

Geoffrey Chaucer, d. 1400: Canterbury Tales: Prologue [Parallel Texts]

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The Canterbury Tales: Prologue

Here bygynneþ the Book of the tales of Caunterbury

1: Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
2: The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
3: And bathed every veyne in swich licour
4: Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
5: Whan zephirus eek with his sweete breath
6: Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
7: Tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
8: Hath in the ram his halve cours yronne,
9: And smale foweles maken melodye,
10: That slepen al the nyght with open ye
11: (so priketh hem nature in hir corages);
12: Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
13: And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,
14: To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;
15: And specially from every shires ende
16: Of engelond to caunterbury they wende,
17: The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
18: That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

19: Bifil that in that seson on a day,
20: In southwerk at the tabard as I lay
21: Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage
22: To caunterbury with ful devout corage,
23: At nyght was come into that hostelrye
24: Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
25: Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
26: In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,

Here begins the Book of the Tales of Canterbury

When April with his showers sweet with fruit
The drought of March has pierced unto the root
And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;
When Zephyr also has, with his sweet breath,
Quickened again, in every holt and heath,
The tender shoots and buds, and the young sun
Into the Ram one half his course has run,
And many little birds make melody
That sleep through all the night with open eye
(So Nature pricks them on to ramp and rage)-
Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmeres to go seeking out strange strands,
To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.
And specially from every shire's end
Of England they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blessed martyr there to seek
Who helped them when they lay so ill and weal

Befell that, in that season, on a day
In Southwark, at the Tabard, as I lay
Ready to start upon my pilgrimage
To Canterbury, full of devout homage,
There came at nightfall to that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry persons who had chanced to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all

27: That toward caunterbury wolden ryde.
 28: The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
 29: And wel we weren esed atte beste.
 30: And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
 31: So hadde I spoken with hem everichon
 32: That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,
 33: And made forward erly for to ryse,
 34: To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.

35: But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,
 36: Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
 37: Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
 38: To telle yow al the condicioun
 39: Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
 40: And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
 41: And eek in what array that they were inne;
 42: And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.

The Knight's Portrait

43: A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,
 44: That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 45: To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
 46: Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
 47: Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 48: And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
 49: As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
 50: And evere honoured for his worthynesse.
 51: At alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.
 52: Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
 53: Aboven alle nacions in pruce;
 54: In lettow hadde he reysed and in ruce,
 55: No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
 56: In gernade at the seege eek hadde he be
 57: Of algezir, and riden in belmarye.
 58: At lyeys was he and at satalye,
 59: Whan they were wonne; and in the grete see
 60: At many a noble armee hadde he be.
 61: At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
 62: And foughten for oure feith at tramysene
 63: In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
 64: This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also
 65: Somtyme with the lord of palatye

That toward Canterbury town would ride.
 The rooms and stables spacious were and wide,
 And well we there were eased, and of the best.
 And briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
 So had I spoken with them, every one,
 That I was of their fellowship anon,
 And made agreement that we'd early rise
 To take the road, as you I will apprise.

But none the less, whilst I have time and space,
 Before yet farther in this tale I pace,
 It seems to me accordant with reason
 To inform you of the state of every one
 Of all of these, as it appeared to me,
 And who they were, and what was their degree,
 And even how arrayed there at the inn;
 And with a knight thus will I first begin.

THE KNIGHT

A knight there was, and he a worthy man,
 Who, from the moment that he first began
 To ride about the world, loved chivalry,
 Truth, honour, freedom and all courtesy.
 Full worthy was he in his liege-lord's war,
 And therein had he ridden (none more far)
 As well in Christendom as heathenesse,
 And honoured everywhere for worthiness.
 At Alexandria, he, when it was won;
 Full oft the table's roster he'd begun
 Above all nations' knights in Prussia.
 In Latvia raided he, and Russia,
 No christened man so oft of his degree.
 In far Granada at the siege was he
 Of Algeciras, and in Belmarie.
 At Ayas was he and at Satalye
 When they were won; and on the Middle Sea
 At many a noble meeting chanced to be.
 Of mortal battles he had fought fifteen,
 And he'd fought for our faith at Tramissene
 Three times in lists, and each time slain his foe.
 This self-same worthy knight had been also
 At one time with the lord of Palatye

66: Agayn another hethen in turkye.
 67: And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys;
 68: And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
 69: And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.
 70: He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde
 71: In al his lyf unto no maner wight.
 72: He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.
 73: But, for to tellen yow of his array,
 74: His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
 75: Of fustian he wered a gypon
 76: Al bismotered with his habergeon,
 77: For he was late ycome from his viage,
 78: And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

The Squire's Portrait

79: With hym ther was his sone, a yong squier,
 80: A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,
 81: With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
 82: Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
 83: Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
 84: And wonderly delyvere, and of greet
 strengthe.
 85: And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
 86: In flaundes, in artoys, and pycardie,
 87: And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
 88: In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 89: Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
 90: Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.
 91: Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
 92: He was as fressh as is the month of may.
 93: Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and
 wyde.
 94: Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.
 95: He koude songes make and wel endite,
 96: Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
 97: So hote he lovede that by nyghtertale.
 98: He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
 99: Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
 100: And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Against another heathen in Turkey:
 And always won he sovereign fame for prize.
 Though so illustrious, he was very wise
 And bore himself as meekly as a maid.
 He never yet had any vileness said,
 In all his life, to whatsoever wight.
 He was a truly perfect, gentle knight.
 But now, to tell you all of his array,
 His steeds were good, but yet he was not gay.
 Of simple fustian wore he a jupon
 Sadly discoloured by his habergeon;
 For he had lately come from his voyage
 And now was going on this pilgrimage.

THE SQUIRE

With him there was his son, a youthful squire,
 A lover and a lusty bachelor,
 With locks well curled, as if they'd laid in press.
 Some twenty years of age he was, I guess.
 In stature he was of an average length,
 Wondrously active, aye, and great of strength.
 He'd ridden sometime with the cavalry
 In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,
 And borne him well within that little space
 In hope to win thereby his lady's grace.
 Prinked out he was, as if he were a mead,
 All full of fresh-cut flowers white and red.
 Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown, with sleeves both long and
 wide.
 Well could be sit on horse, and fairly ride.
 He could make songs and words thereto indite,
 Joust, and dance too, as well as sketch and write.
 So hot he loved that, while night told her tale,
 He slept no more than does a nightingale.
 Courteous he, and humble, willing and able,
 And carved before his father at the table.

The Yeoman's Portrait

101: A yeman hadde he and servantz namo
 102: At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,
 103: And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
 104: A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
 105: Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
 106: (wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly:
 107: His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe)
 108: And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
 109: A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.
 110: Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.
 111: Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
 112: And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
 113: And on that oother syde a gay daggere
 114: Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;
 115: A cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.
 116: An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
 117: A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.

The Prioress' Portrait

118: Ther was also a nonne, a prioresse,
 119: That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;
 120: Hire gretteste ooth was but by seinte loy;
 121: And she was cleped madame eglentyne.
 122: Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,
 123: Entuned in hir nose ful semely,
 124: And frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,
 125: After the scole of stratford atte bowe,
 126: For frenssh of parys was to hire unknowe.
 127: At mete wel ytaught was she with alle:
 128: She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 129: Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;
 130: Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe
 131: That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.
 132: In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.
 133: Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene
 134: That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene
 135: Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 136: Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.
 137: And sikerly she was of greet desport,

THE YEOMAN

A yeoman had he, nor more servants, no,
 At that time, for he chose to travel so;
 And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
 A sheaf of peacock arrows bright and keen
 Under his belt he bore right carefully
 (Well could he keep his tackle yeomanly:
 His arrows had no draggled feathers low),
 And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
 A cropped head had he and a sun-browned face.
 Of woodcraft knew he all the useful ways.
 Upon his arm he bore a bracer gay,
 And at one side a sword and buckler, yea,
 And at the other side a dagger bright,
 Well sheathed and sharp as spear point in the
 light;
 On breast a Christopher of silver sheen.
 He bore a horn in baldric all of green;
 A forester he truly was, I guess.

THE PRIORESS

There was also a nun, a prioress,
 Who, in her smiling, modest was and coy;
 Her greatest oath was but "By Saint Eloy!"
 And she was known as Madam Eglantine.
 Full well she sang the services divine,
 Intoning through her nose, becomingly;
 And fair she spoke her French, and fluently,
 After the school of Stratford-at-the-Bow,
 For French of Paris was not hers to know.
 At table she had been well taught withal,
 And never from her lips let morsels fall,
 Nor dipped her fingers deep in sauce, but ate
 With so much care the food upon her plate
 That never driblet fell upon her breast.
 In courtesy she had delight and zest.
 Her upper lip was always wiped so clean
 That in her cup was no iota seen
 Of grease, when she had drunk her draught of
 wine.
 Becomingly she reached for meat to dine.
 And certainly delighting in good sport,

138: And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,	She was right pleasant, amiable- in short.
139: And peyned hire to countrefete cheere	She was at pains to counterfeit the look
140: Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,	Of courtliness, and stately manners took,
141: And to ben holden digne of reverence.	And would be held worthy of reverence.
142: But, for to speken of hire conscience,	But, to say something of her moral sense,
143: She was so charitable and so pitous	She was so charitable and piteous
144: She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous	That she would weep if she but saw a mouse
145: Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.	Caught in a trap, though it were dead or bled.
146: Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde	She had some little dogs, too, that she fed
147: With rosted flessch, or milk and wastel-breed.	On roasted flesh, or milk and fine white bread.
148: But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,	But sore she'd weep if one of them were dead,
149: Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;	Or if men smote it with a rod to smart:
150: And al was conscience and tendre herte.	For pity ruled her, and her tender heart.
151: Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,	Right decorous her pleated wimple was;
152: Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,	Her nose was fine; her eyes were blue as glass;
153: Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;	Her mouth was small and therewith soft and red;
154: But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;	But certainly she had a fair forehead;
155: It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;	It was almost a full span broad, I own,
156: For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.	For, truth to tell, she was not undergrown.
157: Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.	Neat was her cloak, as I was well aware.
158: Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar	Of coral small about her arm she'd bear
159: A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,	A string of beads and gauded all with green;
160: And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,	And therefrom hung a brooch of golden sheen
161: On which ther was first write a crowned a,	Whereon there was first written a crowned "A,"
162: And after amor vincit omnia.	And under, Amor vincit omnia.

The Second Nun's Portrait

163: Another nonne with hire hadde she,

THE NUN

Another little nun with her had she,

THE THREE PRIESTS

164: That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.

THE THREE PRIESTS

Who was her chaplain; and of priests she'd three.

The Monk's Portrait

165: A monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
 166: An outridere, that lovede venerie,
 167: A manly man, to been an abbot able.
 168: Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,
 169: And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel
 heere
 170: Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere
 171: And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle.

THE MONK

A monk there was, one made for mastery,
 An outrider, who loved his venerie;
 A manly man, to be an abbot able.
 Full many a blooded horse had he in stable:
 And when he rode men might his bridle hear
 A-jingling in the whistling wind as clear,
 Aye, and as loud as does the chapel bell
 Where this brave monk was of the cell.

172: Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle, The rule of Maurus or Saint Benedict,
 173: The reule of seint maure or of seint beneit, By reason it was old and somewhat strict,
 174: By cause that it was old and somdel streit This said monk let such old things slowly pace
 175: This ilke monk leet olde thynges pace, And followed new-world manners in their place.
 176: And heeld after the newe world the space. He cared not for that text a clean-plucked hen
 177: He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen, Which holds that hunters are not holy men;
 178: That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men, Nor that a monk, when he is cloisterless,
 179: Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees, Is like unto a fish that's waterlees;
 180: Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees, -- That is to say, a monk out of his cloister.
 181: This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre. But this same text he held not worth an oyster;
 182: But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre; And I said his opinion was right good.
 183: And I seyde his opinion was good. What? Should he study as a madman would
 184: What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood, Upon a book in cloister cell? Or yet
 185: Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure, Go labour with his hands and swink and sweat,
 186: Or swynken with his handes, and laboure, As Austin bids? How shall the world be served?
 187: As austyn bit? how shal the world be served? Let Austin have his toil to him reserved.
 188: Lat austyn have his swynk to hym reserved! Therefore he was a rider day and night;
 189: Therefore he was a prikasour aright: Greyhounds he had, as swift as bird in flight.
 190: Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight; Since riding and the hunting of the hare
 191: Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare Were all his love, for no cost would he spare.
 192: Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare. I saw his sleeves were purfled at the hand
 193: I seigh his sleves purfled at the hond With fur of grey, the finest in the land;
 194: With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond; Also, to fasten hood beneath his chin,
 195: And, for to festne his hood under his chyn, He had of good wrought gold a curious pin:
 196: He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn; A love-knot in the larger end there was.
 197: A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was. His head was bald and shone like any glass,
 198: His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas, And smooth as one anointed was his face.
 199: And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt. Fat was this lord, he stood in goodly case.
 200: He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt; His bulging eyes he rolled about, and hot
 201: His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed, They gleamed and red, like fire beneath a pot;
 202: That stemed as a forneys of a leed; His boots were soft; his horse of great estate.
 203: His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat. Now certainly he was a fine prelate:
 204: Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat; He was not pale as some poor wasted ghost.
 205: He was nat pale as a forpyned goost. A fat swan loved he best of any roast.
 206: A fat swan loved he best of any roost. His palfrey was as brown as is a berye.
 207: His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

The Friar's Portrait

208: A frere ther was, a wantowne and a merye,
 209: A lymytour, a ful solempne man.

THE FRIAR

A friar there was, a wanton and a merry,
 A limiter, a very festive man.

210: In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan
 211: So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.
 212: He hadde maad ful many a mariage
 213: Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
 214: Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
 215: Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
 216: With frankeleyns over al in his contree,
 217: And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
 218: For he hadde power of confessioun,
 219: As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,
 220: For of his ordre he was licenciat.
 221: Ful swetely herde he confessioun,
 222: And plesaunt was his absolucioun:
 223: He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,
 224: Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.
 225: For unto a povre ordre for to yive
 226: Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;
 227: For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
 228: He wiste that a man was repentaunt;
 229: For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 230: He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte.
 231: Therefore in stede of wepyng and preyeres
 232: Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.
 233: His tynet was ay farsed ful of knyves
 234: And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
 235: And certainly he hadde a murye note:
 236: Wel koude he syng and pleyen on a rote;
 237: Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.
 238: His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;
 239: Therto he strong was as a champioun.
 240: He knew the tavernes wel in every toun
 241: And everich hostiler and tappestere
 242: Bet than a lazar or a beggestere;
 243: For unto swich a worthy man as he
 244: Acorded nat, as by his facultee,
 245: To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
 246: It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce,
 247: For to deelen with no swich poraille,
 248: But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.
 249: And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,
 250: Curteis he was and lowely of servyse.

In all the Orders Four is none that can
 Equal his gossip and his fair language.
 He had arranged full many a marriage
 Of women young, and this at his own cost.
 Unto his order he was a noble post.
 Well liked by all and intimate was he
 With franklins everywhere in his country,
 And with the worthy women of the town:
 For at confessing he'd more power in gown
 (As he himself said) than it good curate,
 For of his order he was licentiate.
 He heard confession gently, it was said,
 Gently absolved too, leaving naught of dread.
 He was an easy man to give penance
 When knowing he should gain a good pittance;
 For to a begging friar, money given
 Is sign that any man has been well shriven.
 For if one gave (he dared to boast of this),
 He took the man's repentance not amiss.
 For many a man there is so hard of heart
 He cannot weep however pains may smart.
 Therefore, instead of weeping and of prayer,
 Men should give silver to poor friars all bare.
 His tippet was stuck always full of knives
 And pins, to give to young and pleasing wives.
 And certainly he kept a merry note:
 Well could he sing and play upon the rote.
 At balladry he bore the prize away.
 His throat was white as lily of the May;
 Yet strong he was as ever champion.
 In towns he knew the taverns, every one,
 And every good host and each barmaid too-
 Better than begging lepers, these he knew.
 For unto no such solid man as he
 Accorded it, as far as he could see,
 To have sick lepers for acquaintances.
 There is no honest advantageousness
 In dealing with such poverty-stricken curs;
 It's with the rich and with big victuallers.
 And so, wherever profit might arise,
 Courteous he was and humble in men's eyes.

251: Ther nas no man nowher so vertuou.
 252: He was the beste beggere in his hous;
 252.1: (and yaf a certeyne ferme for the graunt;
 252.2: Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;)
 253: For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,
 254: So plesaunt was his in principio,
 255: Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente.
 256: His purchas was wel bettere than his rente.
 257: And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.
 258: In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,
 259: For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer
 260: With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,
 261: But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
 262: Of double worstede was his semycope,
 263: That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
 264: Somwhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,
 265: To make his englyssh sweete upon his tonge;
 266: And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,
 267: His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght,
 268: As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.
 269: This worthy lymytour was cleped huberd.

The Merchant's Portrait

270: A marchant was ther with a forked berd,
 271: In mottelee, and hie on horse he sat;
 272: Upon his heed a flaundryssh bever hat,
 273: His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.
 274: His resons he spak ful solempnely,
 275: Sownyng alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng.
 276: He wolde the see were kept for any thyng
 277: Bitwixe middelburgh and orewelle.
 278: Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.
 279: This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:
 280: Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,
 281: So estatly was he of his governaunce
 282: With his bargaynes and with his chevysaunce.
 283: For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,
 284: But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.

There was no other man so virtuous.
 He was the finest beggar of his house;
 A certain district being farmed to him,
 None of his brethren dared approach its rim;
 For though a widow had no shoes to show,
 So pleasant was his In principio,
 He always got a farthing ere he went.
 He lived by pickings, it is evident.
 And he could romp as well as any whelp.
 On love days could he be of mickle help.
 For there he was not like a cloisterer,
 With threadbare cope as is the poor scholar,
 But he was like a lord or like a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semi-cope,
 That rounded like a bell, as you may guess.
 He lipped a little, out of wantonness,
 To make his English soft upon his tongue;
 And in his harping, after he had sung,
 His two eyes twinkled in his head as bright
 As do the stars within the frosty night.
 This worthy limiter was named Hubert.

THE MERCHANT

There was a merchant with forked beard, and girt
 In motley gown, and high on horse he sat,
 Upon his head a Flemish beaver hat;
 His boots were fastened rather elegantly.
 His spoke his notions out right pompously,
 Stressing the times when he had won, not lost.
 He would the sea were held at any cost
 Across from Middleburgh to Orwell town.
 At money-changing he could make a crown.
 This worthy man kept all his wits well set;
 There was no one could say he was in debt,
 So well he governed all his trade affairs
 With bargains and with borrowings and with shares.
 Indeed, he was a worthy man withal,
 But, sooth to say, his name I can't recall.

The Clerk's Portrait

285: A clerk ther was of oxenford also,
 286: That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
 287: As leene was his hors as is a rake,
 288: And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,
 289: But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.
 290: Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy;
 291: For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,
 292: Ne was so worldly for to have office.
 293: For hym was levere have at his beddes heed
 294: Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,
 295: Of aristotle and his philosophie,
 296: Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.
 297: But al be that he was a philosophre,
 298: Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
 299: But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
 300: On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,
 301: And bisily gan for the soules preye
 302: Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.
 303: Of studie took he moost cure and moost
 heede,
 304: Noght o word spak he moore than was
 neede,
 305: And that was seyde in forme and reverence,
 306: And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;
 307: Sownyng in moral vertu was his speche,
 308: And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

The The Man of Law's Portrait

309: A sergeant of the lawe, war and wys,
 310: That often hadde been at the parvys,
 311: Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
 312: Discreet he was and of greet reverence --
 313: He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.
 314: Justice he was ful often in assise,
 315: By patente and by pleyn commissioun.
 316: For his science and for his heigh renoun,
 317: Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
 318: So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:
 319: Al was fee symple to hym in effect;
 320: His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.
 321: Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,

THE CLERK

A clerk from Oxford was with us also,
 Who'd turned to getting knowledge, long ago.
 As meagre was his horse as is a rake,
 Nor he himself too fat, I'll undertake,
 But he looked hollow and went soberly.
 Right threadbare was his overcoat; for he
 Had got him yet no churchly benefice,
 Nor was so worldly as to gain office.
 For he would rather have at his bed's head
 Some twenty books, all bound in black and red,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophy
 Than rich robes, fiddle, or gay psalterly.
 Yet, and for all he was philosopher,
 He had but little gold within his coffer;
 But all that he might borrow from a friend
 On books and learning he would swiftly spend,
 And then he'd pray right busily for the souls
 Of those who gave him wherewithal for schools.
 Of study took he utmost care and heed.
 Not one word spoke he more than was his need;
 And that was said in fullest reverence
 And short and quick and full of high good sense.
 Pregnant of moral virtue was his speech;
 And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.

THE LAWYER

A sergeant of the law, wary and wise,
 Who'd often gone to Paul's walk to advise,
 There was also, compact of excellence.
 Discreet he was, and of great reverence;
 At least he seemed so, his words were so wise.
 Often he sat as justice in assize,
 By patent or commission from the crown;
 Because of learning and his high renown,
 He took large fees and many robes could own.
 So great a purchaser was never known.
 All was fee simple to him, in effect,
 Wherefore his claims could never be suspect.
 Nowhere a man so busy of his class,

322: And yet he semed bisier than he was.
 323: In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle
 324: That from the tyme of kyng william were falle.
 325: Therto he koude endite, and make a thyng,
 326: Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;
 327: And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.
 328: He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote.
 329: Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;
 330: Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

The Franklin's Portrait

331: A frankeleyn was in his compaignye.
 332: Whit was his berd as is the dayesy;e;
 333: Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
 334: Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
 335: To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
 336: For he was epicurus owene sone,
 337: That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
 338: Was verray felicitee parfit.
 339: An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
 340: Seint julian he was in his contree.
 341: His breed, his ale, was always after oon;
 342: A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
 343: Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous
 344: Of fissh and flessch, and that so plentevous,
 345: It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
 346: Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke.
 347: After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
 348: So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
 349: Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,
 350: And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.
 351: Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
 352: Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.
 353: His table dormant in his halle alway
 354: Stood redy covered al the longe day.
 355: At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
 356: Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.
 357: An anlaas and a gipser al of silk
 358: Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.
 359: A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.
 360: Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.

And yet he seemed much busier than he was.
 All cases and all judgments could he cite
 That from King William's time were apposite.
 And he could draw a contract so explicit
 Not any man could fault therefrom elicit;
 And every statute he'd verbatim quote.
 He rode but badly in a medley coat,
 Belted in a silken sash, with little bars,
 But of his dress no more particulars.

THE FRANKLIN

There was a franklin in his company;
 White was his beard as is the white daisy.
 Of sanguine temperament by every sign,
 He loved right well his morning sop in wine.
 Delightful living was the goal he'd won,
 For he was Epicurus' very son,
 That held opinion that a full delight
 Was true felicity, perfect and right.
 A householder, and that a great, was he;
 Saint Julian he was in his own country.
 His bread and ale were always right well done;
 A man with better cellars there was none.
 Baked meat was never wanting in his house,
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous
 It seemed to snow therein both food and drink
 Of every dainty that a man could think.
 According to the season of the year
 He changed his diet and his means of cheer.
 Full many a fattened partridge did he mew,
 And many a bream and pike in fish-pond too.
 Woe to his cook, except the sauces were
 Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.
 His table, waiting in his hall alway,
 Stood ready covered through the livelong day.
 At county sessions was he lord and sire,
 And often acted as a knight of shire.
 A dagger and a trinket-bag of silk
 Hung from his girdle, white as morning milk.
 He had been sheriff and been auditor;
 And nowhere was a worthier vavasour.

The Guildsmen's Portrait

361: An haberdasshere and a carpenter,
 362: A webbe, a dyere, and a tapycer, --
 363: And they were clothed alle in o lyveree
 364: Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.
 365: Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
 366: Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras
 367: But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
 368: Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
 369: Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys
 370: To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.
 371: Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,
 372: Was shaply for to been an alderman.
 373: For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,
 374: And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
 375: And elles certeyn were they to blame.
 376: It is ful fair to been ycleped madame,
 377: And goon to vigilies al bifore,
 378: And have a mantel roialliche ybore.

The Cook's Portrait

379: A cook they hadde with hem for the nones
 380: To boille the chiknes with the marybones,
 381: And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.
 382: Wel koude he knowe a draughte of londoun ale.
 383: He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
 384: Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
 385: But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
 386: That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.
 387: For blankmanger, that made he with the beste

The Shipman's Portrait

388: A shipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste;
 389: For aught I woot, he was of dertemouthe.
 390: He rood upon a rounce, as he kouthe,
 391: In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.
 392: A daggere hangyng on a laas hadde he

THE HABERDASHER AND THE CARPENTER THE WEAVER, THE DYER, AND THE ARRAS-MAKER

A haberdasher and a carpenter,
 An arras-maker, dyer, and weaver
 Were with us, clothed in similar livery,
 All of one sober, great fraternity.
 Their gear was new and well adorned it was;
 Their weapons were not cheaply trimmed with
 brass,
 But all with silver; chastely made and well
 Their girdles and their pouches too, I tell.
 Each man of them appeared a proper burges
 To sit in guildhall on a high dais.
 And each of them, for wisdom he could span,
 Was fitted to have been an alderman;
 For chattels they'd enough, and, too, of rent;
 To which their goodwives gave a free assent,
 Or else for certain they had been to blame.
 It's good to hear "Madam" before one's name,
 And go to church when all the world may see,
 Having one's mantle borne right royally.

THE COOK

A cook they had with them, just for the nonce,
 To boil the chickens with the marrow-bones,
 And flavour tartly and with galingale.
 Well could he tell a draught of London ale.
 And he could roast and seethe and broil and fry,
 And make a good thick soup, and bake a pie.
 But very ill it was, it seemed to me,
 That on his shin a deadly sore had he;
 For sweet blanc-mange, he made it with the best.

THE SAILOR

There was a sailor, living far out west;
 For aught I know, he was of Dartmouth town.
 He sadly rode a hackney, in a gown,
 Of thick rough cloth falling to the knee.
 A dagger hanging on a cord had he

393: Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.	About his neck, and under arm, and down.
394: The hote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;	The summer's heat had burned his visage brown;
395: And certainly he was a good felawe.	And certainly he was a good fellow.
396: Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe	Full many a draught of wine he'd drawn, I trow,
397: Fro burdeux-ward, whil that the chapmen sleep.	Of Bordeaux vintage, while the trader slept.
398: Of nyce conscience took he no keep.	Nice conscience was a thing he never kept.
399: If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,	If that he fought and got the upper hand,
400: By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.	By water he sent them home to every land.
401: But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,	But as for craft, to reckon well his tides,
402: His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,	His currents and the dangerous watersides,
403: His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,	His harbours, and his moon, his pilotage,
404: Ther nas noon swich from hulle to cartage.	There was none such from Hull to far Carthage.
405: Hardy he was and wys to undertake;	Hardy. and wise in all things undertaken,
406: With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.	By many a tempest had his beard been shaken.
407: He knew alle the havenes, as they were,	He knew well all the havens, as they were,
408: Fro gootlond to the cape of fynystere,	From Gottland to the Cape of Finisterre,
409: And every cryke in britaigne and in spayne.	And every creek in Brittany and Spain;
410: His barge ycleped was the maudelayne.	His vessel had been christened Madeleine.

The Physician's Portrait

411: With us ther was a doctour of phisik;	With us there was a doctor of physic;
412: In al this world ne was the noon hym lik,	In all this world was none like him to pick
413: To speke of phisik and of surgerye	For talk of medicine and surgery;
414: For he was grounded in astronomye.	For he was grounded in astronomy.
415: He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel	He often kept a patient from the pall
416: In houres by his magyk natureel.	By horoscopes and magic natural.
417: Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent	Well could he tell the fortune ascendent
418: Of his ymages for his pacient.	Within the houses for his sick patient.
419: He knew the cause of everich maladye,	He knew the cause of every malady,
420: Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,	Were it of hot or cold, of moist or dry,
421: And where they engendred, and of what humour.	And where engendered, and of what humour;
422: He was a verray, parfit praktisour:	He was a very good practitioner.
423: The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,	The cause being known, down to the deepest root,
424: Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.	Anon he gave to the sick man his boot.
425: Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries	Ready he was, with his apothecaries,
426: To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,	To send him drugs and all electuaries;
427: For ech of hem made oother for to wyne --	By mutual aid much gold they'd always won-
428: Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.	Their friendship was a thing not new begun.
429: Wel knew he the olde esculapius,	Well read was he in Esculapius,
430: And deyscorides, and eek rufus,	And Deiscorides, and in Rufus,
431: Olde ypocras, haly, and galyen,	Hippocrates, and Hali, and Galen,

THE PHYSICIAN

432: Serapion, razis, and avycen,
 433: Averrois, damascien, and constantyn,
 434: Bernard, and gatesden, and gilbertyn.
 435: Of his diete mesurable was he,
 436: For it was of no superfluitee,
 437: But of greet norissyng and digestible.
 438: His studie was but litel on the bible.
 439: In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,
 440: Lyned with taffata and with sendal;
 441: And yet he was but esy of dispence;
 442: He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
 443: For gold in phisik is a cordial,
 444: Therefore he lovede gold in special.

The Wife of Bath's Portrait

445: A good wif was ther of biside bathe,
 446: But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.
 447: Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt,
 448: She passed hem of ypres and of gaunt.
 449: In al the parisshes wif ne was ther noon
 450: That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
 451: And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she,
 452: That she was out of alle charitee.
 453: Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
 454: I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
 455: That on a sonday weren upon hir heed.
 456: Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
 457: Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
 458: Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
 459: She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:
 460: Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
 461: Withouten oother compaignye in youthe, --
 462: But therof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.
 463: And thries hadde she been at jusalem;
 464: She hadde passed many a straunge strem;
 465: At rome she hadde been, and at boloigne,
 466: In galice at seint-jame, and at coloine.
 467: She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.
 468: Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.
 469: Upon an amblere esily she sat,
 470: Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
 471: As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;

Serapion, Rhazes, and Avicen,
 Averrhoes, Gilbert, and Constantine,
 Bernard and Gatisden, and John Damascene.
 In diet he was measured as could be,
 Including naught of superfluity,
 But nourishing and easy. It's no libel
 To say he read but little in the Bible.
 In blue and scarlet he went clad, withal,
 Lined with a taffeta and with sendal;
 And yet he was right chary of expense;
 He kept the gold he gained from pestilence.
 For gold in physic is a fine cordial,
 And therefore loved he gold exceeding all.

THE WIFE OF BATH

There was a housewife come from Bath, or near,
 Who- sad to say- was deaf in either ear.
 At making cloth she had so great a bent
 She bettered those of Ypres and even of Ghent.
 In all the parish there was no goodwife
 Should offering make before her, on my life;
 And if one did, indeed, so wroth was she
 It put her out of all her charity.
 Her kerchiefs were of finest weave and ground;
 I dare swear that they weighed a full ten pound
 Which, of a Sunday, she wore on her head.
 Her hose were of the choicest scarlet red,
 Close gartered, and her shoes were soft and new.
 Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.
 She'd been respectable throughout her life,
 With five church'd husbands bringing joy and strife,
 Not counting other company in youth;
 But thereof there's no need to speak, in truth.
 Three times she'd journeyed to Jerusalem;
 And many a foreign stream she'd had to stem;
 At Rome she'd been, and she'd been in Boulogne,
 In Spain at Santiago, and at Cologne.
 She could tell much of wandering by the way:
 Gap-toothed was she, it is no lie to say.
 Upon an ambler easily she sat,
 Well wimpled, aye, and over all a hat
 As broad as is a buckler or a targe;

472: A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,
 473: And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
 474: In felawshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.
 475: Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,
 476: For she koude of that art the olde daunce.

The Parson's Portrait

477: A good man was ther of religioun,
 478: And was a povre persoun of a toun,
 479: But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
 480: He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 481: That cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
 482: His parissshens devoutly wolde he teche.
 483: Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
 484: And in adversitee ful pacient,
 485: And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes.
 486: Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
 487: But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
 488: Unto his povre parissshens aboute
 489: Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.
 490: He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.
 491: Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
 492: But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
 493: In siknesse nor in meschief to visite
 494: The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,
 495: Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
 496: This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
 497: That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.
 498: Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 499: And this figure he added eek therto,
 500: That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
 501: For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
 502: No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
 503: And shame it is, if a prest take keep,
 504: A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
 505: Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
 506: By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve.
 507: He sette nat his benefice to hyre
 508: And leet his sheep encombred in the myre
 509: And ran to londoun unto seinte poules
 510: To seken hym a chanterie for soules,
 511: Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;

A rug was tucked around her buttocks large,
 And on her feet a pair of sharpened spurs.
 In company well could she laugh her slurs.
 The remedies of love she knew, perchance,
 For of that art she'd learned the old, old dance.

THE PARSON

There was a good man of religion, too,
 A country parson, poor, I warrant you;
 But rich he was in holy thought and work.
 He was a learned man also, a clerk,
 Who Christ's own gospel truly sought to preach;
 Devoutly his parishioners would he teach.
 Benign he was and wondrous diligent,
 Patient in adverse times and well content,
 As he was ofttimes proven; always blithe,
 He was right loath to curse to get a tithe,
 But rather would he give, in case of doubt,
 Unto those poor parishioners about,
 Part of his income, even of his goods.
 Enough with little, coloured all his moods.
 Wide was his parish, houses far asunder,
 But never did he fail, for rain or thunder,
 In sickness, or in sin, or any state,
 To visit to the farthest, small and great,
 Going afoot, and in his hand, a stave.
 This fine example to his flock he gave,
 That first he wrought and afterwards he taught;
 Out of the gospel then that text he caught,
 And this figure he added thereunto-
 That, if gold rust, what shall poor iron do?
 For if the priest be foul, in whom we trust,
 What wonder if a layman yield to lust?
 And shame it is, if priest take thought for keep,
 A shitty shepherd, shepherding clean sheep.
 Well ought a priest example good to give,
 By his own cleanness, how his flock should live.
 He never let his benefice for hire,
 Leaving his flock to flounder in the mire,
 And ran to London, up to old Saint Paul's
 To get himself a chantry there for souls,
 Nor in some brotherhood did he withhold;

512: But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,	But dwelt at home and kept so well the fold
513: So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;	That never wolf could make his plans miscarry;
514: He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.	He was a shepherd and not mercenary.
515: And though he hooly were and vertuouus,	And holy though he was, and virtuous,
516: He was to synful men nat despitous,	To sinners he was not impiteous,
517: Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,	Nor haughty in his speech, nor too divine,
518: But in his techyng discreet and benygne.	But in all teaching prudent and benign.
519: To drawen folk to hevене by fairnesse,	To lead folk into Heaven but by stress
520: By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.	Of good example was his busyness.
521: But it were any persone obstinat,	But if some sinful one proved obstinate,
522: What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,	Be who it might, of high or low estate,
523: Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.	Him he reprovèd, and sharply, as I know.
524: A better preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.	There is nowhere a better priest, I trow.
525: He waited after no pompe and reverence,	He had no thirst for pomp or reverence,
526: Ne makèd him a spiced conscience,	Nor made himself a special, spiced conscience,
527: But cristes loore and his apostles twelve	But Christ's own lore, and His apostles' twelve
528: He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselfe.	He taught, but first he followed it hymselfe.

The Plowman's Portrait

529: With hym ther was a plowman, was his brother,
 530: That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;
 531: A trewe swynkere and a good was he,
 532: Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.
 533: God loved he best with al his hoole herte
 534: At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
 535: And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.
 536: He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
 537: For cristes sake, for every povre wight,
 538: Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
 539: His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
 540: Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.
 541: In a tabard he rood upon a mere.
 542: Ther was also a reve, and a millere,
 543: A somnour, and a pardonor also,
 544: A maunciple, and myself -- ther were namo.

THE PLOWMAN

With him there was a plowman, was his brother,
 That many a load of dung, and many another
 Had scattered, for a good true toiler, he,
 Living in peace and perfect charity.
 He loved God most, and that with his whole heart
 At all times, though he played or plied his art,
 And next, his neighbour, even as himself.
 He'd thresh and dig, with never thought of pelf,
 For Christ's own sake, for every poor wight,
 All without pay, if it lay in his might.
 He paid his taxes, fully, fairly, well,
 Both by his own toil and by stuff he'd sell.
 In a tabard he rode upon a mare.
 There were also a reeve and miller there;
 A summoner, manciple and pardonor,
 And these, beside myself, made all there were.

The Miller's Portrait

545: The millere was a stout carl for the nones;
 546: Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.
 547: That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,
 548: At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.
 549: He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;
 550: Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
 551: Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.
 552: His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
 553: And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
 554: Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
 555: A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,
 556: Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;
 557: His nosethirles blake were and wyde.
 558: A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde.
 559: His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
 560: He was a jangler and a goliardeys,
 561: And that was moost of synne and harlotries.
 562: Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;
 563: And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
 564: A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.
 565: A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,
 566: And therewithal he broghte us out of towne.

The Manciple's Portrait

567: A gentil maunciple was ther of a temple,
 568: Of which achatours myghte take exemple
 569: For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;
 570: For wheither that he payde or took by taille,
 571: Algate he wayted so in his achaat
 572: That he was ay biforn and in good staat.
 573: Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace
 574: That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
 575: The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?
 576: Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,
 577: That weren of lawe expert and curious,
 578: Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous
 579: Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond
 580: Of any lord that is in engelond,
 581: To make hym lyve by his propre good
 582: In honour dettelees (but if he were wood),
 583: Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;

THE MILLER

The miller was a stout churl, be it known,
 Hardy and big of brawn and big of bone;
 Which was well proved, for when he went on lam
 At wrestling, never failed he of the ram.
 He was a chunky fellow, broad of build;
 He'd heave a door from hinges if he willed,
 Or break it through, by running, with his head.
 His beard, as any sow or fox, was red,
 And broad it was as if it were a spade.
 Upon the coping of his nose he had
 A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,
 Red as the bristles in an old sow's ears;
 His nostrils they were black and very wide.
 A sword and buckler bore he by his side.
 His mouth was like a furnace door for size.
 He was a jester and could poetize,
 But mostly all of sin and ribaldries.
 He could steal corn and full thrice charge his fees;
 And yet he had a thumb of gold, begad.
 A white coat and blue hood he wore, this lad.
 A bagpipe he could blow well, be it known,
 And with that same he brought us out of town.

THE MANCIPLE

There was a manciple from an inn of court,
 To whom all buyers might quite well resort
 To learn the art of buying food and drink;
 For whether he paid cash or not, I think
 That he so knew the markets, when to buy,
 He never found himself left high and dry.
 Now is it not of God a full fair grace
 That such a vulgar man has wit to pace
 The wisdom of a crowd of learned men?
 Of masters had he more than three times ten,
 Who were in law expert and curious;
 Whereof there were a dozen in that house
 Fit to be stewards of both rent and land
 Of any lord in England who would stand
 Upon his own and live in manner good,
 In honour, debtless (save his head were wood),
 Or live as frugally as he might desire;

584: And able for to helpen al a shire
 585: In any caas that myghte falle or happe;
 586: And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe.

The Reeve's Portrait

587: The reve was a sclendre colerik man.
 588: His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
 589: His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;
 590: His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn
 591: Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
 592: Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.
 593: Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
 594: Ther was noon auditour koude on him wyne.
 595: Wel wiste he by the droghthe and by the reyn
 596: The yeldyng of his seed and of his greyn.
 597: His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,
 598: His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye
 599: Was hoolly in this reves governynge,
 600: And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,
 601: Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.
 602: Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.
 603: Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,
 604: That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;
 605: They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.
 606: His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;
 607: With grene trees yshadwed was his place.
 608: He koude better than his lord purchase.
 609: Ful riche he was astored pryvely:
 610: His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,
 611: To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,
 612: And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
 613: In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster;
 614: He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
 615: This reve sat upon a ful good stot,
 616: That was al pomely grey and highte scot.
 617: A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
 618: And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
 619: Of northfolk was this reve of which I telle,
 620: Biside a toun men clepen baldeswelle.
 621: Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,
 622: And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

These men were able to have helped a shire
 In any case that ever might befall;
 And yet this manciple outguessed them all.

THE REEVE

The reeve he was a slender, choleric man
 Who shaved his beard as close as razor can.
 His hair was cut round even with his ears;
 His top was tonsured like a pulpiteer's.
 Long were his legs, and they were very lean,
 And like a staff, with no calf to be seen.
 Well could he manage granary and bin;
 No auditor could ever on him win.
 He could foretell, by drought and by the rain,
 The yielding of his seed and of his grain.
 His lord's sheep and his oxen and his dairy,
 His swine and horses, all his stores, his poultry,
 Were wholly in this steward's managing;
 And, by agreement, he'd made reckoning
 Since his young lord of age was twenty years;
 Yet no man ever found him in arrears.
 There was no agent, hind, or herd who'd cheat
 But he knew well his cunning and deceit;
 They were afraid of him as of the death.
 His cottage was a good one, on a heath;
 By green trees shaded with this dwelling-place.
 Much better than his lord could he purchase.
 Right rich he was in his own private right,
 Seeing he'd pleased his lord, by day or night,
 By giving him, or lending, of his goods,
 And so got thanked- but yet got coats and hoods.
 In youth he'd learned a good trade, and had been
 A carpenter, as fine as could be seen.
 This steward sat a horse that well could trot,
 And was all dapple-grey, and was named Scot.
 A long surcoat of blue did he parade,
 And at his side he bore a rusty blade.
 Of Norfolk was this reeve of whom I tell,
 From near a town that men call Badeswell.
 Bundled he was like friar from chin to croup,
 And ever he rode hindmost of our troop.

The Summoner's Portrait

623: A somonour was ther with us in that place,
 624: That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,
 625: For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.
 626: As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,
 627: With scalled browes blake and piled berd.
 628: Of his visage children were aferd.
 629: Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,
 630: Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon;
 631: Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
 632: That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,
 633: Nor of the knobbes sittyng on his chekes.
 634: Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
 635: And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;
 636: Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.
 637: And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
 638: Thanne wolde he speke no word but latyn.
 639: A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,
 640: That he had lerned out of som decree --
 641: No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
 642: And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay
 643: Kan clepen watte as wel as kan the pope.
 644: But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,
 645: Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
 646: Ay questio quid iuris wolde he crie.
 647: He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
 648: A better felawe sholde men noght fynde.
 649: He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
 650: A good felawe to have his concubyn
 651: A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;
 652: Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.
 653: And if he foond owher a good felawe,
 654: He wolde techen him to have noon awe
 655: In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs,
 656: But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
 657: For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.
 658: Purs is the ercedekenes helle, seyde he.
 659: But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;
 660: Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,
 661: For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,
 662: And also war hym of a significavit.

THE SUMMONER

A summoner was with us in that place,
 Who had a fiery-red, cherubic face,
 For eczema he had; his eyes were narrow
 As hot he was, and lecherous, as a sparrow;
 With black and scabby brows and scanty beard;
 He had a face that little children feared.
 There was no mercury, sulphur, or litharge,
 No borax, ceruse, tartar, could discharge,
 Nor ointment that could cleanse enough, or bite,
 To free him of his boils and pimples white,
 Nor of the bosses resting on his cheeks.
 Well loved he garlic, onions, aye and leeks,
 And drinking of strong wine as red as blood.
 Then would he talk and shout as madman would.
 And when a deal of wine he'd poured within,
 Then would he utter no word save Latin.
 Some phrases had he learned, say two or three,
 Which he had garnered out of some decree;
 No wonder, for he'd heard it all the day;
 And all you know right well that even a jay
 Can call out "Wat" as well as can the pope.
 But when, for aught else, into him you'd grope,
 'Twas found he'd spent his whole philosophy;
 Just "Questio quid juris" would he cry.
 He was a noble rascal, and a kind;
 A better comrade 'twould be hard to find.
 Why, he would suffer, for a quart of wine,
 Some good fellow to have his concubine
 A twelve-month, and excuse him to the full
 (Between ourselves, though, he could pluck a gull).
 And if he chanced upon a good fellow,
 He would instruct him never to have awe,
 In such a case, of the archdeacon's curse,
 Except a man's soul lie within his purse;
 For in his purse the man should punished be.
 "The purse is the archdeacon's Hell," said he.
 But well I know he lied in what he said;
 A curse ought every guilty man to dread
 (For curse can kill, as absolution save),
 And 'ware significavit to the grave.

663: In daunger hadde he at his owene gise
 664: The yonge girles of the diocise,
 665: And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.
 666: A gerland hadde he set upon his heed
 667: As greet as it were for an ale-stake.
 668: A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.

The Pardoner's Portrait

669: With hym ther rood a gentil pardoner
 670: Of rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
 671: That streight was comen fro the court of rome.
 672: Ful loude he soong com hider, love, to me!
 673: This somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;
 674: Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
 675: This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
 676: But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;
 677: By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,
 678: And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;
 679: But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.
 680: But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
 681: For it was trussed up in his walet.
 682: Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
 683: Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
 684: Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.
 685: A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
 686: His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
 687: Bretful of pardoun, comen from rome al
 hoot.
 688: A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
 689: No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;
 690: As smothe it was as it were late shave.
 691: I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
 692: But of his craft, fro berwyk into ware,
 693: Ne was ther swich another pardoner
 694: For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
 695: Which that he seyde was oure lady veyl:
 696: He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
 697: That seint peter hadde, whan that he wente
 698: Upon the see, til jhesu crist hym hente.
 699: He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
 700: And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
 701: But with thise relikes, whan that he fond

In his own power had he, and at ease,
 The boys and girls of all the diocese,
 And knew their secrets, and by counsel led.
 A garland had he set upon his head,
 Large as a tavern's wine-bush on a stake;
 A buckler had he made of bread they bake.

THE PARDONER

With him there rode a gentle pardoner
 Of Rouncival, his friend and his compeer;
 Straight from the court of Rome had journeyed he.
 Loudly he sang "Come hither, love, to me,"
 The summoner joining with a burden round;
 Was never horn of half so great a sound.
 This pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
 But lank it hung as does a strike of flax;
 In wisps hung down such locks as he'd on head,
 And with them he his shoulders overspread;
 But thin they dropped, and stringy, one by one.
 But as to hood, for sport of it, he'd none,
 Though it was packed in wallet all the while.
 It seemed to him he went in latest style,
 Dishevelled, save for cap, his head all bare.
 As shiny eyes he had as has a hare.
 He had a fine veronica sewed to cap.
 His wallet lay before him in his lap,
 Stuffed full of pardons brought from Rome all hot.
 A voice he had that bleated like a goat.
 No beard had he, nor ever should he have,
 For smooth his face as he'd just had a shave;
 I think he was a gelding or a mare.
 But in his craft, from Berwick unto Ware,
 Was no such pardoner in any place.
 For in his bag he had a pillowcase
 The which, he said, was Our True Lady's veil:
 He said he had a piece of the very sail
 That good Saint Peter had, what time he went
 Upon the sea, till Jesus changed his bent.
 He had a latten cross set full of stones,
 And in a bottle had he some pig's bones.
 But with these relics, when he came upon
 Some simple parson, then this paragon

702: A povre person dwellynge upon lond,	In that one day more money stood to gain
703: Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye	Than the poor dupe in two months could attain.
704: Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;	And thus, with flattery and suchlike japes,
705: And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,	He made the parson and the rest his apes.
706: He made the person and the peple his apes.	But yet, to tell the whole truth at the last,
707: But trewely to tellen atte laste,	He was, in church, a fine ecclesiast.
708: He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.	Well could he read a lesson or a story,
709: Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,	But best of all he sang an offertory;
710: But alderbest he song an offertorie;	For well he knew that when that song was sung,
711: For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,	Then might he preach, and all with polished
712: He moste preche and wel affile his tonge	tongue.
713: To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;	To win some silver, as he right well could;
714: Therefore he song the murierly and loude.	Therefore he sang so merrily and so loud.

PROLOGUE

715: Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,	Now have I told you briefly, in a clause,
716: Th' estaat, th' array, the nombre, and eek the cause	The state, the array, the number, and the cause
717: Why that assembled was this compaignye	Of the assembling of this company
718: In southwerk at this gentil hostelrye	In Southwark, at this noble hostelry
719: That highte the tabard, faste by the belle.	Known as the Tabard Inn, hard by the Bell.
720: But now is tyme to yow for to telle	But now the time is come wherein to tell
721: How that we baren us that ilke nyght,	How all we bore ourselves that very night
722: Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;	When at the hostelry we did alight.
723: And after wol I telle of our viage	And afterward the story I engage
724: And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.	To tell you of our common pilgrimage.
725: But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,	But first, I pray you, of your courtesy,
726: That ye n' arette it nat my vileynye,	You'll not ascribe it to vulgarity
727: Thogh that I pleyedly speke in this mateere,	Though I speak plainly of this matter here,
728: To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,	Retailing you their words and means of cheer;
729: Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.	Nor though I use their very terms, nor lie.
730: For this ye knowen al so wel as I,	For this thing do you know as well as I:
731: Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,	When one repeats a tale told by a man,
732: He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan	He must report, as nearly as he can,
733: Everich a word, if it be in his charge,	Every least word, if he remember it,
734: Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,	However rude it be, or how unfit;
735: Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewre,	Or else he may be telling what's untrue,
736: Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.	Embellishing and fictionizing too.
737: He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;	He may not spare, although it were his brother;
738: He moot as wel seye o word as another.	He must as well say one word as another.
739: Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,	Christ spoke right broadly out, in holy writ,

781: Now, by my fader soule that is deed, Then, by my father's spirit, who is dead,
 782: But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed! If you're not gay, I'll give you up my head.
 783: Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche. Hold up your hands, nor more about it speak."
 784: Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche. Our full assenting was not far to seek;
 785: Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys, We thought there was no reason to think twice,
 786: And graunted hym withouten moore avys, And granted him his way without advice,
 787: And bad him seye his voidit as hym leste. And bade him tell his verdict just and wise,
 788: Lordynges, quod he, now herkneth for the beste; "Masters," quoth he, "here now is my advice;
 789: But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn. But take it not, I pray you, in disdain;
 790: This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn, This is the point, to put it short and plain,
 791: That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye, That each of you, beguiling the long day,
 792: In this viage shal telle tales tweye Shall tell two stories as you wend your way
 793: To caunterbury-ward, I mene it so, To Canterbury town; and each of you
 794: And homward he shal tellen othere two, On coming home, shall tell another two,
 795: Of aventures that whilom han bifalle. All of adventures he has known befall.
 796: And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle, And he who plays his part the best of all,
 797: That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas That is to say, who tells upon the road
 798: Tales of best sentence and moost solaas, Tales of best sense, in most amusing mode,
 799: Shal have a soper at oure aller cost Shall have a supper at the others' cost
 800: Heere in this place, sittyng by this post, Here in this room and sitting by this post,
 801: Whan that we come agayn fro caunterbury. When we come back again from Canterbury.
 802: And for to make yow the moore mury, And now, the more to warrant you'll be merry,
 803: I wol myselfen goodly with yow ryde, I will myself, and gladly, with you ride
 804: Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde, At my own cost, and I will be your guide.
 805: And whoso wole my juggement withseye But whosoever shall my rule gainsay
 806: Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye. Shall pay for all that's bought along the way.
 807: And if ye vouche sauf that it be so, And if you are agreed that it be so,
 808: Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo, Tell me at once, or if not, tell me no,
 809: And I wol erly shape me therfore. And I will act accordingly. No more."
 810: This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore This thing was granted, and our oaths we swore,
 811: With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also With right glad hearts, and prayed of him, also,
 812: That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so, That he would take the office, nor forgo
 813: And that he wolde been oure governour, The place of governor of all of us,
 814: And oure tales juge and reportour, Judging our tales; and by his wisdom thus
 815: And sette a soper at a certeyn pris, Arrange that supper at a certain price,
 816: And we wol reuled been at his devys We to be ruled, each one, by his advice
 817: In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent In things both great and small; by one assent,
 818: We been acorded to his juggement. We stood committed to his government.
 819: And therupon the wyn was fet anon; And thereupon, the wine was fetched anon;
 820: We dronken, and to reste wente echon, We drank, and then to rest went every one,
 821: Withouten any lenger tarynge. And that without a longer tarryng.
 822: Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,

823: Up roos oure hoost, and was oure aller cok, Next morning, when the day began to spring,
 824: And gradrede us togidre alle in a flok, Up rose our host, and acting as our cock,
 825: And forth we riden a litel moore than paas He gathered us together in a flock,
 826: Unto the wateryng of seint thomas; And forth we rode, a jog-trot being the pace,
 827: And there oure hoost bigan his hors areste Until we reached Saint Thomas' watering-place.
 828: And seyde, lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste. And there our host pulled horse up to a walk,
 829: Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde. And said: "Now, masters, listen while I talk.
 830: If even-song and morwe-song accorde, You know what you agreed at set of sun.
 831: Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale. If even-song and morning-song are one,
 832: As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale, Let's here decide who first shall tell a tale.
 833: Whoso be rebel to my juggement And as I hope to drink more wine and ale,
 834: Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent. Whoso proves rebel to my government
 835: Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne; Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.
 836: He which that hath the shortestest shal bigynne. Come now, draw cuts, before we farther win,
 837: Sire knyght, quod he, my mayster and my lord, And he that draws the shortest shall begin.
 838: Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord. Sir knight," said he, "my master and my lord,
 839: Cometh neer, quod he, my lady prioresse. You shall draw first as you have pledged your word.
 840: And ye, sire clerk, lat be youre Come near," quoth he, "my lady prioress:
 shamefastnesse, And you, sir clerk, put by your bashfulness,
 841: Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man! Nor ponder more; out hands, flow, every man!"
 842: Anon to drawen every wight bigan, At once to draw a cut each one began,
 843: And shortly for to tellen as it was, And, to make short the matter, as it was,
 844: Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas, Whether by chance or whatsoever cause,
 845: The sothe is this, the cut fil to the knyght, The truth is, that the cut fell to the knight,
 846: Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght, At which right happy then was every wight.
 847: And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun, Thus that his story first of all he'd tell,
 848: By foreward and by composicioun, According to the compact, it befell,
 849: As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo? As you have heard. Why argue to and fro?
 850: And whan this goode man saugh that it was so, And when this good man saw that it was so,
 851: As he that wys was and obedient Being a wise man and obedient
 852: To kepe his foreward by his free assent, To plighted word, given by free assent,
 853: He seyde, syn I shal bigynne the game, He slid: "Since I must then begin the game,
 854: What, welcome be the cut, a goddes name! Why, welcome be the cut, and in God's name!
 855: Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye. Now let us ride, and hearken what I say."
 856: And with that word we ryden forth oure weye, And at that word we rode forth on our way;
 857: And he bigan with right a myrie cheere And he began to speak, with right good cheer,
 858: His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere. His tale anon, as it is written here.

HERE ENDS THE PROLOGUE OF THIS BOOK
 AND HERE BEGINS THE FIRST TALE,
 WHICH IS THE KNIGHT'S TALE

Source:

Middle English: Virginia Etext Project

Modern English: `gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/63/38`

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