



Book of the Duchesse by Geoffrey Chaucer

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THE PROEM

- 1 I have gret wonder, be this lighte,
- 2 How that I live, for day ne nighte
- 3 I may nat slepe wel nigh noght,
- 4 I have so many an ydel thoght
- 5 Purely for defaute of slepe
- 6 That, by my trouthe, I take no kepe
- 7 Of no-thing, how hit cometh or goth,
- 8 Ne me nis no-thing leef nor loth.
- 9 Al is y-liche good to me --
- 10 Ioye or sorowe, wherso hyt be --
- 11 For I have feling in no-thinge,
- 12 But, as it were, a mased thing,
- 13 Alway in point to falle a-doun;
- 14 For sorwful imaginacioun
- 15 Is alway hoolly in my minde.
- 16 And wel ye wite, agaynes kynde
- 17 Hit were to liven in this wyse;
- 18 For nature wolde nat suffyse
- 19 To noon erthely creature
- 20 Not longe tyme to endure
- 21 Withoute slepe, and been in sorwe;
- 22 And I ne may, ne night ne morwe,
- 23 Slepe; and thus melancolye
- 24 And dreed I have for to dye,
- 25 Defaute of slepe and hevynesse
- 26 Hath sleyn my spirit of quiknesse,
- 27 That I have lost al lustihede.

28 Suche fantasies ben in myn hede
29 So I not what is best to do.
30 But men myght axe me, why soo
31 I may not slepe, and what me is?
32 But natheles, who aske this
33 Leseth his asking trewely.
34 My-selven can not telle why
35 The sooth; but trewely, as I gesse,
36 I holde hit be a siknesse
37 That I have suffred this eight yere,
38 And yet my bote is never the nere;
39 For ther is phisicien but oon,
40 That may me hele; but that is doon.
41 Passe we over until eft;
42 That wil not be, moot nede be left;
43 Our first matere is good to kepe.
44 So whan I saw I might not slepe,
45 Til now late, this other night,
46 Upon my bedde I sat upright
47 And bad oon reche me a book,
48 A romaunce, and he hit me took
49 To rede and dryve the night away;
50 For me thoghte it better play
51 Then playen either at chesse or tables.
52 And in this boke were writen fables
53 That clerkes hadde, in olde tyme,
54 And other poets, put in ryme
55 To rede, and for to be in minde
56 Whyl men loved the lawe of kinde.
57 This book ne spak but of such thinges,
58 Of quenes lyves, and of kinges,
59 And many othere thinges smale.
60 Amonge al this I fond a tale
61 That me thoughte a wonder thing.
62 This was the tale: There was a king
63 That hight Seys, and hadde a wyf,
64 The beste that mighte bere lyf;
65 And this quene hight Alcyone.
66 So hit befel, therafter sone,
67 This king wolde wenden over see.
68 To tellen shortly, whan that he
69 Was in the see, thus in this wyse,
70 Soche a tempest gan to ryse
71 That brak hir mast, and made it falle,
72 And clefted her ship, and dreinte hem alle,
73 That never was founden, as it telles,
74 Bord ne man, ne nothing elles.
75 Right thus this king Seys loste his lyf.
76 Now for to speken of his wife: --
77 This lady, that was left at home,
78 Hath wonder, that the king ne come
79 Hoom, for hit was a longe terme.
80 Anon her herte gan to erme;
81 And for that hir thoughte evermo
82 Hit was not wel he dwelte so,
83 She longed so after the king
84 That certes, hit were a pitous thing
85 To telle hir hertely sorwful lyf
86 That hadde, alas! this noble wyfe;
87 For him she loved alderbest.

88 Anon she sente bothe eest and west
89 To seke him, but they founde nought.
90 'Alas!' quoth she, 'that I was wrought!
91 And wher my lord, my love, be deed?
92 Certes, I nil never ete breed,
93 I make a-vowe to my god here,
94 But I mowe of my lord here!'
95 Such sorwe this lady to her took
96 That trewely I, which made this book,
97 Had swich pite and swich rowthe
98 To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe,
99 I ferde the worse al the morwe
100 After, to thenken on her sorwe.
101 So whan she coude here no word
102 That no man mighte fynde hir lord,
103 Ful ofte she swouned, and saide 'Alas!'
104 For sorwe ful nigh wood she was,
105 Ne she coude no reed but oon;
106 But down on knees she sat anoon,
107 And weep, that pite was to here.
108 'A! mercy! swete lady dere!'
109 Quod she to Iuno, hir goddessse;
110 'Help me out of this distresse,
111 And yeve me grace my lord to see
112 Sone, or wite wher-so he be,
113 Or how he fareth, or in what wyse,
114 And I shal make you sacrificyse,
115 And hoolly youres become I shal
116 With good wil, body, herte, and al;
117 And but thou wilt this, lady swete,
118 Send me grace to slepe, and mete
119 In my slepe som certeyn sweven,
120 Wher-through that I may knowen even
121 Whether my lord be quik or deed.'
122 With that word she heng down the heed,
123 And fil a-swown as cold as ston;
124 Hir women caught her up anon,
125 And broghten hir in bed al naked,
126 And she, forweped and forwaked,
127 Was wery, and thus the dede sleep
128 Fil on hir, or she toke keep,
129 Through Iuno, that had herd hir bone,
130 That made hir to slepe sone;
131 For as she prayde, so was don,
132 In dede; for Iuno, right anon,
133 Called thus her messagere
134 To do her erande, and he com nere.
135 Whan he was come, she bad him thus:
136 'Go bet,' quod Iuno, 'to Morpheus,
137 Thou knowest hym wel, the god of sleep;
138 Now understond wel, and tak keep.
139 Sey thus on my halfe, that he
140 Go faste into the grete see,
141 And bid him that, on alle thing,
142 He take up Seys body the king,
143 That lyth ful pale and no-thing rody.
144 Bid him crepe into the body,
145 Aud do it goon to Alcyone
146 The quene, ther she lyth alone,
147 And shewe hir shortly, hit is no nay,

148 How hit was dreynt this other day;
149 And do the body speke so
150 Right as hit was wont to do,
151 The whyles that hit was on lyve.
152 Go now faste, and hy thee blyve!
153 This messenger took leve and wente
154 Upon his wey, and never ne stente
155 Til he com to the derke valeye
156 That stant bytwene roches tweye,
157 Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,
158 Ne tree, ne nothing that ought was,
159 Beste, ne man, ne nothing elles,
160 Save ther were a fewe welles
161 Came renning fro the cliffes adoun,
162 That made a deedly sleping soun,
163 And ronnen doun right by a cave
164 That was under a rokke y-grave
165 Amid the valey, wonder depe.
166 Ther thise goddes laye and slepe,
167 Morpheus, and Eclympasteyre,
168 That was the god of slepes heyre,
169 That slepe and did non other werk.
170 This cave was also as derk
171 As helle pit over-al aboute;
172 They had good leyser for to route
173 To envye, who might slepe beste;
174 Some henge hir chin upon hir breste
175 And slepe upright, hir heed y-hed,
176 And some laye naked in hir bed,
177 And slepe whyles the dayes laste.
178 This messenger come flying faste,
179 And cryed, 'O ho! awake anon!
180 Hit was for noght; ther herde him non.
181 'Awak!' quod he, 'who is, lyth there?'
182 And blew his horn right in hir ere,
183 And cryed 'awaketh!' wonder hye.
184 This god of slepe, with his oon ye
185 Cast up, axed, 'who clepeth there?'
186 'Hit am I,' quod this messagere;
187 'Iuno bad thou shuldest goon' --
188 And tolde him what he shulde doon
189 As I have told yow here-tofore;
190 Hit is no need reherse hit more;
191 And wente his wey, whan he had sayd.
192 Anon this god of slepe a-brayd
193 Out of his slepe, and gan to goon,
194 And did as he had bede him doon;
195 Took up the dreynte body sone,
196 And bar hit forth to Alcyone,
197 His wif the quene, ther-as she lay,
198 Right even a quarter before day,
199 And stood right at hir beddes fete,
200 And called hir, right as she hete,
201 By name, and sayde, 'my swete wyf,
202 Awak! let be your sorwful lyf!
203 For in your sorwe there lyth no reed;
204 For certes, swete, I nam but deed;
205 Ye shul me never on lyve y-see.
206 But good swete herte, look that ye
207 Bury my body, at whiche a tyde

208 Ye mowe hit finde the see besyde;
209 And far-wel, swete, my worldes blisse!
210 I praye god your sorwe lisse;
211 To litel whyl our blisse lasteth!"
212 With that hir eyen up she casteth,
213 And saw noght; 'A!' quod she, 'for sorwe!"
214 And deyed within the thridde morwe.
215 But what she sayde more in that swow
216 I may not telle yow as now,
217 Hit were to longe for to dwelle;
218 My first matere I wil yow telle,
219 Wherfor I have told this thing
220 Of Alcione and Seys the king.
221 For thus moche dar I saye wel,
222 I had be dolven everydel,
223 And deed, right through defaute of sleep,
224 If I nad red and taken keep
225 Of this tale next before:
226 And I wol telle yow wherfore:
227 For I ne might, for bote ne bale,
228 Slepe, or I had red this tale
229 Of this dreynte Seys the king,
230 And of the goddes of sleping.
231 Whan I had red this tale wel
232 And over-loked hit everydel,
233 Me thoughte wonder if hit were so;
234 For I had never herd speke, or tho,
235 Of no goddes that coude make
236 Men for to slepe, ne for to wake;
237 For I ne knew never god but oon.
238 And in my game I sayde anoon --
239 And yet me list right evel to pleye --
240 'Rather then that I shulde deye
241 Through defaute of sleping thus,
242 I wolde yive thilke Morpheus,
243 Or his goddesse, dame Iuno,
244 Or som wight elles, I ne roghte who --
245 To make me slepe and have som reste --
246 I wil yive him the alder-beste
247 Yift that ever he aboode his lyve,
248 And here on warde, right now, as blyve;
249 If he wol make me slepe a lyte,
250 Of downe of pure dowves whyte
251 I wil yive him a fether-bed,
252 Rayed with golde, and right wel cled
253 In fyn blak satin doutremere,
254 And many a pilow, and every bere
255 Of clothe of Reynes, to slepe softe;
256 Him thar not nede to turnen ofte.
257 And I wol yive him al that falles
258 To a chambre; and al his halles
259 I wol do peynte with pure golde,
260 And tapite hem ful many folde
261 Of oo sute; this shal he have,
262 Yf I wiste wher were his cave,
263 If he can make me slepe sone,
264 As did the goddesse Alcione.
265 And thus this ilke god, Morpheus,
266 May winne of me mo fees thus
267 Than ever he wan; and to Iuno,

268 That is his goddesse, I shal so do,
269 I trow that she shal holde her payd.'
270 I hadde unneth that word y-sayd
271 Right thus as I have told hit yow,
272 That sodeynly, I niste how,
273 Swich a lust anoon me took
274 To slepe, that right upon my book
275 I fil aslepe, and therwith even
276 Me mette so inly swete a sweven,
277 So wonderful, that never yit
278 I trowe no man hadde the wit
279 To conne wel my sweven rede;
280 No, not Ioseph, withoute drede,
281 Of Egipte, he that redde so
282 The kinges meting Pharao,
283 No more than coude the leste of us;
284 Ne nat scarsly Macrobeus,
285 (He that wroot al thavisoun
286 That he mette, Kyng Scipioun,
287 The noble man, the Affrican --
288 Swiche marvayles fortunéd than)
289 I trowe, a-rede my dremes even.
290 Lo, thus hit was, this was my sweven.

THE DREAM

291 Me thoughte thus: -- that hit was May,
292 And in the dawning ther I lay,
293 Me mette thus, in my bed al naked: --
294 I loked forth, for I was waked
295 With smale foules a gret hepe,
296 That had affrayed me out of slepe
297 Through noyse and swetnesse of hir song;
298 And, as me mette, they sate among,
299 Upon my chambre-roof withoute,
300 Upon the tyles, al a-boute,
301 And songen, everich in his wise,
302 The moste solempne servyse
303 By note, that ever man, I trowe,
304 Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,
305 Som hye, and al of oon acorde.
306 To telle shortly, at oo worde,
307 Was never y-herd so swete a steven,
308 But hit had be a thing of heven; --
309 So mery a soun, so swete entunes,
310 That certes, for the toune of Tewnes,
311 I nolde but I had herd hem singe,
312 For al my chambre gan to ringe
313 Through singing of hir armonye.
314 For instrument nor melodye
315 Was nowher herd yet half so swete,
316 Nor of acorde half so mete;
317 For ther was noon of hem that feyned
318 To singe, for ech of hem him peyned
319 To finde out mery crafty notes;
320 They ne spared not hir throtes.
321 And, sooth to seyn, my chambre was
322 Ful wel depeynted, and with glas
323 Were al the windowes wel y-glased,

324 Ful clere, and nat an hole y-crased,
325 That to beholde hit was gret loye.
326 For hoolly al the storie of Troye
327 Was in the glasing y-wroght thus,
328 Of Ector and of king Priamus,
329 Of Achilles and king Lamedon,
330 Of Medea and of Iason,
331 Of Paris, Eleyne, and Lavyne.
332 And alle the walles with colours fyne
333 Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
334 Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.
335 My windowes weren shet echon,
336 And through the glas the sunne shon
337 Upon my bed with brighte bemes,
338 With many glade gilden stremes;
339 And eek the welken was so fair,
340 Blew, bright, clere was the air,
341 And ful atempre, for sothe, hit was;
342 For nother cold nor hoot hit nas,
343 Ne in al the welken was a cloude.
344 And as I lay thus, wonder loude
345 Me thoughte I herde an hunte blowe
346 Tassaye his horn, and for to knowe
347 Whether hit were clere or hors of soune.
348 I herde goinge, up and doune,
349 Men, hors, houndes, and other thing;
350 And al men speken of hunting,
351 How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,
352 And how the hert had, upon lengthe,
353 So moche embosed, I not now what.
354 Anon-right, whan I herde that,
355 How that they wolde on hunting goon,
356 I was right glad, and up anoon;
357 I took my hors, and forth I wente
358 Out of my chambre; I never stente
359 Til I com to the feld withoute.
360 Ther overtook I a gret route
361 Of huntres and eek of foresteres,
362 With many relays and lymeres,
363 And hyed hem to the forest faste,
364 And I with hem; -- so at the laste
365 I asked oon, ladde a lymere: --
366 'Say, fellow, who shal hunten here'
367 Quod I, and he answerde ageyn,
368 'Sir, themperour Octovien,'
369 Quod he, 'and is heer faste by.'
370 'A goddes halfe, in good tyme,' quod I,
371 'Go we faste!' and gan to ryde.
372 Whan we came to the forest-syde,
373 Every man dide, right anoon,
374 As to hunting fil to doon.
375 The mayster-hunte anoon, fot-hoot,
376 With a gret horne blew three moot
377 At the uncoupling of his houndes.
378 Within a whyl the hert y-founde is,
379 Y-halowed, and rechased faste
380 Longe tyme; and so at the laste,
381 This hert rused and stal away
382 Fro alle the houndes a prevy way.
383 The houndes had overshote hem alle,

384 And were on a defaute y-falle;
385 Therwith the hunte wonder faste
386 Blew a forloyn at the laste.
387 I was go walked fro my tree,
388 And as I wente, ther cam by me
389 A whelp, that fauned me as I stood,
390 That hadde y-folowed, and coude no good.
391 Hit com and creep to me as lowe,
392 Right as hit hadde me y-knowe,
393 Hild down his heed and loyned his eres,
394 And leyde al smothe down his heres.
395 I wolde han caught hit, and anoon
396 Hit fledde, and was fro me goon;
397 And I him folwed, and hit forth wente
398 Doun by a floury grene wente
399 Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete,
400 With floures fele, faire under fete,
401 And litel used, hit seemed thus;
402 For bothe Flora and Zephirus,
403 They two that make floures growe,
404 Had mad hir dwelling ther, I trowe;
405 For hit was, on to beholde,
406 As thogh the erthe envye wolde
407 To be gayer than the heven,
408 To have mo floures, swiche seven
409 As in the welken sterres be.
410 Hit had forgete the povertie
411 That winter, through his colde morwes,
412 Had mad hit suffren, and his sorwes;
413 Al was forgotten, and that was sene.
414 For al the wode was waxen grene,
415 Swetnesse of dewe had mad it waxe.
416 Hit is no need eek for to axe
417 Wher ther were many grene greves,
418 Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves;
419 And every tree stood by him-selve
420 Fro other wel ten foot or twelve.
421 So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,
422 Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,
423 Clene withoute bough or stikke,
424 With croppes brode, and eek as thikke --
425 They were nat an inche a-sonder --
426 That hit was shadwe over-al under;
427 And many an hert and many an hinde
428 Was both before me and bihinde.
429 Of founes, soures, bukkes, does
430 Was ful the wode, and many roes,
431 And many squirelles that sete
432 Ful hye upon the trees, and ete,
433 And in hir maner made festes.
434 Shortly, hit was so ful of bestes,
435 That thogh Argus, the noble countour,
436 Sete to rekene in his countour,
437 And rekened with his figures ten --
438 For by tho figures mowe al ken,
439 If they be crafty, rekene and noumbre,
440 And telle of every thing the noumbre --
441 Yet shulde he fayle to rekene even
442 The wondres, me mette in my sweven.
443 But forth they romed wonder faste

444 Doun the wode; so at the laste
445 I was war of a man in blak,
446 That sat and had y-turned his bak
447 To an oke, an huge tree.
448 'Lord,' thoghte I, 'who may that be?
449 What ayleth him to sitten here?'
450 Anoon-right I wente nere;
451 Than fond I sitte even upright
452 A wonder wel-faringe knight --
453 By the maner me thoughte so --
454 Of good mochel, and yong therto,
455 Of the age of four and twenty yeer.
456 Upon his berde but litel heer,
457 And he was clothed al in blakke.
458 I stalked even unto his bakke,
459 And ther I stood as stille as ought,
460 That, sooth to saye, he saw me nought,
461 For-why he heng his heed adoune.
462 And with a deedly sorwful soun
463 He made of ryme ten vers or twelve
464 Of a compleynt to him-selve,
465 The moste pite, the moste rowthe,
466 That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
467 Hit was gret wonder that nature
468 Might suffren any creature
469 To have swich sorwe, and be not deed.
470 Ful pitous, pale, and nothing reed,
471 He sayde a lay, a maner song,
472 Withoute note, withoute song,
473 And hit was this; for wel I can
474 Reherse hit; right thus hit began. --
475 'I have of sorwe so grete woon,
476 That Ioye gete I never noon,
477 Now that I see my lady bright,
478 Which I have loved with al my might,
479 Is fro me dedd, and is a-goon.
480 And thus in sorwe lefte me alone.
481 'Allas, o deeth! what ayleth thee,
482 That thou noldest have taken me,
483 'Whan that thou toke my lady swete?
484 That was so fayr, so fresh, so free,
485 So good, that men may wel y-see
486 'Of al goodnesse she had no mete!' --
487 Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,
488 His sorowful herte gan faste faynte,
489 And his spirites wexen dede;
490 The blood was fled, for pure drede,
491 Doun to his herte, to make him warm --
492 For wel hit feled the herte had harm --
493 To wite eek why hit was a-drad,
494 By kinde, and for to make hit glad;
495 For hit is membre principal
496 Of the body; and that made al
497 His hewe chaunge and wexe grene
498 And pale, for no blood was sene
499 In no maner lime of his.
500 Anoon therwith whan I saw this,
501 He ferde thus evel ther he sete,
502 I wente and stood right at his fete,
503 And grette him, but he spak nought,

504 But argued with his owne thought,
505 And in his witte disputed faste
506 Why and how his lyf might laste;
507 Him thoughte his sorwes were so smerte
508 And lay so colde upon his herte;
509 So, through his sorwe and hevy thought,
510 Made him that he ne herde me noght;
511 For he had wel nigh lost his minde,
512 Thogh Pan, that men clepe god of kinde,
513 Were for his sorwes never so wrooth.
514 But at the laste, to sayn right sooth,
515 He was war of me, how I stood
516 Before him, and dide of myn hood,
517 And grette him, as I best coude.
518 Debonairly, and no-thing loude,
519 He sayde, 'I prey thee, be not wrooth,
520 I herde thee not, to sayn the sooth,
521 Ne I saw thee not, sir, trewely.'
522 'A! goode sir, no fors,' quod I,
523 'I am right sory if I have ought
524 Destroubled yow out of your thought;
525 For-yive me if I have mis-take.'
526 'Yis, thamendes is light to make,'
527 Quod he, 'for ther lyth noon ther-to;
528 Ther is no-thing missayd nor do,'
529 Lo! how goodly spak this knight,
530 As it had been another wight;
531 He made it nouthen tough ne queynte
532 And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte
533 With him, and fond him so trefable,
534 Right wonder skilful and resonable,
535 As me thoughte, for al his bale.
536 Anoon-right I gan finde a tale
537 To him, to loke wher I might ought
538 Have more knowing of his thought.
539 'Sir,' quod I, 'this game is doon;
540 I holde that this hert be goon;
541 Thise huntis conne him nowher see.'
542 'I do no fors therof,' quod he,
543 'My thought is ther-on never a del.'
544 'By our lord,' quod I, 'I trow yow wel,
545 Right so me thinketh by your chere.
546 But, sir, oo thing wol ye here?
547 Me thinketh, in gret sorwe I yow see;
548 But certes, good sir, yif that ye
549 Wolde ought discure me your wo,
550 I wolde, as wis god help me so,
551 Amende hit, yif I can or may;
552 Ye mowe preve hit by assay.
553 For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
554 I wol do al my power hool;
555 And telleth me of your sorwes smerte,
556 Paraventure hit may ese your herte,
557 That semeth ful seke under your syde.'
558 With that he lokyd on me asyde,
559 As who sayth, 'Nay, that wol not be.'
560 'Graunt mercy, goode frend,' quod he,
561 'I thanke thee that thou woldest so,
562 But hit may never the rather be do,
563 No man may my sorwe glade,

564 That maketh my hewe to falle and fade,
565 And hath myn understanding lorn,
566 That me is wo that I was born!
567 May noght make my sorwes slyde,
568 Nought the remedies of Ovyde;
569 Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
570 Ne Dedalus, with playes slye;
571 Ne hele me may phisicien,
572 Noght Ypocras, ne Galien;
573 Me is wo that I live houres twelve;
574 But who so wol assaye him-selve
575 Whether his herte can have pite
576 Of any sorwe, lat him see me.
577 I wrecche, that deeth hath mad al naked
578 Of alle blisse that ever was maked,
579 Y-worthe worste of alle wightes,
580 That hate my dayes and my nightes;
581 My lyf, my lustes be me lothe,
582 For al welfare and I be wrothe.
583 The pure deeth is so my fo
584 Thogh I wolde deye, hit wolde not so;
585 For whan I folwe hit, hit wol flee;
586 I wolde have hit, hit nil not me.
587 This is my peyne withoute reed,
588 Alway deinge and be not deed,
589 That Sesiphus, that lyth in helle,
590 May not of more sorwe telle.
591 And who so wiste al, be my trouthe,
592 My sorwe, but he hadde routhe
593 And pite of my sorwes smerte,
594 That man hath a feendly herte.
595 For who so seeth me first on morwe
596 May seyn, he hath y-met with sorwe;
597 For I am sorwe and sorwe is I.
598 `Allas! and I wol telle the why;
599 My song is turned to pleyning,
600 And al my laughter to weping,
601 My glade thoughtes to hevinesse,
602 In travaile is myn ydelnesse
603 And eek my reste; my wele is wo,
604 My goode is harm, and ever-mo
605 In wrathe is turned my pleying,
606 And my delyt in-to sorwing.
607 Myn hele is turned into seeknesse,
608 In drede is al my sikernesse.
609 To derke is turned al my light,
610 My wit is foly, my day is night,
611 My love is hate, my sleep waking,
612 My mirthe and meles is fasting,
613 My countenaunce is nycete,
614 And al abaved wher-so I be,
615 My pees, in pleding and in werre;
616 Allas! how mighte I fare werre?
617 `My boldnesse is turned to shame,
618 For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
619 Atte ches with me, allas! the whyle!
620 The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,
621 That al behoteth and no-thing halt,
622 She goth upryght and yet she halt,
623 That baggeth foule and loketh faire,

624 The dispitouse debonaire,
625 That scorneth many a creature!
626 An ydole of fals portraiture
627 Is she, for she wil sone wryen;
628 She is the monstres heed y-wryen,
629 As filth over y-strawed with floures;
630 Hir moste worship and hir flour is
631 To lyen, for that is hir nature;
632 Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure.
633 She is fals; and ever laughinge
634 With oon eye, and that other wepinge.
635 That is broght up, she set al down.
636 I lykne hir to the scorioun,
637 That is a fals, flateringe beste;
638 For with his hede he maketh feste,
639 But al amid his flateringe
640 With his tayle he wol stinge,
641 And envenyme; and so wol she.
642 She is thenvyouse charite
643 That is ay fals, and seemeth wele,
644 So turneth she hir false whele
645 About, for it is no-thing stable,
646 Now by the fyre, now at table;
647 Ful many oon hath she thus y-blent;
648 She is pley of enchauntement,
649 That semeth oon and is not so,
650 The false theef! what hath she do,
651 Trowest thou? By our lord, I wol thee seye.
652 Atte ches with me she gan to pleye;
653 With hir false draughtes divers
654 She stal on me, and took my fers.
655 And whan I saw my fers aweye,
656 Alas! I couthe no lenger playe,
657 But seyde, "Farewel, swete, y-wis,
658 And farwel al that ever ther is!"
659 Therwith Fortune seyde, "Chek here!"
660 And "Mate!" in mid pointe of the chekkere
661 With a poune erraunt, allas!
662 Ful craftier to pley she was
663 Than Athalus, that made the game
664 First of the ches: so was his name.
665 But God wolde I had ones or twyes
666 Y-koud and knowe the leupardyes
667 That coude the Grek Pithagores!
668 I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,
669 And kept my fers the bet therby;
670 And thogh wherto? for trewely,
671 I hold that wish nat worth a stree!
672 Hit had be never the bet for me.
673 For Fortune can so many a wyle,
674 Ther be but fewe can hir begyle,
675 And eek she is the las to blame;
676 My-self I wolde have do the same,
677 Before god, hadde I been as she;
678 She oghte the more excused be.
679 For this I say yet more therto,
680 Hadde I be god and mighte have do
681 My wille, whan she my fers caughte,
682 I wolde have drawe the same draughte.
683 For, also wis god yive me reste,

684 I dar wel swere she took the beste!
685 'But through that draughte I have lorn
686 My blisse; alas! that I was born!
687 For evermore, I trowe trewly,
688 For al my wil, my lust hoolly
689 Is turned; but yet what to done?
690 Be oure lord, hit is to deye sone;
691 For no-thing I ne leve it noght,
692 But live and deye right in this thought.
693 There nis planete in firmament,
694 Ne in air, ne in erthe, noon element,
695 That they ne yive me a yift echoon
696 Of weping, whan I am aloon.
697 For whan that I avyse me wel,
698 And bethenke me every-del,
699 How that ther lyth in rekenyng,
700 In my sorwe for no-thing;
701 And how ther leveth no gladnesse
702 May gladde me of my distresse,
703 And how I have lost suffisance,
704 And therto I have no plesance,
705 Than may I say, I have right noght.
706 And whan al this falleth in my thought,
707 Allas! than am I overcome!
708 For that is doon is not to come!
709 I have more sorowe than Tantale.'
710 And whan I herde him telle this tale
711 Thus pitously, as I yow telle,
712 Unnethe mighte I lenger dwelle,
713 Hit dide myn hert so moche wo.
714 'A! good sir!' quod I, 'say not so!
715 Have som pite on your nature
716 That formed yow to creature,
717 Remembre yow of Socrates;
718 For he ne counted nat three strees
719 Of noght that Fortune coude do.'
720 'No,' quod he, 'I can not so.'
721 'Why so? good sir! parde!' quod I;
722 'Ne say noght so, for trewely,
723 Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,
724 And ye for sorwe mordred your-selve,
725 Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
726 By as good right as Medea was,
727 That slow hir children for Iason;
728 And Phyllis als for Demophon
729 Heng hir-self, so weylaway!
730 For he had broke his terme-day
731 To come to hir. Another rage
732 Had Dydo, quene eek of Cartage,
733 That slow hir-self for Eneas
734 Was fals; a whiche a fool she was!
735 And Ecquo dyed for Narcisus.
736 Nolde nat love hir; and right thus
737 Hath many another folly don.
738 And for Dalida died Sampson,
739 That slow him-self with a pilere.
740 But ther is noon a-lyve here
741 Wolde for a fers make this wo!
742 'Why so?' quod he; 'hit is nat so,
743 Thou woste ful litel what thou menest;

744 I have lost more than thow wenest.'
745 'Lo, sir, how may that be?' quod I;
746 'Good sir, tel me al hoolly
747 In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
748 That ye have thus your blisse lore,'
749 'Blythly,' quod he, 'com sit adoun,
750 I telle thee up condicioun
751 That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,
752 Do thyn entent to herkene hit.'
753 'Yis, sir.' 'Swere thy trouthe ther-to.'
754 'Gladly.' 'Do than holde her-to!'
755 'I shal right blythly, so god me save,
756 Hoolly, with al the witte I have,
757 Here yow, as wel as I can,'
758 'A goddes half!' quod he, and began: --
759 'Sir,' quod he, 'sith first I couthe
760 Have any maner wit fro youthe,
761 Or kyndely understanding
762 To comprehend, in any thing,
763 What love was, in myn owne wit,
764 Dredeles, I have ever yit
765 Be tributary, and yiven rente
766 To love hoolly with goode entente,
767 And through plesaunce become his thral,
768 With good wil, body, herte, and al.
769 Al this I putte in his servage,
770 As to my lorde, and dide homage;
771 And ful devoutly prayde him to,
772 He shulde besette myn herte so,
773 That it plesaunce to him were,
774 And worship to my lady dere.
775 'And this was longe, and many a yeer
776 Or that myn herte was set o-wher,
777 That I did thus, and niste why;
778 I trowe hit cam me kindely.
779 Paraunter I was therto most able
780 As a whyt wal or a table;
781 For hit is redy to cacche and take
782 Al that men wil therin make,
783 Wher-so so men wol portreye or peynte,
784 Be the werkes never so queynte.
785 'And thilke tyme I ferde so
786 I was able to have lerned tho,
787 And to have coud as wel or better,
788 Paraunter, other art or letter.
789 But for love cam first in my thought,
790 Therfore I forgat hit nought.
791 I chees love to my firste craft,
792 Therfor hit is with me y-laft.
793 Forwhy I took hit of so yong age,
794 That malice hadde my corage
795 Nat that tyme turned to no-thing
796 Through to mochel knowleching.
797 For that tyme youthe, my maistresse,
798 Governed me in ydelnesse;
799 For hit was in my firste youthe,
800 And tho ful litel good I couthe,
801 For al my werkes were flittinge,
802 And al my thoghtes varyinge;
803 Al were to me y-liche good,

804 That I knew tho; but thus hit stood.
805 'Hit happed that I cam on a day
806 Into a place, ther I say,
807 Trewly, the fayrest companye
808 Of ladies that ever man with ye
809 Had seen togedres in oo place.
810 Shal I clepe hit hap other grace
811 That broght me ther? nay, but Fortune,
812 That is to lyen ful comune,
813 The false trayteresse, pervers,
814 God wolde I coude clepe hir wers!
815 For now she worcheth me ful wo,
816 And I wol telle sone why so.
817 'Among thise ladies thus echoon,
818 Soth to seyn, I saw ther oon
819 That was lyk noon of al the route;
820 For I dar swere, withoute doute,
821 That as the someres sonne bright
822 Is fairer, clere, and hath more light
823 Than any planete, is in heven,
824 The mone, or the sterres seven,
825 For al the worlde so had she
826 Surmounted hem alle of beaute,
827 Of maner and of comlinesse,
828 Of stature and wel set gladnesse,
829 Of goodlihede so wel beseye --
830 Shortly, what shal I more seye?
831 By god, and by his halwes twelve,
832 It was my swete, right al hir-selve!
833 She had so stedfast countenaunce,
834 So noble port and meytenaunce.
835 And Love, that had herd my bone,
836 Had espyed me thus sone,
837 That she ful sone, in my thought,
838 As helpe me god, so was y-caught
839 So sodenly, that I ne took
840 No maner reed but at hir look
841 And at myn herte; for-why hir eyen
842 So gladly, I trow, myn herte seyen,
843 That purely tho myn owne thoght
844 Seyde hit were bet serve hir for noght
845 Than with another to be wel.
846 And hit was sooth, for, everydel,
847 I wil anoon-right telle thee why.
848 I saw hir daunce so comlily,
849 Carole and singe so swetely,
850 Laughe and pleye so womanly,
851 And loke so debonairly,
852 So goodly speke and so frendly,
853 That certes, I trow, that evermore
854 Nas seyn so blisful a tresore.
855 For every heer upon hir hede,
856 Soth to seyn, hit was not rede,
857 Ne nouthur yelw, ne broun hit nas;
858 Me thoghte, most lyk gold hit was.
859 And whiche eyen my lady hadde!
860 Debonair, goode, glade, and sadde,
861 Simple, of good mochel, noght to wyde;
862 Therto hir look nas not a-syde,
863 Ne overthwert, but beset so wel,

864 Hit drew and took up, everydel,
865 Alle that on hir gan beholde.
866 Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde
867 Have mercy; fooles wenden so;
868 But hit was never the rather do.
869 Hit nas no countrefeted thing,
870 It was hir owne pure loking,
871 That the goddesse, dame Nature,
872 Had made hem opene by mesure,
873 And close; for, were she never so glad,
874 Hir loking was not foly sprad,
875 Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;
876 But ever, me thoght, hir eyen seyde,
877 "By god, my wrathe is al for-yive!"
878 `Therwith hir liste so wel to live,
879 That dulnesse was of hir a-drad.
880 She nas to sobre ne to glad;
881 In alle thinges more mesure
882 Had never, I trowe, creature.
883 But many oon with hir loke she herte,
884 And that sat hir ful lyte at herte,
885 For she knew no-thing of her thoght;
886 But whether she knew, or knew hit noght,
887 Algate she ne roghte of hem a stree!
888 To gete hir love no ner was he
889 That woned at home, than he in Inde;
890 The formest was alway behinde.
891 But goode folk, over al other,
892 She loved as man may do his brother;
893 Of whiche love she was wonder large,
894 In skilful places that bere charge.
895 `Which a visage had she ther-to!
896 Allas! myn herte is wonder wo
897 That I ne can discryven hit!
898 Me lakketh bothe English and wit
899 For to undo hit at the fulle;
900 And eek my spirits be so dulle
901 So greet a thing for to devyse.
902 I have no wit that can suffyse
903 To comprehenden hir beaute;
904 But thus moche dar I seyn, that she
905 Was rody, fresh, and lyvely hewed;
906 And every day hir beaute newed.
907 And negh hir face was alder-best;
908 For certes, Nature had swich lest
909 To make that fair, that trewly she
910 Was hir cheef patron of beautee,
911 And cheef ensample of al hir werke,
912 And moustre; for, be hit never so derke,
913 Me thinketh I see hir ever-mo.
914 And yet more-over, thogh alle tho
915 That ever lived were not a-lyve,
916 They ne sholde have founde to discryve
917 In al hir face a wikked signe;
918 For hit was sad, simple, and benigne.
919 `And which a goodly, softe speche
920 Had that swete, my lyves leche!
921 So frendly, and so wel y-grounded,
922 Up al resoun so wel y-founded,
923 And so trefable to alle gode,

924 That I dar swere by the rode,
925 Of eloquence was never founde
926 So swete a sowninge facounde,
927 Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,
928 Ne bet coude hele; that, by the masse,
929 I durste swere, thogh the pope hit songe,
930 That ther was never yet through hir tonge
931 Man ne woman gretly harmed;
932 As for hir, ther was al harm hid;
933 Ne lasse flatering in hir worde,
934 That purely, hir simple recorde
935 Was founde as trewe as any bonde,
936 Or trouthe of any mannes honde.
937 Ne chyde she coude never a del,
938 That knoweth al the world ful wel.
939 `But swich a fairnesse of a nekke
940 Had that swete that boon nor brekke
941 Nas ther non sene, that mis-sat.
942 Hit was whyt, smothe, streght, and flat,
943 Withouten hole; and canel-boon,
944 As by seming, had she noon.
945 Hir throte, as I have now memoire,
946 Semed a round tour of yvoire,
947 Of good gretnesse, and noght to grete.
948 `And gode faire Whyte she hete,
949 That was my lady name right.
950 She was bothe fair and bright,
951 She hadde not hir name wrong.
952 Right faire shuldres, and body long
953 She hadde, and armes; every lith
954 Fattish, flesshy, not greet therwith;
955 Right whyte handes, and nayles rede,
956 Rounde brestes; and of good brede
957 Hyr hippes were, a streight flat bake.
958 I knew on hir non other lak
959 That al hir limmes nere sewing,
960 In as fer as I had knowing.
961 `Therto she coude so wel pleye,
962 Whan that hir liste, that I dar seye,
963 That she was lyk to torche bright,
964 That every man may take of light
965 Ynogh, and hit hath never the lesse.
966 `Of maner and of comlinessse
967 Right so ferde my lady dere;
968 For every wight of hir manere
969 Might cacche ynogh, if that he wolde,
970 If he had eyen hir to beholde.
971 For I dar sweren, if that she
972 Had among ten thousand be,
973 She wolde have be, at the leste,
974 A cheef mirour of al the feste,
975 Thogh they had stonden in a rowe,
976 To mennes eyen coude have knowe.
977 For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,
978 Me thoughte the felawship as naked
979 Withouten hir, that saw I ones,
980 As a coroune withoute stones.
981 Trewly she was, to myn ye,
982 The soleyn fenix of Arabye,
983 For ther liveth never but oon;

984 Ne swich as she ne know I noon.
985 `To speke of goodnesse; trewly she
986 Had as moche debonairete
987 As ever had Hester in the bible
988 And more, if more were possible.
989 And, soth to seyne, therwith-al
990 She had a wit so general,
991 So hool enclyned to alle gode,
992 That al hir wit was set, by the rode,
993 Withoute malice, upon gladnesse;
994 Therto I saw never yet a lesse
995 Harmul, than she was in doing.
996 I sey nat that she ne had knowing
997 What harm was; or elles she
998 Had coud no good, so thinketh me.
999 `And trewly, for to speke of trouthe,
1000 But she had had, hit had be routhe.
1001 Therof she had so moche hir del --
1002 And I dar seyn and swere hit wel --
1003 That Trouthe him-self, over al and al,
1004 Had chose his maner principal
1005 In hir, that was his resting-place.
1006 Ther-to she hadde the moste grace,
1007 To have stedfast perseveraunce,
1008 And esy, atempre governaunce,
1009 That ever I knew or wiste yit;
1010 So pure suffraunt was hir wit.
1011 And reson gladly she understood,
1012 Hit folowed wel she coude good.
1013 She used gladly to do wel;
1014 These were hir maners every-del.
1015 `Therwith she loved so wel right,
1016 She wrong do wolde to no wight;
1017 No wight might do hir no shame,
1018 She loved so wel hir owne name.
1019 Hir luste to holde no wight in honde;
1020 Ne, be thou siker, she nolde fonde
1021 To holde no wight in balaunce,
1022 By half word ne by countenaunce,
1023 But-if men wolde upon hir lye;
1024 Ne sende men in-to Walakye,
1025 To Pruyse, and in-to Tartarye,
1026 To Alisaundre, ne in-to Turkye,
1027 And bidde him faste, anoon that he
1028 Go hoodles to the drye see,
1029 And come hoom by the Carrenare;
1030 And seye, "Sir, be now right ware
1031 That I may of yow here seyn
1032 Worship, or that ye come ageyn!"
1033 She ne used no suche knakkes smale.
1034 `But wherfor that I telle my tale?
1035 Right on this same, as I have seyd,
1036 Was hoolly al my love leyde;
1037 For certes, she was, that swete wyf,
1038 My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf,
1039 Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blisse,
1040 My worldes welfare, and my lisse,
1041 And I hires hoolly, everydel.'
1042 `By our lord,' quod I, 'I trowe yow wel!
1043 Hardely, your love was wel beset,

1044 I not how ye mighte have do bet.'
1045 'Bet? ne no wight so wel!' quod he.
1046 'I trowe hit, sir,' quod I, 'parde!'
1047 'Nay, leve hit wel!' 'Sir, so do I;
1048 I leve yow wel, that trewely
1049 Yow thoghte, that she was the beste,
1050 And to beholde the alderfaireste,
1051 Who so had loked hir with your eyen.'
1052 'With myn? Nay, alle that hir seyen
1053 Seyde and sworn hit was so.
1054 And though they ne hadde, I wolde tho
1055 Have loved best my lady fre,
1056 Thogh I had had al the beautee
1057 That ever had Alcipyades,
1058 And al the strengthe of Ercules,
1059 And therto had the worthinesse
1060 Of Alisaundre, and al the richesse
1061 That ever was in Babiloyne,
1062 In Cartage, or in Macedoyne,
1063 Or in Rome, or in Ninive;
1064 And therto al-so hardy be
1065 As was Ector, so have I loye,
1066 That Achilles slow at Troye --
1067 And therfor was he slayn also
1068 In a temple, for bothe two
1069 Were slayn, he and Antilegius,
1070 And so seyth Dares Frigius,
1071 For love of hir Polixena --
1072 Or ben as wys as Minerva,
1073 I wolde ever, withoute drede,
1074 Have loved hir, for I moste nede!
1075 "Nede!" nay, I gabbe now,
1076 Noght "nede", and I wol telle how,
1077 For of good wille myn herte hit wolde,
1078 And eek to love hir I was holde
1079 As for the fairest and the beste.
1080 'She was as good, so have I reste,
1081 As ever was Penelope of Grece,
1082 Or as the noble wyf Lucrece,
1083 That was the beste -- he telleth thus,
1084 The Romain Tytus Livius --
1085 She was as good, and no-thing lyke,
1086 Thogh hir stories be autentyke;
1087 Algate she was as trewe as she.
1088 'But wherfor that I telle thee
1089 Whan I first my lady say?
1090 I was right yong, the sooth to sey,
1091 And ful gret need I hadde to lerne;
1092 Whan my herte wolde yerne
1093 To love, it was a greet empryse.
1094 But as my wit coude best suffyse,
1095 After my yonge childly wit,
1096 Withoute drede, I besette hit
1097 To love hir in my beste wise,
1098 To do hir worship and servyse
1099 That I tho coude, be my trouthe,
1100 Withoute feyning outhur slouth;
1101 For wonder fayn I wolde hir see.
1102 So mochel hit amended me,
1103 That, whan I saw hir first a-morwe,

1104 I was warished of al my sorwe
1105 Of al day after, til hit were eve;
1106 Me thoghte no-thing mighte me greve,
1107 Were my sorwes never so smerte.
1108 And yit she sit so in myn herte,
1109 That, by my trouthe, I nolde noghte,
1110 For al this worlde, out of my thought
1111 Leve my lady; no, trewly!
1112 'Now, by my trouthe, sir,' quod I,
1113 'Me thinketh ye have such a chaunce
1114 As shrift withoute repentaunce.'
1115 'Repentaunce! nay, fy,' quod he;
1116 'Shulde I now repente me
1117 To love? nay, certes, than were I wel
1118 Wers than was Achitofel,
1119 Or Anthenor, so have I Ioye,
1120 The traytour that betrayesd Troye,
1121 Or the false Genelon,
1122 He that purchased the treson
1123 Of Rowland and of Oliver.
1124 Nay, why! I am a-lyve here
1125 I nil foryete hir never-mo.'
1126 'Now, goode sir,' quod I right tho,
1127 'Ye han wel told me her-before.
1128 It is no need reherse hit more
1129 How ye sawe hir first, and where;
1130 But wolde ye telle me the manere,
1131 To hir which was your firste speche --
1132 Therof I wolde yow be-seche --
1133 And how she knewe first your thought,
1134 Whether ye loved hir or noght,
1135 And telleth me eek what ye have lore;
1136 I herde yow telle her-before.'
1137 'Ye,' seyde he, 'thow nost what thou menest;
1138 I have lost more than thou wenest.'
1139 'What los is that, sir?' quod I tho;
1140 'Nil she not love yow? Is hit so?
1141 Or have ye oght y-doon amis,
1142 That she hath left yow? is hit this?
1143 For goddes love, telle me al.'
1144 'Before god,' quod he, 'and I shal.
1145 I saye right as I have seyde,
1146 On hir was al my love leyde;
1147 And yet she niste hit never a del
1148 Noght longe tyme, leve hit wel.
1149 For be right siker, I durste noght
1150 For al this worlde telle hir my thought,
1151 Ne I wolde have wratthed hir, trewely.
1152 For wostow why? she was lady
1153 Of the body; she had the herte,
1154 And who hath that, may not asterte.
1155 'But, for to kepe me fro ydelnesse,
1156 Trewly I did my besinesse
1157 To make songes, as I best coude,
1158 And ofte tyme I song hem loude;
1159 And made songes a gret del,
1160 Al-thogh I coude not make so wel
1161 Songes, ne knowe the art al,
1162 As coude Lamekes sone Tubal,
1163 That fond out first the art of songe;

1164 For, as his brothers hamers ronge
1165 Upon his anvelt up and doun,
1166 Therof he took the firste soun;
1167 But Grekes seyn, Pictagoras,
1168 That he the firste finder was
1169 Of the art; Aurora telleth so,
1170 But therof no fors, of hem two.
1171 Algates songes thus I made
1172 Of my feling, myn herte to glade;
1173 And lo! this was the alther-firste,
1174 I not wher that hit were the werst. --
1175 "Lord, hit maketh myn herte light,
1176 Whan I thenke on that swete wight
1177 That is so semely on to see;
1178 And wisshe to god hit might so be,
1179 That she wolde holde me for hir knight,
1180 My lady, that is so fair and bright!" --
1181 `Now have I told thee, sooth to saye,
1182 My firste song. Upon a daye
1183 I bethoghte me what wo
1184 And sorwe that I suffred tho
1185 For hir, and yet she wiste hit noght,
1186 Ne telle hir durste I nat my thoght.
1187 `Allas!' thoghte I, 'I can no reed;
1188 And, but I telle hir, I nam but deed;
1189 And if I telle hir, to seye sooth,
1190 I am a-dred she wol be wrooth;
1191 Allas! what shal I thanne do?"
1192 `In this debat I was so wo,
1193 Me thoghte myn herte braste a-tweyn!
1194 So atte laste, soth to sayn,
1195 I me bethoghte that nature
1196 Ne formed never in creature
1197 So moche beaute, trewely,
1198 And bounte, withouten mercy.
1199 `In hope of that, my tale I tolde,
1200 With sorwe, as that I never sholde;
1201 For nedes, and, maugree my heed,
1202 I moste have told hir or be deed.
1203 I not wel how that I began,
1204 Ful evel rehersen hit I can;
1205 And eek, as helpe me god with-al,
1206 I trowe hit was in the dismal,
1207 That was the ten woundes of Egipte;
1208 For many a word I over-skipte
1209 In my tale, for pure fere
1210 Lest my wordes mis-set were.
1211 With sorweful herte, and woundes dede,
1212 Softe and quaking for pure drede
1213 And shame, and stinting in my tale
1214 For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,
1215 Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and reed;
1216 Bowing to hir, I heng the heed;
1217 I durste nat ones loke hir on,
1218 For wit, manere, and al was gon.
1219 I seyde "mercy!" and no more;
1220 Hit nas no game, hit sat me sore.
1221 `So atte laste, sooth to seyn,
1222 Whan that myn herte was come ageyn,
1223 To telle shortly al my speche,

1224 With hool herte I gan hir beseche
1225 That she wolde be my lady swete;
1226 And swor, and gan hir hertely hete
1227 Ever to be stedfast and trewe,
1228 And love hir alwey freshly newe,
1229 And never other lady have,
1230 And al hir worship for to save
1231 As I best coude; I swor hir this --
1232 "For youres is al that ever ther is
1233 For evermore, myn herte swete!
1234 And never false yow, but I mete,
1235 I nil, as wis god helpe me so!"
1236 `And whan I had my tale y-do,
1237 God wot, she acounted nat a stree
1238 Of al my tale, so thoghte me.
1239 To telle shortly as hit is,
1240 Trewly hir answer, hit was this;
1241 I can not now wel counterfete
1242 Hir wordes, but this was the grete
1243 Of hir answer: she sayde, "nay"
1244 Al-outerly. Allas! that day
1245 The sorwe I suffred, and the wo!
1246 That trewly Cassandra, that so
1247 Bewayled the destruccioun.
1248 Of Troye and of Ilioun,
1249 Had never swich sorwe as I tho.
1250 I durste no more say therto
1251 For pure fere, but stal away;
1252 And thus I lived ful many a day;
1253 That trewely, I hadde no need
1254 Ferther than my beddes heed
1255 Never a day to seche sorwe;
1256 I fond hit redy every morwe,
1257 For-why I loved hir in no gere.
1258 `So hit befel, another yere,
1259 I thoughte ones I wolde fonde
1260 To do hir knowe and understonde
1261 My wo; and she wel understood
1262 That I ne wilned thing but good,
1263 And worship, and to kepe hir name
1264 Over al thing, and drede hir shame,
1265 And was so besy hir to serve; --
1266 And pite were I shulde sterve,
1267 Sith that I wilned noon harm, y-wis.
1268 So whan my lady knew al this,
1269 My lady yaf me al hoolly
1270 The noble yift of hir mercy,
1271 Saving hir worship, by al weyes;
1272 Dredles, I mene noon other weyes.
1273 And therwith she yaf me a ring;
1274 I trowe hit was the firste thing;
1275 But if myn herte was y-waxe
1276 Glad, that is no need to axe!
1277 As helpe me god, I was as blyve,
1278 Reysed, as fro dethe to lyve,
1279 Of alle happes the alder-beste,
1280 The gladdest and the moste at reste.
1281 For trewely, that swete wight,
1282 Whan I had wrong and she the right,
1283 She wolde alwey so goodely

1284 For-yeve me so debonairly.
1285 In alle my youthe, in alle chaunce,
1286 She took me in hir governaunce.
1287 `Therwith she was alway so trewe,
1288 Our loye was ever y-liche newe;
1289 Our hertes wern so even a payre,
1290 That never nas that oon contrayre
1291 To that other, for no wo.
1292 For sothe, y-liche they suffred tho
1293 Oo blisse and eek oo sorwe bothe;
1294 Y-liche they were bothe gladde and wrothe;
1295 Al was us oon, withoute were.
1296 And thus we lived ful many a yere
1297 So wel, I can nat telle how.'
1298 `Sir,' quod I, `where is she now?'
1299 `Now!' quod he, and stinte anoon.
1300 Therwith he wex as deed as stoon,
1301 And seyde, `allas! that I was bore,
1302 That was the los, that her-before
1303 I tolde thee, that I had lorn.
1304 Bethenk how I seyde her-beforn,
1305 "Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;
1306 I have lost more than thou wenest" --
1307 God wot, allas! right that was she!'
1308 `Allas! sir, how? what may that be?'
1309 `She is deed!' `Nay!' `Yis, by my trouthe!'
1310 `Is that your los? By god, hit is routhe!'
1311 And with that worde, right anoon,
1312 They gan to strake forth; al was doon,
1313 For that tyme, the hert-hunting.
1314 With that, me thoghte, that this king
1315 Gan quikly hoomward for to ryde
1316 Unto a place ther besyde,
1317 Which was from us but a lyte,
1318 A long castel with walles whyte,
1319 Be seynt Iohan! on a riche hil,
1320 As me mette; but thus it fil.
1321 Right thus me mette, as I yow telle,
1322 That in the castel was a belle,
1323 As hit had smiten houres twelve. --

1324 Therwith I awook my-selve,
1325 And fond me lying in my bed;
1326 And the book that I had red,
1327 Of Alcyone and Seys the king,
1328 And of the goddes of sleping,
1329 I fond it in my honde ful even.
1330 Thoghte I, `this is so queynt a sweven,
1331 That I wol, be processe of tyme,
1332 Fonde to putte this sweven in ryme
1333 As I can best'; and that anoon. --
1334 This was my sweven; now hit is doon.

Explicit the Boke of the Duchesse.

End of "The Book of the Duchess"



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