

lie all fix'd adown, May in our working nothing us avail; For lost is all our labour and travail, And all the cost, a twenty devil way, Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

There is also full many another thing That is unto our craft appertaining, Though I by order them not rehearse can, Because that I am a lewed* man; *unlearned Yet will I tell them as they come to mind, Although I cannot set them in their kind, As sal-armoniac, verdigris, borace; And sundry vessels made of earth and glass; <4> Our urinales, and our descensories, Phials, and croslets, and sublimatories, Cucurbites, and alembikes eke, And other suche, *dear enough a leek,* *worth less than a leek* It needeth not for to rehearse them all. Waters rubifying, and bulles' gall, Arsenic, sal-armoniac, and brimstone, And herbes could I tell eke many a one, As egremoine,* valerian, and lunary,** *agrimony**moon-wort And other such, if that me list to tarry; Our lampes burning bothe night and day, To bring about our craft if that we may; Our furnace eke of calcination, And of waters albification, Unslaked lime, chalk, and *glair of an ey,* *egg-white Powders diverse, ashes, dung, piss, and clay, Seared pokettes,<5> saltpetre, and vitriol; And divers fires made of wood and coal; Sal-tartar, alkali, salt preparate, And combust matters, and coagulate; Clay made with horse and manne's hair, and oil Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, argoil,* *potter's clay<6> Rosalgar,* and other matters imbibing; *flowers of antimony And eke of our matters encorporing,* *incorporating And of our silver citrination, <7> Our cementing, and fermentation, Our ingots,* tests, and many thinges mo'. *moulds <8> I will you tell, as was me taught also, The foure spirits, and the bodies seven, By order, as oft I heard my lord them neven.* *name The first spirit Quicksilver called is; The second Orpiment; the third, y-wis, Sal-Armoniac, and the fourth Brimstone. The bodies sev'n eke, lo them here anon. Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe* *name <9> Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver we clepe;* *call Saturnus lead, and Jupiter is tin, And Venus copper, by my father's kin.

This cursed craft whoso will exercise, He shall no good have that him may suffice; For all the good he spendeth thereabout, He lose shall, thereof have I no doubt. Whoso that list to utter* his folly, *display Let him come forth and learn to multiply: And every man that hath aught in his coffer, Let him appear, and wax a philosopher; Ascaunce* that craft is so light to lear.** *as if **learn Nay, nay, God wot, all be he monk or frere, Priest or canon, or any other wight; Though he sit at his book both day and night; In learning of this *elvish nice* lore, *fantastic, foolish All is in vain; and pardie muche more, Is to learn a lew'd* man this subtlety; *ignorant Fie! speak not thereof, for it will not be.

And *conne he letterure,* or conne he none, *if he knows learning* As in effect, he shall it find all one; For bothe two, by my salvation, Concluden in multiplication* *transmutation by alchemy Alike well, when they have all y-do; This is to say, they faile bothe two. Yet forgot I to make rehearsale Of waters corrosive, and of limaile,* *metal filings And of bodies' mollification, And also of their induration, Oiles, ablutions, metal fusible, To tellen all, would passen any Bible That owhere* is; wherefore, as for the best, *anywhere Of all these names now will I me rest; For, as I trow, I have you told enough To raise a fiend, all look he ne'er sorough.

Ah! nay, let be; the philosopher's stone, Elixir call'd, we seeke fast each one; For had we him, then were we sicker* enow; *secure But unto God of heaven I make avow,* *confession For all our craft, when we have all y-do, And all our sleight, he will not come us to. He hath y-made us spende muche good, For sorrow of which almost we waxed wood,* *mad But that good hope creeped in our heart, Supposing ever, though we sore smart, To be relieved by him afterward. Such supposing and hope is sharp and hard. I warn you well it is to seeken ever. That future temps* hath made men dissever,** *time **part from In trust thereof, from all that ever they had, Yet of that art they cannot waxe sad,* *repentant For unto them it is a bitter sweet; So seemeth it; for had they but a sheet Which that they mighte wrap them in at night, And a bratt* to walk in by daylight, *cloak<10> They would them sell, and spend it on this craft; They cannot stint,* until no thing be laft. *cease And evermore, wherever that they gon, Men may them knowe by smell of brimstone; For all the world they stinken as a goat; Their savour is so rammish and so hot, That though a man a mile from them be, The savour will infect him, truste me. Lo, thus by smelling and threadbare array, If that men list, this folk they knowe may. And if a man will ask them privily, Why they be clothed so unthriftily,* *shabbily They right anon will rownen* in his ear, *whisper And sayen, if that they espied were, Men would them slay, because of their science: Lo, thus these folk betrayen innocence!

Pass over this; I go my tale unto. Ere that the pot be on the fire y-do* *placed Of metals, with a certain quantity My lord them tempers,* and no man but he *adjusts the proportions (Now he is gone, I dare say boldly); For as men say, he can do craftily, Algate* I wot well he hath such a name, *although And yet full oft he runneth into blame; And know ye how? full oft it happ'neth so, The pot to-breaks, and farewell! all is go'.* *gone These metals be of so great violence, Our walles may not make them resistance, *But if* they were wrought of lime

and stone; *unless* They pierce so, that through the wall they
gon; And some of them sink down into the ground (Thus have we lost by
times many a pound), And some are scatter'd all the floor about; Some leap
into the roof withoute doubt. Though that the fiend not in our sight him
show, I trowe that he be with us, that shrew;* *impious wretch
In helle, where that he is lord and sire, Is there no more woe, rancour, nor ire.
When that our pot is broke, as I have said, Every man chides, and holds him
evil apaid. *dissatisfied* Some said it was *long on* the fire-
making; *because of <1 1 > * Some saide nay, it was on the blowing
(Then was I fear'd, for that was mine office); "Straw!" quoth the third, "ye be
*lewed and **nice, *ignorant **foolish It was not temper'd* as it ought to
be." *mixed in due proportions "Nay," quoth the fourthe, "stint* and
hearken me; *stop Because our fire was not y-made of beech,
That is the cause, and other none, *so the'ch.* *so may I thrive* I
cannot tell whereon it was along, But well I wot great strife is us among."
"What?" quoth my lord, "there is no more to do'n, Of these perils I will
beware eftsoon.* *another time I am right sicker* that the pot
was crazed.** *sure **cracked Be as be may, be ye no thing amazed.*
confounded As usage is, let sweep the floor as swithe; *quickly
Pluck up your heartes and be glad and blithe."

The mullok* on a heap y-sweeped was, *rubbish And on
the floor y-cast a canevas, And all this mullok in a sieve y-throw, And sifted,
and y-picked manya throw.* *time "Pardie," quoth one,
"somewhat of our metal Yet is there here, though that we have not all. And
though this thing *mishapped hath as now,* *has gone amiss Another
time it may be well enow. at present* We muste *put our
good in adventure; * *risk our property* A merchant, pardie, may
not aye endure, Truste me well, in his prosperity: Sometimes his good is
drenched* in the sea, *drowned, sunk And sometimes comes it safe
unto the land." "Peace," quoth my lord; "the next time I will fand*
*endeavour To bring our craft *all in another plight,* *to a different
conclusion* And but I do, Sirs, let me have the wite;* *blame
There was default in somewhat, well I wot." Another said, the fire was over
hot. But be it hot or cold, I dare say this, That we concluden evermore
amiss; We fail alway of that which we would have; And in our madness
evermore we rave. And when we be together every one, Every man seemeth a
Solomon. But all thing, which that shineth as the gold, It is not gold, as I
have heard it told; Nor every apple that is fair at eye, It is not good, what so
men clap* or cry. *assert Right so, lo, fareth it amonges us.
He that the wisest seemeth, by Jesus, Is most fool, when it cometh to the
prefe;* *proof, test And he that seemeth truest, is a thief. That
shall ye know, ere that I from you wend; By that I of my tale have made an

nothing annoyeth me *I am not unwilling* To lend a man a noble, or
 two, or three, Or what thing were in my possession, When he so true is of
 condition, That in no wise he breake will his day; To such a man I never can
 say nay. "What," quoth this canon, "should I be untrue? Nay, that were
 thing y-fallen all of new! *a new thing to happen* Truth is a thing that I
 will ever keep, Unto the day in which that I shall creep Into my grave; and
 elles God forbid; Believe this as sicker* as your creed.
 *sure God thank I, and in good time be it said, That there was never man yet
 evil apaid *displeased, dissatisfied* For gold nor silver that he to me
 lent, Nor ever falsehood in mine heart I meant. And Sir," quoth he, "now of
 my privity, Since ye so goodly have been unto me, And kithed* to me so
 great gentleness, *shown Somewhat, to quite with your
 kindness, I will you shew, and if you list to lear,* *learn I
 will you teache plainly the mannere How I can worken in philosophy. Take
 good heed, ye shall well see *at eye* *with your own eye* That I will do
 a mas'try ere I go." "Yea," quoth the priest; "yea, Sir, and will ye so? Mary!
 thereof I pray you heartily." "At your commandement, Sir, truly," Quoth the
 canon, "and elles God forbid." Lo, how this thiefe could his service bedel!*
 *offer

Full sooth it is that such proffer'd service Stinketh, as witsesse *these olde
 wise;* *those wise folk of old* And that full soon I will it verify In this
 canon, root of all treachery, That evermore delight had and gladness (Such
 fiendly thoughtes *in his heart impress*) *press into his heart* How
 Christe's people he may to mischief bring. God keep us from his false
 dissimuling! What wiste this priest with whom that he dealt? Nor of his
 harm coming he nothing felt. O sely* priest, O sely innocent!
 simple With covetise anon thou shalt be blent; *blinded; beguiled
 O graceless, full blind is thy conceit! For nothing art thou ware of the deceit
 Which that this fox y-shapen* hath to thee; *contrived His wily
 wrenches* thou notmayest flee. *snares Wherefore, to go to
 the conclusioun That referreth to thy confusion, Unhappy man, anon I will
 me hie* *hasten To telle thine unwit* and thy folly,
 *stupidity And eke the falseness of that other wretch, As farforth as that my
 conning* will stretch. *knowledge This canon was my lord, ye
 woulde ween;* *imagine Sir Host, in faith, and by the
 heaven's queen, It was another canon, and not he, That can* an hundred
 fold more subtlety. *knows He hath betrayed folkes many a
 time; Of his falseness it doleth* me to rhyme. *paineth And
 ever, when I speak of his falsehead, For shame of him my cheekes waxe red;
 Algates* they beginne for to glow, *at least For redness
 have I none, right well I know, In my visage; for fumes diverse Of metals,
 which ye have me heard rehearse, Consumed have and wasted my redness.

Now take heed of this canon's cursedness.*

*villainy

"Sir," quoth he to the priest, "let your man gon For quicksilver, that we it had anon; And let him bringen ounces two or three; And when he comes, as faste shall ye see A wondrous thing, which ye saw ne'er ere this." "Sir," quoth the priest, "it shall be done, y-wis."* *certainly He bade his servant fetche him this thing, And he all ready was at his bidding, And went him forth, and came anon again With this quicksilver, shortly for to sayn; And took these ounces three to the canoun; And he them laide well and fair adown, And bade the servant coales for to bring, That he anon might go to his working. The coales right anon weren y-fet,* *fetch'd And this canon y-took a crosselet* *crucible Out of his bosom, and shew'd to the priest. "This instrument," quoth he, "which that thou seest, Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein Of this quicksilver an ounce, and here begin, In the name of Christ, to wax a philosopher. There be full few, which that I woulde proffer To shewe them thus much of my science; For here shall ye see by experience That this quicksilver I will mortify,<13> Right in your sight anon withoute lie, And make it as good silver, and as fine, As there is any in your purse, or mine, Or elleswhere; and make it malleable, And elles holde me false and unable Amonge folk for ever to appear. I have a powder here that cost me dear, Shall make all good, for it is cause of all My conning,* which that I you shewe shall.

knowledge Voide your man, and let him be thereout; *send away And shut the doore, while we be about Our privity, that no man us espy, While that we work in this phiosophy." All, as he bade, fulfilled was in deed. This ilke servant right anon out yede,* *went And his master y-shut the door anon, And to their labour speedily they gon.

This priest, at this cursed canon's bidding, Upon the fire anon he set this thing, And blew the fire, and busied him full fast. And this canon into the croslet cast A powder, I know not whereof it was Y-made, either of chalk, either of glass, Or somewhat elles, was not worth a fly, To blinden* with this priest; and bade him hie** *deceive **make haste The coales for to couchen* all above lay in order The croslet; "for, in token I thee love," Quoth this canon, "thine owen handes two Shall work all thing that here shall be do'." *Grand mercy,"* quoth the priest, and was full glad, *great thanks* And couch'd the coales as the canon bade. And while he busy was, this fiendly wretch, This false canon (the foule fiend him fetch), Out of his bosom took a beechen coal, In which full subtily was made a hole, And therein put was of silver limaile* *filings An ounce, and stopped was withoute fail The hole with wax, to keep the limaile in. And understande, that this false gin* *contrivance Was not made there, but it was made before; And other thinges I shall tell you more,

Hereafterward, which that he with him brought; Ere he came there, him to
 beguile he thought, And so he did, ere that they *went atwin,*
 separated Till he had turned him, could he not blin.* *cease
 <14> It doleth* me, when that I of him speak; *paineth On
 his falsehood fain would I me awreak,* *revenge myself If I wist
 how, but he is here and there; He is so variant,* he abides nowhere.
 *changeable

But take heed, Sirs, now for Godde's love. He took his coal, of which I spake
 above, And in his hand he bare it privily, And while the prieste couched
 busily The coales, as I tolde you ere this, This canon saide, "Friend, ye do
 amiss; This is not couched as it ought to be, But soon I shall amenden it,"
 quoth he. "Now let me meddle therewith but a while, For of you have I pity,
 by Saint Gile. Ye be right hot, I see well how ye sweat; Have here a cloth,
 and wipe away the wet." And while that the prieste wip'd his face, This
 canon took his coal, -- *with sorry grace,* -- *evil fortune And layed it
 above on the midward attend him!* Of the croslet, and blew
 well afterward, Till that the coals beganne fast to brenn.*
 burn "Now give us drinke," quoth this canon then, "And swithe all shall be
 well, I undertake. *quickly Sitte we down, and let us merry
 make." And whenne that this canon's beechen coal Was burnt, all the
 limaile out of the hole Into the crosselet anon fell down; And so it muste
 needes, by reasoun, Since it above so *even couched* was;
 exactly laid But thereof wist the priest no thing, alas! He deemed all the
 coals alike good, For of the sleight he nothing understood.

And when this alchemister saw his time, "Rise up, Sir Priest," quoth he,
 "and stand by me; And, for I wot well ingot* have ye none;
 *mould Go, walke forth, and bring me a chalk stone; For I will make it of the
 same shape That is an ingot, if I may have hap. Bring eke with you a bowl,
 or else a pan, Full of water, and ye shall well see than* *then
 How that our business shall *hap and preve* *succeed* And yet,
 for ye shall have no misbelieve* *mistrust Nor wrong conceit of
 me, in your absence, I wille not be out of your presence, But go with you,
 and come with you again." The chamber-doore, shortly for to sayn, They
 opened and shut, and went their way, And forth with them they carried the
 key; And came again without any delay. Why should I tarry all the longe
 day? He took the chalk, and shap'd it in the wise Of an ingot, as I shall you
 devise;* *describe I say, he took out of his owen sleeve A
 teine* of silver (evil may he chevel**) *little piece **prosper Which that
 ne was but a just ounce of weight. And take heed now of his cursed sleight;
 He shap'd his ingot, in length and in brede* *breadth Of this
 teine, withouten any drede,* *doubt So slily, that the

Too simple is my tongue to pronounce, As minister of my wit, the
doubleness Of this canon, root of all cursedness. He friendly seem'd to them
that knew him not; But he was fiendly, both in work and thought. It
wearerth me to tell of his falseness; And natheless yet will I it express, To
that intent men may beware thereby, And for none other cause truly. He
put this copper in the crosselet, And on the fire as swithe* he hath it set,
*swiftly And cast in powder, and made the priest to blow, And in his working
for to stoope low, As he did erst,* and all was but a jape;** *before
**trick Right as him list the priest *he made his ape.* *befooled him*
And afterward in the ingot he it cast, And in the pan he put it at the last Of
water, and in he put his own hand; And in his sleeve, as ye beforehand
Hearde me tell, he had a silver teine;* *small piece He silly took
it out, this cursed heine* *wretch (Unweeting* this priest of
his false craft), *unsuspecting And in the panne's bottom he it laft*
*left And in the water rumbleth to and fro, And wondrous privily took up
also The copper teine (not knowing thilke priest), And hid it, and him hente*
by the breast, *took And to him spake, and thus said in his
game; "Stoop now adown; by God, ye be to blame; Helpe me now, as I did
you whilere;* *before Put in your hand, and looke what is
there."

This priest took up this silver teine anon; And thenne said the canon, "Let
us gon, With these three teines which that we have wrought, To some
goldsmith, and *weet if they be aught:* *find out if they are For, by my
faith, I would not for my hood worth anything* *But if* they were
silver fine and good, *unless And that as swithe* well proved
shall it be." *quickly Unto the goldsmith with these teines three
They went anon, and put them in assay* *proof To fire and
hammer; might no man say nay, But that they weren as they ought to be.
This sotted* priest, who gladder was than he? *stupid, besotted Was
never bird gladder against the day; Nor nightingale in the season of May
Was never none, that better list to sing; Nor lady lustier in carolling, Or for
to speak of love and womanhead; Nor knight in arms to do a hardy deed, To
standen in grace of his lady dear, Than had this priest this craft for to lear;
And to the canon thus he spake and said; "For love of God, that for us alle
died, And as I may deserve it unto you, What shall this receipt coste? tell me
now." "By our Lady," quoth this canon, "it is dear. I warn you well, that, save
I and a frere, In Engleland there can no man it make." *"No force,"* quoth
he; "now, Sir, for Godde's sake, *no matter What shall I pay? telle me,
I you pray." "Y-wis,"* quoth he, "it is full dear, I say. *certainly
Sir, at one word, if that you list it have, Ye shall pay forty pound, so God me
save; And n'ere* the friendship that ye did ere this *were it not for To
me, ye shoulde paye more, y-wis." This priest the sum of forty pound anon

Of nobles fet,* and took them every one *fetched To this
 canon, for this ilke receipt. All his working was but fraud and deceit. "Sir
 Priest," he said, "I keep* to have no los** *care **praise <16> Of my craft,
 for I would it were kept close; And as ye love me, keep it secre: For if men
 knewen all my subtlety, By God, they woulde have so great envy To me,
 because of my philosophy, I should be dead, there were no other way." "God
 it forbid," quoth the priest, "what ye say. Yet had I lever* spenden all the
 good *rather Which that I have (and elles were I wood*),
 *mad Than that ye shoulde fall in such mischief." "For your good will, Sir,
 have ye right good prefe,"* *results of your Quoth the canon; "and farewell,
 grand mercy." *experiments* He went his way, and never the priest
 him sey * *saw After that day; and when that this priest should
 Maken assay, at such time as he would, Of this receipt, farewell! it would
 not be. Lo, thus bejaped* and beguil'd was he; *tricked Thus
 made he his introduction To bringe folk to their destruction.

Consider, Sirs, how that in each estate Betwixte men and gold there is
 debate, So farforth that *unnethes is there none.* *scarcely is there any*
 This multiplying blint* so many a one, *blinds, deceive That in
 good faith I trowe that it be The cause greatest of such scarcity. These
 philosophers speak so mistily In this craft, that men cannot come thereby,
 For any wit that men have how-a-days. They may well chatter, as do these
 jays, And in their termes set their *lust and pain,* *pleasure and exertion*
 But to their purpose shall they ne'er attain. A man may lightly* learn, if he
 have aught, *easily To multiply, and bring his good to naught.
 Lo, such a lucre* is in this lusty** game; *profit **pleasant A manne's
 mirth it will turn all to grame,* *sorrow <17> And empty also
 great and heavy purses, And make folke for to purchase curses Of them that
 have thereto their good y-lent. Oh, fy for shame! they that have been brent,*
 burnt Alas! can they not flee the fire's heat? Ye that it use, I rede that ye it
 lete,** *advise **leave Lest ye lose all; for better than never is late;
 Never to thrive, were too long a date. Though ye prowle aye, ye shall it never
 find; Ye be as bold as is Bayard the blind, That blunders forth, and *peril
 casteth none;* *perceives no danger* He is as bold to run against a stone,
 As for to go beside it in the way: So fare ye that multiply, I say. If that your
 eyen cannot see aright, Look that your minde lacke not his sight. For though
 you look never so broad, and stare, Ye shall not win a mite on that
 chaffare,* *traffic, commerce But wasten all that ye may *rape and
 renn.* *get by hook or crook* Withdraw the fire, lest it too faste brenn; *
 burn Meddle no more with that art, I mean; For if ye do, your thrift is gone
 full clean. *prosperity And right as swithe* I will you telle here
 *quickly What philosophers say in this mattere.

Lo, thus saith Arnold of the newe town, <18> As his Rosary maketh
mentiou, He saith right thus, withouten any lie; "There may no man
mercury mortify, <13> But* it be with his brother's knowledging."
*except Lo, how that he, which firste said this thing, Of philosophers father
was, Hermes;<19> He saith, how that the dragon doubtless He dieth not,
but if that he be slain With his brother. And this is for to sayn, By the
dragon, Mercury, and none other, He understood, and Brimstone by his
brother, That out of Sol and Luna were y-draw.* *drawn, derived
"And therefore," said he, "take heed to my saw. *saying Let no
man busy him this art to seech,* *study, explore *But if* that he
th'intention and speech *unless Of philosophers
understande can; And if he do, he is a lewed* man. *ignorant,
foolish For this science and this conning,* quoth he, *knowledge
"Is of the secret of secrets <20> pardie." Also there was a disciple of Plato,
That on a time said his master to, As his book, Senior, <21> will bear
witness, And this was his demand in soothfastness: "Tell me the name of
thilke* privy** stone." *that **secret And Plato answer'd unto him
anon; "Take the stone that Titanos men name." "Which is that?" quoth he.
"Magnesia is the same," Saide Plato. "Yea, Sir, and is it thus? This is
ignotum per ignotius. <22> What is Magnesia, good Sir, I pray?" "It is a
water that is made, I say, Of th' elementes foure," quoth Plato. "Tell me the
roote, good Sir," quoth he tho,* *then "Of that water, if that it
be your will." "Nay, nay," quoth Plato, "certain that I n'ill.* *will not
The philosophers sworn were every one, That they should not discover it to
none, Nor in no book it write in no mannere; For unto God it is so lefe* and
dear, *precious That he will not that it discover'd be, But
where it liketh to his deity Man for to inspire, and eke for to defend'*
*protect Whom that he liketh; lo, this is the end."

Then thus conclude I, since that God of heaven Will not that these
philosophers neven* *name How that a man shall come
unto this stone, I rede* as for the best to let it gon. *counsel
For whoso maketh God his adversary, As for to work any thing in contrary
Of his will, certes never shall he thrive, Though that he multiply term of his
live. <23> And there a point;* for ended is my tale. *end
God send ev'ry good man *boot of his bale.* *remedy for his sorrow*