

Notes to the Pardoner's Tale

1. The outline of this Tale is to be found in the "Cento Novelle Antiche," but the original is now lost. As in the case of the Wife of Bath's Tale, there is a long prologue, but in this case it has been treated as part of the Tale.

2. Hautein: loud, lofty; from French, "hautain."

3. Radix malorum est cupiditas: "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. vi. 10)

4. All had she taken priestes two or three: even if she had committed adultery with two or three priests.

5. Blackburied: The meaning of this is not very clear, but it is probably a periphrastic and picturesque way of indicating damnation.

6. Grisly: dreadful; fitted to "agrise" or horrify the listener.

7. Mr Wright says: "The common oaths in the Middle Ages were by the different parts of God's body; and the popular preachers represented that profane swearers tore Christ's body by their imprecations." The idea was doubtless borrowed from the passage in Hebrews (vi. 6), where apostates are said to "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame."

8. Tombesteres: female dancers or tumblers; from Anglo-Saxon, "tumban," to dance.

9. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Eph. v. 18.

10. The reference is probably to the diligent inquiries Herod made at the time of Christ's birth. See Matt. ii. 4-8

11. A drunkard. "Perhaps," says Tyrwhitt, "Chaucer refers to Epist. LXXXIII., 'Extende in plures dies illum ebrii habitum; nunquid de furore dubitabis? nunc quoque non est minor sed brevior.'" ("Prolong the drunkard's condition to several days; will you doubt his madness? Even as it is, the madness is no less; merely shorter.")

12. Defended: forbidden; French, "defendu." St Jerome, in his book against

Jovinian, says that so long as Adam fasted, he was in Paradise; he ate, and he was thrust out.

13. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them." 1 Cor. vi. 13.

14. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Phil. iii. 18, 19.

15. Cod: bag; Anglo-Saxon, "codde;" hence peas-cod, pin-cod (pin-cushion), &c.

16. Compare with the lines which follow, the picture of the drunken messenger in the Man of Law's Tale.

17. Lepe: A town near Cadiz, whence a stronger wine than the Gascon vintages afforded was imported to England. French wine was often adulterated with the cheaper and stronger Spanish.

18. Another reading is "Fleet Street."

19. Attila was suffocated in the night by a haemorrhage, brought on by a debauch, when he was preparing a new invasion of Italy, in 453.

20. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

21. Most manuscripts, evidently in error, have "Stilbon" and "Calidone" for Chilon and Lacedaemon. Chilon was one of the seven sages of Greece, and flourished about B.C. 590. According to Diogenes Laertius, he died, under the pressure of age and joy, in the arms of his son, who had just been crowned victor at the Olympic games.

22. "Swear not at all;" Christ's words in Matt. v. 34.

23. "And thou shalt swear, the lord liveth in truth, in judgement, and in righteousness." Jeremiah iv. 2

24. The nails that fastened Christ on the cross, which were regarded with superstitious reverence.

25. Hailes: An abbey in Gloucestershire, where, under the designation of "the blood of Hailes," a portion of Christ's blood was preserved.
26. Go bet: a hunting phrase; apparently its force is, "go beat up the game."
27. Haw; farm-yard, hedge Compare the French, "haie."
28. Avicen, or Avicenna, was among the distinguished physicians of the Arabian school in the eleventh century, and very popular in the Middle Ages. His great work was called "Canon Medicinæ," and was divided into "fens," "fennes," or sections.
29. Assoil: absolve. compare the Scotch law-term "assoilzie," to acquit.
30. Saint Helen, according to Sir John Mandeville, found the cross of Christ deep below ground, under a rock, where the Jews had hidden it; and she tested the genuineness of the sacred tree, by raising to life a dead man laid upon it.