

THE CANTERBURY TALES.

—

THE PROLOGUE.

—

WHAN that Aprillē with his schowrēs swootē
 The drougt of Marche hath perced to the rootē,
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
 Of which vertue engendred is the flour;—
 Whan Zephirus eek with his swetē breethē 5
 Enspired hath in every holte and heethē
 The tendre croppēs, and the yongē sonnē
 Hath in the Ram his halfē cours i-ronnē,

1. *Swoote*.—*Swoot* and *swet* (line 5) are the old forms of *sweet*; the final *e* is here the sign of the plural, in line 5 of the definite.
2. *Perced* = pierced; the pronunciation long outlasted the spelling. Milton, *L'Allegro*, 137-8, makes *perce* rime with *verse*.
3. *Swich* = such, from *sua* = so, and *lic* = like.
4. *Vertue*.—The Fr. equivalent of the Eng. *might*, power. *Of*, like the Fr. *de*, means from or by. The sense is "By which virtue or power, viz. the sunshine and showers of spring, the flowers are engendered or produced." Cf. old couplet:

"March winds and April showers
 Bring forth May flowers."

Cf.: "Jesus knowing that *virtue* had gone out of him," Mark v. 30 and Luke vi. 19. *Flour* and *flower* are the same word; first the bloom of plants, next a product of sublimation (chemical term), as flowers of sulphur, then any fine powder, as meal, wheaten flour.

5. *Eek* = also, Ger. *auch*. *Swete*, see note, line 1.
6. *Holte* = *Holt*, a wood or plantation; extant as a provincialism, and in several local names, as Knockholt in Kent.
7. *Yonge sonne* (*yonge* is the definite of *yong*).—Because he has as yet run through but one of the twelve signs of the zodiac.
8. *Halfe cours*.—"The Man of Lawes" in the prologue to his tale tells us that it is the 18th of April: Chaucer in his *Astrolabe* always refers to the signs, not the constellations, and in his first figure places opposite the month of April the latter half of the Ram

And smalē fowlēs maken melodie,
 That slepen al the night with open eye, 10
 So priketh hem nature in here corāges:—
 Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimāges,
 And palmers for to seeken straungē strondēs,
 To fernē halwes, kouthe in sondry londēs;

- and the first half of the Bull. The former of these was now just completed; the sun had run that half of the Ram which falls in April. *I-ronne*, *i* or *y*, the sign of the past, part., represents, doubtless too in sound, the O. E. *ge-*, retained in German.
- 9, 10. *Maken* and *slepen* are plurals, so is *smale*.
 11. *Priketh* = excites, urges, prompts.
 11. *Hem* = them, obj. pl.; *here*, poss. pl. = their; the fem. poss. now *her*, is written by Chaucer *hir*, *hire* (see description of the Prioress, p. 49). In A. S. *hira* = their (all genders), *hire* = her.
 11. *Corage*.—Heart, from Lat. *cor*, Fr. *cœur*, heart. The meaning courage is secondary to this.
 12. *To gon* = *to goen* = to go. Our perf. *went* is borrowed from another verb, to *wend* (see line 16), obsolete except in the phrase "to wend one's way." The Aryan root *ga* underlies nearly all the words implying motion in Sanscrit, Teutonic, and even Greek. Some derive the A. S. perf. *ebde* from the root *i*, found also in Latin *eo*, *ire*, but this is doubtful, for in O. H. German they seem to pass into one another.
 13. *Palmers*.—A pilgrim was one who made a single or occasional journey to a shrine without any special conditions; a palmer, so called from the staff of a palm-tree which he carried as evidence of his having visited the Holy Land, professed poverty, and must pass his whole life in perpetual pilgrimages. Another badge of the palmer was some scallop-shells, as seen in the arms of families of the name of Palmer, presumed to have been gathered by him on the "straunge strondes" or foreign shores that he had visited. "Foreign" was the original meaning of *strange*, as still of the Fr. *étranger*.
 13. *For to seeken*.—The gerundial obj., not the infin. One must understand *longen* after *palmers* and *wenden* before *to ferne halwes*.
 14. *Ferne halwes, kouthe* = distant saints known. *Ferne* or *ferren*, from the adv. *far*, must be distinguished from *foreign*, Fr. *forain*, Low Lat. *foraneus*, from L. *foras*, out of doors, abroad. A *g* has been interpolated from a false analogy with *reign* = *regnum*. Others would explain this as meaning *olden*, *ancient*, A. S. *fyrn*.

And specially, from every schirës endë 15
 Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wendë,
 The holy blisful martir for to seekë,
 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seekë.
 Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay, 20
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimagë
 To Caunterbury with ful devout coragë,
 At night was come into that hostelrie
 Wel nyne and twenty in a compainye,
 Of sondry folk, by aventure i-fallë 25
 In felaweschipe, and pilgryms were thei allë,

Halwes = holy ones, saints. All Hallows' is All Saints' day. *Kouth*, pl. of *kouth* or *couth*, part. of *cunnan*, to know. *Uncouth* is unknown, strange, thence awkward. *Outlandish*, once foreign, has undergone the same change of meaning.

17. *Holy blisful martir*.—Thomas à Becket, called also St. Thomas of Canterbury.
 18. *Seek*.—Pl. of *seek*, A.S. *seoc* = sick; in the previous line it is the verb to seek.
 19. *Byfel*.—Verb impers., it befell or chanced.
 20. *Tabard*.—Defined by Speght, in his Glossary to Chaucer, as a sleeveless jacket or coat, formerly worn by nobles in war, but now by heralds only. On it were emblazoned their arms, whence the expression "coat of arms." It was the sign of a well-known inn in Southwark, to which adjoined the house of the Abbot of Hyde, near Winchester.
 20. *Lay* = resided. "When the court lay at Windsor."—*Merry Wives of Windsor*, ii. 2.
 23. *Was*.—Collective singular. We should now say *were*.
 23. *Hostelrie*.—O.Fr. *hostellerie*, Mod. Fr. *hôtellerie*, lengthened from *hostel*, *hôtel*, Eng. *hotel*. Our word *host* comes through the French from L. *hospes*, a guest, a host. *Ostler*, now the man in charge of the stables, is really *hostellier*, or the keeper of the inn. *Host*, an army, is from L. *hostis*, enemy; and the *host* or consecrated elements in the Roman Catholic Church from L. *hostia*, a sacrifice, first for victory over an enemy, then any sacrifice.
 25. *Aventure*.—Fr.; in Mod. E. *adventure*. Chaucer accentuates French words on the last syllable.
 25. *I-fulle* = *i-fallen* = fallen, i.e. by adventure or chance.

That toward Caunterbury wolden rydë.
 The chambres and the stables weren wydë,
 And wel we weren esed attë bestë.
 And schortly, whan the sonnë was to restë, 30
 So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
 That I was of here felaweschipe anon,
 And madë forward erly for to rysë,
 To take our wey ther as I yow devysë.
 But natheles, whiles I have tyme and spacë, 35
 Or that I forther in this talë pacë,
 Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
 To telle yow allë the condicioun
 Of eche of hem, so as it semede me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degrë; 40
 And eek in what array that they were innë:
 And at a knight than wol I first bygynnë.

27. *Wolden* = would, past tense of *will*, which had not lost its primary signification of to wish, L. *volo*.
 28. *Weren* = were. A.S. *wæron*.
 29. *Esed atte beste* = entertained in the best manner. Easement is still used as a law term for accommodation.
 30. *To reste* = at rest. *To* is used in the western counties and in the U. States for *at*, as *zu* in German.
 31. *Everychon* = ever each one, every one.
 32. *Anon* = immediately, probably *on an* (instant).
 34. *Ther as I yow devyse* = where I tell you of. Devise was to describe, as advise to inform. Cf. trade term an *advice*.
 35. *Natheless*.—Not the less, nevertheless.
 35. *Whiles*, from *while* = time; *whiles* = *whilst*, a genitive form.
 36. *I forther in this tale pace* = I pass further in this tale.
 37. *Me thinketh*.—Same as "It semede me," in line 39: the *me* is the dative case after the impers. verb *it thinketh*. In A.S. and O.E. *thencan* = to think, and *thyncan* = to seem. The Germans keep up the distinction, *ich denke, es dünkt mir*.
 37. *Acordaunt* = according. The Eng. ending *-ing* had not yet replaced the Fr. *-ant*.
 41. *Inne*, the adverb; *in*, the prep.
 42. *Wol*.—Not found in the oldest Eng. or A.S.; a *quasi* regular present suggested by the past *wolde*.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That from the tymē that he first bigan
 To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye, 45
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
 Ful worthi was he in his lordēs werrē,
 And therto hadde he riden, noman ferrē,
 As wel in Christendom as in hethenessē,
 And evere honoured for his worthinessē. 50
 At Alisandre he was whan it was wonnē.
 Ful oftē tyme he hadde the bord bygonnē

43. *Knicht*.—The primary idea conveyed by this word is that of a personal attendant of any kind. In A.S. a disciple is *leorning cricht*, but in O.H. Ger. of the 8th and 9th centuries *kneht* is used without any qualifying words for *servant*, *soldier*, or *disciple*. Next it became restricted to the armed and mounted attendants on a king or noble, and those who before the rise of regular cavalry had received from the king or prince the right to fight on horseback. The corresponding Fr. *chevalier*, It. *cavaliere*, Sp. *caballero*, and German *ritter*, all imply the act of riding. In German the *knēcht* in like manner at one time connoted horsemanship, but has been degraded to mean a stableman, or colloquially a mean fellow.
45. *Chyvalrye*.—Chivalry, the rules and duties of knighthood. Fr. *cheval*, Low L. *caballus* = a horse.
46. Mr. Earle considers these to be two pairs of synonyms, one Saxon and one French, illustrating the fact that we often find a Saxon and a French word for the same thing existing side by side in Middle English. This I doubt, for *courtesie* = the manners of courts, can hardly be defined as "fredom."
47. *Werre* = wars.
48. *Ferre* = comp. of *fer* = far. No man further.
49. *Hethenessē* = heathendom. He had, like many other knights of that age, served, when his own country was at peace, under several foreign princes as a volunteer or free-lance.
51. Alexandria was taken by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, in 1365.
52. *He hadde the bord bygonne*.—An obscure expression. Cotgrave says "Gaigner le hault bout" = to win the highest prize, also to take the highest place at table, so that *bord* may be board = table; or it may be Low Ger. *boort* or M.H.G. *buhurt* = joust, tournament.

Aboven allē naciouns in Prucē.
 In Lettowe hadde he reysed and in Rucē,
 No cristen man so ofte of his degrē. 55
 In Gernade attē siegē hadde he be
 Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
 At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Greetē see
 At many a noble arive hadde he be. 60
 At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
 And foughten for oure feith at Tramassene

- 53, 54.—*Pruce, Lettow, and Ruce* = Prussia, Lithuania (Ger. *Lettau*), and Russia. Our knight had served in these countries with the Teutonic knights who were engaged in constant hostilities with their Pagan and Mohammedan neighbours. They had compelled the Pagan Slavs of Russia to embrace Christianity in the preceding century, but the Lithuanians were still heathen, and though the Russian people had received Christianity at an early period, their country was overrun by Tatars, and they were struggling against the authority of the successors of Zinghis Khan.
54. *Reysed*.—A. S. *ræsan*, to rush or make inroads into a country. Cf. our word *race*. The Germans use *reisen* = to travel.
- 56, &c.—*Algeziras* was taken from the Moorish King of Granada (Gernade) by Alphonso XI. of Castile in 1342, though Granada itself was not reduced till 1492. *Lieys* in Armenia and *Satalie* (Attalia) were taken from the Turks by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, in 1367 and 1352 respectively.
59. *The Greete see*.—The Great Sea, the name frequently used in the O. T. for the Levant or eastern portion of the Mediterranean, to distinguish it from the Red Sea and the lakes of Palestine. It is used in the same sense by Sir J. Mandeville.
60. *Arive* = arrival or disembarkation.
61. *Mortal* = deadly. We still say mortal strife in poetry or rhetorical language. Cf. *Parad. Lost*, line 1, 2:

"The fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death, &c.

Our present usage is a return to the classical meaning of the word.

In lystes thriës, and ay slayn his foo.
 This ilkë worthi knight hadde ben also
 Somtymë with the lord of Palatye, 65
 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
 And though that he was worthy he was wys,
 And of his port as meke as is a maydë.
 He never yit no vileinye ne saydë 70

63. *Lystes*.—Properly the inclosure for tournaments, &c., like our modern ring; then, as here, any single combat.
64. *Ilkë* = same; A.S. *ylc*. Cf. Scot. "of that ilk;" as, "Sir James Grant of that ilk," that is, of Grant.
65. *Palatye* (Palathia) in Anatolia, a lordship held by the Christian knights after the Turkish conquest.
66. *Ageyn* = against.
36. *Hethen* = any non-Christian, not necessarily an idolater. Heathen from *heath*, and pagan from *pagus*, a village, were used to designate those who adhered to the ancient religions while Christianity was as yet almost confined to the more intelligent inhabitants of the town. The first instance of this use of the word *pagan* occurs in an edict of the Emperor Valentinian, A.D. 368. The earlier fathers employed *Gentile* in the same sense.
67. *Sovereyn prys* = highest renown. Sovereign, from Low Lat. *superanus*, from L. *super*, above; Sp. *soverano*, It. *sovrano*, O.Fr. *souverain*, Mod. Fr. *souverain*. The *g* insinuated itself into the older French word through a false analogy with *règne* (L. *regnum*), a kingdom. Milton's familiarity with Italian led him to write *soveran*, and why should not we drop the *g* as the French have? *Praise*, *prize*, and *price* are all of the same origin, L. *pretium*, value.
68. *Though that he was worthy*. *Worthy* here means bold; though bold, he was prudent and gentle or unassuming.
70. *Vileinye*.—Any conduct unbecoming a gentleman. *Villanus*, from *villa*, a farm, was originally simply a serf, then by association of ideas a rude, unmannerly, low-bred fellow, then a blackguard, irrespectively of his social rank. *Boor* (Ger. *bauer* and Dutch *boer*) has undergone the like change of meaning, and *churl* (A.S. *ceorl* or *carl*), a free tenant at will, a corresponding degradation.

In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
 He was a verray perfight gentil knight.
 But for to tellë you of his aray,
 His hors was good, but he ne was nougt gay.
 Of fustyan he wered a gepoun
 Al bysmoterëd with his haburgeoun, 75

71. *No maner wight* = no manner of wight. This word (A.S. *wiht*), now nearly obsolete, is a great loss to our language. It implied simply a human being, male or female. The Scotch have *body* as an equivalent; we are compelled, except in the expressions any-, some-, no-, and everybody, to substitute creature, person, individual, or some other less appropriate Latin periphrase.
72. *Verray perfight gentil knight*.—*Verray*, O.F. *vray*, now *vrai* = true, truly. L. *verus*, true. (Ger. *wahr*.) *Perficht*, now more correctly *perfect*, L. *perfectus*. In *delight*, L. *delecto*, we still retain the *gh* from a false analogy with *light*. *Gentile* and *gentle* are each derived from L. *gens*, a nation or family. The former, like the Greek *ta ethnea* (the nations) was used to distinguish the nations of the world from God's chosen people Israel, and later, heathens from Christians. Hooker, *Ecl. Pol.* v. 2, speaks of "the falsehood of oracles, whereupon all gentility was built." The latter was applied in the age of chivalry to one whose family had been noble or *armigeri*, i.e. entitled to bear certain devices on their arms, for several generations, four in England and Germany, three in France, where the first was *annobli*, the second *noble*, the third *un gentilhomme*, a title to which many a duke or marquis could not lay claim. Our James I. told his nurse that he could make her son a lord but not a gentleman. Only gentlemen in this sense were eligible for several knightly orders, as the Teutonic; and the rule obtains still, in the case of some continental or at least German orders. Next *gentle*, as in the text, implied the possession of those moral and social qualities supposed to mark a man of noble blood. It means far more than *mek* (line 69), indeed it includes all that has been described in lines 68-71.
74. *Ne. . . nougt*. A double negation in O.E. does not constitute an affirmative.
74. *Gay* refers to attire or dress, not to manners.
75. *Gepoun*.—Dim. of *gipe*, a short plaided coat.
76. *Haburgeoun*.—Dim. of or synonymous with *hauberk*, from O.G. *hals*, neck or chest, and *bergen*, to cover; a coat of chain-mail without

For he was late ycome from his viagē,
 And wentē for to doon his pilgrimagē.
 With him ther was his sone, a yong SCUYER,
 A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler, 80
 With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in pressē.
 Of twenty yeer he was of age I gessē.
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthē,
 And wondurly delyver, and gret of strenghtē.
 And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie, 85
 In Flaundes, in Artoys, and Picardie,

sleeves, before the introduction of plate armour; it was long enough to protect the abdomen and legs.

"Helm nor hauberks twisted mail."—Gray's *Bard*.

76. *Bysmotered*.—Besmattered or soiled with rust and blood.
 77. *Viage* = voyage or travels. Voyage, as in French, was used of travels by land as well as by sea down to the end of the seventeenth century. He had just come back from the wars, and had vowed to go straight to the shrine to return thanks for his preservation.
 79. *Squyer* = esquire, O.F. *escuyer*, from Lat. *scutiger*, in classic Latin an armour-bearer, in mediæval language successively an armed attendant on a prince or knight, a gentleman armed and mounted at his own expense, and one entitled to armorial bearings. *Escuage* was pecuniary composition for such personal service.
 80. *Lusty* = merry.
 80. *Bachelor*.—Few words have puzzled antiquarians and etymologists more than this. Modern authorities derive the word (Fr. *bachelier*, O. Fr. *bachelor*) from Low L. *baccalarius*, the owner of a small farm, a farm-servant. *Knights Bachelors*, the lowest and oldest of the orders of knighthood; and *Bachelors* in the universities are the lowest order of graduates in the several faculties of arts, law, medicine, divinity, &c. The academic term is always written *Baccalaureus*, as if it had something to do with laurel wreaths. *Bachileria* as an old law term signified freemen below the rank of nobles. A *bachelor* is also an unmarried man.
 81. *Crulle* = curled. Dutch *krol*, *krolle*. The displacement of the *r* is common. E. *bird* in A.S. is *brīd*.
 84. *Delyver* = lithesome, active. Fr. *delivre*, L. *liber* = free.
 85. *Chivachie* = Fr. *chevauchée*, a raid or expedition of cavalry (*c.ieval*, a horse).
 86. *At Cressy*, &c., under Edward III.

And born him wel, as in so litel spacē,
 In hope to stonden in his lady gracē.
 Embrowded was he, as it were a mede
 Al ful of fresshē flourēs, white and reede. 90
 Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
 He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
 Schort was his goune, with sleevēs longe and wydē.
 Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and fairē rydē.
 He cowdē songēs wel make and enditē, 95
 Juste and eek daunce, and wel purtray and writē.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
 He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,
 And carf byform his fader at the table. 100
 A YEMAN had he, and servauntz nomoo
 At that tymē, for him lust rydē soo;

87. *Born him wel*.—Acquitted himself well.
 88. *Lady grace*.—The old possessive fem. was *e*, not *es*; *lady* stands for *ladye*. Cf. *Lady Day*.
 89. *Embrowded* = embroidered, *i.e.* in his dress.
 91. *Floytynge* = fluting, or playing the flute.
 95. *Endite* = recite or relate.
 96. *Juste and eek daunce* = joust, or contend in a tournament, and also dance.
 96. *Purtray* = *portray* = draw or paint. He was as accomplished as he was manly and strong.
 97. *Hote* = hotly. *E* is the adverbial ending.
 97. *Nightertale* = night-time. *Tale* has here its primary import of a number or reckoning, viz. of the hours. So, too, to tell meant to count. Cf.: "The *tale* of the bricks," Ex. v. 8 and 18. "We spend our years as a *tale* that is told," Ps. xc. 9. "The shepherd tells his *tale*," *i.e.* counts over his sheep. Milton, *L'Allegro*. In modern Ger. *zahl* (number) and *zahlen* (to number) retain their original sense exclusively.
 99. *Servysable* = willing to be of service, to make himself useful.
 100. *Carf* = carved.
 101. *Yeman* = a yeoman, an attendant above the rank of a menial servant. It was used in a secondary sense of the middle class of the rural population, and lastly to signify a small landholder

And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
 A shef of pocok arwēs bright and kene
 Under his belte he bar full thriftily. 105
 Wel cowde he dresse his takel yemanly;
 His arwēs drowpede nougt with fetheres lowe.
 And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe.
 A not-heed hadde he, with a broun visagē.
 Of woode-craft cowde he wel al the usagē. 110

not a gentleman. *Gwds*, O.H.G., a young man or servant, *gwds gyroch*, a strong brave man. Krensiar's *Urteutsche Sprache*.

102. *Ryde*, for *ryden* = to ride. The inf. "He had a yeoman, but no more servants at that time, for it pleased him to ride so" (without more escort).
103. *He*, *i.e.* the yeoman.
104. *Pocok arwes*.—Arrows winged with peacock feathers. Ascham in his *Toxophilus* pronounces peacock feathers to be greatly inferior to those of the goose for real use, though thought by some to be more showy. Peacock is from Fr. *paon*, L. *pavo*, *pavonis*. It has nothing to do with peas, any more than *gooseberry*, Fr. *groseille*, has with geese. These words illustrate the tendency to press some meaning into the spelling of a foreign word.
105. *Thriftily* = carefully, sparingly. This good old word *thrift* is almost obsolete, having been superseded by the cumbrous economy, which really implies the whole of housekeeping. Cf. *political economy*, of which retrenchment is but a small part.
106. *Dresse* = set in order, make straight, direct. Fr. *dresser*, It. *dirizzare*, L. *dirigere*. The original idea of making straight is retained in the military terms of "dressing the men," *i.e.* by their heights, and "dressing up" a rank or a part of it.
106. *Takel*.—Tackle, though now used only of ship's cordage and pulleys, or of those of certain machines, originally meant any implements whatever. Cf. *gear*, which, except in head-gear, is almost exclusively a nautical term nowadays.
107. *Nought* = not. Ger. *nicht*.
109. *Not-heed*.—Cropped head. Cf. *Roundheads*. To *not*, according to Bailey's *Dictionary*, 11th ed. 1745, was still used in Essex for to crop or shear.
110. *Cowde*, in its primary signification of *he knew*.

Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,
 And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
 And on that other side a gay daggere,
 Harneysed wel, and scharp as poynt of spere;
 A Cristofre on his brest of silver schene. 115
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
 A forster was he sothly, as I gessē.
 Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
 Hire gretteste ooth ne was but by seynte Loy; 120
 And sche was cleped madame Englentyne.
 Ful wel sche sang the servisē devyne,
 Entuned in hire nose ful semēly;
 And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,

111. *Bracer* = a covering for the arm. Fr. *bras*, the arm. Cf. *bracelet*, dim. of same word. According to Ascham it was a sleeve of leather without nails or buckles, which with a shooting glove formed a gauntlet, and served not only to protect the arm from the bowstring, but presented a smooth surface for the string to glide along.
112. *Bokeler*.—Buckler. Fr. *bouclier*, akin to *buckle*, a shield of leather strengthened with an iron boss and plates.
114. *Harneysed* = harnessed = equipped, in reference here to the sheath and belt.
115. *Cristofre*.—A brooch with the effigy of St. Christopher, held as a charm.
115. *Schene* = bright; A.S. *scīne*. Cf. *shining*. Ger. *schön*, beautiful.
116. *Bawdrik*.—O.H.G. *balderich*, deriv. of *belt*, a military belt, often decked with jewels.
117. *Forster*.—Forester. Ger. *förster*.
117. *Sothly* = truly. Cf. *forsooth*, *soothsayer*, &c.
119. *Coy* = quiet. Fr. *coi*.
120. *Loy*.—Probably Louis, a mild oath. See note on line 164.
123. *Nose*.—Speght would read voice, but *nose* is found in all the best MSS.
123. *Semely*.—The three syllables to be distinctly sounded.
124. *Fetysly*, or *fetously*, later *featly*. From O.Fr. *faictis*, neatly done, prettily.

After the scole of Stratford attē Bowē, 125
 For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowē.
 At metē wel i-taught was sche withallē;
 Sche leet no morsel from hire lippēs fallē,
 Ne wette hire fynGRES in hire saucē deepē.
 Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepē, 130
 That no dropē ne fil uppon hire brest.
 In curtesie was set ful moche hire lest.
 Hire overlippē wyped sche so clenē,
 That in hire cuppē was no ferthing senē
 Of greecē, whan sche dronken hadde hire draughtē. 135
 Ful semēly after hire mete sche raughtē.
 And sikerly sche was of gret disport,
 And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,
 And peynēd hire to counterfetē cheere
 Of court, and ben estatlich of manere, 140

- 125. *Scole*.—School (in sense of style) of Stratford, *i.e.* Norman French; not unlike the old Law French.
- 127. *At mete*.—At meals. These simple directions for behaviour at table are to be found in Caxton's *Book of Curtesye*, *The Babie's Book*, and other mediæval manuals.
- 129. *Sauce* = a saucer, a deep plate. For *sauce* as a made dish, see note on l. 625. Fingers had not yet been superseded by forks and spoons.
- 131. *No dropē ne fil* = no drop fall. Double negative, as in French and A.S.
- 132. *Lest*.—Pleasure. She affected to be a woman of fashion and good breeding.
- 133. *Overlippe*.—Upper lip.
- 134. *Ferthing*.—Literally a fourth part. Cf. *farthing* (of a penny). Hence the smallest fragment.
- 136. *Mete* = food of any kind; butcher's meat was until the seventeenth century always termed *flesh*, as in our Bible, where also the *meat-offering* means one consisting usually of the fruits of the earth.
- 136. *Raughte*.—The old past tense of *reche*, to reach. Like *teach*, *taught*.
- 137. *Sikerly*.—Surely. Ger. *sicherlich*.
- 137. *Disport*.—A noun; we now use it only as a verb.
- 139. *Peyned hire* = she laboured or studied; a verb reflexive; *pains* and *painful* long retained the meaning of effort without any thought

And to ben holden digne of reverencē.
 But for to speken of hire consciencē,
 Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
 Sche woldē weepe if that sche sawe a mous
 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bleddē. 145
 Of smalē houndēs hadde sche, that sche feddē
 With rosted fleissch or mylk and wastel breed.
 But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
 Or if men smot it with a yerdē smertē:
 And al was consciēce and tendrē hertē. 150

- of suffering. Hooker, *Eccles. Pol.* v. 19, speaks of the "painful travels" of Biblical translators, *i.e.* careful labours.
- 139. *Cheere*.—O.Fr. *chiere*. Countenance, aspect. Cf. "Be of good cheer."
- 140. *Estatlich*.—Stately. See note on l. 132.
- 141. *Digne* = worthy; L. *dignus*.
- 145. *Deed* = dead.
- 146. *Houndes*.—Probably dogs not necessarily for hunting.
- 147. *Wastel*.—A cake. Fr. *gâteau*; the O.Fr. was *gastel*, in Picardy *owastel*; Anglo-Norman *wastel*; not the usual food of dogs, unless ladies' pets. The finest flour called bolted (or sifted) was made into manchet bread, O.Fr. *michette*, *miche*, L. *mica*; the unbolted into *chete* or coarse wheaten, *i.e.* brown bread; while the middle classes and servants used *mesclēin*, or *maslin*, a mixture of wheaten and rye flour, and the poor a still coarser though most nutritious meal of rye, oatmeal, and lentils. Fancy breads were also made under the names of *paynepuffe*, *march*, or *mass-pane*, &c.
- 149. *Men smot*.—*Men*, or O.E. *me*, stands, like the Ger. *man*, or Fr. *on*, O.Fr. *om*, *i.e.* *homme*, for one; if *men* pl. were meant the verb would be *smote*.
- 149. *Yerde*.—Originally a rod or stick of any kind; secondarily, a measure; so pole is used in either sense. Yard retains its primary meaning in a ship's yards; and *pertica*, the source of our perch, is simply a pole or long staff in Latin and Italian.
- 149. *Smerte*.—Probably the adverb *smartly*.
- 150. The context shows that *consciēce* here and in line 142 means rather feeling, sensibility, than the high moral sense implied by the word now.

Ful semely hire wympel i-pynchèd was;
 Hire nose tretys; hire eyen greye as glas;
 Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
 But sikerly sche hadde a fair forheed.
 It was almost a spannè brood, I trowë; 155
 For hardily sche was not undergrowë.
 Ful fetys was hire cloke, as I was waar.
 Of smal coral aboute hire arme sche baar
 A peire of bedës gauded al with grene;
 And theron heng a broch of gold ful schene, 160
 On which was first i-writen a crowned A,
 And after *Amor vincit omnia*.

151. *Wympel*.—Wimple, a plaited white linen covering for the neck and shoulders, worn mostly by elderly women and nuns. *I-pynched*, drawn close.

152. *Tretys*.—A.N., long and well proportioned, probably connected with the Fr. *trait*, drawn out.

Harl. MS. reads *streight*, but *tretys* Ellesm. suits the verse better.

153. *Reed* = red. The proper name *Reed* or *Reid* is the same.

154. *Fair*.—Fine, not fair complexioned.

156. *Hardily*.—Same as *sikerly* in line 154.

157. *Waar* = aware.

159. *Bedes*.—The original meaning of beads was prayer, A.S. *biddan*, to pray, Ger. *beten*, then the "beads" used as aids in counting the paternosters and ave-marias to be repeated consecutively. The "bidding prayer" in the Church of England service, in which the minister calls on the people to pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth, owes its name to the pre-reformation practice of the priest before beginning his sermon calling on the people to pray silently for the king, pope, &c., and to say a paternoster, an ave-maria, &c., on their beads.

Gauded al with grene.—The larger beads were called *gaudies*, because *gauded* or ornamented with gold, silver, or colours. (Palsgrave.)

160. *Broch* or *brooch* was used not for a clasp-pin, but for any such jewel or ornament; here it seems to have been a kind of locket. In 1845 a brooch in the form of an A, with the Norman French inscription, "Jo fas amer, e doz de amer," apparently of the fourteenth century, was found in a field in Dorset.

Another NONNĚ with hire haddë sche,
 That was hire chapeleyn, and PRESTRĚS thre.

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie, 165
 An out-rydere, that loved venerye;

163, 164. These lines, which have given rise to many conjectures, have been fully cleared up by Mr. Furnivall in a letter to the Academy (May, 1880), by an appeal to a lady who had herself held the office of secretary and chaplain to the lady abbess of a convent of Benedictine nuns in England. She says, *inter alia*, that one of her duties was to hold the crozier when on the great festivals the abbess intoned the hymns and read the capitulums, lessons, and prayers, her hands being occupied with her book. On the Continent the chaplain held the book, for in an old French ceremonial of the Abbey of Montmartre, dated 1669, there is mention not only of the "Chapeline" but also of the "Porte-Crosse." "Une des sœurs sera choisie par la mère abbess pour estre sa chapeline. Sa place au chœur sera du costé droit, proche du siège de la mère abbess, qui lors qu'elle sera obligée de chanter quelque chose, la chapeline viendra à sa costé droit afin de luy tenir le livre; ce qu'elle fera encore aux processions et autres céremonies." Further on in the same chapter is the office of "Porte-Crosse,"—"une sœur qui viendra au costé gauche de la mère abbess lorsqu'il faudra se servir de la crosse," &c.

In the Benedictine abbey (for nuns) at Rheims, there were "chapels in the church, each of course with an altar, and some of these chapels were each to have daily mass. Now a priest can say but one mass daily, therefore where more than one daily mass was required, more priests must necessarily be kept."

As to the equivocal "St. Loy," the lady naively observes, "I can only believe that 'St. Loy' was an expression, no real name, and thus (!) no real oath."

165. *A fair for the maistrie* = one who bid fair to excel in his profession. *For the maistrie* is equivalent to the French phrase *pour la maistrie*, which in old medical books is applied to such medicines as we usually call sovereign, excellent, above all others. (Tyrwhitt.)

166. *Out-rydere*.—One who could ride cross country.

Venerye = hunting. The monks of the middle ages were extremely attached to hunting and field sports; and this was a frequent subject of complaint with the more austere ecclesiastics.

A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
 Full many a deynté hors hadde he in stable :
 And whan he rood, men might his bridel heerē
 Gynglyng in a whistlyng wynd as cleerē, 170
 And eek as lowde as doth the chapel bellē.
 Ther as this lord was keperē of the sellē

170. *Gynglyng* = jingling. Fashionable riders hung small bells to their bridles and harness. Wycliffe, a contemporary of Chaucer, denounces the worldliness of the clergy, their "fair hors (pl.) and joly and gay sadeles and bridels ringing by the way."

Spenser makes mention of these "bells" in his description of a lady's steed:—

"Her wanton palfrey all was overspread
 With tinsel trappings, woven like a wave,

Whose bridle rung with golden bells and bosses brave."

172-176. The meaning of this passage is "At the cell where this lord was the superior the rules of SS. Benedict and Maur were observed; but since these rules were old and somewhat strict he let them be regarded as obsolete, and followed the newer fashions."

Ther as = where that.

Selle.—A cell, originally the private chamber of each single monk, was afterwards used to designate a religious house which was not incorporated or itself possessed of endowments, but in connection with and dependent on some larger monastery. Of such a house this lord, as he is ironically called, was the superior, not having as yet attained the rank of abbot, though probably destined to be one before long.

St. Benet or Benedict of Nursia in Italy, born A.D. 480, founded the order of Benedictines, whose mode of life was severely ascetic. Their rules were revised by Benedict of Aniana in Languedoc, A.D. 817. In the middle ages they were the greatest conservators of learning, and the first English monks were of this order, which from the twelfth century became the wealthiest and most influential in Christendom.

St. Mawr, or Mauritius, a disciple of St. Benedict.

Pace = pass by: for "olde thinges pace" the Harl. MS. reads "forby hem pace," *forby* meaning away.

Space.—Lansd. MS. *pace* = steps.

Olde thinges.—This is the reading of most of the MSS., and I have adopted it instead of that of the MS. Harl. *forby hem*, which appears to give no clear sense.

The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
 Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
 This ilke monk leet oldē thingēs pacē, 175
 And helde after the newē world the spacē.
 He gaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
 That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
 Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheles
 Is likned to a fische that is waterles; 180
 This is to seynt, a monk out of his cloystre.
 But thilkē text held he not worth an oystre.
 And I seide his opinioun was good.
 What schulde he studie, and make himselfen wood,
 Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powrē, 185
 Or swynkē with his handēs, and labourē,
 As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
 Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.

177. A *pulled hen*, a moulting hen, a worthless hen, because neither laying eggs nor fit for food. Mr. Earle suggests that *pulled* = pullet, but surely a *pullet* would be good for something. Tyrwhitt says, "I do not see much force in the epithet *pulled*." It is sometimes explained as a *plucked hen*; but *pulled* is evidently for *pilled*, bald, or scalled (scurfy).

Text, an authoritative quotation; so the term *scripture* was applied to the writings of saints, &c., as well as to the Bible.

178. *Noon* = none.

179-181 *Reccheles* = reckless, careless. A.S. *reccan*, to think, regard.

All the oldest MSS. read *reccheles*, though Mr. T. Wright, on the authority of one at Cambridge, proposes *cloysterles*. The "text," he observes, is taken from a Decretal of Gratian—"Sicut piscis sine aqua caret vita, ita sine monasterio monachus." Had Chaucer, however, written *cloysterles* the explanation in l. 181 would have been superfluous and redundant. Prof. Ten Brink suggests *resettes*, i.e. without shelter; but, unsatisfactory as *reccheles* may be, all authority supports it.

183. *Seide* = said.

184. *Wood*.—A.S. *wod*, from *wedan*, to rage or be mad. Cf. Mod. Ger. *wüthen*, to rave. In this sentiment he shows his disregard of the traditions of his order. *Wud* = mad, is still used in Scotland.

186. *Swynke* = to toil.

187. *Byt* = bids. St. Augustine of Canterbury enjoined on his clergy a life of the utmost strictness and simplicity.

Therefore he was a pricasour aright;
 Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowels in flight; 190
 Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
 I saugh his slevës purfiled atte hondë
 With grys, and that the fynest of a londë.
 And for to festne his hood under his chynne 195
 He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pynne:
 A love-knotte in the grettere ende ther was.
 His heed was balled, and schon as eny glas,
 And eek his face as he hadde ben anoynt.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt; 200
 His eyeen steepe, and rolling in his heed,
 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
 His bootës souple, his hors in gret estate;
 Now certainly he was a fair prelate;
 He was not pale as a for-pyned goost. 205
 A fat swan lovede he best of eny roost.

189. *Pricasour* = a hard rider, one who pricks or spurs his horse.
 191. *Of*, i.e. in.
 192. *Lust* = pleasure.—At no cost would he give up such pursuits.
 193. *Purfiled*.—Fr. *pourfiler*, to embroider; here it means *trimmed*. L. *filum* = a thread.
Atte honde = at the hand (or cuff).
 194. *Grys*.—A costly (gray?) fur. Fr. *gris*, gray.
 198. His head was bald.
 200. *In good poynt*.—Rendering of Fr. *embonpoint*.
 201. *Steepe*.—Not steep, deep, sunken, but an old word meaning bright.
 "His twa ehnen semden steappre thene sterren," his two eyes seemed brighter than stars.
 202. *Stemed as a forneys of a leed*.—Shone or glowed as the furnace of or under a cauldron. The O.E. *steme* was not restricted to the steam of water. The old dictionary called the Promptorium Parvulorum defines L. *flamma* as the "steme of fyre."
 203. It was the fashion to wear high boots of soft leather fitting closely to the leg.
 204. A prelate is an ecclesiastic who is set over (*prelatus*) or has jurisdiction over others; a bishop or abbot. Cf. note on line 172.
 205. *For-pyned*.—Tormented or wasted. *For* is intensive. To pine meant primarily to suffer; "pinede under Ponce Pilate," Old Creed. Thence to waste away through pain.

His palfray was as broun as is a berye.

A FRERE ther was, a wantoun and a merye,
 A lymytour, a ful solempnë man.
 In alle the ordres foure is noon that can 210
 So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
 He hadde i-mad many a fair mariage

207. *Palfray* = a horse for the road. Fr. *palefroi*, from Low L. *paraveredus*, from prefix *para*, and *veredus*, from Lat. *veho*, to carry or draw, and *rheda*, a four-wheeled carriage.
 208. *Wantoun*.—Literally untrained, then lively, wild, &c. *Wan* is an O.E. negative prefix like *un*. We meet successively in Middle English the forms *unitowen*, *wanitowen*, *untoun*, and *wanton*. Cf. to *tow* = to draw, and draw = train. *Wanhope* = despair, *wantrust* = distrust, &c.

Merye = pleasant. Merryweather = fine weather.

There were four orders of mendicant friars. 1. The Dominicans or preaching friars, who settled at Oxford in 1221, and were known as Black friars. 2. The Franciscans or Gray friars, founded by Francis of Assisi in 1209, and appearing in England in 1224. 3. The Carmelites or White friars, who first came here in 1240; and 4. The Augustin or Austin friars, introduced by Adewold, confessor to Henry I., whose vow included not only poverty and chastity but silence. Their superior in England was *ex-officio* an alderman of the city of London.

The friar was popular with the mercantile classes on account of his varied attainments and experience. "Who else so welcome at the houses of men to whom scientific skill and information, scanty as they might be, were yet of no inconsiderable service and attraction? He alone of learned and unlearned possessed some knowledge of foreign countries and their productions; he alone was acquainted with the composition and decomposition of bodies, with the art of distillation, with the construction of machinery, and with the use of the laboratory." See Professor Brewer's Preface to *Monumenta Franciscana*, p. xlv.

209. *Lymytour*.—One who had a limit or district assigned to him within which he might beg alms.

"Ther walketh noon but the *lymytour* hymself,
 In undermeles and in morwenynges;
 And saith his matyns and his holy thynges
 As he goth in his *lymytacioun*." (*Wife of Bath's Tale*.)

210. *Can* = knows.

211. *Daliaunce*.—Small talk, entertaining conversation. Akin to tales

Of yongē wymmen, at his ownē cost.
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he 215
 With frankeleyns over-al in his cuntré,
 And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
 For he hadde powēr of confessioun,
 As seyde himself, more than a curat,
 For of his ordre he was licenciat. 220
 Ful sweetely herde he confessioun,
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
 * * * * *
 His typet was ay farsed ful of knyfēs

in sense of stories. O.E. *dalygn* (Promp. Parv.), *talen*, line 772, Swiss *dalen*, *talen*. This is the source of our *tale*, a story, quite distinct from *tale* (of bricks, &c.), which is akin to the Ger. *zahl* = number.

To *dally* is to gossip, not to delay.

214. *Post* = a pillar or support. Cf. Gal. ii. 9.
219. *Curat*.—A clergyman having "cure of souls." Fr. *curé*, an incumbent, not as now an assistant minister. So in the Church of England service prayer is offered "for all bishops and curates," including under these two terms the whole ministry of a Protestant Episcopal Church.
220. *Licenciat*.—One who hears confessions, or grants absolution, or lays penance independent of the local clergy.
223. *Typet was ay farsed*.—His hood was always stuffed. The quasi-hood worn by clergymen not being graduates, to distinguish them from choristers or other surpliced laymen, is called in the LVIII. Canon and the Rubrics a tippet. It was used by the friars as a pouch or bag for the trinkets which they sold, combining the trade of pedlar with the practice of begging, and doubtless finding it the more lucrative of the two.
- "When the Order degenerated, the friar combined with the spiritual functions the occupation of pedlar." (Brewer.) In an old poem printed in Professor Brewer's *Monumenta Franciscana*, we have the following allusion to the dealings of the friars:—
- "For thai have noght to lyve by, they wandren here and there,
 And dele with dyvers marche, right as thai pedlers were,

And pynnēs, for to givē fairē wyfēs.
 And certaynli he hadde a mery noote. 235
 Wel couthe he syngē and pleyen on a rote.
 Of yeddynges he bar utterly the prys.
 His nekkē whit was as the flour-de-lys.
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.
 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun, 240
 And everich hostiler and tappestère,
 Bet than a lazer, or a beggestère,

Thei dele with pynnes and knyves, } Ther thai are haunted
 With gyrdles, gloves for wenchis and wyves. } till"

Farsed = stuffed, Lat. *farctio*, Fr. *farcir*, to stuff, to cram, now used chiefly in cookery.

234. Ellesmere MS. reads *yonge wyfes*.
236. *Rote*.—Some kind of musical instrument. O.E. to *rote* = to hum a tune, to say or learn by rote in an automatic sing-song manner, a far more significant expression than learning by heart.
237. *Yeddynges*.—A.S. *gydd* = a song, *gyddian*, to sing. Norse *gidda* = to shake, whence our *giddy*. Cf. *quaver* and *quiver*. *Yeddings* were properly ballads.
- Bar utterly the prys*.—Carried off unquestionably the prize. See note on line 67.
239. *Champioun*.—This word, though found in French, is Teutonic. O.H.G. *champh*, M.H.G. *kampf*, A.S. *camp*, a contest; *champ* is used in some parts of England.

"The regent was there that daye a lion,
 And faught in armes like any champion."

241. *Tappestere* = a barmaid; the masc. was *tapper*. In olden times the retailers of beer, and for the most part the brewers also, appear to have been women. Originally *-er* was the masc. and *-ster* the fem. affix of agency. Thus *brewer*, *brewster*; *webber* (weaver), *webster*; *spinster*, a young unmarried woman as being still employed at the spindle. In the fourteenth century the distinction of sex began to be lost, and *malster*, *huckster*, *songster*, and *baxter* (a baker) were used of men. *Songstress* is a double feminine, so is *sempstress*; *seamer* and *seamster* being the proper forms. In *youngster*, *gamester*, &c., it implies contempt.