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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

A BALLAD OF GENTLENESS

THE firste stock-father of gentleness, <1>
What man desireth gentle for to be,
Must follow his trace, and all his wittes dress,* *apply
Virtue to love, and vices for to flee;
For unto virtue longeth dignity,
And not the reverse, safely dare I deem,
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe. *whether he wear*
This firste stock was full of righteousness,
True of his word, sober, pious, and free,
Clean of his ghost, and loved business, *pure of spirit*
Against the vice of sloth, in honesty;
And, but his heir love virtue as did he,
He is not gentle, though he riche seem,
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe.
Vice may well be heir to old richess,
But there may no man, as men may well see,
Bequeath his heir his virtuous nobless;
That is appropried* to no degree, *specially reserved
But to the first Father in majesty,
Which makes his heire him that doth him queme,* *please
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe.

Notes to A Ballad of Gentleness

1. The firste stock-father of gentleness: Christ