





deliver'd out of woe The people of God, and made him, Mardoche, Of Assuere  
 enhanced\* for to be. \*advanced in dignity There is nothing \*in  
 gree superlative\* \*of higher esteem\* (As saith Senec) above a  
 humble wife. Suffer thy wife's tongue, as Cato bit,\* \*bid  
 She shall command, and thou shalt suffer it, And yet she will obey of  
 courtesy. A wife is keeper of thine husbandry: Well may the sicke man  
 bewail and weep, There as there is no wife the house to keep. I warne thee, if  
 wisely thou wilt wirth,\* \*work Love well thy wife, as Christ  
 loveth his church: Thou lov'st thyself, if thou lovest thy wife. No man hateth  
 his flesh, but in his life He fost'reth it; and therefore bid I thee Cherish thy  
 wife, or thou shalt never the.\* \*thrive Husband and wife, what  
 \*so men jape or play,\* \*although men joke Of worldly folk holde the  
 sicker\* way; and jeer\* \*certain They be so knit there may no harm  
 betide, And namely\* upon the wife's side. \* especially

For which this January, of whom I told, Consider'd hath within his dayes  
 old, The lusty life, the virtuous quiet, That is in marriage honey-sweet. And  
 for his friends upon a day he sent To tell them the effect of his intent. With  
 face sad,\* his tale he hath them told: \*grave, earnest He saide,  
 "Friendes, I am hoar and old, And almost (God wot) on my pitte's\* brink,  
 \*grave's Upon my soule somewhat must I think. I have my body foolishly  
 dispended, Blessed be God that it shall be amended; For I will be certain a  
 wedded man, And that anon in all the haste I can, Unto some maiden, fair  
 and tender of age; I pray you shape\* for my marriage \* arrange,  
 contrive All suddenly, for I will not abide: And I will fond\* to espy, on my  
 side, \*try To whom I may be wedded hastily. But  
 forasmuch as ye be more than, Ye shalle rather\* such a thing espy Than I,  
 and where me best were to ally. But one thing warn I you, my friendes dear,  
 I will none old wife have in no mannere: She shall not passe sixteen year  
 certain. Old fish and younge flesh would I have fain. Better," quoth he, "a  
 pike than a pickerel,\* \*young pike And better than old beef is  
 tender veal. I will no woman thirty year of age, It is but beanestraw and  
 great forage. And eke these olde widows (God it wot) They conne\* so much  
 craft on Wade's boat,<5> \*know \*So mucche brooke harm  
 when that them lest,\* \*they can do so much That with them should I  
 never live in rest. harm when they wish\* For sundry schooles make  
 subtle clerkes; Woman of many schooles half a clerk is. But certainly a  
 young thing men may guy,\* \*guide Right as men may warm  
 wax with handes ply.\* \*bend,mould Wherefore I say you plainly  
 in a clause, I will none old wife have, right for this cause. For if so were I  
 hadde such mischance, That I in her could have no pleasance, Then should  
 I lead my life in avoutrie,\* \*adultery And go straight to the  
 devil when I die. Nor children should I none upon her gotten: Yet \*were me

lever\* houndes had me eaten                      \*I would rather\* Than that mine  
 heritage shoulde fall In strange hands: and this I tell you all. I doubt not I  
 know the cause why Men shoulde wed: and farthermore know I There  
 speaketh many a man of marriage That knows no more of it than doth my  
 page, For what causes a man should take a wife. If he ne may not live chaste  
 his life, Take him a wife with great devotion, Because of lawful procreation  
 Of children, to th' honour of God above, And not only for paramour or love;  
 And for they shoulde lechery eschew, And yield their debte when that it is  
 due: Or for that each of them should help the other In mischief,\* as a sister  
 shall the brother,                      \*trouble And live in chastity full holily. But,  
 Sires, by your leave, that am not I, For, God be thanked, I dare make  
 avaunt,\*                      \*boast I feel my limbes stark\* and suffisant  
 \*strong To do all that a man belongeth to: I wot myselfe best what I may do.  
 Though I be hoar, I fare as doth a tree, That blossoms ere the fruit y-waxen\*  
 be;                      \*grown The blossomy tree is neither dry nor dead; I feel  
 me now here hoar but on my head. Mine heart and all my limbes are as  
 green As laurel through the year is for to seen.\*                      \*see And,  
 since that ye have heard all mine intent, I pray you to my will ye would  
 assent."

Diverse men diversely him told Of marriage many examples old; Some  
 blamed it, some praised it, certain; But at the haste, shortly for to sayn (As  
 all day\* falleth altercation                      \*constantly, every day Betwixte friends  
 in disputation), There fell a strife betwixt his brethren two, Of which that  
 one was called Placebo, Justinus soothly called was that other.

Placebo said; "O January, brother, Full little need have ye, my lord so dear,  
 Counsel to ask of any that is here: But that ye be so full of sapience, That  
 you not liketh, for your high prudence, To waive\* from the word of Solomon.  
 \*depart, deviate This word said he unto us every one; Work alle thing by  
 counsel, -- thus said he, -- And thenne shalt thou not repente thee But  
 though that Solomon spake such a word, Mine owen deare brother and my  
 lord, So wisly\* God my soule bring at rest,                      \*surely I hold  
 your owen counsel is the best. For, brother mine, take of me this motive; \*  
 \*advice, encouragement I have now been a court-man all my life, And, God it  
 wot, though I unworthy be, I have standen in full great degree Aboute lordes  
 of full high estate; Yet had I ne'er with none of them debate; I never them  
 contraried truely. I know well that my lord can\* more than I;  
 \*knows What that he saith I hold it firm and stable, I say the same, or else a  
 thing semblable. A full great fool is any counsellor That serveth any lord of  
 high honour That dare presume, or ones thinken it; That his counsel should  
 pass his lorde's wit. Nay, lordes be no fooles by my fay. Ye have yourselfe  
 shewed here to day So high sentence,\* so holily and well

\*judgment, sentiment That I consent, and confirm \*every deal\* \*in  
every point\* Your wordes all, and your opinioun By God, there is no man in  
all this town Nor in Itale, could better have y-said. Christ holds him of this  
counsel well apaid.\* \*satisfied And truely it is a high courage Of  
any man that stopen\* is in age, \*advanced <6> To take a  
young wife, by my father's kin; Your hearte hangeth on a jolly pin. Do now  
in this matter right as you lest, For finally I hold it for the best."

Justinus, that aye stille sat and heard, Right in this wise to Placebo  
answer'd. "Now, brother mine, be patient I pray, Since ye have said, and  
hearken what I say. Senec, among his other wordes wise, Saith, that a man  
ought him rightwell advise,\* \*consider To whom he gives his hand  
or his chattel. And since I ought advise me right well To whom I give my  
good away from me, Well more I ought advise me, pardie, To whom I give my  
body: for alway I warn you well it is no childe's play To take a wife without  
advisement. Men must inquire (this is mine assent) Whe'er she be wise, or  
sober, or dronkelew,\* \*given to drink Or proud, or any other ways a  
shrew, A chidester,\* or a waster of thy good, \*a scold Or rich  
or poor; or else a man is wood.\* \*mad Albeit so, that no  
man finde shall None in this world, that \*trotteth whole in all,\* \*is  
sound in No man, nor beast, such as men can devise,\* every point\*  
\*describe But nathehess it ought enough suffice With any wife, if so were  
that she had More goode thewes\* than her vices bad: \*  
qualities And all this asketh leisure to inquire. For, God it wot, I have wept  
many a tear Full privily, since I have had a wife. Praise whoso will a wedded  
manne's life, Certes, I find in it but cost and care, And observances of all  
blisses bare. And yet, God wot, my neighebour about, And namely\* of  
women many a rout,\*\* \*especially \*\*company Say that I have the  
moste steadfast wife, And eke the meekest one, that beareth life. But I know  
best where wringeth\* me my shoe, \*pinches Ye mayfor me  
right as you like do Advise you, ye be a man of age, How that ye enter into  
marriage; And namely\* with a young wife and a fair, \* especially  
By him that made water, fire, earth, air, The youngest man that is in all this  
rout\* \*company Is busy enough to bringen it about To have his  
wife alone, truste me: Ye shall not please her fully yeares three, This is to  
say, to do her full pleasance. A wife asketh full many an observance. I pray  
you that ye be not \*evil apaid.\*" \*displeased\*

"Well," quoth this January, "and hast thou said? Straw for thy Senec, and  
for thy proverbs, I counte not a pannier full of herbs Of schoole termes;  
wiser men than thou, As thou hast heard, assented here right now To my  
purpose: Placebo, what say ye?" "I say it is a cursed\* man," quoth he,  
\*ill-natured, wicked "That letteth\* matrimony, sickerly."

\*hindereth And with that word they rise up suddenly, And be assented fully,  
that he should Be wedded when him list, and where he would.

High fantasy and curious business From day to day gan in the soul impress\*  
\*imprint themselves Of January about his marriage Many a fair shape, and  
many a fair visage There passed through his hearte night by night. As whoso  
took a mirror polish'd bright, And set it in a common market-place, Then  
should he see many a figure pace By his mirror; and in the same wise Gan  
January in his thought devise Of maidens, which that dwelte him beside: He  
wiste not where that he might abide.\*                   \*stay, fix his choice For if that  
one had beauty in her face, Another stood so in the people's grace For her  
sadness\* and her benignity,                   \*sedateness That of the people  
greatest voice had she: And some were rich and had a badde name. But  
nathless, betwixt earnest and game, He at the last appointed him on one,  
And let all others from his hearte gon, And chose her of his own authority;  
For love is blind all day, and may not see. And when that he was into bed y-  
brought, He pourtray'd in his heart and in his thought Her freshe beauty,  
and her age tender, Her middle small, her armes long and slender, Her wise  
governance, her gentleness, Her womanly bearing, and her sadness.\*  
\*sedateness And when that he \*on her was condescended,\*                   \*had  
selected her\* He thought his choice might not be amended; For when that  
he himself concluded had, He thought each other manne' s wit so bad, That  
impossible it were to reply Against his choice; this was his fantasy. His  
friendes sent he to, at his instance, And prayed them to do him that  
pleasance, That hastily they would unto him come; He would abridge their  
labour all and some: Needed no more for them to go nor ride,<7> \*He was  
appointed where he would abide.\*                   \*he had definitively

Placebo came, and eke his friendes soon,                   made his choice\* And  
\*alderfirst he bade them all a boon,\*                   \*first of all he asked That none of  
them no arguments would make                   a favour of them\* Against the  
purpose that he had y-take: Which purpose was pleasant to God, said he,  
And very ground of his prosperity. He said, there was a maiden in the town,  
Which that of beauty hadde great renown; All\* were it so she were of small  
degree,                   \*although Sufficed him her youth and her beauty;  
Which maid, he said, he would have to his wife, To lead in ease and holiness  
his life; And thanked God, that he might have her all, That no wight with his  
blisse parte\* shall;                   \*have a share And prayed them to labour in  
this need, And shape that he faile not to speed: For then, he said, his spirit  
was at ease. "Then is," quoth he, "nothing may me displease, Save one thing  
pricketh in my conscience, The which I will rehearse in your presence. I  
have," quoth he, "heard said, full yore\* ago,                   \*long There may no  
man have perfect blisses two, This is to say, on earth and eke in heaven. For

though he keep him from the sinne's seven, And eke from every branch of  
 thilke tree, <8> Yet is there so perfect felicity, And so great \*ease and lust,\* in  
 marriage, \*comfort and pleasure\* That ev'r I am aghast,\* now in mine  
 age \*ashamed, afraid That I shall head now so merry a life, So  
 delicate, withoute woe or strife, That I shall have mine heav'n on earthe  
 here. For since that very heav'n is bought so dear, With tribulation and great  
 penance, How should I then, living in such pleasance As alle wedded men do  
 with their wives, Come to the bliss where Christ \*etern on live is? \*lives  
 eternally\* This is my dread;\* and ye, my brethren tway, \*doubt  
 Assoile\* me this question, I you pray." \*resolve, answer

Justinus, which that hated his folly, Answer'd anon right in his japery;\*  
 \*mockery, jesting way And, for he would his longe tale abridge, He woulde  
 no authority\* allege, \*written texts But saide; "Sir, so there  
 be none obstacle Other than this, God of his high miracle, And of his mercy,  
 may so for you wurch,\* \*work That, ere ye have your rights  
 of holy church, Ye may repent of wedded manne's life, In which ye say there  
 is no woe nor strife: And elles God forbid, \*but if\* he sent  
 \*unless A wedded man his grace him to repent Well often, rather than a  
 single man. And therefore, Sir, \*the beste rede I can,\* \*this is the best  
 counsel Despair you not, but have in your memory, that I know\*  
 Paraventure she may be your purgatory; She may be Godde's means, and  
 Godde's whip; And then your soul shall up to heaven skip Swifter than doth  
 an arrow from a bow. I hope to God hereafter ye shall know That there is  
 none so great felicity In marriage, nor ever more shall be, That you shall let\*  
 of your salvation; \*hinder So that ye use, as skill is and  
 reason, The lustes\* of your wife attemperly,\*\* \*pleasures \*\*moderately  
 And that ye please her not too amorously, And that ye keep you eke from  
 other sin. My tale is done, for my wit is but thin. Be not aghast\* hereof, my  
 brother dear, \*aharmed, afraid But let us waden out of this  
 matter, The Wife of Bath, if ye have understand, Of marriage, which ye  
 have now in hand, Declared hath full well in little space; Fare ye now well,  
 God have you in his grace."

And with this word this Justin' and his brother Have ta'en their leave, and  
 each of them of other. And when they saw that it must needes be, They  
 wroughte so, by sleight and wise treaty, That she, this maiden, which that  
 \*Maius hight,\* \*was named May\* As hastily as ever that she might,  
 Shall wedded be unto this January. I trow it were too longe you to tarry, If I  
 told you of every \*script and band\* \*written bond\* By which she  
 was feoffed in his hand; Or for to reckon of her rich array But finally y-  
 comen is the day That to the churche bothe be they went, For to receive the  
 holy sacrament, Forth came the priest, with stole about his neck, And bade

her be like Sarah and Rebec' In wisdom and in truth of marriage; And said  
his orisons, as is usage, And crouched\* them, and prayed God should them  
bless, \*crossed And made all sicker\* enough with holiness.

\*certain

Thus be they wedded with solemnity; And at the feaste sat both he and she,  
With other worthy folk, upon the dais. All full of joy and bliss is the palace,  
And full of instruments, and of vitaille, \* \*victuals, food The moste  
dainteous\* of all Itale. \*delicate Before them stood such  
instruments of soun', That Orpheus, nor of Thebes Amphioun, Ne made  
never such a melody. At every course came in loud minstrelsy, That never  
Joab trumped for to hear, Nor he, Theodomas, yet half so clear At Thebes,  
when the city was in doubt. Bacchus the wine them skinked\* all about.  
\*poured <9> And Venus laughed upon every wight (For January was become  
her knight, And woulde both assaye his courage In liberty, and eke in  
marriage), And with her firebrand in her hand about Danced before the  
bride and all the rout. And certainly I dare right well say this, Hymeneus,  
that god of wedding is, Saw never his life so merry a wedded man. Hold thou  
thy peace, thou poet Marcian, <10> That writest us that ilke\* wedding merry  
\*same Of her Philology and him Mercury, And of the songes that the Muses  
sung; Too small is both thy pen, and eke thy tongue For to describen of this  
marriage. When tender youth hath wedded stooping age, There is such  
mirth that it may not be writ; Assay it youreself, then may ye wit\*  
\*know If that I lie or no in this mattere.

Maius, that sat with so benign a cheer,\* \*countenance Her to  
behold it seemed faerie; Queen Esther never look'd with such an eye On  
Assuere, so meek a look had she; I may you not devise all her beauty; But  
thus much of her beauty tell I may, That she was hike the bright morrow of  
May Full filled of all beauty and pleasance. This January is ravish'd in a  
trance, At every time he looked in her face; But in his heart he gan her to  
menace, That he that night in armes would her strain Harder than ever  
Paris did Helene. But natheless yet had he great pity That thilke night  
offende her must he, And thought, "Alas, O tender creature, Now woulde  
God ye mighte well endure All my courage, it is so sharp and keen; I am  
aghast\* ye shall it not sustene. \*afraid But God forbid that  
I did all my might. Now woulde God that it were waxen night, And that the  
night would lasten evermo'. I would that all this people were y-go."\*  
\*gone away And finally he did all his labour, As he best mighte, saving his  
honour, To haste them from the meat in subtle wise.

The time came that reason was to rise; And after that men dance, and  
drinke fast, And spices all about the house they cast, And full of joy and



bliss is every man, All but a squire, that highte Damian, Who carv'd before  
the knight full many a day; He was so ravish'd on his lady May, That for the  
very pain he was nigh wood;\* *\*mad* Almost he swelt\* and  
swooned where he stood, *\*fainted* So sore had Venus hurt him  
with her brand, As that she bare it dancing in her hand. And to his bed he  
went him hastily; No more of him as at this time speak I; But there I let him  
weep enough and plain,\* *\*bewail* Till freshe May will rue upon  
his pain. O perilous fire, that in the bedstraw breedeth! O foe familiar,\* that  
his service bedeth!\*\* *\*domestic* <11> *\*\*offers* O servant traitor, O false  
homely hewe,\* *\*servant* <12> Like to the adder in bosom shy  
untrue, God shield us alle from your acquaintance! O January, drunken in  
pleasance Of marriage, see how thy Damian, Thine owen squier and thy  
boren\* man, *\*born* <13> Intendeth for to do thee villainy:\*  
*\*dishonour*, outrage God grante thee thine *\*homehy foe\** t' espy. *\*enemy*  
in the household\* For in this world is no worse pestilence Than homely foe,  
all day in thy presence.

Performed hath the sun his arc diurn,\* *\*daily* No longer  
may the body of him sojourn On the horizon, in that latitude: Night with his  
mantle, that is dark and rude, Gan overspread the hemisphere about: For  
which departed is this *\*lusty rout\** *\*pleasant company\** From  
January, with thank on every side. Home to their houses lustily they ride,  
Where as they do their things as them lest, And when they see their time  
they go to rest. Soon after that this hasty\* January  
*\*eager* Will go to bed, he will no longer tarry. He dranke hippocras, clarre,  
and vernage <14> Of spices hot, to increase his courage; And many a  
lectuary\* had he full fine, *\*potion* Such as the cursed monk  
Dan Constantine<15> Hath written in his book *\*de Coitu\**; *\*of*  
sexual intercourse\* To eat them all he would nothing eschew: And to his  
privy friendes thus said he: "For Godde's love, as soon as it may be, Let  
*\*voiden all\** this house in courteous wise." *\*everyone leave\** And they  
have done right as he will devise. Men drinken, and the travers\* draw anon;  
*\*curtains* The bride is brought to bed as still as stone; And when the bed  
was with the priest y-bless'd, Out of the chamber every wight him dress'd,  
And January hath fast in arms y-take His freshe May, his paradise, his  
make.\* *\*mate* He lulled her, he kissed her full oft; With  
thicke bristles of his beard unsoft, Like to the skin of houndfish,\* sharp as  
brere\*\* *\*dogfish* *\*\*briar* (For he was shav'n all new in his mannere), He  
rubbed her upon her tender face, And saide thus; "Alas! I must trespace To  
you, my spouse, and you greatly offend, Ere time come that I will down  
descend. But natheless consider this," quoth he, "There is no workman,  
whatso'er he be, That may both worke well and hastily: This will be done at  
leisure perfectly. It is *\*no force\** how longe that we play; *\*no*





stood at that time fortunate As for to put a bill of Venus' works (For alle  
thing hath time, as say these clerks), To any woman for to get her love, I  
cannot say; but greate God above, That knoweth that none act is causeless,  
\*He deem\* of all, for I will hold my peace. \*let him judge\* But sooth  
is this, how that this freshe May Hath taken such impression that day Of  
pity on this sicke Damian, That from her hearte she not drive can The  
remembrance for \*to do him ease.\* \*to satisfy "Certain,"  
thought she, "whom that this thing displeas his desire\* I recke not, for  
here I him assure, To love him best of any creature, Though he no more  
hadde than his shirt." Lo, pity runneth soon in gentle heart. Here may ye  
see, how excellent franchise\* \*generosity In women is when they  
them \*narrow advise.\* \*closely consider\* Some tyrant is, -- as there be  
many a one, -- That hath a heart as hard as any stone, Which would have  
let him sterven\* in the place \*die Well rather than have  
granted him her grace; And then rejoicen in her cruel pride. And reckon not  
to be a homicide. This gentle May, full filled of pity, Right of her hand a  
letter maked she, In which she granted him her very grace; There lacked  
nought, but only day and place, Where that she might unto his lust suffice:  
For it shall be right as he will devise. And when she saw her time upon a  
day To visit this Damian went this May, And subtilly this letter down she  
thrust Under his pillow, read it if him lust.\* \*pleased She  
took him by the hand, and hard him twist So secretly, that no wight of it  
wist, And bade him be all whole; and forth she went To January, when he  
for her sent. Up rose Damian the nexte morrow, All passed was his sickness  
and his sorrow. He combed him, he proined <20> him and picked, He did all  
that unto his lady liked; And eke to January he went as low As ever did a  
dogge for the bow.<21> He is so pleasant unto every man (For craft is all,  
whoso that do it can), Every wight is fain to speak him good; And fully in his  
lady's grace he stood. Thus leave I Damian about his need, And in my tale  
forth I will proceed.

Some clerke\* holde that felicity \*writers, scholars Stands in  
delight; and therefore certain he, This noble January, with all his might In  
honest wise as longeth\* to a knight, \*belongeth Shope\* him to  
live full deliciously: \*prepared, arranged His housing, his array, as  
honestly\* \*honourably, suitably To his degree was maked as a  
king's. Amonges other of his honest things He had a garden walled all with  
stone; So fair a garden wot I nowhere none. For out of doubt I verily suppose  
That he that wrote the Romance of the Rose <22> Could not of it the beauty  
well devise;\* \*describe Nor Priapus <23> mighte not well  
suffice, Though he be god of gardens, for to tell The beauty of the garden,  
and the well\* \*fountain That stood under a laurel always  
green. Full often time he, Pluto, and his queen Proserpina, and all their

faerie, Disported them and made melody About that well, and danced, as  
men told. This noble knight, this January old Such dainty\* had in it to walk  
and play, \*pleasure That he would suffer no wight to bear the  
key, Save he himself, for of the small wicket He bare always of silver a  
cliket,\* \*key With which, when that him list, he it  
unshet.\* \*opened And when that he would pay his wife's debt, In  
summer season, thither would he go, And May his wife, and no wight but  
they two; And thinges which that were not done in bed, He in the garden  
them perform'd and sped. And in this wise many a merry day Lived this  
January and fresh May, But worldly joy may not always endure To January,  
nor to no creatucere.

O sudden hap! O thou fortune unstable! Like to the scorpion so deceivable,\*  
\*deceitful That fhatt' rest with thy head when thou wilt sting; Thy tail is  
death, through thine envenoming. O brittle joy! O sweete poison quaint!\*

\*strange O monster, that so subtilly canst paint Thy giftes, under hue of  
steadfastness, That thou deceivest bothe \*more and less!\* \*great and  
small\* Why hast thou January thus deceiv'd, That haddest him for thy full  
friend receiv'd? And now thou hast bereft him both his eye, For sorrow of  
which desireth he to dien. Alas! this noble January free, Amid his lust\* and  
his prosperity \*pleasure Is waxen blind, and that all  
suddenly. He weeped and he wailed piteously; And therewithal the fire of  
jealousy (Lest that his wife should fall in some folly) So burnt his hearte,  
that he woulde fain, That some man bothe him and her had slain; For  
neither after his death, nor in his life, Ne would he that she were no love nor  
wife, But ever live as widow in clothes black, Sole as the turtle that hath lost  
her make.\* \*mate But at the last, after a month or tway, His  
sorrow gan assuage, soothe to say. For, when he wist it might none other be,  
He patiently took his adversity: Save out of doubt he may not foregon That  
he was jealous evermore-in-one:\* \*continually Which jealousy  
was so outrageous, That neither in hall, nor in none other house, Nor in  
none other place never the mo' He woulde suffer her to ride or go, \*But if\*  
that he had hand on her alway. \*unless For which full often  
wepte freshe May, That loved Damian so burningly That she must either  
dien suddenly, Or elles she must have him as her lest:\*

\*pleased She waited\* when her hearte woulde brest.\*\* \*expected  
\*\*burst Upon that other side Damian Becomen is the sorrowfullest man  
That ever was; for neither night nor day He mighte speak a word to freshe  
May, As to his purpose, of no such mattere, \*But if\* that January must it  
hear, \*unless\* That had a hand upon her evermo'. But  
nathless, by writing to and fro, And privy signes, wist he what she meant,  
And she knew eke the fine\* of his intent. \*end, aim

O January, what might it thee avail, Though thou might see as far as  
 shippes sail? For as good is it blind deceiv'd to be, As be deceived when a  
 man may see. Lo, Argus, which that had a hundred eyen, <24> For all that  
 ever he could pore or pryen, Yet was he blent,\* and, God wot, so be mo',  
 \*deceived That \*weene wisly\* that it be not so:                    \*think confidently\*  
 Pass over is an ease, I say no more. This freshe May, of which I spake yore,\*  
 \*previously In warm wax hath \*imprinted the cliket\*                    \*taken an  
 impression That January bare of the small wicket                    of the key\*  
 By which into his garden oft he went; And Damian, that knew all her intent,  
 The cliket counterfeited privily; There is no more to say, but hastily Some  
 wonder by this cliket shall betide, Which ye shall hearen, if ye will abide.

O noble Ovid, sooth say'st thou, God wot, What sleight is it, if love be long  
 and hot, That he'll not find it out in some mannere? By Pyramus and Thisbe  
 may men lear;\*                    \*learn Though they were kept full long  
 and strait o'er all, They be accorded,\* rowning\*\* through a wall,                    \*agreed  
                   \*\*whispering Where no wight could have found out such a sleight. But  
 now to purpose; ere that dayes eight Were passed of the month of July, fill\*  
 \*it befell That January caught so great a will, Through egging\* of his wife,  
 him for to play                    \*inciting In his garden, and no wight but they  
 tway, That in a morning to this May said he: <25> "Rise up, my wife, my  
 love, my lady free; The turtle's voice is heard, mine owen sweet; The winter  
 is gone, with all his raines weet.\*                    \*wet Come forth now with  
 thine \*eyen columbine\*                    \*eyes like the doves\* Well fairer be thy breasts  
 than any wine. The garden is enclosed all about; Come forth, my white  
 spouse; for, out of doubt, Thou hast me wounded in mine heart, O wife: No  
 spot in thee was e'er in all thy life. Come forth, and let us taken our disport;  
 I choose thee for my wife and my comfort." Such olde lewed\* wordes used  
 he.                    \*foolish, ignorant On Damian a signe made she, That he  
 should go before with his cliket. This Damian then hath opened the wicket,  
 And in he start, and that in such mannere That no wight might him either  
 see or hear; And still he sat under a bush. Anon This January, as blind as is  
 a stone, With Maius in his hand, and no wight mo', Into this freshe garden  
 is y-go, And clapped to the wicket suddenly. "Now, wife," quoth he, "here is  
 but thou and I; Thou art the creature that I beste love: For, by that Lord  
 that sits in heav'n above, Lever\* I had to dien on a knife,  
 \*rather Than thee offende, deare true wife. For Godde's sake, think how I  
 thee chees,\*                    \*chose Not for no covetise\* doubteless,  
 \* covetousness But only for the love I had to thee. And though that I be old,  
 and may not see, Be to me true, and I will tell you why. Certes three thinges  
 shall ye win thereby: First, love of Christ, and to yourself honour, And all  
 mine heritage, town and tow'r. I give it you, make charters as you lest; This  
 shall be done to-morrow ere sun rest, So wisly\* God my soule bring to bliss!



worthy be thy wordes of memory To every wight that wit and reason can. \*  
 \*knows Thus praised he yet the bounte\* of man: \*goodness  
 'Among a thousand men yet found I one, But of all women found I never  
 none.' <27> Thus said this king, that knew your wickedness; And Jesus,  
 Filius Sirach, <28> as I guess, He spake of you but seldom reverence. A  
 wilde fire and corrupt pestilence So fall upon your bodies yet to-night! Ne  
 see ye not this honourable knight? Because, alas! that he is blind and old,  
 His owen man shall make him cuckold. Lo, where he sits, the lechour, in the  
 tree. Now will I granten, of my majesty, Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,  
 That he shall have again his eyen sight, When that his wife will do him  
 villainy; Then shall be knowen all her harlotry, Both in reproof of her and  
 other mo'." "Yea, Sir," quoth Proserpine," and will ye so? Now by my mother  
 Ceres' soul I swear That I shall give her suffisant answer, And alle women  
 after, for her sake; That though they be in any guilt y-take, With face bold  
 they shall themselves excuse, And bear them down that woulde them  
 accuse. For lack of answer, none of them shall dien.

All\* had ye seen a thing with both your eyen, \*although Yet shall  
 \*we visage it\* so hardily, \*confront it\* And weep, and swear,  
 and chide subtilly, That ye shall be as lewed\* as be geese. \*ignorant,  
 confounded What recketh me of your authorities? I wot well that this Jew,  
 this Solomon, Found of us women fooles many one: But though that he  
 founde no good woman, Yet there hath found many another man Women  
 full good, and true, and virtuous; Witness on them that dwelt in Christes  
 house; With martyrdom they proved their constance. The Roman gestes  
 <29> make remembrance Of many a very true wife also. But, Sire, be not  
 wroth, albeit so, Though that he said he found no good woman, I pray you  
 take the sentence\* of the man: \*opinion, real meaning He meant thus,  
 that in \*sovereign bounte\* \*perfect goodness Is none but God, no,  
 neither \*he nor she.\* \*man nor woman\* Hey, for the very God that  
 is but one, Why make ye so much of Solomon? What though he made a  
 temple, Godde's house? What though he were rich and glorious? So made he  
 eke a temple of false goddes; How might he do a thing that more forbode\* is?  
 \*forbidden Pardie, as fair as ye his name emplaster,\* \*plaster over,  
 "whitewash" He was a lechour, and an idolaster,\* \*idohater  
 And in his eld he very\* God forsook. \*the true And if that  
 God had not (as saith the book) Spared him for his father's sake, he should  
 Have lost his regne\* rather\*\* than he would. \*kingdom \*\*sooner I  
 \*sette not of\* all the villainy \*value not\* That he of women  
 wrote, a butterfly. I am a woman, needes must I speak, Or elles swell until  
 mine hearte break. For since he said that we be jangleresses,\*  
 \*chatterers As ever may I brooke\* whole my tresses, \*preserve  
 I shall not spare for no courtesy To speak him harm, that said us villainy."





\*whatever way God give you both one shame's death to dien! He swived\*  
 thee; I saw it with mine eyen;                      \*enjoyed carnally And elles be I  
 hanged by the halse."\*                                      \*neck "Then is," quoth she, "my  
 medicine all false; For certainly, if that ye mighte see, Ye would not say  
 these wordes unto me. Ye have some glimpsing,\* and no perfect sight."  
 \*glimmering "I see," quoth he, "as well as ever I might, (Thanked be God!)  
 with both mine eyen two, And by my faith me thought he did thee so." "Ye  
 maze,\* ye maze, goode Sir," quoth she;                      \*rave, areconfused "This  
 thank have I for I have made you see: Alas!" quoth she, "that e'er I was so  
 kind." "Now, Dame," quoth he, "let all pass out of mind; Come down, my  
 lefe,\* and if I have missaid,                                      \*love God help me so, as I am  
 \*evil apaid.\*                                      \*dissatisfied\* But, by my father's soul, I ween'd  
 have seen How that this Damian had by thee lain, And that thy smock had  
 lain upon his breast." "Yea, Sir," quoth she, "ye may \*ween as ye lest:\*\br/>
 \*think as you But, Sir, a man that wakes out of his sleep,  
 please\* He may not suddenly well take keep\*                                      \*notice  
 Upon a thing, nor see it perfectly, Till that he be adawed\* verily.  
 \*awakened Right so a man, that long hath blind y-be, He may not suddenly  
 so well y-see, First when his sight is newe come again, As he that hath a day  
 or two y-seen. Till that your sight establish'd be a while, There may full  
 many a sighte you beguile. Beware, I pray you, for, by heaven's king, Full  
 many a man weeneth to see a thing, And it is all another than it seemeth;  
 He which that misconceiveth oft misdeemeth." And with that word she leapt  
 down from the tree. This January, who is glad but he? He kissed her, and  
 clipped\* her full oft,                                      \*embraced And on her womb he stroked  
 her full soft; And to his palace home he hath her lad.\*                                      \*led  
 Now, goode men, I pray you to be glad. Thus endeth here my tale of  
 January, God bless us, and his mother, Sainte Mary.