STORIES FROM CHAUCER

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

SHE HAD ALMOST RESOLVED TO KILL HERSELF.

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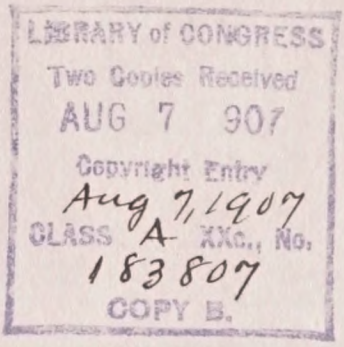

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Introduction

FIVE hundred years is a long time to go back after stories. It brings us to a far-off day when America was not even discovered or suspected, unless it was by wandering bands of Northmen—and what *they* found they kept to themselves! Indeed we are now going back to a period one hundred years before Columbus sailed across the ocean in his queer little ships.

The place is England of feudal days, when grim castles frowned upon nearly every hill, and when knights rode about in complete armor which made them look like animated stoves and which must have felt dreadfully uncomfortable.

At that time the English language was a curious jumble—at least, we should think so now. Words were spelled in as complicated style as possible. For instance they spelled the word fish "fysshe," and the double s in the middle looked like broken-backed *f* s. In fact very few people knew how to spell at all, in those days; and the wise ones who did know, used their own methods

and tried to represent the word just as it sounded to them.

But two or three things happened about this time, which helped crystallize or "set" the language. One was the translation of the Bible into English; another was the invention of printing; and a third was the birth of a great poet—the greatest man of letters who had yet risen in England. His name was Geoffrey Chaucer, and he has been spoken of as the father of the English tongue, as well as the first of poets. Chaucer, however, came *before* the printing press; and his poems were preserved in rolled manuscripts written by hand, some of them being finely illuminated and illustrated. We have reproduced some of these quaint old illustrations in the story of the "Prologue" here given; and we also show a page of manuscript, but you would find it difficult reading even if shown full size.

Beyond the fact that he wrote the "Canterbury Tales" and a few other works, little is known with certainty in regard to Chaucer. Even the year of his birth is uncertain. It was somewhere between 1328 and 1340, and probably nearer the latter date. His birthplace is thought to be London where his father, John Chaucer, was a wine merchant. In 1356 we obtain our

first definite news of the future poet. He was then a page to the Duchess of Clarence, whose husband the Duke was the third son of King Edward III. As soon as the boy Chaucer was well grown he became a soldier and went with the King's army to make war upon France. This was at the end of 1359. But the young soldier had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the enemy, who held him with other prisoners for ransom. The King thought so well of Chaucer's services, that he personally contributed a sum of money toward his freedom.

When Chaucer returned to London he was again attached to the royal household, this time as valet of the King's chamber, or personal attendant—a position of some honor. He was also fortunate in being a chosen comrade of the King's fourth son, Prince John, who later became famous in history as John of Gaunt, and who was enabled to do Chaucer many favors.

Meanwhile Chaucer had always been of a studious turn of mind, and may have attended one of the universities of Oxford or Cambridge. It is certain that he was good in foreign tongues and esteemed as a scholar. So the King found him of great service at court, and also sent him abroad upon missions of increasing importance.

He went in turn to Flanders, to France, and to Italy. When the King died, and a new monarch, Richard II, was crowned, Chaucer went to France to negotiate a marriage for the young King with the daughter of the King of France. On a visit to Italy it is said that Chaucer met the other greatest living poet of his day—Petrarch, who occupied the exalted place in Italy which Chaucer did in England. In the tale "Patient Griselda," Chaucer speaks of his indebtedness to Petrarch, and it is believed that he heard the tale from the Italian poet's own lips.

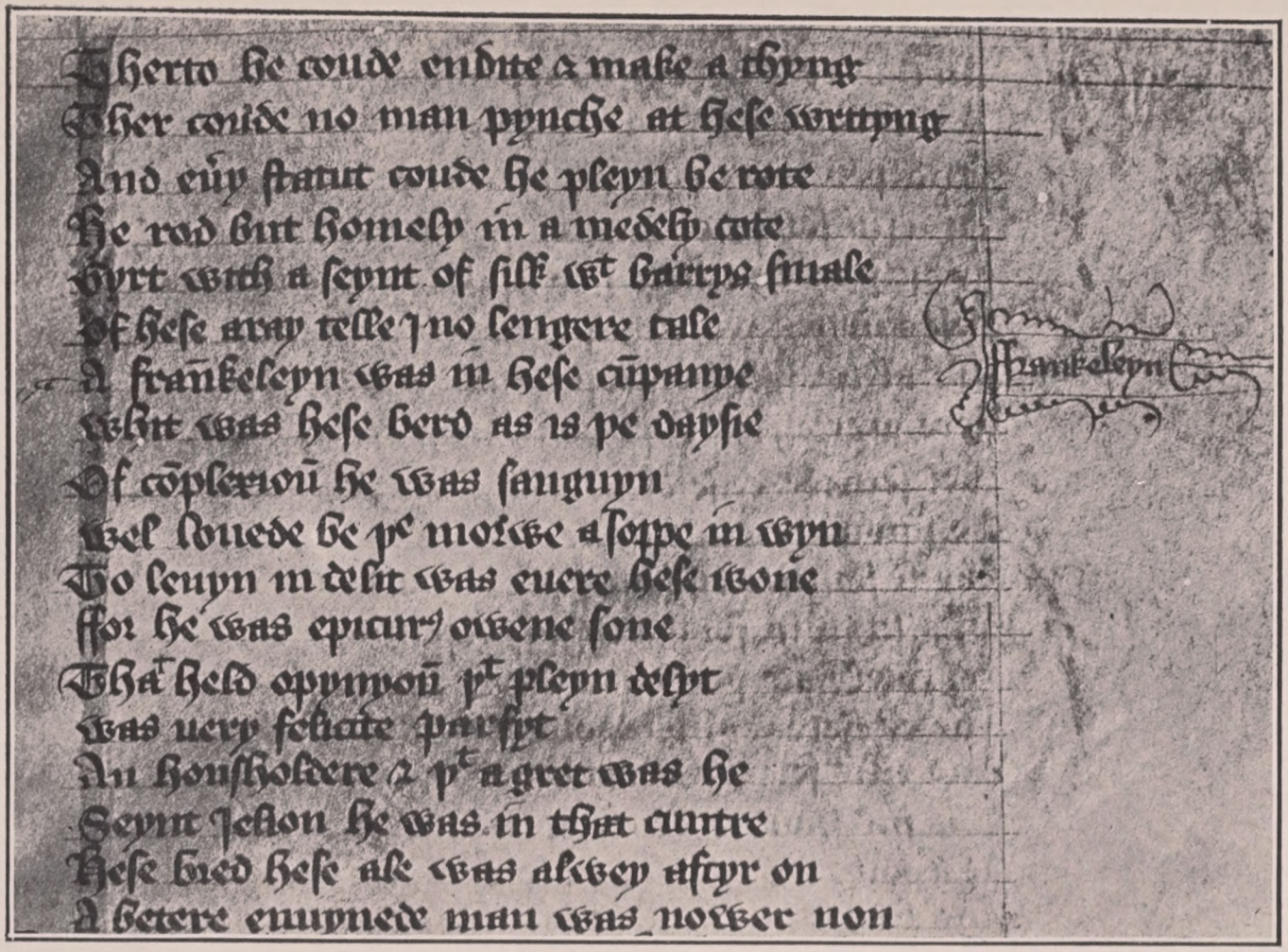
But Chaucer's activity was not confined to foreign embassies. In 1374 he was made Controller of Customs—that is, of wool, skins, and leather. In 1382 his office in the port of London was still further increased by adding other things such as wine to the list. His official duties required him to write the records in his own hand, which must have kept him rather busy, with his literary writing. In 1386 Chaucer was made knight of the shire and elected to Parliament, at which time he gave up his position in the Customs. During the next few years he held various official positions, probably aided by his friend and benefactor John of Gaunt. Finally when this friend's son was crowned king, as

Henry IV, in 1399, Chaucer received a pension for his long and faithful services. It is believed that the old poet needed it, as he had lost his most lucrative positions. With the pension money he leased a house and garden near Westminster, but he did not long enjoy his well earned repose. The next year he died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey—the first of English poets to find a resting place there. The inscription there gives the date of his death as October 25, 1400.

But Chaucer's fame has remained steadfast through all these centuries, not because of any public offices he held, or from any friendship with King or Prince. His name now towers above them, and what he did will be remembered for other centuries to come, when they will be forgotten. *His* fame is secure because he was a poet and a creator of the English tongue. He found the language a thicket of conflicting dialects. He left it firmly rooted in one strong graceful tree which has grown into our modern speech—a sturdy oak whose branches extend toward every point of the compass and bid fair to shelter almost every nation of the earth.

Chaucer's chief work, from which the present stories are drawn, was his "Canterbury Tales."

Their writing occupied all his spare time during the later years of his life, and indeed he left the great task unfinished. The design of these "Tales" is set forth clearly in his own Prologue, which we have tried to give faithfully in this prose version. Chaucer imagines a group of pilgrims setting forth for the cathedral at Canterbury, there to do penance at the shrine of the church martyr, Thomas à Becket. Such pilgrimages were very common in those days, especially in the spring-time, when the flowers and green grass invited people to spend as much time as possible in the glad out-of-doors. Chaucer himself was on this pilgrimage—he says—and stopped overnight on the way, at the Tabard Inn. That same evening the other pilgrims arrived by twos and threes, and the observant scholar describes them for us in close detail. There were twenty-nine in all, representing nearly every trade and profession of that day from the highest to the lowest. It was a motley throng. The soldiery were represented by a knight belonging to the noble class, his son the squire, and his follower the yeoman; the church, by an abbot, a friar, a parson, a prioress, a nun, three priests, a pardoner, and a summoner; the professions, by a scholar, a clerk of Oxford, a doctor, and a lawyer. Then there were also a



FACSIMILE PAGE FROM AN EARLY COPY OF THE "CANTERBURY TALES," KNOWN AS THE CAMBRIDGE MS.

Franklin or landowner, a haberdasher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, an upholsterer, a cook, a plowman, a sailor, a reeve or sheriff, and a manciple or steward.

Chaucer says that these people decided to ride on to Canterbury together for the sake of safety and companionship; and that the landlord of the Tabard Inn proposed that each should take his turn in telling stories by the way. Of course it is all make-believe, and the stories are really by Chaucer himself. Yet he succeeds wonderfully well in putting into the mouths of these various people just the sort of story you would naturally expect of them. The knight begins with a fine high-flown tale of chivalry and battle; while the tradesmen, when it comes their turn, tell tales of coarse broad humor and every-day life. The most successful story-teller—says Chaucer—was to have been given a dinner at the expense of all the others, when they rode back from Canterbury town. But unfortunately the journey was never completed, as the great mind which was creating these scenes was stilled by death before he could set them all down upon paper for your pleasure and mine. Enough was done, however, to serve as a model to story-tellers for all time. The figures seem drawn from life, the action never

drags, the speech is always sprightly and vigorous.

The best of these "Canterbury Tales" have been chosen for the present book. They are the ones which children will most appreciate and enjoy; and their perusal, we hope, will lead to a personal study of the quaint old original text, in the later "grown-up" years. We have tried to give a faithful prose rendering of the rhymed lines of the original, and in numerous places that original crops out word for word. In other places where the text has been expanded or contracted slightly, it has remained faithful to the Canterbury spirit.

With these few words of explanation, we will now turn with you to the book itself; or as the genial old poet would have put it, we will mount our steeds with the rest of the company and ride on to Canterbury, listening and laughing by the road to the tales that shall be told.

J. W. M.

New York City,
May, 1907.

The Prologue

In Which Chaucer Describeth the Company of Canterbury Pilgrims and Telleth How the Tales Came to be Told

Here Beginneth the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

WHEN April has come with his sweetest showers to pierce the hard heart of March and breathe new life into every living thing all nature rejoices. The tender grass once more clothes the hillside, the little birds make melody, and men are stirred to go forth upon long journeys. Pilgrims hasten to distant lands to visit the shrines of far-off saints, while other devout folk in England wend their way to Canterbury town to kneel before the blessed martyr's tomb.[1]

It befel that one day in spring as I, Chaucer, was resting at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, ready to go upon my devout pilgrimage to Canterbury, a company of pilgrims upon the same quest arrived at nightfall. There were nine-and-twenty of them—various folk who had chanced to fall in one with another. The Inn's quarters were roomy so that every one found a place;

[1] Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was slain by servants of King Henry II, in 1170. He was made a saint by the Pope, and pilgrimages were instituted to his tomb.

and shortly I had made friends with them all and was counted one of their company. We agreed to rise up early the next day and pursue our journey together.

But while I have time and space I think it well to tell you something about this company. And I will begin with

THE KNIGHT

A KNIGHT there was, a very worthy man,

from the time that he had first begun to ride about. He loved chivalry and truth, freedom and courtesy. He had borne with honor many high commands. He had been in Alexandria when it was won; had served with renown in Prussia, Russia, Turkey and by the Great Sea; had fought in fifteen mortal battles, and in the lists of tourney for our faith had three times slain a foe. And though he was worthy he was also wise and modest. He never spoke evil, but was a very perfect, gentle knight. As for his array, his horse was good without being showy, and he wore a rough under-coat stained by his metal armor, for he had but lately arrived from a long voyage.

With him was his son a SQUIRE, a lively boy with curly locks who was about twenty. He was of even stature and wonderfully graceful and strong. He had followed his father in knightly deeds of war in Picardy, Flanders, and Artois, and borne himself well, hoping thus to win his lady's grace. He was richly embroidered, with short coat and wide sleeves. Singing he was, or flute-playing all day long, and he could make songs or ballads and recite, joust, dance, draw pictures or write; while he became his horse and well could ride. His behavior was also good, for

THE SQUIRE

he was courteous and serviceable, and carved the meat for his father at the table.

The only servant he had was a YEOMAN who was clad in a coat and hood of green. He carried a sheaf of bright arrows at his belt, and in his hand a mighty bow, while by his side hung a sword and buckler. A hard-headed fellow he

THE YEOMAN

looked, with brown visage as though well versed in woodcraft.

There was also a nun, a PRIORESS who was called Madam Eglantine. She had shy simple manners, sang the divine service full well, and spoke French fair and fluently. At table her manners were of the daintiest, and she was amiable though at mighty pains to have a courtly

THE PRIORESS

manner. While as for her conscience, she was so charitable and piteous she would weep if she did but see a mouse caught in a trap, or a dog beaten by a man. Her nose was straight, her eyes were gray as glass, and her mouth was quite small with soft red lips. Besides she had a good forehead and she was of goodly height. Her cloak was trimmed, and she bore upon her

arm a small rosary of corals set with green, and thereon hung a brooch of gold on which was written *Amor vincit omnia* whose meaning is, Love conquers all things.

With the Prioress were a nun and three priests.

THE MONK

A MONK there was—a man bound to excel others and who loved hunting. He was fit to be an abbot, and he was also a good

judge of horses. He cared little what was said about him and he spared no cost to keep the finest grayhounds. I saw his sleeves edged with fine lace; his hood was fastened under his chin with a curious gold pin shaped like a love-knot. His head was bald and shone like glass and there was much flesh on his bones.

THE FRIAR

And there was a FRIAR, a riotous merry fellow

enough, glib of tongue, yet solemn in his office. He was well-known and liked, for he heard confessions and gave pleasant absolutions. And his penances were light when people made it worth his while. He carried a pocket full of pretty knives and trinkets to give to people, and he could sing well and play on the guitar. He courted the folk who could give the best dinners, and was hard to turn away when he came asking alms. He was well clad and round. He lisped somewhat to make his English sweet upon his tongue, and when he played and sang, his eyes twinkled like stars on a frosty night.

A CLERK there was—a scholar from Oxford town who had long applied his heart unto learning. His horse was skinny as a rake, and I'll wager that he himself was none too fat! He had a sober hollow look which went well with his threadbare cloak, for he had not tried to get a scholar's pension, and did not yet have an office. He would rather have, stacked up at the head of his bed, a score of books on philosophy, bound in black and red, than rich robes or easy living. So he had very little money, and all that he did get he spent on books of learning. No word he spake for which there was no need, but what he said was short and quick and to the point, yet

THE CLERK

with all dignity and soundness. True worth and goodness lay in his speech; glad would he learn and gladly teach.

Likewise there was a MAN-OF-LAW, who was wary and wise. He also was a man full rich in excellence, and discreet and held in great esteem. He was often seen in the court rooms, for he was a skilful counselor. So he won many fees, both

THE MAN OF LAW

large and small. He acted as agent for many estates. Indeed there was nowhere a busier man, and yet he seemed busier than he was. He had all the law and evidence down pat from the time of King William, and when he wrote out a thing, no man could get around it. And every statute he could say off by rote. But despite the fact

that he was a famous lawyer, he rode but a homely mount, and wore a medley coat girt about with a belt of silk set with little bars. I cannot tell farther of his array.

THE FRANKLIN

A FRANKLIN was in his company. His beard was white, his complexion ruddy. Well did he

love his wine. His house was never without baked meat both fish and flesh, and that so plenteous that one would think it snowed meat and drink. Woe to his cook if but his sauce lacked its sharp flavor! His table stood ready covered all day long, for often he was knight of the shire and must needs keep open house. A dagger and hawk-net hung at his girdle.

And there were also in the company a MERCHANT with forked beard and motley raiment, a HABERDASHER, a CARPENTER, a WEAVER, a DYER, a TAPESTRY-MAKER, all clad in their proper livery, a COOK, a SHIPMAN, a PHYSICIAN and a WIFE OF BATH.

But I must tell you more about the WIFE OF BATH.[1] I am sorry to say she was somewhat deaf, but she was so expert at weaving cloth that no one could equal her. She allowed no other woman to outdo her in church worship, and she had been on pilgrimages to Rome as well as traveled in many lands. Fair was her face and ruddy. The worthy woman had buried five husbands in her time. That she was well-to-do might be seen by her showy dress. Her hat was as broad as a buckler or target. She sat easily

[1] Meaning a housewife hailing from that city.

THE WIFE OF BATH

upon her ambling steed and could laugh and jibe in good fellowship with the best of us.

A good man there was of religion—a PARSON poor in worldly goods but rich in holy thought and work. He was also a learned man and given to preaching the gospel truly. He was cheerful and diligent and patient in adversity. Wide was

THE PARSON

his parish with houses far asunder, but never did he fail through rain or thunder to visit all who were sick or in trouble. He followed neither pomp nor show, but only his sound conscience, preaching the law of Christ and his apostles and, better still, following it himself.

Then there was the Parson's brother, a PLOWMAN who worked hard in the fields but who lived

in peace and perfect charity with his fellow man. He wore a tabard and rode on a mare.

There were also a MILLER, a REEVE, a SUMMONER, a PARDONER, a MANCIPLE, and myself completing the party.

THE MILLER

The MILLER was a stout carl, big of brawn and bone, as he had proved in many a wrestling

match. He was stout and thick-set, and there was no door in the town that he could not burst in with his burly shoulders. His beard was red like a fox, and on the tip of his nose was a wart with bristly red hairs in it. He could grind corn well enough, but he often kept more than his share of the meal. He wore a sword and buckler, and carried a bagpipe with which he piped us merrily out of the town.

The REEVE, or bailiff, was a thin, fiery fellow with short beard and hair cropped about the ears. His legs were long and lean like walking sticks and you could see no calves at all. But he was a just man, and never came up short in accounts, when he managed estates for other people.

The SUMMONER was an ugly fellow with an ugly trade; for it was his business to summon people to appear before the church courts, and it was whispered that he blackmailed them right and left. He liked strong dishes flavored with garlic and onions, and when he drank too much sour wine he would jabber nothing but Latin. He had picked up a few legal terms, but knew nothing about them. He cut a queer figure as he rode along, for he wore on his head a garland as big as an ivy-bush, and carried instead of a buckler a big round cake.

THE PARDONER

In company with the Summoner rode his friend the PARDONER, who was a priest that sold pardons from Rome. Full loud he sang such love-ditties as "Come hither, love, to me!" and the Summoner would growl out an accompaniment in a stiff bass voice. His hair was as yellow as beeswax and it hung down his back in straggling locks. His face was beardless and his

voice was gentle like the bleating of a goat, but he was right crafty in his business. He carried a bag of bones, relics of saints, about which he told the most wonderful tales, and thus sold them to the poor people for a goodly sum of money.

The MANCIPLE was a well-groomed fellow who acted as steward and buyer for the lawyers of London. He knew so well how to buy provisions at the best market price, that he had more than thirty customers on his list. No matter how shrewd they might be in law, he could beat them at a trade every time.

Lastly there was myself, DAN CHAUCER, Esquire, who have set me to describe this company. But I will not speak of mine own form and feature for very modesty's sake. My likeness is set forth here with the others, so that the gentle reader may judge for himself.[1]

Now I have told you in brief the array and number of this company of pilgrims who were assembled at Tabard Inn, and so it is time to tell you what happened with us that night, and afterward of the journey itself.

But first I pray you out of your courtesy not

[1] The genial Chaucer will doubtless pardon us for putting words into his mouth which he did not utter!

CHAUCER

to charge me with false speech if I set down in full all words and actions; for this you know as

well as I, that whoso tries to tell a tale after a man must only rehearse it the best way he can. He must tell it faithfully, sparing no one, not even his brother. You must also forgive me if I have not set folk in their rank and dignity in this tale. I am a plain man myself and can only use plain words.

Our Host made us right welcome and set great cheer before us at the supper-table. He was a big man bold of speech, but wise and shrewd. And he was also a right merry man, keeping the company lively with his witty jests. When we had supped and settled our accounts he said to us all:

"Now, lordings, you are truly right welcome; for by my troth, if I shall not lie, I never have seen so large a company at once inside my tavern before, this year. I'd gladly make you mirth if I knew how; and of a pleasant game I've just bethought, to cheer your way—and cost you naught! You go to Canterbury. God speed you, and if you will abide by my judgment on the way, hold up your hands!"

Without more ado we held them up and begged our Host to say on.

"Well, masters," quoth he, "I have decided that each of you shall tell the rest of us four tales

—two on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. They will shorten the journey. And whichever tells the best story shall have a supper at this inn at the expense of the others. And to add to the sport, I myself will gladly ride with you at my own expense to be both guide and judge; and whoever gainsays my judgment shall pay for all we spend by the way. Now tell me if you agree to this, and I shall get ready in time to start."

We were all right glad of this plan and told him as much; and so, early next morning, our clever Host gathered us together like a hen gathering her chicks, and we rode away to Saint Thomas's Well. Here he reined his horse and said that we must draw lots to determine who should tell the first story. And the lot fell to the Knight, much to the delight of everybody else. As for that good man he put a pleasant face on it, saying: "Since I shall begin the game, why, forsooth, welcome be the lot! Come, let us ride forward while I begin my tale."

Here endeth the Prologue of this book; and here beginneth the first tale which is the Knight's Tale.

The Knight's Tale

PALAMON AND ARCITE

Palamon and Arcite

ONCE upon a time, as old stories tell us, there was a duke named Theseus, the lord and governor of Athens; and in his day he was such a conqueror that there was none greater under the sun. Full many a rich country had he won by his wisdom and prowess. He conquered the land of the Amazons, once called Scythia, and wedded its queen Hippolyta, bringing her back home with much pomp and great solemnity; and with her came her younger sister Emily. And thus with victory and with melody this noble duke to Athens rode with all his host.

And certainly if it were not too long to hear, I would tell you fully of his conquests and battles, but the rest of the tale is long enough and I can only use my share of time. Then let the others tell their story and see who wins the landlord's supper!

As Duke Theseus was on his way home with his bride, he perceived by the roadside a company of ladies all clad in black raiment who wept and wailed and made great outcry.

"What folk are ye," quoth Theseus sternly, "that ye should disturb my home-coming with your cries? And why this black attire when ye should be doing me honor?"

Then said the oldest of them: "Lord, to whom fortune hath given victory, we do not grudge your glory and honor, but we come to beseech your mercy and aid. There is not one of us who was not once a queen or a duchess, but now by a turn of the fickle wheel of fate are we all beggars. Myself was the wife of King Capaneus of Thebes; and all of us who make this lamentation lost each her husband on the fatal day when that besieged city fell. And now Creon who is the new King of Thebes has piled all the dead bodies in a heap and will not suffer us either to burn or to bury them."

And with these words the ladies wept and cried more grievously then ever: "Have pity on us wretched ones, and let our sorrow sink into your heart!"

The tender-hearted duke dismounted from his horse, full of profound pity for the ladies. He lifted them all from the ground and comforted them and swore a great oath that, as he was a true knight, he would deal forcibly with this cruel tyrant Creon. And making good his word he

turned to right about, unfurled his banner and rode with all his army toward Thebes—sending his queen Hippolyta and her sister Emily on to Athens to await his coming.

The duke's white banner bore the red statue of Mars, God of War, upon it; and by his banner fluttered his pennon. Thus in the flower of chivalry rode the conqueror till he came to Thebes.

To make matters short, the duke fought a great battle with the King of Thebes and slew him and many a knight upon the field and routed his whole army. Afterward he took the city by assault and tore down its walls; and the sorrowing ladies came and received the bones of their dead husbands for honorable care.

When Theseus had slain Creon and won the city he remained all night on the field of battle; and in the pillage that followed it so befel that two young knights were found who, though wounded sorely, were yet alive. Side by side they lay in their rich armor which proclaimed them to be of the blood royal—cousins and the sons of sisters. Their names were Palamon and Arcite.

On account of their rank the two young knights were carried to Theseus' tent; and he, disdaining

any ransom, sent them to Athens to lifelong imprisonment.

Then rode Theseus home, crowned with laurel as a conqueror, and lived in joy and honor all his life. But in a strong tower Palamon and Arcite were shut up and left to anguish and woe.

Thus passèd year by year and day by day,
Till it fell once upon a morn in May
That Emily, far fairer to be seen
Than is the lily on his stalk of green,
And fresher than the May with flowers new —
For with the rose's color strove her hue,
I know not which the fairer of the two —
Ere it was day, as was her wont to do,
She had arisen with the early light;
For May will have no sluggard of the night.
This she remembered and in fresh array
Had come to do her honor to the May.
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress
Behind her back—a yard in length, I guess;
And in the garden as the sun uprose
She wandered up and down where as she chose.
She gathered flowers partly white and red
To make a witching garland for her head,
And as an angel heavenly she sang.

Now the great tower, in which the young knights Palamon and Arcite were imprisoned, stood hard by the wall of the garden. And Palamon, by leave of his jailer, had also risen

early upon this bright May morning, and was roaming at will about an upper chamber whence he could see all the noble city and likewise the garden in which Emily was walking. This sorrowful prisoner was pacing back and forth in the great room bemoaning his sad case and wishing he had never been born; when it chanced that through the square barred window he cast his eye upon the princess.

"Ah!" he cried, starting backward as though stricken to the heart.

So sudden was his outcry that Arcite sprang up asking, "Dear cousin, what ails you? You are quite pale and deathly. We must learn to be patient and endure this prison life."

Palamon answered, "Cousin, it is not the prison which made me cry out. But I was smitten just now through the eye right to the heart. The fairness of that lady that I see roaming yonder in the garden is the cause of my outcry. I know not whether she be woman or goddess, but I think it must be Venus herself!"

And with that word Arcite began to look at the lady Emily; and the sight of her fairness hurt him so sorely that he sighed deeply, saying: "Her fresh beauty slays me suddenly, and if I find no favor in her eyes I am but dead."

When Palamon heard this he said sternly, "Say you that in jest or earnest?"

"Nay," quoth Arcite, "in earnest by my faith! I am in no mood to play."

Then Palamon began to knit his brows. "It were no great honor," quoth he, "for you to prove false and traitor to me who am your cousin and brother, sworn as we both are to stand together till death. But now you would falsely try to take from me this lady whom I love and serve and ever shall till my heart break. Now, certes, this you shall not do. I loved her first and took you into my secret, and you are bound in knightly honor to help me with my suit."

But Arcite answered proudly, "You are rather false than I, for I loved her truly first. You did not know whether she was a woman or a goddess, and therefore your affection was a sort of religious feeling. But my love is real and I told my cousin and sworn brother of it at once. But even if you *had* loved her first, what matters it? A man must love because he can't help it, and not because he wills it. Moreover it is not likely that you will obtain her grace any more than I, for here we are, lifelong prisoners denied all ransom. And so, my brother, each man for himself, say I!"

But his cousin was unyielding, and long and bitter was the quarrel between them for the love of the lady they had barely seen and could never hope to meet.

But to go on with my story: There was a great duke named Perotheus who was a close friend and brother-in-arms to Theseus. They loved each other dearly, so that it seemed there was nothing the one would not do for the other. Now Duke Perotheus had known Arcite for years and liked him well; and he begged Theseus to let the young knight out of prison. Theseus agreed to do this, but only on condition that Arcite leave Athens. Should he ever be found there he was to lose his head.

So Arcite recovered his freedom, but he did not rejoice thereat. Instead, he sorrowed greatly saying, "Alas, that ever I knew Perotheus! For rather would I be back in prison so that I might see again the lady I love!

"O dear Cousin Palamon," he continued, "yours is the victory in this adventure! Full blissfully in prison may you linger. In prison? Nay, truly, in *paradise;* for fortune has given you the lucky throw!"

Upon the other side Palamon made great lament when he learned that Arcite was free.

"Alas!" quoth he, "Arcite, my cousin, the fruit of the strife falls to you. You will walk free in Thebes and think little of my misery. Instead, you will mayhap gather together a great army and make war upon this city and thus obtain the fair lady to be your wife; while I linger here in this cage helpless with pain and love."

Indeed it were hard to tell which of the twain suffered the deepest woe. Arcite in Thebes fell into such dire sorrow that there never was so sad a creature before or since. He ceased to eat, sleep or drink until he became so lean that he looked like an arrow-shaft. While Palamon, though he could see his lady day by day, was fettered closely in a prison cell.

One night the exile Arcite had a dream. He thought that the winged god Mercury stood before him bidding him be of good cheer.

"Go back to Athens," said the god, "and there will your sorrow have an end."

And with that word Arcite sprang up with a start, crying, "Now truly I shall turn back to Athens at once! The fear of death shall not keep me from sight of the beautiful lady."

And as he said this he caught up a mirror and saw that his sickness had so changed his color and visage that none would know him. He was

right glad of this, as now he knew that he could go to Athens without fear of discovery. So he lost no time in changing his garments for those of a poor laborer; and all alone, save for a faithful squire as humbly clad as his master, he hastened to the city and court of Theseus.

There he offered his services to a chamberlain of Emily's house, to hew wood or draw water, or do any menial work entrusted to him. And he received service there, and could soon hold his own with the best of the servants, for he was young and very strong.

Thus Arcite became page-in-waiting for the fair Emily, and was called Philostrate.

In fine it came about that no one in all the court was half so well beloved as he, for he was gentle of speech and modestly behaved. Everybody said it would be no more than right if Theseus promoted the young man and placed him in a rank which would better display his virtues.

So general was his fame that Theseus began to notice him. He made him a squire and gave him gold to maintain his position. Moreover his own moneys was brought Arcite privately from Thebes, but he managed to spend it so prudently that none suspected him. In this manner Arcite

lived happily for a long time and bore himself so well in peace and war that no man became dearer to Theseus.

Meanwhile for seven long years Palamon had wasted away in prison. There seemed not the slightest hope of his ever getting out, and his great love for Emily was consuming him. But at last, one May night, some friend of his gave the jailer a drink which caused him to fall into a deep sleep; and Palamon was thus enabled to make his escape from the tower. He fled as far as he was able, but the night was short and he must needs hide himself in a grove. He planned to travel by night and hide thus by day until he should reach Thebes, where he hoped to stir all his friends up in his behalf. Then he would either lose his life in battle or win the hand of Emily.

Now would I turn again to Arcite, who little knew of the turn affairs had taken.

The busy lark, messenger of day, was saluting the morrow of Palamon's escape, when Theseus' chief squire Arcite arose and mounted his steed. He was mindful to do homage to the May morning, and also weave a garland for his lady love. And as he rode he sang aloud in the sweet sunshine:

"O May, with all thy flowers and green, I pray,
Accept our welcome, fairest, freshest May!
Yield thee of all thy tender green to-day!"

Then from his courser he sprang merrily and plunged into the grove still singing. A path led him by chance right by the bush in which Palamon lay hid, fearing for his life. But the fugitive did not know it was Arcite, and he passed by unknowing and unknown. So was it said of old that "the field hath eyes and the wood hath ears."

A man should be cautious even when he fancies himself most secure. Arcite was careless and after he had roamed up and down still singing, his mood changed suddenly and he fell into a brown study.

Seating himself near to where Palamon lay he exclaimed: "Alas, the day that I was born! Though I am of royal blood I have become the squire and slave of my mortal enemy; and I dare not own even my own name of Arcite. Ah, Mars and Juno, save me and the wretched Palamon martyred in prison! For all my pains are because of the love of Emily."

When Palamon heard this he felt as though a sword had been suddenly thrust through his heart. His face grew pale as death and he sprang

out of the thicket like a madman, crying, "Arcite! False, wicked traitor! Now are you caught in full confession of your misdeeds! You are of my blood, bound to me by vow, but you have dared to love my lady, and to trick the duke Theseus. For all this baseness you or I must die! I am unarmed, having but lately escaped from prison, but give you no heed to that, as I fear nothing. I am Palamon your mortal foe!"

When Arcite heard and knew him, fury filled his heart. Drawing his sword he exclaimed, "By him who rules above, if you were not sick, mad for love and without weapon, never would you stir from this grove alive! Here I give back the bond of fealty you claim I owe. What, fool, know you not that love is free? I tell you plain, I will love this lady always! But since you are a worthy knight willing to leave the issue to fair contest, here is my gage. By to-morrow at dawn I shall not fail to meet you as a knight in combat here in this spot. And I will bring full arms for us both, and choose the poorest for myself. Also I will bring meat and drink and a bed for you this night, so that you may be strengthened for the battle. Then if you win, the lady love is yours."

HE SPRANG OUT OF THE THICKET LIKE A MADMAN.

Palamon merely answered, "I grant it to you." And thus parted two who had once been devoted comrades.

O Cupid!—say I—thou art the God of Love, and yet thou hast no charity! In thy kingdom thou wilt not brook even the presence of a friend and brother. Poor Palamon and Arcite found it so.

When the morrow was come, behold Arcite riding to the battle-field. Before him on his steed he carried two full suits of armor, the one for himself, the other for Palamon. He found his cousin awaiting him; and though each changed color on seeing the other, there was no greeting or "good-day." But straightway, without wasting time or words, each helped the other to arm, as friendly as if he were his own brother.

Then with lances sharp and strong they dashed upon each other, so fiercely that you would have thought Palamon a mad lion and Arcite a cruel tiger; or that they were two wild boars combatting till the ground beneath their feet was red with blood.

Now it so chanced that Duke Theseus was also abroad early on this bright May morning. He was devoted to the hunt; and to-day he rode out with his queen Hippolyta, and Emily robed

all in green. Their dogs gave chase to a deer and thus led them by the grove wherein Palamon and Arcite were contending so fiercely. Their bright swords flashed back and forth in the sun so hideously that it seemed each stroke would fell an oak. But the duke did not know who the two knights were.

Setting spurs to his horse, Theseus dashed in between them, and drawing his sword cried, "Ho! No more of this on pain of death! By mighty Mars, he shall lose his head who strikes a blow in my presence! Tell me, forsooth, how comes it that ye fight so hardily in the lists without judge or proper officers for the fray?"

"Sire," replied Palamon weariedly, "why should we waste our words? Both of us have deserved death. We are two wretched creatures cumbered with our lives; and you our rightful lord and judge. So give us, I pray you, neither mercy nor refuge. Slay me first, and slay my fellow afterward."

Then Palamon told quite simply who they were.

"This is Arcite, your mortal foe, exiled from Athens on pain of death. Yet under the name of Philostrate he has deceived you and risen to be your chief squire. And all this has he done

for love of the Princess Emily. And I that make this my last confession before death am that miserable Palamon, lately broken wickedly forth from your prison. I also am your mortal foe; and I also love the fair Emily so madly that I would gladly die this moment in her presence. Therefore I ask my death and doom to-day. But slay my fellow in the selfsame way."

The duke had heard him through and now gave answer: "No further judgment is needed. Your own mouth and confession have condemned you both. By mighty Mars, ye shall surely die!"

Then the queen for very womanhood began to weep, and so did Emily and all the ladies in the company. They deemed it passing pitiful that two brave men of high degree should come to such an end, and all for loving a lady so faithfully. When they saw the knights' wounds all gaping and red, they fell upon their knees before Duke Theseus and prayed and entreated him to pardon the knights for their sakes.

And presently the duke felt his heart soften within him. His brow lightened, and looking around him with a quizzical eye he said, "Lo! what a mighty and great lord is this God of Love! Here are this Arcite and this Palamon

who might have gone to Thebes and dwelt there safely and royally. Yet hath Love blinded their eyes and led them both hither to their doom! Now does this not seem the height of folly? See how they bleed! Truly the Love God has paid them full wages! And the best jest of it all is, that the lady who has been the cause of all this knew no more about it than a cuckoo! Verily, whether young or old a man will play the fool, as I know for myself in my younger days!

"Well, I will pardon you," he added good-naturedly, "for the sake of my own past follies, and upon the request of the queen and my sister Emily. But you must both swear never to come and make war upon my land, but always to be my friends."

This they promised him full thankfully, for it was a fair, royal speech.

Then Theseus continued, still in bantering mood: "As for birth and wealth, though Emily were a queen both of you are doubtless worthy of her hand. But you can see for yourselves that she cannot wed you both, though you fought till doomsday. One of you, whether he likes or no, must forsooth go whistle and endure his woe. This then is the plan which I

propose. Both of you shall return to Thebes without ransom or hindrance; and this day year shall come again bringing with you an hundred knights armed for the lists and ready to do battle for your cause. I pledge my knightly word that whichever side shall come off victor in the fray—whether it be Palamon or Arcite—to him shall I give Emily to wife. What think ye of this plan?"

Who looks lightly now but Palamon? Who springs up for very joy but Arcite? Every one was so delighted with the gracious words of Theseus, that they fell upon their knees again and thanked him with all their heart and might. But the most thankful hearts of all were Palamon and Arcite.

These young knights forthwith took their leave and made straight for Thebes where they set about enlisting their hundred chosen followers.

Duke Theseus, on his part, became busied with preparations for the tourney. First of all an outdoor theatre had to be built, and a noble structure it was, when he had finished it. There was nothing else in the world to equal it. It was in circular form and measured a mile round about. Its walls were of stone, and a great

ditch ran on the outside. On the east and west sides stood gates of white marble; and there was not a carver or sculptor or painter or cunning worker of any sort that Theseus did not employ to decorate the theatre.

There were three temples. That one over the east gate was devoted to Venus the Goddess of Love; the one to the west was for Mars, God of War; while on the north side he built a turret in which was an oratory all of white alabaster and red coral, and this was given to Diana, Goddess of Hunting.

In the Temple of Venus were beautiful pictures of banquets, and dances, and people singing or else walking in flower gardens with their lady loves. And there were many famous stories told in these scenes, about Hercules, and Narcissus, and King Solomon, and the rich Crœsus. The statue of Venus herself was glorious to see. She was shown floating amid green waves which were bright as glass. She had a harp in her hand and a rose garland on her head; while doves hovered over her. By her side stood Cupid, the little Love God, with wings upon his shoulders. He had a bow and arrows, and he was blinded so that he could not tell whom he struck.

The Temple of Mars was not at all like this, but was full of terrible pictures of battles and burnings and famines and sinking ships and other dreadful things. There were blacksmiths beating out sharp swords upon their anvils, and men running hither and yon to slay each other. There were also stories of Julius Cæsar and Nero and other leaders in conflict. The statue of Mars stood armed upon a chariot, looking as grim as possible. By his side stood a hungry wolf with glaring red eyes.

The Temple of Diana was still different. Venus wishes every one to love and to wed. Mars wishes every one to hate and to fight. While Diana wishes every one neither to quarrel nor to wed, but to hunt all day in the fields; so the pictures in her temple were all of hunting stories. The Goddess was shown seated upon a deer with small dogs round about. She was clad in green, with a bow in her hand and a sheaf of arrows. The moon was shown just disappearing with the darkness, for Diana loves the early morning.

Now I have told you all about the wonderful theatre and the three temples; so let us hasten on to the time of the tournament.

True to their promise, Palamon and Arcite returned to Athens bringing each his hundred

knights. Splendidly mounted and equipped was every knight, so that never since the world began was seen a company so splendid. And every knight was eager to strike a blow on behalf of Love, and prove the prowess of his leader.

With Palamon rode Licurgus the mighty King of Thrace. Black was his beard and manly was his face. His limbs were great, his muscles hard and strong, his shoulders broad, his arms round and long. According to the fashion of his country he stood upright in a golden car drawn by four white bulls. Instead of armor, he wore a black bear's skin slung over his shoulder. Behind his car leaped more than twenty huge white hounds held to their leashes by golden collars set with spikes.

With Arcite—so say the stories—rode the mighty Emetrius, King of India, upon a bay horse with steel trappings and covered with cloth of gold. He looked like Mars the God of War. His coat armor was inlaid with pearls; his mantle covered with rubies glowed like a flame. His curling yellow hair glittered in the sun, and lion-like his glance swept all about him. Upon his wrist he carried a tame white eagle.

Indeed the noble companies who followed Palamon and Arcite were made up chiefly of

dukes and earls and kings who delighted in the game of chivalry.

When Theseus saw this gallant array, he hastened to welcome all the knights and do them honor. Indeed no man great or small could have done more than he.

> The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
> The great gifts given to the first and least,
> The palace with its very rich array
> Giving due place to every one that day;
> What ladies were the fairest, danced the best,
> Or spoke of love with most bewitching zest;
> What hawks were perched on high above the door,
> What hounds lay sleeping sound upon the floor:

all this I shall not mention in detail, but shall hasten on to the point of my story.

Before the joustings should begin, both Palamon and Arcite thought it well to visit one of the temples and implore the aid of the gods. Palamon went to Venus, Goddess of Love, and laid his suit before her in an impassioned plea. If he was not to be favored in his wooing, he prayed that a spear-thrust might end his days. When he had concluded, the statue of Venus shook, though after some delay. But he accepted this as a sign that his prayer was answered and went forth with a glad heart.

Arcite chose the Temple of Mars and offered up sacrifice to the God of War with a prayer for the safety and success of his arms. And when he had ended the temple doors quaked and the target of Mars rang, while the altar fires burned brightly. It seemed to the joyous Arcite, also, that he heard a low murmuring which said "Victory!"

But Emily did not wish to marry. She loved the freedom of the woods and the pleasures of the hunt. So it is not strange that we see her going, on this self-same day to the Temple of Diana. In fact she implored that chaste goddess to keep her from wedding either one of her suitors! But she had the grace to add that—if she *must* marry—she would prefer the one who loved her best.

Diana, however, would not listen to her. The fire upon the altar went out with a whistling sound, and poor Emily was so frightened that she began to cry. And therewith Diana appeared and said to her, "Daughter, cease thy heaviness! Among the gods it is affirmed that thou shalt wed the one or the other of these suitors who for thy sake have suffered so greatly. But which of them it shall be, I may not tell."

And with this she vanished leaving Emily spellbound.

But the gods Mars and Venus had a great quarrel because each had promised the victory and both could not win. Now you shall see how they favored, the one Arcite, the other Palamon.

It was on Sunday that the two knights and their companies reached Athens. All Monday was given over to jousts and dances; and early on Tuesday the great tournament began.

Such noise and clattering of horse and armor as was heard in all public places! Such an array of horsemen! Lords in rich steel gleaming with gold; knights with embroidered helmets; squires nailing heads to spears and buckling visors; armorers busy with file and hammer; yeomen on foot lacing the armor-plates; common soldiers hastening about armed only with staves—all was bustle and commotion while the foamy steeds champed upon their golden bits. Pipes, trumpets, clarionets, and drums resounded on every hand. Little knots of people—here three, there ten—gathered about the duke's palace arguing the merits of the two Theban rivals. Some said one thing, some another. Some favored him of the black beard, some the knight of the close-cropped hair. Some said, "He looks grim and

will fight!" and some, "*He* carries an axe that weighs twenty pounds!"

Duke Theseus sat at his window watching this great concourse of people and men-at-arms; while you may be sure the people lost no chance to gaze upon the duke and to do him honor; for they delighted to obey his word.

Presently a herald came forth and shouted "Ho!" The noise of the crowd instantly ceased while they waited to hear what should be the duke's will. Then the herald spoke further:

"The Lord Duke has of his high discretion considered that it were destruction to gentle blood to fight in this tourney as if in mortal battle. Wherefore to save life and limb he hereby changes his first purpose. No man, on pain of loss of life, shall bring into the lists short sword, axe, or knife. No man shall ride more than one course with a sharp spear. Whoso comes to harm shall be taken but not slain, and shall be brought to a stake there to await the issue of the battle. And if it so happen that the leader of either side be taken or slain then no longer shall the tourney last. God speed you! Go forth with long sword and mace and fight your fill!"

The voice of the people reached the very sky: "God save such a lord who is so good he will

not allow bloodshed!" Up struck the trumpets and the martial music, and forth rode the splendid company to the field of battle. First came the duke, with the two Theban knights on either side; then came the queen and fair Emily and all the cavalcade according to their rank.

When they came to the lists all the people pressed forward to obtain seats. Arcite entered the western gate by the Temple of Mars and arrayed his hundred knights under his red banner. Palamon entered the east gate of Venus and unfurled a white banner over his company. Never was there seen two hosts more equally matched. The names were read out so that there might be no difference in numbers; then the gates were shut and the herald cried aloud:

"Sir knights, now do your duty!"

The trumpets rang the charge loud and clear, and at the same instant the two companies sprang forward into shock of battle. Now might one see who could joust and who could ride! The spears shiver like straws upon the thick shields. Swords flash like fire and descend mightily upon helmets. Maces go crashing through breastplates. There stumble the steeds head first; here rises a man from out the press to continue the fight on foot; and there a man is taken, badly

wounded to the prison stake. Blood flows freely on every side, despite the first orders of Duke Theseus.

From time to time the duke calls a halt in the fray, and sends food and drink to the warriors; then the battle is resumed more savagely than ever.

Full often do the two Thebans meet and each work havoc upon his foe. Each has unhorsed the other twice. Never was tiger, whose whelps have been stolen, so cruel as Arcite. Never lion, mad with hunger, raged like Palamon. Soon both are covered with blood from their wounds.

Thus waged the battle back and forth all day, and many valiant deeds were done. Finally as Palamon fought with Arcite, the strong king Emetrius, crazed by excitement, charged also upon Palamon and drove his sword deep into his side. A score of others sprang forward also and seized Palamon and, despite his struggles, bore him to the stake. Forth charged his followers to rescue him, Licurgus in the van, but he in turn was borne down in the press. But King Emetrius for all his strength was knocked a sword's length out of his saddle, so violently did Palamon hit him ere he was taken. And so the rescue went for nought, and Palamon was brought to the

stake, which ended the tourney by the rules of Duke Theseus.

How sorrowful was this wretched Palamon when he saw that by unfair advantage they had turned the fight against him! As soon as Theseus perceived that the hero was taken, he cried to the knights who still fought "Ho!" and the tumult was ceased.

Then he said: "I will be a true judge and impartial. Arcite shall have Emily, for by his good fortune he has fairly won her."

Upon which the people shouted so loud that it seemed as if the lists would fall.

But the Goddess Venus who had promised to favor Palamon was sore distressed, and went for aid to her father Saturn, who comforted her, saying, "Daughter, hold thy peace; Mars has had his way, and now it is thy turn!"

Meanwhile in the lists the trumpets sounded with loud minstrelsy. The fierce Arcite, overcome with joy, raised the visor of his helmet and spurred his horse down the lists to pay his duty to the lady. He looked up at her as he galloped forward, and she in turn looked down with friendly eye; for women always follow the favor of fortune. While he rode thus carelessly, the God Saturn caused his horse to take fright

from some fancied shape arising from the ground.

The horse shied violently and stumbled as it leaped, and before Arcite could save himself he was thrown from the saddle. Headlong he fell, and lay still as death, his face black with the sudden rush of blood to his head. They picked him up and carried him to Theseus' palace, where they cut his armor away and laid him in bed. And all the while he was conscious and moaned, "Emily! Emily!"

Duke Theseus with all his company rode home in great spirits; for they had seen a great day's sport. None were slain, though many were grievously hurt, and it was told him that Arcite would not die. While as for broken limbs and cuts and bruises they were part of a soldier's fortune.

So the duke bade all make merry, and he held a feast for three days and gave them all rich presents. At parting also he rode away with the kings and lords, so that each one departed worthily and in good heart.

But as for Arcite the sore of his wound increased more and more, and could not be overcome by the surgeons. Balms and salves and drink of herbs gave him no ease, for nature re-

fused to perform her part. And when nature balks, then farewell physic! There is nothing more to do but carry a man to the churchyard.

When Arcite found that he was not getting well, and felt that he must die, he sent for Emily and his Cousin Palamon. Tenderly he told Emily of all the sorrow that was in his heart through loss of her; how that he had suffered for her sake, and now for her sake must lay down his life. Then he turned to his cousin and said: "With this my Cousin Palamon, I have had strife and rancor because of you. But now death ends all this, and perhaps it is the best way. Truly in all this world I know of no man so worthy to be loved as Palamon. He has served you well and faithfully. And so as my last request I ask that if you ever shall become a wife you forget not Palamon, that noble man." Then more faintly: "Farewell my sweet foe—and—my—Emily!"

And with that his breath began to fail him, and the chill of death crept up over his body. His eyes grew dark, but with their last ray he looked up at his lady and whispered: "Mercy—Emily!"

And thus died Arcite.

When they saw that he was no more, Emily fell swooning so that Theseus must needs bear

her away. Palamon also was overcome with grief for loss of his old-time comrade.

All the city mourned for Arcite, both young and old. No greater weeping was ever made for Hector of Troy, for all the people had been taken with this valiant knight and true.

The good Duke Theseus, always mindful of the right thing, caused a lofty funeral pyre to be built in that selfsame grove where Arcite and Palamon had first contended for Emily. And he likewise prepared a bier overlaid with the finest cloth of gold, and thereon laid the body of the knight clad in the same rich attire and crowned with laurel wreath. His face was left uncovered so that all the people might see him, and thus was he carried forth from the great hall of the palace.

Three splendid white steeds in glittering steel trappings bore all the armor and weapons of Arcite to the grove, and they were followed by the bier itself borne aloft on the shoulders of the noblest Greeks in Athens. Upon the one side walked the aged Egeus, father of Theseus; and upon the other walked the duke himself bearing in his hands vessels filled with honey and milk and wine. Next came Palamon robed in deepest black, his head sprinkled with ashes in token of

his woe. And next came Emily also in deep mourning, for she considered herself the wife of the dead knight; and she carried in her hand a torch to light the funeral pyre.

With solemn labor and ceremonial the fire was laid high about the bier, with sweet-smelling woods, and the whole was covered with cloth of gold and festoons of flowers. Then Emily applied the torch, and as the crackling flames leaped upward she fell swooning; for her grief seemed greater than she could bear. Meanwhile upon the flames some cast their shields, and others their weapons and jewels, as the duke poured out the vessels of honey and milk and wine for an offering to the departed soul. Then all the Greeks rode thrice around the funeral pile shouting aloud and waving their spears. And thus with ceremony and funeral games the last honors were paid to the dead knight Arcite.

Time heals all wounds. The period of mourning for Arcite passed with the changing months, although his memory was still clear and beloved. Then came a day when the people of Athens desired to form an alliance with their ancient enemy Thebes. And for this cause the noble Theseus sent for Palamon. Unknowing

the purpose of the call, Palamon came still dressed in black and looking the sorrow he had never ceased to feel.

Then the fatherly duke talked long to him, advising him to end his mourning and look upon the joy of life. He reminded him also of Arcite's dying request that Emily should favor him, and he ended by summoning the lady and placing her hand in that of Palamon.

"Sister," quoth he, "this has my full assent and that of my Parliament. It is needful that we be knit closer to our neighbor Thebes by ties of blood and affection. Take then this noble Palamon as your husband. Long has he served you faithfully, and you will not rue your grace."

And to Palamon: "I trow there is little need of sermoning to make you consent to this thing. Take this lady by the hand to be your lawful wedded wife."

And so with all bliss and melody Palamon was at last married to Emily. Need I say that they lived happily ever after?

For now hath Palamon his fullest wealth,
Living in bliss and riches and in health;
And Emily loveth him so tenderly,
And he doth cherish her so faithfully,

That never was there word between the two
Of jealousy or other things that rue.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emily ;
And God save all this noble company !

Here is ended the Knight's Tale.

The Priest's Tale

THE COCK AND THE FOX

PROLOGUE

WHEN the Knight had told his tale there was not one in all the company but said it was a noble story. The Host was delighted with so good a beginning, and was on the point of asking the Monk to tell the next tale. But just then the Miller, who had drunk so much ale that he could scarcely sit upon his horse, woke up and insisted upon telling a story whether it was his turn or not. Forthwith he began to spin out a droll yarn about a carpenter who was outwitted by two clerks. The Reeve, however, did not like the tale, as he was a carpenter by trade; so he began a story at the expense of the Miller.

Finally when the Monk got a hearing he swelled up in a very learned manner and began with a "tragedy" so long that it began with Adam and ended with Julius Cæsar.

All stood it as long as they could, when the Knight could no longer keep his peace.

"Hold!" said he, "good sir, no more of this. What you have said is right enough, I guess, but 'tis somewhat heavy for this company."

"Yea," quoth our Host, "you say well, for, soothly, the tale annoys all the company. Wherefore, Sir Monk, I pray you, try us with something else."

"Nay," replied the Monk testily "tis the best I can do; so let another have his say."

Our Host looked about him and saw the Nun's Priest standing near, looking jovial and merry.

"Come, Sir John, tell us a story to make our hearts glad," he commanded.

And the jolly Priest, nothing loth, began:

Here beginneth the Priest's Tale.

The Cock and the Fox

A POOR widow, bent with age, once dwelt in a small cottage beside a grove of trees in a valley. She was quite poor, but by good management she supported herself and her two daughters. Her chief wealth was in three large sows, three cows, and a sheep which was a great pet and was called Molly. The rooms of the cottage were meanly furnished and marred by soot; and they had to eat their food without sauce. No wine either white or red ever came on the table, but the widow had plenty of brown bread and milk as well as bacon, with now and then an egg or two, so they lived comfortably enough after all.

She had fenced a small yard all about with sticks and left a dry ditch on the outside; and in this yard was kept a cock called Chanticleer, who could outcrow anything else in the whole country. His voice was merrier than the organ which resounds in church on mass-days, and it was more certain as to time than an abbey clock, for he always knew when the dawn was at

hand and welcomed it right lustily. His comb was redder than fine coral, and jagged like the battlements of a castle wall. His bill was black and shone like jet. His legs and toes were blue, his nails lily-white, and his plumage like burnished gold.

This noble fellow had in his domain seven hens who were marked very much like him. The fairest of them all was called Pertelotte. Courteous she was, discreet and friendly, and carried herself so well that from the day she was a week old she had won old Chanticleer's heart completely. He loved her so that it was a joy to hear them sing together at sunrise: "My love is going far away." For at that time, so I have heard, both birds and beasts could talk as well as sing.

And so one day it befel that as Chanticleer sat upon his perch, with the fair Pertelotte beside him, he began to groan aloud as a man who is troubled in his sleep. When Pertelotte heard him she was alarmed, and said, "Dear heart, what ails you, that you groan like this?"

"Forgive me, dear," he answered, "but I have had a dreadful dream that haunts me still. Methought I saw, roaming up and down in our yard, a beast that looked something like a dog; and it

seized me and tried to make an end of me. Its color was a reddish-yellow, its tail and ears tipped with black, its nose was sharp and its eyes glowed like fire. O-oh, my bones! I think I see him yet!"

"Pish!" she replied; "fie on you for a faint heart! I can no longer love such a chicken liver!"

And forthwith she began to laugh him to scorn, for confessing that he was afraid of anything—least of all a silly dream. And she ended by advising him to physic himself as he undoubtedly had a poor digestion.

"Madame," he replied with dignity, "enough of your lore. But you should know that dreams are not to be lightly regarded; they often foretell good as well as ill. I have known them, in my own experience, to bring to light murders and other crimes. Also do you not remember how Daniel in the Bible profited by his dreams? And how Joseph gave heed to them so that he became Pharaoh's chief ruler, after he had told the butler and baker what should happen to them?

"As for physics and herbs, I do not take much stock in them," he continued, "for I think they are poisonous. But let us talk of something pleasant; for, dear Pertelotte, when I see how fair

your face is, with those red circles around your eyes, it makes all my fear to vanish. For truly you are my chiefest joy."

With this gallant speech he flew down from the perch and with a cluck began to call all the hens around him, for he had found some corn in the yard. Right royal he looked as he strutted back and forth, scarcely deigning to set his foot upon the ground. And thus with his seven hens around him, like a king in his palace, I will leave Chanticleer for the nonce until I can tell what happened to him.

Winter had ended, March was also passed, and the gentle Spring was quickly drawing near, when it chanced that Chanticleer, walking proudly about with his hens, looked up at the sun and knowing that it was at high noon began to crow loudly.

"The sun," he cried, "has climbed up into the high heaven. Madame Pertelotte, my heart's bliss, hark to the joyful birds, how they sing, and see the fresh flowers springing up. Truly my heart is full of joy!"

But quick on the heels of this joy was to tread sorrow; and Chanticleer in his happiest hour was to meet with misfortune. For a sly fox which had dwelt in the grove hard by for three years,

had crept stealthily into the yard and now lay hid in a vegetable bed awaiting his chance to seize him.

O Chanticleer! sad the day when thou didst leave thy perch, for thou wert warned in thy dreams! And sad the day when thou didst heed the counsel of thy wife and neglect the warning!

But thinking no harm, the fair Pertelotte and her sisters bathed merrily in the dust and preened their feathers in the sun; while Chanticleer sang merrier than a mermaid. But as he sang he chanced to look in the vegetable bed—and there lay his enemy the fox, just as he had seen him in the dream!

Forgetful of his crowing, the cock turned tail and started to flee from the danger. But the fox stepped forward and said politely, "Gentle sir, whither would you go, thus to leave one who is your best friend? Be not afraid, for I would indeed be wicked if I sought to do harm to a noble fellow like you. For, truth to tell, I came not to spy upon you, but to listen to your voice. You sing like an angel, and better still you put feeling into your music. In former days I knew both your father and your mother well; and there never was any one who could sing like

your father—excepting yourself. He put his whole heart into it, and took such pains to get his notes out, that he would stand on tiptoe and stretch his neck and wink both his eyes in the effort. And now, sir, I beg of you that you will sing for me, so that I may see if your voice is like his."

The silly Chanticleer was so pleased with this flattery that he beat his wings for very joy. Standing upon his tiptoes, stretching out his neck, and closing his eyes, he began to crow as loudly as he could. This was, of course, what the wily old fox was waiting for, and he at once seized the cock by the neck and started off toward the wood with him.

Alas, poor Chanticleer! It was on a Friday that this mischance happened—unlucky day for him. Certes, there was no such cry and lamentation among all the women of Troy, than now burst forth from the throats of the affrighted hens when they saw their liege lord being carried away; and the loudest of them all in her grief was Pertelotte.

The outcry aroused the widow and her two daughters, and out of the door they came just in time to see the fox in full flight with the cock on his back. Crying "After him! the fox, the

THE FOX IN FULL FLIGHT WITH THE COCK ON HIS BACK.

fox!" they started at full speed for the wood, and as they ran others joined in the chase. First in speed ran Collie the dog; then came the neighbors Talbot and Gerland and Granny Malkin with her distaff in her hand. Cows and calves and even the hogs came running after; the geese flew wildly squawking over the road; a swarm of bees came angrily out of a tree to see what it was all about; the ducks quacked shrilly as though they were being killed; and withal there was such a hubbub you'd think the world was coming to an end. In good sooth, Jack Straw and all his gang never made so great a commotion when they rioted with the Flemings; for the widow's friends brought horns and whistles and trumpets, and when these failed they shouted so loudly that it seemed as though the heavens would fall—and all on account of one rascally fox!

But behold how suddenly Fortune turns the tables on her enemy! This cock that lay upon the fox's back, frightened almost to death, finally spoke to the fox and said: "Sir, if I were as bold and strong as you, I should certainly turn upon these proud churls and send them packing about their business! 'A very pestilence fall upon you!' I should say to them; 'in despite

of all your rabble and clatter I have reached the edge of the wood with my prize, and I shall eat him speedily!' "

The fox was flattered by this advice and answered, "In faith, it shall be done——"

But as he spoke the word the clever cock broke from his mouth suddenly and flew high up on a tree.

"Alas!" groaned the fox when he saw that Chanticleer was beyond his reach, "I owe you an apology, dear friend, for frightening you and bringing you out of the yard by force. But, sir, I did it with no wicked intent. Come down from the tree and I shall explain the whole thing to you. I promise you I shall tell the truth."

"Nay then," quoth Chanticleer, "I would indeed be a fool if I let you beguile me more than once. Nevermore by flattery will you persuade me to sing and wink at the same time. For he who closes his eyes when they are given him to see with, will certainly come to grief."

"Nay," retorted the fox, "but the worse fortune comes to him who hasn't sense enough to keep from chattering when his mouth was given him to close!"

So saying he slunk off into the wood to dodge the crowd of pursuers, and esteemed himself

lucky to go without his dinner that day; while Chanticleer returned to his kingdom a hero in the eyes of Pertelotte.

Lo, what comes of vain security,
And carelessness, and trust in flattery!
But ye that hold this tale a mere folly,
As of a fox, or of a cock and hen,
Take home the moral to yourselves, good men;
For St. Paul says that all that written is,
Is written for our good; and so I wis
The wheat is here to sort out from the chaff,
And men may profit them as well as laugh!

Here is ended the Priest's Tale.

The Pardoner's Tale

THE THREE RIOTERS

PROLOGUE

"SIR NUN'S PRIEST," said our Host anon, after that the company had ended their laughing over this merry tale, "this were indeed a right good story of Chanticleer. It proves you to be a man of observation as well as a priest. Now let us see if there be another here who can tell one so likely to the point."

Forthwith he asked the Physician to try his turn; and that learned man, clearing his throat and looking wise, told that tale of ancient Rome wherein Virginius slays his daughter—a woeful story enough.

Our Host was greatly wrought up over this telling, and said: "Harrow! but this is a piteous tale for to hear! Not but it was well told, Sir Physician. But I would listen to something merrier, an it please you.

"What say you, Pardoner," he continued; "can you not rehearse for us some mirths or jests?"

"It shall be done," quoth the person addressed.

"But first, as we are so near this friendly tavern, I would like somewhat to drink and eat."

Hereupon, some of the gentler folk interposed. "Nay, let him not give us any vulgar jests," said they; "but tell us some moral thing that we may learn as well as be entertained."

"I grant you this," quoth he, "but I must think it over in a pot of ale."

So saying he disappeared within the tavern, whence he presently returned wiping his lips across his sleeve.

"Lordings," quoth he, "I am not a highly moral man myself, but I think I can tell you a moral tale. So hold your peace and listen."

Here beginneth the Pardoner's Tale.

The Three Rioters

IN Flanders there once lived a company of young men who gave themselves over to folly and wrong-doing. They lounged about the taverns all day drinking, swearing, singing, dancing and gambling; and their gluttony and idleness made them so wicked that when they heard of any other wrong thing, they not only laughed at it, but went straightway and sought out the sin for themselves.

(At this point the Pardoner launched forth into a sermon on the various kinds of evil he had mentioned. For though he was not indeed a moral man—as he had admitted—he was very fond of sermonizing. The company were fain to yawn and gape before he was through his diatribe and ready to resume the thread of his tale.)

Three of these rioters, of whom I have spoken, were sitting at the tavern drinking, early one morning, when they chanced to hear a bell clink. It was being carried at the head of a funeral

procession—as was the custom in those days. One of the rioters thereupon called the tavern-boy to him and said, "Go out and ask the name of the dead man who passes by. And look you, report it to me speedily."

"Sir," quoth the lad, "I do not need to ask, as the name was told me here not two hours agone. He was, in sooth, a mate of yours, and was slain only last night, while he sat here drinking, by that prowling thief called Death who lays low all the people in this country. With his spear he smote his heart in two and went his way in silence. This very pestilence has e'en slain his thousands; and, master, ere you come into his sight it were well that you be prepared to meet him. For so my mother teaches me."

"By holy Mary, the child speaks truth," said the innkeeper; "for Death hath slain both man and woman, child and page, to be found in a large village within a mile of here. I trow he must live there, so many have met their end."

"Odds boddikins!" cried one of the rioters, springing up, "is it then so great a peril to meet him? *I'll* seek him out, by hedge and highway, —and to this I make my vow! Hearken ye, my mates, for we three are one in this. Let each of us hold up his hand and swear to become the

others' brother; and we will seek out and slay this traitor Death, who by stealth has slain so many of our friends."

The others loudly cheered him in their drunken way, and took the oath to stand together and make an end of Death before nightfall. So they started up at once and directed their steps toward the village of which the host had spoken; and many an oath they swore, on the way, of what they should accomplish.

They had not gone more than half a mile when they came to a stile, where they met a poor old man, who greeted them civilly enough with: "God be with you, my lordings."

But the proudest of these three rioters made answer: "Why, how now, churl! Why is your bag of bones so wrapped up, clear to your face? And how do you manage to hang on to life so long?"

The old man gave him a straight look and said: "I live thus because I cannot find—either in city or in village, though I walked to India,—any one who will change his youth for my age. And so I must still keep my age as long as it is God's will, for Death, alas! will not come and take me. Thus I go up and down, a restless wanderer.

"And on the ground which is my mother's gate
I knock, knock with my staff, early and late,
And thus beseech, 'Dear mother, let me in!
Lo, how I vanish, flesh and blood and skin!
Alas! when shall my bones be laid to rest?
Mother, I want with you to change my chest,
That in my chamber now so long hath been,
Yea, for a cloth of hair to wrap me in!'
But yet for me she will not do that grace,
And thus doth come my pale and wrinkled face."

Here the old man drew himself up with dignity and added: "But, sirs, it shows no courtesy in you to speak to one of my years so rudely, since he has done you no harm in word or deed. In Holy Writ you may read for yourselves that ye should respect the gray hairs of the aged. I have no more to say, but must go on my way."

"Nay, old churl, *that* you shall not do," said another of the gamesters with an oath. "You have just spoken of that arch-traitor Death who has been slaying all our friends in the country round about. Belike you are his spy; so tell us where he is, or it shall go hard with you!"

"Nay, sirs," replied graybeard, "speak not so rashly for your souls' good. But if you are so set upon finding Death, I can tell you which way to go. Turn up this crooked by-path; for in yonder grove I saw him sitting beneath a tree,

DOWN THEY SQUATTED BY THE PRECIOUS HOARD.

and there he will abide for all your boasts. See ye that oak? Close by it ye shall find him. God save you, sirs, who would benefit mankind; and mend you all!"

But before the old man had quite finished his speech the three rioters turned and ran toward the oak he had shown them. There they saw no one; but on the ground they discovered a heap of golden coins, bright and round—well-nigh seven bushels of them, they thought. So delighted were they to see this great heap of glittering gold, that they speedily forgot all about Death whom they had been seeking. But Death was near by, for all that, and did not forget them, as you shall see.

Down they squatted by this precious hoard and dug their fingers deep into it, and let the coins trickle through their fingers hungrily. The worst of the three was the first to speak a word.

"Brothers," said he, "take heed to what I say. This treasure will make our fortune, so that we may spend all the rest of our lives in mirth and jollity. Lightly as it comes we'll lightly spend. By heaven, who would have thought we should tumble into such luck!"

Thereupon he counseled them with rare cunning that they should not try to carry the treasure

off in the daytime, lest they should be arrested for thieves. Instead, he advised that they draw lots, and the one chosen should go back to town for meat and drink, while the other two should remain in the grove and hide the gold until nightfall.

The counsel seemed good to the others, and they drew, and the lot fell to the youngest to go back for food. He therefore started without loss of time.

No sooner was he out of sight than the first speaker said to the other: "You know well that you are my sworn brother, so I will tell you something to your profit. Here is bright gold heaped up plentifully which is to be divided among three of us. But one of us is away; and if I can shape it so that the gold need only be divided between *two*, have I not done you a friendly turn?"

The other listened greedily, but answered, "I know not how it can be done. Our mate knows all about the gold, and we couldn't fool him."

"Well, I can tell you how, and that in a few words, if you'll keep it dark," said the first one.

"Tell away," said the other; "I shall not betray you."

The first one tapped him on the shoulder and

said in a low voice: "Look you, there are two of us, and two are stronger than one. When the youngster comes back we will make a game of him. You can pretend to wrestle with him while he is sitting down, and I will watch my chance and stab him. Then draw your dagger and do the same. After that, my dear friend, there will be only two of us to share the gold."

The other ruffian nodded his head at this, and so they plotted to murder the third in cold blood.

Meanwhile the young man who had gone to town was not idle in wickedness; for all the way thither he could not get his mind off the beauty of those new bright coins of gold.

"O Lord!" said he to himself, "if I could only devise a plan so that I might have all this treasure for myself, I should be the merriest fellow under the canopy of heaven!"

At last the fiend, our common enemy, put it into his head that he should buy poison and thus make an end of both his fellows. The fiend knew he would do this wicked thing for the sake of all the gold, and that he never would repent.

So the young man lost no time in going to an apothecary's shop, in the town; and he asked, plausibly enough, for some rat poison. He said

there was a polecat roaming in his yard, which had carried off his fat geese, and he wanted some poison strong enough to kill the beast.

The apothecary answered: "You shall have something so strong that no living creature in this world could withstand it—even if he took an amount no greater than a grain of wheat."

The wretched plotter was secretly glad to hear this, and bought the poison without delay. Then in the next street he bought three large bottles of wine. Into two of them he put the poison, while he kept the third pure for his own use. For he purposed to toil all night at carrying and hiding the gold away, after that he had brought his comrades to a violent end.

So when he had prepared his three bottles, he bought some meat also and went back to the other two rioters laden as if to dine.

What need is there of telling the rest? For as the other two had already planned, they slew the young man without delay.

When the bloody deed was done, the first one said: "Ha! now that the young fool is out of the way, let us sit and drink and make us merry, and afterward we can bury the body."

And with the word he picked up one of the

bottles which contained the poison. He drank deeply and gave it to his companion. The apothecary had told true. Within a little while the poison took effect and they both died in fearful agony.

Thus ended the two murderers, slain by the man they had murdered; and thus came Death —whom they had forgot—to seek his own at the last.

Here is ended the Pardoner's Tale.

The Lawyer's Tale

CONSTANCE

PROLOGUE

THE rascally Pardoner, when that he had ended his tale, and judged that it had been received in the proper spirit, thought this a good time to do some traffic in his line. For he carried a bag of so-called relics —bones of saints and such like—which he allowed any one to kiss if they paid him for the privilege.

"Why, bethink you," said the wily rogue; "any one of you is liable to fall off his horse and break his neck, ere this journey is done. Better be ready for Death by doing homage to the saints! Sir Host, I will begin with you. You may kiss every one of these relics for a groat; so come, unbuckle your purse!"

"Nay, let be!" said the Host, "you are such a knave that I would never know what I was kissing."

Forthwith they engaged in wordy quarrel until peace was restored by the good offices of the Knight. Then our Host, looking about him for another who could tell a good story, espied the sober face of the Man of Laws.

"Sir Man of Laws," he said, "so have ye bliss, tell us a tale anon. You have submitted to stand in this trial with the others, at my judgment. So acquit you well before the jury."

The Landlord rolled these legal terms like sweet morsels under his tongue, and even the Lawyer was forced to smile as he replied,

"Answering your summons I will bear witness as best I can. But my friend Chaucer here could tell a better story. He writes books of rhymes and sets forth everything that ever happened. But perhaps he has overlooked this story. At any rate, I'll tell it to the rest of you."

Here beginneth the Man's Tale, of Law.

Constance

IN Syria there once dwelt a company of rich merchants who sent spices, cloth of gold, and fine satins to other lands and received in exchange gold and other valuables. Their goods were so new and yet so cheap that everybody desired to buy of them.

Now it chanced that some of these merchants decided to go on a visit to Rome; and while there they heard much talk concerning the Emperor's daughter, Constance. She was so beautiful and good, everybody said, that there was not another like her in the world. She ought to be queen of all Europe. And then they would go on to praise her good qualities—her modesty, courtesy and charity; and the best of it was that all they said was true, as the merchants found out for themselves. For they had the chance to see this happy maiden for themselves.

When their sojourn at Rome was ended, they took ship again for Syria, where they dwelt and traded as of yore, in great honor and prosperity.

These merchants stood in favor with the Sultan of Syria; and when they returned from visiting any strange place, he would summon them to the palace, feast them royally, and ask questions about the people and lands they had seen. For thus he learned of what was going forward in the world around him.

After their visit to Rome they, of course, had much to tell him about that great city. But most of all they dwelt upon the charms of the Lady Constance, the Emperor's daughter. They spoke of her so much that the Sultan fell in love with her, merely from hearing their report, and he desired to win her as his wife.

Then he called his secret council together and set forth the matter to them fully, saying that unless he won the hand of Constance, and that very soon, he must surely die. So they were to devise some way out of this trouble without delay.

The council hummed and hawed. Some said one thing, and some another. Many a subtle reason was brought forth, and many a shrewd bit of logic. But the upshot of the whole reasoning was that there was no other way out except for him to marry the maiden—if he could get her!

And therein lay the difficulty; for the two nations had different customs, different laws and dif-

ferent religions. No Christian prince, they said, would give his daughter to a follower of Mahomet.

But the Sultan answered impatiently: "Rather than lose Constance, I will submit to being baptized in her faith. I must have her! I will choose nobody else, so I pray you hold your arguments in peace; for I cannot live without her!"

This was rank heresy and every good Mahometan shuddered when he heard it. But the Sultan's will was law, and they set about the matter that very day.

I will not tell you about all the treaties and embassies which then went forward. But at last the Pope was persuaded to intervene, and the Emperor agreed that if the Sultan and all his court should accept Christianity and be baptized, he should have Constance to wife and also receive a dowry in gold. The Emperor thought that in this way he would be doing a great service for the Christian religion; while as for Constance, the poor lady was not consulted at all.

Now some of you are probably waiting to hear me tell all about the preparations for the wedding which were made by the Emperor. But indeed they were so great that I could not begin to re-

hearse them in little space. Many people of high repute—bishops, lords, ladies, knights and other folk—were commanded to go with Constance to Syria. And everybody along the way thither was commanded to pray that Heaven would bless this marriage and speed the maiden on her journey.

At last the woeful day of her departure was at hand. No longer might she find excuse to tarry at home; but pale and sorrowful she arose and dressed herself in all her splendid robes, for she saw well there was no other way.

Alas! what wonder was it that she wept, who was to be sent like any chattel into a strange land and far away from her friends! She was going to the rule of a lord she had never seen; and there are good husbands and bad ones, as every woman knows.

"Father," she said as she clung round the Emperor's neck at parting, "your wretched child Constance commends herself to you and my mother daily in your prayers. For I fear that I shall never see you again. Syria is a far country, a barbarous land; but I submit me to your will. Farewell, dear father!"

And so this lady was conducted to her ship with great weeping and much ceremony.

"Now may Christ be with you all!" she said, with a pitiful attempt to smile.

And they answered, "Farewell, fair Constance!"

Now the Sultan's mother was a very wicked woman; and when she learned that it was her son's purpose to forsake his faith and become a Christian, she sent for her counselors to find what might be done to prevent this act.

"Lords," quoth she, "ye all know how that my son is on the point of forsaking the holy laws of our Koran, given by that prophet of God, Mahomet. But, for my part, I would rather die than thus forsake the faith! What good, in sooth, will this new religion do us? It means nothing but penance upon earth, and punishment hereafter, and as for me I will have none of it. But if ye will listen to my plan and swear to follow it, I will keep our religion and ourselves safe forevermore."

Every one of them took oath to stand with her, and to further her project as far as he could; whereupon she laid bare a very wicked scheme.

"We must all feign to become Christians," she said; "a little cold water on the head will not hurt us. Then I will make a great feast in wel-

come of the bride, and I fear it will take a whole font full of water to wash away the blood that will flow."

Thus saying she dismissed her council, and went to her son the Sultan. She told him that she, too, desired to accept Christianity and also to make a feast in honor of the bride and her retinue. The Sultan was delighted to find his mother so yielding, and told her that she might do everything as she desired. The evil woman thereupon kissed her son and went her way to prepare for the banquet.

It was not long after this until the ship bearing Constance came safely to harbor in Syria. When the Sultan heard the welcome news, he sent word to his mother bidding her welcome the bride as she had promised.

> Great was the press, and rich was the array
> Of Syrians and Romans there that day.
> The mother of the Sultan, richly dressed,
> Clasped Constance warmly to her evil breast,
> As any mother might her daughter, best
> Beloved; and to the city, side by side,
> An easy journey in great state they ride.

Before they reached the city, the Sultan himself rode forth to meet them, clad in his royal robes of state. And he greeted Constance so

courteously that she began to take heart again. And thus with great pomp they rode into the city, where games and revelry were in order the whole day long.

Then came the fateful time of the feast, and to it were bidden all the Princess's company, young and old, for the Sultan's mother did not want any to be left out. So all were present and right royal was the scene. But alas! all this splendor was speedily to end in bitter woe.

No sooner were they intent upon the feast when armed men rushed in and slew them all—even the Sultan; for this wicked crone hoped thus to rule the country as she liked. Constance alone of all the company was spared, and her they placed upon a rudderless ship and set the sails, as if in mockery, toward Italy. In the ship they put all the dower which she had brought, and also food, drink and clothing; and forth she sailed alone upon the salt sea. And as she sailed she prayed that God would protect her from the terrors of the deep.

For many days Constance's ship floated upon the sea, a prey to every wind and tide. On many a sorry meal she must now stay her hunger, and full often she prepared for death as the wild waves dashed her from place to place. On

and on she drifted through the Sea of Greece and beyond the Strait of Morocco, till at last she came into our own wild waters of the German Ocean. Then a wave cast her ship ashore on the coast of Northumberland, and there it stuck fast in the sand.

The Constable of the castle hard by saw the wreck and hastened down to learn if there might be any person thereon. And when he had sought throughout the ship he came upon poor terrified Constance, hiding behind the bags of gold which had served her so little and which she had come to despise. Then she besought the Constable in her own language that he would have mercy upon her and slay her and thus deliver her from her many woes.

The Constable understood a little Latin and could follow what she said. But he had pity on her and raised her up and brought her safe to land. When her foot touched solid ground again she sank upon her knees and thanked God for protecting her. But she would not tell who she was nor whence she had come, avowing that her long wanderings on the sea had confused her mind. The Constable and his wife had great compassion on the fair shipwrecked stranger, and they sheltered her at the castle. Here she was

ON AND ON SHE SAILED.

so quiet and industrious, and strove so to please people, that every one about the place came to love her.

The Constable and Dame Hermengild his wife were pagans, like all the countryside. But Hermengild loved Constance so dearly that she soon became converted to Christianity.

At one time there had been other Christians in England, but the northern pirates had overrun the land, driving all the believers to seek refuge in Wales. Here the old Britons still worshiped the true God, but in secret and unknown to the rulers of the land.

Three of these old Britons dwelt near the Constable's castle, and one of them was blind. While the Constable, Hermengild and Constance were out walking on the shore, one day, they met this blind man, crooked and aged, stumbling along the path. By some strange inner vision he knew who they were and also that Hermengild had become a Christian.

"In the name of Christ," cried this blind Briton, "Dame Hermengild, give me my sight again!"

The lady was alarmed at these words lest her husband should hear and understand their purport—as indeed he did, although Constance bade her be bold and work the will of Christ.

"What does this mean?" blustered the Constable.

"Sir, it is Christ's might that helps folk to overcome the wicked one," answered Constance quietly.

Then Hermengild took heart of faith at her words, and gave heed to the blind man's cry, and laid her hands upon his eyes, praying earnestly. And the blind man's sight came again, and he went away rejoicing and praising God.

The Constable was so moved by this miracle, as well as by Constance's speech, that he became a Christian ere nightfall—much to the joy of the two ladies.

But alas! Now must I tell a direful thing which Satan the evil one caused to happen. He made a young knight of the castle fall so madly in love with Constance that it seemed he could not live without her. But Constance paid no heed to him, so the young knight became crazed and resolved to work her harm. He crept softly to the room in which both Hermengild and Constance slept, and he slew Hermengild and left the knife by the sleeping Constance, so that all might think she had done the deed.

The king of that country was Alla, and he chanced to be visiting the castle at that time.

To him, the next morning, went the Constable with a woeful tale. He stated how he had just found his wife murdered in her bed, and that the knife had been found by the side of the Lady Constance. When she was awakened she could say no word for very grief and horror; and he, the Constable, feared much against his will that she had done the dreadful deed.

Then King Alla, who had never seen Constance, began to ask questions about her. The Constable told him what little he knew—how she had been wrecked upon their coast in a strange rudderless ship laden with treasure and fine clothing; and how that she would say no word as to her name and station. The King became so interested that he summoned a speedy trial and sat upon the judge's seat himself.

> Then as a lamb which to its death is brought,
> So stood this guiltless maid before the king,
> While the false knight who had this evil wrought
> Told under oath that she had done the thing.
> But nathless there was general murmuring
> Among the people; for they could not guess
> How one so good could do such wickedness.

And every one in the castle testified how that Constance had been true and seemly, and had

loved Hermengild as her life. No one bore witness against her save this wicked knight.

Then the King had great compassion for her, and cast about how he might aid her. As soon as he heard that she was a Christian, he commanded that a Bible be brought in. The knight was ordered to place his hand upon this book and swear that Constance was guilty of the deed.

The knight stepped forward and laid his hand upon the book, but as he swore that she was guilty an unseen hand smote him to the earth so suddenly that he died before them all.

Then a great fear fell upon the people, and by reason of this wonder and Constance's mediation they all came to accept Christ, from the King down.

And after that the King loved Constance and made her his wife and queen of all the land.

But not yet were Constance's trials ended. Donegild the King's mother was another wicked woman, like the Sultan's mother had been. She could not brook that he should wed a woman whom no one knew anything about. Nathless she hid her anger and bided her time to work woe to Constance.

In the course of time a little boy came to glad-

den the palace of the King and Queen. But King Alla had gone to the wars in Scotland; so the Constable sent a messenger in haste to the King to tell him the good news of his son's birth.

This messenger, instead of riding straight forth upon his mission, paused on the way to acquaint the King's mother with the tidings.

"Madame," quoth he, "be glad and blithe, for the Queen hath borne a son, and I am now on my way to the King to bear him this letter with the news of it."

Donegild pretended to smile, and pressed the man to pause long enough for food and drink. The messenger dismounted and while he was fuddling his brain with wine, she stole the letter from him and put another in its place which looked like it. But this false letter said that the Queen had borne a son so ugly and horrible that no one dared remain with it in the castle; and that now they all thought the Queen was a wicked sorceress.

Sad was the King when he had read this letter, but he told no man of his sorrowful news. Instead he wrote again with his own hand:

"Welcome be the Lord's will! We must submit ourselves to his guidance. Keep the child,

whether it be foul or fair, and also my wife until I return home."

Then with secret tears he sealed the letter and gave it to the messenger to take home, charging him to go straightway.

But the messenger, mindful of the food and drink he had obtained from Donegild, paused at her court again on the way back. And again he became drunken and again was his letter stolen. A lying letter was put in its place commanding the Constable, under penalty of death, not to suffer the Queen and her child to abide longer in the country.

> "But in the same ship as he had her found,
> Her and her young son, and treasure as before,
> He must place all, and shove the boat from land,
> And charge her never to set foot there more."

When the Constable had read this letter, he cried "woe!" and "alas!" and "alackaday!" He was astonished at such a message, for he knew that the King had loved Constance. But he dared not disobey the command, so he made ready the ship and placed the food, drink, clothing and treasure upon it as before. Then he led Constance, white of face and bearing her pretty little son in her arms, to the water's edge. And

all along the way the people burst out into loud weeping against this dreadful thing.

But Constance knelt upon the strand and commended herself and her boy to the Lord who, she said, would do everything for the best. "He has protected me before, and will again be my sail and rudder," she said.

Her little child lay weeping in her arm,
And bending piteously to him she said,
"Peace, little son, I will keep thee from harm!"
And then she took her kerchief from her head,
And over his own little eyes she laid;
Then in her arms she lulled him close and fast,
While up to Heaven her meek eyes she cast.

"O little child, what is thy guilt?" she cried. "Why will thy father banish thee before he has looked upon thy sweet face? Have mercy, dear Constable! Let my boy dwell here with you, then will I wander forth to unknown dangers alone and thankfully. But if you dare not disobey the King's decree, then kiss the child once for the sake of his father whom he will never see."

The old Constable bent and kissed the child, while the great tears rolled down his rugged face.

Constance looked backward toward the land

only once and said, "Farewell, dear pitiless husband!" Then she went with firm step toward the boat, while the whole company followed close upon her, sobbing aloud. When she came on board, she turned and blessed them with one hand uplifted while the other clasped her sleeping babe to her breast.

This was their last glimpse of her as the boat was pushed off and the night closed in about the helpless wanderers.

Soon after this, King Alla came home from the wars, and at once asked for his wife and child. The Constable felt his heart grow cold with fear, but told him plainly all that had occurred, and showed him the letter which he had received sealed with the King's seal.

"I could not know why you should do this, my lord," said the old man tremblingly, "for your wife was fidelity itself and the child was fair to look upon."

"*Fair*, say you!" exclaimed the King. "I did not write the letter you hold in your hand; but why did you tell me the child was horrible?"

"Not I, my lord!" cried the Constable amazed in his turn.

Then the King suspected treason.

"Send for the messenger," he ordered sharply.

The messenger was brought in and plied with questions until he told all about his going and coming, and how that he had stopped at the queen-mother's house each time. By this and that it was made plain to all, who was the guilty one; and Donegild was condemned to death. Still this did not bring back the King's wife and child, and for sorrow of their fate the King mourned night and day.

Now let us turn to the Emperor of Rome, of whom I have not spoken for a long while. When news reached him of how his daughter had been treated in Syria, and how her retinue and also the Sultan had been slain by the wicked mother, he gathered together a great army and sent it under command of a Senator to lay waste the land. The Romans indeed took high vengeance for the wrong, burning and sacking the cities till there was scarcely left one stone upon another.

The Emperor had also commanded all his navy and every merchant vessel to keep a lookout for the wandering ship, but all in vain.

However, when the victorious Senator set sail again from Syria on his return to Rome, he met

a boat far out in the Mediterranean Sea, with sails flapping and drifting here and there at the mercy of wind and tide. It was Constance's boat, sent by the mercy of Heaven through the Strait of Gibraltar; but the Senator did not know her, the sorrows of the past few months had so changed her. Besides there was the little boy.

Nathless his heart was filled with pity for them, and he brought them into his ship and conveyed them to Rome. Here he entrusted them to the care of his wife, and Constance found a haven of peace and quiet. The strange part of the story is that the Senator's wife was Constance's own aunt. Yet neither of them recognized the other.

Now let us turn again to King Alla. Though his mother had richly deserved death and had been tried by the laws of the land, he became deeply penitent of her fate when his anger had cooled. He resolved to go on a pilgrimage to Rome to seek forgiveness of his sins.

When the tidings of Alla's proposed visit reached the Emperor, he sent the Senator forward to meet him and show him every honor. The Senator escorted him to his own house and prepared a great feast, and thereto sat down many lords and ladies to pay respect to Alla.

Then Constance, who was not present at the

board, sent her little son into the banquet-hall and bade him look upon the great lord at the head of the table. The boy did as he was told; and the King, chancing to look around, gave a great start so that his chair nearly fell over. For the child was as like unto Constance as it was possible to be.

"Whose is that fair child that stands yonder?" Alla asked the Senator.

"I know his mother, but no one knows his father," replied the Senator. And briefly he told what little was known about them, ending with a high tribute to the mother's worth.

Then Alla wondered secretly if this child's mother could be his own wife.

"In sooth," thought he, "a phantom's in my head!
It must be, by all sober reasonment,
That in the salt sea my dear wife is dead!"
But afterward he made this argument —
"Why doubt I that Heaven hither sent
My wife by sea, as well as once before
Her boat was guided to my Northern shore?"

Then rising up hastily he prayed that the Senator might take him to the child's mother. The Senator wondered at this, but did as he was requested. They begged the company to excuse

them, and taking the child by the hand they sought Constance's apartment. When Constance heard who had come, she trembled so that she could hardly stand upon her feet. Yet she bravely went into the room.

> When Alla saw his wife he called her name
> And wept, so that 'twas pitiful to see,
> For at the first look when in she came
> He knew full certainly that it was she.
> While she for sorrow stood dumb as a tree,
> So was her heart shut fast in her distress,
> When she remembered his unkindliness.

Then Alla burst forth in sorrowful excuses. He called Heaven to witness that he was guiltless of any of her troubles, and he told her all that had been done.

Constance gave him a quick piercing look—then with a glad cry sprang into his arms. The flood-gates of her heart, long pent-up, were opened and she sobbed out all her past grief and present joy upon his shoulder; while he kissed her tenderly and called her a thousand fond names. And, I warrant you, the little boy came in for his full share of loving attention.

Now Constance had never told any one who she was, not even her father the Emperor. Her

heart had been too bitter. But now that her husband was come she greatly desired that they all might be united. So she prayed King Alla to ask the Emperor to dinner, but to say no word of her. The Emperor was pleased to accept the invitation, and came in great state at the time appointed.

Alla and Constance rode forth to meet the Imperial party; and when Constance saw her father coming, she alighted from her horse and knelt down in the street.

"Father," she said, "your child Constance is clean gone from your remembrance, I wot. But I am she whom once you sent to Syria and who was left to die upon the salt sea. Now, good father, I cry you mercy. Send me no more to heathen lands, but thank my dear husband here for his kindness in shielding me."

Who could tell of the great joy of the Emperor, or of the bliss among all three when their adventures were told? I shall not try to describe it, or keep these good folk waiting for the dinner to which they had started.

Constance's woes were all at an end. The King and the Emperor pledged a lifelong friendship, and the child, who had been christened Maurice, grew up to become Emperor in his

turn. You will find his life told in the history of Rome.

After a long visit in Italy, Alla and Constance returned to England where they reigned with justice, having the love of all their subjects to their lives' end.

Here endeth the tale of the Man of Law.

The Wife of Bath's Tale

A WOMAN'S WISH

PROLOGUE

OUR Host stood up in his stirrups at the conclusion of this tale.

"By my faith," quoth he, "that was a thrifty story!" (Meaning by this, it had pleased him mightily.) "Every one of you must agree with my opinion."

We all made haste to say the same.

"Now let us see who can tell us as good an one," continued the Host looking around. "But the day is getting well spent, so we must needs have a short tale and a merry one."

Just then he espied the fat contented face of the Wife of Bath, and so he asked her for the next.

That worthy dame was so pleased at being allowed to talk that, instead of her story, she launched into her entire past history and that of the five husbands she had married—and buried, one after another.

The Friar laughed heartily at this long preamble—for which our Host took him to task.

"Peace!" cried he. "Let the good woman tell her tale in her own way. Proceed, dame."

"All ready, sir," she replied somewhat nettled, "if I have license of this worthy Friar."

"Yes, dame," quoth he bowing his apology; "tell forth and I shall listen."

So she began afresh.

Here beginneth the tale of the Wife of Bath.

A Woman's Wish

IN the old days of King Arthur, whom good British folk delight to honor, all this land was filled with fairies. The elf-queen with her jolly company danced full often in many a green meadow. But this was many hundred years ago, and nobody has been able to see them of late. For the friars have driven them away, with their holy blessing of halls and chambers, kitchens and bowers, cities, castles, barns, ships and dairies. Everything has had the spell removed, so that now where once walked the elves, the priest himself goes, saying his matins.

But back in the days of good King Arthur, that I am telling you about, it so befel upon a day that a brave knight of the court came riding along by a river. He was in sore trouble, for he was in disgrace and banishment. He had sinned grievously against the laws of chivalry of the Round Table, and King Arthur had condemned him to die. But the Queen and her

ladies, who liked him well, had prayed the King to pardon him. The King granted him his life, and turned him over to the Queen to pronounce what sentence seemed good to her.

Then the Queen called the Knight before her and said, "You stand yet in peril of your life, Sir Knight, and it is not certain that your head will remain upon your shoulders. But I will give you grace if you will answer a riddle for me: What is it that a woman wishes for, most of all? If you cannot answer this at once, I will give you a year and a day to seek it out. But if you fail to answer, your life shall be forfeit."

And that is why the Knight was so sorrowful as he rode by the brink of the river. He had taken his leave resolved to make the most of his year's quest, and at the last to come again with such answer as heaven might teach him.

Far and wide he sought in every place and in every house; and always his question was the same, What is it that women love best? But never could he find two with the same answer.

Some said that women love riches best; others, fame; others, amusement; and others, fine clothes. Some said that they liked to be flattered and pleased; others said that they wanted to be free to do as they wished. Some

said that they liked to be thought wise and discreet in all things; and others said that they desired to be considered steadfast and reliable in all things, especially in the keeping of a secret.

Concerning this last, the story of Midas which Ovid tells about, is well known. Midas wore his hair extra long, because he had the misfortune to have ass's ears, which he always kept carefully hid. Nobody knew of this affliction save his wife, whom he loved and trusted fully. He prayed her that she should tell no creature, and this she swore to obey. However, her thoughts dwelt upon those long ears so constantly that she felt she *must* tell her secret to something. So she ran to the edge of a stream and kneeling down whispered it to the water. "My husband has two long ass's ears!" she said. "Now is my heart whole again, since it is relieved of its burden." But for the rest of this tale you must read Ovid. My tale concerns the sorrowful Knight and his quest.

Finally the day rolled around when he must return to the court; and he was in despair, for among all the conflicting answers he had received, none of them seemed the one that would save his head.

As he rode along, he came to a forest side,

where he saw four and twenty ladies dancing together. Toward the merry party he turned, hoping that from them he should learn the wise thing he so sorely needed. But ere he reached the spot the dancers vanished, and he saw no living creature save an old woman. An uglier hag he could scarcely imagine, as she sat there under a tree.

When the Knight approached she rose up and said: "Sir Knight, your way does not lie hither. Tell me what you seek, and mayhap I can aid you, for we old folk are exceeding wise."

"Mother," he replied, "you may be the very one to aid me. I am as good as dead if I cannot find what it is that a woman wishes for, most of all. If you can tell me, I would requite you well."

"Then give me your hand," she answered, "and promise me faithfully you will do the next thing I ask of you; and I will tell you the answer you seek ere nightfall."

"Have here my troth. I will do what you say," replied the Knight.

"Then your life is safe," said the hag, "for I dare promise that none of them, from the Queen to her lowliest maid, will gainsay the answer I shall teach you."

With that she whispered in his ear and bade him be of good cheer, and went along with him to the court.

When they had reached there, the Knight sought an audience with the Queen, saying that as this was his last day of grace, his answer was ready as he had promised.

The news of the Knight's return caused a great stir in the castle, for every one knew of the riddle and how he had gone forth to solve it, upon peril of his life. Ladies, high and low, lost no time in assembling about the Queen when she gave audience to the Knight. The Queen sat as Chief Justice, and after she had commanded silence, she asked again in a clear voice:

"Now can you tell us, Sir Knight, what it is that a woman wishes for, most of all?"

Then the Knight came forward and knelt down at the foot of the throne and answered in a manly voice, so that all the court heard him:

"My liege lady, the thing that woman wishes for most of all, is to have the headship of the house, and make her husband obey her will."

And when they all heard this answer, there was not one in all the court, whether wife, widow or maid who durst gainsay him. "He is worthy to have his life," they said smilingly; and the Queen

greatly pleased with the clever answer was nothing loth to give him his freedom.

But with that word up started the old hag who had come with the Knight and had lurked in hiding till he should give his answer.

"Mercy, my sovereign lady!" she cried. "Mercy and justice! It was I taught that answer to the Knight; and in return he gave me his word to do the first thing that I should ask of him.

"Before the court, then, Sir Knight," she continued, turning to him with a horrid leer upon her wrinkled face, "I demand that you receive me as your wife."

"Alas, and well-a-day!" the Knight answered ruefully. "I freely admit that I made you this promise. But for the love of heaven spare me this! Take all my goods, but leave me my liberty."

"Nay," quoth she, "though I be old and poor and ugly, yet for all the riches in the world I would not forego being your wife and winning your love."

"My love!" he retorted, "truly you must take me for a very fool!"

Indeed it must be said that the Knight was more blunt than courteous in this speech; but he

had sore provocation as he stood there in sight of all the court faced by this ancient crone. It seemed to him that this were worse than losing his head.

Meanwhile the Queen and her ladies were greatly amused by this scene, though they could not help being secretly sorry for the Knight. However, the Queen told the Knight that there was nothing for it but to keep his plighted word. So the Knight with a wry face accepted the old woman as his wife.

Now you may call me a careless story-teller if I fail to tell you all about the wedding feast and array. But sooth to say there was no feast at all. The Knight wedded the hag as secretly as he could, and then hid himself all day long like an owl. He could not bear so much as the sight of his hideous wife.

The old woman meanwhile held her peace until they were alone, that evening, when she turned to him smiling and asked: "Come, dear husband, is this the spirit in which a knight of King Arthur's court keeps his word? Wherein lies my wrong-doing? Tell me, and I will strive to amend my ways to please you."

"Amend!" groaned the Knight. "An age and a face like yours cannot be amended."

"Ah, is *that* all your trouble?" she asked still smiling.

"Is it not enough?" he returned.

"Nay in good sooth," she said gently. "Beauty is but skin deep, and the heart is ever young. It is *conduct* that counts above rank and family; and he who deals the gentlest with others, that one is the gentlest born."

Thereupon she took him quietly to task for his rudeness, and withal talked so wisely and so well that the Knight was amazed. He began to feel more kindly toward her, and to be ashamed of himself. Finally she told him it was ofttimes better to have an ugly but obedient wife, than to choose one for her pretty face who had no wifely qualities to back it.

"Choose now for yourself," she added earnestly. "Would you prefer to have me old and ugly until I die, but true and faithful always and never displeasing you in anything? Or do you wish me young and fair—and mayhap vain and frivolous?"

The nobler nature of the Knight was struck with this appeal. The winning charm of her wisdom drew him to her irresistibly.

"My lady, my love, and dear wife," he said,

"choose for me. I put myself in your guidance, for I know that you will not choose wrong."

"Then I am to have the mastery over my husband, as the riddle said?" she asked laughing.

"Yes, truly," he answered, "I know it will be best."

"Then kiss me, dear," quoth she, "and
be not wroth,
For by my troth I will be, to you, *both.*
That is to say, both fair and good I'll be,
And pray to God to guard me faithfully.
And I will also be both good and true,
As ever wife since that the world was new.
And if by morrow's sun I am not seen
As fair as any empress, maid or queen
Who lives between the bounds of East and West —
Do with me as you will. This is my test."

And the Knight accepted her challenge; and forgetting her wrinkled face he stooped and drew her to him and kissed her on the lips. And behold! As he did so she was transformed into a beautiful maiden—the fairest that his eyes had ever rested upon. For she was a fairy who had taken this means of trying his knightly honor.

There is little need to tell of his joy at this surprise, or of the model wife this lady made him. Henceforth they lived together in peace and hap-

piness; and in all the land no better mated pair might be seen. But whether she continued to rule the house, or left the lordship to him, the chronicle does not say.

Here endeth the Wife's Tale, of Bath.

The Friar's Tale

THE WICKED SUMMONER

PROLOGUE

ALL the while that the Wife of Bath was telling her tale, the Friar had been regarding the Summoner with a sour face; and though he had as yet said nothing to provoke a quarrel, it was very plain that there was no love lost between them. For they looked upon each other as rivals, and while the Friar might only beg alms in behalf of the Church, the Summoner often used threats to obtain his gifts.

"Dame," quoth the Friar, when the Wife had ended, "God give you good life! Your story was worth waiting for. And now if it be agreeable to this company, I'll tell you a good one at the expense of a Summoner."

The Summoner lowered back at him, and the Landlord to prevent a quarrel said, "Tut, tut, Friar! A man of your estate should be more courteous. In company we will have no personal debate."

"Nay, let him say what he will," retorted the Summoner surlily, "for I'll get even with him!"

But our Host answered, "Peace, no more of this! Tell forth your tale, Sir Friar."

So the Friar, nothing abashed, began to tell forth what was in his mind.

Here beginneth the Friar's Tale.

The Wicked Summoner

ONCE upon a time, in my country, there dwelt an archdeacon—a man of high degree, yet stern and strict against all evil-doers. He punished all sorts of sin from petty theft and slander up to witchcraft and perjury. But it was whispered of him that those who had money ready in hand could escape with much lighter punishment than the rest.

He had a Summoner in his employ who was one of the slyest fellows in all England. He would spy upon people in secret to catch them in some peccadillo; then he would threaten them with the heaviest punishments of the Church if they did not pay him handsomely. I speak thus plainly about the whole bad lot of them, because we Friars are out of their power.

["So are other abandoned wretches!" cried the Summoner hotly.

"Peace! Bad luck to you!" said our Host; "and let him tell his tale."]

This false thief—this Summoner—at last

learned the haunts of all the wicked people and he kept them pretty well under his thumb He never told his master of half the places he visited, but he managed to line his own pockets on every occasion. At times he would even summon innocent people; and when he found a person too poor to buy him off, the Summoner would bring him up before the court and have the archdeacon punish him. But others who bribed him he would suffer to escape. This was all very wicked, but although he got rich he had to pay for his evil-doing, as you shall presently see.

It so befel that on a day, the Summoner, who was ever on the lookout for his victims, rode forth to summon a widow, a poor harmless old soul with a cracked voice; and as he rode he was busily thinking up some charge to bribe her about.

It happened that he saw before him ride
A yeoman gay beneath the forest-side.
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.
He wore a cloak of gaily colored green.
A black-fringed hat upon his head was set.
"Hail!" cried our fellow; "hail, sir, and well met!"

"Welcome!" said the yeoman, "and the same

to every good fellow. Whither go you in the greenwood to-day?"

"I ride not far," the Summoner made answer. "Here hard by I purpose to call upon one of my lord's tenants and collect some rent which is past due."

"Are you a bailiff then?" asked the other.

The Summoner was ashamed to say what his real occupation was, so he answered, "Yes."

"Good!" said the yeoman. "You are a bailiff and I am another. Let us be comrades. I am unknown in this part of the country, but if you will make me acquainted and do me a good turn, I have both silver and gold in my chest at home which I will share with you."

"Gramercy, you are the fellow for me, and here's my hand on it!" cried the greedy Summoner. And forth they fared together on the way.

The Summoner was always anxious to find out all he could about people, so he presently began asking his new friend questions.

"Brother," quoth he, "where do you live? I shall be glad to call on you some day soon."

The yeoman answered him with soft speech: "Brother, you cannot miss the place. It is in the north country where I hope some day to see

you. Ere we part company I'll tell you how to get there."

"Now, brother," continued the Summoner, "I pray you teach me some of the tricks of the trade, while we ride on our way. For I perceive that you are a sly bailiff and know how to get the money. How can *I* do it?"

"Now by my troth," replied the other, "I will be frank with you, but my wages are very small. My lord is hard on me and mine office is a laborious one. So I have to resort to extortion to make any money. I take anything that men will give me, either by craft or violence. And that's the whole truth of the matter."

"Now certes," cried this Summoner, "so do I!
I never spare to take a thing, God wot,
Unless it be too heavy or too hot.
When I can gain by plotting secretly,
No scruples in the matter trouble me.
Without extortion I could never thrive,
So of my jests no churchman me will shrive.
Stomach nor conscience truly have I none;
I hate these shriving fathers every one.
Well are we met—our ways are just the same—
But tell me, brother dear, what is your name?"

The yeoman began to smile.

"Are you sure you want to know?" quoth he.

"Then, in plain speech, I am a fiend and my dwelling is in hell. I am riding up and down in the world to see what people will give me of their own free wills. And I will ride to the world's end to get my lawful prey."

"Heaven help us!" cried the Summoner at this confession. "I thought you were really a yeoman. You have the same human shape I have. Down in the under world do you look like this?"

"No, certainly," said the fiend, "there we have no distinct form, but take what shape we will. Sometimes I am like a man, and again like an ape. Sometimes I appear like an angel. It is not so wonderful, because your ordinary jugglers can deceive you; and have I not more craft than they?"

"Why, then, do you go in several shapes, instead of only one?" asked the Summoner.

"We assume such form as will help us best to catch our prey," replied the evil one with a cunning grin in his direction.

The Summoner, however, never suspected that *he* was the one that was being chased. He was too busy asking questions.

"Why do you take all this trouble?" was his next.

"For a good many reasons, Sir Summoner," replied the fiend. "But everything in its time. The day is well spent and I have caught nothing yet; so I'll turn my attention to business, if you don't mind, and keep these secrets till another time."

"But tell me," insisted the Summoner, "how you manage to make yourself new bodies out of the same elements?"

"You will find out for yourself soon enough!" said the evil one with hidden menace in his voice.

But the warning had no effect upon the Summoner. He was too intently thinking about the chest of silver and gold which the other had in his dwelling.

"Nay," he said, "come what will, you and I are sworn brothers. I don't care who you are—devil or angel or plain yeoman like myself—so long as we share and share alike."

"I grant it, by my faith," replied the fiend. And with that they continued on their way.

Presently they came upon the outskirts of the town toward which the Summoner was directing his steps. There in the road they saw a cart heavily loaded with hay. The road had deep ruts in it, and the cart stuck fast. The carter smote his horses and cried like mad,

"Get up, Brock! Hey, Scot! Go on, I say! The fiend take you body and bones—and the cart and hay with you!"

The Summoner turned quickly to his companion.

"Do you hear what the carter says?" he whispered. "Here are some good pickings for us! He has given you the horses, cart and hay —all!"

"Nay," answered the evil one, "trust me, he doesn't mean a word of what he is saying. Ask him yourself, or wait a bit and see for yourself."

Just then, beneath the carter's swearing and beating, the horses bent their backs and began to pull the load out of the rut.

"Ah, bless you, good fellows!" cried the carter. "May the saints keep you from harm!"

"There, brother, what did I tell you?" said the fiend. "This fellow said one thing and meant another. Let us go on; we will get nothing here."

With that they went a little way farther into the town. Then they paused before a tumble-down cottage, and the Summoner said to the fiend,

"Here's the place for us! An old beldame lives within, who would sooner lose her head

than give up a penny of her goods. But I mean to have twelve pence out of her, or else summon her before the court. And yet I know no harm of her. But if you want to know how to get money out of people, willy-nilly, take a lesson from me!"

With this the Summoner knocked loudly upon the widow's door.

"Come out, old virago!" he shouted, "I know you are up to some mischief."

"Who knocks?" asked the widow. "God save you, sir, what is your will?"

"I have a summons against you. See that you answer it in person before the archdeacon, to-morrow, under pain of being cursed for your sins."

"God help me!" answered the poor old woman. "I have been sick for many a day, and it would kill me to ride so far. Will you not give me a copy of this summons, so that I can get some one else to vouch for me?"

"Yes," said the Summoner, "pay me—let's see—twelve pence, and I will let you off. I shall not make much profit out of that, for it goes to my master. Come—give me twelve pence in a hurry! I can't wait all day."

"Twelve pence!" cried the widow; "now may

"ALAS!" SHE WAILED, "I HAVE DONE NO EVIL!"

the saints help me! You know that I am poor and old, and I haven't half that sum between me and starvation!"

"Nay, then," he exclaimed in a rage, "may the foul fiend carry me off, if I excuse you from paying this money!"

"Alas!" she wailed, "I have done no evil!"

"Pay me!" he said, "or I shall carry off your new pan too. You know you owe me that for paying your fine the last time."

"You lie," said the widow. "I was never summoned to your court before in all my life. May the evil one, to whom you commended yourself a moment agone, carry you off and my pan too, for thus tormenting a helpless old woman!"

And when the fiend heard her curse the Summoner upon her knees, he came forward and asked: "Now, good mother, are you in earnest when you say that?"

"May the devil fetch him, pan and all, if he doesn't repent!" she said solemnly.

"Repent!" exclaimed the Summoner with a sneer. "Nay, old hag, I never have repented of anything, and don't mean to begin now. I would like to take the very rags off your back!"

"Well, brother," said the fiend, with a wicked

grin, "I think by your speech as well as this widow's, that you and this pan belong to me of right. So you shall go to the lower world with me this very night, where, I warrant, you will soon find out more about our mysteries than a doctor of divinity."

And with that the fiend seized him, clapped the new pan soundly against his back, and carried him off, body and soul, to the place where so many summoners have their heritage.

May the one who is in our present company take warning from this fate, and repent of his misdeeds before the fiend carries him away!

Here endeth the Friar's Tale.

The Clerk's Tale

PATIENT GRISELDA

PROLOGUE

"Sir Clerk of Oxenford," our Host then said,
"You ride as shy and quiet as a maid
Who newly wedded sits beside the board;
All day I have not heard you speak a word.
I trow you're bent upon some studying,
But Solomon says, 'there's time for everything';
And so I pray you be of better cheer,
It is not time for your deep studies here.
Tell us a story, and certes do not preach,
But give us good plain words within our reach."

The worthy Clerk made answer with a smile,
"Good Host, I must obey you for the while,
Since that you are our governor and guide:
I'll tell a tale which cannot be denied.
'Twas learned at Padua, of a worthy clerk,
As proved by words as well as all his work.
He now is dead and fastened in his chest;
I pray to God to give his spirit rest.
Francis Petrarch, the poet laureate,
This was his name, and high was his estate
In letters; for his flowing poetry
So sweet did light up all his Italy.

"But this the tale just as he told it me,
I'll try to tell it truly unto ye."

Here beginneth the Tale of the Clerk of Oxenford.

Patient Griselda

THERE is, on the western side of Italy, over against Mount Viso, a teeming plain well watered and fertile where you may behold full many a tower and town; and this noble country of delight is called Saluzzo. A Marquis was one time lord over all this land, a man who was greatly beloved by the people, both lords and commoners, because of his many virtues. Besides, he was the gentlest born of any in Lombardy—handsome, young, strong, and full of honor and courtesy. He was likewise discreet enough—save in a few things—and his name was Walter.

I speak blame of him only because of his careless ways. He thought too much of his own pleasure, and went hunting and hawking instead of attending to the more serious cares of state. And he would not marry a wife and settle down, which was a sore point in his people's eyes.

They at last decided to take him kindly to task and let him see how they looked upon his

habits. So on a day they went in a great crowd to his audience room ; and the wisest of them all, who acted as spokesman, said :

" O noble Marquis, your humanity gives us courage to come before you and tell you the thing that is troubling our hearts. And deign not, lord, to be angry with us for you have always shown us favor and grace, and we love you, every one.

" For, certes, we could not devise a way in which we might live together in greater harmony, save in one thing. We pray you to take unto yourself a wife, for then our hearts would be at rest."

The old man then spoke very sweetly of the joys of wedded life, and how no man ought to neglect that " blissful yoke " simply because he was in the flower of youth and wished to live unfettered. " Old age creeps on apace," he said, " and it is far better to establish a home in good season, so that in time of old age or sickness there should be some one who loved you to take care of you. Then, too, the joy of seeing children growing up in your likeness is not to be gainsaid. And the birth of a son and heir to the lands of the Marquis," the old man concluded, " would be the happiest of events to us all, as

it would prevent the country from passing into the hands of strangers."

In his eagerness the old man even suggested that the Marquis allow them to choose a wife for him from the noblest and fairest families. But at this Walter only smiled.

Howbeit his heart was touched by this appeal of his people, and he answered quite frankly, "You know very well, my dear people, how much I enjoy my own liberty and doing my own way. I do not want a wife, but I will defer to your wishes and the good of the state. And so I promise to get married without delay. But pray don't trouble to choose a wife for me, as I much prefer to choose for myself!

"Also I must insist that you pay the fullest respect and reverence to the lady I shall choose, as though she were an emperor's daughter. I am doing so much for you that you must do this much for me, and abide by my choice in the matter."

This they promised heartily; but they prayed him to set a day for the wedding—so great was their dread lest he put it off too long.

The Marquis good-naturedly agreed to this, and instructed his squires and knights to make ready a fitting entertainment against that day.

Then the people thanked him on their knees, and went back home greatly pleased with the success of their petition.

Now not far from the palace of the Marquis there was a village where dwelt the humble folk who led out their cattle and sheep to graze in the fields, and who tilled the soil.

The poorest of all these poor people was a man named Janicula, for he could put all his goods into an ox's stall. But he was rich in having a daughter Griselda who was fair to see, and as good as she was fair.

For tho' this maiden was of tender age,
Yet in her girlish heart was purity,
And strength and ever patient, true courage.
With loving care and tender charity
Her poor old father ever fostered she.
Some sheep, while spinning in the field, she kept,
For never was she idle till she slept.

And when at nightfall they would homeward fare,
Some herbs and roots she'd gather on the way
To brew for supper at their table bare,
Ere seeking her hard bed. Thus, day by day,
She earned her father's bread ; and so I say
In every obedience and diligence
This child was first in filial reverence.

Now as the poor Griselda went about her daily task she had no idea that any one was watching her conduct. But the Marquis Walter had often noticed her tending her flocks and spinning busily at the same time, while he was out hunting. And as often as he saw her he was filled with admiration for her, and he esteemed her more highly than the greatest lady in the land. This shepherd girl, thought he to himself, would make an ideal wife if one ever should marry.

But the Marquis Walter kept his counsel to himself; and so the day set for the wedding came around and nobody knew who the lady was to be. And they wondered about it and said one to another, "Will our lord not wed anybody after all?"

Nathless, Walter had been very busy gathering together gems and gold and beautiful robes for the mysterious bride; while every token about the palace—hurrying squires, decorations, fine foods and wines—showed that the Marquis would keep his word.

At last the great day arrived. The palace was ablaze with bright streamers without and gorgeous hangings within. All the guests had arrived from far and near; and still there was no hint of the bride!

Then to the sound of music the Marquis came forth richly attired, with many lords and ladies in his company; and in this state he bade them follow him to the humble village where lived Griselda and her father.

Now Griselda knew nothing of all these plans and had not suspected that the Marquis, if he ever saw her, had thought of her a second time. She had gone that morning to fetch water from a well and had hastened home again, as it was told her that this was the lord's wedding-day and if she hurried she might see the company ride by.

"I will stand with the other maidens," she thought, "and perchance catch a glimpse of the new Marchioness. Then I will hasten to catch up with my work."

But just as she reached her door, whom should she see but the Marquis himself, looking like a King in his beautiful robes. He called her name gently, and she dropped her pail and fell on her knees before him waiting for him to speak.

"Griselda," he said, "where is your father?"

"Here at hand, my lord," she answered tremblingly. And at a sign from him she went within and presently returned with Janicula.

Then Walter took the old man by the hand and said, "Janicula, I can no longer hide from you the wish that is in my heart. If you will grant it me, I will take your daughter to be my wife. You love me—that I know—and are my faithful follower. Now will you consent to have me for your son-in-law?"

This sudden offer so astonished the poor man that he grew red and his knees quaked together. "My lord," he stammered, "your wish is law. It is not for me to gainsay it."

"Then I desire to meet her and you in your room," said the Marquis softly, "so that I can ask her if she will be my wife and obey me in all things. All this shall be agreed to in your presence, and no contract entered into behind your back."

And while they were in the room, the Marquis's company drew near and halted before the humble dwelling. They marveled to see how neat it was kept and how carefully she had tended her father. But poor Griselda was quite pale. She had never seen so grand a company before.

Walter noticed her agitation and showed his true courtesy. In those days it was customary for a ruler merely to make known his wishes, and every one was expected to obey him. But Wal-

ter treated Griselda as though she were a great lady, and first asked her father's, then her own consent.

"Griselda," he said, "you must understand that your father is willing for me to marry you; and I suppose you also are not unwilling. But I must ask you first—since it is being done in such a hurry—will you consent, or no? If you consent it must be with good heart. And you must promise to obey me in all things, whether I am kind to you or not; never to sulk night or day; never say 'no' when I say 'yes,' or say 'yes' when I say 'no'—either by word or frown. Swear this, if you consent, and I will swear to wed you."

Wondering at all this and trembling with fear Griselda answered, "My lord, I am quite unworthy of the great honor you offer me. But I will willingly obey your commands, and I swear to do as you would like to have me do—even to giving up my life, though I do not want to die."

"It is enough, my Griselda," he replied. And taking her by the hand he led her to the door and presented her to the people.

"This is my wife," he said with quiet dignity. "I call on all of you who love me to love and honor her."

And in order that she might proceed to the

palace in fitting style, he ordered his ladies to bring forward the royal robes he had prepared and put them upon her. Some of the ladies did not like to handle the poor garments she wore; but nathless they led her into the room, and dressed her in the fine garments from head to foot. They combed and dressed her hair and placed a crown upon it, and fastened costly jewels upon her.

When she came forth again the people fairly gasped with astonishment. She seemed the most beautiful creature they had ever gazed upon. Her fairness was almost dazzling in all this rich attire.

The Marquis also was delighted. He placed a costly ring on her finger, and set her upon a snow-white horse. Then she was conducted to the palace amid great rejoicings, and there were revels and feasting the whole day long in honor of the bride.

In short the new Marchioness was so favored of heaven, that you would never have guessed she was of humble birth and had spent her life in a sheep-cote and ox-stall. She was so well behaved that she might well have been born to the purple. The people who had known her from childhood could hardly believe it was Janicula's daughter.

And though she had always been modest and kindly, she now added to these a gentle dignity and winning manner so that everybody who saw her loved her; and people traveled for miles just to look upon her face.

Thus was Walter royally wedded after all. For he had not only obtained a worthy helpmeet, he had also won the people's confidence in his prudence and judgment. And Griselda, by reason of her humble origin, was enabled to redress many wrongs of the people and lighten their lot; so that there was peace and harmony throughout all the land.

You may believe, there was great joy in the palace and among the people when in course of time a little girl was born to Walter and Griselda. The child was fair to see, and the happiness of the mother knew no bounds. But in this time of general rejoicing an evil thought came to Walter. He wanted to tempt his wife and find if she were as obedient to his will as she had promised to be before marriage—and in fact until now. Needless, God wot, that he should do this,

> For he had tested her enough before
> And found her ever good. What needed it

To tempt her thus and always more and more?
Tho' some men praise it for a subtle wit,
I call it evil and, forsooth, unfit
To try a wife thus, when there is no need,
And put her mind in anguish and in dread.

Nathless, Walter did in this manner. He came to her one evening and said with a stern face, "Griselda, I suppose you have not forgotten the day I lifted you from your poor estate; nor have you forgotten the words which we uttered then. You have been very dear to me, but unfortunately my people do not look upon you with favor. They say it is a disgrace to be subject to one of such humble birth. And since your daughter was born they have complained so much that I cannot disregard them. So I must deal with your child as seems best, for the good of the country. Still, what I do is greatly against my will, and I cannot do it without your consent. But, I pray you to remember your promise to me and show yourself patient and submissive."

Griselda heard him out without showing by word or look how keenly his words smote her. Then when he was through, "My lord," she said, "it is all subject to your pleasure. Both I and my child are yours to do with as seems good to you. Have then your will with us for good or

ill; but for my part nothing counts except the love of you."

This noble, self-sacrificing speech should have ended the Marquis's test. Indeed he was secretly overjoyed to hear her speak thus, but he would not desist from his purpose. He left her room with the same look of sternness.

Then he sent for a trusted private servant—a sergeant who would obey him in all things and tell nothing—and Walter told him just how he should act, and sent him to Griselda's room.

Into the room he stalked, looking very fierce, and said, "Madam, I pray you to pardon me, if I simply obey my lord's commands. I am instructed to take this child away from you ——"

Here the brutal looking man snatched up the sleeping baby from its cradle, and made as though he would slay it then and there. Poor Griselda felt her blood running cold yet she gave no sign of resistance. She only asked the sergeant, very gently, if she might kiss her child once before it died. Taking it in her arms she lulled it and fondled it in a heart-breaking way, saying,

"Farewell, my child! I shall never see you again—never hold you in my arms again, or kiss you, as I do now. Farewell, my baby! I mark

you with this cross, and commend you to the dear Heavenly Father's care."

Then placing the child again in the sergeant's hands, "Go now," quoth she, "and do my lord's will. But one boon I pray of you. Bury this little body in some place where the birds and beasts cannot harm it."

But the sergeant would not promise her even that, but took the child roughly and went his way.

When he was come again to the Marquis he gave him the child unharmed and told him all that Griselda had said. Walter's heart was touched, but still he would not turn from his plan. He bade the sergeant wrap the child carefully and take it to his sister, the Countess of Panik in Bologna, and request her to rear it tenderly for his sake. But whose child it was, the sergeant was straitly charged to tell no man.

After her baby was thus torn from her, Walter watched Griselda narrowly to see if there was any change in her demeanor. But always she was the same patient Griselda, kind and loving and tender and thoughtful as before. She never once mentioned her lost child, whom she believed to be dead, but her quietly sad look must have been hard for Walter to bear.

Thus the months passed until four years had rolled around, and once more there was great rejoicing in all the land. For another child had been born in the palace, and this time it was a boy—one who could inherit the land and title of his father the Marquis. The people's delight knew no bounds, and Walter also felt as happy as any king; for this beautiful boy was the equal of any prince that ever lived.

But when the child was two years old, the Marquis took it into his head to tempt his wife still farther. Ah! how needless to torture her thus! But married men are often overbearing when they find a patient wife.

"Griselda," quoth the Marquis, "you remember I told you once before about the people's discontent at our marriage. Since my son's birth their anger has been even greater, and I scarcely know which way to turn for peace. They say that when I am gone, a descendant of Janicula the herdsman will be lord over them. I cannot disregard their complaint; and so I have decided to put this boy away privately, as I did his sister. But do not give way openly to your grief. Be patient and control yourself, I pray you."

"My lord," she answered, "I have always said,

and ever shall say, that I wish no thing save as you choose. Naught grieves me, though both my daughter and my son be slain. I will tell people with a smile that I never had any children. You are our lord. Do with your own as seems best to you. Ask no leave of me ; for as I brought nothing when I came to you—not even the garments on my back—I left behind mine own will and liberty and took your habits. Wherefore, I pray you, do your pleasure and I will strive to be submissive."

And then she added this touching appeal.

" If I could only know beforehand what your will was, I would do it gladly! And if your people find me in the way, I will willingly die to please you. Death means nothing to me in comparison with the loss of your love!"

When the Marquis saw this new proof of his wife's constancy he cast down his eyes and wondered how she could endure it all. He went forth with very dreary countenance, but in reality he was well pleased with her.

Then he chose the same ugly sergeant who had taken her daughter away ; and he came and seized the boy with great show of roughness. And as before she sat as though graven out of stone and made no outcry of the heaviness that

was within her heart. Only as she kissed her son a tender farewell, she prayed the sergeant that he would lay the child carefully in some grave to keep him from the wild beasts.

And again he made no answer, but carried the child carefully to Bologna where it was sheltered and nourished with its sister who was now a well grown little girl.

The Marquis was amazed at her patience, for he knew that, next to himself, she loved her children better than anything in the world. Indeed, what could a husband ask more than such steadfastness as this? But there are some people who, when they start upon a thing, will stick to it as though they were bound to a stake. So this Marquis made up his mind to tempt his wife still farther.

He watched to see if by word or look she might betray a weakened courage, but never could he find any change in her. The older she grew, the more faithful she seemed. There was but one will between them, and no quarrel or frown ever disturbed the peace of their wedded life.

But if Griselda was the soul of submissiveness, Walter's subjects were far from being so. Instead of complaining about Griselda, as he had said, they were devoted to her service. And

when they saw how cruelly he had treated her, the slander against him spread far and wide. For everybody believed that the two children had been murdered by his commands; and a murderer is a hateful name.

I ought to say here, in plea for Walter, that the children of rulers were often sent away privately to be brought up, lest some harm should befall them. The Marquis was within his own rights when he did this, but it was cruelly wrong thus to deceive and torture his poor wife.

Nathless, in spite of the people's murmurs he persisted in his course; and presently, when his daughter was twelve years old, he devised another unkind deed. He sent to Rome and procured some false letters, seeming to come from the Pope, but really being forged. These letters, or "bulls," commanded him to leave his wife, for the sake of the people, and to marry another nearer his own rank.

The people were easily deceived by these false bulls, but when the news came to Griselda she was exceeding heavy of heart; for she loved Walter better than any one in the world, and that he well knew. But still she uttered no word of complaint.

Then he sent his trusty messenger to the Earl of Panik, at Bologna, and begged him to bring the two children home openly and in honorable estate; but still to keep it secret whose children they were. Instead he was to say that the little maid was later to be the wife of the Marquis of Saluzzo.

The Earl did as he was asked, and soon set forth from Bologna to Saluzzo in royal state with a gallant company of lords and knights; and in their van rode the little boy and the maiden, now well grown and beautiful to look upon.

> Arrayed for marriage was this maiden fair,
> With robes of silk and gems and jewels rare.
> Her brother, gallant lad of seven years,
> Sat well his horse, as any of his peers.
> And thus with splendor and with rich array
> The lordly cavalcade rode on its way.

Now turn we from all this bright scene of joy to poor, patient Griselda, about to be put to the severest proof of her courage. One day in open audience the Marquis said in a boisterous way:

"Certes, Griselda, I was content enough at one time to have you for my wife—not for your birth and lineage, but because you were truthful, steadfast and obedient. But I have found out

that high station brings its own service and duties; and so I may not do as any common plowman—listen only to the voice of mine own desires. Instead, I must do as my people say, and take another wife in order to keep peace in my country. Even the Pope has commanded this, and, to be brief, my new wife is even now on her way hither.

"But be strong of heart! Give up your place to her without a murmur and thus show once again your patience. And you may take back to your humble home the dower which you brought to me; for thus Fortune deals with some—lifting them up only to cast them down again."

Griselda's reply to this was so noble that I must try to tell you exactly what she said.

> And then she answered him in patience,
> "My lord," quoth she, "I have known well alway
> That 'twixt your splendor and magnificence
> And mine own poverty no one can say
> There is comparison; and day by day
> I ne'er have held me worthy in my life
> To be your servant—or, much less, your wife.
>
> "And in this house where I a lady came—
> The high God take my word in true witness,
> Who has so wisely kept my soul from blame—

I never thought me wife or e'en mistress,
But humble servant to your worthiness,
And ever shall while my life may endure,
Above every other worldly creature.

"That you so long out of your courtesy
Have held me thus in honor day by day,
Whereas I was not worthy for to be,
I thank both God and you, to whom I pray
That he requite you—more I cannot say.
Unto my father gladly will I wend,
And with him dwell until my life's last end.

"There was I fostered as an infant small,
There till I die I count my earthly home,
A widow clean in heart and spirit all.
For since I gave to you my youth and bloom,
And am your true wife, it would ill become
That such a great lord's wife should ever take
Another husband, for her honor's sake.

"And to your new wife may God of his grace
Grant every weal and true prosperity,
For I will gladly yield to her my place,
Altho' it has been blissful unto me.
But since it pleases you, my lord," quoth she,—
"Who ever have been dearest to my heart—
That I shall go, content I will depart.

"But since you offer me the dower again
That first I brought, it still is in my mind—
My wretched clothes was all I had—so plain,
So coarse and ragged they'd be hard to find.
But O just God! how gentle and how kind

You seemed, in spite of them, that day
You came and took me from my home away!

"You said you loved me, but alas! 'tis true
That saying old—it now is shown to me —
Love's not the same when old as when 'twas new.
But truly, lord, in my adversity
I'll love you still, till death and faithfully,
And ne'er in word or deed shall I repent
That I gave you my heart with true intent.

"My lord, you know that in my father's place
You bade me leave my garments poor and old,
And clad me richly out of all your grace.
To you I brought naught else—the story's told —
Save youth and love and hopes, ah, manifold!
And here again my clothing I restore,
And e'en my wedding-ring forevermore.

"The remnant of your jewels ready be
Within your chamber. I can safely say,
Naked from my father's house," quoth she,
"I came, and naked turn again to-day;
In all things heed your will—glad to obey.
But yet I hope it is not your intent
To send me forth quite stript! You must relent

"To leaving me one gown; tho' old and poor,
'Twill serve my need upon my homeward way,
For such a dress in poverty I wore.
Do not refuse this little boon, I pray,
For your own honor's sake, and mine: you may
Remember still, my lord and husband dear,
I was your wife, tho' all unworthy were."

This piteous appeal for one poor garment to clothe her upon her homeward way so touched the Marquis that he could scarcely speak. Yet, he thought, the pitiful little play must be carried through to the end.

"The gown that you have on your back," he said in a dry voice, "let it remain, and wear it away with you."

And then he turned away abruptly, unable to say another word.

Before all the people, Griselda took off all her fine apparel, her gems and her laces. She even took the pins out of her hair and the shoes off her feet. And out of the palace gate she walked, humbly yet proudly, bare of foot and with her beautiful hair falling about her shoulders; out of the city and toward her father's humble roof.

After her followed many of the people weeping for very pity and murmuring angrily against her hard fate. But her own eyes were dry and she spoke no word more.

Her father had already heard something of how things had been going at the palace, and was not surprised to see her returning. For he had greatly distrusted this unequal marriage and feared that the Marquis would become wearied of it and seek to set it aside.

SHE WALKED HUMBLY YET PROUDLY.

Hastening forth to meet her, he took her into his arms and comforted her. Then with all the thoughtfulness of a woman he brought the old dress she had formerly worn—ah, sadly aged and tattered now!—and tenderly placed it upon her.

"We have each other, still, my daughter," he said simply.

And so for a certain space she dwelt with her father as of old, tending the flocks, carrying wood and water, and living steadfastly and quietly as though the palace had been a dream of the morning blown away like the mist.

Truly, men speak of the patience of Job; but though they praise women little enough, no man can equal them in patience or fidelity!

And now we turn again to the Earl of Panik on his way to Bologna. As he neared the city with his splendid cavalcade the fame of his mission spread far and near. People heard of the new Marchioness who was being brought with such pomp and display, the like of which had never been seen before in Lombardy.

The Marquis, who had planned all this beforehand, sent for Griselda again before the company had arrived.

"Griselda," he said, "my will is that the

maiden I shall wed be received as royally as possible. I have no servant who is able to arrange the rooms to my liking—who shows the taste and skill about the house that *you* have. Now will you take this matter in hand for me? You know all my ways and taste, and I am willing to overlook the fact that your dress is very ragged."

"I am glad to do it, my lord," she said, smiling. "Your service is my dearest joy."

And with that word she 'gan the house to deck,
The tables for to set, the beds to make,
And scrubbed the floors free from all stain and speck,
Praying the chamber-maids for goodness' sake
To hasten them, and sweep and shake;
While she, the most industrious of all,
Hath every room arrayed, and stair and hall.

About noontime the company arrived. The Earl alighted and helped the two unknown children to dismount. All the people ran to see the procession, and when they beheld the beautiful maiden they began to whisper that, after all, the Marquis was no fool to exchange an old wife for a new one! For she was even fairer than Griselda—not unlike her, perhaps, but of tenderer age. While the rosy boy standing beside her divided all their admiration.

Griselda had been busy up to the very mo-

ment of their arrival. She was not abashed at her clothing though it was rough and coarse and somewhat ragged besides. But with cheerful face she paused long enough to go to the gate with the other people to greet the bride; then she hurried back to her work.

When they came within, she received every one of the Marquis's guests so courteously that none could find fault with her manner. Indeed the newcomers wondered who this woman might be, clad in such poor array yet with the grace and dignity of a queen.

The Marquis offered his arm to the fair stranger and, with his other hand, led her brother forward; and thus the three went ahead of all the great lords and ladies to the banquet hall. When all were seated around the table, the Marquis called for Griselda who was busy with the serving.

"Griselda," quoth he as if in play, "how do you like the looks of my new wife?"

"Right well, my lord," she answered quietly; "I pray God to give her happiness. And I pray you, my lord, to deal very gently with her—never to goad or torment her, for she has been tenderly reared and could not endure sorrow like one of humbler birth."

And when Walter saw all her patience and cheerfulness and lack of malice, despite all his cruel tests, his heart failed him utterly and he chided himself bitterly for bringing all this suffering upon her.

"It is enough, my beloved Griselda!" cried he, springing to his feet. "Be fearful no longer of my whims, for I have tried you as no other woman was ever tried before. In rags and riches alike, dear wife, I know your steadfastness!"

And clasping her in his arms he kissed her tenderly.

But she for wonder could not understand it all. She acted as though she were walking in her sleep and heard him not.

"Griselda!" he entreated, "look at me! It has all been a cruel jest, my dear, from first to last. *You* are my wife, and always have been and always will be!"

A glad light broke over Griselda's face, but in a moment she turned to look at the maiden.

"Ah, Griselda!" said Walter, "do you not know her? She is your daughter, and the lad by her side is your son. I sent them secretly to Bologna to be brought up, but now I restore them again to you. And all the people who have been saying dark things about me must

know that I have done nothing in wickedness and nothing in malice, but everything to prove your glorious womanhood and patience to all the world!"

When she heard this she fell swooning to the floor for very joy; and then as she recovered she called both her children to her, and clasped them in her arms, weeping piteously and kissing them and bathing them with her tears.

O what a pitiful thing it was to see her emotion! To hear her trembling voice thanking Walter for saving her children!

"I can die here and now, my lord," she said, "since they and your love have been given back to me."

Then she swooned again for very joy, but still clasping her children in her arms, and so tightly that the company could scarcely loosen her fingers. I warrant you that many a tear ran down the faces of those who stood round about!

Then Walter took her into his arms and consoled her again, and afterward he gave her into the charge of the court ladies. And they took her to her room and stripped off the coarse garments, once for all, and dressed her in cloth of gold. Upon her head they placed a crown set with many a sparkling gem. Radiant as any

queen she looked when they led her back to the banquet hall and placed her at the head of the table. And all the company delighted to do her honor.

Thus hath this piteous day a blissful end,
For every man and woman do their might
This day in revelry and mirth to spend,
Till o'er the sky is seen the stars' pale light.
More joyous was this feast in all men's sight,
And richer far—and there was more to pay—
Than was the revel on her wedding-day.

Here endeth the Clerk of Oxenford his Tale.

The Franklin's Tale

DORIGEN

PROLOGUE

THE Clerk's tale was ended amid many ohs! and ahs! from the company, who had crowded close about his steed during the recital. Much pleasure was found therein, though the Wife of Bath was seen to sniff openly. Others wanted to hear more of the story.

"Good faith!" quoth the Clerk, "the story is at an end; yet, if you will, the patient Griselda lived with her husband for many a year in high prosperity and peace and concord. Her old father was given a place at court—as should have been done long before; her daughter married well; and her son succeeded to the Marquisate. Is that enough?"

"How about the moral?" asked the Wife of Bath.

"The story is told," answered the Clerk roguishly, "not in the hope that other wives will be as patient as Griselda, for that will never happen again! But the moral is that every wight should be constant in adversity. Such was the idea of old Petrarch when he told it."

Then I, Chaucer, breaking in for the first time, could not forbear to add my word:

"Griselda is dead, with all her patience,
Both buried in one grave in Italy,
So I beseech in open audience
No wedded man be foolish to assail
His own wife's patience in the hope to see
Another Grisel,—for he'll surely fail!"

"Well said, and enough said," quoth our Host laughing. "Peace be to Griselda's ashes! Now then, Sir Franklin, let us see what tale you can offer us."

"Gladly, Sir Host," quoth he, "I will obey your will as far as my wits will allow."

Here beginneth the Franklin's Tale.

Dorigen

IN ancient times there lived in Brittany a Knight named Arviragus who was brave and strong and chivalrous. This Knight had long loved a lady, but could not win her at once. She admired him secretly, but she wanted to be sure that he was all he seemed to be. So she sent him on dangerous quests—as was the custom in those days—and in every way tested his devotion and courage. Then as she saw that he was indeed brave and honorable she gave him her hand and all her heart with it.

This lady's name was Dorigen and she seemed well worthy of his love, for she was one of the fairest maidens under the sun, and as well behaved as she was beautiful.

Arviragus was so overjoyed at winning her, that he promised of his own free will he would never antagonize her or do anything she didn't want done; but would ever obey her and yield every point to her,

> Save that the name of sovereignty;
> This would he keep, for shame of his degree.

Truly a self-sacrificing Knight was this, and far different from Griselda's husband!

The generous offer touched Dorigen, so that she thanked him with full great humbleness, saying: "Sir, out of your gentleness you offer me too great authority. But I will be your humble, true wife as long as life shall last."

And so they were wedded and began their life together very happily; for those who would dwell in harmony must yield the one to the other.

> Love will not be held by tyranny,
> Love is a thing as any spirit free;
> When mastery comes, the god of Love anon
> Beats swift his wings, and farewell!—he is gone!

For women of spirit desire liberty, and not to be held like a slave; and so do men, if I speak the truth. And he that is patient and considerate will always be successful, where others of sterner mold fail.

Arviragus took his wife Dorigen to his country seat in Brittany, called Penmark, and there they lived a year and more. But the Knight had always been a man of war, and even this blissful wedded life could not keep him from becoming

restless. He wished to go to England to seek service in arms and perchance win fame and honor. Dorigen thought he had fought enough, but would not say him nay, when she saw how his heart was set on the journey. So he sailed away and was gone two whole years.

Now Dorigen had come to love her husband so dearly, that she mourned his absence until she fell sick from grieving. Everything else in the world she set at naught, although her friends did all in their power to cheer her up. They lectured her upon the folly of giving way to her grief, and provided many amusements to overcome her heaviness of spirit.

You know how a sculptor can keep on chiseling until he gets a figure cut into the stone. In the same way Dorigen's friends after a while made some impression on her heart, and she began to be her former self. Also Arviragus sent letters saying he would soon be home again.

Now her castle stood hard by the sea, and often she would walk with her friends along the shore. And as she saw many a ship and barge come sailing by, it seemed to add to her weight of woe.

"Alas!" she said full oft to herself, "is there no ship, among so many that I see, will bring my

lord home again? Then were my heart all clean of its bitter pain."

At another time she would sit and think and cast her eyes downward over the brink of the cliff; for the coast thereabout was steep and rugged. And when she saw the bleak grisly rocks showing their jagged edges above the water, her heart would begin to quake from very fear lest her husband's ship should perish there. Well might she dread these rocks for they were among the most treacherous on the whole coast of Brittany.

Then she would pray to God to remove the rocks as, she said, they were of no good to mankind but only a constant source of danger.

"I know well," she would pray humbly kneeling on the grass at the cliff's edge, "that wiser people than I argue that all things are created for the best, though I never can know the causes of them. But, dear Lord who made the wind to blow, protect my husband! And if it be thy will, sink these rocks to the uttermost depths for his sake!"

This would she say with many a piteous tear. Her friends saw that it was no pleasure to walk by the sea, but only a new cause for worry. So they chose other ways to amuse her. They took

her inland among gardens and trees and fountains. They danced and played at chess and other games.

So on a day before the sun was high they went to a fair garden which was near at hand, and there they spread their feast (in our picnic fashion) and made them merry all the day.

> And this was on the sixth sweet day of May,
> When May had painted with his softest showers
> This garden full of lovely leaves and flowers
> And craft of man had added to the scene
> A touch of beauty glowing 'mid the green.
> Ah! ne'er was garden in such fair array
> Since paradise from man was ta'en away!
> The odor of the flowers, the pleasing sight
> Would cause the heart's worst sorrow to grow light,
> So full it was of beauty and delight.

After dinner they began to sing and dance upon the green carpet—all save Dorigen who could not forget that the one she loved best was not among them.

Among the dancers was a handsome young squire who was better dressed, and who sang and danced better than any other man in the company. He was not only one of the best looking men you will ever see, but he was also young and

strong and rich and wise and well-beloved by all who knew him. So you see he is worth our acquaintance. His name was Aurelius.

This squire had long loved Dorigen, but he had kept the secret carefully hidden, so that not even she suspected it. Only in his songs would he pour his heart out, and then he said nothing save in general complaint that he was doomed to love all his life and never be loved in return. He made many songs in this strain and yet the pure-hearted Dorigen did not suspect him.

But on this fair May day during the revels, Aurelius found opportunity to have speech with her alone. He had known her of long time and been her neighbor, and was a man of worship and honor, so no one gave a second glance in their direction. Then as they walked apart, Aurelius could no longer hide his love.

"Madame," quoth he, "by the heaven above us, I wish that when your Arviragus went over the sea, I had gone also and never come back again! For well I know you do not care for me, and the sorrow of it is breaking my heart. Forgive me for this speech, but for love of you who are another man's wife, I fear I shall die!"

Dorigen looked at him quickly with startled eyes.

"Is this your will?" she said gently, but with sorrow in her voice. "I never once thought this of you, Aurelius. Now you must banish such evil thoughts, for never could I leave my husband for any man, not even for you. This is my final word, and I pray you never to speak thus again."

Then seeing that Aurelius was utterly cast down and could not say a word for grief, she added as if in play,

"Aurelius, I will love you best of all, upon the day when you remove all those cruel rocks we see at the edge of the cliff. When you have made the coast clear so that any boat or ship may sail by without danger, then will I love you best of any man."

"Is there no other grace in you?" he asked sadly.

"None, by the Lord who made me," she replied.

Woe was in Aurelius' heart when he heard this. "Madame, this task is impossible! I must soon die," he said.

Then came other friends of Dorigen, who knew nothing of this matter, to make her take part in certain of their games. And all made merry save only Aurelius who went home with a heavy heart.

Aurelius was so sad indeed that he fell sick of grieving. He prayed a wicked prayer not only to God but to all the heathen gods, that they should cause so high a tide that all the rocks would vanish away. Thus would Dorigen's jest become a binding promise.

For a long time he lay as if in a trance, telling his trouble to no one except his brother. This brother was a student of books, or a clerk, as such learned men were then called. And he was very sorry for Aurelius and cast about to see how he might help him to get well again.

Meanwhile, Arviragus had come home from the wars in great honor. You may believe that Dorigen was glad to welcome him, for there had always been the most perfect trust and harmony between them. The whole countryside turned out in feasting and rejoicing over his return, save only Aurelius who lay sick and his brother who read his dusty books night and day.

At last this brother chanced to remember a book of magic which he had first seen in Orleans. This book had told of many curious tricks of conjuring and juggling, and how they might be performed so as to fool people. And as soon as he thought of it, his heart was filled with joy, and thus he whispered to himself :

"My brother shall be made well again full speedily, for I am sure that there are sciences which can make things appear to be what they are not—such as the tricks which cunning magicians play. For ofttimes I have heard of jugglers performing in a hall who have seemed to bring a lake therein and have rowed up and down in a boat. Sometimes a fierce lion will appear; sometimes a meadow filled with flowers, or a clustering vine, or a stone castle. Then at their word it will all vanish again. Now, I believe, if I go back to Orleans I can find that book, or some magician who can make the rocks disappear from the coast of Brittany for a day or two. That will be long enough to heal my brother of his woe."

To make a long story short, he went and told Aurelius what was in his mind; and Aurelius was so delighted that he sprang out of bed at once and made ready to go with his brother to Orleans. So the two lost no time in starting thither.

When they had come almost to that city—within two or three furlongs—they met a young clerk roaming by himself, who greeted them in Latin saying to their great wonder, "I know the cause of your coming."

And ere they went any farther he told them all that was in their minds.

Down from his horse sprang Aurelius and went with this magician—for such he had proved himself to be. And before supper time, in his home, the magician showed the two brothers many marvelous things. Forests and parks full of wild deer, they saw; and hounds slaying them by the hundreds, while other harts were wounded by arrows. And when the wild deer were seen no longer, hunters appeared upon a river bearing falcons which pounced upon herons and slew them. Then they saw knights jousting upon a plain; and after that Aurelius thought he beheld his lady in a dance, and he danced with her until the master of magic clapped his hands, when farewell! the revel was at an end![1]

And yet they never stirred out of the house, while they saw all this strange sight, but stayed in his study as still as any of his books, and there was no one else there besides the three.

Then came a squire to summon them to supper—which they were glad to find was no make-believe! And at the table they began to talk about their mission, for they were confident this

[1] These tricks of magic, which were undoubtedly done by the ancient masters, have been explained in our own day by hypnotism, which in India and even in America has created illusions quite as wonderful.

magician could remove the rocks from the entire coast as easily as he could do the other wonderful things they had seen.

So Aurelius asked the magician how much money he would require to perform the feat, and the magician swore that he would not undertake it at all for less than a thousand pounds.

"Fie upon a thousand pounds!" cried Aurelius gladly; "this round world and all that's in it I would give you willingly—if I had it! But see that you lose no time in the matter."

The magician agreed; and after a good night's rest, all three of them set out for the coast of Brittany. It was the bleak month of December, when the frost and sleet and snow had destroyed every green thing. Indeed it was not very pleasant weather to be out of doors, but Aurelius paid scant heed to that. He did not let the magician once get out of his sight; and although he feasted him with cheer in his own home in Brittany, the magician was warned to lose no time in beginning his task.

The magician became so afraid of this young man, who waved his sword at the least word, that he began to work night and day with his books and spells, to make everybody think the rocks had sunk out of sight. At last the trick was

done! There stood the coast as free and clear from rocks (so they thought) as though rocks had never been placed there in the creating of the world!

Aurelius was overjoyed. He cast himself at the magician's feet and thanked him humbly; then he hastened to the Lady Dorigen to tell her the news.

"My sovereign lady," quoth this dreadful man, "you know right well what your word was to me, and upon what day you promised to love me best. That day has come, although I be all unworthy, for I have done as you commanded me. Come and see for yourself! It rests with you whether I live or die; but as for the rocks—they have vanished!"

He bowed low and took his leave. Poor Dorigen stood as though turned to stone. Every drop of blood left her face and she became pale as death. She had never thought to fall into such a trap.

"Alas!" she cried, "that ever this thing should come to pass! It is against all nature and reason!"

She did not want to leave her husband; and in her grief and terror she tried in vain to find some way to escape from her rash promise. Her

husband was away from home at the time, and she had almost resolved to kill herself, but she could not summon the courage. For three days and nights she was the prey of bitter despair.

Then Arviragus came home again, and seeing her grief he asked her why she wept so sore. And at this she began to weep all the more.

"Alas!" quoth she, "that ever I was born!
Thus have I said, and even have I sworn"—
And told him all that is set forth before,
So there's no need to tell it any more.

Then Arviragus gave still farther proof of his nobility. Taking her gently by the hand he asked kindly, "Is there aught else, Dorigen, but this?"

"Nay, nay," quoth she, "God help me if there is!

"That were too much—if it were but his will!"
"Yea, wife," he said, "what has been, must be still.
It may be right, perchance, for on this day
You shall preserve your promise, by my fay;
For God in mercy deal thus unto me,
And I had rather die in misery,
For very love which I have borne for you,
Than you should break your word or promise true!
Truth is the highest thing that man may keep"—
But with that word he choked and 'gan to weep.

Presently Arviragus mastered his grief and began to speak again to his sobbing wife. He reminded her of the promise he had made her, of his own free will, at the time of their marriage, to respect her wishes in all things.

"I will not stand in your way now, Dorigen," he added. "You have made a foolish promise, but it *is* a promise all the same, and must be kept."

Then he raised her up, and called a squire and a maid, and bade them go with Dorigen to the house of Aurelius. They bowed and took their leave, but without knowing anything farther of the matter.

But the little group had gone only as far as the centre of the town, when Aurelius chanced to meet them. He saluted her joyfully and asked her whither she was going. And she answered half as though she were crazed,

"To meet you, as my husband bids me, and to keep my promise—alas, alas!"

Then for the first time Aurelius began to realize the great wrong he was doing both husband and wife in seeking to part them. He began to ponder over it, and his heart was filled with great compassion. He saw how selfish he had been, and his true nobleness of nature again came to

the surface. Never, he thought, could he consent to deal so wretchedly and churlishly against knightly courtesy and honor.

"Madame," quoth he bowing low and lifting her hand to his lips, "say to your lord Arviragus,

> "That since I see all his great nobleness
> To you, and also your own dire distress,
> I would far rather suffer every woe
> Than cut apart the love between you two.
> And so, madame, I give into your hand
> Release of every promise, every bond
> That you have made at any time to me.
> I give my word to let the matter be.
> Farewell, madame,—the truest and best wife
> That ever yet I knew in all my life!"

Thus did Aurelius take his leave, and prove that a squire could do as gentle a deed as any knight. While as for Dorigen, she fell upon her knees and thanked him, and then went joyfully back to her husband to tell him all that had been said and done.

I do not need to tell of his joy or of their bliss and content; for they lived in peace and perfect understanding ever after.

But I must speak a few words more about Aurelius.

The young squire did not regret his noble deed; but when he began to count the cost of his folly, he cursed the day that ever he was born.

"Alas!" quoth he, "that ever I should have promised to pay a thousand pounds in gold to this magician! It will beggar me! I must sell all my heritage and move away from my kindred, lest I shame them with my poverty. But I will do it rather than go back upon my word."

Then he gathered all his ready money together and took it to the magician. There was not more than five hundred pounds—for money in those days, as you must know, was of far greater value than it is now. He gave him all this money and asked him as a favor to grant a little time for the settling of the rest of the debt.

"Master," said Aurelius, "I never yet have failed to keep my word, and I shall certainly requite you every penny though it leaves me stripped to the skin. But will you grant me two or three years' respite on the balance? I will pay it, if I have to sell my heritage to do so."

The magician soberly answered: "Did I not keep my covenant with you?"

"Yes, truly," said Aurelius.

"Have you not won the lady thereby?" continued the magician.

"No, no!" quoth he sorrowfully.

"What was the cause? Tell me if you can."

Thus urged, Aurelius told all the story. How that the lady had given her promise only in jest and never dreaming such a miracle could happen. How that her lord had insisted that as she had given her word, she should keep it. And how he, Aurelius, seeing their mutual distress at being parted, could not bring himself to accept such a sacrifice.

"And just as freely as he sent her to me, as freely sent I her to him again. There is nothing more to be said about it," Aurelius ended.

"Aye but there *is* more to be said, brother," said the magician smiling and holding out his hand.

"Each of you did honorably by the other.
You are but a squire, while he's a knight,
But God forbid, if in his awful might,
A clerk like me should ever be outdone
In gentleness by ye or any one!
Sir, I you quit of every golden pound,
As though I'd made them grow out of the ground;
Nor never will a penny of it take.
I count myself well paid for honor's sake."

And bidding Aurelius farewell the magician mounted his horse and rode away.

Lordings, this question would I ask now of you (said the Franklin as he thus brought his tale to a close)—

Which of the four was the most generous, think you?

Now tell me that, ere ye yet farther wend:
I say no more, my tale is at an end.

Here is ended the Franklin's Tale.

Chaucer's Tale

GAMELYN

PROLOGUE

OUR Host looked around him to see whom to call upon for the next story, and his eye happened to light upon me, Chaucer, riding along just behind the leaders of the party and busily trying to remember all that had been said.

"Come, my good sir!" he said with a chuckle; "we have time for one more story to-day, so let it be a merry one. Why are you always staring at the ground, as though you would catch a rabbit running along? Look up, man! And give him place, all the rest of you! For all his sober sides, I'll warrant he has as good round stomach as I have. So tell us a tale of mirth, since that so many of the others have had their say."

"Host," I replied, somewhat at a loss—for I had been so engaged with listening to the others that I had forgotten I also might be called upon; "Host, you will be ill repaid, I fear, for I cannot think of a good tale on the spur of the moment. But here is a rhyme I heard long ago."

Forthwith I began a rhyme about a certain Knight called Sir Topas, but I had not given

more than a score of verses of it, when the Landlord broke in with,

"No more of this, for Heaven's sake! Now tell us a *story!*"

"I can think of but one other," I replied meekly.

"Then let us have it," quoth he; "it couldn't possibly be worse than this!"

Here beginneth Chaucer's tale of Gamelyn.

Gamelyn[1]

LISTEN to me then, good sirs, and you shall hear the story of a doughty Knight and his three sons. The Knight's name was Sir John Boundys and he was famous in tournaments and feats of arms. The eldest of his three sons was also named John, but he was not like his father; instead he was a deceitful wicked man, who deserved his father's curse instead of blessing, and had it at last as you shall hear. The second son was called Ote, and the third, Gamelyn; and they were more dutiful to their father and deserved his grace.

It came to pass that the old Knight fell sick, and he knew that he would never arise from his bed. So he fell to thinking about his three sons and what they should do after he was no more. He was not a rich man, as he had traveled a good deal, but he did own a parcel of land which he had won by his sword.

[1] This story is of doubtful origin, and is usually placed in the Cook's mouth. For convenience we have here given it to Chaucer.

He therefore sent for some friends of his, urging them to come at once if they wanted to see him alive. And when they had reached his bedside,

"Sirs," quoth he, "death will take me soon, for it is God's will."

The other Knights were sorry to hear him say this.

"Do not lose heart, good Sir John," they said, "for God often turns evil into good, and you may yet become well."

"Good or ill," he replied calmly, "I am in his hands. But I have a request to make of you, Sir Knights, and it is that you will see to dividing my land properly among my three sons. Be sure not to forget my youngest boy Gamelyn, for when all the property is left to one person he doesn't often help his brother."

The other Knights told him they would see to the matter, and they went into council over it. But despite his request they thought at first of giving it all to one. However, they finally agreed to divide it into two portions and let Gamelyn go without. They said he was too young to manage any of the estate; and when he was of age his brothers would doubtless divide with him.

Then they came back to Sir John and told him their decision, but the old Knight liked it not at all.

"By St. Martin," he said, "the land is still mine to dispose of! Now, good neighbors, pray stand aside and let me have my own way in this matter. John, my eldest son shall have five farms, for that was all my father left me. Ote shall have five farms, which I won by my good right hand. And all the rest, land and stock, I bequeath to Gamelyn. Now I beseech you, good men, that ye see to carrying out my last wishes."

Not long after that, the good Sir John Boundys passed away. He was no sooner laid to rest in his grave, than the wicked eldest son cheated the boy Gamelyn out of his land and his stock, and gave him nothing but shabby clothes and poor food. He let his lands go to waste, his houses fall to pieces, his forests be destroyed, and his whole estate go to rack and ruin.

Meanwhile, Gamelyn lived in his brother's house doing the most menial tasks. But despite his ill-treatment he grew taller and stronger day by day.

One morning he stood in his brother's yard, stroking his beard which was beginning to grow,

and thinking about all the evil which had befallen him since his father's death. His lands were barren, his oaks were felled, his deer were scattered, his horses were spoiled.

"Truly," thought Gamelyn to himself, "this is not right at all."

Just then his brother John came walking by, and called out angrily, "Have you got that meat cooked yet?"

"No," answered Gamelyn looking him straight in the eye. "I will be your cook no longer. If you want dinner you can go cook it yourself!"

"How, brother Gamelyn! Do you know whom you are talking to, sirrah?" said John. "You never spoke like this before."

"I never thought before of all the harm you had done me," answered Gamelyn. "All my lands and goods are wasted. All that my father left me has been ruined by you, and may you be cursed for it!"

"Be quiet, vagabond!" snarled his brother. "You should be thankful that I give you food to eat and clothes for your back. What could you do with land or stock if you had them?"

"I am no more vagabond than you," replied Gamelyn with spirit. "We were born of the

same parents, whom I honor too much to cast shame upon."

John marveled at his younger brother's courage, but dared not come nearer to him in his present mood. But he called his men and said, "Go beat this boy for me, and teach him to answer me better another time."

"Why don't *you* do it?" asked Gamelyn. "You are my brother, and if I'm to get a beating, no one shall do it but you."

John was so filled with rage at this taunt that he called for his men to hurry with the cudgels. When Gamelyn saw them coming he looked about him and espied a good-sized club lying under the wall. Now Gamelyn was quick of body and light of foot, as well as having great strength. He seized the club and laid about him so fiercely, at the same time dodging all their blows, that he soon drove all the servants away like a flock of sheep. For he looked like a lion, and could not be restrained.

His brother, seeing this, was frightened at him for the first time in his life, and he fled up into the loft and made the door fast.

When Gamelyn saw that he had put the whole party to rout, he laughed merrily.

"Why, how now, you rascals," he called, "you

were in such a hurry to begin this tussle, why do you quit it so soon? I was just beginning to be warmed up."

He looked for his brother and saw him peeping out of the stable window.

"Come a little nearer, John," he said softly, "and I will teach you a great game of cudgels!"

But his crafty brother, seeing that Gamelyn was too strong for them, began to temporize.

"Throw away your cudgel, Gamelyn," he said with a forced smile. "I was just trying to make a man of you, and I see now that you are quite able to take care of yourself."

"Come down from the loft then," said Gamelyn, throwing away the club, "and if you will grant me what I ask, we will get along all right together."

Down came the false brother from the loft, and said, "What is it, brother Gamelyn? I will grant you whatever you ask, in reason."

Then said Gamelyn, "Brother, if we are to live in peace, you must give me the property which my father left me."

"You shall have it, Gamelyn, I swear! All that your father left you, and more too. But first give me time to sow your land and build your houses again, so that it will be as good as ever."

Thus spoke the false brother, meaning in his heart to go on cheating Gamelyn; and they clasped hands and were at peace again. Alas, for young Gamelyn! He still believed everything that was told him, and could not tell a traitor!

Now listen to me, good sirs, and I will tell you what next happened to the young Gamelyn. Not long thereafter a wrestling bout was cried through the countryside, and for prizes a ram and a ring were offered. Gamelyn made up his mind to go to the bout and try his strength with the best of them. So he said to his brother:

"Lend me a horse, I pray you, for I must need go on an errand to-night."

"Go and choose the best steed in my stable," replied his brother; "and tell me where you are going."

"Not far away from here is to be a wrestling bout," answered Gamelyn; "and they have set up a ram and a ring for prizes. Now it would be quite a feather in all our caps, brother, if I might bring home both these prizes."

His brother made no objection, and a horse was saddled without delay. And forth to the wrestling rode the youth Gamelyn. His brother locked the gate after him, and wished in his heart

that the boy might break his neck and never come that way again.

As soon as Gamelyn had come to the place for the wrestling, he dismounted from his steed upon the grass; and there he met a squire who was wringing his hands and wailing bitterly.

"Good man, why are you making this outcry?" asked Gamelyn.

"Alas!" groaned the squire, "that ever I was born! I had two stalwart sons and I have just lost them. A champion in this place hath slain them both. Poor as I am I would give ten pounds and more if I could find a man to make him suffer!"

"Say you so?" quoth Gamelyn. "Then I'm your man. Hold my horse while my servant takes off my boots, and keep an eye on my things while I go and see what luck I may have with this famous wrestler."

"It shall be done!" said the squire. "I will look after your horse and clothes myself, so give yourself no concern over that matter."

Barefooted and stripped for battle Gamelyn came into the lists, and at once the whisper ran about that another wrestler had been found to fight the champion. And when the people saw

how young he was they were amazed at his hardihood; for the champion was a doughty man famous through all the countryside.

Up started the big fellow when he saw Gamelyn enter, and began to scoff at him.

"Who is your father?" he asked. "He would better keep you at home till you grow up. In sooth you are a great fool to come here!"

But Gamelyn answered the champion coolly: "You knew my father well enough while he was alive. He was Sir John Boundys, and I am his son Gamelyn."

"I knew your father, fellow," retorted the champion, "and as for yourself I knew you too, when you were younger; but I never knew any good of you!"

"Nor will you know any better of me now, for I am older and stronger," replied Gamelyn.

"Ha, come on then and welcome!" cried the fellow in a heat; "but I warn you it shall go hard with you if ever you get into my clutches!"

It was late in the evening when Gamelyn had reached the lists, and now the moon shone while he and the champion grasped each other in a mighty struggle. At first Gamelyn stood still and bade the other do his best—which he did with great turnings and twistings in the effort to

throw the youth. But Gamelyn stood firm as a rock. Then he said:

"You have tried many tricks to throw me. Now let's see how you like some of mine."

And forthwith he showed him only one of many little twists that he knew. And behold! the erstwhile champion went sprawling on the ground with three ribs broken. Those who stood round about heard the bones crack.

Then said Gamelyn, "Shall it count for a throw or not?"

"Odds boddikins!" groaned the other, "whether it does or not, I'm sorry for the man who tackles you!"

"Now may Heaven bless you, Gamelyn!" cried the squire in his turn. "And as for *you*, my fine fellow on the ground, you found that this young man could teach you a thing or two after all!"

"He is more active, master," said the wrestler sullenly but honestly. "Never before in my life was I handled so sorely."

Then Gamelyn stepped once more into the ring and said: "If there be any other wrestler who would like to try a bout with me this night, I am ready for him."

But no man cared to answer his challenge. So the two masters of the tourney came forward

and bade him put his clothes on again, as the fair was over.

"But I have not sold half my wares yet!" said Gamelyn.

"He would be a fool who would buy more," replied the former champion. "You sell too dear!"

Then said the squire who was thinking of his two sons, "*You* have bought them cheaply enough, at any rate."

The judges of the fair then brought Gamelyn the ram and the ring, and announced that he was the best wrestler that had ever come there.

So Gamelyn took his prizes, and rode home the next morning with joy in his heart. But his brother saw him coming, with a great crowd of followers, and he bade the porter lock the gate in their faces. When Gamelyn came up and found it was bolted, he said,

"Porter, undo the gate, for many a good man's son is waiting here on the outside."

But the porter answered that neither he nor his friends should step a foot inside. He thought the gate was fastened securely.

"We will see about that," quoth Gamelyn; and he gave the gate a kick with his foot so that the bolt was broken.

The porter ran away as fast as he could, while Gamelyn opened the gate wide and let all his friends come in. There was not a servant who dared oppose his will.

For a whole week they feasted and made merry, while John the eldest brother was hid away in a little turret, not daring to say a word. On the morning of the eighth day the guests took their leave. Then John came to Gamelyn and said: "Who made you so bold as to waste my food and drink in this manner?"

"Brother, be not angry with me," said Gamelyn, "for this is the first I have spent out of my property for sixteen years."

Then said the false knight: "Listen, brother Gamelyn. I have no son of my own, so I will make you my heir, I swear it."

"By my faith," answered Gamelyn, "if you mean what you say, I am content."

"Now, Gamelyn," continued his brother in a soft voice, "when I saw you rioting here of late, I swore an oath that I should chastise you for it. Come, let me bind you hand and foot for a brief season, so that I may not break my oath."

"Agreed," said Gamelyn. "You shall not be forsworn on my account."

So they bound Gamelyn hand and foot, and

John sent for strong fetters to make the bonds fast. They tied him to a stout post in the hall, and John told everybody who came in that Gamelyn was mad. Neither would they give him meat nor drink by day or night.

"Brother, I see you have dealt falsely with me," said Gamelyn. "If I had known all your purpose, I would have given you some hard knocks before I had been bound."

For two days and nights he stood there bound, suffering from hunger and thirst. Then he said to the old steward who chanced to come near him:

"Adam, methinks I have fasted long enough. I beseech you, for the love my father had for you, to release me from these bonds; and I will share my land with you."

"I have served your brother these sixteen years—ever since your father's death," answered the old man; "and if I let you go free, he would call me a traitor."

"Adam," said Gamelyn, "no matter how true you are to him, he will one day be false to you. Now therefore deal justly by me, I pray you, and you shall never suffer for it."

"You speak wisely," said the steward. "I will see what I can do for you."

So when Sir John was gone to bed, Adam took the keys and unlocked the fetters which bound Gamelyn's hands and feet. Then he led him into a private room and set forth food and drink for him; and you may be sure Gamelyn did full justice to them.

Gamelyn thanked the old steward heartily and promised never to forget him.

"Now what is the best plan, Adam?" said he. "Shall I go to my brother and take my revenge on him?"

"No," replied Adam; "I can tell you a plan that is worth two of that. We are planning to give a feast on the coming Sunday, to which many an abbot and friar is invited. Now you shall stand up against the post as though you were still bound fast, and I shall see that the chains are unlocked so that you can throw them off at any time. When the guests have eaten their dinner and washed their hands, you must beseech them to loosen your bonds and give you some food. If any of them do so—well and good. You will be free and I shall not be to blame. But if they all say 'no' to your request, you shall have a stout cudgel near at hand, and I will have another. Then—we shall see!"

Gamelyn was delighted with this idea.

"Good!" he cried. "But how shall I know when to begin?"

"O I'll give you the wink," said Adam chuckling.

When the next Sunday was come, the guests all presented themselves at the feast; for what churchman would forego a good dinner? As they entered the door they cast their eyes upon young Gamelyn standing tied against the post. Sir John answered all their questions and looks by telling many shameful tales of his younger brother, so that the guests shrugged their shoulders and took their seats without a word of pity for him.

After two or three courses had been served, Gamelyn asked in a pleading voice: "Will ye not give me something to eat?"

"Pay no heed to him. He is mad," said his false brother.

Gamelyn bethought himself of Adam's advice and stood still, answering never a word. But presently he spoke again to the great lords who sat in the hall.

"Lords," quoth he, "for the sake of Christ whom ye preach, help to bring poor Gamelyn out of prison!"

Then said a fat abbot: "He shall have Christ's curse instead!" And another added: "Yea, if you were my brother, I should punish you soundly."

"Would you take a good stout cudgel to me?" asked Gamelyn in a pathetic voice.

"Yea, that I would!" said he; and another guest and still another echoed, "I should warm your bones!"

Old Adam the steward was folding up a table-cloth in the pantry, and heard it all. He brought the cloth in at the door, with two good staves hid under it, and when he came near Gamelyn he looked at him and winked. Gamelyn gave a twist and the fetters fell off. He seized one staff and Adam took the other—then things began to happen.

"So you would take a stout cudgel to a helpless boy, would you? Take that!" he cried.

And whack! whack! "Ough! Murder! Help! Fire!" whack! whack! resounded through the hall. Priest and abbot, lord and prior, got their jackets dusted soundly that day, I warrant you!

"Do not shed any holy blood, Gamelyn!" called out Adam who blocked the door so that none could escape; "but remember what they said about warming your bones!"

"PAY NO HEED TO HIM. HE IS MAD."

"Aye, that I will!" replied Gamelyn with a grim smile; and laid about him harder than ever. Not one of the guests escaped a beating, or could make any resistance to him.

They had come riding in jolly fashion, with their servants behind them. But they went away that day in carts and wagons groaning to high heaven.

"Alas, Sir Abbot!" said a gray friar, "why did we come out to-day? We would better have stayed at home to bread and water, than get our meat so well basted!"

While Gamelyn was dressing down the monks, his brother cut but a sorry figure as he tried to rally the servants to his aid. Finally Gamelyn came up with him and sent him sprawling with one blow from the staff. When John recovered his wits, he found himself tied to the post just like he had tied Gamelyn.

"Sit there, brother," said Gamelyn, "and cool your blood, as I did mine."

When he and Adam had finished their house-cleaning they called for water to wash themselves, and then sat down to the best that was in the house. The servants brought them everything they asked for—some through fear, and others willingly enough.

Thus they feasted and had a royal time of it—but not for long. The sheriff lived only a little way off, and you may be sure the churchmen lost no time in telling him how Gamelyn had disturbed the King's peace. So the sheriff called for deputies, and twenty-four young men responded and swore to take Adam and Gamelyn dead or alive. The sheriff sent them on the errand without delay, and they came to the gate while the two victors were still at their feast.

"Open, in the King's name!" the deputies bawled, knocking the while.

But the porter had seen them first, and for love of Gamelyn he held parley with them.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Undo the gate!"

"Not until you have told your business."

"Then tell Gamelyn and Adam, if they are still within, that we would speak two or three words with them."

"Then wait where you are," retorted the porter, "until I learn Gamelyn's will."

Then he went within and warned Gamelyn that the sheriff's men had come to arrest him.

"Hold the gate shut awhile longer, porter," answered Gamelyn coolly, "and you shall see some rare sport."

The porter went back to parley with them; and Gamelyn and Adam went cautiously out the postern gate, taking two good cart poles as they went. Suddenly they came up in the rear of the four-and-twenty young men who stood talking to the porter, and with a shout the two began to belabor the backs nearest them. The attack was so sudden that the deputies thought a party of Gamelyn's friends had come, so they scattered in every direction without striking a blow.

Adam and Gamelyn laughed till their sides ached.

"What's your haste, good fellows?" called Adam. "You might at least have a drink of wine before you go!"

"Not a bit of it!" replied one who had been bowled over at the first onslaught, "your wine addles the brain too much!"

After a while Gamelyn looked and saw the sheriff himself coming with a large reinforcement.

"What's to be done now, Adam?" he said. "Here comes the sheriff hard on our heels."

"Well if you take my advice," said Adam, "I think we would better not tarry here any longer lest we get into trouble. I suggest that we go to the forest. We would be more secure

there and also have more liberty than in any town."

So Gamelyn reached out and grasped Adam by the hand and together they set out for the good greenwood.

When the sheriff came to the house he found the nest but the birds had flown. He alighted from his horse and went into the hall, and there he found Sir John fastened tight to the post. He untied him quickly and rubbed his back, but Sir John's feelings remained too sore for healing.

Meanwhile Adam and Gamelyn were walking in the forest, and the old man began to grow weary.

"Now see what a fine thing it is to be a steward," he said. "I would rather be in a warm hall with my keys dangling at my belt than walking in a wild wood tearing my clothes."

"Do not lose heart, good Adam," replied Gamelyn, "many a good man's son has got into trouble ere this, and got out again."

As they stood talking, in some doubt about what next to do, they heard the voices and laughter of men near by; and Gamelyn peeping through the undergrowth saw seven score young men gayly clad sitting in a circle at meat.

"Adam," he said, "now are we no longer in

doubt. I have caught sight of meat and drink, and that will suit us both, I think."

Adam looked in his turn, and just then the chief of the outlaws—for such they were—glanced up and saw them.

"Here are two well-appearing strangers," he said to his men. "Go and fetch them to the feast so that we may have a look at them."

Up started seven of them and made for Gamelyn and Adam, and when they were come nigh they shouted, "Yield up your weapons, sirs, and submit yourselves to us!"

"Sorrow seize me if I do!" retorted Gamelyn. "Go get five more fellows and then there will be twelve of you."

He meant by this speech that they would resist a band of less than twelve. The outlaws liked his spirit so well that they answered mildly: "Come before our chief and have something to eat, and tell him how you came into the greenwood. For we be outlaws and are masters of this domain."

So Gamelyn and Adam went with them willingly enough, and told all their adventures; and the chief liked Gamelyn's tale so well that he made him captain under him of all the band.

They liked the merry, free life right well, and even Adam speedily forgot his belt of keys.

After they had been some three weeks in the greenwood, the chief of the outlaws made his peace with the King and received full pardon. Then the others chose Gamelyn to be chief in his stead.

Meanwhile Sir John had been made sheriff; and for hatred of his brother he hunted him high and low, and proclaimed him a "wolf's head," for that was a name given to outlaws upon whose head a price was set.

The servants were so sorry for this, that they sought Gamelyn through all the forest to tell him how the wind went; how that his estate was ruined and his friends brought to grief. When they had found him they knelt down on their knees and threw back their hoods so that he might see who they were; and they told him all that had befallen, and that he was a "wolf's head."

"Alas!" said Gamelyn, "that ever I showed mercy unto him. This is how he rewards me for not breaking his back! I will go to the next session of court and denounce him openly for a thief and a traitor."

His friends and servants begged him not to

do this, but he was headstrong and persisted in going.

So when the next court was held, Gamelyn came boldly in and stood before them all.

"God be with you, lordings," he said. "But as for you, lame-backed sheriff, may evil go with you! Why have you put such shame and villainy upon me, and proclaimed me a 'wolf's head'?"

"Seize him!" called the false knight. And he would not let Gamelyn speak in his defense, but had him chained and cast into a prison cell. And thus were evil days descended again upon Gamelyn through his wicked brother.

Now Gamelyn's other brother, Sir Ote, was as good a man as Sir John was bad. He had been living at a distance and did not know how things were faring. But anon a messenger was sent him who told him of Gamelyn's trouble.

Sir Ote was deeply sorrowful to hear this, and he lost no time in saddling a horse and riding over to the sheriff's house.

"John," said Sir Ote, "we are three brothers, the last of our family, and now you have imprisoned the best one of us. How could you treat a brother so?"

"Spare your words, Sir Ote," said the sheriff.

"Gamelyn is safe enough in the King's prison, and there he shall stay until the judge comes to try him."

"No, that will not do," said Sir Ote. "I will go his bail until the next sitting of court, when I promise that he shall be present for trial."

"Very well, brother," said the sheriff grimly. "But I warrant you if he is not present when the time comes, you shall be tried and sentenced in his stead."

"I grant it," replied Sir Ote. "Give him into my keeping."

So Gamelyn was delivered over to Sir Ote his brother, and spent that night with him.

In the morning he said, "Brother Ote, I must leave you for a time, to look after my young men in the forest and keep them from getting into strife."

"Well you know that I am responsible for you," said Ote; "and if you are not present for trial, the judgment falls upon my head."

"Never fear, brother," replied Gamelyn, "for I promise faithfully to return when the judge is ready for me."

"God keep us both from blame, Gamelyn," said the good Sir Ote.

And so they parted in mutual affection.

Gamelyn rode forth into the greenwood and found his men right glad to see him. They told him all the adventures they had found in his absence, while he told about his imprisonment and that he was only out on bond.

For a short time they spent a merry life again in the forest, killing the King's deer, and occasionally lightening the purse of a fat abbot. But to the poor people they were always kind.

Meanwhile the sheriff was laying wicked plots to hang his brother Gamelyn; and to this end he went all around seeking for twelve jurymen who would promise secretly to convict him; likewise a false judge who would do his bidding.

On a day as Gamelyn roamed the greenwood, he began to muse over his troubles, and it came to his memory that the time for the trial must be near at hand, though he had heard no summons about it. So he said to his men:

"Get yourselves ready quickly. For when the judge takes his seat we must be there; else my brother Ote would be sent to prison in my stead."

"Only say the word and it shall be done," answered the young men.

But even while Gamelyn and his band were coming to the court, the sheriff was busy hurry-

ing the trial so that he might get both his brothers into trouble. As soon as Gamelyn came in sight of the town he saw that the court was in session. So he halted his band and asked Adam to go on ahead and learn how things stood.

Adam went into the court-room and looked all about, and he saw many stout lords and churchmen. And there chained against the wall stood poor Sir Ote.

When Adam came back and told these things, and how that a jury had been bribed to hang the good Knight, Gamelyn's wrath boiled over.

"Young men," he said, calling all his outlaws around him; "ye hear how they have treated the good Sir Ote—bound him and fettered him like a common thief! Now stand by me in this, and if God give us grace, it shall go hard with the rascals who have brought him to this shame!"

"Yea, Gamelyn," quoth Adam hotly, "let us hang every man in the court-room."

"No, Adam," replied Gamelyn, "we must not do so. But we will punish all the guilty ones. Now I will go into the court and speak with the judge. And if he will not listen, I will be judge myself this day, and will see that none of the

guilty ones escape. Come with me, Adam, and be my clerk; while the rest of you guard the door."

His men applauded his words with a shout.

"We will stand by you through thick and thin!" they said.

"And I by you," replied Gamelyn.

So Adam and Gamelyn went on ahead, and Gamelyn walked boldly into the court-room. The first thing he did was to go up to Sir Ote and strike off his fetters.

"You were almost too late, Gamelyn," said Sir Ote; "for the sentence has been passed that I shall hang."

"Brother, be of good cheer," said Gamelyn. "Some one may be hanged to-day, but it will not be either you or me."

Meanwhile the judge had found his voice.

"What do you mean," he roared, "by laying your hands upon the prisoner?"

"What do *you* mean," retorted Gamelyn, "by sentencing an innocent man and without giving due notice of trial?"

"Arrest him! Do not let him escape!" shouted the sheriff red in the face.

"There shall no one escape, never fear!" replied Gamelyn. "Now, Sir Judge, are you

ready to give an honest trial before an honest jury?"

"You shall both be hanged this day!" shouted the judge.

"So be it, then," replied Gamelyn. "You have sentenced yourselves."

He blew a silver whistle which hung round his neck, and at once the court-room was filled with yeomen clad in green.

"Treason!" bawled judge and sheriff.

But Gamelyn laid hands upon the judge and with one heave sent him spinning over the bar and into the prisoner's box. The others treated the sheriff likewise, and no man in the court-room durst say a word.

Then with Sir Ote by his side and Adam at the clerk's table, they began a new trial and speedily sentenced both judge and sheriff to be hanged. And Gamelyn inquired also for all those who had borne false witness against his brother; and he tried the false jury who had convicted him. The judge tried to escape by shifting all the blame on the sheriff, while as for Sir John he knelt abjectly before the bar and whined for mercy.

"Remember, you are my brother," he said to Gamelyn.

"'Tis too late for that sort of speech now," answered Gamelyn. "Remember how you dealt by both your brothers, who are brothers no longer. I should fare even worse, if I were in your stead."

So the judge and the sheriff were taken out and hanged without delay.

Then Sir Ote and Gamelyn went straight to the King and told all that had happened; and more than one good man vouched for it. And the King granted them his pardon, and was so pleased with their appearance that he made Sir Ote his judge, and appointed Gamelyn head-keeper of all his free forest. The King also forgave his band of outlaws and gave them good positions, not forgetting old Adam the steward.

Thus Gamelyn got his land and his stock back again; and after Sir Ote died he fell heir to that estate also and thus became Sir Gamelyn with all the lands which had once belonged to his father. And he took him a wife and lived in great honor all the rest of his life.

Here is ended the Tale of Gamelyn.

Epilogue

In Which the Gentle Reader is at a Loss to Know Who Won the Prize Dinner at the Inn.

The End of the Pilgrimage

AND now we must bid farewell and God-speed to the genial company of Canterbury Pilgrims. Other tales were doubtless told by each member of the company, for some of these have been written or begun, by Chaucer, and others have been inserted by other hands to fill up the gaps. But Chaucer himself did not live to tell the whole of the journey—and people old and young have been sorry for this fact ever since.

We can only imagine the rest of the adventures: That the Pilgrims rode pleasantly and without mishap to the shrine, paid their devotion, rested at some hospitable inn, and then returned on their former way, telling still more of their delightful tales.

But what of the final dinner at the Tabard Inn? Who won it at the expense of the others, for telling the best story of all? We can see in our mind's eye the jovial Host standing at one end of the long table, filling the bumper and bidding every guest rise and pledge a toast to the

honored one seated at the head of the board. But who is that one? Is it the doughty Knight, the rascally Pardoner, the learned Lawyer, the droll Wife of Bath, or perchance one of the others whom we have not seen open his mouth?

This you will have to guess for yourself, O gentle reader! And for reward, if you guess correctly, you may travel back through the long years and into the land of dreams; and there in the ancient tavern you may sit down with the other Pilgrims, listen to the merry jest go round, and perchance hear Dan Chaucer himself tell of the journey's end.