The Franklin’s Tale

The Introduction

“In faith, Squier, thou hast thee wel yquit\(^9\) And gently. I praise wel thy wit,”
Quod the Frankelain. “Considering thy youthe,
So feelingly thou spekest, sire, I allowe\(^9\) thee:
As to my doom\(^9\) ther is noon that is heer
Of eloquence that shal be thy peer,
If that thou live. God yive thee good chaunce,
And in vertu sende thee continuaunce,
For of thy speeche I have greet daintee.\(^9\)

As to my doom\(^9\) ther is noon that is heer
Of eloquence that shal be thy peer,
If that thou live. God yive thee good chaunce,
And in vertu sende thee continuaunce,
For of thy speeche I have greet daintee.\(^9\)

I have a sone, and by the Trinitee,
I hadde levere\(^9\) than twenty pound worth land,
Though it right now were fallen\(^3\) in myn hand,
He were a man of swich discrecioun
As that ye been. Fy on possessioun

But if\(^\) a man be vertuous withal!
I have my sone snibbed\(^9\) and yit shal
For he to vertu listeth nat entende,\(^5\)
But for to playe at dees\(^4\) and to dispende,\(^4\)
And lese\(^0\) al that he hath is his usage.

And he hath levere talken with a page\(^9\)
Than to commune with any gentil wight,
Where he mighte lerne gentilesse\(^0\) aright.”

“Straw for thy gentilesse!” quod oure Host.
“What, Frankelain, pardee sire, wel thou woost\(^6\)
That eech of you moot\(^6\) tellen atte leeste
A tale or two, or breken his biheeste.”\(^6\)

“That knowe I wel, sire,” quod the Frankelain.
“I praye you, haveth me nat in desdain,
Though to this man I spoke a word or two.”

“Tel on thy tale withouten wordes mo.”
I wol you nat contrarien\(^5\) in no wise As fer as that my wittes wol suffise.

I praye to God that it may plesen you:
Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow.”\(^9\)

The Prologue

Thise olde gentil Britons\(^0\) in hir dayes
Of diverse aventures maden layes,

1. The Franklin says that his tale is a Breton lay, a subgenre of romance, but his source is probably rather an old story told by, among others, Boccaccio. But in any case, features found in Breton lays also occur in The Franklin’s Tale: a rash promise that must be kept, a supernatural intervention in a plot containing a love situation, stylistic simplicity, and a generally optimistic spirit.
2. The Squire has been speaking for more than 650 lines but has not made much narrative progress in his enormously overplotted Oriental tale of Cambyuskan and his three children when the Franklin speaks, apparently interrupting the story. It is uncertain, however, whether the Franklin’s words represent an intentional interruption or whether they were written to be spoken at the end of The Squire’s Tale, which Chaucer intended sometime to complete.
3. I.e., delivered.
4. Spend money.
5. Act contrary to.
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;

Whiche layes with hir instruments they songe, sung
Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce; read
And oon of hem have I in remembraunce, Which I shal sayn with good wil as I can.

But sires, by cause I am a burel man,

At my beginning first I you biseeche
Have me excused of my rude speeche.
I lerned nevyrere retorike, certain:
Thing that I speke it moot be bare and plain;
I slept nevyrere in the Mount of Parnaso,

Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero;
Colours ne knowe I noon, withouten drede,
But swiche colours as growen in the mede,
Or elles swiche as men dye or painte;
Colours of retorike been too quaine:

My spirit feeleth nat of swich matere.
But if you list, my tale shal ye heere.

The Tale
In Armorik, that called is Britaine, Ther was a knight that loved and dide his paine To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a greet emprise He for his lady wroughte er she were wonne, For she was oon the faireste under sonne,
And eek therto come of so heigh kinrede That wel unnethes dörste this knight for drede
Telle hire his wo, his paime, and his distresse.
But atte laste she for his worthinesse,
And namely for his meeke obeisaunce,
Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce
That prively she fil of his accord
To taken him for hir housbonde and hir lord,
Of swich lordshiphe as men han over hir wives.
And for to lede the more in blisse hir lives,
Of his free wil he swoor hire as a knight
That nevere in al his lif he day ne night
Ne sholde upon him take no maistrye
Again hir wil, ne kithe hire jalousye,
But hire obeye and folwe hir wil in al,
As any lover to his lady shal—
Save that the name of sovereinete,

That wolde he have, for shame of his degree.
She thanked him, and with ful greet humblesse
She saide, “Sire, sith of youre gentilesse
Ye profre me to have so large a reine,

6. Composed in rhyme. 2. With difficulty.
7. Parnassus, home of the Muses. 3. I.e., fell in.
8. I.e., rhetorical figures. 4. Out of respect for.
9. I.e., made every effort. 5. I.e., free.
1. I.e., one of.
Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us twaine,
As in my gilte, were outhere warre or strif.
Sire, I wol be your humble, trewe wif—
Have heer my trouthe—til that myn herte breste.
Thus been they bothe in quiete and in reste.
For oo thing, sires, safuly dar I saye:
That frendes everich other moot obeye,
If they wol longe holden compaignye.
Love wol nat be constrained by maistrye:
Whan maistrye comth, the God of Love anoon
Beteth his winges and farewell, he is goon!

Love is a thing as any spirit free;
Wommen of kinde desiren libertee,
And nat to been constrained as a thrall—
And so doon men, if I sooth sayen shal.
Looke who that is most pacient in love,
He is at his avantage al above.
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certain,
For it venquisheth, as thise clerkes sayn,
Things that rigour sholde nevere atteaine.
For every word men may nat chide or plaine:
Ye shul it lerne, wherso ye wol or noon.
For in this world, certain, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or saith somtime amis:
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun;
And so doon men, if I sooth sayen shal.
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so mote I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wherso ye wol or noon.
For in this world, certain, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or saith somtime amis:
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun;

Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord—
Servant in love and lord in mariage.
Thanne was he bothe in lordshiphe and servage.
Since his lady, certes, and his wif also,
The which that lawe of love accordeth to.
And whan he was in this prosperitee,
Hoom with his wif he gooth to his contree,
Nat fer fro Penmark ther his dwelling was,
Wher as he liveth in blisse and in solas.
Who coude telle but he hadde wedded be
The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee
That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wif?
A yeer and more lasted this blisful lif,
Til that the knight of which I speake of thus,
That of Kairrud8 was cleped9 Arveragus,
Shoop him9 to goon and dwelle a yeer or twaine
In Engelond, that cleped was eek9 Britaine,
To seeke in armes worship and honour—
For al his lust9 he sette in swich labour—
And dwelled ther two yeer, the book saith thus.

Now wol I stinte9 of this Arveragus,
And speke I wol of Dorigen his wif,
That loveth hir housbonde as hir hertes lif.
For his absence weepeth she and siketh,9
As doon thise noble wives whan hem liketh.1
She moorneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;9
Desir of his presence hire so distraineth9
That al this wide world she sette2 at nought.

Hir frendes, whiche that kneve hir hevy thought,
Conferten hire in al that evere they may:
They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day
That causeless she sleeth9 hirself, allass;
And every confort possible in this cas

They doon to make hire leve9 hir hevinesse.
By proces,4 as ye knowen everichoon,
Men may so longe graven9 in a stoon
Til som figure therinne emprinted be:

And eek Arveragus in al this care
Hath sent hir lettres hoom of his welfare,
And that he wol come hastily again—
Or elles hadde this sorwe hir herte slain.
Hir freendes sawe hir sorwe gan to slake,9
And prayed hire on knees, for Goddes sake,
To come and romen hire in compaignye,
Away to drive hir derke fantasye,
And finally she graunted that requeste:
For wel she saw that it was for the beste.

Now stood hir castel faste by the see,
And often with hir freendes walketh she,
Hire to disporte upon the bank an heigh,
Wher as she many a ship and barge9 seigh,9
Sailing hir cours wher as hem liste go—

1. It pleases.
2. I.e., valued.
3. Course of time.
But thanne was that a parcel of hir wo,
For of hirself ful ofte, “Allas!” saith she,
“Is ther no ship of so manye as I see
Wol bringen hoom my lord? Thanne were myn herte
Al warisshed of his bitte paines smerte.”

Another time ther wolde she sitte and thinke,
And caste hir yēn downward fro the brinke;
But when she sawgh the grisly rokkes blake,
For verray fere so wolde hir herte quake
That on hir feet she mighte hire nat sustene:
Thanne wolde she sitte adown upon the greene
And pitously into the see holode,
And sayn right thus, with sorweful sikes colde:
“Eterne God that thurgh thy purveyaunce
Ledest the world by certain governaunce,
In idel, as men sayn, ye nothing make:
But Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,
That seemen rather a foul confusioun
Of werk, than any fair creacioun
Of swich a parfit wis God and a stable,
Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable?
For by this werk south, north, ne west ne eest,
Ther nis yfostred man ne brid ne beest:
It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye nat, Lord, how mankinde it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde
Han rokkes slain, al be they nat in minde:
Which mankinde is so fair part of thy werk
That thou it madest lik to thyn owene merk:
Thanne seemed it ye hadde a greet cheertee
Toward mankinde. But how thanne may it be
That ye swiche menes make it to destroyen?—
Whiche menes do no good, but evere anoyen.
I woot wel clerkes wol sayn as hem leste,
By arguments, that al is for the beste,
Though I ne can the causes nat yknowe.
But thilke God that made wind to blowe,
As keepe my lord! This my conclusioun.
To clerkes lete I al disputisoun,
But wolde God that alle thise rokkes blake
Were sonken into helle for his sake!
This rokkes slain myn herte for the fere.”
Thus wolde she sayn with many a pitous tere.
Hir freendes sawe that it was no disport
To romen by the see, but discomfort,
And shopen for to playen somwher elles:
They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
And eek in othere places delitables;
They dauncen and they playen at ches and tables.

4. I.e., grievous.
5. I.e., without purpose.
6. Mark, i.e., image.
7. May please.
8. I.e., this is.
So on a day, right in the morwetide,
Unto a gardin that was ther biside,
In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce
Of vitaile and of other purveyaunce,
They goon and playe hem at the longe day.
And this was on the sixte morwe of May,
Which May had painted with his softe showres
This gardin ful of leves and of flowres;
And craft of mannes hand so curiously
Arrayed hadde this gardin trewely
That nevere was ther gardin of swich pris,
But if it were the verray Paradis.
The odour of flowres and the fresshe sighte
Wolde han maked any herte lighte
That evere was born, but if too greet siknesse,
Or too greet sorwe heeld it in distresse,
So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.
At after-diner gonne they to daunce,
And singe also, save Dorigen allone,
Which made alway hir complainte and hir mone,
For she ne sawgh him on the daunce go
That was hir housbonde and hir love also.
But nathelees she moste a time abide,
And with good hope lete hir sorwe slide.
Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,
Daunced a squier bifore Dorigen
That fressher was and jolier of array,
As to my doom, than is the month of May.
He singeth, daunceth, passing any man
That is or was sith that the world bigan.
Therwith he was, if men him sholde descrive,
Oon of the beste-faring man on live:
Yong, strong, right vertuous, and riche and wis,
And wel-biloved, and holden in greet pris.
And shortly, if the soothe I tellen shal,
Unwiting of this Dorigen at al,
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that ycleped was Aurelius,
Hadde loved hire best of any creature
Two yeer and more, as was his aventure.
But nevere dorste he tellen hire his grevaunce:
Withouten coppe he drank al his penaunce.
He was despaired, no thing dorste he saye—
Save in his songes somwhat wolde he wraye
His wo, as in a general complaining:
He saide he loved and was biloved no thing,
Of which materre made he manye layes,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelayes,
How that he dorste nat his sorwe telle,
But languissheth as a furrye dooth in helle;
And die he moste° he saide, as dide Ekko
must

For Narcisus that dorste nat telle hir wo.°
In other manere than ye heere me saye
disclose
Ne dorste he nat to his wo biwraye,°
Save that paraventure° som time at daunces,
perchance
Ther yonge folk keepe hir observaunces,°
nevertheless / thence

It may wel be he looked on hir face
In swich a wise as man that asketh grace;
But no thing wiste° she of his entente.
knew
Natheless° it happed, er they thennes° wente,
nevertheless / thence
By cause that he was hir neighebour,

And was a man of worshippe and honour,
And hadde° yknown hir of time yore,°
They fille° in speeche, and forth more and more
fell
Unto his purpos drow° Aurelius,
drew
And whan he sawgh his time, he saide thus:

“Madame,” quod he, “by God that this world made,
So that I wiste° it mighte youre herte glade,°
knew / gladden
I wolde that day that youre Arveragus
Wente over the see that I, Aurelius,
Hadde went ther nevere I sholde have come again.

For wel I woot my service is in vain:
My gerdon° is but bresting° of myn herte.
reward / breaking
Madame, reweth° upon my paines smerte,
For with a word ye may me slee° or save.
slay
Here at youre feet God wolde that I were grave!°
buried
I ne have as now no leiser more to saye:

Have mercy, sweete, or ye wol do° me deye.”
make

She gan to looke upon Aurelius:
“Is this youre wil?” quod she, “and saye ye thus?
Nevere erst,”° quod she, “ne wiste I what ye mente.
before
But now, Aurelie, I knowe youre entente,
By thilke° God that yaf me soule and lif,
that
Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wif,
In word ne werk, as fer as I have wit.
I wol be his to whom that I am knit:°
joined
Take this for final answere as of me.”

But after that in play thus saide she:
“Aurelie,” quod she, “by hye God above,
Sin° I you see so pitously complaine,
since
Looke what day that endelong° Britaine
along
Ye remeve° alle the rokkes, stoon by stoon,
remove
That they ne lette° ship ne boot° to goon.
hinder / boat
I saye, whan ye han maad the coost° so clene
coast
Of rokkes that there nis no stoon yseene,

Thanne wol I love you best of any man—
Have heer my trouthe° —in al that evere I can.
For wel I woot that it shal nevere bitide.
Lat swiche folies out of youre herte slide!
What daintee\textsuperscript{9} sholde a man han by his lif
\textit{delight}

330 For to love another mannes wif,
That hath hir body whan so that him liketh?\textsuperscript{9}
\textit{sighs}

\textit{Is ther noon other grace in you?} quod he.
“No, by that Lord,” quod she, “that maked me.”

335 Wo was Aurelie whan that he this herde,
And with a sorweful herte he thus answered.
“Madame,” quod he, “this were an impossible.
Thanne moot\textsuperscript{6} I die of sodein deeth horrible.”
And with that word he turned him anoon.

340 Tho\textsuperscript{7} come hir othere freendes many oon,
And in the aleyes\textsuperscript{8} romeden up and down,
And no thing wiste of this conclusioun,
But sodeinly bigonne revel newe,
Til that the brighte sonne loste his hewe,
\textit{horizon}

345 For th’ orisonte\textsuperscript{10} hath reft\textsuperscript{1} the sonne his light—
This is as muche to saye as it was night.
\textit{delight}

And hoom they goon in joye and in solas,\textsuperscript{9}
Save only wrecche\textsuperscript{10} Aurelius, allass.
\textit{wretched}

He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte;
He seeth he may nat from his deeth asterte;
Up to the hevene his handes he gan holde,
And on his knees bare he sette him down,
And in his raving saide his orisoun.

355 For verray wo out of his wit he braide;\textsuperscript{9}
He niste\textsuperscript{9} what he spak, but thus he saide;
With pitous herte his plainte\textsuperscript{11} hath he bigonne
\textit{lament}

Unto the goddes, and first unto the sonne:
He saide, “Apollo, god and governour
\textit{merciful}

360 Of every plaunte, herbe, tree and flower,
That yivest after thy declinacioun\textsuperscript{4}
To eech of hem his time and his sesoun,
As thyn herberwe\textsuperscript{4} chaungeth, lowe or hye;
Lord Phebus, cast thy merciable\textsuperscript{9} yë
\textit{lost}

365 On wrecche Aurelie which that am but lorn.\textsuperscript{9}
Lo, lord, my lady hath my deeth ysborn
Withouten gilt, but\textsuperscript{9} thy benignitee
Upon my deedly herte have som pitee;
For wel I woot, lord Phebus, if you lest.\textsuperscript{5}
\textit{unless}

370 Ye may me helpen, save my lady, best.\textsuperscript{9}
Now voucheth sauf that I may you devise\textsuperscript{9}
How that I may been holpe,\textsuperscript{9} and in what wise:
\textit{describe}

\textit{helped}

Youre blisful suster, Lucina\textsuperscript{7} the sheene,\textsuperscript{9}
That of the see is chief goddesse and queene—
\textit{bright}

\textbf{9.} It pleases.
\textbf{1.} Deprived of.
\textbf{2.} Knew not.
\textbf{3.} Who give, according to your position in the sky.
\textbf{4.} Lodging, i.e., one of the astrological houses in
which the planets reside in alternation.
\textbf{5.} It pleases.
\textbf{6.} Except for my lady, you may help me best.
\textbf{7.} I.e., Diana, the moon.
Though Neptunus have deitee in the see,
Yit emperisse\(^9\) aboven him is she—
Ye knoen wel, lord, that right as hir desir
Is to be quiked\(^9\) and lighted of youre fir,
For which she folweth you ful bisily,\(^9\)
Right so the see desireth naturally
To folwen hire, as she that is goddesse
Bothe in the see and rivers more and lesse;
Wherfore, lord Phebus, this is my requeste:
That now next at this opposicioun,\(^8\)
Which in the signe shall be of the Leoun,
As prayeth hire so greet a flood to bringe
That fives fadme\(^9\) at the leeste it overspringe\(^9\)
The hyeste rok in Armorik Britaine;
And lat this flood endure yeres twaine:
Thanne certes to my lady may I saye,
'Holdeth youre heeste,\(^9\) the rokkes been awaye.'
Lord Phebus, dooth this miracle for me!
Praye hire she go no faster cours than ye—
I saye this, prayeth youre suster that she go
No faster cours than ye thise yeres two:
Thanne shal she been evene at the fulle alway,
And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.
And but\(^1\) she vouche sauf in swich manere
To graunte me my soverein lady dere,
Praye hire to sinken every rok adown
Into hir owene derke regioun
Under the ground ther Pluto dwelleth inne,
Or neve more shall I my lady winne.
Thy temple in Delphos\(^9\) wol I barefoot sekke.
Lord Phebus, see the teres on my cheeke,
And of my paine have som compassioun."
And with that word in swoone\(^9\) he fil\(^9\) adown,
And longe time he lay forth in a traunce.
His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,\(^9\)
Up caughte him, and to bedde he hath him brought.
Despaired in this torment and this thought
Lete\(^9\) I this woful creature lie—
Chese\(^1\) he for me whe\(^9\) he wol live or die.
Arveragus with hele\(^9\) and greet honour,
As he that was of chivalrye the flowr,
Is comen hoom, and othere worthy men:
O, blisful artou now, thou Dorigen,
That hast thy lusty housbonde in thine armes,
The fresch knight, the worthy man of armes,
That loveth thee as his owene hertes lif.
No thing list\(^2\) him to been imaginatif
If any wight hadde spoke whil he was oute

---

8. The position of the sun and moon when they are at a 180° angle from one another as seen from the earth.
9. I.e., Diana in her capacity as goddess of the underworld.
1. Let him choose.
2. It pleases.
To hire of love; he ne hadde of it no doute:

He nought entendeth to no swich matere,
But daunceth, justeth, maketh hire good cheere.
And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwelle,
And of the sike Aurelius wol I telle.

In langour and in torment furious

Two yeer and more lay wrecche Aurelius,
Er any foot he mighte on erthe goon,
Ne confort in this time hadde he noon,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk:
He knew of al this wo and al this werk,

For to noon other creature, certain,
Of this matere he dorste no word sayn.

Under his brest he bar it more secreth
Than evere dide Pamphilus for Galathee.
His brest was hool withoute for to seene,

But in his herte ay was the arwe keene;
And wel ye knowe that of a sursanure
In surgerye is perilous the cure,
But men mighte touche the arwe or come therby.

His brother weep and wailed prively,

Til at the laste him fil in remembrance

That whiles he was at Orliens in France,
As yonge clerkes that been likerous
to reden artes that been curious,
Seeken in every halke and every herne

Particuler sciences for to lerne,

He him remembred that, upon a day,
At Orliens in studye a book he sey
Of magik naturel, which his felawe,
That was that time a bacheler of lawe—

Al were he ther to lerne another craft—

Which book spak muchel of the operaciouns

Touching the eighte and twenty mansiouns

That longen to the moone—and swich folye

As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye,
For holy chirches faith in oure bilee
Ne suffreth noon illusion us to greve.

And whan this book was in his remembraunce,
Anoon for joye his herte gan to daunce,

And to himself he saide prively,

“My brother shal be warisshed hastily,
For I am siker that ther be sciences
By whiche men make diverse apparences,
Swiche as thise subtle tregettoures playe;

For ofte at feestes have I wel herd saye

3. Pays attention.
4. Pamphilus and Galataea are the lovers in the medieval Latin *Pamphilus de Amore*.
5. Superficially healed wound.
6. I.e., he happened to remember.
7. Study subjects.
8. Every nook and cranny.
1. Natural magic employs astrological knowledge rather than spirits.
2. Although he was.
3. I.e., daily positions.
The Franklin’s Tale

That tregetours withinne an halle large
Have maad come in a water and a barge, ship
And in the halle rowen up and down;
Som time hath seemed come a grim leoun;
Som time flowres springe as in a mede;
Som time a vine and grapes white and rede;
Som time a castel al of lim and stoon— lime
And whan hem liked voided it anoon:
Thus seemed it to every mannes sighte.

Now thanne conclude I thus: that if I mighte
At Orliens som old felawe yfinde
That hadde thise moones mansions in minde,
Or other magik naturel above,
He sholde wel make my brother han his love.
For with an apparence a clerk may make
To mannes sighte that alle the rokkes blake
Of Britaine were yvoided everichoon,
And shippes by the brinke comen and goon,
And in swich forme enduren a day or two:

Thanne were my brother warisshed of his wo;
Thanne moste she needes holden hir biheeste,
Or elles he shal shame hire at the leeste." longer
What sholde I make a lenger tale of this?
Unto his brothers bed he comen is,
And swich confort he yaf him for to goon
To Orliens, that up he sterte anoon,
And on his way forthward thanne is he fare,
In hope for to been lissed of his care.

Whan they were come almost to that citee,
But if it were a two furlong or three,
A yong clerk roming by himself they mette,
Which that in Latin thriftily hem grette, proper / greeted
And after that he saide a wonder thing:
“I knowe,” quod he, “the cause of your coming.”
And er they ferther any foote wente,
He tolde hem al that was in hir entente.

This Briton clerk him axed of felawes,
The whiche that he hadde knowe in olde daves,
And he answered him that they dele were;
For which he weep ful ofte many a tere.
Down of his hors Aurelius lighte anoon,
And with this magicien forth is he goon
Hoom to his hous, and maden hem wel at ese:
Hem lakked no vitaile that mighte hem plese;
So wel arrayed hous as ther was oon
Aurelius in his lif saw nevere noon.

He shewed him er he wente to soper
Forestes, parkes ful of wilde deer:
Ther saw he hertes with hir hornes hye,
The gretteste that evere were seen with ye;
He sawgh of hem an hundred slain with houndes,

4. Caused to disappear.
And some with arwes bledde of bittre woundes.
    He saw, when voided were thise wilde deer,
Thisese faconcors upon a fair rifier, falconers
That with hir hawkes han the heron slayn.
      Tho sawgh he knightes justing in a plain. jousting
And after this he dide him this plesaunce,
That he him shewed his lady on a daunce—
On which himself he daunced, as him thoughte.
And wann this maister that this magik wroughteth
Sawgh it was time, he clape his handes two,
And farewel, al oure revel was ago.
And yit removed they neveer out of the hous
While they sawe al this sighte merveilous,
But in his stydye, ther as his bookes be,
They sitten stille, and no wight but they three.
To him this maister called his squier
And saide him thus, “Is redy oure soper?
Almost an houre it is, I undertake,
Sith I you bad oure soper for to make,
Whan that thise worthy men wenten with me
Into my stydye, ther as my bookes be.”
    “Sire,” quod this squier, “whan it liketh you,
It is al redy, though ye wol right now.”
“Go we thanne soupe,” quod he, “as for the beste:
This amorous folk som time mote han hir reste.”
    At after-soper fille they in tretée
What somme sholde this maistres gerdon be
To remeven alle the rokkes of Britaine,
And eek from Gerounde to the mouth of Seine:
He made it straunge,7 and swoor, so God him save,
Lasse than a thousand pound he wolde nat have,
Ne gladly for that somme he wolde nat goon.
Aurelius with blisfull herte anoon

Ansverde thus, “Fy on a thousand pound!
This wide world, which that men saye is round,
I wolde it yive, if I were lord of it.
This bargain is ful drive, for we been knit.8
Ye shal be payed trewely, by my trouthe.
But looketh now, for no necligence or slouthe,9
Ye tarye us heer no lenger than tomorwe.”
    “Nay,” quod this clerk, “have heer my faith to borwe.”
To bedde is goon Aurelius whan him leste,9
And wel neagh al that night he hadde his reste:
What for his labour and his hope of blisse,
His woful herte of penance hadde a lisse.0
Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
To Britaine tooke they the righte way,
Aurelius and this magicien biside,
And been descended ther they wolde abide;
And this was, as thise bookes me remembre,1
The colde frosty seson of Decembre.

Phæbus waxed old, and hewed lik latoun,2
That in his hote declinaciuon2

Shoon as the burnes gold with stremes brighte;3
But now in Capricorn adown he lighte,
Wher as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel sayn:
The bittre frostes with the sleet and rain
Destroyed hath the greene in every yeerd.4

Janus sit by the fir with double beerd,
And dranketh of his bugle horn the win;
Biforn him stant brawn of the tusked swin,
And “Nowel!” crieth every lusty man.

Aurelius in al that eve he can
Dooth to this maister cheere and reverence,
And prayeth him to doon his diligence
To bringen him out of his paines smerte,
Or with a swerd that he wolde slitte his herte.6

This subtil clerk swich routhe hadde of this man pity
That night and day he spedde him7 that he can
To waiten a time of his conclusioun8—
This is to sayn, to make illusioun
By swich an apparence or jogelrye
(I ne can no termes of astrologye)

That she and every wight sholde weene and saye think
That of Britaine the rokkes were awaye,
Or elles they were sonken under grounde sunk
So at the laste he hath his time yfounde8
To maken his japes and his wrecchednesse tricks
Of swich a supersticious cursednesse.9

His tables tolletanes forth hath he brought,
Ful wel corrected; ne ther lakked nought,
Neither his collect ne his expans yeres,3
Ne his rootes,4 one his othere geres,6 paraphernalia

As been his centres and his arguments,5
And his proporcionels convenientes,6
For his equacions in every thing;
And by his eighte spere in his werking operation
He knew ful wel how fer Alnath was shove8

---

1. Recall to me.
2. I.e., celestial position.
3. The house of the goat.
4. The god with two faces who knew both past and future, perpetuated in the name January.
5. Wild ox horn.
6. I.e., stab his own heart.
8. To watch for a time for his astrological operation.
11. Astronomical tables based on the latitude of Toledo, Spain.
12. Neither his table of collect years nor his table of expanse years: the former recorded planetary movements for long periods such as twenty years, the latter for short periods of one year.
13. Tables for making astrological propositions concerning planetary position, degrees of influence, etc.
14. Centers and arguments are astronomical instruments for determining the positions of planets in relation to fixed stars.
15. Fitting proportionals, i.e., special tables for scaling down more general planetary motions to the most particular.
16. Sphere, i.e., the sphere of the fixed stars.
17. He knew full well how far a star (“Alnath”) in the head of the sign Aries had moved.
Fro the heed of thilke fixe Aries above
That in the ninte spere considered is:9
Ful subtilly he calculed al this.

When he hadde founde his firste mansioun,1
He knew the remenant by proporcioun,2

And knew the arising of his moone wel,
And in whos face and terme3 and every deel,4
And knew ful wel the moones mansioun
Accordant4 to his operacioun,

For swiche illusions and swiche meschaunces
As hethen folk useden in thilke5 dayes;
For which no lenger maked he delayes,
But, thurgh his magik, for a wike5 or twaye
It seemed that alle the rokkes were awaye.

Aurelius, which that yit despaired is
Wher6 he shall han his love or fare amis,
Awaiteth night and day on this miracle;
And whan he knew that there was noon obstacle,
That voided were thise rokkes everichoon,

Down to his maistres feet he fil7 anoon,
And saide, “I, woful wrecche Aurelius,
Thanke you, lord, and lady myn Venus,
That me han holpen8 from my cares colde.”

And to the temple his way forth hath he holde,
Wher as he knew he sholde his lady see.
And whan he saw his time, anoon right he,
With dreadful9 herte and with ful humble cheere,
Salued9 hath his sovereign lady dere.

“My righte9 lady,” quod this woful man,
“Whom I most drede and love as best I can,
And lothest were of al this world displese,
Nere it10 that I for you have swich disese
That I moste10 dien heer at youre foot anoon,
Nought wolde I telle how me is wo-bigoon.

But certes, outhere10 moste I die or plaine:9
Ye sleen7 me giltelees for verray paine;
But of my deeth though that ye have no routh,11
Aviseth you7 er that ye breke youre trouthe.

Repenteth you, for thilke God above,
Er ye me sleen7 by cause that I you love.

For Madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight—
Not that I chalenge any thing of right
Of you, my sovereign lady, but youre grace:
But in a gardin yond at swich a place,

Ye woot right wel what ye bihigten9 me,
And in myn hand youre trouthe plighten ye
To love me best. God woot ye saiden so,
Al° be that I unworthy am therto.                        although
Madame, I spoke it for the honour of you
More than to save myn hertes lif right now.
I have do so as ye comanded me,
And if ye vouche sauf, ye may go see.
Dooth as you list, have youre biheeste° in minde,
For quik° or deed° right ther ye shal finde.
In you lith° al to do° me live or deye:
But wel I woot the rokke been awaye.”

He taketh his leve and she astoned° stood:
In al hir face nas a drope of blood;
She wende° nevere have come in swich a trappe.
“Alas,” quod she, “that evere this sholde happe!
For wende I nevere by possibileee
That swich a monstre° or merveile mighte be;
It is agains the proces° of nature.”
And hoom she gooth a sorweful creature.

She weepeth, waileth al a day or two,
And swouneth° that it routhe° was to see.
But why it was to no wight tolde she,
For out of town was goon Arveragus.

But to hirself she spak and saide thus,
With face pale and with ful sorweful cheere,°
In hir complainte, as ye shal after heere:
“Alas,” quod she, “on thee, Fortune, I plaine,
That unwar° wrapped hast me in thy chaine,
For which t’ escape woot I no socour—
Save only deeth or elles dishonour:
Oon of thise two bihoveth me to chese.°
But nathelees yit have I levere to lese°
My lif, than of my body to have a shame,
Or knowen myselfen fals or lese my name,
And with my deeth I may be quit° ywis.
Hath ther nat many a noble wif er this,
And many a maide, yslain hirself, allass,
Rather than with hir body doon trespas;°

Yis, certes, lo, thise stories beren witnesse:

Whan thritty tyrants ful of cursednesse°
Hadde slain Phidon° in Athenes atte feeste,
They comanded his doughtren for t’arreste,
And bringen hem biforn hem in despit°

Al naked, to fulfille hir foule delit,
And in hir fadres blood they made hem daunce
Upon the pavement—God yive hem meschaunce!
For which thise woful maidens, ful of drede,
Rather than they wolde lese⁵ hir maidenhede,
They privily been stert² into a welle,
And dreinte⁰ hemselfen, as the bookes telle.
They of Messene enquire and seeke⁶ Of Lacedomye⁰ fifty maidens eke,
On whiche they wolden doon hir lecherye;
But ther was noon of al that compaignye
That she nas slain, and with a good entente
Chees⁰ rather for to die than assente
To been oppressed⁰ of hir maidenhede:
Why sholde I thanne to die been in drede?

Lo, eek, the tyrant Aristoclides
That loved a maiden highte Stymphalides;⁰
Whan that hir fader slain was on a night,
Unto Dianes temple gooth she aright,
And hente⁰ the image in hir handes two;
Fro which image wolde she nevere go:
No wight ne mighte hir handes of it arace,⁰
Til she was slain right in the selve⁰ place.
Now sith⁰ that maidens hadden swich despit⁰ since / indignation
To been defouled with mannes foul delit,
Wel ought a wif rather hirselves slee⁰
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.

What shal I sayn of Hasdrubales⁴ wif
That at Cartage birafte⁰ hirself hir lif?
For whan she saw that Romains wan⁰ the town,
She took hir children alle and skipte adown
Into the fir, and chees rather to die
Than any Romain dide hire vilainye.

Hath nat Lucrece yslain hirself, allas,
Of Tarquin, for hire thoughte it was a shame
To liven whan that she hadde lost hir name?
The sevene maidens of Milesie⁰ also
Han slain hemself for verray drede and wo
Rather than folk of Gaule hem sholde oppresse:

Mo⁰ than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
Coude I now telle as touching this matere.

Whan Habradate⁰ was slain, his wif so dere
Hirselves slow,⁰ and leet hir blood to glide
In Habradates woundes deepe and wide,
And said, 'My body at the leeste way
Thershal no wight defoulen, if I may.'⁶

What sholde I mo ensamples⁰ herof sayn?
Sith⁰ that so manye han hemselfen slain
Wel rather than they wolde defouled be,
I wol conclude that it is bet⁰ for me
To sleen⁰ myself than been defouled thus:
I wol be trewe unto Arveragus,

2. Have jumped.
3. Had inquiries and searches made.
4. Hasdrubal was king of Carthage when it was destroyed by the Romans.
5. If I can help it.
Or rather slee myself in som manere—
As dide Demociones⁶ daughter dere,
By cause that she wolde nat defouled be.
O Cedasus,⁶ it is ful greet pitee
To reden thy doughtren deide, allass,
That slowe himself for⁶ swich manere cas.

As greet a pitee was it, or wel moor,
The Theban maiden that for Nicanor⁹
Hirselven slow right for swich manere wo.
Another Theban maiden did right so:
For oon of Macedonie hadde hire oppressed,
She with hir deeth hir maidenhede redressed.⁷

What shal I sayn of Nicerates wif
That for swich caas birafte hirself hir lif?
How trewe eek was to Alcebiades⁸
His love, that rather for to dien chees⁹
Than for to suffre his body unburied be.

Lo, which a wif was Alceste,"⁹ quod she.
“What saieth Omer¹ of goode Penolopee?
Al Greece knoweth of hir chastitee.
Pardee, of Ladoemia² is writen thus,
That whan at Troye was slain Protheselaus,
No lenger wolde she live after his day.
The same of noble Porcia³ telle I may:
Without Brutus coude she nat live,
To whom she hadde al hool⁹ hir herte yive.
The parfit wifthood of Arthemesie⁴
Honoured is thurgh al the Barbarye.
O Teuta⁵ queen, thy wifly chastitee
To alle wives may a mirour be!
The same thing I saye of Biliea,
Of Rodogone and eek Valeria."⁶

Thus plained⁰ Dorigen a day or twaye,
Purposing evere that she wolde deye.
But nathelees upon the thridde night
Hoom cam Arveragus, this worthy knight,
And axed⁰ why that she weep⁵ so sore,
And she gan weepen evere lenger the more.⁷
“Allas,” quod she, “that evere I was born:
Thus have I said,” quod she; “thus have I sworn—”.
And tolde him al as ye han herd bifore:
It needeth nat reherce it you namore.

6. I.e., for fear of.
7. Made amends for.
8. Alcibiades’ mistress risked death by burying his body after he had been decapitated by the Spartan Lysander; she did not, however, lose her life as a result.
9. Alcestis, the proposed heroine of Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*, died in her husband’s place.
1. Homer relates Odysseus’s return from Troy to his faithful wife, Penelope.
2. Laodomia followed her dead husband, Protesilaus, to the underworld.
3. Portia swallowed burning coals on learning of Brutus’s death at the battle of Philippi.
4. Artemesia built for her husband, King Mausolus, the famed tomb called the Mausoleum.
5. Teuta, queen of Illyria, was unmarried; Dorigen seems to be stretching a point.
6. Bilia’s prowess seems to have consisted in enduring her husband’s had breath in uncomplaining silence. Rhodogune slew her nurse, who suggested that she remarried. Valeria refused to marry again.
7. Always more and more.
This housbond with glad cheer in frendly wise manner. 

Answerde and saide as I shal you devise: 

"Is there ought elles, Dorigen, but this?"

"Nay, nay,” quod she, “God help me so as wis, surely 
This is too muche, and if it were Goddes wille."

"Ye, wif,” quod he, “lat sleepe that is stille. 

It may be wel paraunter yt today. 

Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay, faith 
For God so wisy have mercy upon me, surely 
I hadde wel levere ystikede for to be, stabbed 

For verray love which that I to you have, 

But if ye sholde youre trouthe keepe and save: unless 

Trouthe is the hyeste thing that man may keepe.” 

But with that word he brast anoon to wepe, burst 

And saide, “I you forbede, up paine of deeth, upon 

That nevere whil thee lasteth lif ne breeth, 

To no wight tel thou of this aventure. 

As I may best I wol my wo endure, 
Ne make no countenance of hevinesse, appearance 
That folk of you may deemen harm or gesse.” suspect 

And forth he cleped a squier and a maide: called 

“Go forth anoon with Dorigen,” he saide, 

“And bringeth hire to swich a place anoon.” 

They tooke hir leve and on hir way they goon, 

But they ne wiste why they thider wente: knew 

He nolde no wight tellen his entente. 

Paraventure an heep of you, ywis, indeed 

Wol holden him a lewed man in this, stupid 

That he wol putte his wif in jupartye. jeopardy 

Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crye: 

She may have better fortune than you seemeth, judge 

And whan that ye han herd the tale, deemeth. 

This squier which that highte Aurelius, 

On Dorigen that was so amorous, 

Of aventure happened hire to meete 

Amidde the town, right in the quikkest streete, busiest 

As she was boun prepared / direct to goon the way forth right 

Toward the gardin ther as she hadde hight; promised 

And he was to the gardinward also, 

For wel he spied when she wolde go 

Out of hir hous to any manere place. 

But thus they meete of aventure or grace, 

And he salueth hire with glad entente, greets 

And axed of hire whiderward she wente. asked 

And she anserthe half as she were mad, 

“Unto the gardin as myn housbondes bad, bade 

My trouthe for to holde, alas, alas!” 

Aurelius gan wondren on this cas, 

And in his herte hadde greet compassioun 

Of hire and of hir lamentacioun,
And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.

That fro his lust\(^6\) yit were him levere abide\(^4\)
Than doon so heigh a cherlish wrecchednesse\(^4\)
Agains franchise\(^6\) and alle gentilesse;
For which in fewe wordes saide he thus:
“Madame, sayeth to youre lord Arveragus
To you, and eek I see weloure distresse,
That him were levere han shame—and that were routhe—
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere\(^5\) evere to suffre wo
\(^8\) And of Arveragus, the worthy knight,
That bad hire holden al that she hadde hight,
So loth him was his wif sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,\(^5\)
Considering the beste on every side
\(^3\) I.e., rather abstain.
\(^4\) I.e., low-born, miserable act.
But natheles I wol of him assaye
At certain dayes yer by yer to paye,
And thanke him of his grete curteisy
My trouthe wol I kepe, I nil nat lie."  
   With herte soor he gooth unto his cofre,
And broughte gold unto this philosophre
The value of five hundred pound, I gesse,
And him biseecheth of his gentilesse
To graunten him dayes\(^6\) of the remenaunt,\(^7\)
   And saide, "Maister, I dar wel make avaunt\(^9\)
I failed nevere of my trouthe as yit,
For sikerly\(^8\) my dette shal be quit
   Surely
Towardes you, how euer that I fare,
To goon abegged\(^9\) in my kirtel\(^9\) bare.
   Abegging / undergarment
But wolde ye vouche sauf upon suretee\(^9\)
   Security
Two yeer or three for to respiten\(^7\) me,
Thanne were I wel, for elles moot\(^8\) I selle
Myn heritage: ther is namore to telle.
   Must
This philosophre sobrely answere,
And saide thus, whan he thise wordes herde,
"Have I nat holden covenant unto thee?"
   "Yis, certes, wel and trewely," quod he.
"Hastou nat had thy lady as thee liketh?"\(^8\)
   "No, no," quod he and sorwefullly he siketh.\(^9\)
"What was the cause? Tel me if thou can."
   Sighs
Aurelius his tale anoon bigan,
And tolde him al as ye han herd bifore:
It needeth nat to you reherce it more.
   "Arveragus, of gentilesse,
Hadde levere die in sorwe and in distresse
   Also
Than that his wif were of hir trouthe fals."
The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde him als,\(^9\)
   "That made me han of hire so greet pitee;
And right as freely\(^9\) as he sente hire me,
As freely sente I hire to him again:
This al and som,\(^9\) ther is namore to sayn."
   Dear
Everich of you dide gentilly to other.
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight:
But God forbede, for his blisful might,
But if a clerk coude doon a gentil deede
   Doubt
As wel as any of you, it is no drede.\(^9\)
   Before
Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were cropen\(^1\) out of the ground,
Ne nevere er\(^9\) now ne haddest knowne me.
For sire, I wol nat take a peny of thee,
For al my craft ne nought for my travaile. Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaile:
It is ynough. And farewel, have good day.”
And took his hors and forth he gooth his way.

Lordinges, this question thanne wol I axe now:

Which was the moste free, as thinketh you?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.
I can namore: my tale is at an ende.