**1.1 General Prologue**

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1

                 A KNIGHT there was, and that (one was) a worthy man,  
44           
                 Three times in formal duels, and each time slain his foe.  
64           
                 This same worthy knight had also been   
65           
                 At one time with the lord of Balat  
66           
                 Against another heathen in Turkey;  
67           
                 And evermore he had an outstanding reputation  
68           
                 And although he was brave, he was prudent,  
69           
                 And of his deportment as modest as is a maid.  
70           
                 He never yet said any rude word  
71           
                 In all his life unto any sort of person.  
72          
                 He was a truly perfect, noble knight.  
73           
                 But to tell you of his clothing,  
74           
                 His horses were good, but he was not gaily dressed.  
75           
                 He wore a tunic of coarse cloth   
76           
                 All stained (with rust) by his coat of mail,  
77           
                 For he was recently come (back) from his expedition,  
78           
                 And went to do his pilgrimage.

79        **,**  
                 With him there was his son, a young **SQUIRE,**80           
                 A lover and a lively bachelor,  
81           
                 With locks curled as if they had been laid in a curler.  
82           
                 He was twenty years of age, I guess.  
83           
                 Of his stature he was of moderate height,  
84           
                 And wonderfully agile, and of great strength.  
85           
                 And he had been for a time on a cavalry expedition  
86           
                 In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,  
87          
                 And conducted himself well, for so little a space of time,  
88           
                 In hope to stand in his lady's good graces.  
89           
                 He was embroidered, as if it were a mead  
90           
                 All full of fresh flowers, white and red.  
91           
                 Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;  
92           
                 He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
93           
                 His gown was short, with long and wide sleeves.  
94          
                 He well knew how to sit on horse and handsomely ride.  
95           
                 He knew how to make songs and well compose (the words),  
96           
                 Joust and also dance, and well draw and write.  
97           
                 He loved so passionately that at nighttime  
98           
                 He slept no more than does a nightingale.  
99           
                 Courteous he was, humble, and willing to serve,  
100         **.**  
                 And carved before his father at the table.

101

                 There was also a **Nun, a PRIORESS,**  
119           
                 Who was very simple and modest in her smiling;  
120           
                 Her greatest oath was but by Saint Loy;  
121           
                 And she was called Madam Eglantine.  
122          
                 She sang the divine service very well,  
123          
                 Intoned in her nose in a very polite manner;  
124          
                 And she spoke French very well and elegantly,  
125           
                 In the manner of Stratford at the Bow,  
126           
                 For French of Paris was to her unknown.  
127           
                 At meals she was well taught indeed;  
128           
                 She let no morsel fall from her lips,  
129          
                 Nor wet her fingers deep in her sauce;  
130           
                 She well knew how to carry a morsel (to her mouth) and take good care  
131          
                 That no drop fell upon her breast.  
132           
                 Her greatest pleasure was in good manners.  
133          
                 She wiped her upper lip so clean  
134          
                 That in her cup there was seen no tiny bit   
135           
                 Of grease, when she had drunk her drink.  
136          
                 She reached for her food in a very seemly manner.  
137          
                 And surely she was of excellent deportment,  
138          
                 And very pleasant, and amiable in demeanor,  
139           
                 And she took pains to imitate the manners  
140          
                 Of court, and to be dignified in behavior,  
141          
                 And to be considered worthy of reverence.  
142           
                 But to speak of her moral sense,  
143           
                 She was so charitable and so compassionate  
144           
                 She would weep, if she saw a mouse  
145          
                 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.  
146           
                 She had some small hounds that she fed  
147           
                 With roasted meat, or milk and fine white bread.  
148           
                 But sorely she wept if one of them were dead,  
149           
                 Or if someone smote it smartly with a stick;  
150          
                 And all was feeling and tender heart.  
151           
                 Her wimple was pleated in a very seemly manner,  
152           
                 Her nose well formed, her eyes gray as glass,  
153          
                 Her mouth very small, and moreover soft and red.  
154           
                 But surely she had a fair forehead;  
155           
                 It was almost nine inches broad, I believe;  
156           
                 For, certainly, she was not undergrown.  
157           
                 Her cloak was very well made , as I was aware.  
158          
                 About her arm she bore of small coral   
159           
                 A set of beads, adorned with large green beads,  
160           
                 And thereon hung a brooch of very bright gold,  
161           
                 On which there was first written an A with a crown,  
162           
                 And after "Love conquers all."

163

165         **A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,**  
                 There was a MONK, an extremely fine one,  
166         **An outridere, that lovede venerie,**  
                 An outrider (a monk with business outside the monastery), who loved hunting,  
167         **A manly man, to been an abbot able.**  
                 A virile man, qualified to be an abbot.  
168         **Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,**  
                 He had very many fine horses in his stable,  
169         **And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere**  
                 And when he rode, one could hear his bridle  
170         **Gynglen in a whistlynge wynd als cleere**  
                 Jingle in a whistling wind as clear  
171         **And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle**  
                 And also as loud as does the chapel belle  
172         **Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.**  
                 Where this lord was prior of the subordinate monastery.  
173         **The reule of Seint Maure or of Seint Beneit --**  
                 The rule of Saint Maurus or of Saint Benedict --  
174         **By cause that it was old and somdel streit**  
                 Because it was old and somewhat strict  
175         **This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,**  
                 This same Monk let old things pass away,  
176         **And heeld after the newe world the space.**  
                 And followed the broader customs of modern times.  
177         **He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,**  
                 He gave not a plucked hen for that text  
178         **That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,**  
                 That says that hunters are not holy men,  
179         **Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,**  
                 Nor that a monk, when he is heedless of rules,  
180         **Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees --**  
                 Is like a fish that is out of water --  
181         **This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.**  
                 This is to say, a monk out of his cloister.  
182         **But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;**  
                 But he considered that same text not worth an oyster;  
183         **And I seyde his opinion was good.**  
                 And I said his opinion was good.  
184         **What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,**  
                 Why should he study and make himself crazy,  
185         **Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,**  
                 Always to pore upon a book in the cloister,  
186         **Or swynken with his handes, and laboure,**  
                 Or work with his hands, and labor,  
187         **As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?**  
                 As Augustine commands? How shall the world be served?  
188         **Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!**  
                 Let Augustine have his work reserved to him!  
189         **Therfore he was a prikasour aright:**  
                 Therefore he was indeed a vigorous horseman:  
190         **Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;**  
                 He had greyhounds as swift as fowl in flight;  
191         **Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare**  
                 Of tracking and of hunting for the hare  
192         **Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.**  
                 Was all his pleasure, by no means would he refrain from it.  
193         **I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond**  
                 I saw his sleeves lined at the hand  
194         **With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;**  
                 With squirrel fur, and that the finest in the land;  
195         **And for to festne his hood under his chyn,**  
                 And to fasten his hood under his chin,  
196         **He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;**  
                 He had a very skillfully made pin of gold;  
197         **A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.**  
                 There was an elaborate knot in the larger end.  
198         **His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,**  
                 His head was bald, which shone like any glass,  
199         **And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.**  
                 And his face did too, as if he had been rubbed with oil.  
200         **He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;**  
                 He was a very plump lord and in good condition;  
201         **His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,**  
                 His eyes were prominent, and rolling in his head,  
202         **That stemed as a forneys of a leed;**  
                 Which gleamed like a furnace under a cauldron;  
203         **His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.**  
                 His boots supple, his horse in excellent condition.  
204         **Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat;**  
                 Now certainly he was a handsome ecclesiastical dignitary;  
205         **He was nat pale as a forpyned goost.**  
                 He was not pale as a tormented spirit.  
206         **A fat swan loved he best of any roost.**  
                 A fat swan loved he best of any roast.  
207         **His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.**  
                 His saddle horse was as brown as is a berry.

208         **A FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a merye,**  
                 There was a FRIAR, a pleasure-loving and merry one,  
209         **A lymytour, a ful solempne man.**  
                 A limiter (with an assigned territory), a very solemn man.  
210         **In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan**  
                 In all the four orders of friars is no one that knows  
211         **So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.**  
                 So much of sociability and elegant speech.  
212         **He hadde maad ful many a mariage**  
                 He had made very many a marriage  
213         **Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.**  
                 Of young women at his own cost.  
214         **Unto his ordre he was a noble post.**  
                 He was a noble supporter of his order.  
215         **Ful wel biloved and famulier was he**  
                 Very well beloved and familiar was he  
216         **With frankeleyns over al in his contree,**  
                 With landowners every where in his country,  
217         **And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;**  
                 And also with worthy women of the town;  
218         **For he hadde power of confessioun,**  
                 For he had power of confession,  
219         **As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,**  
                 As he said himself, more than a parish priest,  
220         **For of his ordre he was licenciat.**  
                 For he was licensed by his order.  
221         **Ful swetely herde he confessioun,**  
                 He heard confession very sweetly,  
222         **And plesaunt was his absolucioun:**  
                 And his absolution was pleasant:  
223         **He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,**  
                 He was a lenient man in giving penance,  
224         **Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.**  
                 Where he knew he would have a good gift.  
225         **For unto a povre ordre for to yive**  
                 For to give to a poor order (of friars)  
226         **Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;**  
                 Is a sign that a man is well confessed;  
227         **For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,**  
                 For if he gave, he (the friar) dared to assert,  
228         **He wiste that a man was repentaunt;**  
                 He knew that a man was repentant;  
229         **For many a man so hard is of his herte,**  
                 For many a man is so hard in his heart,  
230         **He may nat wepe, althogh hym soore smerte.**  
                 He can not weep, although he painfully suffers.  
231         **Therfore in stede of wepynge and preyeres**  
                 Therefore instead of weeping and prayers  
232         **Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.**  
                 One may give silver to the poor friars.  
233         **His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves**  
                 His hood was always stuffed full of knives  
234         **And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.**  
                 And pins, to give to fair wives.  
235         **And certeinly he hadde a murye note:**  
                 And certainly he had a merry voice:  
236         **Wel koude he synge and pleyen on a rote;**  
                 He well knew how to sing and play on a rote (string instrument);  
237         **Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.**  
                 He absolutely took the prize for reciting ballads.  
238         **His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;**  
                 His neck was white as a lily flower;  
239         **Therto he strong was as a champioun.**  
                 Furthermore he was strong as a champion fighter.  
240         **He knew the tavernes wel in every toun**  
                 He knew the taverns well in every town  
241         **And everich hostiler and tappestere**  
                 And every innkeeper and barmaid  
242         **Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,**  
                 Better than a leper or a beggar-woman,  
243         **For unto swich a worthy man as he**  
                 For unto such a worthy man as he  
244         **Acorded nat, as by his facultee,**  
                 It was not suitable, in view of his official position,  
245         **To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.**  
                 To have acquaintance with sick lepers.  
246         **It is nat honest; it may nat avaunce,**  
                 It is not respectable; it can not be profitable,  
247         **For to deelen with no swich poraille,**  
                 To deal with any such poor people,  
248         **But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.**  
                 But all with rich people and sellers of victuals.  
249         **And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,**  
                 And every where, where profit should arise,  
250         **Curteis he was and lowely of servyse;**  
                 He was courteous and graciously humble;  
251         **Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.**  
                 There was no man anywhere so capable (of such work).  
252         **He was the beste beggere in his hous;**  
                 He was the best beggar in his house;  
252a         **[And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt;**   
            [And he gave a certain fee for his grant (of begging rights);  
252a         **Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;]**   
            None of his brethren came there in his territory;]  
253         **For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,**  
                 For though a widow had not a shoe,  
254         **So plesaunt was his "In principio,"**  
                 So pleasant was his "In the beginning,"  
255         **Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente.**  
                 Yet he would have a farthing, before he went away.  
256         **His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.**  
                  His total profit was much more than his proper income.  
257         **And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.**  
                 And he knew how to frolic, as if he were indeed a pup.  
258         **In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,**  
                 He knew how to be much help on days for resolving disputes,  
259         **For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer**  
                 For there he was not like a cloistered monk  
260         **With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,**  
                 With a threadbare cope, like a poor scholar,  
261         **But he was lyk a maister or a pope.**  
                 But he was like a master of arts or a pope.  
262         **Of double worstede was his semycope,**  
                 Of wide (expensive) cloth was his short cloak,  
263         **That rounded as a belle out of the presse.**  
                 Which was round as a bell fresh from the clothespress.  
264         **Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse,**  
                 Somewhat he lisped, for his affectation,  
265         **To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;**  
                 To make his English sweet upon his tongue;  
266         **And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,**  
                 And in his harping, when he had sung,  
267         **His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght**  
                 His eyes twinkled in his head exactly  
268         **As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.**  
                 As do the stars in the frosty night.  
269         **This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.**  
                 This worthy friar was called Huberd.

270         **A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,**  
                 There was a MERCHANT with a forked beard,  
271         **In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat;**  
                 Wearing parti-colored cloth, and proudly he sat on his horse;  
272         **Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bever hat,**  
                 Upon his head (he wore a) Flemish beaver hat,  
273         **His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.**  
                 His boots were buckled handsomely and elegantly.  
274         **His resons he spak ful solempnely,**  
                 His opinions he spoke very solemnly,  
275         **Sownynge alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng.**  
                 Concerning always the increase of his profits.  
276         **He wolde the see were kept for any thyng**  
                 He wanted the sea to be guarded at all costs  
277         **Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.**  
                 Between Middelburgh (Holland) and Orwell (England).  
278         **Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.**  
                 He well knew how to deal in foreign currencies.  
279         **This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:**  
                 This worthy man employed his wit very well:  
280         **Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,**  
                 There was no one who knew that he was in debt,  
281         **So estatly was he of his governaunce**  
                 He was so dignified in managing his affairs  
282         **With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.**  
                 With his buying and selling and with his financial deals.  
283         **For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,**  
                 Truly, he was a worthy man indeed,  
284         **But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.**  
                 But, to say the truth, I do not know what men call him.

285         **A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,**  
                 There was also a CLERK (scholar) from Oxford,  
286         **That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.**  
                 Who long before had begun the study of logic.  
287         **As leene was his hors as is a rake,**  
                 His horse was as lean as is a rake,  
288         **And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,**  
                 And he was not very fat, I affirm,  
289         **But looked holwe, and therto sobrely.**  
                 But looked emaciated, and moreover abstemious.  
290         **Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,**  
                 His short overcoat was very threadbare,  
291         **For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,**  
                 For he had not yet obtained an ecclesiastical living,  
292         **Ne was so worldly for to have office.**  
                 Nor was he worldly enough to take secular employment.  
293         **For hym was levere have at his beddes heed**  
                 For he would rather have at the head of his bed  
294         **Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,**  
                 Twenty books, bound in black or red,  
295         **Of Aristotle and his philosophie**  
                 Of Aristotle and his philosophy  
296         **Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.**  
                 Than rich robes, or a fiddle, or an elegant psaltery.   
297         **But al be that he was a philosophre,**  
                 But even though he was a philosopher,  
298         **Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;**  
                 Nevertheless he had but little gold in his strongbox;  
299         **But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,**  
                 But all that he could get from his friends,  
300         **On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,**  
                 He spent on books and on learning,  
301         **And bisily gan for the soules preye**  
                 And diligently did pray for the souls   
302         **Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.**  
                 Of those who gave him the wherewithal to attend the schools.  
303         **Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.**  
                 He took most care and paid most heed to study.  
304         **Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,**  
                 He spoke not one word more than was needed,  
305         **And that was seyd in forme and reverence,**  
                 And that was said with due formality and respect,  
306         **And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;**  
                 And short and lively and full of elevated content;  
307         **Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,**  
                 His speech was consonant with moral virtue,  
308         **And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.**  
                 And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.

309         **A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,**  
                 A SERGEANT OF THE LAW (high-ranking attorney), prudent and wise,  
310         **That often hadde been at the Parvys,**  
                 Who often had been at the Porch of St. Paul's (where lawyers gather)  
311         **Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.**  
                 Was also there, very rich in superior qualities.  
312         **Discreet he was and of greet reverence --**  
                 He was judicious and of great dignity --  
313         **He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.**  
                 He seemed such, his words were so wise.  
314         **Justice he was ful often in assise,**  
                 He was very often a judge in the court of assizes,  
315         **By patente and by pleyn commissioun.**  
                 By royal appointment and with full jurisdiction.  
316         **For his science and for his heigh renoun,**  
                 For his knowledge and for his excellent reputation,  
317         **Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.**  
                 He had many grants of yearly income.  
318         **So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:**  
                 There was nowhere so great a land-buyer:  
319         **Al was fee symple to hym in effect;**  
                 In fact, all was unrestricted possession to him;  
320         **His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.**  
                 His purchasing could not be invalidated.  
321         **Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,**  
                 There was nowhere so busy a man as he,   
322         **And yet he semed bisier than he was.**  
                 And yet he seemed busier than he was.  
323         **In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle**  
                 He had in Year Books all the cases and decisions  
324         **That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.**  
                 That from the time of king William have occurred.  
325         **Therto he koude endite and make a thyng,**  
                 Furthermore, he knew how to compose and draw up a legal document,  
326         **Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;**  
                 So that no one could find a flaw in his writing;  
327         **And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.**  
                 And he knew every statute completely by heart.  
328         **He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,**  
                 He rode but simply in a parti-colored coat,  
329         **Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;**  
                 Girded with a belt of silk, with small stripes;  
330         **Of his array telle I no lenger tale.**  
                 I tell no longer tale of his clothing.

331         **A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye.**  
                 A FRANKLIN was in his company.  
332         **Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;**  
                 His beard was white as a daisy;  
333         **Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.**  
                 As to his temperament, he was dominated by the humor blood.  
334         **Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;**  
                 He well loved a bit of bread dipped in wine in the morning;  
335         **To lyven in delit was evere his wone,**  
                 His custom was always to live in delight,  
336         **For he was Epicurus owene sone,**  
                 For he was Epicurus' own son,  
337         **That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit**  
                 Who held the opinion that pure pleasure   
338         **Was verray felicitee parfit.**  
                 Was truly perfect happiness.  
339         **An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;**  
                 He was a householder, and a great one at that;  
340         **Seint Julian he was in his contree.**  
                 He was Saint Julian (patron of hospitality) in his country.  
341         **His breed, his ale, was alweys after oon;**  
                 His bread, his ale, was always of the same (good) quality;  
342         **A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.**  
                 Nowhere was there any man better stocked with wine.  
343         **Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,**  
                 His house was never without baked pies  
344         **Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous**  
                 Of fish and meat, and that so plentiful  
345         **It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke;**  
                 That in his house it snowed with food and drink;  
346         **Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,**  
                 Of all the dainties that men could imagine,  
347         **After the sondry sesons of the yeer,**  
                 In accord with the various seasons of the year,  
348         **So chaunged he his mete and his soper.**  
                 So he varied his midday meal and his supper.  
349         **Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,**  
                 He had very many fat partridges in pens,  
350         **And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.**  
                 And many a bream and many a pike in his fish pond.  
351         **Wo was his cook but if his sauce were**  
                 Woe was his cook unless his sauce was  
352         **Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.**  
                 Hotly spiced and sharp, and ready all his cooking equipment.  
353         **His table dormant in his halle alway**  
                 In his hall his dining table always  
354         **Stood redy covered al the longe day.**  
                 Stood covered (with table cloth) and ready all the long day.  
355         **At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;**  
                 He presided as lord and sire at court sessions;  
356         **Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.**  
                 He was a member of parliament many times.  
357         **An anlaas and a gipser al of silk**  
                 A dagger and a purse all of silk  
358         **Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.**  
                 Hung at his belt, white as morning milk.  
359         **A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.**  
                 He had been a sheriff, and an auditor of taxes.  
360         **Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.**  
                 There was nowhere such a worthy landowner.

361         **AN HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,**  
                 A HABERDASHER and a CARPENTER,  
362         **A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER --**  
                 A WEAVER, a DYER, and a TAPESTRY-MAKER --  
363         **And they were clothed alle in o lyveree**  
                 And they were all clothed in one livery  
364         **Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.**  
                 Of a solemn and a great parish guild.  
365         **Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;**  
                 Their equipment was adorned all freshly and new;  
366         **Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras**  
                 Their knives were not mounted with brass  
367         **But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,**  
                 But entirely with silver, wrought very neatly and well,  
368         **Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.**  
                 Their belts and their purses every bit.  
369         **Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys**  
                 Each of them well seemed a solid citizen  
370         **To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.**  
                 To sit on a dais in a city hall.  
371         **Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,**  
                 Every one of them, for the wisdom that he knows,  
372         **Was shaply for to been an alderman.**  
                 Was suitable to be an alderman.  
373         **For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,**  
                 For they had enough possessions and income,  
374         **And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;**  
                 And also their wives would well assent to it;  
375         **And elles certeyn were they to blame.**  
                 And otherwise certainly they would be to blame.  
376         **It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"**  
                 It is very fine to be called "my lady,"  
377         **And goon to vigilies al bifore,**  
                 And go to feasts on holiday eves heading the procession,  
378         **And have a mantel roialliche ybore.**  
                 And have a gown with a train royally carried.

379         **A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones**  
                 A COOK they had with them for the occasion  
380         **To boille the chiknes with the marybones,**  
                 To boil the chickens with the marrow bones,  
381         **And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.**  
                 And tart poudre-marchant and galingale (spices).  
382         **Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.**  
                 He well knew how to judge a draft of London ale.  
383         **He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,**  
                 He knew how to roast, and boil, and broil, and fry,  
384         **Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.**  
                 Make stews, and well bake a pie.  
385         **But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,**  
                 But it was a great harm, as it seemed to me,  
386         **That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.**  
                 That he had an open sore on his shin.  
387         **For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.**  
                 As for white pudding, he made that of the best quality.

388         **A SHIPMAN was ther, wonynge fer by weste;**  
                 A SHIPMAN was there, dwelling far in the west;  
389         **For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.**  
                 For all I know, he was from Dartmouth.  
390         **He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,**  
                 He rode upon a cart horse, insofar as he knew how,  
391         **In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.**  
                 In a gown of woolen cloth (that reached) to the knee.  
392         **A daggere hangynge on a laas hadde he**  
                 He had a dagger hanging on a cord   
393         **Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.**  
                 About his neck, down under his arm.  
394         **The hoote somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;**  
                 The hot summer had made his hue all brown;  
395         **And certeinly he was a good felawe.**  
                 And certainly he was a boon companion.  
396         **Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe**  
                 He had drawn very many a draft of wine  
397         **Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.**  
                 While coming from Bordeaux, while the merchant slept.  
398         **Of nyce conscience took he no keep.**  
                 He had no concern for a scrupulous conscience.  
399         **If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,**  
                 If he fought and had the upper hand,  
400         **By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.**  
                 He sent them home by water to every land (they walked the plank).   
401         **But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,**  
                 But of his skill to reckon well his tides,  
402         **His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,**  
                 His currents, and his perils near at hand,  
403         **His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,**  
                 His harbors, and positions of his moon, his navigation,  
404         **Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.**  
                 There was none other such from Hull to Cartagena (Spain).  
405         **Hardy he was and wys to undertake;**  
                 He was bold and prudent in his undertakings;  
406         **With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.**  
                 His beard had been shaken by many a tempest.  
407         **He knew alle the havenes, as they were,**  
                 He knew all the harbors, how they were,  
408         **Fro Gootlond to the cape of Fynystere,**  
                 From Gotland to the Cape of Finisterre,  
409         **And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.**  
                 And every inlet in Brittany and in Spain.  
410         **His barge ycleped was the Maudelayne.**  
                 His ship was called the Maudelayne.

411         **With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK;**  
                 With us there was a DOCTOR OF MEDICINE  
412         **In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,**  
                 In all this world there was no one like him,  
413         **To speke of phisik and of surgerye,**  
                 To speak of medicine and of surgery,  
414         **For he was grounded in astronomye.**  
                 For he was instructed in astronomy.  
415         **He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel**  
                 He took care of his patient very many times  
416         **In houres by his magyk natureel.**  
                 In (astronomically suitable) hours by (use of) his natural science.  
417         **Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent**  
                 He well knew how to calculate the planetary position  
418         **Of his ymages for his pacient.**  
                 Of his astronomical talismans for his patient.  
419         **He knew the cause of everich maladye,**  
                 He knew the cause of every malady,  
420         **Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,**  
                 Were it of hot, or cold, or moist, or dry elements,  
421         **And where they engendred, and of what humour.**  
                 And where they were engendered, and by what bodily fluid.  
422         **He was a verray, parfit praktisour:**  
                 He was a truly, perfect practitioner:  
423         **The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,**  
                 The cause known, and the source of his (patient's) harm,  
424         **Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.**  
                 Straightway he gave the sick man his remedy.  
425         **Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries**  
                 He had his apothecaries all ready   
426         **To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,**  
                 To send him drugs and his electuaries,  
427         **For ech of hem made oother for to wynne --**  
                 For each of them made the other to profit --  
428         **Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.**  
                 Their friendship was not recently begun.  
429         **Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,**  
                 He well knew the old Aesculapius,  
430         **And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,**  
                 And Dioscorides, and also Rufus,  
431         **Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,**  
                 Old Hippocrates, Haly, and Galen,  
432         **Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,**  
                 Serapion, Rhazes, and Avicenna,  
433         **Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,**  
                 Averroes, John the Damascan, and Constantine,  
434         **Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.**  
                 Bernard, and Gaddesden, and Gilbertus.  
435         **Of his diete mesurable was he,**  
                 He was moderate in his diet,  
436         **For it was of no superfluitee,**  
                 For it was of no excess,  
437         **But of greet norissyng and digestible.**  
                 But greatly nourishing and digestible.  
438         **His studie was but litel on the Bible.**  
                 His study was but little on the Bible.  
439         **In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,**  
                 He was clad all in red and in blue,  
440         **Lyned with taffata and with sendal.**  
                 Lined with taffeta and with silk.  
441         **And yet he was but esy of dispence;**  
                 And yet he was moderate in spending;  
442         **He kepte that he wan in pestilence.**  
                 He kept what he earned in (times of) plague.  
443         **For gold in phisik is a cordial,**  
                 Since in medicine gold is a restorative for the heart,  
444         **Therefore he lovede gold in special.**  
                 Therefore he loved gold in particular.

**Do you want to check your understanding of the text? If so take a** [**brief quiz.**](http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/%7Echaucer/teachslf/test2gp.htm)

445         **A good WIF was ther OF biside BATHE,**  
                 There was a good WIFE OF beside BATH,  
446         **But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.**  
                 But she was somewhat deaf, and that was a pity.  
447         **Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt**  
                 She had such a skill in cloth-making   
448         **She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.**  
                 She surpassed them of Ypres and of Ghent.  
449         **In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon**  
                 In all the parish there was no wife   
450         **That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;**  
                 Who should go to the Offering before her;  
451         **And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she**  
                 And if there did, certainly she was so angry  
452         **That she was out of alle charitee.**  
                 That she was out of all charity (love for her neighbor).  
453         **Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;**  
                 Her kerchiefs were very fine in texture;  
454         **I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound**  
                 I dare swear they weighed ten pound  
455         **That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.**  
                 That on a Sunday were upon her head.  
456         **Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,**  
                 Her stockings were of fine scarlet red,  
457         **Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.**  
                 Very closely laced, and shoes very supple and new.  
458         **Boold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.**  
                 Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.  
459         **She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:**  
                 She was a worthy woman all her life:  
460         **Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,**  
                 She had (married) five husbands at the church door,  
461         **Withouten oother compaignye in youthe --**  
                 Not counting other company in youth --  
462         **But thereof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.**  
                 But there is no need to speak of that right now.  
463         **And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;**  
                 And she had been three times at Jerusalem;  
464         **She hadde passed many a straunge strem;**  
                 She had passed many a foreign sea;  
465         **At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,**  
                 She had been at Rome, and at Boulogne,  
466         **In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.**  
                 In Galicia at Saint-James (of Compostella), and at Cologne.  
467         **She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.**  
                 She knew much about wandering by the way.  
468         **Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.**  
                 She had teeth widely set apart, truly to say.  
469         **Upon an amblere esily she sat,**  
                 She sat easily upon a pacing horse,  
470         **Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat**  
                 Wearing a large wimple, and on her head a hat  
471         **As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;**  
                 As broad as a buckler or a shield;  
472         **A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,**  
                 An overskirt about her large hips,  
473         **And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.**  
                 And on her feet a pair of sharp spurs.  
474         **In felaweshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.**  
                 In fellowship she well knew how to laugh and chatter.  
475         **Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,**  
                 She knew, as it happened, about remedies for love   
476         **For she koude of that art the olde daunce.**  
                 For she knew the old dance (tricks of the trade) of that art.

477         **A good man was ther of religioun,**  
                 A good man was there of religion,  
478         **And was a povre PERSOUN OF A TOUN,**  
                 And (he) was a poor PARSON OF A TOWN,  
479         **But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.**  
                 But he was rich in holy thought and work.  
480         **He was also a lerned man, a clerk,**  
                 He was also a learned man, a scholar,  
481         **That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;**  
                 Who would preach Christ's gospel truly;  
482         **His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.**  
                 He would devoutly teach his parishioners.  
483         **Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,**  
                 He was gracious, and wonderfully diligent,  
484         **And in adversitee ful pacient,**  
                 And very patient in adversity,  
485         **And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes.**  
                 And such he was proven many times.  
486         **Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,**  
                 He was very reluctant to excommunicate for (nonpayment of) his tithes,  
487         **But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,**  
                 But rather would he give, there is no doubt,  
488         **Unto his povre parisshens aboute**  
                 Unto his poor parishioners about  
489         **Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.**  
                 Some of his offering (received at mass) and also some of his income.  
490         **He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.**  
                 He knew how to have sufficiency in few possessions.  
491         **Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,**  
                 His parish was wide, and houses far apart,  
492         **But he ne lefte nat, for reyn ne thonder,**  
                 But he did not omit, for rain nor thunder,  
493         **In siknesse nor in meschief to visite**  
                 In sickness or in trouble to visit  
494         **The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,**  
                 Those living farthest away in his parish, high-ranking and low,  
495         **Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.**  
                 Going by foot, and in his hand a staff.  
496         **This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,**  
                 He gave this noble example to his sheep,  
497         **That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.**  
                 That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.  
498         **Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,**  
                 He took those words out of the gospel,  
499         **And this figure he added eek therto,**  
                 And this metaphor he added also to that,  
500         **That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?**  
                 That if gold rust, what must iron do?  
501         **For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,**  
                 For if a priest, on whom we trust, should be foul  
502         **No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;**  
                 It is no wonder for a layman to go bad;  
503         **And shame it is, if a prest take keep,**  
                 And it is a shame, if a priest is concerned:  
504         **A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.**  
                 A shit-stained shepherd and a clean sheep.  
505         **Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,**  
                 Well ought a priest to give an example,  
506         **By his clennesse, how that his sheep sholde lyve.**  
                 By his purity, how his sheep should live.  
507         **He sette nat his benefice to hyre**  
                 He did not rent out his benefice (ecclesiastical living)  
508         **And leet his sheep encombred in the myre**  
                 And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire  
509         **And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules**  
                 And run to London unto Saint Paul's  
510         **To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,**  
                 To seek an appointment as a chantry priest (praying for a patron)  
511         **Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;**  
                 Or to be hired (as a chaplain) by a guild;  
512         **But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,**  
                 But dwelt at home, and kept well his sheep fold (parish),  
513         **So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;**  
                 So that the wolf did not make it go wrong;  
514         **He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.**  
                 He was a shepherd and not a hireling.  
515         **And though he hooly were and vertuous,**  
                 And though he was holy and virtuous,  
516         **He was to synful men nat despitous,**  
                 He was not scornful to sinful men,  
517         **Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,**  
                 Nor domineering nor haughty in his speech,  
518         **But in his techyng discreet and benygne.**  
                 But in his teaching courteous and kind.  
519         **To drawen folk to hevene by fairnesse,**  
                 To draw folk to heaven by gentleness,  
520         **By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.**  
                 By good example, this was his business.  
521         **But it were any persone obstinat,**  
                 Unless it were an obstinate person,  
522         **What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,**  
                 Whoever he was, of high or low rank,  
523         **Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.**  
                 He would rebuke him sharply at that time.   
524         **A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.**  
                 I believe that nowhere is there a better priest.  
525         **He waited after no pompe and reverence,**  
                 He expected no pomp and ceremony,  
526         **Ne maked him a spiced conscience,**  
                 Nor made himself an overly fastidious conscience,  
527         **But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve**  
                 But Christ's teaching and His twelve apostles   
528         **He taughte; but first he folwed it hymselve.**  
                 He taught; but first he followed it himself.

529         **With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,**  
                 With him there was a PLOWMAN, who was his brother,  
530         **That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;**  
                 Who had hauled very many a cartload of dung;  
531         **A trewe swynkere and a good was he,**  
                 He was a true and good worker,  
532         **Lyvynge in pees and parfit charitee.**  
                 Living in peace and perfect love.  
533         **God loved he best with al his hoole herte**  
                 He loved God best with all his whole heart  
534         **At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,**  
                 At all times, whether it pleased or pained him,  
535         **And thanne his neighebor right as hymselve.**  
                 And then (he loved) his neighbor exactly as himself.  
536         **He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,**  
                 He would thresh, and moreover make ditches and dig,  
537         **For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,**  
                 For Christ's sake, for every poor person,  
538         **Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.**  
                 Without payment, if it lay in his power.  
539         **His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,**  
                 He paid his tithes completely and well,  
540         **Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.**  
                 Both of his own labor and of his possessions.  
541         **In a tabard he rood upon a mere.**  
                 He rode in a tabard (sleeveless jacket) upon a mare.

542         **Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,**  
                 There was also a REEVE, and a MILLER,  
543         **A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,**  
                 A SUMMONER, and a PARDONER also,  
544         **A MAUNCIPLE, and myself -- ther were namo.**  
                 A MANCIPLE, and myself -- there were no more.

545         **The MILLERE was a stout carl for the nones;**  
                 The MILLER was a stout fellow indeed;  
546         **Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.**  
                 He was very strong of muscle, and also of bones.  
547         **That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,**  
                 That was well proven, for wherever he came,  
548         **At wrastlynge he wolde have alwey the ram.**  
                 At wrestling he would always take the the prize.  
549         **He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;**  
                 He was stoutly built, broad, a large-framed fellow;  
550         **Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,**  
                 There was no door that he would not heave off its hinges,  
551         **Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.**  
                 Or break it by running at it with his head.  
552         **His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,**  
                 His beard was red as any sow or fox,  
553         **And therto brood, as though it were a spade.**  
                 And moreover broad, as though it were a spade.  
554         **Upon the cop right of his nose he hade**  
                 Upon the exact top of his nose he had  
555         **A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,**  
                 A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,  
556         **Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;**  
                 Red as the bristles of a sow's ears;  
557         **His nosethirles blake were and wyde.**  
                 His nostrils were black and wide.  
558         **A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.**  
                 He wore a sword and a buckler by his side.  
559         **His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.**  
                 His mouth was as large as a large furnace.  
560         **He was a janglere and a goliardeys,**  
                 He was a loudmouth and a buffoon,  
561         **And that was moost of synne and harlotries.**  
                 And that was mostly of sin and deeds of harlotry.  
562         **Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;**  
                 He well knew how to steal corn and take payment three times;  
563         **And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.**  
                 And yet he had a thumb of gold, indeed.  
564         **A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.**  
                 He wore a white coat and a blue hood.  
565         **A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,**  
                 He well knew how to blow and play a bag-pipe,  
566         **And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.**  
                 And with that he brought us out of town.

567         **A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,**  
                 There was a fine MANCIPLE of a temple (law school),  
568         **Of which achatours myghte take exemple**  
                 Of whom buyers of provisions might take example  
569         **For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;**  
                 For how to be wise in buying of victuals;  
570         **For wheither that he payde or took by taille,**  
                 For whether he paid (cash) or took (goods) on credit,  
571         **Algate he wayted so in his achaat**  
                 Always he watched so (carefully for his opportunity) in his purchases  
572         **That he was ay biforn and in good staat.**  
                 That he was always ahead and in good state.  
573         **Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace**  
                 Now is not that a very fair grace of God   
574         **That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace**  
                 That such an unlearned man's wit shall surpass  
575         **The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?**  
                 The wisdom of a heap of learned men?  
576         **Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,**  
                 He had more than three times ten masters,  
577         **That weren of lawe expert and curious,**  
                 Who were expert and skillful in law,  
578         **Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous**  
                 Of whom there were a dozen in that house  
579         **Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond**  
                 Worthy to be stewards of rent and land  
580         **Of any lord that is in Engelond,**  
                 Of any lord that is in England,  
581         **To make hym lyve by his propre good**  
                 To make him live by his own wealth  
582         **In honour dettelees (but if he were wood),**  
                 In honor and debtless (unless he were crazy),  
583         **Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;**  
                 Or live as economically as it pleased him to desire;  
584         **And able for to helpen al a shire**  
                 And (they would be) able to help all a shire  
585         **In any caas that myghte falle or happe.**  
                 In any emergency that might occur or happen.  
586         **And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe.**  
                 And yet this Manciple fooled them all.

587         **The REVE was a sclendre colerik man.**  
                 The REEVE was a slender choleric man.  
588         **His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;**  
                 His beard was shaved as close as ever he can;  
589         **His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;**  
                 His hair was closely cropped by his ears;  
590         **His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.**  
                 The top of his head in front was cut short like a priest's.  
591         **Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,**  
                 His legs were very long and very lean,  
592         **Ylyk a staf; ther was no calf ysene.**  
                 Like a stick; there was no calf to be seen.  
593         **Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;**  
                 He well knew how to keep a granary and a storage bin;  
594         **Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.**  
                 There was no auditor who could earn anything (by catching him).  
595         **Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn**  
                 He well knew by the drought and by the rain  
596         **The yeldynge of his seed and of his greyn.**  
                 (What would be) the yield of his seed and of his grain.  
597         **His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,**  
                 His lord's sheep, his cattle, his herd of dairy cows,  
598         **His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye**  
                 His swine, his horses, his livestock, and his poultry  
599         **Was hoolly in this Reves governynge,**  
                 Was wholly in this Reeve's control,  
600         **And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,**  
                 And in accord with his contract he gave the reckoning,  
601         **Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.**  
                 Since his lord was twenty years of age.  
602         **Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.**  
                 There was no man who could find him in arrears.  
603         **Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,**  
                 There was no farm manager, nor herdsman, nor other servant,  
604         **That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;**  
                 Whose trickery and treachery he did not know;  
605         **They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.**  
                 They were afraid of him as of the plague.  
606         **His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;**  
                 His dwelling was very nicely situated upon an heath;  
607         **With grene trees yshadwed was his place.**  
                 His place was shaded by green trees.  
608         **He koude bettre than his lord purchace.**  
                 He could buy property better than his lord could.  
609         **Ful riche he was astored pryvely.**  
                 He was secretly very richly provided.  
610         **His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,**  
                 He well knew how to please his lord subtly,  
611         **To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,**  
                 By giving and lending him some of his lord's own possessions,  
612         **And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.**  
                 And have thanks, and also a coat and hood (as a reward).  
613         **In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster:**  
                 In youth he had learned a good craft:  
614         **He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.**  
                 He was a very good craftsman, a carpenter.  
615         **This Reve sat upon a ful good stot**  
                 This Reeve sat upon a very good horse  
616         **That was al pomely grey and highte Scot.**  
                 That was all dapple gray and was called Scot.  
617         **A long surcote of pers upon he hade,**  
                 He had on a long outer coat of dark blue,  
618         **And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.**  
                 And by his side he wore a rusty sword.  
619         **Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,**  
                 Of Northfolk was this Reeve of whom I tell,  
620         **Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.**  
                 Near to a town men call Bawdeswelle.  
621         **Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,**  
                 He had his coat hitched up and belted, like a friar,  
622         **And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.**  
                 And ever he rode as the last of our company.

623         **A SOMONOUR was ther with us in that place,**  
                 There was a SUMMONER with us in that place,  
624         **That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,**  
                 Who had a fire-red cherubim's face,  
625         **For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.**  
                 For it was pimpled and discolored, with swollen eyelids.  
626         **As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,**  
                 He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow,  
627         **With scalled browes blake and piled berd.**  
                 With black, scabby brows and a beard with hair fallen out.  
628         **Of his visage children were aferd.**  
                 Children were afraid of his face.  
629         **Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,**  
                 There was no mercury, lead monoxide, nor sulphur,  
630         **Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,**  
                 Borax, white lead, nor any oil of tarter,  
631         **Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,**  
                 Nor ointment that would cleanse and burn,  
632         **That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,**  
                 That could cure him of his white pustules,  
633         **Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.**  
                 Nor of the knobs sitting on his cheeks.  
634         **Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,**  
                 He well loved garlic, onions, and also leeks,  
635         **And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;**  
                 And to drink strong wine, red as blood;  
636         **Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.**  
                 Then he would speak and cry out as if he were crazy.  
637         **And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,**  
                 And when he had drunk deeply of the wine,  
638         **Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn.**  
                 Then he would speak no word but Latin.  
639         **A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,**  
                 He had a few legal terms, two or three,  
640         **That he had lerned out of som decree --**  
                 That he had learned out of some text of ecclesiastical law --  
641         **No wonder is, he herde it al the day;**  
                 That is no wonder, he heard it all the day;  
642         **And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay**  
                 And also you know well how a jay  
643         **Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.**  
                 Can call out "Walter" as well as the pope can.  
644         **But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,**  
                 But whoever knew how to examine him in other matters,  
645         **Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;**  
                 (Would find that) he had used up all his learning;  
646         **Ay "Questio quid iuris" wolde he crie.**  
                 Always "The question is, what point of the law applies?" he would cry.  
647         **He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;**  
                 He was a fine rascal and a kind one;  
648         **A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.**  
                 One could not find a better fellow.  
649         **He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn**  
                 For a quart of wine he would allow  
650         **A good felawe to have his concubyn**  
                 A good fellow to have his concubine  
651         **A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;**  
                 For twelve months, and excuse him completely;  
652         **Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.**  
                 Secretly he also knew how to pull off a clever trick.  
653         **And if he foond owher a good felawe,**  
                 And if he found anywhere a good fellow,  
654         **He wolde techen him to have noon awe**  
                 He would teach him to have no awe  
655         **In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs,**  
                 Of the archdeacon's curse (of excommunication) in such a case,  
656         **But if a mannes soule were in his purs;**  
                 Unless a man's soul were in his purse;  
657         **For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.**  
                 For in his purse he would be punished.  
658         **"Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.**  
                 "Purse is the archdeacon's hell," he said.  
659         **But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;**  
                 But well I know he lied right certainly;  
660         **Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,**  
                 Each guilty man ought to be afraid of excommunication,  
661         **For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,**  
                 For excommunication will slay just as forgiveness saves,  
662         **And also war hym of a Significavit.**  
                 And let him also beware of a Significavit (order for imprisonment).  
663         **In daunger hadde he at his owene gise**  
                 In his control he had as he pleased  
664         **The yonge girles of the diocise,**  
                 The young people of the diocese,  
665         **And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.**  
                 And knew their secrets, and was the adviser of them all.  
666         **A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,**  
                 He had set a garland upon his heed,  
667         **As greet as it were for an ale-stake.**  
                 As large as if it were for the sign of a tavern  
668         **A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.**  
                 He had made himself a shield of a cake.

669         **With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER**  
                 With him there rode a fine PARDONER  
670         **Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,**  
                 Of Rouncivale, his friend and his companion,  
671         **That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.**  
                 Who had come straight from the court of Rome.  
672         **Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"**  
                 Very loud he sang "Come hither, love, to me!"  
673         **This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;**  
                 This Summoner harmonized with him in a strong bass;  
674         **Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.**  
                 There was never a trumpet of half so great a sound.  
675         **This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,**  
                 This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,  
676         **But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;**  
                 But smooth it hung as does a clump of flax;  
677         **By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,**  
                 By small strands hung such locks as he had,  
678         **And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;**  
                 And he spread them over his shoulders;  
679         **But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.**  
                 But thin it lay, by strands one by one.  
680         **But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,**  
                 But to make an attractive appearance, he wore no hood,  
681         **For it was trussed up in his walet.**  
                 For it was trussed up in his knapsack.  
682         **Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;**  
                 It seemed to him that he rode in the very latest style;  
683         **Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.**  
                 With hair unbound, save for his cap, he rode all bare-headed.  
684         **Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.**  
                 He had glaring eyes such as has a hare.  
685         **A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.**  
                 He had sewn a Veronica upon his cap.  
686         **His walet, biforn hym in his lappe,**  
                 Before him in his lap, (he had) his knapsack,   
687         **Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot.**  
                 Brimful of pardons come all fresh from Rome.  
688         **A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.**  
                 He had a voice as small as a goat has.  
689         **No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;**  
                 He had no beard, nor never would have;  
690         **As smothe it was as it were late shave.**  
                 It (his face) was as smooth as if it were recently shaven.  
691         **I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.**  
                 I believe he was a eunuch or a homosexual.  
692         **But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware**  
                 But as to his craft, from Berwick to Ware  
693         **Ne was ther swich another pardoner.**  
                 There was no other pardoner like him.  
694         **For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,**  
                 For in his pouch he had a pillow-case,  
695         **Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;**  
                 Which he said was Our Lady's veil;  
696         **He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl**  
                 He said he had a piece of the sail  
697         **That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente**  
                 That Saint Peter had, when he went  
698         **Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.**  
                 Upon the sea, until Jesus Christ took him.  
699         **He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,**  
                 He had a cross of latten (brass-like alloy) covered with stones,  
700         **And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.**  
                 And in a glass container he had pigs' bones.  
701         **But with thise relikes, whan that he fond**  
                 But with these relics, when he found  
702         **A povre person dwellynge upon lond,**  
                 A poor parson dwelling in the countryside,  
703         **Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye**  
                 In one day he got himself more money  
704         **Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;**  
                 Than the parson got in two months;  
705         **And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,**  
                 And thus, with feigned flattery and tricks,  
706         **He made the person and the peple his apes.**  
                 He made fools of the parson and the people.  
707         **But trewely to tellen atte laste,**  
                 But truly to tell at the last,  
708         **He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.**  
                 He was in church a noble ecclesiast.  
709         **Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,**  
                 He well knew how to read a lesson or a story,  
710         **But alderbest he song an offertorie;**  
                 But best of all he sang an Offertory;  
711         **For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,**  
                 For he knew well, when that song was sung,  
712         **He moste preche and wel affile his tonge**  
                 He must preach and well smooth his speech  
713         **To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;**  
                 To win silver, as he very well knew how;   
714         **Therefore he song the murierly and loude.**  
                 Therefore he sang the more merrily and loud.

715         **Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,**  
                 Now have I told you truly, briefly,  
716         **Th' estaat, th' array, the nombre, and eek the cause**  
                 The rank, the dress, the number, and also the cause  
717         **Why that assembled was this compaignye**  
                 Why this company was assembled   
718         **In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye**  
                 In Southwark at this fine hostelry  
719         **That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.**  
                 That is called the Tabard, close by the Bell.  
720         **But now is tyme to yow for to telle**  
                 But now it is time to tell to you   
721         **How that we baren us that ilke nyght,**  
                 How we conducted ourselves that same night,  
722         **Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;**  
                 When we had arrived in that hostelry;  
723         **And after wol I telle of our viage**  
                 And after that I will tell of our journey  
724         **And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.**  
                 And all the rest of our pilgrimage.  
725         **But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,**  
                 But first I pray yow, of your courtesy,  
726         **That ye n' arette it nat my vileynye,**  
                 That you do not attribute it to my rudeness,  
727         **Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,**  
                 Though I speak plainly in this matter,  
728         **To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,**  
                 To tell you their words and their behavior,  
729         **Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.**  
                 Nor though I speak their words accurately.  
730         **For this ye knowen al so wel as I:**  
                 For this you know as well as I:  
731         **Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,**  
                 Whoever must repeat a story after someone,  
732         **He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan**  
                 He must repeat as closely as ever he knows how  
733         **Everich a word, if it be in his charge,**  
                 Every single word, if it be in his power,  
734         **Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,**  
                 Although he may speak ever so rudely and freely,  
735         **Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,**  
                 Or else he must tell his tale inaccurately,  
736         **Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.**  
                 Or make up things, or find new words.  
737         **He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;**  
                 He may not refrain from (telling the truth), although he were his brother;  
738         **He moot as wel seye o word as another.**  
                 He must as well say one word as another.  
739         **Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,**  
                 Christ himself spoke very plainly in holy writ,  
740         **And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.**  
                 And you know well it is no rudeness.  
741         **Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,**  
                 Also Plato says, whosoever knows how to read him,  
742         **The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.**  
                 The words must be closely related to the deed.  
743         **Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,**  
                 Also I pray you to forgive it to me,  
744         **Al have I nat set folk in hir degree**  
                 Although I have not set folk in order of their rank  
745         **Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.**  
                 Here in this tale, as they should stand.  
746         **My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.**  
                 My wit is short, you can well understand.

747         **Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,**  
                 Our Host made great hospitality to everyone of us,  
748         **And to the soper sette he us anon.**  
                 And to the supper he set us straightway.  
749         **He served us with vitaille at the beste;**  
                 He served us with victuals of the best sort;  
750         **Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.**  
                 The wine was strong, and it well pleased us to drink.  
751         **A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle**  
                 OUR HOST was an impressive man indeed  
752         **For to been a marchal in an halle.**  
                 (Qualified) to be a master of ceremonies in a hall.  
753         **A large man he was with eyen stepe --**  
                 He was a large man with prominent eyes --  
754         **A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe --**  
                 There was no better business man in Cheapside --  
755         **Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,**  
                 Bold of his speech, and wise, and well mannered,  
756         **And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.**  
                 And he lacked nothing at all of the qualities proper to a man.  
757         **Eek therto he was right a myrie man;**  
                 Also moreover he was a right merry man;  
758         **And after soper pleyen he bigan,**  
                 And after supper he began to be merry,  
759         **And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,**  
                 And spoke of mirth among other things,  
760         **Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges,**  
                 When we had paid our bills,  
761         **And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,**  
                 And said thus: "Now, gentlemen, truly,  
762         **Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;**  
                 You are right heartily welcome to me;  
763         **For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,**  
                 For by my word, if I shall not lie (I must say),  
764         **I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye**  
                 I saw not this year so merry a company  
765         **Atones in this herberwe as is now.**  
                 At one time in this lodging as is (here) now.  
766         **Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.**  
                 I would gladly make you happy, if I knew how.  
767         **And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,**  
                 And I have just now thought of an amusement,  
768         **To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.**  
                 To give you pleasure, and it shall cost nothing.

769         **"Ye goon to Caunterbury -- God yow speede,**  
                 "You go to Canterbury -- God give you success,  
770         **The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!**  
                 May the blessed martyr give you your reward!  
771         **And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,**  
                 And well I know, as you go by the way,  
772         **Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;**  
                 You intend to tell tales and to amuse yourselves;  
773         **For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon**  
                 For truly, it is no comfort nor mirth  
774         **To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;**  
                 To ride by the way dumb as a stone;  
775         **And therfore wol I maken yow disport,**  
                 And therefore I will make a game for you,  
776         **As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.**  
                 As I said before, and provide you some pleasure.  
777         **And if yow liketh alle by oon assent**  
                 And if pleases you all unanimously  
778         **For to stonden at my juggement,**  
                 To be subject to my judgment,  
779         **And for to werken as I shal yow seye,**  
                 And to do as I shall tell you,  
780         **Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye,**  
                 Tomorrow, when you ride by the way,  
781         **Now, by my fader soule that is deed,**  
                 Now, by the soul of my father who is dead,  
782         **But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!**  
                 Unless you be merry, I will give you my head!  
783         **Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche."**  
                 Hold up your hands, without more speech."

784         **Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.**  
                 Our decision was not long to seek out.  
785         **Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,**  
                 It seemed to us it was not worthwhile to deliberate on it,  
786         **And graunted hym withouten moore avys,**  
                 And (we) granted his request without more discussion,  
787         **And bad him seye his voirdit as hym leste.**  
                 And asked him to say his decision as it pleased him.  
788         **"Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;**  
                 "Gentlemen," said he, "now listen for the best course of action;  
789         **But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.**  
                 But, I pray yow, do not take it in disdain (scorn it).  
790         **This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn,**  
                 This is the point, to speak briefly and clearly,  
791         **That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,**  
                 That each of yow, to make our way seem short by this means,  
792         **In this viage shal telle tales tweye**  
                 Must tell two tales in this journey  
793         **To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,**  
                 On the way to Canterbury, that is what I mean,  
794         **And homward he shal tellen othere two,**  
                 And on the homeward trip he shall tell two others,  
795         **Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.**  
                 About adventures that in old times have happened.  
796         **And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle --**  
                 And whoever of you who does best of all --  
797         **That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas**  
                 That is to say, who tells in this case  
798         **Tales of best sentence and moost solaas --**  
                 Tales of best moral meaning and most pleasure --  
799         **Shal have a soper at oure aller cost**  
                 Shall have a supper at the cost of us all  
800         **Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,**  
                 Here in this place, sitting by this post,  
801         **Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.**  
                 When we come back from Canterbury.  
802         **And for to make yow the moore mury,**  
                 And to make you the more merry,  
803         **I wol myselven goodly with yow ryde,**  
                 I will myself gladly ride with you,  
804         **Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;**  
                 Entirely at my own cost, and be your guide;  
805         **And whoso wole my juggement withseye**  
                 And whosoever will not accept my judgment   
806         **Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.**  
                 Shall pay all that we spend by the way.  
807         **And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,**  
                 And if you grant that it be so,  
808         **Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,**  
                 Tell me straightway, without more words,  
809         **And I wol erly shape me therfore."**  
                 And I will get ready early for this."

810         **This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore**  
                 This thing was granted, and our oaths sworn  
811         **With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also**  
                 With very glad hearts, and (we) prayed him also  
812         **That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,**  
                 That he would consent to do so,  
813         **And that he wolde been oure governour,**  
                 And that he would be our governor,  
814         **And of oure tales juge and reportour,**  
                 And judge and score keeper of our tales,  
815         **And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,**  
                 And set a supper at a certain price,  
816         **And we wol reuled been at his devys**  
                 And we will be ruled as he wishes  
817         **In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent**  
                 In every respect; and thus unanimously  
818         **We been acorded to his juggement.**  
                 We are accorded to his judgment.  
819         **And therupon the wyn was fet anon;**  
                 And thereupon the wine was fetched immediately;  
820         **We dronken, and to reste wente echon,**  
                 We drank, and each one went to rest,  
821         **Withouten any lenger taryynge.**  
                 Without any longer tarrying.

822         **Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,**  
                 In the morning, when day began to spring,  
823         **Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,**  
                 Our Host arose, and was the rooster of us all (awakened us).  
824         **And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,**  
                 And gathered us together all in a flock,  
825         **And forth we riden a litel moore than paas**  
                 And forth we rode at little more than a walk  
826         **Unto the Wateryng of Seint Thomas;**  
                 Unto the Watering of Saint Thomas;  
827         **And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste**  
                 And there our Host stopped his horse  
828         **And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.**  
                 And said, "Gentlemen, listen, if you please.  
829         **Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde.**  
                 You know your agreement, and I remind you of it.  
830         **If even-song and morwe-song accorde,**  
                 If what you said last night agrees with what you say this morning,   
831         **Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.**  
                 Let's see now who shall tell the first tale.  
832         **As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,**  
                 As ever I may drink wine or ale,  
833         **Whoso be rebel to my juggement**  
                 Whosoever may be rebel to my judgment  
834         **Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.**  
                 Shall pay for all that is spent by the way.  
835         **Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;**  
                 Now draw straws, before we depart further (from London);  
836         **He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.**  
                 He who has the shortest shall begin.  
837         **Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,**  
                 Sir Knight," said he, "my master and my lord,  
838         **Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.**  
                 Now draw a straw, for that is my decision.  
839         **Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioresse.**  
                 Come nearer," he said, "my lady Prioress.  
840         **And ye, sire Clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,**  
                 And you, sir Clerk, let be your modesty,  
841         **Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!"**  
                 And study not; lay hand to (draw a straw), every man!"  
842         **Anon to drawen every wight bigan,**  
                 Every person began straightway to draw,  
843         **And shortly for to tellen as it was,**  
                 And shortly to tell as it was,  
844         **Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,**  
                 Were it by chance, or destiny, or luck,  
845         **The sothe is this: the cut fil to the Knyght,**  
                 The truth is this: the draw fell to the Knight,  
846         **Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,**  
                 For which everyone was very happy and glad,  
847         **And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,**  
                 And he must tell his tale, as was reasonable,  
848         **By foreward and by composicioun,**  
                 By our previous promise and by formal agreement,  
849         **As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?**  
                 As you have heard; what more words are needed?  
850         **And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,**  
                 And when this good man saw that it was so,  
851         **As he that wys was and obedient**  
                 Like one who was wise and obedient  
852         **To kepe his foreward by his free assent,**  
                 To keep his agreement by his free assent,  
853         **He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,**  
                 He said, "Since I must begin the game,  
854         **What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!**  
                 What! Welcome be the draw, in God's name!  
855         **Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."**  
                 Now let us ride, and listen to what I say."  
856         **And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,**  
                 And with that word we rode forth on our way,  
857         **And he bigan with right a myrie cheere**  
                 And he began with a truly merry demeanor  
858         **His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.**  
                 To tell his tale straightway, and said as you may hear.

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