

them in another For he hath told of lovers up and down, More than Ovide
 made of mentioun In his Epistolae, that be full old. Why should I telle them,
 since they he told? In youth he made of Ceyx and Alcyon,<4> And since then
 he hath spoke of every one These noble wives, and these lovers eke. Whoso
 that will his large volume seek Called the Saintes' Legend of Cupid:<5>
 There may he see the large woundes wide Of Lucrece, and of Babylon
 Thisbe; The sword of Dido for the false Enee; The tree of Phillis for her
 Demophon; The plaint of Diane, and of Hermion, Of Ariadne, and Hypsipile;
 The barren isle standing in the sea; The drown'd Leander for his fair Hero;
 The teares of Helene, and eke the woe Of Briseis, and Laodamia; The cruelty
 of thee, Queen Medea, Thy little children hanging by the halse*,
 *neck For thy Jason, that was of love so false. Hypermnestra, Penelop',
 Alcest', Your wifhood he commendeth with the best. But certainly no worde
 writeth he Of *thilke wick'* example of Canace, *that wicked*
 That loved her own brother sinfully; (Of all such cursed stories I say, Fy), Or
 else of Tyrius Apollonius, How that the cursed king Antiochus Bereft his
 daughter of her maidenhead; That is so horrible a tale to read, When he her
 threw upon the pavement. And therefore he, *of full avisement*,
 deliberately, advisedly Would never write in none of his sermons Of such
 unkind* abominations; *unnatural Nor I will none
 rehearse, if that I may. But of my tale how shall I do this day? Me were loth
 to be liken'd doubtless To Muses, that men call Pierides<6>
 (Metamorphoseos <7> wot what I mean), But natheless I recke not a bean,
 Though I come after him with hawebake*; *lout <8> I speak
 in prose, and let him rhymes make." And with that word, he with a sober
 cheer Began his tale, and said as ye shall hear.

Notes to the Prologue to The Man of Law's Tale

1. Plight: pulled; the word is an obsolete past tense from "pluck."
2. No more than will Malkin's maidenhead: a proverbial saying; which, however, had obtained fresh point from the Reeve's Tale, to which the host doubtless refers.
3. De par dieux jeo asente: "by God, I agree". It is characteristic that the somewhat pompous Sergeant of Law should couch his assent in the semi-barbarous French, then familiar in law procedure.
4. Ceyx and Alcyon: Chaucer treats of these in the introduction to the poem called "The Book of the Duchess." It relates to the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the poet's patron, and afterwards his connexion by marriage.
5. The Saintes Legend of Cupid: Now called "The Legend of Good Women". The names of eight ladies mentioned here are not in the "Legend" as it has come down to us; while those of two ladies in the "legend" -- Cleopatra and Philomela -- are her omitted.
6. Not the Muses, who had their surname from the place near Mount Olympus where the Thracians first worshipped them; but the nine daughters of Pierus, king of Macedonia, whom he called the nine Muses, and who, being conquered in a contest with the genuine sisterhood, were changed into birds.
7. Metamorphoseos: Ovid's.
8. Hawebake: hawbuck, country lout; the common proverbial phrase, "to put a rogue above a gentleman," may throw light on the reading here, which is difficult.