

Notes to the Shipman's Tale

1. In this Tale Chaucer seems to have followed an old French story, which also formed the groundwork of the first story in the eighth day of the "Decameron."
2. "He must us clothe": So in all the manuscripts and from this and the following lines, it must be inferred that Chaucer had intended to put the Tale in the mouth of a female speaker.
3. Dan: a title bestowed on priests and scholars; from "Dominus," like the Spanish "Don".
4. Bruges was in Chaucer's time the great emporium of European commerce.
5. The monk had been appointed by his abbot to inspect and manage the rural property of the monastery.
6. Malvesie or Malmesey wine derived its name from Malvasia, a region of the Morea near Cape Malea, where it was made, as it also was on Chios and some other Greek islands. Vernage was "vernaccia", a sweet Italian wine.
7. Contour-house: counting-house; French, "comptoir."
8. Under the yarde: under the rod; in pupillage; a phrase properly used of children, but employed by the Clerk in the prologue to his tale. See note 1 to the Prologue to the Clerk's Tale.
9. Genelon, Ganelon, or Ganilion; one of Charlemagne's officers, whose treachery was the cause of the disastrous defeat of the Christians by the Saracens at Roncevalles; he was torn to pieces by four horses.
10. Elenge: From French, "eloigner," to remove; it may mean either the lonely, cheerless condition of the priest, or the strange behaviour of the merchant in leaving him to himself.
11. Make a chevisance: raise money by means of a borrowing agreement; from French, "achever," to finish; the general meaning of the word is a bargain, an agreement.