
The Canterbury Tales

The General Prologue

	Whan that Aprill with his shoures sote ^o	<i>sweet showers</i>
	The droghte ^o of Marche hath perced to the rote, ^o	<i>dryness / root</i>
	And bathed every veyne ^o in swich licour, ^o	<i>vein / such moisture</i>
	Of which vertu ^o engendred is the flour;	<i>By power of which</i>
5	Whan Zephirus ^o eek with his swete breeth	<i>the west wind</i>
	Inspired ^o hath in every holt ^o and heeth ^o	<i>Breathed into / wood / heath</i>
	The tendre croppes, ^o and the yonge sonne	<i>sprouts</i>
	Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne; ¹	
	And smale fowles ^o maken melodye,	<i>birds</i>
10	That slepen al the night with open yē ^o —	<i>eye(s)</i>
	So priketh hem Nature in hir corages ² —	
	Than longen ^o folk to goon ^o on pilgrimages,	<i>Then long / go</i>
	And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes, ³	
	To ferne halwes, ^o couthe ^o in sondry londes;	<i>far-off shrines / known</i>
15	And specially, from every shires ende	
	Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,	
	The holy blisful martir ⁴ for to seke, ^o	<i>seek</i>
	That hem hath holpen, ^o whan that they were seke. ^o	<i>helped / sick</i>
	Bifel ^o that, in that seson on a day,	<i>It befell</i>
20	In Southwerk at the Tabard ^o as I lay ^o	<i>(an inn) / lodged</i>
	Redy to wenden ^o on my pilgrimage	<i>depart</i>
	To Caunterbury with ful devout corage, ^o	<i>heart</i>
	At night was come into that hostelrye ^o	<i>inn</i>
	Wel nyne and twenty in a companye	
25	Of sondry folk, by aventure ^o y-falle ^o	<i>chance / fallen</i>
	In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,	
	That toward Caunterbury wolden ^o ryde.	<i>wished to</i>
	The chambres ^o and the stables weren wyde, ^o	<i>bedrooms / spacious</i>
	And wel we weren esed ^o atte beste. ^o	<i>made comfortable / in the best (ways)</i>
30	And shortly, whan the sonne was to ^o reste,	<i>at</i>
	So hadde I spoken with hem everichon ^o	<i>every one</i>
	That I was of hir felawshipe anon,	

1. Has run his half-course in the Ram; i.e., has passed through half the zodiacal sign of Aries (the Ram), a course completed on April 11. A rhetorically decorative way of indicating the time of year.

2. Nature so spurs them in their hearts.

3. And pilgrims to seek foreign shores.

4. Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, murdered in 1170 and canonized shortly thereafter. The place of his martyrdom was the greatest shrine in England and much visited by pilgrims.

	And made forward ^o erly for to ryse,	<i>agreement</i>
	To take oure wey, ther as I yow devyse. ^o	<i>(will) tell</i>
35	But natheles, ^o whyl I have tyme and space,	<i>nevertheless</i>
	Er that I ferther in this tale pace, ^o	<i>pass on</i>
	Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun ⁵	
	To telle yow al the condicioun ⁶	
	Of ech of hem, so as it semed me, ^o	<i>seemed to me</i>
40	And whiche ^o they weren, and of what degree, ^o	<i>what / status</i>
	And eek in what array ^o that they were inne;	<i>clothing</i>
	And at a knight than wol ^o I first beginne.	<i>will</i>
	A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,	
	That fro ^o the tyme that he first bigan	<i>from</i>
45	To ryden out, ^o he loved chivalrye,	<i>ride (on expeditions)</i>
	Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye. ⁷	
	Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre, ^o	<i>war(s)</i>
	And therto ^o hadde he riden, no man ferre, ^o	<i>in such / further</i>
	As wel in Cristendom as in hethenesse, ^o	<i>in pagan lands</i>
50	And evere honoured for his worthinesse.	
	At Alisaundre ^o he was whan it was wonne;	<i>Alexandria</i>
	Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne ^o	<i>headed the table</i>
	Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce. ^o	<i>Prussia</i>
	In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce, ⁸	
55	No Cristen man so ofte of his degree. ^o	<i>rank</i>
	In Gernade ^o at the sege ^o eek hadde he be ^o	<i>Granada / siege / been</i>
	Of Algezir, ^o and riden in Belmarye. ^o	<i>Algeciras / Benmarin (in Morocco)</i>
	At Lyeys ^o was he and at Satalye, ^o	<i>Ayas / Adalia (both in Asia Minor)</i>
	Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See ^o	<i>Mediterranean</i>
60	At many a noble armee ^o hadde he be.	<i>armed expedition</i>
	At mortal batailles ⁹ hadde he been fiftene,	
	And foughten for oure feith at Tramissene ^o	<i>Tlemcen (in Algeria)</i>
	In listes ^o thryes, ^o and ay slayn his foo. ^o	<i>tournaments / thrice / foe</i>
	This ilke ^o worthy knight hadde been also	<i>same</i>
65	Somtyme with the lord of Palatye, ^o	<i>Palatia</i>
	Ageyn ^o another hethen in Turkye;	<i>Against</i>
	And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys. ^o	<i>reputation</i>
	And though that he were worthy, ^o he was wys, ^o	<i>i.e., valiant / prudent</i>
	And of his port ^o as meke as is a mayde.	<i>deportment</i>
70	He nevere yet no vileinye ^o ne sayde	<i>rudeness</i>
	In al his lyf, unto no maner wight. ^o	<i>any sort of person</i>
	He was a verray, ^o parfit, ^o gentil ^o knight.	<i>true / perfect / noble</i>
	But for to tellen yow of his array,	
	His hors ^o were gode, but he was nat gay. ^o	<i>horses / brightly dressed</i>
75	Of fustian ^o he wered ^o a gipoun ^o	<i>rough cloth / wore / tunic</i>
	Al bismotered with ^o his habergeoun, ^o	<i>stained by / coat of mail</i>
	For he was late y-come ^o from his viage, ^o	<i>recently come / expedition</i>
	And wente for to doon ^o his pilgrimage.	<i>make</i>

5. It seems to me reasonable (proper).

6. Character, estate, condition.

7. Fidelity, honor, generosity of spirit, and courtesy (the central chivalric virtues).

8. He had been on campaigns in Lithuania and in Russia.

9. Tournaments fought to the death.

- With him ther was his sone, a young SQUYER,
 80 A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler,¹
 With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.²
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
 Of^o his stature he was of evene lengthe,^o *In / average height*
 And wonderly delivere,^o and of greet strengthe. *agile*
 85 And he hadde been somtyme in chivachye^o *on expeditions*
 In Flaundes,^o in Artoys,^o and Picardye,^o *Flanders / Artois / Picardy*
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,³
 In hope to stonden^o in his lady^o grace. *stand / lady's*
 Embrouded^o was he, as it were a mede^o *Embroidered / meadow*
 90 Al ful of freshe floures, whyte and rede.
 Singinge he was, or floytinge,^o al the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May. *fluting (whistling?)*
 Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.
 Wel coude^o he sitte on hors, and faire ryde. *knew how to*
 95 He coude songes make and wel endyte,^o *compose verse*
 Juste^o and eek daunce, and wel purtreye^o and wryte. *Joust / draw*
 So hote^o he lovede that by nightertale^o *hotly / at night*
 He sleep^o namore^o than dooth a nightingale. *slept / no more*
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,⁴
 100 And carl^o biforn his fader at the table. *carved (meat)*
 A YEMAN hadde he, and servaunts namo⁵
 At that tyme, for him liste^o ryde so; *it pleased him to*
 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
 A sheef of pecok arwes^o brighte and kene *arrows*
 105 Under his belt he bar^o ful thriftily.^o *bore / carefully*
 Wel coude he dresse^o his takel^o yemanly: *keep in order / equipment*
 His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe,
 And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.
 A not-heed^o hadde he, with a broun visage.^o *closely cropped head / face*
 110 Of wodecraft wel coude^o he al the usage. *knew*
 Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,^o *fine wrist guard*
 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,^o *shield*
 And on that other syde a gay daggere,
 Harneised^o wel, and sharp as point of spere;
 115 A Cristofre^o on his brest of silver shene.^o *mounted*
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik^o was of grene; *St. Christopher medal / bright*
 A forster^o was he, soothly, as I gesse. *shoulder strap*
 forester
 Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy^o— *modest*
 120 Hir gretteste ooth was but by Seynte Loy^o— *Eligius (French: Eloi)*
 And she was cleped^o madame Eglentyne. *called*
 Ful wel she song^o the service divyne, *sang*
 Entuned^o in hir nose ful semely;^o *Intoned / becomingly*

1. A lover, and a vigorous young man, one preparing to become a knight.

2. With locks as curly as if they'd been pressed (by a curling iron).

3. And conducted himself well, considering his inexperience.

4. He was courteous, humble, and willing to be of service.

5. He (the Knight) had a Yeoman (a servant one step above a groom in rank; this one seems to be a forester) with him, and no other servants.

- And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,⁶ *elegantly*
 125 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,⁶
 For Frensh of Paris was to hire unknowe.
 At mete^o wel y-taught was she with alle: *i.e., At table*
 She leet^o no morsel from hir lippes falle, *let*
 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.^o *(too) deeply*
 130 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe⁷
 That no drope ne fille^o upon hire brest. *fell*
 In curteisy^o was set ful muchel^o hir lest.^o *etiquette / much / delight*
 Hir over^o-lippe wyped she so clene, *upper*
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing^o sene^o *small drop / seen*
 135 Of grece,^o whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.
 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,^o *grease*
 And sikerly^o she was of greet disport,^o *reached*
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,^o *certainly / cheerfulness*
 And peyned hire^o to countrefete chere^o *deportment*
 140 Of court, and to been estatlich^o of manere, *took pains / imitate behavior*
 And to ben holden digne^o of reverence. *stately*
 But, for to speken of hire conscience,^o *considered worthy*
 She was so charitable and so pitous,^o *sensibility*
 She wolde wepe if that she sawe a mous^o *compassionate*
 145 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde. *mouse*
 Of^o smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde *i.e., Some*
 With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed.^o *fine white bread*
 But sore^o wepte she if oon of hem were deed, *sorely*
 Or if men^o smoot it with a yerde^o smerte;^o *(some)one / stick / sharply*
 150 And al was conscience and tendre herte.
 Ful semely hir wimpel^o pinched^o was, *headdress / pleated*
 Hir nose tretys,^o hir eyen^o greye as glas, *graceful / eyes*
 Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.
 But sikerly^o she hadde a fair forheed— *certainly*
 155 It was almost a spanne^o brood, I trowe^o— *span / believe*
 For hardily^o she was nat undergrowe.^o *certainly / undersized*
 Ful fetis^o was hir cloke, as I was war.^o *elegant / aware*
 Of smal coral^o aboute hire arm she bar *i.e., small coral beads*
 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene;⁸
 160 And theron heng a broche^o of gold ful shene,^o *ornament / bright*
 On which ther was first write^o a crowned A,⁹ *written*
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia.*^o *Love conquers all (Latin)*
 Another NONNE with hire hadde she,
 That was hir chapeleyne,^o and PREESTES three. *chaplain, assistant*
 165 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye,^o *a very fine one*
 An outrydere^o that lovede venerye:^o *estate supervisor / hunting*
 A manly man, to been an abbot able.
 Ful many a deyntee^o hors hadde he in stable, *valuable*
 And whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here^o *hear*

6. I.e., in the English fashion, as it was spoken at Stratford at the Bow—a suburb some two miles east of London and home of the Benedictine nunnery of St. Leonard's.

7. She knew well how to raise a portion (to her lips) and take care.

8. A string of beads (a rosary), its groups marked off by special stones, called "gauds," of green.

9. The letter A with a symbolic crown fashioned above it.

170	Ginglen° in a whistling wind als° clere And eek° as loude as dooth the chapel belle, Ther as° this lord was kepere of the celle. ¹ The reule of Seint Maure° or of Seint Beneit,° By cause that it was old and somdel streit,°	<i>Jingling / as also Where Maurus / Benedict somewhat strict</i>
175	This ilke° monk leet olde thinges pace,° And held after the newe world the space.° He yaf° nat of° that text a pulled° hen, That seith that hunters ben° nat holy men, Ne that a monk, when he is reccheless,°	<i>same / pass away course (i.e., customs) gave / for / plucked are negligent of his vows</i>
180	Is lykned til° a fish that is waterlees° (This is to seyn,° a monk out of his cloistre); But thilke° text held he nat worth an oistre.° And I seyde his opinioun was good: What° sholde he studie, and make himselven wood,°	<i>likened to / out of water say that same / oyster Why / mad pore over work</i>
185	Upon a book in cloistre alwey to poure,° Or swinken° with his handes and labour As Austin bit?° How shal the world be served? Lat Austin have his swink° to him reserved! Therfore he was a pricasour° aright:°	<i>Augustine bids work hard rider / truly</i>
190	Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel° in flight; Of priking° and of hunting for the hare Was al his lust,° for no cost wolde he spare. I seigh° his slevs purfiled° at the hond With grys,° and that the fyneste of a lond;°	<i>bird riding pleasure saw / trimmed gray fur / land</i>
195	And, for to festne° his hood under his chin, He hadde of gold y-wroght° a ful curious pin: A love-knotte ² in the gretter° ende ther was. His heed was balled,° that shoon as any glas, And eek his face, as° he had been anoint.°	<i>fasten made larger bald as if / anointed</i>
200	He was a lord ful fat and in good point,° His eyen° stepe° and rollinge in his heed, That stemed as a forneys of a leed; ³ His bootes souple,° his hors in greet estat°— Now certainly he was a fair prelat.	<i>condition eyes / prominent supple / condition</i>
205	He was nat pale as a forpynd goost;° A fat swan loved he best of any roost. His palfrey° was as broun as is a berye.° A FRERE° ther was, a wantowne° and a merye, A limitour, ⁴ a ful solempne° man.	<i>tortured spirit horse / berry Friar / gay (one) distinguished</i>
210	In alle the ordres foure ⁵ is noon that can° So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage. He hadde maad° ful many a mariage Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost. ⁶ Unto his ordre he was a noble post.°	<i>knows arranged pillar</i>

1. A priory or dependent house.

2. An elaborate knot symbolizing true love.

3. That gleamed like a furnace (a fire) under a cauldron.

4. One licensed to beg within a certain region or limit.

5. The four orders of friars (Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite, and Augustinian).

6. I.e., he gave them dowries out of his own funds, perhaps after having first seduced them himself.

- 215 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
 With frankeleyns over al in his contree,⁷
 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;
 For he hadde power of confessioun,
 As seyde himself, more than a curat,^o
- 220 For of his ordre he was licentiat.^o *parish priest*
 Ful swetely herde he confessioun, *licensed to hear confessions*
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
 He was an esy man to yeve^o penaunce *give*
 Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.⁸
- 225 For unto a povre^o ordre for to yive^o *poor / give*
 Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive^o— *shriven*
 For if he yaf,^o he dorste make avaunt,^o *gave / (the Friar) dared assert*
 He wiste^o that a man was repentaunt. *knew*
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
- 230 He may nat wepe although hym sore smerte:^o *it sorely pain him*
 Therefore, in stede of wepinge and preyeres,
 Men moot^o yeve silver to the povre^o freres. *may / poor*
 His tipet^o was ay farsed^o ful of knyves *scarf / always stuffed*
 And pinnes, for to yeven^o faire wyves. *give to*
- 235 And certainly he hadde a murye note;^o *pleasant voice*
 Wel coude he singe and pleyen on a rote;^o *stringed instrument*
 Of yeddinges he bar outrely the prys.⁹
 His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys;^o *lily*
 Therto^o he strong was as a champioun. *Moreover*
- 240 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun,
 And everich hostiler^o and tappestere^o *innkeeper / barmaid*
 Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,¹
 For unto swich^o a worthy man as he *such*
 Acorded nat, as by his facultee,²
- 245 To have with seke lazars^o aqueyntaunce: *sick lepers*
 It is nat honest,^o it may nat avaunce^o *respectable / be profitable*
 For to delen with no swich poraille,^o *such poor people*
 But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.^o *victuals*
 And over al,^o ther as^o profit sholde aryse, *everywhere / wherever*
- 250 Curteys he was, and lowely of^o servyse. *humble in*
 Ther nas^o no man nowher so vertuous.^o *was not / capable*
 He was the beste beggere in his hous,
- 252a And yaf^o a certeyn ferme^o for the graunt: *gave / payment*
 252b Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt.^o *area of begging*
 For thogh a widwe^o hadde nought a sho,^o *widow / shoe*
 So plesaunt was his *In principio*,^o *In the beginning (Latin)*
- 255 Yet wolde he have a ferthing,^o er he wente. *farthing*
 His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.³

7. With rich landholders everywhere in his region.

8. Wherever he knew (that he could expect) to have a good gift in return.

9. At narrative songs, he absolutely took the prize.

1. Better than a leper or beggar woman.

2. It was not fitting, considering his position.

3. His profit from begging was much greater than "his regular income" or "the fee he paid for his exclusive begging rights." (Meaning uncertain.)

	And rage he coude, as it were right a whelpe; ⁴	
	In love-dayes° ther coude he muchel° helpe,	<i>legal arbitrations / much</i>
	For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer, ⁵	
260	With a thredbare cope,° as is a povre scoler.	<i>cape</i>
	But he was lyk a maister° or a pope:	<i>Master of Arts</i>
	Of double worsted was his semi-cope,°	<i>half cape</i>
	That rounded as a belle out of the presse.°	<i>mold</i>
	Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse, ⁶	
265	To make his English swete upon his tonge;	
	And in his harping, whan that he hadde songe,	
	His eyen° twinkled in his heed aright	<i>eyes</i>
	As doon° the sterres° in the frosty night.	<i>do / stars</i>
	This worthy limitour was cleped° Huberd.	<i>called</i>
270	A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,°	<i>beard</i>
	In mottelee,° and hye ⁷ on horse he sat;	<i>figured cloth</i>
	Upon his heed a Flaundrish° bever° hat,	<i>Flemish / beaver fur</i>
	His bootes clasped° faire and fetisly.°	<i>tied / neatly</i>
	His resons° he spak ful solempnely,°	<i>opinions / impressively</i>
275	Souninge° alway th'encrees° of his winning.°	<i>Proclaiming / increase / profit</i>
	He wolde the see were kept for any thing ⁸	
	Bitwixe Middleburgh° and Orewelle.°	<i>(in Holland) / (in England)</i>
	Wel coude he in eschaunge° sheeldes° selle.	<i>foreign exchange / French coins</i>
	This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:°	<i>used</i>
280	Ther wiste no wight° that he was in dette,	<i>no person knew</i>
	So estatly° was he of his governaunce,°	<i>dignified / conduct</i>
	With his bargaynes and with his chevisaunce.°	<i>(possibly illegal) lending</i>
	For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,°	<i>indeed</i>
	But sooth to seyn, I noot° how men him calle.	<i>know not</i>
285	A CLERK° ther was of Oxenford° also,	<i>student / Oxford</i>
	That unto logik hadde longe y-go. ⁹	
	As leene° was his hors as is a rake,	<i>lean</i>
	And he nas° nat right fat, I undertake,°	<i>was not / declare</i>
	But loked holwe° and therto° soberly.	<i>hollow / also</i>
290	Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy,°	<i>outer short cloak</i>
	For he hadde geten him° yet no benefyce,	<i>obtained for himself</i>
	Ne was so worldly for to have offyce;°	<i>secular employment</i>
	For him was levere° have at his beddes heed	<i>he would rather</i>
	Twenty bokes, clad° in blak or reed,	<i>bound</i>
295	Of Aristotle and his philosophye,	
	Than robes riche, or fithele,° or gay sautrye.°	<i>fiddle / psaltery, harp</i>
	But al be that° he was a philosophre, ¹	<i>although</i>
	Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;°	<i>coffer</i>
	But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,°	<i>get</i>
300	On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,	

4. And he knew how to play and flirt, as if he were a puppy.

5. A religious who knows only the enclosed life of the cloister.

6. He lisped a little, out of affectation.

7. On a high saddle.

8. He wanted the sea to be guarded (against pirates) at any cost. (His profits depended on it.)

9. Who had long since proceeded to (the study of) logic in the university curriculum.

1. With a pun on alchemist, another meaning of the word.

	And bisily gan for the soules preye ²	
	Of hem that yaf him wherwith ^o to scoleye. ^o	<i>i.e., the means / study</i>
	Of studie took he most cure ^o and most hede. ^o	<i>care / heed</i>
	Noght o ^o word spak he more than was nede,	<i>Not one</i>
305	And that was seyde in forme ^o and reverence, ^o	<i>properly / respectfully</i>
	And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence. ^o	<i>serious meaning</i>
	Souninge ^o in moral vertu was his speche,	<i>Resounding</i>
	And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.	
	A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, ^o war ^o and wys,	<i>An eminent lawyer / alert</i>
310	That often hadde been at the Parvys, ³	
	Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.	
	Discreet he was and of greet reverence: ^o	<i>worthy of great respect</i>
	He semed swich, ^o his wordes weren so wyse.	<i>such</i>
	Justyce ^o he was ful often in assyse, ^o	<i>Judge / local courts</i>
315	By patente ^o and by pleyn ^o commissioun;	<i>letter of appointment / full</i>
	For his science ^o and for his heigh renoun,	<i>knowledge</i>
	Of fees and robes hadde he many oon. ^o	<i>a one</i>
	So greet a purchasour ^o was nowher noon: ^o	<i>speculator in land / none</i>
	Al was fee simple to him in effect; ⁴	
320	His purchasing mighte nat been infect. ^o	<i>invalidated</i>
	Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas;	
	And yet he semed bisier than he was.	
	In termes hadde he caas and domes alle, ⁵	
	That from the tyme of King William ⁶ were falle. ^o	<i>had taken place</i>
325	Therto he coude endyte, ^o and make a thing; ^o	<i>write / draw up papers</i>
	Ther coude no wight pinche at ^o his wryting,	<i>no one find fault with</i>
	And every statut coude ^o he pleyn by rote. ^o	<i>knew / completely by heart</i>
	He rood but hoomly ^o in a medlee ^o cote,	<i>informally / figured</i>
	Girt with a ceint ^o of silk, with barres ^o smale;	<i>girdle / metal bars</i>
330	Of his array telle I no lenger tale.	
	A FRANKELEYN ^o was in his companye.	<i>wealthy landowner</i>
	Whyt was his berd as is the dayesye; ^o	<i>daisy</i>
	Of his complexioun ^o he was sangwyn. ^o	<i>temperament / sanguine</i>
	Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn. ⁷	
335	To liven in delyt was evere his wone, ^o	<i>custom</i>
	For he was Epicurus ⁸ owene sone,	
	That heeld opinioun that pleyn ^o delyt	<i>complete</i>
	Was verray ^o felicitee parfyt. ^o	<i>true / perfect</i>
	An housholdere, and that a greet, ^o was he;	<i>a great one</i>
340	Seint Julian ⁹ he was in his contree. ^o	<i>region</i>
	His breed, his ale, was always after oon; ^o	<i>of uniform good quality</i>
	A bettre envyned ^o man was nowher noon.	<i>stocked with wine</i>
	Withoute bake mete ^o was nevere his hous,	<i>meat pies</i>
	Of fish and flesh, ^o and that so plentevous ^o	<i>meat / plentiful</i>

2. And busily did pray for the souls.

3. The porch of St. Paul's Cathedral, a favorite gathering place for lawyers.

4. I.e., he always got unrestricted possession ("fee simple") of the property.

5. He knew the exact terms (details) of all the cases and decisions.

6. I.e., since the Norman Conquest (1066).

7. In the morning he dearly loved a sop (a piece of bread or cake) in wine.

8. A Greek philosopher who held that pleasure was the highest good.

9. The patron saint of hospitality.

345	It snewed° in his hous of mete° and drinke. Of alle deyntees° that men coude thinke, After° the sondry sesons of the yeer, So chaunged° he his mete° and his soper.	<i>snowed / food delicacies According to varied / dinner</i>
350	Ful many a fat partrich° hadde he in mewe,° And many a breem° and many a luce° in stewe.° Wo° was his cook, but if° his sauce were Poynaunt° and sharp, and redy al his gere.° His table dormant ¹ in his halle° alway Stood redy covered° al the longe day.	<i>partridge / coop carp / pike / fishpond (Made) sorry / unless Pungent / utensils main room set</i>
355	At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire; ² Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the shire. ³ An anlas° and a gipser° al of silk Heng° at his girdel, whyt as morne° milk. A shirreve° hadde he been, and a countour;°	<i>dagger / purse Hung / morning sheriff / auditor</i>
360	Was nowher such a worthy vavasour.° An HABERDASSHER and a CARPENTER, A WEBBE,° a DYERE, and a TAPICER,°	<i>landholder weaver / tapestry maker one livery (uniform)</i>
365	Were with us eek, clothed in o liveree° Of a solempne° and greet fraternitee.° Ful fresh and newe hir gere° apyked° was; Hir knyves were chaped° noght with bras, But al with silver; wrought ful clene and weel Hire girdles° and hire pouches° everydeel.°	<i>distinguished / (parish) guild equipment / adorned mounted belts / purses / altogether citizen, burgher guildhall</i>
370	To sitten in a yeldhalle° on a deys. ⁴ Everich,° for the wisdom that he can,° Was shaply° for to been an alderman. For catel° hadde they ynogh and rente,° And eek° hir wyves wolde it wel assente;°	<i>Each one / knows fit property / income also / assent to</i>
375	And elles° certein were they to blame.° It is ful fair to been y-clept° "Madame,"° And goon to vigilyës al bifore, ⁵ And have a mantel royalliche y-bore.°	<i>otherwise / deserving of blame called / "my lady" royally carried occasion</i>
380	A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones,° To boille the chiknes° with the mary-bones° And poudre-marchant tart and galingale. ⁶ Wel coude he knowe° a draughte of London ale. He coude° roste, and sethe,° and broille, and frye, Maken mortreux,° and wel bake a pye.	<i>chickens / marrowbones recognize knew how to / boil stews</i>
385	But greet harm° was it, as it thoughte° me, That on his shine° a mormal° hadde he. For blankmanger, ⁷ that made he with the beste.	<i>misfortune / seemed to shin / ulcerous sore</i>

1. Most tables were made of boards laid on trestles and were taken down after each meal; this one seems to have been permanent.

2. I.e., he presided over meetings of local justices of the peace when they gathered to hear cases.

3. Member of Parliament for his county.

4. The dais (a raised platform) on which the mayor or alderman of a city sat.

5. And go to church vigils at the head of the procession.

6. Both are spices, one tart and one sweet.

7. An elaborate dish of chicken in a sweet milk-and-rice sauce.

A SHIPMAN was ther, woning fer by weste:⁸
 For aught I woot,^o he was of Dertemouthe.^o *know / Dartmouth (in Devon)*
 390 He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,⁹
 In a gowne of falding^o to the knee. *heavy wool*
 A daggere hanginge on a laas^o hadde he *cord*
 Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.
 The hote somer^o hadde maad his hewe al broun; *summer*
 395 And certainly he was a good felawe.^o *cheerful companion*
 Ful many a draughte of wyn had he y-drawe^o *drawn off*
 Fro Burdeux-ward, whyl that the chapman sleep.¹
 Of nyce^o conscience took he no keep:^o *scrupulous / heed*
 If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,^o *upper hand*
 400 By water he sente hem hoom^o to every lond. *i.e., drowned them*
 But of his craft, to rekene wel his tydes,²
 His stremes^o and his daungers him bisydes,^o *currents / close to him*
 His herberwe^o and his mone,^o his lodemenage,^o *harbor / moon / pilotage*
 Ther nas noon swich^o from Hulle to Cartage.³ *such*
 405 Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;⁴
 With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
 He knew wel alle the havenes,^o as they were, *harbors*
 From Gootlond to the cape of Finistere,⁵
 And every cryke^o in Britayne^o and in Spayne; *creek / Brittany*
 410 His barge y-cleped^o was the Maudelayne.^o *called / Magdalen*
 With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISYK;^o *a physician*
 In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk
 To speke of phisik^o and of surgerye, *In regard to medicine*
 For he was grounded in astronomye.^o *astrology*
 415 He kepte^o his pacient a ful greet deel *watched*
 In houres, by his magik naturel.⁶
 Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
 Of his images for his pacient.⁷
 He knew the cause of everich maladye,
 420 Were it of hoot or cold, or moiste, or drye,⁸
 And where engendred,^o and of what humour;
 He was a verrey^o parfit practisour.^o *originated*
 The cause y-knowe,^o and of his harm^o the roote,^o *true / practitioner*
 Anon^o he yaf^o the seke man his boote.^o *known / malady / cause*
 425 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries⁹ *Quickly / gave / remedy*

8. There was a shipmaster, dwelling far off to the west.

9. He rode on a small sturdy horse, as (well as) he knew how. (A man more used to ships than horses.)

1. On the way from Bordeaux, while the (wine) merchant slept.

2. But at his craft, in calculating well the tides.

3. From Hull (in England) to Carthage (in northern Africa), or possibly Cartagena (in Spain).

4. Prudent in the risks he undertook.

5. From Gotland (an island in the Baltic Sea) to Cape Finisterre (in Spain).

6. During those hours (best for treatment), through his knowledge of natural magic (i.e., astrology).

7. He knew well how to determine the most favorable position of the stars for (making astrological) images for his patient.

8. The four fundamental qualities, which were thought to combine in pairs to form the four elements and the four humors (melancholia, cholera, phlegm, and blood); bodily health depended upon the existence of a proper equilibrium among them.

9. I.e., pharmacists.

	To sende him drogges and his letuaries, ^o	<i>medicinal syrups</i>
	For ech of hem made other for to winne; ^o	<i>profit</i>
	Hir ^o frendschipe nas nat newe to biginne. ^o	<i>Their / recently begun</i>
	Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,	
430	And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus,	
	Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien,	
	Serapion, Razis, and Avicen,	
	Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,	
	Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn. ¹	
435	Of his diete mesurable ^o was he,	<i>moderate</i>
	For it was of no superfluitee	
	But of greet norissing ^o and digestible.	<i>nourishment</i>
	His studie was but litel on the Bible. ²	
	In sangwin ^o and in pers ^o he clad was al,	<i>bloodred / blue</i>
440	Lyned with taffata and with sendal; ³	
	And yet he was but esy of dispence. ^o	<i>slow to spend</i>
	He kepte that he wan in pestilence,	
	For gold in phisik is a cordial; ⁴	
	Therefore he lovede gold in special. ^o	<i>particularly</i>
445	A good WYF was ther of bisyde BATHE, ^o	<i>from near Bath</i>
	But she was somdel ^o deaf, and that was scathe. ^o	<i>somewhat / a pity</i>
	Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt, ^o	<i>such practiced skill</i>
	She passed ^o hem of Ypres and of Gaunt. ⁵	<i>surpassed</i>
	In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon	
450	That to the offringe ^o bifore hir sholde goon; ^o	<i>offering in church / go</i>
	And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth ^o was she,	<i>angry</i>
	That she was out of alle charitee.	
	Hir coverchiefs ^o ful fyne were of ground; ^o	<i>kerchiefs / texture</i>
	I dorste ^o swere they weyeden ^o ten pound	<i>would dare / weighed</i>
455	That on a Sunday weren upon hir heed.	
	Hir hosen ^o weren of fyn scarlet reed,	<i>hose</i>
	Ful streite y-teyd, ^o and shoos ful moiste ^o and newe.	<i>tightly tied / soft</i>
	Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe. ^o	<i>hue</i>
	She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:	
460	Housbondes at chirche dore ⁶ she hadde fyve,	
	Withouten ^o other companye in youthe—	<i>Not to mention</i>
	But therof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe ^o —	<i>at present</i>
	And thryes ^o hadde she been at Jerusalem.	<i>thrice</i>
	She hadde passed many a straunge stream: ⁷	
465	At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne, ^o	<i>Boulogne (France)</i>
	In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne; ⁸	

1. A list of the best medical authorities, ancient and modern (e.g., John of Gaddesden, an Englishman, died ca. 1349).

2. Doctors were often held to be skeptical in religious matters.

3. With linings of taffeta and fine silk.

4. He kept what he had earned during time of plague, for gold in medicine is good for the heart. (An ironic reference to *aurum potabile*, a liquid medicine compounded of gold and held to be a sovereign remedy for disease.)

5. Cloth making in the Low Countries (here represented by Ypres and Ghent) was of high repute.

6. The medieval marriage ceremony was customarily performed by the priest on the church porch. Afterward the company entered the church to hear the nuptial mass.

7. She had crossed many a foreign river.

8. In Galicia (in Spain) at (the shrine of) St. James of Compostella, and at Cologne.

	She coude° muchel of wandringe by the weye.°	<i>knew / along the road(s)</i>
	Gat-tothed° was she, soothly for to seye.	<i>Gap-toothed</i>
	Upon an amblere° esily° she sat,	<i>saddle horse / comfortably</i>
470	Y-wimpled° wel, and on hir heed an hat	<i>Covered with a wimple</i>
	As brood as is a bokeler° or a targe;°	<i>shields</i>
	A foot-mantel° aboute hir hipcs large,	<i>outer skirt</i>
	And on hir feet a paire of spores° sharpe.	<i>spurs</i>
	In felawschipe wel coude she laughe and carpe.°	<i>talk</i>
475	Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,°	<i>as it happened</i>
	For she coude° of that art the olde daunce.°	<i>knew / (steps of the) dance</i>
	A good man was ther of religioun,	
	And was a povre PERSOUN° of a toun,	<i>poor parson</i>
	But riche he was of holy thought and werk.	
480	He was also a lerned man, a clerk,°	<i>scholar</i>
	That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;	
	His parisshe° devoutly wolde he teche.	<i>parishioners</i>
	Benigne° he was, and wonder° diligent,	<i>Kindly / very</i>
	And in adversitee ful pacient,	
485	And swich he was y-preved ofte sythes.°	
	Ful looth° were him to cursen° for his tithes,	<i>loath / excommunicate</i>
	But rather wolde he yeven,° out of doute,°	<i>give / there is no doubt</i>
	Unto his povre parisshe° aboute	
	Of° his offring, and eek of his substaunce.°	<i>From / income</i>
490	He coude in litel thing han suffisaunce.° ¹	
	Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,	
	But he ne lafte° nat, for reyn ne° thonder,	<i>ceased / nor</i>
	In siknes nor in meschief,° to visyte	<i>misfortune</i>
	The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lyte, ²	
495	Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.	
	This noble ensample° to his sheep he yaf,°	<i>example / gave</i>
	That first he wroghte,° and afterward he taughte.	<i>did (what was right)</i>
	Out of the gospel he tho° wordes caughte,°	<i>those / took</i>
	And this figure° he added eek therto,	<i>metaphor, image</i>
500	That if gold ruste, what shal iren° do?	<i>iron</i>
	For if a preest be foul,° on whom we truste,	<i>corrupted</i>
	No wonder is a lewed man to ruste; ³	
	And shame it is, if a preest take keep,°	<i>heed (it)</i>
	A shiten° shepherde and a clene sheep.	<i>i.e., covered with excrement</i>
505	Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,°	<i>give</i>
	By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde live.	
	He sette nat his benefice to hyre, ⁴	
	And leet° his sheep encombred in the myre,	<i>left</i>
	And ran to London unto Seynte Poules°	<i>St. Paul's Cathedral</i>
510	To seken him a chaunterie for soules,	

9. And he was proved (to be) such many times.

1. He knew how to have enough in very little.

2. The farthest (members) of his parish, great and humble.

3. It is no wonder that an unlearned man (should go) to rust.

4. He did not hire out (i.e., engage a substitute for) his benefice (church appointment).

- Or with a bretherhed to been withholde,⁵
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte° wel his folde, *took care of*
 So that the wolf ne made it nat miscarie;° *come to harm*
 He was a shepherde and nocht a mercenarie.
- 515 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful men nat despitous,° *scornful*
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,° *haughty nor disdainful*
 But in his teching discreet and benigne.
 To drawn folk to heven by fairnesse,
- 520 By good ensample, this was his businesse;° *endeavor*
 But it were° any persone obstinat, *were there*
 What so° he were, of heigh or lough estat,° *Whatever / condition, class*
 Him wolde he snibben° sharply for the nones.° *rebuke / on such an occasion*
 A bettre preest I trowe° that nowher noon is. *believe*
- 525 He wayted after° no pompe and reverence,
 Ne maked him a spyced conscience,⁶ *looked for*
 But Cristes lore,° and his apostles twelve, *teaching*
 He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.
- With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
- 530 That hadde y-lad° of dong° ful many a fother.° *hauled / dung / cartload*
 A trewe swinkere° and a good was he, *worker*
 Livinge in pees° and parfit charitee. *peace*
 God loved he best with al his hole° herte *whole*
 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,⁷
- 535 And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
 He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke° and delve,° *make ditches / dig*
 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,° *poor man*
 Withouten hyre,° if it lay in his might.° *wages / power*
 His tythes° payed he ful faire and wel, *tithes*
- 540 Bothe of his propre swink° and his catel.° *own work / possessions*
 In a tabard° he rood upon a mere.° *smock / mare*
 Ther was also a Reve° and a Millere, *Reeve*
 A Somnour° and a Pardoner also, *Summoner*
 A Maunciple,° and myself—ther were namo.° *Manciple / no more*
- 545 The MILLERE was a stout carl° for the nones;⁸ *exceedingly strong man*
 Ful big he was of brawn, and eek of bones—
 That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,
 At wrastling he wolde have alwey the ram.⁹
 He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre:° *knotty fellow*
- 550 Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,¹
 Or breke it at a renning° with his heed. *(by butting it)*

5. To seek for himself an appointment as a chantry-priest singing masses for the souls of the dead or to be retained (as a chaplain) by a guild. (Both sorts of positions were relatively undemanding and paid enough for such a priest to retain a curate at home and have money to spare.)

6. Nor affected an overly scrupulous nature.

7. At all times, whether he was glad or in distress.

8. Here, a tag-ending, useful to fill out the line metrically but almost wholly devoid of meaning (cf. l. 523).

9. That (was) well proved, for everywhere he went, at wrestling contests he would always win the ram (a usual prize).

1. There was no door he wasn't willing to heave off (its) hinges.

	His berd as any sowe or fox was reed, And therto brood, as though it were a spade. Upon the cop right ^o of his nose he hade	
555	A werte, ^o and theron stood a tuft of herys, Reed as the bristles of a sowes erys; ^o His nosethirles ^o blake were and wyde. A swerd and a bokeler ^o bar he by his syde.	<i>very top wart ears nostrils small shield</i>
560	His mouth as greet ^o was as a greet forneys; ^o He was a jangler ^o and a goliardeys, ^o And that was most of sinne and harlotryes. ^o Wel coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes, ² And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee. ³ A whyt cote and a blew hood wered ^o he.	<i>large / furnace chatterer / teller of jests vulgaries wore</i>
565	A baggepype wel coude he blowe and sowne, ^o And therwithal ^o he broghte us out of towne. A gentil ^o MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple, ⁴ Of which ^o achatours ^o mighte take exemple For to be wyse in bying of vitaille, ^o	<i>play with it worthy, proper From whom / buyers provisions</i>
570	For whether that he payde, or took by taille, ^o Algate he wayted so in his achat ⁵ That he was ay biforn ^o and in good stat. Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace, That swich a lewed ^o mannes wit shal pace ^o	<i>on account always ahead unlearned / surpass</i>
575	The wisdom of an heep of lerned men? Of maistres hadde he mo ^o than thryes ten That weren of ^o lawe expert and curious, ^o Of which ^o ther were a doseyn ^o in that hous Worthy to been stiwardes of rente ^o and lond	<i>more in / skillful Among whom / dozen income</i>
580	Of any lord that is in Engelond, To make him live by his propre good ^o In honour, dettelees, ^o but ^o he were wood, ^o Or live as scarsly as him list desire, ⁶ And ⁷ able for to helpen al a shire ^o	<i>within his own income debtless / unless / mad an entire county</i>
585	In any cas ^o that mighte falle ^o or happe; And yit this maunciple sette hir aller cappe. ^o The REVE was a sclendre colerik man. ⁸ His berd was shave as ny ^o as ever he can; His heer was by his eres ^o ful round y-shorn, ^o	<i>eventuality / befall made fools of them all close ears / cut off</i>
590	His top was dokked ^o lyk a preest biforn. ^o Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene, Ylyk ^o a staf; ther was no calf y-sene. ^o	<i>cut short / in front Like / to be seen</i>

2. He knew well how to steal corn (grain) and take his toll (his percentage for grinding it) three times over.
3. The proverb "An honest miller hath a golden thumb" implies there are no honest millers; "pardee" is a weak form of "by God" (Fr. *par Dieu*), perhaps best translated simply as "I swear."
4. A manciple was in charge of purchasing provisions for a college or (as here) for an inn of court, where law was studied.
5. He was always so watchful in his purchasing.
6. Or live as frugally as it pleases him to wish.
7. The subject is again the "doseyn" men of l. 578 worthy to be stewards.
8. A reeve was manager and accountant of an estate or manor and was chosen from among the serfs. This one is choleric, i.e., dominated by the humor called choler (or yellow bile), and thus hot-tempered by nature.

	Wel coude he kepe a gerner ^o and a binne—	<i>granary</i>
	Ther was noon auditour coude on him winne. ^o	<i>catch him short</i>
595	Wel wiste ^o he by the droghte and by the reyn	<i>knew</i>
	The yeldinge of his seed and of his greyn.	
	His lordes sheep, his neet, ^o his dayerye, ^o	<i>cattle / dairy cows</i>
	His swyn, his hors, his stoor, ^o and his pultrye, ^o	<i>livestock / poultry</i>
	Was hoolly ^o in this reves governinge,	<i>wholly</i>
600	And by his covenaunt ^o yaf ^o the rekeninge,	<i>contract / (he) gave</i>
	Sin that ^o his lord was twenty yeer of age.	<i>Since</i>
	Ther coude no man bringe him in arrerage. ^o	<i>arrears</i>
	Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne, ⁹	
	That he ne knew his sleighte ^o and his covyne; ^o	<i>cunning / deceit</i>
605	They were adrad ^o of him as of the deeth. ¹	<i>afraid</i>
	His woning ^o was ful fair upon an heeth;	<i>dwelling</i>
	With grene trees shadwed was his place.	
	He coude better than his lord purchase. ²	
	Ful riche he was astored prively; ^o	<i>privately stocked</i>
610	His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,	
	To yeve and lene him of his owne good,	
	And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood. ³	
	In youthe he hadde lerned a good mister: ^o	<i>trade</i>
	He was a wel good wrighte, ^o a carpenter.	<i>craftsman</i>
615	This reve sat upon a ful good stot ^o	<i>farm horse</i>
	That was al pomely ^o grey and highte ^o Scot.	<i>dappled / named</i>
	A long surcote ^o of pers ^o upon he hade,	<i>outer coat / blue cloth</i>
	And by his syde he bar ^o a rusty blade.	<i>bore</i>
	Of Northfolk ^o was this reve of which I tell,	<i>Norfolk</i>
620	Bisyde ^o a toun men clepen ^o Baldeswelle.	<i>(From) near / call</i>
	Tukked ^o he was as is a frere ^o aboute;	<i>Belted / friar</i>
	And evere he rood the hindreste ^o of oure route. ^o	<i>hindmost / company</i>
	A SOMONOUR ⁴ was ther with us in that place,	
	That hadde a fyr-reed cherubinnes face, ⁵	
625	For sawcefleem ^o he was, with eyen ^o narwe.	<i>pimpled / eyes</i>
	As hoot ^o he was and lecherous as a sparwe, ^o	<i>passionate / sparrow</i>
	With scalled ^o browes blake and piled berd; ^o	<i>scabby / scraggy beard</i>
	Of his visage ^o children were aferd. ^o	<i>face / afraid</i>
	Ther nas quiksilver, litarge, ^o ne brimstoon,	<i>lead oxide</i>
630	Boras, ^o ceruce, ^o ne oille ^o of tartre noon,	<i>Borax / white lead / cream</i>
	Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte, ^o	<i>sting</i>
	That him mighte helpen of ^o his whelkes ^o whyte,	<i>cure / pimples</i>
	Nor of the knobbes ^o sittinge on his chekes.	<i>lumps</i>
	Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes, ^o	<i>leeks</i>

9. There was no overseer, nor herdsman, nor (any) other servant.

1. Death in general, or perhaps the Black Death (plague).

2. He knew, better than his lord, how to increase one's possessions.

3. He knew well how to please his lord in sly ways, giving and lending to him from his (the lord's) own resources, and earn thanks (for it) and a coat and hood besides.

4. A summoner was an officer who cited ("summoned") malefactors to appear before an ecclesiastical court: in this case, an archdeacon's, having jurisdiction over matrimonial cases, adultery, and fornication.

5. Cherubim, the second order of angels, were sometimes painted brilliant red ("fire-red") in medieval art. The summoner resembles them, not through beatitude but through a skin disease.

- 635 And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood.
 Thanne wolde he speke, and crye^o as^o he were wood;^o *shout / as if / mad*
 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
 Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn.^o *(in) Latin*
 A fewe termes^o hadde he, two or three, *technical phrases*
- 640 That he had lerned out of som decree—
 No wonder is,^o he herde it al the day; *it is*
 And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay^o *a chattering bird*
 Can clepen “Watte” as well as can the Pope.⁶
- 645 But whoso coude in other thing him grope,^o *question*
 Thanne hadde he spent^o al his philosophye; *exhausted*
 Ay “*Questio quid iuris*” wolde he crye.⁷
 He was a gentil^o harlot^o and a kinde;^o *worthy / rascal / natural one*
 A bettre felawe^o sholde men noght finde: *companion*
 He wolde suffre,^o for a quart of wyn, *allow*
- 650 A good felawe to have his concubyn
 A^o twelf-month, and excuse him atte fulle;^o *(For) a / fully*
 Ful prively a finch eek coude he pulle.⁸
 And if he fond^o owher^o a good felawe, *found / anywhere*
 He wolde techen him to have non awe^o *fear*
- 655 In swich cas of the erchedeknes curs,⁹
 But-if^o a mannes soule were in his purs, *Unless*
 For in his purs he sholde y-punished be.
 “Purs is the erchedeknes helle,” seyde he.
 But wel I woot^o he lyed right in dede: *know*
- 660 Of cursing oghte ech gilty man him drede—
 For curs wol slee, right as assoilling saveth—
 And also war him of a *significavit*.¹
 In daunger^o hadde he at^o his owene gyse^o *his power / in / way*
 The yonge girles^o of the diocyse, *wenches*
- 665 And knew hir counseil,^o and was al hir reed.^o *their secrets / adviser to them all*
 A gerland^o hadde he set upon his heed,
 As greet as it were for an ale-stake;^o *garland*
 A bokeler^o hadde he maad him of a cake.^o *tavern sign*
 With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER²
 shield / round bread
- 670 Of Rouncival,³ his freend and his compeer,^o *companion*
 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
 Ful loude he song,^o “Com hider,^o love, to me.” *sang / hither*
 This somnour bar to^o him a stif burdoun,^o *accompanied / sturdy bass*
 Was nevere trompe^o of half so greet a soun.^o *trumpet / sound*
- 675 This pardoner hadde heer^o as yelow as wex,^o *hair / wax*

6. Knows how to say the word “Walter” as well as does the Pope.

7. He would always cry, “The question is, what point of law applies?”

8. He was skilled in secretly seducing girls. (“To pull a finch,” i.e., to pluck a bird, was an obscene expression.)

9. Curse, the power of excommunication.

1. Every guilty man ought to be fearful of excommunication, for it will slay (the soul eternally), just as absolution (the forgiveness granted through the sacrament of penance) saves—and (he ought) also to beware a *significavit* (a writ of arrest).

2. A pardoner was a seller of papal indulgences (remissions of punishment for sin), whose proceeds were often intended to build or support a religious house. Many pardoners were fraudulent, and their abuses were much criticized.

3. Near Charing Cross in London.

	But smothe it heng, ^o as dooth a strike of flex; ^o	<i>hung / bunch of flax</i>
	By ounces ^o henge his lokkes that he hadde,	<i>In thin strands</i>
	And therwith ^o he his shuldres overspradde; ^o	<i>with it / covered</i>
	But thinne it lay, by colpons ^o oon and oon;	<i>in small bunches</i>
680	But hood, for jolitee, ^o wered ^o he noon,	<i>sportiveness / wore</i>
	For it was trussed ^o up in his walet. ^o	<i>packed / pouch</i>
	Him thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;	
	Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare. ⁴	
	Swiche glaringe eyen ^o hadde he as an hare.	<i>staring eyes</i>
685	A vernicle ⁵ hadde he sowed on his cappe.	
	His walet lay biforn ^o him in his lappe,	<i>in front of</i>
	Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot. ⁶	
	A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot. ^o	<i>goat</i>
	No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,	
690	As smothe it was as it were late shave. ^o	<i>recently shaved</i>
	I trowe ^o he were a gelding or a mare.	<i>believe</i>
	But of his craft, fro Berwik into Ware, ^o	<i>i.e., from north to south</i>
	Ne was ther swich another pardoner.	
	For in his male ^o he hadde a pilwe-beer, ^o	<i>bag / pillowcase</i>
695	Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl. ^o	<i>Our Lady's veil</i>
	He seyde he hadde a gobet ^o of the seyl ^o	<i>piece / sail</i>
	That seynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente ^o	<i>walked</i>
	Upon the see, til Jesu Christ him hente. ^o	<i>took hold of</i>
	He hadde a croyss ^o of latoun, ^o ful of stones, ^o	<i>cross / metal / gems</i>
700	And in a glas ^o he hadde pigges bones.	<i>glass container</i>
	But with these relikes, ^o whan that he fond	<i>relics</i>
	A povre person dwellinge upon lond, ⁷	
	Upon a ^o day he gat him more moneye	<i>In one</i>
	Than that the person gat in monthes tweye. ^o	<i>two</i>
705	And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes, ^o	<i>tricks</i>
	He made the person and the peple his apes. ^o	<i>fools</i>
	But trewely to tellen, atte laste, ^o	<i>after all</i>
	He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste. ^o	<i>preacher</i>
	Wel coude he rede a lessou or a storie, ^o	<i>religious tale</i>
710	But alderbest ^o he song ^o an offertorie;	<i>best of all / sang</i>
	For wel he wiste, ^o whan that song was songe,	<i>knew</i>
	He moste preche, and wel affyle ^o his tonge	<i>make smooth</i>
	To winne silver, as he ful wel coude—	
	Therefore he song the murierly ^o and loude.	<i>more merrily</i>
715	Now have I told you soothly, in a clause, ^o	<i>briefly</i>
	Th'estaat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause	
	Why that assembled was this compaignye	
	In Southwerk, at this gentil ^o hostelrye	<i>worthy</i>
	That highte ^o the Tabard, faste ^o by the Belle. ^o	<i>was called / close / Bell Inn</i>
720	But now is tyme to yow for to telle	

4. It seemed to him he rode in the very latest fashion; (his hair) loose, he rode bareheaded except for his cap.

5. A copy of the veil St. Veronica gave to Christ when he was carrying the cross, that he might wipe his brow; it received the imprint of Christ's face.

6. Brimful of pardons, come all hot (fresh) from Rome.

7. A poor parson living in the country.

	How that we baren us ^o that ilke ^o night,	<i>conducted ourselves / same</i>
	Whan we were in that hostelrye alight; ^o	<i>alighted</i>
	And after wol I telle of our viage, ^o	<i>journey</i>
	And al the remenaunt ^o of oure pilgrimage.	<i>remainder</i>
725	But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,	
	That ye n'arette it nat my vileinye, ⁸	
	Thogh that ^o I pleylnly speke in this matere,	<i>Even though</i>
	To tell yow hir ^o wordes and hir chere, ^o	<i>their / behavior</i>
	Ne thogh I speke hir wordes properly. ^o	<i>exactly</i>
730	For this ye knowen al so wel as I:	
	Whoso shal telle a tale after a man, ⁹	
	He moot reherce ^o as ny ^o as evere he can	<i>must repeat / closely</i>
	Everich a word, if it be in his charge,	
	Al speke he never so rudeliche and large; ¹	
735	Or elles ^o he moot ^o telle his tale untrewre,	<i>else / may</i>
	Or feyne thing, ^o or finde wordes newe.	<i>invent something</i>
	He may nat spare, ^o although he ² were his brother;	<i>hold back</i>
	He moot ^o as wel seye ^o word as another.	<i>must / one</i>
	Crist spak himself ful brode ^o in Holy Writ,	<i>broadly</i>
740	And wel ye woot, ^o no vileinye ^o is it.	<i>know / churlishness</i>
	Eek Plato seith, whoso can him rede,	
	The wordes mote be cosin ^o to the dede.	<i>cousin</i>
	Also I prey yow to foryeve ^o it me,	<i>forgive</i>
	Al have I nat set folk in hir degree ³	
745	Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;	
	My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.	
	Greet chere made oure Hoste us everichon, ⁴	
	And to the soper sette he us anon; ^o	<i>immediately</i>
	He served us with vitaille ^o at the beste.	<i>victuals</i>
750	Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste. ^o	<i>it pleased us</i>
	A semely ^o man oure hoste was withalle	<i>suitable</i>
	For to been a marshal in an halle; ⁵	
	A large man he was with eyen stepe ^o —	<i>protruding eyes</i>
	A fairer burgeys ^o was ther noon in Chepe. ^o	<i>citizen / Cheapside (in London)</i>
755	Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,	
	And of manhod him lakkede ^o right naught.	<i>he lacked</i>
	Eek therto he was right ^o a mery man,	<i>truly</i>
	And after soper pleyen ^o he bigan,	<i>to jest</i>
	And spak of mirthe amonges othere thinges—	
760	Whan that we hadde maad oure rekeninges ^o —	<i>paid our bills</i>
	And seyde thus: "Now, lordinges, trewely,	
	Ye been ^o to me right welcome hertely. ^o	<i>are / heartily</i>
	For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,	
	I saugh nat this yeer so mery a compaignye	

8. That you do not attribute it to my churlishness.

9. I.e., repeats another man's story.

1. Every word, if that be the responsibility he's charged with, however roughly and broadly he (may) speak.

2. I.e., the original teller.

3. Although I haven't described (these) people in (the order of) their social rank.

4. Our host made great welcome to every one of us.

5. I.e., the officer in charge of the serving of meals and banquets in a great hall.

765	Atones° in this herberwe° as is now.	<i>At one time / inn</i>
	Fayn wolde I doon yow mirthe, wiste I how, And of a mirthe I am right now bithoght, ⁶ To doon yow ese,° and it shal coste noght.	<i>give you pleasure</i>
	Ye goon° to Caunterbury—God yow spede;	<i>are going</i>
770	The blisful martir quyte° yow your mede.° And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye, Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye; ⁷ For trewely, confort° ne mirthe is noon°	<i>pay / reward</i>
	To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon;	<i>pleasure / (there) is none</i>
775	And therefore wol I maken yow disport,° As I seyde erst,° and doon yow som confort. And if yow lyketh° alle, by oon° assent, Now for to stonden at° my jugement, And for to werken° as I shal yow seye,	<i>amusement</i> <i>before</i> <i>it pleases you / one</i> <i>abide by</i> <i>do</i>
780	To-morwe, whan ye ryden by the weye— Now by my fader° soule that is deed— But° ye be merye, I wol yeve° yow myn heed.° Hold up youre hondes, withouten more speche.”	<i>father's</i> <i>Unless / give / head</i>
	Oure counseil° was nat longe for to seche;°	<i>decision / seek</i>
785	Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys, ⁸ And graunted him withouten more avys,° And bad him seye his voirdit° as him leste.° “Lordinges,” quod° he, “now herkneth° for the beste, But tak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.°	<i>further consideration</i> <i>verdict / it pleased him</i> <i>said / listen</i> <i>disdain</i>
790	This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyn: That ech of yow, to shorte with° oure weye, In this viage° shal telle tales tweye° To Caunterbury-ward,° I mene° it so, And homward he shal tellen othere two,	<i>with which to shorten</i> <i>journey / two</i> <i>Toward Canterbury / intend</i>
795	Of aventures that whylom° han bifalle. And which° of yow that bereth° him best of alle, That is to seyn, that telleth in this cas° Tales of best sentence° and most solas,° Shal have a soper at oure aller cost°	<i>once upon a time</i> <i>whichever / conducts</i> <i>on this occasion</i> <i>wisdom, instruction / delight</i> <i>the expense of us all</i>
800	Here in this place, sittinge by this post,° Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury. And for to make yow the more mery,° I wol myselfen goodly° with yow ryde, Right at myn owne cost, and be youre gyde.	<i>column</i> <i>merry</i> <i>gladly</i>
805	And whoso wole my jugement withseye° Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye. And if ye vouchesauf° that it be so, Tel me anon,° withouten wordes mo,° And I wol erly shape me° therfore.”	<i>oppose</i> <i>grant</i> <i>immediately / more</i> <i>prepare myself</i>
810	This thing was graunted, and oure othes° swore°	<i>oaths / sworn</i>

6. I would gladly make you (some) amusement if I knew how, and I have just now thought of some fun.

7. You plan to tell tales and to play.

8. It seemed to us (that) it was not worth pondering over.

	With ful glad herte, and preyden° him also	<i>we begged</i>
	That he wolde vouchesauf for° to do so,	<i>grant</i>
	And that he wolde been oure governour	
	And of oure tales juge and reportour,°	<i>referee(?)</i>
815	And sette a soper at a certeyn prys;°	<i>price</i>
	And we wol reuled been at his devys°	<i>desire, will</i>
	In heigh and lowe;° and thus, by oon assent,	<i>In all respects</i>
	We been acorded to his jugement.	
	And therupon the wyn was fet° anon;°	<i>fetched / at once</i>
820	We dronken, and to reste wente echon,°	<i>each one</i>
	Withouten any lenger tarynge.	
	Amorwe,° whan that day bigan to springe,	<i>In the morning</i>
	Up roos oure Host and was oure aller cok, ⁹	
	And gadrede° us togidre,° alle in a flok;	<i>gathered / together</i>
825	And forth we riden,° a° litel more than pas,°	<i>rode / at a / walking speed</i>
	Unto the watering of Seint Thomas, ¹	
	And there oure Host bigan his hors areste,°	<i>stopped his horse</i>
	And seyde, "Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.°	<i>it may please</i>
	Ye woot° youre forward,° and I it yow recorde.°	<i>know / agreement / recall</i>
830	If even-song and morwe-song° acorde,	<i>morning song</i>
	Lat se° now who shal telle the firste tale.	<i>Let us see</i>
	As evere mote° I drinke wyn or ale,	<i>may</i>
	Whoso be rebel to my jugement	
	Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.	
835	Now draweth cut,° er that we ferrer twinne;°	<i>lots, cut straws / go farther</i>
	He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.	
	Sire Knight," quod he, "my maister and my lord,	
	Now draweth cut for that is myn acord.°	<i>decision</i>
	Cometh neer,"° quod he, "my lady Prioeresse;	<i>nearer</i>
840	And ye, sire Clerk, lat be° youre shamfastnesse,°	<i>leave off / shyness</i>
	Ne studieth° noght. Ley hond to, every man!"	<i>deliberate</i>
	Anon° to drawen every wight° bigan,	<i>At once / person</i>
	And shortly for to tellen as it was,	
	Were it by aventure,° or sort,° or cas,°	<i>chance / fate / fortune</i>
845	The sothe° is this, the cut fil° to the Knight,	<i>truth / fell</i>
	Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight;	
	And telle he moste° his tale, as was resoun,°	<i>must / right</i>
	By forward° and by composicioun,°	<i>agreement / arrangement</i>
	As ye han herd. What nedeth wordes mo?°	<i>more</i>
850	And whan this gode man saugh it was so,	
	As he that wys was and obedient	
	To kepe his forward by his free assent,	
	He seyde: "Sin° I shal biginne the game,	<i>Since</i>
	What,° welcome be the cut, a Goddes° name!	<i>Why / in God's</i>
855	Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."	
	And with that word we riden° forth oure weye;	<i>rode</i>
	And he bigan with right a mery chere°	<i>in a very merry mood</i>
	His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.	

9. The rooster who wakened us all.

1. St. Thomas a Watering was a brook two miles from London on the Canterbury road.