

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_172471

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

THE SOCRATES BOOKLETS: VIII

General Editor: H. M. MARGOLIOUTH, M.A.,
Secretary of Faculties in the University of Oxford, recently Professor of
English Language and Literature in the University College of Southampton.

DRYDEN'S CHAUCER

(BEING PART OF "FABLES")

First Published, 1699

Edited by
W. ROY MACKLIN, B.A.
Assistant Master, Christ's Hospital



A. & C. BLACK, LTD.
4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W. 1

1927

METHOD OF THE SERIES

This series is intended primarily for boys and girls of thirteen to fifteen. The pupil should first read right through each poem, essay, play or narrative in order to get a general knowledge of the subject-matter, but he may pass over obscure allusions or other difficulties. The whole comes before the part. In order that the teacher may be satisfied that this first reading has been done, a selection of questions is given which should be answered, either aloud or in writing, without the book. These questions are headed "A."

After this comes more detailed and intensive study, but it is important that this should not degenerate into a mere cramming of the memory. The pupil should re-read the whole or parts of his text not in order to "get it up" but in order to find things out. A selection of questions is therefore given which aims at indicating some of the chief things which the pupil should find out if he is to enter into the mind of the writer. These questions, for which the pupil should be allowed the free use of his book, are headed "B."

A few of the questions headed "B" are marked with an asterisk () to indicate that they are intended for older pupils.*

The pupil who, after obtaining a general knowledge of his subject-matter, has employed himself in making intelligent inquiries into it, may then profitably go further afield. For this purpose a selection is given of questions which involve reference to other books. The usefulness of these questions depends partly on the extent to which the pupil has access to the best English classics and to standard works of reference. But the teacher will often have such access even if the pupil has not. In this section again an asterisk () indicates that certain questions are intended for older pupils, and a number has been placed after those where reference is made to one of the books in the list given on the last page of this volume. This third set of questions is headed "C."*

It is hoped that the notes at the end will be of use or interest to adult readers. They are not primarily intended for the pupil.

CONTENTS

PART OF DRYDEN'S PREFACE TO "FABLES"	
QUESTIONS ON THE PREFACE	
PALAMON AND ARCITE	
QUESTIONS ON PALAMON AND ARCITE	
THE COCK AND THE FOX, OR, THE TALE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST	
QUESTIONS ON THE COCK AND THE FOX	
THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON	
QUESTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON	
GENERAL QUESTIONS	
NOTES	
LIST OF BOOKS SUGGESTED	

FROM DRYDEN'S PREFACE TO " FABLES "

. . . It remains that I say somewhat of Chaucer in particular.

In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil : he is a perpetual fountain of good sense ; learned in all sciences ; and therefore speaks properly on all subjects ; as he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off, a continence which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any, of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace. One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation because he could never forego any conceit which came in his way, but swept like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough, but the dishes were ill-sorted ; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men : all this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment ; neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets ; but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing ; and perhaps knew it was a fault, but hoped the reader would not find it. For this reason, though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer : and for ten impressions which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth : for as my last Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, " Not being of God, he could not stand."

Chaucer followed nature everywhere ; but was never so

bold to go beyond her : and there is a great difference of being *Poeta* and *nimis Poeta*, if we believe Catullus, as much as betwixt a modest behaviour and affectation. The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us ; but is like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata* ; they who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical ; and it continues so even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries : there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him ; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine : but this opinion is not worth confuting ; 'tis so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader, that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroic, was either not known, or not always practised in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius, and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace : even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being : and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared. I need say little of his parentage, life, and fortunes : they are to be found at large in all the editions of his works. He was employed abroad and favoured by Edward the Third, Richard the Second, and Henry the Fourth, and was poet, as as I suppose, to all three of them. In Richard's time, I doubt, he was a little dipped in the rebellion of the Commons ;

and being brother-in-law to John of Gaunt, it was no wonder if he followed the fortunes of that family ; and was well with Henry the Fourth when he had deposed his predecessor. Neither is it to be admired, that Henry, who was a wise as well as a valiant prince, who claimed by succession, and was sensible that his title was not sound, but was rightfully in Mortimer, who had married the heir of York ; it was not to be admired, I say, if that great politician should be pleased to have the greatest wit of those times in his interests, and to be the trumpet of his praises. Augustus had given him the example, by the advice of Maecenas, who recommended Virgil and Horace to him ; whose praises helped to make him popular while he was alive, and after his death have made him precious to posterity. As for the religion of our poet, he seems to have some little bias towards the opinions of Wickliff, after John of Gaunt his patron ; somewhat of which appears in the tale of " Piers Plowman ;" yet I cannot blame him for inveighing so sharply against the vices of the clergy in his age : their pride, their ambition, their pomp, their avarice, their worldly interest, deserved the lashes which he gave them, both in that, and in most of his " Canterbury Tales : " neither has his contemporary Boccace spared them. Yet both those poets lived in much esteem with good and holy men in orders : for the scandal which is given by particular priests reflects not on the sacred function. Chaucer's Monk, his Canon, and his Friar took not from the character of his Good Parson. A satirical poet is the check of the laymen on bad priests. We are only to take care, that we involve not the innocent with the guilty in the same condemnation. The good cannot be too much honoured, nor the bad too coarsely used : for the corruption of the best becomes the worst. When a clergyman is whipped, his gown is first taken off, by which the dignity of his order is secured : if he be wrongfully accused, he has his action of slander ; and it is at the poet's peril if he transgress

the law. But they will tell us, that all kind of satire, though never so well deserved by particular priests, yet brings the whole order into contempt. Is then the peerage of England anything dishonoured, when a peer suffers for his treason? If he be libelled, or any way defamed, he has his *Scandalum Magnatum* to punish the offender. They who use this kind of argument seem to be conscious to themselves of somewhat which has deserved the poet's lash; and are less concerned for their public capacity, than for their private; at least there is pride at the bottom of their reasoning. If the faults of men in orders are only to be judged among themselves, they are all in some sort parties: for, since they say the honour of their order is concerned in every member of it, how can we be sure, that they will be impartial judges? How far I may be allowed to speak my opinion in this case, I know not: but I am sure a dispute of this nature caused mischief in abundance betwixt a King of England and an Archbishop of Canterbury; one standing up for the laws of his land, and the other for the honour (as he called it) of God's Church; which ended in the murder of the prelate, and in the whipping of his Majesty from post to pillar for his penance. The learned and ingenious Dr. Drake has saved me the labour of inquiring into the esteem and reverence which the priests have had of old: and I would rather extend than diminish any part of it: yet I must needs say, that when a priest provokes me without any occasion given him, I have no reason, unless it be the charity of a Christian, to forgive him. *Prior læsit* is justification sufficient in the Civil Law. If I answer him in his own language, self-defence, I am sure, must be allowed me; and if I carry it farther, even to a sharp re- crimination, somewhat may be indulged to human frailty. Yet my resentment has not wrought so far but that I have followed Chaucer in his character of a holy man, and have enlarged on that subject with some pleasure, reserving to myself the right, if I shall think fit hereafter, to describe

another sort of priests, such as are more easily to be found than the good parson ; such as have given the last blow to Christianity in this age by a practice so contrary to their doctrine. But this will keep cold till another time. In the meanwhile, I take up Chaucer where I left him. He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his " *Canterbury Tales* " the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other ; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales and of their telling are so suited to their different educations, humours and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity : their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding ; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous ; some are unlearned or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different : the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook are several men, and distinguished from each other, as much as the mincing lady Prioress and the broad-speaking gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this : there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grandames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days ; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of Monks

and Friars, and Canons, and lady Abbesses, and Nuns : for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered. May I have leave to do myself the justice (since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet that they will not allow me so much as to be a Christian or a moral man), may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader, that I have confined my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savour nothing of immodesty. . . .

“ But first, I pray you of your courtesy,
 That ye ne arrete it nought my villany,
 Though that I plainly speak in this mattere
 To tellen you her words, and eke her chere :
 Ne though I speak her words properly,
 For this ye knowen as well as I,
 Who shall tellen a tale after a man
 He mote rehearse as nye as ever he can
 Everich word of it been in his charge,
All speke he, never so rudely, ne large.
 Or else he mote tellen his tale untrue,
 Or feine things, or find words new :
 He may not spare, altho he were his brother
 He mote as well say o word as another.
 Christ spake himself full broad in holy writ,
 And well I wote no villany is it,
 Eke Plato saith, who so can him rede,
 The words mote been cousin to the dede.”

. . . You have here a specimen of Chaucer's language, which is so obsolete, that his sense is scarce to be understood. And you have likewise more than one example of his unequal numbers, which were mentioned before. Yet many of his verses consist of ten syllables, and the words not much behind our present English : as, for example, these two lines in the description of the carpenter's young wife :

“ Wincing she was, as is a jolly colt,
 Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.”

I have almost done with Chaucer, when I have answered some objections relating to my present work. I find some people are offended that I have turned these tales into modern English ; because they think them unworthy of my pains, and look on Chaucer as a dry, old-fashioned wit, not worth reviving. I have often heard the late Earl of Leicester say, that Mr. Cowley himself was of that opinion ; who having read him over at my lord's request, declared he had no taste of him. I dare not advance my opinion against the judgment of so great an author ; but I think it fair, however, to leave the decision to the public. Mr. Cowley was too modest to set up for a dictator : and being shocked, perhaps, with his old style, never examined into the depth of his good sense. Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond ; and must first be polished ere he shines. I deny not, likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece, but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, though not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough. But there are more great wits besides Chaucer, whose fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill sorted. An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observed this redundancy in Chaucer (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater), I have not tied myself to a literal translation ; but have often omitted what I judged unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presumed farther in some places ; and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true lustre, for want of words in the beginning of our language. And to this I was the more emboldened, because (if I may be permitted to say it of my self) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies. Another poet in another age may take the same liberty with my writings ; if at least they live

long enough to deserve correction. It was also necessary sometimes to restore the sense of Chaucer, which was lost or mangled in the errors of the press. Let this example suffice at present : in the story of "Palamon and Arcite," where the Temple of Diana is described, you find these verses in all the editions of our author :

" There saw I Danè turned into a tree,
I mean not the goddess Diane,
But Venus daughter, which that hight Danè : "

which, after a little consideration, I knew was to be reformed into this sense,—that Daphne, the daughter of Peneus, was turned into a tree. I durst not make thus bold with Ovid ; lest some future Milbourn should arise, and say I varied from my author because I understood him not.

But there are other judges who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary notion. They suppose there is a certain veneration due to his old language ; and that it is a little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion, that somewhat of his good sense will suffer in this transfusion, and much of the beauty of his thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more grace in their old habit. Of this opinion was that excellent person whom I mentioned, the late Earl of Leicester, who valued Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despised him. My lord dissuaded me from this attempt (for I was thinking of it some years before his death), and his authority prevailed so far with me as to defer my undertaking while he lived, in deference to him. Yet my reason was not convinced with what he urged against it. If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then, as his language grows obsolete, his thoughts must grow obscure :

" Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere, cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi."

When an ancient word for its sound and significancy deserves to be revived, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed. Customs are changed; and even statutes are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. As for the other part of the argument, that his thoughts will lose of their original beauty, by the innovation of words: in the first place, not only their beauty, but their being is lost, where they are no longer understood; which is the present case. I grant that something must be lost in all transfusion, that is, in all translations; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be lost, or at least be maimed, when it is scarce intelligible, and that but to a few. How few are there who can read Chaucer, so as to understand him perfectly! And if imperfectly, then with less profit and no pleasure. 'Tis not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I have taken these pains with him: let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand. I will go farther, and dare to add, that what beauties I lose in some places I give to others which had them not originally. But in this I may be partial to my self. Let the reader judge: and I submit to his decision. Yet I think I have just occasion to complain of them, who, because they understand Chaucer, would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same advantage, and hoard him up, as misers do their grandam gold, only to look on it themselves, and hinder others from making use of it. In sum, I seriously protest, that no man ever had, or can have, a greater veneration for Chaucer than my self. I have translated some part of his works, only that I might perpetuate his memory, or at least refresh it, amongst my countrymen. I I have altered him anywhere for the better, I must at the same

time acknowledge that I could have done nothing without him : *Facile est inventis addere* is no great commendation ; and I am not so vain to think I have deserved a greater. I will conclude what I have to say of him singly, with this one remark : a lady of my acquaintance, who keeps a kind of correspondence with some authors of the fair sex in France, has been informed by them, that Mademoiselle de Scudery, who is as old as Sibyl, and inspired, like her, by the same god of poetry, is at this time translating Chaucer into modern French. From which I gather, that he has been formerly translated into the old Provençal (for how she should come to understand old English I know not). But the matter of fact being true, it makes me think that there is something in it like fatality ; that, after certain periods of time, the fame and memory of great wits should be renewed, as Chaucer is both in France and England. If this be wholly chance, 'tis extraordinary ; and I dare not call it more, for fear of being taxed with superstition. . . .

I prefer in our countryman, far above all his other stories, the noble poem of "Palamon and Arcite," which is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the *Ilias* or the *Æneis*. The story is more pleasing than either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful ; only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least ; but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action, which yet is easily reduced into the compass of a year by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens. I had thought for the honour of our nation, and more particularly for his whose laurel, though unworthy, I have worn after him, that this story was of English growth and Chaucer's own ; but I was undeceived by Boccace ; . . . it appears that this story was written before the time of Boccace ; but the name of its author being wholly lost, Chaucer is now become an original ; and I question not but the

poem has received many beauties by passing through his noble hands.

QUESTIONS ON THE PREFACE

(Some of these questions should be left until more of the book has been read.)

A.

1. What is Dryden's notion of a modernisation ?
2. What are the chief objections which he thinks readers will have to his modernisation of Chaucer, and how does he overcome them ?
3. Give a brief account of Chaucer's life and work. What does Dryden admire most of all in his work ?
4. For whom does Dryden intend his "Chaucer" ?

B.

1. There are phrases in Dryden which have been quoted over and over again by critics who were unable to improve on them. Can you find any that are peculiarly happy ?
2. The phrase "God's plenty" is especially famous. What does Dryden mean by it ?
3. Dryden has a fondness for parallels between modern and ancient times. Find as many examples as you can.
4. "An author is not to write all he can, but only all he ought." What exactly does this mean ? Is it sound criticism ? How far does Dryden carry it out ?
5. What does Dryden say of Chaucer's language and versification ? What discovery has caused us to think differently ?
6. Does Dryden show great reverence for the laws of antiquity ? Whom does he quote ?
7. Which of the following adjectives would you apply to Dryden's prose style:—Eccentric, laboured, brilliant, vigorous, natural, involved, easy, commonplace, clear, correct ? Explain your choice.
8. What do you think of Dryden's tact and persuasive powers ?
9. What can you discover from the Preface about Dryden's attitude to the clergy ? Does this suggest a motive for his Good Parson ?
- *10. From the peculiar qualities of Dryden's prose you might be led to expect certain qualities in his verse. What are they ? Are your expectations justified ?

C.

1. If you take into consideration the other works of Dryden, would you say that he was capable of greater or less variety than

other poets? Compare him from this point of view with Lamb, Shakespeare, Milton, or any poet you know well. ^{1, 2 and 3}

*2. Compare the Preface with Pope's "Essay on Criticism." Which writer do you consider the greater critic?

*3. What would you expect to be the influence of (a) Dryden's prose style and (b) his poetic style on later writers? Does the history of English literature bear this out?

*4. What appeals to Dryden in the poems of Denham and Waller? ⁵

5. What were the subjects of literature in the time of Addison and of Dryden? What kind of poetry is most successful at such a time. Can you imagine Wordsworth or Tennyson as the contemporary of either? Why?

*6. Is it surprising that the age of Dryden and Pepys should follow the age of Ben Jonson? Why? ⁴

7. Can you guess from Dryden's criticism of Chaucer what he will blame most in Shakespeare?

8. In what particular departments of writing is it clear that Dryden thinks his age excels? Addison and Pope have the same idea. How does it affect poetry and prose? ^{5 and 6}

*9. What do you understand by eighteenth-century poetry? Does Dryden in any way account for its peculiar qualities? ⁵

*10. What would have been the attitude of most men in Dryden's age to a comparison between Chaucer and Ovid? Would Pope agree with Dryden? What changes have come over critical opinions since then?

11. Swift wrote of Dryden's Prefaces:

"Merely writ at first for filling
To raise the volume's price a shilling."

Is this a just verdict on the Preface you know? Why? Compare this:—"The nature of a preface is rambling, never wholly out of the way nor in it." Who wrote this?

PALAMON AND ARCITE, OR THE KNIGHT'S TALE

FROM CHAUCER

IN THREE BOOKS

BOOK I

IN days of old there lived, of mighty fame,
A valiant Prince, and Theseus was his name ;
A chief, who more in feats of arms excelled,
The rising nor the setting sun beheld.

Of Athens he was lord ; much land he won,
And added foreign countries to his crown.
In Scythia with the warrior Queen he strove,
Whom first by force he conquered, then by love ;
He brought in triumph back the beauteous dame,
With whom her sister, fair Emilia, came.

10

With honour to his home let Theseus ride,
With Love to friend, and Fortune for his guide,
And his victorious army at his side.

I pass their warlike pomp, their proud array,
Their shouts, their songs, their welcome on the way ;

* * * *

The Prince I mentioned, full of high renown,
In this array drew near the Athenian town ;
When, in his pomp and utmost of his pride
Marching, he chanced to cast his eye aside,
And saw a quire of mourning dames, who lay
By two and two across the common way :

40

At his approach they raised a rueful cry,
 And beat their breasts, and held their hands on high,
 Creeping and crying, till they seized at last
 His courser's bridle and his feet embraced.

"Tell me," said Theseus, "what and whence you are,

"And why this funeral pageant you prepare ?

"Is this the welcome of my worthy deeds,

"To meet my triumph in ill-omened weeds ?

50

"Or envy you my praise, and would destroy

"With grief my pleasures, and pollute my joy ?

"Or are you injured, and demand relief ?

"Name your request, and I will ease your grief."

The most in years of all the mourning train
 Began ; but swounded first away for pain ;

Then scarce recovered spoke : "Nor envy we

"Thy great renown, nor grudge thy victory ;

"'Tis thine, O King, the afflicted to redress,

"And fame has filled the world with thy success :

60

"We wretched women sue for that alone,

"Which of thy goodness is refused to none ;

"Let fall some drops of pity on our grief,

"If what we beg be just, and we deserve relief ;

"For none of us, who now thy grace implore,

"But held the rank of sovereign queen before ;

"Till, thanks to giddy Chance, which never bears

"That mortal bliss should last for length of years,

"She cast us headlong from our high estate,

"And here in hope of thy return we wait,

70

"And long have waited in the temple nigh,

"Built to the gracious goddess Clemency.

"But reverence thou the power whose name it bears,

"Relieve the oppressed, and wipe the widows' tears.

"I, wretched I, have other fortune seen,

"The wife of Capaneus, and once a Queen ;

"At Thebes he fell ; cursed be the fatal day

"And all the rest thou seest in this array

" To make their moan their lords in battle lost,
 " Before that town besieged by our confederate host. 80
 " But Creon, old and impious, who commands
 " The Theban city, and usurps the lands,
 " Denies the rites of funeral fires to those
 " Whose breathless bodies yet he calls his foes.
 " Unburned, unburied, on a heap they lie ;
 " Such is their fate, and such his tyranny ;
 " No friend has leave to bear away the dead,
 " But with their lifeless limbs his hounds are fed."

At this she shrieked aloud ; the mournful train
 Echoed her grief, and grovelling on the plain, 90
 With groans, and hands upheld, to move his mind,
 Besought his pity to their helpless kind.

The Prince was touched, his tears began to flow,
 And, as his tender heart would break in two,
 He sighed ; and could not but their fate deplore,
 So wretched now, so fortunate before.
 Then lightly from his lofty steed he flew,
 And raising one by one the suppliant crew,
 To comfort each, full solemnly he swore,
 That by the faith which knights to knighthood bore, 100
 And whate'er else to chivalry belongs,
 He would not cease, till he revenged their wrongs ;
 That Greece should see performed what he declared,
 And cruel Creon find his just reward.
 He said no more, but shunning all delay
 Rode on, nor entered Athens on his way ;

* * * *

The process of the war I need not tell,
 How Theseus conquered, and how Creon fell ;
 Or after, how by storm the walls were won,
 Or how the victor sacked and burned the town ;
 How to the ladies he restored again
 The bodies of their lords in battle slain ;

And with what ancient rites they were interred ;
 All these to fitter time shall be deferred : 130
 I spare the widows' tears, their woful cries,
 And howling at their husbands' obsequies ;
 How Theseus at these funerals did assist,
 And with what gifts the mourning dames dismissed.

Thus when the victor chief had Creon slain,
 And conquered Thebes, he pitched upon the plain
 His mighty camp, and when the day returned,
 The country wasted and the hamlets burned,
 And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,
 Without control to strip and spoil the dead. 140

There, in a heap of slain, among the rest
 Two youthful knights they found beneath a load oppressed
 Of slaughtered foes, whom first to death they sent,
 The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.
 Both fair, and both of royal blood they seemed,
 Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deemed ;
 That day in equal arms they fought for fame ;
 Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the same :
 Close by each other laid they pressed the ground,
 Their manly bosoms pierced with many a grisly wound ; 150
 Nor well alive nor wholly dead they were,
 But some faint signs of feeble life appear ;
 The wandering breath was on the wing to part,
 Weak was the pulse, and hardly heaved the heart.
 These two were sisters' sons ; and Arcite one,
 Much famed in fields, with valiant Palamon.
 From these their costly arms the spoilers rent,
 And softly both conveyed to Theseus' tent :
 Whom, known of Creon's line and cured with care,
 He to his city sent as prisoners of the war ; 160
 Hopeless of ransom, and condemned to lie
 In durance, doomed a lingering death to die.

This done, he marched away with warlike sound,
 And to his Athens turned with laurels crowned,

Where happy long he lived, much loved, and more
renowned.

But in a tower, and never to be loosed,
The woful captive kinsmen are enclosed.

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May)

The young Emilia, fairer to be seen 170

Than the fair lily on the flowery green,

More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,

(For with the rosy colour strove her hue,)

Waked, as her custom was, before the day,

To do the observance due to sprightly May ;

For sprightly May commands our youth to keep

The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard sleep ;

Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves ;

Inspires new flames, revives extinguished loves.

In this remembrance Emily ere day 180

Arose, and dressed herself in rich array ;

Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair :

Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair :

A ribband did the braided tresses bind,

The rest was loose, and wantoned in the wind :

Aurora had but newly chased the night,

And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,

When to the garden-walk she took her way,

To sport and trip along in cool of day,

And offer maiden vows in honour of the May. 190

At every turn she made a little stand,

And thrust among the thorns her lily hand

To draw the rose ; and every rose she drew,

She shook the stalk, and brushed away the dew ;

Then party-coloured flowers of white and red

She wove, to make a garland for her head :

This done, she sung and carolled out so clear,

That men and angels might rejoice to hear ;

Even wondering Philomel forgot to sing,

And learned from her to welcome in the spring. 200
 The tower, of which before was mention made,
 Within whose keep the captive knights were laid,
 Built of a large extent, and strong withal,
 Was one partition of the palace wall ;
 The garden was enclosed within the square,
 Where young Emilia took the morning air.

It happened Palamon, the prisoner knight,
 Restless for woe, arose before the light,
 And with his jailor's leave desired to breathe
 An air more wholesome than the damps beneath. 210
 This granted, to the tower he took his way,
 Cheered with the promise of a glorious day ;
 Then cast a languishing regard around,
 And saw with hateful eyes the temples crowned
 With golden spires, and all the hostile ground.
 He sighed, and turned his eyes, because he knew
 'Twas but a larger jail he had in view ;
 Then looked below, and from the castle's height
 Beheld a nearer and more pleasing sight ;
 The garden, which before he had not seen, 220
 In spring's new livery clad of white and green,
 Fresh flowers in wide parterres, and shady walks between.
 This viewed, but not enjoyed, with arms across
 He stood, reflecting on his country's loss ;
 Himself an object of the public scorn,
 And often wished he never had been born.

At last (for so his destiny required),
 With walking giddy, and with thinking tired,
 He through a little window cast his sight,
 Though thick of bars, that gave a scanty light ; 230
 But even that glimmering served him to descry
 The inevitable charms of Emily.

Scarce had he seen, but, seized with sudden smart,
 Stung to the quick, he felt it at his heart ;
 Struck blind with overpowering light he stood,

Then started back amazed, and cried aloud.

Young Arcite heard ; and up he ran with haste,
 To help his friend, and in his arms embraced ;
 And asked him why he looked so deadly wan,
 And whence, and how, his change of cheer began ? 240
 Or who had done the offence ? “ But if,” said he,
 “ Your grief alone is hard captivity,
 “ For love of Heaven with patience undergo
 “ A cureless ill, since Fate will have it so :
 “ So stood our horoscope in chains to lie,
 “ And Saturn in the dungeon of the sky,
 “ Or other baleful aspect, ruled our birth,
 “ When all the friendly stars were under earth ;
 “ Whate'er betides, by Destiny 'tis done ;
 “ And better bear like men than vainly seek to shun.” 250
 “ Nor of my bonds,” said Palamon again,
 “ Nor of unhappy planets I complain ;
 “ But when my mortal anguish caused my cry,
 “ The moment I was hurt through either eye ;
 “ Pierced with a random shaft, I faint away,
 “ And perish with insensible decay :
 “ A glance of some new goddess gave the wound,
 “ Whom, like Actæon, unaware I found.
 “ Look how she walks along yon shady space ;
 “ Not Juno moves with more majestic grace, 260
 “ And all the Cyprian queen is in her face.
 “ If thou art Venus (for thy charms confess
 “ That face was formed in heaven), nor art thou less,
 “ Disguised in habit, undisguised in shape,
 “ O help us captives from our chains to scape !
 “ But if our doom be past in bonds to lie
 “ For life, and in a loathsome dungeon die,
 “ Then be thy wrath appeased with our disgrace,
 “ And show compassion to the Theban race,
 “ Oppressed by tyrant power ! ”—While yet he spoke, 270
 Arcite on Emily had fixed his look ;

The fatal dart a ready passage found
 And deep within his heart infix'd the wound ;
 So that if Palamon were wounded sore,
 Arcite was hurt as much as he or more :
 Then from his inmost soul he sighed, and said,
 " The beauty I behold has struck me dead :
 " Unknowingly she strikes, and kills by chance ;
 " Poison is in her eyes, and death in every glance.
 " Oh, I must ask ; nor ask alone, but move
 " Her mind to mercy, or must die for love." 280

Thus Arcite : and thus Palamon replies
 (Eager his tone, and ardent were his eyes,
 " Speakst thou in earnest, or in jesting vein ? "
 " Jesting," said Arcite, " suits but ill with pain."
 " It suits far worse," (said Palamon again,
 And bent his brows,) " with men who honour weigh,
 " Their faith to break, their friendship to betray ;
 " But worst with thee, of noble lineage born,
 " My kinsman, and in arms my brother sworn. 290
 " Have we not plighted each our holy oath,
 " That one should be the common good of both ;
 " One soul should both inspire, and neither prove
 " His fellow's hindrance in pursuit of love ?
 " To this before the Gods we gave our hands,
 " And nothing but our death can break the bands.
 " This binds thee, then, to farther my design,
 " As I am bound by vow to farther thine :
 " Nor canst, nor darest thou, traitor, on the plain
 " Appeach my honour, or thy own maintain, 300
 " Since thou art of my council, and the friend
 " Whose faith I trust, and on whose care depend.
 " And wouldst thou court my lady's love, which I
 " Much rather than release, would choose to die ?
 " But thou, false Arcite, never shalt obtain
 " Thy bad pretence ; I told thee first my pain :
 " For first my love began ere thine was born ;

" Thou as my council, and my brother sworn,
 " Art bound to assist my eldership of right,
 " Or justly to be deemed a perjured knight." 310

Thus Palamon : but Arcite with disdain
 In haughty language thus replied again :
 " Forsworn thyself : the traitor's odious name
 " I first return, and then disprove thy claim.
 " If love be passion, and that passion nurst
 " With strong desires, I loved the lady first.
 " Canst thou pretend desire, whom zeal inflamed
 " To worship, and a power celestial named ?
 " Thine was devotion to the blest above,
 " I saw the woman, and desired her love ; 320
 " First owned my passion, and to thee commend
 " The important secret, as my chosen friend.
 " Suppose (which yet I grant not) thy desire
 " A moment elder than my rival fire ;
 " Can chance of seeing first thy title prove ?
 " And knowst thou not, no law is made for love ?
 " Law is to things which to free choice relate ;
 " Love is not in our choice, but in our fate ;
 " Laws are not positive ; love's power we see
 " Is Nature's sanction, and her first decree. 330
 " Each day we break the bond of human laws
 " For love, and vindicate the common cause.
 " Laws for defence of civil rights are placed,
 " Love throws the fences down, and makes a general
 waste.
 " Maids, widows, wives without distinction fall ;
 " The sweeping deluge, love, comes on and covers all.
 " If then the laws of friendship I transgress,
 " I keep the greater, while I break the less ;
 " And both are mad alike, since neither can possess.
 " Both hopeless to be ransomed, never more 340
 " To see the sun, but as he passes o'er.
 " Like Æsop's hounds contending for the bone.

" Each pleaded right, and would be lord alone ;
 " The fruitless fight continued all the day,
 " A cur came by and snatched the prize away.
 " As courtiers therefore juggle for a grant,
 " And when they break their friendship, plead their want,
 " So thou, if Fortune will thy suit advance,
 " Love on, nor envy me my equal chance :
 " For I must love, and am resolved to try 350
 " My fate, or failing in the adventure die."

Great was their strife, which hourly was renewed,
 Till each with mortal hate his rival viewed :
 Now friends no more, nor walking hand in hand ;
 But when they met, they made a surly stand,
 And glared like angry lions as they passed,
 And wished that every look might be their last.

It chanced at length, Pirithous came to attend
 This worthy Theseus, his familiar friend :
 Their love in early infancy began, 360
 And rose as childhood ripened into man.
 Companions of the war ; and loved so well,
 That when one died, as ancient stories tell,
 His fellow to redeem him went to hell.

But to pursue my tale : to welcome home
 His warlike brother is Pirithous come :
 Arcite of Thebes was known in arms long since,
 And honoured by this young Thessalian prince.
 Theseus, to gratify his friend and guest,
 Who made our Arcite's freedom his request, 370
 Restored to liberty the captive knight,
 But on these hard conditions I recite :
 That if hereafter Arcite should be found
 Within the compass of Athenian ground,
 By day or night, or on whate'er pretence,
 His head should pay the forfeit of the offence.
 To this Pirithous for his friend agreed,
 And on his promise was the prisoner freed.

Unpleas'd and pensive hence he takes his way,
 At his own peril ; for his life must pay. 380
 Who now but Arcite mourns his bitter fate,
 Finds his dear purchase, and repents too late ?
 " What have I gain'd," he said, " in prison pent,
 " If I but change my bonds for banishment ?
 " And banished from her sight, I suffer more
 " In freedom than I felt in bonds before ;
 " Forced from her presence and condemn'd to live,
 " Unwelcome freedom and unthanked reprieve :
 " Heaven is not but where Emily abides,
 " And where she's absent, all is hell besides. 390
 " Next to my day of birth, was that accurst
 " Which bound my friendship to Pirithous first :
 " Had I not known that prince, I still had been
 " In bondage, and had still Emilia seen :
 " For though I never can her grace deserve,
 " 'Tis recompense enough to see and serve:
 " O Palamon, my kinsman and my friend,
 " How much more happy fates thy love attend !
 " Thine is the adventure, thine the victory,
 " Well has thy fortune turned the dice for thee : 400
 " Thou on that angel's face mayest feed thy eyes,
 " In prison, no ; but blissful paradise !
 " Thou daily seest that sun of beauty shine,
 " And lovest at least in love's extremest line.
 " I mourn in absence, love's eternal night ;
 " And who can tell but since thou hast her sight,
 " And art a comely, young, and valiant knight,
 " Fortune (a various power) may cease to frown,
 " And by some ways unknown thy wishes crown ?
 " But I, the most forlorn of human kind, 410
 " Nor help can hope nor remedy can find ;
 " But doomed to drag my loathsome life in care,
 " For my reward, must end it in despair.
 " Fire, water, air, and earth, and force of fates

" That governs all, and Heaven that all creates,
 " Nor art, nor Nature's hand can ease my grief ;
 " Nothing but death, the wretch's last relief :
 " Then farewell youth, and all the joys that dwell
 " With youth and life, and life itself, farewell !
 " But why, alas ! do mortal men in vain 420
 " Of Fortune, Fate, or Providence complain ?
 " God gives us what he knows our wants require,
 " And better things than those which we desire :
 " Some pray for riches ; riches they obtain ;
 " But, watched by robbers, for their wealth are slain ;
 " Some pray from prison to be freed ; and come,
 " When guilty of their vows, to fall at home ;
 " Murdered by those they trusted with their life,
 " A favoured servant or a bosom wife.
 " Such dear-bought blessings happen every day, 430
 " Because we know not for what things to pray.
 " Like drunken sots about the streets we roam :
 " Well knows the sot he has a certain home,
 " Yet knows not how to find the uncertain place,
 " And blunders on, and staggers every pace.
 " Thus all seek happiness ; but few can find,
 " For far the greater part of men are blind.
 " This is my case, who thought our utmost good
 " Was in one word of freedom understood :
 " The fatal blessing came : from prison free, 440
 " I starve abroad, and lose the sight of Emily."

Thus Arcite : but if Arcite thus deplore
 His sufferings, Palamon yet suffers more.
 For when he knew his rival freed and gone,
 He swells with wrath ; he makes outrageous moan ;
 He frets, he fumes, he stares, he stamps the ground ;
 The hollow tower with clamours rings around :
 With briny tears he bathed his fettered feet,
 And dropped all o'er with agony of sweat.
 " Alas ! " he cried, " I, wretch, in prison pine, 450

" Too happy rival, while the fruit is thine :
 " Thou livest at large, thou drawest thy native air,
 " Pleased with thy freedom, proud of my despair :
 " Thou mayest, since thou hast youth and courage
 joined,
 " A sweet behaviour and a solid mind,
 " Assemble ours, and all the Theban race,
 " To vindicate on Athens thy disgrace ;
 " And after (by some treaty made) possess
 " Fair Emily, the pledge of lasting peace.
 " So thine shall be the beauteous prize, while I
 " Must languish in despair, in prison die.
 " Thus all the advantage of the strife is thine,
 " Thy portion double joys, and double sorrows mine."

460

The rage of jealousy then fired his soul,
 And his face kindled like a burning coal :
 Now cold despair, succeeding in her stead,
 To livid paleness turns the glowing red.
 His blood, scarce liquid, creeps within his veins,
 Like water which the freezing wind constrains.

* * * *

Let Palamon oppressed in bondage mourn,
 While to his exiled rival we return.
 By this the sun, declining from his height,
 The day had shortened to prolong the night :
 The lengthened night gave length of misery,
 Both to the captive lover and the free :
 For Palamon in endless prison mourns,
 And Arcite forfeits life if he returns ;
 The banished never hopes his love to see,
 Nor hopes the captive lord his liberty.
 'Tis hard to say who suffers greater pains ;
 One sees his love, but cannot break his chains ;
 One free, and all his motions uncontrolled,
 Beholds whate'er he would but what he would behold.
 Judge as you please, for I will haste to tell

510

What fortune to the banished knight befel.
 When Arcite was to Thebes returned again,
 The loss of her he loved renewed his pain ;
 What could be worse than never more to see 520
 His life, his soul, his charming Emily ?
 He raved with all the madness of despair,
 He roared, he beat his breast, he tore his hair.
 Dry sorrow in his stupid eyes appears,
 For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears ;
 His eyeballs in their hollow sockets sink,
 Bereft of sleep ; he loathes his meat and drink ;
 He withers at his heart, and looks as wan
 As the pale spectre of a murdered man :
 That pale turns yellow, and his face receives 530
 The faded hue of sapless boxen leaves ;
 In solitary groves he makes his moan,
 Walks early out, and ever is alone ;
 Nor, mixed in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares,
 But sighs when songs and instruments he hears.
 His spirits are so low, his voiced is drowned,
 He hears as from afar, or in a swound,
 Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound :
 Uncombed his locks, and squalid his attire,
 Unlike the trim of love and gay desire ; 540
 But full of museful mopings, which presage
 The loss of reason and conclude in rage.

This when he had endured a year and more,
 Now wholly changed from what he was before,
 It happened once, that, slumbering as he lay,
 He dreamt (his dream began at break of day)
 That Hermes o'er his head in air appeared,
 And with soft words his drooping spirits cheered ;
 His hat adorned with wings disclosed the god,
 And in his hand he bore the sleep-compelling rod ; 550
 Such as he seemed, when, at his sire's command,
 On Argus' head he laid the snaky wand.

“ Arise,” he said, “ to conquering Athens go ;
 “ There Fate appoints an end of all thy woe.”

The fright awakened Arcite with a start,
 Against his bosom bounced his heaving heart ;
 But soon he said, with scarce recovered breath,
 “ And thither will I go to meet my death,
 “ Sure to be slain ; but death is my desire,
 “ Since in Emilia’s sight I shall expire.”

560

By chance he spied a mirror while he spoke,
 And gazing there beheld his altered look ;
 Wondering, he saw his features and his hue
 So much were changed, that scarce himself he knew.
 A sudden thought then starting in his mind,
 “ Since I in Arcite cannot Arcite find,
 “ The world may search in vain with all their eyes,
 “ But never penetrate through this disguise.
 “ Thanks to the change which grief and sickness give,
 “ In low estate I may securely live,
 “ And see, unknown, my mistress day by day.”

570

He said, and clothed himself in coarse array,
 A labouring hind in show ; then forth he went,
 And to the Athenian towers his journey bent :
 One squire attended in the same disguise,
 Made conscious of his master’s enterprise.
 Arrived at Athens, soon he came to court,
 Unknown, unquestioned in that thick resort :
 Proffering for hire his service at the gate,
 To drudge, draw water, and to run or wait.

580

So fair befel him, that for little gain
 He served at first Emilia’s chamberlain ;
 And, watchful all advantages to spy,
 Was still at hand, and in his master’s eye ;
 And as his bones were big, and sinews strong,
 Refused no toil that could to slaves belong ;
 But from deep wells with engines water drew,
 And used his noble hands the wood to hew.

He passed a year at least attending thus
 On Emily, and called Philostratus. 590
 But never was there man of his degree
 So much esteemed, so well beloved as he.
 So gentle of condition was he known,
 That through the court his courtsey was blown
 All think him worthy of a greater place,
 And recommend him to the royal grace ;
 That exercised within a higher sphere,
 His virtues more conspicuous might appear.
 Thus by the general voice was Arcite praised,
 And by great Theseus to high favour raised ; 600
 Among his menial servants first enrolled,
 And largely entertained with sums of gold :
 Besides what secretly from Thebes was sent,
 Of his own income and his annual rent.
 This well employed, he purchased friends and fame,
 But cautiously concealed from whence it came.
 Thus for three years he lived with large increase
 In arms of honour, and esteem in peace ;
 To Theseus' person he was ever near,
 And Theseus for his virtues held him dear. 610

BOOK II.

WHILE Arcite lives in bliss, the story turns
 Where hopeless Palamon in prison mourns.
 For six long years immured, the captive knight
 Had dragged his chains, and scarcely seen the light :
 Lost liberty and love at once he bore ;
 His prison pained him much, his passion more :
 Nor dares he hope his fetters to remove,
 Nor ever wishes to be free from love.

But when the sixth revolving year was run,
 And May within the Twins received the sun,

Were it by Chance, or forceful Destiny,
 Which forms in causes first whate'er shall be,
 Assisted by a friend one moonless night,
 This Palamon from prison took his flight :
 A pleasant beverage he prepared before
 Of wine and honey mixed, with added store
 Of opium ; to his keeper this he brought,
 Who swallowed unaware the sleepy draught,
 And snored secure till morn, his senses bound
 In slumber, and in long oblivion drowned. 20
 Short was the night, and careful Palamon
 Sought the next covert ere the rising sun.
 A thick-spread forest near the city lay,
 To this with lengthened strides he took his way,
 (For far he could not fly, and feared the day.)
 Safe from pursuit, he meant to shun the light,
 Till the brown shadows of the friendly night
 To Thebes might favour his intended flight.
 When to his country come, his next design
 Was all the Theban race in arms to join, 30
 And war on Theseus, till he lost his life,
 Or won the beauteous Emily to wife.
 Thus while his thoughts the lingering day beguile,
 To gentle Arcite let us turn our style ;
 Who little dreamt how nigh he was to care,
 Till treacherous fortune caught him in the snare.
 The morning-lark, the messenger of day,
 Saluted in her song the morning gray ;
 And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,
 That all the horizon laughed to see the joyous sight ; 40
 He with his tepid rays the rose renews,
 And licks the dropping leaves, and dries the dews ;
 When Arcite left his bed, resolved to pay
 Observance to the month of merry May,
 Forth on his fiery steed betimes he rode,
 That scarcely prints the turf on which he trod ;

At ease he seemed, and prancing o'er the plains,
 Turned only to the grove his horse's reins,
 The grove I named before, and, lighting there.
 A woodbind garland sought to crown his hair ; 50
 Then turned his face against the rising day,
 And raised his voice to welcome in the May :

“ For thee, sweet month, the groves green liveries wear,

“ If not the first, the fairest of the year :

“ For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours,

“ And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers :

“ When thy short reign is past, the feverish sun

“ The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.

“ So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,

“ Nor goats with venom'd teeth thy tendrils bite, 60

“ As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find

“ The fragrant greens I seek, my brows to bind.”

His vows addressed, within the grove he strayed,
 Till Fate or Fortune near the place conveyed

His steps where secret Palamon was laid.

Full little thought of him the gentle knight,

Who flying death had there concealed his flight,

In brakes and brambles hid, and shunning mortal sight ;

And less he knew him for his hated foe,

But feared him as a man he did not know. 70

But as it has been said of ancient years,

That fields are full of eyes and woods have ears,

For this the wise are ever on their guard,

For unforeseen, they say, is unprepared.

Uncautious Arcite thought himself alone,

And less than all suspected Palamon,

Who, listening, heard him, while he searched the grove,

And loudly sung his roundelay of love :

But on the sudden stopped, and silent stood,

(As lovers often muse, and change their mood ;) 80

Now high as heaven, and then as low as hell,

Now up, now down, as buckets in a well :

For Venus, like her day, will change her cheer,
 And seldom shall we see a Friday clear.
 Thus Arcite, having sung, with altered hue
 Sunk on the ground, and from his bosom drew
 A desperate sigh, accusing Heaven and Fate,
 And angry Juno's unrelenting hate :
 " Cursed be the day when first I did appear ;
 " Let it be blotted from the calendar, 90
 " Lest it pollute the month, and poison all the year.
 " Still will the jealous Queen pursue our race ?
 " Cadmus is dead, the Theban city was :
 " Yet ceases not her hate ; for all who come
 " From Cadmus are involved in Cadmus' doom.
 " I suffer for my blood : unjust decree,
 " That punishes another's crime on me.
 " In mean estate I serve my mortal foe,
 " The man who caused my country's overthrow.
 " This is not all ; for Juno, to my shame, 100
 " Has forced me to forsake my former name ;
 " Arcite I was, Philostratus I am.
 " That side of heaven is all my enemy :
 " Mars ruined Thebes ; his mother ruined me.
 " Of all the royal race remains but one
 " Besides myself, the unhappy Palamon,
 " Whom Theseus holds in bonds and will not free ;
 " Without a crime, except his kin to me.
 " Yet these and all the rest I could endure ;
 " But love's a malady without a cure : 110
 " Fierce love has pierced me with his fiery dart,
 " He fries within, and hisses at my heart,
 " Your eyes, fair Emily, my fate pursue ;
 " I suffer for the rest, I die for you.
 " Of such a goddess no time leaves record,
 " Who burned the temple where she was adored :
 " And let it burn, I never will complain,
 " Pleased with my sufferings, if you knew my pain."

At this a sickly qualm his heart assailed,
 His ears ring inward, and his senses failed. 120
 No word missed Palamon of all he spoke ;
 But soon to deadly pale he changed his look :
 He trembled every limb, and felt a smart,
 As if cold steel had glided through his heart ;
 Nor longer stayed, but starting from his place,
 Discovered stood, and showed his hostile face :

“ False traitor, Arcite, traitor to thy blood,
 “ Bound by thy sacred oath to seek my good,
 “ Now art thou found forsworn for Emily,
 “ And darest attempt her love, for whom I die 130
 “ So hast thou cheated Theseus with a wife,
 “ Against thy vow, returning to beguile
 “ Under a borrowed name : as false to me,
 “ So false thou art to him who set thee free.
 “ But rest assured, that either thou shalt die,
 “ Or else renounce thy claim in Emily ;
 “ For though unarmed I am, and, freed by chance,
 “ Am here without my sword or pointed lance,
 “ Hope not, base man, unquestioned hence to go,
 “ For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe.” 140

Arcite, who heard his tale and knew the man,
 His sword unsheathed, and fiercely thus began :
 “ Now, by the gods who govern heaven above,
 “ Wert thou not weak with hunger, mad with love,
 “ That word had been thy last ; or in this grove
 “ This hand should force thee to renounce thy love ;
 “ The surety which I gave thee I defy :
 “ Fool, not to know that love endures no tie,
 “ And Jove but laughs at lovers' perjury.
 “ Know, I will serve the fair in thy despite ; 150
 “ But since thou art my kinsman and a knight,
 “ Here, have my faith, to-morrow in this grove
 “ Our arms shall plead the titles of our love :
 “ And Heaven so help my right, as I alone

“ Will come, and keep the cause and quarrel both
unknown,

“ With arms of proof both for myself and thee ;

“ Choose thou the best, and leave the worst to me.

“ And, that at better ease thou mayest abide,

“ Bedding and clothes I will this night provide,

“ And needful sustenance, that thou mayest be

160

“ A conquest better won, and worthy me.”

His promise Palamon accepts ; but prayed,

To keep it better than the first he made.

Thus fair they parted till the morrow's dawn ;

For each had laid his plighted faith to pawn.

Oh Love ! thou sternly dost thy power maintain,

And wilt not bear a rival in thy reign !

Tyrants and thou all fellowship disdain.

This was in Arcite proved and Palamon :

Both in despair, yet each would love alone.

170

Arcite returned, and, as in honour tied,

His foe with bedding and with food supplied ;

Then, ere the day, two suits of armour sought,

Which borne before him on his steed he brought :

Both were of shining steel, and wrought so pure

As might the strokes of two such arms endure.

Now, at the time, and in the appointed place,

The challenger and challenged, face to face,

Approach ; each other from afar they knew,

And from afar their hatred changed their hue.

180

So stands the Thracian herdsman with his spear,

Full in the gap, and hopes the hunted bear,

And hears him rustling in the wood, and sees

His course at distance by the bending trees :

And thinks, Here comes my mortal enemy,

And either he must fall in fight, or I :

This while he thinks, he lifts aloft his dart ;

A generous chillness seizes every part,

The veins pour back the blood, and fortify the heart.

Thus pale they meet ; their eyes with fury burn ; 190
 None greets, for none the greeting will return ;
 But in dumb surliness each armed with care
 His foe professed, as brother of the war ;
 Then both, no moment lost, at once advance
 Against each other, armed with sword and lance :
 They lash, they foin, they pass, they strive to bore
 Their corslets, and the thinnest parts explore.
 Thus two long hours in equal arms they stood,
 And wounded wound, till both were bathed in blood
 And not a foot of ground had either got, 200
 As if the world depended on the spot.
 Fell Arcite like an angry tiger fared,
 And like a lion Palamon appeared :
 Or, as two boars whom love to battle draws,
 With rising bristles and with frothy jaws,
 Their adverse breasts with tusks oblique they wound ;
 With grunts and groans the forest rings around.
 So fought the knights, and fighting must abide,
 Till Fate an umpire sends their difference to decide.
 The power that ministers to God's decrees, 210
 And executes on earth what Heaven foresees,
 Called Providence, or Chance, or Fatal sway,
 Comes with resistless force, and finds or makes her way.
 Nor kings, nor nations, nor united power
 One moment can retard the appointed hour ;
 And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,
 Which happened not in centuries of years :
 For sure, whate'er we mortals hate or love
 Or hope or fear depends on powers above :
 They move our appetites to good or ill, 220
 And by foresight necessitate the will.
 In Theseus this appears, whose youthful joy
 Was beasts of chase in forests to destroy ;
 This gentle knight, inspired by jolly May,
 Forsook his easy couch at early day,

And to the wood and wilds pursued his way.
 Beside him rode Hippolyta the queen,
 And Emily attired in lively green,
 With horns and hounds and all the tuneful cry,
 To hunt a royal hart within the covert nigh : 230
 And, as he followed Mars before, so now
 He serves the goddess of the silver bow.
 The way that Theseus took was to the wood,
 Where the two knights in cruel battle stood :
 The laund on which they fought, the appointed place
 In which the uncoupled hounds began the chase.
 Thither forth-right he rode to rouse the prey,
 That shaded by the fern in harbour lay ;
 And thence dislodged, was wont to leave the wood
 For open fields, and cross the crystal flood. 240
 Approached, and looking underneath the sun,
 He saw proud Arcite and fierce Palamon,
 In mortal battle doubling blow on blow ;
 Like lightning flamed their fauchions to and fro,
 And shot a dreadful gleam ; so strong they strook,
 There seemed less force required to fell an oak.
 He gazed with wonder on their equal might,
 Looked eager on, but knew not either knight.
 Resolved to learn, he spurred his fiery steed
 With goring rowels to provoke his speed. 250
 The minute ended that began the race,
 So soon he was betwixt them on the place ;
 And with his sword unsheathed, on pain of life
 Commands both combatants to cease their strife ;
 Then with imperious tone pursues his threat :
 " What are you ? why in arms together met ?
 " How dares your pride presume against my laws,
 " As in a listed field to fight your cause,
 " Unasked the royal grant ; no marshal by,
 " As knightly rites require, nor judge to try ? " 260
 Then Palamon, with scarce recovered breath

Thus hasty spoke : " We both deserve the death,
 " And both would die ; for look the world around,
 " A pair so wretched is not to be found.
 " Our life's a load ; encumbered with the charge,
 " We long to set the imprisoned soul at large.
 " Now, as thou art a sovereign judge, decree
 " The rightful doom of death to him and me ;
 " Let neither find thy grace, for grace is cruelty.
 " Me first, O kill me first, and cure my woe ; 270
 " Then sheath the sword of justice on my foe ;
 " Or kill him first, for when his name is heard,
 " He foremost will receive his due reward.
 " Arcite of Thebes is he, thy mortal foe,
 " On whom thy grace did liberty bestow ;
 " But first contracted, that, if ever found
 " By day or night upon the Athenian ground,
 " His head should pay the forfeit ; see returned
 " The perjured knight, his oath and honour scorned :
 " For this is he, who, with a borrowed name 280
 " And proffered service, to thy palace came,
 " Now called Philostratus ; retained by thee,
 " A traitor trusted, and in high degree,
 " Aspiring to the bed of beauteous Emily.
 " My part remains, from Thebes my birth I own,
 " And call myself the unhappy Palamon.
 " Think me not like that man ; since no disgrace
 " Can force me to renounce the honour of my race.
 " Know me for what I am : I broke thy chain,
 " Nor promised I thy prisoner to remain : 290
 " The love of liberty with life is given,
 " And life it self the inferior gift of Heaven.
 " Thus without crime I fled ; but farther know,
 " I, with this Arcite, am thy mortal foe :
 " Then give me death, since I thy life pursue ;
 " For safeguard of thyself, death is my due.
 " More wouldst thou know ? I love bright Emily,

" And for her sake and in her sight will die :
 " But kill my rival too, for he no less
 " Deserves ; and I thy righteous doom will bless, 300
 " Assured that what I lose he never shall possess."
 To this replied the stern Athenian Prince,
 And sourly smiled : " In owning your offence
 " You judge your self, and I but keep record
 " In place of law, while you pronounce the word.
 " Take your desert, the death you have decreed ;
 " I seal your doom, and ratify the deed :
 " By Mars, the patron of my arms, you die."

He said ; dumb sorrow seized the standers-by.
 The Queen, above the rest, by nature good, 310
 (The pattern formed of perfect womanhood)
 For tender pity wept : when she began,
 Through the bright quire the infectious virtue ran.
 All dropt their tears, even the contended maid ;
 And thus among themselves they softly said :
 " What eyes can suffer this unworthy sight !
 " Two youths of royal blood, renowned in fight,
 " The mastership of Heaven in face and mind,
 " And lovers, far beyond their faithless kind :
 " See their wide streaming wounds ; they neither came 320
 " From pride of empire nor desire of fame :
 " Kings fight for kingdoms, madmen for applause ;
 " But love for love alone, that crowns the lover's cause."
 This thought, which ever bribes the beauteous kind,
 Such pity wrought in every lady's mind,
 They left their steeds, and prostrate on the place,
 From the fierce King implored the offenders' grace.

He paused a while, stood silent in his mood ;
 (For yet his rage was boiling in his blood :)
 But soon his tender mind the impression felt, 330
 (As softest metals are not slow to melt
 And pity soonest runs in gentle minds :)
 Then reasons with himself ; and first he finds

His passion cast a mist before his sense,
 And either made or magnified the offence.
 Offence? Of what? To whom? Who judged the
 cause?

The prisoner freed himself by Nature's laws ;
 Born free, he sought his right ; the man he freed
 Was perjured, but his love excused the deed :
 Thus pondering, he looked under with his eyes 340
 And saw the women's tears, and heard their
 cries,

Which moved compassion more ; he shook his head,
 And softly sighing to himself he said :

“ Curse on the unpardoning prince, whom tears can
 draw

“ To no remorse, who rules by lion's law ;
 “ And deaf to prayers, by no submission bowed,
 “ Rends all alike, the penitent and proud ! ”
 At this with look serene he raised his head ;
 Reason resumed her place, and passion fled :
 Then thus aloud he spoke :—“ The power of Love, 350
 “ In earth, and seas, and air, and heaven above,
 “ Rules, unresisted, with an awful nod,
 “ By daily miracles declared a god ;
 “ He blinds the wise, gives eye-sight to the blind ;
 “ And moulds and stamps anew the lover's mind.
 “ Behold that Arcite, and this Palamon,
 “ Freed from my fetters, and in safety gone,
 “ What hindered either in their native soil
 “ At ease to reap the harvest of their toil ?
 “ But Love, their lord, did otherwise ordain, 360
 “ And brought them, in their own despite again,
 “ To suffer death deserved ; for well they know
 “ 'Tis in my power, and I their deadly foe.
 “ The proverb holds, that to be wise and love,
 “ Is hardly granted to the gods above.

*

*

*

*

" To this remembrance, and the prayers of those
 " Who for the offending warriors interpose,
 " I give their forfeit lives, on this accord,
 " To do me homage as their sovereign lord ;
 " And as my vassals, to their utmost might,
 " Assist my person and assert my right."

390

This freely sworn, the knights their grace obtained ;
 Then thus the King his secret thought explained :

" If wealth or honour or a royal race,
 " Or each or all, may win a lady's grace,
 " Then either of you knights may well deserve
 " A princess born ; and such is she you serve :

* * * *

" Now hear the award, and happy may it prove
 " To her, and him who best deserves her love.
 " Depart from hence in peace, and free as air,
 " Search the wide world, and where you please repair ;
 " But on the day when this returning sun
 " To the same point through every sign has run,
 " Then each of you his hundred knights shall bring
 " In royal lists, to fight before the king ;
 " And then the knight, whom Fate or happy Chance
 " Shall with his friends to victory advance,
 " And grace his arms so far in equal fight,
 " From out the bars to force his opposite,
 " Or kill, or make him recreant on the plain,
 " The prize of valour and of love shall gain ;
 " The vanquished party shall their claim release,
 " And the long jars conclude in lasting peace.
 " The charge be mine to adorn the chosen ground,
 " The theatre of war, for champions so renowned ;
 " And take the patron's place of either knight.
 " With eyes impartial to behold the fight ;
 " And Heaven of me so judge as I shall judge aright.
 " If both are satisfied with this accord,
 " Swear by the laws of knighthood on my sword."

410

420

Who now but Palamon exults with joy ?
 And ravished Arcite seems to touch the sky.
 The whole assembled troop was pleased as well,
 Extolled the award, and on their knees they fell
 To bless the gracious King. The knights, with leave 430
 Departing from the place, his last commands receive ;
 On Emily with equal ardour look,
 And from her eyes their inspiration took :
 From thence to Thebes' old walls pursue their way,
 Each to provide his champions for the day.

It might be deemed, on our historian's part,
 Or too much negligence or want of art,
 If he forgot the vast magnificence
 Of royal Theseus, and his large expense.
 He first enclosed for lists a level ground, 440
 The whole circumference a mile around ;
 The form was circular ; and all without
 A trench was sunk, to moat the place about.
 Within, an amphitheatre appeared,
 Raised in degrees, to sixty paces reared :
 That when a man was placed in one degree,
 Height was allowed for him above to see.

Eastward was built a gate of marble white ;
 The like adorned the western opposite.
 A nobler object than this fabric was 450
 Rome never saw, nor of so vast a space :
 For, rich with spoils of many a conquered land,
 All arts and artists Theseus could command,
 Who sold for hire, or wrought for better fame ;
 The master-painters and the carvers came.
 So rose within the compass of the year
 An age's work, a glorious theatre.
 Then o'er its eastern gate was raised above
 A temple, sacred to the Queen of Love ;
 An altar stood below ; on either hand 460
 A priest with roses crowned, who held a myrtle wand.

The dome of Mars was on the gate opposed,
 And on the north a turret was enclosed
 Within the wall of alabaster white
 And crimson coral, for the Queen of Night,
 Who takes in sylvan sports her chaste delight.

Within these oratories might you see
 Rich carvings, portraitures, and imagery ;
 Where every figure to the life expressed
 The godhead's power to whom it was addressed.

470

* * * *

Theseus beheld the fanes of every god,
 And thought his mighty cost was well bestowed.
 So princes now their poets should regard ;
 But few can write, and fewer can reward.

660

The theatre thus raised, the lists enclosed,
 And all with vast magnificence disposed,
 We leave the monarch pleased, and haste to bring
 The knights to combat, and their arms to sing.

BOOK III.

THE day approached when Fortune should decide
 The important enterprise, and give the bride ;
 For now the rivals round the world had sought,
 And each his number, well appointed, brought.
 The nations far and near contend in choice,
 And send the flower of war by public voice ;
 That after or before were never known
 Such chiefs, as each an army seemed alone :
 Beside the champions, all of high degree,
 Who knighthood loved, and deeds of chivalry,
 Thronged to the lists, and envied to behold
 The names of others, not their own, enrolled.
 Nor seems it strange ; for every noble knight
 Who loves the fair, and is endued with might,

10

In such a quarrel would be proud to fight.
 There breathes not scarce a man on British ground
 (An isle for love and arms of old renowned)
 But would have sold his life to purchase fame,
 To Palamon or Arcite sent his name ;
 And had the land selected of the best, 20
 Half had come hence, and let the world provide the rest.
 A hundred knights with Palamon there came,
 Approved in fight, and men of mighty name ;
 Their arms were several, as their nations were,
 But furnished all alike with sword and spear.
 Some wore coat armour, imitating scale,
 And next their skins were stubborn shirts of mail ;
 Some wore a breastplate and a light jupon,
 Their horses clothed with rich caparison ;
 Some for defence would leathern bucklers use 30
 Of folded hides, and others shields of Pruce.
 One hung a pole-axe at his saddle-bow,
 And one a heavy mace to stun the foe ;
 One for his legs and knees provided well,
 With jambeux armed, and double plates of steel ;
 This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,
 And that a sleeve embroidered by his love.
 * * * *

In this array the war of either side
 Through Athens passed with military pride.
 At prime, they entered on the Sunday morn ;
 Rich tapestry spread the streets, and flowers the posts
 adorn.

The town was all a jubilee of feasts ;
 So Theseus willed in honour of his guests ;
 Himself with open arms the kings embraced,
 Then all the rest in their degrees were graced.
 No harbinger was needful for the night,
 For every house was proud to lodge a knight.

I pass the royal treat, nor must relate

The gifts bestowed, nor how the champions sate ;
 Who first, who last, or how the knights addressed
 Their vows, or who was fairest at the feast ;
 Whose voice, whose graceful dance did most surprise,
 Soft amorous sighs, and silent love of eyes.

The rivals call my Muse another way,
 To sing their vigils for the ensuing day.

'Twas ebbing darkness, past the noon of night :

And Phosphor, on the confines of the light, 120
 Promised the sun ; ere day began to spring,
 The tuneful lark already stretched her wing,
 And flickering on her nest, made short essays to sing.

When wakeful Palamon, preventing day,
 Took to the royal lists his early way,
 To Venus at her fane, in her own house, to pray.
 There, falling on his knees before her shrine,
 He thus implored with prayers her power divine :

“ Creator Venus, genial power of love,
 “ The bliss of men below, and gods above ! 130
 “ Beneath the sliding sun thou runst thy race,
 “ Dost fairest shine, and best become thy place.
 “ For thee the winds their eastern blasts forbear,
 “ Thy month reveals the spring, and opens all the year.
 “ Thee, Goddess, thee the storms of winter fly ;
 “ Earth smiles with flowers renewing, laughs the sky,
 “ And birds to lays of love their tuneful notes apply.

* * * *

“ If e'er Adonis touched thy tender heart, 147
 “ Have pity, Goddess, for thou knowest the smart !

* * * *

“ Nor ask I fame or honour of the field,
 “ Nor choose I more to vanquish than to yield : 160
 “ In my divine Emilia make me blest,
 “ Let Fate or partial Chance dispose the rest :
 “ Find thou the manner, and the means prepare ;
 “ Possession, more than conquest, is my care.

" Mars is the warrior's god ; in him it lies
 " On whom he favours to confer the prize ;
 " With smiling aspect you serenely move
 " In your fifth orb, and rule the realm of love.
 " The Fates but only spin the coarser clue,
 " The finest of the wool is left for you : 170
 " Spare me but one small portion of the twine,
 " And let the Sisters cut below your line :
 " The rest among the rubbish may they sweep,
 " Or add it to the yarn of some old miser's heap.
 " But if you this ambitious prayer deny,
 " (A wish, I grant, beyond mortality,)
 " Then let me sink beneath proud Arcite's arms,
 " And, I once dead, let him possess her charms."

Thus ended he ; then, with observance due,
 The sacred incense on her altar threw : 180
 The curling smoke mounts heavy from the fires ;
 At length it catches flame, and in a blaze expires ;
 At once the gracious Goddess gave the sign,
 Her statue shook, and trembled all the shrine :
 Pleased Palamon the tardy omen took ;
 For since the flames pursued the trailing smoke,
 He knew his boon was granted, but the day
 To distance driven, and joy adjourned with long delay.

Now morn with rosy light had streaked the sky,
 Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily ; 190
 Addressed her early steps to Cynthia's fane,
 In state attended by her maiden train,
 Who bore the vests that holy rites require,
 Incense, and odorous gums, and covered fire.

* * * *

The plenteous horns with pleasant mead they crown
 Nor wanted aught besides in honour of the Moon.
 When to the shrine approached, the spotless maid
 Had kindling fires on either altar laid ; 210
 (The rites were such as were observed of old,

By Statius in his Theban story told.)

Then kneeling with her hands across her breast,
Thus lowly she preferred her chaste request.

“ O Goddess, haunter of the woodland green,
“ To whom both heaven and earth and seas are seen ;
“ Queen of the nether skies, where half the year
“ Thy silver beams descend, and light the gloomy sphere ;
“ Goddess of maids, and conscious of our hearts,
“ So keep me from the vengeance of thy darts, 220
“ (Which Niobe's devoted issue felt,
“ When hissing through the skies the feathered deaths
 were dealt,)

“ As I desire to live a virgin life,
“ Nor know the name of mother or of wife.
“ Thy votress from my tender years I am,
“ And love, like thee, the woods and sylvan game.
“ Like death, thou knowest, I loathe the nuptial state,
“ And man, the tyrant of our sex, I hate,
“ A lowly servant, but a lofty mate ;
 * * * *

“ Now by thy triple shape, as thou art seen
“ In heaven, earth, hell, and everywhere a queen,
“ Grant this my first desire ; let discord cease,
“ And make betwixt the rivals lasting peace :
“ Quench their hot fire, or far from me remove
“ The flame, and turn it on some other love ;
“ Or if my frowning stars have so decreed,
“ That one must be rejected, one succeed,
“ Make him my lord, within whose faithful breast 240
“ Is fixed my image, and who loves me best.
“ But oh ! even that avert ! I choose it not,
“ But take it as the least unhappy lot.
“ A maid I am, and of thy virgin train ;
“ Oh ! let me still that spotless name retain !
“ Frequent the forests, thy chaste will obey,
“ And only make the beasts of chace my prey ! ”

The flames ascend on either altar clear,
 While thus the blameless maid addressed her prayer.
 When lo ! the burning fire that shone so bright 250
 Flew off, all sudden, with extinguished light,
 And left one altar dark, a little space,
 Which turned self-kindled, and renewed the blaze ;
 That other victor-flame a moment stood,
 Then fell, and lifeless left the extinguished wood ;
 For ever lost, the irrevocable light
 Forsook the blackening coals, and sunk to night :
 At either end it whistled as it flew,
 And as the brands were green, so dropped the dew,
 Infected as it fell with sweat of sanguine hue. 260

The maid from that ill omen turned her eyes,
 And with loud shrieks and clamours rent the skies ;
 Nor knew what signified the boding sign,
 But found the powers displeas'd, and feared the wrath
 divine.

Then shook the sacred shrine, and sudden light
 Sprung through the vaulted roof, and made the temple
 bright.

The Power, behold ! the Power in glory shone,
 By her bent bow and her keen arrows known ;
 The rest, a huntress issuing from the wood,
 Reclining on her cornel spear she stood. 270
 Then gracious thus began : “ Dismiss thy fear,
 “ And Heaven’s unchanged decrees attentive hear :
 “ More powerful gods have torn thee from my side,
 “ Unwilling to resign, and doomed a bride ;
 “ The two contending knights are weigh'd above ;
 “ One Mars protects, and one the Queen of Love :
 “ But which the man, is in the Thunderer’s breast ;
 “ This he pronounced, ‘ ’Tis he who loves thee best.’
 “ The fire that, once extinct, revived again
 “ Foreshows the love allotted to remain. 280
 “ Farewell ! ” she said, and vanished from the place ;

The sheaf of arrows shook, and rattled in the case.
 Aghast at this, the royal virgin stood,
 Disclaimed, and now no more a sister of the wood :
 But to the parting Goddess thus she prayed :
 " Propitious still, be present to my aid,
 " Nor quite abandon your once favoured maid."
 Then sighing she returned ; but smiled betwixt,
 With hopes, and fears, and joys with sorrows mixt.

The next returning planetary hour 290
 Of Mars, who shared the heptarchy of power,
 His steps bold Arcite to the temple bent,
 To adorn with pagan rites the power armipotent :
 Then prostrate, low before his altar lay,
 And raised his manly voice, and thus began to pray
 " Strong God of Arms, whose iron sceptre sways
 " The freezing North, and Hyperborean seas,
 " And Scythian colds, and Thracia's wintry coast,
 " Where stand thy steeds, and thou art honoured most :
 " There most, but everywhere thy power is known, 300
 " The fortune of the fight is all thy own :
 " Terror is thine, and wild amazement, flung
 " From out thy chariot, withers even the strong ;
 " And disarray and shameful rout ensue,
 " And force is added to the fainting crew.
 " Acknowledged as thou art, accept my prayer !
 " If aught I have achieved deserve thy care,
 " If to my utmost power with sword and shield
 " I dared the death, unknowing how to yield,
 " And falling in my rank, still kept the field ; 310
 " Then let my arms prevail, by thee sustained,
 " That Emily by conquest may be gained.

* * * *

" So may my arms with victory be blest,
 " I ask no more ; let Fate dispose the rest."

The champion ceased ; there followed in the close
 A hollow groan ; a murmuring wind arose ;

The rings of iron, that on the doors were hung,
 Sent out a jarring sound, and harshly rung : 360
 The bolted gates flew open at the blast,
 The storm rushed in, and Arcite stood aghast :
 The flames were blown aside, yet shone they bright,
 Fanned by the wind, and gave a ruffled light.

Then from the ground a scent began to rise,
 Sweet smelling as accepted sacrifice :
 This omen pleased, and as the flames aspire,
 With odorous incense Arcite heaps the fire :
 Nor wanted hymns to Mars or heathen charms :
 At length the nodding statue clashed his arms, 370
 And with a sullen sound and feeble cry,
 Half sunk and half pronounced the word of Victory.
 For this, with soul devout, he thanked the God,
 And, of success secure, returned to his abode.

These vows, thus granted, raised a strife above
 Betwixt the God of War and Queen of Love.
 She, granting first, had right of time to plead ;
 But he had granted too, nor would recede.
 Jove was for Venus, but he feared his wife,
 And seemed unwilling to decide the strife ; 380
 Till Saturn from his leaden throne arose,
 And found a way the difference to compose :
 Though sparing of his grace, to mischief bent,
 He seldom does a good with good intent.
 Wayward, but wise ; by long experience taught,
 To please both parties, for ill ends, he sought :
 For this advantage age from youth has won,
 As not to be outridden, though outrun.
 By fortune he was now to Venus trined,
 And with stern Mars in Capricorn was joined : 390
 Of him disposing in his own abode,
 He soothed the Goddess, while he gulled the God :
 " Cease, daughter, to complain, and stint the strife ;
 " Thy Palamon shall have his promised wife :

" And Mars, the lord of conquest, in the fight
 " With palm and laurel shall adorn his knight.
 " Wide is my course, nor turn I to my place
 " Till length of time, and move with tardy pace.
 " Man feels me, when I press the ethereal plains ;
 " My hand is heavy, and the wound remains. 400
 " Mine is the shipwreck in a watery sign ;
 " And in an earthy the dark dungeon mine.
 " Cold shivering agues, melancholy care,
 " And bitter blasting winds, and poisoned air,
 " Are mine, and wilful death, resulting from despair.
 " The throttling quinsey 'tis my star appoints,
 " And rheumatisms I send to rack the joints :
 " When churls rebel against their native prince,
 " I arm their hands, and furnish the pretence ;
 " And housing in the lion's hateful sign, 410
 " Bought senates and deserting troops are mine.
 " Mine is the privy poisoning ; I command
 " Unkindly seasons and ungrateful land.
 " By me king's palaces are pushed to ground,
 " And miners crushed beneath their mines are found.
 " 'Twas I slew Samson, when the pillared hall
 " Fell down, and crushed the many with the fall.
 " My looking is the sire of pestilence,
 " That sweeps at once the people and the prince.
 " Now weep no more, but trust thy grandsire's art, 420
 " Mars shall be pleased, and thou perform thy part.
 " 'Tis ill, though different your complexions are,
 " The family of Heaven for men should war."
 The expedient pleased, where neither lost his right ;
 Mars had the day, and Venus had the night.
 The management they left to Chronos' care.
 Now turn we to the effect, and sing the war.
 In Athens all was pleasure, mirth, and play,
 All proper to the spring, and sprightly May ;
 Which every soul inspired with such delight, 430

'Twas justing all the day, and love at night.
 Heaven smiled, and gladdened was the heart of man ;
 And Venus had the world as when it first began.
 At length in sleep their bodies they compose,
 And dreamt the future fight, and early rose.

Now scarce the dawning day began to spring,
 As at a signal given, the streets with clamours ring :
 At once the crowd arose ; confused and high,
 Even from the heaven was heard a shouting cry,
 For Mars was early up, and roused the sky. 44^o
 The gods came downward to behold the wars,
 Sharpening their sights, and leaning from their stars.
 The neighing of the generous horse was heard,
 For battle by the busy groom prepared :
 Rustling of harness, rattling of the shield,
 Clattering of armour, furbished for the field.
 Crowds to the castle mounted up the street ;
 Battering the pavement with their coursers' feet :
 The greedy sight might there devour the gold
 Of glittering arms, too dazzling to behold : 45^o
 And polished steel that cast the view aside,
 And crested morions, with their plummy pride.
 Knights, with a long retinue of their squires,
 In gaudy liveries march, and quaint attires.
 One laced the helm, another held the lance ;
 A third the shining buckler did advance.
 The courser pawed the ground with restless feet,
 And snorting foamed, and champed the golden bit.
 The smiths and armourers on palfreys ride,
 Files in their hands, and hammers at their side, 46^o
 And nails for loosened spears and thongs for shields
 provide.
 The yeomen guard the streets in seemly bands ;
 And clowns come crowding on, with cudgels in their
 hands.
 The trumpets, next the gate, in order placed,

Attend the sign to sound the martial blast :
 The palace yard is filled with floating tides,
 And the last comers bear the former to the sides.
 The throng is in the midst ; the common crew
 Shut out, the hall admits the better few.

In knots they stand, or in a rank they walk,
 Serious in aspect, earnest in their talk ;
 Factious, and favouring this or t'other side,
 As their strong fancies and weak reason guide ;

470

* * * *

All spoke as partial favour moved the mind ;
 And, safe themselves, at others' cost divined.

Waked by the cries, the Athenian chief arose,
 The knightly forms of combat to dispose ;
 And passing through the obsequious guards, he sate
 Conspicuous on a throne, sublime in state ;
 There, for the two contending knights he sent ;
 Armed cap-a-pe, with reverence low they bent ;
 He smiled on both, and with superior look
 Alike their offered adoration took.

490

The people press on every side to see
 Their awful Prince, and hear his high decree.
 Then signing to their heralds with his hand,
 They gave his orders from their lofty stand.
 Silence is thrice enjoined ; then thus aloud
 The king-at-arms bespeaks the knights and listening
 crowd :

“ Our sovereign lord has pondered in his mind
 “ The means to spare the blood of gentle kind ;
 “ And of his grace and inborn clemency
 “ He modifies his first severe decree,
 “ The keener edge of battle to rebate,
 “ The troops for honour fighting, not for hate.
 “ He wills, not death should terminate their strife,
 “ And wounds, if wounds ensue, be short of life ;
 “ But issues, ere the fight, his dread command,

500

" That slings afar, and poniards hand to hand,
 " Be banished from the field ; that none shall dare
 " With shortened sword to stab in closer war ;
 " But in fair combat fight with manly strength, 510
 " Nor push with biting point, but strike at length.
 " The turney is allowed but one career
 " Of the tough ash, with the sharp-grinded spear ;
 " But knights unhorsed may rise from off the plain,
 " And fight on foot their honour to regain ;
 " Nor, if at mischief taken, on the ground
 " Be slain, but prisoners to the pillar bound,
 " At either barrier placed ; nor, captives made,
 " Be freed, or armed anew the fight invade :
 " The chief of either side, bereft of life, 520
 " Or yielded to his foe, concludes the strife.
 " Thus dooms the lord : now valiant knights and young,
 " Fight each his fill, with swords and maces long."

The herald ends : the vaulted firmament
 With loud acclaims and vast applause is rent :
 Heaven guard a Prince so gracious and so good,
 So just, and yet so provident of blood !
 This was the general cry. The trumpets sound,
 And warlike symphony is heard around.
 The marching troops through Athens take their way, 530
 The great Earl-marshal orders their array.
 The fair from high the passing pomp behold ;
 A rain of flowers is from the windows rolled.
 The casements are with golden tissue spread,
 And horses' hoofs, for earth, on silken tapestry tread.
 The King goes midmost, and the rivals ride
 In equal rank, and close his either side.
 Next after these there rode the royal wife,
 With Emily, the cause and the reward of strife.
 The following cavalcade, by three and three, 540
 Proceed by titles marshalled in degree.
 Thus through the southern gate they take their way,

And at the list arrived ere prime of day.
 There, parting from the King, the chiefs divide,
 And wheeling east and west, before their many ride.
 The Athenian monarch mounts his throne on high,
 And after him the Queen and Emily :
 Next these, the kindred of the crown are graced
 With nearer seats, and lords by ladies placed.
 Scarce were they seated, when with clamours loud 550
 In rushed at once a rude promiscuous crowd,
 The guards, and then each other overbare,
 And in a moment throng the spacious theatre.
 Now changed the jarring noise to whispers low,
 As winds forsaking seas more softly blow,
 When at the western gate, on which the car
 Is placed aloft that bears the God of War,
 Proud Arcite entering armed before his train
 Stops at the barrier, and divides the plain.
 Red was his banner, and displayed abroad 560
 The bloody colours of his patron god.

At that self moment enters Palamon
 The gate of Venus, and the rising Sun ;
 Waved by the wanton winds, his banner flies,
 All maiden white, and shares the people's eyes.
 From east to west, look all the world around,
 Two troops so matched were never to be found ;
 Such bodies built for strength, of equal age,
 In stature sized ; so proud an equipage :
 The nicest eye could no distinction make, 570
 Where lay the advantage, or what side to take.

Thus ranged, the herald for the last proclaims
 A silence, while they answered to their names :
 For so the king decreed, to shun with care
 The fraud of musters false, the common bane of war.
 The tale was just, and then the gates were closed ;
 And chief to chief, and troop to troop opposed.
 The heralds last retired, and loudly cried,

“ The fortune of the field be fairly tried ! ”

At this the challenger, with fierce defy, 580
 His trumpet sounds ; the challenged makes reply :
 With clangour rings the field, resounds the vaulted sky.
 Their vizors closed, their lances in the rest,
 Or at the helmet pointed or the crest,
 They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,
 And spurring see decrease the middle space.
 A cloud of smoke envelopes either host,
 And all at once the combatants are lost :
 Darkling they join adverse, and shock unseen,
 Coursers with coursers justling, men with men : 590
 As labouring in eclipse, a while they stay,
 Till the next blast of wind restores the day.
 They look anew : the beauteous form of fight
 Is changed, and war appears a grisly sight.
 Two troops in fair array one moment showed,
 The next, a field with fallen bodies strowed :
 Not half the number in their seats are found ;
 But men and steeds lie grovelling on the ground.
 The points of spears are stuck within the shield,
 The steeds without their riders scour the field. 600
 The knights unhorsed, on foot renew the fight ;
 The glittering fauchions cast a gleaming light ;
 Hauberks and helms are hewed with many a wound,
 Out spins the streaming blood, and dyes the ground.
 The mighty maces with such haste descend,
 They break the bones, and make the solid armour bend.
 This thrusts amid the throng with furious force ;
 Down goes, at once, the horseman and the horse :
 That courser stumbles on the fallen steed,
 And, floundering, throws the rider o'er his head. 610
 One rolls along, a football to his foes ;
 One with a broken truncheon deals his blows.
 This halting, this disabled with his wound,
 In triumph led, is to the pillar bound,

Where by the king's award he must abide :
 There goes a captive led on t'other side.
 By fits they cease, and leaning on the lance,
 Take breath a while, and to new fight advance.

Full oft the rivals met, and neither spared
 His utmost force, and each forgot to ward : 620
 The head of this was to the saddle bent,
 The other backward to the crupper sent :
 Both were by turns unhorsed ; the jealous blows
 Fall thick and heavy, when on foot they close.
 So deep their fauchions bite, that every stroke
 Pierced to the quick ; and equal wounds they gave and
 took.

Borne far asunder by the tides of men,
 Like adamant and steel they met agen.

So when a tiger sucks the bullock's blood,
 A famished lion issuing from the wood 630
 Roars lordly fierce, and challenges the food.
 Each claims possession, neither will obey,
 But both their paws are fastened on the prey ;
 They bite, they tear ; and while in vain they strive,
 The swains come armed between, and both to distance
 drive.

At length, as Fate foredoomed, and all things tend
 By course of time to their appointed end ;
 So when the sun to west was far declined,
 And both afresh in mortal battle joined,
 The strong Emetrius came in Arcite's aid, 640
 And Palamon with odds was overlaid :
 For, turning short, he struck with all his might
 Full on the helmet of the unwary knight.
 Deep was the wound ; he staggered with the blow,
 And, turned him to his unexpected foe ;
 Whom with such force he struck, he felled him down,
 And cleft the circle of his golden crown.
 But Arcite's men, who now prevailed in fight,

Twice ten at once surround the single knight :
 O'erpowered at length, they force him to the ground, 650
 Unyielded as he was, and to the pillar bound ;
 And king Lycurgus, while he fought in vain
 His friend to free, was tumbled on the plain.

Who now laments but Palamon, compelled
 No more to try the fortune of the field,
 And, worse than death, to view with hateful eyes
 His rival's conquest, and renounce the prize !

The royal judge on his tribunal placed,
 Who had beheld the fight from first to last,
 Bad cease the war ; pronouncing from on high, 660
 Arcite of Thebes had won the beauteous Emily.
 The sound of trumpets to the voice replied,
 And round the royal lists the heralds cried,
 " Arcite of Thebes has won the beauteous bride ! "

The people rend the skies with vast applause ;
 All own the chief, when Fortune owns the cause.
 Arcite is owned even by the gods above,
 And conquering Mars insults the Queen of Love.
 So laughed he when the rightful Titan failed,
 And Jove's usurping arms in heaven prevailed. 670
 Laughed all the powers who favour tyranny,
 And all the standing army of the sky.
 But Venus with dejected eyes appears,
 And weeping on the lists distilled her tears ;
 Her will refused, which grieves a woman most,
 And, in her champion foiled, the cause of Love is lost.
 Till Saturn said :—" Fair daughter, now be still,
 " The blustering fool has satisfied his will ;
 " His boon is given ; his knight has gained the day,
 " But lost the prize ; the arrears are yet to pay. 680
 " Thy hour is come, and mine the care shall be
 " To please thy knight, and set thy promise free."

Now while the heralds run the lists around,
 And Arcite ! Arcite ! heaven and earth resound.

A miracle (nor less it could be called)
 Their joy with unexpected sorrow palled.
 The victor knight had laid his helm aside,
 Part for his ease, the greater part for pride ;
 Bareheaded, popularly low he bowed,
 And paid the salutations of the crowd ; 690
 Then spurring, at full speed, ran endlong on
 Where Theseus sat on his imperial throne ;
 Furious he drove, and upward cast his eye,
 Where, next the Queen, was placed his Emily ;
 Then passing, to the saddle-bow he bent ;
 A sweet regard the gracious virgin lent ;
 (For women, to the brave an easy prey,
 Still follow Fortune, where she leads the way :)
 Just then from earth sprung out a flashing fire,
 By Pluto sent, at Saturn's bad desire ; 700
 The startling steed was seized with sudden fright,
 And, bounding, o'er the pummel cast the knight ;
 Forward he flew, and pitching on his head,
 He quivered with his feet, and lay for dead.
 Black was his countenance in a little space,
 For all the blood was gathered in his face.
 Help was at hand ; they reared him from the ground,
 And from his cumbrous arms his limbs unbound ;
 Then lanced a vein, and watched returning breath ;
 It came, but clogged with symptoms of his death. 710
 The saddle-bow the noble parts had prest,
 All bruised and mortified his manly breast.
 Him still entranced, and in a litter laid,
 They bore from field, and to his bed conveyed.
 At length he waked ; and, with a feeble cry,
 The word he first pronounced was Emily.
 Mean time the King, though inwardly he mourned,
 In pomp triumphant to the town returned,
 Attended by the chiefs who fought the field,
 (Now friendly mixed, and in one troop compelled ;) 720

Composed his looks to counterfeited cheer,
 And bade them not for Arcite's life to fear.
 But that which gladdened all the warrior train,
 Though most were sorely wounded, none were slain.
 The surgeons soon despoiled them of their arms,
 And some with salves they cure, and some with charms ;
 Foment the bruises, and the pains assuage,
 And heal their inward hurts with sovereign draughts of
 sage.

The King in person visits all around,
 Comforts the sick, congratulates the sound ; 73°
 Honours the princely chiefs, rewards the rest,
 And holds for thrice three days a royal feast.
 None was disgraced ; for falling is no shame,
 And cowardice alone is loss of fame.
 The venturous knight is from the saddle thrown,
 But 'tis the fault of fortune, not his own ;
 If crowds and palms the conquering side adorn,
 The victor under better stars was born :
 The brave man seeks not popular applause,
 Nor, overpowered with arms, deserts his cause ; 74°
 Unshamed, though foiled, he does the best he can :
 Force is of brutes, but honour is of man.

Thus Theseus smiled on all with equal grace,
 And each was set according to his place ;
 With ease were reconciled the differing parts,
 For envy never dwells in noble hearts.
 At length they took their leave, the time expired,
 Well pleased, and to their several homes retired.
 Mean while, the health of Arcite still impairs ;
 From bad proceeds to worse, and mocks the leech's cares ; 75°
 Swoln is his breast ; his inward pains increase ;
 All means are used, and all without success.
 The clotted blood lies heavy on his heart,
 Corrupts, and there remains in spite of art ;
 Nor breathing veins nor cupping will prevail ;

All outward remedies and inward fail.

* * * *

For physic can but mend our crazy state,
 Patch an old building, not a new create.
 Arcite is doomed to die in all his pride, 770
 Must leave his youth, and yield his beauteous bride
 Gained hardly against right, and unenjoyed.
 When 'twas declared all hope of life was past,
 Conscience, that of all physic works the last,
 Caused him to send for Emily in haste.
 With her, at his desire, came Palamon ;
 Then, on his pillow raised, he thus begun :
 " No language can express the smallest part
 " Of what I feel, and suffer in my heart,
 " For you, whom best I love and value most ; 780
 " But to your service I bequeath my ghost ;
 " Which, from this mortal body when untied,
 " Unseen, unheard, shall hover at your side ;
 " Nor fright you waking, nor your sleep offend,
 " But wait officious, and your steps attend.
 " How I have loved, excuse my faltering tongue,
 " My spirit's feeble, and my pains are strong :
 " This I may say, I only grieve to die,
 " Because I lose my charming Emily.
 " To die, when Heaven had put you in my power ! 790
 " Fate could not choose a more malicious hour.
 " What greater curse could envious Fortune give,
 " Than just to die when I began to live !
 " Vain men ! how vanishing a bliss we crave ;
 " Now warm in love, now withering in the grave !
 " Never, O never more to see the sun !
 " Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone !
 " This fate is common ; but I lose my breath
 " Near bliss, and yet not blessed before my death.
 " Farewell ! but take me dying in your arms ; 800
 " 'Tis all I can enjoy of all your charms :

" This hand I cannot but in death resign ;
 " Ah, could I live ! but while I live 'tis mine.
 " I feel my end approach, and thus embraced
 " Am pleased to die ; but hear me speak my last :
 " Ah, my sweet foe ! for you, and you alone,
 " I broke my faith with injured Palamon.
 " But love the sense of right and wrong confounds ;
 " Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds.
 " And much I doubt, should Heaven my life prolong, 810
 " I should return to justify my wrong ;
 " For while my former flames remain within,
 " Repentance is but want of power to sin.
 " With mortal hatred I pursued his life,
 " Nor he nor you were guilty of the strife ;
 " Nor I, but as I loved ; yet all combined,
 " Your beauty and my impotence of mind,
 " And his concurrent flame that blew my fire,
 " For still our kindred souls had one desire.
 " He had a moment's right in point of time ; 820
 " Had I seen first, then his had been the crime.
 " Fate made it mine, and justified his right ;
 " Nor holds this earth a more deserving knight
 " For virtue, valour, and for noble blood,
 " Truth, honour, all that is comprised in good ;
 " So help me Heaven, in all the world is none
 " So worthy to be loved as Palamon.
 " He loves you too, with such a holy fire,
 " As will not, cannot, but with life expire :
 " Our vowed affections both have often tried, 830
 " Nor any love but yours could ours divide.
 " Then, by my love's inviolable band,
 " By my long suffering and my short command,
 " If e'er you plight your vows when I am gone,
 " Have pity on the faithful Palamon."

This was his last ; for Death came on amain,
 And exercised below his iron reign ;

Then upward to the seat of life he goes ;
 Sense fled before him, what he touched he froze :
 Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw, 840
 Though less and less of Emily he saw ;
 So, speechless, for a little space he lay ;
 Then grasped the hand he held, and sighed his soul away.

But whither went his soul ? let such relate
 Who search the secrets of the future state :
 Divines can say but what themselves believe ;
 Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative ;
 For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,
 And faith itself be lost in certainty.
 To live uprightly then is sure the best ; 850
 To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest.
 The soul of Arcite went where heathens go,
 Who better live than we, though less they know.

In Palamon a manly grief appears ;
 Silent he wept, ashamed to show his tears.
 Emilia shrieked but once ; and then, opprest
 With sorrow, sunk upon her lover's breast :
 Till Theseus in his arms conveyed with care
 Far from so sad a sight the swooning fair.
 'Twere loss of time her sorrow to relate ; 860
 Ill bears the sex a youthful lover's fate,
 When just approaching to the nuptial state :
 But, like a low-hung cloud, it rains so fast,
 That all at once it falls, and cannot last.
 The face of things is changed, and Athens now,
 That laughed so late, becomes the scene of woe
 Matrons and maids, both sexes, every state,
 With tears lament the knight's untimely fate.
 Not greater grief in falling Troy was seen
 For Hector's death ; but Hector was not then. 870
 Old men with dust deformed their hoary hair ;
 The women beat their breasts, their cheeks they tear.
 " Why wouldst thou go," with one consent they cry,

" When thou hadst gold enough, and Emily ? "

 Theseus himself, who should have cheered the grief

 Of others, wanted now the same relief :

 Old Ægeus only could revive his son,

 Who various changes of the world had known,

 And strange vicissitudes of human fate,

 Still altering, never in a steady state : 88o

 Good after ill and after pain delight,

 Alternate, like the scenes of day and night.

 Since every man who lives is born to die,

 And none can boast sincere felicity,

 With equal mind, what happens, let us bear,

 Nor joy, nor grieve too much for things beyond our care.

 Like pilgrims to the appointed place we tend ;

 The world's an inn, and death the journey's end.

 Even kings but play, and when their part is done,

 Some other, worse or better, mount the throne. 89o

 With words like these the crowd was satisfied ;

 And so they would have been, had Theseus died.

 But he, their King, was labouring in his mind

 A fitting place for funeral pomps to find,

 Which were in honour of the dead designed.

 And, after long debate, at last he found

 (As Love itself had marked the spot of ground,)

 That grove for ever green, that conscious laund,

 Where he with Palamon fought hand to hand ;

 That, where he fed his amorous desires 90o

 With soft complaints, and felt his hottest fires,

 There other flames might waste his earthly part,

 And burn his limbs, where love had burned his heart.

* * * *

I pass the rest ; the year was fully mourned,

 And Palamon long since to Thebes returned :

 When, by the Grecians' general consent,

 At Athens Theseus held his parliament ;

 Among the laws that passed, it was decreed,

That conquered Thebes from bondage should be freed ;
 Reserving homage to the Athenian throne, 1010
 To which the sovereign summoned Palamon.
 Unknowing of the cause, he took his way,
 Mournful in mind, and still in black array.

The monarch mounts the throne, and, placed on high,
 Commands into the court the beautiful Emily.
 So called, she came ; the senate rose, and paid
 Becoming reverence to the royal maid.

* * * *

And first, soft whispers through the assembly went ;
 With silent wonder then they watched the event ;
 All hushed, the King arose with awful grace ; 1020
 Deep thought was in his breast, and counsel in his face :
 At length he sighed, and having first prepared
 The attentive audience, thus his will declared :

“ The Cause and Spring of motion from above
 “ Hung down on earth the golden chain of Love ;
 “ Great was the effect, and high was his intent,
 “ When peace among the jarring seeds he sent ;
 “ Fire, flood, and earth and air by this were bound,
 “ And Love, the common link, the new creation crowned.
 “ The chain still holds ; for though the forms decay, 1030
 “ Eternal matter never wears away :
 “ The same first mover certain bounds has placed,
 “ How long those perishable forms shall last ;
 “ Nor can they last beyond the time assigned
 “ By that all-seeing and all-making Mind :
 “ Shorten their hours they may, for will is free,
 “ But never pass the appointed destiny.

* * * *

“ Since, then our Arcite is with honour dead,
 “ Why should we mourn, that he so soon is freed,
 “ Or call untimely what the gods decreed ?
 “ With grief as just a friend may be deplored,
 “ From a foul prison to free air restored.

" Ought he to thank his kinsman or his wife,
 " Could tears recall him into wretched life ?
 " Their sorrow hurts themselves ; on him is lost,
 " And worse than both, offends his happy ghost. 1110
 " What then remains, but after past annoy
 " To take the good vicissitude of joy ;
 " To thank the gracious gods for what they give,
 " Possess our souls, and, while we live, to live ?
 " Ordain we then two sorrows to combine,
 " And in one point the extremes of grief to join ;
 " That thence resulting joy may be renewed,
 " As jarring notes in harmony conclude.
 " Then I propose that Palamon shall be
 " In marriage joined with beauteous Emily ; 1120
 " For which already I have gained the assent
 " Of my free people in full parliament.
 " Long love to her has borne the faithful knight,
 " And well deserved, had Fortune done him right :
 " 'Tis time to mend her fault, since Emily
 " By Arcite's death from former vows is free ;
 " If you, fair sister, ratify the accord,
 " And take him for your husband and your lord,
 " 'Tis no dishonour to confer your grace
 " On one descended from a royal race ; 1130
 " And were he less, yet years of service past
 " From grateful souls exact reward at last.
 " Pity is Heaven's and yours ; nor can she find
 " A throne so soft as in a woman's mind."
 He said ; she blushed ; and as o'erawed by might,
 Seemed to give Theseus what she gave the knight.
 Then, turning to the Theban, thus he said :
 " Small arguments are needful to persuade
 " Your temper to comply with my command : "
 And speaking thus, he gave Emilia's hand. 1140
 Smiled Venus, to behold her own true knight
 Obtain the conquest, though he lost the fight.

* * * *

All of a tenor was their after-life,
 No day discoloured with domestic strife ;
 No jealousy, but mutual truth believed,
 Secure repose, and kindness undeceived.
 Thus Heaven, beyond the compass of his thought,
 Sent him the blessing he so dearly bought.

1150

So may the Queen of Love long duty bless,
 And all true lovers find the same success.

QUESTIONS ON "PALAMON AND ARCITE."

A.

1. Which of the two knights do you prefer ?
2. What change comes over both Palamon and Arcite when they first see Emily ?
3. Describe the lists prepared by Theseus for the great contest.
4. Give an account of the battle between the knights of Palamon and those of Arcite.
5. What is Arcite's excuse for loving Emily in spite of Palamon's prior claim ?

B.

1. Can you think of a modern solution to the quarrel between the two friends, which did not occur to them ?
2. In what circumstances do we first meet with Palamon and Arcite ? Why is this a peculiarly happy way of introducing them ?
3. Compare the ways in which Emily and Theseus are introduced to the reader.
4. What can you discover from this poem of the laws of knightly conduct ?
5. What part is played by the gods and fate in this story ?
6. Describe Emily as fully as you can. Would you guess from the poem that she was an Amazon and had fought side by side with Hippolyta in battle ? How ?
7. If this poem is regarded as portraying a struggle between two ideals, name them. Which conquers in the end ? Are they equally stressed in the story ?
8. How many reasons can you discover for the introduction of Pirithoüs ?
9. Show how all the omens are fulfilled in spite of being contradictory.
10. Chaucer changed the story of Boccaccio by making Palamon see Emily first. Why did he do this ?

C.

1. What are the requirements of an epic poem? Is this an epic? ^{3 and 13}

2. Can you discover any examples of long similes such as appear in the great classical epics? Do you remember examples in Milton or in any other poet? ^{3 and 13}

3. Would you be surprised to find that the story of Palamon and Arcite was introduced into the Theseus story during the Middle Ages? Why? Show how it belongs rather to the days of the *Morte d'Arthur* and of *Ivanhoe* than to those of the *Heroes* and other versions of classical legend. ^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13}

4. Can you explain why the original legend of Theseus would not have appealed to Chaucer's knight? ⁷

5. What is the character of Theseus according to Kingsley's *Heroes*? Is he like the Theseus of this poem? Compare again the Theseus of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Are there any points common to all? ^{2 and 7}

6. Compare the fights of Theseus in the *Heroes* with the adventures of Palamon and Arcite. Does the contest of the two knights bear any resemblance to that in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (Act I., Scene iii)? ^{2 and 7}

7. Read *Ivanhoe*, Chapter XII. Of what are you reminded? ⁸

8. Do you find anything in *Richard II* and *Ivanhoe* that suggests the period at which Palamon and Arcite were introduced into the "Theban story"? ^{2 and 8}

9. What kind of man was Chaucer's knight? Do you consider his story fitted to his character? Why?

10. Write a short account of the Age of Chivalry. What great writers in English have written of this age, and what do you learn from them? ^{9, 10 11 and 18}

11. Are you enabled now to explain any difference you have noticed between Theseus and the two knights?

*12. Is "The Two Noble Kinsmen" a good title? In what does that play differ from Palamon and Arcite?

*13. Discuss the treatment of Emily in the poem. Compare the part played by her with that of Elaine, Enid, or Lynette in Tennyson's *Idylls*. ¹¹

*14. Compare the part played by women in the *Morte d'Arthur*. Comment on the differences you discover. ⁹

*15. Has Dryden anywhere improved on the Knight's Tale? Where has he failed? Compare passages of various kinds. Find a pathetic, a dignified, a passionate and a descriptive passage.

*16. Why might you guess lines 411 and 672 of Book III. to be Dryden's and not Chaucer's?

THE COCK AND THE FOX, OR THE TALE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST

FROM CHAUCER.

THERE lived, as authors tell, in days of yore,
A widow, somewhat old, and very poor :
Deep in a cell her cottage lonely stood,
Well thatched, and under covert of a wood.

This dowager, on whom my tale I found,
Since last she laid her husband in the ground ;
A simple sober life in patience led,
And had but just enough to buy her bread ;
But huswifing the little Heaven had lent,
She duly paid a groat for quarter-rent ;
And pinched her belly, with her daughters two,
To bring the year about with much ado.

10

The cattle in her homestead were three sows,
An ewe called Mally, and three brinded cows.
Her parlour window stuck with herbs around
Of savoury smell ; and rushes strewed the ground.
A maple dresser in her hall she had,
On which full many a slender meal she made,
For no delicious morsel passed her throat ;
According to her cloth she cut her coat ;
No poignant sauce she knew, no costly treat,
Her hunger gave a relish to her meat ;
A sparing diet did her health assure ;
Or sick, a pepper posset was her cure.
Before the day was done, her work she sped,

20

And never went by candle-light to bed.
 With exercise she sweat ill humours out ;
 Her dancing was not hindered by the gout.
 Her poverty was glad, her heart content,
 Nor knew she what the spleen or vapours meant. 30

Of wine she never tasted through the year,
 But white and black was all her homely cheer ;
 Brown bread, and milk (but first she skimmed her bowls),
 And rashers of singed bacon on the coals.
 On holy days, an egg or two at most ;
 But her ambition never reached to roast.

A yard she had with pales enclosed about,
 Some high, some low, and a dry ditch without.
 Within this homestead lived, without a peer
 For crowing loud, the noble Chanticleer ; 40
 So hight her cock, whose singing did surpass
 The merry notes of organs at the mass.
 More certain was the crowing of a cock
 To number hours, than is an abbey-clock ;
 And sooner than the matin-bell was rung,
 He clapped his wings upon his roost, and sung :
 For when degrees fifteen ascended right,
 By sure instinct he knew 'twas one at night.
 High was his comb, and coral-red withal,
 In dents embattled like a castle wall ; 50
 His bill was raven-black, and shone like jet ;
 Blue were his legs, and orient were his feet ;
 White were his nails, like silver to behold,
 His body glittering like the burnished gold.
 This gentle cock, for solace of his life,
 Six misses had beside his lawful wife.

* * * *

But passing this as from our tale apart, 67
 Dame Partlet was the sovereign of his heart :

* * * *

And she, that was not only passing fair, 71
 But was withal discreet and debonair,

* * * *

At board and bed was affable and kind,
 According as their marriage-vow did bind,
 And as the Church's precept had enjoined.
 Even since she was a sennight old, they say,
 Was chaste and humble to her dying day,
 Nor chick nor hen was known to disobey. 80

By this her husband's heart she did obtain ;
 What cannot beauty joined with virtue gain ?
 She was his only joy, and he her pride :
 She, when he walked, went pecking by his side ;
 If, spurning up the ground, he sprung a corn,
 The tribute in his bill to her was borne.
 But oh ! what joy it was to hear him sing
 In summer, when the day began to spring,
 Stretching his neck, and warbling in his throat,
Solus cum sola then was all his note. 90

For in the days of yore, the birds of parts
 Were bred to speak, and sing, and learn the liberal arts.

It happed that perching on the parlour-beam
 Amidst his wives, he had a deadly dream,
 Just at the dawn ; and sighed and groaned so fast,
 As every breath he drew would be his last.
 Dame Partlet, ever nearest to his side,
 Heard all his piteous moan, and how he cried
 For help from gods and men ; and sore aghast
 She pecked and pulled, and wakened him at last. 100
 " Dear heart," said she, " for love of Heaven declare
 " Your pain, and make me partner in your care.
 " You groan, Sir, ever since the morning light,
 " As something had disturbed your noble spright."
 " And, Madam, well I might," said Chanticleer,
 " Never was shrovetide-cock in such a fear.
 " Even still I run all over in a sweat,

" My princely senses not recovered yet.
 " For such a dream I had of dire portent,
 " That much I fear my body will be shent ; 110
 " It bodes I shall have wars and woeful strife,
 " Or in a loathsome dungeon end my life.
 " Know, dame, I dreamt within my troubled breast,
 " That in our yard I saw a murderous beast,
 " That on my body would have made arrest.
 " With waking eyes I ne'er beheld his fellow ;
 " His colour was betwixt a red and yellow :
 " Tipped was his tail, and both his pricking ears,
 " With black ; and much unlike his other hairs :
 " The rest, in shape a beagle's whelp throughout, 120
 " With broader forehead, and a sharper snout :
 " Deep in his front were sunk his glowing eyes,
 " That yet, methinks, I see him with surprise.
 " Reach out your hand, I drop with clammy sweat,
 " And lay it to my heart, and feel it beat."
 " Now fie for shame," quoth she, " by Heaven above,
 " Thou hast for ever lost thy lady's love.
 " No woman can endure a recreant knight ;
 " He must be bold by day, and free by night :
 " Our sex desires a husband or a friend 130
 " Who can our honour and his own defend ;
 " Wise, hardy, secret, liberal of his purse ;
 " A fool is nauseous, but a coward worse :
 " No bragging coxcomb, yet no baffled knight.
 " How darest thou talk of love, and darest not fight ?
 " How darest thou tell thy dame thou art affereed ?
 " Hast thou no manly heart, and hast a beard ?
 " If aught from fearful dreams may be divined,
 " They signify a cock of dunghill kind.
 " All dreams, as in old Galen I have read, 140
 " Are from repletion and complexion bred ;
 " From rising fumes of indigested food,
 " And noxious humours that infect the blood :

" And sure, my lord, if I can read aright,
 " These foolish fancies you have had to-night
 " Are certain symptoms (in the canting style)
 " Of boiling choler and abounding bile ;
 " This yellow gall that in your stomach floats
 " Engenders all these visionary thoughts.
 " When choler overflows, then dreams are bred 150
 " Of flames, and all the family of red ;
 " Red dragons and red beasts in sleep we view,
 " For humours are distinguished by their hue.
 " From hence we dream of wars and warlike things,
 " And wasps and hornets with their double wings.
 " Cholera adust congeals our blood with fear ;
 " Then black bulls toss us, and black devils tear.
 " In sanguine airy dreams aloft we bound ;
 " With rheums oppressed, we sink in rivers drowned.
 " More I could say, but thus conclude my theme, 160
 " The dominating humour makes the dream.
 " Cato was in his time accounted wise,
 " And he condemns them all for empty lies.
 " Take my advice, and when we fly to ground,
 " With laxatives preserve your body sound,
 " And purge the peccant humours that abound.
 " I should be loth to lay you on a bier ;
 " And though there lives no 'pothecary near,
 " I dare for once prescribe for your disease,
 " And save long bills, and a damned doctor's fees. 170
 " Two sovereign herbs, which I by practice know,
 " Are both at hand (for in our yard they grow),
 * * * *
 " Eat these, and be, my lord, of better cheer ;
 " Your father's son was never born to fear."
 " Madam," quoth he, " grammercy for your care.
 " But Cato, whom you quoted, you may spare ;
 " 'Tis true, a wise and worthy man he seems,
 " And, as you say, gave no belief to dreams ;

" But other men of more authority,
 " And, by the immortal powers, as wise as he, 200
 " Maintain, with sounder sense, that dreams forebode ;
 " For Homer plainly says they come from God.
 " Nor Cato said it ; but some modern fool
 " Imposed in Cato's name on boys at school.
 " Believe me, Madam, morning dreams foreshow
 " The events of things, and future weal or woe :
 " Some truths are not by reason to be tried,
 " But we have sure experience for our guide.

[Chanticleer then tells two stories to illustrate his opinion.]

" Of Daniel you may read in holy writ, 380
 " Who, when the King his vision did forget,
 " Could word for word the wondrous dream repeat.
 " Nor less of patriarch Joseph understand,
 " Who by a dream enslaved the Egyptian land,
 " The years of plenty and of dearth foretold,
 " When for their bread their liberty they sold.
 " Nor must the exalted butler be forgot,
 " Nor he whose dream presaged his hanging lot.
 " And did not Cræsus the same death foresee,
 " Raised in his vision on a lofty tree ? 390
 " The wife of Hector, in his utmost pride,
 " Dreamt of his death the night before he died ;
 " Well was he warned from battle to refrain ;
 " But men to death decreed are warned in vain ;
 " He dared the dream, and by his fatal foe was slain.
 " Much more I know, which I forbear to speak,
 " For see, the ruddy day begins to break :
 " Let this suffice, that plainly I foresee
 " My dream was bad, and bodes adversity ;
 " But neither pills nor laxatives I like, 400
 " They only serve to make the well-man sick :
 " Of these his gain the sharp physician makes,
 " And often gives a purge, but seldom takes ;

“ They not correct, but poison all the blood,
 “ And ne'er did any but the doctors good.
 “ Their tribe, trade, trinkets, I defy them all,
 “ With every work of 'Pothecaries' Hall.

“ These melancholy matters I forbear ;
 “ But let me tell thee, Partlet mine, and swear,
 “ That when I view the beauties of thy face, 410
 “ I fear not death nor dangers nor disgrace ;
 “ So may my soul have bliss, as when I spy
 “ The scarlet red about thy partridge eye,
 “ While thou art constant to thy own true knight,
 “ While thou art mine, and I am thy delight,
 “ All sorrows at thy presence take their flight.
 “ For true it is, as *in principio*,
 “ *Mulier est hominis confusio*.
 “ Madam, the meaning of this Latin is,
 “ That woman is to man his sovereign bliss. 420

* * * *

“ Yet I have such a solace in my mind,
 “ That all my boding cares are cast behind,
 “ And even already I forget my dream.”
 He said, and downward flew from off the beam,
 For daylight now began apace to spring,
 The thrush to whistle, and the lark to sing.
 Then crowing clapped his wings, the appointed call,
 To chuck his wives together in the hall. 430

By this the widow had unbarred the door,
 And Chanticleer went strutting out before,
 With royal courage, and with heart so light,
 As showed he scorned the visions of the night.
 Now roaming in the yard, he spurned the ground,
 And gave to Partlet the first grain he found.

* * * *

He chucked again, when other corns he found,
 And scarcely deigned to set a foot to ground,

But swaggered like a lord about his hall,
 And his seven wives came running at his call.

'Twas now the month in which the world began,
 (If March beheld the first created man ;)
 And since the vernal equinox, the sun
 In Aries twelve degrees or more had run ;
 When, casting up his eyes against the light,
 Both month, and day, and hour, he measured right, 450
 And told more truly than the Ephemeris :
 For art may err, but nature cannot miss.

Thus numbering times and seasons in his breast,
 His second crowing the third hour confessed.
 Then turning, said to Partlet : “ Sec, my dear,
 “ How lavish nature has adorned the year ;
 “ How the pale primrose and blue violet spring,
 “ And birds essay their throats disused to sing :
 “ All these are ours ; and I with pleasure see
 “ Man strutting on two legs, and aping me : 460
 “ An unfledged creature of a lumpish frame,
 “ Endued with fewer particles of flame :
 “ Our dame sits cowering o'er a kitchen fire,
 “ I draw fresh air, and Nature's works admire ;
 “ And even this day in more delight abound,
 “ Than, since I was an egg, I ever found.”

The time shall come when Chanticleer shall wish
 His words unsaid, and hate his boasted bliss ;
 The crested bird shall by experience know,
 Jove made not him his masterpiece below, 470
 And learn the latter end of joy is woe.
 The vessel of his bliss to dregs is run,
 And Heaven will have him taste his other tun.

Ye wise, draw near, and hearken to my tale,
 Which proves that oft the proud by flattery fall ;
 The legend is as true, I undertake,
 As Tristram is, and Launcelot of the Lake :
 Which all our ladies in such reverence hold,

As if in Book of Martyrs it were told.

A fox full fraught with seeming sanctity,
 That feared an oath, but, like the devil, would lie ;
 Who looked like Lent, and had the holy leer,
 And durst not sin before he said his prayer ;
 This pious cheat, that never sucked the blood
 Nor chawed the flesh of lambs, but when he could,
 Had passed three summers in the neighbouring wood :
 And musing long whom next to circumvent,
 On Chanticleer his wicked fancy bent ;
 And in his high imagination cast
 By stratagem to gratify his taste.

The plot contrived, before the break of day,
 Saint Reynard through the hedge had made his way ;
 The pale was next, but, proudly, with a bound
 He leapt the fence of the forbidden ground :
 Yet fearing to be seen, within a bed
 Of coleworts he concealed his wily head ;
 Then skulked till afternoon, and watched his time,
 As murderers use, to perpetrate his crime.

* * * *

The tale I tell is only of a Cock,
 Who had not run the hazard of his life,
 Had be believed his dream, and not his wife :
 For women, with a mischief to their kind,
 Pervert with bad advice our better mind.
 A woman's counsel brought us first to woe,
 And made her man his Paradise forego,
 Where at heart's ease he lived, and might have been
 As free from sorrow as he was from sin.
 For what the devil had their sex to do,
 That, born to folly, they presumed to know,
 And could not see the serpent in the grass ?
 But I my self presume, and let it pass.

Silence in times of suffering is the best.
 'Tis dangerous to disturb a hornet's nest.

480

490

560

In other authors you may find enough,
 But all they say of dames is idle stuff.
 Legends of lying wits together bound,
 The Wife of Bath would throw 'em to the ground ; 570
 These are the words of Chanticleer, not mine,
 I honour dames, and think their sex divine.

Now to continue what my tale begun :
 Lay Madam Partlet basking in the sun,
 Breast-high in sand ; her sisters, in a row,
 Enjoyed the beams above, the warmth below.
 The cock, that of his flesh was ever free,
 Sung merrier than the mermaid in the sea ;
 And so befel, that as he cast his eye
 Among the coleworts on a butterfly, 580
 He saw false Reynard where he lay full low ;
 I need not swear he had no list to crow ;
 But cried, *cock, cock*, and gave a sudden start,
 As sore dismayed and frightened at his heart.
 For birds and beasts, informed by nature, know
 Kinds opposite to theirs, and fly their foe.
 So Chanticleer, who never saw a fox,
 Yet shunned him as a sailor shuns the rocks.

But the false loon, who could not work his will
 By open force, employed his flattering skill : 590
 " I hope, my lord," said he, " I not offend ;
 " Are you afraid of me that am your friend ?
 " I were a beast indeed to do you wrong,
 " I, who have loved and honoured you so long :
 " Stay, gentle Sir, nor take a false alarm,
 " For, on my soul, I never meant you harm !
 " I come no spy, nor as a traitor press,
 " To learn the secrets of your soft recess :
 " Far be from Reynard so profane a thought,
 " But by the sweetness of your voice was brought : 600
 " For, as I bid my beads, by chance I heard
 " The song as of an angel in the yard ;

“ A song that would have charmed the infernal gods,
 “ And banished horror from the dark abodes :
 “ Had Orpheus sung it in the nether sphere,
 “ So much the hymn had pleased the tyrant’s ear,
 “ The wife had been detained, to keep the husband there.

“ My lord, your sire familiarly I knew,
 “ A peer deserving such a son as you :
 “ He, with your lady-mother (whom Heaven rest), 610
 “ Has often graced my house, and been my guest :
 “ To view his living features does me good,
 “ For I am your poor neighbour in the wood ;
 “ And in my cottage should be proud to see
 “ The worthy heir of my friend’s family.

“ But since I speak of singing, let me say,
 “ As with an upright heart I safely may,
 “ That, save your self, there breathes not on the ground
 “ One like your father for a silver sound.
 “ So sweetly would he wake the winter-day, 620
 “ That matrons to the church mistook their way,
 “ And thought they heard the merry organ play.
 “ And he to raise his voice with artful care,
 “ (What will not beaux attempt to please the fair ?)
 “ On tiptoe stood to sing with greater strength,
 “ And stretched his comely neck at all the length ;
 “ And while he pained his voice to pierce the skies,
 “ As saints in raptures use, would shut his eyes,
 “ That the sound striving through the narrow throat,
 “ His winking might avail to mend the note. 630
 “ By this, in song he never had his peer,
 “ From sweet Cecilia down to Chanticleer.

* * * *

“ Besides, a famous monk of modern times
 “ Has left of cocks recorded in his rhymes, 640
 “ That of a parish-priest the son and heir
 “ (When sons of priests were from the proverb clear)
 “ Affronted once a cock of noble kind,

“ And either lamed his legs, or struck him blind ;
 “ For which the clerk his father was disgraced,
 “ And in his benefice another placed.
 “ Now sing, my lord, if not for love of me,
 “ Yet for the sake of sweet Saint Charity ;
 “ Make hills and dales, and earth and heaven, rejoice,
 “ And emulate your father’s angel-voice.” 650

The cock was pleased to hear him speak so fair,
 And proud beside, as solar people are ;
 Nor could the treason from the truth descry,
 So was he ravished with this flattery :
 So much the more, as from a little elf,
 He had a high opinion of him self ;
 Though sickly, slender, and not large of limb,
 Concluding all the world was made for him.

Ye princes, raised by poets to the gods,
 And Alexandered up in lying odes, 660
 Believe not every flattering knave’s report,
 There’s many a Reynard lurking in the court ;
 And he shall be received with more regard,
 And listened to, than modest truth is heard.

This Chanticleer, of whom the story sings,
 Stood high upon his toes, and clapped his wings ;
 Then stretched his neck, and winked with both his eyes,
 Ambitious as he sought the Olympic prize.
 But while he pained himself to raise his note,
 False Reynard rushed, and caught him by the throat. 670
 Then on his back he laid the precious load,
 And sought his wonted shelter of the wood ;
 Swiftly he made his way, the mischief done,
 Of all unheeded, and pursued by none.

* * * *

Not louder cries, when Ilium was in flames,
 Were sent to heaven by woful Trojan dames, 700
 When Pyrrhus tossed on high his burnished blade,
 And offered Priam to his father’s shade,

Than for the cock the widowed poultry made.
 Fair Partlet first, when he was borne from sight,
 With sovereign shrieks bewailed her captive knight :
 Far louder than the Carthaginian wife,
 When Asdrubal her husband lost his life,
 When she beheld the smouldering flames ascend,
 And all the Punic glories at an end :
 Willing into the fires she plunged her head, 710
 With greater ease than others seek their bed.
 Not more aghast the matrons of renown,
 When tyrant Nero burned the imperial town,
 Shrieked for the downfal in a doleful cry,
 For which their guiltless lords were doomed to die.

Now to my story I return again :

The trembling widow, and her daughters twain,
 This woful cackling cry with horror heard,
 Of those distracted damsels in the yard ;
 And starting up, beheld the heavy sight, 720
 How Reynard to the forest took his flight,
 And cross his back, as in triumphant scorn,
 The hope and pillar of the house was borne.

“ The Fox, the wicked fox,” was all the cry ;
 Out from his house ran every neighbour nigh :
 The Vicar first, and after him the crew,
 With forks and staves the felon to pursue.
 Ran Coll our dog, and Talbot with the band,
 And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand :
 Ran cow and calf, and family of hogs, 730
 In panic horror of pursuing dogs ;
 With many a deadly grunt and doleful squeak,
 Poor swine, as if their pretty hearts would break.
 The shouts of men, the women in dismay,
 With shrieks augment the terror of the day.
 The ducks, that heard the proclamation cried,
 And feared a persecution might betide,
 Full twenty mile from town their voyage take,

Obscure in rushes of the liquid lake.

The geese fly o'er the barn ; the bees in arms 740
 Drive headlong from their waxen cells in swarms.

* * * *

But see how Fortune can confound the wise,
 And, when they least expect it, turn the dice.
 The captive cock, who scarce could draw his breath,
 And lay within the very jaws of death ;
 Yet in this agony his fancy wrought,
 And fear supplied him with this happy thought :

“ Yours is the prize, victorious prince,” said he,
 “ The vicar my defeat and all the village see. 760
 “ Enjoy your friendly fortune while you may,
 “ And bid the churls that envy you the prey
 “ Call back the mongrel curs, and cease their cry :
 “ See, fools, the shelter of the wood is nigh,
 “ And Chanticleer in your despite shall die ;
 “ He shall be plucked and eaten to the bone.”

“ 'Tis well advised, in faith it shall be done ; ”

This Reynard said : but as the word he spoke,
 The prisoner with a spring from prison broke ;
 Then stretched his feathered fans with all his might, 770
 And to the neighbouring maple winged his flight.

Whom, when the traitor safe on tree beheld,
 He cursed the gods, with shame and sorrow filled :
 Shame for his folly ; sorrow out of time,
 For plotting an unprofitable crime :
 Yet, mastering both, the artificer of lies
 Renews the assault, and his last battery tries.

“ Though I,” said he, “ did ne'er in thought offend,
 “ How justly may my lord suspect his friend !
 “ The appearance is against me, I confess, 780
 “ Who seemingly have put you in distress ;
 “ You, if your goodness does not plead my cause,
 “ May think I broke all hospitable laws,
 “ To bear you from your palace-yard by might,

" And put your noble person in a fright ;
 " This, since you take it ill, I must repent,
 " Though Heaven can witness with no bad intent
 " I practised it, to make you taste your cheer
 " With double pleasure, first prepared by fear.
 " So loyal subjects often seize their prince, 790
 " Forced (for his good) to seeming violence,
 " Yet mean his sacred person not the least offence.
 " Descend ; so help me Jove, as you shall find,
 " That Reynard comes of no dissembling kind."
 " Nay," quoth the cock ; " but I beshrew us both
 " If I believe a saint upon his oath :
 " An honest man may take a knave's advice,
 " But idiots only may be cozened twice :
 " Once warned is well bewared ; not flattering lies
 " Shall soothe me more to sing with winking eyes, 800
 " And open mouth, for fear of catching flies.
 " Who blindfold walks upon a river's brim,
 " When he should see, has he deserved to swim !"
 " Better, Sir Cock, let all contention cease :
 " Come down," said Reynard, " let us treat of peace."
 " A peace with all my soul," said Chanticleer,
 " But, with your favour, I will treat it here :
 " And lest the truce with treason should be mixed,
 " 'Tis my concern to have the tree betwixt."

THE MORAL

In this plain fable you the effect may see
 'Of negligence, and fond credulity :
 And learn besides of flatterers to beware,
 Then most pernicious when they speak too fair.
 The cock and fox, the fool and knave imply ;
 The truth is moral, though the tale a lie.
 Who spoke in parables, I dare not say ;

But sure he knew it was a pleasing way
 Sound sense by plain example to convey.
 And in a heathen author we may find,
 That pleasure with instruction should be joined ;
 So take the corn, and leave the chaff behind.

QUESTIONS ON " THE COCK AND THE FOX "

A.

1. Give an account of the domestic relations of Partlet and Chanticleer.
2. What was Chanticleer's dream ? How did his wife explain it ?
3. Describe the methods by which Reynard brings about the fall of Chanticleer.
4. How does the cock escape ?

B.

1. Has this fable a moral ? What is it ? How important is the part played by the moral ?
2. Give an account of Partlet's character. Would she have been as easily deceived as her husband ? Why ?
3. Dryden has been accused of being a woman-hater. Would this poem support the accusation ? How ?
4. The science of early times was founded entirely on the authority of ancient writers. How is this ridiculed in this poem ?
5. What do you think of the poet's description of the scene which followed the cock's disappearance ?
6. How would you guess that Dryden had introduced lines 26-30, 480-485, 796 ? What light do the last two examples throw on his religious opinions ?
7. What part do human beings play in this poem ?
8. What is the meaning of " mock-heroic " ? Is the poet's treatment of the cock and the fox mock-heroic ? Illustrate your answer.
9. How do Dryden's religious opinions show themselves in the character of the fox ?

C.

1. Compare the Cock and the Fox with any other fables that you have read. In what does it chiefly differ ? ^{14, 15, 16 and 17}
2. Are fables usually as interesting ? Why ? Which of the other fabulists you know has written anything like this one ?
- *3. Has Chaucer made any other use of the beast fable ? Has Dryden ? Is the treatment the same ?

4. There is a great deal of argument in this poem. Is it well done? Has Dryden written any other argumentative verse?

5. Does this suggest any comment on his Preface, and other critical work? Which of his prose works illustrates this most remarkably?

6. What other examples are there in English of this form of writing? In what period are they found? ¹⁸

*7. Where else have you heard of humours? What changes have come about in the meaning of this word? Trace the development of the words choleric, bilious, and sanguine. ⁴

*8. Does the subject-matter of Dame Partlet's speech beginning at line 140 seem a strange one for poetry? Where else have you found a similar subject in poetry?

*9. Can you see the connection between "The dominating humour makes the dream," Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humour," and the medical ideas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Can you explain it?

THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON

IMITATED FROM CHAUCER, AND ENLARGED

A PARISH-PRIEST was of the pilgrim-train ;
An awful, reverend, and religious man.
His eyes diffused a venerable grace,
And charity it self was in his face.
Rich was his soul, though his attire was poor,
(As God had clothed his own ambassador ;) 10
For such on earth his blessed Redeemer bore.
Of sixty years he seemed ; and well might last
To sixty more, but that he lived too fast ;
Refined himself to soul, to curb the sense
And made almost a sin of abstinence.
Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
But such a face as promised him sincere.
Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity ;
Mild was his accent, and his action free.
With eloquence innate his tongue was armed ;
Though harsh the precept, yet the preacher charmed ;
For, letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky : 20
And oft with holy hymns he charmed their ears
(A music more melodious than the spheres) :
For David left him, when he went to rest,
His lyre ; and after him he sung the best.
He bore his great commission in his look :
But sweetly tempered awe, and softened all he spoke.

He preached the joys of Heaven and pains of Hell,
 And warned the sinner with becoming zeal ;
 But on eternal mercy loved to dwell.

He taught the gospel rather than the law ; 30
 And forced himself to drive, but loved to draw.
 For fear but freezes minds ; but love, like heat,
 Exhales the soul sublime, to seek her native seat.

To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard,
 Wrapped in his crimes, against the storm prepared ;
 But when the milder beams of mercy play,
 He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.

Lightnings and thunder (Heaven's artillery)
 As harbingers before the Almighty fly :
 Those but proclaim his style, and disappear ; 40
 The stiller sound succeeds, and God is there.

The tithes his parish freely paid he took ;
 But never sued, or cursed with bell and book.
 With patience bearing wrong, but offering none :
 Since every man is free to lose his own.

The country churls, according to their kind,
 (Who grudge their dues, and love to be behind,)
 The less he sought his offerings, pinched the more,
 And praised a priest contented to be poor.

Yet of his little he had some to spare, 50
 To feed the famished, and to clothe the bare :
 For mortified he was to that degree,
 A poorer than himself he would not see.

True priests, he said, and preachers of the word,
 Were only stewards of their sovereign Lord,
 Nothing was theirs ; but all the public store,
 Entrusted riches to relieve the poor ;
 Who, should they steal, for want of his relief,
 He judged himself accomplice with the thief.

Wide was his parish ; not contracted close 60
 In streets, but here and there a straggling house :
 Yet still he was at hand, without request,

To serve the sick, to succour the distressed ;
 Tempting, on foot, alone, without affright,
 The dangers of a dark tempestuous night.

All this the good old man performed alone,
 Nor spared his pains ; for curate he had none.
 Nor durst he trust another with his care ;
 Nor rode himself to Paul's, the public fair,
 To chaffer for preferment with his gold, 70
 Where bishoprics and sinecures are sold ;
 But duly watched his flock, by night and day ;
 And from the prowling wolf redeemed the prey,
 And hungry sent the wily fox away.

The proud he tamed, the penitent he cheered :
 Nor to rebuke the rich offender feared.
 His preaching much, but more his practice wrought ;
 (A living sermon of the truths he taught ;)
 For this by rules severe his life he squared :
 That all might see the doctrine which they heard. 80
 For priests, he said, are patterns for the rest ;
 (The gold of heaven, who bear the God impressed ;)
 But when the precious coin is kept unclean,
 The sovereign's image is no longer seen.
 If they be foul on whom the people trust,
 Well may the baser brass contract a rust.

The prelate for his holy life he prized ;
 The worldly pomp of prelacy despised.
 His Saviour came not with a gaudy show,
 Nor was his kingdom of the world below. 90
 Patience in want, and poverty of mind,
 These marks of church and churchmen he designed,
 And living taught, and dying left behind.
 The crown he wore was of the pointed thorn ;
 In purple he was crucified, not born.
 They who contend for place and high degree,
 Are not his sons, but those of Zebedee.

Not but he knew the signs of earthly power

Might well become Saint Peter's successor ;
 The holy father holds a double reign, 100
 The prince may keep his pomp, the fisher must be plain.

Such was the saint ; who shone with every grace,
 Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's face.
 God saw his image lively was expressed ;
 And his own work, as in creation, blessed.

The tempter saw him too with envious eye,
 And, as on Job, demanded leave to try.
 He took the time when Richard was deposed,
 And high and low with happy Harry closed,
 This Prince, though great in arms, the priest withstood, 110
 Near though he was, yet not the next of blood.
 Had Richard unconstrained resigned the throne,
 A King can give no more than is his own ;
 The title stood entailed, had Richard had a son.

Conquest, an odious name, was laid aside ;
 Where all submitted, none the battle tried.
 The senseless plea of right by Providence
 Was by a flattering priest invented since ;
 And lasts no longer than the present sway,
 But justifies the next who comes in play. 120

The people's right remains ; let those who dare
 Dispute their power, when they the judges are.

He joined not in their choice, because he knew
 Worse might and often did from change ensue.
 Much to himself he thought ; but little spoke ;
 And, undeprived, his benefice forsook.

Now, through the land, his cure of souls he stretched,
 And like a primitive apostle preached.
 Still cheerful ; ever constant to his call ;
 By many followed ; loved by most, admired by all, 130
 With what he begged, his brethren he relieved !
 And gave the charities himself received ;
 Gave, while he taught ; and edified the more,
 Because he showed by proof 'twas easy to be poor.

He went not with the crowd to see a shrine ;
But fed us by the way with food divine.

In deference to his virtues, I forbear
To show you what the rest in orders were :
This brilliant is so spotless, and so bright,
He needs no foil, but shines by his own proper light. 140

QUESTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON

A.

1. Give an account of the good Parson. What do you most admire in him ?
2. What was his method of dealing with sinners ?
3. In what way was he unlike other priests of his time ?

B.

1. Dryden calls it enlarged. Try to discover the additions. Verify your guesses from Chaucer if possible.
2. How does Dryden show himself a satirist, without deliberately attacking anyone ?
3. Is the Good Parson a good illustration of Dryden's method of modernisation ? Why ?
4. Chaucer gives him no political views ; why does Dryden make a change ? On what side does Dryden suggest that his sympathies lie ?
5. How has Dryden avoided the appearance of an attack on the magnificence of the Pope ? Have you noticed any other signs that he had become a Roman Catholic ?

C.

1. What use does Dryden make of historical characters in order to deal with the politics of his day ? What does he make use of in Absalom and Achitophel ?
2. Compare this poor parson with those created by Goldsmith. Explain any differences you may observe. ^{19 and 20}
3. Discover from Pepys's Diary his views about the clergy, and explain why he should have persuaded Dryden to modernise this part of the Canterbury Tales. ²¹
4. Compare the Good Parson and the Vicar of Bray.
5. What does Dryden say in his Preface about the Good Parson ? How can you tell from the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales that Chaucer invented the character with the same idea in his mind ?
6. Do you consider Dryden's description as fine as that of Chaucer ? What is the difference ? Compare some parallel passages to illustrate your answer. Does the change from " Poor parson " to " Good Parson " suggest any difference ?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Account for Dryden's choice from among the Canterbury Tales.
 2. Dryden says of Chaucer, "I found I had a soul congenial to his." How far is this true?

3. Account for the fact that the Fables were written at the end of Dryden's life. Do they differ from his other work? In what way?

4. Collect all the evidence you can from these Fables to show that Dryden was a satirist.

5. What is there here to suggest that Dryden was a dramatist? Should you imagine that he was more successful in comedy or tragedy?

*6. What is the metre of these poems? What are its virtues and failings? By what two methods does Dryden avoid monotony? Compare the writings of Pope and of Keats in the same metre. ^{5, 22, and 23}

*7. In which of the following kinds of verse does Dryden excel: lofty and passionate, reflective, descriptive, humorous, dignified, pathetic, conversational, argumentative, epigrammatic? Give examples. Does he appeal more to emotion or intellect?

8. Can you distinguish the influence of the town and the court in his verse? Does it help to account for the differences between Dryden and such poets as Wordsworth, Tennyson, Keats?

9. What evidence have you in Dryden's rimes for believing that his pronunciation was not exactly the same as our own?

10. Do you find any words or phrases which seem out of harmony with the subject? In which story does he seem most at home?

11. What other translation work has Dryden done? Compare this with his modernisations of Chaucer. Which of the tales shows signs of the influence of his translations?

NOTES

THE PREFACE

PAGE

- 2 *Waller and Denham* introduced the smooth regular couplet used by Dryden and perfected by Pope.
- 4 *Dr. Drake* wrote a reply to Collier's attack on the stage.
- 5 *Baptista Porta*—an Italian, famous for his knowledge of men's faces.
- 10 *Boccace*—Boccaccio, from whom Chaucer drew many of his stories, including the Knight's Tale. Dryden also modernised some of Boccaccio's stories in his Fables.

PALAMON AND ARCITE

BOOK I

LINE

- 7 *the warrior Queen*—Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons, conquered and married by Theseus.
- 547 *Hermes*—Mercury, the messenger of the Gods.
- 552 *Argus*—whose hundred eyes were closed in sleep by Hermes.

BOOK II

- 93 *Cadmus*—the legendary founder of Thebes.
- 104 *his mother*—Juno.
- 112 *fries*—burns.
- 235 *laund*—glade.
- 414 *bars*—palisades bounding the lists.

BOOK III

- 28 *juppon*—short leather jerkin.
- 35 *janbeux*—boots, or leg-armour.
- 103 *prime*—sunrise.
- 120 *Phosphor*—the morning star.
- 191 *Cynthia*—Diana.
- 212 *Statius*—from whose Thebaid Boccaccio took the Theseid, from which Chaucer took the Knight's Tale.
- 221 *Niobe*—whose children Diana destroyed.
- 270 *cornel*—cherry.
- 293 *armipotent*—powerful in arms.
- 297 *Hyperborean*—beyond the North.

- LINE
 389 *trined*—related (of heavenly bodies).
 426 *Chronos*—time.
 452 *morions*—helmets.
 516 *at mischief*—at disadvantage.
 603 *hauberck*—coat of mail.
 669 *the Titans*—giants who were driven out of heaven by Jove.
 749 *impairs*—grows worse.
 877 *Ægeus*—the father of Theseus.

THE COCK AND THE FOX

- 24 *posset*—hot drink of ale and milk, good for colds.
 104 *spright*—spirit.
 106 *shrovetide-cock*—shrovetide was the recognised time for cock-fighting and other persecutions of the kind.
 110 *shent*—injured or destroyed.
 140 *Galen*—a celebrated ancient physician.
 451 *Ephemeris*—the calendar.
 580 *coleworts*—cabbages.
 632 *sweet Cecilia*—St. Cecilia, who invented the organ.
 699 *Ilium*—Troy, captured and destroyed by the Greeks.
 707 *Asdrubal*—Hasdrubal, killed by the Romans on his way to relieve Hannibal. As a result Carthage was conquered.

LIST OF BOOKS SUGGESTED

The figures refer to those placed *after* questions headed "C."

- Chaucer : Poems.
Dryden : Poems, Plays and Essays.
¹ Lamb : Works (*Clarendon Press*).
² Shakespeare : Plays.
³ Milton : Paradise Lost (*The Socrates Booklets*).
⁴ Jonson : The Silent Woman (*The Socrates Booklets*).
⁵ T. H. Ward : English Poets.
⁶ Addison : Essays (*The Socrates Booklets*).
⁷ Kingsley : The Heroes.
⁸ Scott : Ivanhoe.
⁹ Malory : Morte d'Arthur.
¹⁰ Berners : Froissart.
¹¹ Tennyson : Idylls of the King.
¹² Fletcher and another : Two Noble Kinsmen (*The Shakespeare Apocrypha*).
¹³ Vergil : Æneid (Dryden's translation).
¹⁴ Æsop : Fables.
¹⁵ Henryson : Fables ("Medieval Scottish Poetry" in the *Abbotsford Series*).
¹⁶ Gay : Fables.
¹⁷ La Fontaine : Fables.
¹⁸ Spenser : Faerie Queene and Mother Hubberd's Tale.
¹⁹ Goldsmith : Vicar of Wakefield.
²⁰ Goldsmith : The Deserted Village.
²¹ Pepys : Diary.
²² Palgrave's Golden Treasury.
²³ Pope : Poems.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

