

## Notes to the Nun's Priest's Tale

1. The Tale of the Nun's Priest is founded on the fifth chapter of an old French metrical "Romance of Renard;" the same story forming one of the fables of Marie, the translator of the Breton Lays. (See note 2 to the Prologue to the Franklin's Tale.) Although Dryden was in error when he ascribed the Tale to Chaucer's own invention, still the materials on which he had to operate were out of comparison more trivial than the result.

2. Tyrwhitt quotes two statutes of Edward III, in which "deys" are included among the servants employed in agricultural pursuits; the name seems to have originally meant a servant who gave his labour by the day, but afterwards to have been appropriated exclusively to one who superintended or worked in a dairy.

3. Orgon: here licentiously used for the plural, "organs" or "orgons," corresponding to the plural verb "gon" in the next line.

4. Horloge: French, "clock."

5. Embattell'd: indented on the upper edge like the battlements of a castle.

6. My lefe is fare in land: This seems to have been the refrain of some old song, and its precise meaning is uncertain. It corresponds in cadence with the morning salutation of the cock; and may be taken as a greeting to the sun, which is beloved of Chanticleer, and has just come upon the earth -- or in the sense of a more local boast, as vaunting the fairness of his favourite hen above all others in the country round.

Transcriber's note: Later commentators explain "fare in land" as "gone abroad" and have identified the song:

My lefe is fare in lond Alas! Why is she so? And I am so sore bound I may not come her to. She hath my heart in hold Where ever she ride or go With true love a thousand-fold.

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7. "Avoi!" is the word here rendered "away!" It was frequently used in the French fabliaux, and the Italians employ the word "via!" in the same sense.

8. "Ne do no force of dreams:" "Somnia ne cares;" -- Cato "De Moribus," 1 ii, dist. 32
9. Centaury: the herb so called because by its virtue the centaur Chiron was healed when the poisoned arrow of Hercules had accidentally wounded his foot.
10. Fumetere: the herb "fumitory."
11. Catapuce: spurge; a plant of purgative qualities. To its name in the text correspond the Italian "catapuzza," and French "catapuce" -- words the origin of which is connected with the effects of the plant.
12. Gaitre-berries: dog-wood berries.
13. One of the greatest authors that men read: Cicero, who in his book "De Divinatione" tells this and the following story, though in contrary order and with many differences.
14. Haled or hylled; from Anglo-Saxon "helan" hid, concealed
15. Kenelm succeeded his father as king of the Saxon realm of Mercia in 811, at the age of seven years; but he was slain by his ambitious aunt Quendrada. The place of his burial was miraculously discovered, and he was subsequently elevated to the rank of a saint and martyr. His life is in the English "Golden Legend."
16. Mercenrike: the kingdom of Mercia; Anglo-Saxon, Myrcnarice. Compare the second member of the compound in the German, "Frankreich," France; "Oesterreich," Austria.
17. Cicero ("De Republica," lib. vi.) wrote the Dream of Scipio, in which the Younger relates the appearance of the Elder Africanus, and the counsels and exhortations which the shade addressed to the sleeper. Macrobius wrote an elaborate "Commentary on the Dream of Scipio," -- a philosophical treatise much studied and relished during the Middle Ages.
18. See the Monk's Tale for this story.
19. Andromache's dream will not be found in Homer; It is related in the book of the fictitious Dares Phrygius, the most popular authority during the Middle Ages for the history of the Trojan War.

20. In principio: In the beginning; the first words of Genesis and of the Gospel of John.
21. Mulier est hominis confusio: This line is taken from the same fabulous conference between the Emperor Adrian and the philosopher Secundus, whence Chaucer derived some of the arguments in praise of poverty employed in the Wife of Bath's Tale proper. See note 14 to the Wife of Bath's tale. The passage transferred to the text is the commencement of a description of woman. "Quid est mulier? hominis confusio," &c. ("What is Woman? A union with man", &c.)
22. Col-fox: a blackish fox, so called because of its likeness to coal, according to Skinner; though more probably the prefix has a reproachful meaning, and is in some way connected with the word "cold" as, some forty lines below, it is applied to the prejudicial counsel of women, and as frequently it is used to describe "sighs" and other tokens of grief, and "cares" or "anxieties."
23. Undern: In this case, the meaning of "evening" or "afternoon" can hardly be applied to the word, which must be taken to signify some early hour of the forenoon. See also note 4 to the Wife of Bath's tale and note 5 to the Clerk's Tale.
24. Ganilion: a traitor. See note 9 to the Shipman's Tale and note 28 to the Monk's Tale.
25. Greek Sinon: The inventor of the Trojan Horse. See note 14 to the Squire's Tale
26. Boulit it from the bren: Examine the matter thoroughly; a metaphor taken from the sifting of meal, to divide the fine flour from the bran.
27. Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury in the thirteenth century, who wrote a book, "De Causa Dei," in controversy with Pelagius; and also numerous other treatises, among them some on predestination.
28. In a popular mediaveal Latin treatise by one Theobaldus, entitled "Physiologus de Naturis XII. Animalium" ("A description of the nature of twelve animals"), sirens or mermaids are described as skilled in song, and drawing unwary mariners to destruction by the sweetness of their voices.
29. "Nigellus Wireker," says Urry's Glossary, "a monk and precentor of Canterbury, wrote a Latin poem intituled 'Speculum Speculorum,' ('The

mirror of mirrors') dedicated to William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, and Lord Chancellor; wherein, under the fable of an Ass (which he calls 'Burnellus') that desired a longer tail, is represented the folly of such as are not content with their own condition. There is introduced a tale of a cock, who having his leg broke by a priest's son (called Gundulfus) watched an opportunity to be revenged; which at last presented itself on this occasion: A day was appointed for Gundulfus's being admitted into holy orders at a place remote from his father's habitation; he therefore orders the servants to call him at first cock-crowing, which the cock overhearing did not crow at all that morning. So Gundulfus overslept himself, and was thereby disappointed of his ordination, the office being quite finished before he came to the place." Wireker's satire was among the most celebrated and popular Latin poems of the Middle Ages. The Ass was probably as Tyrwhitt suggests, called "Burnel" or "Brunel," from his brown colour; as, a little below, a reddish fox is called "Russel."

30. Flattour: flatterer; French, "flatteur."

31. Losengeour: deceiver, cozener; the word had analogues in the French "losengier," and the Spanish "lisongero." It is probably connected with "leasing," falsehood; which has been derived from Anglo-Saxon "hlisan," to celebrate -- as if it meant the spreading of a false renown

32. Dan Russel: Master Russet; a name given to the fox, from his reddish colour.

33. Geoffrey de Vinsauf was the author of a well-known mediaeval treatise on composition in various poetical styles of which he gave examples. Chaucer's irony is therefore directed against some grandiose and affected lines on the death of Richard I., intended to illustrate the pathetic style, in which Friday is addressed as "O Veneris lachrymosa dies" ("O tearful day of Venus").

34. "Priamum altaria ad ipsa trementem Traxit, et in multo lapsantem sanguine nati Implicuitque comam laeva, dextraque coruscum Extulit, ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit ensem. Haec finis Priami fatorum." ("He dragged Priam trembling to his own altar, slipping on the blood of his child; He took his hair in his left hand, and with the right drew the flashing sword, and hid it to the hilt [in his body]. Thus an end was made of Priam") - - Virgil, Aeneid. ii. 550.

35. Jack Straw: The leader of a Kentish rising, in the reign of Richard II, in 1381, by which the Flemish merchants in London were great sufferers.

36. Beams: trumpets; Anglo-Saxon, "bema."

37. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." -- 2 Tim. iii. 16.