PROVERBS OF CHAUCER. <1>

WHAT should these clothes thus manifold, Lo! this hot summer's day? After great heate cometh cold; No man cast his pilche* away.

pelisse, furred cloak Of all this world the large compass Will not in mine arms twain; Who so muche will embrace, Little thereof he shall distrain.

*grasp

The world so wide, the air so remuable,*

*unstable The silly
man so little of stature; The green of ground and clothing so mutable, The
fire so hot and subtile of nature; The water *never in one* -- what creature
never the same That made is of these foure <2> thus flitting, May steadfast
be, as here, in his living?

The more I go, the farther I am behind; The farther behind, the nearer my war's end; The more I seek, the worse can I find; The lighter leave, the lother for to wend; <3> The better I live, the more out of mind; Is this fortune, *n'ot I,* or infortune;*
I know not *misfortune Though I go loose, tied am I with a loigne.*
*line, tether

Notes to Proverbs of Chaucer

- 1. (Transcriber's Note: Modern scholars believe that Chaucer's may have been the author of the first stanza of this poem, but was not the author of the second and third).
- 2. These foure: that is, the four elements, of which man was believed to be composed.
- 3. The lighter leave, the lother for to wend: The more easy (through age) for me to depart, the less willing I am to go.