GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE HOUSE OF FAME

[Thanks partly to Pope's brief and elegant paraphrase, in his "Temple of Fame," and partly to the familiar force of the style and the satirical significance of the allegory, "The House of Fame" is among the best known and relished of Chaucer's minor poems. The octosyllabic measure in which it is written — the same which the author of "Hudibras" used with such admirable effect — is excellently adapted for the vivid descriptions, the lively sallies of humour and sarcasm, with which the poem abounds; and when the poet actually does get to his subject, he treats it with a zest, and a corresponding interest on the part of the reader, which are scarcely surpassed by the best of The Canterbury Tales. The poet, however, tarries long on the way to the House of Fame; as Pope says in his advertisement, the reader who would compare his with Chaucer's poem, "may begin with [Chaucer's] third Book of Fame, there being nothing in the two first books that answers to their title." The first book opens with a kind of prologue (actually so marked and called in earlier editions) in which the author speculates on the causes of dreams; avers that never any man had such a dream as he had on the tenth of December; and prays the God of Sleep to help him to interpret the dream, and the Mover of all things to reward or afflict those readers who take the dream well or ill. Then he relates that, having fallen asleep, he fancied himself within a temple of glass — the abode of Venus — the walls of which were painted with the story of Aeneas. The paintings are described at length; and then the poet tells us that, coming out of the temple, he found himself on a vast sandy plain, and saw high in heaven an eagle, that began to descend towards him. With the prologue, the first book numbers 508 lines; of which 192 only — more than are actually concerned with or directly lead towards the real subject of the poem — are given here. The second book, containing 582 lines, of which 176 will be found in this edition, is wholly devoted to the voyage from the Temple of Venus to the House of Fame, which the dreamer accomplishes in the eagle's claws. The bird has been sent by Jove to do the poet some "solace" in reward of his labours for the cause of Love; and during the transit through the air the messenger discourses obligingly and learnedly with his human burden on the theory of sound, by which all that is spoken must needs reach the House of Fame; and on other matters suggested by their errand and their observations by the way. The third book (of 1080 lines, only a score of which, just at the outset, have been omitted) brings us to the real pith of the poem. It finds the poet close to the House of Fame, built on a rock of ice engraved with names, many of which are half-melted away. Entering the gorgeous palace, he finds all manner of minstrels and historians; harpers, pipers, and trumpeters of fame; magicians, jugglers, sorcerers, and many others. On a throne of ruby sits the goddess, seeming at one moment of but a cubit's stature, at the next touching heaven; and at either hand, on pillars, stand the great authors who "bear up the name" of ancient nations. Crowds of people enter the hall from all regions

of earth, praying the goddess to give them good or evil fame, with and without their own deserts; and they receive answers favourable, negative, or contrary, according to the caprice of Fame. Pursuing his researches further, out of the region of reputation or fame proper into that of tidings or rumours, the poet is led, by a man who has entered into conversation with him, to a vast whirling house of twigs, ever open to the arrival of tidings, ever full of murmurings, whisperings, and clatterings, coming from the vast crowds that fill it — for every rumour, every piece of news, every false report, appears there in the shape of the person who utters it, or passes it on, down in earth. Out at the windows innumerable, the tidings pass to Fame, who gives to each report its name and duration; and in the house travellers, pilgrims, pardoners, couriers, lovers, &c., make a huge clamour. But here the poet meets with a man "of great authority," and, half afraid, awakes; skilfully — whether by intention, fatigue, or accident — leaving the reader disappointed by the nonfulfilment of what seemed to be promises of further disclosures. The poem, not least in the passages the omission of which has been dictated by the exigencies of the present volume, is full of testimony to the vast acquaintance of Chaucer with learning ancient and modern; Ovid, Virgil, Statius, are equally at his command to illustrate his narrative or to furnish the ground-work of his descriptions; while architecture, the Arabic numeration, the theory of sound, and the effects of gunpowder, are only a few among the topics of his own time of which the poet treats with the ease of proficient knowledge. Not least interesting are the vivid touches in which Chaucer sketches the routine of his laborious and almost recluse daily life; while the strength, individuality, and humour that mark the didactic portion of the poem prove that "The House of Fame" was one of the poet's riper productions.]

GOD turn us ev'ry dream to good!
For it is wonder thing, by the Rood,* *Cross <1>
To my witte, what causeth swevens,* *dreams
Either on morrows or on evens;
And why th'effect followeth of some,
And of some it shall never come;
Why this is an avision
And this a revelation;
Why this a dream, why that a sweven,
And not to ev'ry man *like even;* *alike*
Why this a phantom, why these oracles,
I n'ot; but whoso of these miracles
The causes knoweth bet than I,
Divine* he; for I certainly *define
Ne can them not, nor ever think *do not know them*
To busy my wit for to swink* *labour
To know of their significance
The genders, neither the distance
Of times of them, nor the causes
For why that this more than that cause is;
Or if folke's complexions

Make them dream of reflections;
Or elles thus, as others sayn,
For too great feebleness of the brain
By abstinence, or by sickness,
By prison, strife, or great distress,
Or elles by disordinance* *derangement
Of natural accustomance;* *mode of life
That some men be too curious
In study, or melancholious,
Or thus, so inly full of dread,
That no man may them *boote bede;* *afford them relief*
Or elles that devotion
Of some, and contemplation,
Causeth to them such dreames oft;
Or that the cruel life unsoft
Of them that unkind loves lead,
That often hope much or dread,
That purely their impressions
Cause them to have visions;
Or if that spirits have the might
To make folk to dream a-night;
Or if the soul, of *proper kind,* *its own nature*
Be so perfect as men find,
That it forewot* what is to come, *foreknows
And that it warneth all and some
Of ev'reach of their adventures,
By visions, or by figures,
But that our fleshe hath no might
To understanden it aright,
For it is warned too darkly;
But why the cause is, not wot I.
Well worth of this thing greate clerks, <2>
That treat of this and other works;
For I of none opinion
Will as now make mention;
But only that the holy Rood
Turn us every dream to good.
For never since that I was born,
Nor no man elles me beforn,
Mette,* as I trowe steadfastly, *dreamed
So wonderful a dream as I,
The tenthe day now of December;
The which, as I can it remember,
I will you tellen ev'ry deal.* *whit

But at my beginning, truste weel,* *well
I will make invocation,
With special devotion,
Unto the god of Sleep anon,
That dwelleth in a cave of stone, <3>
Upon a stream that comes from Lete,
That is a flood of hell unsweet,
Beside a folk men call Cimmerie;
There sleepeth ay this god unmerry,
With his sleepy thousand sones,
That alway for to sleep their won* is; *wont, custom
And to this god, that I *of read,* *tell of*
Pray I, that he will me speed
My sweven for to tell aright,
If ev'ry dream stands in his might.
And he that Mover is of all
That is, and was, and ever shall,
So give them joye that it hear,
Of alle that they dream to-year;* *this year
And for to standen all in grace* *favour
Of their loves, or in what place
That them were liefest* for to stand, *most desired
And shield them from povert' and shand,* *shame
And from ev'ry unhap and disease,
And send them all that may them please,
That take it well, and scorn it not,
Nor it misdeemen* in their thought, *misjudge
Through malicious intention;
And whoso, through presumption.
Or hate, or scorn, or through envy,
Despite, or jape,* or villainy, *jesting
Misdeem it, pray I Jesus God,
That dream he barefoot, dream he shod,
That ev'ry harm that any man
Hath had since that the world began,
Befall him thereof, ere he sterve,* *die
And grant that he may it deserve,* *earn, obtain
Lo! with such a conclusion
As had of his avision
Croesus, that was the king of Lyde,<4>
That high upon a gibbet died;
This prayer shall he have of me;
I am *no bet in charity.* *no more charitable*
Now hearken, as I have you said,

What that I mette ere I abraid,* *awoke
Of December the tenthe day;
When it was night to sleep I lay,
Right as I was wont for to do'n,
And fell asleepe wonder soon,
As he that *weary was for go*<5> *was weary from going*
On pilgrimage miles two
To the corsaint* Leonard, *relics of <6>
To make lithe that erst was hard.
But, as I slept, me mette I was
Within a temple made of glass;
In which there were more images
Of gold, standing in sundry stages,
And more riche tabernacles,
And with pierrie* more pinnacles, *gems
And more curious portraitures,
And *quainte manner* of figures *strange kinds*
Of golde work, than I saw ever.
But, certainly, I wiste* never *knew
Where that it was, but well wist I
It was of Venus readily,
This temple; for in portraiture
I saw anon right her figure
Naked floating in a sea, <7>
And also on her head, pardie,
Her rose garland white and red,
And her comb to comb her head,
Her doves, and Dan Cupido,
Her blinde son, and Vulcano, <8>
That in his face was full brown.

As he "roamed up and down," the dreamer saw on the wall a tablet of brass inscribed with the opening lines of the Aeneid; while the whole story of Aeneas was told in the "portraitures" and gold work. About three hundred and fifty lines are devoted to the description; but they merely embody Virgil's account of Aeneas' adventures from the destruction of Troy to his arrival in Italy; and the only characteristic passage is the following reflection, suggested by the death of Dido for her perfidious but fate-compelled guest:

Lo! how a woman doth amiss,
To love him that unknowen is!
For, by Christ, lo! thus it fareth,
It is not all gold that glareth.* *glitters
For, all so brook I well my head,
There may be under goodlihead* *fair appearance
Cover'd many a shrewed* vice; *cursed

Therefore let no wight be so nice* *foolish
To take a love only for cheer,* *looks
Or speech, or for friendly mannere;
For this shall ev'ry woman find,
That some man, *of his pure kind,* *by force of his nature
Will showen outward the fairest,
Till he have caught that which him lest;* *pleases
And then anon will causes find,
And sweare how she is unkind,
Or false, or privy* double was. *secretly
All this say I by* Aeneas *with reference to
And Dido, and her *nice lest,* *foolish pleasure*
That loved all too soon a guest;
Therefore I will say a proverb,
That he that fully knows the herb
May safely lay it to his eye;
Withoute dread,* this is no lie. *doubt
When the dreamer had seen all the sights in the temple, he became desirous to know who had worked all those wonders, and in what country he was; so he resolved to go out at the wicket, in search of somebody who might tell him.
When I out at the doores came,
I fast aboute me beheld;
Then saw I but a large feld,* *open country
As far as that I mighte see,
WIthoute town, or house, or tree,
Or bush, or grass, or ered* land, *ploughed <9>
For all the field was but of sand,
As small* as men may see it lie *fine
In the desert of Libye;
Nor no manner creature
That is formed by Nature,
There saw I, me to *rede or wiss.* *advise or direct*
"O Christ!" thought I, "that art in bliss,
From *phantom and illusion* *vain fancy and deception*
Me save!" and with devotion
Mine eyen to the heav'n I cast.
Then was I ware at the last
That, faste by the sun on high,
As kennen might I with mine eye, *as well as I might discern*
Me thought I saw an eagle soar,
But that it seemed muche more* *larger
Than I had any eagle seen;
This is as sooth as death, certain,
It was of gold, and shone so bright,

That never saw men such a sight,
But if* the heaven had y-won, *unless
All new from God, another sun;
So shone the eagle's feathers bright:
And somewhat downward gan it light.* *descend, alight

The Second Book opens with a brief invocation of Venus and of Thought; then it proceeds:

This eagle, of which I have you told,
That shone with feathers as of gold,
Which that so high began to soar,
I gan beholde more and more,
To see her beauty and the wonder;
But never was there dint of thunder,
Nor that thing that men calle foudre,* *thunderbolt
That smote sometimes a town to powder,
And in his swifte coming brenn'd,* *burned
That so swithe* gan descend, *rapidly
As this fowl, when that it beheld
That I a-roam was in the feld;
And with his grim pawes strong,
Within his sharpe nailes long,
Me, flying, at a swap* he hent,** *swoop *seized
And with his sours <10> again up went,
Me carrying in his clawes stark* *strong
As light as I had been a lark,
How high, I cannot telle you,
For I came up, I wist not how.

The poet faints through bewilderment and fear; but the eagle, speaking with the voice of a man, recalls him to himself, and comforts him by the assurance that what now befalls him is for his instruction and profit. Answering the poet's unspoken inquiry whether he is not to die otherwise, or whether Jove will him stellify, the eagle says that he has been sent by Jupiter out of his "great ruth,"

"For that thou hast so truely
So long served ententively* *with attentive zeal
His blinde nephew* Cupido, *grandson
And faire Venus also,
Withoute guuerdon ever yet,
And natheless hast set thy wit
(Although that in thy head full lite* is) *little
To make bookes, songs, and ditties,
In rhyme or elles in cadence,
As thou best canst, in reverence
Of Love, and of his servants eke,
That have his service sought, and seek,

And pained thee to praise his art,
Although thou haddest never part; <11>
Wherefore, all so God me bless,
Jovis holds it great humbless,
And virtue eke, that thou wilt make
A-night full oft thy head to ache,
In thy study so thou writest,
And evermore of love enditest,
In honour of him and praisings,
And in his folke's furtherings,
And in their matter all devisest,* *relates
And not him nor his folk despisest,
Although thou may'st go in the dance
Of them that him list not advance.
Wherefore, as I said now, y-wis,
Jupiter well considers this;
And also, beausire,* other things; *good sir
That is, that thou hast no tidings
Of Love's folk, if they be glad,
Nor of naught elles that God made;
And not only from far country
That no tidings come to thee,
But of thy very neighebours,
That dwellen almost at thy doors,
Thou hearest neither that nor this.
For when thy labour all done is,
And hast y-made thy reckonings, <12>
Instead of rest and newe things,
Thou go'st home to thy house anon,
And, all so dumb as any stone,
Thou sittest at another book,
Till fully dazed* is thy look; *blinded
And livest thus as a hermite
Although thine abstinence is lite."* <13> *little

Therefore has Jove appointed the eagle to take the poet to the House of Fame, to do him some pleasure in recompense for his devotion to Cupid; and he will hear, says the bird,

"When we be come there as I say,
More wondrous thinges, dare I lay,* *bet
Of Love's folke more tidings,
Both *soothe sawes and leasings;* *true sayings and lies*
And more loves new begun,
And long y-served loves won,
And more loves casually

That be betid,* no man knows why, *happened by chance
But as a blind man starts a hare;
And more jollity and welfare,
While that they finde *love of steel,* *love true as steel*
As thinketh them, and over all weel;
More discords, and more jealousies,
More murmurs, and more novelties,
And more dissimulations,
And feigned reparations;
And more beardes, in two hours,
Withoute razor or scissours
Y-made, <14> than graines be of sands;
And eke more holding in hands,* *embracings
And also more renovelances* *renewings
Of old *forleten acquaintances;* *broken-off acquaintanceships*
More love-days,<15> and more accords,* *agreements
Than on instruments be chords;
And eke of love more exchanges
Than ever cornes were in granges."* *barns

The poet can scarcely believe that, though Fame had all the pies [magpies] and all the spies in a kingdom, she should hear so much; but the eagle proceeds to prove that she can.

First shalt thou heare where she dwelleth;
And, so as thine own booke telleth, <16>
Her palace stands, as I shall say,
Right ev'n in middes of the way
Betweene heav'n, and earth, and sea,
That whatsoe'er in all these three
Is spoken, *privy or apert,* *secretly or openly*
The air thereto is so overt,* *clear
And stands eke in so just* a place, *suitable
That ev'ry sound must to it pace,
Or whatso comes from any tongue,
Be it rowned,* read, or sung, *whispered
Or spoken in surety or dread,* *doubt
Certain *it must thither need."* *it must needs go thither*

The eagle, in a long discourse, demonstrates that, as all natural things have a natural place towards which they move by natural inclination, and as sound is only broken air, so every sound must come to Fame's House, "though it were piped of a mouse" — on the same principle by which every part of a mass of water is affected by the casting in of a stone. The poet is all the while borne upward, entertained with various information by the bird; which at last cries out —

"Hold up thy head, for all is well!
Saint Julian, lo! bon hostel! <17>

See here the House of Fame, lo
May'st thou not heare that I do?"
"What?" quoth I. "The greate soun',"
Quoth he, "that rumbleth up and down
In Fame's House, full of tidings,
Both of fair speech and of chidings,
And of false and sooth compouned;* *compounded, mingled
Hearken well; it is not rowned.* *whispered
Hearest thou not the greate swough?"* *confused sound
"Yes, pardie!" quoth I, "well enough."
And what sound is it like?" quoth he
"Peter! the beating of the sea,"
Quoth I, "against the rockes hollow,
When tempests do the shippes swallow.
And let a man stand, out of doubt,
A mile thence, and hear it rout.* *roar
Or elles like the last humbling* *dull low distant noise
After the clap of a thund'ring,
When Jovis hath the air y-beat;
But it doth me for feare sweat."
"Nay, dread thee not thereof," quoth he;
"It is nothing will bite thee,
Thou shalt no harme have, truly."
And with that word both he and I
As nigh the place arrived were,
As men might caste with a spear.
I wist not how, but in a street
He set me fair upon my feet,
And saide: "Walke forth apace,
And take *thine adventure or case,* *thy chance of what
That thou shalt find in Fame's place." may befall*
"Now," quoth I, "while we have space
To speak, ere that I go from thee,
For the love of God, as telle me,
In sooth, that I will of thee lear,* *learn
If this noise that I hear
Be, as I have heard thee tell,
Of folk that down in earthe dwell,
And cometh here in the same wise
As I thee heard, ere this, devise?
And that there living body n'is* *is not
In all that house that yonder is,
That maketh all this loude fare?"* *hubbub, ado
"No," answered he, "by Saint Clare,

And all *so wisly God rede me;* *so surely god
But one thing I will warne thee, guide me*
Of the which thou wilt have wonder.
Lo! to the House of Fame yonder,
Thou know'st how cometh ev'ry speech;
It needeth not thee eft* to teach. *again
But understand now right well this;
When any speech y-comen is
Up to the palace, anon right
It waxeth* like the same wight** *becomes **person
Which that the word in earthe spake,
Be he cloth'd in red or black;
And so weareth his likeness,
And speaks the word, that thou wilt guess* *fancy
That it the same body be,
Whether man or woman, he or she.
And is not this a wondrous thing?"
"Yes," quoth I then, "by Heaven's king!"
And with this word, "Farewell," quoth he,
And here I will abide* thee, *wait for
And God of Heaven send thee grace
Some good to learen* in this place." *learn
And I of him took leave anon,
And gan forth to the palace go'n.

At the opening of the Third Book, Chaucer briefly invokes Apollo's guidance, and entreats him, because "the rhyme is light and lewd," to "make it somewhat agreeable, though some verse fail in a syllable." If the god answers the prayer, the poet promises to kiss the next laurel-tree <18> he sees; and he proceeds:

When I was from this eagle gone,
I gan behold upon this place;
And certain, ere I farther pace,
I will you all the shape devise* *describe
Of house and city; and all the wise
How I gan to this place approach,
That stood upon so high a roche,* *rock <19>
Higher standeth none in Spain;
But up I climb'd with muche pain,
And though to climbe *grieved me,* *cost me painful effort*
Yet I ententive* was to see, *attentive
And for to pore* wondrous low, *gaze closely
If I could any wise know
What manner stone this rocke was,
For it was like a thing of glass,
But that it shone full more clear

But of what congealed mattere
It was, I wist not readily,
But at the last espied I,
And found that it was *ev'ry deal* *entirely*
A rock of ice, and not of steel.
Thought I, "By Saint Thomas of Kent, <20>
This were a feeble fundament* *foundation
To builden a place so high; *on which to build
He ought him lite* to glorify *little
That hereon built, God so me save!"
Then saw I all the half y-grave <21>
With famous folke's names fele,* *many
That hadde been in muche weal,* *good fortune
And their fames wide y-blow.
But well unnethes* might I know *scarcely
Any letters for to read
Their names by; for out of dread* *doubt
They were almost off thawed so,
That of the letters one or two
Were molt* away of ev'ry name, *melted
So unfamous was wox* their fame; *become
But men say, "What may ever last?"
Then gan I in my heart to cast* *conjecture
That they were molt away for heat,
And not away with stormes beat;
For on the other side I sey* *saw
Of this hill, that northward lay,
How it was written full of names
Of folke that had greate fames
Of olde times, and yet they were
As fresh as men had writ them there
The selfe day, right ere that hour
That I upon them gan to pore.
But well I wiste what it made;* *meant
It was conserved with the shade,
All the writing which I sigh,* *saw
Of a castle that stood on high;
And stood eke on so cold a place,
That heat might it not deface.* *injure, destroy
Then gan I on this hill to go'n,
And found upon the cop* a won,** *summit <22> **house
That all the men that be alive
Have not the *cunning to descrive* *skill to describe*
The beauty of that like place,

Nor coulde *caste no compass* *find no contrivance*
Such another for to make,
That might of beauty be its make,* *match, equal
Nor one so wondrously y-wrought,
That it astonieth yet my thought,
And maketh all my wit to swink,* *labour
Upon this castle for to think;
So that the greate beauty,
Cast,* craft, and curiosity, *ingenuity
Ne can I not to you devise;* *describe
My witte may me not suffice.
But natheless all the substance
I have yet in my remembrance;
For why, me thoughte, by Saint Gile,
Alle was of stone of beryle,
Bothe the castle and the tow'r,
And eke the hall, and ev'ry bow'r,* *chamber
Withoute pieces or joinings,
But many subtile compassings,* *contrivances
As barbicans* and pinnacles, *watch-towers
Imageries and tabernacles,
I saw; and eke full of windows,
As flakes fall in greate snows.
And eke in each of the pinnacles
Were sundry habitacles,* *apartments or niches
In which stooden, all without,
Full the castle all about,
Of all manner of minstrales
And gestiours,<23> that telle tales
Both of weeping and of game,* *mirth
Of all that longeth unto Fame.
There heard I play upon a harp,
That sounded bothe well and sharp,
Him, Orpheus, full craftily;
And on this side faste by
Satte the harper Arion,<24>
And eke Aeacides Chiron <25>
And other harpers many a one,
And the great Glasgerion; <26>
And smalle harpers, with their glees,* *instruments
Satten under them in sees,* *seats
And gan on them upward to gape,
And counterfeit them as an ape,
Or as *craft counterfeiteth kind.* *art counterfeits nature*

Then saw I standing them behind,
Afar from them, all by themselve,
Many thousand times twelve,
That made loude minstrelsies
In cornmuse and eke in shawmies, <27>
And in many another pipe,
That craftily began to pipe,
Both in dulcet <28> and in reed,
That be at feastes with the bride.
And many a flute and lilting horn,
And pipes made of greene corn,
As have these little herde-grooms,* *shepherd-boys
That keepe beastes in the brooms.
There saw I then Dan Citherus,
And of Athens Dan Pronomus, <29>
And Marsyas <30> that lost his skin,
Both in the face, body, and chin,
For that he would envyen, lo!
To pipe better than Apollo.
There saw I famous, old and young,
Pipers of alle Dutche tongue, <31>
To learne love-dances and springs,
Reyes, <32> and these strange things.
Then saw I in another place,
Standing in a large space,
Of them that make bloody* soun', *martial
In trumpet, beam,* and clarioun; *horn <33>
For in fight and blood-sheddings
Is used gladly clarionings.
There heard I trumpe Messenus. <34>
Of whom speaketh Virgilius.
There heard I Joab trump also, <35>
Theodamas, <36> and other mo',
And all that used clarion
In Catalogne and Aragon,
That in their times famous were
To learne, saw I trumpe there.
There saw I sit in other sees,
Playing upon sundry glees,
Whiche that I cannot neven,* *name
More than starres be in heaven;
Of which I will not now rhyme,
For ease of you, and loss of time:
For time lost, this knowe ye,

By no way may recover'd be.
There saw I play jongelours,* *jugglers <37>
Magicians, and tregetours,<38>
And Pythonesses, <39> charmeresses,
And old witches, and sorceresses,
That use exorcisations,
And eke subfumigations; <40>
And clerkes* eke, which knowe well *scholars
All this magic naturel,
That craftily do their intents,
To make, in certain ascendents, <41>
Images, lo! through which magic
To make a man be whole or sick.
There saw I the queen Medea, <42>
And Circes <43> eke, and Calypsa.<44>
There saw I Hermes Ballenus, <45>
Limote, <46> and eke Simon Magus. <47>
There saw I, and knew by name,
That by such art do men have fame.
There saw I Colle Tregetour <46>
Upon a table of sycamore
Play an uncouth* thing to tell; *strange, rare
I saw him carry a windmell
Under a walnut shell.
Why should I make longer tale
Of all the people I there say,* *saw
From hence even to doomesday?
When I had all this folk behold,
And found me *loose, and not y-hold,* *at liberty and unrestrained*
And I had mused longe while
Upon these walles of beryle,
That shone lighter than any glass,
And made *well more* than it was *much greater
To seemen ev'rything, y-wis,
As kindly* thing of Fame it is; <48> *natural
I gan forth roam until I fand* *found
The castle-gate on my right hand,
Which all so well y-carven was,
That never such another n'as;* *was not
And yet it was by Adventure* *chance
Y-wrought, and not by *subtile cure.* *careful art*
It needeth not you more to tell,
To make you too longe dwell,
Of these gates' flourishings,

Nor of compasses,* nor carvings, *devices
Nor how they had in masonries,
As corbets, <49> full of imageries.
But, Lord! so fair it was to shew,
For it was all with gold behew.* *coloured
But in I went, and that anon;
There met I crying many a one
"A largess! largess! <50> hold up well!
God save the Lady of this pell,* *palace
Our owen gentle Lady Fame,
And them that will to have name
Of us!" Thus heard I cryen all,
And fast they came out of the hall,
And shooke *nobles and sterlings,* *coins <51>
And some y-crowned were as kings,
With crownes wrought fall of lozenges;
And many ribands, and many fringes,
Were on their clothes truely
Then at the last espied I
That pursuivantes and herauds,* *heralds
That cry riche folke's lauds,* *praises
They weren all; and ev'ry man
Of them, as I you telle can,
Had on him throwen a vesture
Which that men call a coat-armure, <52>
Embroidered wondrously rich,
As though there were *naught y-lich;* *nothing like it*
But naught will I, so may I thrive,
Be aboute to descrive *concern myself with describing*
All these armes that there were,
That they thus on their coates bare,
For it to me were impossible;
Men might make of them a bible
Twenty foote thick, I trow.
For, certain, whoso coulde know
Might there all the armes see'n
Of famous folk that have been
In Afric', Europe, and Asie,
Since first began the chivalry.
Lo! how should I now tell all this?
Nor of the hall eke what need is
To telle you that ev'ry wall
Of it, and floor, and roof, and all,
Was plated half a foote thick

Of gold, and that was nothing wick',* *counterfeit
But for to prove in alle wise
As fine as ducat of Venise, <53>
Of which too little in my pouch is?
And they were set as thick of nouches* *ornaments
Fine, of the finest stones fair,
That men read in the Lapidaire, <54>
As grasses growen in a mead.
But it were all too long to read* *declare
The names; and therefore I pass.
But in this rich and lusty place,
That Fame's Hall y-called was,
Full muche press of folk there n'as,* *was not
Nor crowding for too muche press.
But all on high, above a dais,
Set on a see* imperial, <55> *seat
That made was of ruby all,
Which that carbuncle is y-call'd,
I saw perpetually install'd
A feminine creature;
That never formed by Nature
Was such another thing y-sey.* *seen
For altherfirst,* sooth to say, *first of all
Me thoughte that she was so lite,* *little
That the length of a cubite
Was longer than she seem'd to be;
But thus soon in a while she
Herself then wonderfully stretch'd,
That with her feet the earth she reach'd,
And with her head she touched heaven,
Where as shine the starres seven. <56>
And thereto* eke, as to my wit, *moreover
I saw a greater wonder yet,
Upon her eyen to behold;
But certes I them never told.
For *as fele eyen* hadde she, *as many eyes*
As feathers upon fowles be,
Or were on the beastes four
That Godde's throne gan honour,
As John writ in th'Apocalypse. <57>
Her hair, that *oundy was and crips,* *wavy <58> and crisp*
As burnish'd gold it shone to see;
And, sooth to tellen, also she
Had all so fele* upstanding ears, *many

And tongues, as on beasts be hairs;
And on her feet waxen saw I
Partridges' winges readily.<59>
But, Lord! the pierrie* and richess *gems, jewellery
I saw sitting on this goddess,
And the heavenly melody
Of songes full of harmony,
I heard about her throne y-sung,
That all the palace walles rung!
(So sung the mighty Muse, she
That called is Calliope,
And her eight sisteren* eke, *sisters
That in their faces seeme meek);
And evermore eternally
They sang of Fame as then heard I:
"Heried* be thou and thy name, *praised
Goddess of Renown and Fame!"
Then was I ware, lo! at the last,
As I mine eyen gan upcast,
That this ilke noble queen
On her shoulders gan sustene* *sustain
Both the armes, and the name
Of those that hadde large fame;
Alexander, and Hercules,
That with a shirt his life lese.* <60> *lost
Thus found I sitting this goddess,
In noble honour and richess;
Of which I stint* a while now, *refrain (from speaking)
Of other things to telle you.
Then saw I stand on either side,
Straight down unto the doores wide,
From the dais, many a pillere
Of metal, that shone not full clear;
But though they were of no richess,
Yet were they made for great nobless,
And in them greate sentence.* *significance
And folk of digne* reverence, *worthy, lofty
Of which *I will you telle fand,* *I will try to tell you*
Upon the pillars saw I stand.
Altherfirst, lo! there I sigh* *saw
Upon a pillar stand on high,
That was of lead and iron fine,
Him of the secte Saturnine, <61>
The Hebrew Josephus the old,

That of Jewes' gestes* told; *deeds of braver
And he bare on his shoulders high
All the fame up of Jewry.
And by him stooden other seven,
Full wise and worthy for to neven,* *name
To help him bearen up the charge,* *burden
It was so heavy and so large.
And, for they writen of battailes,
As well as other old marvailes,
Therefore was, lo! this pillere,
Of which that I you telle here,
Of lead and iron both, y-wis;
For iron Marte's metal is, <62>
Which that god is of battaile;
And eke the lead, withoute fail,
Is, lo! the metal of Saturn,
That hath full large wheel* to turn. *orbit
Then stoode forth, on either row,
Of them which I coulde know,
Though I them not by order tell,
To make you too longe dwell.
These, of the which I gin you read,
There saw I standen, out of dread,
Upon an iron pillar strong,
That painted was all endelong* *from top to bottom*
With tiger's blood in ev'ry place,
The Tholosan that highte Stace, <63>
That bare of Thebes up the name
Upon his shoulders, and the fame
Also of cruel Achilles.
And by him stood, withoute lease,* *falsehood
Full wondrous high on a pillere
Of iron, he, the great Homere;
And with him Dares and Dytus, <64>
Before, and eke he, Lollius, <65>
And Guido eke de Colempnis, <66>
And English Gaufrid <67> eke, y-wis.
And each of these, as I have joy,
Was busy for to bear up Troy;
So heavy thereof was the fame,
That for to bear it was no game.
But yet I gan full well espy,
Betwixt them was a little envy.
One said that Homer made lies,

Feigning in his poetries,
And was to the Greeks favourable;
Therefore held he it but a fable.
Then saw I stand on a pillere
That was of tinned iron clear,
Him, the Latin poet Virgile,
That borne hath up a longe while
The fame of pious Aeneas.
And next him on a pillar was
Of copper, Venus' clerk Ovide,
That hath y-sowen wondrous wide
The greate god of Love's fame.
And there he bare up well his name
Upon this pillar all so high,
As I might see it with mine eye;
For why? this hall whereof I read
Was waxen in height, and length, and bread,* *breadth
Well more by a thousand deal* *times
Than it was erst, that saw I weel.
Then saw I on a pillar by,
Of iron wrought full sternely,
The greate poet, Dan Lucan,
That on his shoulders bare up than,
As high as that I might it see,
The fame of Julius and Pompey; <68>
And by him stood all those clerks
That write of Rome's mighty works,
That if I would their names tell,
All too longe must I dwell.
And next him on a pillar stood
Of sulphur, like as he were wood,* *mad
Dan Claudian, <69> the sooth to tell,
That bare up all the fame of hell,
Of Pluto, and of Proserpine,
That queen is of *the darke pine* *the dark realm of pain*
Why should I telle more of this?
The hall was alle fulle, y-wis,
Of them that writen olde gests,* *histories of great deeds
As be on trees rookes' nests;
But it a full confus'd mattere
Were all these gestes for to hear,
That they of write, and how they hight.* *are called
But while that I beheld this sight,
I heard a noise approache blive,* *quickly

That far'd* as bees do in a hive, *went
Against their time of outflying;
Right such a manner murmuring,
For all the world, it seem'd to me.
Then gan I look about, and see
That there came entering the hall
A right great company withal,
And that of sundry regions,
Of all kinds and conditions
That dwell in earth under the moon,
Both poor and rich; and all so soon
As they were come into the hall,
They gan adown on knees to fall,
Before this ilke* noble queen, *same
And saide, "Grant us, Lady sheen,* *bright, lovely
Each of us of thy grace a boon."* *favour
And some of them she granted soon,
And some she warned* well and fair, *refused
And some she granted the contrair* *contrary
Of their asking utterly;
But this I say you truely,
What that her cause was, I n'ist;* *wist not, know not
For of these folk full well I wist,
They hadde good fame each deserved,
Although they were diversely served.
Right as her sister, Dame Fortune,
Is wont to serven *in commune.* *commonly, usually*
Now hearken how she gan to pay
Them that gan of her grace to pray;
And right, lo! all this company
Saide sooth,* and not a lie. *truth
"Madame," thus quoth they, "we be
Folk that here beseeche thee
That thou grant us now good fame,
And let our workes have good name
In full recompensatioun
Of good work, give us good renown
"I warn* it you," quoth she anon; *refuse
"Ye get of me good fame none,
By God! and therefore go your way."
"Alas," quoth they, "and well-away!
Tell us what may your cause be."
"For that it list* me not," quoth she, *pleases
No wight shall speak of you, y-wis,

Good nor harm, nor that nor this."
And with that word she gan to call
Her messenger, that was in hall,
And bade that he should faste go'n,
Upon pain to be blind anon,
For Aeolus, the god of wind;
"In Thrace there ye shall him find,
And bid him bring his clarioun,
That is full diverse of his soun',
And it is called Cleare Laud,
With which he wont is to heraud* *proclaim
Them that me list y-praised be,
And also bid him how that he
Bring eke his other clarioun,
That hight* Slander in ev'ry town, *is called
With which he wont is to diffame* *defame, disparage
Them that me list, and do them shame."
This messenger gan faste go'n,
And found where, in a cave of stone,
In a country that highte Thrace,
This Aeolus, *with harde grace,* *Evil favour attend him!*
Helde the windes in distress,* *constraint
And gan them under him to press,
That they began as bears to roar,
He bound and pressed them so sore.
This messenger gan fast to cry,
"Rise up," quoth he, "and fast thee hie,
Until thou at my Lady be,
And take thy clarions eke with thee,
And speed thee forth." And he anon
Took to him one that hight Triton, <70>
His clarions to beare tho,* *then
And let a certain winde go,
That blew so hideously and high,
That it lefte not a sky* *cloud <71>
In all the welkin* long and broad. *sky
This Aeolus nowhere abode* *delayed
Till he was come to Fame's feet,
And eke the man that Triton hete,* *is called
And there he stood as still as stone.
And therewithal there came anon
Another huge company
Of goode folk, and gan to cry,
"Lady, grant us goode fame,

And let our workes have that name,
Now in honour of gentleness;
And all so God your soule bless;
For we have well deserved it,
Therefore is right we be well quit."* *requited
"As thrive I," quoth she, "ye shall fail;
Good workes shall you not avail
To have of me good fame as now;
But, wot ye what, I grante you.
That ye shall have a shrewde* fame, *evil, cursed
And wicked los,* and worse name, *reputation <72>
Though ye good los have well deserv'd;
Now go your way, for ye be serv'd.
And now, Dan Aeolus," quoth she,
"Take forth thy trump anon, let see,
That is y-called Slander light,
And blow their los, that ev'ry wight
Speak of them harm and shrewedness,* *wickedness, malice
Instead of good and worthiness;
For thou shalt trump all the contrair
Of that they have done, well and fair."
Alas! thought I, what adventures* *(evil) fortunes
Have these sorry creatures,
That they, amonges all the press,
Should thus be shamed guilteless?
But what! it muste needes be.
What did this Aeolus, but he
Took out his blacke trump of brass,
That fouler than the Devil was,
And gan this trumpet for to blow,
As all the world 't would overthrow.
Throughout every regioun
Went this foule trumpet's soun',
As swift as pellet out of gun
When fire is in the powder run.
And such a smoke gan out wend,* *go
Out of this foule trumpet's end,
Black, blue, greenish, swart,* and red, *black <73>
As doth when that men melt lead,
Lo! all on high from the tewell;* *chimney <74>
And thereto* one thing saw I well, *also
That the farther that it ran,
The greater waxen it began,
As doth the river from a well,* *fountain

And it stank as the pit of hell.
Alas! thus was their shame y-rung,
And guilteless, on ev'ry tongue.
Then came the thirde company,
And gan up to the dais to hie,* *hasten
And down on knees they fell anon,
And saide, "We be ev'ry one
Folk that have full truely
Deserved fame right fully,
And pray you that it may be know
Right as it is, and forth y-blow."
"I grante," quoth she, "for me list
That now your goode works be wist;* *known
And yet ye shall have better los,
In despite of all your foes,
Than worthy* is, and that anon. *merited
Let now," quoth she, "thy trumpet go'n,
Thou Aeolus, that is so black,
And out thine other trumpet take,
That highte Laud, and blow it so
That through the world their fame may go,
Easily and not too fast,
That it be knowen at the last."
"Full gladly, Lady mine," he said;
And out his trump of gold he braid* *pulled forth
Anon, and set it to his mouth,
And blew it east, and west, and south,
And north, as loud as any thunder,
That ev'ry wight had of it wonder,
So broad it ran ere that it stent.* *ceased
And certes all the breath that went
Out of his trumpet's mouthe smell'd
As* men a pot of balme held *as if
Among a basket full of roses;
This favour did he to their loses.* *reputations
And right with this I gan espy
Where came the fourthe company.
But certain they were wondrous few;
And gan to standen in a rew,* *row
And saide, "Certes, Lady bright,
We have done well with all our might,
But we *not keep* to have fame; *care not
Hide our workes and our name,
For Godde's love! for certes we

Have surely done it for bounty,* *goodness, virtue
And for no manner other thing."
"I grante you all your asking,"
Quoth she; "let your workes be dead."
With that I turn'd about my head,
And saw anon the fifthe rout,* *company
That to this Lady gan to lout,* *bow down
And down on knees anon to fall;
And to her then besoughten all
To hide their good workes eke,
And said, they gave* not a leek *cared
For no fame, nor such renown;
For they for contemplatioun
And Godde's love had y-wrought,
Nor of fame would they have aught.
"What!" quoth she, "and be ye wood?
And *weene ye* for to do good, *do ye imagine*
And for to have of that no fame?
Have ye despite to have my name? *do ye despise*
Nay, ye shall lie every one!
Blow thy trump, and that anon,"
Quoth she, "thou Aeolus, I hote,* *command
And ring these folkes works by note,
That all the world may of it hear."
And he gan blow their los* so clear *reputation
Within his golden clarioun,
That through the worlde went the soun',
All so kindly, and so soft,
That their fame was blown aloft.
And then came the sixth company,
And gunnen* fast on Fame to cry; *began
Right verily in this mannere
They saide; "Mercy, Lady dear!
To telle certain as it is,
We have done neither that nor this,
But idle all our life hath be;* *been
But natheless yet praye we
That we may have as good a fame,
And great renown, and knowen* name, *well-known
As they that have done noble gests,* *feats.
And have achieved all their quests,* *enterprises; desires
As well of Love, as other thing;
All* was us never brooch, nor ring, *although
Nor elles aught from women sent,

Nor ones in their hearte meant
To make us only friendly cheer,
But mighte *teem us upon bier;* *might lay us on our bier
Yet let us to the people seem (by their adverse demeanour)*
Such as the world may of us deem,* *judge
That women loven us for wood.* *madly
It shall us do as muche good,
And to our heart as much avail,
The counterpoise,* ease, and travail, *compensation
As we had won it with labour;
For that is deare bought honour,
At the regard of our great ease. *in comparison with*
And yet ye must us more please; *in addition*
Let us be holden eke thereto
Worthy, and wise, and good also,
And rich, and happy unto love,
For Godde's love, that sits above;
Though we may not the body have
Of women, yet, so God you save,
Let men glue* on us the name; *fasten
Sufficeth that we have the fame."
"I grante," quoth she, "by my troth;
Now Aeolus, withoute sloth,
Take out thy trump of gold," quoth she,
"And blow as they have asked me,
That ev'ry man ween* them at ease, *believe
Although they go in full *bad leas."* *sorry plight*
This Aeolus gan it so blow,
That through the world it was y-know.
Then came the seventh rout anon,
And fell on knees ev'ry one,
And saide, "Lady, grant us soon
The same thing, the same boon,
Which *this next folk* you have done." *the people just before us*
"Fy on you," quoth she, "ev'ry one!
Ye nasty swine, ye idle wretches,
Full fill'd of rotten slowe tetches!* *blemishes <75>
What? false thieves! ere ye would
Be famous good, and nothing n'ould *have good fame*
Deserve why, nor never raught,* *recked, cared (to do so)
Men rather you to hangen ought.
For ye be like the sleepy cat,
That would have fish; but, know'st thou what?
He woulde no thing wet his claws.

Evil thrift come to your jaws,
And eke to mine, if I it grant,
Or do favour you to avaunt.* *boast your deeds
Thou Aeolus, thou King of Thrace,
Go, blow this folk a *sorry grace,"* *disgrace
Quoth she, "anon; and know'st thou how?
As I shall telle thee right now,
Say, these be they that would honour
Have, and do no kind of labour,
Nor do no good, and yet have laud,
And that men ween'd that Belle Isaude <76>
Could them not of love wern; *could not refuse them her love*
And yet she that grinds at the quern* *mill <77>
Is all too good to ease their heart."
This Aeolus anon upstart,
And with his blacke clarioun
He gan to blazen out a soun'
As loud as bellows wind in hell;
And eke therewith, the sooth to tell,
This sounde was so full of japes,* *jests
As ever were mows* in apes; *grimaces
And that went all the world about,
That ev'ry wight gan on them shout,
And for to laugh as they were wood;* *mad
Such game found they in their hood. <78> *so were they ridiculed*
Then came another company,
That hadde done the treachery,
The harm, and the great wickedness,
That any hearte coulde guess;
And prayed her to have good fame,
And that she would do them no shame,
But give them los and good renown,
And *do it blow* in clarioun. *cause it to be blown*
"Nay, wis!" quoth she, "it were a vice;
All be there in me no justice,
Me liste not to do it now,
Nor this will I grant to you."
Then came there leaping in a rout,* *crowd
And gan to clappen* all about *strike, knock
Every man upon the crown,
That all the hall began to soun';
And saide; "Lady lefe* and dear, *loved
We be such folk as ye may hear.
To tellen all the tale aright,

We be shrewes* every wight, *wicked, impious people
And have delight in wickedness,
As goode folk have in goodness,
And joy to be y-knowen shrews,
And full of vice and *wicked thews;* *evil qualities*
Wherefore we pray you *on a row,* *all together*
That our fame be such y-know
In all things right as it is."
"I grant it you," quoth she, "y-wis.
But what art thou that say'st this tale,
That wearest on thy hose a pale,* *vertical stripe
And on thy tippet such a bell?"
"Madame," quoth he, "sooth to tell,
I am *that ilke shrew,* y-wis, *the same wretch*
That burnt the temple of Isidis,
In Athenes, lo! that city." <79>
"And wherefore didst thou so?" quoth she.
"By my thrift!" quoth he, "Madame,
I woulde fain have had a name
As other folk had in the town;
Although they were of great renown
For their virtue and their thews,* *good qualities
Thought I, as great fame have shrews
(Though it be naught) for shrewdeness,
As good folk have for goodeness;
And since I may not have the one,
The other will I not forgo'n.
So for to gette *fame's hire,* *the reward of fame*
The temple set I all afire.
*Now do our los be blowen swithe,
As wisly be thou ever blithe."* *see note <80>
"Gladly," quoth she; "thou Aeolus,
Hear'st thou what these folk prayen us?"
"Madame, I hear full well," quoth he,
"And I will trumpen it, pardie!"
And took his blacke trumpet fast,
And gan to puffen and to blast,
Till it was at the worlde's end.
With that I gan *aboute wend,* *turn*
For one that stood right at my back
Me thought full goodly* to me spake, *courteously, fairly
And saide, "Friend, what is thy name?
Art thou come hither to have fame?"
"Nay, *for soothe,* friend!" quoth I; *surely*

"I came not hither, *grand mercy,* *great thanks*
For no such cause, by my head!
Sufficeth me, as I were dead,
That no wight have my name in hand.
I wot myself best how I stand,
For what I dree,* or what I think, *suffer
I will myself it alle drink,
Certain, for the more part,
As far forth as I know mine art."
"What doest thou here, then," quoth he.
Quoth I, "That will I telle thee;
The cause why I stande here,
Is some new tidings for to lear,* *learn
Some newe thing, I know not what,
Tidings either this or that,
Of love, or suche thinges glad.
For, certainly, he that me made
To come hither, said to me
I shoulde bothe hear and see
In this place wondrous things;
But these be not such tidings
As I meant of." "No?" quoth he.
And I answered, "No, pardie!
For well I wot ever yet,
Since that first I hadde wit,
That some folk have desired fame
Diversely, and los, and name;
But certainly I knew not how
Nor where that Fame dwelled, ere now
Nor eke of her description,
Nor also her condition,
Nor *the order of her doom,* *the principle of her judgments*
Knew I not till I hither come."
"Why, then, lo! be these tidings,
That thou nowe hither brings,
That thou hast heard?" quoth he to me.
"But now *no force,* for well I see *no matter*
What thou desirest for to lear."
Come forth, and stand no longer here.
And I will thee, withoute dread,* *doubt
Into another place lead,
Where thou shalt hear many a one."
Then gan I forth with him to go'n
Out of the castle, sooth to say.

Then saw I stand in a vally,
Under the castle faste by,
A house, that domus Daedali,
That Labyrinthus <81> called is,
N'as* made so wondrously, y-wis, *was not
Nor half so quaintly* was y-wrought. *strangely
And evermore, as swift as thought,
This quainte* house aboute went, *strange
That nevermore it *stille stent;* *ceased to move*
And thereout came so great a noise,
That had it stooden upon Oise, <82>
Men might have heard it easily
To Rome, I *trowe sickerly.* *confidently believe*
And the noise which I heard,
For all the world right so it far'd
As doth the routing* of the stone *rushing noise*
That from the engine<83> is let go'n.
And all this house of which I read* *tell you
Was made of twigges sallow,* red, *willow
And green eke, and some were white,
Such as men *to the cages twight,* *pull to make cages*
Or maken of these panniers,
Or elles hutches or dossers;* *back-baskets
That, for the swough* and for the twigs, *rushing noise
This house was all so full of gigs,* *sounds of wind
And all so full eke of chirkings,* *creakings
And of many other workings;
And eke this house had of entries
As many as leaves be on trees,
In summer when that they be green,
And on the roof men may yet see'n
A thousand holes, and well mo',
To let the soundes oute go.
And by day *in ev'ry tide* *continually*
Be all the doores open wide,
And by night each one unshet;* *unshut, open
Nor porter there is none to let* *hinder
No manner tidings in to pace;
Nor ever rest is in that place,
That it n'is* fill'd full of tidings, *is not
Either loud, or of whisperings;
And ever all the house's angles
Are full of *rownings and of jangles,* *whisperings and chatterings*
Of wars, of peace, of marriages,

Of rests, of labour, of voyages,
Of abode, of death, of life,
Of love, of hate, accord, of strife,
Of loss, of lore, and of winnings,
Of health, of sickness, of buildings,
Of faire weather and tempests,
Of qualm* of folkes and of beasts; *sickness
Of divers transmutations
Of estates and of regions;
Of trust, of dread,* of jealousy, *doubt
Of wit, of cunning, of folly,
Of plenty, and of great famine,
Of *cheap, of dearth,* and of ruin; *cheapness & dearness (of food)*
Of good or of mis-government,
Of fire, and diverse accident.
And lo! this house of which I write,
Sicker be ye, it was not lite;* *be assured* *small
For it was sixty mile of length,
All* was the timber of no strength; *although
Yet it is founded to endure,
While that it list to Adventure, *while fortune pleases*
That is the mother of tidings,
As is the sea of wells and springs;
And it was shapen like a cage.
"Certes," quoth I, "in all mine age,* *life
Ne'er saw I such a house as this."
And as I wonder'd me, y-wis,
Upon this house, then ware was I
How that mine eagle, faste by,
Was perched high upon a stone;
And I gan straighte to him go'n,
And saide thus; "I praye thee
That thou a while abide* me, *wait for
For Godde's love, and let me see
What wonders in this place be;
For yet parauntre* I may lear** *peradventure **learn
Some good thereon, or somewhat hear,
That *lefe me were,* ere that I went." *were pleasing to me*
"Peter! that is mine intent,"
Quoth he to me; "therefore I dwell;* *tarry
But, certain, one thing I thee tell,
That, but* I bringe thee therein, *unless
Thou shalt never *can begin* *be able*
To come into it, out of doubt,

So fast it whirleth, lo! about.
But since that Jovis, of his grace,
As I have said, will thee solace
Finally with these ilke* things, *same
These uncouth sightes and tidings,
To pass away thy heaviness,
Such ruth* hath he of thy distress *compassion
That thou suff'rest debonairly,* *gently
And know'st thyselven utterly
Desperate of alle bliss,
Since that Fortune hath made amiss
The fruit of all thy hearte's rest
Languish, and eke *in point to brest;* *on the point of breaking*
But he, through his mighty merite,
Will do thee ease, all be it lite,* *little
And gave express commandement,
To which I am obedient,
To further thee with all my might,
And wiss* and teache thee aright, *direct
Where thou may'st moste tidings hear,
Shalt thou anon many one lear."
And with this word he right anon
Hent* me up betwixt his tone,** *caught **toes
And at a window in me brought,
That in this house was, as me thought;
And therewithal me thought it stent,* *stopped
And nothing it aboute went;
And set me in the floore down.
But such a congregatioun
Of folk, as I saw roam about,
Some within and some without,
Was never seen, nor shall be eft,* *again, hereafter
That, certes, in the world n' is* left *is not
So many formed by Nature,
Nor dead so many a creature,
That well unnethes* in that place *scarcely
Had I a foote breadth of space;
And ev'ry wight that I saw there
Rown'd* evereach in other's ear *whispered
A newe tiding privily,
Or elles told all openly
Right thus, and saide, "Know'st not thou
What is betid,* lo! righte now?" *happened
"No," quoth he; "telle me what."

And then he told him this and that,
And swore thereto, that it was sooth;
"Thus hath he said," and "Thus he do'th,"
And "Thus shall 't be," and "Thus heard I say
"That shall be found, that dare I lay;"* *wager
That all the folk that is alive
Have not the cunning to descrive* *describe
The thinges that I hearde there,
What aloud, and what in th'ear.
But all the wonder most was this;
When one had heard a thing, y-wis,
He came straight to another wight,
And gan him tellen anon right
The same tale that to him was told,
Or it a furlong way was old, <84>
And gan somewhat for to eche* *eke, add
To this tiding in his speech,
More than it ever spoken was.
And not so soon departed n'as* *was
He from him, than that he met
With the third; and *ere he let
Any stound,* he told him als'; *without delaying a momen*
Were the tidings true or false,
Yet would he tell it natheless,
And evermore with more increase
Than it was erst.* Thus north and south *at first
Went ev'ry tiding from mouth to mouth,
And that increasing evermo',
As fire is wont to *quick and go* *become alive, and spread*
From a spark y-sprung amiss,
Till all a city burnt up is.
And when that it was full up-sprung,
And waxen* more on ev'ry tongue *increased
Than e'er it was, it went anon
Up to a window out to go'n;
Or, but it mighte thereout pass,
It gan creep out at some crevass,* *crevice, chink
And fly forth faste for the nonce.
And sometimes saw I there at once
A leasing, and a sad sooth saw, *a falsehood and an earnest
That gan *of adventure* draw true saying* *by chance
Out at a window for to pace;
And when they metten in that place,
They were checked both the two,

And neither of them might out go;
For other so they gan *to crowd,* *push, squeeze, each other*
Till each of them gan cryen loud,
"Let me go first!" — "Nay, but let me!
And here I will ensure thee,
With vowes, if thou wilt do so,
That I shall never from thee go,
But be thine owen sworen brother!
We will us medle* each with other, *mingle
That no man, be he ne'er so wroth,
Shall have one of us two, but both
At ones, as *beside his leave,* *despite his desire*
Come we at morning or at eve,
Be we cried or *still y-rowned."* *quietly whispered*
Thus saw I false and sooth, compouned,* *compounded
Together fly for one tiding.
Then out at holes gan to wring* *squeeze, struggle
Every tiding straight to Fame;
And she gan give to each his name
After her disposition,
And gave them eke duration,
Some to wax and wane soon,
As doth the faire white moon;
And let them go. There might I see
Winged wonders full fast flee,
Twenty thousand in a rout,* *company
As Aeolus them blew about.
And, Lord! this House in alle times
Was full of shipmen and pilgrimes, <85>
With *scrippes bretfull of leasings,* *wallets brimful of falsehoods*
Entremedled with tidings* *true stories
And eke alone by themselve.
And many thousand times twelve
Saw I eke of these pardoners,<86>
Couriers, and eke messengers,
With boistes* crammed full of lies *boxes
As ever vessel was with lyes.* *lees of wine
And as I altherfaste* went *with all speed
About, and did all mine intent
Me *for to play and for to lear,* *to amuse and instruct myself*
And eke a tiding for to hear
That I had heard of some country,
That shall not now be told for me; —
For it no need is, readily;

Folk can sing it better than I.
For all must out, or late or rath,* *soon
All the sheaves in the lath;* *barn <87>
I heard a greate noise withal
In a corner of the hall,
Where men of love tidings told;
And I gan thitherward behold,
For I saw running ev'ry wight
As fast as that they hadde might,
And ev'reach cried, "What thing is that?"
And some said, "I know never what."
And when they were all on a heap,
Those behinde gan up leap,
And clomb* upon each other fast, <88> *climbed
And up the noise on high they cast,
And trodden fast on others' heels,
And stamp'd, as men do after eels.
But at the last I saw a man,
Which that I not describe can;
But that he seemed for to be
A man of great authority.
And therewith I anon abraid* *awoke
Out of my sleepe, half afraid;
Rememb'ring well what I had seen,
And how high and far I had been
In my ghost; and had great wonder
Of what the mighty god of thunder
Had let me know; and gan to write
Like as ye have me heard endite.
Wherefore to study and read alway
I purpose to do day by day.
And thus, in dreaming and in game,
Endeth this little book of Fame.
Here endeth the Book of Fame

Notes to The House of Fame

1. Rood: the cross on which Christ was crucified; Anglo-Saxon, "Rode."

2. Well worth of this thing greate clerks: Great scholars set much worth upon this thing — that is, devote much labour, attach much importance, to the subject of dreams.

3. The poet briefly refers to the description of the House of Somnus, in Ovid's "Metamorphoses," 1. xi. 592, et seqq.; where the cave of Somnus is said to be "prope Cimmerios," ("near the Cimmerians") and "Saxo tamen exit ab imo Rivus aquae Lethes." ("A stream of Lethe's water issues from the base of the rock")

4. See the account of the vision of Croesus in The Monk's Tale.

5. The meaning of the allusion is not clear; but the story of the pilgrims and the peas is perhaps suggested by the line following — "to make lithe [soft] what erst was hard." St Leonard was the patron of captives.
5. Corsaint: The "corpus sanctum" — the holy body, or relics, preserved in the shrine.
7. So, in the Temple of Venus described in The Knight's Tale, the Goddess is represented as "naked floating in the large sea".
8. Vulcano: Vulcan, the husband of Venus.
9. Ered: ploughed; Latin, "arare," Anglo-Saxon, "erean," plough.
10. Sours: Soaring ascent; a hawk was said to be "on the soar" when he mounted, "on the sours" or "souse" when he descended on the prey, and took it in flight.
11. This is only one among many instances in which Chaucer disclaims the pursuits of love; and the description of his manner of life which follows is sufficient to show that the disclaimer was no mere mock-humble affectation of a gallant.
12. This reference, approximately fixing the date at which the poem was composed, points clearly to Chaucer's daily work as Comptroller of the Customs — a post which he held from 1374 to 1386.
13. This is a frank enough admission that the poet was fond of good cheer; and the effect of his "little abstinence" on his corporeal appearance is humorously described in the Prologue to the Tale of Sir Thopas, where the Host compliments Chaucer on being as well shapen in the waist as himself.
14. "To make the beard" means to befool or deceive. See note 15 to the Reeve's Tale. Precisely the same idea is conveyed in the modern slang word "shave" — meaning a trick or fraud.
15. Love-days: see note 21 to the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.
16. If this reference is to any book of Chaucer's in which the House of Fame was mentioned, the book has not come down to us. It has been reasonably supposed, however, that Chaucer means by "his own book" Ovid's "Metamorphoses," of which he was evidently very fond; and in the twelfth book of that poem the Temple of Fame is described.
17. Saint Julian was the patron of hospitality; so the Franklin, in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales is said to be "Saint Julian in his country," for his open house and liberal cheer. The eagle, at sight of the House of Fame, cries out "bon hostel!" — "a fair lodging, a glorious house, by St Julian!"
18. The laurel-tree is sacred to Apollo. See note 11 to The Assembly of Fowls.
19. French, "roche," a rock.
20. St. Thomas of Kent: Thomas a Beckett, whose shrine was at Canterbury.
21. The half or side of the rock which was towards the poet, was inscribed with, etc.
22. Cop: summit; German, "kopf"; the head.
23. Gestiours: tellers of stories; reciters of brave feats or "gests."
24. Arion: the celebrated Greek bard and citharist, who, in the seventh century before Christ, lived at the court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth. The story of his preservation by the dolphin, when the covetous sailors forced him to leap into the sea, is well known.
25. Chiron the Centaur was renowned for skill in music and the arts, which he owed to

the teaching of Apollo and Artemis. He became in turn the instructor of Peleus, Achilles, and other descendants of Aeacus; hence he is called "Aeacides" — because tutor to the Aeacides, and thus, so to speak, of that "family."

26. Glasgerion is the subject of a ballad given in "Percy's Reliques," where we are told that

"Glasgerion was a king's own son,
And a harper he was good;
He harped in the king's chamber,
Where cup and candle stood."

27. Cornemuse: bagpipe; French, "cornemuse." Shawmies: shalms or psalteries; an instrument resembling a harp.

28. Dulcet: a kind of pipe, probably corresponding with the "dulcimer;" the idea of sweet — French, "doux;" Latin, "dulcis" — is at the root of both words.

29. In the early printed editions of Chaucer, the two names are "Citherus" and "Proserus;" in the manuscript which Mr Bell followed (No. 16 in the Fairfax collection) they are "Atileris" and "Pseustis." But neither alternative gives more than the slightest clue to identification. "Citherus" has been retained in the text; it may have been employed as an appellative of Apollo, derived from "cithara," the instrument on which he played; and it is not easy to suggest a better substitute for it than "Clonas" - - an early Greek poet and musician who flourished six hundred years before Christ. For "Proserus," however, has been substituted "Pronomus," the name of a celebrated Grecian player on the pipe, who taught Alcibiades the flute, and who therefore, although Theban by birth, might naturally be said by the poet to be "of Athens."

30. Marsyas: The Phrygian, who, having found the flute of Athena, which played of itself most exquisite music, challenged Apollo to a contest, the victor in which was to do with the vanquished as he pleased. Marsyas was beaten, and Apollo flayed him alive.

31. The German (Deutsche) language, in Chaucer's time, had not undergone that marked literary division into German and Dutch which was largely accomplished through the influence of the works of Luther and the other Reformers. Even now, the flute is the favourite musical instrument of the Fatherland; and the devotion of the Germans to poetry and music has been celebrated since the days of Tacitus.

32. Reyes: a kind of dance, or song to be accompanied with dancing.

33. Beam: horn, trumpet; Anglo-Saxon, "bema."

34. Messenus: Misenus, son of Aeolus, the companion and trumpeter of Aeneas, was drowned near the Campanian headland called Misenum after his name. (Aeneid, vi. 162 et seqq.)

35. Joab's fame as a trumpeter is founded on two verses in 2 Samuel (ii. 28, xx. 22), where we are told that he "blew a trumpet," which all the people of Israel obeyed, in the one case desisting from a pursuit, in the other raising a siege.

36. Theodamas or Thiodamas, king of the Dryopes, plays a prominent part in the tenth book of Statius' "Thebaid." Both he and Joab are also mentioned as great trumpeters in The Merchant's Tale.

37. Jongelours: jugglers; French, "jongleur."

38. Tregetours: tricksters, jugglers. For explanation of this word, see note 14 to the Franklin's tale.
39. Pythonesses: women who, like the Pythia in Apollo's temple at Delphi, were possessed with a spirit of divination or prophecy. The barbarous Latin form of the word was "Pythonissa" or "Phitonissa." See note 9 to the Friar's Tale.
40. Subfumigations: a ceremony employed to drive away evil spirits by burning incense; the practice of smoking cattle, corn, &c., has not died out in some country districts.
41. In certain ascendents: under certain planetary influences. The next lines recall the alleged malpractices of witches, who tortured little images of wax, in the design of causing the same torments to the person represented — or, vice versa, treated these images for the cure of hurts or sickness.
42. Medea: celebrated for her magical power, through which she restored to youth Aeson, the father of Jason; and caused the death of Jason's wife, Creusa, by sending her a poisoned garment which consumed her to ashes.
43. Circes: the sorceress Circe, who changed the companions of Ulysses into swine.
44. Calypsa: Calypso, on whose island of Ogygia Ulysses was wrecked. The goddess promised the hero immortality if he remained with her; but he refused, and, after a detention of seven years, she had to let him go.
45. Hermes Ballenus: this is supposed to mean Hermes Trismegistus (of whom see note 19 to the Canon's Yeoman's Tale); but the explanation of the word "Ballenus" is not quite obvious. The god Hermes of the Greeks (Mercurius of the Romans) had the surname "Cyllenius," from the mountain where he was born — Mount Cyllene, in Arcadia; and the alteration into "Ballenus" would be quite within the range of a copyist's capabilities, while we find in the mythological character of Hermes enough to warrant his being classed with jugglers and magicians.
46. Limote and Colle Tregetour seem to have been famous sorcerers or jugglers, but nothing is now known of either.
47. Simon Magus: of whom we read in Acts viii. 9, et seqq.
48. "And made well more than it was
To seemen ev'rything, y-wis,
As kindly thing of Fame it is;"
i.e. It is in the nature of fame to exaggerate everything.
49. Corbets: the corbels, or capitals of pillars in a Gothic building; they were often carved with fantastic figures and devices.
50. A largess!: the cry with which heralds and pursuivants at a tournament acknowledged the gifts or largesses of the knights whose achievements they celebrated.
51. Nobles: gold coins of exceptional fineness. Sterlings: sterling coins; not "luxemburgs", but stamped and authorised money. See note 9 to the Miller's Tale and note 6 to the Prologue to the Monk's tale.
52. Coat-armure: the sleeveless coat or "tabard," on which the arms of the wearer or his lord were emblazoned.
53. "But for to prove in alle wise As fine as ducat of Venise" i.e. In whatever way it

might be proved or tested, it would be found as fine as a Venetian ducat.
54. Lapidaire: a treatise on precious stones.
55. See imperial: a seat placed on the dais, or elevated portion of the hall at the upper end, where the lord and the honoured guests sat.
56. The starres seven: Septentrion; the Great Bear or Northern Wain, which in this country appears to be at the top of heaven.
57. The Apocalypse: The last book of the New Testament, also called Revelations. The four beasts are in chapter iv. 6.
58. "Oundy" is the French "ondoye," from "ondoyer," to undulate or wave.
59. Partridges' wings: denoting swiftness.
60. Hercules lost his life with the poisoned shirt of Nessus, sent to him by the jealous Dejanira.
61. Of the secte Saturnine: Of the Saturnine school; so called because his history of the Jewish wars narrated many horrors, cruelties, and sufferings, over which Saturn was the presiding deity. See note 71 to the Knight's tale.
62. Compare the account of the "bodies seven" given by the
Canon's Yeoman:
"Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe;
Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver we clepe;
Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin,
And Venus copper, by my father's kin."
63. Statius is called a "Tholosan," because by some, among them Dante, he was believed to have been a native of Tolosa, now Toulouse. He wrote the "Thebais," in twelve books, and the "Achilleis," of which only two were finished.
64. Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis were the names attached to histories of the Trojan War pretended to have been written immediately after the fall of Troy.
65. Lollius: The unrecognisable author whom Chaucer professes to follow in his "Troilus and Cressida," and who has been thought to mean Boccaccio.
66. Guido de Colonna, or de Colempnis, was a native of Messina, who lived about the end of the thirteenth century, and wrote in Latin prose a history including the war of Troy.
67. English Gaufrid: Geoffrey of Monmouth, who drew from Troy the original of the British race. See Spenser's "Faerie Queen," book ii. canto x.
68. Lucan, in his "Pharsalia," a poem in ten books, recounted the incidents of the war between Caesar and Pompey.
69. Claudian of Alexandria, "the most modern of the ancient poets," lived some three centuries after Christ, and among other works wrote three books on "The Rape of Proserpine."
70. Triton was a son of Poseidon or Neptune, and represented usually as blowing a trumpet made of a conch or shell; he is therefore introduced by Chaucer as the squire of Aeolus.
71. Sky: cloud; Anglo-Saxon, "scua;" Greek, "skia."
72. Los: reputation. See note 5 to Chaucer's Tale of Meliboeus.
73. Swart: black; German, "schwarz."

74. Tewell: the pipe, chimney, of the furnace; French "tuyau." In the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, the Monk's head is described as steaming like a lead furnace.
75. Tetches: blemishes, spots; French, "tache."
76. For the story of Belle Isaude see note 21 to the Assembly of Fowls.
77. Quern: mill. See note 6 to the Monk's Tale.
78. To put an ape into one's hood, upon his head, is to befool him; see the prologue to the Prioresses's Tale, l.6.
79. Obviously Chaucer should have said the temple of Diana, or Artemis (to whom, as Goddess of the Moon, the Egyptian Isis corresponded), at Ephesus. The building, famous for its splendour, was set on fire, in B.C. 356, by Erostatus, merely that he might perpetuate his name.
80. "Now do our los be blowen swithe, As wisly be thou ever blithe." i.e. Cause our renown to be blown abroad quickly, as surely as you wish to be glad.
81. The Labyrinth at Cnossus in Crete, constructed by Dedalus for the safe keeping of the Minotaur, the fruit of Pasiphae's unnatural love.
82. The river Oise, an affluent of the Seine, in France.
83. The engine: The machines for casting stones, which in Chaucer time served the purpose of great artillery; they were called "mangonells," "springolds," &c.; and resembled in construction the "ballistae" and "catapultae" of the ancients.
84. Or it a furlong way was old: before it was older than the space of time during which one might walk a furlong; a measure of time often employed by Chaucer.
85. Shipmen and pilgrimes: sailors and pilgrims, who seem to have in Chaucer's time amply warranted the proverbial imputation against "travellers' tales."
86. Pardoners: of whom Chaucer, in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, has given us no flattering typical portrait
87. Lath: barn; still used in Lincolnshire and some parts of the north. The meaning is, that the poet need not tell what tidings he wanted to hear, since everything of the kind must some day come out — as sooner or later every sheaf in the barn must be brought forth (to be threshed).
88. A somewhat similar heaping-up of people is de scribed in Spenser's account of the procession of Lucifera ("The Faerie Queen," book i. canto iv.), where, as the royal dame passes to her coach,

"The heaps of people, thronging in the hall,
Do ride each other, upon her to gaze."