

Playful Poems

Henry Morley

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**PLAYFUL POEMS, (by various authors)
EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY
MORLEY.**

INTRODUCTION

The last volume of these “Companion Poets” contained some of Chaucer’s Tales as they were modernised by Dryden. This volume contains more of his Tales as they were modernised by later poets. In 1841 there was a volume published entitled, “The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernized.” Of this volume, when it was first projected, Wordsworth wrote to Moxon, his publisher, on the 24th of February 1840: “Mr. Powell, my friend, has some thought of preparing for publication some portion of Chaucer modernised, as far and no farther than is done in my treatment of ‘The Prioress’ Tale.’ That would, in fact, be his model. He will have coadjutors, among whom, I believe, will be Mr. Leigh Hunt, a man as capable of doing the work well as any living writer. I have placed at my friend Mr. Powell’s disposal three other pieces which I did long ago, but revised the other day. They are ‘The Manciple’s Tale,’ ‘The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,’ and twenty–four stanzas of ‘Troilus and Cressida.’ This I have done mainly out of my love and reverence for Chaucer, in hopes that, whatever may be the merits of Mr. Powell’s attempt, the attention of other writers may be drawn to the subject; and a work hereafter produced, by different persons, which will place the treasures of one of the greatest of poets within the reach of the multitude, which now they are not. I mention all this to you because, though I have not given Mr. Powell the least encouragement to do so, he may sound you as to your disposition to undertake the publication. I have myself nothing further to do with it than I have stated. Had the thing been suggested to me by any number of competent persons twenty years ago, I would have undertaken the editorship and done much more myself, and endeavoured to improve the several contributions where they seemed to require it. But that is now out of the question.”

Wordsworth had made his versions of Chaucer in the year 1801. “The Prioress’s Tale” had been published in 1820, so that only the three pieces he had revised for his friend’s use were available, and of these the Manciple’s Tale was withdrawn, the version by Leigh Hunt (which is among the pieces here reprinted) being used. The volume was published in 1841, not by Moxon but by Whitaker. Wordsworth’s versions of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” (here reprinted), and of a passage taken from “Troilus and Cressida,” were included in it. Leigh Hunt contributed versions of the Manciple’s Tale and the Friar’s Tale (both here reprinted), and of the Squire’s Tale. Elizabeth A. Barrett, afterwards Mrs. Browning, contributed a version of “Queen Annelida and False Arcite.” Richard Hengist Horne entered heartily into the venture, modernised the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, the Reve’s Tale, and the Franklin’s, and wrote an Introduction of more than a hundred pages, to which Professor Leonhard Schmitz added thirty–two pages of a Life of Chaucer. Robert Bell, to whom we were afterwards indebted for an “Annotated Edition of the English Poets,” modernised the Complaint of Mars and Venus. Thomas Powell, the editor, contributed his version of the Legends of Ariadne, Philomene, and Phillis, and of “The Flower and the Leaf,” and a friend, who signed only as Z. A. Z, dealt with “The Rime of Sir Thopas.”

After the volume had appeared, Wordsworth thus wrote of it to Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia: “There has recently been published in London a volume of some of Chaucer’s tales and poems modernised; this little specimen originated in what I attempted with ‘The Prioress’ Tale,’ and if the book should find its way to America you will see in it two further specimens from myself. I had no further connection with the publication than by making a present of these to one of the contributors. Let me, however, recommend to your notice the Prologue and the Franklin’s Tale. They are both by Mr. Horne, a gentleman unknown to me, but are—the latter in particular—very well done. Mr. Leigh Hunt has not failed in the Manciple’s Tale, which I myself modernised many years ago; but though I much admire the genius of Chaucer as displayed in this performance, I could not place my version at the disposal of the editor, as I deemed the subject somewhat too indelicate for pure taste to be offered to the world at this time of day. Mr. Horne has much hurt this publication by not abstaining from the Reve’s Tale. This, after making all allowance for the rude manners of Chaucer’s age, is intolerable; and by indispensably softening down the incidents, he has killed the spirit of that humour, gross and farcical, that pervades the original. When the work was first mentioned to me, I protested as strongly as possible against admitting any coarseness and indelicacy, so that my conscience is clear of countenancing aught of that kind. So great is my admiration of Chaucer’s genius, and so profound my reverence for him. . . for spreading the light of

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Literature through his native land, that, notwithstanding the defects and faults in this publication, I am glad of it, as a means for making many acquainted with the original, who would otherwise be ignorant of everything about him but his name.”

Wordsworth's objection to the Manciple's Tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was an afterthought. He had begun by offering his version of it for publication in this volume. His objection to Horne's treatment of the Reve's Tale was reasonable enough. The original tale was the sixth novel in the ninth day of the *Decameron*, and probably was taken by Chaucer from a *Fabliau* by Jean de Boves, “De Gombert et des Deux Clercs.” The same story has been imitated in the “Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles,” and in the “Berceau” of *La Fontaine*. Horne's removal from the tale of everything that would offend a modern reader was designed to enable thousands to find pleasure in an old farcical piece that would otherwise be left unread.

Chaucer's “Rime of Sir Thopas” was a playful jest on the long-winded story-telling of the old romances, and had specially in mind Thomas Chestre's version of *Launfal* from *Marie of France*, and the same rhymer's romance of “Ly Beaus Disconus,” who was Gingelein, a son of Gawain, called by his mother, for his beauty, only *Beaufis* (handsome son); but when he offered himself in that name to be knighted by King Arthur, he was knighted and named by him *Li Beaus Disconus* (the fair unknown). This is the method of the tediousness, in which it showed itself akin to many a rhyming tale.

“And for love of his fair vis
His mother clepéd him *Beaufis*,

And none other name;
And himselvé was full nis,
He ne axéd nought y-wis

What he hight at his dame.

“As it befel upon a day,
To wood he went on his play
Of deer to have his game;
He found a knight, where he lay
In armés that were stout and gay,
Y-slain and made full tame.

“That child did off the knightés wede,
And anon he gan him schrede

In that rich armoúr.
When he haddé do that dede,
To *Glasténburý* he gede,
There lay the King *Arthoúr*.

“He knelde in the hall
Before the knightés all,
And grette hem with honoúr,
And said: ‘*Arthoúr*, my lord,
Grant me to speak a word,

I pray thee, par amour.

“I am a child uncouth,
And come out of the south,
And would be made a knight,
Lord, I pray thee nouthe,
With thy merry mouthe,
Grant me anon right.’

“Then said *Arthoúr* the king,
'Anon, without dwelling,
Tell me thy name aflight!
For sethen I was ybore,
Ne found I me before

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None so fair of sight.'
 "That child said, 'By Saint Jame,
I not what is my name;
 I am the moré nis;
But while I was at hame
My mother, in her game,
 Clepéd me Beaufis.'
 "Then said Arthour the king,
'This is a wonder thing
 By God and Saint Denis!
When he that would be knight
Ne wot not what he hight,
 And is so fair of vis.
 "Now will I give him a name
Before you all in same,
 For he is so fair and free,
By God and by Saint Jame,
So clepéd him ne'er his dame,
 What woman so it be.
 "Now clepéth him all of us,
Li Beaus Disconus,
 For the love of me!
Then may ye wite a rowe,
"The Faire Unknowe,'
 Certes, so hatté he"

John Gower's "Confessio Amantis" was a story book, like the Canterbury Tales, with a contrivance of its own for stringing the tales together, and Gower was at work on it nearly about the time when his friend Chaucer was busy with his Pilgrims. The story here extracted was an old favourite. It appeared in Greek about the year 800, in the romance of Barlaam and Josaphat. It was told by Vincent of Beauvais in the year 1290 in his "Speculum Historiale;" and it was used by Boccaccio for the first tale of the tenth day of his "Decameron."

Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate were the old poetical triumvirate, though Lydgate, who was about thirty years old when Chaucer died, has slipped much out of mind. His verses on the adventures of the Kentish rustic who came to London to get justice in the law courts, and his words set to the action of an old piece of rustic mumming, "Bicorn and Chichevache," here represent his vein of playfulness. He was a monk who taught literature at Bury St. Edmunds, and was justly looked upon as the chief poet of the generation who lived after Chaucer's death.

Next follows in this volume a scrap of wise counsel to take life cheerfully, from the Scottish poet, William Dunbar. He lived at the Scottish Court of James the Fourth when Henry the Seventh reigned in England, and who was our greatest poet of the north country before Burns.

Next we come to the poets "who so did please Eliza and our James," and represent their playfulness by Drayton's "Dowsabell," and that most exquisite of fairy pieces, his "Nymphidia," where Oberon figures as the mad Orlando writ small, and Drayton earned his claim to be the Fairies' Laureate, though Herrick, in the same vein, followed close upon him. Michael Drayton, nearly of an age with Shakespeare, was, like Shakespeare, a Warwickshire man. Empty tradition says that Shakespeare died of a too festive supper shared with his friend Drayton, who came to visit him.

Then follows in this volume the playful treatment of a quarrel between friends, in Pope's "Rape of the Lock." Lord Petre, aged twenty, audaciously cut from the head of Miss Arabella Fermor, daughter of Mr. Fermor of Tusmore, a lock of her hair while she was playing cards in the Queen's rooms at Hampton Court. Pope's friend, Mr. Caryll, suggested to him that a mock heroic treatment of the resulting quarrel might restore peace, and Pope wrote a poem in two cantos, which was published in a Miscellany in 1712, Pope's age then being twenty-four. But as epic poems required supernatural machinery, Pope added afterwards to his mock epic the machinery of sylphs and gnomes, suggested to him by the reading of a French story, "Le Comte de Gabalis," by the Abbé

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Villars. Here there were sylphs of the air and gnomes of the earth, little spirits who would be in right proportion to the substance of his poem, which was refashioned into five cantos, and republished as we have it now in February 1714.

“John Gilpin” was written by William Cowper in the year 1782, when Lady Austin was lodging in the Vicarage at Olney, and spent every evening with Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, cheering Cowper greatly by her liveliness. One evening she told the story of John Gilpin's ride in a way that tickled the poet's fancy, set him laughing when he woke up in the night, and obliged him to turn it next day into ballad rhyme. Mrs. Unwin's son sent it to the *Public Advertiser*, for the poet's corner. It was printed in that newspaper, and thought no more of until about three years later. Then it was suggested to a popular actor named Henderson, who gave entertainments of his own, that this piece would tell well among his recitations. He introduced it into his entertainments, and soon all the town was running after John Gilpin as madly as the six gentlemen and the post-boy.

John Gilpin's flight is followed in this volume by the flight of Tam o' Shanter. Burns wrote “Tam o' Shanter” at Elliesland, and himself considered it the best of all his poems. He told the story to Captain Grose, as it was current among the people in his part of the country, its scene laid almost on the spot where he was born. Captain Grose, the antiquary, who was collecting materials for his “Antiquities of Scotland,” published in 1789–91, got Burns to versify it and give it to him. The poem made its first appearance, therefore, in Captain Grose's book. Mrs. Burns told of it that it was the work of a day. Burns was most of the day on his favourite walk by the river, where his wife and some of the children joined him in the afternoon. Mrs. Burns saw that her husband was busily engaged “crooning to himself,” and she loitered behind with the little ones among the broom. Presently she was attracted by the poet's strange and wild gesticulations; he seemed agonised with an ungovernable joy. He was reciting very loud. Every circumstance suggested to heighten the impression of fear in the lines following,

“By this time he was 'cross the ford

Where in the snaw the chapman smooored,” etc.,

was taken from local tradition. Shanter was the real name of a farm near Kirkoswald, then occupied by a Douglas Grahame, who was much of Tam's character, and was well content to be called by his country neighbours Tam o' Shanter for the rest of his life, after Burns had made the name of the farm immortal.

Our selection ends with two pieces by Thomas Hood, whose “Tale of a Trumpet” is luxuriant with play of wit that has its earnest side. Hood died in 1845.

A Note upon the Game of Ombre is added, which is founded upon the description of the game in a little book—“The Court Gamester”—which instructed card-players in the reigns of the first Georges. In the “Rape of the Lock” there is a game of ombre played through to the last trick. That note will enable any reader to follow Belinda's play. It will also enable any one who may care to do so to restore to a place among our home amusements a game which carried all before it in Queen Anne's day, and which is really, when cleared of its gambling details, as good a domestic game for three players as cribbage or piquet is for two. My “Court Gamester,” which was in its fifth edition in 1728, after devoting its best energies to ombre, contented its readers in fewer pages with the addition only of piquet and chess.

Obsolete words and words of Scottish dialect, with a few more as to the meaning of which some readers might be uncertain, will be found explained in the Glossary that ends this volume.

CHAUCER'S MANCIPLE'S TALE OF PHBUS AND THE CROW MODERNISED BY LEIGH HUNT.

NOTE.

The reader is to understand, that all the persons previously described in the "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" are now riding on their way to that city, and each of them telling his tale respectively, which is preceded by some little bit of incident or conversation on the road. The agreement, suggested by the Host of the Tabard, was, first, that each pilgrim should tell a couple of tales while going to Canterbury, and another couple during the return to London; secondly, that the narrator of the best one of all should sup at the expense of the whole party; and thirdly, that the Host himself should be gratuitous guide on the journey, and arbiter of all differences by the way, with power to inflict the payment of travelling expenses upon any one who should gainsay his judgment. During the intervals of the stories he is accordingly the most prominent person.—LEIGH HUNT.

PROLOGUE TO THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

Wottest thou, reader, of a little town, {17}
Which thereabouts they call Bob-up-and-down,
Under the Blee, in Canterbury way?
Well, there our host began to jest and play,
And said, "Hush, hush now: Dun is in the mire.
What, sirs? will nobody, for prayer or hire,
Wake our good gossip, sleeping here behind?
Here were a bundle for a thief to find.
See, how he noddeth! by St. Peter, see!
He'll tumble off his saddle presently.
Is that a cook of London, red flames take him!
He knoweth the agreement—wake him, wake him:
We'll have his tale, to keep him from his nap,
Although the drink turn out not worth the tap.
Awake, thou cook," quoth he; "God say thee nay;
What aileth thee to sleep thus in the day?
Hast thou had fleas all night? or art thou drunk?
Or didst thou sup with my good lord the monk,
And hast a jolly surfeit in thine head?"

This cook that was full pale, and nothing red,
Stared up, and said unto the host, "God bless
My soul, I feel such wondrous heaviness,
I know not why, that I would rather sleep
Than drink of the best gallon-wine in Cheap."

"Well," quoth the Manciple, "if it might ease
Thine head, Sir Cook, and also none displease
Of all here riding in this company,
And mine host grant it, I would pass thee by,
Till thou art better, and so tell *my* tale;
For in good faith thy visage is full pale;
Thine eyes grow dull, methinks; and sure I am,
Thy breath resembleth not sweet marjoram,
Which showeth thou canst utter no good matter:
Nay, thou mayst frown forsooth, but I'll not flatter.
See, how he gapeth, lo! this drunken wight;

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He'll swallow us all up before he'll bite;
Hold close thy mouth, man, by thy father's kin;
The fiend himself now set his foot therein,
And stop it up, for 'twill infect us all;
Fie, hog; fie, pigsty; foul thy grunt befall.
Ah—see, he bolteth! there, sirs, was a swing;
Take heed—he's bent on tilting at the ring:
He's the shape, isn't he? to tilt and ride!
Eh, you mad fool! go to your straw, and hide.”

Now with this speech the cook for rage grew black,
And would have stormed, but could not speak, alack!
So mumbling something, from his horse fell he,
And where he fell, there lay he patiently,
Till pity on his shame his fellows took.
Here was a pretty horseman of a cook!
Alas! that he had held not by his ladle!
And ere again they got him on his saddle,
There was a mighty shoving to and fro
To lift him up, and muckle care and woe,
So heavy was this carcass of a ghost.
Then to the Manciple thus spake our host:—
“Since drink upon this man hath domination,
By nails! and as I reckon my salvation,
I trow he would have told a sorry tale;
For whether it be wine, or it be ale,
That he hath drank, he speaketh through the nose,
And sneezeth much, and he hath got the *pose*, {19}
And also hath given us business enow
To keep him on his horse, out of the slough;
He'll fall again, if he be driven to speak,
And then, where are we, for a second week?
Why, lifting up his heavy drunken corse!
Tell on thy tale, and look we to his horse.
Yet, Manciple, in faith thou art too nice
Thus openly to chafe him for his vice.
Perchance some day he'll do as much for thee,
And bring thy baker's bills in jeopardy,
Thy black jacks also, and thy butcher's matters,
And whether they square nicely with thy platters.”

“Mine,” quoth the Manciple, “were then the mire!
Much rather would I pay his horse's hire,
And that will be no trifle, mud and all,
Than risk the peril of so sharp a fall.
I did but jest. Score not, ye'll be not scored.
And guess ye what? I have here, in my gourd,
A draught of wine, better was never tasted,
And with this cook's ladle will I be basted,
If he don't drink of it, right lustily.
Upon my life he'll not say nay. Now see.

And true it was, the cook drank fast enough;
Down went the drink out of the gourd, *fluff, fluff*:

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Alas! the man had had enough before:
And then, betwixt a trumpet and a snore,
His nose said something,—grace for what he had;
And of that drink the cook was wondrous glad.

Our host nigh burst with laughter at the sight,
And sighed and wiped his eyes for pure delight,
And said, “Well, I perceive it's necessary,
Where'er we go, good wine with us to carry.
What needeth in this world more strifes befall?
Good wine's the doctor to appease them all.
O, Bacchus, Bacchus! blessed be thy name,
That thus canst turn our earnest into game.
Worship and thanks be to thy deity.
So on this head ye get no more from me.
Tell on thy tale, Manciple, I thee pray.”

“Well, sire,” quoth he, “now hark to what I say.”

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE OF PHBUS AND THE CROW.

When Phbus dwelt with men, in days of yore,
He was the very lustiest bachelor
Of all the world; and shot in the best bow.
'Twas he, as the old books of stories show,
That shot the serpent Python, as he lay
Sleeping against the sun, upon a day:
And many another noble worthy deed
He did with that same bow, as men may read.

He played all kinds of music: and so clear
His singing was, and such a heaven to hear,
Men might not speak during his madrigal.
Amphion, king of Thebes, that put a wall
About the city with his melody,
Certainly sang not half so well as he.
And add to this, he was the seemliest man
That is, or has been, since the world began.
What needs describe his beauty? since there's none
With which to make the least comparison.
In brief, he was the flower of *gentillesse*, {21}
Of honour, and of perfect worthiness:
And yet, take note, for all this mastery,
This Phbus was of cheer so frank and free,
That for his sport, and to commend the glory
He gat him o'er the snake (so runs the story),
He used to carry in his hand a bow.

Now this same god had in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And taught to speak, as folks will teach a jay.
White was the crow; as is a snow-white swan,
And could repeat a tale told by a man,
And sing. No nightingale, down in a dell,

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Could sing one–hundred–thousandth part so well.

Now had this Phbus in his house a wife
Which that he loved beyond his very life:
And night and day did all his diligence
To please her well, and do her reverence;
Save only, to speak truly, *inter nos*,
Jealous he was, and would have kept her close:
He wished not to be treated monstrously:
Neither does any man, no more than he;
Only to hinder wives, it serveth nought;—
A good wife, that is clean of work and thought,
No man would dream of hindering such a way.
And just as bootless is it, night or day,
Hindering a shrew; for it will never be.
I hold it for a very foppery,
Labour in vain, this toil to hinder wives,
Old writers always say so, in their Lives.

But to my story, as it first began.

This worthy Phbus doeth all he can
To please his wife, in hope, so pleasing her,
That she, for her part, would herself bestir
Discreetly, so as not to lose his grace;
But, Lord he knows, there's no man shall embrace
A thing so close, as to restrain what Nature
Hath naturally set in any creature.

Take any bird, and put it in a cage,
And do thy best and utmost to engage
The bird to love it; give it meat and drink,
And every dainty housewives can bethink,
And keep the cage as cleanly as you may,
And let it be with gilt never so gay,
Yet had this bird, by twenty–thousand–fold,
Rather be in a forest wild and cold,
And feed on worms and suchlike wretchedness;
Yea, ever will he tax his whole address
To get out of the cage when that he may:—
His liberty the bird desireth aye.

So, take a cat, and foster her with milk
And tender meat, and make her bed of silk,
Yet let her see a mouse go by the wall,
The devil may take, for her, silk, milk, and all,
And every dainty that is in the house;
Such appetite hath she to eat the mouse.
Lo, here hath Nature plainly domination,
And appetite renounceth education.

A she–wolf likewise hath a villain's kind:
The worst and roughest wolf that she can find,
Or least of reputation, will she wed,
When the time comes to make her marriage–bed.

But misinterpret not my speech, I pray;
All this of men, not women, do I say;

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For men it is, that come and spoil the lives
Of such, as but for them, would make good wives.
They leave their own wives, be they never so fair,
Never so true, never so debonair,
And take the lowest they may find, for change.
Flesh, the fiend take it, is so given to range,
It never will continue, long together,
Contented with good, steady, virtuous weather.

This Phbus, while on nothing ill thought he,
Jilted he was, for all his jollity;
For under him, his wife, at her heart's—root,
Another had, a man of small repute,
Not worth a blink of Phbus; more's the pity;
Too oft it falleth so, in court and city.
This wife, when Phbus was from home one day,
Sent for her lemman then, without delay.
Her lemman!—a plain word, I needs must own;
Forgive it me; for Plato hath laid down,
The word must suit according with the deed;
Word is work's cousin—german, ye may read:
I'm a plain man, and what I say is this:
Wife high, wife low, if bad, both do amiss:
But because one man's wench sitteth above,
She shall be called his Lady and his Love;
And because t'other's sitteth low and poor,
She shall be called,—Well, well, I say no more;
Only God knoweth, man, mine own dear brother,
One wife is laid as low, just, as the other.

Right so betwixt a lawless, mighty chief
And a rude outlaw, or an arrant thief,
Knight arrant or thief arrant, all is one;
Difference, as Alexander learnt, there's none;
But for the chief is of the greater might,
By force of numbers, to slay all outright,
And burn, and waste, and make as flat as floor,
Lo, therefore is he cleft a conqueror;
And for the other hath his numbers less,
And cannot work such mischief and distress,
Nor be by half so wicked as the chief,
Men clepen him an outlaw and a thief.

However, I am no text—spinning man;
So to my tale I go, as I began.

Now with her lemman is this Phbus' wife;
The crow he sayeth nothing, for his life;
Caged hangeth he, and sayeth not a word;
But when that home was come Phbus the lord,
He singeth out, and saith,—“Cuckoo! cuckoo!”
“Hey!” crieth Phbus, “here be something new;
Thy song was wont to cheer me. What is this?”
“By Jove!” quoth Corvus, “I sing not amiss.
Phbus,” quoth he; “for all thy worthiness,

Playful Poems

For all thy beauty and all thy gentillesse,
For all thy song and all thy minstrelsy,
And all thy watching, blearéd is thine eye;
Yea, and by one no worthier than a gnat,
Compared with him should boast to wear thine hat.”

What would you more? the crow hath told him all;
This woful god hath turned him to the wall
To hide his tears: he thought 'twould burst his heart;
He bent his bow, and set therein a dart,
And in his ire he hath his wife yslain;
He hath; he felt such anger and such pain;
For sorrow of which he brake his minstrelsy,
Both harp and lute, gittern and psaltery,
And then he brake his arrows and his bow,
And after that, thus spake he to the crow:—

“Traitor,” quoth he, “behold what thou hast done;
Made me the saddest wretch beneath the sun:
Alas! why was I born! O dearest wife,
Jewel of love and joy, my only life,
That wert to me so steadfast and so true,
There liest thou dead; why am not I so too?
Full innocent thou wert, that durst I swear;
O hasty hand, to bring me to despair!
O troubled wit, O anger without thought,
That unadviséd smitest, and for nought:
O heart of little faith, full of suspicion,
Where was thy handsomeness and thy discretion?
O every man, hold hastiness in loathing;
Believe, without strong testimony, nothing;
Smite not too soon, before ye well know why;
And be adviséd well and soberly
Before ye trust yourselves to the commission
Of any ireful deed upon suspicion.
Alas! a thousand folk hath hasty ire
Fouly foredone, and brought into the mire.
Alas! I'll kill myself for misery.”

And to the crow, “O thou false thief!” said he,
I'll quit thee, all thy life, for thy false tale;
Thou shalt no more sing like the nightingale,
Nor shalt thou in those fair white feathers go,
Thou silly thief, thou false, black-hearted crow;
Nor shalt thou ever speak like man again;
Thou shalt not have the power to give such pain;
Nor shall thy race wear any coat but black,
And ever shall their voices crone and crack
And be a warning against wind and rain,
In token that by thee my wife was slain.”

So to the crow he started, like one mad,
And tore out every feather that he had,
And made him black, and reft him of his stores
Of song and speech, and flung him out of doors

Playful Poems

Unto the devil; whence never come he back,
Say I. Amen. And hence all crows are black.
 Lordings, by this example I you pray
Take heed, and be discreet in what you say;
And above all, tell no man, for your life,
How that another man hath kissed his wife.
He'll hate you mortally; be sure of that;
Dan Solomon, in teacher's chair that sat,
Bade us keep all our tongues close as we can;
But, as I said, I'm no text-spinning man,
Only, I must say, thus taught me my dame; {26}
My son, think on the crow in God his name;
My son, keep well thy tongue, and keep thy friend;
A wicked tongue is worse than any fiend;
My son, a fiend's a thing for to keep down;
My son, God in his great discretion
Walléd a tongue with teeth, and eke with lips,
That man may think, before his speech out slips.
A little speech spoken advisedly
Brings none in trouble, speaking generally.
My son, thy tongue thou always shouldst restrain,
Save only at such times thou dost thy pain
To speak of God in honour and in prayer;
The chiefest virtue, son, is to beware
How thou lett'st loose that endless thing, thy tongue;
This every soul is taught, when he is young:
My son, of muckle speaking ill-advised,
And where a little speaking had sufficed,
Com'th muckle harm. This was me told and taught,—
In muckle speaking, sinning wanteth nought.
Know'st thou for what a tongue that's hasty serveth?
Right as a sword forecutheth and forecarveth
An arm in two, my dear son, even so
A tongue clean-cutheth friendship at a blow.
A jangler is to God abominable:
Read Solomon, so wise and honourable;
Read David in his Psalms, read Seneca;
My son, a nod is better than a say;
Be deaf, when folk speak matter perilous;
Small prate, sound pate,—guardeth the Fleming's house.
My son, if thou no wicked word hast spoken,
Thou never needest fear a pate ybroken;
But he that hath missaid, I dare well say,
His fingers shall find blood thereon, some day.
Thing that is said, is said; it may not back
Be called, for all your “Las!” and your “Alack!”
And he is that man's thrall to whom 'twas said;
Cometh the bond some day, and will be paid.
My son, beware, and be no author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true:
Go wheresoe'er thou wilt, 'mongst high or low,

Playful Poems

Keep well thy tongue, and think upon the crow.

CHAUCER'S RIME OF SIR THOPAS MODERNISED BY Z. A. Z.

PROLOGUE TO SIR THOPAS.

1.

Now when the Prioress had done, each man
So serious looked, 'twas wonderful to see!
Till our good host to banter us began,
And then at last he cast his eyes on me,
And jeering said, "What man art thou?" quoth he,
"That lookest down as thou wouldst find a hare,
For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.

2.

"Approach me near, and look up merrily!
Now make way, sirs! and let this man have place.
He in the waist is shaped as well as I:
This were a poppet in an arm's embrace,
For any woman, small and fair of face.
He seemeth elf-like by his countenance,
For with no wight holdeth he dalliance.

3.

"Say somewhat now, since other folks have said;
Tell us a tale o' mirth, and that anon."
"Host," quoth I then, "be not so far misled,
For other tales except this know I none;
A little rime I learned in years ago."
"Ah! that is well," quoth he; "now we shall hear
Some dainty thing, methinketh, by thy cheer."

THE RIME OF SIR THOPAS.

FYTTE THE FIRST. {30}

1.

Listen, lordlings, in good intent,
And I will tell you *verament*
Of mirth and chivalry,
About a knight on glory bent,
In battle and in tournament;
Sir Thopas named was he.

2.

And he was born in a far countré,
In Flanders, all beyond the sea,
At Popering in the place;
His father was a man full free,
And of that country lord was he,
Enjoyed by holy grace.

3.

Sir Thopas was a doughty swain,
 Fair was his face as *pain de Maine*,
 His lips were red as rose;
 His ruddy cheeks like scarlet grain;
 And I tell you in good certaine,
 He had a seemly nose.

4.

His hair and beard like saffron shone,
 And to his girdle fell adown;
 His shoes of leather bright;
 Of Bruges were his hose so brown,
 His robe it was of ciclatoun—
 He was a costly wight:

5.

Well could he hunt the strong wild deer,
 And ride a hawking for his cheer
 With grey goshawk on hand;
 His archery filled the woods with fear,
 In wrestling eke he had no peer,—
 No man 'gainst him could stand.

6.

Full many a maiden bright in bower
 Was sighing for him *par amour*
 Between her prayers and sleep,
 But he was chaste, beyond their power,
 And sweet as is the bramble flower
 That beareth the red hip.

7.

And so it fell upon a day,
 Forsooth, as I now sing and say,
 Sir Thopas went to ride;
 He rode upon his courser grey,
 And in his hand a lance so gay,
 A long sword by his side.

8.

He rode along a forest fair,
 Many a wild beast dwelling there;
 (Mercy in heaven defend!)
 And there was also buck and hare;
 And as he went, he very near
 Met with a sorry end.

9.

And herbs sprang up, or creeping ran;
 The liquorice, and valerian,
 Clove-gillyflowers, sun-dressed;
 And nutmeg, good to put in ale,
 Whether it be moist or stale,—
 Or to lay sweet in chest,

10.

The birds all sang, as tho' 'twere May;
 The spearhawk, and the popinjay, {32}

Playful Poems

It was a joy to hear;
The throstle cock made eke his lay,
The wood-dove sung upon the spray,
With note full loud and clear.

11.

Sir Thopas fell in love-longing
All when he heard the throstle sing,
And spurred his horse like mad,
So that all o'er the blood did spring,
And eke the white foam you might wring:
The steed in foam seemed clad.

12.

Sir Thopas eke so weary was
Of riding on the fine soft grass,
While love burnt in his breast,
That down he laid him in that place
To give his courser some soláce,
Some forage and some rest.

13.

Saint Mary! benedicite!
What meaneth all this love in me,
That haunts me in the wood?
This night, in dreaming, did I see
An elf queen shall my true love be,
And sleep beneath my hood.

14.

An elf queen will I love, I wis,
For in this world no woman is
Worthy to be my bride;
All other damsels I forsake,
And to an elf queen will I take,
By grove and streamlet's side.

15.

Into his saddle be clomb anon,
And pricketh over stile and stone,
An elf queen to espy;
Till he so long had ridden and gone,
That he at last upon a morn
The fairy land came nigh.

16.

Therein he sought both far and near,
And oft he spied in daylight clear
Through many a forest wild;
But in that wondrous land I ween,
No living wight by him was seen,
Nor woman, man, nor child.

17.

At last there came a giant gaunt,
And he was named Sir Oliphaunt,
A perilous man of deed:
And he said, "Childe, by Termagaunt,

If thou ride not from this my haunt,
Soon will I slay thy steed
With this victorious mace;
For here's the lovely Queen of Faery,
With harp and pipe and symphony,
A-dwelling in this place.”

18.

Childe Thopas said right haughtily,
“To-morrow will I combat thee
In armour bright as flower;
And then I promise '*par ma fay*'
That thou shalt feel this javelin gay,
And dread its wondrous power.
To-morrow we shall meet again,
And I will pierce thee, if I may,
Upon the golden prime of day;—
And here you shall be slain.”

19.

Sir Thopas drew aback full fast;
The giant at him huge stones cast,
Which from a staff-sling fly;
But well escaped the Childe Thopás,
And it was all through God's good grace,
And through his bearing high.

20.

Still listen, gentles, to my tale,
Merrier than the nightingale;—
For now I must relate,
How that Sir Thopas rideth o'er
Hill and dale and bright sea-shore,
E'en to his own estate.

21.

His merry men commandeth he
To make for him the game and glee;
For needs he must soon fight
With a giant fierce, with strong heads three,
For paramour and jollity,
And chivalry so bright.

22.

“Come forth,” said he, “my minstrels fair,
And tell me tales right debonair,
While I am clad and armed;
Romances, full of real tales,
Of dames, and popes, and cardinals,
And maids by wizards charmed.”

23.

They bore to him the sweetest wine
In silver cup; the muscadine,
With spices rare of Ind;
Fine gingerbread, in many a slice,
With cummin seed, and liquorice,

And sugar thrice refined.

24.

Then next to his white skin he ware

A cloth of fleecy wool, as fair,

Woven into a shirt;

Next that he put a cassock on,

And over that an habergeon, {35}

To guard right well his heart.

25.

And over that a hauberk went

Of Jews' work, and most excellent;

Full strong was every plate;

And over that his coat armou're,

As white as is the lily flower,

In which he would debate.

26.

His shield was all of gold so red,

And thereon was a wild boar's head,

A carbuncle beside;

And then he swore on ale and bread,

How that the giant should be dead,

Whatever should betide!

27.

His boots were glazed right curiously,

His sword-sheath was of ivory,

His helm all brassy bright;

His saddle was of jet-black bone,

His bridle like the bright sun shone,

Or like the clear moons light,

28.

His spear was of the cypress tree,

That bodeth battle right and free;

The point full sharp was ground;

His steed it was a dapple grey,

That goeth an amble on the way,

Full softly and full round.

29.

Lo! lordlings mine, here ends one fyttre

Of this my tale, a gallant strain;

And if ye will hear more of it,

I'll soon begin again.

FYTTE THE SECOND.

1.

Now hold your speech for charity,

Both gallant knight and lady free,

And hearken to my song

Of battle and of chivalry,

Of ladies' love and minstrelsy,

All ambling thus along.

2.

Men speak much of old tales, I know;
Of Hornchild, Ipotis, alsó
Of Bevis and Sir Guy;
Of Sire Libeaux, and Pleindamour;
But Sire Thopas, he is the flower
Of real chivalry.

3.

Now was his gallant steed bestrode,
And forth upon his way he rode,
As spark flies from a brand;
Upon his crest he bare a tower,
And therein stuck a lily flower:
Save him from giant hand.

4.

He was a knight in battle bred,
And in no house would seek his bed,
But laid him in the wood;
His pillow was his helmet bright,—
His horse grazed by him all the night
On herbs both fine and good.

5.

And he drank water from the well,
As did the knight Sir Percival,
So worthy under weed;
Till on a day—

[Here Chaucer is interrupted in his Rime.]

EPILOGUE TO RIME.

“No more of this, for Heaven's high dignity!”
Quoth then our Host, “for, lo! thou makest me
So weary of thy very simpleness,
That all so wisely may the Lord me bless,
My very ears, with thy dull rubbish, ache.
Now such a rime at once let Satan take.
This may be well called 'doggrell rime,’” quoth he.
“Why so?” quoth I; “why wilt thou not let me
Tell all my tale, like any other man,
Since that it is the best rime that I can?”
“Mass!” quoth our Host, “if that I hear aright,
Thy scraps of rhyming are not worth a mite;
Thou dost nought else but waste away our time:—
Sir, at one word, thou shalt no longer rhyme.”

CHAUCER'S FRIAR'S TALE; or, THE SUMNER AND THE DEVIL MODERNISED BY LEIGH HUNT.

There lived, sirs, in my country, formerly,
A wondrous great archdeacon,—who but he?
Who boldly did the work of his high station
In punishing improper conversation,
And all the slidings thereunto belonging;
Witchcraft, and scandal also, and the wronging
Of holy Church, by blinking of her dues
In sacraments and contracts, wills and pews;
Usury furthermore, and simony;
But people of ill lives most loathéd he:
Lord! how he made them sing if they were caught.
And tithes—defaulters, ye may guess, were taught
Never to venture on the like again;
To the last farthing would he rack and strain.
For stinted tithes, or stinted offering,
He made the people piteously to sing.
He left no leg for the good bishop's crook;
Down went the black sheep in his own black book;
For when the name gat there, such dereliction
Came, you must know, sirs, in his jurisdiction.

He had a Sumner ready to his hand;
A slyer bully filched not in the land;
For in all parts the villain had his spies
To let him know where profit might arise.
Well could he spare ill livers, three or four,
To help his net to four—and—twenty more.
'Tis truth. Your Sumner may stare hard for me;
I shall not screen, not I, his villainy;
For heaven be thanked, *laudetur Dominus*,
They have no hold, these cursed thieves, on us;
Nor never shall have, let 'em thief till doom.

["No," cried the Sumner, starting from his gloom,
"Nor have we any hold, Sir Shaven—crown,
On your fine flock, the ladies of the town."

"Peace, with a vengeance," quoth our Host, "and let
The tale be told. Say on, thou marmoset,
Thou lady's friar, and let the Sumner sniff."]

"Well," quoth the Friar; "this Sumner, this false thief,
Had scouts in plenty ready to his hand,
Like any hawks, the sharpest in the land,
Watching their birds to pluck, each in his mew,
Who told him all the secrets that they knew,
And lured him game, and gat him wondrous profit;

Playful Poems

Exceeding little knew his master of it.
Sirs, he would go, without a writ, and take
Poor wretches up, feigning it for Christ's sake,
And threatening the poor people with his curse,
And all the while would let them fill his purse,
And to the alehouse bring him by degrees,
And then he'd drink with them, and slap his knees
For very mirth, and say 'twas some mistake.
Judas carried the bag, sirs, for Christ's sake,
And was a thief; and such a thief was he;
His master got but sorry share, *pardie*.
To give due laud unto this Satan's imp,
He was a thief, a Sumner, and a pimp.

Wenches themselves were in his retinue;
So whether 'twas Sir Robert, or Sir Hugh,
Or Jack, or Ralph, that held the damsel dear,
Come would she then, and tell it in his ear:
Thus were the wench and he of one accord;
And he would feign a mandate from his lord,
And summon them before the court, those two,
And pluck the man, and let the mawkin go.
Then would he say, "Friend, for thine honest look,
I save thy name, this once, from the black book;
Thou hear'st no further of this case."—But, Lord!
I might not in two years his bribes record.
There's not a dog alive, so speed my soul,
Knoweth a hurt deer better from a whole
Than this false Sumner knew a tainted sheep,
Or where this wretch would skulk, or that would sleep,
Or to fleece both was more devoutly bent;
And reason good; his faith was in his rent.

And so befell, that once upon a day,
This Sumner, prowling ever for his prey,
Rode forth to cheat a poor old widowed soul,
Feigning a cause for lack of protocol,
And as he went, he saw before him ride
A yeoman gay under the forest side.
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen;
And he was clad in a short cloak of green,
And wore a hat that had a fringe of black.

"Sir," quoth this Sumner, shouting at his back,
"Hail, and well met."—"Well met," like shouteth he;
"Where ridest thou under the greenwood tree?
Goest thou far, thou jolly boy, to-day?"

This bully Sumner answered, and said, "Nay,
Only hard-by, to strain a rent."—"Hoh! hoh!
Art thou a bailiff then?"—"Yea, even so."
For he durst not, for very filth and shame,
Say that he was a Sumner, for the name.

"Well met, in God's name," quoth black fringe; "why, brother,
Thou art a bailiff then, and I'm another;

Playful Poems

But I'm a stranger in these parts; so, prythee,
Lend me thine aid, and let me journey with thee.
I've gold and silver, plenty, where I dwell;
And if thou hap'st to come into our dell,
Lord! how we'll do our best to give thee greeting!"

"Thanks," quoth the Sumner; "merry be our meeting."
So in each other's hand their troths they lay,
And swear accord: and forth they ride and play.

This Sumner then, which was as full of stir,
And prate, and prying, as a woodpecker,
And ever inquiring upon everything,
Said, "Brother, where is thine inhabiting,
In case I come to find thee out some day?"

This yeoman dropped his speech in a soft way,
And said, "Far in the north. But ere we part, {42}
I trow thou shalt have learnt it so by heart,
Thou mayst not miss it, be it dark as pitch."

"Good," quoth the Sumner. "Now, as thou art rich,
Show me, dear brother, riding thus with me,
Since we are bailiffs both, some subtlety,
How I may play my game best, and may win:
And spare not, pray, for conscience or for sin,
But, as my brother, tell me how do ye."

"Why, 'faith, to tell thee a plain tale," quoth he,
"As to my wages, they be poor enough;
My lord's a dangerous master, hard and chuff;
And since my labour bringeth but abortion,
I live, so please ye, brother, by extortion,
I take what I can get; that is my course;
By cunning, if I may; if not, by force;
So cometh, year by year, my salary."

"Now certes," quoth the Sumner, "so fare I.
I lay my hands on everything, God wot,
Unless it be too heavy or too hot.
What I may get in counsel, privily,
I feel no sort of qualm thereon, not I.
Extortion or starvation;—that's my creed.
Repent who list. The best of saints must feed.
That's all the stomach that my conscience knoweth.
Curse on the ass that to confession goeth.
Well be we met, 'Od's heart! and by my dame!
But tell me, brother dear, what is thy name?"

Now ye must know, that right in this meanwhile,
This yeoman 'gan a little for to smile.
"Brother," quoth he, "my name, if I must tell—
I am a fiend: my dwelling is in hell:
And here I ride about my fortunings,
To wot if folk will give me anything.
To that sole end ride I, and ridest thou;
And, without pulling rein, will I ride now
To the world's end, ere I will lose a prey."

Playful Poems

“God bless me,” quoth the Sumner, “what d'ye say?
I thought ye were a yeoman verily.
Ye have a man's shape, sir, as well as I.
Have ye a shape then, pray, determinate
In hell, good sir, where ye have your estate?”

“Nay, certainly,” quoth he, “there have we none;
But whoso liketh it, he taketh one;
And so we make folk think us what we please.
Sometimes we go like apes, sometimes like bees,
Like man, or angel, black dog, or black crow:—
Nor is it wondrous that it should be so.
A sorry juggler can bewilder thee;
And 'faith, I think I know more craft than he.”

“But why,” inquired the Sumner, “must ye don
So many shapes, when ye might stick to one?”

“We suit the bait unto the fish,” quoth he.
“And why,” quoth t'other, “all this slavery?”
“For many a cause, Sir Sumner,” quoth the fiend;
“But time is brief—the day will have an end;
And here jog I, with nothing for my ride;
Catch we our fox, and let this theme abide:
For, brother mine, thy wit it is too small
To understand me, though I told thee all;
And yet, as toucheth that same slavery,
A devil must do God's work, 'twixt you and me;
For without Him, albeit to our loathing,
Strong as we go, we devils can do nothing;
Though to our prayers, sometimes, He giveth leave
Only the body, not the soul, to grieve.
Witness good Job, whom nothing could make wrath;
And sometimes have we power to harass both;
And, then again, soul only is possest,
And body free; and all is for the best.
Full many a sinner would have no salvation,
Gat it he not by standing our temptation:
Though God He knows, 'twas far from our intent
To save the man:— his howl was what we meant.
Nay, sometimes we be servants to our foes:
Witness the saint that pulled my master's nose;
And to the apostle servant eke was I.”

“Yet tell me,” quoth this Sumner, “faithfully,
Are the new shapes ye take for your intents
Fresh every time, and wrought of elements?”

“Nay,” quoth the fiend, “sometimes they be disguises;
And sometimes in a corpse a devil rises,
And speaks as sensibly, and fair, and well,
As did the Pythoness to Samuel:
And yet will some men say, it was not he!
Lord help, say I, this world's divinity.
Of one thing make thee sure; that thou shalt know,
Before we part, the shapes we wear below.

Playful Poems

Thou shalt—I jest thee not—the Lord forbid!
Thou shalt know more than ever Virgil did,
Or Dante's self. So let us on, sweet brother,
And stick, like right warm souls, to one another:
I'll never quit thee, till thou quittest me.”

“Nay,” quoth the Sumner, “that can never be;
I am a man well known, respectable;
And though thou wert the very lord of hell,
Hold thee I should as mine own plighted brother:
Doubt not we'll stick right fast, each to the other:
And, as we think alike, so will we thrive:
We twain will be the merriest devils alive.
Take thou what's given; for that's thy mode, God wot;
And I will take, whether 'tis given or not.
And if that either winneth more than t'other,
Let him be true, and share it with his brother.”

“Done,” quoth the fiend, whose eyes in secret glowed;
And with that word they pricked along the road:
And soon it fell, that entering the town's end,
To which this Sumner shaped him for to wend,
They saw a cart that loaded was with hay,
The which a carter drove forth on his way.
Deep was the mire, and sudden the cart stuck:
The carter, like a madman, smote and struck,
And cried, “Heit, Scot; heit, Brock! What! is't the stones?
The devil clean fetch ye both, body and bones:
Must I do nought but bawl and swinge all day?
Devil take the whole—horse, harness, cart, and hay.”

The Sumner whispered to the fiend, “I' faith,
We have it here. Hear'st thou not what he saith?
Take it anon, for he hath given it thee,
Live stock and dead, hay, cart, and horses three!”

“Nay,” quoth the fiend, “not so;—the deuce a bit.
He sayeth; but, alas! not meaneth it:
Ask him thyself, if thou believ'st not me;
Or else be still awhile, and thou shalt see.”

Thwacketh the man his horses on the croup,
And they begin to draw now, and to stoop.
“*Heit* there,” quoth he; “*heit, heit*; ah, *matthywo* .
Lord love their hearts! how prettily they go!
That was well twitched, methinks, mine own grey boy:
I pray God save thy body, and Saint Eloy.
Now is my cart out of the slough, *pardie*.”

“There,” quoth the fiend unto the Sumner; “see,
I told thee how 'twould fall. Thou seest, dear brother,
The churl spoke one thing, but he thought another.
Let us prick on, for we take nothing here.”

And when from out the town they had got clear,
The Sumner said, “Here dwelleth an old witch,
That had as lief be tumbled in a ditch
And break her neck, as part with an old penny.”

Playful Poems

Nathless her twelve pence is as good as any,
And I will have it, though she lose her wits;
Or else I'll cite her with a score of writs:
And yet, God wot, I know of her no vice.
So learn of me, Sir Fiend: thou art too nice."

The Sumner clappeth at the widow's gate.
"Come out," he saith, "thou hag, thou quiver-pate:
I trow thou hast some friar or priest with thee."

"Who clappeth?" said this wife; "ah, what say ye?
God save ye, masters: what is your sweet will?"

"I have," said he, "of summons here a bill:
Take care, on pain of cursing, that thou be
To-morrow morn, before the Archdeacon's knee,
To answer to the court of certain things."

"Now, Lord," quoth she, "sweet Jesu, King of kings,
So help me, as I cannot, sirs, nor may:
I have been sick, and that full many a day.
I may not walk such distance, nay, nor ride,
But I be dead, so pricketh it my side.
La! how I cough and quiver when I stir!—
May I not ask some worthy officer
To speak for me, to what the bill may say?"

"Yea, certainly," this Sumner said, "ye may,
On paying—let me see—twelve pence anon.
Small profit cometh to myself thereon:
My master hath the profit, and not I.
Come—twelve pence, mother—count it speedily,
And let me ride: I may no longer tarry."

"Twelve pence!" quoth she; "now may the sweet Saint Mary
So wisely help me out of care and sin,
As in this wide world, though I sold my skin,
I could not scrape up twelve pence, for my life.
Ye know too well I am a poor old wife:
Give alms, for the Lord's sake, to me, poor wretch."

"Nay, if I quit thee then," quoth he, "devil fetch
Myself, although thou starve for it, and rot."

"Alas!" quoth she, "the pence I have 'em not."
"Pay me," quoth he, "or by the sweet Saint Anne,
I'll bear away thy staff and thy new pan
For the old debt thou ow'st me for that fee,
Which out of pocket I discharged for thee,
When thou didst make thy husband an old stag."

"Thou liest," quoth she; "so leave me never a rag,
As I was never yet, widow nor wife,
Summoned before your court in all my life,
Nor never of my body was untrue.
Unto the devil, rough and black of hue,
Give I thy body, and the pan to boot."

And when this devil heard her give the brute
Thus in his charge, he stooped into her ear,
And said, "Now, Mabily, my mother dear,

Playful Poems

Is this your will in earnest that ye say?"

"The devil," quoth she, "so fetch him cleanaway,
Soul, pan, and all, unless that he repent."

"Repent!" the Sumner cried; "pay up your rent,
Old fool; and don't stand preaching here to me.
I would I had thy whole inventory,
The smock from off thy back, and every cloth."

"Now, brother," quoth the devil, "be not wroth;
Thy body and this pan be mine by right,
And thou shalt straight to hell with me to-night,
Where thou shalt know what sort of folk we be,
Better than Oxford university."

And with that word the fiend him swept below,
Body and soul. He went where Sumners go.

CHAUCER'S REVE'S TALE MODERNISED BY R. H. HORNE.

THE REVE'S PROLOGUE.

When all had laughed at this right foolish case
Of Absalom and credulous Nicholas, {49}
Diverse folk diversely their comments made.
But, for the most part, they all laughed and played,
Nor at this tale did any man much grieve,
Unless indeed 'twas Oswald, our good Reve.
Because that he was of the carpenter craft,
In his heart still a little ire is left.
He gan to grudge it somewhat, as scarce right;
“So aid me!” quoth he; “I could such requite
By throwing dust in a proud millers eye,
If that I chose to speak of ribaldry.
But I am old; I cannot play for age;
Grass-time is done—my fodder is now forage;
This white top sadly writeth mine old years;
Mine heart is also mouldy'd as mine hairs:
And since I fare as doth the medlar tree,
That fruit which time grows ever the worse to be
Till it be rotten in rubbish and in straw.

“We old men, as I fear, the same lot draw;
Till we be rotten can we not be ripe.
We ever hop while that the world will pipe;
For in our will there sticketh ever a nail,
To have a hoary head and a green tail,
As hath a leek; for though our strength be lame,
Our will desireth folly ever the same;
For when our climbing's done, our words aspire;
Still in our ashes old is reeking fire. {50}

“Four hot coals have we, which I will express:
Boasting, lying, anger, and covetousness.
These burning coals are common unto age,
Our old limbs well may stumble o'er the stage,
But will shall never fail us, that is sooth.
Still in my head was always a colt's tooth,
As many a year as now is passed and done,
Since that my tap of life began to run.
For certainly when I was born, I trow,
Death drew the tap of life, and let it flow;
And ever since the tap so fast hath run,
That well-nigh empty now is all the tun.
The stream of life but drips from time to time;
The silly tongue may well ring out and chime
Of wretchedness, that passéd is of yore:

With aged folk, save dotage, there's nought more.”

When that our Host had heard this sermoning,
 He gan to speak as lordly as a king;
 And said, “Why, what amounteth all this wit?
 What! shall we speak all day of Holy Writ?
 The devil can make a steward fit to preach,
 Or of a cobbler a sailor, or a leech.
 Say forth thy tale; and tarry not the time.
 Lo Deptford! and the hour is half-way prime:
 Lo Greenwich! there where many a shrew loves sin—
 It were high time thy story to begin.”

“Now, fair sirs,” quoth this Oswald, the old Reve,
 “I pray you all that you yourselves ne'er grieve,
 Though my reply should somewhat fret his nose;
 For lawful 'tis with force, force to oppose.
 This drunken Miller hath informed us here
 How that some folks beguiled a carpenter—
 Perhaps in scorn that I of yore was one.
 So, by your leave, him I'll requite anon.
 In his own churlish language will I speak,
 And pray to Heaven besides his neck may break.
 A small stalk in mine eye he sees, I deem,
 But in his own he cannot see a beam.

THE REVE'S TALE.

At Trumpington, near Cambridge, if you look,
 There goeth a bridge, and under that a brook,
 Upon which brook there stood a flour-mill;
 And this is a known fact that now I tell.
 A Miller there had dwelt for many a day;
 As any peacock he was proud and gay.
 He could pipe well, and fish, mend nets, to boot,
 Turn cups with a lathe, and wrestle well, and shoot.
 A Norman dirk, as brown as is a spade,
 Hung by his belt, and eke a trenchant blade.
 A jolly dagger bare he in his pouch:
 There was no man, for peril, durst him touch.
 A Sheffield clasp-knife lay within his hose.
 Round was his face, and broad and flat his nose.
 High and retreating was his bald ape's skull:
 He swaggered when the market-place was full.
 There durst no wight a hand lift to resent it,
 But soon, this Miller swore, he should repent it.

A thief he was, forsooth, of corn and meal,
 A sly one, too, and used long since to steal.
 Disdainful Simkin was he called by name.
 A wife he had; of noble kin she came:
 The rector of the town her father was.
 With her he gave full many a pan of brass,
 That Simkin with his blood should thus ally.

She had been brought up in a nunnery;
 For Simkin ne'er would take a wife, he said,
 Unless she were well tutored and a maid,
 To carry on his line of yeomanry:
 And she was proud and pert as is a pie.
 It was a pleasant thing to see these two:
 On holidays before her he would go,
 With his large tippet bound about his head;
 While she came after in a gown of red,
 And Simkin wore his long hose of the same.
 There durst no wight address her but as dame:
 None was so bold that passed along the way
 Who with her durst once toy or jesting play,
 Unless he wished the sudden loss of life
 Before Disdainful Simkin's sword or knife.
 (For jealous folk most fierce and perilous grow;
 And this they always wish their wives to know.)
 But since that to broad jokes she'd no dislike
 She was as pure as water in a dyke,
 And with abuse all filled and froward air.
 She thought that ladies should her temper bear,
 Both for her kindred and the lessons high
 That had been taught her in the nunnery.

These two a fair and buxom daughter had,
 Of twenty years; no more since they were wed,
 Saving a child, that was but six months old;
 A little boy in cradle rocked and rolled.
 This daughter was a stout and well-grown lass,
 With broad flat nose, and eyes as grey as glass.
 Broad were her hips; her bosom round and high;
 But right fair was she here—I will not lie.

The rector of the town, as she was fair,
 A purpose had to make her his sole heir,
 Both of his cattle and his tenement;
 But only if she married as he meant.
 It was his purpose to bestow her high,
 Into some worthy blood of ancestry:
 For holy Church's good must be expended
 On holy Church's blood that is descended;
 Therefore he would his holy Church honour,
 Although that holy Church he should devour.

Great toll and fee had Simkin, out of doubt,
 With wheat and malt, of all the land about,
 And in especial was the Soler Hall—
 A college great at Cambridge thus they call—
 Which at this mill both wheat and malt had ground.
 And on a day it suddenly was found,
 Sick lay the Manciple of a malady;
 And men for certain thought that he must die.
 Whereon this Miller both of corn and meal
 An hundred times more than before did steal;

Playful Poems

For, ere this chance, he stole but courteously,
But now he was a thief outrageously.
The Warden scolded with an angry air;
But this the Miller rated not a tare:
He sang high bass, and swore it was not so!

There were two scholars young, and poor, I trow,
That dwelt within the Hall of which I say.
Headstrong they were and lusty for to play;
And merely for their mirth and revelry,
Out to the Warden eagerly they cry,
That he should let them, for a merry round,
Go to the mill and see their own corn ground,
And each would fair and boldly lay his neck
The Miller should not steal them half a peck
Of corn by sleight, nor by main force bereave.

And at the last the Warden gave them leave:
One was called John, and Allen named the other;
From the same town they came, which was called Strauther,
Far in the North—I cannot tell you where.

This Allen maketh ready all his gear,
And on a horse the sack he cast anon:
Forth go these merry clerks, Allen and John,
With good sword and with buckler by their side.
John knew the way, and needed not a guide;
And at the mill the sack adown he layeth.

Allen spake first:—“Simon, all hail! in faith,
How fares thy daughter, and thy worthy wife?”

“Allen,” quoth Simkin, “welcome, by my life;
And also John:—how now! what do ye here?”

“Simon,” quoth John, “compulsion has no peer.
They who've nae lackeys must themselves bestir,
Or else they are but fools, as clerks aver.
Our Manciple, I think, will soon be dead,
Sae slowly work the grinders in his head;
And therefore am I come with Allen thus,
To grind our corn, and carry it hame with us:
I pray you speed us, that we may be gone.”

Quoth Simkin, “By my faith it shall be done;
What will ye do while that it is in hand?”

“Gude's life! right by the hopper will I stand,”
(Quoth John), “and see how that the corn goes in.
I never yet saw, by my father's kin,
How that the hopper waggles to and fro.”

Allen continued,—“John, and wilt thou so?
Then will I be beneath it, by my crown,
And see how that the meal comes running down
Into the trough—and that shall be my sport.
For, John, like you, I'm of the curious sort;
And quite as bad a miller—so let's see!”

This Miller smiled at their 'cute nicety,
And thought,—all this is done but for a wile;

Playful Poems

They fancy that no man can them beguile:
But, by my thrift, I'll dust their searching eye,
For all the sleights in their philosophy.
The more quaint knacks and guarded plans they make,
The more corn will I steal when once I take:
Instead of flour, I'll leave them nought but bran:
The greatest clerks are not the wisest men.
As whilom to the wolf thus spake the mare:
Of all their art I do not count a tare.

Out at the door he goeth full privily,
When that he saw his time, and noiselessly:
He looketh up and down, till he hath found
The clerks' bay horse, where he was standing bound
Under an ivy wall, behind the mill:
And to the horse he goeth him fair and well,
And strippeth off the bridle in a trice.

And when the horse was loose he 'gan to race
Unto the wild mares wandering in the fen,
With *wehee!* *whinny!* right through thick and thin!
This Miller then returned; no word he said,
But doth his work, and with these clerks he played,
Till that their corn was well and fairly ground.
And when the meal is sacked and safely bound
John goeth out, and found his horse was gone,
And cried aloud with many a stamp and groan,
"Our horse is lost! Allen, 'od's banes! I say,
Up on thy feet!—come off, man—up, away!
Alas! our Warden's palfrey, it is gone!"

Allen at once forgot both meal and corn—
Out of his mind went all his husbandry—
"What! whilk way is he gone?" he 'gan to cry.

The Miller's wife came laughing inwardly,
"Alas!" said she, "your horse i' the fens doth fly
After wild mares as fast as he can go!
Ill-luck betide the man that bound him so,
And his that better should have knit the rein."

"Alas!" quoth John, "good Allen, haste amain;
Lay down thy sword, as I will mine also;
Heaven knoweth I am as nimble as a roe;
He shall not 'scape us baith, or my saul's dead!
Why didst not put the horse within the shed?
By the mass, Allen, thou'rt a fool, I say!"

Those silly clerks have scampered fast away
Unto the fen; Allen and nimble John:
And when the Miller saw that they were gone,
He half a bushel of their flour doth take,
And bade his wife go knead it in a cake.
He said, "I trow these clerks feared what they've found;
Yet can a miller turn a scholar round
For all his art. Yea, let them go their way!
See where they run! yea, let the children play:

Playful Poems

They get him not so lightly, by my crown.”

The simple clerks go running up and down,
With “Soft, soft!—stand, stand!—hither!—back ! take care!
Now whistle thou, and I shall keep him here!”
But, to be brief, until the very night
They could not, though they tried with all their might,
The palfrey catch; he always ran so fast:
Till in a ditch they caught him at the last.

Weary and wet as beasts amid the rain,
Allen and John come slowly back again.
“Alas,” quoth John, “that ever I was born!
Now are we turned into contempt and scorn.
Our corn is stolen; fools they will us call;
The Warden, and our college fellows all,
And 'specially the Miller—'las the day!”

Thus plaineth John while going by the way
Toward the mill, the bay nag in his hand.
The Miller sitting by the fire they found,
For it was night: no further could they move;
But they besought him, for Heaven's holy love,
Lodgment and food to give them for their penny.

And Simkin answered, “If that there be any,
Such as it is, yet shall ye have your part.
My house is small, but ye have learned art;
Ye can, by arguments, well make a place
A mile broad, out of twenty foot of space!
Let's see now if this place, as 'tis, suffice;
Or make more room with speech, as is your guise.”

“Now, Simon, by Saint Cuthbert,” said this John,
“Thou'rt ever merry, and that's answered soon.
I've heard that man must needs choose o' twa things;
Such as he finds, or else such as he brings.
But specially I pray thee, mine host dear,
Let us have meat and drink, and make us cheer,
And we shall pay you to the full, be sure:
With empty hand men may na' hawks allure.
Lo! here's our siller ready to be spent!”

The Miller to the town his daughter sent
For ale and bread, and roasted them a goose;
And bound their horse; he should no more get loose;
And in his own room made for them a bed,
With blankets, sheets, and coverlet well spread:
Not twelve feet from his own bed did it stand.
His daughter, by herself, as it was planned,
In a small passage closet, slept close by:
It might no better be, for reasons why,—
There was no wider chamber in the place.
They sup, and jest, and show a merry face,
And drink of ale, the strongest and the best.
It was just midnight when they went to rest.

Well hath this Simkin varnished his hot head;

Full pale he was with drinking, and nought red.
 He hiccougheth, and speaketh through the nose,
 As with the worst of colds, or quinsy's throes.
 To bed he goeth, and with him trips his wife;
 Light as a jay, and jolly seemed her life,
 So was her jolly whistle well ywet.
 The cradle at her bed's foot close she set
 To rock, or nurse the infant in the night.
 And when the jug of ale was emptied quite,
 To bed, likewise, the daughter went anon:
 To bed goes Allen; with him also John.
 All's said: they need no drugs from poppies pale,
 This Miller hath so wisely bibbed of ale;
 But as an horse he snorteth in his sleep,
 And blurteth secrets which awake he'd keep.
 His wife a burden bare him, and full strong:
 Men might their routing hear a good furlóng.
 The daughter routeth else, *par compaignie*.

Allen, the clerk, that heard this melody,
 Now poketh John, and said, "Why sleepest thou?
 Heardest thou ever sic a song ere now?
 Lo, what a serenade's among them all!
 A wild-fire red upon their bodies fall!
 Wha ever listened to sae strange a thing?
 The flower of evil shall their ending bring.
 This whole night there to me betides no rest.
 But, courage yet, all shall be for the best;
 For, John," said he, "as I may ever thrive,
 To pipe a merrier serenade I'll strive
 In the dark passage somewhere near to us;
 For, John, there is a law which sayeth thus,—
 That if a man in one point be aggrieved,
 Right in another he shall be relieved:
 Our corn is stolen—sad yet sooth to say—
 And we have had an evil bout to-day;
 But since the Miller no amends will make,
 Against our loss we should some payment take.
 His sonsie daughter will I seek to win,
 And get our meal back—de'il reward his sin!
 By hallow-mass it shall no otherwise be!"

But John replied, "Allen, well counsel thee:
 The Miller is a perilous man," he said,
 "And if he wake and start up from his bed,
 He may do both of us a villainy."

"Nay," Allen said, "I count him not a flie!"
 And up he rose, and crept along the floor
 Into the passage humming with their snore:
 As narrow was it as a drum or tub.
 And like a beetle doth he grope and grub,
 Feeling his way with darkness in his hands,
 Till at the passage-end he stooping stands.

Playful Poems

John lieth still, and not far off, I trow,
And to himself he maketh ruth and woe.
“Alas,” quoth he, “this is a wicked jape!
Now may I say that I am but an ape.
Allen may somewhat quit him for his wrong:
Already can I hear his plaint and song;
So shall his 'venture happily be sped,
While like a rubbish-sack I lie in bed;
And when this jape is told another day,
I shall be called a fool, or a cokenáy!
I will adventure somewhat, too, in faith:
'Weak heart, worse fortune,' as the proverb saith.”

And up he rose at once, and softly went
Unto the cradle, as 'twas his intent,
And to his bed's foot bare it, with the brat.
The wife her routing ceased soon after that,
And woke, and left her bed; for she was pained
With nightmare dreams of skies that madly rained.
Eastern astrologers and clerks, I wis,
In time of Apis tell of storms like this.
Awhile she stayed, and waxeth calm in mind;
Returning then, no cradle doth she find,
And gropeth here and there—but she found none.
“Alas,” quoth she, “I had almost misgone!
I well-nigh stumbled on the clerks a-bed:
Eh benedicite! but I am safely sped.
And on she went, till she the cradle found,
While through the dark still groping with her hand.

Meantime was heard the beating of a wing,
And then the third cock of the morn 'gan sing.
Allen stole back, and thought, “Ere that it dawn
I will creep in by John that lieth forlorn.”
He found the cradle in his hand, anon.
“Gude Lord!” thought Allen, “all wrong have I gone!
My head is dizzy with the ale last night,
And eke my piping, that I go not right.
Wrong am I, by the cradle well I know:
Here lieth Simkin, and his wife alsó.”
And, scrambling forthright on, he made his way
Unto the bed where Simkin snoring lay!
He thought to nestle by his fellow John,
And by the Miller in he crept, anon,
And caught him by the neck, and 'gan to shake,
And said, “Thou John! thou swine's head dull, awake!
Wake, by the mass! and hear a noble game,
For, by St. Andrew! to thy ruth and shame,
I have been trolling roundelays this night,
And won the Miller's daughter's heart outright,
Who hath me told where hidden is our meal:
All this—and more—and how they always steal;
While thou hast as a coward lain aghast!”

Playful Poems

“Thou slanderous ribald!” quoth the Miller, “hast?
A traitor false, false lying clerk!” quoth he,
“Thou shalt be slain by heaven's dignity,
Who rudely dar'st disparage with foul lie
My daughter that is come of lineage high!”
And by the throat he Allen grasped amain;
And caught him, yet more furiously, again,
And on his nose he smote him with his fist!
Down ran the bloody stream upon his breast,
And on the floor they tumble, heel and crown,
And shake the house—it seemed all coming down.
And up they rise, and down again they roll;
Till that the Miller, stumbling o'er a coal,
Went plunging headlong like a bull at bait,
And met his wife, and both fell flat as slate.
“Help, holy cross of Bromeholm!” loud she cried,
“And all ye martyrs, fight upon my side!
In manus tuas—help!—on thee I call!
Simon, awake! the fiend on me doth fall:
He crusheth me—help!—I am well—nigh dead:
He lieth along my heart, and heels, and head.
Help, Simkin! for the false clerks rage and fight!”

Now sprang up John as fast as ever he might,
And graspeth by the dark walls to and fro
To find a staff: the wife starts up alsó.
She knew the place far better than this John,
And by the wall she caught a staff anon.
She saw a little shimmering of a light,
For at an hole in shone the moon all bright,
And by that gleam she saw the struggling two,
But knew not, as for certain, who was who,
Save that she saw a white thing in her eye.
And when that she this white thing 'gan espy,
She thought that Allen did a nightcap wear,
And with the staff she drew near, and more near,
And, thinking 'twas the clerk, she smote at full
Disdainful Simkin on his bald ape's skull.
Down goes the Miller, crying, “Harow, I die!”
These clerks they beat him well, and let him lie.
They make them ready, and take their horse anon,
And eke their meal, and on their way are gone;
And from behind the mill-door took their cake,
Of half a bushel of flour—a right good bake.

CHAUCER'S POEM OF THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTINGALE MODERNISED BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

1.

The God of Love—*ah, benedicite!*
How mighty and how great a Lord is he!
For he of low hearts can make high, of high
He can make low, and unto death bring nigh;
And hard hearts he can make them kind and free.

2.

Within a little time, as hath been found,
He can make sick folk whole and fresh and sound;
Them who are whole in body and in mind
He can make sick,—bind can he and unbind
All that he will have bound, or have unbound.

3.

To tell his might my wit may not suffice;
Foolish men he can make them out of wise;—
For he may do all that he will devise;
Loose livers he can make abate their vice,
And proud hearts can make tremble in a trice.

4.

In brief, the whole of what he will, he may;
Against him dare not any wight say nay;
To humble or afflict whome'er he will,
To gladden or to grieve, he hath like skill;
But most his might he sheds on the eve of May.

5.

For every true heart, gentle heart and free,
That with him is, or thinketh so to be,
Now against May shall have some stirring—whether
To joy, or be it to some mourning; never
At other time, methinks, in like degree.

6.

For now when they may hear the small birds' song,
And see the budding leaves the branches throng.
This unto their remembrance doth bring
All kinds of pleasure mixed with sorrowing,
And longing of sweet thoughts that ever long.

7.

And of that longing heaviness doth come,
Whence oft great sickness grows of heart and home;
Sick are they all for lack of their desire;
And thus in May their hearts are set on fire,
So that they burn forth in great martyrdom.

Playful Poems

8.

In sooth, I speak from feeling, what though now
Old am I, and to genial pleasure slow;
Yet have I felt of sickness through the May,
Both hot and cold, and heart-aches every day,—
How hard, alas! to bear, I only know.

9.

Such shaking doth the fever in me keep,
Through all this May that I have little sleep;
And also 'tis not likely unto me,
That any living heart should sleepy be
In which love's dart its fiery point doth steep.

10.

But tossing lately on a sleepless bed,
I of a token thought which lovers heed;
How among them it was a common tale,
That it was good to hear the nightingale,
Ere the vile cuckoo's note be utteréd.

11.

And then I thought anon as it was day,
I gladly would go somewhere to essay
If I perchance a nightingale might hear,
For yet had I heard none, of all that year,
And it was then the third night of the May.

12.

And soon as I a glimpse of day espied,
No longer would I in my bed abide,
But straightway to a wood, that was hard by,
Forth did I go, alone and fearlessly,
And held the pathway down by a brook-side;

13.

Till to a lawn I came all white and green,
I in so fair a one had never been.
The ground was green, with daisy powdered over;
Tall were the flowers, the grove a lofty cover,
All green and white; and nothing else was seen.

14.

There sate I down among the fresh fair flowers,
And saw the birds come tripping from their bowers,
Where they had rested them all night; and they,
Who were so joyful at the light of day,
Began to honour May with all their powers.

15.

Well did they know that service all by rote,
And there was many and many a lovely note;
Some singing loud, as if they had complained;
Some with their notes another manner feigned;
And some did sing all out with the full throat.

16.

They pruned themselves, and made themselves right gay,
Dancing and leaping light upon the spray;

Playful Poems

And ever two and two together were,
The same as they had chosen for the year,
Upon Saint Valentine's returning day.

17.

Meanwhile the stream, whose bank I sate upon,
Was making such a noise as it ran on
Accordant to the sweet birds' harmony;
Methought that it was the best melody
Which ever to man's ear a passage won.

18.

And for delight, but how I never wot,
I in a slumber and a swoon was caught,
Not all asleep, and yet not waking wholly;
And as I lay, the Cuckoo bird unholy
Broke silence, or I heard him in my thought.

19.

And that was right upon a tree fast by,
And who was then ill-satisfied but I?
“Now, God,” quoth I, “that died upon the rood,
From thee and thy base throat, keep all that's good,
Full little joy have I now of thy cry.”

20.

And, as I with the Cuckoo thus 'gan chide,
In the next bush that was me fast beside,
I heard the lusty Nightingale so sing,
That her clear voice made a loud rioting,
Echoing thorough all the green wood wide.

21.

“Ah! good sweet Nightingale! for my heart's cheer,
Hence hast thou stayed a little while too long;
For we have heard the sorry Cuckoo here,
And she hath been before thee with her song;
Evil light on her! she hath done me wrong.”

22.

But hear you now a wondrous thing, I pray;
As long as in that swooning fit I lay,
Methought I wist right well what these birds meant,
And had good knowing both of their intent,
And of their speech, and all that they would say.

23.

The Nightingale thus in my hearing spake:
“Good Cuckoo, seek some other bush or brake
And, prithee, let us that can sing dwell here;
For every wight eschews thy song to hear,
Such uncouth singing verily dost thou make.”

24.

“What!” quoth she then, “what is't that ails thee now?
It seems to me I sing as well as thou;
For mine's a song that is both true and plain,—
Although I cannot quaver so in vain
As thou dost in thy throat, I wot not how.

Playful Poems

25.

“All men may understanding have of me,
But, Nightingale, so may they not of thee;
For thou hast many a foolish and quaint cry:—
Thou say'st OSEE, OSEE; then how may I
Have knowledge, I thee pray, what this may be?”

26.

“Ah, fool!” quoth she, “wist thou not what it is?
Oft as I say OSEE, OSEE, I wis,
Then mean I, that I should be wondrous fain
That shamefully they one and all were slain,
Whoever against Love mean aught amiss.

27.

“And also would I that they all were dead
Who do not think in love their life to lead;
For who is loth the God of Love to obey
Is only fit to die, I dare well say,
And for that cause OSEE I cry; take heed!”

28.

“Ay,” quoth the Cuckoo, “that is a quaint law,
That all must love or die; but I withdraw,
And take my leave of all such company,
For mine intent it neither is to die,
Nor ever while I live Love's yoke to draw.

29.

“For lovers of all folk that be alive,
The most disquiet have and least do thrive;
Most feeling have of sorrow's woe and care,
And the least welfare cometh to their share;
What need is there against the truth to strive?”

30.

“What!” quoth she, “thou art all out of thy mind,
That in thy churlishness a cause canst find
To speak of Love's true Servants in this mood;
For in this world no service is so good
To every wight that gentle is of kind.

31.

“For thereof comes all goodness and all worth;
All gentleness and honour thence come forth;
Thence worship comes, content and true heart's pleasure,
And full—assuréd trust, joy without measure,
And jollity, fresh cheerfulness, and mirth:

32.

“And bounty, lowliness, and courtesy,
And seemliness, and faithful company,
And dread of shame that will not do amiss;
For he that faithfully Love's servant is,
Rather than be disgraced, would choose to die.

33.

“And that the very truth it is which I
Now say—in such belief I'll live and die;

Playful Poems

And Cuckoo, do thou so, by my advice.”

“Then,” quoth she, “let me never hope for bliss,
If with that counsel I do e'er comply.

34.

“Good Nightingale! thou speakest wondrous fair,
Yet, for all that, the truth is found elsewhere;
For Love in young folk is but rage, I wis;
And Love in old folk a great dotage is;
Whom most it useth, him 'twill most impair.

35.

“For thereof come all contraries to gladness;
Thence sickness comes, and overwhelming sadness,
Mistrust and jealousy, despite, debate,
Dishonour, shame, envy importunate,
Pride, anger, mischief, poverty and madness.

36.

“Loving is aye an office of despair,
And one thing is therein which is not fair;
For whoso gets of love a little bliss,
Unless it alway stay with him, I wis
He may full soon go with an old man's hair.

37.

“And, therefore, Nightingale! do thou keep nigh,
For trust me well, in spite of thy quaint cry,
If long time from thy mate thou be, or far,
Thou'lt be as others that forsaken are;
Then shalt thou raise a clamour as do I.”

38.

“Fie,” quoth she, “on thy name, Bird ill beseen!
The God of Love afflict thee with all teen,
For thou art worse than mad a thousandfold;
For many a one hath virtues manifold
Who had been nought, if Love had never been.

39.

“For evermore his servants Love amendeth,
And he from every blemish them defendeth;
And maketh them to burn, as in a fire,
In loyalty and worshipful desire,
And when it likes him, joy enough them sendeth.”

40.

“Thou Nightingale!” the Cuckoo said, “be still;
For Love no reason hath but his own will;—
For to th' untrue he oft gives ease and joy;
True lovers doth so bitterly annoy,
He lets them perish through that grievous ill.

41.

“With such a master would I never be,
For he, in sooth, is blind, and may not see,
And knows not when he hurts and when he heals;
Within this court full seldom truth avails,
So diverse in his wilfulness is he.”

42.

Then of the Nightingale did I take note,
How from her inmost heart a sigh she brought,
And said, "Alas! that ever I was born,
Not one word have I now, I am so forlorn,"—
And with that word, she into tears burst out.

43.

"Alas, alas! my very heart will break,"
Quoth she, "to hear this churlish bird thus speak
Of Love, and of his holy services;
Now, God of Love! thou help me in some wise,
That vengeance on this Cuckoo I may wreak."

44.

And so methought I started up anon,
And to the brook I ran, and got a stone,
Which at the Cuckoo hardily I cast,
And he for dread did fly away full fast;
And glad, in sooth, was I when he was gone.

45.

And as he flew, the Cuckoo ever and aye
Kept crying, "Farewell!—farewell, popinjay!"
As if in scornful mockery of me;
And on I hunted him from tree to tree,
Till he was far, all out of sight, away.

46.

Then straightway came the Nightingale to me,
And said, "Forsooth, my friend, do I thank thee,
That thou wert near to rescue me; and now,
Unto the God of Love I make a vow,
That all this May I will thy songstress be."

47.

Well satisfied, I thanked her, and she said,
"By this mishap no longer be dismayed,
Though thou the Cuckoo heard, ere thou heard'st me;
Yet if I live it shall amended be,
When next May comes, if I am not afraid.

48.

"And one thing will I counsel thee alsó,
The Cuckoo trust not thou, nor his Love's saw;
All that she said is an outrageous lie."

"Nay, nothing shall me bring thereto," quoth I,
"For Love, and it hath done me mighty woe."

49.

"Yea, hath it? Use," quoth she, "this medicine,
This May-time, every day before thou dine,
Go look on the fresh daisy; then say I,
Although for pain thou may'st be like to die,
Thou wilt be eased, and less wilt droop and pine.

50.

"And mind always that thou be good and true,
And I will sing one song, of many new,

Playful Poems

For love of thee, as loud as I may cry;"
And then did she begin this song full high,
"Beshrew all them that are in love untrue."

51.

And soon as she had sung it to the end,
"Now farewell," quoth she, "for I hence must wend;
And, God of Love, that can right well and may,
Send unto thee as mickle joy this day
As ever he to lover yet did send."

52.

Thus takes the Nightingale her leave of me;
I pray to God with her always to be,
And joy of love to send her evermore;
And shield us from the Cuckoo and her lore,
For there is not so false a bird as she.

53.

Forth then she flew, the gentle Nightingale,
To all the birds that lodged within that dale,
And gathered each and all into one place;
And them besought to hear her doleful case,
And thus it was that she began her tale:—

54.

"The Cuckoo—'tis not well that I should hide
How she and I did each the other chide,
And without ceasing, since it was daylight;
And now I pray you all to do me right
Of that false Bird whom Love can not abide."

55.

Then spake one Bird, and full assent all gave:
"This matter asketh counsel good as grave,
For birds we are—all here together brought;
And, in good sooth, the Cuckoo here is not;
And therefore we a parliament will have.

56.

"And thereat shall the Eagle be our Lord,
And other Peers whose names are on record;
A summons to the Cuckoo shall be sent,
And judgment there be given; or that intent
Failing, we finally shall make accord.

57.

"And all this shall be done, without a nay,
The morrow after Saint Valentine's day,
Under a maple that is well beseen,
Before the chamber-window of the Queen,
At Woodstock, on the meadow green and gay."

58.

She thankéd them; and then her leave she took,
And flew into a hawthorn by that brook;
And there she sate and sung—upon that tree,—
"For term of life Love shall have hold of me!"
So loudly, that I with that song awoke.

Playful Poems

Unlearned Book and rude, as well I know,
For beauty thou hast none, nor eloquence,
Who did on thee the hardiness bestow
To appear before my Lady? but a sense
Thou surely hast of her benevolence,
Whereof her hourly bearing proof doth give;
For of all good, she is the best alive.

Alas, poor Book! for thy unworthiness,
To show to her some pleasant meanings writ
In winning words, since through her gentleness,
Thee she accepts as for her service fit;
Oh! it repents me I have neither wit
Nor leisure unto thee more worth to give;
For of all good, she is the best alive.

Beseech her meekly with all lowliness,
Though I be far from her I reverence,
To think upon my truth and steadfastness,
And to abridge my sorrow's violence,
Caused by the wish, as knows your sapience,
She of her liking, proof to me would give;
For of all good, she is the best alive.

L'ENVOY.

Pleasure's Aurora, Day of gladsomeness!
Lucerne, by night, with heavenly influence
Illumined! root of beauty and goodness,
Write, and allay, by your beneficence,
My sighs breathed forth in silence,—comfort give!
Since of all good, you are the best alive.

EXPLICIT.

TREASURE TROVE MODERNISED FROM THE FIFTH BOOK OF GOWER'S “CONFESSIO AMANTIS.”

In ancient Chronicle I read:—
About a King, as it must need,
There was of Knights and of Squiërs
Great rout, and eke of Officers.
Some for a long time him had served,
And thought that they had well deserved
Advancement, but had gone without;
And some also were of the Rout
That only came the other day
And were advanced without delay.
Those Older Men upon this thing,
So as they durst, against the King
Among themselves would murmur oft.
But there is nothing said so soft
That it shall not come out at last,
The King soon knew what Words had passed.
A King he was of high Prudence,
He shaped therefore an Evidence
Of them that plained them in that case,
To know of whose Default it was.
And all within his own intent,
That not a man knew what it meant,
He caused two Coffers to be made
Alike in Shape, and Size, and Shade,
So like that no man, by their Show,
The one may from the other know.
They were into his Chamber brought,
But no man knew why they were wrought;
Yet from the King Command hath come
That they be set in private Room,
For he was in his Wisdom keen.
When he thereto his time had seen,
Slily, away from all the rest,
With his own hands he filled one Chest,
Full of fine Gold and Jewelry
The which out of his Treasury
Was taken; after that he thrust
Into the other Straw and Dust,
And filled it up with Stones also;
Full Coffers are they, both the two.
And early then upon a day
He bade within doors where he lay

Playful Poems

That there should be before his Bed
A Board set up and fairly spread.
The Coffers then he let men get,
And on the Board he had them set.
Full well he knew the Names of those
Whose Murmurings against him rose,
Both of his Chamber and his Hall,
And speedily sent for them all,
And said unto them in this wise:

“There shall no man his Hap despise;
I know well that ye long have served,
And God knows what ye have deserved.
Whether it is along of me
That ye still unadvancéd be,
Or whether it belong of you,
The Sooth is to be provéd now,
Wherewith to stop your Evil Word.
Lo here two Coffers on the Board,
Of both the two choose which you will,
And know that ye may have your fill
Of Treasure heaped and packed in one,
That if ye happen thereupon
Ye shall be made Rich Men for ever.
Now choose and take which you is liever.
But be well ware, ere that ye take,—
For of the one I undertake
There is no manner good therein
Whereof ye might a Profit win.
Now go together of one assent
And take your own Advisément.
Whether I you this day advance
Stands only on your Choice and Chance.
No question here of Royal Grace,
It shall be showéd in this place
Upon you all, and well and fine,
If Fortune fails by Fault of mine.”

They all kneel down, and with one voice
They thank the King for this free Choice;
And after this they up arise
And go aside and them advise,
And at the last they all accord;
Whereof their Finding to record
To what Issue their Voices fall,
A Knight shall answer for them all.

He kneeleth down unto the King
And saith, that they upon this thing
Or for to win or for to lose
Are all decided how to choose.
Then took this Knight a Rod in hand
And goes to where the Coffers stand,
And with the Assent of every one

Playful Poems

He layeth his Rod upon one,
And tells the King they only want
Him that for their Reward to grant,
And pray him that they might it have.
The King, who would his Honour save,
When he hath heard the common Voice,
Hath granted them their own free Choice,
And gave them thereupon the Key.
But as he would that men might see
What Good they got, as they suppose,
He bade anon the Coffers uncloset,—
Which was filled full with Straw and Stone;
Thus are they served, the Luck's their own.

“Lo,” saith the King, “now may ye see
That there is no Default in me;
Therefore myself I will acquit,
Bear ye the Blame now, as is fit,
For that which Fortune you refused.”
Thus was this wise old King excused,
And they left off their evil Speech,
And Mercy of their King beseech.

Touching like matter to the quick,
I find a Tale how Frederick,
At that time Emperor of Rome,
Heard, as he went, a Clamour come
From two poor Beggars on the way.
The one of them began to say,
“Ha, Lord, the man is rich indeed
To whom a King's Wealth brings his Speed!”
The other said, “It is not so,
But he is rich and well-to-do
To whom God pleases Wealth to send.”
And thus their Words went without end,
Whereto this Lord hath given ear
And caused both Beggars to appear
Straight at his Palace, there to eat;
And bade provide them for their Meat
Two Pasties which men were to make,
And in the one a Capon bake,
And in the other, Wealth to win,
Of Florins all that may within
He bade them put a great Richesse,
And just alike, as one may guess,
Outward they were, to Sight of Men.

This Beggar was commanded then,
He that had held him to the King,
That he first choose upon this thing.
He saw them, but he felt them not,
So that upon his single Thought
He chose the Capon, and forsook
That other, which his Fellow took.

Playful Poems

But when he wist how that it fared,
He said aloud, that men it heard:
“Now have I certainly conceived
That he may lightly be deceived
Who puts his trust in Help of Man.
He's rich whom God helps, for he can
Stand ever on the safer side
That else on Vain Hope had relied.
I see my Fellow well supplied,
And still a Poor Man I abide.”
Thus spake the Beggar his intent,
And poor he came, and poor he went;
Of all the Riches that he sought
His evil Fortune gave him nought.

And right as it with those men stood,
Of evil Hap in worldly Good,
As thou hast heard me tell above,
Right so, full oft, it stands by Love;
Though thou desire it evermore
Thou shalt not have a whit the more,
But only what is meant for thee,
Of all the rest not worth a Pea.
And yet a long and endless Row
There be of Men who covet so
That whereas they a Woman see,
To ten or twelve though there may be,
The Love is now so little wise
That where the Beauty takes his Eyes
Anon the Man's whole Heart is there
And whispers Tales into her Ear,
And says on her his Love is set,
And thus he sets him to covet.
A hundred though he saw a day,
So would he have more than he may;
In each of them he finds somewhat
That pleaseth him, or this or that.
Some one, for she is white of skin,
Some one, for she is noble of kin,
Some one, for she hath a ruddy cheek,
Some one, for that she seemeth meek,
Some one, for that her eyes are gray,
Some one, for she can laugh and play,
Some one, for she is long and small,
Some one, for she is lithe and tall,
Some one, for she is pale and bleach,
Some one, for she is soft of speech,
Some one, for that her nose turns down,
Some one, for that she hath a frown,
Some one, for she can dance and sing;
So that of what he likes something
He finds, and though no more he feel

Playful Poems

But that she hath a little heel,
It is enough that he therefore
Her love; and thus an hundred score
While they be new he would he had,
Whom he forsakes, she shall be bad.
So the Blind Man no Colour sees,
All's one to take as he may please;
And his Desire is darkly minded
Whom Covetise of Love hath blinded.

LONDON LICKPENNY BY JOHN LYDGATE.

To London once my steps I bent,
Where truth in nowise should be faint;
To Westminster-ward I forthwith went,
To a man of law to make complaint,
I said, "For Mary's love, that holy saint,
Pity the poor that would proceed!"
But for lack of Money I could not speed.

And as I thrust the press among,
By froward chance my hood was gone,
Yet for all that I stayed not long
Till to the King's Bench I was come.
Before the judge I kneeled anon,
And prayed him for God's sake to take heed.
But for lack of Money I might not speed.

Beneath them sat clerks a great rout,
Which fast did write by one assent,
There stood up one and cried about,
"Richard, Robert, and John of Kent!"
I wist not well what this man meant,
He cried so thickly there indeed.
But he that lacked Money might not speed

Unto the Common Pleas I yode tho, {81}
Where sat one with a silken hood;
I did him reverence, for I ought to do so,
And told my case as well as I could,
How my goods were defrauded me by falsehood.
I got not a mum of his mouth for my meed,
And for lack of Money I might not speed.

Unto the Rolls I gat me from thence,
Before the clerks of the Chancerie,
Where many I found earning of pence,
But none at all once regarded me.
I gave them my plaint upon my knee;
They liked it well when they had it read,
But lacking Money I could not be sped.

In Westminster Hall I found out one {82a}
Which went in a long gown of ray,
I crouched and kneeled before him anon,
For Mary's love of help I him pray.
"I wot not what thou mean'st," gan he say;
To get me thence he did me bede:
For lack of Money I could not speed.

Within this Hall, neither rich nor yet poor
Would do for me aught although I should die.

Playful Poems

Which seeing, I got me out of the door
Where Flemings began on me for to cry,
“Master, what will you copen or buy? {82b}
Fine felt hats, or spectacles to read?
Lay down your silver, and here you may speed.”
Then to Westminster Gate I presently went,
When the sun was at highé prime;
Cooks to me they took good intent,
And proffered me bread with ale and wine,
Ribs of beef, both fat and full fine;
A fair cloth they gan for to sprede,
But wanting Money I might not then speed.
Then unto London I did me hie,
Of all the land it beareth the prize.
“Hot peascods!” one began to cry,
“Strawberry ripe!” and “Cherries in the rise!” {82c}
One bade me come near and buy some spice,
Pepper and saffron they gan me bede,
But for lack of Money I might not speed.
Then to the Cheap I began me drawn,
Where much people I saw for to stand;
One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn,
Another he taketh me by the hand,
“Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land!”
I never was used to such things indeed,
And wanting Money I might not speed.
Then went I forth by London Stone,
Throughout all Can'wick Street. {83}
Drapers much cloth me offered anon;
Then comes me one cried, “Hot sheep's feet!”
One cried, “Mackerel!” “Rushes green!” another gan greet;
One bade me buy a hood to cover my head,
But for want of Money I might not be sped,
Then I hied me into East Cheap;
One cries “Ribs of beef,” and many a pie;
Pewter pots they clattered on a heap,
There was harp, pipe, and minstrelsie.
“Yea, by cock!” “Nay, by cock!” some began cry;
Some sung of Jenkin and Julian for their meed,
But for lack of Money I might not speed.
Then into Cornhill anon I yode,
Where was much stolen gear among;
I saw where hung mine owné hood
That I had lost among the throng:
To buy my own hood I thought it wrong;
I knew it well as I did my Creed,
But for lack of Money I could not speed.
The taverner took me by the sleeve,
“Sir,” saith he, “will you our wine assay?”
I answered, “That cannot much me grieve,
A penny can do no more than it may.”

Playful Poems

I drank a pint, and for it I did pay.
Yet soon ahungred from thence I yede,
And wanting Money I could not speed.
 Then hied I me to Billingsgate,
And one cried, "Hoo! Go we hence!"
I prayed a barge man, for God's sake,
That he would spare me my expence.
"Thou scrap'st not here," quoth he, "under two pence;
I list not yet bestow any alms deed."
Thus lacking Money I could not speed.
 Then I conveyed me into Kent;
For of the law would I meddle no more,
Because no man to me took intent,
I dight me to do as I did before.
Now Jesus, that in Bethlehem was bore,
Save London, and send true lawyers their meed!
For whoso wants Money with them shall not speed.

BICORN AND CHICHEVACHE BY JOHN LYDGATE.

First there shall stand an image in Poet-wise, saying these verses:—

O prudent folkés, taketh heed,
And remembreth in your lives
How this story doth proceed
Of the husbands and their wives,
Of their áccord and their strives,
With life or death which to darrain {85a}
Is granted to these beastés twain.

Then shall be pourtrayed two beasts, one fat; another lean.

For this Bicorn of his natúre
Will none other manner food,
But patient husbands his pastúre,
And Chichevache eat'th the women good;
And both these beastés, by the Rood,
Be fat or lean, it may not fail,
Like lack or plenty of their vitail.

Of Chichevache and of Bicorn, {85b}
Treateth wholly this matere,
Whose story hath taught us beforne
How these beastés both infere {85c}
Have their pastúre, as you shall hear,
Of men and women in sentéce
Through suffrance or through impatiéce.

Then shall be pourtrayed a fat beast called Bicorn, of the country of Bicornis, and say these three verses following:—

“Of Bicornis I am Bicorn,
Full fat and round here as I stand,
And in marriage bound and sworn
To Chichevache as her husbánd,
Which will not eat on sea nor land
But patient wivés debonair,
Which to their husbands be n't contraire

“Full scarce, God wot, is her vitail,
Humble wives she finds so few,
For always at the contre tail
Their tongúe clappeth and doth hew.
Such meeké wivés I beshrew,
That neither can at bed ne board
Their husbands not forbear one word.

“But my food and my cherishing,
To tell plainly and not to vary,
Is of such folks which, their living,
Dare to their wives be not contrary,
Ne from their lustés dare not vary,

Playful Poems

Nor with them hold no champarty, {86a}
All such my stomach will defy.” {86b}

Then shall be pourtrayed a company of men coming towards this beast Bicornis, and say these four ballads:—

“Fellows, take heed and ye may see
How Bicorn casteth him to devour
All humble men, both you and me,
There is no gain may us succour;
Wo be therefore in hall and bower
To all those husbands which, their lives,
Make mistrésses of their wives.

“Who that so doth, this is the law,
That this Bicorn will him oppress
And devouren in his maw
That of his wife makes his mistréss;
This will us bring in great distress,
For we, for our humility,
Of Bicorn shall devoured be.

“We standen plainly in such case,
For they to us mistrésses be;
We may well sing and say, 'Alas,
That we gave them the sovereigntie!
For we ben thrall and they be free.
Wherefore Bicorn, this cruel beast,
Will us devouren at the least.

“But who that can be sovereign,
And his wife teach and chastise,
That she dare not a word gainsain
Nor disobey in no manner wise,
Of such a man I can devise
He stands under protection
From Bicornis jurisdiction.”

Then shall there be a woman devoured in the mouth of Chichevache, crying to all wives, and say this verse:—

“O noble wivés, be well ware,
Take example now by me;
Or else affirmé well I dare
Ye shall be dead, ye shall not flee;
Be crabbéd, void humilitie,
Or Chichevache ne will not fail
You for to swallow in his entrail.”

Then shall there be pourtrayed a long-horned beast, slender and lean, with sharp teeth, and on her body nothing but skin and bone.

“Chichevache, this is my name,
Hungry, meagre, slender, and lean,
To show my body I have great shame,
For hunger I feel so great teen; {88c}
On me no fatness will be seen,
Because that pasture I find none,
Therefore I am but skin and bone.

“For my feeding in existéce
Is of women that be meek,
And like Grisiold in patiéce

Playful Poems

Or more their bounty for to eke;
But I full long may go and seek
Ere I can find a good repast,
A morrow to break with my fast.

“I trow there be a dear year
Of patient women now—a—days.
Who grieveth them with word or cheer
Let him beware of such assays;
For it is more than thirty Mays
That I have sought from lond to lond,
But yet one Grisiold ne'er I fond.

“I found but one in all my live,
And she was dead ago full yore;
For more pastúre I will not strive
Nor seeké for my food no more.
Ne for vitail me to restore;
Women ben woxen so prudént {88a}
They will no more be patient.”

Then shall be pourtrayed, after Chichevache, an old man with a baton on his back, menacing the beast for devouring of his wife.

“My wife, alas, devouréd is,
Most patiént and most pesíble!
She never said to me amiss,
Whom now hath slain this beast horrible!
And for it is an impossible
To find again e'er such a wife
I will live solé all my life.

“For now of newé, for their prow, {88b}
The wivés of full high prudéce
Have of assent made their avow
T' exile for ever paciéce,
And cried wolfs—head obedience,
To maké Chichevaché fail
Of them to findé more vitail.

Now Chichevaché may fast long
And die for all her cruelty,
Women have made themselves so strong
For to outrage humility.
O silly husbands, wo ben ye!
Such as can have no paciéce
Against your wivés violence.

If that ye suffer, ye be but dead,
Bicorn awaiteth you so sore;
Eke of your wives go stand in dread,
If ye gainsay them any more!
And thus ye stand, and have done yore,
Of life and death betwixt coveyne {89}
Linkéd in a double chain.

BEST TO BE BLYTH BY WILLIAM DUNBAR.

Full oft I muse, and hes in thocht
How this fals Warld is ay on flocht,
Quhair no thing ferme is nor degest; {91a} {91d}
And when I haif my mynd all socht,
For to be blyth me think it best.

This warld ever dois flicht and wary, {91b}
Fortoun sa fast hir quheill dois cary,
Na tyme but turning can tak rest; {91e}
For quhois fats change suld none be sary,
For to be blyth me think it best.

Wald men considir in mynd richt weill,
Or Fortoun on him turn hir quheill,
That erdly honour may nocht lest,
His fall less panefull he suld feill;
For to be blyth me think it best.

Quha with this warld dois warsill and stryfe, {91c}
And dois his dayis in dolour dryfe,
Thocht he in lordschip be possest,
He levis bot ane wrechit lyfe:
For to be blyth me think it best.

Off warldis gud and grit richness,
Quhat fruct hes man but merriness?
Thocht he this warld had eist and west,
All wer povertie but glaidness:
For to be blyth me think it best.

Quho suld for tynsall drowp or de, {92a}
For thyng that is bot vanitie;
Sen to the lyfe that evir dois lest,
Heir is bot twynkling of an ee:
For to be blyth me think it best.

Had I for warldis unkyndnéss
In hait tane ony heviness,
Or fro my plesans bene opprest;
I had bene deid lang syne dowlless:
For to be blyth me think it best.

How evir this warld do change and vary,
Lat us in hait nevir moir be sary,
But evir be reddy and address
To pass out of this frawfull fary: {92b}
For to be blyth me think it best.

DOWSABELL BY MICHAEL DRAYTON.

Far in the country of Arden
 There woned a knight, hight Cassamen, {93d}
 As bold as Isenbras:
 Fell was he and eager bent
 In battle and in tournament
 As was good Sir Topás.
 He had, as antique stories tell,
 A daughter clepéd Dowsabell,
 A maiden fair and free.
 And for she was her fathers heir,
 Full well she was yconned the leir {93a} {93b}
 Of mickle courtesie.
 The silk well couth she twist and twine,
 And make the finé marché pine, {93c}
 And with the needle work;
 And she couth help the priest to say
 His matins on a holiday,
 And sing a psalm in kirk.
 She ware a frock of frolic green
 Might well become a maiden queen,
 Which seemly was to see;
 A hood to that so neat and fine,
 In colour like the columbine,
 Inwrought full featously.
 Her features all as fresh above
 As is the grass that grows by Dove,
 And lithe as lass of Kent.
 Her skin as soft as Lemster wool, {94a}
 And white as snow on Peakish hull, {94b}
 Or swan that swims in Trent.
 This maiden, in a morn betime,
 Went forth, when May was in the prime,
 To get sweet setiwall, {94c}
 The honeysuckle, the harlock, {94d}
 The lily and the lady-smock, {94k}
 To deck her summer-hall. {94e}
 Thus, as she wandered here and there,
 And pickéd of the bloomy brere,
 She chancéd to espy
 A shepherd sitting on a bank,
 Like chanticleer he crowéd crank, {94f}
 And piped full merrily.
 He learned his sheep as he him list, {94g}
 When he would whistle in his fist,

Playful Poems

To feed about him round,
Whilst he full many a carol sang,
Until the fields and meadows rang,
And that the woods did sound.

In favour this same shepherd swain
Was like the bedlam Tamburlaine
Which held proud kings in awe.
But meek as any lamb mought be,
And innocent of ill as he
Whom his lewd brother slaw.

This shepherd ware a sheep-gray cloke,
Which was of the finest loke
That could be cut with shear;
His mittens were of bauzon's skin, {94h}
His cockers were of cordiwin, {94i} {94j}
His hood of minivere.

His awl and lingell in a thong; {95a}
His tarbox on his broadbelt hung,
His breech of Cointree blue.
Full crisp and curléd were his locks,
His brows as white as Albion rocks,
So like a lover true.

And piping still he spent the day
So merry as the popinjay,
Which likéd Dowsabell,
That would she ought, or would she nought,
This lad would never from her thought,
She in love-longing fell.

At length she tuckéd up her frock,
White as the lily was her smock;
She drew the shepherd nigh;
But then the shepherd piped a good,
That all the sheep forsook their food,
To hear his melodie.

“Thy sheep,” quoth she, “cannot be lean
That have a jolly shepherd swain
The which can pipe so well.”
“Yea, but,” saith he, “their shepherd may,
If piping thus he pine away
In love of Dowsabell.”

“Of love, fond boy, take then no keep,” {95b}
Quoth she; “Look well unto thy sheep,
Lest they should hap to stray.”
Quoth he, “So had I done full well,
Had I not seen fair Dowsabell
Come forth to gather may.”

With that she 'gan to vail her head,
Her cheeks were like the roses red,
But not a word she said.
With that the shepherd 'gan to frown,
He threw his pretty pipes adown,

Playful Poems

And on the ground him laid.

Saith she, "I may not stay till night
And leave my summer-hall undight,
And all for love of thee."

"My cote," saith he, "nor yet my fold
Shall neither sheep nor shepherd hold,
Except thou favour me."

Saith she, "Yet liever were I dead
Than I should [yield me to be wed],
And all for love of men."

Saith he, "Yet are you too unkind
If in your heart you cannot find
To love us now and then.

"And I to thee will be as kind
As Colin was to Rosalind
Of courtesy the flower."

"Then will I be as true," quoth she,
"As ever maiden yet might be
Unto her paramour."

With that she bent her snow-white knee
Down by the shepherd kneeléd she,
And him she sweetly kist.

With that the shepherd whooped for joy.
Quoth he, "There's never shepherd's boy
That ever was so blist."

NYMPHIDIA, THE COURT OF FAIRY By MICHAEL DRAYTON.

Old Chaucer doth of Topas tell,
Mad Rabelais of Pantágruél,
A later third of Dowsabel
With such poor trifles playing;
Others the like have laboured at,
Some of this thing and some of that,
And many of they knew not what,
But what they may be saying.
Another sort there be, that will
Be talking of the Fairies still,
For never can they have their fill,
As they were wedded to them;
No tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take,
And some strange thing they fain would make,
Knew they the way to do them.
Then since no Muse hath been so bold,
Or of the later, or the old,
Those elvish secrets to unfold,
Which lie from others' reading;
My active Muse to light shall bring
The court of that proud Fairy King,
And tell there of the revelling.
Jove prosper my proceeding!
And thou, Nymphidia, gentle Fay,
Which, meeting me upon the way,
These secrets didst to me bewray,
Which now I am in telling;
My pretty, light, fantastic maid,
I here invoke thee to my aid,
That I may speak what thou hast said,
In numbers smoothly swelling.
This palace standeth in the air,
By necromancy placéd there,
That it no tempest needs to fear,
Which way soe'er it blow it.
And somewhat southward tow'rds the noon,
Whence lies a way up to the moon,
And thence the Fairy can as soon
Pass to the earth below it.
The walls of spiders' legs are made
Well mortiséd and finely laid;
It was the master of his trade
It curiously that builded;

The windows of the eyes of cats,
 And for the roof, instead of slats,
 Is covered with the skins of bats,
 With moonshine that are gilded.

Hence Oberon him sport to make,
 Their rest when weary mortals take,
 And none but only fairies wake,

Descendeth for his pleasure;
 And Mab, his merry Queen, by night
 Bestrides young folks that lie upright,
 (In elder times the mare that hight),
 Which plagues them out of measure.

Hence shadows, seeming idle shapes,
 Of little frisking elves and apes
 To earth do make their wanton scapes,

As hope of pastime hastes them;
 Which maids think on the hearth they see
 When fires well-nigh consuméd be,
 There dancing hays by two and three, {98}
 Just as their fancy casts them.

These make our girls their sluttery rue,
 By pinching them both black and blue,
 And put a penny in their shoe

The house for cleanly sweeping;
 And in their courses make that round
 In meadows and in marshes found,
 Of them so called the Fairy Ground,
 Of which they have the keeping.

These when a child haps to be got
 Which after proves an idiot
 When folk perceive it thriveth not,
 The fault therein to smother,
 Some silly, doting, brainless calf
 That understands things by the half,
 Say that the Fairy left this oaf
 And took away the other.

But listen, and I shall you tell
 A chance in Faery that befell,
 Which certainly may please some well,
 In love and arms delighting,
 Of Oberon that jealous grew
 Of one of his own Fairy crew,
 Too well, he feared, his Queen that knew,
 His love but ill requiting.

Pigwigin was this Fairy Knight,
 One wondrous gracious in the sight
 Of fair Queen Mab, which day and night
 He amorously observéd;
 Which made King Oberon suspect
 His service took too good effect,
 His sauciness had often checkt,

And could have wished him stervéd.
 Pigwiggin gladly would commend
 Some token to Queen Mab to send,
 If sea or land him aught could lend
 Were worthy of her wearing;
 At length this lover doth devise
 A bracelet made of emmets' eyes,
 A thing he thought that she would prize,
 No whit her state impairing.

And to the Queen a letter writes,
 Which he most curiously indites,
 Conjuring her by all the rites
 Of love, she would be pleaséd
 To meet him, her true servant, where
 They might, without suspect or fear,
 Themselves to one another clear
 And have their poor hearts easéd.

At midnight, the appointed hour;
 “And for the Queen a fitting bower,”
 Quoth he, “is that fair cowslip flower
 On Hient Hill that bloweth; {100}
 In all your train there's not a fay
 That ever went to gather may
 But she hath made it, in her way,
 The tallest there that groweth.”

When by Tom Thumb, a Fairy Page,
 He sent it, and doth him engage
 By promise of a mighty wage
 It secretly to carry;
 Which done, the Queen her maids doth call,
 And bids them to be ready all:
 She would go see her summer hall,
 She could no longer tarry.

Her chariot ready straight is made,
 Each thing therein is fitting laid,
 That she by nothing might be stayed,
 For nought must be her letting;
 Four nimble gnats the horses were,
 Their harnesses of gossamere,
 Fly Cranion the charioteer
 Upon the coach-box getting.

Her chariot of a snail's fine shell,
 Which for the colours did excel,
 The fair Queen Mab becoming well,
 So lively was the limning;
 The seat the soft wool of the bee,
 The cover, gallantly to see,
 The wing of a pied butterfly;
 I trow 'twas simple trimming.

The wheels composed of cricket's bones,
 And daintily made for the nonce,

For fear of rattling on the stones
With thistle-down they shod it;
For all her maidens much did fear
If Oberon had chanced to hear
That Mab his Queen should have been there,
He would not have abode it.

She mounts her chariot with a trice,
Nor would she stay, for no advice,
Until her maids that were so nice
To wait on her were fitted;
But ran herself away alone,
Which when they heard, there was not one
But hastened after to be gone,
As he had been diswitted.

Hop and Mop and Drop so clear,
Pip and Trip and Skip that were
To Mab, their sovereign, ever dear,
Her special maids of honour;
Fib and Tib and Pink and Pin,
Tick and Quick and Jill and Jin,
Tit and Nit and Wap and Win,
The train that wait upon her.

Upon a grasshopper they got
And, what with amble, what with trot,
For hedge and ditch they spared not,
But after her they hie them;
A cobweb over them they throw,
To shield the wind if it should blow,
Themselves they wisely could bestow
Lest any should espy them.

But let us leave Queen Mab awhile,
Through many a gate, o'er many a stile,
That now had gotten by this wile,
Her dear Pigwiggin kissing;
And tell how Oberon doth fare,
Who grew as mad as any hare
When he had sought each place with care,
And found his Queen was missing.

By grisly Pluto he doth swear,
He rent his clothes and tore his hair,
And as he runneth here and there
An acorn cup he greeteth,
Which soon he taketh by the stalk,
About his head he lets it walk,
Nor doth he any creature balk,
But lays on all he meeteth.

The Tuscan Poet doth advance,
The frantic Paladin of France,
And those more ancient do enhance
Alcides in his fury,
And others Ajax Telamon,

But to this time there hath been none
 So Bedlam as our Oberon,
 Of which I dare assure ye.
 And first encountering with a Wasp,
 He in his arms the fly doth clasp
 As though his breath he forth would grasp,
 Him for Pigwiggin taking:
 "Where is my wife, thou rogue?" quoth he;
 "Pigwiggin, she is come to thee;
 Restore her, or thou diest by me!"
 Whereat the poor Wasp quaking
 Cries, "Oberon, great Fairy King,
 Content thee, I am no such thing:
 I am a Wasp, behold my sting!"
 At which the Fairy started;
 When soon away the Wasp doth go,
 Poor wretch, was never frightened so;
 He thought his wings were much too slow,
 O'erjoyed they so were parted.
 He next upon a Glow-worm light,
 You must suppose it now was night,
 Which, for her hinder part was bright,
 He took to be a devil,
 And furiously doth her assail
 For carrying fire in her tail;
 He thrashed her rough coat with his flail;
 The mad King feared no evil.
 "Oh!" quoth the Glow-worm, "hold thy hand,
 Thou puissant King of Fairy-land!
 Thy mighty strokes who may withstand?
 Hold, or of life despair!"
 Together then herself doth roll,
 And tumbling down into a hole
 She seemed as black as any coal;
 Which vext away the Fairy.
 From thence he ran into a hive:
 Amongst the bees he letteth drive,
 And down their combs begins to rive,
 All likely to have spoiled,
 Which with their wax his face besmeared,
 And with their honey daubed his beard:
 It would have made a man afeared
 To see how he was moiléd.
 A new adventure him betides;
 He met an Ant, which he bestrides,
 And post thereon away he rides,
 Which with his haste doth stumble;
 And came full over on her snout,
 Her heels so threw the dirt about,
 For she by no means could get out,
 But over him doth tumble.

And being in this piteous case,
And all be-slurréd head and face,
On runs he in this wild-goose chase,

As here and there he rambles;
Half blind, against a mole-hill hit,
And for a mountain taking it,
For all he was out of his wit
Yet to the top he scrambles.

And being gotten to the top,
Yet there himself he could not stop,
But down on th' other side doth chop,

And to the foot came rumbling;
So that the grubs, therein that bred,
Hearing such turmoil over head,
Thought surely they had all been dead;
So fearful was the jumbling.

And falling down into a lake,
Which him up to the neck doth take,
His fury somewhat it doth slake;

He calleth for a ferry;
Where you may some recovery note;
What was his club he made his boat,
And in his oaken cup doth float,
As safe as in a wherry.

Men talk of the adventures strange
Of Don Quixoit, and of their change
Through which he arméd oft did range,

Of Sancho Pancha's travel;
But should a man tell every thing
Done by this frantic Fairy King,
And them in lofty numbers sing,
It well his wits might gravel.

Scarce set on shore, but therewithal
He meeteth Puck, which most men call
Hobgoblin, and on him doth fall,

With words from frenzy spoken:
"Oh, oh," quoth Hob, "God save thy grace!
Who drest thee in this piteous case?
He thus that spoiled my sovereign's face,
I would his neck were broken!"

This Puck seems but a dreaming dolt,
Still walking like a ragged colt,
And oft out of a bush doth bolt,

Of purpose to deceive us;
And leading us makes us to stray,
Long winter's nights, out of the way;
And when we stick in mire and clay,
Hob doth with laughter leave us.

"Dear Puck," quoth he, "my wife is gone:
As e'er thou lov'st King Oberon,
Let everything but this alone,

Playful Poems

With vengeance and pursue her;
Bring her to me alive or dead,
Or that vile thief, Pigwiggin's head,
That villain hath [my Queen misled];
He to this folly drew her.”

Quoth Puck, “My liege, I'll never lin,
But I will thorough thick and thin,
Until at length I bring her in;
My dearest lord, ne'er doubt it.”
Thorough brake, thorough briar,
Thorough muck, thorough mire,
Thorough water, thorough fire;
And thus goes Puck about it.

This thing Nymphidia overheard,
That on this mad king had a guard,
Not doubting of a great reward,
For first this business broaching;
And through the air away doth go,
Swift as an arrow from the bow,
To let her sovereign Mab to know
What peril was approaching.

The Queen, bound with Love's powerful charm,
Sate with Pigwiggin arm in arm;
Her merry maids, that thought no harm,
About the room were skipping;
A humble-bee, their minstrel, played
Upon his hautboy, every maid
Fit for this revel was arrayed,
The hornpipe neatly tripping.

In comes Nymphidia, and doth cry,
“My sovereign, for your safety fly,
For there is danger but too nigh;
I posted to forewarn you:
The King hath sent Hobgoblin out,
To seek you all the fields about,
And of your safety you may doubt,
If he but once discern you.”

When, like an uproar in a town,
Before them everything went down;
Some tore a ruff, and some a gown,
'Gainst one another justling;
They flew about like chaff i' th' wind;
For haste some left their masks behind;
Some could not stay their gloves to find;
There never was such bustling.

Forth ran they, by a secret way,
Into a brake that near them lay;
Yet much they doubted there to stay,
Lest Hob should hap to find them;
He had a sharp and piercing sight,
All one to him the day and night;

Playful Poems

And therefore were resolved, by flight,
To leave this place behind them.

At length one chanced to find a nut,
In th' end of which a hole was cut,
Which lay upon a hazel root,
There scattered by a squirrel
Which out the kernel gotten had;
When quoth this Fay, "Dear Queen, be glad;
Let Oberon be ne'er so mad,
I'll set you safe from peril.

"Come all into this nut," quoth she,
"Come closely in; be ruled by me;
Each one may here a chooser be,
For room ye need not wrastle:
Nor need ye be together heaped;"
So one by one therein they crept,
And lying down they soundly slept,
And safe as in a castle.

Nymphidia, that this while doth watch,
Perceived if Puck the Queen should catch
That he should be her over-match,
Of which she well bethought her;
Found it must be some powerful charm,
The Queen against him that must arm,
Or surely he would do her harm,
For throughly he had sought her.

And listening if she aught could hear,
That her might hinder, or might fear;
But finding still the coast was clear;
Nor creature had descried her;
Each circumstance and having scanned,
She came thereby to understand,
Puck would be with them out of hand;
When to her charms she hied her.

And first her fern-seed doth bestow,
The kernel of the mistletoe;
And here and there as Puck should go,
With terror to affright him,
She night-shade strews to work him ill,
Therewith her vervain and her dill,
That hindreth witches of their will,
Of purpose to despise him.

Then sprinkles she the juice of rue,
That groweth underneath the yew;
With nine drops of the midnight dew,
From lunary distilling:
The molewarp's brain mixed therewithal; {108a}
And with the same the pismire's gall:
For she in nothing short would fall,
The Fairy was so willing.

Then thrice under a briar doth creep,

Playful Poems

Which at both ends was rooted deep,
And over it three times she leap;
Her magic much availing:
Then on Prosérpina doth call,
And so upon her spell doth fall,
Which here to you repeat I shall,
Not in one tittle failing.

“By the croaking of a frog;
By the howling of the dog;
By the crying of the hog
Against the storm arising;
By the evening curfew bell,
By the doleful dying knell,
O let this my direful spell,
Hob, hinder thy surprising!
“By the mandrake's dreadful groans; {108b}
By the lubrican's sad moans; {108c}
By the noise of dead men's bones
In charnel-houses rattling;
By the hissing of the snake,
The rustling of the fire-drake, {108d}
I charge thee thou this place forsake,
Nor of Queen Mab be prattling!

“By the whirlwind's hollow sound,
By the thunder's dreadful stound,
Yells of spirits underground,
I charge thee not to fear us;
By the screech-owl's dismal note,
By the black night-raven's throat,
I charge thee, Hob, to tear thy coat
With thorns, if thou come near us!”

Her spell thus spoke, she stept aside,
And in a chink herself doth hide,
To see thereof what would betide,
For she doth only mind him:
When presently she Puck espies,
And well she marked his gloating eyes,
How under every leaf he pries,
In seeking still to find them.

But once the circle got within,
The charms to work do straight begin,
And he was caught as in a gin;
For as he thus was busy,
A pain he in his head-piece feels,
Against a stubbéd tree he reels,
And up went poor Hobgoblin's heels,
Alas! his brain was dizzy!

At length upon his feet he gets,
Hobgoblin fumes, Hobgoblin frets;
And as again he forward sets,
And through the bushes scrambles,

A stump doth trip him in his pace;
Down comes poor Hob upon his face,
And lamentably tore his case,
Amongst the briars and brambles.
“A plague upon Queen Mab!” quoth he,
“And all her maids where'er they be
I think the devil guided me,
To seek her so provokéd!”
Where stumbling at a piece of wood,
He fell into a ditch of mud,
Where to the very chin he stood,
In danger to be chokéd.
Now worse than e'er he was before,
Poor Puck doth yell, poor Puck doth roar,
That waked Queen Mab, who doubted sore
Some treason had been wrought her:
Until Nymphidia told the Queen
What she had done, what she had seen,
Who then had well-near cracked her spleen
With very extreme laughter.
But leave we Hob to clamber out,
Queen Mab and all her Fairy rout,
And come again to have a bout
With Oberon yet madding:
And with Pigwiggin now distraught,
Who much was troubled in his thought,
That he so long the Queen had sought,
And through the fields was gadding.
And as he runs he still doth cry,
“King Oberon, I thee defy,
And dare thee here in arms to try,
For my dear lady's honour:
For that she is a Queen right good,
In whose defence I'll shed my blood,
And that thou in this jealous mood
Hast laid this slander on her.”
And quickly arms him for the field,
A little cockle-shell his shield,
Which he could very bravely wield;
Yet could it not be piercéd:
His spear a bent both stiff and strong,
And well-near of two inches long:
The pile was of a horse-fly's tongue,
Whose sharpness nought reverséd.
And puts him on a coat of mail,
Which was made of a fish's scale,
That when his foe should him assail,
No point should be prevailing:
His rapier was a hornet's sting,
It was a very dangerous thing,
For if he chanced to hurt the King,

Playful Poems

It would be long in healing.

His helmet was a beetle's head,
Most horrible and full of dread,
That able was to strike one dead,
Yet did it well become him;
And for a plume a horse's hair,
Which, being tosséd with the air,
Had force to strike his foe with fear,
And turn his weapon from him.

Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce he on his back could get,
So oft and high he did curvet,
Ere he himself could settle:
He made him turn, and stop, and bound,
To gallop, and to trot the round,
He scarce could stand on any ground,
He was so full of mettle.

When soon he met with Tomalin,
One that a valiant knight had been,
And to King Oberon of kin;

Quoth he, "Thou manly Fairy,
Tell Oberon I come prepared,
Then bid him stand upon his guard;
This hand his baseness shall reward,
Let him be ne'er so wary.

"Say to him thus, that I defy
His slanders and his infamy,
And as a mortal enemy

Do publicly proclaim him:
Withal that if I had mine own,
He should not wear the Fairy crown,
But with a vengeance should come down,
Nor we a king should name him."

This Tomalin could not abide,
To hear his sovereign vilified;
But to the Fairy Court him hied,
(Full furiously he posted,)
With everything Pigwiggin said:
How title to the crown he laid,
And in what arms he was arrayed,
As how himself he boasted.

Twixt head and foot, from point to point,
He told the arming of each joint,
In every piece how neat and quaint,

For Tomalin could do it:
How fair he sat, how sure he rid,
As of the courser he bestrid,
How managed, and how well he did:

The King which listened to it,
Quoth he, "Go, Tomalin, with speed,
Provide me arms, provide my steed,

And everything that I shall need;
 By thee I will be guided:
 To straight account call thou thy wit;
 See there be wanting not a whit,
 In everything see thou me fit,
 Just as my foe's provided."

Soon flew this news through Fairy-land,
 Which gave Queen Mab to understand
 The combat that was then in hand
 Betwixt those men so mighty:
 Which greatly she began to rue,
 Perceiving that all Fairy knew
 The first occasion from her grew
 Of these affairs so weighty.

Wherefore attended with her maids,
 Through fogs, and mists, and damps she wades,
 To Proserpine the Queen of Shades,
 To treat, that it would please her
 The cause into her hands to take,
 For ancient love and friendship's sake,
 And soon thereof an end to make,
 Which of much care would ease her.

A while there let we Mab alone,
 And come we to King Oberon,
 Who, armed to meet his foe, is gone,
 For proud Pigwiggin crying:
 Who sought the Fairy King as fast,
 And had so well his journeys cast,
 That he arrivéd at the last,
 His puissant foe espying.

Stout Tomalin came with the King,
 Tom Thumb doth on Pigwiggin bring,
 That perfect were in everything
 To single fights belonging:
 And therefore they themselves engage,
 To see them exercise their rage,
 With fair and comely equipage,
 Not one the other wronging.

So like in arms these champions were,
 As they had been a very pair,
 So that a man would almost swear,
 That either had been either;
 Their furious steeds began to neigh,
 That they were heard a mighty way;
 Their staves upon their rests they lay;
 Yet ere they flew together
 Their seconds minister an oath,
 Which was indifferent to them both,
 That on their knightly faith and troth
 No magic them suppliéd;
 And sought them that they had no charms,

Wherewith to work each other harms,
But came with simple open arms
To have their causes triéd.
Together furiously they ran,
That to the ground came horse and man;
The blood out of their helmets span,
So sharp were their encounters;
And though they to the earth were thrown,
Yet quickly they regained their own,
Such nimbleness was never shown,
They were two gallant mounters.

When in a second course again
They forward came with might and main,
Yet which had better of the twain,
The seconds could not judge yet;
Their shields were into pieces cleft,
Their helmets from their heads were reft,
And to defend them nothing left,
These champions would not budge yet.

Away from them their staves they threw,
Their cruel swords they quickly drew,
And freshly they the fight renew,
They every stroke redoubled:
Which made Prosérpina take heed,
And make to them the greater speed,
For fear lest they too much should bleed,
Which wondrously her troubled.

When to th' infernal Styx she goes,
She takes the fogs from thence that rose,
And in a bag doth them enclose:
When well she had them blended,
She hies her then to Lethe spring, {114}
A bottle and thereof doth bring,
Wherewith she meant to work the thing
Which only she intended.

Now Proserpine with Mab is gone,
Unto the place where Oberon
And proud Pigwiggin, one to one,
Both to be slain were likely:
And there themselves they closely hide,
Because they would not be espied;
For Proserpine meant to decide
The matter very quickly.

And suddenly unties the poke,
Which out of it sent such a smoke,
As ready was them all to choke,
So grievous was the pother;
So that the knights each other lost,
And stood as still as any post;
Tom Thumb nor Tomalin could boast
Themselves of any other.

But when the mist 'gan somewhat cease,
 Prosérpina commandeth peace;
 And that a while they should release
 Each other of their peril:

“Which here,” quoth she, “I do proclaim
 To all in dreadful Pluto's name,
 That as ye will eschew his blame,
 You let me bear the quarrel:

“But here yourselves you must engage,
 Somewhat to cool your spleenish rage;
 Your grievous thirst and to assuage
 That first you drink this liquor,
 Which shall your understanding clear,
 As plainly shall to you appear;
 Those things from me that you shall hear,
 Conceiving much the quicker.”

This Lethe water, you must know,
 The memory destroyeth so,
 That of our weal, or of our woe,
 Is all remembrance blotted;
 Of it nor can you ever think,
 For they no sooner took this drink,
 But nought into their brains could sink
 Of what had them besotted.

King Oberon forgotten had,
 That he for jealousy ran mad,
 But of his Queen was wondrous glad,
 And asked how they came thither:
 Pigwiggin likewise doth forget
 That he Queen Mab had ever met;
 Or that they were so hard beset,
 When they were found together.

Nor neither of them both had thought,
 That e'er they each had other sought,
 Much less that they a combat fought,
 But such a dream were lothing.
 Tom Thumb had got a little sup,
 And Tomalin scarce kissed the cup,
 Yet had their brains so sure locked up,
 That they remembered nothing.

Queen Mab and her light maids, the while,
 Amongst themselves do closely smile,
 To see the King caught with this wile,
 With one another jesting:
 And to the Fairy Court they went,
 With mickle joy and merriment,
 Which thing was done with good intent,
 And thus I left them feasting.

POPE'S RAPE OF THE LOCK. AN HEROI-COMICAL POEM.

*Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;
Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.*
— MART., *Epigr.* xii. 84.

CANTO I.

What dire offence from amorous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due:
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?

Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,
And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.
Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian Sylph prolonged the balmy rest;
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hovered o'er her head;
A youth more glittering than a birth-night beau,
(That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)
Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,
And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say:

“Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!
If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught;
Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,
The silver token, and the circled green,
Or virgins visited by angel-powers,
With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers;
Hear and believe! thy own importance know,
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.
Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,
To maids alone and children are revealed:
What though no credit doubting wits may give?
The fair and innocent shall still believe.

Playful Poems

Know, then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,
The light militia of the lower sky:
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the ring.
Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.
As now your own, our beings were of old,
And once enclosed in woman's beauteous mould;
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair
From earthly vehicles to these of air.
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,
That all her vanities at once are dead;
Succeeding vanities she still regards,
And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,
And love of ombre, after death survive.
For when the fair in all their pride expire,
To their first elements their souls retire:
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip, with nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver prude sinks downward to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam,
The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

“Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste
Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embraced:
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.
What guards the purity of melting maids,
In courtly balls and midnight masquerades,
Safe from the treacherous friend, the daring spark,
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,
When music softens, and when dancing fires?
'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,
Though honour is the word with men below.

“Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
For life predestined to the gnomes' embrace.
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
When offers are disdained, and love denied:
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,
And garters, stars, and coronets appear,
And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear.
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,
Teach infant cheeks a hidden blush to know,
And little hearts to flutter at a beau.

“Oft, when the world imagine women stray,

Playful Poems

The sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
And old impertinence expel by new.
What tender maid but must a victim fall
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
With varying vanities, from every part,
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
This erring mortal's levity may call;
Oh, blind to truth! the sylphs contrive it all.

“Of these am I, who thy protection claim,
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.
Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,
But heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:
Warned by the sylph, oh pious maid, beware!
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:
Beware of all, but most beware of man!”

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,
Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue.
'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux;
Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,
But all the vision vanished from thy head.

And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
A heavenly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
The inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.
Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and here
The various offerings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the goddess with the glittering spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux.
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;

Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
 The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
 These set the head, and those divide the hair,
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
 And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

CANTO II.

Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,
 The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,
 Than, issuing forth, the rival of his beams
 Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.
 Fair nymphs, and well-dressed youths around her shone,
 But every eye was fixed on her alone.
 On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
 Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore.
 Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
 Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those:
 Favours to none, to all she smiles extends;
 Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
 Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
 And, like the sun, they shine on all alike,
 Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
 Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide:
 If to her share some female errors fall,
 Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
 Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
 In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
 With shining ringlets the smooth ivory neck.
 Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
 And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.
 With hairy springes we the birds betray,
 Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
 Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
 And beauty draws us with a single hair.

Th' adventurous Baron the bright locks admired;
 He saw, he wished, and to the prize aspired.
 Resolved to win, he meditates the way,
 By force to ravish, or by fraud betray;
 For when success a lover's toil attends,
 Few ask, if fraud or force attained his ends.

For this, ere Phbus rose, he had implored
 Propitious heaven, and every power adored,
 But chiefly Love—to Love an altar built,
 Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
 There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves;
 And all the trophies of his former loves;
 With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,
 And breathes three amorous sighs to raise the fire,

Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent eyes
 Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:
 The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
 The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
 The sunbeams trembling on the floating tides:
 While melting music steals upon the sky,
 And softened sounds along the waters die;
 Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
 Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.
 All but the Sylph—with careful thoughts oppressed,
 Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
 He summons straight his denizens of air;
 The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
 Soft o'er the shrouds aërial whispers breathe,
 That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
 Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
 Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
 Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
 Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light,
 Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
 Thin glittering textures of the filmy dew,
 Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
 Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes,
 While every beam new transient colours flings,
 Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.
 Amid the circle, on the gilded mast,
 Superior by the head, was Ariel placed;
 His purple pinions opening to the sun,
 He raised his azure wand, and thus begun:

“Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear!
 Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Dæmons, hear!
 Ye know the spheres and various tasks assigned
 By laws eternal to th' aërial kind.
 Some in the fields of purest æther play,
 And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.
 Some guide the course of wandering orbs on high,
 Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
 Some less refined, beneath the moon's pale light
 Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
 Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
 Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
 Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
 Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.
 Others on earth o'er human race preside,
 Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide:
 Of these the chief the care of nations own,
 And guard with arms divine the British throne.

“Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
 Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
 To save the powder from too rude a gale,

Playful Poems

Nor let the imprisoned essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers;
To steal from rainbows ere they drop in showers
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
To change a flounce or add a furbelow.

“This day black omens threat the brightest fair
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care;
Some dire disaster, or by force or slight;
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall,
Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her favourite lock;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

“To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the petticoat:
Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.

“Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stopped in vials, or transfixed with pins;
Or plunged in lakes of bitter washes lie,
Or wedged whole ages in a bodkin's eye:
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogged he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or alum styptics with contracting power
Shrink his thin essence like a rivelled flower;
Or, as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling mill,
In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below!”

He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend;
Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend;
Some thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair;
Some hang upon the pendants of her ear:
With beating hearts the dire event they wait,
Anxious and trembling, for the birth of Fate.

CANTO III.

Close by those meads, for ever crowned with flowers,
 Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,
 There stands a structure of majestic frame,
 Which from the neighbouring Hampton takes its name.
 Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
 Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home;
 Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
 Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.

Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
 To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;
 In various talk the instructive hours they passed,
 Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
 One speaks the glory of the British Queen,
 And one describes a charming Indian screen;
 A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
 At every word a reputation dies.
 Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
 With singing, laughing, ogling, *and all that*.

Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
 The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
 The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
 And wretches hang that jurymen may dine;
 The merchant from the Exchange returns in peace,
 And the long labours of the toilet cease.
 Belinda now whom thirst of fame invites,
 Burns to encounter two adventurous knights,
 At Ombre singly to decide their doom; {125}
 And swells her breast with conquests yet to come.
 Straight the three bands prepare in arms to join,
 Each band the number of the sacred nine.
 Soon as she spreads her hand, the aerial guard
 Descend, and sit on each important card:
 First Ariel, perched upon a Matador,
 Then each, according to the rank they bore;
 For sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
 Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.

Behold, four Kings in majesty revered,
 With hoary whiskers and a forked beard;
 And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flower,
 The expressive emblem of their softer power;
 Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band,
 Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
 And particoloured troops, a shining train,
 Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The skilful Nymph reviews her force with care:
 “Let Spades be trumps!” she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores,
 In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.
 Spadillio first, unconquerable lord,
 Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.

As many more Manillio forced to yield,
 And marched a victor from the verdant field.
 Him Basto followed, but his fate more hard
 Gained but one trump and one plebeian card.
 With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
 The hoary Majesty of Spades appears,
 Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
 The rest, his many-coloured robe concealed.
 The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage,
 Proves the just victim of his royal rage.
 Even mighty Pam, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew {126}
 And mowed down armies in the fights of Lu,
 Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid,
 Falls undistinguished by the victor Spade!

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield;
 Now to the Baron fate inclines the field.
 His warlike Amazon her host invades,
 Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades.
 The Club's black tyrant first her victim died,
 Spite of his haughty mien, and barbarous pride;
 What boots the regal circle on his head,
 His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread;
 That long behind he trails his pompous robe,
 And, of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

The Baron now his Diamonds pours apace;
 The embroidered King who shows but half his face,
 And his refulgent Queen, with powers combined
 Of broken troops an easy conquest find.
 Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen,
 With throngs promiscuous strow the level green.
 Thus when dispersed a routed army runs,
 Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons,
 With like confusion different nations fly,
 Of various habit, and of various dye,
 The pierced battalions disunited fall,
 In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,
 And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.
 At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook,
 A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look;
 She sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill,
 Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.
 And now (as oft in some distempered State)
 On one nice trick depends the general fate.
 An Ace of Hearts steps forth: the King unseen
 Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive Queen:
 He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
 And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.
 The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky;
 The walls, the woods, and long canals reply.

Oh thoughtless mortals, ever blind to fate,

Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!
Sudden, these honours shall be snatched away,
And cursed for ever this victorious day.

For lo, the board with cups and spoons is crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
On shining altars of Japan they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze:
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
While China's earth receives the smoking tide:
At once they gratify their scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the Fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped, the fuming liquor fanned,
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.
Coffee (which makes the politician wise,
And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)
Sent up in vapours to the Baron's brain
New stratagems the radiant Lock to gain.
Ah cease, rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late,
Fear the just Gods, and think of Scylla's fate!
Changed to a bird, and sent to flit in air,
She dearly pays for Nisus' injured hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
So ladies in romance assist their knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with reverence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;
This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.
Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.
Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
The close recesses of the virgin's thought;
As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
He watched the ideas rising in her mind,
Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
An earthly lover lurking at her heart.
Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,
Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.

The peer now spreads the glittering forfex wide,
To inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.
Even then, before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched sylph too fondly interposed;
Fate urged the shears, and cut the sylph in twain
(But airy substance soon unites again),

The meeting points the sacred hair dis sever
From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!

Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands or when lapdogs breathe their last;
Or when rich china vessels fallen from high,
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie!

“Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine,”
The victor cried, “the glorious prize is mine!
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach—and—six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read, {129}
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When numerous wax—lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honour, name, and praise shall live!
What time would spare, from steel receives its date,
And monuments, like men, submit to fate!
Steel could the labour of the gods destroy,
And strike to dust th' imperial towers of Troy;
Steel could the works of mortal pride confound,
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel
The conquering force of unresisting steel?

CANTO IV.

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed,
And secret passions laboured in her breast.
Not youthful kings in battle seized alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robbed of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refused a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,
Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinned awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair,
As thou, sad virgin! for thy ravished hair.

For that sad moment when the sylphs withdrew.
And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light,
Down to the central earth, his proper scene,
Repaired to search the gloomy cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the gnome,
And in a vapour reached the dismal dome.
No cheerful breeze this sullen region knows,
The dreaded east is all the wind that blows.
Here in a grotto, sheltered close from air,
And screened in shades from day's detested glare,

Playful Poems

She sighs for ever on her pensive bed,
Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head. {130}

Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place,
But differing far in figure and in face.
Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient maid,
Her wrinkled form in black and white arrayed;
With store of prayers, for mornings, nights, and noons,
Her hand is filled; her bosom with lampoons.

There Affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen,
Practised to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapped in a gown, for sickness, and for show.
The fair ones feel such maladies as these,
When each new night-dress gives a new disease.
A constant vapour o'er the palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
Dreadful as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright as visions of expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes and angels in machines.

Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen,
Of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.
Here living tea-pots stand, one arm held out,
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod walks;
Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pie talks;
Men prove with child, as powerful fancy works,
And maids turned bottles call aloud for corks.

Safe past the Gnome, through this fantastic band,
A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.
Then thus addressed the power: "Hail, wayward Queen!
Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen:
Parent of vapours and of female wit,
Who give the hysteric, or poetic fit,
On various tempers act by various ways,
Make some take physic, others scribble plays;
Who cause the proud their visits to delay,
And send the godly in a pet to pray.
A nymph there is, that all thy power disdains,
And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.
But oh! if e'er thy gnome could spoil a grace,
Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face,
Like citron-waters matrons' cheeks inflame,
Or change complexions at a losing game;
If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
Or rumbled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
Or caused suspicion when no soul was rude,

Playful Poems

Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,
Or e'er to costive lapdog gave disease,
Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen."

The Goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, though she grants his prayer.
A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,
Like that where once Ulysses held the winds;
There she collects the force of female lungs,
Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.
A vial next she fills with fainting fears,
Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.
The gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,
Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found,
Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.
Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent,
And all the Furies issued at the vent.
Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.
"O wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cried,
(While Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" replied)
"Was it for this you took such constant care
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
For this your locks in paper durance bound,
For this with torturing irons wreathed around?
For this with fillets strained your tender head,
And bravely bore the double loads of lead?
Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair,
While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!
Honour forbid! at whose unrivalled shrine
Ease, pleasure, virtue, all our sex resign.
Methinks already I your tears survey,
Already hear the horrid things they say,
Already see you a degraded toast,
And all your honour in a whisper lost!
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?
'Twill then be infamy to seem your friend!
And shall this prize, the inestimable prize,
Exposed through crystal to the gazing eyes,
And heightened by the diamond's circling rays,
On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?
Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow,
And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs,
And bids her beau demand the precious hairs:
(Sir Plume of amber snuff-box justly vain,
And the nice conduct of a clouded cane)

With earnest eyes, and round unthinking face,
 He first the snuff-box opened, then the case,
 And thus broke out—"My Lord, why what the devil?
 Zounds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad, you must be civil!
 Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay prithee, pox!
 Give her the hair"—he spoke, and rapped his box.

"It grieves me much" (replied the Peer again)
 "Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.
 But by this lock, this sacred lock, I swear,
 (Which never more shall join its parted hair;
 Which never more its honours shall renew,
 Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)
 That while my nostrils draw the vital air,
 This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."
 He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph spread
 The long-contended honours of her head.

But Umbriel, hateful gnome! forbears not so;
 He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow.
 Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears,
 Her eyes half-languishing, half-drowned in tears;
 On her heaved bosom hung her drooping head,
 Which, with a sigh, she raised; and thus she said:

"For ever cursed be this detested day,
 Which snatched my best, my favourite curl away!
 Happy! ah, ten times happy had I been,
 If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen!
 Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
 By love of courts to numerous ills betrayed.
 Oh had I rather unadmired remained
 In some lone isle, or distant Northern land,
 Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
 Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste Bohea;
 There kept my charms concealed from mortal eye,
 Like roses that in deserts bloom and die!
 What moved my mind with youthful lords to roam?
 Oh had I stayed, and said my prayers at home!
 'Twas this, the morning omens seemed to tell,
 Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;
 The tottering china shook without a wind,
 Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind!
 A sylph, too, warned me of the threats of fate,
 In mystic visions, now believed too late!
 See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs!
 My hands shall rend what even thy rapine spares:
 These in two sable ringlets taugt to break,
 Once gave new beauties to the snowy neck;
 The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone,
 And in its fellow's fate foresees its own;
 Uncurled it hangs, the fatal shears demands,
 And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands.
 Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize

Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!”

CANTO V.

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears.
 But Fate and Jove had stopped the Baron's ears.
 In vain Thalestris with reproach assails,
 For who can move when fair Belinda fails?
 Not half so fixed the Trojan could remain,
 While Anna begged and Dido raged in vain.
 Then grave Clarissa graceful waved her fan;
 Silence ensued, and thus the nymph began:
 “Say why are beauties praised and honoured most,
 The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast?
 Why decked with all that land and sea afford,
 Why angels called, and angel-like adored?
 Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved beaux,
 Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows;
 How vain are all these glories, all our pains,
 Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:
 That men may say, when we the front-box grace:
 'Behold the first in virtue as in face!'
 Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
 Charmed the smallpox, or chased old age away,
 Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
 Or who would learn one earthly thing of use?
 To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint,
 Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.
 But since, alas! frail beauty must decay;
 Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
 Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
 And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
 What then remains but well our power to use,
 And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose?
 And trust me, dear! good-humour can prevail,
 When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
 Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
 Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.”

So spoke the dame, but no applause ensued;
 Belinda frowned, Thalestris called her Prude.
 “To arms, to arms!” the fierce virago cries,
 And swift as lightning to the combat flies.
 All side in parties, and begin the attack;
 Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack;
 Heroes' and heroines' shouts confusedly rise,
 And bass and treble voices strike the skies.
 No common weapons in their hands are found,
 Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the gods engage,
 And heavenly breasts with human passions rage;
 'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms;

Playful Poems

And all Olympus rings with loud alarms:
Jove's thunder roars, heaven trembles all around,
Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound,
Earth shakes her nodding towers, the ground gives way,
And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a sponce's height
Clapped his glad wings, and sate to view the fight;
Propped on their bodkin spears, the sprites survey
The growing combat, or assist the fray.

While through the press enraged Thalestris flies,
And scatters death around from both her eyes,
A beau and witling perished in the throng,
One died in metaphor, and one in song.

“O cruel nymph! a living death I bear,”
Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair.
A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast,
“Those eyes are made so killing”—was his last.
Thus on Mæander's flowery margin lies
The expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down,
Chloe stepped in, and killed him with a frown;
She smiled to see the doughty hero slain,
But, at her smile, the beau revived again.

Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
Weighs the men's wits against the ladies' hair;
The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,
With more than usual lightning in her eyes:
Nor feared the chief the unequal fight to try,
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.
But this bold lord with manly strength endued,
She with one finger and a thumb subdued:
Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
The gnomes direct, to every atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust.
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

“Now meet thy fate,” incensed Belinda cried,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
(The same, his ancient personage to deck,
Her great-great-grandsire wore about his neck,
In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown;
Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;
Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,
Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears).

“Boast not my fall,” he cried, “insulting foe!
Thou by some other shalt be laid as low,

Nor think to die dejects my lofty mind:
 All that I dread is leaving you behind!
 Rather than so, ah! let me still survive,
 And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive.”

“Restore the lock!” she cries; and all around
 “Restore the lock!” the vaulted roofs rebound.
 Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain
 Roared for the handkerchief that caused his pain.
 But see how oft ambitious aims are crossed,
 And chiefs contend till all the prize is lost!
 The lock, obtained with guilt, and kept with pain,
 In every place is sought, but sought in vain:
 With such a prize no mortal must be blest,
 So Heaven decrees: with Heaven who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere,
 Since all things lost on earth are treasured there,
 There heroes' wits are kept in ponderous vases,
 And beaux' in snuff-boxes and tweezer-cases.
 There broken vows and death-bed alms are found,
 And lovers' hearts with ends of riband bound,
 The courtiers promises, and sick man's prayers,
 The smiles of harlots, and the tears of heirs,
 Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,
 Dried butterflies and tomes of casuistry.

But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise,
 Though marked by none but quick, poetic eyes:
 (So Rome's great founder to the heavens withdrew,
 To Proculus alone confessed in view)
 A sudden star, it shot through liquid air,
 And drew behind a radiant trail of hair.
 Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright,
 The heavens bespangling with dishevelled light.
 The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,
 And pleased pursue its progress through the skies.

This the beau-monde shall from the Mall survey,
 And hail with music its propitious ray.
 This the blest lover shall for Venus take,
 And send up vows from Rosamonda's lake.
 This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies, {137}
 When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
 And hence the egregious wizard shall foredoom
 The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
 Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
 Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
 Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.
 For, after all the murders of your eye,
 When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
 When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
 And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
 This lock the Muse shall consecrate to fame,

And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

**THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN:
SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED
AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.**

BY WILLIAM COWPER.

John Gilpin was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

"My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise; so you must ride
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

"I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the calender
Will lend his horse to go."

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, "That's well said:
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnished with our own,
Which is both bright and clear."

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife;
O'erjoyed was he to find,
That though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,
Where they did all get in;
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.
Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,

Playful Poems

Were never folk so glad,
The stones did rattle underneath,
As if Cheapside were mad.
John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again;
For saddle-tree scarce reached had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.
So down he came; for loss of time,
Although it grieved him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.
'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came downstairs,
"The wine is left behind!"
"Good lack!" quoth he—"yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword,
When I do exercise."
Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she loved,
And keep it safe and sound.
Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.
Then over all, that he might be
Equipped from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,
He manfully did throw.
Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
With caution and good heed.
But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which galled him in his seat.
So, "Fair and softly," John he cried,
But John he cried in vain;
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.
So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasped the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN: SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED

Playful Poems

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought;
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
Up flew the windows all;
And every soul cried out, "Well done!"
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he?
His fame soon spread around;
"He carries weight!" "He rides a race!"
"Tis for a thousand pound!"

And still, as fast as he drew near,
'Twas wonderful to view,
How in a trice the turnpike—men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shattered at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry weight,
With leathern girdle braced;
For all might see the bottle—necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay;

And there he threw the Wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wondering much

Playful Poems

To see how he did ride.

“Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here's the house!”

They all at once did cry;

“The dinner waits, and we are tired;”

Said Gilpin—“So am I!”

But yet his horse was not a whit

Inclined to tarry there!

For why?—his owner had a house

Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,

Shot by an archer strong;

So did he fly—which brings me to

The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,

And sore against his will,

Till at his friend the calender's

His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amazed to see

His neighbour in such trim,

Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,

And thus accosted him:

“What news? what news? your tidings tell!

Tell me you must and shall—

Say why bareheaded you are come,

Or why you come at all?”

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,

And loved a timely joke;

And thus unto the calender

In merry guise he spoke:

“I came because your horse would come,

And, if I well forbode,

My hat and wig will soon be here—

They are upon the road.”

The calender, right glad to find

His friend in merry pin,

Returned him not a single word,

But to the house went in;

Whence straight he came with hat and wig;

A wig that flowed behind,

A hat not much the worse for wear,

Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn

Thus showed his ready wit,

“My head is twice as big as yours,

They therefore needs must fit.

“But let me scrape the dirt away

That hangs upon your face;

And stop and eat, for well you may

Be in a hungry case.”

Said John, “It is my wedding-day,

And all the world would stare,

Playful Poems

If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware.”
So turning to his horse, he said,
“I am in haste to dine;
’Twas for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine.”
Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast!
For which he paid full dear;
For, while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear;
Whereat his horse did snort, as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And galloped off with all his might,
As he had done before.
Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig:
He lost them sooner than at first;
For why?—they were too big.
Now Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pulled out half-a-crown;
And thus unto the youth she said
That drove them to the Bell,
“This shall be yours, when you bring back
My husband safe and well.”
The youth did ride, and soon did meet
John coming back amain:
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
By catching at his rein;
But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frightened steed he frightened more
And made him faster run.
Away went Gilpin, and away
Went postboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad to miss
The lumbering of the wheels.
Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scampering in the rear,
They raised the hue and cry:
“Stop thief! stop thief!—a highwayman!”
Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that passed that way
Did join in the pursuit.
And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space;
The toll-men thinking, as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.
And so he did, and won it too,

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN: SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED

Playful Poems

For he got first to town;
Nor stopped till where he had got up
He did again get down.
Now let us sing, Long live the king!
And Gilpin, long live he!
And when he next doth ride abroad
May I be there to see!

TAM O'SHANTER: A TALE

BY ROBERT BURNS.

"Of brownys and of bogilis full is this buke."

– GAWIN DOUGLAS.

When chapman billies leave the street, {147a}
 And drouthy neibors neibors meet, {147b}
 As market days are wearin' late,
 And folk begin to tak the gate; {147h}
 While we sit bousing at the nappy,
 And gettin' fou and unco' happy, {147c}
 We think na on the lang Scots miles,
 The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles, {147d}
 That lie between us and our hame,
 Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
 Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
 Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,
 As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
 (Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses
 For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise
 As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!
 She tauld thee weel thou wast a skellum, {147e}
 A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum; {147f}
 That frae November till October,
 Ae market day thou wasna sober;
 That ilka melder, wi' the miller {147g} {147i}
 Thou sat as lang as thou hadst siller;
 That every naig was ca'd a shoe on,
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
 That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday. {148f}
 She prophesied that, late or soon,
 Thou wouldst be found deep drowned in Doon!
 Or caught wi' warlocks i' the mirk, {148a}
 By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet {148b}
 To think how mony counsels sweet,
 How mony lengthened, sage advices,
 The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale:– Ae market night,
 Tam had got planted unco right.
 Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely, {148c}
 Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely; {148d}
 And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
 His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;

Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither—
 They had been fou for weeks thegither!
 The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
 And aye the ale was growing better:
 The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
 Wi' favours secret, sweet, and precious;
 The Souter tauld his queerest stories,
 The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
 The storm without might rair and rustle—
 Tam didna mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
 E'en drowned himsel among the nappy! {148e}
 As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
 The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure:
 Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flower, its bloom is shed!
 Or like the snowfall in the river,
 A moment white—then melts for ever;
 Or like the borealis race,
 That flit ere you can point their place;
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
 Evanishing amid the storm.
 Nae man can tether time or tide;
 The hour approaches, Tam maun ride;
 That hour, o' night's black arch the keystone,
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
 And sic a night he taks the road in
 As never poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blown its last;
 The rattling showers rose on the blast;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed;
 Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed:
 That night, a child might understand
 The deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,
 A better never lifted leg,
 Tam skelpit on through dub and mire, {149a}
 Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
 Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
 Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
 Whiles glowering round wi' prudent cares,
 Lest bogles catch him unawares:
 Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
 Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.
 By this time he was 'cross the foord,
 Whare in the snow the chapman smooored, {149b}
 And past the birks and meikle stane
 Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane:
 And through the whins, and by the cairn

Playful Poems

Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersel'.
Before him Doon pours a' his floods;
The doubling storm roars through the woods;
The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When glimmering through the groaning trees,
Kirk—Alloway seemed in a bleeze;
Through ilka bore the beams were glancing, {150h}
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst mak us scorn!
Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil:
Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae reamed in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he cared na deils a boddle. {150a}
But Maggie stood right sair astonished,
Till, by the heel and hand admonished,
She ventured forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!
Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillon brent—new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle i' their heels:
At winnock—bunker, i' the east, {150b}
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast,
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large, {150c}
To gie them music was his charge;
He screwed the pipes, and gart them skirl, {150d}
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl. {150e}
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip slight {150f}
Each in its cauld hand held a light,—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span—lang, wee, unchristened bairns;
A thief, new—cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape; {150g}
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red—rusted:
Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft:
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowered, amazed and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:

Playful Poems

The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reeled, they set, they crossed, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark, {151a}
And linket at it in her sark. {151h} {151b}

Now Tam! O Tam! had they been queans,
A' plump and strappin' in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen, {151c}
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gien them aff my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonny burdies!

But withered beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags, wad spean a foal, {151d} {151j}
Lowpin' and flingin' on a cummock, {151e}
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kenned what was what fu' brawlie,
"There was ae winsome wench and walie," {151i}
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kenned on Carrick shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perished mony a bonny boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bere,
And kept the country-side in fear.)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn, {151f}
That, while a lassie, she had worn,
In longitude though sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.

Ah! little kenn'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie, {151g}
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever graced a dance o' witches!
But here my Muse her wing maun cour,
Sic flights are far beyond her power;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was, and strang,)
And how Tam stood like ane bewitched,
And thought his very een enriched;
Even Satan glowered, and fidget fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main: {152a}
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a'thegither, {152b}
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"
And in an instant a' was dark:
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.
As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke, {152c}
When plundering herds assail their byke; {152d}
As open pussie's mortal foes,

Playful Poems

When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch screech and hollow. {152e}

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'lt get thy fairin'!

In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!

In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!

Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!

Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,

And win the keystone of the brig;

There at them thou thy tail may toss,

A running stream they darena cross;

But ere the keystone she could make,

The fient a tail she had to shake!

For Nannie, far before the rest,

Hard upon noble Maggie prest,

And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle; {152f}

But little wist she Maggie's mettle—

Ae spring brought off her master hale,

But left behind her ain grey tail:

The carlin claught her by the rump,

And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,

Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:

Whane'er to drink you are inclined,

Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,

Think! ye may buy the joys owre dear—

Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

THE DEMON SHIP

BY THOMAS HOOD.

'Twas off the Wash the sun went down—the sea looked black and grim,
For stormy clouds with murky fleece were mustering at the brim;
Titanic shades! enormous gloom!—as if the solid night
Of Erebus rose suddenly to seize upon the light!
It was a time for mariners to bear a wary eye,
With such a dark conspiracy between the sea and sky!

Down went my helm—close reefed—the tack held freely in my hand—
With ballast snug—I put about, and scudded for the land;
Loud hissed the sea beneath her lee—my little boat flew fast,
But faster still the rushing storm came borne upon the blast.

Lord! what a roaring hurricane beset the straining sail!
What furious sleet, with level drift, and fierce assaults of hail!
What darksome caverns yawned before! what jagged steeps behind!
Like battle-steeds, with foamy manes, wild tossing in the wind,
Each after each sank down astern, exhausted in the chase,
But where it sank another rose and galloped in its place;
As black as night—they turned to white, and cast against the cloud
A snowy sheet, as if each surge upturned a sailor's shroud:—
Still flew my boat; alas! alas! her course was nearly run!
Behold yon fatal billow rise—ten billows heaped in one!
With fearful speed the dreary mass came rolling, rolling fast,
As if the scooping sea contained one only wave at last;
Still on it came, with horrid roar, a swift pursuing grave;
It seemed as though some cloud had turned its hugeness to a wave!
Its briny sleet began to beat beforehand in my face—
I felt the rearward keel begin to climb its swelling base!
I saw its alpine hoary head impending over mine!
Another pulse—and down it rushed—an avalanche of brine!
Brief pause had I on God to cry, or think of wife and home;
The waters closed—and when I shrieked, I shrieked below the foam!
Beyond that rush I have no hint of any after-deed—
For I was tossing on the waste, as senseless as a weed.

“Where am I? in the breathing world, or in the world of death?”
With sharp and sudden pang I drew another birth of breath;
My eyes drank in a doubtful light, my ears a doubtful sound—
And was that ship a *real* ship whose tackle seemed around?
A moon, as if the earthly moon, was shining up aloft;
But were those beams the very beams that I have seen so oft?
A face that mocked the human face, before me watched alone;
But were those eyes the eyes of man that looked against my own?

Oh! never may the moon again disclose me such a sight
As met my gaze, when first I looked, on that accursed night!
I've seen a thousand horrid shapes begot of fierce extremes

Playful Poems

Of fever; and most frightful things have haunted in my dreams—
Hyenas—cats—blood—loving bats—and apes with hateful stare—
Pernicious snakes, and shaggy bulls—the lion, and she—bear—
Strong enemies, with Judas looks, of treachery and spite—
Detested features, hardly dimmed and banished by the light!
Pale—sheeted ghosts, with gory locks, upstarting from their tombs—
All phantasies and images that flit in midnight glooms—
Hags, goblins, demons, lemures, have made me all aghast,—
But nothing like that GRIMLY ONE who stood beside the mast!

His cheek was black—his brow was black—his eyes and hair as dark;
His hand was black, and where it touched, it left a sable mark;
His throat was black, his vest the same, and when I looked beneath,
His breast was black—all, all was black, except his grinning teeth,
His sooty crew were like in hue, as black as Afric slaves!
Oh, horror! e'en the ship was black that ploughed the inky waves!
“Alas!” I cried, “for love of truth and blessed mercy's sake,
Where am I? in what dreadful ship? upon what dreadful lake?
What shape is that, so very grim, and black as any coal?
It is Mahound, the Evil One, and he has gained my soul!
Oh, mother dear! my tender nurse: dear meadows that beguiled
My happy days, when I was yet a little sinless child—
My mother dear—my native fields I never more shall see:
I'm sailing in the Devil's Ship, upon the Devil's Sea!”

Loud laughed that SABLE MARINER, and loudly in return
His sooty crew sent forth a laugh that rang from stem to stern—
A dozen pair of grimly cheeks were crumpled on the nonce—
As many sets of grinning teeth came shining out at once:
A dozen gloomy shapes at once enjoyed the merry fit,
With shriek and yell, and oaths as well, like Demons of the Pit.
They crowed their fill, and then the Chief made answer for the whole:—
“Our skins,” said he, “are black, ye see, because we carry coal;
You'll find your mother sure enough, and see your native fields—
For this here ship has picked you up—the *Mary Ann* of Shields!”

A TALE OF A TRUMPET

BY THOMAS HOOD.

*“Old woman, old woman, will you go a–shearing?
Speak a little louder, for I’m very hard of hearing.”*

– *Old Ballad.*

Of all old women hard of hearing,
The deafest sure was Dame Eleanor Spearing!
On her head, it is true,
Two flaps there grew,
That served for a pair of gold rings to go through,
But for any purpose of ears in a parley,
They heard no more than ears of barley.
No hint was needed from D. E. F.,
You saw in her face that the woman was deaf:
From her twisted mouth to her eyes so peery,
Each queer feature asked a query;
A look that said in a silent way,
“Who? and What? and How? and Eh?
I’d give my ears to know what you say!”
And well she might! for each auricular
Was deaf as a post—and that post in particular
That stands at the corner of Dyott Street now,
And never hears a word of a row!
Ears that might serve her now and then
As extempore racks for an idle pen;
Or to hang with hoops from jewellers’ shops;
With coral; ruby, or garnet drops;
Or, provided the owner so inclined,
Ears to stick a blister behind;
But as for hearing wisdom, or wit,
Falsehood, or folly, or tell–tale–tit,
Or politics, whether of Fox or Pitt,
Sermon, lecture, or musical bit,
Harp, piano, fiddle, or kit,
They might as well, for any such wish,
Have been buttered, done brown, and laid in a dish!
She was deaf as a post,—as said before—
And as deaf as twenty similes more,
Including the adder, that deafest of snakes,
Which never hears the coil it makes.
She was deaf as a house—which modern tricks
Of language would call as deaf as bricks—
For her all human kind were dumb,
Her drum, indeed, was so muffled a drum,
That none could get a sound to come,
Unless the Devil, who had Two Sticks!

Playful Poems

She was as deaf as a stone—say one of the stones
Demosthenes sucked to improve his tones;
And surely deafness no further could reach
Than to be in his mouth without hearing his speech!

She was deaf as a nut—for nuts, no doubt,
Are deaf to the grub that's hollowing out—
As deaf, alas! as the dead and forgotten—
(Gray has noticed the waste of breath,
In addressing the “dull, cold ear of death”),
Or the felon's ear that is stuffed with cotton—
Or Charles the First *in statue quo*;
Or the still-born figures of Madame Tussaud,
With their eyes of glass, and their hair of flax,
That only stare whatever you “ax,”
For their ears, you know, are nothing but wax.

She was deaf as the ducks that swam in the pond,
And wouldn't listen to Mrs. Bond,—
As deaf as any Frenchman appears,
When he puts his shoulders into his ears:
And—whatever the citizen tells his son—
As deaf as Gog and Magog at one!
Or, still to be a simile-seeker,
As deaf as dogs'-ears to Enfield's Speaker!

She was deaf as any tradesman's dummy,
Or as Pharaoh's mother's mother's mummy;
Whose organs, for fear of modern sceptics,
Were plugged with gums and antiseptics.

She was deaf as a nail—that you cannot hammer
A meaning into for all your clamour—
There never *was* such a deaf old Gammer!

So formed to worry
Both Lindley and Murray,
By having no ear for Music or Grammar!

Deaf to sounds, as a ship out of soundings,
Deaf to verbs, and all their compoundings,
Adjective, noun, and adverb, and particle,
Deaf to even the definite article—
No verbal message was worth a pin,
Though you hired an earwig to carry it in!

In short, she was twice as deaf as Deaf Burke,
Or all the Deafness in Yearsley's work,
Who in spite of his skill in hardness of hearing,
Boring, blasting, and pioneering,
To give the dunny organ a clearing,
Could never have cured Dame Eleanor Spearing.

Of course the loss was a great privation,
For one of her sex—whatever her station—
And none the less that the dame had a turn
For making all families one concern,
And learning whatever there was to learn
In the prattling, tattling village of Tringham—

Playful Poems

As, who wore silk? and who wore gingham?
And what the Atkins's shop might bring 'em?
How the Smiths contrived to live? and whether
The fourteen Murphys all pigged together?
The wages per week of the Weavers and Skinners,
And what they boiled for their Sunday dinners?
What plates the Bugsbys had on the shelf,
Crockery, china, wooden, or delf?
And if the parlour of Mrs. O'Grady
Had a wicked French print, or Death and the Lady?
Did Snip and his wife continue to jangle?
Had Mrs. Wilkinson sold her mangle?
What liquor was drunk by Jones and Brown?
And the weekly score they ran up at the Crown?
If the cobbler could read, and believed in the Pope?
And how the Grubbs were off for soap?
If the Snobbs had furnished their room upstairs,
And how they managed for tables and chairs,
Beds, and other household affairs,
Iron, wooden, and Staffordshire wares?
And if they could muster a whole pair of bellows?
In fact she had much of the spirit that lies
Perdu in a notable set of Paul Prys,
By courtesy called Statistical Fellows—
A prying, spying, inquisitive clan,
Who have gone upon much of the self-same plan,
Jotting the labouring class's riches;
And after poking in pot and pan,
And routing garments in want of stitches,
Have ascertained that a working man
Wears a pair and a quarter of average breeches!
But this, alas! from her loss of hearing,
Was all a sealed book to Dame Eleanor Spearing;
And often her tears would rise to their founts—
Supposing a little scandal at play
'Twixt Mrs. O'Fie and Mrs. Au Fait—
That she couldn't audit the gossips' accounts.
'Tis true, to her cottage still they came,
And ate her muffins just the same,
And drank the tea of the widowed dame,
And never swallowed a thimble the less
Of something the reader is left to guess,
For all the deafness of Mrs. S.
Who *saw* them talk, and chuckle, and cough,
But to *see* and not share in the social flow,
She might as well have lived, you know,
In one of the houses in Owen's Row,
Near the New River Head, with its water cut off!
And yet the almond oil she had tried,
And fifty infallible things beside,
Hot, and cold, and thick, and thin,

Dabbed, and dribbled, and squirted in:
 But all remedies failed; and though some it was clear,
 Like the brandy and salt
 We now exalt,
 Had made a noise in the public ear,
 She was just as deaf as ever, poor dear!
 At last—one very fine day in June—
 Suppose her sitting,
 Busily knitting,
 And humming she didn't quite know what tune;
 For nothing she heard but a sort of whizz,
 Which, unless the sound of circulation,
 Or of thoughts in the process of fabrication,
 By a spinning—jennyish operation,
 It's hard to say what buzzing it is.
 However, except that ghost of a sound,
 She sat in a silence most profound—
 The cat was purring about the mat,
 But her mistress heard no more of that
 Than if it had been a boatswain's cat;
 And as for the clock the moments nicking,
 The dame only gave it credit for ticking.
 The bark of her dog she did not catch;
 Nor yet the click of the lifted latch;
 Nor yet the creak of the opening door;
 Nor yet the fall of a foot on the floor—
 But she saw the shadow that crept on her gown
 And turned its skirt of a darker brown.

 And lo! a man! a Pedlar! ay, marry,
 With the little back—shop that such tradesmen carry,
 Stocked with brooches, ribbons, and rings,
 Spectacles, razors, and other odd things
 For lad and lass, as Autolycus sings;
 A chapman for goodness and cheapness of ware,
 Held a fair dealer enough at a fair,
 But deemed a piratical sort of invader
 By him we dub the “regular trader,”
 Who—luring the passengers in as they pass
 By lamps, gay panels, and mouldings of brass,
 And windows with only one huge pane of glass,
 And his name in gilt characters, German or Roman—
 If he isn't a Pedlar, at least he's a Showman!

 However, in the stranger came,
 And, the moment he met the eyes of the Dame,
 Threw her as knowing a nod as though
 He had known her fifty long years ago:
 And presto! before she could utter “Jack”—
 Much less “Robinson”—opened his pack—
 And then from amongst his portable gear,
 With even more than a Pedlar's tact,—
 (Slick himself might have envied the act)—

Playful Poems

Before she had time to be deaf, in fact—
Popped a Trumpet into her ear.
“There, Ma'am! try it!
You needn't buy it—
The last New Patent, and nothing comes nigh it
For affording the deaf, at a little expense,
The sense of hearing, and hearing of sense!
A Real Blessing—and no mistake,
Invented for poor Humanity's sake:
For what can be a greater privation
Than playing Dumby to all creation,
And only looking at conversation—
Great philosophers talking like Platos,
And Members of Parliament moral as Catos,
And your ears as dull as waxy potatoes!
Not to name the mischievous quizzers,
Sharp as knives, but double as scissors,
Who get you to answer quite by guess
Yes for No, and No for Yes.”
 (“That's very true,” says Dame Eleanor S.)
 “Try it again! No harm in trying—
I'm sure you'll find it worth your buying.
A little practice—that is all—
And you'll hear a whisper, however small,
Through an Act of Parliament party-wall,—
Every syllable clear as day,
And even what people are going to say—
I wouldn't tell a lie, I wouldn't,
But my Trumpets have heard what Solomon's couldn't;
And as for Scott he promises fine,
But can he warrant his horns like mine,
Never to hear what a lady shouldn't—
Only a guinea—and can't take less.”
 (“That's very dear,” said Dame Eleanor S.)
 “Dear!—Oh dear, to call it dear!
Why, it isn't a horn you buy, but an ear;
Only think, and you'll find on reflection
You're bargaining, ma'am, for the Voice of Affection;
For the language of Wisdom, and Virtue, and Truth,
And the sweet little innocent prattle of Youth:
Not to mention the striking of clocks—
Cackle of hens—crowing of cocks—
Lowling of cow, and bull, and ox—
Bleating of pretty pastoral flocks—
Murmur of waterfall over the rocks—
Every sound that Echo mocks—
Vocals, fiddles, and musical-box—
And zounds! to call such a concert dear!
But I mustn't 'swear with my horn in your ear.'
Why, in buying that Trumpet you buy all those
That Harper, or any Trumpeter, blows

Playful Poems

At the Queen's Levees or the Lord Mayor's Shows,
At least as far as the music goes,
Including the wonderful lively sound,
Of the Guards' key-bugles all the year round;
Come—suppose we call it a pound!
Come,” said the talkative Man of the Pack,
“Before I put my box on my back,
For this elegant, useful Conductor of Sound,
Come, suppose we call it a pound!
“Only a pound: it's only the price
Of hearing a concert once or twice,
It's only the fee
You might give Mr. C.
And after all not hear his advice,
But common prudence would bid you stump it;
For, not to enlarge,
It's the regular charge
At a Fancy Fair for a penny trumpet.
Lord! what's a pound to the blessing of hearing!”
 (“A pound's a pound,” said Dame Eleanor Spearing.)
“Try it again! no harm in trying!
A pound's a pound, there's no denying;
But think what thousands and thousands of pounds
We pay for nothing but hearing sounds:
Sounds of Equity, Justice, and Law,
Parliamentary jabber and jaw,
Pious cant, and moral saw,
Hocus-pocus, and Nong-tong-paw,
And empty sounds not worth a straw;
Why, it costs a guinea, as I'm a sinner,
To hear the sounds at a public dinner!
One pound one thrown into the puddle,
To listen to Fiddle, Faddle, and Fuddle!
Not to forget the sounds we buy
From those who sell their sounds so high,
That, unless the managers pitch it strong,
To get a signora to warble a song,
You must fork out the blunt with a haymaker's prong!
“It's not the thing for me—I know it,
To crack my own trumpet up and blow it;
But it is the best, and time will show it.
There was Mrs. F.
So very deaf,
That she might have worn a percussion cap,
And been knocked on the head without hearing it snap,
Well, I sold her a horn, and the very next day
She heard from her husband at Botany Bay!
Come—eighteen shillings—that's very low,
You'll save the money as shillings go,
And I never knew so bad a lot,
By hearing whether they ring or not!

“Eighteen shillings! it's worth the price,
 Supposing you're delicate-minded and nice,
 To have the medical man of your choice,
 Instead of the one with the strongest voice—
 Who comes and asks you, how's your liver,
 And where you ache, and whether you shiver,
 And as to your nerves, so apt to quiver,
 As if he was hailing a boat on the river!
 And then, with a shout, like Pat in a riot,
 Tells you to keep yourself perfectly quiet!

“Or a tradesman comes—as tradesmen will—
 Short and crusty about his bill;

Of patience, indeed, a perfect scorner,
 And because you're deaf and unable to pay,
 Shouts whatever he has to say,
 In a vulgar voice, that goes over the way,
 Down the street and round the corner!

Come—speak your mind—it's 'No' or 'Yes.’“
 (“I've half a mind,” said Dame Eleanor S.)

“Try it again—no harm in trying,
 Of course you hear me, as easy as lying;
 No pain at all, like a surgical trick,
 To make you squall, and struggle, and kick,

Like Juno, or Rose,

Whose ear undergoes
 Such horrid tugs at membrane and gristle,
 For being as deaf as yourself to a whistle!

“You may go to surgical chaps if you choose,
 Who will blow up your tubes like copper flues,
 Or cut your tonsils right away,
 As you'd shell out your almonds for Christmas Day;
 And after all a matter of doubt,
 Whether you ever would hear the shout
 Of the little blackguards that bawl about,
 'There you go with your tonsils out!'

Why I knew a deaf Welshman, who came from Glamorgan
 On purpose to try a surgical spell,
 And paid a guinea, and might as well

Have called a monkey into his organ!
 For the Aurist only took a mug,
 And poured in his ear some acoustical drug,
 That, instead of curing, deafened him rather,
 As Hamlet's uncle served Hamlet's father!
 That's the way with your surgical gentry!

And happy your luck

If you don't get stuck
 Through your liver and lights at a royal entry,
 Because you never answered the sentry!

“Try it again, dear madam, try it!
 Many would sell their beds to buy it.
 I warrant you often wake up in the night,

Ready to shake to a jelly with fright,
 And up you must get to strike a light,
 And down you go, in you know what,
 Whether the weather is chilly or hot,—
 That's the way a cold is got,—
 To see if you heard a noise or not.

“Why, bless you, a woman with organs like yours
 Is hardly safe to step out of doors!
 Just fancy a horse that comes full pelt,
 But as quiet as if he was shod with felt,
 Till he rushes against you with all his force,
 And then I needn't describe of course,
 While he kicks you about without remorse,
 How awkward it is to be groomed by a horse!
 Or a bullock comes, as mad as King Lear,
 And you never dream that the brute is near,
 Till he pokes his horn right into your ear,
 Whether you like the thing or lump it,—
 And all for want of buying a trumpet!

“I'm not a female to fret and vex,
 But if I belonged to the sensitive sex,
 Exposed to all sorts of indelicate sounds,
 I wouldn't be deaf for a thousand pounds.

Lord! only think of chucking a copper
 To Jack or Bob with a timber limb,
 Who looks as if he was singing a hymn,
 Instead of a song that's very improper!
 Or just suppose in a public place
 You see a great fellow a-pulling a face,
 With his staring eyes and his mouth like an O,—
 And how is a poor deaf lady to know,—
 The lower orders are up to such games—
 If he's calling 'Green Peas,' or calling her names?”

(“They're tenpence a peck!” said the deafest of dames.)

“'Tis strange what very strong advising,
 By word of mouth, or advertising,
 By chalking on wall, or placarding on vans,
 With fifty other different plans,
 The very high pressure, in fact, of pressing,
 It needs to persuade one to purchase a blessing!
 Whether the soothing American Syrup,
 A Safety Hat, or a Safety Stirrup,—
 Infallible Pills for the human frame,
 Or Rowland's O—don't—O (an ominous name)!
 A Doudney's suit which the shape so hits
 That it beats all others into *fits*;
 A Mechi's razor for beards unshorn,
 Or a Ghost—of—a—Whisper—Catching Horn!

“Try it again, ma'am, only try!”
 Was still the voluble Pedlar's cry;
 “It's a great privation, there's no dispute,

To live like the dumb unsociable brute,
 And to hear no more of the *pro* and *con*,
 And how Society's going on,
 Than Mumbo Jumbo or Prester John,
 And all for want of this *sine quâ non*;
 Whereas, with a horn that never offends,
 You may join the genteelest party that is,
 And enjoy all the scandal, and gossip, and quiz,
 And be certain to hear of your absent friends;—
 Not that elegant ladies, in fact,
 In genteel society ever detract,
 Or lend a brush when a friend is blacked,—
 At least as a mere malicious act,—
 But only talk scandal for fear some fool
 Should think they were bred at *charity* school.
 Or, maybe, you like a little flirtation,
 Which even the most Don Juanish rake
 Would surely object to undertake
 At the same high pitch as an altercation.
 It's not for me, of course, to judge
 How much a deaf lady ought to begrudge;
 But half-a-guinea seems no great matter—
 Letting alone more rational patter—
 Only to hear a parrot chatter:
 Not to mention that feathered wit,
 The starling, who speaks when his tongue is slit;
 The pies and jays that utter words,
 And other Dicky Gossips of birds,
 That talk with as much good sense and decorum
 As many *Beaks* who belong to the Quorum.
 “Try it—buy it—say ten and six,
 The lowest price a miser could fix:
 I don't pretend with horns of mine,
 Like some in the advertising line,
 To '*magnify sounds*' on such marvellous scales,
 That the sounds of a cod seem as big as a whale's;
 But popular rumours, right or wrong,—
 Charity sermons, short or long,—
 Lecture, speech, concerto, or song,
 All noises and voices, feeble or strong,
 From the hum of a gnat to the clash of a gong,
 This tube will deliver distinct and clear;
 Or, supposing by chance
 You wish to dance,
 Why it's putting a *Horn-pipe* into your ear!
 Try it—buy it!
 Buy it—try it!
 The last New Patent, and nothing comes nigh it,
 For guiding sounds to their proper tunnel:
 Only try till the end of June,
 And if you and the trumpet are out of tune

I'll turn it gratis into a funnel!"
 In short, the pedlar so beset her,—
 Lord Bacon couldn't have gammoned her better,—
 With flatteries plump and indirect,
 And plied his tongue with such effect,—
 A tongue that could almost have buttered a crumpet:
 The deaf old woman bought the Trumpet.

The pedlar was gone. With the horn's assistance,
 She heard his steps die away in the distance;
 And then she heard the tick of the clock,
 The purring of puss, and the snoring of Shock;
 And she purposely dropped a pin that was little,
 And heard it fall as plain as a skittle!

'Twas a wonderful horn, to be but just!
 Nor meant to gather dust, must, and rust;
 So in half a jiffy, or less than that,
 In her scarlet cloak and her steeple-hat,
 Like old Dame Trot, but without her cat,
 The gossip was hunting all Tringham thorough,
 As if she meant to canvass the borough,
 Trumpet in hand, or up to the cavity;—
 And, sure, had the horn been one of those
 The wild rhinoceros wears on his nose,
 It couldn't have ripped up more depravity!

Depravity! mercy shield her ears!
 'Twas plain enough that her village peers
 In the ways of vice were no raw beginners;
 For whenever she raised the tube to her drum
 Such sounds were transmitted as only come
 From the very Brass Band of human sinners!
 Ribald jest and blasphemous curse
 (Bunyan never vented worse),
 With all those weeds, not flowers, of speech
 Which the Seven Dialecticians teach;
 Filthy Conjunctions, and Dissolute Nouns,
 And Particles picked from the kennels of towns,
 With Irregular Verbs for irregular jobs,
 Chiefly active in rows and mobs,
 Picking Possessive Pronouns' fobs,
 And Interjections as bad as a blight,
 Or an Eastern blast, to the blood and the sight:
 Fanciful phrases for crime and sin,
 And smacking of vulgar lips where Gin,
 Garlic, Tobacco, and offals go in—
 A jargon so truly adapted, in fact,
 To each thievish, obscene, and ferocious act,
 So fit for the brute with the human shape,
 Savage Baboon, or libidinous Ape,
 From their ugly mouths it will certainly come

Should they ever get weary of shamming dumb!

Alas! for the Voice of Virtue and Truth,
And the sweet little innocent prattle of Youth!
The smallest urchin whose tongue could tang,
Shocked the Dame with a volley of slang,
Fit for Fagin's juvenile gang;

While the charity chap,

With his muffin cap,

His crimson coat, and his badge so garish,
Playing at dumps, or pitch in the hole,
Cursed his eyes, limbs, body and soul,
As if they did not belong to the Parish!

'Twas awful to hear, as she went along,
The wicked words of the popular song;

Or supposing she listened—as gossips will—
At a door ajar, or a window agape,
To catch the sounds they allowed to escape.

Those sounds belonged to Depravity still!
The dark allusion, or bolder brag
Of the dexterous “dodge,” and the lots of “swag,”
The plundered house—or the stolen nag—
The blazing rick, or the darker crime,
That quenched the spark before its time—
The wanton speech of the wife immoral,
The noise of drunken or deadly quarrel,
With savage menace, which threatened the life,
Till the heart seemed merely a strop for the knife;
The human liver, no better than that
Which is sliced and thrown to an old woman's cat;

And the head, so useful for shaking and nodding,
To be punched into holes, like a “shocking bad hat”
That is only fit to be punched into wadding!

In short, wherever she turned the horn,
To the highly bred, or the lowly born,
The working man, who looked over the hedge,
Or the mother nursing her infant pledge.

The sober Quaker, averse to quarrels,
Or the Governess pacing the village through,
With her twelve Young Ladies, two and two,
Looking, as such young ladies do,

Trussed by Decorum and stuffed with morals—
Whether she listened to Hob or Bob,

Nob or Snob,

The Squire on his cob,
Or Trudge and his ass at a tinkering job,
To the “Saint” who expounded at “Little Zion”—
Or the “Sinner” who kept the “Golden Lion”—
The man teetotally weaned from liquor—
The Beadle, the Clerk, or the Reverend Vicar—
Nay, the very Pie in its cage of wicker—
She gathered such meanings, double or single,

That like the bell,
 With muffins to sell,
 Her ear was kept in a constant tingle!
 But this was nought to the tales of shame,
 The constant runnings of evil fame,
 Foul, and dirty, and black as ink,
 That her ancient cronies, with nod and wink,
 Poured in her horn like slops in a sink:
 While sitting in conclave, as gossips do,
 With their Hyson or Howqua, black or green,
 And not a little of feline spleen,
 Lapped up in "Catty packages," too,
 To give a zest to the sipping and supping;
 For still by some invisible tether,
 Scandal and Tea are linked together,
 As surely as Scarification and Cupping;
 Yet never since Scandal drank Bohea—
 Or sloe, or whatever it happened to be,
 For some grocerly thieves
 Turn over new leaves,
 Without much mending their lives or their tea—
 No, never since cup was filled or stirred
 Were such wild and horrible anecdotes heard,
 As blackened their neighbours of either gender,
 Especially that, which is called the Tender,
 But instead of the softness we fancy therewith,
 Was hardened in vice as the vice of a smith.
 Women! the wretches! had soiled and marred
 Whatever to womanly nature belongs;
 For the marriage tie they had no regard,
 Nay, sped their mates to the sexton's yard,
 (Like Madame Laffarge, who with poisonous pinches
 Kept cutting off her L by inches)—
 And as for drinking, they drank so hard
 That they drank their flat-irons, pokers, and tongs!
 The men—they fought and gambled at fairs;
 And poached—and didn't respect grey hairs—
 Stole linen, money, plate, poultry, and corses;
 And broke in houses as well as horses;
 Unfolded folds to kill their own mutton,—
 And would their own mothers and wives for a button:
 But not to repeat the deeds they did,
 Backsliding in spite of all moral skid,
 If all were true that fell from the tongue,
 There was not a villager, old or young,
 But deserved to be whipped, imprisoned, or hung,
 Or sent on those travels which nobody hurries,
 To publish at Colburn's, or Longmans', or Murray's.
 Meanwhile the Trumpet, *con amore*,
 Transmitted each vile diabolical story;
 And gave the least whisper of slips and falls,

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As that Gallery does in the Dome of St. Paul's,
Which, as all the world knows, by practice or print,
Is famous for making the most of a hint.

Not a murmur of shame,

Or buzz of blame,

Not a flying report that flew at a name,
Not a plausible gloss, or significant note,
Not a word in the scandalous circles afloat,
Of a beam in the eye, or diminutive mote,
But vortex-like that tube of tin
Sucked the censorious particle in;

And, truth to tell, for as willing an organ
As ever listened to serpent's hiss,
Nor took the viperous sound amiss,

On the snaky head of an ancient Gorgon!

The Dame, it is true, would mutter "shocking!"
And give her head a sorrowful rocking,
And make a clucking with palate and tongue,
Like the call of Partlet to gather her young,
A sound, when human, that always proclaims
At least a thousand pities and shames;

But still the darker the tale of sin,
Like certain folks, when calamities burst,
Who find a comfort in "hearing the worst,"

The farther she poked the Trumpet in.
Nay, worse, whatever she heard she spread

East and West, and North and South,
Like the ball which, according to Captain Z.,
Went in at his ear, and came out at his mouth.

What wonder between the Horn and the Dame,
Such mischief was made wherever they came,
That the parish of Tringham was all in a flame!

For although it required such loud discharges,
Such peals of thunder as rumbled at Lear,
To turn the smallest of table-beer,
A little whisper breathed into the ear

Will sour a temper "as sour as varges."
In fact such very ill blood there grew,
From this private circulation of stories,
That the nearest neighbours the village through,
Looked at each other as yellow and blue,
As any electioneering crew

Wearing the colours of Whigs and Tories.
Ah! well the Poet said, in sooth,
That "whispering tongues can poison Truth,"—

Yes, like a dose of oxalic acid,
Wrench and convulse poor Peace, the placid,
And rack dear Love with internal fuel,
Like arsenic pastry, or what is as cruel,
Sugar of lead, that sweetens gruel,—
At least such torments began to wring 'em

From the very morn
When that mischievous Horn
Caught the whisper of tongues in Tringham.
The Social Clubs dissolved in huffs,
And the Sons of Harmony came to cuffs,
While feuds arose and family quarrels,
That discomposed the mechanics of morals,
For screws were loose between brother and brother,
While sisters fastened their nails on each other;
Such wrangles, and jangles, and miff, and tiff,
And spar, and jar—and breezes as stiff
As ever upset a friendship—or skiff!
The plighted lovers who used to walk,
Refused to meet, and declined to talk:
And wished for two moons to reflect the sun,
That they mightn't look together on one:
While wedded affection ran so low,
That the oldest John Anderson snubbed his Jo—
And instead of the toddle adown the hill,
Hand in hand,
As the song has planned,
Scratched her, penniless, out of his will!
In short, to describe what came to pass
In a true, though somewhat theatrical way,
Instead of “Love in a Village”—alas!
The piece they performed was “The Devil to Pay!”
However, as secrets are brought to light,
And mischief comes home like chickens at night;
And rivers are tracked throughout their course,
And forgeries traced to their proper source;—
And the sow that ought
By the ear is caught,—
And the sin to the sinful door is brought;
And the cat at last escapes from the bag—
And the saddle is placed on the proper nag—
And the fog blows off, and the key is found—
And the faulty scent is picked out by the hound—
And the fact turns up like a worm from the ground—
And the matter gets wind to waft it about;
And a hint goes abroad, and the murder is out—
And a riddle is guessed—and the puzzle is known—
So the Truth was sniffed, and the Trumpet was blown!

‘Tis a day in November—a day of fog—
But the Tringham people are all agog!
Fathers, Mothers, and Mothers' Sons,—
With sticks, and staves, and swords, and guns,—
As if in pursuit of a rabid dog;
But their voices—raised to the highest pitch—
Declare that the game is “a Witch!—a Witch!”
Over the Green and along by the George—

Past the Stocks and the Church, and the Forge,
 And round the Pound, and skirting the Pond,
 Till they come to the whitewashed cottage beyond,
 And there at the door they muster and cluster,
 And thump, and kick, and bellow, and bluster—
 Enough to put Old Nick in a fluster!
 A noise, indeed, so loud and long,
 And mixed with expressions so very strong,
 That supposing, according to popular fame,
 “Wise Woman” and Witch to be the same,
 No hag with a broom would unwisely stop,
 But up and away through the chimney-top;
 Whereas, the moment they burst the door,
 Planted fast on her sanded floor,
 With her trumpet up to her organ of hearing,
 Lo and behold!—Dame Eleanor Spearing!
 Oh! then rises the fearful shout—
 Bawled and screamed, and bandied about—
 “Seize her!—Drag the old Jezebel out!”
 While the Beadle—the foremost of all the band,
 Snatches the Horn from her trembling hand—
 And after a pause of doubt and fear,
 Puts it up to his sharpest ear.
 “Now silence—silence—one and all!”
 For the Clerk is quoting from Holy Paul!
 But before he rehearses
 A couple of verses,
 The Beadle lets the Trumpet fall!
 For instead of the words so pious and humble,
 He hears a supernatural grumble.
 Enough, enough! and more than enough;—
 Twenty impatient hands and rough,
 By arm and leg, and neck and scruff,
 Apron, 'kerchief, gown of stuff—
 Cap and pinner, sleeve and cuff—
 Are clutching the Witch wherever they can,
 With the spite of woman and fury of man;
 And then—but first they kill her cat,
 And murder her dog on the very mat—
 And crush the infernal Trumpet flat;—
 And then they hurry her through the door
 She never, never will enter more!
 Away! away! down the dusty lane
 They pull her and haul her, with might and main;
 And happy the hawbuck, Tom or Harry,
 Dandy or Sandy, Jerry or Larry,
 Who happens to get “a leg to carry!”
 And happy the foot that can give her a kick,
 And happy the hand that can find a brick—
 And happy the fingers that hold a stick—
 Knife to cut, or pin to prick—

And happy the boy who can lend her a lick;—
 Nay, happy the urchin—Charity—bred,—
 Who can shy very nigh to her wicked old head!

Alas! to think how people's creeds
 Are contradicted by people's deeds!

But though the wishes that Witches utter
 Can play the most diabolical rigs—
 Send styes in the eye—and measles the pigs—
 Grease horses' heels—and spoil the butter;
 Smut and mildew the corn on the stalk—
 And turn new milk to water and chalk,—
 Blight apples—and give the chickens the pip—
 And cramp the stomach—and cripple the hip—
 And waste the body—and addle the eggs—
 And give a baby bandy legs;
 Though in common belief a Witch's curse
 Involves all these horrible things and worse—
 As ignorant bumpkins all profess,
 No bumpkin makes a poke the less
 At the back or ribs of old Eleanor S.!

As if she were only a sack of barley!
 Or gives her credit for greater might
 Than the Powers of Darkness confer at night

On that other old woman, the parish Charley!

Ay, now's the time for a Witch to call
 On her imps and sucklings one and all—
 Newes, Pyewacket, or Peck in the Crown,
 (As Matthew Hopkins has handed them down)
 Dick, and Willet, and Sugar—and—Sack,
 Greedy Grizel, Jarmara the Black,
 Vinegar Tom, and the rest of the pack—
 Ay, now's the nick for her friend Old Harry
 To come “with his tail,” like the bold Glengarry,
 And drive her foes from their savage job
 As a mad black bullock would scatter a mob:—

But no such matter is down in the bond;
 And spite of her cries that never cease,
 But scare the ducks and astonish the geese,
 The dame is dragged to the fatal pond!

And now they come to the water's brim—
 And in they bundle her—sink or swim;
 Though it's twenty to one that the wretch must drown,
 With twenty sticks to hold her down;
 Including the help to the self—same end,
 Which a travelling Pedlar stops to lend.
 A Pedlar!—Yes!—The same!—the same!
 Who sold the Horn to the drowning Dame!
 And now is foremost amid the stir,
 With a token only revealed to her;
 A token that makes her shudder and shriek,
 And point with her finger, and strive to speak—

But before she can utter the name of the Devil,
Her head is under the water level!

MORAL.

There are folks about town—to name no names—
Who much resemble the deafest of Dames!
And over their tea, and muffins, and crumpets,
Circulate many a scandalous word,
And whisper tales they could only have heard
Through some such Diabolical Trumpets!

GLOSSARY

- {114} **And**, in old English could be placed like “also” in different parts of a sentence. Thus, in *Nymphidia*,
 “She hies her then to Lethe spring,
 A bottle and thereof doth bring.”
- {129} **Atalantis**, “As long as Atalantis shall be read.” Atalantis was a book of Court scandal by Mrs. De la Rivière Manley, in four volumes, entitled “Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality of both Sexes from the New Atalantis, an Island in the Mediterranean.” Mrs. Manley died in 1724.
- {94h} **Bauzon**, badger. French, *bausin*.
- {147a} **Billies**, fellows, used rather contemptuously.
- {147f} **Blellum**, idle talker.
- {150a} **Boddle**, a Scottish copper coin worth the third part of an English halfpenny; said to be named after the Mint-master who first coined it, Bothwell.
- {150h} **Bore**, hole in the wall.
- {91e} **But**, “without,” “but merriness,” without mirth.
- {152d} **Byke**, hive.
- {150f} **Cantrip**, charm, spell. Icelandic, *gandr*, enchantment; *gand-reithr* was the witches' ride.
- {83} **Can'wick Street**, Candlewick, where now there is Cannon Street.
- {86a} **Champarty**, Champartage, was a feudal levy of a share of profit from the ground (*campi pars*), based originally upon aid given to enable profit to be earned. Thus it became a law term for right of a stranger to fixed share in any profits that on such condition he helped a litigant to win.
- {85b} **Chiche vache**, lean cow. French *chiche*, Latin *ciccus*, wretched, worthless; from Greek *kikkos*, the core of a pomegranate. Worth no more than a pomegranate seed.
- {94i} **Cockers**, rustic half-boots.
- {151g} **Coft**, bought. German, *kaufte*.
- {82b} **Copen**, buy. Dutch, *koopen*.
- {94j} **Cordiwin**, or cordewane, Cordovan leather.
- {89} **Coueyn**, **coveyne** convening or conspiring of two or more to defraud.
- {94f} **Crank**, lively. A boat was “crank” when frail, lightly and easily tossed on the waves, and liable to upset. Prof. Skeat thinks that the image of the tossed boat suggested lively movement.
- {151c} **Creeshie flannen**, greasy flannel.
- {151e} **Cummock**, a short staff with a crooked head.
- {151f} **Cutty**, short; so cutty pipe, short pipe.
- {85a} **Darrain**, decide. To “arraign” was to summon *ad rationes* to the pleadings. To darraign was *derationare*, to bring them to a decision.
- {86b} **Defy**, digest. As in the Vision of Piers Plowman
 “wyn of Ossye
 Of Ruyn and of Rochel, the rost to defye.”
 Latin, *defio* = *deficio*, to make one's self to be removed from something, or something to be removed from one's self. To defy in the sense of challenging is a word of different origin, *diffidere*, to separate from *fides*, faith, trust, allegiance to another.
- {91d} **Degest**, orderly. To “digest” is to separate and arrange in an orderly manner.
- {150e} **Dirl**, vibrate, echo.
- {147b} **Drouthy**, droughty, thirsty.
- {151a} **Duddies**, clothes.
- {152e} **Eldritch**, also *elrische*, *alrische*, *alry*, having relation to elves or evil spirits, supernatural, hideous, frightful.

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{152f} **Ettle** , endeavour, aim. Icelandic, *ætla*, to mean anything, design, have aim, is the Scottish *ettle*.

{108d} **Fire–drake**, dragon breathing out fire.

{91b} **Flicht and wary**, fluctuate and change.

{92b} **Frawfull fary**, froward tumult.

{152c} **Fyke** , fuss.

{30} **Fytte**, a song, canto. First English, *fit*, a song.

When Wisdom “*thas fitte asungen hæfde*” had sung this song. King Alfred's Boëthius.

{150g} **Gab** , mouth.

{148b} **Gars** , makes; “gars me greet,” makes me weep.

{147h} **Gate** , road. Icelandic, *gata*.

{35} **Habergeon** , small hauberk, armour for the neck. Old High German, *hals*, the neck; *bergan*, to protect.

{94d} **Harlock** , This plant–name occurs only here and in Shakespeare's *Lear*, Act iv. sc. 4, where Lear is said to be crowned “with harlocks, hemlocks, nettles, cuckoo–flowers.” Probably it is charlock, *Sinapis arvensis*, the mustard–plant.

{98} **Hays**, The hay was a French dance, with many turnings and windings.

{100} **Hient Hill**, Ben Hiand, in Ardnamurchan, Argyleshire.

{152a} **Hotched**, hitched.

{147g} **Ilka** , each one, every.

{85c} **Infere** , together.

{148c} **Ingle** , fire. Gaelic, *aingeal*, allied to Latin *ignis*.

{95b} **Keep**, “take thou no keep”—heed, “never mind.”

{148f} **Kirkton**, familiar term for the village in which the country people had their church.

{94k} **Ladysmock** , *Cardamine pratensis*.

{93b} **Leir** , lore, doctrine.

{94g} **Learned his sheep**, taught his sheep.

{94a} **Lemster** , Leominster.

{95a} **Lingell** , a shoemaker's thong. Latin *lingula*.

{151h} **Linkit**, tripped, moved briskly.

{108c} **Lubrican**, the Irish leprechaun, a fairy in shape of an old man, discovered by the moan he makes. He brings wealth, and is fixed only as long as the finder keeps his eye upon him.

{108b} **Mandrake** , the root of mandragora, rudely shaped like the forked animal man, and said to groan or shriek when pulled out of the earth.

{93c} **Marchpine**, sweet biscuit of sugar and almonds. Marchpane paste was used by comfit–makers for shaping into letters, true–love knots, birds, beasts, etc.

{130} **Megrin** , pain on one side of the head, headache. French *migraine*, from Gr. *eemikranía*.

{147i} **Melder**, milling. The quantity of meal ground at once.

{148a} **Mirk** , dark.

{108a} **Molewarp**, mole. First English, *moldearp*.

{148e} **Nappy** , nap, strong beer.

{126} **Pam**, Knave of Clubs, the highest card in the game of Loo, derived from “palm,” as “trump” from “triumph.”

{137} **Partridge**, a maker of prophetic almanacs, who was ridiculed by Swift as type of his bad craft.

{94b} **Peakish hull**, hill by the Peak of Derbyshire.

{19} **Pose**, catarrh. First English, *gepósu*.

“By the pose in thy nose,

And the gout in thy toes.”

– *Beaumont and Fletcher*.

{88b} **Prow** , profit. Old French, *prou*, *preu*—“*Oil voir, sire, pour vostre preu i viens.*”—*Garin le Loharain*.

{91a} **Qu**, Scottish = W. **Quhair**, where; **quhois**, whose; **quheill** , wheel; **quha**, **quho**, who; **quhat**, what.

{82a} **Ray**, striped cloth.

{151d} **Rigwoodie**, tough. Rigwiddie is the rope crossing the back of a horse yoked in a cart; *rig*, back, and

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withy, a twig. Applied to anything strong-backed.

{82c} **Rise**, “cherries in the rise,” cherries on the twig. First English, *hris*, a twig, or thin branch. The old practice of selling cherries upon shoots cut from the tree ended in their sale by pennyworths with their stalks tied to a little stick of wood. So they were sold in London when I was a boy.

{151b} **Sark**, shirt or shift. First English, *syr*.

{94c} **Setiwall**, garden valerian.

{147e} **Skellum**, a worthless fellow. German, *schelm*.

{149a} **Skelpit**, beat the ground with strong pulsation; rode quickly; pounded along.

{150d} **Skirl**, sound shrill.

{147d} **Slaps**, breaks in walls or hedges; also narrow passes.

{149b} **Smoored**, smothered.

{151j} **Spean**, wean.

{32} **Spear-hawk**, sparrow-hawk. From the root *spar*, to quiver or flutter, comes the name of “sparrow” and a part of the name “sparrow-hawk.”

{94e} **Summerhall**, Stubbs, in the “Anatomy of Abuses,” speaking of the maypole, tells how villagers, when they have reared it up, “with handkerchiefs and flags streaming on the top, they strew the ground about, bind green boughs about it, set up *summerhalls*, bowers, and arbours hard by it, and then fall they to banquet and feast, and leap and dance about it.”

{148d} **Swats**, new ale, wort. First English, *swate*.

{88c} **Teen**, vexation, grief.

{152b} **Tint**, lost.

{150c} **Towsie tyke**, a large rough cur.

{92a} **Tynsall**, loss.

{147c} **Unco'**, uncouth, more than was known usually.

{151i} **Wally**, **walie** thriving. First English, *wælig*.

{91c} **Warsill**, wrestle.

{150b} **Winnock-bunker**, the window seat.

{93d} **Woned**, dwelt.

{17} **Wottest**, knowest.

{88a} **Woxen**, grown.

{93a} **Yconned**, taught.

{81} **Yode**, went. First English, *eóde*, past of *gán*, to go.

NOTES.

{21} This old French and Anglo-Norman word, answering to the Italian *gentilezza*, and signifying the possession of every species of refinement, has been retained as supplying a want which there is no modern word to fill up. — *Leigh Hunt*.

{26} The sententious sermon which here follows might have had a purely serious intention in Chaucer's time, when books were rare, and moralities not such commonplaces as they are now; yet it is difficult to believe that the poet did not intend something of a covert satire upon at least the sermoniser's own pretensions, especially as the latter had declared himself against text-spinning. The Host, it is to be observed, had already charged him with forgetting his own faults, while preaching against those of others. The *refashioner* of the original lines has accordingly endeavoured to retain the kind of tabernacle, or old woman's tone, into which he conceives the Manciple to have fallen, compared with that of his narrative style.—*Leigh Hunt*.

{42} “We possess,” says Satan in *Paradise Lost*, “the quarters of the north.” The old legend that Milton followed placed Satan in the north parts of heaven, following the passage in Isaiah concerning Babylon on which that legend was constructed (Isa. xiv. 12–15), “Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation *in the sides of the north*.”

{49} Alluding to the “Millers Tale,” which has rather offended the Reve, by reason that it ridiculed a worthy carpenter.—R. H. H.

{50} Or thus:—

For when our climbing's done our speech aspires;
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

The original lines are:—

“For whanne we may not don than wol we speken,
Yet in our ashen olde is fyre yreken.”

The coincidence of the last line with the one quoted from Gray's *Elegy* will be remarked. Mr. Tyrwhit says he should certainly have considered the latter as an “imitation” (of Chaucer), “if Mr. Gray himself had not referred us to the 169 Sonnet of Petrarch as his original:—

Ch' i' veggio nel pensier, dolce mio foco,
Fredda una lingua, e duo begli occhi chiusi
Rimaner dopo noi pien' di faville.

The sentiment is different in all three; but the form of expression here adopted by Gray closely resembles that of the Father of English Poetry, although in Gray's time it was no doubt far more elegant to quote Petrarch than Chaucer.—*R. H. Horne*.

{125} THE GAME OF OMBRE

was invented by the Spaniards, and called by them *El Hombre*, or THE MAN, *El Hombre* being he (or she) who undertakes the game against the other players.

There were variations in the way of playing, and there were sometimes four or even five players; but usually there were three players, as described by Pope in the third canto of *The Rape of the Lock*, where Belinda played as Ombre against the Baron and another, and the course of the game is faithfully described. It is the purpose of this note to enable any reader of *The Rape of the Lock* to learn the game of Ombre, play it, and be able to follow Pope's description of a game.

The game of Ombre is played with a pack of cards from which the eights, nines, and tens of each of the four suits have been thrown out. The Ombre pack consists, therefore, of forty cards.

The values of cards when they are not trumps are not arranged in the same order for each colour.

For the two black suits, Spades and Clubs, the values, from highest to lowest, follow the natural order—King, Queen, Knave, seven, six, five, four, three, two. But the two black aces always rank as trumps, and are not reckoned as parts of the black suit. The Ace of Spades is named *Spadille*, the Ace of Clubs is *Basto*.

For the two red suits, Hearts and Diamonds, only the King, Queen, and Knave keep their values in natural order; the other cards have their order of values reversed. The value from highest to lowest for each red suit is, therefore, King, Queen, Knave, ace, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

The values of trump cards are thus arranged:—

The first and best trump is the Ace of Spades, *Spadille*.

The second best trump is the lowest card of the trump suit, the two of trumps in a black suit, or the seven of trumps if the trump suit be red. This second trump is called *Manille*.

The third trump is the Ace of Clubs, *Basto*.

When the trump suit is red, its Ace becomes the fourth trump. Thus if Diamonds be trumps the Ace of Diamonds can take the King of Diamonds; the Ace of Hearts can take the King of Hearts if Hearts be trumps, not otherwise. There is no addition to the value of the Ace of Diamonds when Hearts are trumps. The Ace of a red suit of trumps, having become in this way the fourth trump in order of value, is called *Punto*.

In order of their value, counted from the highest to the lowest, I now place in parallel columns the trumps in black suits and the trumps in red:—

Black.	Red.
Spadille, Ace of Spades.	Spadille, Ace of Spades.
Manille, the Two of the Trump suit.	Manille, the Seven of the trump suit.
Basto, Ace of Clubs.	Basto, Ace of Clubs.
King.	Punto, Ace of the trump suit.
Queen.	King
Knave.	Queen.
Seven.	Knave.
Six.	Two.
Five.	Three.
Four.	Four.
Three.	Five.
	Six.

The three chief trumps, *Spadille*, *Manille*, and *Basto*, are called *Matadores*, and have powers which, together with their name, are passed to the trumps following them, so far as they are found in sequence in the Ombre's hand. Thus, although *Spadille*, *Manille*, and *Basto* are strictly speaking the only *Matadores*, if the Ombre can

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show also in his hand, say, in the red suit, Punto, King, Queen, Knave, he takes for seven *Matadores*; and if there should be joined to these the two and three, his trumps would be all in sequence, every card would be a *Matadore*, and he would be paid for nine, which is the whole number of cards in a hand.

Counters having been distributed, among which a fish is worth ten round counters, each player lays down a fish before the deal. The cards having been shuffled by the dealer, and cut by the player who sits on the left hand of the dealer, are dealt three at a time, and first to the player who sits on the dealer's right hand, which is contrary to the usual course. The cards are dealt three times round. Each of the three players then has nine, and the remaining thirteen cards are laid down at the right hand of the dealer. No card is turned up to determine trumps.

Each player then looks at his hand. The eldest hand is that to the dealer's right. He speaks first. If his cards are bad, and he will not venture to be Ombre, he says "Pass," and lays a counter down at his left. If all three players say "Pass," each laying a counter down, the cards are dealt again. When a player thinks his cards may win, and is willing to be Ombre, unless he be the third to speak, and the two other hands have passed, he says "Do you give me leave?" or "Do you play without taking in?" If the other players say "Pass," each depositing his counter at his own left hand, the Ombre begins by discarding from his hand two, three, or more cards that he thinks unserviceable. He lays them down at his left hand. Then before he deals to himself from the pack of thirteen left undistributed the same number of cards that he has thrown out, he must name the trump suit. In doing this he chooses for himself, according to his hand, spades, clubs, hearts, diamonds, whichever suit he thinks will best help him to win. If he has a two of a black suit, or a seven of a red, he can secure to himself *Manille* by making that suit trumps, or there may be reason why another suit should be preferred.

If the player who proposes to be Ombre has a safe game in his hand— five *Matadores*, for example—he names the trump and elects to play *Sans-prendre*, that is to say, without discarding. Whoever plays *Sans-prendre*, if he win, receives three counters from each of the other players, and pays three counters to each if he should lose the game.

When the Ombre plays *Sans-Prendre*, his opponents have more cards from which to draw, and the first who discards is even free to change all his nine cards; but he usually limits his discard to six or seven, and avoids encroachment on the share of the next player. The two who play against the Ombre are only half in the position of partners at whist, because one of them, when his hand is strong enough, can be the only winner.

The hands having been thus settled, the game begins, from the hand on the right of the dealer. After a trick has been taken, the lead, as at other games, is with the winner of the trick, the order of play being still from left to right.

As at whist, a suit led must be followed, and a player who cannot follow suit is not obliged to play a trump unless he please.

If the first player who follows the Ombre's lead with a better card, and has in his hand so good a game that he desires, by winning the trick, to obtain the lead, he declares that aloud by saying *Gano*, that is, "I win." His partner then lets him win, if he can. Thus, Ombre has played a spade, which the next player wins with the Queen, saying *Gano* when he does so. If the third player has the King in his hand he refrains from playing it, unless he have no spade in his hand of smaller value, in which case he is obliged to follow suit and win the trick against his partner. Where the lead is urgently desired, not for a personal gain of more tricks than the Ombre, which is called *Codille*, but to defend the stake, and the third player is seen to hesitate, *Gano* may be pressed for, three times, "Gano, if possible." When Ombre was played by gambling courtiers under Queen Anne and George I., all such words spoken in the game had to be given strictly in the Spanish form, which was, in this case, *Yo Gano, si se puede*.

Ombre, to win the stake, must make five tricks; but he can win with four if the other five are so divided between his antagonists that one has only three of them, the other only two. If one of the two defenders of the stakes, playing against Ombre, does not feel almost sure that he can win at least three tricks, with a chance of the fourth, he should win one, and try to avoid winning more, but help whatever chance his partner seems to have of winning four, because Ombre wins with four when each of the other players has won less than four.

If Ombre lose he is said to be Beasted. Whoever loses is said to be Beasted. Whoever is Beasted has to pay to the board counters of the value of what the Ombre takes up if he wins. When players were beasted for revokes and other oversights in play, the fines were heavy upon carelessness.

At the end of the game tricks are counted. When Ombre wins he takes the stakes; when he loses the two

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opponents will divide the stakes between them, unless one of them should have taken more tricks than the Ombre, in which case that one is said to have won *Codille*. Whoever wins *Codille* takes all the stake the Ombre played for. For this reason it was not thought creditable for any one to call *Gano* who had four tricks in his hand, as by so doing he would only be inducing the other player against Ombre to give up to him his half of the winnings. Each player against the Ombre aims at *Codille* when he thinks it within reach, but in that case it used to be held very bad manners to win by calling *Gano*. When one of the players against the Ombre must either give *Codille* to the other or let the Ombre win, he gives the *Codille*. For if the Ombre be beasted he has to replace the stakes. But if the Ombre wins, both of the players against him have to stake again. If any one wins all the nine tricks he is said to have won the *Vole*, and clears all stakes upon the table.

Belinda, in the *Rape of the Lock*, having looked at her hand, named trumps—
“Let spades be trumps,' she said, and trumps they were.”

She chose that suit because she had not only the King but also the two of Spades, and two of trumps, called *Manille*, is the second best trump after *Spadille*. Her hand contained also the Ace of Spades, “unconquerable lord” *Spadille*, and the third trump, *Basto*, Ace of Clubs. By making spades trumps she secured the addition of *Manille*. The three best trumps secured her the three best tricks. *Spadille* and *Manille* fetched small trumps out of the hands of her antagonists. *Basto* brought a trump out of the Baron's suit, that also held the Knave and Queen of trumps, and a small card from the other hand, which showed that it was out of trumps. Then came Belinda's King of trumps, to win her fourth sure trick, and the Baron, who still had his best trumps in his hand, the Knave and Queen, lost the Knave to it.

After this the Baron's Queen of trumps was the best card, and Belinda, with no more trumps in her hand, or possibly the other player, sacrificed the King of Clubs to it.

Trumps being exhausted, and the Baron having won a trick and the lead, it is his turn now to win three tricks in succession with the King, Queen, and Knave of Diamonds. At the third round of the Diamonds Belinda has left in her hand only the King and Queen of Hearts. She gives up the Queen.

Each has now four tricks. It is the Baron's lead. If his card be best he has more tricks than the Ombre, and will win *Codille*. If his card be a club or a diamond—spades are played out—Belinda's King of Hearts will be unable to follow suit. He will be taken. Thus is she “between the jaws of ruin and codille.” But should his last card be a heart—she has the best heart—

“An Ace of Hearts steps forth: the King unseen
Lurked in her hand, and mourned his captive Queen.
He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,
And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace.
The nymph exulting, fills with shouts the sky,
The walls, the woods, the long canals reply.”

In addition to the stakes she won, Belinda was entitled also to the value of four counters from each of her antagonists for her sequence of four *Matadores*, *Spadille*, *Manille*, *Basto*, and the King of Spades. Furthermore, if she had been playing *Sans -prendre*, each of her opponents would have three counters to pay her.