

THE END OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

THE COURT OF LOVE.

"The Court Of Love" was probably Chaucer's first poem of any consequence. It is believed to have been written at the age, and under the circumstances, of which it contains express mention; that is, when the poet was eighteen years old, and resided as a student at Cambridge, -- about the year 1346. The composition is marked by an elegance, care, and finish very different from the bold freedom which in so great measure distinguishes the Canterbury Tales; and the fact is easily explained when we remember that, in the earlier poem, Chaucer followed a beaten path, in which he had many predecessors and competitors, all seeking to sound the praises of love with the grace, the ingenuity, and studious devotion, appropriate to the theme. The story of the poem is exceedingly simple. Under the name of Philogenet, a clerk or scholar of Cambridge, the poet relates that, summoned by Mercury to the Court of Love, he journeys to the splendid castle where the King and Queen of Love, Admetus and Alcestis, keep their state. Discovering among the courtiers a friend named Philobone, a chamberwoman to the Queen, Philogenet is led by her into a circular temple, where, in a tabernacle, sits Venus, with Cupid by her side. While he is surveying the motley crowd of suitors to the goddess, Philogenet is summoned back into the King's presence, chidden for his tardiness in coming to Court, and commanded to swear observance to the twenty Statutes of Love -- which are recited at length. Philogenet then makes his prayers and vows to Venus, desiring that he may have for his love a lady whom he has seen in a dream; and Philobone introduces him to the lady herself, named Rosial, to whom he does suit and service of love. At first the lady is obdurate to his entreaties; but, Philogenet having proved the sincerity of his passion by a fainting fit, Rosial relents, promises her favour, and orders Philobone to conduct him round the Court. The courtiers are then minutely described; but the description is broken off abruptly, and we are introduced to Rosial in the midst of a confession of her love. Finally she commands Philogenet to abide with her until the First of May, when the King of Love will hold high festival; he obeys; and the poem closes with the May Day festival service, celebrated by a choir of birds, who sing an ingenious, but what must have seemed in those days a more than slightly profane, paraphrase or parody of the matins

Thy sugar droppes sweet of Helicon Distil in me, thou gentle Muse, I pray;
And thee, Melpomene, <6> I call anon Of ignorance the mist to chase away;
And give me grace so for to write and say, That she, my lady, of her
worthiness, Accept *in gree* this little short treatess,* *with favour*
*treatise

That is entitled thus, The Court of Love. And ye that be metricians,* me
excuse, *skilled versifiers I you beseech, for Venus' sake above; For
what I mean in this ye need not muse: And if so be my lady it refuse For
lack of ornate speech, I would be woe That I presume to her to write so.

But my intent, and all my busy cure,* *care Is for to write
this treatise, as I can, Unto my lady, stable, true, and sure, Faithful and
kind, since first that she began Me to accept in service as her man; To her
be all the pleasure of this book, That, when *her like,* she may it read and
look. *it pleases her*

When [he] was young, at eighteen year of age, Lusty and light, desirous of
pleasance, Approaching* full sad and ripe corage,<7> *gradually
attaining

Then -- says the poet -- did Love urge him to do him obeisance, and to go
"the Court of Love to see, a lite [little] beside the Mount of Citharee." <8>
Mercury bade him, on pain of death, to appear; and he went by strange and
far countries in search of the Court. Seeing at last a crowd of people, "as
bees," making their way thither, the poet asked whither they went; and "one
that answer'd like a maid" said that they were bound to the Court of Love, at
Citheron, where "the King of Love, and all his noble rout [company],

"Dwelleth within a castle royally." So them apace I journey'd forth among,
And as he said, so found I there truly; For I beheld the town -- so high and
strong, And high pinnacles, large of height and long, With plate of gold
bespread on ev'ry side, And precious stones, the stone work for to hide.

No sapphire of Ind, no ruby rich of price, There lacked then, nor emerald so
green, Balais, Turkeis, <9> nor thing, *to my devise,* *in my judgement*
That may the castle make for to sheen;* *be beautiful Allwas as
bright as stars in winter be'n; And Phoebus shone, to make his peace again,
For trespass* done to high estates twain, -- *offence

When he had found Venus in the arms of Mars, and hastened to tell Vulcan
of his wife's infidelity <10>. Now he was shining brightly on the castle, "in
sign he looked after Love's grace;" for there is no god in Heaven or in Hell

"but he hath been right subject unto Love." Continuing his description of the castle, Philogenet says that he saw never any so large and high; within and without, it was painted "with many a thousand daisies, red as rose," and white also, in signification of whom, he knew not; unless it was the flower of Alcestis <11>, who, under Venus, was queen of the place, as Admetus was king;

To whom obey'd the ladies good nineteen <12>, With many a thousand other, bright of face. And young men fele* came forth with lusty pace, *many <13> And aged eke, their homage to dispose; But what they were, I could not well disclose.

Yet nere* and nere* forth in I gan me dress, *nearer Into a hall of noble apparail,* *furnishings With arras <14> spread, and cloth of gold, I guess, And other silk *of easier avail;* *less difficult, costly, to attain* Under the *cloth of their estate,* sans fail, *state canopy* The King and Queen there sat, as I beheld; It passed joy of *Elysee the feld.* *The Elysian Fields*

There saintes* have their coming and resort, *martyrs for love To see the King so royally beseen,* *adorned In purple clad, and eke the Queen *in sort;* *suitably* And on their heades saw I crownes twain, With stones frett,* so that it was no pain, *adorned Withoute meat or drink, to stand and see The Kinge's honour and the royalty.

To treat of state affairs, Danger <15> stood by the King, and Disdain by the Queen; who cast her eyes haughtily about, sending forth beams that seemed "shapen like a dart, sharp and piercing, and small and straight of line;" while her hair shone as gold so fine, "dishevel, crisp, down hanging at her back a yard in length." <16> Amazed and dazzled by her beauty, Philogenet stood perplexed, till he spied a Maid, Philobone -- a chamberwoman of the Queen's -- who asked how and on what errand he came thither. Learning that he had been summoned by Mercury, she told him that he ought to have come of his free will, and that he "will be shent [rebuked, disgraced]" because he did not.

"For ye that reign in youth and lustiness, Pamper'd with ease, and jealous in your age, Your duty is, as far as I can guess, To Love's Court to dresse* your voyage, *direct, address As soon as Nature maketh you so sage That ye may know a woman from a swan, <17> Or when your foot is grown half a span.

"But since that ye, by wilful negligence, This eighteen year have kept
yourself at large, The greater is your trespass and offence, And in your neck
you must bear all the charge: For better were ye be withoute barge*
*boat Amid the sea in tempest and in rain, Than bide here, receiving woe
and pain

"That ordained is for such as them absent From Love's Court by yeares long
and fele.* many I lay* my life ye shall full soon repent;
wager For Love will rive your colour, lust, and heal: *health Eke
ye must bait* on many a heavy meal: *feed *No force,* y-
wis; I stirr'd you long ago *no matter* To draw to Court," quoth
little Philobone.

"Ye shall well see how rough and angry face The King of Love will show,
when ye him see; By mine advice kneel down and ask him grace,
Eschewing* peril and adversity; *avoiding For well I wot
it will none other be; Comfort is none, nor counsel to your ease; Why will ye
then the King of Love displease?"

Thereupon Philogenet professed humble repentance, and willingness to bear
all hardship and chastisement for his past offence.

These wordes said, she caught me by the lap,* *edge of the garment And
led me forth into a temple round, Both large and wide; and, as my blessed
hap And good. adventure was, right soon I found A tabernacle <18> raised
from the ground, Where Venus sat, and Cupid by her side; Yet half for dread
I gan my visage hide.

And eft* again I looked and beheld, *afterwards Seeing *full
sundry people* in the place, *people of many sorts* And *mister folk,*
and some that might not weld *craftsmen <19>* Their limbes well, --
me thought a wonder case. *use The temple shone with
windows all of glass, Bright as the day, with many a fair image; And there I
saw the fresh queen of Carthage,

Dido, that brent* her beauty for the love *burnt Of false
Aeneas; and the waimenting* *lamenting Of her, Annelide,
true as turtle dove To Arcite false; <20> and there was in painting Of many a
Prince, and many a doughty King, Whose martyrdom was show'd about the
walls; And how that fele* for love had suffer'd falls.** *many **calamities

Philogenet was astonished at the crowd of people that he saw, doing
sacrifice to the god and goddess. Philobone informed him that they came

from other courts; those who knelt in blue wore the colour in sign of their changeless truth <21>; those in black, who uttered cries of grief, were the sick and dying of love. The priests, nuns, hermits, and friars, and all that sat in white, in russet and in green, "wailed of their woe;" and for all people, of every degree, the Court was open and free. While he walked about with Philobone, a messenger from the King entered, and summoned all the new-come folk to the royal presence. Trembling and pale, Philogenet approached the throne of Admetus, and was sternly asked why he came so late to Court. He pleaded that a hundred times he had been at the gate, but had been prevented from entering by failure to see any of his acquaintances, and by shamefacedness. The King pardoned him, on condition that thenceforth he should serve Love; and the poet took oath to do so, "though Death therefor me thirle [pierce] with his spear." When the King had seen all the new-comers, he commanded an officer to take their oaths of allegiance, and show them the Statutes of the Court, which must be observed till death.

And, for that I was letter'd, there I read The statutes whole of Love's Court and hail: The first statute that on the book was spread, Was, To be true in thought and deedes all Unto the King of Love, the lord royal; And, to the Queen, as faithful and as kind As I could think with hearte, will, and mind.

The second statute, Secretly to keep Counsel* of love, not blowing** ev'rywhere *secrets **talking All that I know, and let it sink and fleet;* *float It may not sound in ev'ry wighte's ear: Exiling slander ay for dread and fear, And to my lady, which I love and serve, Be true and kind, her grace for to deserve.

The third statute was clearly writ also, Without change to live and die the same, None other love to take, for weal nor woe, For blind delight, for earnest nor for game: Without repent, for laughing or for grame,* *vexation, sorrow To bide still in full perseverance: All this was whole the Kinge's ordinance.

The fourth statute, To *purchase ever to her,* *promote her cause* And stirre folk to love, and bete* fire *kindle On Venus' altar, here about and there, And preach to them of love and hot desire, And tell how love will quite* well their hire: *reward This must be kept; and loth me to displease: If love be wroth, pass; for thereby is ease.

The fifth statute, Not to be dangerous,* *fastidious, angry If that a thought would reave* me of my sleep: *deprive Nor of a sight to be over squaimous;* *desirous And so verily this statute was to keep, To turn and wallow in my bed and weep, When that my lady, of

her cruelty, Would from her heart exilen all pity.

The sixth statute, It was for me to use Alone to wander, void of company,
And on my lady's beauty for to muse, And thinken it *no force* to live or die;
matter of indifference And eft again to think* the remedy,
*think upon How to her grace I might anon attain, And tell my woe unto my
sovereign.

The sev'nth statute was, To be patient, Whether my lady joyful were or
wroth; For wordes glad or heavy, diligent, Whether that she me helde *lefe or
loth:* *in love or loathing* And hereupon I put was to mine oath, Her
for to serve, and lowly to obey, And show my cheer,* yea, twenty times a
day. *countenance

The eighth statute, to my rememberance, Was, For to speak and pray my
lady dear, With hourly labour and great entendance,*
attention Me for to love with all her heart entere, *entire And
me desire and make me joyful cheer, Right as she is, surmounting every fair;
Of beauty well,* and gentle debonair. *the fountain

The ninth statute, with letters writ of gold, This was the sentence, How that
I and all Should ever dread to be too overbold Her to displease; and truly so
I shall; But be content for all thing that may fall, And meekly take her
chastisement and yerd,* *rod, rule And to offend her ever be
afear'd.

The tenth statute was, Equally* to discern *justly Between the
lady and thine ability, And think thyself art never like to earn, By right, her
mercy nor her equity, But of her grace and womanly pity: For, though
thyself be noble in thy strene,* *strain, descent A thousand fold more
noble is thyQueen.

Thy life's lady and thy sovereign, That hath thine heart all whole in
governance, Thou may'st no wise it take to disdain, To put thee humbly at
her ordinance, And give her free the rein of her pleasance; For liberty is
thing that women look,* *look for, desire And truly else *the
matter is a crook.* *things go wrong*

Th' eleventh statute, Thy signes for to know With eye and finger, and with
smiles soft, And low to couch, and alway for to show, For dread of spies, for
to winken oft: And secretly to bring a sigh aloft, But still beware of over
much resort; For that peradventure spoileth all thy sport.

The twelfth statute remember to observe: For all the pain thou hast for love
and woe, All is too lite* her mercy to deserve, *little Thou
muste think, where'er thou ride or go; And mortal woundes suffer thou also,
All for her sake, and think it well beset* *spent Upon thy love,
for it may not be bet.* *better (spent)

The thirteenth statute, Whilom is to think What thing may best thy lady like
and please, And in thine hearte's bottom let it sink: Some thing devise, and
take for it thine ease, And send it her, that may her heart appease: Some
heart, or ring, or letter, or device, Or precious stone; but spare not for no
price.

The fourteenth statute eke thou shalt assay Firmly to keep, the most part of
thy life: Wish that thy lady in thine armes lay, And nightly dream, thou hast
thy nighte's wife Sweetly in armes, straining her as blife:* *eagerly
<22> And, when thou seest it is but fantasy, See that thou sing not over
merrily;

For too much joy hath oft a woeful end. It *longeth eke this statute for to
hold,* *it belongs to the proper To deem thy lady evermore thy friend,
observance of this statute* And think thyself in no wise a cuckold. In ev'ry
thing she doth but as she sho'ld: Construe the best, believe no tales new,
For many a lie is told, that seems full true.

But think that she, so bounteous and fair, Could not be false: imagine this
algate;* *at all events And think that wicked tongues would her
apair,* *defame Sland'ring her name and *worshipful estate,*
honourable fame And lovers true to setten at debate: And though thou
seest a fault right at thine eye, Excuse it blife, and glose* it prettily.
*gloss it over

The fifteenth statute, Use to swear and stare, And counterfeit a leasing*
hardily,** *falsehood **boldly To save thy lady's honour
ev'rywhere, And put thyself for her to fight boldly; Say she is good, virtuous,
and ghostly,* *spiritual, pure Clear of intent, and heart, and
thought, and will; And argue not for reason nor for skill

Against thy lady's pleasure nor intent, For love will not be counterpled*
indeed: *met with counterpleas Say as she saith, then shalt thou not
be shent;* *disgraced "The crow is white;" "Yea truly, so I rede:"*
*judge And aye what thing that she will thee forbid, Eschew all that, and
give her sov'reignty, Her appetite to follow in all degree.

The sixteenth statute, keep it if thou may: <23> Sev'n times at night thy lady
for to please, And sev'n at midnight, sev'n at morrow day, And drink a
caudle early for thine ease. Do this, and keep thine head from all disease,
And win the garland here of lovers all, That ever came in Court, or ever
shall.

Full few, think I, this statute hold and keep; But truly this my reason *gives
me feel,* *enables me to perceive* That some lovers should rather fall
asleep, Than take on hand to please so oft and weel.* *well
There lay none oath to this statute adele,* *annexed But keep
who might *as gave him his corage:* *as his heart Now get this
garland, folk of lusty age! inspired him*

Now win who may, ye lusty folk of youth, This garland fresh, of flowers red
and white, Purple and blue, and colours full uncouth,* *strange
And I shall crown him king of all delight! In all the Court there was not, to
my sight, A lover true, that he was not adread, When he express* had heard
the statute read. *plainly

The sev'nteenth statute, When age approacheth on, And lust is laid, and all
the fire is queint,* *quenched As freshly then thou shalt begin to
fon,* *behave fondly And doat in love, and all her image paint In
thy remembrance, till thou gin to faint, As in the first season thine heart
began: And her desire, though thou nor may nor can

Perform thy living actual and lust; Register this in thine remembrance: Eke
when thou may'st not keep thy thing from rust, Yet speak and talk of
pleasant dalliance; For that shall make thine heart rejoice and dance; And
when thou may'st no more the game assay, The statute bids thee pray for
them that may.

The eighteenth statute, wholly to commend, To please thy lady, is, That thou
eschew With sluttishness thyself for to offend; Be jolly, fresh, and feat,* with
things new, *dainty <24> Courtly with manner, this is all thy due,
Gentle of port, and loving cleanliness; This is the thing that liketh thy
mistress.

And not to wander like a dulled ass, Ragged and torn, disguised in array,
Ribald in speech, or out of measure pass, Thy bound exceeding; think on
this alway: For women be of tender heartes ay, And lightly set their pleasure
in a place; When they misthink,* they lightly let it pace. *think
wrongly

The nineteenth statute, Meat and drink forget: Each other day see that thou fast for love, For in the Court they live withoute meat, Save such as comes from Venus all above; They take no heed, *in pain of great reprove,* *on pain of great Of meat and drink, for that is all in vain, reproach* Only they live by sight of their sov'reign.

The twentieth statute, last of ev'ry one, Enrol it in thy heart's privity; To wring and wail, to turn, and sigh, and groan, When that thy lady absent is from thee; And eke renew the wordes all that she Between you twain hath said, and all the cheer That thee hath made thy life's lady dear.

And see thy heart in quiet nor in rest Sojourn, till time thou see thy lady eft,* *again But whe'er* she won** by south, or east, or west, *whether **dwell With all thy force now see it be not left Be diligent, *till time* thy life be reft, *until the time that* In that thou may'st, thy lady for to see; This statute was of old antiquity.

The officer, called Rigour -- who is incorruptible by partiality, favour, prayer, or gold -- made them swear to keep the statutes; and, after taking the oath, Philogenet turned over other leaves of the book, containing the statutes of women. But Rigour sternly bade him forbear; for no man might know the statutes that belong to women.

"In secret wise they kepte be full close; They sound* each one to liberty, my friend; *tend, accord Pleasant they be, and to their own purpose; There wot* no wight of them, but God and fiend, *knows Nor aught shall wit, unto the worlde's end. The queen hath giv'n me charge, in pain to die, Never to read nor see them with mine eye.

"For men shall not so near of counsel be'n With womanhead, nor knowen of their guise, Nor what they think, nor of their wit th'engine;* *craft *I me report to* Solomon the wise, <25> *I refer for proof to* And mighty Samson, which beguiled thrice With Delilah was; he wot that, in a throw, There may no man statute of women know.

"For it peradventure may right so befall, That they be bound by nature to deceive, And spin, and weep, and sugar strew on gall, <26> The heart of man to ravish and to reave, And whet their tongue as sharp as sword or gleve:* *glaive, sword It may betide this is their ordinance, So must they lowly do their observance,

"And keep the statute given them *of kind,* *by nature* Of such as Love hath giv'n them in their life. Men may not wit why turneth every

may say, I love, and wot* not where."

*know

If he could only know this lady, he would serve and obey her with all benignity; but if his destiny were otherwise, he would gladly love and serve his lady, whosoever she might be. He called on Venus for help to possess his queen and heart's life, and vowed daily war with Diana: "that goddess chaste I keepen [care] in no wise to serve; a fig for all her chastity!" Then he rose and went his way, passing by a rich and beautiful shrine, which, Philobone informed him, was the sepulchre of Pity. "A tender creature," she said,

"Is shrined there, and Pity is her name. She saw an eagle wreak* him on a fly,
*avenge And pluck his wing, and eke him, *in his
game;* *for sport* And tender heart of that hath made her die: Eke
she would weep, and mourn right piteously, To see a lover suffer great
distress. In all the Court was none, as I do guess,

"That could a lover half so well avail,* *help Nor of his woe
the torment or the rage Aslake;* for he was sure, withoute fail,
*assuage That of his grief she could the heat assuage. Instead of Pity,
speedeth hot Courage The matters all of Court, now she is dead; *I me
report in this to womanhead.* *for evidence I refer to the
behaviour of women themselves.*

"For wail, and weep, and cry, and speak, and pray, -- Women would not
have pity on thy plaint; Nor by that means to ease thine heart convey, But
thee receive for their own talent:* *inclination And say that Pity
caus'd thee, in consent Of ruth,* to take thy service and thy pain,
*compassion In that thou may'st, to please thy sovereign."

Philobone now promised to lead Philogenet to "the fairest lady under sun
that is," the "mirror of joy and bliss," whose name is Rosial, and "whose
heart as yet is given to no wight;" suggesting that, as he also was "with love
but light advanc'd," he might set this lady in the place of her of whom he
had dreamed. Entering a chamber gay, "there was Rosial, womanly to see;"
and the subtle-piercing beams of her eyes wounded Philogenet to the heart.
When he could speak, he threw himself on his knees, beseeching her to cool
his fervent woe:

For there I took full purpose in my mind, Unto her grace my painful heart to
bind.

For, if I shall all fully her describe,*

*describe Her head was

round, by compass of nature; Her hair as gold, she passed all alive, And lily

forehead had this creature, With lively *browes flaw,* of colour pure,
*yellow eyebrows <28> Between the which was mean disseverance From
ev'ry brow, to show a due distance.

Her nose directed straight, even as line, With form and shape thereto
convenient, In which the *goddess' milk-white path* doth shine; *the
galaxy* And eke her eyne be bright and orient As is the smaragd,* unto my
judgment, *emerald Or yet these starres heav'nly, small,
and bright; Her visage is of lovely red and white.

Her mouth is short, and shut in little space, Flaming somedeal,* not over
red I mean, *somewhat With pregnant lips, and thick to kiss,
percase* *as it chanced (For lippes thin, not fat, but ever lean, They
serve of naught, they be not worth a bean; For if the bass* be full, there is
delight; *kiss <29> Maximian <30> truly thus doth he write).

But to my purpose: I say, white as snow Be all her teeth, and in order they
stand Of one stature; and eke her breath, I trow, Surmounteth all odours
that e'er I fand* *found In sweetness; and her body, face,
and hand Be sharply slender, so that, from the head Unto the foot, all is but
womanhead.* *womanly perfection

I hold my peace of other thinges hid: Here shall my soul, and not my tongue,
betray; But how she was array'd, if ye me bid, That shall I well discover you
and say: A bend* of gold and silk, full fresh and gay, *band
With hair *in tress, y-broidered* full well, *plaited in tresses* Right
smoothly kempt,* and shining every deal. *combed

About her neck a flow'r of fresh device With rubies set, that lusty were to
see'n; And she in gown was, light and summer-wise, Shapen full well, the
colour was of green, With *aureate seint* about her sides clean,
golden cincture With divers stones, precious and rich: Thus was she
ray'd,* yet saw I ne'er her lich,** *arrayed **like

If Jove had but seen this lady, Calisto and Alcmena had never lain in his
arms, nor had he loved the fair Europa, nor Danae, nor Antiope; "for all
their beauty stood in Rosial; she seemed like a thing celestial." By and by,
Philogenet presented to her his petition for love, which she heard with some
haughtiness; she was not, she said, well acquainted with him, she did not
know where he dwelt, nor his name and condition. He informed her that "in
art of love he writes," and makes songs that may be sung in honour of the
King and Queen of Love. As for his name --

"My name? alas, my heart, why mak'st thou strange? *why so cold
 Philogenet I call'd am far and near, or distant? Of Cambridge
 clerk, that never think to change From you, that with your heav'nly
 streames* clear *beams, glances Ravish my heart; and ghost, and all in
 fere:* *all together Since at the first I writ my bill* for grace,
 *petition Me thinks I see some mercy in your face;"

And again he humbly pressed his suit. But the lady disdained the idea that,
 "for a word of sugar'd eloquence," she should have compassion in so little
 space; "there come but few who speede here so soon." If, as he says, the
 beams of her eyes pierce and fret him, then let him withdraw from her
 presence:

"Hurt not yourself, through folly, with a look; I would be sorry so to make
 you sick! A woman should beware eke whom she took: Ye be a clerk: go
 searche well my book, If any women be so light* to win:
 *easy Nay, bide a while, though ye were *all my kin."* *my onlykindred*

He might sue and serve, and wax pale, and green, and dead, without
 murmuring in any wise; but whereas he desired her hastily to lean to love,
 he was unwise, and must cease that language. For some had been at Court
 for twenty years, and might not obtain their mistresses' favour; therefore she
 marvelled that he was so bold as to treat of love with her. Philogenet, on
 this, broke into pitiful lamentation; bewailing the hour in which he was
 born, and assuring the unyielding lady that the frosty grave and cold must
 be his bed, unless she relented.

With that I fell in swoon, and dead as stone, With colour slain,* and wan as
 ashes pale; *deathlike And by the hand she caught me up anon:
 "Arise," quoth she; "what? have ye drunken dwale? *sleeping potion <31>
 Why sleepe ye? It is no nightertale."* *night-time "Now mercy!
 sweet," quoth I, y-wis afraid; "What thing," quoth she, "hath made you so
 dismay'd?"

She said that by his hue she knew well that he was a lover; and if he were
 secret, courteous, and kind, he might know how all this could be allayed.
 She would amend all that she had missaid, and set his heart at ease; but he
 must faithfully keep the statutes, "and break them not for sloth nor
 ignorance." The lover requests, however, that the sixteenth may be released
 or modified, for it "doth him great grievance;" and she complies.

And softly then her colour gan appear, As rose so red, throughout her visage
 all; Wherefore methinks it is according* her *appropriate to That

she of right be called Rosial. Thus have I won, with wordes great and small,
Some goodly word of her that I love best, And trust she shall yet set mine
heart in rest.

Rosial now told Philobone to conduct Philogenet all over the Court, and
show him what lovers and what officers dwelt there; for he was yet a
stranger.

And, stalking soft with easy pace, I saw About the king standen all environ,*
around <32> Attendance, Diligence, and their fellow Furtherer, Esperance,
and many one; *Hope Dread-to-offend there stood, and
not alone; For there was eke the cruel adversair, The lover's foe, that called
is Despair;

Which unto me spake angrily and fell,* *cruelly And said,
my lady me deceive shall: "Trow'st thou," quoth she, "that all that she did
tell Is true? Nay, nay, but under honey gall. Thy birth and hers they be no
thing egal:* *equal Cast off thine heart, <33> for all her
wordes white, For in good faith she loves thee but a lite.* *little

"And eke remember, thine ability May not compare with her, this well thou
wot." Yea, then came Hope and said, "My friend, let be! Believe him not:
Despair he gins to doat." "Alas," quoth I, "here is both cold and hot: The one
me biddeth love, the other nay; Thus wot I not what me is best to say.

"But well wot I, my lady granted me Truly to be my wounde's remedy; Her
gentleness* may notinfected be *noble nature With
doubleness,* this trust I till I die." *duplicity So cast I t' avoid
Despair's company, And take Hope to counsel and to friend. "Yea, keep that
well," quoth Philobone, "in mind."

And there beside, within a bay window, Stood one in green, full large of
breadth and length, His beard as black as feathers of the crow; His name
was Lust, of wondrous might and strength; And with Delight to argue there
he think'th, For this was alway his opinion, That love was sin: and so he
hath begun

To reason fast, and *ledge authority:* *allege authorities "Nay,"
quoth Delight, "love is a virtue clear, And from the soul his progress holdeth
he: Blind appetite of lust doth often steer,* *stir (the heart) And that
is sin; for reason lacketh there: For thou dost think thy neighbour's wife to
win; Yet think it well that love may not be sin;

lovers be? Why must we suffer such adversity, Dian' to serve, and Venus to refuse? Full *often sithe* these matters do us muse. *many a time*

"We serve and honour, sore against our will, Of chastity the goddess and the queen; *Us liefer were* with Venus bide still, *we would rather*
And have regard for love, and subject be'n Unto these women courtly, fresh, and sheen.* *bright, beautiful Fortune, we curse thy wheel of variance!
Where we were well, thou reavest* our pleasance." *takest away

Thus leave I them, with voice of plaint and care, In raging woe crying full piteously; And as I went, full naked and full bare Some I beheld, looking dispiteously, On Poverty that deadly cast their eye; And "Well-away!" they cried, and were not fain, For they might not their glad desire attain.

For lack of riches worldly and of good, They ban and curse, and weep, and say, "Alas! That povert' hath us hent,* that whilom stood *seized
At hearte's ease, and free and in good case! But now we dare not show ourselves in place, Nor us embold* to dwell in company, *make
bold, venture Where as our heart would love right faithfully."

And yet againward shrieked ev'ry nun, The pang of love so strained them to cry: "Now woe the time," quoth they, "that we be boun'!* *bound
This hateful order nice* will do us die! *into which we foolishly We sigh
and sob, and bleeden inwardly, entered Fretting ourselves
with thought and hard complaint, That nigh for love we waxe wood* and faint." *mad

And as I stood beholding here and there, I was ware of a sort* full languishing, *a class of people Savage and wild of looking and of cheer, Their mantles and their clothes aye tearing; And oft they were of Nature complaining, For they their members lacked, foot and hand, With visage wry, and blind, I understand.

They lacked shape and beauty to prefer Themselves in love: and said that God and Kind* *Nature Had forged* them to worshippe the sterre,** *fashioned **star Venus the bright, and leften all behind His other workes clean and out of mind: "For other have their full shape and beauty, And we," quoth they, "be in deformity."

And nigh to them there was a company, That have the Sisters warray'd and missaid, I mean the three of fatal destiny, <38> That be our workers: suddenly abraid,* *aroused Out gan they cry as they had been afraid; "We curse," quoth they, "that ever hath Nature Y-formed us this

woeful life t'endure."

And there eke was Contrite, and gan repent, Confessing whole the wound
that Cythere <39> Had with the dart of hot desire him sent, And how that he
to love must subject be: Then held he all his scornes vanity, And said that
lovers held a blissful life, Young men and old, and widow, maid, and wife.

"Bereave me, Goddess!" quoth he, "of thy might, My scornes all and scoffes,
that I have No power for to mocken any wight That in thy service dwell: for I
did rave; This know I well right now, so God me save, And I shall be the
chief post* of thy faith, *prop, pillar And love uphold, the reverse
whoso saith."

Dissemble stood not far from him in truth, With party* mantle, party hood
and hose; *parti-coloured And said he had upon his lady ruth,*
*pity And thus he wound him in, and gan to glose, Of his intent full double,
I suppose: In all the world he said he lov'd her weel; But ay me thought he
lov'd her *ne'er a deal.* *never a jot*

Eke Shamefastness was there, as I took heed, That blushed red, and durst
not be y-know She lover was, for thereof had she dread; She stood and hung
her visage down alow; But such a sight it was to see, I trow, As of these
roses ruddy on their stalk: There could no wight her spy to speak or talk

In love's art, so gan she to abash, Nor durst not utter all her privity: Many a
stripe and many a grievous lash She gave to them that woulde lovers be,
And hinder'd sore the simple commonalty, That in no wise durst grace and
mercy crave, For *were not she,* they need but ask and have; *but
for her*

Where if they now approache for to speak, Then Shamefastness *returneth
them* again: *turns them back* They think, "If we our secret
counsel break, Our ladies will have scorn us certain, And peradventure
thinke great disdain:" Thus Shamefastness may bringen in Despair; When
she is dead the other will be heir.

"Come forth Avaunter! now I ring thy bell!" <40> I spied him soon; to God I
make avow,* *confession He looked black as fiendes do in
Hell: "The first," quoth he, "that ever I did wow,* *woo *Within
a word she came,* I wot not how, *she was won with So that in
armes was my lady free, a single word* And so have been a
thousand more than she.

"In England, Britain,* Spain, and Picardy, *Brittany Artois, and
 France, and up in high Holland, In Burgoyne,* Naples, and in Italy,
 *Burgundy Navarre, and Greece, and up in heathen land, Was never woman
 yet that would withstand To be at my commandment when I wo'ld: I lacked
 neither silver coin nor gold.

"And there I met with this estate and that; And her I broach'd, and her, and
 her, I trow: Lo! there goes one of mine; and, wot ye what? Yon fresh attired
 have I laid full low; And such one yonder eke right well I know; I kept the
 statute <41> when we lay y-fere:* *together And yet* yon same
 hath made me right good cheer." *also

Thus hath Avaunter blowen ev'rywhere All that he knows, and more a
 thousand fold; His ancestry of kin was to Lier,* *Liar
 For first he maketh promise for to hold His lady's counsel, and it not unfold;
 -- Wherefore, the secret when he doth unshit,* *disclose Then
 lieth he, that all the world may wit.* *know

For falsing so his promise and behest,* *trust I wonder sore
 he hath such fantasy; He lacketh wit, I trow, or is a beast, That can no bet*
 himself with reason guy** *better **guide By mine advice, Love
 shall be contrary To his avail,* and him eke dishonour,
 advantage So that in Court he shall no more sojour. *sojourn,
 remain

"Take heed," quoth she, this little Philobone, "Where Envy rocketh in the
 corner yond,* *yonder And sitteth dark; and ye shall see
 anon His lean body, fading both face and hand; Himself he fretteth,* as I
 understand devoureth (Witness of Ovid Metamorphoseos);
 <42> The lover's foe he is, I will not glose.* *gloss over

"For where a lover thinketh *him promote,* *to promote himself* Envy
 will grudge, repining at his weal; It swelleth sore about his heart's root,
 That in no wise he cannot live in heal;* *health And if the
 faithful to his lady steal, Envy will noise and ring it round about, And say
 much worse than done is, out of doubt."

And Privy Thought, rejoicing of himself, -- Stood not far thence in habit
 marvellous; "Yon is," thought I, "some spirit or some elf, His subtile image is
 so curious: How is," quoth I, "that he is shaded thus With yonder cloth, I
 n'ot* of what color?" *know not And near I went and gan *to
 lear and pore,* *to ascertain and
 gaze curiously* And frained* him a question full hard.

asked "What is," quoth I, "the thing thou lovest best? Or what is boot unto thy paines hard? *remedy Me thinks thou livest here in great unrest, Thou wand'rest aye from south to east and west, And east to north; as far as I can see, There is no place in Court may holde thee.

"Whom followest thou? where is thy heart y-set? But *my demand assoil,* I thee require." *answer my question* "Me thought," quoth he, "no creature may let* *hinder Me to be here, and where as I desire; For where as absence hath out the fire, My merry thought it kindleth yet again, That bodily, me thinks, with *my sov'reign* *my lady*

"I stand, and speak, and laugh, and kiss, and halse;* *embrace So that my thought comforteth me full oft: I think, God wot, though all the world be false, I will be true; I think also how soft My lady is in speech, and this on loft Bringeth my heart with joy and great gladness; This privy thought allays my heaviness.

"And what I think, or where, to be, no man In all this Earth can tell, y-wis, but I: And eke there is no swallow swift, nor swan So wight* of wing, nor half so yern** can fly; *nimble **eagerly For I can be, and that right suddenly, In Heav'n, in Hell, in Paradise, and here, And with my lady, when I will desire.

"I am of counsel far and wide, I wot, With lord and lady, and their privy I wot it all; but, be it cold or hot, They shall not speak without licence of me. I mean, in such as seasonable* be, *prudent Tho*first the thing is thought within the heart, *when Ere any word out from the mouth astart."* *escape

And with the word Thought bade farewell and yede:* *went away Eke forth went I to see the Courte's guise, And at the door came in, so God me speed, Two courtiers of age and of assise* *size Like high, and broad, and, as I me advise, The Golden Love and Leaden Love <43> they hight:* *were called The one was sad, the other glad and light.

At this point there is a hiatus in the poem, which abruptly ceases to narrate the tour of Philogenet and Philobone round the Court, and introduces us again to Rosial, who is speaking thus to her lover, apparently in continuation of a confession of love:

"Yes! draw your heart, with all your force and might, To lustiness, and be as ye have said."

She admits that she would have given him no drop of favour, but that she saw him "wax so dead of countenance;" then Pity "out of her shrine arose from death to life," whisperingly entreating that she would do him some pleasure. Philogenet protests his gratitude to Pity, his faithfulness to Rosial; and the lady, thanking him heartily, bids him abide with her till the season of May, when the King of Love and all his company will hold his feast fully royally and well. "And there I bode till that the season fell."

On May Day, when the lark began to rise, To matins went the lusty nightingale, Within a temple shapen hawthorn-wise; He might not sleep in all the nightertale,* *night-time But "Domine" <44> gan he cry and gale,* *call out "My lippes open, Lord of Love, I cry, And let my mouth thy praising now bewry."* *show forth

The eagle sang "Venite," <45> bodies all, And let us joy to love that is our health." And to the desk anon they gan to fall, And who came late he pressed in by stealth Then said the falcon, "Our own heartes' wealth, 'Domine Dominus noster,' <46> I wot, Ye be the God that do* us burn thus hot." *make

"Coeli enarrant," <47> said the popinjay,* *parrot "Your might is told in Heav'n and firmament." And then came in the goldfinch fresh and gay, And said this psalm with heartly glad intent, "Domini est terra;" <48> this Latin intent,* *means The God of Love hath earth in governance: And then the wren began to skip and dance.

"Jube Domine; <49> O Lord of Love, I pray Command me well this lesson for to read; This legend is of all that woulde dey* *die Martyrs for love; God yet their soules speed! And to thee, Venus, sing we, *out of dread,* *without doubt* By influence of all thy virtue great, Beseeching thee to keep us in our heat."

The second lesson robin redbreast sang, "Hail to the God and Goddess of our lay!"* *law, religion And to the lectern amorously he sprang: "Hail now," quoth be, "O fresh season of May, *Our moneth glad that singen on the spray!*" *glad month for us that Hail to the flowers, red, and white, and blue, sing upon the bough* Which by their virtue maken our lust new!"

The third lesson the turtle-dove took up, And thereat laugh'd the mavis* in a scorn: *blackbird He said, "O God, as might I dine or sup, This foolish dove will give us all a horn! There be right here a thousand better

born, To read this lesson, which as well as he, And eke as hot, can love in all degree."

The turtle-dove said, "Welcome, welcome May, Gladsome and light to lovers that be true! I thank thee, Lord of Love, that doth purvey For me to read this lesson all *of due;* *in due form* For, in good sooth, *of corage* I pursue *with all my heart* To serve my make* till death us must depart:" *mate And then "Tu autem" <50> sang he all apart.

"Te Deum amoris" <51> sang the throstel* cock: *thrush Tubal <52> himself, the first musician, With key of harmony could not unlock So sweet a tune as that the throstel can: "The Lord of Love we praise," quoth he than,* *then And so do all the fowles great and lite;* *little "Honour we May, in false lovers' despite."

"Dominus regnavit," <53> said the peacock there, "The Lord of Love, that mighty prince, y-wis, He is received here and ev'rywhere: Now Jubilate <54> sing:" "What meaneth this?" Said then the linnet; "welcome, Lord of bliss!" Out start the owl with "Benedicite," <55> "What meaneth all this merry fare?"* quoth he. *doing, fuss

"Laudate," <56> sang the lark with voice full shrill; And eke the kite "O admirable;" <57> This quire* will through mine eares pierce and thrill; *choir But what? welcome this May season," quoth he; "And honour to the Lord of Love must be, That hath this feast so solemn and so high:" "Amen," said all; and so said eke the pie.* *magpie

And forth the cuckoo gan proceed anon, With "Benedictus" <58> thanking God in haste, That in this May would visit them each one, And gladden them all while the feast shall last: And therewithal a-laughter* out he brast;*** *in laughter **burst "I thanke God that I should end the song, And all the service which hath been so long."

Thus sang they all the service of the feast, And that was done right early, to my doom;* *judgment And forth went all the Court, both *most and least,* *great and small To fetch the flowers fresh, and branch and bloom; And namely* hawthorn brought both page and groom, *especially With freshe garlands party* blue and white, <59> *parti-coloured And then rejoiced in their great delight.

Eke each at other threw the flowers bright, The primerose, the violet, and the gold; So then, as I beheld the royal sight, My lady gan me suddenly behold, And with a true love, plighted many a fold, She smote me through

the very heart *as blive;*
alive.

straightway And Venus yet I thank I am

Explicit*

*The End