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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

THE PROLOGUE. <1>

"IN faith, Squier, thou hast thee well acquit,
And gentilly; I praise well thy wit,"
Quoth the Franklin; "considering thy youthe
So feelingly thou speak'st, Sir, I aloue* thee, *allow, approve
As to my doom, there is none that is here *so far as my judgment
Of eloquence that shall be thy peer, goes*
If that thou live; God give thee goode chance,
And in virtue send thee continuance,
For of thy speaking I have great dainty.* *value, esteem
I have a son, and, by the Trinity;
It were me lever than twenty pound worth land, *I would rather*
Though it right now were fallen in my hand,
He were a man of such discretion
As that ye be: fy on possession,
But if a man be virtuous withal. *unless
I have my sone snibbed* and yet shall, *rebuked; "snubbed."
For he to virtue *listeth not t'intend,* *does not wish to
But for to play at dice, and to dispend, apply himself*
And lose all that he hath, is his usage;
And he had lever talke with a page,
Than to commune with any gentle wight,
There he might learen gentilless aright."
Straw for your gentillesse!" quoth our Host.
"What? Frankelin, pardie, Sir, well thou wost* *knowest
That each of you must tellen at the least
A tale or two, or breake his behest."* *promise
"That know I well, Sir," quoth the Frankelin;
"I pray you have me not in disdain,
Though I to this man speak a word or two."
"Tell on thy tale, withoute wordes mo'."
"Gladly, Sir Host," quoth he, "I will obey
Unto your will; now hearken what I say;
I will you not contrary* in no wise, *disobey
As far as that my wittes may suffice.
I pray to God that it may please you,
Then wot I well that it is good enow.
"These olde gentle Bretons, in their days,

Of divers aventures made lays,<2>
Rhymeden in their firste Breton tongue;
Which layes with their instruments they sung,
Or elles reade them for their pleasance;
And one of them have I in remembrance,
Which I shall say with good will as I can.
But, Sirs, because I am a borel* man, *rude, unlearned
At my beginning first I you beseech
Have me excused of my rude speech.
I learned never rhetoric, certain;
Thing that I speak, it must be bare and plain.
I slept never on the mount of Parnasso,
Nor learned Marcus Tullius Cicero.
Coloures know I none, withoute dread,* *doubt
But such colours as growen in the mead,
Or elles such as men dye with or paint;
Colours of rhetoric be to me quaint;* *strange
My spirit feeleth not of such mattere.
But, if you list, my tale shall ye hear."

Notes to the Prologue to the Franklin's Tale

1. In the older editions, the verses here given as the prologue were prefixed to the Merchant's Tale, and put into his mouth. Tyrwhitt was abundantly justified, by the internal evidence afforded by the lines themselves, in transferring them to their present place.

2. The "Breton Lays" were an important and curious element in the literature of the Middle Ages; they were originally composed in the Armorican language, and the chief collection of them extant was translated into French verse by a poetess calling herself "Marie," about the middle of the thirteenth century. But though this collection was the most famous, and had doubtless been read by Chaucer, there were other British or Breton lays, and from one of those the Franklin's Tale is taken. Boccaccio has dealt with the same story in the "Decameron" and the "Philocopo," altering the circumstances to suit the removal of its scene to a southern clime.

THE TALE.

In Armoric', that called is Bretagne,
There was a knight, that lov'd and *did his pain* *devoted himself,
To serve a lady in his beste wise; strove*
And many a labour, many a great emprise,* *enterprise
He for his lady wrought, ere she were won:
For she was one the fairest under sun,
And eke thereto come of so high kindred,
That *well unnethes durst this knight for dread,* *see note <1>*
Tell her his woe, his pain, and his distress
But, at the last, she for his worthiness,
And namely* for his meek obeisance, *especially

Hath such a pity caught of his penance,* *suffering, distress
That privily she fell of his accord
To take him for her husband and her lord
(Of such lordship as men have o'er their wives);
And, for to lead the more in bliss their lives,
Of his free will he swore her as a knight,
That never in all his life he day nor night
Should take upon himself no mastery
Against her will, nor kithe* her jealousy, *show
But her obey, and follow her will in all,
As any lover to his lady shall;
Save that the name of sovereignety
That would he have, for shame of his degree.
She thanked him, and with full great humbless
She saide; "Sir, since of your gentleness
Ye proffer me to have so large a reign,
*Ne woulde God never betwixt us twain,
As in my guilt, were either war or strife:* *see note <2>*
Sir, I will be your humble true wife,
Have here my troth, till that my hearte brest."* *burst
Thus be they both in quiet and in rest.
For one thing, Sires, safely dare I say,
That friends ever each other must obey,
If they will longe hold in company.
Love will not be constrain'd by mastery.
When mast'ry comes, the god of love anon
Beateth <3> his wings, and, farewell, he is gone.
Love is a thing as any spirit free.
Women *of kind* desire liberty, *by nature*
And not to be constrained as a thrall,* *slave
And so do men, if soothly I say shall.
Look who that is most patient in love,
He *is at his advantage all above.* *enjoys the highest
Patience is a high virtue certain, advantages of all*
For it vanquisheth, as these clerkes sayn,
Thinges that rigour never should attain.
For every word men may not chide or plain.
Learne to suffer, or, so may I go,* *prosper
Ye shall it learn whether ye will or no.
For in this world certain no wight there is,
That he not doth or saith sometimes amiss.
Ire, or sickness, or constellation,* *the influence of
Wine, woe, or changing of complexion, the planets*
Causeth full oft to do amiss or speaken:

On every wrong a man may not be wreaken.* *revenged
After* the time must be temperance *according to
To every wight that *can of* governance. *is capable of*
And therefore hath this worthy wise knight
(To live in ease) sufferance her behight;* *promised
And she to him full wisly* gan to swear *surely
That never should there be default in her.
Here may men see a humble wife accord;
Thus hath she ta'en her servant and her lord,
Servant in love, and lord in marriage.
Then was he both in lordship and servage?
Servage? nay, but in lordship all above,
Since he had both his lady and his love:
His lady certes, and his wife also,
The which that law of love accordeth to.
And when he was in this prosperrity,
Home with his wife he went to his country,
Not far from Penmark,<4> where his dwelling was,
And there he liv'd in bliss and in solace.* *delight
Who coulde tell, but* he had wedded be, *unless
The joy, the ease, and the prosperity,
That is betwixt a husband and his wife?
A year and more lasted this blissful life,
Till that this knight, of whom I spake thus,
That of Cairrud <5> was call'd Arviragus,
Shope* him to go and dwell a year or twain *prepared, arranged
In Engleland, that call'd was eke Britain,
To seek in armes worship and honour
(For all his lust* he set in such labour); *pleasure
And dwelled there two years; the book saith thus.
Now will I stint* of this Arviragus, *cease speaking
And speak I will of Dorigen his wife,
That lov'd her husband as her hearte's life.
For his absence weepeth she and siketh,* *sigheth
As do these noble wives when them liketh;
She mourneth, waketh, waileth, fasteth, plaineth;
Desire of his presence her so distraineth,
That all this wide world she set at nought.
Her friendes, which that knew her heavy thought,
Comforte her in all that ever they may;
They preache her, they tell her night and day,
That causeless she slays herself, alas!
And every comfort possible in this case
They do to her, with all their business,* *assiduity

And all to make her leave her heaviness.
By process, as ye knowen every one,
Men may so longe graven in a stone,
Till some figure therein imprinted be:
So long have they comforted her, till she
Received hath, by hope and by reason,
Th' imprinting of their consolation,
Through which her greate sorrow gan assuage;
She may not always duren in such rage.
And eke Arviragus, in all this care,
Hath sent his letters home of his welfare,
And that he will come hastily again,
Or elles had this sorrow her hearty-slain.
Her friendes saw her sorrow gin to slake,* *slacken, diminish
And prayed her on knees for Godde's sake
To come and roamen in their company,
Away to drive her darke fantasy;
And finally she granted that request,
For well she saw that it was for the best.
Now stood her castle faste by the sea,
And often with her friendes walked she,
Her to disport upon the bank on high,
There as many a ship and barge sigh,* *saw
Sailing their courses, where them list to go.
But then was that a parcel* of her woe, *part
For to herself full oft, "Alas!" said she,
Is there no ship, of so many as I see,
Will bringe home my lord? then were my heart
All warish'd* of this bitter paine's smart." *cured <6>
Another time would she sit and think,
And cast her eyen downward from the brink;
But when she saw the grisly rockes blake,* *black
For very fear so would her hearte quake,
That on her feet she might her not sustene* *sustain
Then would she sit adown upon the green,
And piteously *into the sea behold,* *look out on the sea*
And say right thus, with *careful sikes* cold: *painful sighs*
"Eternal God! that through thy purveyance
Leadest this world by certain governance,
In idle, as men say, ye nothing make; *idly, in vain*
But, Lord, these grisly fiendly rockes blake,
That seem rather a foul confusion
Of work, than any fair creation
Of such a perfect wise God and stable,

Why have ye wrought this work unreasonable?
For by this work, north, south, or west, or east,
There is not foster'd man, nor bird, nor beast:
It doth no good, to my wit, but *annoyeth.* *works mischief* <7>
See ye not, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
A hundred thousand bodies of mankind
Have rockes slain, *all be they not in mind;* *though they are
Which mankind is so fair part of thy work, forgotten*
Thou madest it like to thine owen mark.* *image
Then seemed it ye had a great cherte* *love, affection
Toward mankind; but how then may it be
That ye such meanes make it to destroy?
Which meanes do no good, but ever annoy.
I wot well, clerkes will say as them lest,* *please
By arguments, that all is for the best,
Although I can the causes not y-know;
But thilke* God that made the wind to blow, *that
As keep my lord, this is my conclusion:
To clerks leave I all disputation:
But would to God that all these rockes blake
Were sunken into helle for his sake
These rockes slay mine hearte for the fear."
Thus would she say, with many a piteous tear.
Her friendes saw that it was no disport
To roame by the sea, but discomfort,
And shope* them for to playe somewhere else. *arranged
They leade her by rivers and by wells,
And eke in other places delectables;
They dancen, and they play at chess and tables.* *backgammon
So on a day, right in the morning-tide,
Unto a garden that was there beside,
In which that they had made their ordinance* *provision, arrangement
Of victual, and of other purveyance,
They go and play them all the longe day:
And this was on the sixth morrow of May,
Which May had painted with his softe showers
This garden full of leaves and of flowers:
And craft of manne's hand so curiously
Arrayed had this garden truely,
That never was there garden of such price,* *value, praise
But if it were the very Paradise. *unless*
Th'odour of flowers, and the freshe sight,
Would have maked any hearte light
That e'er was born, *but if* too great sickness *unless*

Or too great sorrow held it in distress;
So full it was of beauty and pleasance.
And after dinner they began to dance
And sing also, save Dorigen alone
Who made alway her complaint and her moan,
For she saw not him on the dance go
That was her husband, and her love also;
But natheless she must a time abide
And with good hope let her sorrow slide.
Upon this dance, amonge other men,
Danced a squier before Dorigen
That fresher was, and jollier of array
As to my doom, than is the month of May. *in my judgment*
He sang and danced, passing any man,
That is or was since that the world began;
Therewith he was, if men should him descrive,
One of the *beste faring* men alive, *most accomplished*
Young, strong, and virtuous, and rich, and wise,
And well beloved, and holden in great price.* *esteem, value
And, shortly if the sooth I telle shall,
Unweeting of this Dorigen at all, *unknown to*
This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
Which that y-called was Aurelius,
Had lov'd her best of any creature
Two year and more, as was his aventure;* *fortune
But never durst he tell her his grievance;
Withoute cup he drank all his penance.
He was despaired, nothing durst he say,
Save in his songes somewhat would he wray* *betray
His woe, as in a general complaining;
He said, he lov'd, and was belov'd nothing.
Of suche matter made he many lays,
Songes, complaintes, roundels, virelays <8>
How that he durste not his sorrow tell,
But languished, as doth a Fury in hell;
And die he must, he said, as did Echo
For Narcissus, that durst not tell her woe.
In other manner than ye hear me say,
He durste not to her his woe bewray,
Save that paraventure sometimes at dances,
Where younge folke keep their observances,
It may well be he looked on her face
In such a wise, as man that asketh grace,
But nothing wiste she of his intent.

Nath'less it happen'd, ere they thennes* went, *thence (from the
Because that he was her neighebour, garden)*
And was a man of worship and honour,
And she had knowen him *of time yore,* *for a long time*
They fell in speech, and forth aye more and more
Unto his purpose drew Aurelius;
And when he saw his time, he saide thus:
Madam," quoth he, "by God that this world made,
So that I wist it might your hearte glade,* *gladden
I would, that day that your Arviragus
Went over sea, that I, Aurelius,
Had gone where I should never come again;
For well I wot my service is in vain.
My guerdon* is but bursting of mine heart. *reward
Madame, rue upon my paine's smart,
For with a word ye may me slay or save.
Here at your feet God would that I were grave.
I have now no leisure more to say:
Have mercy, sweet, or you will *do me dey."* *cause me to die*
She gan to look upon Aurelius;
"Is this your will," quoth she, "and say ye thus?
Ne'er erst,"* quoth she, "I wiste what ye meant: *before
But now, Aurelius, I know your intent.
By thilke* God that gave me soul and life, *that
Never shall I be an untrue wife
In word nor work, as far as I have wit;
I will be his to whom that I am knit;
Take this for final answer as of me."
But after that *in play* thus saide she. *playfully, in jest*
"Aurelius," quoth she, "by high God above,
Yet will I grante you to be your love
(Since I you see so piteously complain);
Looke, what day that endelong* Bretagne *from end to end of
Ye remove all the rockes, stone by stone,
That they not lette* ship nor boat to gon, *prevent
I say, when ye have made this coast so clean
Of rockes, that there is no stone seen,
Then will I love you best of any man;
Have here my troth, in all that ever I can;
For well I wot that it shall ne'er betide.
Let such folly out of your hearte glide.
What dainty* should a man have in his life *value, pleasure
For to go love another manne's wife,
That hath her body when that ever him liketh?"

Aurelius full often sore siketh;* *sigheth
Is there none other grace in you?" quoth he,
"No, by that Lord," quoth she, "that maked me.
Woe was Aurelius when that he this heard,
And with a sorrowful heart he thus answer'd.
"Madame, quoth he, "this were an impossible.
Then must I die of sudden death horrible."
And with that word he turned him anon.
Then came her other friends many a one,
And in the alleys roamed up and down,
And nothing wist of this conclusion,
But suddenly began to revel new,
Till that the brighte sun had lost his hue,
For th' horizon had reft the sun his light
(This is as much to say as it was night);
And home they go in mirth and in solace;
Save only wretch'd Aurelius, alas
He to his house is gone with sorrowful heart.
He said, he may not from his death astart.* *escape
Him seemed, that he felt his hearte cold.
Up to the heav'n his handes gan he hold,
And on his knees bare he set him down.
And in his raving said his orisoun.* *prayer
For very woe out of his wit he braid;* *wandered
He wist not what he spake, but thus he said;
With piteous heart his plaint hath he begun
Unto the gods, and first unto the Sun.
He said; "Apollo God and governour
Of every plante, herbe, tree, and flower,
That giv'st, after thy declination,
To each of them his time and his season,
As thine herberow* changeth low and high; *dwelling, situation
Lord Phoebus: cast thy merciable eye
On wretched Aurelius, which that am but lorn.* *undone
Lo, lord, my lady hath my death y-sworn,
Withoute guilt, but* thy benignity *unless
Upon my deadly heart have some pity.
For well I wot, Lord Phoebus, if you lest,* *please
Ye may me helpe, save my lady, best.
Now vouchsafe, that I may you devise* *tell, explain
How that I may be holp,* and in what wise. *helped
Your blissful sister, Lucina the sheen, <9>
That of the sea is chief goddess and queen, —
Though Neptunus have deity in the sea,

Yet emperess above him is she; —
Ye know well, lord, that, right as her desire
Is to be quick'd* and lighted of your fire, *quickened
For which she followeth you full busily,
Right so the sea desireth naturally
To follow her, as she that is goddess
Both in the sea and rivers more and less.
Wherefore, Lord Phoebus, this is my request,
Do this miracle, or *do mine hearte brest;* *cause my heart
That flow, next at this opposition, to burst*
Which in the sign shall be of the Lion,
As praye her so great a flood to bring,
That five fathom at least it overspring
The highest rock in Armoric Bretagne,
And let this flood endure yeares twain:
Then certes to my lady may I say,
"Holde your hest," the rockes be away.
Lord Phoebus, this miracle do for me,
Pray her she go no faster course than ye;
I say this, pray your sister that she go
No faster course than ye these yeares two:
Then shall she be even at full alway,
And spring-flood laste bothe night and day.
And *but she* vouchesafe in such mannere *if she do not*
To grante me my sov'reign lady dear,
Pray her to sink every rock adown
Into her owen darke regioun
Under the ground, where Pluto dwelleth in
Or nevermore shall I my lady win.
Thy temple in Delphos will I barefoot seek.
Lord Phoebus! see the teares on my cheek
And on my pain have some compassioun."
And with that word in sorrow he fell down,
And longe time he lay forth in a trance.
His brother, which that knew of his penance,* *distress
Up caught him, and to bed he hath him brought,
Despaired in this torment and this thought
Let I this woeful creature lie;
Choose he for me whe'er* he will live or die. *whether
Arviragus with health and great honour
(As he that was of chivalry the flow'r)
Is come home, and other worthy men.
Oh, blissful art thou now, thou Dorigen!
Thou hast thy lusty husband in thine arms,

The freshe knight, the worthy man of arms,
That loveth thee as his own hearte's life:
Nothing list him to be imaginatif *he cared not to fancy*
If any wight had spoke, while he was out,
To her of love; he had of that no doubt;* *fear, suspicion
He not intended* to no such mattere, *occupied himself with
But danced, jousted, and made merry cheer.
And thus in joy and bliss I let them dwell,
And of the sick Aurelius will I tell
In languor and in torment furious
Two year and more lay wretch'd Aurelius,
Ere any foot on earth he mighte gon;
Nor comfort in this time had he none,
Save of his brother, which that was a clerk.* *scholar
He knew of all this woe and all this work;
For to none other creature certain
Of this matter he durst no worde sayn;
Under his breast he bare it more secree
Than e'er did Pamphilus for Galatee.<10>
His breast was whole withoute for to seen,
But in his heart aye was the arrow keen,
And well ye know that of a sursanure <11>
In surgery is perilous the cure,
But* men might touch the arrow or come thereby. *except
His brother wept and wailed privily,
Till at the last him fell in remembrance,
That while he was at Orleans <12> in France, —
As younge clerkes, that be likerous* — *eager
To readen artes that be curious,
Seeken in every *halk and every hern* *nook and corner* <13>
Particular sciences for to learn,—
He him remember'd, that upon a day
At Orleans in study a book he say* *saw
Of magic natural, which his fellaw,
That was that time a bachelor of law
All* were he there to learn another craft, *though
Had privily upon his desk y-laft;
Which book spake much of operations
Touching the eight and-twenty mansions
That longe to the Moon, and such folly
As in our dayes is not worth a fly;
For holy church's faith, in our believe,* *belief, creed
Us suff'reth none illusion to grieve.
And when this book was in his remembrance

Anon for joy his heart began to dance,
And to himself he saide privily;
"My brother shall be warish'd* hastily *cured
For I am sicker* that there be sciences, *certain
By which men make divers apparences,
Such as these subtle tregetoures play. *tricksters <14>
For oft at feaste's have I well heard say,
That tregetours, within a halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and down.
Sometimes hath seemed come a grim lioun,
And sometimes flowers spring as in a mead;
Sometimes a vine, and grapes white and red;
Sometimes a castle all of lime and stone;
And, when them liked, voided* it anon: *vanished
Thus seemed it to every manne's sight.
Now then conclude I thus; if that I might
At Orleans some olde fellow find,
That hath these Moone's mansions in mind,
Or other magic natural above.
He should well make my brother have his love.
For with an appearance a clerk* may make, *learned man
To manne's sight, that all the rockes blake
Of Bretagne were voided* every one, *removed
And shippes by the brinke come and gon,
And in such form endure a day or two;
Then were my brother warish'd* of his woe, *cured
Then must she needes *holde her behest,* *keep her promise*
Or elles he shall shame her at the least."
Why should I make a longer tale of this?
Unto his brother's bed he comen is,
And such comfort he gave him, for to gon
To Orleans, that he upstart anon,
And on his way forth-ward then is he fare,* *gone
In hope for to be lissed* of his care. *eased of <15>
When they were come almost to that city,
But if it were a two furlong or three, *all but*
A young clerk roaming by himself they met,
Which that in Latin *thriftily them gret.* *greeted them
And after that he said a wondrous thing; civilly*
I know," quoth he, "the cause of your coming;"
Aud ere they farther any foote went,
He told them all that was in their intent.
The Breton clerk him asked of fellaws

The which he hadde known in olde daws,* *days
And he answer'd him that they deade were,
For which he wept full often many a tear.
Down off his horse Aurelius light anon,
And forth with this magician is be gone
Home to his house, and made him well at ease;
Them lacked no vitail* that might them please. *victuals, food
So well-array'd a house as there was one,
Aurelius in his life saw never none.
He shewed him, ere they went to suppere,
Forestes, parkes, full of wilde deer.
There saw he hartes with their hornes high,
The greatest that were ever seen with eye.
He saw of them an hundred slain with hounds,
And some with arrows bleed of bitter wounds.
He saw, when voided* were the wilde deer, *passed away
These falconers upon a fair rivere,
That with their hawkes have the heron slain.
Then saw he knightes jousting in a plain.
And after this he did him such pleasance,
That he him shew'd his lady on a dance,
In which himselfe danced, as him thought.
And when this master, that this magic wrought,
Saw it was time, he clapp'd his handes two,
And farewell, all the revel is y-go.* *gone, removed
And yet remov'd they never out of the house,
While they saw all the sightes marvellous;
But in his study, where his bookes be,
They satte still, and no wight but they three.
To him this master called his squier,
And said him thus, "May we go to supper?
Almost an hour it is, I undertake,
Since I you bade our supper for to make,
When that these worthy men wente with me
Into my study, where my bookes be."
"Sir," quoth this squier, "when it liketh you.
It is all ready, though ye will right now."
"Go we then sup," quoth he, "as for the best;
These amorous folk some time must have rest."
At after supper fell they in treaty
What summe should this master's guerdon* be, *reward
To remove all the rockes of Bretagne,
And eke from Gironde <16> to the mouth of Seine.
He made it strange,* and swore, so God him save, *a matter of

Less than a thousand pound he would not have, difficulty*
Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon. *see note <17>*
Aurelius with blissful heart anon
Answered thus; "Fie on a thousand pound!
This wide world, which that men say is round,
I would it give, if I were lord of it.
This bargain is full-driv'n, for we be knit;* *agreed
Ye shall be payed truly by my troth.
But looke, for no negligence or sloth,
Ye tarry us here no longer than to-morrow."
"Nay," quoth the clerk, *"have here my faith to borrow."* *I pledge my
To bed is gone Aurelius when him lest, faith on it*
And well-nigh all that night he had his rest,
What for his labour, and his hope of bliss,
His woeful heart *of penance had a liss.* *had a respite
from suffering*
Upon the morrow, when that it was day,
Unto Bretagne they took the righte way,
Aurelius and this magician beside,
And be descended where they would abide:
And this was, as the bookes me remember,
The colde frosty season of December.
Phoebus wax'd old, and hued like latoun,* *brass
That in his hote declinatioun
Shone as the burned gold, with streames* bright; *beams
But now in Capricorn adown he light,
Where as he shone full pale, I dare well sayn.
The bitter frostes, with the sleet and rain,
Destroyed have the green in every yard. *courtyard, garden
Janus sits by the fire with double beard,
And drinketh of his bugle horn the wine:
Before him stands the brawn of tusked swine
And "nowel"* crieth every lusty man *Noel <18>
Aurelius, in all that ev'r he can,
Did to his master cheer and reverence,
And prayed him to do his diligence
To bringe him out of his paines smart,
Or with a sword that he would slit his heart.
This subtle clerk such ruth* had on this man, *pity
That night and day he sped him, that he can,
To wait a time of his conclusion;
This is to say, to make illusion,
By such an appearance of jugglery
(I know no termes of astrology),

That she and every wight should ween and say,
That of Bretagne the rockes were away,
Or else they were sunken under ground.
So at the last he hath a time found
To make his japes* and his wretchedness *tricks
Of such a *superstitious cursedness.* *detestable villainy*
His tables Toletanes <19> forth he brought,
Full well corrected, that there lacked nought,
Neither his collect, nor his expanse years,
Neither his rootes, nor his other gears,
As be his centres, and his arguments,
And his proportional convenients
For his equations in everything.
And by his eighte spheres in his working,
He knew full well how far Alnath <20> was shove
From the head of that fix'd Aries above,
That in the ninthe sphere consider'd is.
Full subtilly he calcul'd all this.
When he had found his firste mansion,
He knew the remnant by proportion;
And knew the rising of his moone well,
And in whose face, and term, and every deal;
And knew full well the moone's mansion
Accordant to his operation;
And knew also his other observances,
For such illusions and such meschances,* *wicked devices
As heathen folk used in thilke days.
For which no longer made he delays;
But through his magic, for a day or tway, <21>
It seemed all the rockes were away.
Aurelius, which yet despaired is
Whe'er* he shall have his love, or fare amiss, *whether
Awaited night and day on this miracle:
And when he knew that there was none obstacle,
That voided* were these rockes every one, *removed
Down at his master's feet he fell anon,
And said; "I, woeful wretch'd Aurelius,
Thank you, my Lord, and lady mine Venus,
That me have holpen from my cares cold."
And to the temple his way forth hath he hold,
Where as he knew he should his lady see.
And when he saw his time, anon right he
With dreadful* heart and with full humble cheer** *fearful **mien
Saluteth hath his sovereign lady dear.

"My rightful Lady," quoth this woeful man,
"Whom I most dread, and love as I best can,
And lothest were of all this world displease,
Were't not that I for you have such disease,* *distress, affliction
That I must die here at your foot anon,
Nought would I tell how me is woebegone.
But certes either must I die or plain;* *bewail
Ye slay me guilteless for very pain.
But of my death though that ye have no ruth,
Advise you, ere that ye break your truth:
Repente you, for thilke God above,
Ere ye me slay because that I you love.
For, Madame, well ye wot what ye have hight;* *promised
Not that I challenge anything of right
Of you, my sovereign lady, but of grace:
But in a garden yond', in such a place,
Ye wot right well what ye behighte* me, *promised
And in mine hand your trothe plighted ye,
To love me best; God wot ye saide so,
Albeit that I unworthy am thereto;
Madame, I speak it for th' honour of you,
More than to save my hearte's life right now;
I have done so as ye commanded me,
And if ye vouchesafe, ye may go see.
Do as you list, have your behest in mind,
For, quick or dead, right there ye shall me find;
In you hes all to *do me live or dey;* *cause me to
But well I wot the rockes be away." live or die*
He took his leave, and she astonish'd stood;
In all her face was not one drop of blood:
She never ween'd t'have come in such a trap.
"Alas!" quoth she, "that ever this should hap!
For ween'd I ne'er, by possibility,
That such a monster or marvail might be;
It is against the process of nature."
And home she went a sorrowful creature;
For very fear unnethes* may she go. *scarcely
She weeped, wailed, all a day or two,
And swooned, that it ruthe was to see:
But why it was, to no wight tolde she,
For out of town was gone Arviragus.
But to herself she spake, and saide thus,
With face pale, and full sorrowful cheer,
In her complaint, as ye shall after hear.

"Alas!" quoth she, "on thee, Fortune, I plain,* *complain
That unware hast me wrapped in thy chain,
From which to scape, wot I no succour,
Save only death, or elles dishonour;
One of these two behoveth me to choose.
But natheless, yet had I lever* lose *sooner, rather
My life, than of my body have shame,
Or know myselfe false, or lose my name;
And with my death *I may be quit y-wis.* *I may certainly purchase
Hath there not many a noble wife, ere this, my exemption*
And many a maiden, slain herself, alas!
Rather than with her body do trespass?
Yes, certes; lo, these stories bear witness. <22>
When thirty tyrants full of cursedness* *wickedness
Had slain Phidon in Athens at the feast,
They commanded his daughters to arrest,
And bringe them before them, in despite,
All naked, to fulfil their foul delight;
And in their father's blood they made them dance
Upon the pavement, — God give them mischance.
For which these woeful maidens, full of dread,
Rather than they would lose their maidenhead,
They privily *be start* into a well, *suddenly leaped
And drowned themselves, as the bookes tell.
They of Messene let inquire and seek
Of Lacedaemon fifty maidens eke,
On which they woulde do their lechery:
But there was none of all that company
That was not slain, and with a glad intent
Chose rather for to die, than to assent
To be oppressed* of her maidenhead. *forcibly bereft
Why should I then to dien be in dread?
Lo, eke the tyrant Aristoclides,
That lov'd a maiden hight Stimphalides,
When that her father slain was on a night,
Unto Diana's temple went she right,
And hent* the image in her handes two, *caught, clasped
From which image she woulde never go;
No wight her handes might off it arace,* *pluck away by force
Till she was slain right in the selfe* place. *same
Now since that maidens hadde such despite
To be defouled with man's foul delight,
Well ought a wife rather herself to sle,* *slay
Than be defouled, as it thinketh me.

What shall I say of Hasdrubale's wife,
That at Carthage bereft herself of life?
For, when she saw the Romans win the town,
She took her children all, and skipt adown
Into the fire, and rather chose to die,
Than any Roman did her villainy.
Hath not Lucretia slain herself, alas!
At Rome, when that she oppressed* was *ravished
Of Tarquin? for her thought it was a shame
To live, when she hadde lost her name.
The seven maidens of Milesie also
Have slain themselves for very dread and woe,
Rather than folk of Gaul them should oppress.
More than a thousand stories, as I guess,
Could I now tell as touching this mattere.
When Abradate was slain, his wife so dear <23>
Herselfe slew, and let her blood to glide
In Abradate's woundes, deep and wide,
And said, 'My body at the leaste way
There shall no wight defoul, if that I may.'
Why should I more examples hereof sayn?
Since that so many have themselves slain,
Well rather than they would defouled be,
I will conclude that it is bet* for me *better
To slay myself, than be defouled thus.
I will be true unto Arviragus,
Or elles slay myself in some mannere,
As did Demotione's daughter dear,
Because she woulde not defouled be.
O Sedasus, it is full great pity
To reade how thy daughters died, alas!
That slew themselves *for suche manner cas.* *in circumstances of
As great a pity was it, or well more, the same kind*
The Theban maiden, that for Nicanor
Herselfe slew, right for such manner woe.
Another Theban maiden did right so;
For one of Macedon had her oppress'd,
She with her death her maidenhead redress'd.* *vindicated
What shall I say of Niceratus' wife,
That for such case bereft herself her life?
How true was eke to Alcibiades
His love, that for to dien rather chese,* *chose
Than for to suffer his body unburied be?
Lo, what a wife was Alceste?" quoth she.

"What saith Homer of good Penelope?
All Greece knoweth of her chastity.
Pardie, of Laedamia is written thus,
That when at Troy was slain Protesilaus, <24>
No longer would she live after his day.
The same of noble Porcia tell I may;
Withoute Brutus coulde she not live,
To whom she did all whole her hearte give. <25>
The perfect wifehood of Artemisie <26>
Honoured is throughout all Barbarie.
O Teuta <27> queen, thy wifely chastity
To alle wives may a mirror be." <28>
Thus plained Dorigen a day or tway,
Purposing ever that she woulde dey;* *die
But natheless upon the thirde night
Home came Arviragus, the worthy knight,
And asked her why that she wept so sore.
And she gan weepen ever longer more.
"Alas," quoth she, "that ever I was born!
Thus have I said," quoth she; "thus have I sworn. "
And told him all, as ye have heard before:
It needeth not rehearse it you no more.
This husband with glad cheer,* in friendly wise, *demeanour
Answer'd and said, as I shall you devise.* *relate
"Is there aught elles, Dorigen, but this?"
"Nay, nay," quoth she, "God help me so, *as wis* *assuredly*
This is too much, an* it were Godde's will." *if
"Yea, wife," quoth he, "let sleepe what is still,
It may be well par'venture yet to-day.
Ye shall your trothe holde, by my fay.
For, God so wisly* have mercy on me, *certainly
I had well lever sticked for to be, *I had rather be slain*
For very love which I to you have,
But if ye should your trothe keep and save.
Truth is the highest thing that man may keep."
But with that word he burst anon to weep,
And said; "I you forbid, on pain of death,
That never, while you lasteth life or breath,
To no wight tell ye this misaventure;
As I may best, I will my woe endure,
Nor make no countenance of heaviness,
That folk of you may deeme harm, or guess."
And forth he call'd a squier and a maid.
"Go forth anon with Dorigen," he said,

"And bringe her to such a place anon."
They take their leave, and on their way they gon:
But they not wiste why she thither went;
He would to no wight telle his intent.
This squier, which that hight Aurelius,
On Dorigen that was so amorous,
Of aventure happen'd her to meet
Amid the town, right in the quickest* street, *nearest
As she was bound* to go the way forthright *prepared, going <29>
Toward the garden, there as she had hight.* *promised
And he was to the garden-ward also;
For well he spied when she woulde go
Out of her house, to any manner place;
But thus they met, of aventure or grace,
And he saluted her with glad intent,
And asked of her whitherward she went.
And she answered, half as she were mad,
"Unto the garden, as my husband bade,
My trothe for to hold, alas! alas!"
Aurelius gan to wonder on this case,
And in his heart had great compassion
Of her, and of her lamentation,
And of Arviragus, the worthy knight,
That bade her hold all that she hadde hight;
So loth him was his wife should break her truth* *troth, pledged word
And in his heart he caught of it great ruth,* *pity
Considering the best on every side,
That from his lust yet were him lever abide, *see note <30>*
Than do so high a churlish wretchedness* *wickedness
Against franchise,* and alle gentleness; *generosity
For which in fewe words he saide thus;
"Madame, say to your lord Arviragus,
That since I see the greate gentleness
Of him, and eke I see well your distress,
That him were lever* have shame (and that were ruth)** *rather **pity
Than ye to me should breake thus your truth,
I had well lever aye* to suffer woe, *forever
Than to depart* the love betwixt you two. *sunder, split up
I you release, Madame, into your hond,
Quit ev'ry surement* and ev'ry bond, *surety
That ye have made to me as herebeforn,
Since thilke time that ye were born.
Have here my truth, I shall you ne'er repreve* *reproach
Of no behest; and here I take my leave, *of no (breach of)

As of the truest and the beste wife promise*
That ever yet I knew in all my life.
But every wife beware of her behest;
On Dorigen remember at the least.
Thus can a squier do a gentle deed,
As well as can a knight, withoute drede."* *doubt
She thanked him upon her knees bare,
And home unto her husband is she fare,* *gone
And told him all, as ye have hearde said;
And, truste me, he was so *well apaid,* *satisfied*
That it were impossible me to write.
Why should I longer of this case indite?
Arviragus and Dorigen his wife
In sov'reign blisse ledde forth their life;
Ne'er after was there anger them between;
He cherish'd her as though she were a queen,
And she was to him true for evermore;
Of these two folk ye get of me no more.
Aurelius, that his cost had *all forlorn,* *utterly lost*
Cursed the time that ever he was born.
"Alas!" quoth he, "alas that I behight* *promised
Of pured* gold a thousand pound of weight *refined
To this philosopher! how shall I do?
I see no more, but that I am fordo.* *ruined, undone
Mine heritage must I needes sell,
And be a beggar; here I will not dwell,
And shamen all my kindred in this place,
But* I of him may gette better grace. *unless
But natheless I will of him assay
At certain dayes year by year to pay,
And thank him of his greate courtesy.
My trothe will I keep, I will not he."
With hearte sore he went unto his coffer,
And broughte gold unto this philosopher,
The value of five hundred pound, I guess,
And him beseeched, of his gentleness,
To grant him *dayes of* the remenant; *time to pay up*
And said; "Master, I dare well make avaunt,
I failed never of my truth as yet.
For sickerly my debte shall be quit
Towardes you how so that e'er I fare
To go a-begging in my kirtle bare:
But would ye vouchesafe, upon surety,
Two year, or three, for to respite me,

Then were I well, for elles must I sell
Mine heritage; there is no more to tell."
This philosopher soberly* answer'd, *gravely
And saide thus, when he these wordes heard;
"Have I not holden covenant to thee?"
"Yes, certes, well and truely," quoth he.
"Hast thou not had thy lady as thee liked?"
"No, no," quoth he, and sorrowfully siked.* *sighed
"What was the cause? tell me if thou can."
Aurelius his tale anon began,
And told him all as ye have heard before,
It needeth not to you rehearse it more.
He said, "Arviragus of gentleness
Had lever* die in sorrow and distress, *rather
Than that his wife were of her trothe false."
The sorrow of Dorigen he told him als',* *also
How loth her was to be a wicked wife,
And that she lever had lost that day her life;
And that her troth she swore through innocence;
She ne'er erst* had heard speak of apparence** *before **see note <31>
That made me have of her so great pity,
And right as freely as he sent her to me,
As freely sent I her to him again:
This is all and some, there is no more to sayn."
The philosopher answer'd; "Leve* brother, *dear
Evereach of you did gently to the other;
Thou art a squier, and he is a knight,
But God forbidde, for his blissful might,
But if a clerk could do a gentle deed
As well as any of you, it is no drede* *doubt
Sir, I release thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crept out of the ground,
Nor ever ere now haddest knowen me.
For, Sir, I will not take a penny of thee
For all my craft, nor naught for my travail;* *labour, pains
Thou hast y-payed well for my vitaille;
It is enough; and farewell, have good day."
And took his horse, and forth he went his way.
Lordings, this question would I aske now,
Which was the moste free,* as thinketh you? *generous <32>
Now telle me, ere that ye farther wend.
I can* no more, my tale is at an end. *know, can tell

Notes to The Franklin's Tale

1. Well unnethes durst this knight for dread: This knight hardly dared, for fear (that

she would not entertain his suit.)
2. "Ne woulde God never betwixt us twain, As in my guilt, were either war or strife" Would to God there may never be war or strife between us, through my fault.
3. Perhaps the true reading is "beteth" — prepares, makes ready, his wings for flight.
4. Penmark: On the west coast of Brittany, between Brest and L'Orient. The name is composed of two British words, "pen," mountain, and "mark," region; it therefore means the mountainous country
5. Cairrud: "The red city;" it is not known where it was situated.
6. Warished: cured; French, "guerir," to heal, or recover from sickness.
7. Annoyeth: works mischief; from Latin, "nocco," I hurt.
8. Virelays: ballads; the "virelai" was an ancient French poem of two rhymes.
9. Lucina the sheen: Diana the bright. See note 54 to the Knight's Tale.
10. In a Latin poem, very popular in Chaucer's time, Pamphilus relates his amour with Galatea, setting out with the idea adopted by our poet in the lines that follow.
11. Sursanure: A wound healed on the surface, but festering beneath.
12. Orleans: Where there was a celebrated and very famous university, afterwards eclipsed by that of Paris. It was founded by Philip le Bel in 1312.
13. Every halk and every hern: Every nook and corner, Anglo- Saxon, "healc," a nook; "hyrn," a corner.
14. Tregetoures: tricksters, jugglers. The word is probably derived — in "treget," deceit or imposture — from the French "trebuchet," a military machine; since it is evident that much and elaborate machinery must have been employed to produce the effects afterwards described. Another derivation is from the Low Latin, "tricator," a deceiver.
15. Lissed of: eased of; released from; another form of "less" or "lessen."
16. Gironde: The river, formed by the union of the Dordogne and Garonne, on which Bourdeaux stands.
17. Nor gladly for that sum he would not gon: And even for that sum he would not willingly go to work.
18. "Noel," the French for Christmas — derived from "natalis," and signifying that on that day Christ was born — came to be used as a festive cry by the people on solemn occasions.
19. Tables Toletanes: Toledan tables; the astronomical tables composed by order Of Alphonso II, King of Castile, about 1250 and so called because they were adapted to the city of Toledo.
20. "Alnath," Says Mr Wright, was "the first star in the horns of Aries, whence the first mansion of the moon is named."
21. Another and better reading is "a week or two."
22. These stories are all taken from the book of St Jerome "Contra Jovinianum," from which the Wife of Bath drew so many of her ancient instances. See note 1 to the prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale.
23. Panthea. Abradatas, King of Susa, was an ally of the Assyrians against Cyrus; and his wife was taken at the conquest of the Assyrian camp. Struck by the honourable treatment she received at the captors hands, Abradatas joined Cyrus, and fell in battle

against his former alhes. His wife, inconsolable at his loss, slew herself immediately.
24. Protesilaus was the husband of Laedamia. She begged the gods, after his death, that but three hours' converse with him might be allowed her; the request was granted; and when her dead husband, at the expiry of the time, returned to the world of shades, she bore him company.
25. The daughter of Cato of Utica, Porcia married Marcus Brutus, the friend and the assassin of Julius Caesar; when her husband died by his own hand after the battle of Philippi, she committed suicide, it is said, by swallowing live coals — all other means having been removed by her friends.
26. Artemisia, Queen of Caria, who built to her husband Mausolus, the splendid monument which was accounted among the wonders of the world; and who mingled her husband's ashes with her daily drink. "Barbarie" is used in the Greek sense, to designate the non-Hellenic peoples of Asia.
27. Teuta: Queen of Illyria, who, after her husband's death, made war on and was conquered by the Romans, B.C 228.
28. At this point, in some manuscripts, occur thefollowing two
lines: —
"The same thing I say of Bilia,
Of Rhodegone and of Valeria."
29. Bound: prepared; going. To "boun" or "bown" is a good old word, whence comes our word "bound," in the sense of "on the way."
30. That from his lust yet were him lever abide: He would rather do without his pleasure.
31. Such apparence: such an ocular deception, or apparition — more properly, disappearance — as the removal of the rocks.
32. The same question is stated a the end of Boccaccio's version of the story in the "Philocopo," where the queen determines in favour of Aviragus. The question is evidently one of those which it was the fashion to propose for debate in the mediaeval "courts of love."