best to be of service,
Without my doing aught amiss;
For I would do aught willingly
If I could do it faultlessly;
It would add to my value naught,
If any error there I wrought.
My heart recalled, and listened to,
All that wise Friend told me to do.
I honoured Ill-Talk, everywhere
I found him, and I took great care,
To set myself to honour and please
All of my other enemies,
And serve them thus with all my might.
I'm not sure if I gave delight,
But while seeking thanks and esteem,
I never dared approach my dream,
The rose-bush, as I used to do,

Although I wished I could, tis true.
Thus for a long time my penance
I performed with such conscience
As God knows, for I, the lover,
Did one thing and thought another.
I lingered there with dual intent,
And yet no treason there was meant;
To treason I had needs descend
So that I might achieve my end.
And yet a traitor I've ne'er been,
Nor been accused of it, I ween.

CHAPTER LVII: THE LOVER PAYS HOMAGE TO THE GOD OF LOVE

(*Lines 10663-10764*)

Here the Lover tells Amor how
He's come to him, swiftly enow,
To show him his profound distress,
Seeking pardon for foolishness,
In listening to Reason's address,
Whom he now calls Reason-less.

'The Lover and Love'

ONCE Love had fully tested me,
And proven thus my loyalty,
The loyalty that I should show
To him where'er I choose to go,
He appeared, and upon my head,
Seeing me there discomforted,
Placed his hand, and then demanded
If I had done all he commanded;
And how I had fared, on my part,
With the Rose who stole my heart.
He knew of course all I had done,
For God knows that of everyone.
'Have you obeyed each command
That of true lovers I demand?'
He asked, smiling, 'Of no others
I demand them, but loyal lovers.'
'I know not; yet have done, I vow,
All as well, sire, as I know how.'
'True, and yet you are so fickle,
Your heart is e'er so changeable,
And, sadly, often full of doubt;
Truly, I see what you're about.
You would leave me yesterday,
Were almost minded not to pay
Homage to me; gainst Idleness
And myself sought (now come, confess)
To raise complaint and you did claim
That all Hope's knowledge was in vain;
And, thinking yourself a sorry fool
For seeking to attend my school,
And serve me, agreed with Reason:
Proved you not then a wicked one?'
'Mercy, sire, I do so confess,
Yet I fled not, made my bequest,

(As you know, I recall it clearly)
As one ought to, most sincerely
To all those in homage to you.
And Reason thought me unwise, who
Chided me, and preached endlessly,
Thinking by her words to sway me
From serving you, when she came;
Yet I would not believe that same,
Despite the strength of her intent;
For, without fail, true testament,
She made me fear, nothing more.
Reason won't move me, I am sure,
To anything that works against you,
Nor any of less worth than you,
Please God, whate'er may come to me;
As long as my heart keeps company
With you, and it will do so, truly,
Till they tear it from my body.
I know I did ill in thinking
As I did then, and listening,
So granting her an audience.
And pardon I do beg from hence,
So I might yet amend my ways.
I'll do as you command always,
Nor follow Reason, so that I
Within your rule may live and die.
Naught can erase it from my heart,
Let Atropos not have me part
From this life, except in serving
You and not seeking anything
Of mine, but in that task take me,
That Venus doth most willingly:
None have, I'm certain I am right,
Than in that instant, more delight.

And those who ought shall weep for me,
On seeing my corpse, and say of me:
'Dear sweet friend, who here doth lie,
Without a shadow of a lie,
This death is most appropriate,
This leaving of our mortal state,
Given the life that you led, freely,
When your soul was in your body.'
'Now, on my life, you speak wisely,
For your homage, as all can see,
Is well employed; tis certain you
Are not among those wretches who
Renounce me, be it understood,
When they have done all that they would.
Loyal the heart, where truth prevailed;
Your ship will come, tis so well sailed,
To fair harbour; I pardon you,
Not for any gift but your true
Request, one both fine and loyal.
So rather than the confessional,
Ere you are reconciled to me,
Repeat all my commands to me,
For ten there were in your Romance
Twixt prohibitions and demands,
And if you remember them well,
Your dice the double-six will tell.
Say on.'

CHAPTER LVIII: THE LOVER REPEATS LOVE'S LESSON

(*Lines 10765-10806*)

How Lover, without more ado
All Love's lesson recalls anew.

'RIGHT willingly. Baseness
I must flee, and slander no less;
Greetings swiftly give and render;
Speak vilely to neither gender;
At all times respect and honour,
Womankind, and at that labour;
Scorn pride; yet dress elegantly;
Ever prove cheerful, and lively;
True generosity embrace;
And set my heart in the one place.'
'I'faith, you've learnt your lesson well,
As any a true lover could tell.
How goes it with you?'
'Most sadly,
My heart is alive, but barely.'
'Have you not three comforts, though?
'Not all; I lack Sweet-Glances, woe
And its poison he'd draw from me,
With his sweet savour; all the three
Fled from me, and yet of them two
Returned to me, and have stayed true.'
'Have you not Hope then? 'Why yes, Sire,
She'll not allow me to expire;

For Hope, indeed, when once conceived
For a long while after is believed.'
'Where is the Rose?' 'Ah, she is lost.
Jealousy vexed her, to my cost,
Because of Ill-Talk, that monster,
Whom I know not how to conquer.'
'And what's become of Fair Welcome?'
'Jealousy holds him there, in prison,
So frank, so free, he loved me so.'
'Be not dismayed now, you should know
That you will win more, by my eyes,
Of what you wish, than you surmise.
Since you've served me faithfully,
I'll order my troops, and instantly,
To lay siege to that mighty castle
My generals will strive and bustle.
And ere we leave the siege, trust me,
Fair-Welcome will indeed be free.'

Chapter LIX: Love gathers his forces

(*Lines 10807-10864*)

How that Love, the fair and noble,
Writes despatches to his people,
And sends them by a messenger,
Who takes them, and waits no longer.

'Love and his messenger'

THE God of Love without setting
A time for that martial gathering,
Did of his generals then demand,
Some by request, some by command,
That they come to his parliament.
All did so, without argument,
Ready to aid in what he would,
Accordingly, as each one could.
Briefly I'll name them now, at will,
(The easier thus my rhymes to fill)
Dame Idleness, the garden's keeper,
Came there with the noblest banner;
Wealth, and Pity, and Openness,
Nobility of heart, and Largesse;
Boldness, Innocence, Courtesy,
Delight, and Honour, and Company,
Joy, Pleasure, and Security,
Youth, and Beauty, and Gaiety,
And Humility, and Patience,
Concealment, and strict Abstinence,
Who had False-Seeming in her care;
Without him, she would not be there.
These arrived with all their people,
Each bore a heart fine and noble.
Except indeed for Abstinence,
And False-Seeming, with his pretence;
However fair a face they brought,
Fraud was ever in their thought.
Twas Fraud engendered False-Seeming,
Who steals hearts with all his scheming.
His mother is Hypocrisy,
The shameful queen of thievery,
Who suckled and did nurse apart,
The hypocrite with wicked heart,

Who has betrayed many a region,
Beneath the banner of religion.
When the Love-God saw him there,
All his heart was filled with care.
'What is this, now, am I dreaming?
Tell me by whose leave, False-Seeming,
You are come into my presence.'
Then up leapt strict Abstinence,
And took False-Seeming by the hand:
'Sire,' said she, 'tis at my command.
I brought him here, be not displeased,
He has brought me honour and ease,
For he sustains and comforts me,
Or dead of hunger I would be;
So you should blame me the less.
He loves folk not, I will confess,
And yet I'd have him be loved,
Thought noble as the saints above,
For I love him, and he loves me
And came to keep me company.'

CHAPTER LX: LOVE PREPARES TO ATTACK THE CASTLE

(*Lines 10865-11312*)

How Love declared to each captain,
That he would an attack maintain
Against the castle, twas his aim
To see Fair-Welcome free again.

'Love prepares to attack'

'SO be it,' said Amor, then he
Gave a speech to all and sundry.
'That we might conquer Jealousy,
Who torments all Lovers,' said he,
'I have ordered you here today,
For against Love she doth array
This mighty castle; against me,
And wounds my heart most cruelly.
She has fortified it strongly,
So we must battle long and bravely,
Before we take the place from her.
Yet I am sad, and full of anger;
Fair-Welcome she imprisons there,
Who of our friends takes such good care.
If he's not freed, I am ill-served.
I lack Tibullus now, who served
Me lovingly, knew all my ways,
For whom I broke, in ancient days,
My arrows, and my bow, and left
My quiver in shreds; all bereft
Of him, anguished at his last breath,
I trailed my wings, after his death,
Beside his tomb, the feathers torn
And battered; grieving and forlorn.
My mother wept so at his demise,
She almost died herself, likewise.
Not for Adonis did she weep so,
Whom the wild boar's tusk brought low,
Such that he died in great torment.
Nor did the grievous pain relent
That seized him, till his life was o'er;
Yet for Tibullus she wept more.
None who had seen us weeping so
Would have failed to pity our woe;

No bridle-rein could restrain us:
Of Gallus, Ovid, and Catullus
We had need who of love treated,
Yet still by Death were defeated.
See, here is Guillaume de Lorris,
Whose cruel opponent Jealousy's
Anger grants him sorrow and pain.
Of such sadness he doth complain,
That of cruel death he's in danger,
If I seek not to bring him succour.
He took my counsel, willingly,
As one who doth belong to me,
And was right to do so; for him
In his trouble, not on some whim,
Are all our generals gathered here
To free Fair-Welcome; though I fear
That he is not so wise this lover.
Twould be a pity however,
If I lost so loyal a man,
Whom I should succour if I can.
He has served me right faithfully
And so has deserved well of me.
Let me sally forth, set, this hour,
To breach the walls and the tower,
And this mighty castle assail,
With all my strength, so we prevail.
And he will serve me further yet,
For to win my favour he will set
To work upon the fair Romance,
By which my rule he shall advance,
Until he reach the verses where
To Fair-Welcome, he doth declare:
(Fair-Welcome who lies in prison,
Now to sorrow wrongly given)

'But I am now deeply afraid
Lest you've forgot me, sore dismayed,
Abandoned here, in sorrow and pain;
Nor shall I find comfort again
If I have lost all your good-will;
Small faith I have in others still…'
At that point, may Guillaume rest,
Let his tomb with balm be blessed,
And incense, aloes, and sweet myrrh,
To mark his service, on him confer.
And then shall come Jean Chopinel,
With lively heart, and body as well;
At Meung-sur-Loire will he be born,
Who, feasting and fasting, shall adorn
My company his whole life through,
All free of greed and envy, and who
Will prove to be a man so wise
That Reason's claims he will despise,
(Who doth my unguents hate and blame,
Though sweeter than balm are those same.)
And if it should be, whate'er fate bring,
That he should fail in anything,
(For no man's free of sinfulness,
And each man has his weaknesses)
His heart shall so toward me bend,
That ever, at least in the end,
Seeing his fault, of his misdeed
The sinner will repent indeed.
He shall hold the Romance so dear,
To its ending he'll hope to steer
The work, if time and place allow.
When Guillaume's head in death shall bow,
Jean will continue it, say I,
After his death, I speak no lie,

Yea, after more than forty years,
And, because of Guillaume's fears
And his despair that he might lose
The goodwill Fair-Welcome did choose
To show, who in gaol doth suffer,
Lest Jean betray me, he will utter:
'If, perchance, tis lost to me there,
Then will my ending be despair.'
And then make speeches, on love's theme,
Wise or foolish, as they may seem,
Until the moment he doth, entire,
From the green and leafy briar,
Gather the lovely crimson Rose,
And so, at dawn, wake from repose.
Then will he seek to expound it all,
So naught lies hidden he can recall.
If they, in this, could counsel me,
They would have done so instantly;
As for Guillaume, that cannot be,
And Jean is not yet born you see,
And thus he cannot be present;
So things remain far from pleasant,
For if I fail when Jean is born
To come to him all winged one morn,
As soon as childhood's complete,
And him with his penance greet,
I swear to you, nay guarantee,
He'll not ensure it comes to be.
And since perchance it may yet be
That this Jean, the world will see,
Might be hindered ere he begin,
Which would be woeful and a sin,
A detriment to every lover,
For great good he'll do them ever,

I'll ask Lucina, the goddess
Of infancy, to grant success
To his birthing, sans pain or fear,
So he'll live for many a year.
And after when, in due course, he's
At the age when Jupiter sees
That all drink, as we have gleaned,
From those two casks ere they are weaned,
Those double casks, the one right clear,
The other cloudier, I fear,
The one sweet, the other bitter,
More than is soot or sea-water,
And he is laid there in his cradle,
Who soon will eat at my table,
I shall cover him with my wing,
And I to him such airs will sing
That when he's quit of infancy,
Imbued with all my knowledge, he
Will so pipe all our words throughout
The schools and crossroads all about,
(In language understood in France,
That kingdom granting audience)
That none who hear his speech will die
Of the sweet pangs of love, say I,
If they'll believe in him, wholly.
For he will speak so fittingly,
That those alive in those days, all
Near and far, should rightly call
That book The Mirror for Lovers,
Such good they'll find twixt its covers,
As long as Reason's not believed,
The cowardly, the ill-conceived.
Tis why I would be counselled more,
By you who are my counsellors,

And with joined hands, as if at Rome,
Beg your grace, that poor Guillaume,
Who bears himself well toward me,
Thus helped and comforted may be.
And if twere not for him I prayed,
I'd ask that Jean's woes be allayed,
The which lies in your power, freely,
So he might write more easily;
Tis a benefit you can supply,
For he'll be born, I prophesy.
I ask it too for those to come,
Whoe'er they are, where'er they're from,
Those who with devotion follow
My laws, as his fair book will show,
So they might conquer Jealousy,
All her scheming and her envy,
And destroy all the castles she
Dares build here, in her enmity.
Advise me then, what shall we do,
How order now our host, say you?
How may we work her most harm,
The sooner her castle to disarm?'

CHAPTER LX: WEALTH WITHDRAWS FROM THE ENTERPRISE

SO Love addressed them all, and they
Received his speech right well that day.
When they'd heard what he did utter,
His generals did commune together.
Diverse opinions there they brought,
And diverse things diversely thought,
But then, all their disputes explored,
They with the Love-God did accord.
'Sire,' they said, 'we are all agreed
As are our soldiers too, indeed,
Except, that is, for Wealth alone,
For she has sworn an oath, we own,
That she will ne'er attack the tower
Nor strike a blow, at any hour,
With arrow, or with lance, or axe,
No matter what may be the facts,
Or what other weapons might be,
Scorns our enterprise utterly,
And has withdrawn from our host;
At least for such was her riposte.
She holds this wretch in great despite,
And doth blame and scorn him quite,
And ever hostile doth now appear,
For, she says, he ne'er held her dear;
Thus she hates him, now and ever,
Because the fool longs not for treasure.
No proper tribute has he paid her,
With this request he waylaid her:

She says he asked her yesterday
If he could enter on that way,
The one that Give-Too-Much is named,
And flattered her, all unashamed,
Yet he was poor when he asked her,
Therefore she'd not let him enter;
Since then so little has he done,
That not a sou has this fool won;
Thus said Wealth, so on this matter
We came to our accord without her.
Now we advise, when we commence,
That False-Seeming and Abstinence,
With all who fight neath their banner,
Strike at the gate behind the tower,
That Ill-Talk hath in his command,
With his Normans, let both be damned!
And let Courtesy and Largesse
Now demonstrate their great prowess,
Against the Crone who doth command
Fair-Welcome with her cruel hand.
Then Delight and deft Concealment,
Will slay Shame, for their joint intent
Is to gather their host against her,
And at her gateway besiege her.
Next, Boldness and Security
Over Fear will seek mastery,
They'll both assail her, with delight,
None of their troops know aught of flight.
Openness and Pity will move
Gainst Resistance, and him remove.
So shall our host be well-deployed.
So shall the castle be destroyed,
If each makes that their sole intent,
As long as Venus gives assent,

Your mother, who is very wise
In all this kind of enterprise;
Twill never be finished utterly,
In word and deed if she disagree.
Twould be well to send for her,
For she doth make all easier.'
'My lords, my mother, the goddess,
My true lady and my mistress,
Comes not at my beck and call;
She obeys not my wish at all.
But when she pleases she will come
To succour and to aid her son,
That I may achieve some affair.
But I'll not trouble her, I declare.
She's my mother, yet I've feared her
From infancy, and I revere her;
For any child who does not fear
His parents cannot be their peer.
Nonetheless we may send for her
If we truly have need of her;
If she were nearby, she'd appear,
Naught would detain her, tis clear.
And great is my mother's prowess,
She's taken many a great fortress,
Worth a thousand or more in gold,
While I was absent, for she is bold;
They attributed them to me,
But her battles were not mine, you see,
And no such conquest do I prize
Where I am absent; to my eyes,
Whate'er they say, such is naught
But by way of trade; he who's bought
A war-horse for a hundred in gold,
He pays, and tis completely sold,

He owes the tradesman nothing more,
Who owes him no more than before.
I call not such selling giving,
A sale requires no rewarding,
In it there's no grace or merit,
For each is of the other quit.
With her tis not even a sale,
For when the buyer, in my tale,
Has stabled his new horse, he can
Sell it again to another man,
Not lose its cost, at least not all;
If twas but its hide he could call
On that at least, and I suppose
Recover something if he chose;
Or if he holds the horse so dear
He rides it for sport and cheer,
At least he's the horse's owner.
But that market is far other
Where Venus joins in the affair,
For none goes and traffics there,
But loses all he doth possess,
And all that he has bought, no less;
Goods and cost stay with the seller,
While both are lost to the buyer.
For he may not spend so freely
That he owns the goods, you see;
Nor, with all his powers, may he,
Despite mad generosity,
Prevent a stranger coming by,
A Breton, or some English spy,
Or a Roman, who's less or more
Will buy what he has bought before;
Perchance they will have all for naught,
Given the stories they have brought.

Now tell me, are such buyers wise,
Those foolish wretches all despise,
Who knowingly will bear the cost,
Though goods and payment both are lost?
Naught comes of all their toil and pain,
For nothing with them will remain.
Howe'er, I'll not deny saying,
My mother's not one for paying;
She's not so foolish, or unwise,
As to indulge in such a vice;
While, you know, those who pay her,
They repent of the cost later,
When Poverty their pride troubles,
Those who were Wealth's disciples;
And Wealth doth vigilant remain,
Since she and I desire the same.
But by sacred Venus, my mother,
And by Saturn her ancient father,
(Who did engender that young maid,
Though not by his wife, I'm afraid)
By them I would swear once more,
To render the issue more sure.
By the loyalty I owe my brothers,
(Knowing not who were their fathers,
So various and so many are they,
Those with whom my mother lay)
I swear once more, and bear witness
All Styx's waters, all Hell's marshes,
That wine I'll drink not for a year,
If I tell a lie, bear witness here,
For the Gods all know the custom;
If to perjury they're given,
For a year no wine they'll drink;
Now I've sworn enough, I think.

Twere ill should it prove perjury,
And yet foresworn I'll never be.
Now, since Wealth has failed me here,
Then that fault shall cost her dear.
She'll pay if she'll not ride abroad,
And fight for me with pike or sword.
Since she holds me not dear today,
When she doth see, in disarray,
The fortress of its tower shorn,
Ill for her that this day did dawn.
If I've a rich man in my power,
Watch me bankrupt him this hour;
No matter how bulging his purse,
I'll soon have whate'er he's worth,
All of his gold coins will be gone,
Unless from a granary they're won;
Our girls will see he's plucked bare,
And ne'er the least pinfeather there;
They'll set him to selling his land,
If he comes to them with open hand.
Tis poor men make me their master,
Though they've not a bean for nurture;
There is no way I'd scorn such men,
No worthy man doth give them pain.
Wealth who's greedy and gluttonous,
Harries and spurns them, ever vicious,
But they love better than the rich,
The misers, hoarders, with their itch
For cash and, by the faith I owe
My grandfather, more loyal also,
Serving me, pleasing me no less
With their good hearts, their willingness.
And as their thoughts are all of me,
I must think of them, reciprocally.

If I were not the God of Love,
But a God of wealth I did prove,
Then I would set them up on high,
Such is my pity for their outcry.
And it must be my duty to succour
Those who in my service labour;
For if they died of Love's misery,
Twould show there was no Love in me.'
'Sire,' cried the generals, 'tis all true,
All this that we have heard from you:
Your judgement is most suitable,
Good, and worthy, and valuable,
That you give regarding rich men,
And thus will it be; tis for certain.
And if rich men do you homage
They will show themselves less than sage,
For you will ne'er commit perjury,
And have to suffer the misery
Of abstaining from sweet wine.
The ladies such pepper will grind
For them, if they fall into their net,
They'll readily collect your debt,
Such courtesies the ladies offer;
Much trouble shall the rich discover.
No other conquerors will you need,
For they'll lay down the law indeed,
Those ladies and, be not dismayed,
You'll consider yourself well paid.
Interfere not with what they do,
They'll tell them such stories too,
And so arouse them with requests,
And flattery and, at their behest,
Give them such volleys of kisses
And warm embraces, those misses,

That, if the men believe, then they
Will not be left one house this day,
That won't run after the furniture,
Which is removed today for sure.
Now command us as to this fight,
Then we shall obey, wrong or right,
And yet False-Seeming dare not go,
And battle for you, or he claims so,
For he says that you do blame him,
And knows not if you will shame him.
Therefore we beg of you, fair sire,
Concerning him, allay your ire,
Let him our company attend,
With Abstinence, who is his friend;
This we agree, tis our request.'
I'faith', said Amor, 'that seems best;
Henceforth my court he shall follow.
Let him, advance.' And he did so.

Chapter LXI: False-Seeming joins Love's court

(*Lines 11313-11576*)

How the God of Love lifts his ban
On False-Seeming, who's now his man,
At which his troops are filled with joy;
King of the Rascals is his employ.

'False-Seeming joins Love's court'

'NOW False-Seeming, since all agree,
You're mine; go aid my company,
And from henceforth their ills relieve,
For none of them must you e'er grieve;
But think to stir their bravery
And trouble thus our enemy.
You've licence and authority,
King of my Rascals you shall be,
Since our Chapter wills it so.
You are a wicked traitor though,
Unconstrained your thieving crimes,
Perjured a hundred thousand times;
Nonetheless, in all our hearing,
Describe, twill be reassuring,
In general terms, I command you,
In what places they may find you,
If they're forced to seek you out;
And you can tell us all about,
How we're then to recognise you,
For one needs much wit so to do.
Tell us what places you frequent.'
'Sire, in many I'm resident,
Of which I may not tell you aught,
Forgive me, now; for if I sought
To tell the truth about those same,
It would bring trouble and shame.
If my companions get to know
Then they'll seek to harass me, so
As to bring great trouble on me,
If I know aught of their cruelty.
For they would silence everywhere
Truth that runs contrary to their
Situation, they'll not listen.
Ill indeed on me would fasten,

If I said one word, at present,
That sounded not sweet and pleasant.
For all the words that hurt and sting,
Will please them not if such I bring,
Which from the Gospels I compile
Words that flay them for their guile,
And they are cruel in evil ways.
Indeed, I know, all that one says,
If one does speak of them at all,
Reaches their ears through the wall,
No matter how secure your Court;
Sooner or later, I'll be caught.
I'm speaking not of decent men,
Who heed not what they hear of them;
But those who think they are the one
I mean, arouse one's suspicion
That they would wish their life to be
One of Fraud, and Hypocrisy,
That did conceive and nourish me.'
'And twas a fine conception too,'
Said Amor, 'and profitable,
Since the pair conceived a devil.
Nevertheless, how e'er that be,
Now, without fail, you shall,' said he,
'In the hearing of every person,
Give the name of every mansion
You dwell in, and show all your ways;
You may not hide your life always.
You must reveal now how you serve,
And by what means, if you'd deserve
The place that you sought among us.
And if, for the truth you tell us,
You are beaten, which you are not
Accustomed to, such be your lot;

You will not be the first who was.'
'Sire, if it please you, and because
I seek to serve you willingly,
Though I die for it accordingly,
I shall, and will so do this day.'
False-Seeming, without more delay,
Began his speech, before them all:
'Generals, now hear what I let fall.
Those who would False-Seeming know
Must to the world, and cloister go,
None but these two hide my address,
Though one the more, the other less.
Briefly, I lodge where I am bidden,
And where I think myself best hidden;
The hiding place that's most secure
Is under the vesture seeming poor.
The worldly are the more overt,
The religious the more covert.
(Of course, I would not wish to blame
Religion, nor its ways defame,
In whatever dress one finds it.
Nor the religious, not a bit,
Humble and faithful; tis their lot,
Yet, nonetheless, I love it not.)
I mean the falsely religious,
Both criminal and malicious,
Those who wish to wear the habit,
Yet in their hearts will not submit.
True believers show compassion,
Never spiteful in their passion,
Following not the paths of pride,
Living humbly, side by side.
With such folk I do not dwell,
Or, if I do, must feign as well.

Though I can adopt their habit,
I'd rather be hanged than do it,
And thus forgo my intention,
Whatever face I must put on.
I dwell with those puffed up with pride,
The cunning, full of guile inside,
Those who covet worldly honour,
Those who great affairs favour,
Who go about to seek donations,
And cultivate good relations
With the powerful they follow,
Pretend to poverty, yet wallow
In the haunts of food and wine;
Eat and drink all that's divine,
Preach poverty to you the while,
As they fish for wealth in style,
With a seine or trammel net.
By my life, they'll catch it yet!
They're not religious or worldly,
Their argument, most unworthy,
Yields a shameful conclusion;
This man is cloaked in religion,
Therefore he must be religious,
Yet the argument is specious,
As robust as a hollow trunk;
For the habit makes not the monk.
Yet none do that error counter,
No matter how full their tonsure,
Though they shave it in tranches,
Like Fraud, into thirteen branches,
As Logic's sharp razor sanctions;
None make such fine distinctions,
For none do seek to lay all bare,
Which is why you'll find me there

Most often, for where'er I go,
Whate'er I say, or do, or know,
No more than Sir Tybalt the cat,
Chases aught but a mouse or rat,
Do I pursue aught but Fraud;
Nor doth my appearance afford
A clue as to with whom I dwell,
Nor from my words can you e'er tell,
No matter how truthful they seem,
Or innocent and kind their theme.
If you have eyes to see, then you
Must every action keep in view,
For those who do not as they say,
They practise to deceive alway,
Whatever costume they may wear,
Whatever title they may bear,
Lord or lady, clerk or layman,
Sergeant, servant, man or woman.'

Chapter LXI: False-Seeming speaks of true and false religion

'False-Seeming speaks of religion'

AS False-Seeming sought to explain,
Amor addressed him once again,
Scorning what he sought to express

As if twere falsehood and foolishness:
'What, devil? Are you devoid of shame?
Who are these people you proclaim?
Can one then not find religion
Housed in a secular mansion?'
'Yes, Sire, it follows not always
That those who pursue the world's ways
Lead wicked lives, and unseemly,
Or must lose their souls completely,
For a great sorrow that would be.
It is the case that frequently
Religion doth indeed flower true
In robes decked with many a hue.
For many a holy saint has died,
Devout, religious, free of pride,
Who wore but everyday attire,
And yet to naught less did aspire;
And I could name a good many.
For almost all those we call holy,
All those women to whom we pray,
Chaste virgins, or wed many a day
And the mothers of lovely children,
Dressed in clothes that were common
Amongst all folk, and in them died,
And yet were saints and canonized.
The eleven thousand virgins,
Who before God, freed of their sins,
Held their candles, were in like state,
Those girls whose feast we celebrate,
When they received their martyrdom,
But are no less of the holy kingdom.
A good heart good thought doth make,
A robe doth neither give nor take;
Good thought it is that fashions one

Who in themselves reveal religion.
Go place the fleece of Dame Belin,
Upon the wolf, Sir Ysengrin,
Instead of his sable mantle,
So a sheep he doth resemble,
And set him with the ewes today,
Would he not pick and choose his prey?
Why, he'd drink no less of their blood,
But deceive them more than he could,
For, though seeming more familiar,
He'd be no less fierce, but crueller.
Since they'd never recognise him,
If he fled, they'd flee behind him.
Be there a few such wolves abroad
Amongst your new apostles, Lord,
Then, Holy Church, you're in trouble
Should these fine knights of the table
Mount an attack upon your City;
Weak then proves your authority.
If those who swore to defend it
Are the enemies who attack it,
Who can hold it gainst such a foe?
Twill be taken without a blow
From catapults with siege-towers twinned,
Their banners blowing in the wind.
If you'd not save it, if you care
To let them wander everywhere,
Then let them; as their commander,
Your role is simply to surrender,
And render tribute to them too,
Make peace with them, for if you do
Twill be no worse than that they
Prove masters of all they survey.
By day they run to mend the wall,

By night they mine, so it will fall;
They know indeed how to flout you.
Think then of setting out anew
The grafts that you would see bear fruit,
Don't linger till the weeds take root.
But peace, enough! Now let me turn
From this subject; though I'll return
To it, perchance, let it be gone,
Lest I o'er tire you, and pass on.'

Chapter LXI: False-Seeming speaks of his own guile

'**Now**, I'd make a compact with you;
I will advance your friends for you,
So long as they seek my company;
And they are fools if they scorn me,
For they must be my friends indeed,
By God, that is if they'd succeed.
That I'm a traitor's a true belief;
God judges me to be a thief;
I'm perjured; what I seek to do
Few men can know before I do.
For many in failing to perceive
My deceit, did their death receive,
And do receive, and shall receive,
Who never can my fraud believe.
He who does so, if he is wise,
Guards himself from my disguise;
Yet so subtle is my deception,
It takes a man of great perception.
For Proteus, the master of this,
Who changed his form as he did wish,
Was ne'er so skilled at fraud and guile,
As I am; for tis a good long while
Since I came to town yet was known,
However much my face was shown.'

CHAPTER LXII: FALSE-SEEMING ON RELIGIOUS DECEIT

(*Lines 11577-11984*)

How the treacherous False-Seeming
Hides men's hearts, by his scheming,
In robes grey or black in colour,
Behind faces pale and meagre.

'FOR I know how myself to cover;
Dressed in one garb, then another,
Now a knight, and now a friar,
Now a canon, now a prior,
Now a clerk, and now a palmer,
Now the pupil, now the master,
Castellan, forester I've played.
In short, I am of every trade.
Now I'm a prince, and now a page,
I can speak each man's language.
At one time I am old and grey,
Then a young man I do play,
Robert or Robin, I'm your man,
Franciscan, or Dominican;
Or, to follow my companion
Who comforts me as we go on,
(She the strict Lady Abstinence)
Other forms my looks enhance.
To whate'er she wishes, I aspire,
Whate'er fulfils her least desire.
At times I'm dressed as a woman,
As you, demoiselle or madam;

Next I'm in religious dress,
Now devotee, now prioress;
Now as a nun or abbess dressed,
Now a novice, or now professed.
And I traverse every region,
Searching out all religion.
But of religion, let's be plain,
I take the husk, and shun the grain;
To deceive, I dwell within it,
Seeking no more than the habit.
What's there to say? In this wise,
As I please, I my heart disguise.
Though my tune doth suit the words,
My deeds are other than my words.'
At this point False-Seeming sought
To fall silent, but Love by naught
Seemed offended, and then did he
Speak thus, to please the company:
'Tell me now, more especially,
How you serve thus, deceitfully;
Don't be ashamed to speak of it,
For, as you tell us, by your habit
You'd seem to be a holy hermit.'
'Tis true, though I'm a hypocrite.'
'But you go preaching abstinence,'
'Tis true, and yet I fill my paunch
With sweet morsels and fine wine,
Such as suit all those in my line.'
'But you go preaching poverty.'
'True, yet I am more than wealthy.
And although poverty I feign,
No poor man will I entertain.
A hundred times, the King of France
Would I wish as my acquaintance,

Than a poor man, by Our Lady,
However fine his soul may be!
When I hear some naked beggar
On a dunghill, who doth shiver,
Racked by hunger, cry his cares,
I meddle not with his affairs;
If the hospital he should see,
No comfort will he get from me,
For not a single gift will he
Give to me to feed my belly.
He licks his knife, has not a sou;
What can a wretch like that grant you?
He's a fool who hopes to be fed
Looking for meat in a dog's bed;
But tis fine my visit to fulfil
To some rich usurer who's ill.
I'll go and comfort him each day,
And hope to bear some cash away;
And if vile death should stifle him,
Then to his grave I'll carry him.
And if any seek to shame me,
Because I shun the poor, and blame me,
Do you know how I seek escape?
I tell them, spreading out my cape,
That the rich man's tarnished more
By his sinfulness, than the poor,
And has the greater need of counsel;
Thus I needs go when he's unwell.'

CHAPTER LXII: FALSE-SEEMING SPEAKS AGAINST BEGGARY

'AND yet, the soul's harmed equally
By an excess of poverty,
As much as by excessive wealth,
They both impair the soul's health,
When at either extremity,
Prosperity or beggary.
Sufficiency lies twixt the two,
The mean, ever full of virtue.
For Solomon has written all
About it in his book, its title
Proverbs, speaks of it with care,
In the thirtieth chapter, there:
"O Lord, through your power keep me,
From riches and from beggary.'
For the rich man who doth address
His wealth, thinks on it to excess,
Gives his heart to foolishness,
And his Creator he neglects.
How can I save a man from sin,
If a state of beggary he's in?
He cannot help but be a sinner,
Thief, perjurer, or God's a liar,
Who to Solomon did allow
The words I told you of but now.
I swear to you, that I ne'er saw
It written there in any law
(At least tis not in our Gospels)
That Jesus Christ or his Apostles,

When they went about the earth
Sought their bread ever, or knew dearth,
They'd no desire for beggary.
The masters of divinity
Were wont to preach thus frequently,
In Paris, all throughout the city.
The Apostles could make demands,
Without begging with open hands,
For they were pastors, in God's name,
And the cure of souls did claim.
And on the death of their Master,
Each then with his hands did labour,
And from naught else gained sustenance,
And in such efforts showed patience;
And if they had aught left over
Gave it to those who were poorer.
They built no palaces or halls,
And ever dwelt in humble stalls.
A fit man, I recall, should give,
If he has not the means to live,
Himself to labour, and be ready
To exercise his hands and body;
No matter how religious he be,
Or anxious to serve God is he.
And such is what he ought to do,
Except in such cases as I'll tell you
About, for I recall them well,
When of them I have time to tell.
And he should sell all that he has,
And give himself to labour, as
Holy Scripture tells us, no less,
Even if he's of perfect goodness.
The idler who haunts other's tables,
Is a thief, and serves them fables.

No man's excused for the reason,
That he's obliged to pray in season,
For he should forgo God's service,
While carrying out his every wish
As well in doing what he must.
For he must eat, and that is just,
And sleep, and do the other things,
While prayers do rest their wings.
From prayer all men must withdraw
To do their work, as I said before,
For Scripture doth with that agree,
That holds the truth for all to see.
And so declares Justinian,
Saying no able-bodied man,
Should seek to beg, but instead
Should labour for his daily bread,
In any manner that he can.
Twere better to maltreat the man,
Or to punish him openly,
Than sustain him in beggary.
And those who do such alms receive
Commit a wrong, so I believe,
Unless they own the privilege
Of doing so, as some allege,
And are excused the penalty;
But tis not right; they have received
It from some prince they've deceived.
I do not think tis justified
That they should have it who but lied.
Not that I would seek to limit
The power of any prince to grant it,
Nor do my words say aught, you know,
As to whether he should or no;
I must not meddle in the matter.

And then, according to the letter,
He who eats the offerings due
To weary men without a sou,
Naked, feeble, crippled, aged,
Who cannot labour to be fed,
Such a one who eats what's meant
For the poor, to their detriment,
His damnation's but delayed,
If He errs not who Adam made.
Yet know that where God commands
The rich to sell all in their hands,
Give to the poor, and follow Him,
He did not intend that, on a whim,
They should serve Him by beggary.
That was never his solemn plea.
He meant they should work with their hands,
And by good works keep his commands.
Saint Paul demanded the Apostles
Work to put meat on their tables,
To win what was necessary;
And he forbade them beggary.
For he said: 'With your hands labour,
Acquire nothing through another.'
He wished them to demand naught
From those they preached to, or taught,
And ne'er to sell the Gospel word.
He feared that all gifts so conferred
Might then seem extortion, merely;
For in this world there are many
Who, to tell the truth, will choose
To give, since they dare not refuse
From shame or, riled by beggary,
Simply give alms so they can flee.
Know you how they profit by it?

They lose the gift and the merit.
When the virtuous folk who heeded
Saint Paul's sermons, gently pleaded,
With him to take what they offered,
For God's sake, he ne'er proffered
A hand, but worked with it to gain
All that which did his life sustain.'
'Tell me,' said Love, 'how a man
Strong in body follows God's plan,
Who must sell all he had before
And give the money to the poor,
Yet wishes only ever to pray,
And labour not even for a day?
Can it be done?' 'Yes.' 'Then how?'
If he decides to make a vow,
And thereby enters an abbey,
Endowed with its own property,
Such as the white monks do offer,
The black, the canons regular,
Knights of the Hospital or Temple;
Each I give, as an example;
So Augustine suggests, and he
May live there free of beggary.
Nonetheless many monks labour,
Then run to serve the Lord later.
And since there was once great discord
Which I, at the time, did record,
About the state of beggary,
I'll discuss the question briefly,
How a man who has naught to eat
May live, a beggar on the street;
And, case by case, I'll state it plain,
So none need hear the thing again.
No matter if the wicked murmur,

Truth leaves no neglected corner,
And brave the reward I shall yield,
By daring to plough such a field.'

CHAPTER LXIII: FALSE-SEEMING DEALS WITH SPECIAL CASES OF BEGGARY

(*Lines 11985-12592*)

False-Seeming deals, in verity,
With every case of beggary.

'HERE are all the special cases:
If a man so low and base is
That he knows naught of any trade,
Yet seeks one where he might be paid,
Then he can take up beggary,
Until he's learnt enough to be
Master of something, and can gain
A living, free of beggary's pain.
Or if he cannot toil and labour
When illness doth him disfavour,
Or through weakness, or old age,
He may act on beggary's stage.
Or if, by chance, he's been raised
In such a manner he's amazed
By aught but living delicately,
Good men, in his community,
Should take pity on him now,
And through fellowship allow
Him to beg and gain his bread,
Rather than hunger till he's dead.
Or if he indeed he has the power,
The wit and the wish to labour

And is prepared to labour hard,
But cannot find, or near or far,
Any who would have him do
Aught that he is accustomed to,
Then that man might certainly
Gain a living by beggary.
Or if he earns wages by work,
And that labour doth not shirk
But cannot earn enough to live,
Then he may ask who will give,
And go about from day to day,
Seeking thus to bolster his pay.
Or if, since the faith he'd defend,
He's taken knighthood as his friend
And deeds of arms, or learning sought,
Or for some noble cause has fought,
And is weighed down by poverty,
Then, as I claim, that man may be
A beggar till he can seek labour,
And his needs in that way cover.
Then let him labour with bodily
Hands not spiritual ones, you see,
And put his own hands to good use,
With no hidden meaning as excuse.
In all these and similar cases
Or any you find in other places
As rational as those listed here,
He who so wishes may appear
As a beggar, not otherwise,
If he of Saint-Amour tells no lies,
William, that is, who this did teach,
And disputed, and so did preach
In Paris, amongst the divines.
And ne'er aid me bread and wine

If all the University
Did not then with his truth agree,
And the common folk in general,
Who heard William preach to all;
And none shall here find excuse
If their assent they would refuse.
He who'd murmur, his be the pain,
He who's angry, let him complain,
For I'll not keep quiet about it,
If I were to lose my life for it;
Or like Saint Paul, without reason,
Be shut away in some dark prison;
Or be banished from the kingdom
Wrongly again, like that William
Of Saint-Amour, Hypocrisy
Drove into exile, out of envy;
For there, she, my mother, chased him,
And then she plotted against him
Because he did Truth discover.
Then he erred against my mother,
In writing a new book leastways,
In which he did expose her ways,
Would have me quit mendicancy,
And go and toil, laboriously,
If I lacked all means of support.
I was but a drunkard he thought,
Since labouring pleased me not,
While how to labour I'd forgot.
There's too much pain in labour;
I like an audience, and prayer,
Where false holiness may hide
The subtle fox concealed inside.'

CHAPTER LXIII: FALSE-SEEMING ON RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

'WHAT the devil! What's this you say?
What words are these that you relay?'
'What now?' 'Tis blatant faithlessness,
Fear you not God? Tis sin no less.'
'Why no, the man who God doth fear
Gains little in this age, tis clear,
For the good, who evil eschew
And lawfully their lives pursue,
And fare according to God's law,
They win their bread, yet little more.
Such people drink of misery,
And no life so displeases me.
But look now, what heaps of money,
Fill the usurer's granary,
The loan-shark's, the counterfeiter's,
Bailiff's, provost's, beadle's, mayor's.
All live by plundering other men,
The common people bow to them
While, like wolves, they plunder more;
For all men trample on the poor,
And none view them as aught but prey,
And with their spoils all speed away;
Their substance is consumed by rich men,
Who, without first scalding, pluck them.
The strongest doth rob the weakest,
While I, in my simple robe dressed,
I dupe the duped and the duper,
I rob the robbed and the robber.
Great heaps and piles, by my trespass,

Of precious treasure, I amass
That naught can afterwards destroy.
If on a palace I should employ
All my wealth, and take my pleasure,
In company, all at my leisure,
At table, filled with every fare,
(Since for no other life I care)
Still my heaps of gold would grow.
Before my treasury's emptied so,
Coins will find me, in abundance,
All of my tricks my wealth enhance.
All my aim is acquisition,
My worth far greater than my income.
Though they ought to beat or slay me,
I would claim each man, each lady.'
'You seem a holy man.' 'Yes, master,
A priest ordained, a sacred brother,
Of this whole world I'm the curé,
Tomorrow, now, and yesterday,
Going about to shrive each soul;
For none without me can be whole;
Preaching and counselling I go,
Yet not dirtying my hands so.
I have permission from the Pope,
And he thinks me no fool, I hope,
For I seek ever to confess,
Emperors, in purple dressed,
King, duke, baron and count;
But not the poor, for such amount
To naught, I hate such confession,
If tis for no other reason
Than that I dislike poor people,
Their state is neither fair nor noble.
But empresses, and duchesses,

And great queens and countesses,
Fine ladies who haunt palaces,
And rich beguines and abbesses,
Wives of bailiffs, wives of knights,
Proud bourgeois ladies, fair sights,
And the nun, and the demoiselle,
Provided they are rich as well,
Whether barely or well dressed,
They too all go away confessed.
And for the salvation of souls,
I enquire throughout households,
Of how they do spend their days,
And of their lord's and lady's ways.
I fill their minds with this belief:
That their parish priest's a thief
Compared to me and my company,
Though many a cur follows me,
To whom folks' secrets I reveal,
And not a thing do I conceal.
And they reveal all that they see,
So naught in this world's hid from me.'

CHAPTER LXIII: HOW TO RECOGNISE THE HYPOCRITES

'SO you may recognise these evil
Folk who go deceiving people,
I will utter a few words here,
Of Saint Matthew's which appear
In that twenty-third chapter of his,
For so speaks the great evangelist:
"Now upon the chair of Moses
(The gloss upon the words supposes
The Old Testament as meant by these)
Sit the Scribes and Pharisees
(Those accursed, who fraud commit,
And earn the title hypocrite.)
Do as they say, not as they do,
For they will preach glibly to you,
To mouth the good they're never slow,
They have no wish to act it though.
They'll attach to the unaware
A heavy load they cannot bear,
Setting it upon their shoulder,
Yet themselves lift not a finger.'"
'Why not?' asked Love, 'They wish it not,'
Said False-Seeming, 'a porter's lot
Is oft to bear his load and suffer,
These folk wish it upon another.'
If good works they perchance pursue,
Tis so that folk those works can view.
For larger phylacteries they send,
Their shawl-fringes they extend,

And seek among the seats at table
The highest and most honourable,
And the best ones in the synagogue,
As ever doth the arrogant dog;
They would be greeted in the street
By everyone they chance to meet,
And called "master", formally,
Which, indeed, they ought not to be,
For the Gospel speaks against it,
And that arrogance hid within it.
We have another custom too,
In dealing with those we eschew,
Since we wish to show our hate,
And, in full force, attack their state.
He whom one hates, the others do
Also, and seek to ruin him too.
If we see that he might acquire
Honour or land he doth desire,
Revenues, or some possession,
Then we give all our attention
To finding how he seeks to climb
The better to spread our quicklime,
And hold him fast, by defamation,
If that will further his damnation.
We'll cut the rungs from his ladder,
And strip him of his friends, the latter
All vanishing without a word,
And naught of it will he have heard,
For had we sought it openly,
Perchance we'd be blamed, then we
Might be thwarted of our scheme,
For if he knew of what we dreamed
He might defend himself against it,
And we be reprimanded for it.

If one of us good works has done,
Tis claimed by each and every one;
Indeed, by God, if he did feign
To do it only, or but deigned
To boast he had advanced some man,
We'll all stand parties to the plan,
And say, for you'll hear it stated,
That such and such we elevated.
And then, in order to win praise,
We persuade rich men to raise
Letters, by lies, that bear witness,
In their text, to our great goodness,
So all the world will then believe
That virtue in us folk perceive.
And ever we feign to be poor,
Yet though we but complain the more,
We are those who have everything
Without owning to a single thing.
I broker trades, draft agreements,
Draw up marriage arrangements,
Prove wills, act as an attorney,
Or as a messenger I'll journey,
Or conduct investigations,
Into dishonest situations.
To sound another man's business,
Doth grant me pleasure to excess;
And if you have business to do
With any I frequent, then you
But needs tell me, and it is done,
The minute you ask, tis begun.
And if you treat me well in this,
You'll have deserved my service.
But any man who'd chastise me,
He will lose my favour swiftly,

I neither love nor value the man
Who reproves me, you understand.
I'm happy to reprove another,
But his reproof I will not suffer;
For I who others have chastised,
Seek not myself to be chastised.'

CHAPTER LXIII: THE SERVANTS OF THE ANTICHRIST

'A HERMITAGE, I love it not;
I've quit the woods, the desert hot,
And to Saint John the Baptist leave
Such barren lodging, there I'd grieve,
With naught in my vicinity.
A town, a castle, or a city,
There halls and palaces I gain,
Where a man may have free rein;
Out of the world I claim to be,
But there I plunge and bathe all free.
And take my ease and swim around,
Better than any fish I've found.
I'm a servant of the Antichrist,
One of his thieves, thus enticed
To wear the habit, of whom tis writ
A life of pretence they lead in it;
Like lambs without, all free of sin,
Yet like ravening wolves within.
Everywhere, on both land and sea,
We war with the world, in enmity
Would have in fine detail decreed
The life that everyone should lead.
If there's a castle or a city
Where a heretic's sitting pretty,
Perchance one coming from Milan,
Since they're known for it, to a man,
Or exacts too high a penalty
In renting, or in usury,

Far too eager to make a gain,
Or if he's a lecher, again,
Or robber, or simoniac,
Or a provost, all dressed in black,
Or a prelate, full of joyfulness,
Or a fat priest, with a mistress,
Or a whore, with a hostelry,
Or a pimp, or keeps the brothel key,
Or sins at whate'er vice there is,
That merits a measure of justice,
Then by the saints to whom we pray
If he sends not lampreys our way,
A pike, a salmon, or some eels,
If they're gettable, for our meals,
Or pies, or tarts, or a fine cheese
In a wicker basket, they will please,
Or cooking pears, the sweeter ones,
Or fat young geese, or plump capons,
With which we'll tickle our palates,
Or perchance a brace of rabbits,
Or if he fails, through lack of wit,
To bring a kid to roast on the spit,
Or a few pork chops for us to peck,
He'll find a rope around his neck,
And be led away to feel the fire,
To yell as loud as a town crier,
And be heard by all, far and near;
Or be imprisoned, and disappear,
Into some high tower's dank cell,
Like all who fail to treat us well,
For all the sins that he's committed,
More perchance than he's admitted.
Yet if he has sufficient wealth
To construct a tower himself,

No matter if the stone's prepared,
Or left unshaped, and unsquared,
Or it be made of wood or earth,
Or whate'er else may give it birth,
As long as he's amassed inside
Such temporal goods as it will hide,
And mounted a catapult atop it,
To aim before it and behind it,
And fire as well toward each side,
A host of such missiles as I'd
Be prepared to list for you,
Then he might prove famous too;
And if he hurled from mangonels
Rare wines, in casks and barrels,
Or wine-sacks of a hundredweight,
Freedom might yet prove his fate.
But if he sends not nourishment,
Let him find some equivalent,
Abandoning lies and fallacies,
If he hopes our anger to appease;
Or we'll bear witness, and strive,
To have the fellow burned alive
Or give to him such punishment
As weighs more than our nourishment.'

CHAPTER LXIII: THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS VERSUS THE MENDICANT ORDERS

'YOU'D not know us by our dress,
We false preachers, nonetheless,
You can catch us in the deed,
If you watch closely, and take heed.
And but for the watch that was kept
By the University, for it ne'er slept,
That guards, for all, the sacred key,
The key of Christianity,
All were ruined by ill intention
In the year of the Incarnation
Twelve hundred and fifty five,
(I yield the truth to no man alive)
For a book was released, tis true,
A common example I give to you,
A book that came from the Devil,
The Eternal Gospel was its title,
As brought by the Holy Spirit,
The very phrase suggested it;
Such was the name it had earned,
Twas thought worthy of being burned.
In Paris, not one woman or man,
In the square before Notre-Dame,
Might not have had it to transcribe
If they pleased, nor all the tribe.
There they'd have found with ease
Such ill comparisons as these:
That by as much, in its nobleness,
Be it of heat or of brightness,

As doth the sun exceed the moon,
Which is paler at night's noon,
Or by as much as nut doth shell,
(I mock you not, this I do tell,
I swear on my soul, without guile)
Doth this "Gospel", such its style,
Exceed that which the Evangelists
Of Jesus Christ gave us; it insists,
That book, on such comparisons,
A mass of them; but I pass on.
The University that but seemed
Asleep (or perchance it dreamed),
At the noise of that book's fame,
Rose then, and hardly slept again,
But armed itself for battle rather,
When it perceived a vile monster,
Ready to war against it, and send
The book to judgement at the end.
But those who had issued the thing,
Now withdrew it from the ring,
And then made haste to conceal it
Knowing not how to defend it,
By gloss or by exposition,
Against all those in opposition,
Who wished to denounce each word
Written there, and would be heard.
I know not, regarding this thing,
What result the book may bring,
But he must wait, its begetter,
Until they can defend it better.
Thus the Antichrist we yet attend,
For to him our heads we'll bend;
Those who do not wish to join us,
They shall all be slain before us.

Against them we'll incite all folk,
By the fraud that doth us cloak,
Thus they'll perish by the sword,
Or in some other way be gnawed,
If they refuse to do as bidden.
For in the book it is written
That recounts this, there we see:
"While Peter has authority,
Then John cannot show his power."
Now that I've shown you this sour
Rind of meaning which doth hide
The sense, I'll show the fruit inside.
"Peter" means the Pope, by intention,
The secular clergy by extension,
Who do keep to Jesus Christ's law,
Guard and defend it, what is more,
Against all the false impeachers.
And by "John" is meant the preachers,
Who claim no law is tenable
But that of their Eternal Gospel,
That which the Holy Spirit sent
To guide both sinful and innocent.
By the "power" of John it means
The force of grace which it seems
Those vaunt who'd convert the sinner,
And have him turn to God after.
Many another devilry
Is commanded (for all to see,
In the aforementioned tome,
That is against the law of Rome,
And belongs to the Antichrist)
Of those who are by it enticed.
They may command the murder
Of all those who side with Peter,

But will never have the power
To slay, or punish or devour
Peter's law, this I guarantee,
For enough will endure you see
To maintain that law forever,
So that at last there'll be no other.
And the law John doth proclaim
Will thus be thwarted of its aim.
But I'll speak no more of it here,
For the matter is too great I fear.
Yet if the book had been accepted,
My state would ne'er be neglected,
For I have friends among the great
Who forever set me in high estate.'

CHAPTER LXIII: FALSE-SEEMING SPEAKS OF FRAUD TO THE GOD OF LOVE

'FOR Fraud, my lord, and my father,
Of all this world is emperor,
And my mother is its empress.
Despite the Holy Spirit's success,
Our powerful lineage doth reign;
In every kingdom, I'd maintain,
And it is right that we do so,
For a face on all we do bestow;
And thus we do all men deceive,
Yet the deception none perceive.
Or if tis recognised by the few,
None dare tell the truth to you.
But he who doth fear my brother
More than God stirs God's anger;
He who fears but a simulation
Is of the faith no great champion,
No more than he who might complain,
But does not, to avoid the pain.
Such a man wishes not to hear
The truth, nor have his God appear,
Him God will punish, without fail.
No matter how the ship doth sail;
For we have honour among men,
And we're thought such goodly men,
That we've authority to punish
Without reproof, which we relish.
Who indeed should win honour
But we who are ever at prayer,

Before all men, quite openly,
Whate'er we practice covertly?
Is that any greater a folly
Than to encourage chivalry,
And love all the noble and pleasant
People, with clothes so elegant?
If they were such as they appear,
As fine that is as their fine gear,
Such that they did what do they say,
Were that not a great pity I say,
Rather than playing the hypocrite?
May those be cursed who welcome it!
Certainly, they'll find no love here.
But Beguins with all their headgear,
Their faces ever pale and sweet,
Wide grey robes down to their feet,
All spotted with dirt from the street,
Knitted leggings, boots to compete
With the pouches of quail-hunters,
Princes should make them governors
Of themselves and all their land,
In peace or war, you understand.
A prince should ever cleave to those
Who e'er the path to honours chose,
And if they're other than it seems,
And win life's favour by such means,
Tis there I'd settle my estate,
To trick, and so deceive the great.
Now by that I seek not to say
One should despise a habit alway,
Unless beneath it pride doth lie;
For none should hate the poor, say I,
Because of the clothes that they wear.
Though God Himself doth not care

For those who leave the world behind
Yet whom in search of power we find,
And worldly glory, earth's delights.
Who can think such Beguins right,
Such hypocrites, who surrender
Themselves to God then do other,
Saying they have abandoned all,
When they'd grow fat in riches' hall?
They are like curs that instantly
Return to their vomit greedily.
And yet to you I dare not lie,
Although I certainly would try
To cheat you, were I not to feel
You'd know it, and the trick reveal.
I'd have assuredly tried to win
And not left off for fear of sin;
And that I'll surely seek to do,
If you now treat me badly, too.'
At this the God of Love did smile,
And all the company laughed a while,
In amazement, and cried aloud:
'Here's a lad to make us proud!'
'False-Seeming,' said Love, 'come, tell me,
Since I've brought you so near to me
That in my court you are a power,
The King of Rascals from this hour,
Will you now keep faith with me?'
'Why yes, I swear it faithfully,
Your father, nor your ancestors,
E'er had an officer more sure.'
'How come? Tis against your nature.'
'Take a chance; you'll ne'er be surer,
For if true pledges you require here,
Twill not make you any the wiser,

Even if I gave hostages,
Letters, testimonies, gages.
On you as witness now I call,
Confirm this truth: that none can haul
The wolf from his hide till he's skinned,
Howe'er you beat him when he's sinned.
Think you all tricks I shall forgo,
Because in humble robes I show?
Beneath them I have worked much ill.
By God, my heart will follow still
That life; if my gaze seems humble too,
Think you evil I'll cease to do?
My dear friend strict Abstinence
Has need of all my providence,
For she'd have been in sorry plight,
If she'd not had me in her sight;
Let us both carry out this task.'
'So be it, no pledge shall I ask.'
The thief knelt down upon the spot,
His treacherous face awhile forgot,
And pale without, yet black within,
Thanked Love, ere battle did begin.

CHAPTER LXIII: AMOR LAUNCHES THE ATTACK ON JEALOUSY'S TOWER

NOW there was naught to do that day
But start the assault, without delay,
And this Amor commanded loudly.
They took up arms thus, instantly,
Such weapons as would best endure,
And when their armour was secure,
They sallied forth, full of ardour,
And soon came to the walled tower,
Which they intended not to quit
Until they'd either conquered it,
Or they'd been taken, or been slain.
Four divisions they now maintain,
For each of those four forces waits
To force one of the keep's four gates.
Whose guards are not lazy or idle,
But strong and vigorous in battle.

Chapter LXIV: False-Seeming and Abstinence approach Ill-Talk

(*Lines 12593-12666*)

False-Seeming takes counsel here
As to their garb, how they appear;
Then Ill-Talk he and Abstinence
Approach, in seeming innocence.

'False-Seeming and Abstinence'

NOW I'll speak of the appearance
Of False-Seeming and Abstinence,
Who now against Ill-Talk did go.
They held a council, you must know,
On how they should act, and whether
They should just appear together,
Or if they should go in disguise.
By agreement, they did devise,
A plan of proceeding covertly,
As though they were pious, saintly
Folk upon some pilgrimage.
So Abstinence did there engage
To dress herself as a Beguine,
In a robe made of cameline,
And with a large kerchief, she said,
Of white cloth, would drape her head.
Nor did she forget her psalter,
She had too her paternoster
Beads all strung on a white lace cord,
Which she had not purchased abroad,
Twas a gift from a holy brother,
Whom she claimed to be her father,
And whom she visited quite often,
More than the other holy men,
And he would often visit her,
And many a fine sermon gave her.
And, by False-Seeming, he never
Failed frequently to confess her,
And they performed that confession
With such intense devotion,
Their two heads did never cease,
To meet beneath the one headpiece.
I'd say she was of goodly stature,
Though a little pale of feature,

Like that vile mare the rider whips,
That horse in the Apocalypse,
Marked, among wicked company,
Pale and stained with hypocrisy;
For that mount it bore no colour
Except a foul and deathly pallor,
And with that pale and sickly hue
This Abstinence was covered too.
Her appearance represented
One who of her state repented.
She held a staff, made of larceny,
Darkened it was with misery,
She'd had from Fraud, as a gift,
And a bag of cares she did lift.
Once ready, she then departed.
False-Seeming, from whom she parted,
As if to test his skill, moreover,
Was garbed as one Brother Cutler,
His face humble, full of pity,
And nary a trace of pride had he,
In appearance sweet and peaceful;
From his neck there hung a Bible.
Without a squire, he went his way,
Though he, to bear his weight that day,
As if his limbs were impotent,
Upon a crutch of treason leant.
In his sleeve he did conceal
A razor of sharpened steel,
That he'd had forged, and with the name
Of Cut-Throat he'd endowed that same.
So they progressed, the hale and lame,
Until to Ill-Talk they both came,
Who was seated there beside his gate;
The passers-by he viewed, in state,

And hence two pilgrims he did see,
Who bore themselves with humility.

Chapter LXV: False-Seeming and Abstinence greet Ill-Talk

(*Lines 12667-12746*)

How False-Seeming and Abstinence
In Love's cause do now advance
To salute Ill-Talk the treacherous
Who often doth speak ill of us.

'False-Seeming and Abstinence greet Ill-Talk'

AND they saluted him most humbly,
Abstinence first, with a low curtsy;
She approached Ill-Talk quite near,
Then False-Seeming did appear
And bowed, and Ill-Talk greeted them
But doubting not, nor fearing them,
Stirred not, for gazing neath his brow
He thought he knew them well enow,
Abstinence seemed to him familiar,
But knew not she brought falseness there;
He knew not that she was constrained
To a life of thievery, and but feigned
To come, as he thought, in good faith,
For she came in a state of unfaith;
And if in good faith she had begun,
Good faith she'd lacked from that time on.
He had seen False-Seeming too,
Yet the falseness was nary on view;
He was false, but of falsity
Had ne'er been convicted, you see,
For he worked so hard at seeming,
That of falseness none were dreaming
Who viewed him, yet if you'd seen him,
Before in these clothes you saw him,
You'd swear by the Celestial King
That he you'd seen, in the dancing,
You knew as fair Robin, that man
Who's now become a Dominican.
But doubtless, here's the sum of it,
The Dominicans are men of wit,
And their order would be badly run,
If they were wretches like this one;
And the Carmelites, and Franciscans,
No matter how vast the expansion

Of their stomachs, nor the plunder
They take from every other brother.
But none draw a true consequence,
From the realm of mere appearance,
By any argument they e'er make,
Since mask for essence they mistake.
You'll always find some sophism,
That doth the argument envenom,
If you possess the subtlety
To comprehend duplicity.
Now when the pilgrims had wended
Their way to Ill-Talk as intended,
Stick and crutch they dropped like that,
And down beside Ill-Talk they sat.
Who said to them: 'Come, as you're here,
Tell me the news now, and make clear
Your reason for it, your business,
Whate'er brings you to this fortress.'
'Sire,' said strict Abstinence,
'We come here in penitence,
With pure hearts, clear and sound,
As pilgrims we are onward bound;
We almost always go on foot,
Our heels are dusty, black as soot,
We are both sent, to and fro,
Among the errant folk, we go,
As an example, and to preach,
So the sinner we might reach;
We seek to catch no other fish.
We come, as is our wont and wish,
To seek shelter, in God's name;
And to amend your life we claim,
Should it not displease, a moment,
To preach a sermon's our intent;

A brief one, but a word or two.'
And thus Ill-Talk replied: 'Then you
'May have such shelter as you see,
It ne'er shall be denied by me,
And say whatever pleases you,
Whate'er that is, I'll listen too.'
'Thank you, Sire,' says Abstinence,
And their sermon doth commence.

CHAPTER LXVI: ABSTINENCE REPROACHES ILL-TALK

(*Lines 12747-12846*)

How Abstinence doth reproach
Ill-Talk for slanders he doth broach.

'SIRE, of the virtues, the greatest,
The most sovereign, the highest,
A mortal man may call upon,
By knowledge, or by possession,
It is the holding of his tongue.
Whether they be old or young
All should do so, for tis better
To be silent than to utter,
Ill words; who listens willingly,
Fears not God, and is unworthy.
You Sire, in this, are a greater
Sinner than is any other.
For a long while you've defamed,
And you are greatly to be blamed,
A young man who lingered here,
Claiming that he did but appear
To deceive Fair-Welcome, yet you
Said, in that, a thing most untrue,
Or you did lie, it would appear;
Now he comes and goes not here,
And perchance you'll see him not.
Fair-Welcome in prison doth rot,
Who with you did erstwhile enjoy

The fairest games one could employ,
Most of the days of every week,
Nor aught wicked did he e'er seek.
Now he dare not find solace here,
For you've forced him to disappear,
Who sought this place for its charm.
What inspired you to do him harm,
If not your evil mind, say I,
That gives birth to many a lie?
Twas your foolish loquaciousness,
That chatters, cries, brays no less,
And brings shame on innocent men,
And saddens and dishonours them,
With tales that lack all evidence,
Through appearance or contrivance.
I challenge you to speak openly
The falsehoods you say covertly;
For tis a sin thus to contrive
Lies about any man alive;
And yours is the greater sin too
Since you know all I say is true.
Nonetheless, the youth cares not,
Gives not a fig now for your thought,
Whate'er it may be, and ne'er will.
And know that he intended no ill,
For he'd have come and gone away,
No reason had he to delay.
He'll not, unless it catch his eye,
Perchance, when he is passing by;
He does so less than others do.
Yet you, with couched lance, view
This gate, and guard it every day,
Idly the idler lives alway.
Day and night a watch you keep,

But do naught, tis as if you sleep.
Jealousy, who demands something
From you, values you at nothing.
A shame it is that Fair-Welcome,
Is pointlessly held in prison,
Lies there, and none a ransom seeks,
Languishes there, the wretch, and weeps.
If you'd done no more wrong on earth
Than that to this deed you gave birth,
You ought, without more ado, to be
Thrust from out this place, swiftly,
Granted a cell, or iron chains.
You'll go to Hell, for your pains,
If of your deeds you'll not repent.'
'You lie,' he cried, 'with ill intent
You come, and unwelcome it is.
Have I entertained you for this,
That you should shame and revile me?
Tis your misfortune, if you take me
For some wretched keeper of sheep;
Go find somewhere else to sleep,
You who do call me a liar,
You're a trickster, as was your sire.
You two are come here to blame me,
And, as I speak the truth, shame me.
Is that not what you're here to do?
The Devil take me, and do You,
God above me, here confound me,
If not ten days ere Jealousy
Built her castle I was not told,
(For I repeat what did unfold)
That the youth had kissed the Rose;
Naught more I know, or suppose.
Why be led to think it, say you,

If, in fact, the thing was not true?
By God, I say it, and repeat it,
And I believe the truth is in it,
And I shall trumpet it about,
To all the good folk hereabout,
How the young man the Rose did seek.'
Then False-Seeming began to speak:

CHAPTER LXVII: FALSE-SEEMING BEGUILES ILL-TALK

(*Lines 12847-12932*)

How Ill-Talk listened closely to
False-Seeming who did him subdue.

'ALL that is said about the town
Is not Gospel truth I have found,
Now, as you are not deaf, then I
Can prove this thing is but a lie.
You will agree that, certainly,
No man can love, wholeheartedly,
(Indeed, for all the former knows,
Little of him the latter knows)
A man who doth of him speak ill.
For I have read, and true tis still,
All lovers do those places visit
Their beloved doth inhabit.
This young man doth honour your name,
And you as his friend he doth claim,
And everywhere that he doth meet you,
He doth ever come to greet you
With a joyful and friendly face;
Nor doth he press you but, with grace,
The youth seeks not to weary you,
And comes here less than others do.
Know if his heart was troubled by
The Rose, he'd have been forced to try,
And often then you'd have sought him,

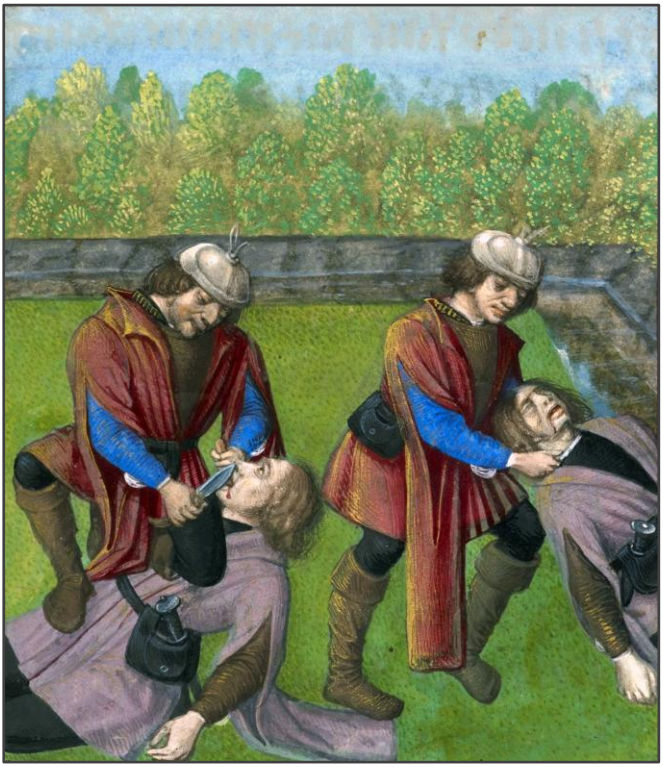
And, in truth, you'd have caught him,
The youth could not have kept away
Not if they'd roasted him that day,
And he'd not be in the state he is.
So you see he thinks not of this;
Nor does Fair-Welcome, surely,
Though he is paying for it sorely.
By God, if they wished it those two,
They'd cull the Rose in spite of you.
Though you have slandered the youth,
Who loves you, as you know in truth,
Accept that, if he did intend
Such a thing, he'd not call you friend,
And never would have called you so,
Nor loved you as he doth, you know.
He would have dreamed up some plan
To take the castle would that young man.
For surely he would see, and know,
For someone would have told him so,
That he could take that path no more,
To the Roses, that he'd had before?
Himself he would surely have seen it
Or from some other have known it?
But now he acts quite otherwise,
Thus by showing yourself unwise
Since in this way fair folk you serve,
Death and damnation you deserve.'
False-Seeming proved the case thereby,
Ill-Talk knew not how to reply,
And deceived by his appearance,
And ready to seek repentance,
Said: 'By God, it may well be so,
In this you are my master, though
Dame Abstinence is also wise;

You are of one mind, I surmise.
What would you counsel me to do?'
'Be confessed, without more ado,
And repent of this sin, on the spot,
For you've repeated what was not.
I am of an Order, and am a priest,
And I am by no means the least
Of confessors, rather their master;
While this world lasts, they've no other;
I have the whole world in my care,
No other priest, no curé has there
Such rights, and by the Lady on high
A hundred times more pity have I
On your soul, than your parish priest,
No matter how singular that beast.
Moreover I've a great advantage,
There's not a single priest as sage,
And learned as am I, you see.
I've a licence in divinity,
Tis true by God, long I've had it.
The finest people you may meet
Have had me as their confessor,
Since I'm so wise a professor.
If you'll confess here and now,
Then, that sin forgotten I vow
Which I'll no longer mention,
You shall have my absolution.'

Chapter LXVIII: False-Seeming slays Ill-Talk and cuts out his tongue

(*Lines 12933-12956*)

How not with a sword but a razor
False-Seeming did the tongue sever
Of Ill-Talk who fell down dead,
And ne'er a slander in his head.



'False-Seeming slays Ill-Talk'

SO Ill-Talk bowed his head, humbly,
And, kneeling then, confessed, for he
Sore repented; there, by the moat,
False-Seeming, seized him by the throat,
Squeezed with his hands, and strangled
Ill-Talk, then his tongue he mangled,
And cut it from him with his razor.
They were done with him forever;
And swiftly, without more ado,
Into the moat his corpse they threw.
They broke down the unguarded gate,
Once it was down, passed through it straight,
And found his Normans posted there,
All deep in sleep, with nary a care,
For they had all so drunk their fill
Of more bad wine than I could swill,
The wine they themselves had poured,
That on their backs they lay and snored.
They were strangled where they slept,
Their slanders silenced, drunk, unwept.

Chapter LXIX: False-Seeming and his company placate the Crone

(*Lines 12957-13164*)

How False-Seeming who doth placate
Many a lover, now passed the gate
Of the castle, with his mistress,
And Courtesy too, and Largesse.

THEN through the open gate did press
Courtesy also, and Largesse,
And thus all four met together,
Furtively, and there took cover.
The old Crone was not on guard
Who Fair-Welcome's exit barred.
All four of them at her did glower,
She'd but descended from the tower,
A coif beneath a wimple, instead
Of a veil, covering her head,
A morsel of leisure thus to taste;
The four ran up to her in haste,
And all four then assailed her.
Since she'd no wish to suffer
When she saw all four assemble:
'I'faith, she cried, 'you resemble
Fine folk, all brave and courteous,
Now tell me, without any fuss,
Am I to count myself the prize
You seek for in your enterprise?'
'The prize! Why, sweet gentle mother,

We come not seeking your capture,
But solely to visit here and greet you,
And then, if it should please you,
To place our bodies, completely
At your command, and what's worthy
That we might happen to possess,
And never fail you, or distress
You, and if you please, sweet mother,
Sweet, for you have ne'er been bitter,
We now request you, should you please,
For no ill there is in these, our pleas,
That Fair-Welcome should no more
Languish within, but issue forth,
To come and play with us awhile
Nor dirty his feet, the sweet child;
Or if he cannot be released,
Speak a word to his friend at least,
And let them comfort one another
And prove a solace to each other,
For that will scarce cost you aught.
And then his friend may be thought
Your liegeman, your slave almost,
Or you his mistress and his host,
His life to do with as you wish,
To sell, or torment, or extinguish.
And then tis good to gain a friend,
And twill be worth it in the end,
For look here at all these jewels,
All these buttons, clasp and buckles,
Will be yours, and a fine garment
He shall grant you, as a present.
His heart is generous, noble too,
He'll not prove a burden to you;
For you are greatly loved by him;

He'll not blame you for anything,
For he is wise and most discreet.
Protect him now, thus we entreat,
So none are prompted to complain;
Restore the youth to life again.
Now take this chaplet of fresh flowers
To Fair-Welcome, this gift of ours,
With a warm greeting, tis our plea,
On his friend's behalf, for he'll see
These flowers and be comforted;
Better than gold were this instead.'
'God help me for, if I could though,
And Jealousy ne'er got to know,
And I was not to incur the blame,'
Said the Crone, 'I'd do that same.
But Ill-Talk the scandal-monger
Who's given to endless slander,
Jealousy made her sentinel,
And he keeps watch on us as well:
Without hindrance he shouts, he cries
Whate'er he knows, or doth surmise,
And he'll contrive slanderous tales
If e'er his fount of mischief fails.
Yet he'd not be hindered, though
Were he to hang for doing so.
And if the wretch told Jealousy,
Then shame indeed would fall on me.'
'As to that,' they said 'have no fear,
There's naught Ill-Talk can see or hear,
His throat cut, and without a bier,
Ill-Talk lies dead in the moat here.
Unless tis through some enchanter,
He'll ne'er to the gods utter slander,
Ne'er will his accusations pain,

For he'll ne'er be revived again,
Unless with potions those devils
Down below can work miracles.
He shall cause no trouble for you.'
'Then I can deny naught to you,'
Said the Crone, 'but tell the youth
That he must hasten now, in truth;
I shall seek fair passage for him.
He's not to speak openly, tell him,
Nor must the lad delay too long,
And then he must hurry along,
When I choose to let him know,
Nor let himself or his gear show,
So that our people see him not;
Nor must do aught he should not,
Even though he'd have his way.'
'Lady, twill all be as you say,'
They cried, and each of them thanked her.
Thus they hatched a plan together.
But howe'er it seemed to other eyes,
False-Seeming, he thought otherwise,
And to himself he whispered low:
'He for whom we are gathered so,
Trusts me somewhat, and since he
Has never ceased loving certainly,
Then if he's not in accord with you,
Old Crone, you'll scarcely, in my view,
Get far along that path ere he
Doth make his entrance secretly,
If he finds but the time and place;
Tis not always you'll see the face
Of the wolf ere he steals the sheep
From the field, howe'er well you keep
A watch; in church you might delay,

Where you spent hours yesterday.
Jealousy, who did trick him there,
She might easily be elsewhere,
Far off, where'er she needs to be,
And he might come there secretly,
Perchance by night, before the court,
Alone, without a light, in short,
Or perchance with Friend to guide him,
If our Lover did invite him,
Unless that is the moon was bright,
For the moon, with her clear light
Has oft to lovers proved a bane;
And Friend could come and go again;
Then since the castle he doth know,
He could enter it by a window,
Secure a rope and thus ascend,
And then could equally descend.
Or Fair-Welcome, he might do so,
While the Lover waits there below,
For he might well flee his prison,
Where you hold him without reason,
And come to speak with the Lover
If there's no access for the latter.
Or if he knows that you're asleep,
And has the chance, then he might creep
Abroad, and leave the gate ajar,
So our true Lover, from afar
Might secretly approach the Rose,
On which his thought he so bestows
And gather it, with ease as well,
If he the other guards can quell.'

CHAPTER LXIX: THE CRONE SPEAKS WITH FAIR-WELCOME

NOW I, who was not far away,
Thought I would do as he did say.
If the Crone would so conduct me
I should have scant difficulty,
And if not, then I would enter,
By whichever route seemed better,
Just as False-Seeming had taught;
I agreed with his every thought.
Now the Old Crone without delay
To Fair-Welcome did make her way,
Who kept the tower against his will,
And in his prison suffered still;
To the doorway there she tottered,
Of the tower, and thus she entered.
Once inside she climbed the stair
As swift as she could, on a pair
Of limbs that trembled as she went.
She sought Fair-Welcome, who leant
In dejection, gainst the battlement,
Most pensive, in his discontent.
Thus, sad and mournful, she found him,
And tried to bring comfort to him.
'Fair lad, it fills me with dismay
That you such sadness now display.
Tell me your thoughts for, if I know
How to comfort you, I will do so,
Nor shall I fail to do so ever.'
Fair-Welcome knew not whether

She spoke truth to him or a lie,
So thus he made her no reply,
Denied her knowledge of his thought,
Not trusting any news she brought.
He confided nothing to her
For his heart had scant faith in her,
Fearful and trembling as it was,
But dared not show it as it was,
So great had ever been his fear
Of the wretch when she did appear;
Made sure he was from error free,
For he ever feared her treachery.
And so he displayed no unease,
But set himself now at his ease,
And thus assumed a pleasant face.
'Certainly, lady, though this place
You might think doth sadden me,
I was not saddened, as you can see,
Except in that you'd gone away;
The lack of you doth harm my stay,
So great a love I have for you.
What is it that so delayed you?'
'What? By my life, you shall know,
Twill bring you joy, for I swear so.'

Chapter LXX: The Crone brings Fair-Welcome the youth's gift

(*Lines 13165-13310*)

How the Crone tells Fair-Welcome,
To console him in his prison,
All the deeds of his Lover,
And the great grief he doth suffer.

'The Crone speaks with Fair-Welcome'

'SINCE you are noble, brave and wise,
I bring you, much to your surprise,
A thousand greetings now, and more,
Not from some stranger, what is more,
But a courteous lad, all full of grace,
For but now I met him in this place,
As he was going down the street,
And he sends this chaplet to greet
You, wishes that he might see you;
Not another day shall he see through,
Not another day of health shall know,
If that be not your wish also.
God and Saint Foy love him, he said,
Could he but speak to you, he said,
One single time, at his leisure,
Should that also be your pleasure.
He loves life through you only,
At Pavia naked would be gladly,
If he could but grant a measure
Of aught that gave you pleasure.
Nor cares what becomes of him
If he can keep you near to him.'
Fair-Welcome asked straight away
Who it might be that this did say,
Before he'd accept the present,
Uncertain who the gift had sent,
And from what origin it came,
Lest he wish to refuse the same.
And the Crone, with nary a lie,
Told the whole story, by and by.
'Tis from the young man that you know,
Of whom you heard such talk below,
On whose account you've suffered lately,
Since Ill-Talk troubled you greatly,

By placing all the blame on you.
Paradise may his soul ne'er view!
He's troubled many a good man
But now to the Devil he has gone;
He is dead, and we've escaped him,
And his slanders vanish with him,
Not one of which was worth a sou.
We're free, and if he rose anew,
He would not trouble you again,
Howe'er he sought you to blame,
For I know more than ever he did.
Now believe me, for I do bid
You take this chaplet, wear it too,
Twill comfort the youth if you do,
For he doth love you, doubt me not,
With a true love, all else forgot.
And if he harbours other intent,
He told it not, in any event;
Yet upon him you may rely.
And then you know how to deny
Aught he asks that he should not.
If he plays the fool, he's a sot.
If he's no fool, then he is wise,
And him the more I'll love and prize,
If he's done naught outrageous.
He'll ne'er be so discourteous
As to make of you a base demand,
You who do naught on mere command.
He's truer than any that live,
So those who know him do believe,
And ever to that will testify,
As witnesses, and so will I.
He is well-ordered in his ways;
None born of woman ever says

A bad word of him, or heard such,
Except when Ill-Talk claimed too much.
But all such things are now forgot,
I may say I remember them not,
I no longer recall his malice,
Except I know twas all foolish,
And that wretch did them contrive,
Who proved them not while yet alive.
I know the youth had slain him for it,
If he had known aught about it,
For he's fine and brave, without doubt,
None's equal to him hereabout;
He's of the true nobility,
Surpassing in generosity
King Arthur, or Alexander.
If he had all the gold and silver
That they had at their command,
He'd give with a more open hand
Than they did, a hundred times more;
Gifts that the world could not ignore,
So good a heart lies in his breast,
Had he the riches they possessed.
None can teach him about largesse.
Come, take the chaplet; I confess
Its flowers smell sweeter than balm.'
'I'faith, I fear twill do me harm,
For I'll be blamed,' Fair-Welcome said.
He trembled, started, sighed, turned red,
Then pale again, lost countenance,
As the old Crone made her advance,
And sought to force him to take it.
He dared not stretch a hand to it,
Saying, the better to excuse it,
Twould be better to refuse it,

Though wishing to accept, in fact,
Whate'er might come of such an act.
'The chaplet,' he said, 'is very fair,
But twere better that I went bare,
My clothes burned and turned to ash,
Than that I take it, twere too rash.
For if I do so, what would we
Say then, to fractious Jealousy,
The quarrelsome, for she, I fear,
Filled with anger would appear
To tear the chaplet from my head,
Piece by piece, and strike me dead,
If she did know where it came from;
Or I'd be shut in a darker room
Than ever I have been till now;
Or if I seek to flee, say how
I might, and where I could strive
To hide; she'll see me buried alive,
If I'm taken after I've fled;
While I fear I'll be as good as dead,
If I'm caught as I try to flee,
For all will rise to hinder me.
I'll take it not.' 'Come, take this same,
For it will bring nor loss nor blame.'
'And if she asks from whence it came?'
'Ten or more places I could name.'
'Yet if an answer she doth demand
What should I say to her command?
If I'm reproached, if blame should come,
Where shall I say I had it from?
For I'll be obliged then to reply
With the truth, or tell her a lie.
I swear that if she knew, instead
Of prison, I'd be better off dead.'

'What to tell her? If you know not,
If no better answer you've got,
Say that it was a gift from me.
You know she trusts me utterly;
No blame or shame will fall on you,
For anything that I might do.'

Chapter LXXI: The Crone's lament

(*Lines 13311-13598*)

How, after the exhortation
Of the Crone, with jubilation,
Fair-Welcome doth the chaplet take,
Risking his life, all for love's sake.

'Fair-Welcome, gazing in his mirror'

'SO Fair-Welcome, thus reassured,
Took the chaplet and without more
Ado set it upon his head.
And the old Crone smiled, and said
That, upon her soul, she did swear
Ne'er was there a chaplet so fair.
Fair-Welcome, gazing in his mirror,
Looked there often to see whether
It showed as fair as she did say.
The Crone, as no one came their way,
None but the two of them were there,
Sitting beside him, gave her care
To preaching at him in this way:
'Ah, Fair-Welcome,' she did say,
'How worthy, fair, and dear you are!
My happy days are distant far,
But yours, my dear, are yet to be.
You're scarcely out of infancy,
While I must soon, in Age's clutch,
Support myself with stick or crutch.
You know not what you'll do, alas,
But I know you'll be forced to pass
Sooner or later, come what may,
Through the flames, along that way
Where all are burned, and must stew
Where Venus stews her ladies too.
I know you'll feel her burning brand,
But ere you do so, understand,
Ere the hot bath you enter, there,
I'll teach you how you may prepare;
For to bathe is most perilous
For any youth not counselled thus,
While if my counsel you receive
A fair harbour shall you achieve.

If I had but been as great a sage,
When I was at your youthful age,
As wise in Love as I am now!
For I had beauty, I avow,
Though now I moan and complain,
To view my face doth give me pain.
From frowning I may not forbear
Remembering the beauty there,
That made the youths skip about,
So greatly did I draw them out,
It was a wonder just to see.
And then I was famed for beauty;
Tales of it went here and there,
How that I was sweet and fair.
To my house flocked many more
Youths than any had seen before.
At night upon my door they knocked
But harsh was I, who kept it locked,
And failed thus to keep my promise,
And twas not seldom I did this,
For I had other company.
They committed many a folly,
At which I did often frown,
For often my door they'd break down,
Or find themselves in such fierce fights,
Through envy, hate, and such delights,
That ere the rest ended the strife,
They'd lose a member, or their life.
If master Algus, Al-Khwarizmi,
Who could calculate so keenly,
If he had taken the trouble,
To come, with every numeral
Of the ten with which he did count,
He'd not have rendered an account

Of all those fierce quarrels, say I,
Howe'er much he did multiply.
Then was my body strong and firm;
Ten thousand might I have earned
Of sterling silver or even more,
But I was foolish, and I am poor.
Young, and fair, foolish and wild,
Ne'er in Love's school, as a child,
Was I, where one learns the theory;
All I know the practice taught me.
Tis experience hath made me wise,
That all my life I've learnt to prize.
Now I've been in every battle,
Tis only right that I should prattle
To you, and teach you all I know,
All that I've proven to be so,
Tis well to counsel thus the young.
And tis no wonder, by my tongue,
You know naught, nay, not a bean,
For you, my lad, are yet so green.
And then there's such science in it,
That I would likely never finish
To tell you all I've learnt with age.
Never avoid though or disparage,
All that seems ancient now; what's old
Good sense and manners it may hold.
For, many have proved, as I maintain,
At least in the end, there doth remain
But manners and sense that they own,
However rich they might have grown.
Since manners and sense I did gain,
That I won not without some pain,
Many a fine man I did deceive,
Caught in the net that I did weave.

Yet I too was deceived by many
Ere I comprehended any;
Then twas too late, they'd had their fun!
Then my youth was over and done.
My door that was oft open, I say,
(For it was open night and day)
Was more often tight to the sill.
No one came yesterday, nor will
Today, I used to think, ah woe!
I am doomed to live in sorrow,
My heart should depart in pain!
And when I viewed my door again,
And even myself, at thought of it,
This country I desired to quit,
For I could not endure the shame.
How could I bear it when those same
Still handsome men came wandering by,
And I, once the apple of their eye,
Whom they could never leave alone,
I watched them pass by, with a groan
At their sidelong glance as they progressed,
Though each was once my dearest guest?
There they went passing by me, too,
Thinking I was worth ne'er a sou,
Even those whose hearts I did own,
Calling me a wrinkled old crone;
And much worse to themselves did sigh,
Before indeed they'd passed me by.
And then, my dear and noble child,
None, who has ne'er been reviled,
Or seen great sorrow, none knows
Unless they watch how this world goes,
What great sadness gripped my heart,
When I remembered the grace and art

Of all those sweet words, and caresses,
All those pleasures, all those kisses,
And all those sweet embraces past,
All that had flown away so fast.
Flown? In truth, and without return.
Twould have been better, you will learn,
If I'd been prisoned in a tower high,
All my days, than be born to cry.
God, what sorrow then came to me,
Through my fair gifts that now failed me!
And the remnants that remained,
How sadly of them I complained!
Alas! Why was I born? To whom
Can I thus complain, to whom
But you, the lad I hold so dear?
No other solace have I, I fear,
Than to preach to you my doctrine.
Tis why, fair lad, I did thus begin
To lecture you, so when twas done,
You'd take revenge on every one.
If God please that time doth come,
Why then you'll recall my sermon.
Know that, as to retaining it,
If, that is, you do now recall it,
You have by reason of your age
A most substantial advantage.
For Plato said, and it is true,
That the memory stays with you
Whatever the lesson may be,
Best, if it's learned in infancy.
Certain, dear boy, my tender youth,
If my youth were but here in truth,
As yours is now, the vengeance I
Would take on them none dare try

To write down as twould be taken;
Everywhere, if I'm not mistaken,
That I went I'd work such wonders
On them, none would have heard the like,
On all who valued me so lightly,
And vilified me and despised me,
As basely as they did, in passing,
They would pay for my weeping,
For all their pride, and their spite;
No pity on them would alight.
For with the sense that God gave me,
And in this speech you hear from me,
Do you know what I'd do to them?
I'd pluck all they have from them,
Even if that were wrong, indeed,
And on worms I'd make them feed,
And lie naked on dunghills there,
Especially the first whom I did care
For, those who loved most faithfully,
And sought to serve most willingly,
And did serve and show me honour.
Naught would I grant in their favour,
Not a clove, if I could, until,
With their gold my purse I did fill,
And they were gripped by poverty,
And stamped their feet behind me,
And gnashed their teeth in anger too.
But then, regret's not worth a sou;
For what has gone can't come again.
There's no man now I could retain,
With a face so wrinkled that they
See no threat there in its display.
Long ago those rascals told me
So, those rascals who despise me;

Then it was I took to weeping!
Yet, please God, tis still pleasing
To think upon it, to this day,
In such thought I delight alway,
And I feel joy in every member,
When the good times I remember
And all that life of gaiety,
For which my heart yearns so strongly.
My body doth rejuvenate,
Whene'er my youth I contemplate.
Every blessing I feel bar none,
When I think of all I have done;
And then, at least, I've had my fun,
Although deceived by everyone.
A young lady ne'er is idle,
When she leads the life that's joyful,
Especially one who, in her defence,
Thinks but to live at others' expense.
And then I came into this country,
Where I chanced to meet my lady,
Who has taken me into her service
To guard you here; such is her wish.
May God that keeps and guards us all,
Grant that I guard you well in all!
Your fair behaviour means I should
For certain, that proves naught but good;
Though to do so would prove perilous
Due to your beauty, all marvellous,
That nature has granted to you,
If she had not also taught you
Prowess, sense, valour and grace.
Now we have the time and space
Where we can speak unperturbed
By any fear of being disturbed,

And say to each other, in my view,
More than we were accustomed to.
And I must now advise you fully.
Wonder not if occasionally
I interrupt my speech a little.
For I must say to you that till
This siege began I made no move
To set you on the path of love;
But if involved you now would be,
Then I will show you willingly,
The pathways that I travelled on
Before my beauty all was gone.'
Then the Crone sighed, and did seek
To know if he desired to speak,
Yet then, indeed, did scarcely wait,
Finding that he did hesitate,
And was silent, and did listen,
And so took up her theme again;
For he who, without contradicting,
Says naught agrees to everything;
And to one who's pleased to hear
It, all can be said without fear.
Then she recommenced her babble,
Like a false crone, old and evil,
Who thought, by her doctrine, she
Could make me lick pure honey
From thorns, and wished me to be
Called friend, but not too lovingly;
So Fair-Welcome told me later
In recounting the whole matter.
If he'd been such as might believe her,
He might have betrayed me to her,
But he was not a traitor there,
Through aught she said in that affair;

This he swore and, scorning her lies,
Assured me twas not otherwise.
'O fair sweet boy, fair tender flesh,
I teach the games of Love, no less,
So when my lesson you've received,
You will,' she said, 'be less-deceived.
Live in accord with my sweet art,
For none who has it not by heart
Can survive without selling all.
Now, attend, so you may recall
And comprehend, all that I say,
For I know all the games they play.'

Chapter LXXII: The Crone teaches a perverse view of Love

(*Lines 13599-13765*)

How the Crone, without objection,
To Fair Welcome gave her lesson,
Such as is taught by any woman
Who cares naught for reputation.

'The Crone teaches Fair-Welcome'

'FAIR lads, who would delight in love,
With its sweet ills that bitter prove,
All of Love's commands must know,
But Love himself ought not to know!
And all of them I'd teach, you see,
If twere not visible to me,
That there is in you by Nature,
Of each thing an ample measure
Of what you ought to own, and so,
Of those that you ought to know,
Although there are ten in number,
He's a fool who would encumber
Himself here with the final two,
Neither of which is worth a sou.
So I will here allow you eight;
For whoe'er of the two doth prate,
Wastes his time and ends in folly;
Teach them not to anybody.
For he who'd have a lover's heart
"Be generous" knows not love's art;
And "set its love on but one place,"
The text is false, and false its face.
Amor but lies, fair Venus' son,
None should believe him, for the one
Who does so will pay most dearly.
As in the end you'll see, clearly.
Fair son steer clear of all largesse,
Nor keep your heart under duress,
Ne'er set it on a single one,
Nor give or lend it anyone.
No, sell your love is my advice
And always at the highest price.
And make sure that the one who buys
Ne'er wins a bargain, earns the prize.

Let them have naught they do not earn,
Tis better you hang or drown or burn.
And in such things take care that you
Keep your hands from giving too;
Open them swiftly, though, to take.
Giving is but a fool's mistake,
Unless a little, to win someone,
Whom one hopes to prey upon;
Or if one hopes from such a birth,
To garner more than it was worth,
Such giving, I'll allow it ever;
Giving is good where the giver
Wins multiples, and thus doth gain.
Who's sure of their profit, of the pain
And the gift should ne'er repent;
To such a gift I grant consent.
Next I'll speak of the five arrows,
For the five possess great virtues,
And yet all five wound readily;
Learn how to fire them so wisely
That even Love that great archer,
Never drew his own bow better;
For many a time you fire your bow,
And then do never seem to know
In what place the arrow will land,
Whether far away or near to hand,
For when one fires away at will,
The one that arrow seeks to kill
May not be the archer's target.
But whoe'er sees you fairly set
Sees you so well-equipped to draw,
There I can teach you nothing more.
And your skill is such, you realise,
That, if God please, you'll take the prize.

And next, there is no need for me,
To teach you aught of finery,
Of how to adorn your garments,
With ribbons, baubles, ornaments,
To seem of worth to other men;
Such you may dispense with when
You know the little song by heart
You have heard me sing with art,
When I have dallied here with you,
About Pygmalion's statue.
Take care, dress well, you'll know, I vow,
More than an ox doth how to plough.
There is no need for you to learn
The trade, yet if your heart doth yearn
For more, well, I will tell you later,
Of the statue and its creator,
If you wish to listen, and ample
The wisdom gained from that example.
And to you this much I can say,
If you'd offer friendship, any day,
To any young man it ought to be
Granted to that young man I see
Who prizes you, but not unwisely.
If you'd offer, do so wisely,
And I'll find you enough rich men
For you to gain great wealth from them.
Tis good to befriend the wealthy
If their hearts prove not miserly,
And you know how to pluck them well.
Fair-Welcome, as far as I can tell,
May know whom he wishes, if he
Tells each friend no other would he
Know, not for a thousand in gold;
And swears that if he were so bold

As to wish another to command
The Rose, that is in great demand,
Then he'd be rich in gems and gold,
But his heart's so true, if truth be told,
That none will e'er set there his hand
But one. And were there a thousand,
He must say to each who doth aspire,
"The Rose is yours alone, fair sire.
No other may have a share in it;
God help me, were I to divide it."
He may so swear, and so flatter;
If he perjures himself, what matter,
God smiles at such oaths as these,
And pardons the deceit with ease.
Jupiter and the Gods all laughed
When Lovers did so in the past;
They often committed perjury
When they loved adulterously.
When Jupiter sought to reassure
Juno, twas falsely that he swore
By the Styx, in a loud voice too;
He but perjured himself anew.
Since the Gods are their examples,
By the saints, convents, and temples,
True lovers may thus falsely swear
With assurance, and nary a care.
But, God love me, what fool is there
Who doth believe what lovers swear?
For their hearts are ever fickle,
The young folk ever mutable
As often the old folk are too,
All lie on oath, as people do.
Now for another truth prepare;
He who is lord of all the fair

Takes his toll wherever he will;
He who finds no joy at the mill,
Hey then, and off to another!
The mouse that runs for cover,
Is in peril if it has no more
Than one bolthole, that's for sure.
So tis with that woman, no less,
Who of all the market's mistress,
Since all labour to possess her,
She must take her toll wherever.
For a foolish choice it would be
If after much reflection she
Wished for but a single lover.
By Saint Liphard of Meung, whoever
Sets her love in a single place,
Has a heart unfree, if such the case,
And thus she doth but basely serve.
Truly doth such a woman deserve
Her full measure of pain and woe
Who, loving but one man, doth so.
If comfort he fails to confer,
Then there is none to comfort her,
And they are often failed the most
Whose hearts do of one lover boast.
All men in the end, all do them flee,
When they are bored, and feel ennui,
No woman e'er comes to a good end.'

Chapter LXXIII: The sad tales of Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea

(*Lines 13766-14444*)

How that Dido, Queen of Carthage,
Because of the villainous outrage
Committed by Aeneas her friend,
With his sword made sudden end;
While Phyllis hung herself rather
Than hopelessly await her lover.

'The death of Dido'

'SHE could not hold him in the end,
Dido, who was Queen of Carthage,
Though to Aeneas every advantage
She had offered; greeted him, poor,
A wretched fugitive, at her door,
Fled from Troy, where he was born,
Clothed him, and did him adorn.
In her great love for him did she
Honour him and his company,
And did his fleet of ships renew,
To serve him, and to please him too.
She gave him, to arouse his passion,
Of her body full possession,
And her city and her riches,
And he swore to his mistress
That he was hers and would be ever,
And that he would leave her never.
Yet scant was her joy, as I said,
For, without leave, the traitor fled
With his ships, far over the sea;
And she lost her life, in misery.
Ere the morrow you understand,
She was dead by her own hand,
The sword she used he gave her.
Dido, thinking still of her lover,
Seeing that love indeed had fled,
Took the naked blade, and led
The upturned point toward her heart,
Into her breast the blade did start,
And then upon the sword she fell;
Of pity doth the story tell.
Whoever saw her do that deed
Unmoved, were pitiless indeed,
Beholding her, Dido, the fair

Transfixed by the sharp blade, there.
Into her body she drove the steel,
So great the sorrow she did feel.
Phyllis too was such another,
Who hanged herself; for her lover,
Demophon, tardily did return,
And broke his oath to her, we learn.
And what of Paris and Oenone,
Who gave him her heart and body,
As he in return gave his to her?
He took back what he did confer,
For on a tree beside the river,
With his knife he carved a letter
Rather than on parchment, I mean,
And yet it proved not worth a bean.
Twas the bark of a poplar tree,
That conveyed his words you see;
He said it would reverse its stream,
The Xanthus, ere he would dream
Of leaving her, and yet, of course,
Xanthus was free to seek its source.
And what of Jason and Medea?
Shamefully did he deceive her,
Though she'd saved him from sudden death
When savage bulls with fiery breath
Came at him, and he thought to die;
Such that he was not wounded by
Their horns, not burnt by their flame;
Yet his word he broke, to his shame.
He was delivered through her spell,
For she charmed the serpent as well,
So that it slept and would not wake,
So strong a potion did she make.
As for the soldiers born of earth,

Leaping forth warlike at their birth,
Who all wished to slay the hero,
When he threw a stone, the blow
Through her enchantment, drove the men
To destroy each other. And then
Through her potion, the stories tell,
He won the Golden Fleece as well.
While she rejuvenated Aeson,
To strengthen her hold on Jason.
No more from him did she require
Than that she be his sole desire.
And that he value her, his lover,
The better to keep faith with her.
Ye he left her, the false trickster,
The disloyal thief, the traitor;
And once she knew, then the children
That she had conceived with Jason
She strangled, in her grief and rage,
Less than sanely, with that outrage,
Forsaking a mother's pity;
Worse than a stepmother proved she.
A thousand such I might detail,
But it would prove too long a tale.'

Chapter LXXIII: The Crone's advice on appearance and behaviour

'IN short, they're faithless and deceive
These imps, who everywhere achieve
Their wish, so we should do likewise,
Love more than one, if we are wise.
Foolish is she who doth not so,
Many a lover she should know,
And to distraction, if she can,
She should drive them, every man.
If she's no graces, then acquire them,
And be all the haughtier to them,
All those men, who would deserve
Her love, so they more truly serve;
And gather the more from all those
Who lightly do their love dispose.
Let her know games and songs to suit,
And flee from quarrel and dispute.
If she's not lovely, she should dress,
Even the ugliest, to impress;
And if she finds her tresses suffer,
(A great sorrow to any lover)
The blonde hairs falling from her head,
Or if they must be trimmed instead
Because of some dire malady,
And she be shorn of her beauty,
Or if some rascally lover
Has torn them away in anger,
Such that she can do naught at all

Her lovely long hair to recall,
Why, then let false strands be brought,
Hair from some dead woman sought,
Or soft pads of light-coloured silk,
Shaped to fit her, aught of that ilk;
Above each ear then wear a horn,
That goat, or stag, or unicorn,
Could not with their horns surpass,
Not if they burst their brows, alas.
And if they need a little colour,
She should dye them with a smatter
Of plant-juice, and there's good in fruit,
In wood and leaf, in bark and root.
Next, if her complexion suffers,
Which also grieves the heart of lovers,
She must have moist ointments ready
In her room, as necessary,
So she may hide and thus repair
Her face; but let no guest be there
As witness, or tis my belief
She might swiftly come to grief.
If she's a fine neck, a white throat,
Then let her dressmaker take note,
She must wear dresses decollete,
And show her skin the whiter yet,
Six inches there, behind, before,
That she may but seduce the more.
And if her shoulders are too fat
To please, if dancing she is at,
Then let her wear a silken shawl,
To seems less ugly at the ball.
And if her hand's not fair and white,
Due to some wart or insect-bite,
She should not neglect the skin,

But scrape the surface with a pin,
Or wear a pair of long gloves so
The warts and pimples will not show.
And if her breasts seem too heavy,
She should have a towel ready
To press them flat to her chest,
And round her sides secure the rest,
Stitched or knotted, whichever way,
So she can go abroad, and play.
And like a good child all complete,
She'll keep Venus' chamber neat,
If she's well brought up, I'd say,
All the cobwebs she'll sweep away,
Scour and trim, and smooth and gloss,
So that naught can gather moss.
With ugly feet she should choose
Always to cover them with shoes;
Thin stockings for fat legs too;
In short, hide all not worth the view.
And if her breath is not so sweet,
She should spare no effort to eat
Not fast, and for goodness sake
Speak not if she doth not partake,
And to keep her mouth well away
From others' noses, and not stray.
If she gives way to laughter, she,
Should seek to do so discreetly,
With charm, and let the dimples show
At the corners of her lips also,
And never grimace, and never fail
To keep from puffing like a gale;
But smile and keep the lips closed,
The teeth covered, and in repose.
A woman should smile with her mouth,
For tis not pretty, north or south,
To widen the mouth at each side

Until an army could step inside.
And if her teeth are not quite even,
Worse ugly, crooked and uneven,
If she opens her mouth to laugh,
For a pretty woman tis a gaffe.
There is a proper way to cry,
But then every woman, say I,
Knows how to weep on occasion.
For whate'er may be the reason,
Even if not grief, hurt, or shame,
They're always ready for that same.
They weep and are used to weeping
In whate'er guise they are keeping.
Yet no man should feel disturbed
If he sees tears, or be perturbed,
Though they flow as fast as rain,
For all those tears are not of pain,
Those sorrows and lamentations,
For they're mere manifestations;
A woman's tears are but a ruse,
For any pretext she may use,
Yet must take care not to reveal
By word or deed, what she doth feel.
Next, she must also take her place
At table with appropriate grace;
Before she even sits down, there
She should trip about everywhere,
Let all know, at least the hostess,
She knows all about the business;
Go up and down, and to and fro,
And be the last to be seated, so;
And look about a moment too
Before she settles herself anew.
And once she's seated at the table

She should serve, if she is able,
She should carve before them all,
And pass the bread to one and all.
And then she must, to win his grace,
Before her close companion place,
A share indeed of every dish,
A thigh, a wing, a piece of fish,
Or carve the beef or pork or hare,
According to what meat is there.
Nor should she prove niggardly
In dealing out whate'er there be,
While one as yet's unsatisfied;
But let her guard against the fried,
The wet and greasy; let her fingers
Keep far from the sauce that lingers,
Her lips far from the garlic, fat or
Soup, nor must she pile her platter
With far more food than she can eat.
Let but her fingertips touch the meat
That she would dip now in the sauce,
Whether for bland or spicy course,
And bring it carefully to her lips,
So that no drop or morsel slips
Down her chin onto her breast.
And if she drinks, neatly is best,
So naught is spilt down her front,
For one who did the sight confront
Might consider she was greedy,
Or at best that she was clumsy.
And she must not to be touching
Her drinking glass while she is eating
And she must wipe her mouth so clean
That on her glass no grease is seen,
Nor dwells there on her upper lip,

For when a smear, if she doth sip,
Remains, then drops fall in the wine,
Which is not pretty or refined.
And she must drink as a bird might
However great her appetite,
And never should drain a full glass,
Or goblet, in a single pass;
Little and often she should drink,
So that others there do not think,
Or say, that she doth drink too much,
Or while she eats, the wine doth touch,
But rather sips delicately.
Nor swallow the cup's rim, should she,
Like many a nurse, as we see,
Who is both foolish and greedy.
They pour the wine down hollow throats
As into casks, or castle moats,
With great gulps that make one amazed,
Then they become fuddled and dazed.
She must ne'er in drink so indulge.
Every secret they'll soon divulge
The tipsy man or woman, straight;
For when a woman's in that state,
She has no defence, from drink,
But blurts out all that she doth think,
And abandons herself to all,
When into liquor she doth fall.
She must not fall asleep at table,
She'll appear far less agreeable;
Many an ugly thing can occur
To those who sleep and do not stir.
It is not sensible to sleep
In those places where one should keep
Awake, many have been deceived
And then a nasty fall received,

Forward, backward or to the side,
And broken an arm, or leg, or died.
Beware lest sleep overtakes her,
Palinurus let her remember,
Helmsman of Aeneas' vessel,
Who while awake steered her right well,
And yet when sleep overtook him
Fell from the rudder into the swim,
And drowned in sight of the company,
Who afterwards mourned him deeply.
Next, a lady must not delay
Too long ere she choose to play,
For so long there she might stand
That none offer to take her hand.
She should seek the delights of love,
While youth dictates her every move,
For when old age assails her, then
She'll lose the attentions of men.
The fruit of love, the wise, in truth,
Will gather in the flower of youth;
For they do lose their time, alas,
If lacking love's joys it doth pass!
If my counsel she doth not credit,
That I share with all, to their profit,
Know, she'll be sorry hereafter,
When old age her flesh doth wither.
But I know that women will believe
At least those who wisdom receive,
And adhere to my rules, or may,
And many a paternoster will say
For my poor soul when I am dead,
Who comfort them, for twill be read
This lesson I preach, rule by rule,
And taught then in many a school.'

Chapter LXXIII: The Crone's advice to girls on the make

'**MY** fair, sweet boy, if you should live,
(For I see that these words I give,
All my teaching, you set apart
Gladly in the book of your heart,
And when you depart from me,
You shall be a teacher like me,
If it please God, for you will preach)
Then I'll grant you licence to teach
Despite rules set by chancellors,
In all the chambers and cellars,
Meadows, groves and gardens,
Behind tapestries, in pavilions,
And thereby inform the students,
And in lodgings, in tenements,
In attic, wardrobe, kitchen, stable,
If you've nowhere more suitable.
But yet my lessons only tell,
To them when you have learned them well.
Now, a woman should take good care
Not to be shut indoors, for there
She is less seen by one and all,
And her beauty is not known at all,
Less desired and less in demand.
She should go to church, and stand
There to be seen, and go on visits,
To weddings, and to view exhibits,
To games, and to feasts, and dances;
For there the God of Love prances,

He and the Goddess school do keep,
And chant the mass to all their sheep.
Now if she would be well-admired
Of course she must be well-attired,
And when she wears the latest dress,
And through the streets she doth progress,
Let her bear herself alluringly,
Neither too stiffly nor too loosely,
Not too upright, nor too bowed,
But graciously, among the crowd.
Let her move her shoulders, her flanks,
So gracefully, that in the ranks
Of women none seems as lovely;
And she should walk most daintily,
In pretty little shoes, so sweet,
That well-made, trim, perfectly neat,
Fitting so tightly to her feet,
Show not a wrinkle or a pleat.
And if her dress should trail along,
Too near the pavement, and all wrong,
She should raise the front or side,
As it to sweep the breeze aside,
Or as if it were her habit
To raise her gown a little bit,
So she might walk more freely;
And take care to reveal briefly
The shape of her foot to the eye,
Of everyone who passes by.
If she wears a mantle, by the way,
She should wear it in such a way
As to make sure it part reveals
The lovely body it conceals.
For she will wish to display all
Her form, and the material,

Neither too heavy nor too light,
With silver thread and small pearls bright,
And her purse, prominently, too
For everyone she meets to view;
Open her mantle, show her charms,
And widen and extend her arms,
Whether the street is clean or muddy,
And remembering that fan, that he
The peacock offers with his tail,
She should her mantle like a sail
Extend so as to show the lining,
Grey, or vair, or whatever, shining,
And flaunt her body on the street,
For any onlooker she may meet.
And if her face is not so lovely,
She must be clever, let them see,
Her blonde tresses, rich and fair,
Her head behind coifed with care,
With never a loose tress in sight.
A fine head of hair, fair and bright,
Is truly a most pleasant thing.
Now, a woman must seek to bring
Ever a she-wolf's powers to bear
As when that creature's sole affair
Is stealing ewes, when she must run
At a thousand sheep to capture one,
Not knowing till she sees it bleed,
With which of them she will succeed.
So a woman must spread her net
Among all men, uncertain as yet
Which of them she may have the grace
To capture, till she sees his face,
And attach herself to them all,
To guarantee that one will fall.

Thus she'll not have to wait too long
To find one fool that crowd among,
Of thousands that brush against her,
To recruit as her defender,
Or more than one, peradventure,
Since art doth greatly aid nature.
And if she doth hook a number
Of those who would kiss her finger,
Let her take care, for tis her power,
To grant no two the self-same hour,
For they would think themselves deceived
If two together she received;
And then they might even quit her,
On account of feeling bitter,
And she'll lose, at the very least,
What each of them brings to the feast.
No, she should leave them naught at all,
On which to fatten, but see them fall
Into such depths of poverty
They must end in misery,
And debt, while she grows wealthier,
For what they keep tis lost to her.
She must not fall for one who's poor,
For no man that's poor is worth more
Than a glance, though he be Homer
Or Ovid; nor for some traveller,
Who as he lodges in many places
Amongst many bodies and faces,
So he has a heart that's flighty.
No, let her pray to the Almighty,
Not to fall for a travelling man,
But she should gather what she can
If he offers her cash or jewellery,
And hide it in her treasury;

Then let him take his pleasure,
Whether in haste, or at leisure.
She should be careful not to pant
After one who's too elegant,
Or who likes to vaunt his beauty,
For pride tempts him; so Ptolemy,
Who says that the man who pleases
Himself, e'er his God displeases,
(And Ptolemy was a great lover
Of knowledge, and truth moreover.)
Such a man can ne'er love well,
His heart is under an evil spell,
And bitter, and then such a man
Says to all what he says to one,
Deceives many women indeed,
But to despoil them, in his greed;
Many a complaint I've received
From many a girl so deceived.
And if any man makes promises
Whether he's honest, or wishes
To swindle her, hoping for her
Love, or with pledges to bind her,
She may promise him in return,
But must be careful, in her turn,
Never to give herself away,
Unless some money comes her way.
In aught that he puts in writing,
She for deceit should be looking
To find if it shows good intention,
A true heart without deception.
Soon she may write him her reply,
Yet delay a little longer, say I,
For delay excites many a lover,
As long as tis not forever.

When she hears a lover's request
She should take care, for it is best,
Not to grant all that he desires,
Nor ban all to which he aspires.
Rather keep him in the balance,
Twixt hope and fear so let him dance.
And then when he asks more of her,
And she aims not to surrender
Her love to him, but bind him tight,
With cunning and with all her might,
Let her ensure that hope shall grow
Little by little, but passing slow,
While fear diminishes all the while,
Till peace doth them both reconcile.
She who does so, with all her feints,
Should swear by God and the saints,
That she had ne'er wished to give
Herself to any, as long as she live,
And say: "Fair sir, here is my all,
By Saint Peter on whom I call,
I give myself to you from love,
Not for presents; heavens above,
The man's not born for whom I would
Give myself for such gifts, nor could.
Many a fair man I've refused,
Though many have o'er me enthused,
I think o'er me you've cast a spell,
An evil charm chanted as well."
Then she must embrace him straight
And kiss him hard, to seal his fate,
Yet, if she'll listen to my advice,
Think of gain ere she does so twice.
She's a fool who plucks not a lover
Down to the very last feather;

For the better that she can pluck,
Then the better will prove her luck,
For she's held the dearer, clearly,
Who doth sell herself more dearly.
And men who get all for nothing,
They think it not worth anything,
No not a single husk of wheat,
And thus think naught of losing it,
At least not as much as will he
Who has bought the thing dearly.'

CHAPTER LXXIII: THE CRONE'S ADVICE ON HOW TO DESPOIL A LOVER

'HERE is the way to pluck a man:
Get all your servants, tis my plan,
Your chambermaid, your nurse, your sister,
Even, if she will, your mother,
To help you in the given task,
And so take every chance to ask,
For coat and mantle, glove and mitten,
As by wolves let him be bitten,
That will seize on all they can,
So that the unfortunate man,
No means of flight can hit upon,
Till his very last sou is gone.
As though twere with buttons he played,
Let all his gold coins be displayed;
The prey is ever captured apace
When many hunters join the chase.
On occasion let them say: "Sire,
See you not my lady's desire,
For a new dress; though we say so,
How can you let her go forth so!
If, by Saint Giles, she wished to be,
With a certain person in this city,
Why, she'd be dressed like a queen,
And in a coach and four be seen!
And you, lady, why wait so long
To ask for that for which you long?
You are too shy in your pursuit

Of one who leaves you destitute."
Howe'er it pleases that they try it,
She must order them to be quiet,
She who has perchance relieved
Him of such as leaves him grieved.
And if she thinks he doth recognise
That he's given more than is wise,
And may be harmed grievously
By all he gives so generously,
And does not feel that she dare
Urge him to strip the cupboard bare,
Then she should ask him for a loan,
Swearing she's ready, she doth own,
At any time, that sum to repay,
If he will merely name the day;
But let her be torn limb from limb
If aught she e'er returns to him.
If some past lover appears, the while,
Of whom, God willing, there's a pile,
On none of whom she's set her heart,
Though she calls them all "sweetheart",
She should complain, if she is wise,
That she's in debt up to her eyes,
Her best dress pawned, tis usury
That means she's in such misery
And so uneasy is her heart
She can do naught, on her part,
To please, till he redeems her debt.
And if he's not wise to her yet,
And happens to have cash to hand,
Into his purse he'll put his hand,
Or bring about some contrivance
By which she wins deliverance,
From debts that need not be paid,

For in some coffer she has laid,
The better that he might believe,
Those items he must not perceive
In her wardrobe, you understand,
Till she's the money in her hand.
Of a third friend she should request,
Perchance, a silver belt, a dress,
Or a scarf, or since he's a friend,
Some cash in hand that she can spend.
But then if he's naught to give her,
Yet swears to her, to comfort her,
While promising, at her command,
Tomorrow it will come to hand,
Then she should turn a deaf ear.
Trust not a thing, tis lies I fear,
All men indeed are expert liars;
More lies I've had from those sires,
More oaths and vows, to be precise,
Than there are saints in paradise.
If he has naught, let him at least
Pledge his word for wine, the beast,
Two sous worth, or three, or four,
Or go knock on another's door.
A woman who's no simpleton
Must feign to be a coward, one
Who trembles much and doth appear
Anxious, distraught, and full of fear,
Whenever she receives her lover.
She should have him know, moreover,
Tis perilous to receive him,
Since her spouse, well, she deceives him,
(Or her parents, or her guardian)
And that she'd be dead for certain
If what she would do covertly

Were there for everyone to see.
She should swear he cannot stay
If it brings ill in any way,
And then, when she has enchanted,
He'll remain just as she wanted.
Then she should always be sure
Whene'er her lover's at the door,
To guarantee he's not perceived,
That through the window he's received,
Even if twere fine through the door,
And swear she'd be ruined evermore,
Or dead, and he'd be dead as well,
If aught were known of what befell;
No sharp weapon could defend him,
Nor helm or hauberk would protect him
Nor would the wardrobe in her chamber,
He'd be shorn of every member.
Next, she must be ready to sigh,
Wipe an angry tear from her eye,
Attack him forcefully, and say
He must have a reason for delay,
That he comes so late, it must be
That elsewhere he keeps company
With some other girl, whoever,
Whose charms yield him greater pleasure,
And that she's indeed betrayed,
Now his hatred for her's displayed,
And she a wretched fool is proved
For loving where she is unloved.
Then, once her anger he has bought,
Once occupied with foolish thought,
He'll believe, quite incorrectly,
That this girl loves him loyally,
And indeed that she's more jealous

Than Vulcan e'er was o'er Venus,
His wife, he caught there in the act;
With the god Mars she lay, in fact.
For he had forged a net of steel,
To hold them; naught could they conceal
When they were coupled in their play;
The fool had spied on them that day.'

CHAPTER LXXIV: THE TALE OF VENUS, MARS AND VULCAN

(*Lines 14445-14542*)

How Vulcan spied upon his wife,
Venus; and caught her, by my life,
In a net with Mars her lover,
When he found the two together.

'The tale of Venus, Mars and Vulcan'

'NOW, the moment Vulcan knew
That he indeed had caught the two,
In that net of steel he'd prepared,
(Only a fool would thus have dared,
And little he knows, he who's said,
That he alone his wife will bed)
He summoned up the gods swiftly,
Who all laughed long and loudly,
On seeing them in such a plight,
Amazed at Venus' beauty bright;
It delighted the majority,
While she was ashamed and angry
At having been caught and netted so;
Much she complained in her woe,
Great her shame and without equal,
Yet twas not very wonderful
If Venus gave herself to Mars,
For Vulcan, all replete with scars
And soot from his forge, was ugly,
Black his hands, and face, and body,
Such that Venus she loved him not,
Nor could, marriage being their lot,
Not though an Absalom was there,
As spouse, he of the long blonde hair,
Or Paris, son of the King of Troy,
Even then she'd have felt no joy.
For she knew, lovely and debonair,
What all women know of that affair.'

CHAPTER LXXIV: WOMAN'S NATURAL FREEDOM

'BESIDES, all women are born free,
Tis the law acts conditionally,
Taking away the freedom Nature
Gave to them in equal measure.
Nature is not so foolish she
Gives birth to some girl, Marie,
Solely to mate with Robichon,
If wisdom's cap we now don,
Nor Robichon with Mariette,
Or Agnes or, perchance, Perette.
She made all women, forever,
For all men, and vice versa,
Each man is for every woman,
And each woman for every man.
So when a woman's engaged, you see,
Then taken in marriage lawfully,
To avoid quarrels and contentions,
And even murderous intentions,
And to aid the children's nurture,
Whom parents care for together,
She'll still struggle in every way
To regain her freedom each day,
This demoiselle, or this lady,
Whether she is gross, or lovely.
They'll act freely, if they can do so,
From which many an ill must flow,
And does flow, and has flowed before.
A hundred names I'd name, or more
If I were not forced to move on,

For I'd be tired when I was done,
And you tired of hearing them all,
Ere I'd listed those that I recall.
In times past when a man guessed
That some woman would suit him best,
He'd seek to ravish her, there and then,
If she was not claimed by other men,
And then he'd quit her if he wished,
Once he'd added her to his list.
Men and women killed each other,
Blind to their offspring's nurture.
This was ere marriage was contrived,
By wise counsel; then they survived.
And, if Horace you'll dare believe,
Good and true words you'll receive,
For he knew how to think and teach;
I'd like women to hear him preach,
For a wise woman feels no shame
When such authority she doth name,
Thus: long ago, in Helen's day,
There were wars over women, pray,
In which many fought and died,
With great suffering on each side;
Many the dead who are unknown
For Homer sang of Troy alone.
And those men were not the first,
Nor shall be the last to be cursed
By wars that have and will be waged
By those whose hearts are engaged
By one woman alone, and thus
Both body and soul are lost to us.
And shall be lost if the world endure;
But attend to Nature once more,
And that I may more clearly address

What wondrous power she doth possess,
Many examples I'll advance you,
Which in detail may convince you.'

CHAPTER LXXV: EXAMPLES OF NATURE'S POWER

(*Lines 14543-15307*)

Here our minds may now devour,
True examples of Nature's power.

'WHEN the songbird, in the foliage,
Is caught, and prisoned in a cage,
And nourished most attentively
And cared for, there, most tenderly,
Think you she is forever happy,
And sings lifelong, right cheerfully?
No, alas, she naturally
Loves and longs for the branching tree,
And would be in the greenwood seated,
No matter how well she is treated.
She always thinks and studies how
She might be free, regain the bough.
She tramples her food in rare fashion,
So full her heart is of that passion,
And all around her cage she trails,
In anguish at the bars and rails,
Searching for a gap, each day,
Through which to hop, then fly away.
In the same way, every woman
Be she a lady or young maiden,
Of whate'er rank and condition,
Has, by nature, the inclination,
To seek out, and most willingly,

The road or pathway by which she
Can achieve her liberation,
Which is ever her destination.
And it's the same with anyone
Who doth commit to religion,
And then comes later to repent.
They'd hang themselves, in discontent
Complain, are well-nigh demented,
And then are endlessly tormented,
By their fierce longing to discover,
In what way they might recover
The liberty that they have lost;
For the will, that's tempest-tossed,
Is moved not by the habit we bear,
No matter how we live, or where.
They're like that foolish fish, all set,
To invade the mouth of the net,
Who finds, on wishing to return,
He must, despite himself, sojourn
In his prison now forever,
Since he can escape it never.
The others who remained outside
Cluster round, once they've spied
Him there within, seeing him turn
About, as if in joy, and squirm,
And think him writhing with delight,
When they see that wondrous sight,
And the more so, especially,
In that they can see, quite clearly,
There is a wealth of food within,
As much as each might seek to win.
They wish to join him, willingly,
And swim around the net, you see,
Twist, and strike, and agitate it,

Seeking how to penetrate it.
But once they have all swum within,
They're trapped forever, fin to fin;
And then however much they wish
To be free, they're but captive fish,
There they must in sadness quiver,
Till it doth them to death deliver.
Such a life doth a young man find
Who dons the habit, to my mind,
For howe'er large his cowl may be
To clothe his form, it seems to me,
He'll never find a robe to hide
The nature of that heart inside.
Indeed, as good as dead is he
Who's sacrificed his liberty,
And makes not, in humility,
A virtue of necessity.
But Nature tells no lie at all,
In opening him to freedom's call,
For even Horace says, look you,
As one who knows a thing or two,
'He who'd with a pitchfork wager
To defend himself from Nature,
And so eject her from his heart,
She'll return, for with all her art
Nature ever comes back to stay,
No matter the habit we display.'
What use is it? Every creature
Would exercise its true nature,
Nor is deterred by violence,
Nor driven by necessity thence.
This grants Venus every excuse,
Since her freedom she may use,
And every lady who doth play

No matter how married this day;
For Nature tis makes them act so,
Who'd have them all in freedom go.
And so strong indeed is Nature
It scorns training in a creature.
Dear boy, take up a little cat,
One that has never seen a rat,
And let it run about the house
Without meeting a rat or mouse,
And feed it long and with care
And on the most delicate fare,
And then but let a mouse appear
Naught will hold it still, I fear,
If one but let that little cat free,
From seizing it immediately.
It will forsake its usual dish,
No matter how hungry it is.
No peace could you forge between them,
Whate'er pains you took to train them.
Who sought a young colt to rear,
That never saw a mare appear,
Till he was fit to be a war-horse,
Saddled and bridled, in due course,
That then set eyes upon a mare,
You'd hear him neigh, his teeth he'd bare,
He'd chase her down; her he'd savour,
If there were none there to save her.
Black won't only mate with black,
If the bridle don't hold him back,
But with a sorrel, or dapple-grey,
A roan, or amber, or a bay,
For any mare he will assail,
If not held back behind the rail.
And he who lets a black mare free,

Will see her run immediately
To a black, sorrel, or amber
Stallion, as the fancy takes her.
Nor will she ever hesitate;
The first she sees shall be her mate,
She waits not to look them over,
If free to frolic in the clover.
And what I said of the black mare,
And of the sorrel stallion there,
Or amber, or black, I say now
Of every single bull and cow,
And every single ram and ewe,
For we doubt not those males too
Would have a female as their mate.
Never doubt it, dear boy, tis fate;
Every female a male doth seek,
All willingly; the flesh is weak.
By my soul, fair lad, tis the plan,
For every woman, every man,
Regarding natural appetite!
Little the law curbs their delight.
Little? Yet too much, I believe,
For when the law did thus conceive
Marriage, it sought that youth and maid
Own but each other, I'm afraid,
Or she should have but him, at least,
Until the life in him hath ceased.
But at the same time they are tempted
To use their free will, none's exempted;
For I know the temptation's stirred,
Though some by shame are deterred,
Others because tis trouble they fear.
Yet Nature rules, it doth appear,
As with the beasts, there's no defence,

I know from my experience,
For I took every pain one can,
To be beloved of every man.
And were it not for fear of shame,
Which many a heart doth restrain,
When I went out about the street,
And many a young lad I did greet,
Enveloped in my fair adornment,
(More than to many a doll is lent)
I'd have had all who pleased me,
With such glances they teased me,
Sweet God! The pity I had for them,
When those glances shot from them!
I'd have had them all, so I would,
If it had pleased them, and I could.
I'd have sated them, one by one,
If I could have pleased everyone.
And if they could, it seems to me,
They'd have received me willingly.
I except not monks, not one,
Prelate, merchant, knight or canon,
Clerical, lay, foolish or wise,
As long as they were of manly guise.
Out of their orders they'd have sailed,
Had they not thought they might have failed
To gain my love, when they did ask;
But if they'd understood my task,
And all about our situation,
All had yielded to temptation.
Several would have dared, I think,
Take their marriages to the brink,
Forgetting their vows, readily,
Simply to clasp me, privately.
None had kept his condition,

His faith, or vows or religion,
Unless a madman he did prove
That was indeed smitten by love,
And loved his lover faithfully,
Such might choose, perchance, to quit me,
By thinking of his own fair field,
One that for no price he would yield.
Few such lovers are there to hand,
So help me God, and Saint Amand;
For I believe, most certainly,
If any man spoke so to me,
Whether twas truth or but a lie,
I could have moved him with a sigh.
Whether corded, and in an order,
Or in a belt of fine red leather,
Whate'er clothes a man did wear,
Oh, he'd have dallied with me there,
If he had thought I desired him,
Or might, in a trice, inspire him.
So we are controlled by Nature,
Who incites us thus to pleasure;
Such that Venus incurs less blame
For granting Mars that very same.
When Mars and Venus were caught
In that plight, as joy they sought,
Many the gods who wished that they
Were so mocked, that they but lay
Like Mars in that selfsame position;
While Vulcan later would have given
Ten thousand gold marks to suppress
Knowledge of all that sorry business.
For the pair, who were full of shame
On finding all witness to that same,
Afterwards did, quite openly,

What they had done in secrecy,
And never felt a trace of shame;
While the gods told that tale of blame,
And so broadcast the news about,
That it was known in heaven and out.
And the more that knew that same,
The more wrathful Vulcan became,
Yet found no counsel anywhere,
For as the tale doth witness bear,
He'd have done better to suffer,
Than grant the bed its iron cover;
Far better not to take on so,
But rather to feign not to know;
If he would still receive good cheer
From Venus whom he held so dear.'

CHAPTER LXXV: FURTHER ADVICE TO WOMEN OF THE WORLD

'THUS the jealous man should beware
Who for a wife or lover doth care,
That his spying doth not in fact,
Foolishly, catch her in the act;
For, know, she'll certainly do worse
Afterwards, than, before, she durst.
And he who burns with such mad folly
As to catch her, by his trickery,
Will never, after that piece of art,
Win a fair look, nor hold her heart;
No greater ill than jealousy yet,
To make a lover burn and fret.
But she should true jealousy feign
And of it, feigningly, complain,
And thus amuse the foolish man,
Who'll burn the more, the more she can.
And if he deigns not to reply,
But just to anger her doth cry
That he truly loves another,
He had best beware her anger.
And yet whate'er her face may show,
Should he claim another lover so,
Let the girl not give a button,
For that promiscuous glutton,
But simply give him to believe
That some other she'll receive;
For he'll not cease to love her,
If she claims she'll take another,

Simply because tis right to sever
From a man who'll love her never,
Saying: "You've tricked me all along,
I must have vengeance for this wrong;
Since you've dealt poor me this blow
You'll feel the same." And let him know,
He'll be in a worse situation
If he loves her, on this occasion
Than ever he was, and feel lost.
No man possesses, to his cost,
The power to feel love, ardently,
Unless he fears her trickery.
Then let the chambermaid appear,
And call out, with a look of fear,
Alas, we're dead! Behold, he's here,
Our master or some other is near,
He's there, he's entering the court!
Then the lady must soon cut short
The business at hand, and interrupt,
And hide the lover, be most abrupt,
In some attic, stable, closet,
Until she can free him from it;
Though then, when she doth return,
He who had longed for her return,
May, even, from fear and despair,
Desperately wish himself elsewhere.
And if it's another lover of hers,
With whom the lady now confers,
Though the appointment was unwise,
Since the first will baulk at her lies
Howe'er much she hath him in mind,
She must some other chamber find.
Though he do whatever he may,
This second lover cannot stay,

Though he's full of grief and anger;
For she must say to him: "No longer
May you remain, my lord's within,
Brings my four cousins here with him,
You'll have to leave, you understand.
God aid me now, and Saint Germain,
Yet when you are here next, dear sire,
I'll do whatever you desire,
Though you will have to wait till then;
Now I must go greet them again."
If she can but drive him away
She'll not doubt him from that day.
She must, when he's gone, return straight,
So as not to have the first one wait
For long enough to feel unease,
Or that lover she will displease,
Leaving him there in discomfort;
Now she must renew his comfort.
And he may leave his prison then
And take her in his arms again,
Upon her bed, and hold her dear,
So long as he lies there in fear.
And she should have him know that she
Is far too bold and foolhardy,
Deceiving her husband for him,
And herself no doubt, on whim,
And swear, upon her father's soul,
She pays too dearly, on the whole,
For his love, by such a venture.
She must ne'er let him feel safer,
Than those who follow their desires,
Dancing through the fields and briars;
For joy that in safety finds birth,
Is less pleasant, and of less worth.

And when they are to lie together,
Let her beware he keep not with her,
However much he'd seek to stay,
If she sees the clear light of day,
Unless she doth mask the window,
That the room may lie in shadow,
So he may never see, within,
Or spot or blemish on her skin.
And let him find her clean that day,
Or he will soon be on his way,
And flee with his tail in the air,
While she feels shame at the affair.
And when they set about their work,
Each should labour, and neither shirk,
And use such care that both, as one,
Reach their delight in unison,
Such that both find pleasure, or none,
Ere their task together is done.
And thus they must wait on each other,
To achieve what's good together;
Nor either leave the other behind,
Nor cease to voyage, to my mind,
Till together they reach harbour,
Thus complete will be their pleasure.
And if she finds no pleasure in it,
She should feign delight each minute,
Pretend, in every way she knows,
To what's appropriate to those
Who make love; and seem grateful too,
For what she deems not worth a sou.
And if he would, to feel secure,
Invite her to his own front door,
Or some place that he's been lent,
Then she should go with the intent,

If she must visit there that day,
Of lingering a little on the way,
So his desire mounts, at her leisure,
Before he takes her to his pleasure.
The more delayed the game of love
The more agreeable twill prove;
While those who do indulge at will,
Find all the pleasure they do kill.
And when she doth at last come near
The house where she'll be held so dear,
She should swear, once in the house,
To her friend, that her jealous spouse
She's in fear of, all a-tremble,
Feign the fear, and thus dissemble:
That his punishment she'll earn,
And so be beaten on her return.
But howe'er distracted she seem,
What truth or lies from her may stream,
Let him take her, in fear, securely,
Secure, though it be fearfully,
And play out the game discreetly,
In peace and quiet, and privacy.
And if she's not the leisure to go,
To his own house to meet him so,
Nor dares receive him at her own,
So jealous hath her spouse now grown,
Then get the sad spouse drunk, I say,
If she can find no better way.
Should wine fail to intoxicate,
Then a pound of herbs on a plate,
More or less, she should gently sink,
Without risk, in his food or drink.
Then he'll fall so deeply asleep
That out of the house she may creep,

While he slumbers, do what she will,
For he's no power to keep her still.
If she has servants in her care,
Now she can send them her or there,
Or with little gifts seduce them,
And receive her lover through them;
Or if her secret she'd not tell,
She can get them drunk as well.
Or to her jealous spouse can say:
'I know not what ails me, this day,
Some fever, swelling, or the gout,
Has inflamed me, inside and out,
I need to go to the baths and stew,
Though we have of tubs full two;
A bath without a sweat's no good,
I must to the baths, tis understood.
When he's thought a bit, conceive,
He perchance may grant her leave,
Though he may pull an ugly face.
Then she should take to that place
Her chambermaid, or a neighbour.
One who's in the know about her,
Perchance has a friend of her own,
Who to the lady too is known.
Then off to the baths she may go,
Yet by no chance will she bestow
A glance on bath or tub, for she
Is far away, her lover to see,
Unless that is she knows her lover
Thinks they ought to bathe together,
For he can attend upon her there,
Once he knows that way she'll fare.
No man can keep a woman barred,
If over herself she keeps no guard,

Though he'd set Argus to watch her,
With a hundred eyes to catch her,
Of which, if one half were asleep,
Then the others a watch did keep,
Such vigilance must go for naught.
(And then twas Jupiter who taught,
Argus a lesson; revenge he sought,
And vengeance indeed he brought,
For Io whom Argus did transform,
To a cow from her human form,
Mercury killed him with a blow,
Taking revenge on Juno so.)
More fool he who a mere human
Watch would set upon a woman.
Next, she must take good care always,
Despite what clerk or layman says,
Not to believe in sorcery,
Witches' dances, necromancy,
Nor Balenus with all his arts,
Incantations, or magic charts;
Nor that she with such can move
Some man to offer her his love,
Or, by compulsion, hate another.
By no such means could Medea
Hold her Jason, no enchantment;
No more than Circe's dark intent
Prevented Ulysses from fleeing,
No matter the fate it might bring.
Then, she should take care, however
Much she claims him as her lover,
Not to grant a man gifts of worth,
Better a pillow, towel or purse,
Or handkerchief, if not too dear,
Or let some needle-case appear

Or some piece of lace, or a belt
And clasp, whose cost won't be felt,
Or a fine little knife instead,
Or, perchance, a ball of thread,
Nuns are accustomed to make;
Yet he's a fool who doth take
Himself to nuns, tis much better
To love a worldly woman, as her
Mind's her own, the blame is less,
And she will always find success
In feeding spouse or kin her lies;
And then, perchance tis no surprise,
Though both are costly to entice,
The nun comes at a higher price.
And yet a man who would be wise
Gifts should beware in any guise,
For women's gifts, to tell the truth,
Are mere deceiver's nets; in sooth,
A woman of a generous bent
Sins against Nature's true intent.
We should leave such things to men,
For when we prove generous, then
It brings ill fortune, and is a vice.
Tis the Devil deals such advice!
Tis no matter though, scarce one
Is wont to grant gifts to anyone.'

CHAPTER LXXV: THE CRONE'S REGRETS

'FAIR lad, indeed, gifts you may use
The better the foolish to amuse;
And keep whatever you are given,
Let it remind you, now and then,
Of that end to which youth must go.
If you should reach it, you will know,
It is old age draws ever on,
Closer to us, each day that's gone.
And so, when you achieve old age,
Better be taken for a sage
Than for a fool, be well-adorned
With riches, rather than be scorned.
For wealth that's won and lost again
Is worthless as a mustard grain.
Ah, alas! I have not so wrought,
For I am poor through my own fault.
All that was given willingly
By those who gave themselves to me,
I gave to those that I loved more;
I gave away all they gave before.
Naught there was that I did retain;
Giving has brought me naught but pain;
Nor could have thought of old age less,
That now doth cause me such distress.
Poverty then was not in sight,
I let the hour pass as it might;
Let it go by, and took no pleasure
In spending in sensible measure.

Upon my soul, if I'd been wise,
I'd have been such as none despise;
I was acquainted with the great,
A most elegant reprobate,
And I was prized by many a one,
But when a prize from them I won
Why then, by God and Saint Thibaut,
I gave it all away to that low
Rascal, who only brought me shame,
But pleased me more than all those same.
I called all the others "lover"
Yet I loved him and no other.
He valued me at not a sou,
And oh, he would tell me so, too.
He was bad, I ne'er saw one worse,
For he despised me, and did curse,
Ever called me a common whore,
And loved me not, of that I'm sure.
A woman shows little judgement,
And woman am I, by true descent.
I ne'er loved a man who loved me,
But if that man had beaten me,
Broken my arm or foolish head,
I'd have but thanked him instead.
He could not so have savaged me
I'd not still have yielded gladly,
For, whatever he did, he knew
How to make peace with me too.
For he'd ne'er seek to do me ill,
Drag me about, strike me at will,
Turn my face all black and blue,
And yet not beg my favour too,
Before he ever left my side;
For all the shameful things he cried,

He e'er would counsel me to peace,
And then pleasure me without cease,
Till all discord we did forget.
Thus had he caught me in his net;
For a wondrous lover, to my grief,
Was that false and traiterous thief.
And ne'er could I live without him,
But ever wished to be about him.
If he'd fled, I'd have gone as far
As England and its London are,
He brought me joy so readily.
I brought him shame, as he did me,
For he led a life of revelry,
With the gifts he had from me;
He never saved a single sou,
But the tavern and dice he knew,
He never learned another trade,
Nor needed to for he was made,
I gave him all that he could spend,
All I won from many a friend,
For all the world filled my purse,
That he spent willingly on worse,
Lost every day to revelry,
Wasting it all on lechery;
So wide open his mouth stood,
He'd not listen to aught of good,
For life itself he did not treasure
Not spent in idleness and pleasure.
Yet he was destitute in the end,
When I lacked or gift or friend;
He was poor, and begged for two,
For I had nothing worth a sou.
Never a lord, then, did I wed,
But I came here, as I have said,

Through these woods, with furrowed brow.
Let my state be a warning now,
Sweet lad, and keep it e'er in mind,
Act wisely thus, and you will find
You're the better for my teaching.
For when your Rose is withering,
And white hairs come to assail you,
Fair gifts too will surely fail you.'

CHAPTER LXXV: FAIR-WELCOME AGREES TO RECEIVE THE LOVER

WHILE the Crone preached on, undeterred,
Fair-Welcome, who'd not said a word,
Had listened willingly to all.
His fear of her was passing small,
Far less than it had been before,
And, as she continued, he saw,
That if it were not for Jealousy
And the guards she trusted fully,
At least the three who still remained,
Who now a foot-patrol maintained
About the castle, to defend it,
A small force might take, and rend it.
Yet it would not be won, he thought,
No matter how its fall was sought.
Of Ill-Talk, who indeed was dead,
Why, not a word, within, was said,
For they'd no love for Ill-Talk there.
He had defamed all, everywhere,
And betrayed them to Jealousy,
And so was hated vehemently,
And not a one who dwelt therein
Cared for that sorry wretch a pin.
Except, perchance, for Jealousy,
She greatly loved his devilry,
And willingly lent him an ear,
And was wondrous sad, I hear,
When he made some accusation,

Slandered someone's reputation,
And hid naught that he could recall,
As long as ill might then befall.
And he possessed one great fault too,
That of telling more than he knew,
Ever, by exaggeration,
Adding things to his narration,
Always repeating something new,
When it was neither good nor true,
And omitting whate'er was fine.
With Jealousy he did align,
As one who his whole life through
Naught but slander and envy knew.
None sang Mass at the corpse's head,
So glad they were to see him dead.
And naught was lost it seemed to them,
For when they were gathered again,
They felt they could hold the tower,
And keep it still within their power,
Should half a million rage outside.
'For little strength have we,' they cried,
If we can't hold what we possess,
Because we are the one guard less,
A thief, a vile traitor as well.
May his soul be consigned to Hell,
And be consumed there in Hellfire,
For all that he did here proved dire!'
The three remaining guards spoke thus,
But whate'er plan they might discuss,
They were much weakened by his death.
Once the Crone had paused for breath,
Fair-Welcome then began to speak.
Though slow to start, his voice but weak,
He spoke as one who'd been raised well.

'Lady, you teach you art so well,
With such good grace, so debonairly,
I can do naught but thank you kindly.
Yet when you speak to me of love,
That sweet ill that bitter doth prove,
It seems a matter strange to me.
I know but what I hear, you see,
And no more do I seek to know.
And then when you speak to me so
Of possessions, I smile indeed,
For what I have is all I need;
And the sole object of my desire
Is a fine and noble manner, entire.
And then in magic, the Devils' art,
Be it true or false, I take no part.
And regarding the youth, you say
Has such goodness and worth this day,
That every grace is there in play;
If he has them, there let them stay;
I do not hope they will be mine,
But to him leave them by design.
Then, I hate him not, most truly,
Yet I love him not so dearly,
Though his chaplet I did accept,
As to call him my "friend", except
In the manner of common speech,
As each person may say to each:
"Fair welcome to you here, my friend,"
"God bless you, and your life defend."
Nor do I yield him love and honour,
Except that well I wish him ever.
But since this gift he has proffered,
And I've received what was offered,
I should be pleased, and it is right

If he comes to see me, outright,
Should he own the wish so to do;
He'll ne'er find me slow, nor you,
To receive him most willingly,
But it must be while Jealousy
Who hates the lad most violently
Is out of the castle, for I fear
She might arrive while he is here,
For often when she has prepared
To go abroad, and away hath fared,
While granting the rest leave to stay,
Imagining something on the way,
She has seen fit then to return,
And savage us all at every turn.
And if perchance that came to be
She is so harsh and cruel to me
That if she found him here within,
And though that was our only sin,
If you her cruelty do remember,
My living self she'd dismember.'
The Crone reassured him though:
'Let mine be the care, I do know
In no case shall she find him here;
Even if Jealousy doth appear,
I have so many hiding places,
She'd as well find his traces,
So help me God and Saint Remy,
As an ant's egg in a granary;
And not a sign of him revealed,
If she asks where he's concealed.'
'Then I would have him here,' said he,
'If he will bear himself discreetly,
So as never to give offence.'
'By God's body, you speak sense,

With thoughtful and noble intent,
Like a lad of worth and judgment.'
Then their conversation complete,
They left the place where they did meet.

CHAPTER LXXV: THE CRONE RETURNS TO THE LOVER

OFF to his room Fair-Welcome went,
As the Crone departed, her intent
To further her tasks about the tower.
But when the proper place and hour,
Presented themselves, and the Crone
Knew Fair-Welcome was there alone,
So one might speak to him, at leisure,
She descended the stairs, with pleasure,
Until she issued forth from the keep,
And on that same path she did keep
Till to my lodging she made ingress,
To tell me all about the business,
Tired and panting from the journey.
'Now,' she said, 'are there gloves for me,
For bringing such good news to you
Matter that's wholly fresh and new?'
'Gloves, lady? Why, without a jest,
You'll have a robe and all the rest,
A coat, a hat with grey feathers,
And fine shoes fit for all weathers,
If you can tell me aught of worth.'
Then to the news she gave birth
That I might go to the castle there,
Where one awaited; and took care
To tell me the way one might enter.

CHAPTER LXXVI: THE LOVER ENTERS THE CASTLE OF JEALOUSY

(*Lines 15308-15378*)

How the Crone told the Lover,
In a whisper, about the manner
Of entry to the keep, at the rear,
The gifts, as promised, to appear;
And instructed him so wisely
That he secretly made entry.

'The Lover enters the castle of Jealousy'

'GO by the rear, in that manner,'
Said she, 'I'll ope the back door there,
The better to work this affair;
The passage-way is hidden; beside,
The door has not been opened wide
For more than two months, easily.'
'Lady,' said I, 'by Saint Remy,
Though it cost ten livres a yard,
(For Friend did say, in that regard,
Fine promises should be given,
Even if I can ne'er redeem them)
Or twenty, good cloth you'll see,
If I find the door is oped to me.'
The Crone departed straight away,
While I sailed off the other way,
To where she'd open the back door,
Praying God I'd find safe harbour.
Without a word, to the door I came,
And found that she'd unlocked the same,
And left it half-open for me;
Once within I closed it tightly.
Then I felt in greater safety;
And I felt so, particularly,
Because Ill-Talk was now no more.
Great my delight was, on that score.
A broken gate then met my eye,
I had no sooner passed it than I
Found Amor and his company,
Within, and that did comfort me.
Lord, what benefit they brought me!
Those who thus had made an entry!
And may they all be blessed for it,
By God, and by Saint Benedict!
There was False-Seeming, the traitor,

Son of Fraud, and false minister
To Hypocrisy his mother,
Who is toward all virtue bitter.
Abstinence was there apparent,
Who was by False-Seeming pregnant,
Ready to bear the Antichrist,
As the book I'd read advised.
They took the gate; so, without fail,
I'll pray for them if twill avail.
My lords, he who'd be a traitor
Should make False-Seeming his master,
And welcome strict Abstinence;
Be false, and yet feign innocence.
When the gate of which I've spoken,
I saw thus shattered and taken,
And saw that company inside,
Armed for battle, with my own eyes,
Let none ask if I was filled with joy.
Then did I all my thoughts employ,
On how Sweet-Glances I might find.
And there he was; as God is kind!
Amor sent him to comfort me,
He whom I'd long thought not to see.
I filled with joy, thus, at the sight,
And almost fainted with delight;
And Sweet-Glances so was he
Full of his joy on greeting me;
And then to Fair-Welcome showed me,
Who leaped up, and came swiftly,
Right well-mannered, he doth go;
His mother Courtesy taught him so.

CHAPTER LXXVII: THE LOVER MEETS WITH FAIR-WELCOME

(*Lines 15379-15428*)

How the Lover, in a chamber,
All in secret, of the tower,
Found Fair-Welcome, through False-Seeming,
Ready to offer him fair greeting.

I BOWED low to him on meeting,
And he, in turn, gave me greeting,
And for the chaplet he thanked me.
'Sire,' said I, 'twas done willingly,
And you owe me no thanks at all,
Rather I upon thanks should call,
A hundred thousand times, for you
By receiving it, honour me too.
And know, if it gives you pleasure,
There is naught that I do treasure
That is not yours, to do with then
As you wish, whate'er doth happen.
All my desire is to assure you,
That I shall honour and serve you.
If you wish then now command me,
Or summon, if you'd demand me,
Or inform me in some other way,
And my body and goods, this day,
Indeed my soul, I will commit,
All free of conscience or regret;
So you may know it to be true,
Why, try me, I do implore you,

And if I fail, may I ne'er enjoy
My body or aught in my employ.'
'My thanks to you,' said he, 'fair sire,
If I have aught that you desire,
Why then, in turn, I say to you
That you are welcome to that, too.
Take it without a by your leave,
In honour, as if you were me.'
'Sire, I give you thanks,' said I,
'A hundred thousand times, if I
May take aught that is yours so,
Then I must wait no longer; know
That you possess the very thing,
That no greater a joy can bring
Than all the gold of Alexander.'
And I turned to run, and gather
The Rose, to which I did aspire,
And so accomplish my desire.
Thus did I place my faith complete
In those speeches, both fine and sweet,
And our acquaintance, so pleasing,
Full of fair looks, and fair seeming,
Which are created so readily;
Yet things transpired quite differently.

CHAPTER LXXVIII: THE LOVER ENCOUNTERS RESISTANCE

(*Lines 15429-15558*)

How the Lover swiftly goes
To the garden to win the Rose,
But Resistance doth him espy
And gives a loud and deafening cry.

MANY a fool's plan's left undone.
Cruel opposition I met, for one;
For as I started on my way,
Resistance now leapt into play.
That wretch, whom wolves may strangle!
He was concealed in an angle
Of the garden, and all he'd heard
Of all we had said, word for word,
He'd made note of, while he did spy.
At that moment, he gave a cry:
'Be off now! Away with you, go!
Fly, vassal, who troubles me so;
Those cursed devils, mad with fury,
Tis they tempt you to ignore me;
They, who take part in that affair,
Where all will seize whate'er is there.
No saint would ever stoop to such!
God save me, vassal, for this much
I'll break your head; tis as I feared.'
Then Fear leapt up, and Shame appeared,
When they heard the wretch shout: 'Fly'
Twice more, as I sought to pass by!

Not a moment was he quiet then,
As he cursed those devils again,
And praised again all the saints.
That evil crew, at his complaints,
Ran out in rage, and then all three
With one accord, laid hands on me,
And tied my hands behind my back,
'Never,' they cried, midst their attack,
'Shall you win more than you own.
You understood but little, tis shown
By this, of what Fair-Welcome meant
In welcoming you with good intent.
He offered you his treasure freely,
If you'd but showed true honesty;
For honesty, though, you cared not,
But took the offer for what twas not,
And not in the sense that one ought,
For a gentleman is ever taught
That when someone offers a service,
Then they perform a worthy office,
Their good intent is understood.
So tell us, trickster, if you would,
Why, hearing what he had to say,
You took it in so ill a way?
Either your coarse understanding
Led you to take it so, or finding
That you can trick him easily,
You worked the fool skilfully.
He did not offer you the Rose
Since that were a dishonest pose,
Nor should you ask him for it,
Nor yet, without asking, have it.
When you your gift did proffer,
How did you intend that offer?

Was it to come here, to fool him,
And of his clothes to relieve him?
Thus do you trick him and betray
Seeking to serve him in this way,
And prove his hidden enemy.
Naught in a book did one e'er see,
To cause a man such grief and harm.
If you were to cry out with alarm
Why should any man believe you?
You must quit this garden anew;
The Devil's brought you here again;
You must remember all that pain
When you were chased away before:
Go seek your wish at some other door.
And know the Crone seeking passage
For a wretch like you proved no sage;
Yet she knew not what you planned,
Nor could your treachery understand.
She'd not done thus, it seems to me,
If she'd known of your disloyalty.
And Fair-Welcome, all defenceless,
Was deceived by your fair address;
When he welcomed you to his cell,
He but proposed to serve you well.
As a man's dog, if he takes a swim,
As he touches shore, barks at him,
So his well-being you did impair.
Now go seek your prey elsewhere,
And leave this garden in our care.
You may quickly ascend our stair,
With gratitude, as you did before,
Or never a step will you climb more;
For soon one comes here who may
If he gets you in his grasp, today,

Make you miscount them, instead,
For he'll be forced to break your head.
Sir Fool, Sir Presumption, empty
Of any sense of loyalty,
What wrong has Fair-Welcome done you?
What is his sin? What could he do,
That you now hate him in this way
And thus would a true friend betray?
You offered him all you possess,
Everything that's yours, no less;
Is that then why he received you,
Deceived us and himself for you,
Granting you to hunt with his men,
And hawks and hounds, through wood and glen?
He must know he acted foolishly;
For all that he has done, you'll see,
All that he did, and doth, employ,
So help us God, and Saint Foy,
He'll live in a prison so secured,
That none was ever thus immured,
Loaded down with chain on chain,
Such that you'll ne'er see him again,
Wandering down the fair pathway;
He troubles us so, and so must pay.
Ill the day when you were received,
For, by him, we were all deceived.'
And then he was seized and beaten,
And, in flight, to the tower driven.
There, after much ill treatment, they
Locked their poor prisoner away,
Without chaining him or doing more;
Three pairs of locks secured the door,
With three pairs of keys to work them.
That was all, for they had to hasten,

But, they promised that much worse,
When they returned, they'd disburse.

CHAPTER LXXIX: THE LOVER IS ASSAILED BY THE THREE GUARDS

(*Lines 15559-15698*)

How Resistance, Fear and Shame,
Maltreat the Lover, and that same
They beat most savagely, while he
Cries out, most humbly, for mercy.

'The Lover is assailed'

THEY'D break that promise utterly.
All three of them returned to me,
While I awaited them outside,
Grieving, mazed; sad tears I cried.
Again their blows on me they spent:
And may God grant they yet repent,
Of the outrage they wrought on me!
For my heart was broken; clearly,
I wished now that I'd surrendered,
Since my death they thus intended.
I tried to make my peace with them,
Would gladly have joined in prison,
Fair-Welcome. 'Resistance,' said I,
'Dear, noble, fellow,' catching his eye,
'Brave in body, open of heart,
More compassionate, on your part,
Than I can say, and Shame, and Fear,
Who noble, fair, wise, free, appear,
Well-mannered in both word and deed,
Born thus of Reason's race, indeed,
Suffer me to become your servant,
And in prison, by your agreement
Set me now at Fair-Welcome's side;
With all hope of ransom denied.
I promise to serve faithfully
If you choose to imprison me,
And do whatever you require,
And obey you all as you desire.
I'faith, if I were now a robber,
A simple thief, or vile traitor,
Or accused as a foul murderer,
Why ask to be made a prisoner?
Why would I need such a request?
Would I not be gaoled on arrest?

In truth, by God, without asking
In any country they would bring
Me to prison, and hold me there,
And never let me escape that lair,
Or if I did, and they caught me,
Cut me to pieces, utterly.
Prison, for God's sake, I demand,
Gaoled with him at your command,
Forever, and if it should be found,
With proof, that is or is not sound,
That I fail to serve in any way,
Expel me from prison that day.
No man there is who never fails,
But if aught wrong my stay entails,
Then have me pack my bags and go,
And leave your jurisdiction so.
And if ever I should anger you,
Punish me for doing so too;
And you yourselves the judges be,
As long as none but you judge me.
Head to toe, I surrender, you see,
As long as you are only three,
And Fair-Welcome's here with you,
Though then there will be four, tis true.
We can lodge it with him, indeed,
And if you are not all three agreed,
Let him now forge the agreement,
And you then hold to that intent:
For though I be beaten, or slain,
I shall not move from here again.'
Immediately, Resistance cried:
'Dear God, set you with him, inside!
When you have such a ready heart,
And he so welcoming, for his part,

What kind of a request is there?
Nothing doth with that compare,
Except to place Reynard the Fox,
Among the hens, to stir the flocks.
Whate'er else may be your intent,
We know well that what is meant
Is to do us shame, work villainy,
And we care not for such trickery.
Of sense you have nary a trace,
If you think you can judge the case.
Judge! By the Great Celestial King
How can a man judge anything,
Or grant justice to anybody,
Who's taken and judged already?
Fair-Welcome is judged, yet he
Is one you judge to be worthy
Of playing judge and arbiter!
The Deluge will cover us here,
Before he issues from the tower,
And he'll be done for, on our
Return, for such he doth deserve,
Since, above all else, he did serve
You in offering whate'er you chose.
Tis through him we lose every Rose;
Any fool would cull the flower,
If he's made welcome at any hour;
But none would ever thus enrage,
If he were imprisoned in a cage.
No living man would bear away
More than do the winds that play,
Were there not those fools of course,
Who would do so by brute force;
Those men who are so tarnished,
They should all be hung or banished.'

'Surely they do a wrongful deed,
Who'd ruin a man, a man indeed
Who's done no wrong, and imprison
The brave and honest without reason,
Like Fair-Welcome, one whose ways
Are such as all the world doth praise,
Simply because he holds me dear,
And my acquaintance doth him cheer,
Holding him on no other charge;
Great wrong you do; set him at large;
For, if it please you, in all good reason,
Fair-Welcome should be free of prison.
Let him come forth, I pray; relent,
And be done with his punishment.
You have already done him wrong
Beware lest he is free before long.'
'I'faith,' they cried, 'the fool would lead us.
On such truffles he would feed us,
And delude us with his sermon,
So as to free the lad from prison.
He seeks for that which cannot be.
As for Fair-Welcome he'll ne'er see
His head poke from window or door.'
Then all three attacked me once more,
Each one trying to drive me out;
Yet I cared not how they did shout,
I'd set myself to be crucified.
But then, not too loudly, I cried
For mercy, not in a high voice,
But a low one, to all those choice
Troops ready to come to my aid,
Till the sentinels they had bade
Guard the attacking host perceived
How badly I had been received.

CHAPTER LXXX: THE LOVER IS AIDED AGAINST THE GUARDS

(*Lines 15699-15758*)

How all the generals there arrayed
Come swiftly to the Lover's aid
Set to attack the Guards so fiercely
They must disable them completely.

'The Lover is aided against the Guards'

'AT them, at them, generals!' they cried,
If we should fail at once to ride
To the aid of this true Lover,
God love us, he'll be lost forever!
The Keepers will kill or chain him,
Beat him with sticks or brain him;
Hear him cry out at their attack,
Though in so low a voice, alack,
That one can scarcely hear the cry.
So feeble is his call, say I,
Anyone would think, to hear him,
That he was horse from shouting,
Or that his throat was constrained
By some hold on it so maintained
By those who'd kill him, already,
He cannot, or dare not, cry loudly.
We know not what they'd achieve,
But tis against his health, I believe.
He's dead if aid doth not appear,
And Fair-Welcome has fled, I fear,
He who used to bring him comfort,
Now other comfort must be sought,
Till he can find his friend again,
We must fight and ease his pain.'
The keepers would have done for me,
If they had not rushed to aid me.
The generals leapt forth to the fight,
When they heard, saw, and knew aright,
That I had lost my joy and solace.
Without moving from my place,
I who was captured in the net
In which Love tangles lovers yet,
Watched the tournament begin
Where each fought fiercely to win.

For as soon as the keepers knew
That they must face more than a few,
All three together formed alliance
And swore to make mutual defence,
Promising to aid each other,
And ne'er desert one another,
In any way, to their life's end.
And I who never ceased to send
My gaze their way, watching them,
Was saddened by their regimen;
And those of the host who did see
That alliance between the three,
They also combined their force,
Swearing they'd take no other course
Than this, that they would rather die,
Upon that spot, and there must lie,
Or be made captive in the fight,
If they could not conquer by might,
All eager not to be denied
A way to quench the keepers' pride.
And now the battle is in sight,
And you may hear how each did fight.

Chapter LXXXI: The Author seeks pardon for any offence

(*Lines 15759-15786*)

How that the Author, to retain
His honour, and his worth maintain,
Prays that he might now find pardon
For any offence here given.

NOW hear me lovers, good and true,
That the Love-God may e'er aid you,
And grant that you your love enjoy!
You'll hear me in this wood employ
Those hounds, if you now list to me,
That yelping chase the prey they see;
You'll watch the rabbit flee the ferret,
That has it leaping into the net.
Note now what I am telling you,
You'll have an Art of Love anew;
And if you're troubled by aught here,
I shall resolve it, have no fear,
When I come to expound the dream.
You'll know how to reply, I mean,
Concerning love, whoe'er objects,
Once you've heard me gloss the text.
And in that way you'll understand
All that has flowed from my hand,
And all that in future I may write.
But ere you hear about the fight,

I'll take but a moment to defend,
Against ill folk, what I thus intend,
Not to delay you here, but rather
To excuse myself to those others.

CHAPTER LXXXII: THE AUTHOR'S PLEA TO THE SYMPATHETIC READER

(*Lines 15787-15824*)

Here, the Author, with good intent,
Gives his excuses; no ill is meant.

THUS I beg you, amorous sires,
By love's pleasures and desires,
If some speech you find too foolish,
Or too bawdy, in all you relish,
Aught that might make some slanderer
Go speaking ill of us elsewhere,
For what's been said, or may be said,
Do you oppose them, in my stead,
Courteously; and when you've reproved,
Foiled, or countered what they've moved,
Should the nature of what I've done
Be such as rightly needs pardon,
Then I pray you to pardon me,
And thus reply to them, from me,
That my subject doth demand
Such matter, they must understand;
For its properties draw me thither,
Hence such speeches I deliver.
And to do so is right and just,
At least according to Sallust,
Who says to us, in judgement true,
That though less glory may accrue

To the one who doth merely write,
In some book, of a deed of might,
Than accrues to he who does it,
Tis no light thing to describe it,
Since it needs an effort of will,
To tell the facts aright with skill,
And set the deed down in writing.
For whoever would write a thing,
And not mislay the truth, indeed
Must make the word reflect the deed.
Words that are neighbours to things,
Must to their deeds e'er be cousins;
And thus am I required to speak,
If now the right road I must seek.

CHAPTER LXXXIII: THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY TO THE LADIES

(*Lines 15825-15934*)

His apology, with humble stance,
To all the ladies of Romance.

THUS I beg all worthy women
Whether ladies or yet maiden,
In love, or lacking of a lover,
If you find declared here ever
Aught that seems but sour praise,
Or critical of feminine ways,
Lay not the blame for it on me,
Nor yet defame my poetry,
Which aims at your enlightenment.
For certain, twas not my intent,
To say aught, nor will be ever,
In drunkenness, or yet in anger,
Hatred, or envy, or so strive
Against any woman alive.
None would any woman decry
But the vilest of hearts, say I.
Rather we have written it here
So we, and you, from what you hear,
Garner knowledge, and what it brings,
For it is good to know all things.
Besides, honourable ladies,
If you think I tell mere stories,
Never take me for a liar,

But those Authors who's entire
Works I've read so I may write
The words that they did there indite,
Such words as I may write again;
No lie will issue from my pen
As long as ne'er a lie they told,
All those who wrote the books of old.
All, I judge, were of one accord,
Who did feminine ways record,
Nor were they foolish or drunken
When in their books all was written.
They knew the ways of women, for
They had experienced them before,
And in women had found such ways
As were displayed on diverse days.
Here I simply, for you, recall,
(But for, what costs you naught at all,
A few words in my treatment of it)
Something written by some poet
To another, about this matter,
When he was disposed to chatter.
So you should the more absolve me,
For, as the books give testimony,
Our profit and our delectation,
Was their only expectation.
And if people grumble at me,
And are troubled, angered by me,
Those who feel they're criticised,
In that chapter where I realised
Those words uttered by False-Seeming,
And so set themselves to scheming,
How to punish me or blame me,
Since my words do pain them badly;
Hear then this, my protestation,

That I harboured no intention
To speak here against anyone
Who follows saintly religion,
Or spends his life in good works,
Beneath whatever robe he lurks.
Instead I take my bow and bend it,
Sinner though I am, extend it,
And then let my arrow fly,
To wound whate'er may meet the eye:
To wound? So one may recognise
What in the world or cloister lies,
The faithless and the cursed wits,
Whom Jesus named the hypocrites;
Those whom to seem more honest
Eat no beast's flesh, or so attest,
At any time; and not for penance,
Perform their act of abstinence,
As we do at the time of Lent,
Yet realise their true intent,
By eating folk alive; their faction
Fierce with the teeth of detraction.
No other target sought I at all;
Twas there I wished my darts to fall.
So I dispense them, in a volley,
And if it should appear that any
Would place themselves in the way
And willingly take a wound that way;
If they deceive themselves with pride,
So that the blow doth strike their side,
And then of that wound do complain,
The fault's not mine, nor yet the pain,
Even if they must perish thereby.
For I can strike none at all, say I,
Who guard themselves from the blow,

Since they themselves do seek to know.
Even those who some pain do feel
From that arrow I ne'er conceal,
If they cease to play the hypocrite,
May of their grievous wound be quit.
And regardless, who doth complain,
Whate'er importance they may feign,
Ne'er a word I've said, I believe,
No matter what they may conceive,
But has been already written,
And by experience proven,
Or is, by reason, provable
Even to the disagreeable.
And if I've uttered any word
That Holy Church now deems absurd,
Such, at her wish, I would amend,
If I can change what doth offend.

CHAPTER LXXXIV: LADY OPENNESS FIGHTS RESISTANCE

(*Lines 15935-16146*)

Here the Author doth once more
Take up his tale, and go to war,
Where Lady Openness doth fight
Against Resistance; sad her plight.

'Lady Openness fights Resistance'

HUMBLY, Openness, first to fight,
Against Resistance came outright;
He was proud and, though courageous,
In semblance was wild and vicious.
And in his grip he held a mace,
Brandished it fiercely, and the space
Around him filled with perilous blows,
Such that no shield of those that rose
Against him might remain intact,
Nor they defend themselves, in fact,
Who stood around him in that place,
Against the sweep of that vile mace;
For none but those in warfare skilled
Could scorn the risk of being killed.
Cut from the Wood of Refusal,
Was the mace that villain did cull;
His shield was of brutality,
Rimmed with outrageous cruelty.
Openness too was armed for war,
And scarcely to be wounded sore,
For she knew how to shield herself.
To force the gate, she threw herself
Fiercely against Resistance,
And in her hand she bore a lance,
Fine and smooth as a lance could be,
From the Forest of Cajolery,
None so fine at Fontainebleau;
Its tip, of sweet prayer, did glow,
She also held, with great devotion,
A shield made all of supplication,
And no less bordered with strong bands,
And they were formed of clasped hands,
Of promises, and agreements,
Of sworn oaths, and firm engagements,

All coloured o'er most daintily.
You'd have thought, of a certainty,
She'd been given it by Largesse,
Who'd painted it herself, no less,
So much her workmanship it seemed.
Thus Openness, with lance that gleamed,
Attacked, defended by her shield,
While Resistance who ne'er did yield
Lightly, and bore no coward's heart,
Seemed indeed more like Renouart
('Au Tinel') brought to life again.
His shield might have shattered then,
But such strength it did summon,
That twould fend off any weapon,
And protected him from the blow
That sought indeed to lay him low.
The tip of the lance had broken,
Thus the blow was a mere token.
The villain too was well-equipped,
And bit by bit the wood he stripped
From that lance, in his cruel rage,
With his mace, for war he did wage.
Then a mighty blow he did vow:
'Who will save you from me now?
He cried, 'A vile harlot of old,
How do you dare to be so bold,
And thus attack a fighting man?'
He struck the shield till it rang,
Of that fair and courteous lady,
While she recoiled six feet, did she,
And, from the pain, fell to her knees;
Cursing he struck at her with ease,
And she'd have died, tis understood,
Had her shield been of common wood.

'And I believed you before,' cried he,
'You false harlot, and ne'er a lady!
But I'll not fall for such again,
Traiterous lies that brought me pain;
Through you I did that wanton please,
Who stole a kiss that gave him ease;
He found me foolish, pliable,
By the action of some devil.
By God's body, twas ill for you,
The day you sought my ill anew!
For now your life here you must lose.'
The fair lady could not but choose
To beg of him that he not slay her,
For she could now retreat no further.
The villain merely shook his head,
Swore wildly by the saints instead
That he would kill her right away.
But Pity advanced, without delay,
Who held that villain in contempt,
To save her friend all her intent.
Pity, that doth with good accord,
Held her knife, the misericorde,
Dripping with tears, in her hand,
Instead of a sword, you understand;
This, if its author's claims are true,
Would pierce a diamond, through and through,
That is if it be rightly aimed;
It has the sharpest point, tis claimed.
Her shield was made of true solace,
Rimmed with lamentation, its face
Wrought with sighs and plaintive cries;
Pity, all weeping, onward flies,
Piercing the scoundrel everywhere,
While he claws at her like a bear.

Yet once she had bathed him in tears,
And washed away the dirt of years,
He it seems was forced to soften.
He felt he was drowning, often,
In that river, while sadly mazed,
For he had never, in all his days,
Been hit so hard, by word or deed.
His strength had failed him, indeed,
Feeble and drained he sought to flee,
Staggering, faint. Shame cried loudly:
'Resistance, a villain you've proved;
If you're found so easily moved
That Fair-Welcome doth now escape,
You'll have us all in the same scape.
Then he will surrender the Rose,
That in this garden we enclose.
And this I tell you, without fail,
If greed takes her, she'll grow pale,
Be blemished, tainted, wither away.
And I would claim, on that sad day,
Such a wind would blow through here,
A breeze so great and strong, I fear,
If the entryway were oped by force,
That harm we'd suffer, in due course.
Its pollen we'd lose to the air;
Or other seed, from elsewhere,
Might settle, and weigh down the Rose.
May it not settle here! God knows,
That would prove but ill, for, thus,
Before it was snatched away from us,
The Rose so weighted down would die,
At once, with no recourse, say I.
Or if vile death it did evade,
But yet the wind assault had made,

While the seeds mingled together,
Its blows would strike at the flower,
Until, as from the weight it bent,
Petals would fall in sad descent.
And as the petals fell away,
(May God forbid such things, I pray!)
The ovary would then appear,
And then all folk would say, I fear,
That greed upon the Rose did seize.
And we would then feel Jealousy's
Hatred, for she would know of it,
And she such grief would feel from it,
She'd see us dead indeed, I think.
What devil has driven you to drink?'
'Help me, now!' Resistance cried.
At once Shame gathered to his side,
And came at Pity, threateningly,
A threat she felt most profoundly.
'Too long you've lived,' said Shame, 'perforce
I will shatter that shield of yours,
And you will lie there on the earth;
Ill the war to which you give birth.'
Shame a mighty sword did carry,
Well- tempered, and gleaming brightly,
A blade that she had forged from fear
Of discovery, twould appear.
She called the shield, of her creation,
Fear-Of-Evil-Reputation;
Of such a wood that shield was made,
Many a tongue thereon portrayed.
She struck Pity, who must retreat,
Well-nigh conceding her defeat.
Immediately Delight came on,
A handsome soldier, bold and strong,

Who made fresh attack upon Shame.
A sword of pleasant life that same
Young man did flourish, and a shield
Of ease (of which I've none) did wield,
Bordered with solace, and with joy.
But Shame did her own shield deploy,
So skilfully, that no blow grieved her.
Then Shame turned on her attacker,
Striking Delight so hard instead,
She broke her shield upon his head,
And laid him out upon the ground.
She'd have continued thus to pound
On his body, if God had not brought
Skilful Concealment, a well-taught,
Wise, and prudent, and hardy man,
Into the fray, who in his hand,
Held a sword shaped like a tongue,
Wielded noiselessly, in that throng.
He brandished it without a sound,
Silent beyond six feet of ground,
Not a whisper, not an echo,
No matter how severe the blow.
His shield was of a place so hid,
No bird roosts there or ever did,
And twas bordered by safe going,
And return with no one knowing.
He raised his sword, and struck at Shame,
Such that he almost killed that same;
Shame was dazed by the fierce blow.
'Jealousy shall know of this never,'
He said, 'that sad wretch, forever,
Of that indeed I can assure you;
I'll extend my hand toward you,
And swear a hundred oaths; tell me,

Is that not handsome surety?
Since that wretch Ill-Talk is dead,
You I've captured, in his stead.'

CHAPTER LXXXV: CONCEALMENT DEFEATS SHAME

(*Lines 16147-16247*)

Hear how skilful Concealment came
To beat, in hard fight, Lady Shame,
While Fear and Boldness, equally,
Fought each other furiously.

'TO this, Shame knew not what to say;
But Fear leapt up, in anger, to play
Her part, though of cowardly heart;
Shame glanced at her, and gave a start.
Fear, with her cousin in dire straight,
Placed a hand on her sword, straight,
One far too sharp to be denied.
Its name was Suspicious-Of-Pride,
For of such metal it was made
And, once twas in the light displayed,
Brightly it shone, as clear as beryl;
Her shield was made of fear of peril,
Bordered all with effort and pain.
Thus Fear then did labour amain;
To cut down skilful Concealment
And save her cousin was her intent.
She struck suck a blow on his shield
That he was almost forced to yield,
Faltering there, and dazed beside;
But Boldness he called to his side,
Who ran forward, for all was over

If Fear had added to that another;
Concealment was as good as dead
If from Fear more blows had sped.
Boldness was both brave and hardy,
Deeds and words wrought expertly;
A fine well-burnished sword, had he
All fashioned of the steel of fury;
And his shield, well-known to fame,
Scorn-Of-Death, such was its name,
Bordered with self-abandonment
To all peril; with mad intent,
He came at Fear, to strike her low,
With a cunning and mighty blow.
She took the stroke, and recovered;
She knew enough to have covered
Herself, skilful in such defence,
Knowing how to parry and fence.
Then she struck so heavy a blow,
In return, that he was laid low,
On the ground, and without his shield.
Boldness, knowing that he must yield,
Now joined his hands to beg and pray,
That she'd not kill him where he lay.
And Fear said she'd do as he wished.
Security, cried out: 'What's this?
Fight so, and likely you'll die here!
Do the best that you can now, Fear,
You who shiver, and less do dare,
A hundred times less, than a hare.
Now of cowardice you break free;
The Devil's made you bold, I see,
Such that Boldness you now attack,
Who so loves tourneys and, alack,
Holds so much in his memory,

That no other knows more than he.
Not since you walked this earth, I know,
Except for now, have you jousted so;
Ne'er have you shown such skill before.
Elsewhere, in other forms of war,
You choose to flee or surrender;
Here you're attacker and defender.
When Hercules arrived one day,
With club in hand, you fled away
Along with Cacus, then you gave
Wings to his heels, less than brave,
So that Cacus nigh learnt to soar,
Who'd never had such wings before.
Cacus did Hercules' anger brave,
Stole his cattle, and in a cave,
Dark and deep, though to no avail,
Dragging them backward by the tail,
Hid them, and not a trace outside.
There your fortitude was tried,
There, without a shadow of doubt,
Your lack of courage found you out;
And as you haunt not battlefields,
You know little of what war yields.
Seek not to play the bold defender,
Flee now or, if you will, surrender,
For dearly you will have to pay
If you dare to battle this way.'
A strong sword, had Security,
Forged of flight from trouble, and she
Held a shield of peace, good and fine,
Bordered with concord its design.
She struck at Fear, seeking to kill,
But Fear defending herself, still,
Held up her shield on encounter,

Deflecting the blow beyond her,
And was not harmed in any way;
The glancing blow thus fell away,
And Fear did such a blow return
Upon her shield the other in turn
Was well-nigh stunned, or slain,
And sword and shield, such her pain,
Flew from her hands to the ground.

'Boldness yields'

Chapter LXXXVI: A general mêlée ensues

(*Lines 16248-16302*)

How Fear then, and Security,
Fought each other, furiously,
As the rest fought one another,
Struggling skilfully together.

'The mêlée'

SEE what ploy Security found:
Fear she seized, about the breast,
To yield an example to the rest;
While Fear, she did the same to her,
As the armies merged about her.
In pairs, they fought hard together,
No battle saw such duels ever.
As the struggle grew fiercer, now
So great the conflict that, I vow,
Never at any tournament
Was seen such courage and intent.
From here they came, and from there
Summoned their troops to that affair.
They engaged each other pell-mell,
The fiercest hail or snow ne'er fell
More thickly than their fierce blows flew;
They tore at each other, and slew.
Never was seen such a mêlée,
In such numbers, for many a day.
However, for I'll not lie to you,
The assailants, although not few,
Had the worst of what fight they made.
The God of Love was much afraid,
That all his folk would die, unless
They found aid, so, by Openness
And Sweet Glances, he requested
Of Venus, or at least suggested,
That she, his mother, might appear;
And meanwhile forged a truce for clear
Eight days, or ten, or maybe more,
Or less, for I know not for sure.
He could have done as much each day,
Simply by asking, I would say,
No matter if each truce were broken,

Or by whom, once he had spoken.
Though, if he'd thought that he had
The upper hand, then it were mad
To do so, and had they not thought,
The gatekeepers, that those they fought
Might break through, tis evident
They'd not have given their consent
In good faith, rather battled on,
Howe'er the parleying had gone.
Nor would a truce have been seen
If Venus had sought to intervene,
But indeed it had to be conceded;
A withdrawal, when such is needed,
Either through truce, or by retreat,
Is essential to avoid defeat,
If one cannot conquer with speed;
Till such time as one might succeed.

CHAPTER LXXXVII: VENUS IS ASKED FOR AID

(*Lines 16303-16346*)

How the messengers of the host
Of Love, those true hearts, did post
To Venus, so she might approve
Aid, to succour the God of Love.

THE messengers now left the army,
And travelling the lands, securely,
They came at last to Cythera,
Where they did receive great honour.
Cythera is a mount enisled,
Upon a wooded plain tis piled,
And stands so tall no arbalest,
Howe'er powerful, I suggest,
Could send an iron dart so high.
There Venus, who makes ladies sigh,
Has her main residence as well,
And there she mainly likes to dwell;
Though were I to describe it all,
Perchance your eyelids soon would fall,
And I myself too might weary,
So I'll but speak of Venus briefly.
Venus had gone abroad, chiefly
To hunt in a wooded valley,
Beside Adonis, fair of face,
Her sweet friend, heart full of grace;
Though he was somewhat of a child,
Keen now on hunting in the wild.

A child he was, young, maturing,
But very handsome and pleasing.
Now noon had passed a while ago,
Both were tired from hunting, so
Beneath a poplar, halt had made,
Beside a pool, to seek the shade.
Their hounds weary from the going,
Drank at the stream there flowing,
While they, their bows and quivers by,
Upon the soft green turf did lie,
Listening there, most pleasantly,
To songbirds choiring cheerfully,
There in the branches all around.
In her lap, there, gently bound,
Venus held him in her embrace,
And as she kissed him, of the chase
She spoke, and how to hunt the prey,
Through the woods, as was her way.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII: THE TALE OF VENUS AND ADONIS

(*Lines 16347-16430*)

How Venus did warn Adonis
Who was her dearest love, that his
Aim should be in hunting never
To pursue the fiercest creature.

'MY love,' she said, 'when your array
Of hounds are set to seek the prey,
Then chase the prey that turns to flee.
If any creature you do see,
That runs away then chase it freely,
But against the one that fiercely
Seeks then to defend its body
Let your horn not sound, prove lazy,
Be a coward against the bold,
For those who brave hearts do hold,
Near them, the strong and courageous,
There is no safety; tis perilous,
Rather, when the brave do fight
Against the brave; I speak aright.
Harts and hinds, and goats in pairs,
Red and fallow deer, rabbits, hares,
Such as these I'd have you chase;
You may hunt all such with grace.
But chase not, for such is my law,
The bear, wolf, lion or wild boar;
For such beasts do themselves defend
They kill the hounds, them they rend,

And oft the hunters they will maim,
Such that they fail of their true aim.
Many they have wounded or slain.
Ne'er shall I joy in you again
But heavily wounded I will be,
If you do so, and disobey me.'
Thus did fair Venus counsel him,
And, in counselling, begged of him
To remember her every warning,
Whene'er he chose to go hunting.
Adonis, who cared little indeed
When his lover begged him take heed,
Whether her words were false or true,
Agreed to all, to find peace anew,
Since he cared naught for her scolding;
Thus all in vain was all she told him.
Let her counsel him all she might,
Yet he would soon be lost to sight.
He believed her not, and so he died;
For Venus, she came not to his side
To bring him aid, she was not there,
Yet wept indeed, for that sad affair;
For he chased after the wild boar,
He thought to take it, yet before
He might do so, it turned about,
And showed to him its ugly snout;
Against Adonis it shook its head,
Like a fierce, proud beast instead,
In his groin did its tusk embed,
Twisted its snout, and he lay dead.
Fair lords, whate'er may come to you,
Remember this example true,
You who believe not your lovers
Yours is greater folly than others,

For you should all of them believe,
True as history what they conceive.
And if 'We are all yours,' they swear,
Believe it, as twere the Lord's Prayer;
Never retreat from your belief.
If Reason comes, then give her grief;
If she brings a crucifix to you,
Believe her no more than I do.
For if he'd listened to his lover,
Adonis would have lived much longer.
As yet they played still, took their joy
When they pleased, without annoy,
And thus to Cythera they returned.
Then the messengers who had earned
Their interview, while Venus changed,
Over her son's words they ranged,
And spoke of all they had to say.
'I'faith,' she cried, 'twas an ill day
When Jealousy prepared to hold
Castle, or hut, against this bold
Assault of my son's; should I fail
To seize these Guards by the tail,
And burn them, and all their crew,
And win the keys to the tower too,
My bow and torch aren't worth a sou.'

Chapter LXXXIX: Venus flies to the aid of her son Amor

(*Lines 16431-16456*)

How eight young turtle-doves, they drew
Venus's fair chariot, and flew,
With all the speed that they could boast,
To bring swift succour to Love's host.

'Venus in her chariot'

THEN she summoned everybody,
Asked that her chariot be ready,
A four-wheeled one, and very fair;
(She need not walk to this affair)
It was all starred with pearls and gold,
Instead of steeds, there were, all told,
Eight doves hitched to that chariot;
She housed them in a fine dovecote.
When preparations were complete,
Venus mounted, who doth compete
With Chastity, and wars with her;
None of the turtle doves did err,
But beat their wings, and off they flew,
The air before them cut in two,
And came to the host. Venus then
From her car descended again,
And was greeted by everyone,
First of all by her loving son,
Who in his haste had already
Broken the truce, prematurely.
For he was fickle, ever loth
To keep a promise or an oath.

Chapter XC: Amor and Venus attack the castle

(*Lines 16457-16552*)

Of the assault before the castle,
How none could of a greater tell,
Though Amor, and his company,
Had not, as yet, the victory;
For those within so resisted
All their strength was now enlisted.

'Amor and Venus attack the castle'

THEY gathered fiercely to the fight;
Those defended, these launched outright
Assaults, with catapults on station,
That fired great weights of supplication,
In order to break down the wall;
While the Guards reinforced it all
With pliant wattles of denial,
Laced from wands, firm but supple,
Cut, brutally, from out the edge
Of Resistance's stoutest hedge.
The attackers fired shafts with barbs,
Made so as to win swift rewards,
And feathered with fine promises,
Either of gifts or services,
(For no arrow there was weighed
That was not of promises made,
And tipped with steely instances
Of oaths and firm assurances),
Though the defenders were not slow
To cover themselves, even so,
With solid shields fit for the fight
Neither too heavy nor too light,
Of pliant wood like those wands sought
From Resistance's hedge that naught
Could fire against except in vain.
While they the conflict did maintain,
Love approached his mother, Venus,
The situation to discuss,
And then he begged her for her aid.
'May I perish wretchedly', she said,
'And may death take me instantly,
If I should e'er let Chastity
With any living woman dwell!
That goes for Jealousy as well!

We are too often in great pain
Because of them, fair son; again,
Swear all men your paths shall see.'
'I shall, my lady, willingly;
Not one of them shall have respite;
At the least, none within our sight
Will be as men of worth approved
If they love not, or are not loved.
Tis a great sorrow to me if men
Scorn the delights of true love, when
They have the power to sustain them.
May an ill fate overtake them!
Such men I hate and if I could
Confound them all then I would!
I complain of them, and ever will,
Nor shall I cease complaining, till
As one who'll bring them misery,
At every opportunity,
My revenge shall be complete,
And they are humbled at my feet,
Or they are all condemned to die.
Ill-born of Adam were these, say I,
Since now they seek to harm me so!
May yet their hearts be broken though,
For wishing to destroy my pleasure!
They could seek no worse a measure
If with their pikes they made attack,
Or belaboured me front and back.
And though a mortal I am not,
Such anger I feel, that if my lot
Were to be mortal, if I were now,
Here I would die of grief, I vow.
If of my joys there proves a dearth,
I've lost whate'er I have that's worth

Aught but my body, all I have on,
And my chaplet, and my weapon.
And if these men do lack the power,
And do forsake my joys this hour,
At least they should feel a weight
Of grief, and sorrow for their fate;
For where is the true life other
Than in the arms of one's lover?'
They swore an oath before the army,
And, to hold to it more firmly,
Pledged it not on holy relics,
Nor on the waters of the Styx,
But on their quivers, and their bows,
On their torches, and their arrows,
And they cried: 'We need no other
Holy things than these, no matter
Howe'er other ones might please.
For if we swore on aught but these,
Then we would never be believed.'
And so the army too conceived,
Since, as upon the Trinity,
They swore indeed in verity.

Chapter XCI: Nature's role in continuing the species

(*Lines 16553-16850*)

How Nature doth, all skilfully,
Bring sons and daughters constantly
To be, so that the human line
Fails not through her, nor doth decline.

'Nature at her forge'

WHILE Love and Venus swore that oath,
Such that the army heard them both,
Nature, that doth all things compose
Which the wide heavens do enclose,
Made entry to her forge where she
Attends, individually,
To the forming of those pieces
Which serve to prolong the species.
Those pieces give the species life,
Such that Death, with victims rife,
Cannot slay all, for all her speed;
Though Nature is run close indeed,
For though Death who wields a mace,
Strikes individuals in place,
Those whose time it seems is due,
(Some things are corruptible too,
And they possess no fear of Death,
And yet may perish in a breath,
Consume themselves, or decay
And nourish others on the way)
Yet when Death thinks to work their fall
Entire, Death cannot grasp them all,
For, as one is seized, another
Yet escapes, perchance the mother
Though the father dies; a daughter
Or son surviving, flees from Death,
Despite their father's dying breath.
Then other folk in turn must die,
No matter how they seek to fly;
No medicine's worth aught nor vow.
Yet up leap nieces, nephews now
To haste away from Death again,
Fast as their feet can carry them;
Some to dance, and some to rule,

Some to church, and some to school,
Others to sell their merchandise,
Others to labour, or find delight,
Wine or food, or play, or bed,
To work a trade, or laze instead.
Others, to fly with greater speed,
Ere Death's assault on them succeed,
Mount great chargers, all decked out
With gilded stirrups, and ride about.
Others who trust their lives to boats,
Board some ship, and hope it floats,
And steer themselves, with oar and sail,
By whatever star doth prevail.
Others, vowing humility,
Don the cloak of hypocrisy,
And hide their thoughts, as on they speed,
Till all's revealed by some ill deed.
Thus all who live do seek to flee;
All would escape Death willingly.
While Death, with visage painted black,
Doth run, forever, at their back,
Till they are caught, in cruel chase;
All flee, as Death doth wield the mace,
Ten years, twenty, thirty, forty,
Fifty, sixty, or full seventy,
Eighty, ninety, a hundred years,
They flee, till Death doth end their fears.
And though they live beyond their time,
Unwearyingly, Death runs behind,
Till they're seized, and make submission,
Despite the art of their physician.
Nor do those physicians, we see,
Escape from Death's grip, finally.
Hippocrates could not, nor Galen,

No matter how fine as a physician;
Rhazes, Constantine, Avicenna,
Left their bodies, like any sinner.
While those who cannot run as fast,
Find no recourse; such cannot last.
So Death, who is never sated,
Greedily swallows all thus fated;
By land and sea pursues their fall,
And, in the end, buries them all;
Yet can't herd them all together,
So, at a stroke, can't all dissever,
Nor thus slay the species entire,
Since individuals scape the fire,
And if but one remains alive,
The common form will yet survive.
As regards the Phoenix, however,
Where two cannot exist together,
There's but a single one on earth,
That doth, from the hour of its birth,
Live five hundred years, and then
Builds a spice-filled pyre again,
And to the fire doth surrender,
Its body to ash doth render.
But yet its species doth not die,
Another from the ash doth fly,
Another Phoenix now has birth;
Or perchance the same, to Earth,
God grants; thus Nature doth remake
The species that Death seeks to take.
The Phoenix is the common form,
Whose rebirth Nature doth perform,
And which would swiftly disappear
Should a live Phoenix not appear.
And though the first Phoenix is dead,

There yet remains one, in its stead,
Such that, a thousand times, we see
The species lives eternally.
This same privilege doth possess
All those things that do progress
Beneath the circuit of the Moon,
Such that if one's as yet immune,
The species then lives on in it,
And Death cannot extinguish it.
Then Nature, all compassionate,
Seeing envious Death, and Fate,
In company with corruption,
Seeking to work the destruction
Of those creatures she has made,
Hammers at her forge, dismayed,
And ever seeks there to refashion
Others, through fresh generation.
When she finds no other counsel,
She makes copies of such metal
That she gives them all true birth,
In coins, though, of differing worth.
From these Art takes her models too,
Though her forms prove not so true;
Yet she doth kneel before Nature,
And, seeking aid like a beggar,
Through close care and attention
Yet no force or skill to mention,
Strives to follow her, so Nature
May indulge her thus, and teach her
How, with her scant ability,
She might find, eventually,
Some way to enfold all creatures
Within her letters and her figures.
She observes Nature's workings,

Desiring to create such things,
And like a monkey imitates her;
But her sense is so much weaker,
She cannot make a living thing,
Whatever freshness she may bring
To the task, since, for all her pains,
All the knowledge that she gains,
When she makes anything whatever,
Regardless of its form or figure,
Paints and dyes, and forges and shapes,
Knights in armour, perchance, or apes
Their fine warhorses covered o'er
With arms in green, blue, yellow, or
Other colours, variegated,
That show them brightly decorated;
Some pretty bird among green leaves,
The fish that through the water weaves,
With each of the savage creatures,
Feeding among wooded features,
And all the herbs, and all the flowers,
That girls and boy collect for hours,
In the spring, beneath the trees,
Finding they bloom as if to please;
Or tame birds and domestic beasts,
Or dances, farandoles and feasts,
Whose well-dressed ladies, elegant
Art would portray, and represent,
In wood perchance, wax or metal,
Or some fine, rare material,
In picture form, or on some wall,
Holding hands at some fair ball,
With fine young men; despite her skill,
Art never has, and never will,
Make them live and, living, walk,

Love, and feel, and hear and talk.
Whate'er she learns of alchemy,
Tincturing metals variously,
She'll die indeed before it teaches
Her to e'er transmute the species,
Nor even to reduce the creature
To its source, its primal nature.
She may labour whole lives through,
Yet catch not what she doth pursue.
And if Art should labour further,
So as life's sources to uncover,
She would still lack the science
To come at that perfect balance,
As she produced her elixir,
By which a form might rise up here,
Through varying the substances
With their particular differences;
Like one whose logic lacks precision,
Yet who knows the right conclusion.
Nevertheless, I here impart,
Alchemy is a proper art.
One who laboured wisely therein,
Great wonders would find therein.
For, however it goes with species,
The individual bits and pieces,
When they're handled sensibly,
Are mutable, and they have many
Guises, altering their complexion
In ways too various to mention,
So changing that the very change
Places them in a species strange
To the species whence they came.
Do we not see that very same
When from fern-ash and from sand,

Glass is made, and worked by hand,
By some master of glass-blowing;
Through purification, showing
The glass is no more sand nor fern.
And when we see the lightning burn,
And hear the thunder sound on high,
We see, descending from the sky,
Stones that shower through the air,
Which as stones ne'er rose to there.
The knowledgeable learn the cause
That to new species matter draws;
When species are quite transformed,
New individual parts are formed,
Different in shape and substance;
The beads of glass, in this instance,
By Art, and the stones by Nature.
Likewise metals might so feature,
That in pure form we may enable,
Where they each other resemble,
If purged of their impurities,
In accord with their affinities;
For they are all of one matter,
Howe'er they are clothed by Nature.
For all are born in diverse ways
Beneath their earthly displays,
From mercury and from sulphur,
As in the writings we discover.
That man so skilled in Alchemy
As to prepare the spirits, you see,
So they had the strength to enter,
And descend to the bodily centre,
And then not issue forth once more,
As long as twas purified before,
And the sulphur there not burning,

To yield a white or red colouring,
Might with metals have his way,
Knowing thus how to work away.
For gold is born of quicksilver
To those that Alchemy master,
Who weight and colour the metal
With things that cost very little.
They also make precious stones
Bright and clear, of various tones,
From gold; and they change other
Metals from their form, and alter
Them to pure silver, by using
White liquids, pure and piercing.
But those who work by sophistry
Will ne'er achieve such mastery;
Though all their lives they labour
They'll ne'er compete with Nature.
Nature, though most skilful clearly,
Claimed that she was sad and weary,
Howe'er attentive she might be,
To the work she loved so dearly,
And was weeping so profoundly
No heart full of love and pity
Could view her, as she was working,
And yet still refrain from weeping.
Such sorrow her heart tormented,
For an act, of which she repented,
She wished to forgo her labour,
And cease to think of it with favour,
If only she might know that her
Master granted such leave to her.
Her heart impelled her thus to go
And ask her master to tell her so.
Though to describe her I'd consent,

My wit and sense are insufficient.
My wit and sense? What can I say?
No human wit could her portray,
Neither in speech nor writing, no,
Not Aristotle, nor Plato,
Nor Euclid, nor wise Ptolemy,
No, not even al-Khwarizmi,
Though their works brought them fame;
Their skill would all have proved in vain,
If they'd dared undertake the task;
They'd still have failed at the last,
Nor could Pygmalion shape her,
In vain Parrhasius would labour,
Indeed Apelles, whom I deem
A mighty artist, could not dream
Such beauty as hers is, ever,
Though he were to live forever.
Not Myron, nor Polycletus,
Could e'er reveal Nature to us.

Chapter XCII: The impossibility of depicting Nature's beauty

(*Lines 16851-16954*)

How that fine artist Zeuxis thought
To imitate Nature, and sought,
By taking the greatest care,
To portray all her beauty there.

'Zeuxis with his models'

EVEN Zeuxis could not portray
Her form, nor all her charms display,
In her image for the temple;
Five girls, each serving as a model,
Who were the loveliest to be seen
In all the country round, I mean,
Stood there before him, in the nude,
Struck every pleasing attitude,
So he might work from another,
If he found fault with her sister,
In head, or torso, or member.
This Cicero bids us remember
In his book, tis the Rhetoric,
Where his knowledge seems authentic;
For Zeuxis could do nothing there
However great his skill and care,
In colouring and portraiture,
Such is the loveliness of Nature.
And yet not merely Zeuxis; nor
Could any master born of Nature:
For suppose they comprehended
All her beauty, and extended
All their skill in such a matter,
They would wear out every finger,
Ere they could achieve such beauty;
For none but God could, truthfully.
And therefore, I would willingly,
Extend my hand, and most freely;
If I could do so, and knew how,
I would describe her for you now.
And I have even pondered it,
And so exhausted all my wit,
Like many a presumptuous fool,

A hundred times more than you
Might think; mere presumption
On my part, such an intention,
To forge so great a work of art,
Over which I'd but break my heart,
So noble and of such high beauty
Is that loveliness so worthy;
So that howe'er I might labour
I could not, by thinking, capture,
Ere I dared to pen a word, aught
Of it, despite my hours of thought.
And I am weary of thinking thus
And so no more will I discuss
Her beauty, for in thinking more
On her, I know less than before.
For God, whose beauty's beyond measure,
When He granted such to Nature,
Did make of her a fountain bright,
Ever-flowing and filled with light,
From which all beauty doth proceed,
Of which none knows the depths indeed,
Nor the bounds; so, tis not my place
To say aught of her form and face,
That such fair beauty doth display
As doth the lily flower in May;
No rose on branch, no snow on bough,
Do such crimson, and white, allow.
Such compliments I must pay her,
If to aught I dared compare her,
Since her beauty, and her worth
Can be grasped by none on Earth.

CHAPTER XCII: NATURE REPENTS OF HAVING CREATED HUMANKIND

WHEN Nature heard the oaths those two,
Amor and Venus, swore, she knew
Some lightening of her grief; relieved,
For she now saw she'd been deceived,
And cried: 'Alas, what have I done?
I regret naught, by moon and sun,
That's occurred to me in all the span
Of time since this fair world began,
Except for this one thing, sadly,
In which I did behave most badly,
In which indeed I proved foolish.
And when, a fool, I think on this,
It is but right that I repent.
Sad fool, with a fool's sad intent!
Wretch, a thousand times unsound!
Where now may loyalty be found?
Was my labour spent to good ends,
Who thought each day to serve my friends
And so deserve their gratitude,
Only to find all that ensued
Did but advance my enemies?
Devoid of sense, I sought to please.
I'm ruined by my kindliness.'

Chapter XCII: Nature addresses Genius, her priest

'Nature addresses Genius'

THEN Nature did her priest address,
Who took the mass in her chapel;
Though naught about this was novel,
For this he'd done each day, at least

Since he had served her as a priest.
Before the goddess Nature there,
In lieu of other Mass, his care,
Since he was in full agreement,
Was, in a loud voice, to present
The forms of all things mutable,
Of all that is corruptible,
All that in his book did feature,
As twas given him by Nature.

Chapter XCIII: Nature seeks to make her confession

(*Lines 16955-17062*)

How that Nature, the Goddess,
Doth now to her priest confess
Who exhorts her, most sweetly,
To forsake her tears completely.

'Nature confesses'

'GENIUS, fair priest,' said Nature,
'Of every place the god and master,
Who sets all things to work or cease,
According to their properties,
And who performs the task right well
As each place needs, I need to tell
You of a folly I committed,
Of which I've ne'er been acquitted;
Repentance doth upon me press,
And all to you I would confess.'
'Queen of this whole world, my lady,
To whom do bow all things earthly,
If there is aught within you pent
That renders you a penitent,
Of which twould ease your heart to tell,
Whate'er it be, for good or ill,
You may confess, in full measure,
All to me, and at your leisure,'
Said Genius, 'I'll grant you ever
The best counsel I deliver,
And if tis aught you would not air,
Then I will hide the whole affair;
And should you need absolution,
I will grant you restitution;
Therefore cease to weep I pray you.'
'Tis no wonder, though, if I do,
Fair Genius,' Nature replied.
'Nonetheless, lady, I'd advise,
That you show restraint, and weep less,
If you would, here and now, confess.
Come, pay attention to the matter
If you would undertake the latter,
For the misdeed, I think, is great,
Since the noble heart doth hesitate

Ere it is moved by some small thing.
A fool he who'd mere trouble bring.
Yet tis true a lady may be
Roused to great anger, readily.
Virgil himself bears testimony,
Who understood the difficulty,
That there's no female so stable,
But proves various and mutable,
And an irritable creature.
Solomon says naught, by nature,
Is cruel as a serpent's tooth, or
More wrathful than a female, for
Naught's imbued with greater venom.
In short, there's so much vice in woman,
None can recount all her perverse
Ways in prose, or yet in verse,
And so says Livy who well knew
All the manners of women too,
For he states that a woman is
So easily deceived and foolish,
That in her case plain entreaty
Avails far less than flattery;
And claims she's fickle by nature.
And again, elsewhere, in Scripture,
It says that avarice is the basis
Of every vice among the ladies.'

Chapter XCIII: Genius on women's inability to keep a secret

'AND whoe'er tell his secrets to
His wife makes her his mistress too.
For no man born of woman ought,
If he's not mad or drunk, in short,
To tell his secrets to his wife,
If he'd retain a private life,
And not hear all from another,
Howe'er loyal she is, by nature.
Rather he should flee the country,
Than swear woman to secrecy.
He should do naught secret in fact.
If she might catch him in the act,
E'en in the face of bodily danger
She will tell it to some stranger.
No matter how long she must wait,
She's guaranteed to tell it straight;
Even if no one sought to know it,
Without coaxing, she would show it.
Not for aught will she stay silent,
Tis death, she thinks, to all intent,
If it should leap not from her tongue,
Though she be cursed for it, or hung.
And if the man who told it to her
Is such as beats her thereafter,
And dares to strike her three or four
Times, not just once, or even more,
She, now he's seen fit to touch her,
Will reproach him with it, later,

And speak it openly moreover.
Confide in her, and he'll lose her.
What does the wretch do, who does so?
He ties his hands I'd have you know,
And cuts his throat! For if he should
Grumble at her, but once, he would
Put his life in mortal danger,
By reproaching her, in anger.
And if tis hanging he's deserved,
With a rope she'll have him served,
If the court can apprehend him,
Or have her friends, in secret, end him.
For he has put his life in danger,
And reached by that an ill harbour.'

CHAPTER XCIV: GENIUS' ADVICE TO HUSBANDS NOT TO CONFESS

(*Lines 17063-17220*)

Here he gives, in my opinion,
The very best introduction
One can give incautious men,
As to how to guard against
A wife as mistress who doth live
To out-talk the most talkative.

'SUPPOSE the fool doth go to bed,
His wife beside him, lays his head
Down to rest, but dare not nor can.
Perchance he's done, or has a plan
To do, a murder or something ill,
Because of which he doth, or will,
Go in fear of his life, indeed,
Should any learn of his foul deed;
And so he moans, complains and sighs,
Till his wife on him turns her eyes,
And sees him so filled with unease
She kisses him, and seeks to please,
Clasps him there against her breast:
"Come, sire," says she, "why such unrest?
What makes you toss and turn, and sigh,
And roll about, the sheets awry?
For here we lie, most privately,
And are we not, we two, surely,
In this whole wide world, the ones,

You the first, and I the second,
Who ought to love each other most,
With loyal hearts of which we boast,
Pure, true, and free of bitterness.
I closed the door myself no less,
And these four walls, I prize them for
The fact, are three feet thick or more.
And the rafters are strung so high
We are safe here from every eye.
And from the windows we are far,
And thus in safety where we are,
If aught secret is your concern;
And none can open them, in turn,
Without them shattering the glass,
No more than can the winds that pass.
In short none living can come near
To hear us; I your voice do hear,
None other shall, but myself only;
Such that I pray, most fervently,
By our true love, have faith in me;
Whate'er it is, come, tell it me.'
'Lady, he says, as God's my witness,
Not for aught would I here confess
The thing, for tis not fit to tell."
"Ah, fair sire, that bodes not well.
Do you then suspect aught of me,
Who love and serve you faithfully?
When in marriage we came together,
Jesus Christ, whom we found neither
Grudging nor sparing of his grace,
Made one flesh of us, in which case,
By the common rule of Nature,
Since we have but a single measure
Of flesh, we have but a single heart,

On our left side, not two, apart;
And our hearts now, as one, combine,
For I have yours and you have mine;
No secret should you have that's so
Private that I too may not know.
Therefore, I pray you, tell it me,
As a gift, from respect for me;
For no joy will my poor heart own
Until all this matter is known.
And if you will not tell it me,
Then, I think, you're deceiving me.
And know not with what heart you love,
Who would call me your sweet dove,
Sweet companion, and sweet sister.
Shall you bestow it on some other?
If you'll not reveal all to me,
You are indeed betraying me,
For I have confided in you,
Since we up and married, we two,
Such that I've told you everything
That my poor heart contains within.
For you I left father and mother,
Uncles, nephews, sister, brother,
And my friends, and my other kin,
For the situation I now am in.
Good for ill, it seems, I exchanged,
Now that I find us so estranged.
I love you more than any living,
Yet what is it all worth? Nothing!
You seem to think I'd misbehave,
Nor take your secrets to the grave
But tell them, yet that cannot be.
By Jesus Christ in sovereignty,
Who should protect you if not I?

Consider, look me now in the eye,
If you know aught of loyalty,
The pledge you have of my body.
Is that not sufficient now, dear sire,
What better pledge could you desire?
I have it worse than every other,
If your secret you'll not uncover.
I see how other women reign
Mistresses of their own domain,
Such that their lords tell them all
Their secrets, in chamber and hall.
They take counsel of their wives,
In bed they speak of their lives,
And confess themselves privately,
Not hiding aught, thus, secretly;
And more often, these days at least,
Than they confess such to the priest.
I know it from what their wives do say;
I've listened to them, many a day;
For they've revealed it all to me,
All that they think and hear and see;
They tell me all about themselves,
Thus they purge and empty themselves.
Yet I'm no woman of that sort,
I would not one of them be thought,
For I am no loose gossip indeed,
I'm not of that quarrelsome breed,
Howe'er my soul be in God's eyes,
Honest in body am I; no lies
Must you ever believe of me,
How I've committed adultery,
For any fool who told you so
Invented it, I'd have you know.
And have you not proven me true?

For when have I been false to you?
Now, dear sire, shall we but see
How you in turn keep faith with me.
For sure, you did a wretched thing
Who on my finger did set this ring,
And pledged undying loyalty.
How did you dare do that to me?
If you're afraid to confide in me,
Why on earth did you marry me?
Therefore have faith in me, I pray,
This once at least; truly I say,
And swear to you most faithfully;
Promise, pledge, and swear loyally,
By blessed Saint Peter of Rome,
It shall be buried beneath a stone.
I would be but a fool, tis certain,
If my mouth of it made mention,
For twould bring you harm and shame;
And bring my family the same,
On whom I would ne'er bring blame;
Above all, twould blacken my name.
There is a saying, tis true, God knows:
Tis a fool who cuts off her nose
To spite her face; she brings dishonour.
Tell me, and God grant you favour,
What is it that so grieves your heart;
You'll kill me else, tell me, dear heart."
Then she'll uncover head and breast
And kiss him then, and never rest,
All with many a piteous tear,
That, twixt the kisses, will appear.'

CHAPTER XCV: GENIUS ON THE RESULTS OF A HUSBAND'S CONFESSION

(*Lines 17221-17412*)

How the husband, placed in check,
Puts the rope round his own neck,
Foolishly tells his wife the whole,
Loses his body, and she her soul.

'**AND** then the poor wretch tells her all,
How shame and sorrow did him befall,
And hangs himself, by speaking of it;
And then repents when he has done it.
Once from his lips the words have flown,
Then he must reap what he has sown,
Not one can be recalled; he prays her
To say naught about the matter,
Most uneasy, indeed far more,
Now, than he ever was before
He told her; while his wife doth say
She'll say nothing come what may.
But surely he must think she will!
He cannot keep his own tongue still,
So why should his wife now pay heed?
Where did he think it all would lead?
Now she sees she has the upper
Hand, here's a weapon that, whenever
He shows anger she can deploy,
Or, if he grumbles, can employ.

Now she has his measure, in sum
She can render him deaf and dumb.
Perchance she will keep her promise,
Till he's angered, or aught's amiss;
Indeed she may well choose to wait,
But howe'er long she doth hesitate,
Twill prove a burden, for his heart
Hangs in the balance from the start.
And whoever holds all men dear
Should preach this sermon in their ear,
And speak it in every place men go,
That each man might view himself so,
And thus avoid great danger with ease,
Though perchance he may displease
Talkative women, who such deride.
Yet truth doth never seek to hide.
My lords, from such defend yourselves,
If you love your bodies and souls;
At least work not so ill a labour
That all your secrets you uncover,
All that you hold within your heart.
Fly my children, use every art,
Fly if you can from such creatures,
I counsel you, beware their natures,
Here are no lies or deceptions,
Take note of Virgil's directions,
Keep his lines in your memory,
So they can ne'er erased be:
Child, if you go gathering flowers,
Or fresh strawberries from their bowers,
Here lies the serpent in the grass.
Fly child, for as the people pass
She poisons all who venture near,
She sinks her fangs full deep I fear.

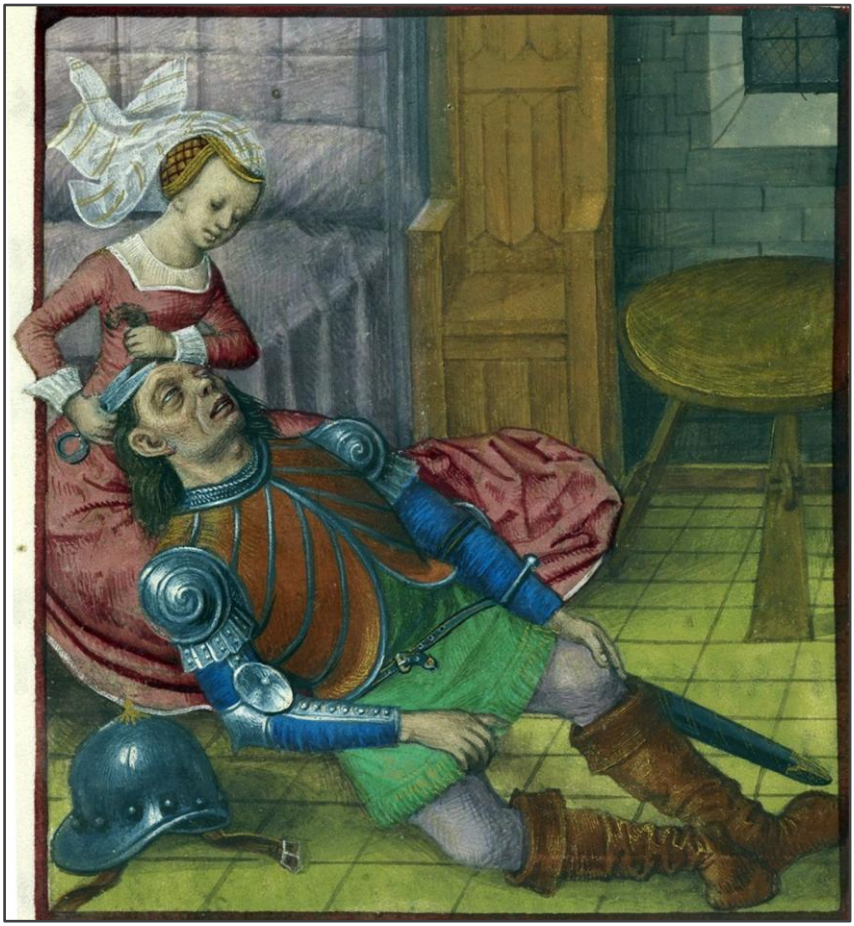
Child, that sweet flowers have found,
Or fresh strawberries near the ground,
The evil serpent, icy cold,
That conceals each shining fold,
The malicious snake that will bite,
And hides her venom out of sight,
And lurks beneath the tender grass,
Until your gentle feet shall pass,
So as to harm and deceive you,
Take thought, child; let her not grieve you.
Let her not seize you, in a breath,
If you would yet escape from death.
For she's such a venomous creature,
In head, and tail, and every feature,
That if you approach too closely
You'll be envenomed completely;
She bites, and she pierces deeply,
Poisoning all, sans remedy;
For no concoction serves to cure,
That venom that doth burn so sure;
No herb or root is worth a pin,
Flight alone is your medicine.'

CHAPTER XCV: GENIUS ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN

'I SAY not though, in all I mention,
(Such was never my intention)
That you should fail to hold them dear,
Or ought to fly from them in fear,
Or not lie with the woman in bed.
No you should value them, instead,
And, by reason, improve them all,
See them clothed and shod, and all,
And see that every day you labour
To serve them and show them honour.
Thus you may further your own kind,
Your species ne'er to death consigned.
But ne'er such faith in women hold
As to tell what must not be told.
But let them freely come and go,
Keep house and home if they know
How so to do, with proper care,
Of if perchance they are aware
Of how to buy and sell, they may
Attend to such, and pay their way,
Or if they've knowledge of a trade,
Follow that, if it proves well paid.
And let them know quite openly
Of all that's not done secretly.
But if you grant them too much power,
Losing yours, you'll rue the hour;
Too late regretting your mistake,
When their malice doth you rake.
If woman has the mastery,

Scripture claims, she's contrary,
And will oppose her husband too,
In all that he would say or do.
Yet see that you take care, however,
That the household does not suffer,
And all prospers in her keeping.
The wise take care in everything.
And you, who have your sweethearts, see
That you keep them good company.
It is fine that each should know
Of what betwixt them should flow,
But if you're sensible and wise
When you clasp them, tell no lies,
As you shower them with kisses,
But keep silence, silence bliss is.
Think on it, and hold your tongue,
For nothing to fair end will come,
If they're a party to your secret,
So proud and haughty are they yet;
For their tongues are so corrosive,
Venomous; and truth's explosive.
But when fools come to their arms
And are captured by their charms,
And they kiss them and embrace,
And their games with pleasure grace,
Naught from them can e'er be hidden;
Fools tell all when they are bidden,
And husbands tell the plight they're in,
From which comes sorrow and chagrin.
All of them their thoughts will tell,
Except the wise, who ponder well.
Delilah, that malicious woman,
With flattery, all full of venom,
Cut off Samson's locks as she

Held him in her arms, all gently,
Sleeping there, against her lap,
Caught the valiant in her trap,
The strong, and noble, to his cost,
For all of his great strength was lost,
As she sheared away his hair,
And told his secrets to the air,
All that the fool to her did bring,
Not knowing how to hide a thing.
I will give no further example,
But let that one suffice for all.
Even Solomon speaks of such,
And as I love you, I shall touch
Briefly on his counsel: 'To flee
From danger and reproach,' says he,
'Guard your mouth, your tongue arrest;
Ware she who sleeps upon your breast.'
Whoe'er holds men dear should preach
This sermon to them, and should teach
Them to guard themselves gainst women,
And never place their trust in them.
Tis not to you, I say this, Nature,
For you have, by any measure,
Proven loyal and steadfast ever;
Tis even affirmed by Scripture:
God to you did such sense extend,
That yours is wisdom without end.'
Genius thus comforted her
In every way, exhorting her
To abandon sorrow wholly,
For none can conquer aught, said he,
When filled with sorrow and distress;
Tis a thing that wounds; and less
It profits us whene'er we grieve.



'Samson and Delilah'

When he'd exhorted her to leave,
Off weeping, with a brief prayer
He sat himself down, on a chair,
That was placed beside the altar.
And then, without delay, Nature
Knelt before the priest, though she
As yet still lacked the strength to free
Herself from sorrow, it is true.
Nor indeed was he seeking to
Speak his exhortations, in vain,
But, rather, to give ear again
To one who, with great devotion,
In tears, sought to make confession.
This I bring you; here tis written,
Word for word, as it was given.

Chapter XCVI: Nature's confession

(*Lines 17413-17724*)

Pay heed! All carefully displayed
Is the confession Nature made.

'WHEN God, who is full of goodness,
Did this fair world with beauty bless,
Its lovely form, of which he wrought
The whole intent within his thought,
He bore there, in eternity,
Before it ever came to be.
He found within Him his exemplar
And whate'er was needed after,
For if he had sought elsewhere
He'd have found nor earth nor air,
Naught that might thus grant Him aid,
For naught of it as yet was made.
And so from naught, He made all spring,
He in whom naught can be lacking,
And naught there moved him so to do,
Except His own will, good and true,
Broad, generous and without envy,
The fountain of all life and beauty.
There He made, in the beginning,
A swirl of matter, without meaning,
Where all was simply confusion,
Without order and distinction.
Then into parts He split it all,

Which parts were indivisible,
Enumerating all by number;
Thus He knows their sum forever.
And then, by rational measure,
He completed every figure,
Rounding them so they might move
The better and more spacious prove,
Since they were destined to be
Capacious, moveable, and free,
While setting them in fitting places,
Locating them in varied spaces.
The lighter ones flew up on high,
The heavier lower, neath the sky,
The heaviest to the centre fell;
Thus all of them were ordered well,
With true measure, in their place.
Then God Himself, through His grace,
When he had placed each element
According to His clear intent,
Honoured me and held me dear,
His chambermaid I did appear;
And He will let me serve here still,
As long as it shall be His will.
And no other right do I claim,
But yet I thank him for that same
Love, that in His mansion fair,
He set this poor maid to its care.
As chambermaid! As Vicar too,
And Constable, for both are true,
For which I am unworthy still
Except through his benign will.
I guard, since God so honours me,
The golden chain, eternally,
That doth the elements embrace,

All four set here before my face.
And everything He gave to me
That chain comprises, ordering me
To guard the forms and so ensure
That they continue evermore.
And would have them all obey me,
And learn my rules, studiously,
So that they forget them never,
But keep them, hold to them ever,
All the days of eternity;
And this they do, usually,
All to that task do give their care,
Except for one sole creature there.
I must not complain of heaven,
That turns without hesitation,
And in its polished circuit bears
The stars above, and their affairs;
They glitter, all their power show
Over the precious stones below.
It goes all the world delighting,
First the eastern regions lighting,
Then pursues its western journey,
Never turning back though lightly
Carrying all the wheels that rise,
To retard its motion, in the skies,
But it is ne'er retarded though,
On their account, so as to slow
Such that it will not, it appears,
In full thirty-six thousand years,
Come to the same place exactly,
As when God did make it newly,
One whole circuit rendered wholly,
According to the mighty journey
Of the Zodiac as it wheels on high,

A single form, placed in the sky.
The heavens so run their course
That there's no error there, nor pause;
Therefore they were called 'aplanos'
By those who found them error-less;
'Aplanos' doth to Greek belong,
And means error-less in our tongue.
These far heavens that I name,
Men do not e'er view those same,
But Reason proves the whole affair,
And finds them demonstrated there.
Nor of the seven planets here
Do I complain, all bright and clear,
And shining throughout their course.
It seems indeed the moon, perforce,
May not yet prove so clear and pure,
Since in some parts it shows obscure.
Its double nature thus doth make
It seem both cloudy and opaque;
So it shows dark and cloudy here,
Yet in another part shines clear.
What makes its light so to fail
Is that the sun's rays must prevail;
Its light pierces, in this instance,
Deep into the moon's clear substance,
Passing through it, and beyond.
But the opaque part doth respond
And resists the rays completely,
So reflects them to us wholly.
To better understand the matter,
Instead of glossing it I'd rather
Give you here a brief example;
To clarify the text, tis ample.
Whenever rays of light do pass

Swiftly through transparent glass,
There's naught within or behind
That can reflect them, and we find
It cannot shapes or figures show,
For the eye-beams meet there no
Obstacle that might them retain,
And return form to the eyes again.
But if one took something instead
That will not let them pass, like lead,
Then the form will be apparent
As to the eyes the beams are sent.
Or if there were something bright
And polished that reflects the light,
Dense, or backed by what doth repel,
It would return it, I know well.
Thus the moon where it is clear,
In which it resembles its sphere,
Cannot retain the rays that fall,
By which the light shines on it all,
Instead they pass beyond, but where
Tis dense and will not let them fare,
It then reflects them to our sight,
And makes the moon appear bright;
Thus part of it seems luminous,
While part of it seems dark to us.
The part of the moon dark in nature
Represents to us the figure
Of a quite marvellous beast,
Tis a serpent that to the east
Extends its tail, and to the west
Raises its head, and then its chest.
Upon its back it bears a tree,
Toward the east its boughs we see,
But displayed all upside-down,

On this inverted seat is found,
A man who on his arms doth lean,
And seems, when the moon is seen,
One whose legs and feet are best
Described as pointing to the west.
The seven planets function surely,
Each of them performs so smoothly,
That none of them doth meet delay,
Through twelve houses make their way,
And run through all of the degrees,
Remaining as they ought, with ease.
To work their heavenly affair,
They circle contrariwise there,
Gaining each day in the heavens,
The proper change in their positions,
In order to complete their circuit;
Then recommence as they achieve it,
Retarding the motion of the sky
And aiding the elements thereby;
For if the heavens could freely run,
Then naught could live beneath the sun.
The lovely sun that brings the day,
The cause of its brightness, doth stay
Amidst the seven like a king,
With its golden rays all flaming,
And in the centre has its mansion.
It is not without good reason
That God, the lovely, strong, and wise,
Wished it to dwell there in the skies,
For if its course ran not so high,
Then all things from its heat would die,
While if further off twere circling
The cold would condemn everything.
There the sun shares out its light,

So the moon and stars shine bright,
And makes them seem so beautiful,
That Night takes each for a candle,
At eve, when she sits down to table
So that she might seem less frightful,
To Acheron, who is her spouse,
Though he prefers a darker house,
And would desire a blacker Night,
Finding her better without light,
As they had once dwelt together,
When they first knew one another;
For Night then, so say the stories,
There conceived the three Furies,
Who act as justices in Hell,
Guardians both fierce and cruel.
But nonetheless Night doth believe
When she her image doth conceive
In her cave, when she doth unveil,
That she'd look hideous and pale
Her face appear too shadowy,
Without the joyous clarity
Of the heavenly bodies shining
Through the air, light reflecting,
Turning, each one in its sphere,
As God the Father set them here,
Where they create their harmony
Which is the source of melody
And those diversities of tone
Which we in concord thus do loan
To all manner of song; all sings
Through them, they move all things
According to their influences;
The accidents and substances
Of all that lies beneath the moon.

Through their diversity they soon
May darken the clear element,
And render the dark translucent,
And make hot, cold, moist and dry,
Enter into bodies, whereby
As in a receptacle they gather
And yet maintain peace together.
For though the elements contend
They are bound thus in the end;
Peace between those four enemies
Is forged by the heavenly bodies,
Mixing them in due proportion,
Till, through rational disposition,
They achieve in their best form
All things that I, Nature, perform.
And if they're less than optimal,
The fault's in the material.
But howe'er careful one's intent,
This peace among the elements,
Is ne'er such that heat will not
Consume all the humidity,
Destroying it continually,
From day to day until that end,
Which is their due as I intend
Established by my right, arrives;
Unless death comes in other guise.
For it may hasten some other way,
Ere the humidity's sucked away,
For though none knows a medicine,
Nor drug to penetrate, within,
Nor an unction, without, so strong,
A body's life it will prolong.
I know that it is more than easy
To shorten life, or end it wholly.

For many do their lives curtail,
Before their inner humours fail,
By being hung or being drowned,
Or some peril doth them confound,
In which they are burned or buried
Ere they can flee; to death hurried
By some accident; or destroyed
By some plan that they've employed;
Or by their private enemies,
Who, without a blow, ne'er cease
To kill by steel or poison's arts,
So false and wicked are their hearts.
Or they're seized by some malady,
Through living ill or carelessly,
Sleeping too little, or too late,
Their work too hard, or rest too great,
Their body too fat, or too thin;
For in all such ways they may sin;
Fasting in too severe a measure,
Indulging in too much pleasure,
Too much unease, without relief,
Or too much joy, or too much grief,
Too much eating, too much drinking,
Or changing their state of being;
Which reveals itself, especially,
When they are rendered, suddenly,
Either too cold, or far too hot,
And repent too late, such their lot;
Or change their habits foolishly,
Which does for people frequently;
Many have grieved themselves, or died,
Through self-harm, and through suicide.
For every sudden mutation,
Causes me, Nature, consternation,

Since it has proved a waste of breath,
My leading them to natural death.
And though a great wrong they wreak,
When such death, gainst me, they seek,
It weighs upon me nonetheless
When they from my road digress,
Too weak to live, too cowardly,
Vanquished by death so easily.
Which death they could readily
Avoid if they shunned all folly,
And held back from that excess
Which shortens their lives no less,
Before they've sought or attained
The good I set there, to be gained.'

Chapter XCVII: Nature's complaint regarding human wilfulness

(*Lines 17725-18300*)

How Nature doth here complain
Of all men do that brings her pain.

'FOR Empedocles took little care,
Who spent such time on reading there,
And so loved all Philosophy
Full, perchance, of melancholy,
That he shunned all fear of death
Into the flames did, in a breath,
Leap, feet bound there, into Etna,
To show that all those who do fear
To die are but weak-minded souls;
Thus willingly he faced the coals.
He prized nor honey nor sugar,
Rather he chose his sepulchre,
There in the sulphurous abyss.
And Origen, too, who removed his
Private parts, valued me lightly;
Doing thus with his own hands, he
Sought to serve with more devotion
The female servants of religion;
That there might be no suspicion
That he would ever lie with one.
Now men do say the Fates decree
Such deaths, and weave their destiny,

That in a time to come's perceived,
From the moment when they're conceived.
And in the sky, on such occasions,
Planets, stars and constellations,
Determine, of necessity,
The only possibility,
That they by such a death must die,
Knowledge that e'er brings a sigh,
And have no power to alter fate.
Yet I know they may change their state,
Howe'er the heavenly positions
Form their natural dispositions,
And incline them to what may tend
To draw them on towards that end,
Obedient to the stars, I say,
That will lead their hearts that way.
For they can, through lore and learning,
And through clean and pure living,
And choosing good companions too,
Those endowed with sense and virtue,
And use of pure medicament,
As long as tis with good intent,
And through true understanding,
Obtain a quite different ending;
If, being wise, tis their mission,
To curb their natal disposition.
For when a man or woman's pleasure
Is to turn from their true nature,
Against all that is good and right,
Then Reason may yet set them right,
If they believe in her alone;
Thus their fate remains unknown;
For things may well go otherwise,
Howe'er the stars may set and rise.

There's power in each constellation,
As long as it accords with Reason.
Powerless against Reason it shows;
For as every wise person knows,
The stars are not Reason's master,
Nor did the sky above conceive her.'

CHAPTER XCVII: NATURE ON FREE-WILL AND PREDESTINATION

'BUT the answer to the question
Of how it is predestination
Along with divine prescience,
And foresight, and providence,
Can yet exist beside free will,
Is hard for laymen to grasp still.
Who would undertake the matter,
Would meet problems as a teacher,
No matter if he'd solved, in short,
The counter-arguments men brought.
But it is true, howe'er things seem;
All can be reconciled, I deem,
For those true folk who work the good
They would ne'er profit as they should,
While those who here indulge in sin
Would ne'er their punishment begin,
If it were seen, in verity,
That all came of necessity.
For those who wished to work the good
Could do no other if they would,
And those who would cease from ill
Would yet be bound to evil still,
Though they might long to be free,
Since it would prove their destiny.
Now anyone might, any day,
In disputing the matter, say
That God cannot be thus deceived
By deeds He's previously conceived,

Which must happen, they will insist,
As in His mind they now exist.
For when they'll happen He doth know,
And how, and to what end they flow;
And if such deeds were otherwise,
And God knew not all they comprise,
He would not prove all-powerful,
All good, nor all-knowledgeable,
Nor would He be the sovereign king,
Fair, sweet, the source of everything.
He would not know of all we do,
But rather think, as we must, who,
Unsure in coming, and in going,
Lack all certainty of knowing.
To accuse God of such error
Is the Devil's work however;
No man should such words employ
Who would Reason's truth enjoy.
Thence, of necessity, tis true,
That when a man's will would do
Aught whatever, tis forced to do it,
Think, say, wish it, and perform it.
For his deed is destined to be,
And in it there is nothing free.
And it seems to follow from this
That here free-will doth not exist.
Yet if destiny doth confer
On men all things that do occur,
As this argument would appear
To prove, by all that I've said here,
Then what reward or punishment,
Since of free-will they're innocent,
Should God have in mind for those
Who good works or ill deeds chose?

If they had sworn the contrary
Yet their choice remains unfree;
And God could ne'er hand out justice,
Reward the good, and evil punish,
For how indeed could He do so?
Consider this answer, it doth show
There could be nor virtue nor vice,
No Mass to mark God's sacrifice.
No prayer to Him would be worth aught,
If virtue thus, and vice, were naught.
And if God sought judgement then,
With vice and virtue naught in men,
There then could be no wrong or right,
The usurer He would ne'er indict,
The thief or murderer He'd acquit,
And the good and the hypocrite
He would find of equal weight;
And shameful would be the state
Of those who sought for God's love,
When in the end they lacked His love.
And yet they must lack such, indeed,
For should such reasoning succeed,
None could the grace of God, again,
Through their good works, e'er obtain.
But from Him justice ever flows,
In Him the light of goodness glows,
Or else a fault might then appear,
In Him who is of all faults clear.
And be it gain or loss, He serves
All according to their deserts;
So that all deeds are recompensed,
And destiny's subservient,
(At least as laymen understand it,
Who ascribe all happenings to it,

Whether good or bad, false or true,
Treating them as necessary too)
While free-will is seen to exist,
On whose misuse these folk insist.
But someone might indeed object,
And grant to fate greater respect,
Razing the concept of free will,
(As many a one is tempted still)
Saying of some possible thing,
Howe'er unlikely its happening,
That, after the fact of its advent,
If one had foreseen that event,
And said such a thing would be,
And must come, of necessity,
Would one not have spoken truly?
Doth that not show necessity?
For it follows, since the thing is true,
It must have been necessary too,
Through the interchangeability
Of truth and pure necessity,
And so it had to be, perforce,
Since it, necessity did enforce.
How does one reply to this thing
And thus escape such reasoning?
Certainly the thing proved true,
But not necessary, though true,
For though it may have been foreseen,
The event happened, and was seen,
Not as a necessary one,
But simply a possible one.
Consider their logic carefully,
And tis not worth a sou you see,
The event was but conditional
Necessity, and thus not simple;

If a thing to come proves true,
It must prove necessary too,
But such "potential" verity
Cannot be converted, you see,
Into simple necessity,
As can a simple verity;
Therefore, such reasoning still
Cannot be used to raze free will.
Again, if any person sought
To use such reasoning they ought
Never to seek a word of counsel,
Nor work at aught, nor buy or sell,
For why should counsel be sought
Or that person labour at aught,
If all things work by destiny,
And are predetermined wholly?
Nothing then would e'er be better
Or worse, through counsel or labour,
Whether it was already born,
Or was a thing yet to be born,
A something done, or to be done,
To be spoken, or in silence won.
None would need to study a thing,
All would learn without studying
The skills acquired, in whatever
Arts, without a lifetime's labour.
But the idea should be shunned,
And thus denied by everyone,
That the work of humanity
Occurs through mere necessity.
For all work good or ill freely,
And of their own free-will solely.
There's naught beyond themselves, in truth
That can e'er force their will to do

Aught they could not take or leave
If they use their reason, I believe.
But it is difficult, as I've found,
All those arguments to confound,
That can be brought in opposition.
Many have sought the true position,
And in considered judgement said
That divine prescience, instead,
Lays no weight of necessity
On the works of humanity.
For they point out, you understand,
That though God knows all beforehand
It does not follow that things occur
Inevitably, and such ends prefer.
Yet because they will come to be,
And move to the ends that we see,
They say God knows them, previously.
But in this they try, quite wrongly,
To untie the knot of the question,
For if one sees all their intention,
And if one pursues, with reason,
Their argument to its conclusion,
If their judgement were then true
To this God's prescience is due,
Events deem it necessary.
Such belief though were great folly,
Thinking God's knowledge so weak
That it depends on what others seek
To do; and those who adopt it,
An outrage against God commit,
Who'd diminish His prescience,
In penning fables lacking sense.
Reason cannot the judgment bring
That one can teach God anything,

For He would certainly not be
Utterly all-knowing if He
Were found so deficient in this
Matter that He was proved remiss.
That which hides God's prescience,
And conceals His great providence
Beneath the shadows of ignorance,
Is thus a valueless response,
For it cannot acquire, tis certain,
Aught from anything that's human.
For if it could such would arise
From impotence, in some wise,
A thought that's painful to relate,
Sinful, even to contemplate.
Others will argue otherwise,
And, in accord with their surmise,
They then unfailingly agree
That howe'er things come to be
Through the exercise of free will
As choice delivers, yet God still
Knows what all things portend
And how they must reach their end;
With the small addition however,
Of His knowledge of the manner
In which they will all come to be.
For by that they'd show, you see,
That in this there's no necessity,
Rather all's possibility.
He knows to what ends events go,
And whether they will happen or no,
And He knows, of what will happen,
Of two ways twill tend towards one;
This will happen through negation,
That occurs through affirmation;

Yet neither in so precise a guise
That they could not end otherwise;
For some other end we'd know,
If free will had but wished it so.
How dare they argue thus, I say?
How scorn their God in such a way,
He is but granted prescience thus:
That what He knows is dubious,
In that He has not conceived
The exact truth ere tis perceived?
For though the outcome He doth know
He knew not that it would be so,
If it might have been otherwise.
Should it occur in different guise
Than he expected or surmised,
His prescience was unrealised,
And indeed has proved uncertain,
Deceptive as mere opinion,
As I have sought to show before.
Others have argued furthermore,
And many hold to the idea,
That, whatever happens here
On Earth through possibility,
To God all is necessity;
For He knows all things finally,
Knows forever, with certainty,
And they cannot be otherwise,
No matter what free-will devise;
Knows ere they have come to be,
All the outcomes we will see,
All through necessary knowledge.
And they speak true if they allege
(In so far as they all agree,
And claim it as a verity),

His knowledge to be necessary,
Eternal, and of ignorance free;
That He knows what will happen,
But, as regards Himself, or men,
Lays no constraint on anything.
For to know the sum of things,
And each of the intricacies
Of the realm of possibilities,
All this comes of His great power,
His knowledge and His great dower
Of goodness from which naught's concealed.
If this answer one sought to yield
That on all he lays necessity,
Twould not be truth, in verity.
The fact that he doth foresee all,
Doth not make those things befall,
Nor is the fact that they're then shown,
The reason why they are foreknown;
But because He's all-powerful,
And knows of good and evil all,
Therefore He knows the truth entire,
Naught can deceive Him, the choir
Of all things He doth hear and see.
And thus, if to the straight way we
Would hold, and so grasp this matter,
Which is no easy one to gather,
One might give a crude example,
For laymen, who love things simple,
As do unlettered souls, because
They need no subtlety of gloss:
Suppose a man then, with free-will,
Did some deed, be it what you will,
Or refrained from doing that same
Lest it might bring him to shame,

Depending on the outcomes there,
That might arise from that affair;
And suppose a second knew naught
Of that action ere it were sought,
Or left unsought lest it obtain
Due to the first's choice to refrain,
Then he who learned of it later,
Would never grant the matter
Aught of constraint or necessity.
And if he'd been able to foresee
Aught of what occurred before
Assuming that he did no more
Than foresee it, that would present
No manner of impediment
To the first to do, or not do,
Whate'er pleased, and suited too,
Even refraining from the deed,
If his will allowed it, indeed,
Being so unconstrained and free
He may pursue the deed, or flee.
In the same way, God, more nobly,
In all respects, so absolutely,
Knows what will come, and to what end
Each of those events doth tend,
(No matter that a thing may be
Yet subject to its master's will,
Who has the power of choice still,
And will be swayed to some degree,
According to his sense or folly);
God knows, of what comes to pass
How it was brought about at last,
And knows of those who refrain
If that was from a sense of shame,
Or through some other occasion,

Reasonable, or lacking reason,
Just as their will directed them.
For I, indeed, am quite certain
That there are very many people
Who are tempted to work evil,
And yet, nonetheless, abstain,
Of whom a goodly few restrain
Themselves, to live virtuously,
Out of their love of God solely,
They being blessed with moral sense,
Though but sparse is their existence.
Others, while sin is their intent,
Will yet, for fear of punishment,
Subdue their desires, tis plain,
Lest they incur or shame or pain.
God sees all this transparently,
Before His eyes, and presently,
All the obvious conditions
Of deeds, and all their intentions;
Naught from Him can be concealed,
In any manner, all's revealed,
For there is naught, however far,
But God can see it; all things are
As if they were near and present.
Be it ten years, since some event,
Or twenty or thirty that have passed,
Five hundred, or a thousand at last,
Whether in town, or the country,
Honest, dishonest, God doth see
The thing as if it happened now,
And has seen it ever, I'll avow,
In all its detail, without error,
Within His everlasting mirror,
Where none but Him can gaze, and still

Leave undiminished man's free-will.
That mirror is the very same
From which our origins came.
In that mirror, polished, bright,
Which he has held, day and night,
And holds ever, where He doth see
All that was, is, and shall be,
He sees where those souls shall go
Who serve him faithfully below,
And all those who have not a care
For loyalty or justice there,
And keeps in mind, for each one,
For all the deeds they have done,
Their salvation, or damnation.
And this is pre-destination,
This is the divine prescience,
That knows all in its very essence,
Nor divines it, but doth extend
Grace to those who to virtue tend,
And yet by that doth not supplant
The power of free-will an instant.
All people then work through free-will,
Either for good or yet for ill,
Yet all is His present vision,
For if we seek the definition
Of eternity, tis possession
Of that life, without division,
Not to be seen as ever ending
But whole, complete in its being.
Now, the ordering of this presence,
That God, in his great providence,
Created, rules, and doth defend,
Must be pursued to its true end
As to universal causes;

Those perforce must be such causes
As valid for all time may prove;
The heavenly bodies must move,
According to their revolutions,
Through all their transmutations,
And thus exert their influence,
Through necessary pursuance
Of their paths, on each single thing,
Bound by the elements, and bring
It to bear, when all things receive
Their rays, as God did so conceive.
And things that can engender
Shall engender their like ever;
Or bring about new combinations
Through their innate dispositions,
Accordingly as they do possess
Between them a shared likeness.
And those, that must die, will die,
And those, that can, live on thereby;
And through their natural desire
The hearts of some will aim higher,
Others low seeking pleasures new,
Some will seek vice, others virtue.
Perchance, events may not occur
In every instance, as would prefer
The heavenly bodies in their intent,
If things some sure defence present,
Things that obey them usually,
If not deflected, suddenly,
By pure chance or by their free-will;
For all things must be drawn still
To act as their hearts may incline,
Which will never cease to define
Their actions, as if twere by fate.

Thus destiny may be that fate,
Or, rather, that disposition,
In line with predestination,
That is added to things mutable,
Insofar as they're thus capable.
So, through good fortune on Earth,
From the first moment of one's birth,
One may be bold in one's affairs,
Wise, generous, yet without airs,
Surrounded by wealth and friends,
With those skills on which fame depends;
Or fortune may but prove perverse;
Then the wisest, fate may curse,
For many a thing yet can hinder;
A vice, perchance, or an error.
If one finds oneself too miserly,
For the wise are not the wealthy,
One should counter it with reason,
And keep sufficient for the season,
Be of good heart, and give and spend
Money on clothes and food, but then
Not gain a foolish reputation,
For largesse on all occasions.
They've no love for the avaricious
Who'd have them gather riches thus,
Then watch them live in martyrdom
Since no amount will e'er please them,
And so blind and overwhelm them,
They leave not one good deed to them,
Making them forgo all virtue,
While urging such folk so to do.
And someone who is not foolish
Can guard against the other vices,
Or can turn away from virtue

If, seeking ill, they choose to do.
For Free-Will is so powerful,
If one knows oneself full well,
That it will always be fulfilled
If one feels one's heart is filled
With the urge that Sin be master,
Whate'er fate the heavens foster.
One who, before it happened, knew
Whate'er the heavens sought to do,
Could certainly avoid their action.
For if they wished to set in motion
Such heat as would make people die,
And those folk knew; ere all was dry,
They could seek new dwelling-places
Near the rivers, or in damp places,
Or hollow caves could excavate,
Deep underground, till it abate,
And so avoid their death by heat.
Ere a flood came, they could retreat,
From the coming of that deluge;
All those who knew of some refuge,
Departing swiftly from the plain,
And seeking some high peak to gain,
Where they could forge a mighty boat,
And save themselves, survive afloat,
And thus flee the inundation,
As, long ago, Deucalion,
And Pyrrha made a like escape,
As a strange new world took shape,
And so were saved from the flood.
And, as soon as ever they could
Make safe harbour, and could see,
As the waters sank back to sea
From the slopes on either hand,

How marshy valleys stretched inland,
While no man or woman had life,
Except Deucalion and his wife,
Then they knelt down to confess
As in some shrine, to the goddess
Themis, she who e'er judged the fate
Of mortal things, or small or great.'

'Deucalion and Pyrrah'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE TELLS THE STORY OF DEUCALION AND PYRRHA

(*Lines 18301-19296*)

How, through divine Themis' advice,
Deucalion, and Pyrrha his wife,
Did restore, in body and soul,
All their friends, and made them whole.

'THEY threw themselves upon their knees,
There, to Themis, they made their pleas,
Seeking how they might work together
Their whole lineage to recover.
And when Themis heard their prayer,
Which was, honest, good, and fair,
She told them they must up and go,
And behind them they must throw
The bones, now, of their great mother.
This reply seemed harsh and bitter
To Pyrrha, who did straight refuse,
From such a fate sought to excuse
Herself, saying she would never
Defile the bones of her mother;
But then heard this explanation
Of the words, from Deucalion.
"Another meaning must be found."
He said, "Our mother is the ground,
The solid earth, its rocks and stones,
And surely those must be her bones.

We must throw the rocks behind us,
For we'll restore our lineage thus."
So they both did as he had said,
Men sprang up from the rocks that sped
From the hands of Deucalion,
Hurled now with firm intention,
And from Pyrrha's there sprang up, whole,
Women, live of body and soul.
Just as Lady Themis had said,
Who had set the thought in his head;
For these folk need seek no father;
The hardness of stone thereafter,
Would ever be present in that line.
Thus he'd worked wisely to design
A vessel that would float, and could
Save both their lives, amidst the flood.
Likewise could anyone escape
Who foresaw such a watery fate.
Or if cruel Famine forth should sail,
One who would see the harvest fail,
And watch the people die each hour
For lack of grain and lack of flour,
They could store their grain away,
Ere cruel Famine marred their day,
Two years before, or three, or four,
So they might feel the pinch no more
Than in good years; folk great and small,
Whatever dearth might them befall.
So did Joseph there, in Egypt,
When through his good sense and merit,
He gathered such a store of wheat
That all the people there could eat,
Defeating misery and hunger.
Or if such folk learnt earlier

That there might come, that winter,
A depth of cold beyond measure,
They could give their closest care
To warm clothing, and gather there
Great cartloads of logs piled higher
Than was their wont, to feed the fire.
And when the wintry season came,
They could strew, before the flame,
Around the house, across the floor,
Heaps of fair and clean white straw,
From the farm, shut tight the doors
And windows, warm now and secure.
Or build bathhouses, good and hot,
In which, with all their clothes forgot,
They could work, or sing and dance,
When they heard the storms advance,
And saw the stones the tempest yields
Like to destroy beasts in the fields,
That tempest that will freeze a river.
Their heated rooms would them deliver
From all such threat of storms or ice,
And they could scorn, with true advice,
All ills, and laugh, and dance within,
And, free of danger, safety win,
Scorning winter's coldest weather,
By labouring, in advance, together.
Yet, if God works not His miracles,
Through visions, or through oracles,
There can be none, it seems to me,
Unless they know by astronomy
All the peculiar conditions,
All the varying positions
Of the heavenly bodies, and
Know what weather they do command,

Who might foresee, by any science
Such things, as if by prescience.
For though the body has such power
That it can flee the sudden shower,
And so thwart the heavens' intent
By sheltering gainst the firmament,
Yet the soul's more powerful still
Than body; through mere strength of will,
It moves the body, carrying,
What else would be but a dead thing.
Far better then, and more easily,
Through true knowledge, as we see,
Free-Will can readily conquer
Whatever might make it suffer,
And need not grieve for anything
If it consents not to that thing,
And learns by heart this clause:
Of its own unease tis the cause.
Mere external tribulation
Simply affords it occasion;
No man needs care for destiny.
Though his natal chart he doth see,
And learns his exact condition,
What value has such prediction?
Free-Will can conquer destiny,
However fated one might be.
Of destiny I would speak more,
And fortune and chance explore,
And expand on all this matter
Raising and answering other
Questions, each with an example,
But the time I've spent is ample,
And I would never reach the end.
Other writings I would commend;

Some clerk, perchance, is on hand,
One well-read, who may understand.'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE ON PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

'I WOULD have said naught about it,
And ne'er would have spoken of it,
But it pertains to my whole matter,
For some opponent may chatter
About me, hearing me complain
Of his unfaith, to mask his disdain
For that Creator he seeks to blame,
Claiming that I would him defame,
Though wrongly. He will often say
He lacks free-will to forge his way,
In that God, through His prevision,
So holds the mind in subjection
That He by destiny hath decreed
Every human thought and deed;
If toward good a man would tend,
God forces him towards that end.
And if for evil he sets course,
Then God will drive him there, perforce;
With more than His finger doth thrust
Him on to do whate'er he must;
All his sinning, and alms-giving,
His scorn of folk or fair-speaking,
His fair praise, or foul detractions,
His thefts, his murderous actions,
Marriage, or forging a treaty,
Now reasonably, now foolishly.
"For," says he, "tis forced to be,
God made this girl for him to marry,
Nor could he now wed another

For any reason; he must have her.
For she was destined his to be."
And if the thing turns out badly,
If he's a fool perchance, or she is,
And in discussion of this foolish
Match, someone condemns whoe'er
Consented to the whole affair,
He'll respond to them by saying:
"Let God be the judge of the thing,
For He willed it should turn out so.
He brought it all about, you know."
Then with an oath he'll swear likewise
Naught could have happened otherwise.
No, no! He gives a false reply;
The true God, He who cannot lie,
Serves not mankind such a sauce
That they consent to evil's course.
From that is born the mad intent
That leads to just such ill consent,
And moves men to enact those deeds
Of which no man should sow the seeds;
And no such seeds would any sow,
If only they themselves did know,
And upon their Creator did call,
Who, if they but love Him, loves all;
For those folk alone love wisely
Who do know themselves entirely.'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE ON THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

'**SURELY**, among those dumb creatures
No such true self-knowledge features,
Who know themselves not, by Nature;
For if of language they'd a measure,
And Reason, to know one another
So that they could teach each other,
Mankind would reap the consequence.
The fine war-horses, filled with sense,
Would never let themselves be ridden,
And bear armoured knights when bidden;
The ox would never choose to bow
Beneath the yoke of cart or plough;
Asses, mules, camels for mankind
Would never bear a load behind;
Nor would the elephant that blows
A loud trumpet with his long nose,
And feeds himself with his nose too
As humans with their hand will do,
Would ne'er a castle bear aloft
Upon his backbone, long and oft;
All cats and dogs would flout mankind
Since they could live without mankind;
Bears, wolves, lions, leopards, boars
Would crunch humans in their jaws;
Even a rat would kill a small one,
If in its cradle it should find one;
No hawk would come to the call,
Nor put itself at risk, at all,
But rather take men by surprise,

And, as they slept, pluck out their eyes;
And if any say, in answer,
That easily men would conquer,
Since they are good at making armour,
Helmets, coats of mail, swords, arrows;
So could the creatures do also.
Have they not monkeys, marmosets
Who could make them coats, and sets
Of armour from leather and iron too,
Doublets in fact, as good and true?
For they would never lack for hands,
And theirs would be as good as Man's:
And then they could write as well,
They would have the wit to spell
Out all the ways, for one another,
All the ways that they might conquer,
All of those methods by which they
Could trouble Man, and make him pay.
And earwigs and fleas, their peers,
If they but crept into folk's ears,
While all those folk were sleeping,
Would have them wondrously grieving.
And even lice and nits, and mites
Could often trouble them in fights,
Making them forsake their labour,
And itch and twitch, like their neighbour,
Bow, and bend, and flinch, and dip,
Turn, and jump, and leap, and skip,
Scratch themselves, and tear their hair,
Shed clothes and shoes, and then run bare.
And flies could, at their meals, pursue
These wretched folk, and bite them too,
Swarming, darting at their faces,
Whether the pageboy's or His Grace's.

'Nature on the animal kingdom'

Ants and lesser vermin would be
The cause of many an injury,
If of themselves they'd cognisance.
The truth is that their ignorance
Comes from their proper natures;
But if clearly rational creatures
Whether humans, or angel horde,
All of whom should praise the Lord,
Know themselves not, it suffices
That the fault lies with those vices
That trouble and do cloud the mind;
For such folk too could Reason find,
And use their free-will readily,
While no excuse can set them free.
And that is why I spoke at length
And did these arguments present,
To quell all gossip on the matter,
For none has a defence to offer.
But to pursue my whole intention,
And see my labour over and done,
Due to the heart-ache it produces,
That body and soul so abuses,
I'll speak no more about it now.
To the heavens once more I bow,
Which do all that they need to do
To the host of creatures who
Receive the skies' influences
As per their diverse substances.'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE ON THE CELESTIAL INFLUENCES: THE TEMPEST

'**THEY** make conflicting winds to blow,
The air to kindle, and roar below,
And lightning strike many a region,
And storms rumble, and the legion
Of clouds burst open, full of vapour,
To blaring drum-rolls of thunder.
Then blind heat and rapid motion
Tear the rushing storm-clouds open,
Amidst struggles and commotion,
Over all the earth and ocean.
The tempest with its lightning rages,
Raising dust-storms for the ages,
Felling church-steeples and towers,
And many an ancient tree devours,
Tearing it bodily from the ground;
None so deep-rooted or so sound,
That their roots sank deep enough
To save their fall, nor strong enough
To keep their boughs from shattering
And flying onwards in the wind.
Some claim it as the work of devils,
With their talons, midst their revels,
And the hooks and crooks they use;
Yet such claims aren't worth two sous.
For they are wrong in all they say,
Naught with them has had its way
Except the storm-winds and the rain
That pursues them o'er the plain.

Those are the things that make them pine,
That fell the wheat, and spoil the vine,
And beat the fruit down from the trees,
Blowing so hard they strip, with ease,
The harvest from the boughs before
Their harvest won time to mature.
The heavens make the atmosphere,
At various times shed tear on tear,
And all the clouds, in sympathy,
Strip themselves naked, suddenly,
And do not give a bare fig for
The dark cloaks that they wore before,
Feeling such sorrow that they tear them
Into small pieces ere they'd wear them.
And then they help the air to cry,
And weep as if they all must die,
Their depths of sorrow so profound,
Their tears so dense upon the ground
That all the rivers break their banks,
And wash against the wooded flanks
Of hills, and sink the flooded fields
Beneath those waters heaven yields,
Such that the harvest then must fail,
While times are hard, along the vale,
So that the poor folk who labour
Weep for hopes now lost forever.
And when the rivers overflow
The fish that through their waters go,
As is reasonable and right,
Since there they dwell, both day and night,
Swim away, now lords and masters,
To graze the fields, amid the waters,
Skim the meadows, pluck the vines,
And bathe among the oaks and pines,

And take from the savage creatures
Their heritage, their halls and manors,
As they go swimming everywhere;
And thus enrage the deities there,
Bacchus, Ceres, Cybele, Pan,
Who then behold that fishy band,
Go swishing their fins, at leisure,
Through all their delightful pasture.
And the Satyrs, in their cohorts,
Are full of the saddest thoughts,
When their green and pleasant woods
Are lost to the swirling floods.
The Naiads bewail their fountains,
While the waters overwhelm them,
Drown their sources deep below,
As if they wept their losses so.
And the Nymphs and the Dryads
Have hearts as sad as the Naiads
So sick with grief they feel lost,
Seeing the trees tempest-tossed,
And of the River-Gods complain,
Who seek to bring them now fresh pain,
Unrecompensed, and undeserved,
While naught of theirs has been thus served.
And the fish now find a lodging
In the villages adjoining,
Vile and wretched now, where they
In every room and cellar play,
No place so valuable and fine,
Whether a temple or a shrine,
Where they are not everywhere
Denying gods the act of prayer,
Driving from dark sanctuaries
The statues with their deities.'

Chapter XCVIII: Nature on the celestial influences: the rainbow

'AFTER the storm, when all is well,
Fair weather doth the foul dispel,
The tempest and its rain now cease,
That the heavens did so displease,
Soon the air's wrath disappears,
And smilingly the sky appears.
Swiftly, as the clouds perceive
The joy the air doth now receive,
They all rejoice, as well, and so
That fair and pleasing they might show,
They deck themselves, free of dolour,
In many a varied colour,
And spread their fleeces out to dry
As now the fair sun lifts on high,
And in clear resplendent weather
They tease and card them together;
Next they spin, and when they've spun,
Then they set twirling in the sun,
Great spindlefuls of white thread,
As if to sew the sleeves they spread.
And when they can muster courage
To go once more on pilgrimage,
They harness white steeds, and mount them,
Passing over vale and mountain;
And like mad things they do flee,
For Aeolus, the winds' deity,
(Thus the god is named, indeed)
Has so equipped each lively steed,

(And there's no charioteer, they say,
Who doth those steeds so well array)
With such fine wings for their feet
No bird has such, or can compete.
A cloak of blue the sky now wears,
That which in India he bears,
Decks himself out, and thus displayed
In festive gear, sweetly arrayed,
Waits while the sun doth brightly burn,
Until the clouds seek their return,
Who, to solace the earth below,
As much as to hunt, as they go,
Carry a bow in their right hand,
Two or three more at their command,
And these are called celestial bows,
And no man but a master knows,
One who can teach optics that is,
How the sun selects and varies
The colours that their bows possess,
Nor why there are not more or less,
Nor why those colours, and that form;
And such will take care to inform
Himself, as a true disciple,
Of Nature's friend, Aristotle,
Who knew more than any man,
Since Cain. And Ibn al-Haytham,
Was no mean intellect, one who
Wrote a book of Optics; that too
He must know about who'd know
All that's written of the rainbow;
With it he should be familiar
Who'd be a student of Nature.
And he should know geometry,
Its mastery is necessary,

To work the proofs in that same book.
There a student may take a look
At the shape and strength of mirrors
Possessed of such wondrous powers
That the very smallest thing,
As tiny letters, in close writing,
Or the finest grains of sand,
Are seen so close and near at hand,
And so large, any can distinguish
Them, and read, count, as they wish,
From such a distance, that any man
Who wishes to speak of it and can,
And tells of the vision he received
Is scarcely likely to be believed,
By any who'd not seen such laws
In action, and knew not the cause,
For then he would give it credence
Since he'd have seen the evidence.
If Mars and Venus who faced capture
As in bed they lay together,
Had ere they mounted on that bed
Gazed in such a mirror instead,
As long as they held the mirror
So they could view the bed closer,
They would never have been bound
By that fine subtle net that round
The bed, Vulcan, her spouse, had set
With neither knowing of the net.
For even if he'd wrought it finer
Than that woven by a spider,
They would the net have thus perceived,
And Vulcan then had been deceived.
For every fine link there would seem
As thick and wide as a wooden beam,

And cruel Vulcan would no longer,
Though hot with jealousy and anger,
Have caught them there and visibly
Have proven their adultery;
Nor would the gods have learnt aught,
If they such mirrors they had brought,
For they would have fled the place
On seeing the net before their face,
And elsewhere than Vulcan's fire
Had gone to hide all their desire.
Or had worked some expedient
To quench all their sorry intent,
Without knowing shame or grief.
Now say, by the faith and belief
You owe me, have I spoken truly?'
Genius replied: 'Most surely,
They'd have proved, such mirrors,
In truth, most useful, to the lovers,
For they could have met elsewhere
If they'd known the danger there;
Or, perchance, Mars the god of war,
Gripping his well-tempered sword,
Would have taken, with his own hand,
Vengeance on that jealous Vulcan.
Then he could have been quite certain
Of making love to his lover then,
In that bed, without seeking other,
Such as the ground neath a cover.
And if it happened by some chance,
One hard and cruel, in that instance,
That Vulcan came upon the pair,
Even though Mars clasped her there,
Venus who's a cunning lady,
(For in the sex there's trickery)

When she heard the door opening,
All her nakedness now hiding,
Would have invented some excuse,
Through some cavil at his abuse,
And given Vulcan a good reason
Why Mars presence was no treason;
And sworn, by whoe'er you wished,
Twas scarcely proof of some tryst,
And forced him therefore to believe
That naught there did they conceive.
Even if he had viewed it all,
She would still have chosen to call
Him purblind: for how could he see?
Such double-speak comes easily,
And doth show its diverse uses,
In formulating good excuses;
For none will swear or tell a lie
More boldly than the sex, say I;
Mars would easily have gone free.'
'You speak, indeed, sir priest,' said she,
With wisdom and with courtesy,
For in their hearts they certainly
Are full of subtlety and malice,
(Who knows it not, proves but foolish)
However that is no excuse.
Most certainly they will use
A lie more boldly than a man,
Especially whene'er they can
Be accused of some misdeed,
Then they often feel the need
To escape the situation;
So I make this proclamation,
That all who view a woman's heart
Should ne'er be proud of that art;

Nor can it be done safely, too,
For some mischance must then ensue.'
Thus Nature and Genius did agree
Or so, at least, it seemed to me;
Yet Solomon says, nonetheless,
Since I'd be truthful: 'He is blessed
That doth a good woman find,
If she to him doth truly bind.'

Chapter XCVIII: Nature on the celestial influences: sensory deception

'POWERS there are, many others,'
Said Nature, 'possessed by mirrors.
Large objects that are placed nearby
Seem so far off beneath the sky,
That the largest mountains yet,
From France to Sardinia set,
Are rendered so small, so tiny,
Of such a meagre size entirely,
Once could hardly distinguish
If one tried, twixt that and this.
Other mirrors show, with verity,
The quantity and quality
Of things within, as one can see
If one regards them carefully.
And others still will burn a thing,
One upon which they are looking,
If one doth adjust them rightly,
To gather the sun's rays tightly,
Such that the rays, all together,
Are reflected from the mirror.
Others make diverse images
Appear in diverse packages,
Columns, oblongs, and reversed,
All the varying forms rehearsed.
Those who are of mirrors master
Make one form beget another,
Showing four eyes in one head,

If one before that mirror's led.
They can make phantoms appear
To those who look, and over here
Outside the mirror, or over there,
Alive, in the water, or the air,
One can see the phantoms quiver,
Between the eye and the mirror,
By simply varying the angle.
Whether compound or single,
By one method or by diverse,
The form, now seen as its inverse,
By such means doth multiply
Itself ere it doth reach the eye,
Appearing to the watching gaze,
In accord with the reflected rays,
That it has variously received.
So the observer is deceived.
Aristotle, too, bears witness,
Who knew about it, more or less;
(For all knowledge he held dear)
A certain man, it doth appear,
Was ill, and with some malady
So dire that he could barely see;
And the air was dark and turbid,
And he, for this twin reason, did
See there before him his own face
Move in the air from place to place.
In short, when free of obstacles,
Mirrors seem to work miracles.
Varying distance, moreover,
Without mirrors, plays the deceiver;
For, seemingly, the distance brings
Close together, separate things,
And can make one thing seem two

According to the point of view;
Make six of three, or eight of four,
If one wished to render more,
For more or less one can perceive,
If so placed that one doth receive
Their light; or many things seem one,
If they're so ordered by someone.
Even a man who is so small
That a dwarf one might him call,
May appear to the watching eye
As tall as ten giants, neath the sky,
And over the woods seem to pass
Without one branch above the grass
Breaking, so that all shake with fear;
While giants as dwarfs may appear
To the eyes, which see quite wrongly,
When they see things so diversely.
And those folk who are so deceived
By the impression they've received,
Through mirrors or through distances,
Which have produced such instances,
Then they will boast to another,
And say, not truly but in error,
That some devil they've perceived,
And yet twas but the eyes deceived.
Weak eyes that illness doth trouble
Make a single thing seem double;
A double moon shows in the sky,
Two candles seem but one thereby.
None there are whose powers of sight
Are such they always see aright,
And many things are judged to be
Other than what we ought to see.
But I'll not take the trouble now

To tell of mirrors-shapes, or how
The rays are reflected from them,
Nor all the angles of those rays,
Will I describe, for one may look
And find them written in a book;
Nor why the image of a thing
Is reflected to those watching,
When they become observers,
And turn to gaze at the mirrors;
Nor the image's location;
Nor the reasons for deception;
Nor, dear priest, of that thing,
Where its image has its being,
In the mirror, or without it.
I would speak no more about it,
Nor of other wondrous visions
Pleasant, or the source of frissons,
One may see happening suddenly;
Whether they occur externally
Or are no more than fantasy;
You must hear it not from me.
I must not utter one word more,
But, of all that I said before,
Say naught and pass swiftly by,
Nor picture it to the mind's eye.
For I have a wealth of matter,
Twould be tiresome to chatter,
And much of it is hard to teach,
Even if one knew how to preach
To laymen, particularly,
Who'd learn but superficially,
And who'll ne'er believe a thing
To be true, without them viewing
(Regarding mirrors, especially,

All of which work so diversely)
Instrument, and experiment;
If those folk gave their consent,
Who know all, by demonstration,
Of this science in operation.
Hard too it is to teach of visions
Strange and wondrous apparitions,
No matter who sought to explain,
Even so twould bring them pain;
And speak too of the deceptions,
That are brought by such visions,
Whether while waking or sleeping,
That many folk find confusing.
Thus I'd seek to forgo all this,
Not to weary ourselves I'd wish,
I with speaking, you with hearing;
Prolixity is well worth fleeing.
We women toy with difficulty,
And in speech are most contrary,
So, I pray, be you not displeased
If I have not yet wholly ceased
To speak of these things forever,
But I'd just say this, however,
Many are so addled in their heads,
That they are driven from their beds
By visions; they dress, twould appear,
Gather together all their gear,
While common sense is fast asleep,
But other senses vigil keep:
With staffs and stakes, at their backs
Pruning hooks, sickles, and sacks,
All day the road they will follow
While never caring where they go.
They'll even mount upon a horse,

O'er hill and dale then take their course,
Dry road or muddy trail they'll face
Till they reach some alien place.
But then, when common sense doth wake,
They marvel, and their heads they shake.
When their right senses they attain,
And are midst their neighbours again,
They all swear that, tis no fable,
They were swept up by the Devil,
And carried there from their bed,
And yet twas they went there, instead.'

Chapter XCVIII: Nature on the celestial influences: fantasy and dream

'AND then, it will often happen,
When someone is truly stricken
By some oppressive malady,
That can stir them to a frenzy,
And when they're insufficiently
Guarded, or are alone, maybe,
They leap up, taking to the road,
And never stop until that road
Leads them to some savage place,
Or grove, or meadow, where they pace
Awhile, and then fall to the ground.
And afterwards, if they are found
By some passer-by, whenever,
He will see they're dead of fever,
Or from cold; because they had,
No nurses but the fools or mad.
Then one sees, though they are fit,
Many people who through habit
Are given to disordered thoughts,
Those who think not as they aught,
Seized by deep melancholy,
Which brings them much misery,
Or by some immeasurable fear,
That makes strange images appear
Within their minds, though other
Than those I talked of earlier,
When speaking about the mirror,

Which things I did briefly cover;
All of these, to them, it seems
Appear quite real, as in dreams.
There are those whose deep devotion
Leads to too much contemplation,
Such that in their minds appear
The images which they hold dear.
Except they think them wholly
Real, for they see them clearly
Outside themselves; tis but a lie,
As in a dream one may espy,
While thinking it a true instance,
Something of spiritual substance,
As Scipio did, formerly.
Hell and Paradise one may see,
Heaven and earth, the sea and sky,
And all that one may seek thereby.
And one may see the stars up there,
And birds all flying through the air
And fishes swimming in the sea,
And wild things in the woods maybe,
Playing, and leaping all about,
And diverse people, in and out,
This one alone, in their chamber,
Or in the woods, a mighty hunter,
On the hills, and by the river,
Meadow, vineyard, or wherever;
And dream then of pleas and judgements
Of battles, and of tournaments,
And dance at balls and sing carols,
And hark to fiddles and to viols;
And e'en smell odorous spices,
And taste some dish that entices,
And lie there in one's lover's arms,

Though yet distant from their charms;
Or perchance find Jealousy
Arriving inopportunely,
To find the parties there together,
Just as Ill-Talk had informed her,
He who invents what may occur,
And deals lovers harm, moreover.
One who claims to be a lover,
And therefore burns for the other,
From which comes toil and sweat,
When at night they sleep, or yet
Are still awake and in deep thought,
(For I know what love has brought)
They dream of some beloved thing
That they hope the day will bring,
Or dream about some enemy,
Some rival, proving contrary.
Or if they're filled with mortal hate
They'll dream then, in that wrathful state,
Of struggles with the enemy,
Who has so roused their enmity,
And all that follows, as in war,
By contrast with what went before,
Or directly; if in prison,
They are held, for any reason,
They dream then of deliverance,
If their hopes are good, perchance;
Or dream of the gibbet and rope,
If their hearts hold little hope;
And folk will dream of aught, beside,
That is within, and not outside;
Things unpleasant they think real
Since their reality they feel;
There, joy and sorrow all may find,

And bear it all within the mind,
Which the five senses so deceive
With the phantoms it may receive.
Thus many folk, in their folly,
Think they indulge in sorcery,
By night, with the faery lady,
And say, in all the world, every
Third child is born with such
A disposition, and at its touch
Three times a week they will go
Following their destiny so.
They enter houses in that state,
Fearing neither bars, nor gate
They slip through cracks and crevices,
Or cat-flaps, and so need no keys.
And their souls leave their bodies
And travel with the witch ladies,
Through palaces and through mansions;
And prove it all by such reasons
As that various things they've seen
Did not come to them in dream,
Rather tis their souls that labour
And about the world thus hover;
And they tempt people to believe
That while they journey thus, at eve,
If they're turned about their centre,
Their bodies they cannot re-enter.
That is a most dreadful folly,
A mortal state that cannot be,
For the body's but a dead thing
Once the soul's not there within.
If it were true, then those who seek
To pursue three times every week,
Such a journey while yet alive,

Thrice would die, and thrice revive,
In that very same week, indeed;
And if twere so, then, by that deed,
They'd be resurrected full often,
All the members of that coven.
The matter's truly settled, though,
For, without gloss, this thing is so:
None that must meet death, say I,
Has more than one death they can die.
Nor will they be resurrected
Till the Judgement Day expected,
Unless God, by celestial
Decree, allows a miracle,
Such as we read of Lazarus;
For all contention's settled thus.
And when, to cap the lie, they say
That, after the soul flits away
From the body thus denuded,
If the body is inverted
The soul cannot return to it,
Who, on earth, shall believe it?
For I recall, as true clearly,
The soul severed from the body
Is freer, wiser, cleverer,
Than when they are bound together,
And of the latter's complexion,
Which then clouds its best intention;
The soul knows better, when apart,
How to make entry than depart;
And would swiftly find the gate
In the body's inverted state.
Again, if a third in every country
Dallied thus with the faery lady,
As foolish old crones will claim

Because of the visions they name,
Then it must be true, I would claim,
That the whole world doth the same;
There's none honest or a liar,
Who dreams not such visions entire
All the week, by day or night,
And fourteen times in a fortnight,
Or more, or less, as chance may be,
Given their powers of fantasy.
I'll speak no more of dreams, will I,
Whether they're truth, or but a lie;
Or if some should be recognised,
Or if they are to be despised;
Or why some are more terrible
Than others both fair and peaceful,
By telling of the apparitions
Seen by varying dispositions,
And by diverse minds and hearts
Of diverse ages and moral parts;
Or if God employs such visions
To achieve His revelations,
Or malign spirits, to render
Those who see them in danger.
I'll not speak, nor shall you learn,
For to my subject I return.'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE ON THE CELESTIAL INFLUENCES: COMETS

'THUS, I may tell you, when the clouds
Are tired of shooting those great crowds
Of arrows from their airy bows,
(More moist than dry one would suppose
Since they have sprinkled them with dew
And rain, till they are quite wet through,
Unless Heat dries them out again,
To draw fair weather forth, not rain)
Then they unstring their bows together,
Being sated with their pleasure.
Yet the bows they use each archer
Employs in the strangest manner,
For their colours vanish from them,
When they unstring and sheathe them,
Nor will the clouds e'er draw the same
Bows they have shown to us again.
Since, to repeat their archery,
They must string new bows, you see,
Which the sun can paint once more,
And they must shape them as before.
The heavens have further influence,
For they have power in abundance
Over the land, and sea, and air;
They cause comets to glisten there,
Which are not fixed beyond the sky,
But kindled in the air nearby,
And last but little time alight;

Thence many fables men indite;
The death of princes they divine
Who seek forever for a sign.
And yet those comets will no more
Mark out a king than one who's poor,
Nor influence in their working
The same poor man less than a king.
Rather they work, as we do know,
And as their influences show
In the world, on each region,
According to the disposition
Of climate, animals and men,
As moved by the powers again
Of the planets and constellations,
Most influential in their stations.
They carry the significance
Of some celestial influence,
Altering conditions, I say,
According as such will obey.'

'A King and his court'

CHAPTER XCVIII: NATURE ON THE CELESTIAL INFLUENCES: THE WORTH OF KINGS

'AND yet I do not claim a king
Should be called rich in anything,
Any more than the least one meets
Going bare-foot through the streets;
For wealth creates sufficiency,
And covetousness poverty.
Be a king not worth a stitch;
Tis he who covets less is rich.
If one reads the ancient writers
Kings are like to artists' pictures;
This example he doth attest,
Ptolemy, in his Almagest:
If, examining carefully,
One doth view the paintings closely,
Then at a distance they may please,
But close to will such pleasures cease;
From afar they seem delightful,
But close to far less pleasurable.
Powerful friends appear the same,
When unproven, sweet is the name
Of their aid and their acquaintance,
Untested by experience;
But one who tries them thoroughly
Will find such bitterness, that he
Will fear to lean in that direction,
Their favour proving mere election.
Thus, of their love and grace, Horace
Warns us, and of this assures us:

Princes, he says, are not worthy
That thus some heavenly body,
Should mark their princely death rather
Than take note of someone poorer,
For their corpse is worth no more
Than a ploughman's is, a squire's, or
A clerk's; they are of equal worth,
I find, when I view them at birth.
Through me they're born, naked all,
Strong or weak, and great or small,
I nurture all humanity
In a state of pure equality,
While Fortune, she does all the rest,
Who's but a fickle jade at best,
And gives out gifts, at her pleasure,
Careless of who wins her favour,
Yet withdraws all she has given,
As she wishes, morn and even.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE ON NOBILITY AND LEARNING

(*Lines 19297-20028*)

How Nature doth, with certainty,
Devise the truth, most properly,
From which nobility doth come,
And grant prowess to anyone.

'YOU who boast of nobility,
And likewise do contradict me,
By claiming that a gentleman
Or such as folk do understand,
Is, through nobility of birth,
A personage of greater worth,
Than those who cultivate the fields,
Or live by what their labour yields,
Why none are noble, I say to you,
Unless they are intent on virtue,
Nor none base except through vice
That unbridled fools doth entice.
A good heart breeds nobility,
For nobility through ancestry
Is worth naught, doth naught impart,
If it lacks true goodness of heart.
A nobleman must show perforce
The prowess of his ancestors,
Who won their own nobility
Through such efforts as men could see,
And on departing from this earth,
Took with them all they'd won from birth,

Leaving their heirs mere possession
Of their wealth upon succession.
That wealth is all they can receive;
Nobility, they can achieve
If they but act to win that too,
By their own sense and true virtue.
A clerk may sooner, I surmise,
Become noble, courteous, wise,
Than kings and princes may (and I
Will tell you now the reason why)
Because a clerk is full of learning,
And can read what's set in writing,
All that's proven and reasonable,
And known, and thus demonstrable,
Regarding evils one should shun,
And all the good that can be done.
He sees all things that can be read,
Writ just as they're done and said;
And reading past lives he can see
Every base villain's villainy,
The noble deeds of every one,
And of all courtesies the sum;
He views in his books, readily,
What one should follow or should flee.
Disciple or teacher, certainly,
Are noble, or at least should be;
(And those who are not need to know
Tis their wicked heart fails them so)
For they become so with more ease
Than stag-hunters neath the trees.
Clerks whose hearts are not noble
Are worth less than other people,
Since they shun the good they know
While the vice they see they follow,

And they should be punished more
Before the Celestial Emperor,
For their abandonment to vice,
Than lay folk, who do lack advice,
Simple, knowing not the learning
That we see such clerks spurning.
And though princes learn to read
They cannot undertake indeed
To study and to learn as much,
For they have laws to make, and such.
Therefore clerks possess, you know
As far as nobility doth go,
A finer advantage, greater
Than has any earthly ruler.
Thus to become of noble worth,
A thing most honourable on earth,
All those who'd wish to yet be so
This rule alone should hear and know:
Whoe'er would seek to be noble
Must shun pride and ne'er be idle,
Give themselves to arms or study,
And free themselves from villainy;
Their hearts must be humble, gentle,
Courteous ever, to all people,
Except towards their enemy
If neither party can agree.
They should honour every lady
But not confide in her too freely,
For misfortune may come swiftly,
If one's thoughts are known completely.
Such will earn praise, and gain esteem,
Without blame or censure, I mean,
And for nobility win the name
As they deserve, others the blame.

A knight who in arms is hardy
Strong in deed, in speech courtly,
As, long ago, was Lord Gawain,
Who was no coward, I'd maintain,
And good Count Robert of Artois,
For whom honour was his lodestar;
For he was noble, chivalrous,
From childhood, and most generous,
And, ne'er idle when work began,
Ere age determined, proved a man.
Such a strong and valiant knight
Generous, courteous in a fight,
Should be welcomed by one and all,
Praised, loved, held dear, whate'er befall.
And all should honour the clerk's part,
Which is to labour at his art,
And ever to the virtues look,
He finds written of in his book.
For they did so in ancient days;
I could name ten who sought such ways,
And truth to tell, all their number
Your ears would tire, and encumber.
For, once, those valiant noblemen,
As all the writings do name them,
Emperor, count, duke and king,
A greater number than I can sing,
Did honour the philosophers,
Gave them towns as their dowers,
Gardens, and delightful places,
Honouring them to their faces.
Naples thus was granted Virgil,
A citadel more delightful
Than Paris, or Lavardin's chateau,
Where the River Loir runs below.

And, in Calabria, Ennius
Had lovely gardens, generous
Townsfolk did bestow. Name more?
Rather I'd make my case secure
With some of lowlier origin
Who more nobility did win
Than many a king's son or count;
And though their names I'll not recount,
They were held so by everyone.
Now however the time has come
When the good who work, endlessly,
To master true philosophy,
Who visit all the lands on Earth
To add to their knowledge and worth,
While suffering much from poverty,
As those in debt, or beggary,
Going naked and barefoot here,
Are neither loved nor held dear.
Princes value them not a sou,
Yet they are nobler, those who do,
(May God save me from such cares)
Than all those who go chasing hares,
Or those who are accustomed to,
In princely palaces, sit and stew.
And he who'd have the praise and fame
For nobility through another's name,
Without their valour or prowess,
Is he noble? No, he's worth less;
He should be known as base and low,
And loved far less, I'd have you know,
Than the son of some poor beggar.
Such folk as these I'll not flatter,
Were they the sons of Alexander,
Who dared such deeds as commander,

And waged campaigns of such worth,
That he was lord of all the earth.
And when all who'd fought against him
Were subdued, and thus obeyed him,
And those others had surrendered,
Who'd left their lands undefended,
He cried out, in pride and sorrow,
That the whole world was so narrow
He could scarce turn round within it;
And, wishing not to waste a minute,
Thought that he would seek another
World, to wage his campaigns further;
Perchance to break the gates of Hell,
That they too might of his fame tell,
At which the infernal gods felt fear,
For if, they thought, he should appear,
As I had warned them, then it would
Be he, not with a cross of wood,
Who'd break the gates at Hell's door,
For all those sinners gone before,
And crush those gates, in all their pride,
To free, from Hell, his friends inside.
Assume, though, that which cannot be,
That some were born to nobility,
While I cared naught for all the rest,
Called base, whom I thus dispossessed.
What point then in nobility?
Who puts their mind to it may see
In comprehending their true good,
That naught else can be understood
By those who'd prove noble and true,
Other than that they should pursue
The prowess of every ancestor,
And must that burden bear, what's more,

If they'd assume nobility,
Unless they'd steal it, wilfully,
And win the praise without the worth.
For I would say to all on Earth,
Nobility doth to mortals bring
No other good but this one thing,
That is, this one burden alone;
And to them it should be known,
That no one should praise garner
Through the virtue of some other;
As tis right that none should blame
One person for another's shame.
Let them be praised who so deserve;
But those that virtue will not serve,
In whom are found true wickedness,
Villainy, ill-humour, baseness,
Bluster, and arrant boastfulness,
Who show deceit and faithlessness,
Stuffed full of insolence and pride,
Charity and largesse denied,
Neglectful, prone to idleness,
As we all too often witness,
Though born of some ancestor,
In whom all virtue lived before,
Tis wrong if they receive today,
Praise due their ancestor. I say
That they should be thought baser,
Than those with no such ancestor.
All folk with wit know this is true:
Tis not the same thing to accrue
Great riches, and great possessions,
Appurtenances, costume, fashions,
As knowledge, and nobility,
And fame through one's ability,

Regarding what one doth acquire.
For all those filled with the desire
To labour so they might accrue
Wealth and land and costume too,
May leave it freely to their friends,
Even though that wealth extends
To a hundred thousand or more,
In gold, but he who labours for
Knowledge, learning and would gain it
Wholly through personal merit,
His love cannot so work the thing
That he can leave them anything.
Leave them his knowledge? No; the same
With his nobility or fame,
Though his teaching they may sample,
If they follow his example;
Other than this he can do naught,
Nor can more from him be sought.
And many scorn learning, tis true,
And think it all not worth a sou,
Compared to the acquisition
Of riches, and their possession.
They call themselves nobility
Because they are held so to be,
As their ancestors were thought
To be in truth what these ought;
They own hounds and many a hawk,
And talk as other nobles talk,
And hunt along the river, and through
The woods, and fields, and hedges too,
And idle their time away in play.
Yet they're but ill-born, base I say,
Who'd vaunt others' nobility,
Scorn truth, full of mendacity;

Those who'd steal, and dissemble,
And ne'er their ancestors resemble.
For when I, Nature, cause the birth
Of true likenesses they seek worth
And nobility that's other
Than any I at birth can offer,
And has a beauty all its own;
As Inner-Freedom it is known,
Shared equally by all mortals,
With reason, that is granted all
By God and is so fine and good
He and His angels all folk would
Resemble, were it not that Death
Parts the two, in a mortal breath;
Still, these seek fresh nobility
If they've inborn ability,
For if that thing they can't discover,
They'll ne'er do so through another.
Nor kings nor counts do I except,
For greater shame, in this respect,
Marks out a king's son who's a fool,
A clown run wild in Vice's school,
Than if a cobbler were his father,
A swineherd, or yet a carter.
Indeed there were greater honour
In Gawain, that noble fighter,
Being by a coward engendered,
Sitting by the fire, all cindered,
Than if he were a coward at heart,
Though his father were Renouart.
Nonetheless it is no fable,
A prince's death proves notable,
More so than doth a peasant's death;
Given the speeches, all that breath

Granted a prince where they do lie,
And foolish people think, thereby,
On seeing comets, they are made
For princes, and are thus displayed.
But if neither princes nor kings
Existed in these realms, the things
Would still be born accordingly,
As the heavenly bodies decree,
All being equal (and what's more
Though all were peaceful, or at war)
If to those aspects they had run,
Where such work was to be done,
So long as in the atmosphere
Sufficient matter did appear.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE CONTINUES TO SPEAK OF THE CELESTIAL INFLUENCES

'**THEY** also make the stars appear
Fiery dragons in the atmosphere,
Descending, as they quit the sky;
Foolish folk think these they spy.
But there is no way that reason
Can agree stars fall from heaven,
For naught, there, is corruptible;
All is firm, and strong, and stable,
And receives no imprint there
That can be issued through the air.
Naught could shatter them, like glass;
Nor aught within that they let pass,
No matter how acute or subtle,
Unless perchance twere spiritual;
For the influences pass through,
But yet break naught, nor damage do.
Their various aspects deliver
A hot summer, a cold winter,
Bringing the snowfall and the hail,
Now heavy, now light, without fail,
And many other impressions,
According to their positions,
Whether far, in opposition,
Or near, or in conjunction.
And many folks are thus dismayed
When an eclipse is there displayed,
Thinking it a great misfortune,
They can no longer see the moon,

Or sun, as they were seen before,
And, suddenly, see them no more.
Yet if the cause of such they knew,
No deep dismay would then ensue.
Next, through the winds' hostility
They'll raise the waters of the sea,
And make the waves to kiss the sky,
Yet then the sea will pacify,
Until it cannot raise a moan,
Nor raise the waters on its own
Except those that the moon's decree
Sets moving, of necessity,
Making the tides to ebb and flow,
For naught can stop their doing so.
One who would enquire more deeply
Into the miracles the starry
Bodies and the planets achieve
On earth, would find I do believe
Many a lovely one that, to indite
All, would take forever to write.
Thus the heavens indeed acquit
Themselves towards me, who profit
By their goodness, and they achieve
Their intentions well, I perceive.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE COMPLAINS OF HUMANKIND

'NOR do I of the elements
Complain, that keep my commandments,
Forming their various solutions,
And turning, in their revolutions;
For whatever there is below
The moon's corruptible, I know;
Nothing is so well nourished here
It cannot rot, and disappear.
All things obey, by disposition,
And through natural intention,
A law that cannot fail or lie;
For all at its command must die,
And this law is so general
The elements are in its thrall.
Nor of the plants do I complain,
They're not slow to obey, again;
But are attentive to my law,
And, while they are alive, are sure
To form their branches, and their roots,
Their stems and leaves, flowers and fruits;
Each year each bears all that it may
Until it dies, and fades away,
Like the grass, the bushes, trees;
Nor of the birds or fish, that please
With beauty fair to look upon;
They know how my school is run,
And such fine scholars are they,
They all bear the yoke each day,
Produce young, as is customary,

And honour thus their ancestry.
Nor let their lines die needlessly,
The which is comforting to see.
Nor of the beasts do I complain
For they have never brought me pain,
No, they forever bow the head,
And gaze upon the earth instead.
They hold to my ways, as I bid,
And do as their ancestors did.
The male goes by with his mate,
A fine and fitting couple, their fate
Their young to swiftly engender,
When it seems good to be together;
Nor do they make a market there,
When they conclude the brief affair;
Rather one labours for the other,
Courteously, of their good-nature;
They consider themselves well paid
With all the gifts for them I've made.
So too my lovely insects do,
Ants, butterflies, and horseflies too,
And the worms born from manure,
Keep my commands, and are as pure;
And my adders and my vipers,
Are all studious in their labours.
And yet mankind alone, for whom
I make the gifts that all consume,
Mankind alone, I say, whom I
Have formed to gaze upon the sky,
Mankind alone, whom I have borne
In the Divine Master's very form,
Mankind alone, whom I thus favour,
Is the end of all my labour;
Man has naught, unless from me,

As regards the corporal body,
In the trunk, nor in the members,
Worth more than dust and embers;
Nor as regards the soul, indeed,
Except for what I, here, concede:
He holds from me, his true lady,
Three powers of soul and body,
Since I the truth do here reveal,
I make him be, and live, and feel.
Mankind reaped many a benefit,
If nobility is sought, and wit;
In the godly virtues doth abound,
That in the world below are found;
And is companion to all things
That the world contains, and brings
As its bounty, that all may share;
With the stones has a being there,
With the grass has life, and then,
Feels with the creature in its den,
And not dumb as it, but knowing,
Owns, like the angels, understanding.
What more would you have me say?
Mankind owns all thought might portray,
Yet, a new world in miniature,
Acts far worse than any creature.
As regards Man's understanding,
Tis true that, as to the giving,
It was not I that decreed it so.
For twas not my gift to bestow.
I am not so powerful or wise
That I could do aught, in that guise;
I make naught that is eternal,
Whate'er I make's corruptible,
As Plato himself bears witness,

When speaking of my true business,
And of the gods who have no more
Defence 'gainst death; tis their Creator,
Sustains the gods eternally,
His will alone doth so, says he;
And if His will did not so do,
The gods would all prove mortal too.
My deeds, he says, see dissolution,
So weak my powers of execution,
Compared with the mighty power
Of God, who at this very hour
Sees all triple temporality,
In the moment of eternity.
He is the king, the emperor
And tells the gods he is their father.
Those who read Plato so concede;
His words I'll give for all to read,
At least, their meaning I'll advance,
As writ in the language of France.
"You gods, of gods I am the maker,
Both your father and creator,
And you the creatures I have made,
My works, that I have here arrayed,
Through Nature made corruptible,
But, through my will, as yet eternal.
For there is naught made by Nature,
Howe'er careful her endeavour,
That doth not fail at some season.
But whatever God, through reason,
Being good and wise without peer,
Would conjoin and temper here,
He has never wished, nor would
Dissolve that, be it understood;
Such will ne'er come to corruption,

And thus I render this conclusion:
That since you gods began to be
Through your master's will, when He
Created and engendered you,
Such that I keep, and shall keep you,
You are not of corruption free,
Nor quit of all mortality,
Utterly, for you too would die,
If you were not dear to my eye;
Yet though by nature you are such,
Tis my wish that death not touch
You, for my will is master, hence
Rules the bonds of your existence,
Thus commands its composition,
And makes eternal your position."
Such is the meaning of the speech
That Plato would indite and teach,
When of God he dared speak further,
Prizing and praising Him as greater
Than any to whom he refers
Among the ancient philosophers.
He could not speak adequately
Lacking the power to completely
Comprehend, from end to end,
What naught else could comprehend,
Except indeed the Virgin's womb.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE SPEAKS OF THE TRINITY

'FOR tis true that the Virgin whom
God chose, whose womb swelled so,
Comprehended more than Plato.
For she knew ere she bore Him,
As she rejoiced in carrying Him,
That He is the wondrous sphere,
That must without an end appear,
Whose centre is placed everywhere,
Whose circumference lies nowhere;
And the marvel of all triangles,
Whose unity creates three angles,
Yet the three considered wholly,
Form but the one sole entity.
That circle, yet triangular,
That triangle, yet circular,
He entrusted to the Virgin.
Plato knew not that within
His mind; the triple unity
Of that simple Trinity,
Nor the sovereign Deity
In the form of humanity;
That God, as the Creator working,
Formed all human understanding,
And in that flexing of His power,
Gave it to humans as their dower,
Who in truth repaid Him badly,
Thinking to deceive Him, sadly,
And yet themselves they did deceive,

Such that my Lord did death receive,
Who, without me, took human flesh,
To save those wretches from distress.
Without me! Though I know not how,
Except that all to his word doth bow;
Rather was I amazed to see
How He, of the Virgin Mary,
Was born in the flesh, for the sinner,
And crucified in the flesh moreover.
For never through me could it be
That a true virgin bore any,
Yet His Incarnation was foretold
By many a prophet of old,
Both by the Jew, and the Pagan,
To solace every heart, and then
Encourage them to believe, anew,
That the prophecy would prove true.
For in the Eclogues of Virgil,
Is heard the voice of the Sibyl,
As taught by the Holy Spirit:
"With this, fresh lineage we admit,
Sent down from high heaven this day,
To aid the folk who've gone astray;
The age of iron thus shall perish,
And the age of gold shall flourish."
E'en Abu Ma'shar bears witness,
Howe'er he knew of the business,
That beneath the sign of Virgo,
A maiden would be born below,
Who would prove a virgin mother,
And would suckle then her father,
Her husband having lain with her
Yet refrained from touching her;
This prophecy all know who are

Conversant with Abu Ma'shar,
Tis writ there in the book, at least;
And therefore all do hold a feast,
All Christian folk, in September,
Who her birth would thus remember.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE REGRETS MANKIND

'IN all of which I've spoken so,
Our Lord Jesus Christ doth know,
I have but laboured for Mankind,
For those wretches, as designed.
They are the summit of my work,
Yet my laws they scorn and shirk;
Those creatures, faithless and forsworn,
Who their lack of blessings mourn,
For nothing will satisfy them.
What more can I say about them?
All of those favours I gave them,
Cannot be withdrawn, tis certain.
Shame they bring me, at their pleasure,
Shame beyond all count and measure.
O fair sweet chaplain, my fair priest,
Is't right that I should love the least
Of them, hold them in reverence
Who yet dwell in such ignorance?
So help me God the Crucified,
I repent of them,' Nature sighed,
'But by the death that He suffered,
To whom that kiss Judas offered,
Whom Longinus struck with his lance,
The tale of Man's Fall I'll advance,
His Fall before God, who gave him
To me, and in his image made him;
For Man fills me with discontent.
As Woman, I may not be silent,
Instead, I'll speak of everything,

For Woman cannot hide a thing.
None now shall be more vilified;
Ill was it when he left my side;
Of all his vices I will tell,
And ever speak the truth as well.'

CHAPTER XCIX: NATURE SPEAKS OF MAN AND THE FALL

'A THIEF, he's proud and murderous,
Cruel, miserly, and treacherous,
Brooding, slanderous and hateful,
Envious, spiteful and unfaithful,
An unbeliever filled with lies,
Who perjures himself, and falsifies,
A foolish and inconstant boaster,
Hypocrite and idolater,
A treacherous dog, born to bite,
Bone idle, and a sodomite,
In short a wretch, whom it suffices,
To call the slave of all the vices,
That in himself doth harbour all.
See to what shackles he's in thrall;
Does he do well to purchase death
Pursuing evil, at every breath?
Yet since all things one day return
The gift received (one none can earn)
At their life's commencement, later,
When Man comes before his Maker,
Man who ought, as best he might,
To serve and honour Him outright,
And keep from evil, all his days,
How will he dare return that gaze?
And He who'll judge, with what eye
Will He his creature thus espy,
Who shall be proven then to be
So wicked toward Him, though free
To seek the good, of such base heart

He has no wish to play his part?
Great and small, men do their worst,
While claiming to put honour first,
And are, it seems, so sworn, forever,
In some pact they've made together;
Yet their honour is seldom saved
By this pact that they have made,
Great pain, instead, they oft incur,
And death or worldly shame prefer.
But what can such a wretch expect
Who all his sins shall recollect
When he's before the Judge on high,
Who'll weigh all things, by and by,
Judge them aright, without error,
And free of deviation ever?
For what reward doth him await,
Except the halter that will straight
Lead him off to Hell's sad gibbet,
To hang in irons, around him set,
Riveted in eternal shackles,
There before the Prince of Devils?
Or in a cauldron he'll be boiled,
Or roasted, all his body oiled,
Or on the coals, or on a grill,
Rotated, at some devil's will,
Like Ixion on his bladed wheel,
Spun by a devil's paw and heel;
Or must die of thirst and hunger,
Like Tantalus who bathes in water
Up to his chin but, however great
His thirst may be, such is his fate
He cannot ever reach and taste
The water, in that marshy waste;
The more he tries it ebbs and goes,

And hunger too adds to his woes,
Which he can never satisfy;
Maddened by hunger he must die.
He cannot bite the apple he sees
Before his face, nor can it seize;
When he pursues it with his teeth
It lifts higher, leaves him beneath.
Or like Sisyphus he must roll
His stone uphill, achieve the goal
Then see the rock roll down once more,
Doomed to repeat it, as before,
As Sisyphus was forced to do,
Set to raise it ever anew;
Or like the Danaids must fill
A bottomless cask, and refill;
Twas an act of pure futility,
To repay their ancient folly.
And you know too, fair Genius,
The tale of giant Tityus,
Forced to see his liver ever
Torn apart by either vulture.
In that place, many cruelties
And torments and villainies
Exist, where, at every station,
A man may suffer tribulation,
Great misery, and greater pain,
Till my revenge I can obtain.
If the strict Judge, of whom indeed
I spoke, who judges word and deed,
If he were naught but merciful,
Then they too would be delightful,
Those loans made by some usurer,
But he is just and judges ever,
And thus is feared; tis ill to sin,

All you who choose to enter in;
Though I leave to God, tis plain,
All those sins each wretch again
Is stained by, and let Him in this
As He may please, seize and punish.
But those of whom Amor complains,
(For I must hear him, for my pains)
I too complain of, every man,
And as loudly as e'er I can,
Who here denies me tribute too,
That which from every man is due,
That which they owe, and ever will,
While I grant them members still.'

CHAPTER C: NATURE SENDS GENIUS TO LOVE'S CAMP

(*Lines 20029-20136*)

Here Lady Nature doth implore
Genius to seek out Amor,
And salute him, and ensure
His courage is aroused once more.

'NOW Genius, fine orator,
Go seek the host of fair Amor,
He who ever strives to serve me,
And, I am certain, so loves me
That with a heart, frank, debonair,
He's drawn to my works so fair
As the iron's drawn to the magnet.
Say that I send him greetings yet,
And to Lady Venus my friend,
The same to all his host extend,
Except for False-Seeming alone,
Because he doth for ever roam
With proud felons, and he visits
All those dangerous hypocrites,
Of whom, indeed, the Scripture says
They're but pseudo-prophets always.
I have my own suspicions, beside,
That Abstinence is full of pride;
False-Seeming she doth resemble,
Seeming charitable and humble.
If False-Seeming is still found
Where proven traitors do abound,

Let him not stand in God's presence,
Nor yet his lover, Abstinence,
So greatly are such to be feared.
If to Amor it had not appeared
That they were so necessary
To his fight, and, assuredly,
He could manage naught without them,
He would have wished to banish them;
And yet if advocates should prove
Of them, in the cause of true love,
That their sinfulness was far less,
I shall pardon them, nonetheless.
Go to the God of Love, my friend,
To him my greetings thus extend,
Speak my complaint, ask not that he
Should seek to gain justice for me,
But speak so he may be comforted,
When he has heard your news, instead;
Please him, and grieve our enemies,
And so may all those troubles cease
That I see him now troubled by:
Tell him I send you, my ally,
To excommunicate all those
Who our firm will would thus oppose,
And to absolve the brave stalwarts
Labouring, with virtuous hearts,
To follow the laws here written
In my book, as they were bidden,
Those who strive to multiply
Their offspring, as time goes by,
Whose thoughts are on loving well,
For I hold them my friends as well,
And bring their souls thus to delight;
But let them guard themselves aright

From all the vices I have named,
And for their virtues thus be famed.
Grant them sufficient pardon too
Not for ten years, for not a sou
Is such a meagre pardon worth,
But pardon forever, on this Earth,
For every wrong they may have done,
When they've confessed to every one.
When midst Love's army you appear,
By whom you will be held most dear,
After you've greeted them for me,
As you know how, full courteously,

'She sealed it, then gave him it so'

To show them that I am forgiving,
Announce the pardon in their hearing,
The judgement that I'd have you write.'
He wrote the missive, in her sight,
She sealed it, then gave him it so,
Then she urged him to up and go.
Now that Nature, the fair goddess,
Had told all that she would confess,
As rule and custom seek of us,
Her valiant priest, brave Genius,
Absolved her and gave her penance
Good and fitting, in this instance;
A penance that he felt accorded
With the error she'd committed:
For he enjoined her then to stay
Within her forge, and toil away,
At her customary labour,
As she did when free of dolour,
And perform such service ever,
Until the King gave some other
Counsel to her, He who doth make
All things and can all things unmake.
'Sir, 'she replied, 'most willingly.'
'Then I shall go, immediately,'
Said Genius, 'all the sooner
To bring aid to the true lover.
First this silken chasuble though
I'll doff, this alb and surplice, so.'
Then he went to hang each thing
On a hook there, before dressing
In fresh clothes, his secular wear,
Less encumbering for that affair,
As if for a dance, and not a fight,
And so took wings for instant flight.

Chapter CI: Genius is greeted with joy

(*Lines 20137-20206*)

How the fair goddess Nature
Returned to her forge to labour,
With the care her work demanded,
As Genius had commanded.

'Nature returns to her forge'

'THEN Nature, at her forge once more,
Wrought with her hammers, as before,
While Genius, beat his wings and flew
Faster than the wind e'er blew,
And came, as swiftly as he might,
To Love's host, and did there alight;
But failed to locate False-Seeming,
Who had departed, swiftly fleeing,
As soon as the Crone met capture,
Who'd oped the door of the tower,
And then had allowed me to come
Where I could be with Fair-Welcome;
False-Seeming had fled I believe,
Instantly, without asking leave.
Yet Genius, arriving thence,
Found, indeed, strict Abstinence,
Who, on seeing the priest nearby,
Summoned all her strength to fly
After False-Seeming, on his track,
Such that none could hold her back;
For she'd no longing to be seen,
By any watching, with, I mean,
A priest, e'en for four gold bezants,
If False-Seeming was not present.
But Genius, without delay,
Greeted all, in a courtly way,
As he ought, and the occasion
For his visit gave, the reason
In full, forgetting naught, he told.
Yet I'd not seek here to unfold
The tale of all the joy it brought,
When they received the full import
Of all his news, for I'll be brief,
And grant your ears some relief;

For many a time those who preach
Are too verbose in what they teach,
And drive their listeners away
By speaking in that tedious way.
For now the God of Love did push
A chasuble on Genius
A ring, and crosier, and mitre,
Clearer than crystal and far brighter,
And eager for his prompt oration,
Brooked no further preparation,
Ere the judgement was read aloud.
Venus, all smiles, amidst the crowd,
Could not be silent, filled with joy,
So much so, she, no longer coy,
Pressed in his hand a burning brand,
Not virgin wax, you'll understand,
To enforce the excommunication
Of those condemned by his oration.
Genius, without more ado,
Mounted to a grand lectern, to
Better communicate the speech,
That Nature had sent him to preach.
The generals sat upon the ground,
No better seats could there be found,
While Genius unveiled his charter,
Making a sign thus with his finger,
Wagging it there to ask for silence.
And those pleased by his eloquence
Looked about and nudged each other,
Then quieted, listening together
To his words, at the commencement,
Of this, the definitive judgement.

Chapter CII: Genius pronounces judgement on Mankind

(*Lines 20207-20408*)

How that most brave priest Genius,
Amidst the host, before Venus,
Preached aloud, with every care,
All Nature's commandments there,
So that each there understood
All Nature wished for their good.

'Genius pronounces judgement'

'BY Nature's sole authority,
Who has Earth in her custody,
As the constable and vicar
Of the eternal Emperor,
Whose seat is in the sovereign tower
Of the earthly city whose power
Is administered by Nature,
Of all good things, the minister,
Through that influence of the stars,
Which ordains, blesses, and mars,
According to the imperial law,
Of which Nature is executor,
Who has given birth to each thing
Since the Earth had its first being;
And grants them their allotted term
For growth and increase, root and germ,
Creating all for their due purpose,
Beneath the heavens about us,
That circle Earth in ceaseless flow,
As high above us as below,
And never rest, by night or day,
But ever turn, without a stay;
With this, I excommunicate,
The faithless and the apostate,
And I condemn, without respite,
Be they lowly, or men of might,
All those who those works have stained,
By which Nature is sustained.
But those who, with all their power,
Seek to defend Nature's dower,
And who strive ever to love well,
Let them, in whom no base thoughts dwell,
Who labour loyally, at all hours,
Go to paradise decked with flowers.

Let them but make true confession,
And all their deeds (tis my profession)
I'll take upon me, as best I can;
Nor needst pardon any such man.
Ill was it when Nature, in accord
With law and custom, did afford
Those false folk, of whom I murmur,
Pen and book, forge and hammer.
Ploughshares too she did allow,
With sharp blades, so they might plough
The wide fields, not full of stones,
But rich and deep, in fertile zones,
Which need intensive cultivation,
If a man would prosper by them,
For they wish to forgo labour,
Nor will they serve her with honour;
Rather Nature they'd destroy,
And flee their forges, man and boy,
Their books, and every fertile field,
That she made precious, and doth yield,
So that things might yet continue,
And, undying, be born anew.
These faithless ones of whom I speak
Should be ashamed when they seek
To spurn the pen nor learn to write
That they their letters might indite,
Nor even make a mark that shows.
Sad the book's future; who knows,
But that its loss may prove total,
If Mankind's hands remain idle,
Such that the anvils rust away,
Their hammer blows stilled always,
For now they will be eaten through
And not one blow delivered true.

The fields will lie bare and fallow,
Knowing not the plough or harrow.
As well to be buried alive,
As flee the tools, and never strive,
That God has shaped with His hand,
And gave my lady, to command,
Wishing to give the tools to her
So she might forge ones similar,
To give being, as an eternal
Species, to these sadly mortal
Creatures here, who work but evil;
For if none here took the trouble
To use their tools for sixty years,
Behold, Mankind fast disappears.
If it pleased God that such prevail,
His wish were that the world fail,
Or the Earth remain, deserted, bare,
With but dumb creatures dwelling there,
Until it pleased him to create
A new Mankind in other state,
Or He revived the first again,
To populate the world; and then
If they were still all virgin when
Sixty years had passed again,
If He wished to reinstate them
He would have to recreate them;
And so on, ever. If any say
God would take desire away
From this one but not another,
I say each man is as his brother;
Indeed, because His grace is such
That He has never ceased to touch
The world with virtue, it must be
Pleasing to Him, equally,

That all are born here in like state,
Filled with the grace He doth create.
Must I question my conclusion,
That barren folk go to perdition?
I know no answer, in brief,
Except faith justifies belief;
For God loves, at their beginning,
All folk alike, in their being,
And grants rational souls to all;
To men, as to women, they fall.
I believe he desires each one,
And not merely this or that one,
To follow the path that's better,
So as to come to Him the sooner.
If he would have some folk live
Their lives as virgins, it doth give
Me to think why would He not
Wish upon others that same lot?
What deters Him, since, with these,
He cares not if generation cease?
Let those who would respond, reply,
I know no more of it, say I,
Let divines come and divine,
Who endlessly such things refine.
But those who write not with the pen
By which the species doth live again,
In those precious books, that Nature
Prepared not for the idle creature
To despise, but granted to all,
That which might be used by all,
Such that each might be a writer
And Man and Woman live forever;
Those that the twin hammers receive
But forge not, with what they receive,

Right truly, on the true anvil,
Those who so consort with evil
Blinded by sin, they go astray,
In pride despising the true way,
That furrow in the fertile field,
But seek to make the barren yield,
Ploughing deserts, in their haste,
Where all their seed goes to waste,
Who will not keep to the straight track,
But turn the plough to show its back,
And justify their sinful labour
By perverse precedents moreover,
Seeking to follow Orpheus,
(Who chose to plough wrongly thus,
Nor write, nor strike the true anvil;
May he hang by the neck, that devil
Who contrived such for the creature,
And wrought evil against Nature)
Those who spurn such a mistress,
Read her book backwards no less,
And from the wrong page, whence,
They fail to grasp its proper sense;
And thus pervert the writing when
They come to preach to other men,
As well as excommunication
That condemns them to damnation,
Since the true path they'd forego,
Ere they die, let them lose, also,
The sack they bear, its sorry tale,
That is the sign that they are male!
Let them those twin pendants lose,
That, in that purse, they so abuse!
Those two hammers hanging there
May they forgo the wretched pair!

And may the pen be snatched away
With which they fail to write, I say,
And in those precious books indite,
Fit for what the honest write!
And if they can't plough rightly there
And hold a line with their ploughshare,
Then let their bones be broken now
And ne'er mended to drive the plough!
May all those who revere their name
Live their lives in deepest shame!
May their sad and dreadful sin
Prove a sorrow and pain within,
And they be beaten in every place
So that all men do know its face!
For God's sake, all you lords alive,
Let not such sins as these survive!
At Nature's work, free of evil,
Be you quicker than a squirrel.
Lighter, more lively, as you go
Than bird doth fly or wind doth blow.
Do not forgo this, Nature's guerdon,
For all your sins I hereby pardon
If you ensure that you work well,
Move and skip and leap, pell-mell,
And never let yourself grow cold,
With icy limbs, when young or old.
Put all your tools to work, each day;
Who works is warm enough, I say.'

CHAPTER CIII: GENIUS EXHORTS LOVE'S HOST TO PROCREATE

(*Lines 20409-20812*)

How Genius swore damnation
And brought excommunication,
On all those who would not ensure
The species lived for evermore.

'COME plough, my lords, for God's sake plough,
Revive your lineages now.
Unless you do think of ploughing,
Naught ensures their continuing.
Tuck your clothes all up before,
To take the air, not less but more,
Or if you wish go naked, bold,
Yet not too hot and not too cold;
Raise the guide-boards of your ploughs
With bare hands, and naked brows,
Grip them in your arms, full tight,
And drive your ploughshares aright,
All along the straight and narrow
Plough them deeper in the furrow,
Nor let the horse that goes before
Slow, for God's sake, but be sure
To spur on the creature, harshly,
And when you wish to plough deeply,
Grant it the greatest blows you can,
As great as e'er did any man;
Or yoke a horned ox to the plough

And grant it its head, I allow,
And spur it onwards with a goad;
Thus to our benefit runs the road.
If you spur it well and often,
The better will the plough go then.
And then when you have ploughed enough,
And are weary of ploughing thus,
And have reached that point indeed,
Where you must rest from the deed
(For nothing doth last long I say,
Without some rest along the way)
And cannot yet advance it farther,
Let not desire flag, but rather,
Wait till your weariness doth pass.
Cadmus, at a word from Pallas,
Ploughed two hundred feet of ground,
And sowed the serpent's teeth around;
From those teeth, armed knights arose
To fight each other midst the rows,
Where all died in that disaster,
Except for five, companions after,
Who sought to aid Cadmus when he
Built the walls of Thebes, that city
Of which Cadmus was the founder.
With him they walled the ground there,
And then they peopled that city,
Full mighty, in antiquity.
A good sowing had brave Cadmus,
He who advanced his people thus;
If you commence as well as he,
Your lineages advanced will be.
And you have two advantages
In fostering your lineages,
If you would not forge a third,

You have a sense of the absurd,
For here's the one danger to you,
Defend yourself, and smartly too;
You are attacked on but one side,
Three of their champions beside
Are weak, and you, in riding forth,
Are fools if you can't beat the fourth.
There are three sisters too, you know,
Two of whom will their aid bestow,
Only the third can harm you aught,
For she it is cuts all lives short.
They will prove a comfort to you,
Clotho wields the spindle, tis true,
While Lachesis draws out the thread
But Atropos cuts and shears instead
Whate'er the other two can spin;
Atropos would not have you win;
Unless to your ploughing you leap
She'll bury your line, good and deep,
And upon yourself she will spy.
There is no creature worse, say I,
You have no greater enemy;
Pardon, my lords, but pardon me;
Remember your good forefathers,
And all your ancestral mothers;
Do as your fathers did before
Of your lineages make sure.
What did they do? Now pay heed,
For they made sure of them indeed,
If their prowess you but recall,
For they have engendered you all.
If twere not for their chivalry
You'd not be alive, and free,
Thus they took full pity on you.

For love, and then for friendship too,
Think of all those yet to appear,
Who'll maintain your lineage here,
Don't let yourselves be harmed again,
Pens you have, think of writing then,
Don't let your weapons rust away,
At the forge, go hammer, each day.
Help Clotho and Lachesis too,
Such that if Atropos shears through
Six fine threads, for she's a villain,
You shall spin another dozen.
Oh, think yourselves to multiply
So that you may cheat, thereby,
The cruel, unyielding Atropos,
Who'll hinder all, to your sad cost.'

CHAPTER CIII: GENIUS SPEAKS OF THE FATES AND THE FURIES

'SHE, that miserable wretch, doth strive
Against all those who are alive,
And at their death rejoices; thus,
She nurtures vicious Cerberus,
Who craves their deaths instantly,
And slavers over them greedily,
And would well-nigh die of hunger
If she failed to grant him succour;
And if she had not, then he could
Have found no other who would.
She ne'er ceases to feed him though;
When she chooses to feed him so,
Then she hangs the cur at her breast,
For she has three nipples, I attest,
(Matching his three mouths so) where
He butts, and tugs, suckling there.
He was not weaned, nor will be so,
For he seeks no other milk, I know;
No other meat doth he demand
Except the bodies and souls on hand.
Women and men thus he doth throw
Into his gullet, and down they go,
Piles of them, into his three throats.
She feeds him there alone, and gloats,
Thinking to sate him readily,
And yet she finds him ever hungry,
However much she tries to fill him.
The Furies show concern for him,

Those three most cruel pursuers,
Of every crime the avengers,
Alecto, and Tisiphone,
For I know the names of all three,
And the third one is Megara,
Who, if she could, would all devour.
These three await you all, in Hell,
There they beat and whip folk well,
Hang, and strike, and skin, and maul,
Drown, burn, grill and boil them all,
Before the cruel judges three,
Who sit in full consistory,
And bind all those who once did strive
To fuel their vices when alive.
By means of such tribulations
They extract from them confessions,
Of all the evils they did spawn
Since the moment they were born,
Before them all the folk do tremble,
Yet a coward I should resemble
If I failed to name them thus,
King Minos, and Rhadamanthus,
The third Aeacus, their brother;
And Jupiter he was their father.
Now, those three in the world above
Three such worthy men did prove,
And all maintained the right so well
That they were made judges in Hell;
Such was the reward that Pluto
Granted them in the world below;
Their souls departed; such his need
To have them serve him there, indeed.
My lords, for God's sake, go not there.
Gainst vices struggle, everywhere,

All those that Nature, our mistress,
Told me of when she did confess
Today at my mass; there are plenty,
You will find here six and twenty,
More harmful than you might think;
But the virtuous will not sink,
All those who love and live well,
To where those three Furies dwell,
The three whom I have named before
Whose reputations all deplore,
Nor need you fear condemnation,
By those judges, to damnation.
I would name to you the vices,
Yet, the task, it scarce entices,
That the Romance doth disclose,
The lovely Romance of the Rose;
Gaze, if you please, upon them there,
The better to guard you from care.'

CHAPTER CIII: GENIUS DESCRIBES THE PARADISIAL REWARD FOR VIRTUE

'Genius describes the reward for virtue'

'NOW, think you virtue to recover;
Let each man embrace his lover,
And let his lover embrace him,
And kiss, and fête, and comfort him,
And each be faithful to that same,
Nor thought ever to be to blame.
And when you've finished your employ,
As I commend, sated with joy,
Think of going to confession,
Twill do you good, and ill will lessen;
And call on the Celestial King,
Nature's master in everything.
He will succour you in the end,
When Atropos's shears descend.
He will save both soul and body;
He is my lady's mirror, the lovely
Mirror without which she would
Know nothing of the bad or good.
He doth govern her and rule her,
But for His she knows no other
Rule, for what she knows He taught her,
When as his chamberlain he sought her.
My lords, I wish that this sermon
All, word for word, ere it be gone,
(For such my lady doth command)
All present here should understand,
(One's book is not always around,
And tis so tiring to write it down)
And that all should learn it by heart,
And so recite it in whate'er part
They reach, be it town or city,
Or some castle, where'er they be,
In summer or in winter, I say,
For those who are not here today.

Tis a good thing to remember
What flows from a good teacher,
And a better to speak of it again,
For so one might to praise attain.
All my speech is full of virtue,
A hundred times more precious too
Than sapphire, ruby, or spinel.
Fair lords, my lady needs as well
Such preachers to uphold her law,
And chastise all the sinners for
Transgressing her rules every day
That they should learn and keep alway.
And if you too do preach like this,
According to my word and promise,
As long as word and deed agree,
You will ever gain your entry
To that park's sweet meadow too
Where the Son of the Virgin ewe,
Leading his flock, doth gently pass;
They go behind Him o'er the grass.
In His fleecy coat he's dressed,
As he goes on before the rest,
All in their scattered company,
Along the narrow path they see,
Buried deep in flowers and grass,
So little worn by those that pass.
There the little white ewes go,
Good-natured creatures that do flow
Over all the fresh grass grazing,
And the wild flowers springing.
Know you it is such a pasture,
And of so wondrous a nature,
That every delightful flower
Is fresh and pure, born that hour,

Such as maidens cull in spring,
As fresh and new to everything
As the twinkling stars that shine
Midst the grass at morning time,
Gleaming in the early dew;
And they hold their beauty too
Through the whole day, pure in colour,
Fresh and living, greet each other,
Nor in the evening show their age,
But can be gathered at each stage,
And are the same at eve as morn,
Seeming as when they were born;
Nor are they, you may be certain,
Overblown or still half-open,
But rather shine, at every hour,
In all the fullness of their flower;
For the sunlight falling there
Harms them not, nor doth impair
The dew, whose drops like jewels seem,
With which the living flowers do gleam,
That brings a beauty absolute,
It sweetens them so at the root.
No matter how much of the grass
The flock consume as they pass,
Nor how many flowers they eat,
Or they tread beneath their feet,
They cannot consume so much
That all revives not at a touch;
Moreover, and I speak no fable,
All there is incorruptible,
However much the sheep may graze;
They live, securely, all their days,
Whose wool is not sold in the end,
Nor fleece is used, you may depend,

For woollen cloth, nor doth their skin
Give unknown folk shelter within.
They will not be sent for slaughter,
Nor their flesh be eaten; rather,
Free from all illness and decay,
Naught there shall take their life away.
And yet, whate'er I've said to you,
The Good Shepherd, and this is true,
He whom all the flock doth follow,
Doth clothed in woollen garments go,
Yet shears them not, nor despoils them,
Takes not a wisp of value from them;
For it seems good to Him He shares
A robe of wool resembling theirs.
I'd say no more, for fear I bore you,
Yet no night obscures their view,
There all is day, and that forever,
And evening can touch them never,
Nor does the dawn there advance,
At morning, in like circumstance;
For like the evening is the morn,
And the evening's like the dawn.
I say the same of every hour,
The day is in the moment's power,
That day that cannot fade away
Howe'er night may seek a way:
It owns to no temporal measure,
That day so fair, that lasts for ever,
That present that glows so bright,
Without future or preterite,
For, to all that such truth can see,
Time there's composed of all three;
One present compasses the day,
But not one that doth pass away

In part, and so doth make an end,
Nor leaves a part to come, my friend;
For past was never present there,
Where His flock doth take the air,
And future has such permanence,
That it can never seek a presence.
For the sun is there resplendent,
Forever bright, in the ascendant,
And ever to that point did bring
The day, in an eternal spring.
So fair a spring none ever saw
In Saturn's reign, nor one so pure,
When he ruled o'er the age of gold,
And his son Jupiter proved bold,
Castrating his father, cruelly,
Doing him harm and injury.'

CHAPTER CIII: GENIUS SPEAKS ABOUT EUNUCHS

'TO speak true, most assuredly,
Those who would castrate a worthy
Man work him great harm and shame,
And bring dishonour on that same,
For even if I told you naught
Of the pain and shame it brought,
The least harm that it doth prove:
It loses him his lover's love.
No matter how close their ties.
Or if in marriage there he lies,
All will go wrong in that affair,
For, be she ever so debonair,
He'll lose the love of a good wife.
It is a sin to impair a life,
A great sin to castrate a man
For he loses you understand
Far more than a lover so dear
In whom now he will find scant cheer,
Or a wife, for they are the least;
He loses the vigour, all decreased,
That a valiant man should possess,
For eunuchs are, all must confess,
Cowards, perverse in their fashion,
Malicious, in the mode of woman.
No eunuch, I say, for certain,
Has bravery or vigour in him,
Unless tis in the ways of vice
Some work of malice, cold as ice.
Then, women are always ready

To undertake some devilry,
And eunuchs will attempt the same
Who act like women in all but name.
The man who doth castrate another,
Though he be no thief or murderer,
Nor is of mortal sin guilty,
Has at least sinned to this degree,
That he has truly wronged Nature,
Stealing the power to engender;
Though they pondered his action
None could excuse his infraction.
At least I could not, for if I too
Thought about it long, like you,
I'd wear out my tongue, in truth,
Before I could forgive, in sooth,
Such a wrong, so great an error,
As he committed towards Nature.
But howe'er great the sin might be,
Jupiter he cared naught, not he,
So long as he, you understand,
Might hold the power in his hand.
And when that flesh away he hurled,
And thus was lord of all the world
Then he issued his commandment,
The law expressing his intent,
And to those mortals did it give,
To teach the people how to live,
Delivered in open audience;
Of which I'll teach you now the sense.'

CHAPTER CIV: JUPITER'S COMMANDMENT

(*Lines 20813-21428*)

Hear now how Jupiter teaches
That all folk should seek what pleases,
Do all according to their wish
And will; and his law doth publish.

"'**JUPITER**, who doth rule the Earth
Commands that each one, from their birth,
Should think to satisfy their ease,
If aught there is that doth them please
Let them do it, if tis their part,
And so bring solace to their heart."
For nothing further did he call,
Granting licence to one and all,
That individually each might do
That from which pleasure might accrue,
For pleasure, he said, in their presence,
Was the best thing in existence,
And of life the sovereign good;
All should seek it as best they could.
And so that all would follow him,
And for their example take him
And his deeds, he wrought, in the flesh,
Whate'er pleased him, and sought no less;
Dan Jove wrought as his heart advised,
He by whom pleasure was so prized.
As Virgil says in his Georgics,
He who wrote the fine Bucolics,

(For in the Greek writers he found
All that Jove did on solid ground)
Before Jove came, and did endow
Mankind, no man did drive a plough,
No man had ever ploughed a field,
Or made the fertile soil to yield.
Those simple folk, peaceful and good
Set no boundaries, as now they would:
Communally they sought for all
The good things that did them befall.
He ordered the land divided, this
Because none knew what was his,
And marked out, acre by acre;
He set the venom in the viper,
And he set malice up on high,
So the wolves might rage thereby;
Cut down the oaks, each wild beehive,
No living brooks did there survive;
He quenched the fires everywhere,
(To drive the people to despair!)
So men must seek a spark from stone,
So cunning he, from there alone;
Diverse new arts he entertained,
The stars he numbered and he named;
And he had snares and lime-traps set
And caught wild creatures in the net,
And hallooed hounds to hunt the deer
The first time such sport did appear;
And he first tamed the birds of prey,
With all the cunning men display,
And set the sparrow-hawks to sail,
Made war, on partridges and quail,
And cranes, in tourneys in the air,
And goshawks flew, and falcons there,

And had them fly down to the lure,
And so their tameness would endure,
And they'd upon one's fist alight,
He fed the birds both morn and night.
Thus cruel hawks in their bondage
Served the youth in that new age,
And they were held in slavery,
To act as the fierce enemy,
The ravishers, most terrible,
Of other birds born peaceable.
Men could fly not through the air,
And yet could not live lacking their
Wild game, that all desired to eat,
To make their meals thus complete,
Greedy for such delicacies,
For the fowl that most did please.
And then a ferret he would set
To drive the rabbit to his net.
He loved to feed his body ever
And had the fish, from sea and river,
Baked, poached, skinned, and embayed
In new sauces that he had made,
With many fine herbs and spices
Mingled in their various guises.
Thus such arts all came about,
For all things, day in, day out,
Yield to labour, and necessity,
When driven by harsh poverty,
For such ill stirs an active mind,
Through the need that it doth find;
So says Ovid himself who knew
A great deal of such trouble too,
Good and bad, honour and shame,
And tells, in letters, of that same.

In short, as Jupiter intended,
When he his power extended,
Over Earth, his rule, perverse,
Changed all from good to bad, to worse.
For he proved lax in everything;
Shortening the time granted spring,
Dividing the year's length in four,
As now, and not as twas before;
Spring, summer, autumn, winter
These the seasons, and so forever,
Where once was one endless spring.
For Jupiter he changed everything,
Who when he so began his reign
Did thus the age of gold disdain,
And brought about the age of silver,
And then of brass; for folk did ever
Continue to degenerate,
And draw towards a base estate,
Until that lesser age did pass,
Changed to iron from that of brass,
Delighting the gods of darkness,
The shadowy courts full of vileness,
Who are jealous when men thrive,
While gazing on them yet alive.'

CHAPTER CIV: GENIUS SPEAKS OF THE BLACK SHEEP AND THE WHITE

'IN their pens, below, they hold,
And ne'er to be set free of old,
The dolorous black sheep, weary,
Ill, wretched, in their melancholy,
Who the path would not pursue
That the fair Lamb led them too,
That which would have freed them quite,
And turned all their black fleeces white.
They the broad road chose to follow,
That led them to their dark hollow,
And with so great a company,
They filled the whole road completely.
But no sheep that thereon is caught,
Bears a hide that is worth aught,
From which clothing might be sewn,
Except some vile hair shirt, I'd own,
That is more bristling and rank,
Where'er it brushes either flank,
Than a coat, that merely tickles,
Made of spiny hedgehog prickles.
But whoe'er that pure wool did seek
To card, so soft, and smooth, and sleek,
Of the white sheep, and had enough
To fashion clothes of that fine stuff,
Would be dressed by those creatures
As befits kings or emperors,
Or angels, if they wore such things
As robes of wool beside their wings.

For any who were dressed that way,
And wore such robes of wool today,
Would be dressed more than nobly;
Because of this, especially,
They should hold such creatures dear,
For they prove very few, I fear.
The High Shepherd who those white sheep
Has in His flock, and them doth keep
In pasture, is no simpleton;
No black sheep may graze thereon,
No matter how much they bleat,
For tis the white graze at His feet,
Those who know their Shepherd well
And lodge with Him, as I do tell,
And they are all well known to Him
And are thus, readily, gathered in.
And, I say, the most delightful,
Compassionate, and beautiful,
Of those to that pasture keeping,
Is also the white Lamb leaping,
Who by his toil and suffering
To that park the sheep did bring,
For he knows if the wolf but sees
A stray sheep that doth it please,
The wolf that seeks naught else, I say,
Than a sheep straying from the way
Of the Lamb that leads it ever,
Lacking that defence and shelter,
Then it will eat that sheep alive,
Howe'er against it man may strive.
My lords, the Lamb doth await you,
Of that I'll speak no more, to you,
Except to pray to God the Father,
That through the grace of His Mother,

He grant the Shepherd guide His sheep,
That from the wolf He may them keep,
And pray that you, through sin, not fail
To graze and gambol in that dale,
That is so lovely, so delightful,
Decked with grass and flowers eternal,
With violets and roses too,
And all good things the eye may view.'

CHAPTER CIV: GENIUS COMPARES THE PLEASURE-GARDEN AND THE PARK

'YET if one drew comparison
Twixt that beautiful walled garden,
Where the Lover viewed the dance,
Where Pleasure and his people prance,
(Tis barred by the little wicket gate)
And this fair park, then, I must state,
There is no just comparison,
And one would thus commit a wrong,
As great as one incapable
Of telling pure truth from fable;
For one who was within this park
Or from without its realm did mark,
Would dare, and rightly, to claim
The pleasure-garden nowhere came,
Compared to this fair pasture,
That is not walled so, in a square,
But is so rounded and so subtle,
That there was never ball or beryl
So round, so circular, I'll allow.
What would you have me tell you now?
Let me speak of those things again,
That the Lover saw on that plain,
Outside the garden, and then pass
Swiftly on, ere you tire, alas:
Ten images before the gate
He saw, each one a vile portrait;
While one who stood outside the park

Would there find Hell and all its dark
Scheming devils, in truth, portrayed,
Ugly and foul, as they displayed
Each fault, each miserable vile thing,
They commit in Hell, their lodging;
And Cerberus who guards its gate;
And then the whole of Earth's estate,
With all its ancient riches shown,
And every earthly thing that's known;
And see the seas, and oceans, shine,
And all the fish that swim the brine,
And every river-loving creature,
In sweet, clear, or cloudy water,
All the large and small fish, plain,
That fresh water doth contain,
And the air, each bird that flies,
The insects, and the butterflies,
And all that hums through the air,
And then the fire that everywhere
Surrounds the home, to all intents,
Of all the other elements;
And see each planet and each star,
Clear, bright, and shining from afar,
Wandering or fixed, as each appears,
Attached to their respective spheres.
One might see all that encloses
The park, and all that there reposes,
Openly portrayed, in every wise
As though before one's very eyes.
Now we'll return to the garden,
And then relate, as we have done,
What lies inside; the Lover said
He saw the folk that Pleasure led,
As he did dance across the grass,

And o'er the fragrant flowers did pass;
Saw, the youth said, all its features,
Plants, and trees, and all its creatures,
And the brooks, and the springs,
And the fountain there that sings
The one that rises neath the pine,
And boasted not since Pepin's time
Was there such a wondrous tree,
Nor e'er a fount half as lovely.
For God's sake, my lords, take care!
All the things he speaks of there,
Are trifles and mere bagatelles.
In truth, all this of which he tells,
Has in it naught that is eternal,
All he saw there's corruptible;
He saw the dances that must pass,
As will the dancers on that grass,
And all the things the garden shows,
All that he found it did enclose.
For when that nurse of Cerberus,
Exerts her strength, fell Atropos,
Who can use her powers forever,
And yet will ne'er grow weary ever,
There's naught mere mortals can employ
To save whate'er she would destroy.
She spies on all things, everywhere,
Except the gods, should they be there,
For, I am certain, things divine
Do not, in truth, to death decline.
For now I will speak of all those
Fair things the park doth enclose;
I'll speak of them quite generally,
As I would speak of this but briefly,
And those who'd know all, I, truly,

Cannot give the whole entirely,
For no mind could yet believe,
Nor the tongue of man conceive
The worth and beauty and the grace
Of all contained within that place,
The great joy, the lovely gambols,
All the things, true and eternal,
Those that dwell within do find;
For all within that place divine,
Possess all that is delightful
All there proves true, and is eternal,
And it is right it should be so,
For every good thing doth flow
From the one source and spring,
Which doth water everything,
And which is both healing and pure,
Precious, fair and clear, what's more,
And from its flow the creatures drink,
Who wished to dwell upon its brink,
Once from the black sheep separated.
And when they drink, and are sated,
They can ne'er be thirsty ever,
And live, as they wished, forever
Free of death and free of sickness.
In good time, shall they progress,
In good time, the Lamb, I say,
They'll follow on the narrow way,
Protected by the Good Shepherd,
Who desired them for His herd.
None who drink of that fountain
Shall ever die, but live again.
It is not that beneath the tree,
The Lover saw flow readily,
From the slab of marble born,

His praise of which one should scorn.
For that's the fountain perilous
So bitter, and so venomous,
That it killed the fair Narcissus,
When he gazed within it thus.
The Lover too is not ashamed,
To testify that it be blamed;
He hides not that it proves bitter,
But calls it the perilous mirror,
And says that when he gazed therein,
And saw himself, he found therein
Grief and pain, gave many a sigh.
Behold what sweetness there doth lie!
Lord, what a fountain sweet and fair,
When health but turns to sickness there!
What good will come to those who gaze,
And view themselves where that fount plays!
It flows, he says, in two great waves,
From two deep and hollow caves,
But its twin sources do not flow
From its own self, that I do know;
For there is naught that issues there
That doth not come there from elsewhere;
He says it endlessly runs clear,
Brighter than silver doth appear;
With what trifles he beguiles you,
In truth tis cloudy, and ugly too,
Such that none who sets his mind
To gazing in it, his self can find,
But struggles, and labours withal,
Yet knows his own self not at all.
Its depths hold two crystals, he says,
Which when the bright sun shoots its rays,
Shine so brightly, that those who gaze

See glittering there within, always,
Half of all the things that lie
In that garden and meet the eye.
And so clear and powerful are they,
That gazing in another way
Reveals the rest, bright, unshrouded.
Yet they themselves are dark and clouded!
Why, since the sun shines so brightly,
Can they not show the garden rightly,
Together in one single view?
They cannot, for i'faith the two,
Dark in themselves, are obscure,
And clouded, as I said before.
Of themselves they're insufficient
To those who gaze with that intent,
Since they gain brightness from elsewhere.
If the sun's rays do not strike there
So as within their depths to fall,
They have no power themselves at all.
But that which I describe to you,
The fount of all, lovely and true,
Oh, grant me your ear a while, as I
Speaks of the wonders that in it lie.'

CHAPTER CIV: THE ETERNAL FOUNTAIN

'THAT fountain, of which I speak,
Which is so lovely, and doth seek
To revive the weary creature,
With its virtues and its savour,
From three sweet springs ever rolling,
Sends its clear sweet water, glistening.
They are so close to one another
That all three act as one together,
Such that, when you view them clear,
Both one and three do there appear,
If you the number there would find,
And never four will come to mind,
But ever three and ever one,
That is their property, in sum.
None has e'er seen such a fount,
For from itself its streams do mount;
No other spring doth create it,
Borne from some other conduit;
It flows itself through all its course,
And has no need of other source.
Holding its own channel alone,
More firmly than the native stone.
It needs no marble to surround it,
Nor pine-tree's canopy above it,
For from so high a source it flows
No tree so mighty ever grows,
That the height of that pure water
Proves not at its source far greater.

Except that, on a slope, you'd see
Above a lowly olive tree,
One that seems as if descending,
Beneath which the fount is flowing,
And when the little olive tree
Feels the fountain at its knee,
Moistening all its roots below
With its clear, sweet, pure flow
It finds there such sweet nourishment,
It so receives encouragement,
That it is charged with leaves and fruit,
Becomes so tall and great, to suit,
The pine the Lover once described
Never climbed so high, nor thrived
So greatly, nor such width displayed,
Nor produced such wondrous shade.
The olive tree there, on the mount,
Extends its branches o'er the fount,
And thus that fountain it doth shade,
And, in the coolness it has made,
The little sheep hide, there they sip
The sweet dew, that meets the lip,
The cool flow spreads, as it doth pass,
Over the flowers and tender grass.
And hanging from the olive tree
There is a scroll whose letters read,
For those who do its message heed,
As they recline there in its shade:
"Here is the fount of life displayed,
Beneath the leafy olive tree
As lovely as a tree may be,
That bears the fruit of salvation."
What pine hath so fine a station?
I say to you that in this fount

(Fools will question my account
And say it is no more than fable)
There shines a gem, a miracle,
Greater than all earthly garnets,
Round, and brilliant, with three facets.
It sits amidst the fount, on high,
So that, full clearly to the eye,
It there illuminates the park.
Its rays shine out, and ne'er grow dark,
Untouched by cloud or wind or rain,
So fine it is, without a stain.
And know you, each facet doth own
(Such is the virtue of the stone)
As much worth as the other two,
Such power to the whole is due;
The other two each worth no less,
However great its loveliness.
And none however hard they try
Can separate the three thereby,
Nor so fuse them all, moreover,
That they are lost in one another.
No sun lights this gem, however,
Which is so pure and true in colour,
So clear, and bright and shining
That the sun, that he saw gleaming
In that pool, those crystals doubled,
Would seem dark, and ever troubled.
What can I tell you here, in short?
No other sun shines in that court,
Except this gem that shines above,
This is the sun that all doth move
There within, of greater splendour
Than any sun, and tis no wonder
That its light banishes the night

Renders the day shining bright,
That fair, eternal day, my friend,
Without beginning, without end,
Holds itself there, eternally,
Without waning one degree
Past any sign that there may be,
Past midnight, or any line
That might divide the present time.
And it has such wondrous power
That any who, in its fixed hour,
Bent towards the fount have gazed
To see their faces their displayed,
No matter how they are aligned
They see the whole park there defined,
And understand all there aright,
And themselves too, at that sight.
And, viewing themselves, thereafter
Each shall become a wise master
And so will never be deceived,
By whate'er they have perceived.
Another wonder I will teach,
The rays of that fair sun do reach
The eyes not to mar or weaken
Those who do look upon them,
Rather they delight, and strengthen
All images in their retention,
And reinvigorate the sight
With true clarity, shining bright,
And filled with a temperate heat,
That with a subtle fragrance sweet
Fills the park, through the power
Of that worth which is its dower.
And though I would not hold you long,
Keep this in your remembrance strong

That whoe'er sees the form and matter
Of that park, would claim, thereafter,
That Adam was not, to their eyes,
Formed in so fair a paradise.
By God's grace, my lords, how there
Do the garden and park compare?
Give your judgement, in a sentence,
On both accident and substance;
And, tell me then, most faithfully,
Which owns to the greater beauty;
Think, from which of those two founts
The purer, healthier water mounts;
Judge now the natures of the two,
Say which has the greater virtue;
Compare next the precious stones,
And say which place the finer owns;
Compare the pine and olive after,
That stand above the flowing water.
And I will accept your sentence,
If, based upon the evidence,
That I've proclaimed heretofore
A true judgement you'll ensure.
For I say, without flattery,
I yield to no man entirely,
For if you seek a wrong, in sooth,
Speak falsely, or suppress the truth,
I shall not seek to hide from you
I would appeal elsewhere, anew.
That the sooner we might agree,
I will recall for you, briefly,
As I explained before, to you,
The greater goodness, greater virtue.
That – makes the living drunk with death,
This – raises the dead, in a breath.

My lords, know this with certainty,
If you manage yourselves wisely,
And act, in all ways, as you ought
You'll drink of the fount, as I've taught.
And so that all I said may be
Retained by you more readily,
(A lesson's easier to retain
If few words do its sense explain)
I will briefly repeat for you,
All of the things that you should do.
Seek always to honour Nature,
Serve her well by your labour;
And however goes the season,
Lend her your aid within reason.
If you receive aught from another
Return the same then to that other,
And if you have frittered away
That loan, or lost it all at play,
When you are in funds again,
Then willingly repay that same.
Seek not to murder, or to slay,
Keep hands and mouth clean alway;
Be loyal, and compassionate,
So pass beyond the narrow gate,
Follow the lamb in that fair field,
That doth the life eternal yield,
And drink from that lovely spring,
So clear, sweet, and health-giving
That you will be all free from death,
Once you drink of it, at a breath.
But rather will live joyfully,
Sing on through all eternity,
Upon the grass, sweet chansonettes
Amidst the flowers, and fair motets,

Carolling neath the olive tree.
What restlessness is this I see?
Tis time for me to finish, clearly,
For lovely songs too may weary,
Now lest I keep you all too long,
I shall, indeed, complete my song.
Now you know what you must do
When you are placed on high here too,
To preach from the pulpit to us.'
Genius preached to the host thus,
Delighting, bringing them solace.
Then his candle, in that very place,
He threw down; and its smoky flame
Spread all its glare about the same,
No lady was protected from it,
So well did Venus seek to spread it.
And the wind so caught it then
That all the women once again,
Bodies, hearts, and thoughts moreover,
Were permeated with that odour.
And Amor spread the news abroad,
All that the charter did afford,
So that no man of discernment,
E'er disagreed with its judgement.
That candle he did thus employ,
And all the host were filled with joy,
For never had they heard, they said
So fine and true a sermon read,
Nor e'er, since they were conceived,
So great a pardon had received,
Nor heard until this fine oration,
Such an excommunication;
And so as not to lose the pardon,
Agreed his judgement on the garden,

And replied at once, to that,
'Amen, amen, fiat, fiat.'
Since there was naught left to weigh,
There was no reason to delay.
All who admired the sermon's art,
Took it, word for word, to heart,
For it seemed most salutary,
Its pardon, for all, a charity;
They heard it willingly, I mean.
Now Genius vanished from the scene,
And what became of him none knew.
Then twenty or more raised the halloo:
'Now to the assault, without delay,
Who understood his speech this day!
Our enemies are discomforted.'
Then all arose, with virtue fed,
Ready now to advance the war,
Take all and raze it to the floor.

CHAPTER CV: VENUS RE-LAUNCHES THE ASSAULT

(*Lines 21429-21590*)

Venus gathered up her dress,
The better the air to address,
And went full swiftly thither,
Yet the castle did not enter.

VENUS, prepared for the assault,
First called out to the foe to halt
Their vain defence and surrender.
Shame it was that gave their answer:
'Indeed Venus, this means nothing;
For you'll ne'er set a foot within,
Not if twere I alone were here,'
Said Shame, 'for I know no fear.'
The goddess, hearing her reply,
'You slut, what purpose,' she did cry,
'Is served by your resisting so?
All this we soon shall overthrow
If the castle's not surrendered;
By you twill never be defended.
Defend it against us, indeed!
You will surrender it, at speed,
Or I shall burn you all alive,
Every wretch that doth so strive.
For I'll set the whole place alight,
Raze the tower, and turrets, quite.
I'll warm your backside and burn

Pillars, posts, and walls in turn.
Your moat will be piled sky high,
With their wreckage, thus say I;
However strong you choose to build,
Down they come, the moat is filled.
And Fair-Welcome will then allow
All whom he welcomes with a bow
To take the Rosebuds and the Roses,
Gifts, or by sale, that wall encloses.
No matter how proud you may be,
You'll all strike your flag readily.
Then folk may go, and in procession,
For I shall brook no exception,
Among the bushes, midst the roses,
When I throw ope what it encloses.
To overcome vile Jealousy,
I shall make the meadows free,
Lay the fields and pastures low,
I shall enlarge the pathways so,
And all then may gather freely
Buds and Roses; lay and clergy,
Religious folk, and secular,
None shall circumvent the matter,
All shall come in penitence,
Though you may find this difference;
That some folk will come secretly,
While others come quite openly;
And those who come in secret will
Be yet considered fine men still,
While the others will be defamed,
As wretched whoremongers claimed,
Though indeed their fault is smaller,
Than those who scorn their accuser.
But yet, tis true, there is the sinner

(And may the Lord, and Saint Peter,
Confound him, may he be cursed!)
Who shuns the Roses, turns to worse;
He'll be pricked hard, and the devils,
Shall grant him a crown of nettles;
For Genius, who spoke for Nature,
He has sentenced each vile creature,
For his base proclivities,
With all our other enemies.
Shame, if I could not trick your heart,
Little I'd prize my bow, my art,
Indeed, I could blame no other;
For I'll never love your mother,
Reason, nor can I love you ever;
She's bitter towards the Lover.
Who lists to your mother or you,
Will never know a love that's true.'
This speech fulfilled Venus' intent,
What she'd said was all-sufficient.
She drew herself to her full height,
Like a woman ready for a fight.
She drew her bow, notched her dart,
And then she exercised her art,
Bringing the bowstring to her ear,
The bow no longer than a mere
Six feet, and aimed, that fine archer,
Towards a narrow aperture,
Half-concealed, which she espied
At the front, not round the side,
Of the tower, where cunning Nature
Had placed it between two pillars.
These pillars, made of ivory,
In place of a reliquary
Supported a silver statue,

Not too short or tall, nor too
Wide or thin, but of a measure
In the body, hand, arm, shoulder,
Neither too little nor too much,
But perfect in its form, as such,
The other parts as fine or finer,
And, more fragrant then pomander,
Within there was a sanctuary,
Covered by precious drapery,
The finest cloth and most noble
Twixt there and Constantinople.
There was no equal on any tower;
Greater than Medusa's power,
It performed wonders profuse
Though put to far better use.
Gainst Medusa none might survive
For they were turned to rock, alive.
Twas her gaze, ill she did there,
With her evil, snake-filled hair;
For all who looked towards her
Had no sure defence against her,
Except for Jove's son, Perseus,
Who made this Medusa yield,
By gazing at her in the shield
That Pallas his sister gave him;
And thus that same shield saved him.
By its means, the Gorgon's head,
He took and kept, once she was dead.
He held it close, and used it well,
In many a conflict that befell;
Many a foe he changed to stone,
Or slew them with his sword alone.
The head he gazed at in the shield;
Else to stone he'd have congealed,

Remained a rock there, in that place,
Merely from looking on her face;
Using his shield, but as a mirror,
So great was the Gorgon's power.
But the statue that I tell you of
Has greater virtue, for thereof
No death comes, for it kills none,
Nor turns to stone a single one,
Rather from rock doth transform them,
And propagates the form of them,
Finer, in truth, than twas before,
Or others could indeed restore.
One works hurt, the other profit,
One kills, the other revives it.
One causes harm, with its fell charm,
The other doth remove the harm,
Since those who were stone before
Or in their senses wounded sore,
If they are brought near the latter
Though it looks on stony matter,
They will be changed from stone,
And their right senses they will own,
And be protected forever,
From every evil and danger.
If I could, if God might help me,
I would approach it more closely,
And touch that form which I revere,
If any may approach so near.
For it is worthy, and virtuous,
And in its beauty it is precious.
And if, by use of one's reason,
One would make comparison
Twixt this image and the other,
One could say that it was greater

Than that carved by Pygmalion;
As a mouse must yield to a lion.

Chapter CVI: The tale of Pygmalion

(*Lines 21591-21692*)

Of that statue the tale's begun,
That was carved by Pygmalion.

'Pygmalion and the statue'

PYGMALION, he was a sculptor,
Who worked in hardwood and other
Things suited to the craft, like stone,
And metal too, and wax, and bone,
And all materials that proved fine
To carry out some grand design.
(No better artist could be found
To carve a work of great renown)
A statue he would make would he,
An image carved of ivory,
And gave his work such attention
So executed his intention,
So wrought this work, of his conceiving,
It proved so noble and so pleasing,
It seemed, that form he did contrive,
Fair as the fairest, and alive.
Not Helen, nor Lavinia,
Her complexion could come near,
Nor were born to be as lovely,
Nor owned a tenth of her beauty.
He was amazed, Pygmalion,
When he himself looked thereon.
And, all unwary of the threat,
Love now enmeshed him in his net,
So strongly, he found scant relief;
He grieved, but could not stem his grief.
'Alas,' he said, 'do I wake or sleep?
Many a statue I've made; but weep,
And fall in love with them? Never!
Some are beyond price, moreover,
Yet I'm conquered by this fair one,
And she's robbed me of all reason.
How did this love seize me, though?
Alas, what captured my thoughts so?

Though deaf and mute I love but her;
A statue, she'll not move or stir,
Nor ever yet grant me mercy;
How did such a love come to be?
There is not one could give an ear
And yet not be dumbfounded here
By, of all fools, the greatest one
In all the world. What's to be done?
I'faith, if I loved fair royalty,
I might still have hope of mercy,
For such a thing is possible.
But this love is unthinkable,
It arises not from Nature,
But some malaise in the creature;
Nature finds an ill son in me,
She shamed herself in making me.
Yet if I would love so foolishly
Tis not her I should blame; on me
The blame should fall, anon.
Since I was named Pygmalion,
And could walk on my own two feet
With such a love I ne'er did meet.
Yet I love not so foolishly,
For if the tales lie not, many
Have, indeed, proved more foolish still.
Did not Narcissus drink his fill
Of his own face, in the fountain
Neath the branches, gazed again,
Sated his thirst in the pure water?
Did he not lose himself, thereafter?
Then he died, so goes the story,
Yet lives on in the memory.
So I am not so great a fool,
For when I wish to love this jewel,

I can go hold her, clasp her, kiss,
And ease my misery through this.
Narcissus, he could ne'er possess
What he viewed, while scant success
Men have won, in many a country,
In loving many a fair lady.
They served them as best they might,
And yet none would their love requite,
Though they performed to the letter.
Has not Amor served me better?
No for those lovers, howe'er unsure,
Possessed the hope of winning more,
To be kissed, some other favour,
But I lack hope that I shall savour
Such joy as they anticipate
Who the delights of love await.
When, to comfort myself, I wish
To clasp her, and embrace, and kiss,
I find my love is as rigid
As a post, and just as frigid,
My mouth a frozen orifice,
When I touch there so as to kiss.
Ah, I have spoken too coarsely,
Sweet friend, I beg your mercy,
And beg you to accept amends,
For inasmuch as your gaze extends
To me, and you do smile sweetly,
That, I think, should suffice me;
A tender regard, a sweet smile,
Delight the lover and beguile.'

CHAPTER CVII: PYGMALION WEDS THE STATUE

(*Lines 21693-22048*)

How Pygmalion asks his friend
For pardon, seeking to amend
The words he used which did seem
Wrong and foolish in the extreme.

THEN Pygmalion knelt, his face
Wet with tears, and sought to place
A pledge, in her hand, as amends,
But she cared naught for his ends.
For she felt and understood naught
Of him, nor of whate'er he sought,
So that he felt his efforts vain,
That love for this thing brought but pain.
He knew not how to regain his heart,
Reft of wit and sense by Love's art,
Such that he was discomforted;
Was she alive or was she dead?
Gently he clasped her in his arms,
Thinking he felt there tender charms,
That it was with true flesh he dealt,
Yet it was his own hand he felt.
Thus Pygmalion strove to love,
But peace remained at one remove;
His mood unstable, at her side,
He loved and hated, laughed and cried,
Now was happy, now ill at ease,

Now tormented, now all did please.
He dressed the statue in diverse ways,
In robes, skilfully wrought always,
Clothes woven of silk or cotton,
Of pure wool, of finest linen,
In vert, or russet, or azure,
The colours bright, and fresh, and pure.
Many were lined with rich fur,
Ermine, or grey, or subtle vair.
He'd unclothe her, and then re-try
The effect of silk stuffs on the eye,
Sendal, Arabian melequin,
In purple, scarlet, yellow, green,
Then ornate samite or camelot.
Angelic faces might be forgot
Beside her face of innocence,
Which indeed he would then commence
To surround with a full headdress,
Wimple, kerchief and all the rest,
Yet took care not to veil her face
For he had no longing to embrace
That custom of the Saracen,
Who covers the face of woman,
So full is he of jealousy,
Such that no passer-by may see
A woman's face as they go past.
At another time, in clear contrast,
He'd remove it, then add for show
Ornaments, crimson and indigo,
Green and yellow, fine and noble,
Silk and gold, and fair seed-pearl.
Above the ornament he'd set
A delicate gold coronet,
Where was many a precious stone,

In squared settings, richly shown,
Each facet semi-circular;
And many a small gem, bright and rare,
Many more than I could count,
About the gold crown he did mount.
And from her small neat ears he hung
Earrings from which gold pendants swung.
Then, to hold her collar in place,
Two gold clips did her neck embrace,
Another, there, her breast embraced,
While a slender belt clasped her waist;
Yet it was so rich and fair a belt
No other maid its like has felt,
And from the belt he hung a purse,
None more precious doth disburse
Any man; five small stones were set
Within, he from the shore did get,
The kind with which maids play around
When they find them, pretty and round.
And then he gave great attention
To her two shoes, I should mention,
And stockings, trimmed what's more
Two finger-lengths from the floor;
(No boots though did he add to this
For the maid was not born in Paris,
They prove too coarse as footwear
For a young girl not born there)
Then with a needle of fine gold,
Which a golden thread did hold,
So that she might be better dressed
Sewed up her sleeves to match the rest.
Then he brought to her fresh flowers
With which, in springtime bowers,
Pretty girls make lovely garlands;

And little birds placed in her hands,
And every diverse novel thing
That to maids doth pleasure bring.
Chaplets he wove from the flowers
Upon which he spent long hours,
Yet unlike any you have seen.
A gold ring he placed, there to gleam
Upon her finger, and then he said:
'Sweet one, here now we are wed,
For I am yours, and you are mine;
May Hymen and Juno incline
Towards us, and with joy appear;
(No priest or clerk needs visit here,
No prelate's mitre shall us please)
For they're the feast's true deities.
Then, in a loud clear voice, he sang,
For filled with his great joy it rang,
In lieu of the Mass, fair chansonettes,
Concerning love's delicious secrets,
And made his instruments sound out,
So none might hear God's thunder shout,
For he'd a host, of diverse fashion,
And hands more skilled, in addition,
Than Amphion of Thebes possessed,
Harps, gigues and rebecs, and the rest,
Guitars and lutes, in full measure,
All such chosen to bring pleasure;
And his clocks he made to sound
In his hall, and the rooms around,
All by means of intricate wheels,
To run sweet, and ring their peals;
He had organs, held in one hand,
Thus portative, you understand,
So the bellows he could squeeze,

While he sang as he might please,
Motets, in treble or tenor voice;
Then in the cymbals he'd rejoice,
Or seize a fretel and flute away,
On a chalumeau pipe, or play
On some drum or tambourine,
Full loud as any could, I wean;
Bagpipes, trumpet, and citole,
And the psaltery, and viol,
He would take and play them all,
All as the notes did rise and fall,
Then take up his bagpipes, set
To work, the Cornish or musette,
And then spring, leap and prance,
Through the halls in rapid dance;
He clasped her hand tight, so to do,
But heavy-heartedly tis true,
For, despite his exhortation,
No answer came from his creation.
He took her in his arms, once more,
And lay beside her, as before,
And embraced and kissed her close,
But did no good, you may suppose,
As when two kiss, all at their ease,
And yet the gods they cannot please.
Thus Pygmalion, so deceived,
Captive of what he'd conceived,
Moved by his dumb statue, fell
Beneath the madness of her spell.
He decked her out in every way,
And sought to serve her night and day,
Though she appeared no less lovely
When naked as when dressed finely.
It happened, in that country fair,

A feast was celebrated where
Many a wondrous thing occurred
And all its people, at the word,
Came, like the youth, to keep vigil
All day before Venus' temple;
He came in hopes of good counsel,
Regarding his love, in his trouble,
For to the gods he did complain,
Of this sweet love that dealt such pain.
For many a time he had served
The gods well, as they'd observed,
Since he was a fine, skilled worker,
Carving their sacred statues ever,
Who lived, in his maturity,
A life of perfect chastity.

CHAPTER CVII: PYGMALION'S PRAYER TO THE GODS IS ANSWERED

'FAIR gods, he cried, 'who can do all,
May my prayer now on your ears fall;
And you, the Lady of this place,
Saint Venus, fill me now with grace,
For angered you must be with me,
Who have so worshipped Chastity,
That I deserve great punishment
For all the time with her I've spent.
No more malingering; I repent;
Let pardon be your kind intent,
Grant me now, of your mercy,
Your sweetness, and your amity,
Pardon; to banishment I'll flee,
Should I not shun now Chastity,
If but she who stole my heart,
Who seems ivory in every part,
Might become my faithful lover,
Her body, soul and life discover.
And if you grant me this in haste,
And I hereafter am found chaste,
Then I agree that I should die,
Be cut to pieces, hanged on high,
Or Cerberus, Hell's guardian,
May bind me with an iron band;
Then watch it swallow me alive
His triple gorge wherein I'll dive.'
Venus heard the young man's prayer

And was overjoyed by this affair;
He'd now abandoned Chastity,
And strove to serve her loyally,
As a truly repentant lover,
Ready, in penitence, to suffer
All naked now in his love's arms,
If life was granted to her charms.
For joy, then, and to put an end
To the youth's sorrows, she did send
A soul into that statue's breast,
Which gave it life and, for the rest,
None there was in any country
Had ever seen so fair a lady.
Pygmalion, being in great haste,
No time dare in the temple waste,
But to his statue swift returned,
Now his pardon he had earned.
For he, indeed, could barely wait
To see her, hold her, she, his fate.
He ran and skipped for all that day,
Till he reached her, along the way.
He knew naught of the miracle,
But to the gods was most loyal,
And now that he saw her nearer
His heart it burned ever brighter.
He saw that she was alive no less,
He uncovered her naked flesh,
And saw her blonde hair shining,
Like fair waves together flowing,
And felt the bones, and saw the veins,
Full of blood, that waxes and wanes,
Feeling a pulse move there and beat.
A lie perchance, or truth complete?
He drew back, knew not what to do,

Nor dare draw too close, in view
Of his fear of being enchanted.
'What now, am I being tempted?'
Am I awake? No, tis a dream,
Yet none e'er saw so true a dream.
A dream! I wake; no dream is this;
Whence comes this miracle? She is
Possessed within by some phantom,
Perchance, or by some foul demon?'
At once the maid, so pleasing fair,
With her lovely flowing hair,
Replied to him: 'I am no demon,
My dear friend, nor a phantom,
Rather I am your sweet lover,
And ready all my love to offer,
And to receive your company
If you'll accept true love from me.'
Once he'd found the thing was fact
The miracle a divine act,
And drawn closer for assurance
That hers was a living glance,
He pledged himself willingly,
As one who was hers entirely;
They bound themselves in speech,
As thanks passed from each to each.
There was no joy left unexpressed,
And deep in love they embraced,
Like two doves kissed one another,
Loved and delighted each other.
Both to the gods thanks rendered,
For the favour they'd extended;
To the goddess Venus mostly,
Who had helped them more than any.
Now was Pygmalion at ease,

Nothing now could him displease,
For she refused naught he wished,
If he opposed her, she'd desist,
If she commanded, he obeyed,
Every wish that she displayed
He now hastened to approve;
Now he could lie beside his love,
Sans resistance or denial,
And she, since they loved so well,
Bore Paphus, who gave his name
To Paphos, the isle known to fame.
From him descended Cynaras,
A splendid king except, alas,
That he was tricked by his daughter,
And brought to ill; that was Myrrha
The Fair, one whom disaster found,
For the Crone (whom God confound!)
Who feared not to sin outright,
Brought her to his bed at night.
The queen was at a feast, dining.
The girl lay down beside the king,
And he knew naught by word or sign
Of her incestuous design.
It was a strange trick to play,
That he should know her in this way.
After his bed she did adorn,
The fair Adonis then was born,
And she was changed into a tree,
For the king had slain her if he
Had come to know of the fraud;
Yet the truth ne'er ran abroad,
For when he had the candles brought
She, now no longer virgin, sought
To vanish in the shades of night,

Lest he should destroy her quite.
All this strays far from my matter,
Tis right I take it no further,
For you'll know all it signifies
Ere this Romance I realise;
No longer now shall I delay,
I'll return to the former way,
For I must plough another field.
Whoever then might seek to yield
A comparison of those statues,
As to their beauty, which to choose,
Could draw one thus, it seems to me:
As much as a mouse in degree
Is smaller than a lion, and less
In bodily strength, and worthiness,
Pygmalion's was less lovely
Than this image, I swear truly,
That I here esteem so greatly.
Venus gazed long and closely,
At the statue that I described,
The statue that had been devised
To dwell, on either side a pillar,
Upon the tower, in the centre;
None did I view more willingly,
And so adore, on bended knee,
The opening and the sanctuary.
For all the gods' fine archery,
I'd not forsake it, nor forego
My entry, for arrow or bow;
At least I'd do all in my power
Whate'er might come at that same hour,
To find one who might so offer
Entry, or but my presence suffer.
For I, by God, have sworn a vow

To those relics I speak of now,
Which I will seek, if God please,
The moment I regain my ease,
With sack and staff, and may He
Protect me from all trickery,
And the barrier such may pose,
To my enjoyment of the Rose!
Venus now delayed no longer,
She let fly with brand and feather,
And so loosed her burning dart
As to bring panic through her art.
But Venus did so covertly
Launch the dart, that none did see
However closely they were watching
The burning brand, nor its landing.

CHAPTER CVIII: THE CASTLE IS TAKEN

(*Lines 22049-22500*)

How those of the castle came forth
As soon as they felt all the force
Of fair Venus' burning brand;
None fought naked, you'll understand.

'The castle is taken'

ONCE the burning brand had flown,
Panic amongst the foe was sown,
Fire blazed out about the tower;
It seemed captured that very hour.
None could from the fire recover,
Nor could they defend the tower.
All cried out: 'Betrayed! Betrayed!
'We are all dead! The tower's unmade!
Woe, woe! Now flee the country.'
And each hurled away their key.
Resistance seemed good as dead,
His clothes burning, as he fled
Fast as a stag over the heath.
None lingered there, to bring relief;
Each, with their clothes around their waist,
Thought only to depart, in haste.
Fear fled, and forth came Shame,
All left the castle wreathed in flame.
None then wished to heed the lesson
That was taught to them by Reason.
At this point appeared Courtesy,
That worthy, fair, and noble lady;
On viewing the rout, her desire
To snatch her son from out the fire;
So with Openness and Pity,
She commenced a sudden sally,
Deterred by naught, as on she came,
To save Fair-Welcome from the flame.
Courtesy, she addressed him first,
For she was ne'er slow to rehearse
Her eloquence and, much relieved,
Said: 'Fair son, how I have grieved,
All full of sorrow was my heart,
That you were in prison, apart;

May ill-fire and an ill-flame burn
He who served you that evil turn!
Now, thank God, you are delivered
From Ill-Talk the slanderer; dead,
In the moat beyond, he lies, hard
By his crew of Norman drunkards;
Now he can neither see nor hear.
Nor Jealousy ought you to fear;
One should not through Jealousy
Forbear to live full joyously,
Nor seek comfort from a friend
In privacy, I would contend;
For she no longer has the power
To hear or see, though she glower;
There's none here to tell her aught,
Nor could she find you if she sought.
And the others, arrogant, vile,
Haste, the wretches, to long exile.
Disconsolate, they fled swiftly;
The castle is completely empty.
Fair sweet son, by God's mercy,
Don't let yourself be burned, be free;
We beg you, out of amity,
I, and Openness, and Pity,
Grant to this faithful Lover
Whate'er he may ask; for, ever,
Has he suffered pain for you,
And never has he proved untrue.
He's ne'er deceived you, he confesses,
Receive him, and what he possesses;
His very soul he offers you,
For love of God, receive it too.
Fair sweet son, do not refuse me,
By the loyalty you owe me,

And by Amor who sets his course,
And drives him on with such great force.
Fair son, Love conquers everything,
All's in his power; so doth sing
Virgil, who doth confirm the thought,
Which in a fine verse he hath caught,
"Love conquers all," you there will find,
If through the Eclogues you do wind;
He says that we should welcome love;
And good and true his verse doth prove,
A single line doth thus regale,
Nor could he tell a better tale.
Fair son, now rescue this Lover,
So God may love both together,
Grant him the gift now of the Rose.'
'Lady, I shall, you may suppose
Right willingly,' Fair-Welcome said,
'He may pluck it, the gift be sped,
While there are but the two of us;
I should have been more generous,
For he loves, I see, without guile.'
I thanked him then in noble style,
And soon, like a good pilgrim, went
Wholehearted, fervent, impatient,
Thence, as a true lover should do
After so great a favour, to
Seek the end of my pilgrimage,
And to that shrine made my voyage.

CHAPTER CVIII: THE LOVER SETS OUT TO WIN THE ROSE

WITH a deal of effort, I bore along,
My sack, and my staff, stiff and strong,
That needs not be shod with iron,
For journeying; and travelled on.
The sack too was fashioned well,
Of skin both seamless and supple,
And know it was far from empty,
For Nature, who gave it to me,
Had placed within, with great care,
At the same time, working there
As diligently as she knew how,
Two hammers; two she did allow,
So subtly made, it seems to me,
She knew her craft more profoundly
Than Daedalus; she made the pair
As I believe, that I might hammer
Away, at need, as I went along,
And so she made them good and strong.
And so I shall do certainly,
If there's any possibility;
For, God be thanked, I do know how.
For I place greater weight, I vow,
On my sack, and my hammers two,
Than my lute and my harp; tis true.
Nature did me a great honour
In arming me with the hammer,
And taught the use, and altogether
Made me a good and wise worker:

The staff too she herself had made,
As a gift to me it was conveyed,
And put her hand to polishing it,
Ere ever I learned to read a bit;
But twas not necessary to tip it,
With iron, tis no less without it.
And, since I did receive it, ever
It goes with me, I leave it never,
Have not lost it, for e'en an hour,
Nor will not, if tis in my power,
For I'd not be deprived its hold
For fifty million livres in gold.
Her fine gift, I guard it closely,
And when I gaze on it am happy,
And give thanks for her present
When I grasp it, and am content.
For many a time it comforts me
In any place where I may be,
And serves me well, do you know how?
If I find myself in a place now
That's remote, as on I journey,
I'll set it in the holes before me,
Whene'er my road I cannot see,
To know if I can ford them safely,
And then I can boast quite freely
That there's no obstacle to fear;
Thus readily the fords I clear,
Through each river, and each spring.
But some are deep as anything,
And with their sides so far apart,
Twould require less pain, less art,
To swim a good two leagues or more,
Through the waves, along the shore;
And less weariness twould afford

Than passing so perilous a ford.
For many a deep one I have tried,
And yet have reached the other side;
For when I was ready to begin,
I'd try them, ere I entered in,
And if they proved so profound,
It seemed no bottom could be found,
With a pole, or e'en with an oar,
Then I would go along the shore,
Where either bank did there extend,
Such that I came forth in the end;
But I'd not have emerged, you see,
If I had lacked the armoury
That Nature granted me outright.
Let those on such broad roads alight,
Who seek to go there willingly,
Let us on narrow paths go free
That lead us on, delightfully,
Seducing us, intriguingly,
Not those cart-roads full of strife;
We who seek the pleasant life.

CHAPTER CVIII: THE LOVER ON RICH OLD WOMEN

YET old roads bring greater gain,
Than those new ones in the main;
More things you find there, truly,
From which you may profit greatly.
Juvenal himself doth state:
Who seeks a path to great estate
Can journey by no shorter one,
Than finding a rich old woman;
If he seeks to serve her gladly,
It boosts him to the heights swiftly.
And Ovid says, if you read him,
In a tried and trusted maxim,
That he who takes up with the old
Will often win his weight in gold;
By dealing in such merchandise
Thus he may soon be rich likewise.
But he who doth so must beware
To say and do naught, anywhere,
That might seem but trickery,
If her love he'd steal, e'en if he
Seeks to snare her honestly yet
In the windings of Love's net.
For by those wretches, hard and old,
Whose youth long ago grew cold,
(Youth when they knew flattery,
And were robbed through trickery,
And were oft the more-deceived)
They are more readily perceived,
Those sweet lies, than by young girls

Of tender age, with golden curls,
Who when they hear the flatterer
Suspect no trickery whatever;
Trickery and guile they're liable,
To think as true as is the Bible;
For they have not been scalded yet.
But the wrinkled old ne'er forget,
Malicious and cunning they see
Through all the arts of trickery,
Deployment of which they sense,
With time, and with experience,
So that when the flatterers come
And with their lies fill the room,
And drum into their ears, apace,
All their deceitful pleas for grace,
And abase themselves and sigh,
Clasp their hands, and mercy cry,
And seek to kneel, and bow full low,
And flood the place with weeping so,
And cross themselves before a lady
So as to appear trustworthy,
And promise, quite deceitfully,
Goods and service, heart and body,
And pledge themselves and swear,
By all the blessed saints, that there
Ever were, or are, or shall be,
They know that tis but flattery,
That what into their ears were dinned,
Are merely words, borne on the wind.
Such men do as the fowlers do,
Who spread their nets, and not a few,
Then call the birds with their sweet airs,
So they may trap them in their snares.
Spread in the bushes, you understand,

And then may take their birds in hand.
Some foolish bird will oft draw near,
That knows not the false snare to fear,
Nor can resolve that strange sophism,
A string of sounds yet pure deception;
So doth the hunter cheat the quail,
That into the net the bird might sail,
And when the quail hears the sound
It draws near, over the ground,
And throws itself into the snare
That the hunter has set with care
In the dense new grass, in spring.
But old quails, wary of everything,
Scalded, beaten, as they have been,
Full many a snare they have seen,
From which it seems they had fled,
When they should have been, instead,
Taken amidst the new-born grass.
Such are these old women, alas,
Whose favours were once in request;
Who, by such suitors then distressed,
Now know, by the words they hear,
By those countenances they fear,
Such trickery; know it from afar,
More wary now of what doth mar.
Or if the suitors seem in earnest,
In wishing to reap love's harvest,
Much like those who, once caught,
That the net's sweet solace sought,
Find their travail so delightful,
Nothing being more agreeable,
Than the fond hope, they believe,
That doth so please them, and doth grieve;
Then they're filled with suspicion,

Frightened of the angler's mission,
And so they listen and reflect,
As if some lie they would detect,
And weigh every word they hear,
So much plain fraud they do fear,
Because of all that's gone before,
Of which the memory is sore.
Every old woman doth believe
That all are labouring to deceive.
If you wish to incline your heart
To such, the sooner to depart
With riches, or to find pleasure,
You may have both, at your leisure;
You readily can trace that road,
Make comfort, pleasure, your abode.
And you who wish for some young maid,
By me shall never be betrayed,
Howe'er my master may command,
(For all's fair that he doth demand.)
I'll tell you true, I'd not deceive,
(Believe me all who would believe)
That it is good to try all things,
Better to savour what life brings,
Just as the gourmet doth linger
Over morsels, a connoisseur,
Of titbits, tasting every dish,
Simmered, roasted, at his wish,
Fried, marinaded, en galantine,
When in the kitchen he is seen;
Knows which to praise as fitter,
This too sweet, and this too bitter,
For every one he's tested out.
Thus believe me, there's no doubt,
That he who has not tried the bad

Knows naught of the good to be had,
As one can only know of shame,
Who knows all of honour's game.
None knows if a thing is easy,
If they've not met with difficulty,
Nor do those deserve their ease,
Who wish to never know unease;
So to that man no comfort offer
Who doth not know how to suffer.
And so things go, by contraries,
One reveals the other, and he
Who would seek to define the one
Must bring to mind the other one,
Or he will fail of his intention,
And never frame the definition,
For he who does not know the two,
Fails to perceive their difference, too,
Without which it will come to naught,
That definition that he sought.

CHAPTER CVIII: THE LOVER REACHES THE SANCTUARY

IF all the equipment that I bore
I could but bear to that fair port,
I wished to touch it to the relic,
If I could fittingly approach it.
I'd come so far, so much had done,
My staff untipped by any iron,
That, vigorous and agile still,
Without delay, I knelt, at will,
Betwixt that pair of pillars fair,
So keen was I to worship, there,
That fair sanctuary, on my part
With a pious and devoted heart.
All had been razed by that fierce fire,
To war with which naught dare aspire;
All had been levelled to the earth
Except that thing of precious worth.
I raised the curtain a little way
Which covered the relic alway,
And approached the statue closely,
To know the shrine, more deeply.
Kissing it now most devoutly,
And, wishing to enter safely,
I thrust my staff in the opening,
Leaving the weighty sack hanging.
I thought to penetrate easily;
My staff rebounded back on me;
I thrust in vain, again to fail,
I could not, despite all, prevail,

Something therein prevented me,
Which I could feel, but could not see,
And it had blocked the opening,
From the creation of this thing,
For it bordered on the aperture,
So it was strong and more secure.
I tried again now, oft assailing,
Thrusting hard, but ever failing,
And if you'd seen me jousting there,
Positioning yourself with care,
Hercules you would oft remember,
He who would Cacus dismember,
Three times battering at his door,
Three times falling to the floor,
Three times, wearied half to death,
Sitting there to catch his breath,
So great the pain and his labour;
And I, who did likewise suffer,
Covered with sweat, in anguish,
Sad and weary, I did languish,
At failing to break the door so,
Like Hercules, or even more so.
But I strove so hard, nonetheless
I perceived the means of ingress,
A narrow passage by which I sought
To pass the blockage I now fought.
By means of this, narrow and tight,
Through which I sought to pass outright,
I broke down the obstruction,
And, moving in that direction,
Gained access to the aperture,
But only half-way, and no more,
Troubled I could go no deeper,
But possessing not the power.

Yet I'd cease not for anything,
Until that staff was fully in.
So I pushed on without delay,
Though the sack was in the way,
With its two hammers hanging
Outside, and there remaining.
I was now somewhat in distress,
Caused by the entry's narrowness;
For I'd not freed sufficient space
To move an inch within that place;
And, if I knew aught about it,
No other had yet passed through it,
And I was the first so to do,
And, as of yet, it was so new
None charged a toll to enter it.
Whether it's granted benefit
To other entrants since, that I
Know not, but I so loved that I
Could scarcely believe that any
Had been there before me, truly;
For no one disbelieves lightly
In the beloved, shame weighs heavy,
And I shall not believe it now.
At least I knew that, anyhow,
It was no well-worn beaten track,
And other paths there I did lack,
To gain entry ere others should,
And take the rosebud, as I would.
You shall know how I went on,
Till, at my pleasure it was won.
You shall know, both deed and manner,
So if the need arises, ever,
In the sweet season of the year,
Young Lords, for you to press full near

The Roses, and gather them too,
Either open or closed to you,
You may act then so discreetly
You shall win them all completely.
Do as you hear that I have done,
Knowing no better course to run;
And if you can, more easily,
Navigate the way, more deftly,
Tire yourself less, strain less than I,
Find a better means to pass by,
Then do so in your manner, tis fine,
Once you know all this path of mine.
At least you have this advantage,
That I tell you of the passage
Without robbing you of a sou;
For that you should be grateful too.

CHAPTER CVIII: THE LOVER ARRIVES AT THE ROSEBUSH

CRAMPED as I was in there, twas clear
That I could touch the bush, so near
That, stretching out my hand I could
Draw back the branch, and take the bud.
Fair-Welcome had begged, with a prayer,
That I commit no outrage there,
And since he'd asked me in God's name,
I'd sworn to him I'd shun the same,
And do all that was good and fine,
In accord with his wish and mine.

CHAPTER CIX: THE LOVER WINS THE ROSE

(*Lines 22501-22580*)

The ending of the Romance is:
That the Lover attains his wish
And wins the Rose he doth admire,
Which has aroused all his desire.

'The Lover wins the Rose'

I TOOK the rosebush by the waist
Suppler than any willow I'd faced;
And, gripping it with either hand,
Then, very gently I began,
Shunning the thorns, to shake the bud,
Yet spoil it as little as I could,
Although I could not help but make
The branches to tremble and shake,
Yet drew not any branch too far,
For naught there did I wish to mar;
Though I had to, in due course,
Scrape the bark with a little force,
Since no other means did I know
To win that which I longed for so.
And, in the end, I had, indeed,
Over the bud, spread a little seed
When I had shaken the bud about.
That was as I touched it, no doubt,
Within, to examine each petal,
For I desired to search it all,
To the very depths of the bud,
Since, to me, all within seemed good;
Such that I mixed the seeds together,
So they could scarce be parted ever,
And thus all the bud so tender,
I made to swell and grow fuller.
See you how wrong I was in this;
But for all that I worked in this,
That sweet fellow, who thought no ill,
He would bear me yet no ill will;
Rather he'd suffer such, and agree
Whate'er he thought pleasing to me;
He'd but remind me of my pledge
And that I wronged him he'd allege,

And I was too rough, he would say,
Yet still he'd let me have my way,
To take, and reveal all, and gather
Both Bush and Rose; leaf and flower.
Now, exalted to such high degree,
An estate I had gained so nobly,
My method in no way suspect
Since I'd proved loyal, and direct
And open, with each benefactor,
As so ought every good debtor,
For I was much obliged to them,
Since it was purely through them
That I was now so rich; indeed,
No other wealth could this exceed,
I rendered thanks, ten or twenty
Times, to Amor and Venus gladly,
Who had aided me most of all,
Then to the host before the wall,
Whose help I pray God will never
Remove from the true lover;
Speaking twixt each fragrant kiss,
Yet Reason included not in this,
She who'd granted me naught but pain;
And cursed vile Wealth who, again,
Had shown me not the least pity,
When she had refused me entry
To the path that she guarded there.
For this path she'd failed to care,
By which I had struggled within,
For all secretly had I entered in;
Cursed too each mortal enemy,
Especially vile Jealousy
Who had so obstructed me,
With her chaplet of anxiety,

Who doth from Lovers guard the Roses,
And even now great danger poses.
Ere I removed from that fair place
(A garden that I yet would grace)
With great delight, I did gather,
From that leafy bush, the flower,
And so the crimson Rose I won;
Day broke, I woke; my dream was done.

THE END OF THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE CONTINUATION

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's Metamorphoses and Dante's Divine Comedy.