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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE MERCHANT'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE.<l>
"Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow,
I have enough, on even and on morrow,"
Quoth the Merchant, "and so have other mo',
That wedded be; I trow* that it be so; *believe
For well I wot it fareth so by me.
I have a wife, the worste that may be,
For though the fiend to her y-coupled were,
She would him overmatch, I dare well swear.
Why should I you rehearse in special
Her high malice? she is *a shrew at all.* *thoroughly, in
There is a long and large difference everything wicked*
Betwixt Griselda's greate patience,
And of my wife the passing cruelty.
Were I unbounden, all so may I the,* *thrive
I woulde never eft* come in the snare. *again
We wedded men live in sorrow and care;
Assay it whoso will, and he shall find
That I say sooth, by Saint Thomas of Ind,<2>
As for the more part; I say not all, —
God shielde* that it shoulde so befall. *forbid
Ah! good Sir Host, I have y-wedded be
These moneths two, and more not, pardie;
And yet I trow* that he that all his life *believe
Wifeless hath been, though that men would him rive* *wound
Into the hearte, could in no mannere
Telle so much sorrow, as I you here
Could tellen of my wife's cursedness."* *wickedness
"Now," quoth our Host, "Merchant, so God you bless,
Since ye so muche knowen of that art,
Full heartily I pray you tell us part."
"Gladly," quoth he; "but of mine owen sore,
For sorry heart, I telle may no more."
Notes to the Prologue to the Merchant's Tale
1. Though the manner in which the Merchant takes up the closing words of the Envoy to the Clerk's Tale, and refers to the patience of Griselda, seems to prove beyond doubt that the order of the Tales in the text is the right one, yet in some manuscripts of good authority the Franklin's Tale follows the Clerk's, and the Envoy is concluded

by this stanza: — "This worthy Clerk when ended was his tale, Our Hoste said, and swore by cocke's bones 'Me lever were than a barrel of ale My wife at home had heard this legend once; This is a gentle tale for the nonce; As, to my purpose, wiste ye my will. But thing that will not be, let it be still.'"

In other manuscripts of less authority the Host proceeds, in two similar stanzas, to impose a Tale on the Franklin; but Tyrwhitt is probably right in setting them aside as spurious, and in admitting the genuineness of the first only, if it be supposed that Chaucer forgot to cancel it when he had decided on another mode of connecting the Merchant's with the Clerk's Tale.

2. Saint Thomas of Ind: St. Thomas the Apostle, who was believed to have travelled in India.

THE TALE.<l>

Whilom there was dwelling in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was at Pavie,
In which he liv'd in great prosperity;
And forty years a wifeless man was he,
And follow'd aye his bodily delight
On women, where as was his appetite,
As do these fooles that be seculeres.<2>
And, when that he was passed sixty years,
Were it for holiness, or for dotage,
I cannot say, but such a great corage* *inclination
Hadde this knight to be a wedded man,
That day and night he did all that he can
To espy where that he might wedded be;
Praying our Lord to grante him, that he
Mighte once knowen of that blissful life
That is betwixt a husband and his wife,
And for to live under that holy bond
With which God firste man and woman bond.
"None other life," said he, "is worth a bean;
For wedlock is so easy, and so clean,
That in this world it is a paradise."
Thus said this olde knight, that was so wise.
And certainly, as sooth* as God is king, *true
To take a wife it is a glorious thing,
And namely* when a man is old and hoar, *especially
Then is a wife the fruit of his treasor;
Then should he take a young wife and a fair,
On which he might engender him an heir,
And lead his life in joy and in solace;* *mirth, delight
Whereas these bachelors singen "Alas!"
When that they find any adversity
In love, which is but childish vanity.

And truely it sits* well to be so, *becomes, befits
That bachelors have often pain and woe:
On brittle ground they build, and brittleness
They finde when they *weene sickerness:* *think that there
They live but as a bird or as a beast, is security*
In liberty, and under no arrest;* *check, control
Whereas a wedded man in his estate
Liveth a life blissful and ordinate,
Under the yoke of marriage y-bound;
Well may his heart in joy and bliss abound.
For who can be so buxom* as a wife? *obedient
Who is so true, and eke so attentive
To keep* him, sick and whole, as is his make?** *care for **mate
For weal or woe she will him not forsake:
She is not weary him to love and serve,
Though that he lie bedrid until he sterve.* *die
And yet some clerkes say it is not so;
Of which he, Theophrast, is one of tho:* *those
*What force* though Theophrast list for to lie? *what matter*
"Take no wife," quoth he, <3> "for husbandry,* *thrift
As for to spare in household thy dispence;
A true servant doth more diligence
Thy good to keep, than doth thine owen wife,
For she will claim a half part all her life.
And if that thou be sick, so God me save,
Thy very friendes, or a true knave,* *servant
Will keep thee bet than she, that *waiteth aye *ahways waits to
After thy good,* and hath done many a day." inherit your property*
This sentence, and a hundred times worse,
Writeth this man, there God his bones curse.
But take no keep* of all such vanity, *notice
Defy* Theophrast, and hearken to me. *distrust
A wife is Godde's gifte verily;
All other manner giftes hardily,* *truly
As handes, rentes, pasture, or commune,* *common land
Or mebles,* all be giftes of fortune, *furniture <4>
That passen as a shadow on the wall:
But dread* thou not, if plainly speak I shall, *doubt
A wife will last, and in thine house endure,
Well longer than thee list, paraventure.* *perhaps
Marriage is a full great sacrament;
He which that hath no wife, I hold him shent;* *ruined
He liveth helpless, and all desolate
(I speak of folk *in secular estate*): *who are not

And hearken why, I say not this for nought, — of the clergy*
That woman is for manne's help y-wrought.
The highe God, when he had Adam maked,
And saw him all alone belly naked,
God of his greate goodness saide then,
Let us now make a help unto this man
Like to himself; and then he made him Eve.
Here may ye see, and hereby may ye preve,* *prove
That a wife is man s help and his comfort,
His paradise terrestre and his disport.
So buxom* and so virtuous is she, *obedient, complying
They muste needes live in unity;
One flesh they be, and one blood, as I guess,
With but one heart in weal and in distress.
A wife? Ah! Saint Mary, ben'dicite,
How might a man have any adversity
That hath a wife? certes I cannot say
The bliss the which that is betwixt them tway,
There may no tongue it tell, or hearte think.
If he be poor, she helpeth him to swink;* *labour
She keeps his good, and wasteth never a deal;* *whit
All that her husband list, her liketh* well; *pleaseth
She saith not ones Nay, when he saith Yea;
"Do this," saith he; "All ready, Sir," saith she.
O blissful order, wedlock precious!
Thou art so merry, and eke so virtuous,
And so commended and approved eke,
That every man that holds him worth a leek
Upon his bare knees ought all his life
To thank his God, that him hath sent a wife;
Or elles pray to God him for to send
A wife, to last unto his life's end.
For then his life is set in sickerness,* *security
He may not be deceived, as I guess,
So that he work after his wife's rede;* *counsel
Then may he boldely bear up his head,
They be so true, and therewithal so wise.
For which, if thou wilt worken as the wise,
Do alway so as women will thee rede. * *counsel
Lo how that Jacob, as these clerkes read,
By good counsel of his mother Rebecc'
Bounde the kiddes skin about his neck;
For which his father's benison* he wan. *benediction
Lo Judith, as the story telle can,

By good counsel she Godde's people kept,
And slew him, Holofernes, while he slept.
Lo Abigail, by good counsel, how she
Saved her husband Nabal, when that he
Should have been slain. And lo, Esther also
By counsel good deliver'd out of woe
The people of God, and made him, Mardoche,
Of Assuere enhanced* for to be. *advanced in dignity
There is nothing *in gree superlative* *of higher esteem*
(As saith Senec) above a humble wife.
Suffer thy wife's tongue, as Cato bit;* *bid
She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it,
And yet she will obey of courtesy.
A wife is keeper of thine husbandry:
Well may the sicke man bewail and weep,
There as there is no wife the house to keep.
I warne thee, if wisely thou wilt wirch,* *work
Love well thy wife, as Christ loveth his church:
Thou lov'st thyself, if thou lovest thy wife.
No man hateth his flesh, but in his life
He fost'reth it; and therefore bid I thee
Cherish thy wife, or thou shalt never the.* *thrive
Husband and wife, what *so men jape or play,* *although men joke
Of worldly folk holde the sicker* way; and jeer* *certain
They be so knit there may no harm betide,
And namely* upon the wife's side. * especially
For which this January, of whom I told,
Consider'd hath within his dayes old,
The lusty life, the virtuous quiet,
That is in marriage honey-sweet.
And for his friends upon a day he sent
To tell them the effect of his intent.
With face sad,* his tale he hath them told: *grave, earnest
He saide, "Friendes, I am hoar and old,
And almost (God wot) on my pitte's* brink, *grave's
Upon my soule somewhat must I think.
I have my body foolishly dispended,
Blessed be God that it shall be amended;
For I will be certain a wedded man,
And that anon in all the haste I can,
Unto some maiden, fair and tender of age;
I pray you shape* for my marriage * arrange, contrive
All suddenly, for I will not abide:
And I will fond* to espy, on my side, *try

To whom I may be wedded hastily.
But forasmuch as ye be more than,
Ye shalle rather* such a thing espy
Than I, and where me best were to ally.
But one thing warn I you, my friendes dear,
I will none old wife have in no mannere:
She shall not passe sixteen year certain.
Old fish and younge flesh would I have fain.
Better," quoth he, "a pike than a pickerel,* *young pike
And better than old beef is tender veal.
I will no woman thirty year of age,
It is but beanestraw and great forage.
And eke these olde widows (God it wot)
They conne* so much craft on Wade's boat,<5> *know
*So muche brooke harm when that them lest,* *they can do so much
That with them should I never live in rest. harm when they wish*
For sundry schooles make subtle clerkes;
Woman of many schooles half a clerk is.
But certainly a young thing men may guy,* *guide
Right as men may warm wax with handes ply.* *bend,mould
Wherefore I say you plainly in a clause,
I will none old wife have, right for this cause.
For if so were I hadde such mischance,
That I in her could have no pleasance,
Then should I lead my life in avoutrie,* *adultery
And go straight to the devil when I die.
Nor children should I none upon her getten:
Yet *were me lever* houndes had me eaten *I would rather*
Than that mine heritage shoulde fall
In strange hands: and this I tell you all.
I doubte not I know the cause why
Men shoulde wed: and farthermore know I
There speaketh many a man of marriage
That knows no more of it than doth my page,
For what causes a man should take a wife.
If he ne may not live chaste his life,
Take him a wife with great devotion,
Because of lawful procreation
Of children, to th' honour of God above,
And not only for paramour or love;
And for they shoulde lechery eschew,
And yield their debte when that it is due:
Or for that each of them should help the other
In mischief,* as a sister shall the brother, *trouble

And live in chastity full holily.
But, Sires, by your leave, that am not I,
For, God be thanked, I dare make avaunt,* *boast
I feel my limbes stark* and suffisant *strong
To do all that a man belongeth to:
I wot myselfe best what I may do.
Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossoms ere the fruit y-waxen* be; *grown
The blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead;
I feel me now here hoar but on my head.
Mine heart and all my limbes are as green
As laurel through the year is for to seen.* *see
And, since that ye have heard all mine intent,
I pray you to my will ye would assent."
Diverse men diversely him told
Of marriage many examples old;
Some blamed it, some praised it, certain;
But at the haste, shortly for to sayn
(As all day* falleth altercation *constantly, every day
Betwixte friends in disputation),
There fell a strife betwixt his brethren two,
Of which that one was called Placebo,
Justinus soothly called was that other.
Placebo said; "O January, brother,
Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,
Counsel to ask of any that is here:
But that ye be so full of sapience,
That you not liketh, for your high prudence,
To waive* from the word of Solomon. *depart, deviate
This word said he unto us every one;
Work alle thing by counsel, — thus said he, —
And thenne shalt thou not repente thee
But though that Solomon spake such a word,
Mine owen deare brother and my lord,
So wisly* God my soule bring at rest, *surely
I hold your owen counsel is the best.
For, brother mine, take of me this motive; * *advice, encouragement
I have now been a court-man all my life,
And, God it wot, though I unworthy be,
I have standen in full great degree
Aboute lordes of full high estate;
Yet had I ne'er with none of them debate;
I never them contraried truely.
I know well that my lord can* more than I; *knows

What that he saith I hold it firm and stable,
I say the same, or else a thing semblable.
A full great fool is any counsellor
That serveth any lord of high honour
That dare presume, or ones thinken it;
That his counsel should pass his lorde's wit.
Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay.
Ye have yourselfe shewed here to day
So high sentence,* so holily and well *judgment, sentiment
That I consent, and confirm *every deal* *in every point*
Your wordes all, and your opinioun
By God, there is no man in all this town
Nor in Itale, could better have y-said.
Christ holds him of this counsel well apaid.* *satisfied
And truely it is a high courage
Of any man that stopen* is in age, *advanced <6>
To take a young wife, by my father's kin;
Your hearte hangeth on a jolly pin.
Do now in this matter right as you lest,
For finally I hold it for the best."
Justinus, that aye stille sat and heard,
Right in this wise to Placebo answer'd.
"Now, brother mine, be patient I pray,
Since ye have said, and hearken what I say.
Senec, among his other wordes wise,
Saith, that a man ought him right well advise,* *consider
To whom he gives his hand or his chattel.
And since I ought advise me right well
To whom I give my good away from me,
Well more I ought advise me, pardie,
To whom I give my body: for alway
I warn you well it is no childe's play
To take a wife without advisement.
Men must inquire (this is mine assent)
Whe'er she be wise, or sober, or dronkelew,* *given to drink
Or proud, or any other ways a shrew,
A chidester,* or a waster of thy good, *a scold
Or rich or poor; or else a man is wood.* *mad
Albeit so, that no man finde shall
None in this world, that *trotteth whole in all,* *is sound in
No man, nor beast, such as men can devise,* every point* *describe
But nathehess it ought enough suffice
With any wife, if so were that she had
More goode thewes* than her vices bad: * qualities

And all this asketh leisure to inquere.
For, God it wot, I have wept many a tear
Full privily, since I have had a wife.
Praise whoso will a wedded manne's life,
Certes, I find in it but cost and care,
And observances of all blisses bare.
And yet, God wot, my neighebours about,
And namely* of women many a rout,** *especially **company
Say that I have the moste steadfast wife,
And eke the meekest one, that beareth life.
But I know best where wringeth* me my shoe, *pinches
Ye may for me right as you like do
Advise you, ye be a man of age,
How that ye enter into marriage;
And namely* with a young wife and a fair, * especially
By him that made water, fire, earth, air,
The youngest man that is in all this rout* *company
Is busy enough to bringen it about
To have his wife alone, truste me:
Ye shall not please her fully yeares three,
This is to say, to do her full pleasance.
A wife asketh full many an observance.
I pray you that ye be not *evil apaid."* *displeased*
"Well," quoth this January, "and hast thou said?
Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbs,
I counte not a pannier full of herbs
Of schoole termes; wiser men than thou,
As thou hast heard, assented here right now
To my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?"
"I say it is a cursed* man," quoth he, *ill-natured, wicked
"That letteth* matrimony, sickerly." *hindereth
And with that word they rise up suddenly,
And be assented fully, that he should
Be wedded when him list, and where he would.
High fantasy and curious business
From day to day gan in the soul impress* *imprint themselves
Of January about his marriage
Many a fair shape, and many a fair visage
There passed through his hearte night by night.
As whoso took a mirror polish'd bright,
And set it in a common market-place,
Then should he see many a figure pace
By his mirror; and in the same wise
Gan January in his thought devise

Of maidens, which that dwelte him beside:
He wiste not where that he might abide.* *stay, fix his choice
For if that one had beauty in her face,
Another stood so in the people's grace
For her sadness* and her benignity, *sedateness
That of the people greatest voice had she:
And some were rich and had a badde name.
But natheless, betwixt earnest and game,
He at the last appointed him on one,
And let all others from his hearte gon,
And chose her of his own authority;
For love is blind all day, and may not see.
And when that he was into bed y-brought,
He pourtray'd in his heart and in his thought
Her freshe beauty, and her age tender,
Her middle small, her armes long and slender,
Her wise governance, her gentleness,
Her womanly bearing, and her sadness.* *sedateness
And when that he *on her was condescended,* *had selected her*
He thought his choice might not be amended;
For when that he himself concluded had,
He thought each other manne' s wit so bad,
That impossible it were to reply
Against his choice; this was his fantasy.
His friendes sent he to, at his instance,
And prayed them to do him that pleasance,
That hastily they would unto him come;
He would abridge their labour all and some:
Needed no more for them to go nor ride,<7>
*He was appointed where he would abide.* *he had definitively
Placebo came, and eke his friendes soon, made his choice*
And *alderfirst he bade them all a boon,* *first of all he asked
That none of them no arguments would make a favour of them*
Against the purpose that he had y-take:
Which purpose was pleasant to God, said he,
And very ground of his prosperity.
He said, there was a maiden in the town,
Which that of beauty hadde great renown;
All* were it so she were of small degree, *although
Sufficed him her youth and her beauty;
Which maid, he said, he would have to his wife,
To lead in ease and holiness his life;
And thanked God, that he might have her all,
That no wight with his blisse parte* shall; *have a share

And prayed them to labour in this need,
And shape that he faile not to speed:
For then, he said, his spirit was at ease.
"Then is," quoth he, "nothing may me displease,
Save one thing pricketh in my conscience,
The which I will rehearse in your presence.
I have," quoth he, "heard said, full yore* ago, *long
There may no man have perfect blisses two,
This is to say, on earth and eke in heaven.
For though he keep him from the sinne's seven,
And eke from every branch of thilke tree,<8>
Yet is there so perfect felicity,
And so great *ease and lust,* in marriage, *comfort and pleasure*
That ev'r I am aghast,* now in mine age *ashamed, afraid
That I shall head now so merry a life,
So delicate, withoute woe or strife,
That I shall have mine heav'n on earthe here.
For since that very heav'n is bought so dear,
With tribulation and great penance,
How should I then, living in such pleasance
As alle wedded men do with their wives,
Come to the bliss where Christ *etern on live is?* *lives eternally*
This is my dread;* and ye, my brethren tway, *doubt
Assoile* me this question, I you pray." *resolve, answer
Justinus, which that hated his folly,
Answer'd anon right in his japery;* *mockery, jesting way
And, for he would his longe tale abridge,
He woulde no authority* allege, *written texts
But saide; "Sir, so there be none obstacle
Other than this, God of his high miracle,
And of his mercy, may so for you wirch,* *work
That, ere ye have your rights of holy church,
Ye may repent of wedded manne's life,
In which ye say there is no woe nor strife:
And elles God forbid, *but if* he sent *unless
A wedded man his grace him to repent
Well often, rather than a single man.
And therefore, Sir, *the beste rede I can,* *this is the best counsel
Despair you not, but have in your memory, that I know*
Paraventure she may be your purgatory;
She may be Godde's means, and Godde's whip;
And then your soul shall up to heaven skip
Swifter than doth an arrow from a bow.
I hope to God hereafter ye shall know

That there is none so great felicity
In marriage, nor ever more shall be,
That you shall let* of your salvation; *hinder
So that ye use, as skill is and reason,
The lustes* of your wife attemperly,** *pleasures **moderately
And that ye please her not too amorously,
And that ye keep you eke from other sin.
My tale is done, for my wit is but thin.
Be not aghast* hereof, my brother dear, *aharmed, afraid
But let us waden out of this mattere,
The Wife of Bath, if ye have understand,
Of marriage, which ye have now in hand,
Declared hath full well in little space;
Fare ye now well, God have you in his grace."
And with this word this Justin' and his brother
Have ta'en their leave, and each of them of other.
And when they saw that it must needes be,
They wroughte so, by sleight and wise treaty,
That she, this maiden, which that *Maius hight,* *was named May*
As hastily as ever that she might,
Shall wedded be unto this January.
I trow it were too longe you to tarry,
If I told you of every *script and band* *written bond*
By which she was feoffed in his hand;
Or for to reckon of her rich array
But finally y-comen is the day
That to the churche bothe be they went,
For to receive the holy sacrament,
Forth came the priest, with stole about his neck,
And bade her be like Sarah and Rebecc'
In wisdom and in truth of marriage;
And said his orisons, as is usage,
And crouched* them, and prayed God should them bless, *crossed
And made all sicker* enough with holiness. *certain
Thus be they wedded with solemnity;
And at the feaste sat both he and she,
With other worthy folk, upon the dais.
All full of joy and bliss is the palace,
And full of instruments, and of vitaille, * *victuals, food
The moste dainteous* of all Itale. *delicate
Before them stood such instruments of soun',
That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphioun,
Ne made never such a melody.
At every course came in loud minstrelsy,

That never Joab trumped for to hear,
Nor he, Theodomas, yet half so clear
At Thebes, when the city was in doubt.
Bacchus the wine them skinked* all about. *poured <9>
And Venus laughed upon every wight
(For January was become her knight,
And woulde both assaye his courage
In liberty, and eke in marriage),
And with her firebrand in her hand about
Danced before the bride and all the rout.
And certainly I dare right well say this,
Hymeneus, that god of wedding is,
Saw never his life so merry a wedded man.
Hold thou thy peace, thou poet Marcian,<10>
That writest us that ilke* wedding merry *same
Of her Philology and him Mercury,
And of the songes that the Muses sung;
Too small is both thy pen, and eke thy tongue
For to describen of this marriage.
When tender youth hath wedded stooping age,
There is such mirth that it may not be writ;
Assay it youreself, then may ye wit* *know
If that I lie or no in this mattere.
Maius, that sat with so benign a cheer,* *countenance
Her to behold it seemed faerie;
Queen Esther never look'd with such an eye
On Assuere, so meek a look had she;
I may you not devise all her beauty;
But thus much of her beauty tell I may,
That she was hike the bright morrow of May
Full filled of all beauty and pleasance.
This January is ravish'd in a trance,
At every time he looked in her face;
But in his heart he gan her to menace,
That he that night in armes would her strain
Harder than ever Paris did Helene.
But natheless yet had he great pity
That thilke night offende her must he,
And thought, "Alas, O tender creature,
Now woulde God ye mighte well endure
All my courage, it is so sharp and keen;
I am aghast* ye shall it not sustene. *afraid
But God forbid that I did all my might.
Now woulde God that it were waxen night,

And that the night would lasten evermo'.
I would that all this people were y-go."* *gone away
And finally he did all his labour,
As he best mighte, saving his honour,
To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.
The time came that reason was to rise;
And after that men dance, and drinke fast,
And spices all about the house they cast,
And full of joy and bliss is every man,
All but a squire, that highte Damian,
Who carv'd before the knight full many a day;
He was so ravish'd on his lady May,
That for the very pain he was nigh wood;* *mad
Almost he swelt* and swooned where he stood, *fainted
So sore had Venus hurt him with her brand,
As that she bare it dancing in her hand.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this time speak I;
But there I let him weep enough and plain,* *bewail
Till freshe May will rue upon his pain.
O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth!
O foe familiar,* that his service bedeth!** *domestic <11> **offers
O servant traitor, O false homely hewe,* *servant <12>
Like to the adder in bosom shy untrue,
God shield us alle from your acquaintance!
O January, drunken in pleasance
Of marriage, see how thy Damian,
Thine owen squier and thy boren* man, *born <13>
Intendeth for to do thee villainy:* *dishonour, outrage
God grante thee thine *homehy foe* t' espy. *enemy in the household*
For in this world is no worse pestilence
Than homely foe, all day in thy presence.
Performed hath the sun his arc diurn,* *daily
No longer may the body of him sojourn
On the horizon, in that latitude:
Night with his mantle, that is dark and rude,
Gan overspread the hemisphere about:
For which departed is this *lusty rout* *pleasant company*
From January, with thank on every side.
Home to their houses lustily they ride,
Where as they do their thinges as them lest,
And when they see their time they go to rest.
Soon after that this hasty* January *eager
Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry.

He dranke hippocras, clarre, and vernage <14>
Of spices hot, to increase his courage;
And many a lectuary* had he full fine, *potion
Such as the cursed monk Dan Constantine<15>
Hath written in his book *de Coitu;* *of sexual intercourse*
To eat them all he would nothing eschew:
And to his privy friendes thus said he:
"For Godde's love, as soon as it may be,
Let *voiden all* this house in courteous wise." *everyone leave*
And they have done right as he will devise.
Men drinken, and the travers* draw anon; *curtains
The bride is brought to bed as still as stone;
And when the bed was with the priest y-bless'd,
Out of the chamber every wight him dress'd,
And January hath fast in arms y-take
His freshe May, his paradise, his make.* *mate
He lulled her, he kissed her full oft;
With thicke bristles of his beard unsoft,
Like to the skin of houndfish,* sharp as brere** *dogfish **briar
(For he was shav'n all new in his mannere),
He rubbed her upon her tender face,
And saide thus; "Alas! I must trespace
To you, my spouse, and you greatly offend,
Ere time come that I will down descend.
But natheless consider this," quoth he,
"There is no workman, whatsoe'er he be,
That may both worke well and hastily:
This will be done at leisure perfectly.
It is *no force* how longe that we play; *no matter*
In true wedlock coupled be we tway;
And blessed be the yoke that we be in,
For in our actes may there be no sin.
A man may do no sinne with his wife,
Nor hurt himselfe with his owen knife;
For we have leave to play us by the law."
Thus labour'd he, till that the day gan daw,
And then he took a sop in fine clarre,
And upright in his bedde then sat he.
And after that he sang full loud and clear,
And kiss'd his wife, and made wanton cheer.
He was all coltish, full of ragerie * *wantonness
And full of jargon as a flecked pie.<16>
The slacke skin about his necke shaked,
While that he sang, so chanted he and craked.* *quavered

But God wot what that May thought in her heart,
When she him saw up sitting in his shirt
In his night-cap, and with his necke lean:
She praised not his playing worth a bean.
Then said he thus; "My reste will I take
Now day is come, I may no longer wake;
And down he laid his head and slept till prime.
And afterward, when that he saw his time,
Up rose January, but freshe May
Helde her chamber till the fourthe day,
As usage is of wives for the best.
For every labour some time must have rest,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to say, no life of creature,
Be it of fish, or bird, or beast, or man.
Now will I speak of woeful Damian,
That languisheth for love, as ye shall hear;
Therefore I speak to him in this manneare.
I say. "O silly Damian, alas!
Answer to this demand, as in this case,
How shalt thou to thy lady, freshe May,
Telle thy woe? She will alway say nay;
Eke if thou speak, she will thy woe bewray; * *betray
God be thine help, I can no better say.
This sicke Damian in Venus' fire
So burned that he died for desire;
For which he put his life *in aventure,* *at risk*
No longer might he in this wise endure;
But privily a penner* gan he borrow, *writing-case
And in a letter wrote he all his sorrow,
In manner of a complaint or a lay,
Unto his faire freshe lady May.
And in a purse of silk, hung on his shirt,
He hath it put, and laid it at his heart.
The moone, that at noon was thilke* day *that
That January had wedded freshe May,
In ten of Taure, was into Cancer glided;<17>
So long had Maius in her chamber abided,
As custom is unto these nobles all.
A bride shall not eaten in the ball
Till dayes four, or three days at the least,
Y-passed be; then let her go to feast.
The fourthe day complete from noon to noon,
When that the highe masse was y-done,

In halle sat this January, and May,
As fresh as is the brighte summer's day.
And so befell, how that this goode man
Remember'd him upon this Damian.
And saide; "Saint Mary, how may this be,
That Damian attendeth not to me?
Is he aye sick? or how may this betide?"
His squiers, which that stoode there beside,
Excused him, because of his sickness,
Which letted* him to do his business: *hindered
None other cause mighte make him tarry.
"That me forthinketh,"* quoth this January *grieves, causes
"He is a gentle squier, by my truth; uneasiness
If that he died, it were great harm and ruth.
He is as wise, as discreet, and secre',* *secret, trusty
As any man I know of his degree,
And thereto manly and eke serviceble,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after meat, as soon as ever I may
I will myself visit him, and eke May,
To do him all the comfort that I can."
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounty and his gentleness
He woulde so comforten in sickness
His squier, for it was a gentle deed.
"Dame," quoth this January, "take good heed,
At after meat, ye with your women all
(When that ye be in chamb'r out of this hall),
That all ye go to see this Damian:
Do him disport, he is a gentle man;
And telle him that I will him visite,
*Have I nothing but rested me a lite:* *when only I have rested
And speed you faste, for I will abide me a little*
Till that ye sleepe faste by my side."
And with that word he gan unto him call
A squier, that was marshal of his hall,
And told him certain thinges that he wo'ld.
This freshe May hath straight her way y-hold,
With all her women, unto Damian.
Down by his beddes side sat she than,* *then
Comforting him as goodly as she may.
This Damian, when that his time he say,* *saw
In secret wise his purse, and eke his bill,
In which that he y-written had his will,

Hath put into her hand withoute more,
Save that he sighed wondrous deep and sore,
And softely to her right thus said he:
"Mercy, and that ye not discover me:
For I am dead if that this thing be kid."* *discovered <18>
The purse hath she in her bosom hid,
And went her way; ye get no more of me;
But unto January come is she,
That on his bedde's side sat full soft.
He took her, and he kissed her full oft,
And laid him down to sleep, and that anon.
She feigned her as that she muste gon
There as ye know that every wight must need;
And when she of this bill had taken heed,
She rent it all to cloutes* at the last, *fragments
And in the privy softely it cast.
Who studieth* now but faire freshe May? *is thoughtful
Adown by olde January she lay,
That slepte, till the cough had him awaked:
Anon he pray'd her strippe her all naked,
He would of her, he said, have some pleasance;
And said her clothes did him incumbrance.
And she obey'd him, be her *lefe or loth.* *willing or unwilling*
But, lest that precious* folk be with me wroth, *over-nice <19>
How that he wrought I dare not to you tell,
Or whether she thought it paradise or hell;
But there I let them worken in their wise
Till evensong ring, and they must arise.
Were it by destiny, or aventure,* * chance
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or constellation, that in such estate
The heaven stood at that time fortunate
As for to put a bill of Venus' works
(For alle thing hath time, as say these clerks),
To any woman for to get her love,
I cannot say; but greate God above,
That knoweth that none act is causeless,
*He deem* of all, for I will hold my peace. *let him judge*
But sooth is this, how that this freshe May
Hath taken such impression that day
Of pity on this sicke Damian,
That from her hearte she not drive can
The remembrance for *to do him ease.* *to satisfy
"Certain," thought she, "whom that this thing displease his desire*

I recke not, for here I him assure,
To love him best of any creature,
Though he no more haddee than his shirt."
Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart.
Here may ye see, how excellent franchise* *generosity
In women is when they them *narrow advise.* *closely consider*
Some tyrant is, — as there be many a one, —
That hath a heart as hard as any stone,
Which would have let him sterven* in the place *die
Well rather than have granted him her grace;
And then rejoicen in her cruel pride.
And reckon not to be a homicide.
This gentle May, full filled of pity,
Right of her hand a letter maked she,
In which she granted him her very grace;
There lacked nought, but only day and place,
Where that she might unto his lust suffice:
For it shall be right as he will devise.
And when she saw her time upon a day
To visit this Damian went this May,
And subtilly this letter down she thrust
Under his pillow, read it if him lust.* *pleased
She took him by the hand, and hard him twist
So secretly, that no wight of it wist,
And bade him be all whole; and forth she went
To January, when he for her sent.
Up rose Damian the nexte morrow,
All passed was his sickness and his sorrow.
He combed him, he proined <20> him and picked,
He did all that unto his lady liked;
And eke to January he went as low
As ever did a dogge for the bow.<21>
He is so pleasant unto every man
(For craft is all, whoso that do it can),
Every wight is fain to speak him good;
And fully in his lady's grace he stood.
Thus leave I Damian about his need,
And in my tale forth I will proceed.
Some clerke* holde that felicity *writers, scholars
Stands in delight; and therefore certain he,
This noble January, with all his might
In honest wise as longeth* to a knight, *belongeth
Shope* him to live full deliciously: *prepared, arranged
His housing, his array, as honestly* *honourably, suitably

To his degree was maked as a king's.
Amonges other of his honest things
He had a garden walled all with stone;
So fair a garden wot I nowhere none.
For out of doubt I verily suppose
That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose <22>
Could not of it the beauty well devise;* *describe
Nor Priapus <23> mighte not well suffice,
Though he be god of gardens, for to tell
The beauty of the garden, and the well* *fountain
That stood under a laurel always green.
Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen
Proserpina, and all their faerie,
Disported them and made melody
About that well, and danced, as men told.
This noble knight, this January old
Such dainty* had in it to walk and play, *pleasure
That he would suffer no wight to bear the key,
Save he himself, for of the small wicket
He bare always of silver a cliket,* *key
With which, when that him list, he it unshet.* *opened
And when that he would pay his wife's debt,
In summer season, thither would he go,
And May his wife, and no wight but they two;
And thinges which that were not done in bed,
He in the garden them perform'd and sped.
And in this wise many a merry day
Lived this January and fresh May,
But worldly joy may not always endure
To January, nor to no creatucere.
O sudden hap! O thou fortune unstable!
Like to the scorpion so deceivable,* *deceitful
That fhatt'rest with thy head when thou wilt sting;
Thy tail is death, through thine envenoming.
O brittle joy! O sweete poison quaint!* *strange
O monster, that so subtilly canst paint
Thy giftes, under hue of steadfastness,
That thou deceivest bothe *more and less!* *great and small*
Why hast thou January thus deceiv'd,
That haddest him for thy full friend receiv'd?
And now thou hast bereft him both his eyen,
For sorrow of which desireth he to dien.
Alas! this noble January free,
Amid his lust* and his prosperity *pleasure

Is waxen blind, and that all suddenly.
He weeped and he wailed piteously;
And therewithal the fire of jealousy
(Lest that his wife should fall in some folly)
So burnt his hearte, that he woulde fain,
That some man bothe him and her had slain;
For neither after his death, nor in his life,
Ne would he that she were no love nor wife,
But ever live as widow in clothes black,
Sole as the turtle that hath lost her make.* *mate
But at the last, after a month or tway,
His sorrow gan assuage, soothe to say.
For, when he wist it might none other be,
He patiently took his adversity:
Save out of doubte he may not foregon
That he was jealous evermore-in-one:* *continually
Which jealousy was so outrageous,
That neither in hall, nor in none other house,
Nor in none other place never the mo'
He woulde suffer her to ride or go,
*But if* that he had hand on her alway. *unless
For which full often wepte freshe May,
That loved Damian so burningly
That she must either dien suddenly,
Or elles she must have him as her lest:* *pleased
She waited* when her hearte woulde brest.** *expected **burst
Upon that other side Damian
Becomen is the sorrowfullest man
That ever was; for neither night nor day
He mighte speak a word to freshe May,
As to his purpose, of no such mattere,
*But if* that January must it hear, *unless*
That had a hand upon her evermo'.
But natheless, by writing to and fro,
And privy signes, wist he what she meant,
And she knew eke the fine* of his intent. *end, aim
O January, what might it thee avail,
Though thou might see as far as shippes sail?
For as good is it blind deceiv'd to be,
As be deceived when a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had a hundred eyen, <24>
For all that ever he could pore or pryen,
Yet was he blent;* and, God wot, so be mo', *deceived
That *weene wisly* that it be not so: *think confidently*

Pass over is an ease, I say no more.
This freshe May, of which I spake yore,* *previously
In warm wax hath *imprinted the cliket* *taken an impression
That January bare of the small wicket of the key*
By which into his garden oft he went;
And Damian, that knew all her intent,
The cliket counterfeited privily;
There is no more to say, but hastily
Some wonder by this cliket shall betide,
Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide.
O noble Ovid, sooth say'st thou, God wot,
What sleight is it, if love be long and hot,
That he'll not find it out in some mannere?
By Pyramus and Thisbe may men lear;* *learn
Though they were kept full long and strait o'er all,
They be accorded,* rowning** through a wall, *agreed **whispering
Where no wight could have found out such a sleight.
But now to purpose; ere that dayes eight
Were passed of the month of July, fill* *it befell
That January caught so great a will,
Through egging* of his wife, him for to play *inciting
In his garden, and no wight but they tway,
That in a morning to this May said he: <25>
"Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free;
The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet;
The winter is gone, with all his raines weet.* *wet
Come forth now with thine *eyen columbine* *eyes like the doves*
Well fairer be thy breasts than any wine.
The garden is enclosed all about;
Come forth, my white spouse; for, out of doubt,
Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife:
No spot in thee was e'er in all thy life.
Come forth, and let us taken our disport;
I choose thee for my wife and my comfort."
Such olde lewed* wordes used he. *foolish, ignorant
On Damian a signe made she,
That he should go before with his cliket.
This Damian then hath opened the wicket,
And in he start, and that in such mannere
That no wight might him either see or hear;
And still he sat under a bush. Anon
This January, as blind as is a stone,
With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo',
Into this freshe garden is y-go,

And clapped to the wicket suddenly.
"Now, wife," quoth he, "here is but thou and I;
Thou art the creature that I beste love:
For, by that Lord that sits in heav'n above,
Lever* I had to dien on a knife, *rather
Than thee offende, deare true wife.
For Godde's sake, think how I thee chees,* *chose
Not for no covetise* doubteless, * covetousness
But only for the love I had to thee.
And though that I be old, and may not see,
Be to me true, and I will tell you why.
Certes three thinges shall ye win thereby:
First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour,
And all mine heritage, town and tow'r.
I give it you, make charters as you lest;
This shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest,
So wisly* God my soule bring to bliss! *surely
I pray you, on this covenant me kiss.
And though that I be jealous, wite* me not; *blame
Ye be so deep imprinted in my thought,
That when that I consider your beauty,
And therewithal *th'unlikely eld* of me, *dissimilar age*
I may not, certes, though I shoulde die,
Forbear to be out of your company,
For very love; this is withoute doubt:
Now kiss me, wife, and let us roam about."
This freshe May, when she these wordes heard,
Benignely to January answer'd;
But first and forward she began to weep:
"I have," quoth she, "a soule for to keep
As well as ye, and also mine honour,
And of my wifehood thilke* tender flow'r *that same
Which that I have assured in your hond,
When that the priest to you my body bond:
Wherefore I will answer in this mannere,
With leave of you mine owen lord so dear.
I pray to God, that never dawn the day
That I *no sterve,* as foul as woman may, *do not die*
If e'er I do unto my kin that shame,
Or elles I impaire so my name,
That I bee false; and if I do that lack,
Do strippe me, and put me in a sack,
And in the nexte river do me drench:* *drown
I am a gentle woman, and no wench.

Why speak ye thus? but men be e'er untrue,
And women have reproof of you aye new.
Ye know none other dalliance, I believe,
But speak to us of untrust and repreve."* *reproof
And with that word she saw where Damian
Sat in the bush, and coughe she began;
And with her finger signe made she,
That Damian should climb upon a tree
That charged was with fruit; and up he went:
For verily he knew all her intent,
And every signe that she coulde make,
Better than January her own make.* *mate
For in a letter she had told him all
Of this matter, how that he worke shall.
And thus I leave him sitting in the perry,* *pear-tree
And January and May roaming full merry.
Bright was the day, and blue the firmament;
Phoebus of gold his streames down had sent
To gladden every flow'r with his warmness;
He was that time in Geminis, I guess,
But little from his declination
Of Cancer, Jove's exaltation.
And so befell, in that bright morning-tide,
That in the garden, on the farther side,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a lady in his company
Following his wife, the queen Proserpina, —
Which that he ravished out of Ethna,<26>
While that she gather'd flowers in the mead
(In Claudian ye may the story read,
How in his grisly chariot he her fet*), — *fetched
This king of Faerie adown him set
Upon a bank of turfes fresh and green,
And right anon thus said he to his queen.
"My wife," quoth he, "there may no wight say nay, —
Experience so proves it every day, —
The treason which that woman doth to man.
Ten hundred thousand stories tell I can
Notable of your untruth and brittleness * *inconstancy
O Solomon, richest of all richess,
Full fill'd of sapience and worldly glory,
Full worthy be thy wordes of memory
To every wight that wit and reason can. * *knows
Thus praised he yet the bounte* of man: *goodness

'Among a thousand men yet found I one,
But of all women found I never none.' <27>
Thus said this king, that knew your wickedness;
And Jesus, Filius Sirach, <28> as I guess,
He spake of you but seldom reverence.
A wilde fire and corrupt pestilence
So fall upon your bodies yet to-night!
Ne see ye not this honourable knight?
Because, alas! that he is blind and old,
His owen man shall make him cuckold.
Lo, where he sits, the lechour, in the tree.
Now will I granten, of my majesty,
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he shall have again his eyen sight,
When that his wife will do him villainy;
Then shall be knowen all her harlotry,
Both in reproof of her and other mo'."
"Yea, Sir," quoth Proserpine," and will ye so?
Now by my mother Ceres' soul I swear
That I shall give her suffisant answer,
And alle women after, for her sake;
That though they be in any guilt y-take,
With face bold they shall themselves excuse,
And bear them down that woulde them accuse.
For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.
All* had ye seen a thing with both your eyen, *although
Yet shall *we visage it* so hardily, *confront it*
And weep, and swear, and chide subtilly,
That ye shall be as lewed* as be geese. *ignorant, confounded
What recketh me of your authorities?
I wot well that this Jew, this Solomon,
Found of us women fooles many one:
But though that he founde no good woman,
Yet there hath found many another man
Women full good, and true, and virtuous;
Witness on them that dwelt in Christes house;
With martyrdom they proved their constance.
The Roman gestes <29> make remembrance
Of many a very true wife also.
But, Sire, be not wroth, albeit so,
Though that he said he found no good woman,
I pray you take the sentence* of the man: *opinion, real meaning
He meant thus, that in *sovereign bounte* *perfect goodness
Is none but God, no, neither *he nor she.* *man nor woman*

Hey, for the very God that is but one,
Why make ye so much of Solomon?
What though he made a temple, Godde's house?
What though he were rich and glorious?
So made he eke a temple of false goddes;
How might he do a thing that more forbode* is? *forbidden
Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplaster,* *plaster over, "whitewash"
He was a lechour, and an idolaster,* *idohater
And in his eld he very* God forsook. *the true
And if that God had not (as saith the book)
Spared him for his father's sake, he should
Have lost his regne* rather** than he would. *kingdom **sooner
I *sette not of* all the villainy *value not*
That he of women wrote, a butterfly.
I am a woman, needes must I speak,
Or elles swell until mine hearte break.
For since he said that we be jangleresses,* *chatterers
As ever may I brooke* whole my tresses, *preserve
I shall not spare for no courtesy
To speak him harm, that said us villainy."
"Dame," quoth this Pluto, "be no longer wroth;
I give it up: but, since I swore mine oath
That I would grant to him his sight again,
My word shall stand, that warn I you certain:
I am a king; it sits* me not to lie." *becomes, befits
"And I," quoth she, "am queen of Faerie.
Her answer she shall have, I undertake,
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forsooth, I will no longer you contrary."
Now let us turn again to January,
That in the garden with his faire May
Singeth well merrier than the popinjay:* *parrot
"You love I best, and shall, and other none."
So long about the alleys is he gone,
Till he was come to *that ilke perry,* *the same pear-tree*
Where as this Damian satte full merry
On high, among the freshe leaves green.
This freshe May, that is so bright and sheen,
Gan for to sigh, and said, "Alas my side!
Now, Sir," quoth she, "for aught that may betide,
I must have of the peares that I see,
Or I must die, so sore longeth me
To eaten of the smalle peares green;
Help, for her love that is of heaven queen!

I tell you well, a woman in my plight <30>
May have to fruit so great an appetite,
That she may dien, but* she of it have. " *unless
"Alas!" quoth he, "that I had here a knave* *servant
That coulde climb; alas! alas!" quoth he,
"For I am blind." "Yea, Sir, *no force,"* quoth she; *no matter*
"But would ye vouchesafe, for Godde's sake,
The perry in your armes for to take
(For well I wot that ye mistruste me),
Then would I climbe well enough," quoth she,
"So I my foot might set upon your back."
"Certes," said he, "therein shall be no lack,
Might I you helpe with mine hearte's blood."
He stooped down, and on his back she stood,
And caught her by a twist,* and up she go'th. *twig, bough
(Ladies, I pray you that ye be not wroth,
I cannot glose,* I am a rude man): *mince matters
And suddenly anon this Damian
Gan pullen up the smock, and in he throng.* *rushed <31>
And when that Pluto saw this greate wrong,
To January he gave again his sight,
And made him see as well as ever he might.
And when he thus had caught his sight again,
Was never man of anything so fain:
But on his wife his thought was evermo'.
Up to the tree he cast his eyen two,
And saw how Damian his wife had dress'd,
In such mannere, it may not be express'd,
*But if* I woulde speak uncourteously. *unless*
And up he gave a roaring and a cry,
As doth the mother when the child shall die;
"Out! help! alas! harow!" he gan to cry;
"O stronge, lady, stowre! <32> what doest thou?"
And she answered: "Sir, what aileth you?
Have patience and reason in your mind,
I have you help'd on both your eyen blind.
On peril of my soul, I shall not lien,
As me was taught to helpe with your eyen,
Was nothing better for to make you see,
Than struggle with a man upon a tree:
God wot, I did it in full good intent."
"Struggle!" quoth he, "yea, algate* in it went. *whatever way
God give you both one shame's death to dien!
He swived* thee; I saw it with mine eyen; *enjoyed carnally

And elles be I hanged by the halse."* *neck
"Then is," quoth she, "my medicine all false;
For certainly, if that ye mighte see,
Ye would not say these wordes unto me.
Ye have some glimpsing,* and no perfect sight." *glimmering
"I see," quoth he, "as well as ever I might,
(Thanked be God!) with both mine eyen two,
And by my faith me thought he did thee so."
"Ye maze,* ye maze, goode Sir," quoth she; *rave, are confused
"This thank have I for I have made you see:
Alas!" quoth she, "that e'er I was so kind."
"Now, Dame," quoth he, "let all pass out of mind;
Come down, my lefe,* and if I have missaid, *love
God help me so, as I am *evil apaid.* *dissatisfied*
But, by my father's soul, I ween'd have seen
How that this Damian had by thee lain,
And that thy smock had lain upon his breast."
"Yea, Sir," quoth she, "ye may *ween as ye lest:* *think as you
But, Sir, a man that wakes out of his sleep, please*
He may not suddenly well take keep* *notice
Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly,
Till that he be adawed* verily. *awakened
Right so a man, that long hath blind y-be,
He may not suddenly so well y-see,
First when his sight is newe come again,
As he that hath a day or two y-seen.
Till that your sight establish'd be a while,
There may full many a sighte you beguile.
Beware, I pray you, for, by heaven's king,
Full many a man weeneth to see a thing,
And it is all another than it seemeth;
He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth."
And with that word she leapt down from the tree.
This January, who is glad but he?
He kissed her, and clipped* her full oft, *embraced
And on her womb he stroked her full soft;
And to his palace home he hath her lad.* *led
Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth here my tale of January,
God bless us, and his mother, Sainte Mary.

Notes to The Merchant's Tale

1. If, as is probable, this Tale was translated from the French, the original is not now extant. Tyrwhitt remarks that the scene "is laid in Italy, but none of the names, except Damian and Justin, seem to be Italian, but rather made at pleasure; so that I doubt

whether the story be really of Italian growth. The adventure of the pear-tree I find in a small collection of Latin fables, written by one Adoiphus, in elegiac verses of his fashion, in the year 1315. . . . Whatever was the real origin of the Tale, the machinery of the fairies, which Chaucer has used so happily, was probably added by himself; and, indeed, I cannot help thinking that his Pluto and Proserpina were the true progenitors of Oberon and Titania; or rather, that they themselves have, once at least, deigned to revisit our poetical system under the latter names."

2. Seculeres: of the laity; but perhaps, since the word is of two- fold meaning, Chaucer intends a hit at the secular clergy, who, unlike the regular orders, did not live separate from the world, but shared in all its interests and pleasures — all the more easily and freely, that they had not the civil restraint of marriage.

3. This and the next eight lines are taken from the "Liber aureolus Theophrasti de nuptiis," ("Theophrastus's Golden Book of Marriage") quoted by Hieronymus, "Contra Jovinianum," ("Against Jovinian") and thence again by John of Salisbury.

4. Mebles: movables, furniture, &c.; French, "meubles."

5. "Wade's boat" was called Guingelot; and in it, according to the old romance, the owner underwent a long series of wild adventures, and performed many strange exploits. The romance is lost, and therefore the exact force of the phrase in the text is uncertain; but Mr Wright seems to be warranted in supposing that Wade's adventures were cited as examples of craft and cunning — that the hero, in fact, was a kind of Northern Ulysses, It is possible that to the same source we may trace the proverbial phrase, found in Chaucer's "Remedy of Love," to "bear Wattis pack" signifying to be duped or beguiled.

6. Stopen: advanced; past participle of "step." Elsewhere "y-stept in age" is used by Chaucer.

7. They did not need to go in quest of a wife for him, as they had promised.

8. Thilke tree: that tree of original sin, of which the special sins are the branches.

9. Skinked: poured out; from Anglo-Saxon, "scencan."

10. Marcianus Capella, who wrote a kind of philosophical romance, "De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae" (Of the Marriage of Mercury and Philology) . "Her" and "him," two lines after, like "he" applied to Theodomas, are prefixed to the proper names for emphasis, according to the Anglo- Saxon usage.

11. Familiar: domestic; belonging to the "familia," or household.

12. Hewe: domestic servant; from Anglo-Saxon, "hiwa." Tyrwhitt reads "false of holy hue;" but Mr Wright has properly restored the reading adopted in the text.

13. Boren man: born; owing to January faith and loyalty because born in his household.

14. Hippocras: spiced wine. Clarre: also a kind of spiced wine. Vernage: a wine believed to have come from Crete, although its name — Italian, "Vernaccia" — seems to be derived from Verona.

15. Dan Constantine: a medical author who wrote about 1080; his works were printed at Basle in 1536.

16. Full of jargon as a flecked pie: he chattered like a magpie

17. Nearly all the manuscripts read "in two of Taure;" but Tyrwhitt has shown that, setting out from the second degree of Taurus, the moon, which in the four complete

days that Maius spent in her chamber could not have advanced more than fifty- three degrees, would only have been at the twenty-fifth degree of Gemini — whereas, by reading "ten," she is brought to the third degree of Cancer.
18. Kid; or "kidde," past participle of "kythe" or "kithe," to show or discover.
19. Precious: precise, over-nice; French, "precieux," affected.
20. Proined: or "pruned;" carefully trimmed and dressed himself. The word is used in falconry of a hawk when she picks and trims her feathers.
21. A dogge for the bow: a dog attending a hunter with the bow.
22 The Romance of the Rose: a very popular mediaeval romance, the English version of which is partly by Chaucer. It opens with a description of a beautiful garden.
23. Priapus: Son of Bacchus and Venus: he was regarded as the promoter of fertility in all agricultural life, vegetable and animal; while not only gardens, but fields, flocks, bees — and even fisheries — were supposed to be under his protection.
24. Argus was employed by Juno to watch Io with his hundred eyes but he was sent to sleep by the flute of Mercury, who then cut off his head.
25. "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of the birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." — Song of Solomon, ii. 10-12.
26. "That fair field,
Of Enna, where Proserpine, gath'ring flowers,
Herself a fairer flow'r, by gloomy Dis
Was gather'd."
— Milton, Paradise Lost, iv. 268
27. "Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man amongst a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those I have not found. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright." Ecclesiastes vii. 27-29.
28. Jesus, the son of Sirach, to whom is ascribed one of the books of the Apochrypha — that called the "Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus;" in which, especially in the ninth and twenty-fifth chapters, severe cautions are given against women.
29. Roman gestes: histories; such as those of Lucretia, Porcia, &c.
30. May means January to believe that she is pregnant, and that she has a craving for unripe pears.
31. At this point, and again some twenty lines below, several verses of a very coarse character had been inserted in later manuscripts; but they are evidently spurious, and are omitted in the best editions.
32. "Store" is the general reading here, but its meaning is not obvious. "Stowre" is found in several manuscripts; it signifies "struggle" or "resist;" and both for its own appropriateness, and for the force which it gives the word "stronge," the reading in the text seems the better.