

GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA:

OR, THE

*Clerk of Oxford's* TALE.

FROM

BOCCACE, PETRARCH, and CHAUCER.

To which are added,

A Letter to a FRIEND, with the *Clerk of Oxford's*  
Character, &c.

The *Clerk of Oxford's* Prologue, from CHAUCER.

The *Clerk of Oxford's* Conclusion, from PETRARCH.

The Declaration, or *l'Envoy de CHAUCER a les Maris*  
*de notre Temps*, from CHAUCER.

The Words of our Host, from CHAUCER.

A Letter in *Latin*, from PETRARCH to BOCCACE.

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By GEORGE OGLE, *Esq;*

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D U B L I N :

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A  
L E T T E R  
T O A  
F R I E N D,  
With the P O E M of  
GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA.

*Dear M\*\*\*\*\**

**I**F your more serious occupations of the law have not intirely habituated your mind to a full contempt, and strong distaste, of all lighter studies; (the case of many grave practitioners of the bar) permit Me to indulge the hopes of furnishing You with matter for the amusement of an idle hour. Was my ability, to entertain You,  
A 2 equal

equal to my inclination, there is none, that would turn his thoughts with greater cheerfulness to that end ; as indeed, there is none, that can owe You greater obligations. In Me, it would be no more than a grateful acknowledgment, to give You some hours of relaxation, after the many days of trouble I have given You, on affairs not to be mentioned in this place. But all I can pretend to offer of that kind, will, I fear, rather require your further favour and indulgence. However, like some unfortunate client, who (by worse advice, than You would give him) has embark'd in a desperate suit ; as I am already in, I must go on, let Me get out as well as I can. I would even compound to hear, that the subject might tempt your Perusal on some vacant *Saturday* ; or that it had fill'd up the void (for it is not immoral) of some rainy *Sunday* ; at least, that it had been dipp'd into between the Terms ; or that perhaps it had been finish'd during the long vacation.

I can even figure You to my mind (allow Me here a little poetical licence) opening this packet, on the first receipt, with the face of a kind, and solicitous friend ; I can imagine, that I see You in expectation of finding inclos'd the Draught of some enormous Bill ; and can almost hear You say (thinking aloud)

This



This must be O——, *Heir at Law, Plaintiff*, against W——, *Doctor in Divinity, Defendant*. I can paint You, under no little surprise, when, after having turned to the Title-page, You discover the contents to be no more than some idle reports from *Parnassus*; and when You meet with the Name of *Griilda*, I can conceive You, not without concern, reflect; that any man of common-sense should waste his time and study on reviving an old Nurfery-Ballad.

But it will never be your practice, to condemn, unheard. Let Me therefore first put in my plea. The courts of APOLLO, as well as those of his Sister, your Patroness, are ruled by authorities and precedents. The Students of PARNASSUS are not without their poetical COKEs, on poetical LITTLETONs; and tho' not always to the purpose (as may happen sometimes at another Bar) They will argue as loud, and as strenuously insist, on the precedents and authorities of such, as have been esteemed most learned in their laws (for instance, on the reports of a BOCCACE, a PETRARCH, or a CHAUCER, as my ingenious friend on the Reports of a HOLT, a HALE, or a LUTWYCHE. Then thus I state my case.

Such of the Readers of this Poem as may not happen to be conversant with the Authors, by whom the Story of *GRISELDA* and *GUALTHERUS*, has been invented, amplify'd, or improv'd, may think it not unsatisfactory to receive such information as can be got, either from inquiry, or conjecture.

I am apt to imagine, that this Story had some foundation in History; but that passing thro' the hands of Monkish Writers (such as was our own *Geofrey of Monmouth*) the Obstinacy of *GUALTHERUS*, and the Patience of *GRISELDA*, have been highly illumined, if not greatly exaggerated; and that thence rising, from the Probable to the Marvellous, the Subject pass'd to some *Provençal* Bard; which language, after a long age of ignorance, was esteem'd the most polish'd of all the modern. Hence, as I suppose, the Story came down to *Boccace*; who, modelling it a-new, inserted it as the Last and Best of the Tales in his *Decameron*. Higher, than *Boccace*, We are not able to trace it, tho' We may well suppose its Original is higher; for *Boccace*, it is well known, was rarely the inventor, tho' always the improver, of the stories he relates. It was either from an error of the Press, or inadvertency of the Revisor, from a failure of the memory, or haste of transcribing,

transcribing, that We find these words in Mr. Dryden's Preface to his Fables, "*The Tale of GRIZZILD was the invention of Petrarch, by him sent to Boccace; from whom it came to Chaucer.*" Mr. Dryden, who is rarely guilty of mistakes of this kind, undoubtedly meant to say, "*That this Story was the invention of Boccace, by him sent to Petrarch; from whom it came to Chaucer.*" For that is the fact: and it is for this reason, that the *Latin Letter from Petrarch to Boccace*, which inclosed his translation, is here subjoin'd at the end of this Piece. The inquisitive, I imagin'd, might not be displeas'd with the perusal of that Letter; especially, as it is only to be found in the collection of that Author's compositions in *Latin*; which become every day more rare, and are to be seen only in the hands of the curious.

In this Letter, *Petrarch* acknowledges to *Boccace*, that he had long before received a copy of his *Decameron*; and strait apologizes, for having but lightly perus'd it; he only rode post thro' it, as he confesses (*festini viatoris in morem*) a negligence arising, partly from his own private occupations, and partly from the public distractions of the times. However, the Last of the Tales, of a turn (says *Petrarch*) very different from many that precede, wholly engag'd and ingross'd

grofs'd me. He affirms, that he could not forbear reading it, till he had got it by heart; and this at a time, when he was so incompass'd with cares, either public or private, that he had almost forgot himself, he took that method (as he adds) not only for the amusement of his own thoughts in private, but for the entertainment of his friends in company; with design to repeat the Story, with more ease and advantage, whenever the turn of conversation might permit him to introduce the subject. Having found by the general approbation of all who heard it, that he was not singular in his affection, at last he took up the resolution of turning it into *Latin*, that the beauties of it might not lie conceal'd, from such as were ignorant of the *Italian* Tongue. But here he hopes his indulgence, if not his approbation, for the liberties he had taken, in dressing his thoughts in his own words, and in making some few alterations and additions in the narration. For he professes to have follow'd that Rule laid down by *Horace* :

*Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus  
Interpres :*

All which, whether to the advantage or disadvantage of the Poem, or to use his own expression, *an mutata veste deformaverim, an fortassis*

*fortassis ornaverim, tu judica*, he submits to his judgment ; and desires that he will accept of this Dedication which he makes him of his own work ; which, he says, he is at a loss to know what to call ; whether a Fiction or History ; and seems \* desirous that *Boccace* would inform him, whether he was really the Inventor, or only the Improver of the Story.

After this Prefatory Discourse, the Translation follows ; which, to do justice to *Petrarch*, is, thro' the whole, much amplify'd, and much improv'd. He likewise begins it with a fuller description of the country of *Saluzzo*, and concludes it with an ampler moral, than *Boccace*. *Chaucer*, to whom this Story came from *Petrarch*, retains his moral, but throws the description into the *Clerk* of *Oxford's* Prologue ; he adds his Reason for it : which I shall the rather transcribe, in order to give the modern Reader a specimen of his language.

But for to tellin of this worthie man,  
That taught me this Tale as I first began ;

I say

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\* Had the answer of *Boccace* to this letter of *Petrarch* been preserv'd, we might have traced this Story to its original source ; for want of this, we can only rely on the most probable conjecture.

I say that he first with hie stile inditeth,  
 ('Ere he the bodie of his talè writeth)  
 A prohemie, in the whiche describeth he  
*Piemont*, and of *Saluce* the country,  
 And spekith of *Apennine* hillis hie,  
 That ben the boundis of *West Lombardie*,  
 And of mount *Vesulus* in specialle,  
 Whereas the *Po* out of a wellè smalle  
 Ytakith his first springing and his fours,  
 That estewarde ev're encrefith in his cours  
 To *Emelleward*, to *Ferare*, and *Venise*,  
 The whiche a long time werin to devise,  
 And tràily, as to my jugèment,  
 Methinkith it a thing impertinent,  
 Save that him life so convey his matere, &c.

But to return to *Petrarch*. After his translation, follows a sort of postscript, or continuation of his letter, which the editors of his *Latin* works have not sufficiently distinguished from the Story. Here *Petrarch* again renews the doubt he intimated before, whether this Story of *Boccace*, which he had taken the pains to translate, was truly historical, or merely fictitious. But waving the argument, he proceeds to tell him, what effect the meer perusal of it had on some of his particular friends. He says, that he submitted

mitted it to the judgment of an acquaintance at *Padua*, whom he commends, as a man of note and genius, *vir altissimi ingenij, multiplicisque notitiæ*. That this person had barely gone half way thro' it, when he was prevented by a flood of tears; that after a short pause, he resumed it again, but with all his recollection was not able to proceed: That upon this, he declined the rest, and put the copy (that of the translation) into the hands of one of his companions, a person of letters, whom he intreated to finish the Story. I took this, adds *Petrarch*, as an instance of his great good-nature, for in the whole circle of my acquaintance, I never knew a man of more humanity. Between his desire and incapacity of proceeding, he repeated these lines of the Satyrist by way of apology.

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*mollissima corda*

*Humano generi dare se natura fatetur.*  
*Quæ lachrymas dedit, hæc nostri: pars optima sensus.*

From this abstract of *Petrarch's* letter to *Boccace*, it plainly appears, that *Petrarch's* Tale of *GRISELDA* and *GUALTHERUS* is a translation in *Latin*, from that first publish'd in *Italian* by *Boccace*. How *Chaucer* came to take it up at a third hand, that is, after *Boccace* and *Petrarch*, is our next subject of inquiry. And here let Me first observe that

*Petrarch*

*Petrarch* was so delighted with the Story, that he got it by heart, with a view of repeating it in company, for the entertainment of his friends. This, he seems to say, was his constant method; and hence it may be concluded, that he had repeated it to many, and might have repeated it to *Chaucer*. At last he resolv'd, for the benefit of those, who were not conversant in the *Italian*, to turn it into a language more lasting and universal, with an intention to perpetuate the singular beauties he found in that Story, to all men of letters; after having mentioned what happened to his friend at *Padua*, he talks a little lower, in the same epistle, of having shov'd it to a friend at *Verona*; of all which, I make no other use than to show, that *Petrarch* was so taken with the design of this tale, that as well before, as after he had translated it, he made it his usual custom to communicate it to his friends; and among these I may venture to name *Chaucer*. This last assertion may seem to require some proof.

Here give Me leave to observe, that *Chaucer* had no sooner quitted the university, than he went early abroad on his travels. He was even of an age, at his return, to enter himself (as we now say) of the *Temple*. After this, he got footing at court; and after that; he not only cross'd the seas again, but was absolutely



absolutely intrusted by *Edward* III. with several foreign Negotiations; and some of these, which make more particularly to our subject, were even in *Italy*. Let us first grant, that there is a possibility the two Poets, the *English* and the *Italian*, were not unknown to each other, when *Chaucer* went first abroad; add to this, that *Chaucer* is said to have attended the duke of *Clarence* at his marriage with the daughter of the duke of *Milan*, where *Paulus Jovius* directly says *Petrarch* was present. This was in the Year 1368, the 43<sup>d</sup> of the reign of *Edward* III. And let us give further allowance, for the embassy, on which *Chaucer* was afterwards sent, in the 46<sup>th</sup> year of the same reign, to treat with the doge and senate of *Genoa*; this supposed acquaintance will then seem not improbable. And I must further observe, that the date of *Petrarch's* letter to *Boccace* is in the year 1373, subsequent to *Chaucer's* last embassy to *Italy*. From all which, I hope you will indulge me with one conjecture; if I should presume that the person of so much humanity, whom *Petrarch* mentions to have seen at *Padua*, may be taken for our very *Chaucer*. I think the words which *Chaucer* puts into the *Clerk of Oxford's* mouth, are good grounds for this suggestion. For certainly in that particular our Author seems to hint at himself; it is his manner and his

way : He does it more strongly on other occasions. This is the passage.

I wolle you telle a Tale, whiche that I  
 Learnid at *Padow* of a worthy clerke,  
 As prev'd is by his wordes, and by his werke.  
 He is now dede, and nailid in his cheste,  
 I praye to God to send his soul good rest !  
 FRANCIS PETRARCH, the Laureate Poete, &c.

By what has been said, it is evident, that this Tale, take it either as a fact of history, or as a fiction of fable, has already pass'd through the hands of *Boccace*, *Petrarch*, and *Chaucer* ; that is, thro' the hands of three men of as great genius as ever appear'd in one age. *Boccace* may be suppos'd to have improv'd on those he follow'd ; *Petrarch* most certainly improv'd on him ; and our Countryman undeniably improv'd on them both. At the same time that I say this, I must ingenuously confess, that tho' upon the whole, I give the preference to *Chaucer's* manner of treating this story, yet, here and there, I thought he had omitted some beauties discernible in *Petrarch* ; and still think, there are others remaining in *Boccace*, which *Petrarch* has omitted. I have compared them one with the other ; and have endeavour'd to glean after them, and found  
 occasion

occasion rather to add than to diminish. So that should You pronounce Me guilty on the whole, I hope You will not condemn Me for sins of omission. Tho' *Chaucer* was my chief guide, I could not forbear consulting the other two; and if by this method the Story has receiv'd any improvement, I will fairly acknowledge (to apply with justice what a great Writer on a like occasion said out of modesty) That, I could have done nothing without their assistance; that, *Facile est inventis addere*, is no great commendation; and that, I am not so vain as to think I deserve a greater.

I shall not trouble You here with any account or defence of this kind of translation; Mr. *Dryden* has sufficiently establish'd the use and advantage of it, as far as it regards the modern *English* reader: But what is of greater prevalence and force, than any argument, he has proved and demonstrated it, by his own practice and example. For I hold Mr. *Dryden* to have been the first, who put the merit of *Chaucer* into its full and true light, by turning some of the *Canterbury Tales* into our language, as it is now refin'd, or rather as he himself refin'd it. This great Man, (whom I know to be your favourite, and therefore I will shelter myself the rather under his authority) assures us,

that he was imbolden'd the more to this undertaking, as he found, he had a soul congenial to *Chaucer*, and that he had been conversant in the same studies. It is certain, Mr. *Dryden* was every way qualified to say so much, for he has most happily acquitted himself of his charge. And I cannot forbear adding, in due veneration of that excellent Author, that it seems to Me a point, not easy to determine; in what his chief excellence consisted: whether in the Talents of Criticism, or Poetry; none, I think, will venture to say, that his judgment was inferior to his wit.

Treating of *Chaucer* (whom he puts on a footing of comparison in some instances with *Ovid*) he observes; that, among other excellencies, he was perfect master of the manners; under which name are to be comprehended the passions, and, in a larger sense, the descriptions of Persons, and their very Habits. For instance, I see, says Mr. *Dryden*, as distinctly before me all the Pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*, their humours, their features, and their very dresses, as if I had suppt'd with them at the *Tabbard* in *Southwark*.

This consideration might lead us into a large field of observation, were we to extend  
it,

it, from a survey of the persons introduc'd as relators merely of the Tales, to an examination of the various tempers and manners of mankind, as we find them more expressly delineated in the ampler designs of the tales these persons are made to relate. To compare his Characters with his Tales ; his Characters, are but sketches, of single pieces in miniature. His Tales, are complete compositions at full length. At present, I shall confine myself singly to his lesser draughts, I mean his Characters of the Pilgrims ; and these he touches with a hand so masterly ; that Mr. *Dryden* does not scruple to say, that they comprise, in one assemblage, the pictures of our Fore-fathers and Grand-dames ; just such as they were in the days of *Chaucer*. He adds, that their general Characters are still remaining in mankind ; and that they may be found in *England* in these times ; tho' they may be called by other names than those of Monks, and Friars, and Canons, and Lady Abesses, and Nuns. For human kind (says he) is ever the same ; and nothing is lost out of nature, tho' every thing may be chang'd.

As to the point of characterizing, at which *Chaucer* was most singularly happy ; You can name no Author even of antiquity, whether in the comic or in the satiric way,

equal, at least superior, to him. Give Me leave, only to throw together a few touches taken from his descriptions of the Pilgrims. *The Knight, or old Soldier* ; who, *tho'* that he was *worthy* (meaning a man of excessive bravery) yet was *wise* ! *The Squire* ; with locks curl'd, just *fresh* from the *press* ! *The Squire's Yeoman* ; so *smartly* equip'd in his *Coat and Hood of Green* ! *The Lady Priorefs* ; who *wept* if she saw a *Mouse* taken in a *Trap* ! *The Monk* ; a *bold Rider*, who had *many* an able *Horse* in his *Stable* ! *The Frier* ; who so *sweetly* heard *Confession*, and whose *Absolution* was so *pleasant* ! *The Merchant* ; who *reason'd* so *solemnly*, showing always the *increase* of his *Winning* ! *The Clerk of Oxford* ; who was a *great Philosopher*, yet had but little gold in his *coffer* ! *The Frankelin, or Country Gentleman* ; of *sanguine* complexion, whose table *dormant* stood always *ready cover'd* in his *hall* ! *The Haberdasher*, with the rest of the *London-Cits* ; whose *intellects* and *shapes* pronounced them each, an *Alderman* ! *The City Cook*, that attended the motions of the former ; who *well* could *know* a *draught* of *London-ale* ! *The Shipman, or Sailor* ; who *rode* as *well* as he *could* ! *The Wife of Bath* ; who *knew* so much of the *good old dance* ! *The good Parson* (this Character I am sure You must recollect, for it has been most beautifully moderniz'd by Mr. Dryden)

who

who was so *mortified* and *poor*, for he was *pious* and *learn'd*! The *Plowman*, Brother to the *Parson*; who *labour'd hard* to pay his *dues*! The *Miller*; who *knew well* to *steal corn*! The *Manciple*, or *Treasurer of the Temple*; so *wise* in *buying vittaille*, that he got a *good estate*! The *Reve*, or *Country Steward*; that could *much better* purchase than his *Lord*! The *Somner*, or *Apparitor*; who had got a few *school terms of Latin* by *rote*, which he *vended* like a *Parrot*! The *Pardoner*; with a *pillow-bear*, made of our *Lady's veil*! a *remnant* of the *sail* of *St. Peter's boat*! and a *viol* full of *pigs bones*, which he *sold* for the *relicks* of *saints*! The *Canon*; with head *dropping* like a *still*! And the *Canon's Yeoman*; with a *double wallet* on the *crupper* of his *horse*! To conclude, the *Doctor of Physic*; whose *study* was *little* in the *Bible*! And the *Serjeant at Law*; who *seemed* much *busier* than he *was*! All these, I say, are the *strokes* of no common *Genius*, but of a man perfectly conversant in the turns and foibles of human nature. Observe but his manner of throwing them in, and you will not think I exaggerate, if I say, these turns of satire, are not unworthy of *Persius*, *Juvenal*, or *Horace* himself. Before I cool upon this subject, I shall venture (as far as the ludicrous may hold comparison with the serious) to rank our *Chaucer* with whatever we have of  
greatest

greatest perfection in this Character of Painting ; I shall venture to rank him (making this allowance) either with *Salust* or *Clarendon* ; who in history are allowed to have been the greatest Masters of the Picturesque ; I mean the best Drawers of Characters. Even here some criticks will not allow that the persons, so described, are always consistent with themselves, at least that their actions are always conformable to the Characters given of them by their historians ; they will never be able to lay that charge to *Chaucer*. A fault, however, more applicable to *Clarendon* than to *Salust*.

For it was not to the distinguishing of Character from Character, that the excellence of *Chaucer* was confin'd ; he was equally master of introducing them properly on the stage ; and after having introduced them, of supporting them agreeably to the part they were formed to personate. In this he claims equal honour with the best comedians ; there is no admirer of *Plautus*, *Terence*, or *Aristophanes*, that will pretend to say, *Chaucer* has not equally, thro' his *Canterbury Tales*, supported his Characters. And all must allow, that the plan, by which he connects and unites his Tales, one with another, is well designed, and well executed. You will not think it loss of time, if I enter into it,  
so



so far as may be requisite to our present subject.

The scheme of the *Canterbury Tales* is this. *Chaucer* pretends, that intending to pay his devotions to the shrine of *Thomas a Becket*, he set up his horse at the *Tabbard-Inn* in *Southwark*. That he found in the inn a number of Pilgrims, who severally propos'd the same journey; and that they all agreed to sup together, and to set out the next morning on the same party. The supper being finished; the Landlord, a fellow of sense and drollery, conformable to his Character and Calling, makes them no disagreeable proposal. As this part of *Chaucer* has not yet been moderniz'd, You may not be displeased to see as much of it, as may conduce to our present purpose.

When now the rage of hunger was alay'd;  
And, what more joy'd our Host, our reck'ning paid.  
Thrice welcome (he began) both great and small!  
Bright lords and ladies fair! Thrice welcome all!  
Full many a noon has pass'd, full many a night,  
Since in this Inn appear'd so brave a fight.  
A braver, never with these eyes to see!  
Such guests! so full of honor and of glee!

Pain

Fain wou'd I raise your mirth, had I but skill ;  
 Or were my talent, equal to my will.  
 Yet let not the intent be wholly lost ;  
 I mean not here to please you at your cost.  
 'To *Canterbury*, early you proceed ;  
 And may the blisful Saint your wishes speed.  
 But if the good and bad you justly weigh,  
 Long must the road, and tedious seem the day ;  
 For 'tis but dull to travel, you must own,  
 Mute as a fish, and senseless as a stone.

Be mine, such luckless silence to prevent ;  
 Attend but my award with one consent.  
 For, by my father's body, long since dead ;  
 Mirth you shall have, at forfeit of my head :  
 If none, my wish too willfully withstands ;  
 In witness of your minds hold up your hands !

The company, without any reserve, agree  
 to abide by his decision ; upon which en-  
 couragement he lays down the law in this  
 manner.

Then thus our Host his speech renew'd again,  
 The point, ye nobles, take not in disdain.  
 The road to shorten, and deceive the day,  
 (For mirth makes mirth, and play gives rise to play!)  
 I will ;

[ xxiii ]

I will ; that each by turns two Stories tell,  
 Of strange adventures, which of old befel ;  
 One, e'er you reach Saint THOMAS' sacred shrine ;  
 And one, e'er you regain the *Tabbard* sign.  
 Then further, be it solemnly agreed ;  
 That he, that in his place shall best succeed :  
 Whose clofe is held most just, whose phrase most fit,  
 For profit or delight, for sense or wit.  
 His be a supper at the common cost ;  
 Here, in this host'ry, sitting by this post.  
 And more, to aid your sport, myself will ride,  
 And be at once your governor and guide ;  
 Content, the shar'd expences to maintain ;  
 Not grutchingly. Such company is gain.  
 But first enact ; that he that disobeyes  
 My will, the common charge, convicted pays.  
 This is my verdict. E'er we further go,  
 Pass sentence, one and all ! your Aye, or No !

The propofal passes *nemine contradicente*, to  
 the great fatisfaction of the Host.

Consent, from one and all, the question bore ;  
 And jointly, as our Host requir'd, we swore.  
 Nay more, we vote him in the Chair of State,  
 Sole umpire of the Tales we should relate.

Submits

[ xxiv ]

Submits in all to follow his advice,  
 We fix a supper at a stated price.  
 Pleas'd was our Host ; success improves design !  
 Pleas'd were the guests ; and loud they call'd for wine.  
 Smooth ev'ry brow, and easy ev'ry breast ;  
 Each took his cordial draught, and went to rest.

At break of day the Pilgrims set out, and  
 the Host obliges them to decide by lot who  
 should tell the first Tale.

Suffice, that on the Knight the forfeit fell ;  
 Or were it chance or fate. Who knows may tell.  
 Nor know we, nor can tell ; yet for the best  
 Suppose, it fortun'd. Glad were all the rest ;  
 As tho' not freed, yet of their burthen eas'd :  
 Nor seem'd the noble Knight in look displeas'd,  
 Or griev'd in thought : The noble Knight was wise ;  
 Whether concern he cover'd with disguise,  
 Or from experience had acquir'd content :  
 For care is vain, unless it can prevent.  
 If then, by me, the sport must be begun,  
 Thrice welcome lot (he said) not lost, but won !  
 Then, ride and listen (to the croud, he cry'd)  
 And, at the word, we listen, as we ride.  
 While, nor with vulgar speech, nor gesture rude,  
 This Tale of Love and Honour he pursu'd.

Here

Here follows the Story of PALEMON and ARCTITE, which Mr. *Dryden* has so happily modernized. The rest of the Pilgrims are summoned in their turns, as the jolly Host pleases to direct.

Thus much I thought necessary to premise, in order to show on what plan the *Canterbury Tales* were laid ; but I think I must not yet dismiss You, before I make You acquainted with the Character of the Master of the Ceremonies. Perhaps, on a country journey, You would not disrelish the hearty salutations of our honest Landlord.

But to return. Great joy our Host express'd,  
 Full heartily he welcom'd ev'ry guest,  
 And goodly cheer prepar'd with equal haste;  
 (He of two ills had rather pray than fast.)  
 Nor less, the plague or comfort of his life,  
 (Judge as ye list !) his busy-stirring wife.  
 Anon, was supper serv'd, and neatly dress'd,  
 In season ev'ry dish, and of the best.  
 Strong was the beer, with toast and nutmeg crown'd ;  
 Pure was the wine, and both went briskly round.  
 Frank was our Host. A comely man withal,  
 A marshal fit, for any noble hall,

C

Where

Where many a graceless page is left in charge.  
 Round was his body, nor more round than large !  
 His sturdy legs, tho' slow, just measure keep !  
 A fairer Bargees never trod the Cheap !  
 Tho' bold of speech ; yet not more bold than wife !  
 His wits awake, and watchful as his eyes !  
 Loud when he laugh'd ! and hearty when he spoke !  
 His voice, was mirth ! his very look, a joke !

Having given You a sketch of his plan, as far as it is introductory to the Tales ; I shall add a word in regard to his manner of interweaving these Tales, the one with the other ; so as to connect them together, and make, if I may use the expression, a compleat body of these separate parts, all consistent with his grand design. It was for this reason, that I thought it necessary to prefix, to the Story of *GRISELDA* and *GUALTHERUS*, the *Prologue* which goes before it in *Chaucer*, and likewise to subjoin, at the end, the *Moral*, the *Envoy*, and the *Words of our Host*, which follow : this specimen will sufficiently show his manner of connecting the whole. Between every Tale, something of the same nature is introduc'd ; which leads us insensibly from one to another, without perceiving the transition ; a circumstance that often shocks us in the perusal of  
*Ovid's*

*Ovid's Metamorphoses*, where we cannot always find the thread that unites one Story with another. Tho' *Boccace* has succeeded better than *Ovid* in this particular, I think him yet far inferior to our Author: the Characters of *Homer* in the *Iliad*, are not more clearly distinguished, than those of *Chaucer* in his *Canterbury Tales*. Mr. *Dryden* was justly delighted with his conduct on this occasion. He must (says he, speaking of *Chaucer*) have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, for 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 escap'd him. All his Pilgrims are severally distinguished, each from the other; not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies, and persons. *Baptista Porta* could not have describ'd 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. This was the opinion of the great Mr. *Dryden*, under whose wing I am proud to take shelter, like little *Teucer* beneath the shield of *Ajax*.

For You will not find more beauty in the execution of our Author's Tales, than in their position. At the entrance of the Poem You have their Characters distinctly drawn, and a Plan of the Comedy in which they stand for the *Dramatis Personæ*. Our Host, from the beginning to the end, is the projector and invivener of the whole; he is the *Prologue*, the *Epilogue*, and even the *Chorus* between the acts. I call'd him above a sort of Master of the Ceremonies, he plays the drole on every occasion, and acts the part not only of *Mercury*, but of *Momus*, in the *Jupiter Tragedian* of *Lucian*; or rather like that of *Silenus* in the *Cæsars* of *Julian*. To exemplify what I mean, I would only desire You to compare the Prologue of the *Clerk of Oxford* with his Character; and his Tale, with both; You will find them all of a piece. The same may be said of every other; but these are most to our present purpose. The Character is this.

A *Clerk* of *Oxford* next appear'd in sight,  
 Who spent on logic many a day and night.  
 Lank, as a rake, the steed on which he sat;  
 And, sooth to say, the man was nothing fat.  
 Of aspect sober, as of body lean;  
 Effect of contemplation more than spleen.

I follow



Hollow his vest, and thread-bare was his coat,  
 A Youth of worth, he look'd, tho' not of note.  
 For he, nor *benefice* had got, nor *cure*,  
 No *Patron*, yet so *worldly* to insure!  
 So *dextrous* yet, of BODY, or of FACE,  
 To *circumvent* no *Chaplain*, with his *Grace*;  
 Nor *fulsome* Dedication cou'd he write!  
*Drudge* for a *Dame*, or *pander* for a *Knight*!  
 Much rather had he range, beside his bed,  
 A score of Authors unadorn'd in red,  
 With ARISTOTLE, Champion of the Schools;  
 To mend his ways, by philosophic rules:  
 Then *basely* to a *vic'rage* owe his rise,  
 By *courting* folly, or by *flatt'ring* vice;  
 'Than *flourish* like a *Canon* in his STALL:  
 That Way, he held, was not to *rise*, but *fall*.  
 Nor wou'd he be the *Man*, for all his rent;  
 Nam'd you the *priest* of *Bray*! or *priest* of *Trent*!—

One search of Science, he forgot alone;  
 An useful search! the Philosophic Stone!  
 Hence, tho' his head much learned wealth might hold,  
 Yet held he, in his coffer, little gold.  
 And late, that stock a foreign journey drain'd,  
 Curious to see, what yet of ROME remain'd.

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Not, to the Dead, that he confin'd his looks,  
 The Living, he cou'd read, and Men with Books;  
 Yet most on Books, what he acquires, he spends,  
 From care of parents, or from love of friends!  
 And these, unbound or bound, his chambers strow,  
 A choice Collection, bought for Use, not Show!  
 There oft, in secret, pray'd the grateful Youth,  
 For those, that put him in the way of truth.  
 'That gave the means, just Precepts to instil;  
 Or taught him to distinguish Good from Ill.  
 Thus, grounded well, he study'd to proceed;  
 And not a word spoke more than there was need.  
 'Twas short or close, sententious or sublime,  
 And urg'd with modesty, and said in time.  
 For to instruct, he rather wish'd, than strow,  
 Willing to be improv'd, or to improve!  
 Still turn'd to moral virtue was his speech;  
 And gladly wou'd he learn, and gladly teach!

I was the more inclinable to add this  
 favourable Character of the *Clerk of Oxford*,  
 because it has been objected by some, that  
*Chaucer* has been most outrageously satirical  
 upon the Clergy. And yet there is another  
 Character of his, equally favourable; You  
 will readily recollect, that I mean that of the  
*good Parson*, so well reviv'd by Mr. *Dryden*:  
 which,

which, join'd with this, evidently proves, that the enmity of *Chaucer* was never rais'd, against the modest, the learned, the exemplary, and the virtuous, but against the impudent, the illiterate, the profligate, and vitious Sons of the Church. His Plan was a picture of human nature, with all her beauties and all her deformities. It was impossible for him to omit the Clergy, and yet compleat his design. In the age he wrote these were the most striking figures, some for virtue but more for vice. Accordingly he contrasts them ; indeed the opposites are not equal in number, but that was not his fault ; it was the fault of the times. The degeneracy of the church could furnish him, but with one *modest Clerk of Oxford*, and one *pious Parish-Priest*, in opposition to a *heavy Monk*, an *abandon'd Frier*, a *simple Abbeys*, a *knavish Somner* ; a *mountebank Pardoner*, and a *tricking Canon*. But let us not call this the prejudice, but the justice of the Author.

It may be objected, I must acknowledge, that *Chaucer* has been reported to have shown no great respect for the Clergy, by one act of violence, standing upon record, against him ; I mean the fine laid on him, for having beat a *Franciscan Frier* in *Fleetstreet* ; the action, I must confess, was somewhat irreverent ; yet might it be extenuated, taken  
only

only as an intemperance of youth ; for *Chaucer* was at that time a student of the *Temple* ; besides that from the general good opinion we may conceive of the man, and the general bad opinion we must conceive of the Religious of those times, it seems more than probable, that barring the sanctitude of his habit, the *Franciscan* might have merited the treatment.

We should find it however more easy to acquit him of another charge, at this time of Day ; viz. that of having strongly imbib'd the tenets of *Wickliffe*. For had those tenets of *Wickliffe* been encourag'd and improv'd ; the laity of *England*, I make no doubt, would not have borne so easily and so long the yoke of *Rome* ; nor would a Reformation in the Church have been postpon'd to the days of *Henry VIII*. The insolence, if not the treason of *THOMAS A BECKET* ; the avarice, if not the extortion of the conclave ; and the corruption, if not the ignorance of the Clergy, were sufficient motives to induce every man of sense and virtue to wish and attempt a change. But this is not a place to give You a state of the church, such as it was in *Chaucer's* days. I will only add, that notwithstanding that the priesthood of that age, was but meanly qualified to execute their own peculiar function ; yet these were  
the

the men, that found means, to obtrude themselves into all places of profit, or distinction ; they were in fact not only the Heads of the Church, but the Arms of the State.

Was it necessary, at this time of day, to add any thing, in order to extenuate the liberties our Author has taken with the Religious of his times, a short survey of the age in which he liv'd would furnish us with ample materials ; such as would raise the indignation of every Lover of his Country ; and every Advocate for Liberty : Were they but to reflect that it was then in the power of *one insolent Priest* to overthrow the measures of *one of the greatest Monarchs* that ever sat on the throne of *England*. A Monarch ! who had nothing in view, but the aggrandisement of his people, and the suppression of their enemies ! It is a subject, upon which, I must ingenuously confess, I cou'd run riot ; but I shall here chiefly confine myself to one instance ; and that, to the profession my friend has chose to follow, which if it be not even now fill'd with all that sagacity, and executed with all that integrity that he cou'd wish, yet, ought we greatly to rejoice, that so much of the practice and authority of the Courts of Justice has been wrested out of ecclesiastic hands.

To

To You, as to a gentleman of the bar, I would put this question; How would You bear to see (and the Man of Law, whom our *Chaucer* introduces as one of the Pilgrims, liv'd to see and bear it) An Archbishop of *Canterbury*, Lord Chancellor? The Parson of *Summerham*, Master of the Rolls? Or ten beneficed Priests, at one time, Masters in Chancery? I should be glad to know, how the city council would relish, the nomination of the Archdeacon of *Northampton*, as Chancellor of the Exchequer? Of the Parson of *Fenny Stanton*, as one of the Chamberlains of the Exchequer? Or the Dean of *St. Martin's le Grand*, not only as one of the Chamberlains of the Exchequer, but Privy-Purse, and Master of the Jewel-House, held, (as may be suppos'd) in commendam? Were you to go to court, how would You digest; The Parson of *Oundle*, as Master of the Wardrobe? A Priest, as Treasurer of *Ireland*? A Prebendary of *St. Martin's*, as Clerk of the Privy Seal? Or a Bishop of *Bath and Wells*, as Lord Treasurer of *England*? Yet this is but a sample of the times in which *Chaucer* liv'd. It is a subject I could enlarge upon with pleasure, but that I think it is time to dismiss You. It must likewise be a grateful reflection as well to the Laity, as to the Clergy of our days, to consider  
how

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how much the circumstances of Affairs are alter'd and settled for the better ; Now that, by the cloſer application of the Former to Temporal Matters, the Latter are left more at leiſure and liberty to purſue their Spiritual Call. Which Charge, that they may always decently fill, and piously execute, is the ſincere Wiſh, of

*Your Obliged Friend,*

*and Humble Servant,*

GEORGE OGLE.

PROLOGUE







# PROLOGUE

TO THE

## *Clerk of Oxford's* TALE.

By Mr. O G L E.

**M**Eantime our Host, the studious Youth, survey'd ;  
" You ride as coy and still as any maid,

" That sits, new marry'd, at the bridal board :

" What ! one whole day, and not one single word ?

" With some hard sophistry, I doubt, you strain, 5

" And a new world of logic fills your brain.

" But *Solemon*, in prose if not in Rhime,

" Declares, that all things have their place and time.

" Sir *Clerk of Oxford*, brighten up your face ;

" To study here, is out of time and place. 10

" Who joins in sport, (no matter what his coat,

" Or character, of note, or not of note !)

" Shou'd use his freedom, or relax his pride,

" And by the compact, he subscribes, abide.

" Then add your share of pleasantry and joke, 15

" And, as becomes a subject, bear the yoke.

D

" But

- " But preach not you, like starving *friar* in *Lent*,  
 " Numb'ring our sins, and damn, tho' we repent ;  
 " Transgressions, with omissions, old and new :  
 " Then sowse in hell, without a heav'n in view !   20  
 " Nor yet perplex your text ; this counsel keep  
 " In mind : For if you nod, we well may sleep !  
 " Tell us a Tale, but not of priests or popes !  
 " And spare your figures, and forbear your tropes !  
 " Keep these in store, to kings till you indite !   25  
 " Then, flourish ev'ry sentence that you write !  
 " Then, stretch your fancy ! Then, exalt your stile !  
 " Here, all we ask, is but to laugh or smile !  
 " But hold ! I bar all *Latin*, and all *Greek* !  
 " Speak plain, that we may know what 'tis you speak ! " 30  
     Mine Host, The worthy Scholar mild reply'd ;  
 As free from bookish spleen, as priestly pride.  
 " I bow beneath the rod ; allegiance pay ;  
 " And, far as innocence permits, obey.  
 " I but demand free liberty of voice ;   35  
 " Light is the tribute, that is giv'n by choice.  
 " A Tale I bring, but not from streets or stews,  
 " At *Padua* learnt, and of no vulgar muse.  
 " 'Tis what *Petrarch* in friendly converse taught.  
 " *Petrarch* ! who purely wrote, and nobly thought ! 40  
                                 " Whose

*the Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 39

- " Whose works and manners, delicate as sage,  
" Charm'd ev'ry sex and state, from youth to age.  
" This, shall his works, to future times, attest !  
" His manners are no more—with him they rest !  
" Illustrious Bard, with laurel'd honors crown'd ! 45  
" And, were it just thy boundless praise to bound,  
" Thou, Sun of *Italy* ! whose piercing light  
" Dispell'd the shade ! forbade it to be night !  
" Oh ! that on me thy rays had longer shone !  
" Too soon departed ! and too lately known ! 50  
" Now deep intomb'd the glorious Poet lies ;  
" To death a prey ! A lesson to the wife !  
" Far as a friend might yet correct a friend——  
" (Justly to blame, is justly to commend !)  
" High tho' I prize the work, and lov'd the man ; 55  
" His *Præm* seems too copious for his plan.  
" Ill wou'd the lengthen'd prologue suit your taste ;  
" You'd think it disproportion'd, and misplac'd.  
" And much I err, indur'd you the delay ;  
" Tir'd with the prelude, you'd demand the play. 60  
" *Piemont* he sketches, with a master hand !  
" *Saluzzo* paints ; and *Eden* is the land !  
" Extends the *Appenines* ; with these you rise !  
" Then *Vesulus* erects ; you touch the skies !

- " Here, from a narrow spring, the streams of *Po*, 65  
 " Take birth, and gather vigor as they flow !  
 " You hear them downward drive, an eastern course,  
 " Grown to a torrent from a scanty source !  
 " Fast to *Emell* their progress you pursue ;  
 " A while you keep *Ferrarian* tow'rs in view ; 70  
 " Thence, chase thro' flow'ry meads the watry train :  
 " Till *Venice* sees their Passage to the main.  
 " This is the sum ; and this I dare to say :  
 " None ever err'd so sweetly from his way.  
 " Yet, tho' he leads us thro' enchanted ground, 75  
 " 'Tis still a needless journey ; round and round.  
 " The goal in view, 'tis worse than death to stay ;  
 " We stray, yes tho' thro' *Paradise*, we stray.  
 " Such noble errors of exalted wit,  
 " I dare not copy, tho' he dares commit. 80  
 " We know our force, know where our strength may fail,  
 " And pass the Preface, to commence the Tale."

*End of the PROLOGUE to the Clerk of Oxford's TALE.*



T H E  
CLERK of Oxford's TALE.

---

B O O K I.

---

*By the same Hand.*

DOWN at the foot of *Vesulus* the cold,  
(Thus ancient Bards the moral Tale unfold)  
Where first, thro' subterraneous caverns led, 85  
The springs of *Po* expand their silver bed ;  
And, *Italy* from *Italy*, divide :  
There lies a district, on the western side.  
Where, rich in flock and herd, in fruit and grain  
Abundant, nature spreads an ample plain. 90  
Here, travel'd eyes the varied scene admire,  
The rounded turret, and the gradual spire ;  
From towns and castles that aspiring rise,  
Proud of their wealthy seats, and claim the skies.  
At once for pleasure and for plenty fam'd, 95  
The country all around *Saluzzo* nam'd.

42 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

*A Marquis* rul'd this happy tract of land;  
 Happy in him : He rul'd with easy hand.  
 Full ready were his subjects to obey  
 The mild indulgence of his gentle sway. 100  
 Obedient to his will, he govern'd all ;  
 Both orders, the Great Vulgar and the Small.  
 Whether, from merit due, or lucky fate ;  
 For worth not always can secure the great.  
 Well was he born, his ancestry to trace, 105  
 No *Lombard* prince cou'd boast a nobler race.  
 And fair of face, his face was fair as young.  
 Tho' strong of body, delicate tho' strong.  
 Nor was his beauty to his form confin'd,  
 His person was the image of his mind. 110  
 Where courtesy, alike, and honour meet.  
 Active, but wise ! Indulgent, but discreet !  
 In camp or council, equal to preside !  
 Direct in battle, and in law decide !  
 In this I blame GUALTIERI (such his name) 115  
 In this, and almost this alone, to blame :  
 But free from love ; From Error who is free ?  
 (The softer Sex will sure admit the plea !)  
 Heirs to support his name, he never sought,  
 But turn'd to lighter sport his daily thought. 120  
 He

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 43

He never weigh'd, how early or how late,  
He sat on matters that concern'd the state.  
But thence releas'd, to hawk or hunt prepares ;  
And well nigh quite neglects all better cares.  
For cares, he deem'd the joys of married life. 125  
Fall what might fall, he wou'd not take a wife.  
This specious cause new disaffection draws.  
And when cou'd subjects find no specious cause ?  
(Oft falsely feign'd, but here sincerely meant !)  
So, flocking on a day, to court they went. 130  
And one, in form, they chose from out the rest,  
The common voice ! to utter their request ;  
Whether, as wisest, to themselves prefer'd,  
Or dearest to their lord, and better heard.  
" Thrice noble *Marquis !*" (thus with humble air, 135  
And suppliant voice, he spoke the public care.)  
" If thus assur'd we meet that honor'd face ;  
" 'Tis due to thy humanity and grace.  
" These princely qualities our fears repel ;  
" You prompt to ease our griefs as we to tell. 140  
" My lowly Pray'r then take not in disdain ;  
" For love and duty force me to complain.  
" But why shou'd I my pray'r, presumptive, call  
" This universal suit ? the pray'r of all ?

" If

44 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" If from my lips these words of licence break, 145

" Thy faithful subjects dictate what I speak.

" Oft have I gain'd before like audience here ;

" Nor wer't thou wont to give an heedless ear.

" Then let me still find favor in thy fight,

" Still, pardon my request, if not requite. 150

" While to the gen'ral good I point the way ;

" And we, but wait your judgment, to obey.

" Such is thy Rule, and such is our content,

" Ought to correct not envy cou'd invent.

" But still forgive, if here with sad presage 155

" We doubt the equal blifs of future age ;

" And wish those virtues rare, continued down

" To latest times, that dignify our own.

" To serve thee, in thy heirs, thy people want ;

" Nor think this royal gift too much to grant. 160

" Then bow thy neck beneath the blifsful yoke ;

" The ties of wedlock are not easy broke :

" But love to beauty lends a filken rein :

" 'Tis not a servile bond, but virtuous chain.

" Then, oh ! reflect, (for here the danger lies !) 165

" Reflect, that time with hasty pinions flies.

" Time, ever on the wing, time, stays for none ;

" Whether we sleep or wake, or stand or run.

Tho'



*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 45

- " Tho' blooming now thy youth, thy vigor green ;  
" Age, silent as the night, creeps on unseen : 170  
" And threatens ev'ry sex ; and ev'ry state.  
" No pow'r can shun the certain doom of fate.  
" Certain the doom that he must yield his breath !  
" Uncertain yet the day assign'd by death.  
" If life's a blessing of so short a stay ; 175  
" Judge what yourself must suffer by delay !  
" Judge what we suffer ! for in this we claim  
" An equal int'rest ; to preserve your name !  
" Preserve your worth ! here ev'ry voice conspires,  
" To leave our sons as happy as their fires ! 180  
" If never yet we disobey'd your will,  
" Accept our offer ! be our parent still !  
" Ourselves, to do thee fame, will make the choice ;  
" A worthy bride, confirm'd by public voice !  
" Such as deriv'd from some exalted line, 185  
" Is fit, and only fit, to match with thine !  
" For this, in full assembly, we appear,  
" Then pardon our well-meant, tho' needless fear.  
" Better declare the grievance than conceal ;  
" If 'tis a forward, 'tis an honest zeal. 190  
" We fear your ancient rights (which heav'n defend !)  
" May to some new, some foreign lord descend.  
" Our

46 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" Our free but duteous care, dread liege, excuse ;  
 " What much we value, much we dread to lose."

    Their honest plea, in modest speech address,      195  
 Touch'd with paternal care his gen'rous breast.  
 By reason and by duty, they were mov'd ;  
 But more than life his liberty he lov'd.  
 That he cou'd ease their grief, exalts his mind ;  
 The manner only leaves a sting behind.      200  
 A doubtful course propos'd, thro' which to run,  
 Of rough and smooth ; a course he wish'd to shun !  
 At length the father o'er the man prevails,  
 And public int'rest turns the private scales.

    " Full dear (he said) is future welfare bought,      205  
 " Constrain'd to act the thing I never thought ;  
 " Forego my peace ; my freedom lay aside ;  
 " Peace, all my pleasure ! Freedom, all my pride !  
 " Freedom and peace ! in marriage rarely found !  
 " Then what is to be wiv'd, but to be bound ?      210  
 " For Woman is at best a pleasing cheat ;  
 " Her look is counterfeit : Her heart deceit :  
 " All she affects, to catch our ears or eyes,  
 " Is meer delusion, virtue in disguise.  
 " Nor think I aggravate ; when here I view      215  
 " So Many marry'd, and content so Few.

" And

- " And most wou'd own, were but the truth confess,  
" That state is an incumbrance at the best.  
" From infancy the knowing dame prepares  
" The child to lay her baits, and spread her snares; 220  
" Man is their prize, and till the prize they find,  
" No fault appears of body or of mind.  
" But say sincerely, You that have been caught,  
" Which of you boasts a wife without a fault?  
" A thousand I cou'd count you in a trice, 225  
" Of folly, noise, impertinence, and vice;  
" What you may guess, but what I spare to name,  
" 'Tis my design to reason, not declaim.  
" Some failures of each kind in men we see;  
" But in one failure the whole sex agree. 230  
" In this, they drive at universal sway;  
" Unblest till they command, and we obey.  
" Wrong I the Sex? By marry'd men be try'd  
" The cause." He paus'd for answer.—None reply'd.  
" Yet to your good my quiet I resign, 235  
" And yield my liberty. Your good is mine.  
" Not born to govern for myself alone,  
" I ever held your int'rest as my own.  
" Then what you kindly ask, I freely give,  
" And this the last and surest proof receive. 240  
" This

48 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

" This friend or foe ! this good, or ill of life !  
 " This specious charge ! this doubtful chance ! A Wife !  
 " But for the choice ; be that our proper care ;  
 " This mark of duty and affection spare.  
 " Nor think it matters ought whate'er She be, 245  
 " Of rich or poor, of high or low degree ;  
 " Ought ! to the present or succeeding age.  
 " What Parents for their Children can ingage ?  
 " The Son or well or ill supports his race,  
 " As heav'n directs ; the glory, or disgrace ! 250  
 " Nor vice nor virtue, rightly understood,  
 " Descend like titles, running with our blood.  
 " Was honor but intail'd upon our kind,  
 " No well-born prince cou'd show a slavish mind.  
 " Nought cou'd the seeds of infamy reclaim, 255  
 " No vulgar progeny cou'd rise to fame.  
 " Yet say what house observes an equal mean ?  
 " Where fix'd was vice or virtue ever seen ?  
 " View Sire and Son with various souls endu'd !  
 " The polish'd Sire begets a Son as rude. 260  
 " Yet oft the circle ends where it begun,  
 " And the rude Sire begets a polish'd Son.  
 " No human care can destiny controule ;  
 " Superior is the Pow'r that guides the whole.

" From

- " From springs unknown are nat'ral talents giv'n ; 265  
" Call it the force of fate, or will of heav'n.  
" Our lives are subject to divine decrees.  
" Man only acts as providence foresees.  
" Our part perform'd, let providence prepare  
" (Here all precaution fails !) the Future Heir ; 270  
" Your weal or woe to frustrate or advance :  
" Sprung from what line, You take an equal chance.  
" I too the same resistless law obey,  
" For ev'ry happy, or unhappy day.  
" The pains or pleasures of the marry'd State, 275  
" Hang on the same necessity of fate.  
" Yet far as human prudence can secure ;  
" There let your common oath my peace insure.  
" Swear, When in form my plighted hands I bind,  
" (Whate'er the object that shall take my mind) 280  
" All due obedience to the Chosen Maid  
" Be fully shown ; all homage freely paid :  
" Her right acknowledg'd, from the nuptial hour  
" As just, as had she brought the world in dow'r.  
" And further ; Be it solemnly agreed ; 285  
" That None in thought, or look, in word, or deed :  
" Or of her fortune grieve, or birth complain.  
" Oppose Me here, I hold the treaty vain.

50 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

" This I exact. And justice this requires.  
 " Freedom and peace I yield to your desires. 290  
 " Resign my body ; so the public voice  
 " Demands : But never will resign my choice.  
 " Whate'er concerns the state is not withstood ;  
 " Slave I will be, with pleasure, for her good.  
 " Yet, as a Royal Slave my port maintain, 295  
 " And to my fancy fit the fashion of my chain."  
 Assent from All, the just proposal bore,  
 And solemnly the tender'd oath they swore ;  
 Praying, e're yet they took their sev'ral way,  
 To fix the spousal, and assign the day : 300  
 Still dreading that GUALTHERUS wou'd not wed.  
 For when cou'd Subjects find no cause of Dread ?  
 To leave no doubt of his determin'd mind ;  
 He fix'd the spousal, and the day assign'd.  
 Term of his future war, or future rest ! 305  
 A chance incurr'd (he said) at their request !  
 Full low they thank him on their bended knees ;  
 For vulgar minds well-tim'd concessions please.  
 And home again all merrily they tend ;  
 Proud, by their conduct, to have gain'd their end. 310  
 Mean time their Lord (as marriage form requires)  
 Appoints his privy knights, and trusty squires,

As well for pomp as order to provide ;  
To grace the Rite, and dignify the bride.  
Strict charge, on every Chief attendant, lays, 315  
And eager ev'ry Chief the charge obeys.  
Nor ought was spar'd of service or delight,  
To dignify the bride, or grace the rite.

---

B O O K II.

---

THE day appointed for the nuptials came ;  
The feast prepar'd : The *Marquis* still the same.  
Not one the chosen confort cou'd devise.  
Tho' what escapes the courtier's busy eyes ?  
To blame their Lord the vulgar much incline ;  
So close his speech, so covert his design ?  
And where they durst, in secret, or alone, 325  
Impeach his good intent, because unknown.  
" Slave to his ease, (in murmurs thus they said)  
" Imagin'd ease ! He still forbears to wed ;  
" Our suit, and ev'n his word, forgot the while :  
" Why will he thus himself and us beguile ? 330  
The morning pass'd ; approach'd the noon of day ;  
The ev'ning came : and still the same delay.

52 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: 65,

No name went round ! No bride appear'd in sight !  
 Yet were the nuptials fix'd to crown the night.  
 Ill cou'd the crowd (suspended to Despair) 335  
 Indure such myst'ry, such delusion bear.  
 For still the palace seem'd the promis'd word  
 To keep, and justify its thoughtless Lord.  
 There neat in splendor, pompous in array,  
 Each spacious hall and princely chamber lay. 340  
 Rich furniture in costly order plac'd ;  
 Never was seat of marriage nobler grac'd.  
 Spread ev'ry table ; ev'ry office stor'd ;  
 With delicates to load the bridal board.  
 All that the compass of *Italian* ground 345  
 Cou'd yield, or might in foreign lands be found.  
 But why prepar'd ? No mortal cou'd decide !  
 For what was bridal pomp without a bride ?  
 At length appear'd GUALTHERUS, richly dress'd ;  
 And dawning hope revives each anxious breast. 350  
 So wand'ring travellers hail the blushing ray,  
 That first forebodes the kind return of day.  
 And forth he rides. While all the royal court  
 Attend ; All bidden to the nuptial sport.  
 With many a noble dame of beauty bright, 355  
 And many a sprightly peer, and valiant knight ;  
 And



And all the chosen gentry of the land,  
Common, or squire, an honorable band :  
With these, his trusty guard, and household train.  
And manfully their foaming steeds they rein. 360  
Who, snorting to the music's mingled sound,  
Pass to the vales, the neighb'ring hills rebound.

Rumor, the while, their close attention drew ;  
And busily, from side to side, she flew.  
A noted dame attracts their ears and eyes ; 365  
And mingles many truths, with many lies.  
A dame, long practis'd in intrigues of court,  
Early in youth she try'd the am'rous sport ;  
Nor late in age cou'd wholly quit the trade.  
Well cou'd she prompt the half consenting maid ; 370  
And to the wishing youth sage counsel lend :  
In her, each found a most convenient friend.  
Thrown out of play, she overlook'd the game ;  
True friend to love ! BAUDERIA was her name.  
Unask'd, tho' high of rank, she join'd the throng, 375  
And thus she tattled as she pac'd along.

“ Well ! now ! the *Marquis* has reveal'd his mind.

“ (All hear, on right, on left, before, behind.)

“ Soon as you pass the wood, and reach the lawn,

“ Where oft in file the marshal'd troops are drawn ; 380

54 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or*,

" You, from your steeds, fair ladies, must alight,  
 " And single pass review, within his sight.  
 " One he will chuse. For tho' he seems to fly,  
 " He loves the Sex: You read it in his eye.  
 " Happy the fair, to fix his choice, assign'd! 385  
 " And great his singularity of mind!  
 " He lays his crown and scepter at her feet,  
 " For unexpected good comes doubly sweet.  
 " This he devis'd, for he is good as great,  
 " In honor to the sex, and to the state; 390  
 " Nor sought a foreign fair to deck his throne,  
 " Proud to display the lustre of his own.  
 " This, he declar'd the cause of his delay;  
 " Declar'd in council, and declar'd to-day.  
 " But 'twas a secret kept by his commands; 395  
 " I know it to be fact, and from good hands."  
 From Fair to Fair the pleasing rumor spread;  
 Hope fills each female heart, and female head.  
 Daughters of avarice his wealth devour;  
 Swell th' ambitious with the thoughts of pow'r; 400  
 Rank fires the proud; and equipage the vain;  
 But self-opinion seizes all the train.  
 Hence, fast they fall to scandal and surmise;  
 As who might claim, but who must lose the prize.

And

*The Clerk of Oxford's* TALE. 55

And strait each beauty ev'ry beauty nam'd ; 405  
 And ev'ry beauty strait each beauty blam'd.  
 The mart of female censure knows no glut ;  
 Bring what you will, they tax it with a But.  
 While thus, in scrutiny, all sentence all.  
 DAPHNE is handsome ; But she is too tall ! 410  
 And honestly to judge 'twixt friend and foe,  
 SILVIA is pretty ; But as much too low !  
 DELIA, men say, is fashion'd for a wife ;  
 But sure it is a piece of meer still life !  
 And CLOE affable, she knows no pride ; 415  
 But is she not too free, or much bely'd ?  
 AMINTA has a voice, divine to hear ;  
 But then a mouth that gapes from ear to ear !  
 And AMARILLIS has a world of fire ;  
 But then a tongue that *Socrates* wou'd tire ! 420  
 FLAVIA has beauty ; But her look is mean ;  
 Ah think, my dear, how she wou'd act the queen !  
 And MYRA, dignity of voice and air ;  
 But oh the colour of her teeth and hair ;  
 TRIVIA is delicate ; But then too lean : 425  
 A living corps ! half malady, half spleen !  
 And, full of health NERINA, 'tis confess'd ;  
 But 'tis a beast of burthen at the best !

Nature

56 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

Nature in PHILLIS made not one mistake ;  
 But she is young, who knows what she may make ? 430  
 And *Phæbus* in SERPILLA's eyes may shine ;  
 But you will grant 'tis *Phæbus* in decline !  
 The only charm of SAPHO is her mind ;  
 But to get lovers she must lift the blind !  
 And DELIA's only merit is her shape ; 435  
 But if you are not deaf you must escape !  
 CÆLIA— (scarce envy here a fault cou'd spy,)  
 Yes, 'tis not seen, But CÆLIA is awry !  
 Not one was worthy (for the truth to own  
 Each priz'd herself) or of his bed or throne. 440  
 And well I wean, were they to chuse the wife,  
 Full long the prince might lead a single life.  
 Meantime in royal Pomp, and proud array,  
 Along the dale GUALTHERUS shap'd his way ;  
 To where a low but cleanly village stood, 445  
 Wash'd by a stream, and border'd by a wood !  
 Of homely cots compos'd ; for such as fed  
 The fleecy kind, or lowing oxen bred ;  
 For such as mow'd the meads, or plow'd the fields ;  
 And liv'd on what industrious labor yields. 450  
 Here, lov'd by all, an honest Rustic dwell'd,  
 Of all the poorer swains the poorest held.

Blest

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 57

Blest with a soul superior to his fate,  
For all his wish was suited to his state.  
Here in this narrow circle cou'd he find, 455  
What not the world can give, content of mind.  
But yet what all may on themselves bestow.  
And here it left the high to blest the low ;  
The princely palace for the oxen stall.  
Him, good JANICOLA, the neighbors call. 460  
A daughter crown'd his age, of spotless fame,  
Tho' noted form ; GRISelda was her name.  
A fairer, not the journeying sun surveys,  
Or with his rising, or his falling rays.  
A chaster, never happy mother bore, 465  
In days of present, or in days of yore.  
Strict in her duty, faithful to her trust,  
She shun'd temptation, specious lure to lust.  
Yet, far as virtue may, she sought to please ;  
And honest toil prefer'd to dang'rous ease. 470  
Of diet temp'rate, cautious of excess,  
Drank oft'ner of the spring, than of the press.  
For wine adds fuel to the tender breast,  
The springs of youth not motion want, but rest.  
Wisely she shun'd all adventitious heat. 475  
Simple her dress, but yet tho' simple, neat.

Tho \*

58 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

Tho' blest of face, and of a tender age,  
 She wou'd not be engag'd, nor wou'd ingage.  
 Free from the dart of love she kept her heart,  
 Nor yet at others strove to throw the dart. 480  
 Such swains as fought her father's voice to gain,  
 In birth not foul her equals, met disdain.  
 Base commerce with superiors she declin'd,  
 For conscious worth sat scepter'd in her mind.  
 Her aged father was her tend'rest care 485  
 His failing nature studious to repair ;  
 And oft his life her diligence repriev'd,  
 Repaying back the breath she had receiv'd.  
 And next to that her duty was to keep,  
 Nor great the charge, his scanty flock of sheep. 490  
 And forth she led them, soon as day begun,  
 And home she drove them with the setting sun.  
 Then was she wont with filial joy to bring,  
 Whate'er produc'd, the summer, or the spring,  
 Of herbs, or fruits : What autumn might afford, 495  
 Or winter spare to spread the frugal board.  
 In household thrift she spent each vacant hour,  
 Arm'd against pleasure, for she fear'd the pow'r :  
 Hence no false bait cou'd her chaste heart entice :  
 For sloth she counted the first step to vice : 500  
 Her,

Her, as he us'd to cross the neighb'ring green,  
GUALTHERUS joy'd to see, and oft had seen.  
Her matchless beauty took his wand'ring sight,  
And hap'ly minister'd unknown delight.  
'Twas the first dawn of passion in his breast ; 505  
And neither settled care, nor total rest.  
More frequent came he here, the various game  
To rouse ; nor knew himself, why here he came.  
'Twas thought, the near adjacence of the place,  
The country round commodious for the chace, 510  
Still to this spot his course inclines and draws ;  
Or any thing besides the real cause.  
Yet hither when he led the sportive train,  
A secret pleasure thrill'd in ev'ry vein ;  
But if averse, he turn'd the flying prey, 515  
Tedious the course, and joyless was the day.  
Next, as she charm'd his eye, she charm'd his ear,  
'Twas sweet delight her modest voice to hear ;  
The native language of an artless mind,  
Unpractis'd in the trains of womankind. 520  
Oft, by design, he from the croud wou'd stray,  
And oft pretend occasions of delay ;  
Loss of the sport ! or failure of his horse !  
And tempt her to more free, but chaste discourse.  
Still

60 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA : *or*,

Still pleas'd (whate'er she said, whate'er declin'd) 525  
 In humble state exalted worth to find,  
 And note each decent look, and just reply,  
 With glad attention, but with watchful eye.  
 Watchful! lest ev'n to distant view betray'd,  
 Envy might wrong the inoffensive maid. 530  
 Prudential cares the best affection prove;  
 No vanity he knew, nor yet knew love.  
 Sincere regard protects the fair from blame;  
 Hence what he priz'd, he dreaded to defame.  
 Then, home as he returns, his thoughts retrace, 535  
 Her winning innocence! her bashful grace!  
 Her pious care! her unaffected mien!  
 (Beauties in courtly dames too rarely seen.)  
 Her form, not spoil'd by art, by nature wrought!  
 And far above her sex her manly thought! 540  
 No poverty of language to express!  
 No! nought of poverty but in her dress.  
 Thus homeward musing was he wont to ride;  
 And thus himself, himself unknowing, try'd.  
 " Blest is the swain, that to his faithful breast 545  
 " This virgin joins, cou'd marriage make him blest.  
 " Yes, I will own, was I reduc'd to wed,  
 " Or fear'd not, more than death, that bondage bed;  
 " None



- " None, but *GRISELDA*, wou'd I chuse for wife:  
" But ah ! what woman answers slavish life? 550  
" Not for the cause, the many may misguide,  
" That in our ancient ancestry I pride ;  
" And rather than their dignity disgrace,  
" Wou'd torture nature, than demean my race.  
" Tho' this be common sense. 'Tis without ground. 555  
" Sense is by truth, not by opinion bound.  
" Much fashion'd vice from false opinion springs ;  
" But lasting virtue from the truth of things.  
" Let vulgar souls the worldly worth define,  
" Of hoarded wealth, or long-continued line ; 560  
" With me, to be well-born, is to be good ;  
" And merit, the pure stream of noble blood.  
" But whither wou'd these wild conclusions drive ?  
" To where I neither tend nor can arrive ?  
" Full happy may the maid (where'er her fate 565  
" Bestows her) make, and find that casual state ;  
" A bliss, so dear the price, by me unfought :  
" An idle question ! and a wand'ring thought !"  
Thus wou'd he war, to strong mistrust inclin'd,  
'Twixt sense of love, and prejudice of mind. 570  
But now, to quit his boasted peace, constrain'd,  
Now, that no hope of liberty remain'd ;

62 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

These barriers of his passion once remov'd,  
 With rapture he reflects on her he lov'd.  
 Then the fair object, rooted in his breast, 575  
 Stood forth, in all the pow'r of fancy drest.  
 So the pent stream, obstructed in his course,  
 The dams o'erthrown, pours with redoubled force.  
 So the tam'd steed with fury scours the plain,  
 When from the curbing hand he snaps the rein. 580  
 Meantime the maid, full innocent of mind,  
 Nor knew the smother'd flame, nor grace design'd.  
 With snow-white pail she sought the silver spring,  
 Thence, nature's pure munificence to bring;  
 Or for her own, or for her father's need : 585  
 And home return'd with more than wonted speed.  
 For now, she heard her rustic neighbors say,  
 Her lord wou'd wed, and this the promis'd day.  
 And tho' gay sport was not her fond delight,  
 Full fain wou'd she have seen this courtly fight. 590  
 For this, with haste she bears the limpid freight,  
 Nor dreamt, how near she verg'd on better fate ;  
 How soon to change her cottage for a throne :  
 And celebrate no nuptial but her own.  
 She but propos'd to end without delay 595  
 The household-labors of the short'ning day ;

Then

Then at her homely gate resolv'd to stand,  
And with her equals view the royal band ;  
While to the lawn their splendid course they hold :  
As swains returning from *Saluzzo* told. 600

Yet something here she found, nor yet cou'd find  
The cause, that pain'd her heart, and griev'd her mind ;  
Something, that seem'd to trouble and perplex :  
Envy, (you'll say) inseparable from the sex.

A virtuous envy still, and well refin'd ! 605  
Corrected vice, uncommon to the kind !

'Twas not, that other's pleasure gave her pain ;  
'Twas not, that his regard had made her vain ;  
Nor malice to the bride, to her unknown ;  
Yet cou'd she wish her any other throne. 610

*GUALTHERUS* too her innocence confess'd,  
She cou'd not wish debas'd, to have possess'd.  
But had, revers'd, their distance been as great ;  
His low as her's, and high as his her state :  
His worth, she inly thought, had fix'd her choice, 615  
No pow'r, or wealth had brib'd her partial voice.

## B O O K III.

HIS steed, GUALTHERUS quitting at the gate,  
 Gave to a squire, and bade th' attendance wait.  
 Scarce had he enter'd, when GRISELDA came,  
 At distance known: He call'd her by her name. 620  
 She down her pail, beside the oxen stall,  
 Hastes to depose, and on her knees to fall.  
 And thus in humble guise continues still,  
 As one that waits to hear the royal will.

Tho' fix'd all sign of passion to withstand, 625  
 Forward he step'd, and rais'd her with his hand.  
 While all, that of her innocence or truth  
 He fram'd, or of her beauty felt or youth,  
 Fell short, to what his present thoughts admire;  
 Her eyes, so full of modesty yet fire! 630  
 The discomposure of her face and frame,  
 Blushing, and trembling, with ingenuous shame!  
 "Say—is—JANICOLA?" His tongue affords  
 Uneasy utterance to these easy words.

And, cover'd with confusion as she stands, 635  
 "He—is (she cries,) he waits—his lord's commands.

Within

*The Clerk of Oxford's* TALE. 65

Within the homely cot not long she fought,  
And to his lord her ancient father brought.  
Him, by the hand he takes, and leads aside ;  
Then thus : " In me, JANICOLA, confide. 640  
" My faithful vassal wer't thou wont to rest ;  
" Nor let the father with the prince contest.  
" No longer will I boast the pow'r or art,  
" To check my will, or to disguise my heart ;  
" Thy daughter, chaste of fame as fair of sight, 645  
" I claim, but wou'd not claim by force but right."

On earth the honest rustic fix'd his eyes,  
Shock'd with mistrust, astonish'd with surprize,  
At length he rais'd ; unable to controul  
The pow'r of virtue working in his soul : 650  
" My sovereign leige, oh ! pardon (he reply'd)  
" To serve you, was my joy ; to please, my pride ;  
" To please you, and to serve you, as I ought.  
" But sure, my ignorance mistakes your thought ?  
" If my GRISELDA may some merit claim, 655  
" She shou'd not pass thro' infamy to fame.  
" Not such my early care, not such appears  
" Her cautious youth ; she will not wrong my years,  
" Nor wrong her own. Tho' daughter of a swain,  
" And bred in want, she lives without a stain. 660

66 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

- " And may I, of thy slaves, the meanest slave,  
" E're virtue she forsake, prepare her grave.  
" Here, in this narrow compass, fortune grants  
" Sufficient for her wishes and my wants.  
" Sufficient yields our flock, tho' small our fold, 665  
" To guard both her and me from heat and cold.  
" The stream gives liquor, and the forest, fire.  
" Possess we little? Little we desire.  
" Ev'n this to your benevolence we owe;  
" But rather re-assume what you bestow, 670  
" Than we from simple honesty depart,  
" And know a mind corrupt, or vicious heart.  
" Still may we live, in innocence and ease,  
" Pleas'd with our charge, nor basely seek to please.  
" And, if so far a father may presume, 675  
" Bear her to court, you bear her to her tomb."

The pleasure that from virtuous action flows,  
The man of virtue only feels and knows.

GUALTHERUS own'd a joy that rose to pain  
To find so worthy, yet so poor a swain. 680  
He smil'd; and to himself in secret sport:  
" Few had return'd this negative at court."

Then to JANICOLA. " My fair design  
" Mistake not, friend. By right I claim her mine;  
With

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 67

" With me, (consent but thou) to lead her life, 685

" Not, as you wrong my sense, but as my wife."

Mute with amaze and, with confusion red,

" Thy will be mine," was all the father said.

GUALTHERUS strait, pursuing his intent,

Within the lowly cot full humbly went ; 690

The bashful maid he bade approach him nigh ;

(All this he will'd beneath the father's eye)

Surpriz'd she stood with wonder and delight,

For never had she seen so fair a sight.

And unaccustom'd to so great a guest, 695

Pale grew her cheek, and much disturb'd her breast.

He mark'd the sweet disorder of the maid,

And thus completes the plan, maturely laid.

" GRISELDA, know my purpose is to wed,

" And make thee partner of my throne and bed. 700

" Thy father yields consent our hands to join ;

" What more remains but to solicit thine ?

" Ought need I add ? The offer shows my love ;

" And time, I hope, thy constancy will prove.

" All that I ask is quietly to live. 705

" Then freely give, what only you can give.

" The match, 'tis true, too much of haste requires ;

" Your thoughts I know not, tho' I feel my fires.

" To

68 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA : *or*,

" To speak my passion, or thy truth to try,  
 " Time fails ; then let me add this further tie. 710  
 " Swear, that with ready will, and honest heart,  
 " Like or dislike, without regret or art,  
 " In presence, or alone, by night or day,  
 " All that I will, you fail not to obey ;  
 " All I intend, to forward that you seek, 715  
 " Nor ever once object to what I speak.  
 " Nor yet, in part alone, my wish fulfil ;  
 " Nor tho' you do it, do it with ill-will.  
 " Nor with a forc'd compliance half refuse ;  
 " And showing duty, all the merit lose. 720  
 " To strict obedience add a willing grace,  
 " And let your soul be painted on your face.  
 " No reasons giv'n, and no pretences sought,  
 " To swerve in deed or word, in look or thought.

Hard terms, I doubt, may judge the modern maid, 725  
 Marriage dear-bought ! and grandeur over-paid !  
 Not so GRISELDA. And observe her life,  
 All that the maid propos'd, perform'd the wife.

" How much thy vassal falls below thy care,  
 " (This just reply she made with modest air) 730  
 " I own : in indigence begot and bred :  
 " Stain to thy race, dishonor to thy bed !

" This



- " This known, was neither oath nor vow to bind,  
" What honest heart cou'd stray, what virtuous mind ?  
" Had fortune join'd me to the meanest swain, 735  
" That tends your lowing herd, or bleating train ;  
" Him to obey, had been my choice in life,  
" The meanest swain had found a faithful wife.  
" Thus honor'd, ill I merited to live,  
" Gave I not that, which only I can give ; 740  
" What ev'ry slave might claim. But if those eyes  
" Have found ought here to prize, myself I prize :  
" Mindful to whom I owe my happier fate ;  
" Nor yet forgetful of my former state.  
" Sense of your worth, and gratitude conspire 745  
" To firm this bond ; I swear, as you require :  
" Still to remain observant of your will,  
" Your ev'ry charge religiously fulfil ;  
" By that sole rule my future life to lead :  
" Nor swerve in thought or look, in word or deed."  
" No other dow'r I ask, (GUALTHERUS cry'd)  
" The world shou'd tempt me to no other bride.  
Then led her to the door : And thus aloud  
Accosts the menial and the noble croud.  
" Here, on this seat of hope, I rest my life, 755  
" This maid, and none but her, I take to wife.  
" To

70 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

“ To this, my better part, that homage show,  
 “ All that you owe your prince, or think you owe.

The ladies then he bade reform her drefs,  
 (Retir'd within the cot's remote recefs) 760  
 And richly deck, as princely rites require,  
 Nor leave one remnant of her old attire;  
 Refolv'd, that e'er she reach'd the royal gate,  
 Her bridal pomp shou'd fuit her wifely ftate;  
 Her mind fo noble, and her form fo fair, 765  
 Firft fix'd his choice: And laft requir'd his care.

In flock the fair, to drefs the rural maid,  
 On nuptials pleas'd to lend their ufeul aid.  
 Some mov'd by duty; by good-nature fome:  
 Some meditating marriages to come; 770  
 And ruminating fome on pleasures paft:  
 Some curious, and fome envious: Moft, the laft.  
 But all, on entrance, loud furprize exprefs'd,  
 To fee the courtly bride, fo country drefs'd,  
 For nobly born, and delicately bred, 775  
 Her rude apparel rais'd a gen'ral dread.  
 Such linen, never felt! feen, garments fuch!  
 So rough! fo coarfe! they almoft fwoon to touch.  
 Deep-principled in vain affected airs,  
 Of framing fears, and counterfeiting cares, 780  
 Of

Of feigning woe, where they rejoice at heart ;  
And pain dissembling, where they feel no smart ;  
Not one less horror witness'd than the rest,  
Not one so low, as not to seem distressed.  
Each, as the painful office they pursue, 785  
Oft gave her injur'd hand, and oft withdrew.  
Oft turn'd her head, ev'n in *GRISELDA's* sight,  
Lest other dames might think her less polite,  
Unless some show of censure she had shown,  
That any thing, so dress'd, shou'd mount a throne. 790  
Then, sends the speedy embassy of eyes,  
To prove her taste, and witness her surprize ;  
Then, starting back, her supple body bends,  
As if infection the vile work attends.  
For softer tasks their polish'd limbs were made ; 795  
This, was meer drudg'ry ! meer mechanic trade !  
Ill, cou'd their whiter fingers bear the soil ;  
Or weaker arms support the grievous toil.  
" But this the prince—And he is free to chuse,  
" And none in common manners can refuse." 800  
This vast fatigue, with mighty pain, subdu'd ;  
More easy was the charge that next ensu'd.  
The sight of rich apparel glads the fair,  
Fond to admire, tho' destin'd not to wear !

For

72 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

For now, more sumpt'ous cloaths, th' attendants brought,  
In secret, by their lord's direction, wrought; 806  
Shap'd to the fairest maiden of the court:

(The measure gayly taken as in sport)

CÆLIA the maid; alike her turn and size.

Such just observers still are lovers eyes! 810

Full-well each fashion'd dame performs her part;  
Skill'd in the Myst'ries of the toilet art.

By each some happy master-stroke was shown,  
The flowing robe adjusting by her own.

Rich was the robe, and glorious to behold, 815

Beset with costly stones incas'd in gold;

The plainer ground of pure cerulean dye;

And oft the hand was stop'd to feast the eye.

Her hair they comb'd, that rudely lay untrest,

But soon reclaim'd, and in new order dress'd: 820

And store they add of adventitious charms,

Rings for the hands and bracelets for the arms;

With pearly rows, with golden bands was grac'd,

The rising Bosom, and the falling waist;

And last a crown was plac'd upon her head, 825

That prominent with gems a mingled lustre shed.

Patient, beneath their hands, GRISELDA sits,

And to their various wills her limbs submits;

But

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But secret with'd, less pomp had been prepar'd,  
And much of their polite exactness spar'd. 830  
The vain with sudden change are soon elate,  
The stupid have no relish of their fate ;  
The two extremes she wisely steer'd between,  
Her rule of action was the golden mean.  
She nor with idiot laugh her bliss proclaims, 835  
Nor with vain triumph treats the courtly dames ;  
Not tho' she saw her fortune inly vex :  
She mild forgave the failure of the sex.  
And yet not senseless of her good remains ,  
But rising pleasure prudently restrains. 840  
The wise their bliss in contemplation find ;  
Joy is not of the tongue but of the mind !  
Yet oft with quicker throbs her bosom rose,  
And oft her face with warmer blushes glows ;  
And softer smiles to paint her lips arise, 845  
And brighter rays to animate her eyes.  
The fair themselves, that joint assistance lend,  
Not apt the charms of others to commend,  
With looks of silent praise, alternate thrown,  
Well nigh prefer her beauty to their own. 850  
Who (still improv'd beneath their forming hands)  
At once their love and their respect commands.

74 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA or,*

But loud applause (produc'd in publick view)  
 The vulgar add still fond of what is new ! 854  
 Transform'd (they thought) a new GRISELDA shown :  
 Slaves to appearance, not transform'd but known !  
 Not such material change their lord confess'd,  
 Who bore her fairer image in his breast ;  
 Who, not by outward show, her form survey'd,  
 And more her merit than her beauty weigh'd. 860  
 Yet, for he knew that dress improves the face,  
 (As eloquence to sense adds better grace)  
 Her just adornment gratify'd his sight  
 Pleas'd to behold her in the fairest light.  
 He on her hands, uprais'd with decent shame, 865  
 Affix'd the ring, that binds the nuptial claim.  
 Then, on a snow-white steed, the virgin plac'd,  
 With crimson reins and silver trappings grac'd.  
 Loud shout the coming and returning throng,  
 As to the royal court they pass along ; 870  
 In revel there the finish'd day he spends ;  
 Till down the western sleeps the sun descends.  
 But not on things minute to dwell too long—  
 (For copious is the remnant of our song.)  
 The new-made bride with such true merit shone, 875  
 She gave (not borrow'd) lustre from the throne.  
 So

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 75

So form'd her speech, so fashion'd was her mein ;  
So just but mild ! so awful but serene !  
Not envy in her look or foul cou'd trace,  
Her low condition or ignoble race. 880  
In nought she seem'd by rustic parents fed ;  
In meanness nurtur'd, or in rudeness bred ;  
No daughter of a cottage humbly born,  
But sprung a princely palace to adorn :  
Nor only to adorn, but to support, 885  
Not only fill, but dignify a court.

Her spreading fame the crowd with wonder hears  
(Who knew her birth) and scarce believe their ears ;  
Gaze the nobility with like surprize,  
And doubt the nearer evidence of eyes. 890  
For tho' her lowly virtue was the same,  
Exalted thus it show'd a brighter flame.  
Virtue lies undiscover'd when confin'd,  
Unfelt the will, unless the pow'r be join'd.  
Her known example may this truth declare, 895  
So witty, yet so wise, so chaste, yet fair !  
So strictly merciful, so humbly great !  
Such winning grace, and such complying state !  
Her looks their love, her words their wonder won,  
Diffus'd on all, indulgent as the sun ! 900

Not only thro' *Saluzzo* spread her fame,  
 But distant regions heard her bounteous name ;  
 And ever lavish on her praises dwell :  
 Well as one spoke another spoke as well.  
 And thousands came, alike the young as old, 905  
 Women as men, to hear her and behold.

Thus honesty for once and honor wed  
 And humble fortune decks a princely bed.  
 The dis-believing lord himself confess'd,  
 'Twas possible in marriage to be blest. 910  
 At home his peace preserv'd the prudent wife,  
 Abroad his wealth supply'd the wants of life :  
 And more than life requires. For kept from waste,  
 Enough remains for elegance of taste.  
 And for that worth, thro' poverty's disguise, 915  
 Discern'd their lord, the people held him wise.  
 This as no common incident be told ;  
 'Tis what the people are not apt to hold.

Yet not in household cares (tho' these alone  
 Are worthy praise) her excellence was shown ; 920  
 Absent her lord, full wisely cou'd she guide  
 The public state, the common good provide :  
 In judgment equal, easy of access,  
 Complaints to hear, or errors to redress.

And



*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 77

And ready, as successful, to assuage, 925  
Or private discontent, or public rage.  
Of counsel prudent, steady to her truth,  
Strong in persuasion, in discernment just.  
And when at strife, (for strife all states afford)  
She reconciled the people to their lord. 930  
So fought his peace, and so their welfare fought,  
Urg'd with such pow'r of speech, and strength of thought;  
That rarely was her judgment found to fail:  
And if he held the sword, she held the scale.  
Hence all degrees, the senate and the croud, 935  
Her justice own'd, her clemency allow'd;  
A gift of heaven, their fortune to attend,  
Not only to preserve the state, but mend.

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B O O K IV.

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**B** Left was the subject, and the sov'reign blest!  
All shar'd her worth, he all her worth possess'd.  
Nor yet the sun had fill'd his annual round, 941  
E're a new pledge of love the nuptials crown'd.  
A daughter crown'd! whose sweetly-op'ning face  
Adorn'd the bed with near-resembling grace.

78 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

And tho' (the better to reward her care) 945

The anxious mother wish'd a manly heir.

Pleas'd was GUALTHERUS, nor displeas'd the state,

To find their wishes half indulg'd by fate.

For, from that sample of inferior kind,

The promise of a nobler ——— they divin'd. 950

The charge GRISELDA, mistress of a throne,

Intrusted to no care, beside her own.

GUALTHERUS long oppos'd, at length comply'd,

Dissenting most from love, but much from pride.

No matrimonial jar ! for here the strife 955

Was not to burthen, but to spare the wife.

He press'd their common dignity and ease,

And yielded but to humor, and to please.

Yet she maintain'd, (her argument was strong)

" Whole nature bias'd to preserve their young. 960

" Of all the habitants of earth and air,

" Shall human kind take less than savage Care ?

" I own (she said) this seems a country strain,

" The language of the daughter of a swain ;

" What to the croud may furnish mirth and sport, 965

" And give distaste and wonder to the court.

" Yet will I say, (for this you taught my youth)

" *Trust not to show of things, but to the truth.*

" Be

" Be truth the rule ; polite or impolite,  
" I weigh not what is thought, but what is right. 970  
" The point let courtly dames with leave contest,  
" This lovely child shall never quit my breast.  
" 'Tis vice of fashion ! 'Tis neglect of kind !  
" 'Tis indolence ! 'Tis cruelty of mind !"

To such a husband added such a wife ; 975  
What fairer scene cou'd yield domestic life ?  
Each seems of each the fortune to controul,  
Each worthy each in body as in soul.  
So fair the road, and so direct to bliss,  
Their way a pair so form'd cou'd hardly miss ; 980  
Unless with open eyes they go astray,  
And wilfully their fated joy betray.  
And so it chanc'd. To plain conviction blind,  
GUALTHERUS makes the ill he cou'd not find.  
Tho' never had she shock'd his ear or sight ; 985  
No woman cou'd be always in the right.  
This was his pain. To strong mistrust inclin'd,  
No proof cou'd turn the bias of his mind.  
But where to fix a fault, he seem'd distress'd ;  
Was ever husband so severely prest ? 990  
First for her beauty ; that was free from blame :  
Nature ne'er fashion'd a completer frame !

Next

80 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or*,

Next for her mind. That gave him less pretence ;  
 Nought but her wit was equal to her sense !  
 Then o'er her virtue quick his scruples run ; 995  
 Fair as the light, and spotless as the sun !  
 Her duty last he weighs. No failure past  
 Appears. Yet restless there he settles last.  
 Her former conduct was not void of praise ;  
 But never was she put to hard essays. 1000  
 Perhaps 'twas indolence ! perhaps 'twas art !  
 Int'rest or fear ! she acted well her part !  
 Content in trivial things is easy shown !  
 Obedience by the Proof is only known !  
 To vain disquiet of their common lives, 1005  
 Thus tyrant-husbands tempt their subject-wives.  
 Full-unadvis'd we deem ; some think full-wife.  
 But obvious (duely judge !) the error lies.  
 Mischances numberless, to cause debate,  
 On either side affords the various state, 1010  
 This want to aggravate, that sense to vex.  
 The lesson we apply to either sex.  
 Some heedless word or action may offend,  
 Speak ne'er so kind, and ne'er so just intend ;  
 Whence noise and strife, mistrust, aversion springs.  
 Add here the common casualty of Things. 1016  
 End.

Each to the other by alliance bound,  
But then each borders on the other's ground.  
On Truce howe'er let marriage-warfare cease.  
Aft not hostilities in time of peace. 1020  
Till provocation raises fresh alarms,  
Let neither route the bosom foe to arms.  
When safe a-shore thy shatter'd bark repair,  
The gale of *Hymen* blows not always fair.  
Pierce not in wanton sport her weaker sides, 1025  
Enough has she to bear from winds and tides.  
If then those ills, that neither can prevent,  
Wives, suffer patient; husbands, live content!  
Alone, by night, where lay the royal dame,  
With visage sternly-sad GUALTHERUS came; 1030  
Whom in un-wonted terms he thus address'd.  
"GRISELDA, say! Retains thy faithful breast,  
"Some just remembrance of that golden-day,  
"When first I threw your rural weeds away,  
"And with more fitting pomp and splendor grac'd? 1035  
"Or, say! Has time the grateful thought eras'd?  
"And dignity, by use familiar grown,  
"Made thee o'erlook the cottage in the throne?  
"Yet not so many glorious months have run,  
"Since this thy new-created pow'r begun. 1040  
"Review

82 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or*,

- " Review thyself, and by reflection know,  
 " High as you stand, that once you stood as low.  
 " 'Tis thine this grace with duty to requite.  
 " For that, I chose the silence of the night,  
 " Safe from each list'ning ear, and prying eye, 1045  
 " Thy constancy to prove, thy truth to try ;  
 " Pay you just faith, or feign'd regard pretend.  
 " Then know my will, and strict attention lend.  
 " E'er since the day that first prefer'd you here.  
 " Not by thyself thy life was held more dear. 1050  
 " Part of my own ! but far the better part !  
 " You shar'd not more my fortune than my heart.  
 " Not such the love you from the subject claim,  
 " Grievous, they think, the load, and great the shame,  
 " Uprais'd from humble State thy worth to see, 1055  
 " (Thy worth unknown) uprais'd to high degree !  
 " Begot in slav'ry ! in a cottage born !  
 " Their private laughter ! and their secret scorn !  
 " But ever since that hapless child you bore,  
 " Loud are their complaints, not wholly dumb before. 1060  
 " My rule in ills, is still to make the best,  
 " (Some ease may follow, if not total rest)  
 " And press, or yield, ambitious of repose ;  
 " Just as the tide of faction ebbs or flows.

" Thy

82 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

- " Review thyself, and by reflection know,  
 " High as you stand, that once you stood as low.  
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 " (Thy worth unknown) uprais'd to high degree !  
 " Begot in slav'ry ! in a cottage born !  
 " Their private laughter ! and their secret scorn !  
 " But ever since that hapless child you bore,  
 " Load are their plaints, not wholly dumb before. 1060  
 " My rule in ill, is still to make the best,  
 " (Some ease may follow, if not total rest)  
 " And press, or yield, ambitious of repose ;  
 " Just as the tide of fashion ebbs or flows.

" Thy

- " Thy daughter now—(and since the child was born  
" Not thrice the moon renew'd her silver horn)  
" Thy daughter now—their tumult must appease—  
" Not as I wou'd—But as my people please—  
" How loth to act the deed—bear witness heav'n !—  
" Nor will I act—unless your voice be giv'n.— 1070  
" An equal share you claim.—But fully know.—  
" (And here your wonted soul, *GRISELDA*, show)  
" Know ! your concurrence is my stated will !  
" Yield ! and by deed your plighted word fulfil !  
" Act what you swore upon our marriage day ! 1075  
" Mine then was to command, your office to obey,  
    She all unmov'd the hard condition hears ;  
Nor ought concern'd in look or thought appears.  
No change his strict inquiring eyes cou'd read.  
Much less oppos'd she or in word or deed. 1080  
But said : " My child, myself too I resign !  
" Dispose at will, my lord ? Your will is mine.  
" In you just property of either lies ;  
" And either for your good, or lives, or dies.  
" My soul [as love and gratitude require] 1085  
" Likes, what you like ; desires, what you desire.  
" Besides yourself nought else is left to chuse ;  
" And nought besides yourself she dreads to lose.  
    " This,



84 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA *or,*

" This, (by your grace since first our hands were join'd)

" Has been her first fix'd principle of mind. 1090

" This! neither change nor fortune can displace ;

" Nor length of Time, nor fear of death deface."

Pleas'd was GUALTHERUS against nature's laws.

Cou'd pleasure spring from such an odious cause ?

Prepost'rous joy ! by virtue not refin'd ! 1095

Unworthy of himself or human kind !

Yet long his thoughts seem'd with themselves at strife,

As doubtful to pronounce for death or life.

Then, as resolv'd, a pensive leave he took ;

Disturb'd his gait, determin'd was his look. 1100

Thence sped ; a messenger of death he fought,

To whom he full reveal'd his secret thought.

Before prepar'd, at distance due to stand,

And strictly execute his lord's command.

Much on his faith and oft had he rely'd ; 1105

But in less sanguinary service try'd.

Whate'er the order giv'n, he spar'd no pain,

For from his diligence accru'd his gain.

When need or danger call'd, was ever near,

From love or duty, from respect or fear ; 1110

The greater the attempt, the bolder still ;

And there is but one step from bold to ill !

*Strait*

Strait to the chamber where GRISELDA lay,  
Commission'd by his lord, he took his way.  
And sternly turning from the infant maid,      1115  
Humanely, as his nature cou'd, he said.  
" Displease the act, necessity may plead  
" Excuse, not choice but force exacts the deed.  
" And well the wife GRISELDA understands,  
" That royal mandates claim obedient hands.      1120  
" Much may we grieve the while, and long complain,  
" But to object, or to resist is vain.  
" 'Tis loss of time, 'tis sorrow thrown away ;  
" The sooner eas'd, the sooner we obey.  
" Such is my fate ; commanded by my lord      1125  
" To seize this child."—He seiz'd her, at the word.  
The tender infant, innocent of harm,  
Smiles on his griev'd beard, and hugs his boist'rous arms  
    To few, such energy of soul is giv'n,  
As show'd GRISELDA ; 'Twas the gift of heav'n. 1130  
At once she summon'd ev'ry pow'r of mind,  
And stood the stress ; foreboding, but resign'd.  
The man she knew ; suspicious was his name !  
Suspicious was his office and his fame !  
Nor less suspicious was the time and place !      1135  
But more suspicious still his speech and face !

36 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

What she must feel (the wretch so arm'd and drest !)

Is easier to be fancy'd, than express !

All, that the prince in dubious words let fall,

Ali, that reflection cou'd to mind recall ; 1140

Seem'd true : (her apprehension wrong or right)

All that she fear'd, seem'd acted in her sight.

A bloody scene of innocence distress !

An infant, torn, and murder'd, from her breast !

An infant, by her hourly tendance fed ! 1145

Sweet inmate of her chamber, and her bed !

Add here, just cause of horror and affright,

The silence and the darkness of the night !

The strange neglect of him her soul approv'd,

The man she honor'd, and the man she lov'd ! 1150

To crown the whole, this ruffian guard appears ;

Who can conceive it without sighs or tears ?

Black were his locks, and nigh upright they stood,

Smear'd were his hands, as exercis'd in blood.

But, to do justice to the virtuous Tale, 1155

Supply in mind, where I in language fail.

Think by the wife and mother what was born,

By duty there, here by affliction torn.

And be the strife, if not describ'd, conceiv'd.

'Tis scarce to be imagin'd, or believ'd. 1160

Yet,

Yet, as recorded rolls the fact relate,  
She bore the storm, collected and sedate.  
And since her lord had doom'd the child to die,  
Nor from her bosom stole one stifled sigh;  
Nor from her eye escap'd one secret tear: 1165  
Tho' never mother held a child more dear.

The messenger of death, she mildly pray'd,  
To reach the child; whom on her lap she laid.  
And gently begg'd, "E'er yet her sentence past,  
"One kiss she might bestow, since 'twas the last." 1170  
Then with such firmness, as no tongue can tell,  
"Farewel, my child, (she said) my child, farewell!  
"Full-long a flight thy thoughtless soul must take,  
"Constrain'd to suffer, for thy mother's sake."

A state so woeful, who cou'd see or hear, 1175  
Without a social sigh, or friendly tear?  
What nurse, that turns her tendance to a trade?  
What mean domestic? mercenary maid?  
Well might the suffering mother feel distress!  
Yet no concern her looks or words express. 1180  
So strongly love and gratitude cou'd bind!  
And such her strength, and her command of mind!

She to the guard, whose aspect horror bred,  
"Here take thy little charge (compos'dly said)

88 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" Go! act thy office, as thy lord commands. 1185

" Yes, royal mandates claim obedient hands.

" And what is his desire, is my content.

" Yet, with his leave (nor will he here dissent.)

" Depose her body in some sacred place ;

" Where neither birds may touch, nor beasts erase.

To this, no word the ruffian deign'd to say,

But seiz'd the child, and sternly stalk'd away,

Strait to his lord the messenger repair'd,

And faithfully, what he observ'd, declar'd ;

And, far as tenderness cou'd touch his breast, 1195

Told all, he thought, she suffer'd, or express'd.

GUALTHERUS, who esteem'd him plain, but just,

In the recital loses his distrust.

Till fresh possession prejudice regain'd ;

" Go, execute (he cries) as I ordain'd. 1200

" Convey the child."—A trial so severe

Sure mother never felt ! as you shall hear.

Ev'n tho' his heart, inclining to relent,

Oft seem'd to disapprove it and repent.

Firm he maintain'd his settled purpose still, 1205

And, as the great are wont, wou'd have his will.

¶ The part assign'd, at forfeit of his life,

The guard performs. GUALTHERUS seeks his wife.

Full-fast

Full-fast imagining, in secret thought.  
Or in her looks to see some strangeness wrought, 1210  
Or some confusion in her words confest ;  
But smooth he found her brow, and calm her breast !  
Collected in herself she rests sedate ;  
Nor swell'd with high, nor sunk with adverse fate !  
Submits, and chearful, as she wont to prove ! 1215  
In duty, faithful ! diligent, in love !  
Unchang'd her turn of speech, and bent of mind !  
Wife, as agreeable ! discreet, as kind !  
Nor mention'd once her tongue her daughter's name ;  
A loss, she cou'd not praise, but wou'd not blame ! 1220

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B O O K V.

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**H**ENCE the fourth sun had fill'd the year complete,  
And vary'd the due change of cold and heat.  
Unchang'd to her the varying seasons run ;  
With peace concludes the day, with joy begun.  
The only cause, that cou'd disturb her breast, 1225  
Was, that she found GUALTHERUS ill at rest.  
A child he wish'd. Nor cou'd GRISELDA find,  
Why that unvalu'd wish shou'd pain his mind.

90 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

So free to part with what was in his pow'r ;  
 Yet now, he counted ev'ry day and hour. 1230  
 At length, heav'n gratify'd his full desire ;  
 And doubly blest'd the mother and the sire.  
 A son was born. All hail the hopeful boy ;  
 Their common safety, and their common joy !  
 All, that their country love, and faction hate ! 1235  
 All, that wish well to sov'reign, or to state.  
 Unfruitful deem'd the wife, the daughter dead ;  
 The want of issue new commotion bred.  
 The next-ally'd in diff'rent parts divide,  
 And draw the giddy croud on ev'ry side. 1240  
 Pride and ambition, no occasion lose,  
 To feast on heirless crowns with eager views.  
 While fuel ev'ry neighb'ring pow'r supplies,  
 And blows the blaze, in hopes to reap the prize.  
 When now a son appear'd, oppos'd to all, 1245  
 The factious, from their high pretensions, fall.  
 This turn their pride, if not their cause, befriends ;  
 Each ends the contest, where his rival ends.  
 The loyal joy'd, to see the tumult cease,  
 A firm foundation laid for lasting peace, 1250  
 All disagreeing int'rests reconcil'd ;  
 And hail'd with kind preface the royal child.

*Lovely*

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 93

Lovely the child, and manly to behold !  
Mild, as his mother ! As his father, bold !  
Scarce the third year begun with full repose, 1255  
When, to disturb the calm, GUALTHERUS rose.  
Hapless in this, that happy was his life ;  
Again must he essay the patient wife.  
Capricious husband, to conviction blind !  
What proof cou'd fix that doubtful turn of mind ? 1260  
If long experience but augments your care ?  
Must man provoke, and women ever bear ?  
Survey the state of wedlock at a view,  
A case so strange, who ever heard or knew ?  
The husband lives dissatisfy'd in thought, 1265  
Because the wife lives guiltless of a fault.  
Tempt her he must ; full-vainly, dare I say.  
Men keep no bounds, where women will obey.  
Imperious most, to those that most indure.  
Such, he. But patience is a sov'reign cure. 1270  
When night had spread her fable umbrage round,  
GRISELDA, hanging o'er her boy, he found.  
" Know (he began) but this thyself must know—  
" Thy marriage has produc'd a world of woe.  
" The subject ill our first affiance took, 1275  
" With lying voice, and counterfeited look.



92 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

- " A daughter born, they lessen'd their disguise ;  
 " Their spleen arose apparent in their eyes :  
 " A son, their open malice kept no bound.  
 " And on the mother their distaste they found. 1280  
 " 'Tis true, not yet the clamor strikes our ear ;  
 " With terror yet the bad report I hear.  
 " Tho', ill or well, the prince observes his trust,  
 " Faction is dang'rous, or unjust or just.  
 " What slav'ry (thus the disaffected cry) 1285  
 " Attends *Saluzzo*, shou'd GUALTHERUS die.  
 " Then shall JANICOLA's mean blood succeed ;  
 " His base-raised offspring ! his opprobrious breed !  
 " Then shall they lord it ! hold the foremost place !  
 " What hope of other rule, or other race ? 1290  
 " Then well may villagers our rights support !  
 " And slaves receive the honors of a court !  
 " Tho' distant yet the voice of discontent,  
 " Thus warn'd, let prudence the increase prevent ;  
 " E're yet in open audience they complain : 1295  
 " That done, the terms propos'd may then be vain.  
 " For judge but of the future by the past,  
 " All private murmur will speak loud at last.  
 " What need of words ? To open all my soul—  
 " Better resign a part, than lose the whole. 1300

He

- He paus'd, and sighing— " Yes, it must be done ;  
" The fate your daughter found, attends your son—  
" By the same hand, on the same hour of night,  
" Torn from your bosom, carry'd from your sight—  
" Harder the trial, with the boy to part, 1305  
" Longer in view, and nearer to your heart—  
" He grew to sense, was knowing, and was known—  
" The loss, a parent well may feel, and own.  
" For this, I came, to warn you and persuade,  
" To summon ev'ry virtue to your aid. 1310  
" Left hurry'd from yourself, you quit the rein,  
" And ill your trust, and character maintain.  
Thus he ; the wily patience thus rejoin'd.  
" This, have I said ; and this, I bear in mind :  
" Your will is mine ! your pleasure, mine I make !  
" Forfake me, life, e'er I this rule forfake ! 1315  
" Slain as your daughter, let your son be slain ;  
" Confirm his being, or his death ordain !  
" In her, in him, no claim *GRISELDA* knows,  
" But her long vigils, and maternal throws. 1320  
" What, but a short amusement was her gain,  
" For previous sickness, and successive pain ?  
" All other right belongs to you alone ;  
" Yours be it, to conduct what is your own.  
" Consider

94 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" Consider my content, below your care ; 1325

" In neither child *GRISELDA* claims a share.

" I too am yours, in all and ev'ry part,

" For when you gave your hand, I gave my heart.

" Not that I plead affection, yet deny

" Obedience due ; I own the forceful tie. 1330

" From that then blest to this still happy day,

" (E'er-since you threw my rural weeds away)

" Then I acknowledg'd, and acknowledge still,

" That with my habit I depos'd my will,

" Freedom of action, liberty of choice ; 1335

" *GRISELDA*'s voice must still confirm your voice,

" Urge what you urge, forbear what you forbear :

" I wait your order, as your dress I wear.

" Nay more. Had I your thoughts by prescience known,

" Such passive duty had not now been shown. 1340

" With your felicity I cou'd not part,

" Tho' ev'ry string it tore that brac'd my heart.

" Myself had been as forward to propose,

" And quell the tumult, e'er so high it rose.

" But now that your resolve is fully told, 1345

" Determin'd as your own, my purport hold.

" And were my death but wanting to your ease ;

" Death wou'd I bear, to serve you, or to please.

" For

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 95

" For death, that weak or wicked minds may move,  
" Makes no comparifon to lofs of love." 1350

Her fteady virtue fill'd him with furprife ;  
Long on the ground he look'd with mufing eyes :  
Then left her prefence, in appearance, fad !  
But glad at heart ! cou'd fuch a heart be glad !

And ftrait, the ill-prefaging ruffian came, 1355  
The fame in gefture, and in face the fame.  
Rude, as he feiz'd the fifter where fhe lay  
He feiz'd the brother ; or in ruder way.  
Worfe than before, if worfe he cou'd devife,  
More infolent his fteps, more ftern his eyes. 1360

A fcene, all human nature muft deteft !  
Yet cou'd the feeling mother fteel her breaft.  
She clasp'd the boy, then, (wonderful to tell !)  
She gently kifs'd, and mildly bade farewel.  
And thus addrefs'd the minifter of death. 1365

" This let me crave, when he refigns his breath,

" This (if your lord object not) let me crave !

" Provide my little fon a decent grave !

" His tender limbs, full delicate to fight,

" Protect from birds by day, and beafts by night !" 1370

She, humbly ask'd ; he no return affords :

Unless in looks, more horrible than words.

Her

96 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

Her strength of soul, GUALTHERUS, more and more,  
Admir'd ; a pure but in-exhaustible store !

Like gold, extracted from long-hidden mines, 1375

'That still the more 'tis try'd, the more refines.

Yet was he not content. To such a bent

Of fix'd mistrust, no proof cou'd give content.

For now, his quiet studious to perplex,

He ruminates the malice of the sex ! 1380

The face of ease, that hides the secret smart !

The tongue, still-ready to bely the heart !

And oft, had there been room, he seem'd inclin'd,

To term her patience, cruelty of mind !

Such dread effusion of her children's blood, 1385

Unmov'd, what tender mother had withstood ?

And tho' he knew (by strict observance prov'd)

That next to him her family she lov'd ;

And, but that him she lov'd, lov'd more than life :

He doubts the woman, forc'd to praise the wife. 1390

He waited, if in look, or word estrang'd,

Her fondness lessen'd, or her temper chang'd.

But neither word nor look admit a doubt,

For all seem'd peace within, and joy without.

One harmony of face and soul appears ; 1395

Days following days, and years succeeding years.

More

More true as she advanc'd in age, she grew;  
(Cou'd genuine truth be said to grow more true!)  
As if by nature, not by marriage, join'd,  
Two forms were influenc'd by one ruling mind. 1400  
Whate'er he fought, seen or unseen his aim,  
Same as his will, her pleasure was the same.  
She thought, 'twas not her province to contest,  
Her ready faith suppos'd it for the best.  
Whether the lovely offspring liv'd or dy'd; 1405  
Much tho' she fear'd, she cou'd not well decide.  
But still her soul this principle maintain'd;  
That if they dy'd, GUALTHERUS was constrain'd.  
She judg'd it his misfortune, not his fault,  
For much of his humanity she thought; 1410  
And much of her concern this thought remov'd,  
She knew, he cou'd not part with what he lov'd.  
This sacrifice, if boist'rous faction claim'd,  
She own'd, he must assent, nor cou'd be blam'd.  
But was it possible to steer between 1415  
The father and the prince, and guard the mean;  
She cou'd not frame the risque, he had not ran,  
For so she took, nor so mistook the man.  
Hoping the best, and to the worst resign'd;  
Such was her force, and confidence of mind. 1420

98 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

Thro' all this mild complacency of life,  
 Fell she, as mother, yet she rose as wife.  
 No other good, besides his good, she knew,  
 Of worldly int'rest, or of private view.  
 No loss, besides his loss, cou'd give her pain, 1425  
 No gain advantage her, besides his gain.  
 These were her rules, these hard but golden rules,  
 (Not well observ'd in matrimonial schools.)  
 Wives on their husbands shou'd rely alone ;  
 And by maturer judgment mend their own. 1430  
 Not so the subject ; where his conduct fail'd,  
 More strict to mark, than where his worth prevail'd.  
 Fond of complaint, and ready of excuse,  
 Each princely virtue, they cou'd turn to vice.  
 That here much cause was giv'n (must be allow'd) 1435  
 Much to alarm the council and the croud.  
 Dark the design. And wide the rumor spread,  
 And equal horror and compassion bred.  
 The silence of the court some guilt confess'd ;  
 The children missing, malice adds the rest. 1440  
 Doubtful as he in conduct, they severe  
 In censure, send the tale from ear to ear.  
 " GUALTHERUS, by unthinking love misled,  
 " First makes his slave the part'ner of his bed.

" And

" And then, the slain impatient to endure, 1445

" Adds to the vile offence a viler cure.

" But what had the long suff'ring mother done ?

" (O'er things unknown thus knowingly they run)

" The children, what ? Then, such unnat'ral death,

" Giv'n by the hand, that shou'd preserve their breath !"

On facts uncertain, while the croud debate, 1451

They hate, that lov'd ; that lov'd not, doubly hate.

Loud was his infamy, as once his fame !

" A murd'rer ! an accurs'd, detested name !

" A villain, not from passion, but design ! 1455

" Abjur'd by laws, both human and divine !"

Yet might the people murmur, or assent,

GUALTHERUS, firm pursu'd his fix'd intent.

But check a-while, my muse, thy looser rein,

To court the judgment of the female train. 1460

Full-fain, wou'd I consult, in time and place,

Their learn'd opinion ; doubtful is the case.

Declare, which, of the two, was most to blame ?

Was he too rigid, or was she too tame ?

Each husband left sole arbiter of life, 1465

What wou'd become of many an honest wife ?

What wou'd she suffer, sentenc'd to submit,

From all his pride of sense, and spleen of wit ?



Or grant such trials, as *GRISELDA* ran,  
 May show, that woman is the slave of man : 1470  
 Say, might not these, for any wife suffice ?  
 What cou'd a harden'd husband more devise ?  
 'To try her faith ? her constancy to prove ?  
 Great, you must own, her patience, and her love.  
 But 'tis a truth the sex need not be told, 1475  
 That men are modell'd in a various mold.  
 And some, as old and new experience finds,  
 Indu'd with most perverse unyielding minds.  
 In these, whatever sense first strikes their thought,  
 (Or wrong or right th' impression deep is wrought ;  
 Dying, they keep the first resolves they make, 1481  
 Bound to opinion, as a bear to stake.  
 If properly the object strikes his sight,  
 'Tis great good luck, the obstinate goes right.  
 But sure the chance is more than equal found, 1485  
 That wrong he goes, yet travels round and round ?  
 Submit, intreat, diversify, explain,  
 Inlarge, confirm, confute : The task is vain.  
 To satisfy the purport of his will,  
 Th' event must follow, be it good or ill ! 1490

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BOOK VI.

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**T**Wice, from the nuptial day, sev'n years were told,  
And twice seven years the nuptial trials hold.  
Each proof severe *GRISelda* firmly pass'd,  
Yet one remain'd behind, the worst, tho' last.  
A doubt, he rais'd, and nourish'd in his breast; 1495  
Nor, till he found the truth, cou'd think of rest.

" There are (he judg'd) a race of selfish mind,  
" That own no tie or nature, or of kind,  
" Who rigidly their breasts to others steel;  
" Yet, for themselves, most sensibly they feel. 1500  
" Such hear, with equal ease, the parting groan,  
" Of them, they never knew, or long have known.  
" And view the wreck, without distress or care,  
" Of those that bore them, or of those they bear.  
" No partner, they, of joint affection, own; 1505  
" Their pleasure, and their pain, is self alone.  
" And such she is, or what, I'm yet to learn!—  
" Hence, her submission! Hence, her unconcern!  
" If try'd in self, she ends as she began, 1510  
" She must be more than woman, more than man!

102 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

Thus he ; such early prejudice he nurs'd ;  
 That the last trial but includes the first.  
 For this, a messenger to *Rome* he sent,  
 (Now was the time to give the scruple vent.)  
 In legal phrase, the marriage to annul, 1515  
 And counterfeit in form the papal bull.  
 His hasty passions to this course incline,  
 The shortest way to answer his design.  
 " Take, for your plan, some old pontific frame ;  
 " Fashion'd anew, the use will be the same." 1520  
 At *Rome*, the messenger arriv'd, and sped ;  
 A forging hand, he found, and scheming head.  
 Nor well cou'd fail in that prolific court,  
 Where, surrogates, scribes, proctors, priests, resort.  
 'Twas modell'd, like to like, and word for word ;  
 He sends a formal copy to his lord : 1526  
 Who, as he us'd on points of high debate,  
 Conven'd all orders that compos'd the state.  
 Summon'd, they meet ; the prince assumes the throne :  
 Then thus, with sterner brow, and haughtier tone.  
 " Content, as fortunate, in single life,  
 " You forc'd me on that dang'rous rock, a wife !  
 " A wife I chose, (nor now disguise the truth)  
 " From heat of blood, th' intemperance of youth.  
 " One,

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 103

" One, whose excelling form my passion mov'd, 1535

" I lov'd ; and all seem'd right, because I lov'd.

" No other, was my motive, or my aim,

" I neither sought your int'rest, nor my fame.

" My riper age this folly wou'd atone,

" Strength to your state, and lustre to my throne, 1540

" I wou'd acquire, in kindred grandeur ty'd ;

" The fair, to great PEGANUS, near ally'd.

" For this, the papal chair our envoy moves,

" The state must sanction, what the church approves."

A long and hoarse applause th' assembly roars, 1545

Like rolling waves that murmur to the shores.

These, slaves by nature, born to bear the rod,

Swallow'd his words, as oracles from god.

Those, from long habit, custom'd to the bit,

Their duty thought, to hear and to submit. 1550

Others, approv'd it not, yet not withstood,

From frigid virtue, indolently good.

But some, from fordid, or ambitious views,

Prais'd the design, and pray'd, " No time he'd lose."

And so had acted, was the case his own, 1555

And good GUALTHERUS sentenc'd from the throne.

Yet some, of nobler soul, but these were few,

Place all GRISELDA's merit full in view ;

Her

104 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : *cr.*

Her worth, of private and of public kind,  
 Her blameless conduct, and unerring mind. 1560  
 And with bold truth, and gen'rous ardor plead,  
 Th' injustice, and dishonor of the deed.  
 Tho' prince and subject join'd their gen'ral voice,  
 No pow'r cou'd authorize the guilty choice.  
 Let pope and synod their whole strength unite, 1565  
 That which is wrong, they never cou'd make right.  
 " Repudiate, without cause, the faultless dame ?  
 " 'Twas Tyranny ! It soil'd a life of fame !  
 " They humbly differ'd ; but the harsh divorce  
 " They cou'd not counsel ! 'Twas an act of force ! 1570  
 Here, rising, " 'Tis my will, (he said) withdraw—"  
 Nor 'till that hour had urg'd his will for law.  
 Meantime, the trusty guard returns from *Rome* ;  
 And all *Saluzzo* mourns GRISELDA's doom.  
 None penetrate the fraud, or doubt a wile, 1575  
 So was it fram'd in true pontific stile !  
 So fraught with church sufficiency and pride.  
 And thus the apostolic roll imply'd.  
 " That he, the delegate of God, the pope, 1579  
 " Their heav'nly guide, and their terrestrial hope,  
 " In kind compliance to his son's request,  
 " (Weighing the people's good, and prince's rest)  
 " Did,

- " Did, and hereby, authority had giv'n,  
" (In virtue of his right deriv'd from heav'n)  
" To nullify the marriage from that hour, 1585  
" Save, to the wife whate'er she brought in dow'r;  
" With sundry meanless items, quaint and old;  
" So sign'd! so seal'd! so witness'd! so inroll'd!—"  
To this, was added, for the subjects ease,  
A load of pardons, and at mod'rate fees. 1590  
    Handed from heav'n the scrole, the croud believ'd;  
To slav'ry prone, and form'd to be deceiv'd.  
Moles, that in darkness center'd their delight!  
The day, to them, had been a pain of sight!  
" The pope, infallible, with one accord, 1595  
" They held, nor less infallible their lord.  
" For what their lord requir'd, the pope allow'd."  
Take but in largest sense the term of croud!  
Nor try'd by affluence, nor to birth confin'd,  
But honesty of heart, and worth of mind. 1600  
Without these qualities, let princes know,  
They are themselves the Vulgar, and the Low.  
    The rude *Saluzzians* swallow'd all the bait,  
(I mean the number of the small and great)  
" In heav'n, they own'd, all marriages were made, 1605  
" Yet was the prince by heat of youth betray'd.  
" If



*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 107

But, humble tho' her birth, her soul was great ; 1631  
Form'd to indure the worst extreme of fate :  
Fix'd, from his pleasure, never to depart,  
To whom, she gave her innocence, and heart.  
Free, was her breast from sighs, her face from tears,  
'Tho' well confirm'd th' unwelcome news she hears ;  
Knows, on what message, and with what intent,  
The frequent envoys to *Bologna* went.  
Where rich *PERCIVAL* rul'd with peaceful sword,  
Whose wife was sister to her faithless lord. 1640  
This princess, with humaner talents blest,  
A mind, resplendent as her state, possess'd.  
To learn her manners, foreign dames resort ;  
The virtues, not the vices, of a court.  
Among the rest, a maid excelling fair, 1645  
Was still distinguish'd with peculiar care,  
Bred from an infant, tho' of birth unknown,  
The royal pair respect her as their own.  
And her, 'twas rumor'd, on his change of Life,  
The *Marquis* of *Saluzzo* chose for wife ; 1605  
To dignify his state, adorn his bed :  
And wide the same malicious echo spread.  
" That now *GRISelda* must resign her claim,  
" For from *Bologna* a new comfort came ;  
" Bright



108 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

" Bright as the sun, and youthful as the day, 1655

" With splendid equipage, and rich array.

" The great PEGANUS, to augment her state,

" With all his noble lords in order wait;

" The kindred maid respectfully to guide,

" And her young brother, riding by her side: 1660

" Who to *Saluzzo* shap'd direct their way,

" The distant journey lefs'ning, day by day.

Say, was not this sufficient to molest?—

The hard GUALTHERUS might have spar'd the rest.

Thro' silence some humanity had shone, 1665

Pity, might lessen wrong, tho' not atone.

But he, when full the court, to tempt her more,

Thus spoke, in boist'rous terms, unus'd before.

" Not much displeas'd, tho' chose from humble life,

" I saw you fill the station of a wife. 1670

" Not for your beauty, birth, or wealth, or youth.

" But for your duty, faith, and love, and truth.

" Yet, now I find, by sad experience wise,

" That in great lordship, greater slav'ry lies.

" To this conspir'd my fortune and my fate; 1675

" Tho' Prince, yet lowest vassal in the state.

" Debarr'd, where ev'ry swain may use his voice,

" Freedom of will, and liberty of choice.

- " A wife to wed, the public care ordains,  
" And now, to quit that wedded wife, constrains ;1680  
" A new, is fought: Nor is the rising flood  
" Of factious discontent, to be withstood.  
" For this, full pow'r to loose my former vows,  
" Th' indulgent father of the church allows.  
" And a new bride is coming by the way, 1685  
" To obviate all suspense, and all delay.  
" Be strong of heart, and void anon the place.  
" Yet this I grant you. Take it as a grace.  
" All that you brought me, on the nuptial hour,  
" I grant you. Take it all! that princely dow'r!  
" But well wou'd you observe, what I advise; 1691  
" Know, they, can never fall, that never rise.  
" Then chuse an equal, on the peaceful plains,  
" And live the little princefs of the swains!  
" Lost to a palace, in a cottage rest. 1695  
" None may presume, for ever to be blest.  
" Yet, this celestial gift to all is sent,  
" To bear the stroke of fortune with content."  
" I am not now to learn (the strait replies)  
" The wond'rous distance, that between us lies. 1700  
" Me, not your partial choice, cou'd worthy make,  
" To share your grandeur, or your bed partake.

1101 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or*,

- " Yet if this house, (as heav'n may witness bear)  
 " I enter'd wife, I liv'd not mistress there.  
 " As best became, I study'd to behave, 1705  
 " As one, above your slaves, your humblest slave.  
 " That there, so long, I held the foremost place,  
 " I think it not my merit, but your grace.  
 " And if a fitter comfort you require,  
 " Content, to my paternal cot retire; 1710  
 " Humbly to dwell, where humbly I was bred:  
 " Nor share your grandeur, nor partake your bed.  
 " There, clean of heart, the widow, as the bride,  
 " Will live, if not to you, to none ally'd.  
 " Nor shall it by my blot, while life remain, 1715  
 " To soil your choice by any vulgar stain.  
 " That once you deign'd to join me to your side;  
 " This thought let me indulge of royal pride.  
 " This single thought! may heav'n propitious grant,  
 " In her you chuse, the wealth and birth I want. 1720  
 " Pleas'd, for your good, the station to resign,  
 " That was my bliss, that once, my lord, was thine.  
 " Thence, priz'd by me. Disturb'd, if I depart,  
 " 'Tis not, to lose your fortune, but your heart.  
 " Such dow'r you proffer me, as first I brought; 1725  
 " Those rustic weeds! yet where may those be sought?  
 " Well

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.*    111

- " Well I remember, on the nuptial hour,  
" With scorn, you threw aside that wretched dow'r.  
" Far other then, your gesture, and your mind !  
" In look, how gentle ! And in speech, how kind ! 1730  
" But I have heard, and prov'd the saying true ;  
" Love is not, when 'tis old, what 'twas when new.  
" Yet, shall no fear of death constrain my will,  
" (Death the last line of human good and ill !)  
" Low as I fall, at fortune to repine,                    1735  
" Proud of the thought, that once your heart was mine.  
" Then, when you rais'd your vassal to your breast,  
" And rudely clad before, full richly dress'd.  
" Obedient duty, and unspotted fame,  
" Was all I brought. No other dow'r I claim. 1740  
" But why recal to mind that blissful day ?—  
" You wish it had not been, and I obey.  
" Then down I lay this scepter from my hand,  
" (Here, never borne, as symbol of command !)  
" Cast, from my head, this decorated crown,                    1745  
" And, from my body, loose this ermin'd gown.  
" And last this ring, (this last let me restore !)  
" What, with unwearied constancy I wore.  
" Lodg'd, in the stores, the rest your orders wait ;  
" Your gifts of love ! or ornaments of state ! 1750

112 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" Naked I came, and naked I return,  
 " Nor must I, since it suits your grandeur, mourn.  
 " This only let me beg, nor beg in vain,  
 " For what I brought, and never can regain !  
 " For all my duty, faith, and love, and truth ! 1755  
 " Untainted chastity ! unpractis'd youth !  
 " Years, that I pass'd ! and children, that I bore !  
 " (The last unguarded words she hurry'd o'er.)  
 " Grant me such cloaths, as fit *GRISELDA* best,  
 " A common garment, and a rustic vest. 1760  
 " An outcast let me be. Yet this I pray,  
 " Let me not, like a worm, go by the way ;  
 " The people's laughter, and their lord's disgrace.  
 " For this may fall below my servile race ! 1764  
 " Below, her state that once was call'd your wife !  
 " None, with immodesty, can tax my life."  
 With dignity unalter'd this she said,  
 Her cheeks alone effus'd a warmer red.  
 Compos'd, tho' pain'd ! Determin'd, tho' distress'd !  
 The prince was mov'd, as ev'ry eye confess'd. 1770  
 " Your vest retain" (impassion'd he reply'd)  
 " But quit all other marks of stately Pride."  
 He cou'd no more.—His voice its utterance lost.  
 And this last proof he tempted to his cost.

Silent

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 113

Silent he stood, with agitated breast ; 1775

But his look witness'd many a sigh suppress'd.

Yet tears wou'd flow, a voluntary tide,

And these he strove, and strove in vain to hide.

His heart, against his stubborn will, conspir'd ;

Aside, he turn'd ; and hastily, retir'd. 1780

Her condescension struck so strong a light ;

It fill'd the court with horror and affright.

" May I be never to such ill betray'd !"

In silence sigh'd the unexperienc'd maid.

Each widow, to her secret friend, alone, 1785

Whisper'd, " Thus treated, he had his own."

And ev'ry wife attested earth and heav'n,

" 'Twas a mean act, a bad example giv'n !"

And ancient maid, with ancient maid began ; 1790

" How great our scape, who never yet knew man !"

Meantime *GRISELDA* secretly withdrew,

And disarray'd her, safe from public view.

Conforming, far as decency allow'd,

She shun'd the noble and ignoble crowd.

All, that she cou'd, she left of her attire, 1795

And no intrusion furth'ring her desire ;

The postern-gate she pass'd, the public street

With naked head, she gain'd, and naked feet.

114 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

But soon the crowd her noted form describ'd, 1810  
 And pour'd, before, behind, on ev'ry side.  
 Down hast thou laid, in vain hast thou laid down,  
 Thy robe, thy ring, thy scepter, and thy crown!  
 Stript of thy state, thy native state they find;  
 Grandeur of mein! and majesty of mind! 1805  
 Exil'd in thee, thy exile they attend;  
 The friendless, that, in thee, still found a friend!  
 The motherless, that met a mother's care!  
 For 'twas thy good, thy good with all to share!  
 Hence, bare-foot as she trod the flinty road, 1810  
 Their vestments o'er the rugged way they strow'd.  
 And not one breast refus'd a pitying sigh;  
 Void of a tear was not one melting eye;  
 Grief, in each voice, and face, express'd, and shown!  
 In ev'ry voice and face, except her own! 1815  
 Tho' loud they spread her praise, and urg'd her wrong;  
 She curb'd resentment, and restrain'd her tongue!  
 Silent she mov'd, majestically slow,  
 As one, in pain that pleasur'd, joy'd in woe!  
 But wicked fate proceeds with nimbler tread, 1820  
 The father reaching in his homely sled.  
 And tho' the long neglect, year after year,  
 Had caus'd him many a sigh, and many a tear.

Never

Never to touch the court on pain enjoin'd ;  
So proud, he thought, his prince, or child, unkind ! 1825  
Yet musing with himself, full oft he said ;  
“ By force of love, GUALTHERUS was misled,  
“ That fire once cool'd, his lust will yield to pride,  
“ And the wife fall a victim to the bride.  
    Tho' length of time had fortify'd his breast, 1830  
The sudden rumour rows'd him from his rest.  
His cloaths, from off his aged breast, he tears,  
From off his aged head his hoary hairs.  
Devotes the light, and deprecates the day,  
And life, impairing with too slow decay. 1835  
Then seeks, with anxious care, his rustic hoard  
Where his fond heart her virgin habit stor'd ;  
Sav'd, to indulge his mind and to employ,  
In pleasing pain, and melancholy joy.  
Now, sound of Use ! he speeds with feeble haste, 1840  
Cover'd his child, lamented, and imbrac'd.  
    Here, for a space, remain'd the patient wife,  
And, thrown from great, returns to vulgar life.  
Yet never once was heard her lord to blame,  
Tho' spirited by many a busy dame. 1845  
Above the pow'r of fortune, or of fate,  
She rose, in good, or ill, alike sedate !



116 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

In good, against distress, she arm'd her skill,  
 And still prepar'd her, for success, in ill.  
 This was her character, by all allow'd, 1850  
 " Virtuous, tho' beautiful ! tho' great, not proud !  
 " Discreet, as witty ! sprightly, as serene !  
 " Sage, but not sad ! and humble, but not mean !  
 On *Job*, priests flourish still, with wond'rous ease,  
 And priests on *Job* may flourish, if they please. 1855  
 We mean not, here, to enter the dispute.  
 Yet priests can prove, a woman is a brute ;  
 And, (when it serves their turn) a man, a god :  
 But 'tis the safest way to kiss the rod.  
 Yet, when the *Man of Uz*, whose perfect Life, 1860  
 They gloss, and blazon the intemp'rate wife,  
 Who bade him to his face, curse God and die ;  
 Mean they the sex ? Sure, priests may err or lye !  
 Yet, not to stab the church, but gently probe,  
 I say, GRISELDA far transcended *Job* ! 1870  
 And, salt as men, cou'd women texts expound,  
 As many female suff'ers wou'd be found !  
 Women than men, more patient, and more true !  
 This is my faith,—But then, It holds of few.

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B O O K VII.

---

GUALTHERUS, his emotion, soon repress'd,  
Refum'd his mind, and fortify'd his breast. 1870  
" Wond'rous her faith, (he commun'd with his heart)  
" Wond'rous her love, if free from female art !  
" To bear, submissive, such repeated wrongs,  
" That temper, rarely, to that sex belongs !  
" Nor ev'n to seek, from words, or sighs, relief ! 1875  
" Was it, excess of patience, or of grief ?  
" Again, not once reproach, not once withstand !  
" 'Twas great disguise of soul, or great command !  
" Sustain such weight of woe with tearless eyes !—  
" But, to the covert, for relief she flies. 1880  
" There, doubtless, vents her rage, and makes her moan,  
" *Eccle*, pays sigh for sigh, and groan for groan.  
" Then, change the scene, from privacy of place ;  
" Yes, let her see her rival, face to face.  
" Thus, as he meditates the full Assay, 1885  
Arriv'd a courier, and at prime of day ;  
To notice : " That the princely youth and dame,  
" With great *PEGANUS*, from *Bologna* came.

" That,

118 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

" That, safely they had pass'd the rocky way,  
 " And hop'd to reach him with the setting ray. 1890  
 Meantime, the banish'd wife, at early dawn,  
 Unfolds her flock and follows to the lawn;  
 To where *GUALTHERUS*, loit'ring in the course,  
 First stop'd, from love, or failure of his horse.  
 There, lowly seated on the dewy ground, 1895  
 She feeds her little charge, that bleats around;  
 And plies the distaff, that before her stands:  
 Yet slow, the widow'd, to the virgin hands.  
 For, tho' the twine with equal care she wrought,  
 Oft, wou'd intrude, an interrupting thought; 1900  
 Oft, wou'd her soul, her former state retrace:  
 " Exalted honor is a slipp'ry place!  
 " Tho' palaces are high, and cots are low;  
 " Here, lies sure peace! There, lies destructive show!  
 " But mind, is all to all, mean or sublime! 1905  
 " Mind, is not to be chang'd, by place, or time!  
 " In time, or place, unblest, or blest can dwell!  
 " Can make a hell of heav'n, a heav'n of hell!  
 Thus musing: For the proof, *GUALTHERUS* sends,  
 She, quits the calm reflection, and attends; 1910  
 In dress, a shepherdess: The same, to see,  
 As on her marriage day. She bends her knee.

But

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 119

But he, more slow to raise her with his hand,  
Nods, and imparts his last severe command.

" This day, we celebrate the previous rite ; 1915

" *GRISELDA* ! know, our nuptial crowns the night.

" Full, to profusion, is the palace stor'd,

" With all, to deck the bed, or cheer the board.

" Yet much I fear, the feast may wrong my soul ;

" For execution, mends, or mays, the whole ! 1920

" Tho' gen'rous the design, and large the cost ;

" All beauty is in want of order lost.

" Not one, thro' all *Salerno*, can I find,

" That knows, so well, my manner, or my mind ;

" The guests, or to distinguish, or invite : 1925

" Put show to use, to profit turn delight.

" But you, long wont this station to support,

" Can best advise, what suits the prince, and court.

" Again exert the talents you have shown,

" Display, at large, the splendor of my throne ; 1930

" Add ev'ry outward instance of my love :

" All, that I might omit, but must approve.

" But chiefly turn you to attend the fair,

" Be that your daily thought, and nightly care,

" 'Tis true, this rustic garb may show neglect ; 1935

" But well it suits your state, if you reflect.

" For,

80 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

- " For, pride of dress, is sure a barren curse ;  
 " E're fancy you consult, consult your purse.  
 " This is my will. Proceed, without delay !  
 " And do the proper honors of the day !" 1940  
 " Much I rejoice (the mild GRISELDA cries)  
 " That on my faith your confidence relies ;  
 " And hail the cause, that brings me to the place,  
 " Where oft, at distance, I may see your face ;  
 " And oft your voice, with due attention, hear : 1945  
 " Thus far I may indulge my eye, and ear !  
 " In honest diligence, thro' servile life,  
 " Pleas'd will I tend the husband and the wife.  
 " Assiduous, to prevent what she requires,  
 " Solicitous, to check my own desires. 1950  
 " So will I act (if but my heart allows)  
 " As e'er I knew your flames, or heard your vows.  
 Her answer half defeated his design :  
 " Oar confidence you see—the trust be thine !" 1955  
 He said. She mingles with the menial train,  
 No service she neglects, and spares no pain :  
 To grace the bed, or magnify the throne :  
 And forms a feast more splendid than her own.  
 Intent, or to dispose, or to provide ;  
 But pains her most, for what concern'd the bride. 1960  
 This

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 121

This done ; each noted chief, each noted dame,  
She summons to the feast ; so call'd, they came.  
These she receives, as suits their rank or race ;  
In vulgar habit, but with noble grace !  
Arranging all, (for such her lord's desire) 1965  
From wealthy citizen, to landed 'Squire !  
Equals in place, not worth ! from hardy knight  
To him, that never saw the face of fight !  
From peer, that builds on ancestors his fame,  
To him, that founds his title and his name ! 1970  
From learn'd and just dispenser of the laws,  
To him, that judges, by the bribe, the cause !  
From seer, whose charity gives health, and ease,  
To him, that poisons, for the sake of fees !  
From priest, of life unstain'd, and zeal sincere, 1975  
To him, of holy fraud, and pious leer !

Enter, of good and bad, a mingled crew.  
'Tis the true state of things, or old, or new !  
Virtue, and vice, divides each mixt degree !  
Such, was the world ! And, such, will ever be ! 1980

But as her care descends from bow'r to hall,  
All still inspecting, still amending all ;  
Thus, to a maid of rank, a wife of spirit :  
" Say, in her meanness, see you any merit ?

L

" I vow

122 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or*,

" I vow, by all the virtue of my pride, 1985

" Was I GRISELDA, sever'd from his side ;

" Then cast, as handmaid, to a second wife ;

" Slave to his will, yet trusted with his life.

" The present bondage shou'd redeem the past.

" Bridegroom and bride, this night shou'd be your last."<sup>a</sup>

Meantime the foremost of the train alight ; 1991

And fast the people pour'd to see the sight.

Close, and more close, the murm'ring insects grew,

Should'ring for place, and crouding for a view.

And much, they prais'd the show, and much the choice.

Ah ! who wou'd rest upon the public voice ? 1996

GRISELDA's rise with equal noise they hail'd ;

With equal noise GRISELDA's fall bewail'd.

Be deaf, fair stranger, to their senseless cries,

Thus wou'd they treat thy fall, who treat thy rise. 2000

" GUALTHERUS is no fool (the croud confess'd)

<sup>a</sup> Changing his wife, but changing for the best.

<sup>b</sup> GRISELDA wants no merit to ingage,

<sup>c</sup> But fairer, this, and of a softer age.

" GRISELDA, was inur'd to brook command, 2005

" And so may this, when molded to his hand.

" From her, what heirs will spring the throne to grace ?

<sup>d</sup> For she descends from some exalted race.

" The

" The brother comes, as sample of the line ;  
" What lineaments ? — majestic, and divine ! 2010  
O vulgar souls, unstable and untrue !  
Tir'd with the old, transported with the new !  
Turn'd by each blast, as fickle as the fane !  
And faster than the moon, Ye wax, and wain !  
Hapless the prince, whose ear, delighted, draws 2015  
The praise of crouds, and swallows vain applause ;  
Whose eye, transported, views the supple round  
Of courtiers, whom he trusts, yet fails to found.  
His ear may be misled, deceiv'd his eye :  
Crouds, can praise folly ; courtiers, look a lye. 2020  
Safer, the call of virtue, to pursue,  
That separates, wrong from right, and false from true.  
Tho' crouds may change, unfaithful as the wind !  
Can they depose the monarch from his mind ?  
Tho' courtiers from allegiance may depart ! 2025  
Great is the empire of an honest heart ?  
For inborn worth, alone, knows no controul,  
Fortune may change the state, not change the soul.  
But good, or ill, as man pursues or flies,  
So truly he may fall, so truly rise. 2030  
'Tis virtue gives him in high life to shine,  
Virtue, in low, is an unminted mine.



124 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

The force of each was in *GRISELDA* shown,

Great in a cot, and humble in a throne!

Thus, of the Many mad, the sober few 2035

Adjudg'd; who lov'd the old, and fear'd the new.

" And fools, (they call'd the number) to disown,

" For good they know not yet, a good long known!

In state, she enters now the palace gate,

And ent'ring is receiv'd with answ'ring state. 2040

The prince descending fast, to meet the bride,

A dame of high condition join'd his side;

Tongue of the sex, she fastens on his ear,

And thus express'd her fashionable fear.

" A Shepherdess, she said, is such a sight, 2045

" It soils the splendor of the nuptial rite;

" Excuse me, 'tis not my peculiar plea,

" Here all the sex in one request agree;

" We make it our petition and desire,

" *GRISELDA*, may redress her, or retire; 2050

" Nor stand, to foreign lords, a fund of sport,

" And scandal, to the ladies of the court.

Nought, to his scheme, so cross as this request.

He veil'd the truth, and gloss'd it with a jest.

Known was the dame, to love supreme command,

And held the bridle with a stedfast hand. 2056

" Ought,

" Ought, to the fair, it grieves me to refuse,  
" But 'tis too late, another course to chuse.  
" *GRISELDA's* inward merit well you know ;  
" And what is dress, but a fictitious show ? 2060  
" Yet, seek you, why to court thus rudely brought?  
" Young is our bride, and shou'd be mildly taught.  
" This rural garb, is humble, and is plain ;  
" In public shown, this maxim to maintain.  
" Plain truth, and humble duty, suits a wife ; 2065  
" An emblem, for the conduct of her life !  
I pass, as trivial, nor the Tale prolong,  
With masque or dance, with minstrelsy or song.  
Nor, drawn by fancy, deviate from the way,  
For kind reception here, there grand array. 2070  
I leave each train, their princes at their head ;  
The youth and virgin by *PEGANUS* led :  
Whom, long, *GUALTHERUS* fasten'd to his breast,  
And all, and each, with kindred warmth carefi'd.  
I dwell not on the maid, in fresh fifteen, 2075  
Whether array'd in white, red, blue, or green.  
Nor count how promising the boy appears,  
How manly, measuring half his sister's years.  
Here glean, ye Bards, who barren subjects chuse ;  
*GRISELDA* will admit no wand'ring muse. 2080

116 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

Short, of her virtues, tho' thy numbers flow,  
 Muse, keep her, first in sight, tho' last in show!  
 Her copious mind makes all her single care;  
 But most she strives to serve, and joy the fair.  
 Natives or strangers, pleas'd and proud to see; 208;  
 The whole she ranges, each in his degree.  
 The foreign lords a due surprize express,  
 So much, her manner supercedes her dress.  
 Nor flints her tongue the youth and maid to raise  
 With praise well judg'd; for they deserv'd her praise:  
 Tho' not to flatt'ry vile here words descend, 2091  
 No flatt'ring courtier cou'd her words amend.  
 A gen'rous flow of soul, that scorn'd all art!  
 Unfoil'd by envy! genuine, from the heart!  
 Some worth, it argues, a friend's worth to know:  
 Virtue, to own the virtue of a foe. 2096  
 Now, was the hour, the guests to entertain,  
 And, one by one, precedes the household train.  
 Just, at that season, e're the board was crown'd,  
 While all prepar'd to join the social round; 2100  
 GUALTHERUS turns, GRISELDA to explore:  
 "Seek her," he said; but sent his eyes before.  
 And where he spy'd her, busy'd in the hall,  
 "Attend," he calls; And she attends his call.

"GRISELDA

- "GRISELDA," (with indiff'rence feign'd he said) 2105  
" You see the maid I chuse, and mean to wed.  
" Speak (he continu'd with a face of sport)  
" What think you of our bride? Make just report.  
" How, to her form, how to her worth, inclin'd?  
" Pass sentence, on her person, and her mind!" 2110  
She, mildly took the word, and strait reply'd;  
" Ill, tho' the reliet might commend the bride.  
" No malice of the sex, no spleen of wrong,  
" My mind shall bias, or mislead my tongue.  
" Never these eyes, in perfect age, cou'd trace. 2115  
" A juster form, or yet a fairer face.  
" Never, from youth imperfect, heard these ears,  
" Thoughts so express, the words of ripen'd years.  
" Base is the office, wrongly to debase;  
" Lessen her worth, I rise not in her place. 2120  
" With truth I praise her, and without design;  
" Her want of merit, wou'd not add to mine.  
" What, fully she exacts, I freely give;  
" And may, each blest in each, securely live! 2124  
Thus, as she spoke; warm grew the virgin's face,  
Rofy her breast. She blush'd with modest grace.  
Then back retir'd, by her own praise subdu'd.  
GRISELDA seiz'd th' occasion, and pursu'd.

" This,

128 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,*

- " This, let me add, by long experience wife,  
 " And once presume GUALTHERUS to advise. 2130  
 " Judge ne'er so hardly of our sex or life,  
 " Ill usage may pervert, not mend a wife.  
 " When from the bounds of reason men depart,  
 " What, but the force of truth, and faith of heart,  
 " Retains affection, too severely prov'd ? 2135  
 " Twice, think not, to be so indur'd, and lov'd.  
 " Try not, as me you try'd, this tender maid,  
 " To summon more than virtue to her aid.  
 " If I, to pain was senseless, deaf to mirth,  
 " I owe it to the lowness of my birth. 2140  
 " The hand to labor us'd, the heart to care.  
 " Ills I had borne, and ills cou'd know to bear.  
 " But she was nobly born, and fondly fed !  
 " In plenty nurtur'd, and in grandeur bred !  
 " Not, like GRISELDA, rais'd from low degree ; 2145  
 " By thee to be debas'd, prefer'd by thee !  
 " She, in the trust of innocence and youth,  
 " Nor doubts your constancy, nor fears your truth.  
 " Soon wou'd she feel distress, soon find a cure ;  
 " She cou'd not well adversity endure ; 2150  
 " Well, cou'd she not, such load of grief, sustain :  
 " For death wou'd soon arrive, and ease her pain.

She

She spoke, from inward ties of kindred blood,  
Or nobler sympathy of good to good ;  
Firm as a column, stable as a wall : 2155  
Her grandeur more conspicuous by her fall.

The gen'rous answer, free from spleen or art,  
Rose inly on his mind, and fill'd his heart.  
" Too far, too far, (in extasy he cry'd)  
" *GRISELDA*, was thy wisely virtue try'd. 2160  
" Resume thy wonted state, thy wonted cheer  
" Resume ; nor think me faithless, tho' severe !  
" Enough have I assay'd thy love and truth ;  
" Assay'd to riper age from tender youth ;  
" So well, as never wife, in pomp array'd, 2165  
" Or clad in poverty, was yet assay'd."  
He said, and by his side *GRISELDA* plac'd,  
Fast seiz'd her in his arms, and long imbrac'd.

As one, from cumb'rous sleep disturb'd, she seems,  
Doubtful, if yet she wakes, or still she dreams ; 2170  
If real forms stand obvious to her sight,  
Or float the airy shadows of the night.

He noted her confusion, silence broke,  
And gently press'd her hand, and kindly spoke.  
" By him, I swear, for man that bled and dy'd, 2175  
" Thou art my wife, I seek no other bride.

— Worthy

130 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

- " Worthy thy praise the maid, I must agree ;  
 " Must joy to praise her, — For she comes from thee.  
 " And thee, in her, thro' all her form I trace,  
 " May she, in soul, but match thee, as in face ! 2180  
 " Thrice five years told (if love not blinds these eyes)  
 " States all the diff'rence that between you lies ;  
 " In age or beauty. Oh ! that heav'n decreed,  
 " Her virtue to thy virtue might succeed.  
 " Thy daughter this, first object of thy care ! 2185  
 " And that thy son, *Saluzzo's* future heir !  
 " Assassin'd ? No ! Not such our base intent.  
 " Safe were the infants to *Bologna* sent ;  
 " To good *PECANUS* privily convey'd :  
 " His worthy comfort rais'd the youth and maid. 2190  
 " That here they stand thus honor'd in thy view,  
 " Say, to his gen'rous heart, what thanks are due ?  
 " That, in thy view, thus polish'd here they stand,  
 " What thanks are due to her reforming hand ?  
 " A second mother she, at our desire, 2195  
 " Conceal'd their birth ; he prov'd a second sire.  
 " My motive, was mistrust ; to own the truth :  
 " A stubborn prejudice, imbib'd in youth !  
 " Wedlock, I judg'd, a station of unrest ;  
 " I found no marry'd pair compleatly blest : 2200  
 " And,

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 131

- “ And, for the male, too hasty to decide,  
“ Plac’d ev’ry error on the female side.  
“ I thought your failures to our faults gave rise,  
“ Your folly, falshoods, levity, or vice.  
“ Hence, the first trial, hence, arose the last. 2205  
“ But well the future shall amend the past.  
“ Hence, was you sworn a life submits to lead,  
“ Nor swerve in thought or look, in word or deed.  
“ Hence, with our daughter when constrain’d to part,  
“ I held your duty, indolence or art. 2210  
“ Hence, was the son propos’d. The son resign’d:  
“ This proof of love, seem’d cruelty of mind,  
“ Hence, was you try’d in self. With honest shame,  
“ I own the crime: *GRISELDA* was the fame.  
“ But fixt suspicion is the worst of woes, 2215  
“ And nought but certainty cou’d bring repose.  
“ Let malice, (room there is) our conduct blame,  
“ Yet my severity shall raise your fame.  
“ And cou’d you penetrate my inmost breast,  
“ There wou’d you find indelibly exprest, 2220  
“ *GRISELDA* fills my heart. My wealth, her gain.  
“ My bliss, her pleasure. Her distress, my pain.  
“ And when most calm her breast, serene, her eye:  
“ Here, many a tear she caus’d, here many a sigh:  
“ And



132 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,

" And let this mitigate, if not atone, 2225

" Each trial was not thine, it was my own.

" And if thy virtue thus exalted shine,

" Thine is the treasure, the discov'ry mine."

She, that cou'd bear misfortune, that had borne,  
Each infant from her tender bosom torne ! 2230

Cou'd to a cottage from a throne descend,

And the great bed, she had adorn'd, attend.

From low to high, from high to low re-toft,

Cou'd see, whate'er on earth she valu'd, lost.

She that cou'd stand the last contempt unmov'd, 2235

Yields to the yielding of the man she lov'd.

Sinks at the thought of either child restor'd,

Whose loss in secrecy she long deplor'd.

Patient in ill, in injury resign'd !

Here first she quits equality of mind. 2240

While, all her wish in her possession stood.

Fast flow'd her joy, like the returning flood.

The swell of passion rose to such a height,

'Twas painful pleasure, and severe delight.

Kind as he spoke, with rapture and amaze, 2245

Her eyes she gives upon her lord to gaze.

And quits but to survey, with silent joy,

The lovely maid and near-resembling boy.

All

*The Clerk of Oxford's TALE.* 133

All moves her, that she heard, or that she view'd ;  
Strong on her soul the tides of joy intrude. 2250  
Fain wou'd her tongue have open'd all her breast ;  
But there she felt, what cou'd not be exprest.  
Vain the endeavour. For in transport tost  
Her voice was stopt, her breath in rapture lost.  
Wound to excess of gratitude and love, 2255  
Her pulse forgot to play, her heart to move.  
No more her form the vital heat retains,  
Slow pass'd the current circling in her veins.  
The dews of death her trembling limbs assail,  
Her lips grew livid, and her cheeks grew pale. 2260  
Sounds, disproportion'd to her thoughts, she hears ;  
Unmeaning murmurs echoing thro' her ears.  
While misty vapors, that in fancy rise,  
Cloud the sole objects that cou'd charm her eyes.  
She faints. She falls. But, sinking to the ground, 2265  
He caught her in his arms. The court surround.

Ye tender youth, in love unblest, or blest,  
Imagination loose, and paint the rest !  
Virtuous or vicious, be your course of life,  
Feel you no pain, for husband or for wife ? 2270

Reclining on his breast, she pants for breath ;  
As pleas'd to die, since there she found her death.

M

He

134 *GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA: or,*

He looks the aid, he wants the pow'r to give;  
As in her life alone he wish'd to live.

A gen'ral care the courtly train confess, 2275  
Joy mixt with sorrow, Pleasure with distress.  
These fan'd her bosom, those her head sustain'd;  
While death o'er life a doubtful conquest gain'd.  
Of art and nature ev'ry aid they bring;  
The cool refreshment of the limpid spring! 2280  
The juice of herbs, that noxious steams repel!  
Of shrubs the virtues, elegant of smell!  
Of drugs and simples the salubrious pow'rs!  
Extract of salts, and quintessence of flow'rs!

Thrice seem'd her eyes, to ask the cheer of light,  
Thrice seem'd to sink in ever-lasting night. 2286  
And thrice he hail'd her as restor'd from death,  
Thrice wail'd her irrecoverable breath.

At length she mov'd, and wildly gazing round,  
First in her care the pleas'd *GUALTHERUS* found; 2290  
Next, weeping o'er her, joy'd the maid to see,  
And last the boy, that trembled at her knee.  
The fond assemblage pour'd, without controul,  
On her weak sense, and mollify'd her soul.  
By turns she seiz'd them, and by turns she press'd, 2295  
The father and the children to her breast.

*Adown*

Adown their cheeks the mingling torrents flow,  
The streams of transport, not the streams of woe.

The sweet contagion spread like tainted air ;  
From youth to youth it pass'd, from fair to fair. 2300  
And many a gen'rous heart breath'd many a sigh,  
And many a tear shed many a gentle eye.  
A scene so sweetly sad, who fail'd to feel,  
Must have an eye of flint, or heart of steel.  
Long silence follow'd. 'Twas not time for speech. 2305  
Looks best explain, what words want pow'r to reach.

Mirth to restore, GUALTHERUS soon began,  
Ironically grave ; for that the man.

" A Shepherdess is such an awkward foil,  
" The splendor of the feast she needs must foil. 2310  
" That she shou'd change her garb, on me you call ;  
" And I agree ; for 'tis the plea of all.  
" Ladies, with joy I grant you this request,  
" Yes ! Let our wife retire to be re-drest.  
" Nor stand to foreign lords a fund of sport, 2315  
" Or scandal to the beauties of the court."

Pleas'd, she retir'd. For well she read his mind.  
A train of busy females flock behind.  
And now more busy none of all the train,  
Than some that witness'd pleasure in her pain ; 2320

136 GUALTHERUS *and* GRISELDA: *or,*

But she that office to the bridal maid  
 Assigns, nor wish'd, nor wanted, other aid.  
 The maiden bride was charm'd with the employ,  
 The sun, she knew, must set in grief or joy ;  
 Late made no stranger to her fire's intent : 2325  
 And, as she griev'd, she joy'd for the event.  
 Soon was she disarray'd, and soon attir'd,  
 For there lay all or more than dress requir'd.  
 All that cou'd wish the vain, or ask the great,  
 In aid of beauty, or in pride of state. 2330  
 Nor senseless of their value was the dame ;  
 Not senseless ! when she thought, from whom they came.  
 Strait she return'd, resplendent to behold ;  
 Of silver was her vest, her robe of gold.  
 The hoards of ages, that her crown compos'd, 2335  
 Took lustre from the tresses they inclos'd.  
 High in the seat of honor was she plac'd ;  
 The seat her virtue fill'd, and beauty grac'd !  
 The guests, in order rang'd, the prince address'd,  
 And with a noble freedom op'd his breast. 2340  
 A gen'rous sense of shame unloos'd his tongue ;  
 The wife and brave dares say, that he was wrong :  
 If virtue errs, she errs against her rules ;  
 'Tis ever the reverse with knaves or fools :

For

*The Clerk of Oxford's Tale.* 137

For wilful faults, these mend not, or not own; 2345

Too weak to see, or wicked to atone!

“ Friends! to the self-accus’d be not unkind;

“ Full dear I nourish’d this distrust of mind.

“ Painful the trial, as severe the test;

“ Had the wife fall’n, the husband was unblest’d.

“ Be her’s the honor; mine be the disgrace; 2350

“ Yet shall my choice beam glory on my race.

“ Nor friend, nor foe that ast of life shall blame;

“ That was my own; and is my praise, not shame.

“ First, that beneath low birth, and mean disguise,

“ Beauty and virtue cou’d not ’scape my eyes. 2356

“ Next, that I held, gentility of blood

“ Consists, in scorn of ill, and pride of good.

“ Last, that I prov’d, worth equal, whence it springs!

“ From cots of swains, or palaces of kings! 2360

“ Remains there ought, *GRISELDA* can desire?

“ Yes, much is due to her neglected fire.

“ What must the good *JANICOLA* have borne,

“ To think his worth the object of our scorn?

“ What, not indur’d from solitary life? 2365

“ What, not expect the father for the wife?

“ To give his innate virtue full support,

“ Be mine the care; he will not shame the court.

138 GUALTHERUS and GRISELDA : or,

" Here, shall he bear the rank his merit gains,

" Example, to our nobles, and our swains! 2370

PEGANUS, by their mutual virtues won,  
Strait ask'd the blooming daughter for his son.  
With which GUALTHERUS gracefully comply'd ;

" If so my son might call your daughter bride."

Ask you, how led the younger race their lives? 2375

Just as they shou'd. Mere husbands, and mere wives !

At rule, the women neither aim'd, nor broke  
Their vow ; with equal neck they bore the yoke.

The men accus'd them not of crimes unknown ;  
But pard'ning lighter faults, excus'd their own. 2380

Thus found that mournful day a blisful end ;  
In mirth and revel the glad night they spend.  
Short seem'd the hours of converse and delight,  
Ev'n day impertinently rose on night.

The coldest maids, and wildest youths confes'd, 2385

So to be join'd, was, doubly to be blest !

With licence, all their various censure pass'd,  
Some the first marriage prais'd, and some the last.

The pair, of last or first, no diff'rence make ;  
Still, one in soul, tho' sunder'd by mistake. 2390

Each wrapt in each, the concord they improve ;  
Their life, was one long day, of harmony and love.

T H E



THE  
CLERK of *Oxford's* CONCLUSION.

From *PETRARCH*.

I Mean not, by this Tale, I must declare,  
What husbands shou'd exact, or wives shou'd bear.  
That sense wou'd much my gen'rous master wrong ;  
For thus *Petrarch* has moraliz'd the song. 2396

Ye Fair ! without offence, let truth be told ;  
This age is not so strong as was the old.  
The proof you cou'd not suffer, if you wou'd ;  
Too much for human flesh, and human blood. 2400

Yet patience is a good, of use in life,  
To youth, or maid ! to husband, or to wife !  
A virtue, to no sex, or age, confin'd !  
Our author wou'd extend it to mankind.

For if such trials bore, such hazards ran, 2405  
(Mere force of love!) a woman for a man ;

Shall



140 *The Clerk of Oxford's Conclusion.*

Shall I presume to question his decree ?

By whom, I am ! In whom, I hope to be !

Vice luring, in the way of virtue, lies.

God suffers this ; but tempts not : tho' he tries. 2410

Go wrong, or right, 'tis your own action still ;

He leaves you to your choice, of good, or ill.

Then chuse the good ! The ill submissly bear !

The man of virtue is above despair.

Safe, on this maxim, with *GRISELDA* rest ! 2415

That all, that fortunes, fortunes for the best !

CHAUCER'S



## CHAUCER's *Declaration*;

O R,

*L'Envoy de CHAUCER a les Mariz  
de notre Temps.*

CHAUCER, who close attended, from the ground  
His musing eyes uprais'd, and look'd around.  
Spare me (hé cry'd) if not our Host oppose,  
One word of epilogue, before you close. 2420  
So rare a coin, are true GRISELDA's grown,  
Scarce two are found, in any country town.  
And bold the man, not wife, that dares engage  
To warrant one, in *London*, in an age.  
For put the current cash to full assay, 2425  
The gold is mix'd with brass; a bad alay!  
And shou'd it stand the Touch, or cheat the Eye.  
Trust me, at last, 'twill rather break than ply.

Hence,

142 CHAUCER'S *Declaration*, &c.

Hence, let our pray'rs the *Wife of Bath* befriend,  
 Whose life, and sect, ye pow'rs of love defend. 2430  
 Still may her tongue the sov'reign rule maintain;  
 And never may her hand relax the rein.  
 Free may she live, in undisturb'd delight,  
 All day in revel, and in bliss all night.  
 Nor will the modest scholar think me bold; 2435  
 (Who with much decency much truth has told)  
 Or will with me, as with mine host dispense;  
 (For no light humbr takes from solid sense)  
 If this advice I add, to poise the scale:  
 A merry Moral suits a serious Tale. 2440

Dead, is, GRISELDA! Wifely patience, dead!  
 Both bury'd in one tomb! Both laid in lead!  
 For which, ye husbands, lend attentive ear;  
 Hear me, for it concerns you much to hear.  
 Let none, I warn you, none on pain of life, 2445  
 In search of a GRISELDA, tempt his wife.  
 If half so far, her patience you assail;  
 You try her, to your loss, for she will fail.

And you, ye wives of spirit, above wrongs, 2450  
 Let no such mean example nail your tongues.  
 Let, never, moral poet of your age,  
 Fill, with your duty, one romantic page.

142 CHAUCER'S *Declaration*, &c.

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Be

Be pleasure, your pursuit! Be pow'r, your aim!  
 Make nothing, of your virtue, or your fame! 2455  
 Of truth and honor, laugh at all he writes;  
 Vain talk for children! Nurs'ry cant of sprites!

Thus taught; no merit in compliance place!  
 Meanests of foul, think, modesty of face!  
 It matters not, how tender, when alone,  
 The part'ner of thy life. It shou'd be known!  
 Known to thy friends! Nor yet shou'd that suffice.  
 To strangers be it known! Might I advise.  
 And now imprint this lesson on your mind,  
 The benefit, by practice, you will find. 2465

Trust not the marriage venture to his hand;  
 Freight he the frigate, thou the sail command!  
 Why, to his blustry oath, such deference paid?  
 The husband, why, thus dreaded and obey'd?  
 Arm'd, tho' he stood, from head to foot, in mail;  
 The arrows of thy quiver shall not fail. 2470  
 Thy crabbed eloquence supplies a dart,  
 That, ent'ring at his ear, shall pierce his heart.

If you have beauty, strait alarm his love.  
 Be ever on the drefs, and on the rove. 2475  
 At home wou'd he remain? Abroad then roam!  
 Then, wou'd he roam abroad? Remain at home!

Make

144 CHAUCER'S *Declaration*, &c.

Make it your rule, to see, and to be seen;  
 Abroad in humor! and at home in spleen! 2480  
 Touch but his jealousy, you must prevail!  
 Yes! You will make him couch like any quail!  
 The pow'r of form, if nature has deny'd;  
 Tho' not his love, you may alarm his pride.  
 Be open of your house, to sup, or dine, 2485  
 Bring company; for all he has is thine!  
 To fiddlers, priests, play'rs, poets, give or lend!  
 Money shall win thee many an humble friend!  
 Thy man, may fume, and fret, and rave, and rail!  
 But touch his honor, and you low'r his fail. 2490  
 For you, the masculine, to labor bred,  
 When menaces his hand, correct his head.  
 If nature gives the sinew and the frame,  
 Same as the pow'r, why not the use the same?  
 Whene'er your wish, is wilfully withstood, 2495  
 Exert your talent; it will do him good.  
 Stick to your point! Again withstood, withstand!  
 There is no logic, like a heavy hand.  
 But for the delicate, the weak in fight,  
 The rich, the great, the tender, the polite! 2500  
 Be furious as a tyger! or if that  
 You cannot compass; vixen as a cat!

By

By tongue reclaim this rebel to your will !  
Loud as the clapper of a drudging mill !  
Fast as the flier of a well order'd jack ! 2505  
From morn to night keep one continu'd clack !  
And went he twice as loud, and twice as fast,  
Speak what he will, like eccho, speak the last.





T H E  
W O R D S o f o u r H O S T.

**T**H E worthy Student, to scholastic pride  
 A stranger, smil'd; but not a word reply'd.  
 Not so mine Host the fly conclusion bore,      2514  
 Roundly he spoke, and horribly he swore.  
 Not much that turn is suited to my mind,  
 As quoth the clerk, it leaves a sting behind.  
 But I had rather than a Tun of Ale      2515  
 Our Dame, at home had heard this courteous Tale.  
 For-sooth to say, was her domestic life  
 Expos'd, no tame GRISELDA, is our wife.  
 But 'tis the daily burden of my song,  
 If things will not go right, let 'em go wrong.      2520  
     To common sense I owe these golden rules.  
 None will suspect I learn'd them in the schools.

Patience



Patience I court ; But patience oft is frail.  
And, if he curs'd not, *Job* himself cou'd rail.  
A heavier plague he never bore in life ; 2525  
A very heap of vices is our wife.  
Tho' poor and low ; yet far from fond, or true.  
And of her tongue, she is an errant shrew.  
Still joys her that, which contradicts my will ;  
But if it must be so, be it so still. 2530  
Yet, here my mind more fully to disclose,  
Reveal'd to friends, and spoke beneath the rose,  
Wou'd some kind priest but forge the Papal Bull,  
Annul, shou'd be my daily song, Annul!

*F I N I S.*





## FRANCISCUS PETRARCHA,

JOAN. BOCCATIO S.

**L**ibrum tuum, quem nostro materno  
elcquio, ut opinor, olim juvenis edi-  
disti, nescio quidem, unde, vel  
qualiter, ad me delatum vidi. Nam si di-  
cam, legi, mentiar. Siquidem ipse magnus  
valde, ut ad vulgus & solutâ scriptus oratione,  
& occupatio mea major, & tempus angus-  
tum erat. Idque ipsum, ut nosti, bellicis  
undique motibus inquietum, a quibus & si  
animo procul absum, nequeo tamen fluctuante  
Rep. non moveri. Quid ergo? Excucurri  
eum, & festini viatoris in morem, hinc atque  
hinc circumspiciens, nec subsistens, animad-  
verti Librum ipsum alicubi canum dentibus  
laceffitum, tuo tamen baculo egregiè, tuâque  
voce defensum. Nec mirarus sum. Nam  
& vires ingenii tui novi, & scio expertus,

esse hominum genus, & insolens, & ignavum, qui quicquid ipsi vel nolunt, vel nesciunt, vel non possunt, in aliis reprehendunt, ad hoc unum docti & arguti, sed elingues ad reliqua. Delectatus sum in ipso transitu, & si quid lasciviæ liberioris occurreret, excusabat ætas tunc tua, dum id scriberes, stilius, idioma, ipsa quoque rerum levitas, & eorum qui lecturi talia videbantur. Refert enim largiter, quibus scribas, morumque varietate stili varietas excusatur; inter multa sane jocosa & levia, quædam pia & gravia deprehendi, de quibus tamen diffinitivè, quid judicem, non habeo, ut qui nusquam totus inhæserim: at quod verè accidit, eo modo currentibus, curiosius aliquantò quàm cætera, libri principium, finemque perpexi, quorum in altero patriæ nostræ statum, illius scilicet pestilentissimi temporis, quod præ omnibus nostra ætas lugubre, ac miserum mundo vidit, meo quidem judicio, & narrâsti propriè, & magnificè deplorâsti. In altero autem historiam ultimam, & multis præcedentium longè dissimilem posuisti, quæ ita mihi placuit, mèque detinuit, ut inter tot curas, quæ penè meipsum immemorem fecere, illam memoriæ mandare voluerim, ut & ipse eam animo, quoties vellem, non sine voluptate repeterem, & amicis ut sit confabulantibus, renarrarem, si quando aliquid tale incidisset, quod cùm brevi postmodum fecissem,

fecissem, gratamque audientibus cognovissem, subito talis inter loquendum cogitatio supervenit, fieri posse, ut nostri etiam sermonis ignaros, tam dulcis historia delectaret, cum & mihi semper ante multos annos, audita placuisset, & tibi usque adeo placuisse perpenderem, ut vulgari eam stilo tuo censueris, non indignam & fine operis, ubi Rhetorum disciplina validiora, quælibet collocari jubet. Itaque die quodam, inter varios cogitatus, animum more solito discerpentes, & illis, & mihi, ut sic dixerim iratus, vale omnibus ad tempus dicto, calamum arripiens, historiam ipsam tuam scribere sum aggressus, te haud dubie gavissimum sperans, ultro rerum interpretem me tuarum fore, quod non facile alteri cuicunque præstiterim; egit me tui amor, & historiæ: ita tamen, ne Horatianum illud poeticæ artis obliviscer:

*Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus  
Interpres :*

Historiam tuam, meis verbis explicui, imò alicubi aut paucis in ipsâ narratione verbis, aut additis, quod te non ferente modò, sed favente fieri credidi, quæ licet a multis & laudata, & expetita fuerit, ego rem tuam tibi non alteri dedicandam censui. Quam quidem, an mutatâ veste deformaverim, an fortassis ornaverim, tu judica, illinc enim  
orat,

orat, illuc redit, notus judex, nota domus, notum iter, ut unum & tu noris, & quisquis hæc leget, tibi non mihi tuarum rationem rerum esse reddendam. Quisquis ex me quæret, an hæc vera sint, hoc est an historiam scripserim, an fabulam, respondebo illud Crispi : Fides penes auctorem, meum scilicet Johannem sit. Hæc præfatus incipio.

**E**ST ad Italiæ latus occiduum Vesulus ex Appennini jugis, mons unus altissimus, qui vertice nubila superans, liquido sese ingerit ætheri, mons suapte nobilis naturâ, sed Padi ortu nobilissimus, qui ejus e latere fonte lapsus, exiguo orientem contra solem fertur, mirisque mox tumidus incrementis, brevi spatio decursu, non tantum maximorum unus amnium, sed Fluviorum a Virgilio Rex dictus. Liguriam gurgite violentus intersecat, dehinc Æmiliam, atque Flaminiam, Venetiamque discriminans, multis ad ultimum & ingentibus ostiis, in Adriaticum mare descendit. Cæterum pars illa terrarum, de quâ primùm dixi, quæ & grata planitie, & interjectis collibus, ac montibus circumflexis, aprica pariter, ac jucunda est, atque ab eorum quibus subjacet Pedemontium nomen tenet, & civitates aliquot, & oppida habet egregia. Inter cætera, &c.

U R S I T

URSIT amor tui, ut scriberem senex,  
 quod juvenis vix scripsissem, nescio an  
 res veras an fictas, quæ jam non Historiæ,  
 sed Fabellæ sunt, ob hoc unum, quod res  
 tuæ, & a te scriptæ erant; quamvis hoc  
 prævidens, fidem rerum penes auctorem,  
 hoc est, penes te fore sim præfatus: Et di-  
 cam tibi, quid de hac Historiâ, quam Fabu-  
 lam dixisse malim, mihi contigit. Legit  
 eam primùm communis amicus Patavinus,  
 vir altissimi ingenii, multiplicisque notitiæ;  
 & cum epistolæ medium vix transisset, subito  
 fletu præventus substitit: post modicum verò  
 cum in manus eam resumpsisset, firmato ani-  
 mo perlecturus, ecce iterum, quasi ad con-  
 dictum rediens, lecturam gemitus interrup-  
 pit. Fassus itaque se non posse procedere,  
 eam uni suorum comitum, docto satis viro,  
 legendam tradidit. Quod accidens, quor-  
 sum alii traherent, incertum habeo, ego in  
 optimam partem traxi, mitissimumque viri  
 animum intellexi: Verè enim homo huma-  
 nior, quem ego quidem noverim, nullus est.  
 Rediit illo flente, ac legente ad memoriam  
 Satyricum illud:

—————mollissima corda  
*Humano generi dare se natura fatetur.  
 Quæ lacrymas dedit, hæc nosti: pars op-  
 tima sensûs.*

Post

Post tempus amicus alter noster Veronenſis, ſunt enim nobis ut reliqua, ſic amici etiam communes, audito quid alteri inter legendum accidiffet, eandem legere optavit. Geſſi morem ingenioſo & amico viro; legit eam totam, nec alicubi ſubſtitit, nec frons obductior, nec vox fractior, nec lachrymæ, nec ſingultus intervenère, & in finem: Ego etiam, inquit, fleſſem: Nam & piæ res, & verba rebus accommodata ſetum ſuadebant, nec ego duri cordis ſum, niſi quòd ficta omnia credidi & credo. Nam ſi vera eſſent, quæ uſquàm mulier, vel Romana, vel cujuſlibet gentis hanc Griſeldim æquatura ſit? Ubi quæſo tantus amor conjugalis? Ubi par fides? Ubi tam inſignis patientia, atque conſtantia? Iſis tunc ego nil reſpondi, ne rem a jocis amicique colloqui ſeſtâ dulcedine ad acrimoniam diſceptationis adducerem: erat autem prona reſponſio. Eſſe nonnullos, qui quæcunque eis difficilia ſint impoſſibilia omnia arbitrantur, ſic menſurâ ſuâ omnia metientes, ut ſe omnium primos locent, cùm tamen multa fuerint, fortè & ſint, quibus eſſent facilia, quæ vulgò impoſſibilia viderentur. Quis eſt enim, exempli gratiâ, qui non Curium ex noſtris, & Mutium, & Decios: ex externis autem Codrum, & Philenes Fratres; vel quoniam de Fœminis Sermo erat, quis vel Porciam, vel Hipſicrateam, vel Alceſtim & harum ſimiles non Fabulas fictas putet? At-  
qui



qui Historiæ veræ sunt. Et sanè, qui pro alio vitam spernit, quid non spernere, quid non pati possit, non intelligo. Cæterùm & illam, & alteram, duas magnas epistolas ad te non pervenisse nunc sentio: sed quid faciam? Pati oportet indignari licet, non ulcisci. Apparuit, ecce: per Cisalpinam Galliam tædiosissimum hoc hominum genus, custodes passuum, imo pestis nunciorum, qui literas apertas introspiciant, & morosissimè contemplantur, quod Dominorum forsàn jussus excusât, qui sibi omnium conscii, trepidâ ac superbâ vitâ, de se, & contra se omnia dici putant, atque omnia nosse volunt. Illud nihil excusât, quòd si quid in literis ipsis inveniunt, quod aures asininas mulceat; solebant quidam in transcribendo tempus terere, & nuncios detinere, nunc crescente licentiâ, ut digitis suis parcant, abire illos jubent sine literis, quodque gravissimum tædii genus est, hoc illi maximè faciunt, qui nihil intelligunt: Similes iis, quorum ampla, & præceps gula est, & lenta digestio, qui malæ valetudini proximi sint, oportet. Importunitatem talium nemo me stomachantior, nullus impatientior, ita ut sæpe me a scribendo diverterit, sæpe quo scripserim, dolore coegerit, quando contra hos prædones, literarum nulla vindictæ patet occasio alterius, turbatis omnibus, & Reip. libertate pessimandâ. Sanè huic tedio accedit mori, & liti-

tudo rerum penè omnium, scribendique non  
 satietas modò, sed fastidium, quibus junctis  
 inducor, ut tibi, amice, & omnibus quibus  
 scribere soleo, quod ad hunc epistolarem  
 stylum attinet ultimum. Vale dicam, tam  
 ne usquam in finem me, quod diutius jam  
 fecêrunt, a meliori studio scripturæ fragili-  
 ores impedian, quàm ne ad horum nebulo-  
 num manus ineptissimas scripta nostra perve-  
 niant, quorum sic saltem ab injuriis tutus ero,  
 si quando vel tecum, vel cum aliis scripto  
 opus sit, sic scribam, ut intelligar non de-  
 lecter. Promiseram, memini, in quâdam  
 ordinis hujus epistolâ, me deinceps in episto-  
 lis brevius scripturum, declivi jam temporis  
 urgente penuriâ, promissum implere non  
 valui, multoque facilius, ut intelligi datur,  
 silentium cum amicis est, quàm brevilo-  
 quium; tantus est, ubi semel incepimus,  
 ardor colloquendi, ut facilius fuerit, non  
 coepisse, quàm siænare impetum coepti ser-  
 monis. Sed promissum, nonne sat promif-  
 sum implet, qui plus præstat? Eram credo,  
 dum promitterem, oblitus Catonis illud apud  
 Ciceronem latè notum. Quod naturâ ipsâ  
 loquacior est senectus. Valete amici, valete  
 epistolæ. Inter colles Euganeos, 6 Idus Junias  
 MCCCLXXIII.