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THE KING'S CLASSICS UNDER
THE GENERAL EDITORSHIP OF
PROFESSOR GOLLANCZ



THE KING'S CLASSICS

B. McM.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE OR
PALAMON AND ARCITE BY
GEOFFREY CHAUCER





*Canterbury Pilgrims,
from a fifteenth century M.S. of
Lydgate to "Siege of Thebes."
Brit. Mus. 18 D. 2. fol. 148.*

THE KNIGHT'S TALE
OR PALAMON AND
ARCITE BY GEOFFREY
CHAUCER DONE INTO
MODERN ENGLISH BY
THE REV. PROFESSOR
WALTER W. SKEAT

ALEXANDER MORING LIMITED
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“ DAN CHAUCER, WELL OF ENGLISH UNDEFILED,
ON FAME'S ETERNAL BEAD-ROLL WORTHY TO BE FILED.”

SPENSER.

“ CHAUCER (OF ALL ADMIR'D) THE STORY GIVES;
THERE CONSTANT TO ETERNITY IT LIVES.”

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

“ THE MORNING-STAR OF SONG, WHO MADE
HIS MUSIC HEARD BELOW;
DAN CHAUCER, THE FIRST WARBLER, WHOSE SWEET BREATH
PRELUDED THOSE MELODIOUS BURSTS THAT FILL
THE SPACIOUS TIMES OF GREAT ELIZABETH
WITH SOUNDS THAT ECHO STILL.”

TENNYSON: *A Dream of Fair Women.*

PREFACE

Chaucer.—Amongst the rather numerous English poets who wrote in times preceding the sixteenth century, the chief name is that of Geoffrey Chaucer. Indeed, not a few of our oldest poems were written by anonymous authors, or by authors of whom we know little beyond the mere name. Fortunately, owing to his connexion with the court and with official duties, the chief events in Chaucer's life are tolerably well ascertained; and a good account of him is readily accessible in all the more recent books that treat of English literature. It is necessary to consult recent accounts, because the older ones contain numerous statements founded upon guesswork, which later researches have shown to be misleading and erroneous.

His Writings.—Many pieces were once assigned to Chaucer which were certainly not composed by him, but there is now little dispute as to his genuine works. The whole question is fully discussed in my Chaucer

Canon (Oxford, 1900). His seven longest poems, arranged in order of length, are *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The House of Fame*, (a fragment of) *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Book of the Duchess*, and *The Assembly or Parliament of Fowls*.

The Canterbury Tales.—Of these, *The Canterbury Tales*, the longest and the best of his works, are deservedly famous. The general scheme of this poem, as indicated in the celebrated *Prologue*, is well known. Chaucer represents a company of pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury as assembling at the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, late in the evening of April 16. The exact year is not given, but we may suppose it to have been about 1385.

After describing the pilgrims severally, Chaucer sets them down to supper, in the course of which the host of the Tabard, Harry Bailey by name, proposed to them a mode of amusement during their pilgrimage, to which they all readily assented. This was, that each pilgrim should relate two stories on the way to Canterbury, and two more on the homeward journey; and he himself would ride with them as their guide and umpire. Whoever, according to the general verdict, told the best stories was to receive a supper at the

Tabard, after their return from Canterbury, at the expense of the other pilgrims. (See note to p. 2, l. 33).

It will be readily understood that this ambitious scheme was by no means fully carried out; indeed, it proved impossible even to complete a quarter of it. It is remarkable that the author himself soon tacitly altered his scheme so as to require but *one* story from each pilgrim, to be told on the outward journey only; so that in the *Parson's Prologue*, the host requests him for a tale on the plea that "every man, save thou, hath told his tale," and asks him to conclude the series. But even with this ample modification the scheme remained incomplete, as several of the pilgrims are altogether unrepresented, and we do not find that they ever reached Canterbury at all.

The Knight's Tale.—The tale told by the knight is the first of the series; it is also the longest of the stories in verse, and the best. The story is not wholly original, as Chaucer was indebted for the main plot and for some of the expressions and details to the Italian poem by Boccaccio entitled *La Teseide*, on the subject of the (fabulous) adventures of Theseus. This poem is written in eight-lined stanzas, known in Italian as *ottava rima*, and is divided into twelve books. But

in the treatment of the story Chaucer has made it entirely his own, reducing the prolix original to 2250 lines, omitting the less interesting parts of the narrative, and altering incidents at pleasure to suit his own purposes. A careful line-by-line comparison of the two poems shows that Chaucer has only translated 270 lines, or less than one-eighth of the whole, from Boccaccio; while 374 more lines bear a general likeness to Boccaccio, and 132 more a slight likeness. The result is a story much more interesting and readable than the somewhat tedious original. An excellent summary of the general contents of *La Teseide* was made by Tyrwhitt, which has been frequently reprinted. (See my six-volume edition of *Chaucer's Works*, vol. iii. p. 392.)

A comparison of *The Knight's Tale* with *La Teseide* shows that Boccaccio, who is to be credited with great inventive power, had much less skill than his imitator in the management of the incidents of a story.

Statius.—It is further worthy of notice, that Boccaccio, in his turn, was partially indebted to the poem entitled *Thebais, or the Tale of the Siege of Thebes*, by the Roman poet Statius, who died about A.D. 96. This poem is also divided into twelve books. The sixth book contains an account of the funeral of

Archemorus, with a particular description of the felling of the wood for the pyre, the funeral procession, the lamentations of the mourners, and the rich offerings which they cast upon the blazing pile. The seventh contains a description of the temple of Mars. The eighth contains the affecting scene of the death of the wounded Atys in the arms of his bride. At the end of the tenth book, Capaneus is struck dead by lightning while scaling the walls of Thebes. In the eleventh book, Creon usurps the crown of Thebes. In the twelfth book, Creon forbids the burial or burning of the dead bodies of his enemies ; but the wives of the captains slain in the siege march in procession to Theseus, King of Athens, to solicit his assistance against Creon. The Athenians march to Thebes, which upon the death of Creon surrenders to Theseus, and entertains him hospitably. The ladies obtain the dead bodies of their husbands, and perform their funeral rites in a sumptuous manner.

All the above circumstances are alluded to in the course of *The Knight's Tale*, the death of Arcite being to some extent imitated from the death of Atys, whilst his funeral rites resemble those performed for Archemorus. It appears, further, that Chaucer read Statius for himself, as he has introduced a few expressions

directly from that author instead of through the medium of Boccaccio.

It also appears that Chaucer introduces references to other sources, among which may be particularly noted the Vulgate (or Latin) version of the Bible; Albricus, a writer of the thirteenth century (*De Deorum Imaginibus*); Boethius (*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*); Dante; Ovid; the thirteenth-century poem entitled *Le Roman de la Rose*; and some others.

Palamon and Arcite.—It is probable that Chaucer actually rewrote *The Knight's Tale*, and that it is an entirely new and much improved version of a poem named *Palamon and Arcite*, which he himself mentions in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. This poem has not come down to us in its original shape, but it is probable that it was, at first, a tolerably close translation of parts of Boccaccio's *Teseide*, and written, not (like *The Knight's Tale*) in rhyming couplets, but in seven-line stanzas. This appears from the fact that some fragments of it seem to be preserved. In fact, no less than 25 seven-line stanzas are still extant, which prove to be partially translated or imitated from the Italian poem; six of these are found in Chaucer's poem of *Anelida and Arcite*, sixteen in the *Parliament of Fowls*, and three

very near the end of *Troilus and Cressida*. The passages from *La Teseide* of which the translations are thus preserved, are: Book i., stanzas 1-3; Book ii., stanzas 10-12; Book vii., stanzas 51-66; and Book xi., stanzas 1-3. Moreover, this *Palamon and Arcite* must have been written before 1382, the date of the *Parliament of Fowls*.

It is further probable that the older poem, *Palamon and Arcite*, may have been recast in the form in which it now appears (viz. as *The Knight's Tale*) before the year 1385, and soon after the time when *Troilus and Cressida* was completed; for it is surprising to observe how many expressions that occur in *The Knight's Tale* are repeated from *Troilus* (*Chaucer's Works*, ed. Skeat, iii. 394). That it was written after *Troilus* rather than before it, is suggested by the circumstance that Boccaccio's account of the ascent of Arcite's spirit to the eighth sphere¹ was utilised to describe the ascent of the spirit of Troilus; so that the poet was afterwards reduced to the humorous alternative of saying that he did not know whither Arcite's spirit went (l. 1952).

And further, if *The Knight's Tale* was really

¹ "Cielo ottava"; but Chaucer calls it the *seventh* sphere; *Troil.*, v. 1809.

composed as early as 1385, or still earlier, this date probably preceded the actual conception of the scheme of *The Canterbury Tales*, so that the story had to be adapted for insertion in the Tales afterwards. That this is not unlikely, appears from the very slight way in which the adaptation might have been made. There is nothing to connect it with the scheme except the four lines on p. 2 :—

“ I hinder none of all this company ;
To tell his tale be every pilgrim free,
And let us see who shall the supper win.
Now, where I ceased, will I again begin.”

The last line of the poem—“ And God save all this gentle [*fair-e*] company ”—is a general expression, and does not necessarily refer to the pilgrims. Even if it does, it was easy to append it.

Palamon and Arcite.—In the Supplementary Volume to Knight’s Pictorial Edition of Shakespeare, p. 170, the editor has the following account:—“ We learn from Wood’s MSS. that when Elizabeth visited Oxford, in 1566, ‘ at night the Queen heard the first part of an English play, named *Palamon*, or *Palamon Arcyte*, made by Mr. Richard Edwards, a gentleman of her chapel, acted with very great applause in Christ Church Hall.’ An accident happened at the beginning

of the plot by the falling of a stage, through which three persons were killed—a scholar of St. Mary's Hall, and two who were probably more missed, a college-brewer and a cook. The mirth, however, went on, and 'afterwards the actors performed their parts so well, that the Queen laughed heartily thereat, and gave the author of the play great thanks for his pains.' It is clear that the fable of Chaucer must have been treated in a different manner by Edwards than we find it treated in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*." For some account of this last-mentioned play, see further below.

Mr. Knight further remarks:—"We have another record of a play on a similar subject. In 'Henslowe's Diary' we have an entry, under the date of September 1594, of *Palamon and Arcite* being acted four times. It is impossible to imagine that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is the same play." This is indeed obvious from the date; for nothing of Fletcher's is known earlier than 1606. But it may have been a revival of the play by Edwards.

Midsummer Night's Dream. — Of this delightful play by Shakespeare, two quarto editions appeared in 1600. In his interesting Preface to this play, Prof. Gollancz well says:—"Shakespeare may

well have evolved *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*,¹ to which he is obviously indebted for many elements. The general framework of the play—viz. the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, must have been suggested by the *Tale*; but Shakespeare ingeniously opens the *Dream* before the marriage, so that this event may round off the whole play; Chaucer introduces us to the pair at the homecoming after the marriage. In the *Tale* we have Palamon and Arcite rivals for the hand of Emelie; in obedience to the symmetrical plan of Shakespeare's early plots, these give place to two pairs of lovers, with their more complex story of crossed love; Emelie in fact resolves herself into Helena and Hermia. They are indeed 'two lovely berries moulded on one stem.' The great gods of Olympus, who busy themselves so actively with the destinies of the lovers in the *Tale*, are represented in the *Dream* by Oberon, Titania, and their ministering sprites. In the *Tale*, as in the *Dream*, we have the same allusions to the rites of May, and the same musical confusion of hounds and echo in conjunction."

It is impossible, in fact, to miss the parallel between

¹ "Shakespeare's debt to Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* amounts to very little—a few names and allusions."

the meeting of Palamon and Arcite in "a wood near Athens," and the various meetings of the lovers in the *Dream* in the very same place.

Prof. Gollancz yet further remarks :—"In Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* the Fairy-king and Fairy-queen are called Pluto and Proserpina ; possibly Shakespeare was indebted to this Tale for the quarrel between Oberon and Titania, and for the Fairy-king's interest in a pair of mortals."

The Two Noble Kinsmen.—A play called *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, attributed on the title-page to John Fletcher and William Shakspeare, was printed in 1634, nine years after Fletcher's death. It was avowedly taken from Chaucer, the "kinsmen" being Palamon and Arcite. The first two lines of the Prologue are :—

"Chaucer (of all admired) the story gives ;
There constant to eternity it lives."

For further information see my edition of the play.¹

John Dryden.—The celebrated poet Dryden, about 1698, wrote some "Tales from Chaucer," the first of them being *Palamon and Arcite, or The Knight's Tale*. It is best appreciated by forgetting

¹ Shakespeare and Fletcher: *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. W. W. Skeat. Cambridge, 1875.

its origin. The Tale is well told, but it was told afresh, and in Dryden's own manner. Professor Lounsbury has well said that "Dryden's version has played a most important part in the history of Chaucer's reputation." And he comes to the conclusion that "Dryden's modernizations, with all their admitted defects, are, in truth, noble-spirited poems. The gold of Chaucer has been transmuted into silver, it is true; but silver is a precious metal, even if not so precious as gold." See further in the admirable chapter on "Chaucer in Literary History" in Lounsbury's *Studies in Chaucer*, vol. iii.

The fact is that Dryden's adaptation is a very loose paraphrase, with numerous alterations and additions. Nor are the additions always satisfactory. The vivid line in Chaucer—"The smiler, with the knife beneath his¹ cloak" (see p. 50)—is but feebly rendered by Dryden, who expands it into three lines—

"Next stood Hypocrisy with holy leer,
Soft, smiling, and demurely looking down,
But hid the dagger underneath the gown."

It will be seen that Dryden made no attempt to preserve Chaucer's modes of expression.

¹ Strictly—"under the."

The present version.—The present version is an attempt to render Chaucer's words into modern English, in such a way as to preserve the exact sense rather than the precise wording. The problem is, in fact, how would Chaucer have expressed himself if he had been compelled to write in modern English, using modern turns of expression as well as modern language? It will be understood, at the same time, that Chaucer's exact words have always been preserved wherever the metre and the rhymes render such a method practicable. In such cases the spelling alone has been modernised; and in this way the number of lines left practically untouched is considerable, especially if we count in those in which the alteration is quite unimportant. Thus, in page 1, l. 3, I write *was he* for *he was*, as better suited to modern accentuation. In l. 4, I insert *was*. In l. 5, I write *beneath* for *under*. In l. 6, I put *wealthy* for *rich-e*, i. e. rich, which in Chaucer's time was dissyllabic. In l. 10, I insert *there*. In l. 13, I substitute *younger* for the dissyllabic *yong-e*; and in l. 14, write *and* for *and with*, where the *with* rather clogs the line, according to modern ideas.

In order to save some further alterations, I have introduced a mark of diæresis or a hyphen to mark off a separate syllable. Thus, in l. 2, the word *Thesëus*

is to be pronounced, as in Chaucer, as *three* distinct syllables, separating the *e* and *u*. In l. 23, *besieg-ed* is to be pronounced as a trisyllable. In particular, whenever the termination *-tion* comes at the end of a line, it is to be pronounced as two syllables (*-ti-on*), with a slight accent on the *-on*; see, *e.g.*, the word *menti-on*, p. 2, l. 35; and *lamentati-on*, p. 4, l. 77. In such cases, the use of an accent always gives warning that the older pronunciation is to be used. I especially request the reader's indulgence in this matter, as it saves a considerable number of needless alterations. For example, ll. 235 and 236 are absolutely unaltered save in spelling. The original has—

“Cosyn, for sothe, of this opinioun
Thou hast a veyn imaginacioun.”

And this is perfectly intelligible as it stands.

The task of thus rendering Chaucer's words, line by line, into modern English, is far harder than might be supposed. For it constantly happens that a mere modification in spelling entirely fails, because the word under consideration may have suffered a considerable change of meaning, and is apt to mislead. Thus at p. 1, l. 12, the original has—“With muchel glorie and greet solemnitee.” Here *solemnitee* had by no means its modern rather sombre sense, but rather

meant "ceremonial pomp"; and *glorie* here signifies "parade" rather than "fame." In this case, the alteration actually preserves the sense.

The present version has, in fact, been well considered; and as, during the past forty years, Middle English has become to me quite a familiar language, I think I may claim that, wherever the version fails in poetical value, it still remains a useful commentary, and represents, with sufficient accuracy, the general idea which was meant to be conveyed. To do more than this is, from the nature of the case, impossible, as the original is a poem of inimitable beauty and excellence. I only aim at making the story accessible to the general public who know nothing of the older forms of our language, but wish to read the story without any trouble to themselves.

A few notes are appended, on some points that seemed to need further illustration.

The text is taken from my six-volume edition of Chaucer's Works (Oxford, 1894); which agrees with that given in my one-volume edition (Oxford, 1901); and hardly differs from that in the *Globe Chaucer*, published in 1898.

CAMBRIDGE; September 19th, 1903.

PART I

WHILOM, as olden tales record for us,
There lived a duke whose name was Theseüs.
Of Athens was he lord and governor,
And in his time was such a conqueror,
That greater was there none beneath the sun.
Full many a wealthy kingdom had he won.
For with his wisdom and his strong right hand
He conquered all the Amazonian land,
That formerly was known as Scythia ;
And wedded there the queen Hippolyta, 10
And home to Athens hath his bride conveyed
With ceremonial pomp and great parade,
And eke her younger sister, Emily.
And thus with victory and melody

I let this noble duke to Athens ride,
His host in armour following close beside.

And surely, were it not too long to hear,
The story, told at length, should render clear
How won was all the Amazonian land
By Theseüs, and by his strong right hand ; 20
And of the mighty battle, for the nonce,
Betwixt this Theseus and the Amazons ;
And how besieg-ed was Hippolyta,
The fair and valiant queen of Scythia ;
And how their wedding-feast was duly made,
And of the tempest that their course delayed.
But from that story must I now forbear.
To plough a spacious field is now my care,
And in my plough the feeble oxen fail.
Sufficient is the remnant of the tale. 30
I hinder none of all this company ;
To tell his tale be every pilgrim free,
And let us see who shall the supper win.
Now, where I ceased, will I again begin.

This duke, of whom I make this mention,
When he was almost come within the town,
In all his glory and his pomp of pride,
Aware was, as he cast his eye aside,

Where kneeling by the way appeared to view
A company of ladies, two and two, 40
One after other, clad in garments black ;
But such lament and such a woe they make,
That in this world was never creature known
That heard so mournful and so sad a moan ;
Nor ever would they end their woeful strain
Till they had caught him by the bridle-rein.

“ What folk are ye, that at my home-return
When all should be rejoicing, weep and mourn ? ”
Quoth Theseüs :—“ have ye such envious pain
At my success, that thus ye dare complain ? 50
Or who hath you ill-treated or offended ?
And tell me, if it e'er can be amended ;
And why ye thus are habited in black ? ”

The eldest of the company out-spake,
(When she had swooned with such a deathly cheer
That it was sorrow both to see and hear)
And answered—“ Lord, to whom doth Fortune give
Success, and as a conqueror to live,
Your glory grieves us not, nor your success,
But we implore your succour and your grace. 60
Have mercy on our woe and our distress,
Some drop of pity, for your gentleness,

Upon us wretched women now let fall.
For here, my lord, is none amongst us all
That hath not been a duchess or a queen ;
Now are we exiles, as may well be seen,
For which we thank dame Fortune's rolling wheel,
Who never suffers long-continued weal.
And verily, your present aid to gain,
Within the goddess Pity's sacred fane 70
A weary fortnight have we waited long ;
Now help us, lord, we pray ; thine arm is strong.

I, wretched one, that wail and sorrow thus,
Was sometime wife to king Capanëus,
That died at Thebes, accurs-ed be the day !
And all the rest that mourn in like array
And make this woful lamentation,
All lost their husbands in that fated town,
While that the cruel siege around it lay.
And now the tyrant Creon, welladay ! 80
That late of Thebes has gained the sovereignty,
Replete with anger and iniquity,
He, for despite, and in his tyranny,
To do the bodies an indignity
Of all our husbands in the conflict slain,
Hath cast the corpses in a heap amain,

And will not suffer them, for any prayer,
To be consumed by fire or buried there,
But causes dogs to eat them, for despite.”
Therewith, without delay, in Theseus' sight, 90
All prone they fell, exclaiming piteously—
“With wretched women show some sympathy,
And let our sorrow sink within thine heart.”
This gentle duke did from his courser start,
With pitying heart, when thus he heard them speak.
It seemed indeed as if his heart would break,
Beholding all the sadness of their fate,
That formerly were of so great estate ;
And in his arms he caught them from the ground,
Consoling them with words of cheerful sound, 100
And swore his oath that, as a worthy knight,
So fully would he exercise his might
Against the tyrant Creon, them to wreak,
That all the folk in Greece should ever speak
How Creon was by Theseus well served,
As one that had his death full well deserved.
And right anon, without the least delay,
He bade his men his banner to display,
And rode to Thebes, with all his host beside.
No nearer Athens would he go nor ride, 110
Nor tarry, for repose, but half a day,

But ever forward journeyed on his way ;
And bade Hippolyta the queen repair,
With Emily her sister, young and fair,
Unto the town of Athens, there to dwell ;
And forth he rides ; there is no more to tell.

Mars, painted all in red, with spear and targe
So shines upon his banner white and large
That all the field is glittering far and wide ;
His pennon fluttered at the banner's side 120
Adorned with beaten gold, that gave to view
The Minotaur, whom once in Crete he slew.
Thus rides this duke, thus rides this conqueror,
And in his host of chivalry the flower,
Till that he came to Thebes, and doth alight
Within the neighbouring plain, prepared for fight.
But shortly to commemorate this thing,
With Creon, then of Thebes the tyrant-king,
He fought, and slew him, manly, like a knight
In battle, putting all the folk to flight ; 130
And by assault he won the city after,
And rent adown both wall, and spar, and rafter.
Next to the ladies he restored again
The bodies of their husbands that were slain,
For solemn burial, as was then their wont.

But long would be the story, to recount
The clamorous cries, the lamentations dire
Raised by the ladies o'er the funeral pyre
That burnt the bodies, and the honours fair
That noble Theseus, in his gentle care, 140
Doth to the ladies, ere they from him went ;
To tell it briefly is my sole intent.
When that this worthy duke, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slain, and won the city thus,
All night within the plain he rested still,
Controlling all the country at his will.

To ransack in the heap of bodies slain
Their armour and accoutrements to gain,
The busy spoilers hastened forth, secure,
After the battle and discomfiture. 150
And so befell, that in the heap they found
Pierced through with many a grievous, bleeding wound,
Two youthful knights, that close together lay,
Their coats of arms the same, in like array ;
The noble Arcite of the twain was one ;
The other knight, his cousin Palamon.
Not wholly quick, nor wholly dead were they,
But by their coats of arms and their array
The heralds could their kindred surely trace

As knights belonging to the regal race 160
Of Creon, of two noble sisters born.
Out of the heap the spoilers have them torn,
And softly carried them within the tent
Of Theseüs ; and he full soon them sent
To Athens, there in prison to remain
Perpetually ; all ransom was in vain.
And when this worthy duke the town had won,
He joined his host, and home he rode anon,
Clad like a conqueror, with laurel crowned ;
And there he liveth, joyful and renowned, 170
For many a year ; no need of words, I trow.
And in a tower, in anguish and in woe,
Arcite and Palamon, these kinsmen, be
For evermore ; no gold can set them free.

Thus passeth year by year, and day by day,
Till once befell, upon a morn in May,
That Emily, that fairer was to sight
Than on its green stalk is the lily white,
And fresher than the May with flowers new,
For with the rose's colour strove her hue— 180
Which of the twain was fairer, who shall say?—
As was her wont, before it yet was day,
She had arisen, and was quickly dressed,

For May permits no sluggard long to rest.
That season pricketh every gentle heart,
And causeth him anon from sleep to start,
And saith—"Arise, and do thy service true."
This causeth her the custom to renew,
To rise betimes, and honour give to May.
All richly was she clad, in fresh array ; 190
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress
Behind her back, a full yard long, I guess.
And in the garden, as the sun up-rose,
She wandered up and down, and as she chose
She gathered flowers, mingling white with red
To make a well-wrought garland for her head ;
And like a heavenly angel's was her song.
The master-tower, that was so thick and strong,
That of the castle was the dungeon-keep, 199
Where that these knights were cast in prison deep,
Of whom I told, and hope to tell you all,
Was close adjoining to the garden-wall
Where that this Emily had come to play.
Bright was the sun, and clear the morning-ray,
And Palamon, this prisoner, who to grieve
Was often wont, had gained his gaoler's leave
To roam within a turret-chamber high,
From whence he all the city round could eye,

And e'en the garden, full of branches green,
Wherein fair Emily, thus clothed in sheen, 210
Was seen to walk, and wandered up and down.
This mournful prisoner, this Palamon,
Walks in his chamber, pacing to and fro,
Complaining to himself of all his woe ;
“ Alas, that I was born ! ” full oft he cried.
And so, by chance, it happened at that tide
That through a window, fenced with many a bar
Of iron, great and square as any spar,
He cast his eye upon Emilia ; 219
And therewithal he blenched, and cried out ‘ ha ! ’
As though that he were stung unto the heart.
And with that cry did Arcita up-start
And said—“ Dear cousin mine, what aileth thee,
That art so wild and deadly pale to see ?
Why criedst thou ? Who hath thee done offence ?
For love of God, take all in patiéce
Our prison ; otherwise it may not be.
Fortune hath wrought us this adversity.
Some evil aspect's dispositi6n
Of Saturn, by some constellati6n, 230
Has caused it, though against it we have striven ;
When we were born, so stood the signs of heaven.
We must endure it ; this is short and plain.”

Then answered Palamon, and said again,
“Cousin, forsooth, of this opini3n
Thou hast a vain imaginati3n ;
This prison caused me not aloud to cry.
But I, right now, was stricken through mine eye
Unto my very heart ; my death ’twill be.
The fairness of the lady that I see 240
In yonder garden wandering to and fro
Is cause of all my crying and my woe.
I know not, be she woman or godd3ss !
But Venus is it truly, as I guess.”
And therewithal down on his knees fell he,
And cried :—“ O Venus ! if thy will so be
In yonder garden thus thyself to show,
In sight of me, a prisoner filled with woe,
Out of this prison help that we may scape !
But if my destiny my course doth shape 250
By fixed decree to die in prison base,
Have some compassion on our noble race,
That thus is humbled by great tyranny ! ”
And with that word did Arcite first espy
This lady, as she wandered to and fro.
And with that sight her beauty hurt him so,
That, if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as much as he, or more.

And with a sigh he cried, full piteously :—
“The shining beauty slays me suddenly 260
Of her, that roameth there, in yonder place ;
Unless I win her mercy and her grace,
That I at least her presence may attain,
I am but dead ; no more, I speak in vain ! ”

This Palamon, when Arcite spake and sighed,
Disdainfully he looked, and thus replied ;
“Now say'st thou this in earnest or in play ? ”
“Nay,” quoth Arcite, “in earnest, by my fay !
God help me, it were ill for me to feign.”

This Palamon did knit his eyebrows twain ; 270
Quoth he, “it were no honour great to thee
To prove but false, or traitor now to be
To me, that am thy cousin and thy brother
Full deeply sworn ; for each of us to other
Once swore that never, spite of torture's pain,
Until grim death shall separate us twain,
Would either seek in love to hinder other,
Nor yet in other case, my dearest brother ;
But that thou shouldest truly further me
In every chance, as I shall further thee. 280
This truly was thine oath, and mine the same ;

I wot right well, thou dar'st it not disclaim.
Thus art thou in my secret, out of doubt.
And now thou wouldest falsely go about
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And ever shall, until my heart shall starve.
Now truly, false Arcite, thou shalt not so.
I loved her first, and told thee all my woe
As in a secret, who art sworn to aid
My love and succour me, as I have said. 290
And therefore art thou bounden, as a knight,
To help me, if it lie within thy might,
Or else thou art forsworn, thine oaths are vain !”

This Arcita full proudly spake again :—
“ Thou wilt,” quoth he, “ be sooner false than I !
But thou *art* false, I tell thee, utterly.
For, *par amour*, I loved her first ere thou !
What canst thou say ? Thou knewest not, e'en now,
Whether she woman or a goddess were !
Thine is devotion, as with holy fear, 300
But mine is *love*, as to created thing !
And therefore spake I of my sudden sting
To thee, my cousin and mine own sworn brother !
Suppose now, thou hadst loved her ere another ;
What ! know'st thou not the olden author's saw,

‘ Who may prescribe to lovers any law ?
Love is a greater law, a greater ban,
Than otherwise is laid on mortal man.’
And therefore many a law and just decree
Are broken oft for love, in each degree. 310
A man must love perforce, despite his will,
Yea, unto death, his fate he must fulfil,
Be she a maid, a widow, or a wife.
And eke thou art not likely, all thy life,
To come within her grace ; no more shall I.
For well, like me, thou knowest verily
That thou and I must here emprisoned be
Perpetually ; no ransom sets us free.
We strive, as once two dogs did for a bone ; 319
They fought all day, and yet their share was none ;
There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,
And bare away the bone between them both.
And therefore, at the kingly court, my brother,
Is each man for himself and not another.
Love if thou wilt ; I love, and ever shall.
And truly, dearest brother, this is all ;
Here in this prison must we long remain,
And each one have his share of joy or pain.”

Great was the strife and long betwixt the two,

Had I the time the story to pursue ; 330
But to proceed :—it happened on a day,
To tell the tale as shortly as I may,
A worthy duke, one named Pirithous,
That friend had been to good duke Theseus
Since they were children innocent and free,
At Athens had arrived, his friend to see,
And make him mirth, as he was wont to do ;
For in this world he cherished no one so ;
And he loved him as tenderly again.
So well they loved—so olden authors feign— 340
That when one died—a wondrous tale to tell—
His comrade went and sought him down in hell.
But all the story I refrain to write.
Pirithous had known and loved Arcite,
And been his friend at Thebes for many a year.
And finally, at the request and prayer
Of this Pirithous, without a fee,
Duke Theseus from his prison set him free,
At liberty to take his chosen course ;
But one condition must he keep, perforce. 350
This was the compact—plainly to recite—
Betwixt duke Theseus and this youthful knight,
That if so happened, Arcite once should stay
One hour of all his life, by night or day,

In any country of this Thesëus,
If he were caught, it was decided thus,
That with a sword he was to lose his head
Without redemption; thus his cause was sped.
He takes his leave, and homeward fast he hies.
Let him beware! his neck in forfeit lies.

360

How great a sorrow suffereth now Arcite!
Sharp death he feeleth through his heart to smite.
He weepeth, waileth, mourneth piteously;
To slay himself he pondereth privily.
He said—"Alas! that ever I was born!
Now is my prisoned state yet more forlorn.
Now is my fate eternally to dwell
No more in purgatory, but in hell!
Alas, that e'er I knew Pirithous!
For else I still had dwelt with Thesëus,
Fast fettered in the prison of my foe.
Then had I been in bliss, and not in woe.
Merely the sight of her whom I must serve,
Though that I never may her grace deserve,
Sufficient would have been, I trow, for me.
O happy cousin Palamon"—quoth he—
"The victory is thine, I know too well;
Full blissfully in prison may'st thou dwell;

370

In prison? surely nay! in paradise! 379

Too well hath Fortune turned for thee the dice!

Thou seest her still, but absence is my share;

'Tis likely too, since thou art always there,

And art a knight, a worthy one and able,

That by some chance of fortune variable

Thou may'st to thy desire some day attain.

But I, alas! am exiled and in pain,

Barren of grace, and in so great despair

That neither earth nor water, fire nor air,

Nor aught that of these four created is

Can bring me help, or comfort yield in this. 390

Needs must I die despairing, in distress;

Farewell my life, my love, my happiness!

Ah! why should men complain so frequently

Of providence of God, or fate's decree,

That yieldeth them full oft in many a wise

A fairer doom than they could e'er devise?

One man desireth riches for to gain

That cause is of his murder or his pain.

Another from his prison would be freed,

And by his servants in his home doth bleed. 400

Infinite harms in such-like things appear;

We know not what it is we pray for here.

We act as one that drunk is as a mouse;

A drunken man well knows he hath a house,
But knoweth not which way will homeward lead;
And slippery is the drunkard's path indeed.
And in this world, I trow, so wander we;
With painful care we seek felicity,
Yet go astray full often, certainly.
Thus may we all confess; and chiefly I, 410
Whose former vain opinion took the shape
That, if from prison I might once escape,
All joy and happiness I could not miss;
Whereas I now am exiled from my bliss.
Since that I may not see thee, Emily,
I am but dead; I know no remedy."

But on the other hand sir Palamon,
When that he knew Arcíte away was gone,
Such sorrow makes, that all the tower on high
Resoundeth with his clamour and his cry. 420
The very fetters on his ankles great
Were with his bitter briny tears all wet.
"Alas!" quoth he, "good Arcite, cousin mine,
Of all our strife, God knows, the fruit is thine,
Thou walkest now in Thebes, and all at large,
And of my woe thou tak'st but little charge.
Thou may'st, since thou art wise and brave and free,

Assemble all the folk that follow thee,
And make so sharp a war against this place,
That by some treaty, chance, or act of grace, 430
Thou may'st obtain that lady for thy wife
For whom, alas! I needs must lose my life.
For, as by way of possibility,
Since thou art all at large, of prison free,
And art a lord, advantage great is thine,
Whilst in a prison's narrow cage I pine. —
For I must weep and wail, the while I live,
With all the woe the prison may me give,
And eke with pain that love doth give alsó,
That doubleth all my torment and my woe." 440

Therewith the fire of jealousy did start
Within his breast, and caught him by the heart
So madly, that he like was to behold
To boxwood, or to ashes dead and cold.
Then said he—"Cruel gods, that regulate
This world by binding words of changeless fate,
And write on tablets of pure adamant
Your sure decrees, and your eternal grant,
What more in mankind can you e'er behold
Than in the sheep that crouches in the fold? 450
For man like other animals is slain,

And dwelleth eke in prison or in pain,
And feeleth sickness or adversity,
Yet oftentimes from guiltiness is free.
What government is in this prescience
That thus tormenteth guiltless innocence?
And this makes all my penance more redound,
That man by duty's yoke is wholly bound
For sake of God, to regulate his will,
Where animals may all their wish fulfil. 460
When any beast is dead, he hath no pain ;
But, after death, mankind must still complain,
Though in this world he had both care and woe !
Without a doubt the case may happen so.
I leave the reason to the grave divine ;
But well I wot, mankind hath cause to pine.
I see a serpent or a thief uncaught,
That hath to honest men much mischief wrought,
Go wholly free, and where he pleases turn.
But I must be in prison through Saturn, 470
And eke through Juno, full of jealous rage,
That well nigh hath destroyed the lineage
Of Thebes, with all its wasted walls so wide.
And Venus slays me on the other side
With jealousy, and fear of Arcite's guile."

Now will I leave sir Palamon awhile,
And let him in his prison hopeless dwell,
And of Arcita will I further tell.

The summer passeth, and the nights grow long,
Increasing double-fold the torments strong 480
Both of the lover and the pris'ner too.
I know not which hath sadder case to rue.
For shortly to compare their luckless state,
In prison Palamon must ever wait
In chains and fetters, till men find him dead ;
And Arcite, on the forfeit of his head,
Is ever banished, far from Athens' shore,
Nor may he see his lady evermore.
I ask you lovers now this question ;
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon ? 490
The one may see his lady day by day,
But fast in prison must he dwell away.
The other one to range at will is free,
But nevermore his lady once shall see.
Decide now as it please you, ye that can ;
For now will I proceed as I began.

So feeble were his spirits and so low,
So greatly changed, that no man well could know
His speech or yet his voice, though men it heard.
His conduct too, for all the world, appeared
Not only like the lover's malady
By Cupid caused, but like insanity
Caused by the melancholic humours vain
That rose in front of his fantastic brain.
And shortly, turned were wholly upside-down
The habits and the disposition
Of this same woful lover, sir Arcíte.
Why should I always all his woe endite ?

520

When that he had endured a year or twain
This cruel torment and this woe and pain,
At Thebes, in his own country, as I said,
Upon a night, in restless slumber laid,
He dreamt he saw winged Mercury appear,
Benignly mild, who bade him take good cheer.
His sleep-compelling rod he bare upright ;
A hat he wore upon his tresses bright.
Apparelled was this god—as he took heed—
As once, when Argus fell asleep indeed ;
And thus he spake :—“To Athens shalt thou wend,
For there is destined all thy woe to end.”

530

And thereupon woke Arcite with a start.
“Now verily, however sore I smart,”
Quoth he, “to Athens surely will I fare.
Nor, for the dread of death, will ever spare
To see her whom I serve so faithfully ;
I reckon not, in her presence though I die.” 540
With that he seized a mirror lying near,
And saw how altered was his former cheer,
And all his features of another kind.
And right anon the thought rose in his mind,
That, since his face was now disfigured so
By maladies, occasioned by his woe,
He well might, if he kept a lowly guise,
Live long in Athens, in an unknown wise,
And see his lady well nigh day by day.
And right anon he altered his array, 550
And clad him like a labourer for hire ;
And all alone, except a trusty squire,
That knew his secret well and all the case,
Disguised as poorly as his master was,
To Athens is he gone, the nearest way.
And to the court he went, upon a day,
And at the gate he proffered him, for hire,
To drudge and draw, whatever men require.
And shortly all the narrative to tell,

He with a chamberlain in converse fell 560
Who in the household dwelt of Emily.
The same was prudent, and could soon espy
The strength and value of each servant there.
Well could Arcíte hew wood, and water bear ;
For he was young, and mighty for the nonce,
Moreover he was strong and big of bones
To execute the tasks upon him laid.
A year or two he in this service stayed,
As chamber-page of Emily the fair,
And ‘ Philostrat ’ the name was that he bare. 570
But half so well beloved a man as he
Was never page in court, of his degree ;
He was so gentle of conditi3n,
That throughout all the court went his renown.
They said, that surely ’twere a charity
If Theseus would exalt him in degree,
And place him in some worthier estate,
Where he might exercise his virtues great.
And thus, in no long time, the fame had sprung
Both of his deeds, and of his courteous tongue, 580
That Theseus bade him near himself remain
To be a squire amongst his household-train,
And gave him gold consistent with his grade.
From Thebes moreover messengers conveyed

From year to year, all stealthily, his rent.
But honestly and wisely he it spent,
That no man wondered how so well he sped.
And three years in this wise his life he led.
In peace or war he such a course did steer,
That Theseus held no comrade half so dear. 590
And thus let Arcite in his gladness dwell,
While now the tale of Palamon I tell.

In loathsome dungeon dark, and fast enchained,
For seven long years hath Palamon remained,
Tormented both with horror and distress.
Who feeleth double pain and heaviness
But Palamon, whom love constraineth so
That well nigh out of wit he goes for woe?
And furthermore, a prisoner is he
Not only for a year, but endlessly. 600
Say, who could rhyme in English properly
His martyrdom?—forsooth, it is not I;
I pass it o'er as lightly as I may.
It chanced that, in the seventh year, in May,
On the third night, as olden books maintain,
That tell us all the story, full and plain,
Whether it were by chance or destiny—
As, when a thing is fated, it must *be*—

This Palamon, soon after midnight's hour,
By aid of friends, brake from his prison-tower, 610
And flees the city, fast as he may go ;
For he had made his gaoler drunken so
With liquor spiced, made of a certain wine
With opium mingled and narcotics fine,
That all that night, howe'er men might him shake,
The gaoler slept, no power had he to wake ;
And thus he flees, as fast as e'er he may.
The night was short, and drawing near to day ;
At any risk, his person must he hide,
And tow'rd a grove, that grew full close beside, 620
With timorous step forth stalketh Palamon.
For shortly, this was his opini6n,
That in the grove he would him hide all day,
And in the night then would he take his way
To go to Thebes, and pray his comrades there
To Athens with an army to repair ;
Thus, shortly, he would either lose his life,
Or win fair Emily to be his wife.
This is his plan, and his intention plain.

Now will I turn to Arcite once again, 630
Who little knew how nigh was all his care,
Till fickle Fortune brought him in the snare.

The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Saluteth in her song the morrow gray,
And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright,
That all the orient laugheth at the light ;
And in the groves he drieth with his rays
The silver drops that hang upon the sprays.
And Arcite, that within the court doth dwell 639
With Theseus, chief of squires, and trusted well,
Is risen, and looketh on the merry day ;
And, prompt to keep the customed rites of May,
Remembering every point of his desire,
Leaps on a courser, strong and fierce as fire,
And rides into the fields, to ease his woes.
Out of the court a mile or twain he goes,
And to the very grove of which I told,
Unwittingly his onward way doth hold
In hopes a garland with the sprays to twine,
Contrived of hawthorn or of eglantine, 650
And loud he sang, to greet the sunny sheen :
“O May, with all thy blossoms and thy green,
Welcome be thou, thou fair refreshing May !
Here may I gather every greenest spray !”
Down from his courser, with a jocund heart,
Into the grove behold him swiftly start ;
And in a path he rambles up and down

Where, as it chanced, this hapless Palamon
Was hidden in a bush, that none might see,
For sore in peril of his life was he. 660
He could not there his rival think to view ;
God knows, he would have deemed the fact untrue.
But truly was it said, in olden years,
That fields have eyes, and lonely woods have ears.
'Tis fit that all should well control their powers,
For oft men meet at unexpected hours.
Full little Arcite guessed his rival near,
Close hidden where he might his song o'erhear ;
For in the bush he lurketh now full still.

When Arcite now of wandering had his fill, 670
And all his roundel sung had lustily,
Into a study fell he suddenly,
As do these lovers in their strange desires,
Now in the tree-top, now amongst the briars,
Now up, now down, like buckets in a well.
Just as on Friday, all the sooth to tell,
Sometimes it shineth, sometimes raineth fast,
Just so can changeful Venus overcast
The hearts of those that serve her ; as her day
Is changeful, so she changeth her array. 680
Like other days is Friday seldom known.

And when Arcite had sung, he gave a groan,
And forthwith down he sat, as one forlorn.
“ Alas ! ” he said—“ the day that I was born !
How long, O Juno, with thy cruel might
Wilt thou make war on Thebes, that city bright ?
Alas ! now brought is to confusión
The blood of Cadmus and of Amphiön ;
Of Cadmus, he that was the foremost man
That founded Thebes, and first the town began, 690
And of the city first was crowned as king.
Of Cadmus’ race am I, from him I spring
By true descent, one of the regal race.
And now am I so humbled and so base,
That him, who is my mortal enemy,
I serve as trusted squire, submissively.
And yet hath Juno done me greater shame ;
I dare not now confess my rightful name ;
But where my title once was Sir Arcíte,
Now am I Philostrat, not worth a mite. 700
Alas, thou cruel Mars ! alas, Junó !
Thus hath your wrath our kindred brought to woe
Save only me, and Palamon forlorn,
Whom Theseus in his prison holds in scorn.
Beyond all this, to slay me utterly,
Love hath his fiery dart so burningly

Infix'd within my heart, full sorely hurt,
That e'en my death was shaped before my shirt.
You slay me with your glances, Emily!
You are the cause, whereby I pine and die! 710
For every other source of grief and care
I count not of the value of a tare,
If aught I could effect to please you well!"
And with that word down in a trance he fell
A weary while; then leapt up with a start.

But Palamon, who thought that through his heart
He felt a cold sword swiftly-piercing glide,
For anger shook, no longer would he bide.
But, when that he had heard his rival's tale,
In madman's wise, with deadly face and pale, 720
He started from the bushes close and high,
And cried:—"Arcite, thou traitor false and sly,
Now art thou caught, that lov'st my lady so,
For whom that I have all this pain and woe;
My kinsman thou, to keep my secrets sworn,
As I have told thee often ere this morn;
For here hast thou deceived duke Theseus,
And falsely hast thou changed thy title thus.
I am prepared for death, or thou shalt die;
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily! 730

Her whom I love let all men else forgo ;
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe !
And though I have no weapon in this place,
But have from prison broken forth, by grace,
I fear thee not ; for either thou shalt die,
Or thou shalt never love fair Emily.
Choose which thou wilt, thou shalt not hence depart.”

This Arcite, with a full disdainful heart,
When he had heard his tale, and well him knew,
Fierce as a lion, straight his sword out-drew, 740
And thus exclaimed :—“ By heaven that is above,
Were ’t not that thou art sick and mad for love,
And hast besides no weapon in this place,
Thou never from this grove shouldst stir a pace,
But rather die this instant on my sword.
For I deny the surety and the word
Which thou declarest I have made to thee !
Why, very fool ! think well that love is free,
And I will love her, spite of all thy might.
But, for as much as thou’rt a worthy knight, 750
Ready to try whose valour shall prevail,
Have here my troth ! To-morrow I will not fail,
But, unperceived by any other wight,
Here will I meet thee like a faithful knight,

And bring fair armour, suitable for thee,
Yea! choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
To-night too will I bring thee drink and bread,
Enough for thee, and clothes to make thy bed.
And if so be that thou my lady win,
And slay me in the wood we now are in, 760
Then may'st thou have thy lady, as for me!"
This Palamon replied:—"I grant it thee."
And thus they parted till the morrow's morn,
When each hath pledged his promise to return.

O Cupid, that disdainest charity!
O prince, that wilt no rival have with thee!
How true the saw, that love and tyranny
Will—knowingly—ne'er suffer rivalry.
Well Arcite findeth this, and Palamon.
Arcite has ridden anon unto the town, 770
And on the morrow, ere the sun was high,
Procured two suits of armour secretly,
Sufficient both and fitting to sustain
The battle in the field betwixt the twain.
And on his horse, himself, and no man more,
He carrieth all this armour, him before;
And in the grove, at time and place as set,
This Arcite and this Palamon are met.

Then change came o'er the colour of each face ;
E'en as the hunter, in the realm of Thrace, 780
Stands waiting at the gap, in hand a spear,
When hunted is the lion or the bear,
And hears him through the groves come rushing on,
And breaking all the leaves and bushes down,
And thinks—" here comes my mortal enemy,
And shortly must lie dead or he, or I ;
For either must I slay him at the gap,
Or he will slay me, if that aught mishap "—
So fared the twain, in changing of their hue,
As far as each of them the other knew. 790
No salutation was there, or " good day,"
But straight, without rehearsal or delay,
Each helped with all his care to arm the other
As friendly as he had been born his brother.
And after that, with sharpened spears and strong
They thrust, each at the other, wondrous long.
Thou mightest deem this Palamon had been,
In his attack, a lion fierce and keen,
And like a cruel tiger was Arcíte.
As two wild boars began they both to smite, 800
That foam with flying froth in angry mood.
Up to the ankles fought they in their blood.
And in this wise I let them fighting dwell,

And now of Theseus I awhile will tell.

Stern destiny, subservient to God's will,
That through the wide world worketh to fulfil
The providence that God before hath seen,
So strong it is, that though the world should ween
The contrary must come, by yea or nay,
Yet sometimes that shall happen, on a day, 810
That in a thousand years ne'er comes again.
For certainly, our inclinations vain,
Be they for war or peace, or hate, or love,
Are overruled by providence above.
And so it chanced with Theseus brave and bold ;
His love of hunting is so uncontrolled,
And chiefly, hunting of the hart in May,
That in his bed he sees no dawning day
But straightway is he clad, prepared to ride 819
With hounds and horn and huntsmen at his side.
For in this hunting hath he such delight
That it is all his joy and appetite
To prove himself the slayer of the hart ;
For, next to Mars, he takes Diana's part.
Clear was the day, as I have said ere this ;
And Theseus, all rejoicing in his bliss,
With his Hippolyta, his dainty queen,

And Emily the fair, all clothed in green,
A-hunting have they ridden, royally.
And tow'rds the fatal grove, that lay hard by, 830
In which there was a hart, as men him told,
Duke Theseus now the nearest way doth hold ;
And tow'rds an open glade he rides aright,
For thither oft the hart would take his flight,
And over a brook he goes, and forth again.
This noble duke would have a course or twain
With hounds, all duly for the chase purveyed.
And when this duke was come unto the glade,
Beneath the sun he looketh, and anon
Was ware of Arcite and of Palamon 840
That fierce as foaming boars gave blow for blow.
Their circling swords flashed brightly to and fro
So forcefully, that with the lightest stroke
They seemed as they would fell a sturdy oak.
But who the knights might be, yet knew he not.
The duke with sudden spurs his courser smote,
And in a moment dashed betwixt the two,
And drew his mighty sword, and shouted—"Ho!
No more, lest each one forfeit here his head!
By mighty Mars, he straightway shall be dead 850
Who strikes another stroke, that I may see!
But tell me now, what kind of men ye be

That have the boldness to do battle here
Without an umpire or such officer
As if in lists of tourney, royally ?”
Then Palamon replied right hastily,
And said—“What need, sir, words to spend in vain?
We well deserve to suffer, both the twain.
Two woeful wretches are we, guilty both,
To whom our lives are cumbersome and loath ; 860
As in thy rightful justice we believe,
Now grant us neither mercy nor reprieve !
And slay me first I pray, for charity ;
But slay my comrade next, as well as me ;
Or slay him first ! For, as thou may’st not know,
This is Arcíte, this is thy mortal foe,
Banished thy land, on forfeit of his head,
For which he well deserveth to be dead.
For this is he that came within thy gate,
Pretending that his name was Philostrát ! 870
Thus hath he long time cheated thy belief,
And thou hast chosen him thy squire in chief ;
And this is he that loveth Emily !
For since the day is come that I must die,
I make here plainly my confessi3n
That I am that same woeful Palamon,
That hath from prison broken, wickedly.

I am thy mortal foe, and it is I
That love so hotly Emily the bright
That I would die here, present in her sight. 880
Therefore I ask for death and justice due.
But in the same way slay my rival too ;
Alike have we deserv-ed to be slain ! ”

The worthy duke anon replied again,
And said—“ Behold a short conclusion !
Your own mouth, by your own confession,
Condemns you, and myself am witness here ;
There needs no torturing cord, the truth to clear.
By mighty Mars the red, ye both shall die ! ”

Thereat the queen, with woman’s sympathy, 890
Began to weep, and so did Emily,
And all the ladies in the company.
Great pity was it, so it seemed to all,
That ever such a fate should knights befall.
For gentlemen were they, of high estate,
And only but for love was this debate.
They viewed their bleeding wounds, severe and sore,
And all together cried, both less and more,
“ Have mercy, lord ! upon us women all ! ”
And on their bended knees adown they fall, 900

And would have kissed his feet, e'en where he stood;
Till at the last compassion swayed his mood;
For pity runneth soon in gentle heart.
And though at first fierce anger made him start,
He hath considered shortly, in a clause,
The trespass of them both, and eke the cause;
And although that his ire their guilt accused,
Yet, in his reason, he them both excused.
And thus concluded well, that every man
Will help himself in love, if help he can, 910
And free from prison gladly would be gone;
And eke his heart had great compassiön
On women, for they wept and pleaded on.
And in his gentle heart he thought anon,
And softly to himself he murmured—"Fie
Upon a lord that knows no clemency,
But is a lion, both in word and deed,
To such as are repentant and in dread
As much as to a proud disdainful man
That dares maintain whate'er he first began! 920
That lord hath little of discretiön,
That in such case knows no divisiön,
But counts humility and pride as one."
And shortly, when his anger thus hath gone,
He looked around with eyes serene and clear,

And spake these words aloud, that all might hear.
“The god of love ! ha ! *benedicite* !
How mighty and how great a lord is he !
Against his might no obstacles succeed,
His wonders mark him as a god indeed. 930
For he can turn and sway, in wilful wise,
Men’s passions, as he pleases to devise.
Lo, here ! this Arcite and this Palamon,
That wholly free from prison once were gone,
And might have lived in Thebes full royally,
And know I am their mortal enemy,
And that their death within my bidding lies ;
And yet hath love forsooth, despite their eyes,
Conducted them both hitherward to die !
Behold how great their folly and how high ! 940
Who may not prove a fool, if led by love ?
Behold, for sake of Him that sits above,
See how they bleed ! Are they not well arrayed ?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, well paid
Their wages, and their fees for service vain.
And yet men deem themselves full wise of brain
Who serve this lord, for aught that may befall.
But yet this is the veriest game of all
That she, for whom they have such blissful glee,
Owes for it no more thanks to them than me ! 950

She knows no more of all their jealous fare,
By heav'n ! than doth a cuckoo or a hare.
But all must be experienced, hot and cold ;
A man must prove a fool, or young or old.
I know it by myself in years agoe ;
For of such lovers I myself was one.
And therefore, since I know how great love's pain,
And know how sore it may a man constrain,
As one that in his snare hath oft been caught,
I here forgive the trespass ye have wrought, 960
Entreated by the queen that kneeleth here
And eke by Emily, my sister dear.
But ye shall swear to me, at my behest,
That ye my country never shall molest,
Nor war against me make, by night or day,
But prove my friends in all that e'er ye may.
I here forgive your trespass evermore."
And they, to keep the compact, frankly swore,
And him for favour and for mercy prayed ; 969
And he them granteth grace, and thus he said :

“ To speak of lineage or of wealth, I ween,
Though that she were a princess or a queen,
Each of the twain is worthy, questionless,
To wed when time shall come ; but, none the less,

I speak here for my sister Emily,
For whom ye have such strife and jealousy,
Ye know yourselves she may not marry twain
However long the contest ye maintain ;
But one or other, be he loath or lief,
Must needs go whistle in an ivy-leaf ;
That is to say, she cannot now have both,
Though ye be ne'er so jealous or so wroth.
And therefore I propose as my decree,
That each of you shall have his destiny
As fate ordains ; and hearken in what wise ;
Lo ! what arbitrament I here devise.

980

My will is this, the quarrel to conclude,
Which ye must neither question nor elude ;
If it may please you, take it as the best.
Each shall depart where seems him pleasantest
Freely, from ransom or acquittance clear ;
And this day fifty weeks, within the year,
Both shall return, and bring a hundred knights,
Prepared for tournament, all well-armed wights,
To prove whose fortune shall by strength prevail.
And this I promise you, and will not fail,
Upon my truth, and as I am a knight,
That whether of the twain may have the might,

990

That is to say, that whether he or thou
May, with his hundred that I spake of now, 1000
His rival slay, or from the lists him drive,
He, by consent, fair Emily shall wive,
To whom dame Fortune grants so fair a grace.
The lists shall I prepare in yonder place,
And God's dear mercy on my soul so rue
As I will prove an umpire just and true !
By this decision shall my mind be swayed,
That one of you be slain or prisoner made.
And if ye this approve as truly meant,
Say what ye think, and give your firm assent. 1010
This shall decide and end your strife anon."

Who looketh lightly now but Palamon ?
Who springeth up for gladness but Arcite ?
Who could recount, or who could it endite,
The general sound of joy that filled the place
When Theseus thus hath done so fair a grace ?
But down upon their knees went every wight,
Oft thanking him with all their heart and might,
And many a time the Thebans thanked him best.
And thus, with good hope and with hearts at rest, 1020
They take their leave of him, and homeward ride
To Thebes the famous, with its walls so wide.

PART III

I TROW, men would but deem it negligence
If I forget to tell the great expense
Of Theseus, who prepares so busily
To furnish all the lists full royally ;
A theatre so noble has he made,
I say the world its like had ne'er surveyed.
Its ample circuit went a mile about, 1029
All strongly walled with stone, and ditched without.
Round was its shape, with rising circles dight,
Arranged in steps, full sixty yards in height,
So that, as rank by rank each step withdrew,
No man might hinder other from the view.

Eastward there stood a gate of marble white ;

And westward, such another, opposite ;
And, shortly to describe it, such a place
Was none on earth, in such a little space.
For in the land no craftsman could be found
Skilled in arithmetic or measuring ground, 1040
No draughtsman, none who carved in stone or wood,
But Theseus gave him meat and wages good
The theatre to fashion and devise.
And, more to do his rite and sacrifice,
He eastward hath, upon the gate above,
In Venus' worship—goddess she of love —
Contrived an altar and an orat'ry.
And westward, in regard and memory
Of Mars, he such another hath designed,
That cost him many a load of gold refined. 1050
And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white and red corál
An oratory, marvellous to see,
In worship of Diana's chastity,
Hath Thesëus contrived with rich array.
But yet have I forgotten to portray
The noble carvings, and the sculptures rare,
The shapes, the ornaments, the figures fair
Displayed within these oratories three.

And first, in Venus' temple may'st thou see 1060
 Wrought on the wall, full piteous to behold,
 The broken slumbers and the sighings cold ;
 The sacred tears, the lamentations dire ;
 The fiery torments of extreme desire
 That Venus' servants in this life endure ;
 The pledges that their covenants assure ;
 Pleasure and hope, desire, fool-hardiness,
 Beauty and youth, riches, lasciviousness,
 Charms, force, false promises, and flattery,
 Expense and busy schemes, and Jealousy 1070
 Who wore a wreath, with marigolds that glowed,
 And, sitting on her hand, a cuckoo showed.
 Rich feasts and instruments, with carols, dances,
 Pleasure and pomp, and all the circumstances
 Of love, all such as I have told or shall,
 In order due, were painted on the wall,
 And many more than I can here recount.
 For truly, all Cithæron's famous mount
 Where Venus hath her principal abode,
 'The portraiture upon the temple showed, 1080
 With all the garden and its pleasantness.
 Nor was o'erpassed the porter Idleness,
 Nor yet Narcissus, famed in years long gone,
 Nor yet the folly of King Solomon,

Nor yet great Hercules, renowned for might,
Medea's incantations, Circe's sleight,
Nor Turnus, with fierce courage unsubdued,
Nor wealthy Cræsus brought to servitude.
Thus may ye see that neither Wisdom's height,
Beauty nor riches, courage, strength, nor sleight 1090
Can e'er with Venus equally compete ;
She holds the world submissive at her feet.
Lo ! in her snare were folk entangled so
That many a time they cried " alas ! " for woe.
These few examples are sufficient quite,
And yet a thousand more I well could cite.

Fair Venus' statue, glorious for to see,
Was floating naked in the spacious sea,
And from the navel down all covered was
With waves of green as bright as any glass. 1100
A well-stringed cittern did her right hand hold,
And on her head, full pleasant to behold,
A wreath of roses, smelling fresh and sweet ;
Above her head her fluttering ringdoves meet.
Before her Cupid stood, her darling fair,
Upon his shoulders white of wings a pair,
And blind he was, as well too oft is seen ;
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.

Why should I not as well describe to all
The pictured scenes that glowed upon the wall 1110
Within red Mars's temple, great of strength?
All painted was the wall, in breadth and length,
Like the interior of the grisly place
Known as the temple vast of Mars in Thrace,
Within that frosty region, icy-cold,
Where Mars his sovereign fixed abode doth hold.
First on the wall behold a forest bare,
To whose dark depths nor men nor beasts repair,
Of barren trees with gnarl-ed branches old
And knotty stubs, full hideous to behold, 1120
Through which the blast a rumbling roar did send
As though a storm each crashing bough would rend.
Beside a hill, beneath a grassy bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent
Wrought all of burnished steel, with entry drear,
Narrow, and long, inspiring thoughts of fear;
And thereout such a raging gust did break
That it made all the portals for to shake.
The northern light in at the doorway shone,
For window in the solid wall was none 1130
Through which men might discern a glimmering ray.
The doors eternal adamant display,
Well strengthened all across and all along

With iron tough ; and all to make it strong,
The pillars that sustained the temple's height
Were thick as barrels, all of iron bright.

There first I saw the dark imagining
Of purposed crimes, and all their compassing ;
Next cruel Ire, like glowing embers red,
The cutpurse, and, close by him, pallid Dread ; 1140
The smiler, with the knife beneath his cloak ;
The stable, burning with a swarthy smoke ;
The treason of the murdering in the bed ;
The warrior, with his wounded limbs be-bled ;
Strife, with his bloody knife and threatening pace ;
All full of shriekings was that sorry place.
The slayer of himself beheld I there,
His heart's fresh blood hath bath-ed all his hair ;
The nail struck through the temples in the night ;
Cold Death with gaping mouth, a ghastly sight. 1150
Midway within the temple sat Mischance,
With drooping eyes and woeful countenance.
Next saw I Madness, laughing in his ire,
Complaint all armed, wild Outcry, Outrage dire.
The corpse within the bush, his throat cut wide,
A thousand slain, yet not by plague that died ;
The tyrant, with his prey by force bereft,

The town destroyed, wherein was nothing left.
Next saw I tossing ships, that blazed amain, 1159
The strangled huntsman, by the wild bears slain ;
The sow that gnawed the infant in the cradle,
The cook sore scalded, though so long his ladle.
Effects were there of Mars's evil star ;
The carter, over-ridden by his car,
Beneath the crushing wheel all lifeless lay.
And there, beneath the god's ill-omened sway,
The barber, butcher, and the smith were seen,
The smith, whose hammer forges weapons keen.
Above, depicted in a tower on high,
Conquest I saw, enthroned in majesty, 1170
But with a sharpened sword above his head
Suspended by a single subtle thread.
There painted was the death of Julius,
Of Nero, and of great Antonius ;
Albeit they were unborn, as at this tide,
Yet was their death beforehand signified
By menacing of Mars, as if foreknown ;
So was it in their painted figures shown,
As is depicted in the stars above
Who shall be slain or else shall die for love. 1180
Sufficient stories old I here recall ;
I cannot, though I would, recount them all.

The form of Mars upon a chariot stood,
Full armed, grim-looking as in raging mood ;
And o'er his head two constellations bright
Which geomantic writers name aright
Puella one, the other Rubëus ;
This god of battles was depicted thus.
A wolf there stood before him, at his feet,
With blood-red eyes, and of a man he ate. 1190
With subtle pencil painted was this story,
In worship of the god, and to his glory.

Now to the temple fair of Dian chaste
As shortly as I can I will me haste,
To tell you all the full description.
The walls were brightly painted, up and down,
With hunting-scenes and shamefaced chastity.
There saw I how the sad Callistopee,
When Dian her displeasure would declare,
Transformed was from a woman to a bear, 1200
And afterwards the load-star was she made ;
I know no further ; thus was it displayed.
Her son you likewise stellified may see.
There saw I Danè, turned into a tree ;
I speak not of the goddess Dian here,
But her named Danè, Peneus' daughter dear.

Into a hart I saw Actæon made,
Because he Dian's naked form surveyed ;
His hounds I saw, that had their master caught,
And fiercely torn him, for they knew him not. 1210
Next painted was, a little further-more,
How Atalanta hunted the wild boar ;
And others that with Meleager go,
For which Diana wrought him care and woe
And many another story there designed
I saw, but will not now recall to mind.

This goddess sat upon a hart full high,
And all about her feet small hounds did lie.
And underneath her feet she had a moon,
Waxing it was, and would be waning soon. 1220
Arrayed in brightest green her statue was,
With bow in hand, and arrows in a case.
Her eyes she downward cast, as if to mark
The place where Pluto rules his regions dark.
A woman 'fore her lay, in travail strong,
But, since her child remained unborn so long,
Full piteously " Lucina ! " did she call,
Exclaiming, " Help ! for thou may'st best of all."
Well could he lifelike paint it, that it wrought ;
With many a florin he the colours bought. 1230

Now are the lists all made, and Theseüs,
That at his great cost had provided thus
Temples and theatre, as all should be,
When all was done, a joyful man was he.
To talk of Theseus will I cease anon,
And speak of Arcite and of Palamon.

The day of their returning comes with speed,
When each his hundred knights should with him lead,
The battle to dispute, as I have told ;
And Athens-ward, his covenant to hold, 1240
Hath each of them now brought a hundred knights
Well armed at all points, to contest their rights.
And certainly, there trusted many a man
That never, since the day the world began,
To speak of prowess or the strong right hand,
As far as God created sea or land,
Was, of so few, so fair a company.
For every wight that cherished chivalry,
And, if he might, would gain a glorious name,
Had prayed to be selected for that game ; 1250
And well was him that thereto chosen was !
For, if befell to-morrow such a case,
Ye know full well, that every valiant knight,
That seeks a sweetheart's love, and hath his might,

Were it in England, or indeed elsewhere,
He, if he might, would hasten to be there.
To fight to win a lady ! *ben'dic'te !*
That were indeed a glorious sight to see !
And just so hastened those with Palamon.
With him went valiant warriors, many a one. 1260
One for his armour wears a hauberk bright,
A shining breast-plate and a doublet light.
Another wears two iron plates full large ;
And some display a Prussian shield or targe.
Some greaves upon their legs would gladly feel ;
Some wield an ax, and some a mace of steel.
No fashion now is new, but once was old.
Thus fully armed were they, as I have told,
Each as his own opinion deemed the best.
With Palamon there came, amongst the rest, 1270
The great Lycurgus, worthy king of Thrace.
Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eyes, within his head,
Glowed fiercely, 'twixt a yellow and a red ;
And like a griffin looked he round about,
With shaggy hair upon his eye-brows stout.
His limbs were large, his sinews hard and strong,
His shoulders broad, his arms were round and long ;
And, with his country's custom to comply,

Upon a car of gold he stood full high, 1280
With four white bulls in traces harnessed fast.
Instead of surcoat o'er his armour cast,
A bear's skin wore he, black as coal, and old,
With talons yellow, bright as any gold.
His flowing hair was combed behind his back,
As any raven's feather it glistened black.
A wreath of gold arm-great, a heavy load,
Upon his head, with brightest gems that glowed,
With rubies red and diamonds flashing far. 1289
White hounds, of mastiff size, went round his car,
Twenty and more, as huge as any steer,
Ready to hunt the lion or the deer,
That followed him with muzzles tightly bound,
And golden collars, set with swivels round.
A hundred lords him followed close about,
All fully armed, with hardy hearts and stout.

With Arcita, in records as we find,
The great Emetrius, the king of Ind,
On steed of bay (of steel his trappings made),
In cloth of gold well diapered, arrayed, 1300
Came riding like the god of battles, Mars.
His surcoat was of cloth called 'cloth of Tars,'
Bedecked with largest pearls, all round and white;

His saddle was of gold, new-burnished bright ;
A hanging mantle o'er his shoulders spread,
Besprent with sparkling rubies, fiery red.
His curling hair in ringlike coils had run,
In colour yellow, glittering like the sun.
His nose was high, bright citron were his eyes,
His lips were round, his hue of sanguine guise ; 1310
A few fine freckles on his face displayed
Of yellow, mingled with a darker shade ;
And like a lion's was his kindling glance.
Of five and twenty years his age, perchance.
His clustering beard had well begun to spring,
His voice was like a trumpet's, thundering.
Upon his head he wore of laurel green
A garland fresh, a glorious crown, I ween.
Upon his hand he bare, for his delight,
An eagle tame, as any lily white. 1320
A hundred lords had he beside him there,
All armed, except their heads, in all their gear,
And every man his richest raiment brings.
For trust ye well, that dukes, and earls, and kings
Were gathered in this noble company,
For love, and for increase of chivalry.
About this king there ran, on every side,
Full many a lion tame and leopard pied.

And on this noble wise this lordly crew
 Upon the Sunday tow' rds the city drew 1330
 At early hour, and in the town alight.
 This Theseus, this duke, this worthy knight,
 When he had brought them through the city-gate,
 And lodged them, each as suited his estate,
 He feasts them well, and doth such pains employ
 To show them honour due, and give them joy,
 That even now men ween that no man's wit
 Could ever greet them with a grace more fit.
 The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
 The costly gifts to greatest and to least, 1340
 The rich array of Theseus' palace-hall,
 Or on the dais who sat first of all,
 Which ladies fairest were or danced the best,
 Or who in dance or song was worthiest,
 Or who most feelingly could speak of love,
 What hawks were sitting on the perch above,
 What hounds were lying low, upon the floor,
 Of all these things I specify no more.
 But tow' rds the sequel let me hasten still ;
 Now comes the point ; and hearken, if ye will. 1350

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,
 When Palamon first heard the sky-lark sing,

Though yet it was not day by hours twain,
Yet with the lark sang Palamon again.
With heart devout and courage high he rose,
And on his pilgrimage he softly goes
Unto the blissful Cytherea's shrine,
I mean dame Venus, glorious and divine.
And in her 'hour' he walketh forth apace,
Unto the lists, e'en where her temple was, 1360
And down he kneeleth, and with humble cheer
And sore at heart, he said as ye shall hear.

“Fairest of fair, O Venus, lady mine,
Daughter of Jove, and Vulcan's spouse divine,
That blissest all Cithæron's mountain fair,
For that same love thou didst Adonis bear,
Have pity on my tears and bitter smart
And take my poor petition to thy heart!
Alas! I know no language fit to tell
The trials or the torments of my hell. 1370
My heart still fails my sufferings to bewray;
Such tumults shake me, that I naught can say.
But mercy! lady bright! that know'st full well
My care, and seest the pains I cannot tell;
Consider all this, have ruth upon my sore,
And verily shall I, for evermore,

With all my power thy trusty servant be,
And make perpetual war on chastity ;
Such is my vow, with thee to aid my prayer :
To boast the prize of arms is not my care. 1380
To-morrow I ask not victory to gain,
Nor lustre of success, nor glory vain
Of fame in battle bruted up and down ;
But I would fully have possession
Of Emily, and in thy service die.
Find thou the manner of my destiny.
I care not, whether better it may be
To win the wreath from them, or they from me,
So that I have my lady in my arms.
For, though so be that Mars is god of arms, 1390
Your influence is so great in heaven above
That, if you will, I well may have my love.
Thy temple will I seek, unfailingly,
And on thine altar, yea ! until I die,
Will daily light the sacrificial flame.
And if ye grant not this, divinest dame !
I pray that, ere to-morrow's eve draws near,
Arcite may through my body drive his spear.
Then reckon not I, when I have lost my life,
Though Arcite win my lady for his wife. 1400
This is the end and aim I pray for here,

But how she did the rites I dare not tell,
But speak of incidents in general,
Though it might please you well to hear it all.
Her bright hair, combed anew, untressed was seen ;
A garland, made of holm-oak fresh and green, 1432
Was set with seemly care upon her head.
Two fires upon the altar high she fed,
And did such rites, as men may well behold
In Statius' Tale of Thebes and stories old.
When kindled was the fire, with mournful cheer
She spake to Dian thus, as ye may hear.

“O virgin goddess of the forest green,
By whom the heaven and earth and sea are seen, 1440
Queen of the realm of Pluto, dark and low,
Goddess of maidens, that my heart dost know,
E'en from the first perceiving my desire,
Now keep me from thy vengeance and thine ire
Such as Actæon suffered woefully.
Chaste goddess, well thou knowest how that I
Desire to live a maiden all my life,
Nor would I be a lover or a wife.
With thee, thou know'st, I still would daily fare,
A maid, that loves to hunt the hart and hare, 1450
And longs to ramble in the woodlands wild,

And not to be a wife, and be with child.
I would not know the company of man.
Now help me, lady, since ye may and can,
For sake of those three forms thou hast in thee.
For Palamon, that hath such love to me,
And eke Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This favour only ask I, and no more,
Send mutual love and peace betwixt the two,
And from me turn away their longings so 1460
That all their ardent love, and their desire,
And all their busy torment, and their fire
Be quenched, or turned towards some other place.
And if so be thou wilt not grant this grace,
Or if my destiny be fated so
That needs I must accept one of the two,
Then send me him that most desireth me !
Behold, thou goddess of pure chastity,
The bitter tears adown my cheeks that fall.
Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all, 1470
My maidenhood thou keep and well conserve ;
And whilst I live a maid, I thee will serve."

The fires were burning on the altar clear,
While Emily thus made her prayer sincere.
But suddenly she saw a sign of doubt,

For all at once one of the fires went out
 And straight revived, and after that anon
 The other fire, expiring, all was gone.
 In going out, it made a whistling moan,
 As when wet brands upon a fire are thrown ; 1480
 And from the brand's end issued out anon
 As it were bloody drops, full many a one.
 Whereat so sore aghast was Emily,
 That she was well nigh mad, and gan to cry ;
 For, though she knew not what it signified,
 For pure affright so loudly hath she cried
 And wept, that it was pity for to hear.
 And therewithal Diana did appear
 With bow in hand, right as a huntress fair, 1489
 And said:—"Dear daughter, cease thy grievous care.
 Amongst the gods above 'tis well affirmed,
 Written by word eternal, and confirmed,
 Thou must be wedded unto one of those
 That have for thy sake suffered grievous woes,
 But unto which of them, I may not tell ;
 Farewell, for here may I no longer dwell.
 The fires that here upon my altar burn
 Shall signify to thee, ere thou return,
 The sequel of thy love, as in this case."
 And with that word, the arrows in the case 1500

Of this fair goddess clatter fast and ring,
And lo! she forth departed, vanishing.
Whereat this maiden sore astonished was,
And said :—“ What means this prodigy ? alas !
I put me under thy protection,
Goddess, and in thy disposition.”
And home she goes anon the nearest way.
This is the end ; no more remains to say.

The hour of Mars, soon after following this,
Arcíte unto the fane departed is 1510
Of fiery Mars, his sacrifice to pay,
With all the rites that marked that pagan day.
With heart submissive and devotion high
Right thus to Mars he made his plaintive cry :—
“ O puissant god, that in the kingdom cold
Of Thrace, as lord, thine honoured seat dost hold,
And hast in every realm and every land
Of battles all the bridle in thy hand,
Bestowing all success as pleaseth thee,
Accept my piteous sacrifice from me. 1520
And if thou deem my youth may well deserve,
And that my might be worthy for to serve
Thy godhead, that I may be one of thine,
Then grant me grace, so piteously I pine.

By that fierce pain, and by that ardent fire
In which thou once didst burn with hot desire,
By that sore sorrow that so wrung thy heart, 1533
Have pity on mine anguish and my smart.
Young and unskilful am I, as thou know'st,
And, as I trow, by love oppressed the most
That e'er was man in whom doth life remain.
For she, that makes me all this woe sustain,
Cares not an atom if I sink or float.
For ere she grant me favour, well I wot, 1540
I must by main force win her in the place.
And well I wot, without some help or grace
By thee bestowed, my strength may not avail ;
Then help me in the combat, lest I fail,
For sake of that fierce flame that once burnt thee
E'en as the selfsame fire now burneth me.
To-morrow grant that victory may be mine,
Mine be the labour, and the glory thine !
Thy sovereign temple will I praise the most
Of any place, and labour, to my cost, 1550
To do thy pleasure and thy feats maintain.
My banner shall be hung within thy fane,
With coats-of-arms of all my company.
And ever shall I, till the day I die,
Eternal fire before thine altar find ;

And to this sacred vow myself I bind ;
My beard, my hair that hangs so long adown,
That never yet th'aggressive touch hath known
Of razor or of shears, to thee I'll give,
And prove thy trusty servant while I live. 1560
Now, lord ! have ruth upon my sorrows sore ;
Give me the victory, I ask no more."

The prayer was done of Arcita the strong ;
The rings upon the temple-door that hung
And eek the doors themselves did rattle fast,
Whereat Arcita somewhat felt aghast.
The fires so burnt upon the altar bright
That all the temple seemed to blaze with light ;
An odour sweet seemed issuing from the floor,
Whereat Arcita raised his hand once more, 1570
And copious incense in the fire he cast,
With other rites besides ; and, at the last,
The hauberk on the statue seemed to ring,
And with that sound he heard a murmuring
Full low and dim, that "Victory" seemed to say,
For which to Mars he thanks and praise did pay.
And thus with joy, in hope right well to fare,
Arcite unto his lodging doth repair,
As fain as bird is of a cloudless sun.

And therewithal such strife is there begun 1580
For granting such a grace, in heaven above,
Between fair Venus, goddess bright of love,
And Mars, the god of strife and armed array,
That Jupiter was busy it to stay ;
Until the god Saturnus, pale and cold,
That knew so many circumstances old,
Found in his old experience an art
Whereby he soon contented every part.
'Tis truly said, advantage great hath age ;
In age is wisdom and observance sage ; 1590
In speed, not skill, the old may be surpassed.
Saturn, to stay the strife and doubt, at last,
Although to reconciliation ill-inclined,
For all this strife a remedy could find.
“ My dearest daughter Venus,” said Saturn,
“ My course, whose orbit hath so far to turn,
Hath greater influence than is known to man.
'Tis mine to drown men in the sea so wan ;
Mine is the prison in the cell remote ;
Strangling is mine, mine hanging by the throat ; 1600
Rebellion of base churls, and murmuring ;
Base discontent, and secret poisoning.
I punishments exact and vengeance fell,
And most when in the Lion's sign I dwell.

Mine is the ruin of the lofty halls,
 The falling of the turrets or the walls
 Upon the carpenter's or miner's crew.
 When Samson shook the pillar, him I slew.
 And mine are maladies and palsies cold,
 All secret treasons and devices old; 1610
 My aspect is the cause of pestilence.
 But weep no more ; for by my diligence
 Thy Palamon, that is thy faithful knight,
 Shall, as thou grantedst, win his lady bright.
 Though Mars may help his knight, yet none the less
 'Twixt him and you there must in time be peace,
 Although ye differ in complexión,
 Which causeth alway such división.
 Thy grandfather am I, and at thy will.
 Then weep no more ; thy wish will I fulfil." 1620
 I speak no further of the gods above,
 Of Mars, or Venus, goddess bright of love,
 But haste to tell you, plainly as I can,
 The end, for sake of which I first began.

PART IV

GREAT was the feast in Athens fair that day,
And eke the lusty season of that May
Made every wight to feel such pleasant joy
That Monday they in jousts and dance employ,
And serve dame Venus in a festive wise.
But, for the reason that they must arise
Full early, to behold the doubtful fight,
Unto their rest they duly went at night.
And on the morrow, when the day did spring,
Of horse and armour noise and clattering
Were heard in all the hostelries about ;
And tow'rd's the palace rode there many a rout
Of lords, on palfreys and on steeds, I ween.
Of armour preparation might be seen

1630

Both strange and rich, and all exactly made 1639
Of goldsmiths' work, or steel, or ring-like braid ;
Steel caps, bright shields and trappings, men behold,
Hauberks and surcoats, helms of beaten gold ;
Knights in apparel brave, on coursers high,
Retainers and esquires that hasten by
To buckle helmets on, or nail a spear,
To fit a shield with straps, or fasten gear ;
Where aught was needed, were they nowise idle ;
The foaming steeds upon the golden bridle
Stand champing, whilst the armourers fast go,
With file and hammer hasting to and fro ; 1650
Yeomen on foot and menials join the throng,
As close as they may stand, with cudgels strong.
Pipes, trumpets, drums, and clarions abound,
Such as, in battle, to the onset sound ;
The hall was thronged with folk from end to end,
Here three, there ten, that eagerly contend,
Weighing the merits of the rivals two ;
Some this foretell, some say it shall be so.
Some hold with him that bears the blackish beard,
Some with the bald, and some with the thick-haired ;
This man, says one, looks fierce, with courage great ;
This hath an ax of twenty pound of weight. 1662
Thus was the palace full of noise and cries,

Long after that the sun began to rise.

The noble Theseus, waked from slumber sound
By minstrelsy and noises that resound,
Still kept his chamber in the palace fair,
Till that the Theban knights, a noble pair,
Into the hall were led, with honour graced.
Duke Theseus was at a window placed, 1670
Apparelled like a god, upon a throne.
The people hasten thitherward full soon
To see his state, and reverence due to pay,
And hearken what commands he has to say.
A herald on a scaffold raised a cry,
Till ceased the murmuring people's voices high ;
And when at length their clamours all were still,
Proclaimed aloud their mighty master's will.

“ Our lord hath, of his high discretión,
Considered, that it were destruction 1680
To gentle blood, to combat in the wise
Of mortal battle in this enterprise.
And therefore, to provide they shall not die,
He will his former purpose modify.
And therefore none, on pain of loss of life,
May any dart, or pole-ax, or short knife

Bring with him to the lists, or thither send ;
 Nor short sword made to thrust, with sharpened end,
 May any draw, or carry by his side.
 Nor any shall against his foeman ride 1690
 But one full course, with sharpened spear well-ground ;
 But thrust he may, on foot, to save a wound.
 And him that has been vanquished, men shall take,
 Saving his life, and bring him to a stake
 That shall provided be, on either side ;
 Thither he shall be forced, and there abide.
 And if, perchance, the chieftain shall be ta'en,
 On either side, or by his foe be slain,
 No longer then the tournament shall last.
 God prosper you ! Go forth, and lay on fast ! 1700
 With long sword and with maces fight your fill ;
 Now go your way ; such is our master's will."

The voices of the people touched the sky ;
 So merrily they raised their shouts on high :—
 " God save a lord so provident of good,
 Who fain would save from needless waste of blood !"
 Loud ring the trumpets and the melody ;
 And tow' rds the lists ride all the company
 Throughout the city large, in proud array ;
 And cloth of gold, not serge, the walls display. 1710

Full like a lord this noble duke did ride,
The Theban heroes rode on either side ;
And after rode the queen and Emily,
And after them another company,
Each after other, each in his degree.
And thus they pass throughout the city free,
And thus in order reach the lists in time.
It was not of the day yet fully prime
When set was Theseus, and enthroned on high,
Hippolyta the queen, and Emily, 1720
And other ladies, in their ranks about.
To fill the seats press forward all the rout ;
And westward, passing under Mars's gate,
Arcíte, and eke his hundred, all elate,
With banner red is entered, right anon.
And in the selfsame moment Palamon
Is under Venus, eastward in the place,
With banner white, and hardy cheer and face.
In all the world to seek, ye might not find 1729
Two groups so closely matched, among mankind,
As were these levies of the Thebans twain.
For no one was so wise, he could maintain
That one or other had advantage great
Of worthiness, of age, or of estate ;
So equally they chosen were, I guess ;

And in two cavalcades themselves they dress.
When that their names were cited, every one,
That in their number oversight were none,
Then were the gates close shut, and cried was loud :—
“Now do your duty, warriors young and proud!” 1740

The heralds ceased their riding up and down ;
Now ring the trumpet loud and clarion.
No more is to be said, but east and west
In go the spears, fixed firmly in their rest,
In go the sharp spurs in the courser's side ;
There see men who can tilt, and who can ride.
Now shafts are shivered on the shields so thick ;
One through the very breast-bone feels the prick.
Up spring the spears full twenty feet in height ;
Out flash the swords, as any silver bright. 1750
The helmets they to pieces hew and shred ;
Out bursts the blood, in copious torrents red.
Here men with mighty maces break the bone ;
One through the thickest throng goes thrusting on.
There stumble sturdy steeds, and down goes all ;
One rolleth under foot as doth a ball.
One with a truncheon fenceth on his feet ;
And one well-horsed is hurled down from his seat.
One through the body's hurt, and straightway caught,

Despite his strength, and to the stake is brought, 1760
As was decreed, and there he must abide.
Another is taken on the other side.
And sometimes Theseus bids the strife be still,
Whilst, to refresh their powers, they drink their fill.

Full oft that day each leader and his foe
Together met, and wrought each other woe.
Each from his horse had borne the foe to ground.
No tiger in Gargaphia's vale is found,
When stolen is her cub in helpless plight,
So fierce against the huntsman, as Arcíte, 1770
For jealous heart, against this Palamon.
In sultry Belmarie is lion none
That hunted is, or mad in hungry mood,
Or of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcíte.
The jealous strokes upon their helmets bite ;
And both their wounded sides are seen to bleed.

Some time there comes an end of every deed.
For ere the sun unto his rest was brought,
The mighty king Emetrius had caught 1780
This Palamon, whilst fighting with Arcíte,
And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite.

And twenty men at once him prisoner make,
Unyielding still, and draw him tow'rd's the stake.
And in the rescue of sir Palamon
The valiant king Lycurgus is borne down.
And king Emetrius, for all his strength,
Is from his saddle borne a lance's length,
So hit him Palamon ere he was caught.
But all in vain ; he to the stake was brought. 1790
His hardy heart could nowise help his plight ;
He must abide there, as a captured knight,
By force, and by the compact made before.

Who now but Palamon lamenteth sore,
That may no longer go again to fight ?
And when that Theseus had beheld this sight,
Unto the folk that fighting were each one
He cried :—" Now hold ! no more ! for it is done !
Impartially and justly I decide,
Arcite of Thebes shall have his lovely bride, 1800
That by his fortune hath her fairly won."
Anon such noise of people is begun
For joy of this, so loud and high withal,
It seemed as if the very lists would fall.

What now can fairest Venus do above ?

What saith she now? What doth the queen of love?
For wanting of her will, she weepeth so,
Her tears descended to the lists below.
She said :—" I am dishonoured, questionless." 1809
But Saturn answered :—" Daughter, hold thy peace!
Mars hath his will, his knight hath all his boon ;
And, by my head, thy comfort followeth soon."

The trumpets and the jocund minstrelsy,
The heralds, that full loudly shout and cry,
With joyous sounds sir Arcite's triumph tell.
But tarry yet a space, and hearken well,
How strange a miracle befell anon.
This fierce Arcite his helmet off had done,
And on a courser, proud to show his face,
Was spurring all along the open space, 1820
Still gazing upward on fair Emily ;
And she upon him cast a friendly eye ;
(For women, as experience doth show,
Where fortune favours, oft their grace bestow) ;
Already, as he deemed, her choice he knows.
Out of the ground a hellish Fury rose ;
By Pluto sent, as Saturn had devised ;
Whereat his horse, by sudden fear surprised,
Did swerve aside, and stumbled on the plain.

And, ere that Arcite might his seat regain,
He fell, and falling pitched upon his head,
And motionless he lay, as he were dead,
His breast bruised sorely by the saddle-bow.
As black he lay as any coal, or crow,
So was the blood all clotted in his face.
Anon men bore him from the fatal place
To Theseus' palace, each with mournful heart.
Soon from his armour was he cut apart,
And softly laid in bed with care and skill.
For still was he alive, and conscious still,
And always crying after Emily.

1830

1840

Duke Theseus, with all his company,
Returned to Athens, to his city great,
With joy and triumph, all in solemn state ;
For, though so sad a chance did thus befall,
He would not disappoint his people all.
A rumour rose, that Arcite would not die,
But might be healed of all his malady.
And of another thing they were as fain,
That of them all was no one fully slain,
Though some were sorely hurt, and mostly one,
Pierced through the breast-plate to the very bone.
To heal their other wounds, and broken arms,

1850

Some sought for healing unguents, some for charms;
Strong med'cines, drawn from divers herbs renowned,
They drank, to save their limbs and make them sound.
Well pleased, the noble duke, as well he can,
Gives praise and comfort to each valiant man,
And held high revel, through the livelong night,
For all the stranger-warriors, as was right. 1860
No word imputed a discomforting,
Except as in a joust or tourneying ;
For Arcite no discomfiture had found,
By accident alone he fell to ground ;
Nor he who had unto the stake been brought,
Unyielding, but by twenty warriors caught ;
And all alone, constrained by many a foe,
Had forth been haled by arm, and foot, and toe ;
The while his steed was driven forth with staves,
By footmen, whether yeomen or their knaves ; 1870
It was not counted as a great disgrace,
Since cowardice had found in him no place.

And therefore Theseus bade the heralds cry,
To stay all rancour and all jealousy,
The prize as due to one side and the other,
For either side was deemed the other's brother ;
And gifts he gave them, after their degree,

And held a princely feast for days full three ;
Escorting afterwards the kings in state
A whole day's journey past the city-gate ;
And home went every man the nearest way,
Each bidding "fare ye well!" and "have good day."
Of this great combat I no more endite,
But speak of Palamon and of Arcíte.

1880

Still swells the breast of Arcite, and the sore
Increases at his heart yet more and more.
The clotted blood, despite the leech's skill,
Corrupts, and in his chest is prisoned still,
That neither cupping, nor the surgeon's knife,
Nor drink of herbs, can save his ebbing life.
For that expulsive influence animal,
That vital force which men call natural
Cannot the poison check, nor yet expel.
The vessels in his lungs began to swell,
And every muscle in his wounded breast
With poison and corruption is distressed ;
And all that part such bruises sore doth bear,
Nature hath now no domination there ;
And certainly, where nature will not work,
Physic, farewell ! go bear the man to kirk.
This is the end, that Arcite must die,

1890

1900

And therefore sendeth he for Emily
And Palamon, that was his cousin dear ;
And thus he spake, as ye shall after hear.
“ Ne'er can the woeful spirit in my heart
Declare a shred of all my sorrow's smart
To you, my lady, whom I love till death.
The service of my spirit I bequeath 1910
To you, o'er every creature counted dear,
Since now my life can last no longer here.
Alas, the woe ! alas, the sorrows strong
That I for you have suffered, and so long !
Alas, for death ! Alas, mine Emily !
Alas, the parting of our company !
Alas, my heart's dear queen ! Alas, my wife !
My heart's dear lady, ender of my life !
What is this world ? What asketh man to have ?
Now with his love, now in his chilly grave 1920
Alone, apart from any company !
Farewell, my dearest foe, mine Emily !
Now softly take me in your arms so dear,
For love of heav'n, and this my message hear.

I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour, in the days now gone,
For love of you, o'erpassing all control.

And, so may Jupiter receive my soul,
Considering all a lover's fond desires,
And all the duties that his love requires, 1930
That is to say, truth, honour, knightly worth,
Wisdom, humility, and noble birth,
Bounty, and all that makes a noble knight—
Yea, so may Jupiter my truth requite,
In all this peopled world I know not one
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
Who serveth you, and will do all his life.
And if that ever you shall prove a wife,
Forget not Palamon, that knightly man.”
And with that word his speech to fail began ; 1940
For from his feet up to his breast at length
Cold death had crept, and overcome his strength ;
And furthermore, in both his arms anon
The vital strength is lost, and wholly gone ;
And last the conscious feeling, and no more,
That lingered in his heart so sick and sore,
Failed also, when the heart felt present death.
Bedimmed were both his eyes, and failed his breath ;
But on his lady cast he yet his eye ;
This was his last word, “ Mercy, Emily ! ” 1950
His spirit changed its house, departing thither
Whence came I never, so I know not whither ;

I therefore pause ; from guessing I refrain,
Concerning souls the records naught contain ;
Nor feel I fain th' opinions all to tell
Of those, that write to teach us where they dwell.
Arcite is cold ; Mars guide his soul aright !
The tale returns to Emily the bright.

Shrieked Emily, and waileth Palamon ;
And Theseus hath his sister ta'en anon 1960
Swooning, and bare her from the corpse away.
What needeth it to linger through the day
To tell how sore she wept, both eve and morrow ?
For in such case must women have such sorrow,
When that their husbands wholly from them go,
That, for the greater part, they suffer so,
Or fall, despairing, in such malady
That, at the last, full certainly they die.

Infinite are the sorrows and the tears
Of aged folk, and folk of tender years, 1970
Throughout the city, for the hero's fate,
That man and child lament their saddened state.
So great a weeping rose not, since the morn
When valiant Hector, newly slain, was borne
To Troy. Alas ! the pity that was there !

Scratching of cheeks, and rending eke of hair.
“Why should'st thou yield to death?” the women cry,
“Who haddest gold enough, and Emily?”
No man could well console duke Thesëus,
Except his aged father, Ægëus, 1980
Who knew this world's quick transmutatiön,
As he had seen it changing up and down,
Joy after woe, and woe for joyfulness;
And old examples showed and instances.

“Lo! e'en as man hath never died,” quoth he,
“But first he lived on earth in some degree,
E'en so man never lived beneath the sky,
In any realm, but some time he must die.
This world's a thoroughfare, and full of woe,
And we the pilgrims, passing to and fro; 1990
Death is an end of every worldly sore.”
And many a thing beside he uttered more
To this effect, full wisely to sustain
The people, bidding all take heart again.

Duke Thesëus, with all his busy care,
Considered in what wise the burial fair
Of good Arcíte should celebrated be,
To honour worthily his high degree.

And at the last to this conclusion drew,
That where Arcíte and Palamon, these two, 2000
First met, and fought the combat them between,
Within that very grove, so sweet and green,
Where first he felt his amorous desires,
His fond despairing love, his ardent fires,
E'en there himself, with reverential care,
Would he a noble funeral fire prepare.
And straight commanded men to hack and hew
The aged oaks, and lay in order due
The logs, for burning well exactly placed.
His officers, with willing feet they haste, 2010
And ride, to do his bidding fully bent.
And after this hath Theseus quickly sent
To fetch a bier, which reverently he dressed
With cloth of gold, the richest he possessed ;
And in the same rich suit he clad Arcíte.
Upon his hands were gloves, of colour white ;
Upon his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.
Then laid he bare the visage on the bier,
And wept therewith, that piteous was to hear. 2020
And, that the people might behold him all,
When daylight came, he brought him to the hall,
That echoes with lamenting sounds anon.

Then came the woeful Theban, Palamon,
With flowing beard, and ashes on his hair,
In raiment black, bedropped with many a tear ;
And, passing all in weeping, Emily,
The ruefullest of all that company.
And, that the purposed funeral rites should be
More worthy yet, and rich in each degree, 2030
The duke commanded men three steeds to bring,
With trappings bright of steel, all glittering,
And covered with the arms of sir Arcite.
Upon these steeds, that seemed so great and white,
Were seated men, of which one bare his shield,
The next his spear within his hands up-held ;
The third one with him bare his Turkish bow ;
With burnished gold the case and quiver glow.
And forth they slowly rode, with mournful cheer,
Towards the grove, as ye shall after hear. 2040
The noblest of the Greeks that there appear
Upon their shoulders bore the honoured bier
With slackened pace, and eyes all red and wet,
Throughout the city, by the widest street
That spread was all with black ; and all around
With hangings of the same the walls abound.
Upon the right hand came old Ægëus,
And on the other side duke Thesëus,

With vessels in their hands of gold full fine,
All full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine. 2050
Then Palamon, with all his company ;
And after him came woeful Emily,
With fire in hand, as was the custom meet
The service of the burial to complete.

Great was the toil, and long did they prepare
To rear the funeral pile with zealous care,
That with its leafy summit skyward reached,
And twenty fathoms broad its sides out-stretched,
That is to say, the branches spread so wide ;
But first was many a load of straw supplied. 2060
But how the massive pyre so high uprose,
And eek the names of all the trees they chose,
As alder, oak, birch, aspen, poplar too,
Elm, willow, plane, ash, chestnut, laurel, yew,
Thorn, maple, beech, box, hazel, cornel-tree,
How all were felled, shall not be told by me ;
Nor how the tree-gods hurried up and down,
Ejected from the habitación
In which they long had dwelt in rest and peace,
As Nymphs, and Fauns, and Hamadryades ; 2070
Nor how the wild beasts and the birds expelled
Fled far in terror, when the trees were felled ;

Nor how the ground was startled with the light,
That ne'er before had seen the sunshine bright ;
Nor how, with straw below, the fire was laid,
With well-dried logs, thrice-cloven, next arrayed ;
And next with green wood and with spices rare,
And last with cloth of gold and jewels fair,
And, wreathed with brightest blossoms, garlands meet,
With myrrh and incense, rich in odours sweet ; 2080
Nor how above the pile Arcite was laid,
Nor how great riches round him were displayed ;
Nor how, by custom, Emily the bride,
To light the funeral pile, the torch applied ;
Nor how she swooned as rose the roaring fire ;
Nor what she spake, or what was her desire ;
Nor what rich jewels in the flames were cast,
When that the fire was great, and burning fast ;
How some cast in a shield, and some a spear,
And some the very raiment they did wear, 2090
And cups filled high with wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that blazed in angry mood ;
Nor how the Greeks, arrayed in even file,
Rode slowly thrice around the burning pile
Still turning tow' rds the left, with loud lament,
And thrice with spears that rattled as they went ;
How thrice the ladies raised a dolorous cry ;

Nor how that homeward led was Emily ;
Nor how Arcite was burnt to ashes cold ;
Nor how their funeral wake the Greeks did hold 2100
The livelong night, nor how the knights did play
Their funeral games, I tarry not to say ;
Who naked wrestled best, besmeared with oil,
Or who best proved his might, and knew no foil.
Nor will I tell you how they went anon
To Athens homeward, when the wake was done ;
But shortly to the sequel must I wend,
And bring my long-drawn story to an end.

In time's progression and by length of years
All ended are the mournings and the tears 2110
Of pensive Greeks, by general assent.
Appointed was—we read—a parliament
At Athens, certain causes to decide.
Whereat was urged, 'twere fitting to provide
To form with neighbouring states alliance new,
And from the Thebans win submission due.
For which same cause duke Theseus anon
Bade heralds summon gentle Palamon,
Who little knew what Theseus wished, or why.
But in his mourning raiment, cheerlessly, 2120
To Athens, at the summons, fast he went.

And next for Emily duke Theseus sent.
When all were set, and hushed was all the place,
And Thesëus had tarried for a space,
Ere any word came from his thoughtful breast,
His eyes he downward cast, as seemed him best,
And with a mournful look he sighed his fill,
And after that right thus he said his will :

“The great prime Mover of the cause above,
When first He made the sovereign chain of love, 2130
Great was th’ effect, and high was His intent ;
Well wist He why, and what thereby He meant.
For with that chain He closed within a band
The fire, the air, the water, and the land
In certain limits, that they might not flee.
That same prime Mover and that Prince”—said he—
“Hath stablished, in this wretched world below,
Such dates, apportioned as He doth foreknow,
To all things living in this world of man ;
Nor can they lengthen out their fated span ; 2140
Their power can only shorten it, I trow.
No proof of this behoveth me to show,
For proved it is by all experience ;
I only would deduce my inference.
For by such fixed decrees we well may prove

That such prime Mover doth Himself ne'er move ;
And all but fools will readily suppose
That to the whole each part its being owes.
For nature, in beginning, did not spring
From any part or fragment of a thing, 2150
But from some whole, immoveable and fast,
Descending to corruption at the last.
And therefore, by His providential might,
He hath so well ordained His laws aright,
That things of every kind, in order due,
By regular succession shall ensue,
And not eternal or perpetual be.
This may ye understand and plainly see.

Behold the oak, that takes so long to grow
From days when first its shoot begins to show, 2160
And hath so long a life, yet men may see
That, at the last, all wasted is the tree.

Consider further, how the rock below,
O'er which our restless feet still come and go,
Is wasted, as it lies beneath our tread.
Dried is at times, perchance, the river's bed.
The mightiest cities see we wane and wend ;
Thus may ye see that all things have an end.

Of man and woman likewise mark the fate ;
For aye the time approaches, soon or late, 2170
That is to say, in youth or else in age,
When all alike must die, both king and page ;
One in his bed, one sunk beneath the sea,
One in the open field, so may it be.
Naught may avail ; all thitherward we hie ;
Well may we say, all living things must die.
What causeth this but Jupiter the king,
The primal Cause and Prince of every thing,
Conducting all things to the source and well
From which at first they issued, truth to tell ? 2180
Against whose will no creature here alive
Can ever hope successfully to strive.
Then is it wisdom, as it seems to me,
To make a virtue of necessity,
And greet the fate we may not well eschew,
And chiefly that which unto all is due.
And whoso dare complain, is proved a fool,
Rebelling 'gainst the Power that all can rule.
And certainly, that man hath honour most
Who dies when excellence he well can boast, 2190
When he is certain of a famous name ;
Then hath he done himself, or friend, no shame.
And gladder should his friend be of his death,

When thus with glory yielded is his breath,
Than when with age his fame is overblown,
And all his valour is no longer known.

Thus is it best for him who covets fame
To die when most in honour is his name ;
The contrary of this is wilfulness.

Why grieve we then? Why have we heaviness 2200
That good Arcite, chief flower of noble days,
Departed is, with honourable praise,
Out of this evil prison of this life ?
Why here lament his cousin and his wife
His welfare, who so loved them to the height ?
Say, can he thank them? Truly, never a mite ;
They both his soul and eke themselves offend,
And yet their sorrows can they ne'er amend.

What may I from this argument conclude
But that we change from woe to merry mood, 2210
And thank great Jupiter for all his grace ?
And ere that we depart from out this place,
I counsel that we make, of sorrows twain,
One perfect joy that ever shall remain.
And look now, where most sorrow is herein,
There will we first amend it, and begin.

Sister," quoth he, "this is my full assent,
With all the counsel of my parliament,
That gentle Palamon, your own true knight, 2219
That serveth you with will, and heart, and might,
And ever hath done, since first that you him knew,
Your favour shall you now for him renew,
And take him for your husband and your lord ;
Lend me your hand, for this is our accord.
Now, like a woman, show your pitying ;
Acknowledge him the nephew of a king.
And though a poor untitled knight he were,
Since he hath served you well so many a year,
And had for you such great adversity,
This should be well considered—grant it me. 2230
For gentle mercy ought to conquer right."

Then said he thus to Palamon the knight :
"I trow, there needeth little sermoning
To win you to approve a welcome thing.
Come near, and take your lady by the hand."
Between them soon was made the tender band
Called matrimonial or the marriage-tie,
With full approval of the courtiers nigh.
And thus with bliss and joyous melody
Sir Palamon hath wedded Emily. 2240

And God, that all this spacious world hath wrought,
Send him his love, who dearly hath her bought
For now is Palamon in fullest wealth,
Living in bliss, in riches, and in health ;
And Emily loves him so tenderly,
And he her serveth so continually,
That never was there one word them between
Of jealousy, nor one unkindness seen.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emily :
And God save all this gentle company.—Amen. 2250

Here is ended the Knight's Tale.

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NOTES

P. 2, l. 33. *The supper win.* Alluding to the proposal made by the host to the Canterbury pilgrims, that whoever told the best story was to be treated to a supper by all the rest.

P. 4, l. 66. The word *caitifs* means (1) captives; (2) wretches, miserable creatures. The right sense here is "exiles." These ladies had fled from Thebes, to escape the tyranny of Creon, and had repaired to the temple of Pity or Clemency at Athens, which is mentioned four lines below.

P. 4, l. 74. *Capaneus.* One of the seven heroes who besieged Thebes; he was struck dead by lightning as he was scaling the walls of the city, because he had defied Zeus.

P. 6, l. 122. The Minotaur was a monster, with the head of a bull and the body of a man, whom Theseus slew in the labyrinth at Crete, by the help of Ariadne. The form of the monster, made of beaten gold, was exhibited upon the pennon.

P. 10, l. 210. *sheen*, bright clothing. I use the word to preserve the rhyme; but it is really distinct from the adjective *schene*, beautiful, as used by Chaucer. For the modern use, cf. *Hamlet*, III. ii. 167.

P. 10, l. 230. *Saturn*. The planet Saturn was supposed, in astrology, to have an evil influence.

P. 13, l. 297. *Par amour*, by way of love, in the way of love.

P. 13, l. 305. *The olden author's saw*, the saying of the old author. The author alluded to is Boethius. The saying is—"Quis legem det amantibus? Maior lex Amor est sibi;" in his work entitled *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, bk. iii. metre 12.

P. 15, l. 340. The story is in *Le Roman de la Rose*, 8186.

P. 17, l. 388. It was supposed that all things were composed of the four elements or elemental substances, viz. earth, water, air, and fire.

P. 18, l. 404. From Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, bk. iii. prose 2 :—"Ebrius domum quo tramite reuertatur ignorat."

P. 20, l. 470. *Through Saturn*, owing to the evil influence of the planet Saturn.

P. 20, l. 471. Juno was hostile to Thebes, and was jealous of Alcmena; according to Statius, *Thebaid*, bk. x. 67. See p. 31, ll. 685, 697.

P. 24, l. 518. It was supposed that the brain was divided into cells, and that the "fantastic cell," or seat of imagination, was situate in *the front* of the head.

P. 24, l. 529. Mercury bore the *caduceus*, or sleep-compelling rod, with which he put to sleep the hundred-eyed Argus; see Ovid, *Metam.* i. 671-714.

P. 30, l. 664. There was a medieval Latin proverb—"Campus habet lumen, et habet nemus auris acumen;" and similar proverbs occur both in Old English and French.

P. 30, l. 676. It was supposed that Fridays differed from other days of the week, being commonly either finer or wetter, or else more uncertain and changeable. Friday was dedicated to Venus (l. 678).

P. 31, l. 688. *Cadmus*; the founder of the citadel of Thebes. *Amphion*; here accented, as in Old French, upon the first syllable; but the *i* is long. By the magical power of his music the stones came together for the building of Thebes.

P. 34, l. 767. *Tyranny*, i. e. sovereignty, sole authority. From *Le Roman de la Rose*, 8489; which again is from Ovid, *Met.* ii. 846 1—"Non bene conueniunt, nec in una sede morantur Maiestas et Amor."

P. 40, l. 903. *For pity, &c.* Cf. Dante, *Inf.* v. 100—"Amor, che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende."

P. 43, l. 980. *Whistle*. To "whistle in an ivy-leaf" is to make a squeaking sound by blowing against a leaf, as boys do for amusement. Hence it means to pursue any idle and frivolous form of amusement, in order to pass the time.

P. 43, l. 992. *Fifty weeks*; a short way of indicating fifty-two weeks or a whole year. Hence, at the end of this period, the month is again *May*; see l. 1626.

P. 47, l. 1078. *Cithæron*; a mountain of Bœotia, sacred to Bacchus and the Muses. Chaucer here speaks of it as if it were sacred to Venus, by confusion with *Cythera*, which was an island in the Ægean sea, whence she took the name of *Cytherea*. The same error occurs in *Le Roman de la Rose*, 15865.

P. 47, l. 1082. *Idleness*, the name (in *Le Roman de la Rose*) of the porter of the garden there described.

P. 51, l. 1163. *Mars*. The planet Mars was supposed to have an evil influence and to cause accidents. Barbour, butchers, and smiths (see l. 1167) were thought to be under his protection.

P. 51, l. 1170. *Conquest* is here personified; the allusion is to the story of Damocles.

P. 52, l. 1187. *Puella* and *Rubeus* were two figures used in the kind of divination named geomancy. The former consisted of five dots or stars, and was sacred to Venus; the other of seven such dots, and was sacred to Mars.

P. 52, l. 1198. *Callisto*, i. e. Callisto, a companion of Diana, who became the mother of Arcas; on which account Juno changed her into the Great Bear. But the load-star or pole-star is really in the Little Bear; they are here confused. Her son Arcas was also stellified or made into a constellation, viz. that of Boötes.

P. 52, l. 1204. *Danē*; a spelling of Daphne, daughter of Peneus, who was changed into a laurel. Chaucer warns us not to confuse her with Diana.

P. 53, l. 1207. Actæon was changed into a hart, and pursued by his own hounds, because he surprised Diana while bathing.

P. 53, l. 1212. *Atalanta*; who hunted the Calydonian boar, and was beloved by Meleager.

P. 53, l. 1227. Diana is here identified with Lucina, the goddess of childbirth.

P. 59, l. 1353. *By hours twain*. It was the second hour before daybreak on Monday, or the twenty-third hour of Sunday.

The days were, astrologically, divided into 24 "unequal" hours. They were called "unequal" because (unlike the "equal" hours of the clock) the actual day from sun-rise to sun-set was divided into twelve (equal) parts, so that the lengths

of each part varied from day to day. The night, from sun-set to sun-rise, was similarly divided. Each of these "planetary" hours was supposed to be under the sway of one of the (then) seven planets, which were arranged according to the size of their orbits. Saturn, with the largest orbit, came first; and the sun (which then was regarded as going round the earth) took the place of the earth. Hence the succession of planets was as follows: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Further, the first hour of every day was dedicated to the planet of the day, which accordingly gave its name to the day. The present order of the days actually depends upon this arrangement, though the fact is not very widely known. For example, the first hour of Saturday was dedicated to Saturn; and consequently the same planet ruled the eighth hour, the fifteenth, and the twenty-second. Hence the twenty-third hour of the same was dedicated to Jupiter, the twenty-fourth to Mars, and the first hour of the next day to the Sun; which day, accordingly, is Sunday. And so on for the rest.

The twenty-second hour of Sunday, like the first, was dedicated to the Sun, so that the twenty-third hour, during which Palamon was at Venus' shrine, was dedicated to Venus. This is why Chaucer is careful to say—"And *in her hour* he walketh forth apace." The next hour was dedicated to Mercury, and was the last hour of Sunday. The "third unequal hour" after that in which Palamon set out for Venus' shrine was, accordingly, the first hour of Monday, and was dedicated to the Moon, or Diana. The sun was then rising, and Emily rose with it, to go to Diana's shrine; see lines 1413-1415. The "hour of Mars," as in l. 1509, was the fourth hour of Monday, during which Arcite, accordingly, sought the shrine of Mars.

P. 59, l. 1365. *Cithæron*; see note to p. 47, l. 1078.

P. 59, l. 1366. "For the sake of the love which thou didst bear to Adonis." See Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*.

P. 61, l. 1413. *Unequal*. See note to p. 59, l. 1353.

P. 62, l. 1436. *Staius*. The allusion is to the Thebaid of Statius, where, however, nothing of the sort appears. Chaucer is here following Boccaccio, who had taken some *other* particulars from Statius.

P. 62, l. 1441. Diana is identified with Proserpine, as queen of hell. She is also the Moon, and thus has *three forms*; as at p. 63, l. 1455.

P. 66, l. 1525. *Ardent fire*; alluding to the love of Mars for Venus.

P. 66, l. 1547. *To-morrow*, i. e. Tuesday, which was named in Latin *dies Martis*, and dedicated to Mars.

P. 68, l. 1596. *My course*. The largest planetary orbit then known was that of Saturn. Many supposed evil effects of that planet are here enumerated.

P. 68, l. 1604. *Lion's sign*; the sign of Leo, which was said, astrologically, to be the depression or dejection of Saturn; and when Saturn appeared to be within that sign in the sky, his influence for evil was at its worst.

P. 71, l. 1628. *That Monday*; i. e. the day when Emily and Arcite sought the shrines of Diana and Mars. The tournament was on the following day, viz. Tuesday, May 7.

P. 77, l. 1768. *Gargaphia*; the valley of Gargaphia or Gargaphie in Bœotia, sacred to Diana, where Actæon was torn to pieces by his own hounds; Ovid, *Metam.* iii. 156.

P. 77, l. 1772. *Belmarie*; Benmarin, a Moorish kingdom in Africa mentioned by Froissart, bk. iv. ch. 24.

P. 90, l. 2095. *Tow'rd the left*; i. e. in a direction contrary to the course of the sun. So also in Statius, Theb. vi. 215:—"ex more sinistro"; in a description of a funeral which Chaucer here partly copies.

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