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**ARCITA AND PALAMON.**

*§c. §c.*

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# ARCITA AND PALAMON:

AFTER

*The excellent Poet,*

**GEOFFREY CHAUCER:**

BY

EDWARD HOVEL THURLOW,

LORD THURLOW.

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THE  
**PREFACE.**

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WHEN I lived at Brussels, and had hardly any books with me, I met, by accident, in that City, with a copy of Chaucer's Poems. And, some time after, going to live at Laken, I made it my employment, and great pleasure, very many mornings, to translate the Knight's Tale: if I may use that expression, in somewhat altering the ancient language and rhythm of Chaucer. I did not lay down to myself any precise rule, in the manner of making my version: but the sense, which I had, of the great beauties of the Original, would not allow me far to wander from it. If I were to engage my mind again in that task, I should weigh every word, in the endeavour to be a strict

and faithful interpreter : for Chaucer is best. He is, surely, one of the greatest poets, whom the Sun ever shone upon. And, because I believe there is no version, extant, of this poem, so near to the original text, as mine, I have caused it to be printed. Whatever may be thought of this little book, which I submit, with deference, to the judgment of the reader, I shall never regret, that I have walked, with humility, in the footsteps of so great a master.

THURLOW.

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**ARCITA AND PALAMON.**

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## ARCITA AND PALAMON.

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**I**n the old time, as the old stories say,  
A duke in Athens did the sceptre sway,  
His name was Theseus, and of mighty state,  
And such a victor in his time and date,  
Under the bright sun there was none more great.  
The Amazonian coast, where women reign'd,  
And the great female sceptre long maintain'd,  
Scythia of old, he fairly overrun,  
Nathless the lady-knights, and all the kingdom won.  
For he was wise and brave, and bore away       10  
The queen Ipolita, as fresh as May,  
Bore her to Athens with exceeding glee,  
With a great glory and solemnity,  
And also her young sister, Emily;  
And thus with victory and with melody,

Let I this worthy duke to Athens ride,  
And all his host in armour him beside.

And surely, but it is too long to hear,  
I would have told you all the fine career,  
And winning of the reign of Amazons, 20  
By the duke Theseus and his gallant ones,  
And the great battle, to bring conquest near,  
'Twixt Athens and the Amazonian spear,  
And how Ipolita besieged lay,  
The hardy queen of Scythia, fair as May,  
And of the feast they at her wedding gave,  
And of the temple deck'd at her home-coming brave;  
But all these things I must as now forbear,  
An ample field is waiting for my share;  
Open the smoking furrow, and for work prepare. 30

This duke, of whom I told you the renown,  
When he was come almost into the town,  
In all his welfare and his utmost pride,  
And had his warlike lady by his side,  
And all the happy people shouted far and wide,  
Aware he was, casting his eye aside,

Where in the highway kneeled, two and two,  
A company of ladies, fair to view,  
Each after other, in black clothes array'd ;  
But such a cry, and such a woe they made, 40  
None living, it may safely be averr'd,  
Another such lamenting ever heard,  
And of this cry they never stinted aught,  
'Till they the reins of the duke's bridle caught.

" Who are ye," said the duke, " that when I come  
" Thus with my lovely bride to Athens home,  
" To keep my feast and marriage in delight,  
" Thus clothe yourselves in weeds as black as night,  
" And fall upon the ground, and wail and cry ?  
" Do ye then envy my felicity ? 50  
" Or who has done you any injury ?  
" Tell it me straight, that I amend it may :  
" Why, cloth'd in black, thus wail ye on the way ?"

The eldest lady of them all then said,  
Lifting from off the ground her withered head,  
But first she swooned with a deadly cheer,  
Ah ! it was pity both to see and hear,

She said, " Lord Theseus, to whom Fortune gives

" To be the greatest conqueror, that lives,

" Victorious lord, we grieve not at your fame, 60

" Nor pine with ashy envy at your name,

" Your glory be increas'd, but turn an eye

" Of gentle pity on our misery,

" Succour and aid us, O renowned lord,

" And all your mercy on our case afford.

" We, wretched women, each of us have been,

" Aye, each of us, a dutchess or a queen,

" Not one of us, but hath enjoy'd that state,

" Though fallen now, and captive unto fate.

" Due thanks to Fortune, and her rolling wheel; 70

" Who all our goods does always from us steal!

" Surely, my lord, my good lord Theseus, we

" These fourteen days have sojourn'd here for thee,

" Here, in the temple of dame Clemency,

" Here have we sojourn'd both the day and night,

" Now help us, lord; it lieth in your might.

" I, wretched creature, that thus weep and wail,

" Was, while more happy fortune did avail,

" The wife of Capaneus, a crowned king,

" Murder'd at Thebes: ah! cursed be that thing, 80



“And cursed be that guilty day, which stole  
“My joy away, and treasure of my soul!  
“And all we here, that in this sad array,  
“With lamentation weep, your path to stay,  
“Have lost our husbands at that fatal town,  
“When the fierce siege did all around it frown;  
“And yet now the old Creon, well-away!  
“That of that self-same Thebes the rod doth sway,  
“Made up of ire and of iniquity,  
“All for despite and for his tyranny, 90  
“To do the corpses a mere villainy,  
“Of all the peers and princes, that were slain,  
“Fighting at Thebes, hath order’d in disdain,  
“That all the bodies on a heap be thrown,  
“And will not let them burn or bury one;  
“None shall be burnt or buried, by his might,  
“But famish’d hounds shall eat them in despite.”

And at that word, not saying any more,  
Flat fell they down upon the dusty floor,  
Flat fell they down, and cried out piteously, 100  
“Ah! good lord duke, we perish but for thee:  
“Some mercy to us, wretched wives, impart;  
“And let our sorrow sink into thine heart.”

Straight from his horse the gentle duke came down ;  
The tears of pity did his visage drown,  
He thought his very heart would break, to view  
So lost, dejected, and distress'd a crew  
Of ladies, formerly of great estate,  
And hopeful glory, ruin'd now by fate:  
And in his arms he took them up with care,      110  
And gentle love, and bade them not despair,  
And comforted their souls, and made an oath,  
And swore it, a true knight, upon his troth,  
On the great tyrant, Creon, he would wreak  
Such dreadful vengeance, that all Greece should speak  
For ever of the same ; how Creon died  
By Theseus, justly punish'd for his pride.

And there no longer will he make abode,  
His banner he display'd, and forth he rode  
Right unto Thebes, and all his host beside :      120  
No nearer Athens now would Theseus ride:  
Nor take his ease ; no, not for half a day :  
But onward on his road that night he lay,  
And sent Ipolita, and Emily,  
The queen, and her young sister, tenderly  
Into the town of Athens, there to dwell ;  
And forth he rid : the very truth I tell.

The statue of red Mars, with spear and targe,  
Like fire so shone in his white banner large,  
That all the fields did glitter up and down, 130  
And all the folks did gaze from every town :  
And by his banner was his pennon borne,  
Of gold full rich, that blazed like the morn,  
In which the artful hammer well had beat  
The Minotaur, which Theseus slew in Crete.  
Thus rid the duke, thus rid the conqueror,  
And in his host, of chivalry the flower,  
Until he came to Thebes, and did alight  
In a fair field, whereon he thought to fight.  
Nor was it long, ere he with Creon fought, 140  
And slew him manly, as a soldier ought,  
In the plain field of battle, and made fly,  
Ah gallant man ! the Theban company ;  
And after by assault he took the town,  
And wall, and bar, and rafter rent he down ;  
And to the ladies be restor'd again  
The bodies of their husbands, that were slain ;  
To give the rites, which love and honour ask,  
A vain, a mournful, but a lovely task !

You rather may conceive, than I shall tell, 150  
Since time is spare, what outcry there befell,

What weeping and lamenting, when the fire  
With doleful brightness touch'd the funeral pyre ;  
How the poor ladies shriek'd, as like to die ;  
And the spectators groan'd in sympathy :  
You also may conceive, what noble things  
Did Theseus, that great proto-type of kings ;  
What courtesy and grace, when from him went  
The ladies, weeping for that last event  
Of human life, yet thankful for his aid : 160  
Time presses, and this cannot here be said.

After the worthy duke thus Thebes had won,  
And Creon slain, and all his task was done,  
Yet in the field he took that night his rest,  
And did with all the country what it lik'd him best.  
The plunderers, who scent the dead afar,  
And are like dogs and vultures in the war,  
Haunters inhuman of the mailed fight,  
Whom kings would punish keenly, did they right,  
Ransack'd the piled bodies all the night. 170  
To strip the dead of harness and of weed,  
So crows may on the fallen lions feed.  
And in this heap of helpless men they found,  
Pierc'd through with many a grievous bloody wound,

Two young knights, lying by each other's side,  
The same their armour, lovely in its pride,  
And of these two young knights, the name of one  
Was Arcite, and the other Palamon.  
Not quite alive, nor yet quite dead they were;  
Lovely they lay upon their bloody bier, 180  
Lovely as lilies, or as daffodils,  
Which the sharp scythe of the keen mower kills:  
And their coat-armour, and their fashion show'd  
The heralds, that they were of royal blood;  
Of the king's race of Thebes, unhappy birth!  
And of two sisters yielded to the earth.  
The heralds knew them; and the plunderers  
Out of the heaps of other sufferers,  
Took them, and carried softly to the tent  
Of Theseus, by whose mandate they were sent 190  
To Athens, for of ransom he would none;  
In everlasting prison to be thrown.  
And when the worthy duke so much had done,  
He rais'd his host, and home he rid anon,  
Crowned with laurel, as a conqueror;  
And liveth all his days, an emperor,  
In joy and honour: many words are vain;  
Coop'd in a tower, in anguish and in pain,

Poor Palamon and Arcite on the floor  
Groan; for no gold can ope their prison door. 200

So year by year flows on, and day by day;  
Till it fell out upon a morn of May,  
That Emily, more lovely to be seen,  
Than a fair lily on its stalk of green,  
And fresher than the May, whose flowers are new,  
For with the rose in colour strove her hue,  
I know not which was finer of the two,  
'Ere it was day, as she was wont to do,  
She was arisen, and soon ready dight,  
For May will have no sluggard of the night: 210  
Ah! the soft season pricketh every heart  
Gentle, of either sex, from sleep to start,  
And saith, "Arise! behold the crimson ray,  
"And do thy duty to the beauteous May."

And this made Emily remember too  
The duty, which she had to May to do,  
The duty, and the honour, and she rose,  
And clad her freshly, looking like the rose:  
Her yellow hair was braided in a tress,  
And flow'd adown her back, a full yard long I guess; 220

And at the golden rising of the sun,  
She walk'd throughout the garden up and down,  
And enter'd every bower, and left unenter'd none :  
The flowers she gather'd, partly white and red,  
To make a lovely garland for her head,  
And flower to flower with subtle art and fragrant hands she  
wed :

And, as an Angel, heaven-like she sung :  
All the whole garden with her carol rung :  
Now the great tower, that was so thick and strong,  
The dungeon of the castle, where each knight, 230  
I told you of, was banished from the light,  
Arcite and Palamon, in prison cast,  
And shall be 'till the day of judgment, fast,  
So sweareth Theseus, let what will befall,  
Was even joining to the garden wall,  
Wherein young Emily, on morn of May,  
Had her chaste heart-full of delight and play.

Bright was the Sun, and clear the morning ray ;  
And Palamon, who a poor prisoner lay,  
Was, by his jailor's leave, for he was kind, 240  
Or else the May had soften'd his rough mind,

Gone early to a chamber built on high,  
From whence the whole of Athens he could spy;  
He saw the noble city with a sigh:  
He also saw the garden shady-green,  
Alleys, and lawns, and fountains bright between,  
And every flower and fruit diversified the scene:  
And there fresh Emily did sing and play;  
May was the season, and her age was May.

This prisoner, poor Palamon, with woe, 250  
Walk'd in the chamber, pensive, to and fro;  
And often he complain'd him of his case,  
And often sigh'd, and often cried, " Alas !  
" Alas ! that I was born !" when so befell,  
In the due course of things, or chance, 'tis hard to tell,  
That through a window, thick of many a bar,  
Of iron grate, and square as any spar,  
Upon young Emily he cast his eye,  
Started the knight aside, and loud did cry,  
" Ah !" with a note, as one at point to die, 260  
As though he had been stung unto the heart.

And Arcite at that cry anon upstart ;  
" Tell me, my cousin, what affecteth thee ?  
" Why dost thou look so pale, and cry so mournfully ?



**And Palamon replied to him again,**

"Cousin, you are in this opinion vain ;  
 "In this imagination you are wrong ;  
 "I am not wounded by the prison strong,                 280  
 "Nor bolts, nor bars can cause me thus to cry,  
 "The power, that hurt me, hurt me through the eye,  
 "And pierc'd my heart, and will my ruin be :  
 "The fairness of a lady, which I see  
 "In yonder garden, roaming to and fro,  
 "Is cause of all my crying and my woe ;  
 "Goddess or merely woman I not know,  
 "Venus it is ; none other can be so."

The knight then reverend fell upon his knees,  
And said, " ah, holy Venus, if thou please" 290  
" Within the garden that thou walk a maid,  
" Before me, who in prison here am laid;  
" Ah ! give thy great protection and thy aid :  
" Let us escape ; but, if our destiny  
" Be in this hateful prison here to die,  
" Yet on our lineage some soft pity have,  
" Whom tyrants ruin, and hard minds enslave."

And with that word Arcita 'gan espy  
There roaming in the garden Emily :  
Her sight and beauty wounded him so sore, 300  
He was more hurt than Palamon before :  
He piteously exclaim'd, and gave a sigh,  
" Ah ! the fresh beauty slays me suddenly  
" Of her, who roameth in the flowery place,  
" And, but I have her mercy and her grace,  
" At least that I may see her and desire,  
" I am but dead ; I feel the fatal fire."

When Palamon heard this, he look'd askance ;  
He gave a fierce and a despiteful glance,  
And, pale as ashes, when the flame's away, 310  
" What ! say'st thou this in earnest or in play ?"

"In earnest," quoth Arcite, "and true as day:

"God help me! I but little lust to play."

"This Palamon 'gan knit his brow in ire;

"Small honour, then," said he, "shalt thou acquire,

"To be to me a traitor, and untrue,

"That am thy cousin, and thy brother too;

"As we have sworn, and deeply have we sworn,

"Each to the other, rather to be borne

"Into the pain and penalty of death, 320

"While yet we shall be heirs of balmy breath,

"Than either shall the other ought gainsay,

"Or hinder, or in love or other way:

"No, not in any case, my brother dear:

"We are compact and knit, while yet we shall be here.

"That thou, Arcite, should'st truly further me

"In every case, as I should further thee,

"This was thy oath, and mine too was the same:

"Thou neither can'st deny it, nor reclaim.

"Thou of my counsel art, and must be so; 330

"And would'st thou now be false, and play the foe,

"And think to love the lady, whom I love,

"And serve, bear witness the great eye above!

“ And ever shall both love and serve, ’till death  
“ Shall strike my heart, and rob me of my breath?”

“ But this thou shalt not do, thou false Arcite,  
“ Thou shalt not love her, nor by day nor night;  
“ I lov’d her first, and told thee of my woe,  
“ As to my brother and my counsel, so  
“ Thou’rt sworn to help me, as a faithful knight, 340  
“ If any way it lie within thy might,  
“ Else art thou false, and I will thee requite.”

Him Arcite answer’d in as proud a tone,  
“ Have back thy words, the falsehood is thy own:  
“ I tell thee, thou art false, and utterly;  
“ I lov’d her first : for what though thou did’st see  
“ Her beauty before me, thou did’st not know,  
“ Woman or Goddess, which she were e’en now:  
“ This is mere holy passion, which we pay  
“ To heavenly things, that live above the day; 350  
“ Love to a creature mine; which bade me say  
“ That, which I saw, to thee this very morn,  
“ As to my cousin and my brother sworn.”

" But, be it other; yet there is a saw,  
" An old clerk's proverb, ' love had never law';  
" Is never over-rul'd, I tell to thee;  
" Nor will admit appeal from its decree;  
" Love always was an air-like sovereignty;  
" A man must needs love in despite of his head;  
" He may not fly it, though he should be dead: 360  
" Maid, widow, or wife; all one: his doom is read."

" And, eke, it is not likely, ' till thou die,  
" Thou shalt be in her grace; no more shall I:  
" For, well thou know'st, no gold our ransom pays,  
" To prison we are damn'd for all our days."

" We strive, as did the two hounds for the bone;  
" They fought all day, and yet their gain was none:  
" There came a kite, the while they were so wroth,  
" And bore away the bone, betwixt them both.  
" And therefore at the king's court, my good brother, 370  
" Each for himself, for law there is no other:  
" Love, if thou will; for I love, and I shall;  
" And, soothly, my dear brother this is all;  
" Here in this prison we must both remain,  
" And bear with our good lot: the thing is plain."

Great was the strife, and long betwixt them two;  
Which, had I leisure, I would tell to you.  
Now to my tale: It happen'd on a day,  
(I mean to tell it shortly, as I may;)  
Perithöus, a duke of mighty state, 380  
Who to duke Theseus was the dear co-mate,  
And had been, with a love, that did surpass,  
Since they were little children on the grass,  
And play'd together in their infancy,  
Came now to Athens, his dear friend to see,  
To dwell with him, as he was wont to do,  
For in this world no man he loved so:  
And Theseus lov'd him tenderly again;  
A love, that broke of hell the fatal chain;  
For old books tell us, when Perithöus died, 390  
And did with Pluto in dark night abide,  
His dear co-mate, (ah! what could love do more?)  
Went down, and sought him on that dismal shore.

Now to my story, as I said before:  
Perithöus lov'd Arcite, and well had known  
From year to year at Thebes, since overthrown;  
And, at his asking, without fee at all,  
The kind duke Theseus let him out of thrall,

Freely to go to any land whate'er,  
But with such terms, as I shall now declare. 400

This was the bargain, that duke Theseus made;  
And sternly meant in all to be obey'd;  
That if Arcita, that unhappy knight,  
Ever in all his life, by day or night,  
A moment should be found in Theseus' land,  
And he were caught, the very law should stand,  
That the keen sword should make his head to fly,  
There was no saving law or remedy,  
His leave he takes, and homeward is withdrawn;  
Let him beware; his neck is in the pawn. 410

How great a sorrow suffers now Arcite!  
He feels the very death his heart to smite:  
He weepeth, wailleth, crieth piteously,  
To slay himself he waiteth privily,  
He saith, "Alas! the mother that me bore!  
"Now is my prison far worse than before,  
"Now is my fate eternally to dwell  
"Not only in purgation, but in hell.  
"Ah! had I never duke Perithöus known,  
"Then had I never from duke Theseus gone, 420

" But, fetter'd in his prison, even so,  
" Then had I been in bliss, and not in woe ;  
" That beauteous angel merely but to see,  
" That angel, whom I love, had been to me  
" Enough of grace and of felicity."

" O my dear cousin, Palamon," said he,  
" That hath in this event the victory,  
" In ward and prison blissfully he lies,  
" In prison ? surely no ; in Paradise :  
" Fortune for him hath thrown the happy dice : 430  
" He has the sight of her, while I must moan  
" Her loss and absence, wretched and alone.  
" Thou Palamon, that art, I know, a knight  
" Worthy and able, living in her sight,  
" By some great chance, since fortune still is fickle,  
" May'st cut the swelling harvest with thy sickle,  
" Thou thy desire perhaps in time may'st have,  
" But I, that am but bondsman to the grave,  
" Exil'd and barren of all hope and grace,  
" And in so great despair, that through all space, 440  
" There is nor earth, nor water, fire, nor air,  
" Nor creature, that is made of them, can bear



“ Or health, or comfort to my wretched heart,  
“ I ought to die, this only is my part,  
“ In want of hope, and absolute despair,  
“ My life, my love, my pleasure perish’d are!”

“ Alas! why should unhappy men complain  
“ Of God, and fortune, crying out in vain,  
“ That they provide them ill, whose care is wise,  
“ And yieldeth them full oft, in many a guise,      450  
“ Far better than they can themselves devise?  
“ Some man desireth gold, and finds his gain,  
“ Murder, or sickness bringeth in its train,  
“ And some would out of his dark prison fain,  
“ That in his house is of his own men slain,  
“ Infinite harms in this: we not discern  
“ The thing we pray for, but have yet to learn.  
“ We fare as one, as drunk as any mouse;  
“ A drunken man can tell he hath a house,  
“ But how to find the way, which leads to it,      460  
“ That is a matter far beyond his wit;  
“ And slippery to a drunken man the way:  
“ So fare we in this world, and falsely pray.”

“ We look for ever for felicity,  
“ But, to speak rightly, in sincerity,

“ Go wrong, full oft; thus all may say, and I,  
“ Above them all, may say it especially:  
“ That had a great opinion, and suppos’d,  
“ If in my prison I were not enclos’d,  
“ Then had I been in joy and perfect health; 470  
“ Lo, here I am, an exile from my wealth.  
“ Since that I may not see you, Emily,  
“ I am but dead: there is no remedy.”

On th’ other side the thrall’d knight, Palamon,  
Perceiving from his prison Arcite gone,  
Such sorrow makes, that the great tower and skies  
Resounded with his yelling and his cries:  
The fetters, wherein his great shins were set,  
Were with his bitter and his salt tears wet.

“ Alas!” said he, “ Arcita, cousin mine, 480  
“ Of all our strife, God knows, the fruit is thine,  
“ Thou walk’st in Thebes at large, as free as air,  
“ And of my woe thou takest little care;  
“ Thou may’st, since thou art manly, and art wise,  
“ Make all our kindred in thy quarrel rise,  
“ And make a war so sharp upon this land,  
“ That, or by fight or treaty, out of hand

" Thou may'st have her thy lady and thy wife,

" For whom I here must perish from the life :

" For it is possible, since thou art free, 490

" And out of prison, and at liberty,

" (And art a lord,) to put in force thy rage ;

" Unlike to me, that starve here in a cage,

" For I may weep and wail, the while I live,

" With all the woe, that prison may me give,

" With all the pain, too, that from love can flow,

" Who doubles all my torment and my woe."

Therewith the fire of jealousy upstart,

Within his breast, and caught him by the heart ;

So madly, that he like was, to behold, 500

The box tree, or the ashes dead and cold :

He cried, " ye cruel Gods, that rule the world,

" And bind it with eternal word, and into being hurl'd

" Your word eternal, writ on adamant,

" Your parliament and everlasting grant,

" What is mankind, that ye him more behold,

" Than is the sheep, that lieth in the fold ?

" For slain is man, right as another beast,

" And dwelleth too in prison and arrest,

" Sickness he hath, and great adversity, 510

" And yet oft times he may not guilty be."

“ What government is this, that, prescient,  
“ Yet without guilt torments the innocent?  
“ This makes my penance more: for holy awe  
“ Of God compells men to observe his law,  
“ To rein his passions, and to curb his will,  
“ Whereas a beast may all his lust fulfill:  
“ And, when a beast is dead, he hath no pain;  
“ But man after his death must weep and plain,  
“ Though in this world he have but care and woe, 520  
“ And yet th’ event and judgment may be so.”

“ I leave it to divines; but I perceive  
“ The world throughout its bounds to pine and grieve;  
“ A serpent, or a thief, alas! I see,  
“ That many a true man hath done injury,  
“ Wander at large, and turn him where he list,  
“ But I through Saturn am in prison trist;  
“ Aye, and through Juno, jealous, and e’en mad,  
“ Whose penal indignation, fierce and sad,  
“ Hath well nigh lost the blood of Thebes entire, 530  
“ And wasted his wide walls with sword and fire;  
“ Aye, and fell Venus stabs me mortally,  
“ For fear of Arcite, and for jealousy.”

Now leave I Palamon in ward to dwell;  
And of Arcita more I will you tell.

Summer is gone, and darkful nights are long,  
And double-wise encrease the anguish strong  
Beth of the lover and the prisoner:  
I know not whose estate were wofuller.  
For, to speak brief, to prison Palamon  
Perpetually is damn'd, to lie alone,  
In chains and fetters, till he shall be dead;  
And Arcite is exil'd, at pawn of head,  
For evermore out of that land to be,  
And nevermore his Emily to see.

540

Tell me, ye lovers, make the case your own,  
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon?  
The one may see his lady day by day,  
But must in prison wear his life away;  
The other, where he lists, may ride or go,  
But never shall behold his lovely foe:  
Solve me this problem, lovers, for ye can:  
For I pursue my tale, as I began.

550

After Arcita had in Thebes arriv'd  
The loss of Emily he scarce surviv'd;  
Full oft a day he swoon'd, and often cried, "ah me!  
" My lovely lady I no more shall see;  
" Where art thou gone, divinest Emily?"  
And, to conclude his woe, it all surpast,  
That is, or may be, while the world may last: 560  
There never liv'd a creature so undone,  
His sleep, his meat, his drink is from him gone,  
Lean did he wax, and dry as any shaft,  
At nothing in this world he ever laugh'd,  
Hollow his eye, and grisly to behold,  
Yellow his hue, and pale as ashes cold,  
And solitary ever and alone,  
And wailing all the night, and making moan,  
And, if he heard or song or instrument,  
Then would he weep, nor any could prevent: 570  
So feeble were his spirits, and so low,  
So alter'd in the change, no man could know  
His speech, nor voice, whoever heard him speak:  
He was distract, and desolate, and weak.  
And in his looks, for all the world, appear'd  
Not only as by Cupid's iron sear'd,  
Not only like the lover's malady,  
But rather like the strange insanity,

Of melancholy gender'd, that doth dwell,  
Beside his head, in his fantastick cell. 580  
Most needed he indeed the mind's physician,  
In habit so displac'd, and disposition,  
So altogether turned upside-down,  
From being a man of wisdom and renown,  
Of this most woeful lover, of Arcite,  
What need say more, to paint his anguish right?

When Arcite had endur'd, a year or two,  
This cruel torment, and this pain and woe,  
At Thebes, in his own land, as I have said,  
Upon a night in deep sleep he was laid, 590  
And thought the winged God, swift Mercury,  
Before him stood, and bade him not to die:  
His sleepy wand he bore, and high in air,  
And had a hat upon his golden hair;  
Arrayed was the God, as he took keep,  
When wakeful Argus drowned lay in sleep,  
And said him thus "to Athens shalt thou go,  
"There fate prepares for thee an end of woe"

And, with that word, Arcite awoke, and started  
From off the bed, (despair had now departed;) 600

Said he, " to Athens right now will I fare,  
" Whatever be my smart, if taken there,  
" No dread of death shall keep me from her sight,  
" In whom I live, and only have delight,  
" Before her face I heed it not to die ;  
" I come to thee, divinest Emily :"

And straight a mirrour caught he in his hand,  
And the great change in all his colour scann'd,  
And saw a visage other than his own,  
Pale, wan, and waste, as marble or as stone ;      610  
And right anon it came into his mind,  
Who look'd upon that face must needs be blind,  
'Twas so disfigur'd by his malady,  
The face of Arcite shone not to the eye.  
Well might he live, by only living low ;  
And none in Athens Arcite ever know ;  
In Athens, but in humble state, might stay,  
And see his lady even day by day ;  
Arcite not stay'd, but changed his array ;  
As a poor labourer clad him, and alone,      620  
Save only with a squire, to whom was known  
His mind and fortunes, is to Athens gone ;



The squire was clad too in a poor array;  
And forth they travell'd by the nearest way.

Now come to Athens, at the ducal gate,  
Behold, the knight and his companion wait:  
Arcita offer'd, with a look of awe,  
Whatever he was told to drag and draw;  
And, to speak brief, a chamberlain, who saw,  
A chamberlain of Emily, and wise, 630  
The value of the man with much surprise,  
How he could hew the wood, and water bear,  
How young and mighty for the service there,  
For surely he was strong, and great of bone,  
Invested him with service, where, unknown,  
Morning and evening oft he gaz'd his soul upon.

A year or two he liv'd in this delight,  
A chamber page of Emily the bright:  
And Philostrate he told them was his name:  
So gentle was he, and devoid of blame, 640  
That through all Athens there went forth his name:  
No, never in the court, of that degree,  
Serv'd there a man so well belov'd as he.  
And all men said, 'twere love and charity  
In Theseus, to exalt his low degree;

And in a service of fair honour place  
A man, whose general virtues would the favour grace  
And thus within a while his name is sprung  
Both of his deeds, and of his gentle tongue ;  
That Theseus hath resolv'd to raise him higher, 650  
And of his chamber made him an esquire,  
And gave him gold, the honour to maintain :  
Also his Theban rents brought him in gain ;  
Which men from year to year full privily  
Brought him from Thebes ; and wise and wittily,  
Not like an upstart fool, he spent the same,  
That no man wonder'd how his riches came.  
And three years in this wise himself he bare,  
Of such approval both in peace and war,  
No man is dearer to the gentle duke : 660  
I leave him in this bliss ; and now I look  
On Palamon, of any hope forsook.

In prison murky, horrible, and strong,  
Hath groaned Palamon this seven year long ;  
By love tormented and captivity,  
A double sorrow and calamity :  
Who ever felt them painfully as he ?

Love with his fatal fire distracts him so,  
That mad out of his wits he goes for woe;  
And add to this, he is a prisoner 670  
'Till he shall die, not only for a year.

All men may think his grief, but none can say;  
I therefore pass it lightly, as I may :  
It fell now in the seventh year, in May,  
Upon the third night, as the old books say,  
That tell this story in a plainer way,  
Whether it were by chance or destiny,  
(As when a thing is fated, it shall be,)  
Soon after midnight Palamon, by aid  
Of a kind friend, his way from prison made, 680  
And flies the city, fast as he may go:  
For he had drugg'd the tippling jailer so  
With a deep cup of spic'd and honied wine,  
And Theban opium, and narcoticks fine,  
That all the night, however men him shake,  
The jailer slept, nor could he aught awake :  
He flies the city fastly as he may.

The night was short, and very near the day,  
Unless he would be slain, he needs must hide,  
And therefore to a grove, that grew beside, 690

Palamon stalk'd, but with a fearful foot:  
Day, promising to dawn, did not his danger suit,  
He meant him in that grove to hide all day,  
And in the night to fly to Thebes away,  
For ire and vengeance, his kind friends to pray,  
To wake a war on Theseus, and his life  
Briefly to lose in the uncertain strife,  
Or win, and make fresh Emily his wife.  
This was the whole of his intention plain.

And now I turn me to Arcite again, 700  
That little wist how neighbour was his care,  
Till slippery fortune brought him in the snare.  
The busy lark, the messenger of day,  
Saluteth in her song the morrow gray,  
And fiery Phœbus riseth up so bright,  
That all the orient laugheth of the sight,  
And drieth with the beams, each grove receives,  
The silver drops, light hanging on the leaves:  
And Arcite, like a happy prodigal, 710  
In Theseus' royal court squire principal,  
Is risen, and looketh on the merry day;  
And, to observe his duty to the May,  
Rememb'ring too the point of his desire,  
He on his courser, starting as the fire,

Is ridden to the fields, to joy and play,  
Out of the court, a mile or two away,  
And to the grove, of which before I told,  
Perhaps by chance, his way began to hold,  
To make him of the groves a garland bright,  
Were it of woodbine, or of hawthorn light,       720  
For both are budding greenly to the sight,  
And loud he carol'd in the bright sun-shine:

“ May, with thy flowers and green, for both are thine,  
“ Right welcome be thou May, thou fair fresh May,  
“ I hope some green to get here for thy day:”  
And from his courser, with a lusty heart,  
The knight into the grove full hastily did start,  
And in a path he roamed up and down,  
Where, by effect of chance, this Palamon  
Was in a bush, and couched secretly,       730  
For sore affrighted of his death was he.  
He knew not 'twas Arcite, and little thought  
It could be he, nor had believed it aught:  
But sooth was said, gone since are many years,  
The field hath eyes, and the green wood hath ears.  
'Tis meet, the wise his actions justly sway,  
These unset meetings meet us all the day.

Full little thought Arcita his co-mate  
And Theban cousin in the hawthorn sate,  
But in the bush he sate, and sate full still. 740  
When that Arcite had roamed all his fill,  
And sung the lusty roundel lustily,  
Into a study fell he suddenly,  
As still these lovers, stung with foolish fires,  
Are now a-top, and now down in the briers,  
Now up, now down, as bucket in a well:  
Very like Friday, if the truth I tell;  
Whereon it shineth now, and now it raineth fast:  
E'en so can fickle Venus overcast  
Her people's hearts, as she o'ercasts her day, 750  
Her fickle day, and changes their array,  
And now lifts up with hope, now sinks them with dismay:  
Seldom is Friday like the rest o'th' week.

But this to lovers is mere heathen Greek.  
When Arcite's song was done, he 'gan to sigh,  
And threw him on a bank, "Thou deity,  
"Terrible Juno," said the knight, "how long  
"Wilt thou be against Thebes so fierce and strong?  
"How long, dread Goddess, wilt thou wage the war  
"Against my native state, and put a bar 760  
"To all the hopes, that in my bosom are?

“ Ah! that I e’er was born! the royal seed  
“ Of Cadmus, and Amphion now doth bleed!  
“ Cadmus, who laid great Thebes’ foundation stone,  
“ And in that city builded first the throne,  
“ Was in that city the first crowned king,  
“ From his great blood and royal line I spring,  
“ A branch unhappy of the royal stock,  
“ Whom fortune now, a caitive wretch, doth mock.  
“ E’en him, that is my mortal enemy, 770  
“ (Can Juno do me sharper penalty?)  
“ E’en him a squire I serve, and forfeit fame;  
“ But Juno helps me to a greater blame;  
“ She even robs me of my very name.  
“ I, that was once Arcite, a noble knight,  
“ Am now Philostrate, hardly worth a mite.  
“ Ah, thou fell Mars, and Juno feller still,  
“ Our bleeding lineage falls before your will:  
“ All are cast down, or dead, save me alone,  
“ And that unhappy prisoner, Palamon. 780  
“ Him Theseus martyrs in a prison close;  
“ And utterly to slay me, I suppose,  
“ Love hath his fiery dart so blazingly,  
“ Struck through my faithful heart, that I shall die

“ Of the keen arrow and the destiny  
“ Jove shap’d, when I in infant’s shirt did lie;  
“ You slay me with your eyes, O Emily,  
“ You are the only cause that I shall die:  
“ Of all the remnant of my other care,  
“ I do not set the value of a tare, 790  
“ So that I could your charming pleasure frame.”  
And o’er him then a dewy trembling came,  
A tingling of the ears; and flying sight;  
Flat fell he in the wood, and lay in night:  
As a tall poplar, that on Ida’s side  
The woodman’s steel doth from its roots divide.  
Upstart’d Palamon, as swift as fire,  
Death-pale as ashes, quaking e’en with ire,  
With ire and fury for Arcita’s tale,  
No ghost of murder’d man e’er look’d so pale, 800  
Even he quaked, like an aspen tree,  
Which the north wind doth vex continually;  
And felt a cold sword suddenly to glide  
Through all his heart, and gasping he replied,  
Staring as he were mad, “ Thou wicked wretch,  
“ Whence but from hell did’st thou thy purpose fetch?  
“ False Arcite, thou art caught! ha! ha! is it so?  
“ Thou lov’st my lady, and would’st play the foe,



“ Although we are of the same counsel sworn,  
“ Thou perjurer! and of two sisters born, 810  
“ What! thou hast chang’d thy name, to be more dear?  
“ And hast befool’d the duke of Athens here?  
“ Awake, thou wretch! I howl it in thy ear,  
“ I will be dead, or else thyself shalt die:  
“ Thou shalt not love my lady, Emily:  
“ But I will love her; and none else below:  
“ For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe,  
“ And though I have no weapon to bestead,  
“ But by heaven’s grace am out of prison fled,  
“ Yet for all that I not a whit thee dread: 820  
“ Take now thy choice, this moment thou shalt die,  
“ Or swear thou wilt not love my Emily;  
“ Swear, swear, thou traitor! for thou shalt not fly,  
“ Swear, wilt thou swear?”

This howling brought to light,  
And life the sleeping spirit of Arcite:  
He pal’d, to view his foeman as he roar’d;  
Fierce as a lion, pull’d he out a sword,  
And said, “ By him, who ever reigns above,  
“ Wert thou not sick, and even mad for love,  
“ And hast besides no weapon in this place, 830  
“ Never from out this forest should’st thou pace,

" That should'st thou not, but by my hand here die ;

" And, for that oath of counsel, I reply,

" It touches not my separate liberty :

" No, I will serve her, maugre all thy might :

" But, since thou art a brave and gentle knight,

" And would'st contest her by the dint of sword,

" Here, by my troth, I will not fail my word,

" No man shall know it, by to-morrow's light

" Here will I be, as I am really knight, 840

" And bring for both enough of armory,

" Choose thou the best, and leave the worst for me,

" And meat and drink this night too will I bring,

" And clothes and bedding ; if thou prove the king,

" And win my lady in the bloody course,

" And slay me in this wood ; why then, perforce,

" This wood wherein I am, I give her thee ;

" Take her, if wilt : the lady is thy fee."

And answered Palamon, " I grant it thee."

They left each other : 'till the morrow dawn, 850

Now each of them hath put his faith to pawn.

O Cupid, out of charity entire !

O reign, that never fellow would'st desire,

Nor bear, if had! th' old saw the truth doth rip,  
Nor love nor rule will bear with fellowship:  
And Palamon and Arcite find it true.

The knights have parted, lacking e'en adieu:  
Arcite to Athens now is rid away,  
And on the morn, or ere the peep of day,  
Two suits of armour privately prepar'd, 860  
Both meet and hardy the keen sword to ward,  
To arm the battle in the equal field;  
Helm, coat, and cuishes, greaves, sword, spear, and shield  
Upon his courser piled up were borne,  
And forth he rid, alone as he were born,  
Forth to the grove, as time and place were set:  
And Palamon and Arcite now are met.  
Then 'gan to change the colour in their face,  
Right as the hunter in the realm of Thrace,  
That at a gap doth stand, and spear doth bear, 870  
When hunted is the lion, or the bear,  
And heareth him come rushing through the wood,  
And break the leafy boughs in angry mood,  
Gnashing and foaming, the fell sylvan brood!  
And thinks here comes my mortal enemy,  
There is no choice, he must be dead or I,

For either I must slay him at the gap;  
Or he slay me, if I shall have mishap:  
So did they fare in changing of their hue,  
So soon as each of them the other knew, 880  
No good day, no salute, no prologue: straight  
Each arm'd the other, to encounter fate,  
Friendly as brothers; and with sharp spear strong  
Foin'd at each other wondrous fierce and long.  
Thou might'st have thought this Palamon had been  
A raging lion in the angry scene;  
Aye, and a cruel tyger too Arcite:  
As wild boars they began together smite,  
That froth as white as foam for raging ire:  
They fought to the ankle up in blood, and higher; 890  
And ev'ry moment made their rage more fell:  
Let them fight on: I will of Theseus tell.

The destiny, the general minister,  
That in the world, and over all doth stir,  
And puts into mere act, and cannot err,  
The providence, which God has seen before,  
So strong and fatal is, that though men swore  
Such thing shall never be, nor never can,  
Yea though all men should swear it, in a span,

As unexpected as a summer's cloud, 900

Speaking in thunder to our senses loud,

That falleth out, and doth in act appear,

Which shall not fall again a thousand year.

"This shall be: that shall not be:" what is this?

Man, let him think: but God the actor is.

For certainly our appetites we prove,

Be it of war, or peace, or hate, or love,

All rul'd and govern'd by the sight above.

I instance Theseus, in whom passion lay

To hunt the great hart in the flowery May; 910

Passion so great, that not the golden ray

He suffer'd on his drowsy bed to play:

No; he is clad, and ready for to ride

Through the green leafy woods, with all th' Athenian pride,

With hound, and horn, and company beside:

For in his hunting hath he such delight,

That it is all his joy and appetite,

To bane the great hart in the sylvan scene,

For after Mars Diana is his queen.

Clear was the day, and bright the morning flow'd, 920

In joy and bliss the duke of Athens rode,

Ipolit' by his side; the lovely queen,  
And Emily, bedecked all in green :  
A hunting they rode royally, and move  
Stately and silent to a neighbour grove,  
In which men told them, that there lodg'd a hart.  
The jolly duke, to wake him to a start,  
Sent in the hunters, and himself he rode  
To a green plain, that neighbour was and broad,  
Where the sharp plough had never broken sward, 930  
For there the hart was wont to shew them play,  
And over a brook, and forward on the way.  
The duke will have a course at him, or two,  
With hounds, like Zephyr, flying through the dew,  
Such hounds, as gave him pleasure to command,  
Born of chaste Dian's breed, and brought up by his hand  
And when this duke was come now to the stand,  
Under the sun he look'd, and there anon  
He plainly saw Arcite and Palamon.  
Madly they fought, as two bulls in a mead; 940  
The bright swords flashing made their bodies bleed :  
So hideously they struck, that the least stroke  
Upon the sparkling steel would fell an oak :  
Like fire, or frenzy the mad duel blaz'd,  
Even the air was with the war amaz'd :  
The strong Athenian duke upon the combat gaz'd :

Heknew not who they were ; he spur'd his horse,  
And headlong o'er the green he urg'd his course,  
He smote his horse with spurs,\*  
And at a start he was betwixt them two, 950  
Out went his sword, and manly cried he, " ho !"  
" No more : on pain of losing of your head :  
" By mighty Mars he forewith shall be dead,  
" That in my presence dares to strike a stroke :  
" What men are ye ? what hardy-minded folk,  
" That, as in royal lists, are fighting here,  
" Without a judge or other officer ?  
" What men are ye ?"  
Said Palamon, " I'll tell ye, who we be :  
" What need of many words ? we merit death ; 960  
" Two woeful wretches, who disdain our breath ;  
" With our own lives encumber'd ; let us die :  
" Sir, we are those, who hate you mortally.  
" And, as you are a rightful judge and lord,  
" Give us the sharp-edg'd justice of the sword.  
" For in your mercy we disdain to lie ;  
" And slay me first for holy charity,  
" But slay my fellow equally with me,

\* These half lines are not negligently left, but made of set purposc, as Spenser has used them in the " Faerie Queene."

“ Or slay him first, for though you think not so,  
“ This is Arcita, thy mere mortal foe, 970  
“ That from thy land is banish’d on his head,  
“ For which he hath deserved to be dead :  
“ For this is he, that came unto thy gate,  
“ And said, and false, his name was Philostrate.  
“ Thus hath he mocked thee this many a year,  
“ And thou hast made him thy chief squire dear :  
“ This very man, I tell thee not a lie,  
“ Burns, like the fire, with love of Emily.”

“ For since the day is come, that I shall die,  
“ I plainly will confess ; reserve is none ; 980  
“ I am the self-same woeful Palamon,  
“ That has thy prison broke ; now dost thou know ?  
“ Yes, I am Palamon, thy mortal foe ;  
“ I am ; and love so Emily the bright,  
“ That I would die with transport in her sight.  
“ Therefore thy judgment for my death I tax,  
“ But slay my fellow with the self-same axe :  
“ Slay both, who both have purchas’d to be slain.”

Duke Theseus made no pause, but said again,  
“ Here is a short conclusion ; you have said ; 990  
“ And your own mouth condemns you to be dead :



“ Your very words the penalty allow ;  
“ There shall be no need of the prison now :  
“ You shall be dead by Mars.”

But then the queen  
Had lightly followed Theseus to the scene :  
Her heart began to bleed, as women will,  
Who scant abide the weapon, that shall kill ;  
Ipolit' wept, and so did Emily,  
And all the ladies of the company.  
Great pity and ruth it was, as thought them all, 1000  
That such a chance should two fair knights befall,  
For gentlemen they were, of great estate,  
And only for mere love was the debate :  
They saw their bloody wounds both great and wide ;  
And all the ladies for their pardon cried :  
“ Have mercy, my dread lord, upon us all,  
“ Poor feeble women, that for pity call :”  
And down upon their knees they 'gan to fall,  
And would have kiss'd the duke's feet, as he stood :  
'Till at the last abated was his mood ;                    1010  
For pity soon is born in gentle heart ;  
And though for ire he quak'd, and stood apart  
From all their prayer at first, he shortly weigh'd  
The cause and trespass, and though anger sway'd

To hold them guilty, reason he obey'd,  
And reason an excuse for all their error made:  
As thus; he rightly thought, that every man  
Will help himself in love, far as he can,  
And every man, however strict the guard,  
Will strive to loose his body from the ward;      1020  
And he had pity too on women's tears,  
For they all wept, and panted with their fears,  
And in his gentle heart thought presently,  
And softly said unto himself, " fie, fie,  
" Upon a lord, that will no mercy know,  
" But both in word and deed shall hold him so,  
" As a gaunt lion, and make no difference,  
" Between the man, that is in penitence,  
" And him, that will maintain what he began,  
" And live, and die, a proud despiteful man.      1030  
" That lord of wisdom little hath descried,  
" Who cannot for a case, like this, provide,  
" But weighs, as one, humility, and pride.  
And shortly, when his ire had pass'd away,  
As thunder passes from the noon-tide day,  
The duke look'd up with cheerful countenance,  
And spake these words, and made this ordinance,  
With a loud voice:

Ah benedicite!

- “ The God of love, how great a God is he!  
“ How mighty in his strength ! against his power 1040  
“ No obstacles have force at any hour :  
“ His miracles declare him for a God :  
“ In every coast he maketh his abode ;  
“ In every heart he acteth what he pleases ;  
“ His power is perfect, and his realm ne’er ceases.”

- “ Lo, here this Arcite and this Palamon,  
“ That from my prison were entirely gone,  
“ And might have liv’d in Thebes, and royally,  
“ And know I am their mortal enemy,  
“ And that their death within my power lies, 1050  
“ And yet hath love, despite their very eyes,  
“ Brought them both hither to this grove to die :  
“ Now is not this a splendid foolery ?  
“ Shall any be call’d fools, but they who love?  
“ Behold, for God’s sake, who still reigns above,  
“ See how they bleed ; are they not well array’d ?  
“ Thus hath the God of love their service paid :  
“ Their fee and wages is but blood and death,  
“ And yet in praising love thy waste their breath,

“ And think themselves most wise, whate’er befall, 1060  
“ Who serve dan Cupid, and maintain his thrall :  
“ And yet this is the best game of it all,  
“ That she, for whom they have this jollity,  
“ Con’d them no better thanks than I, pardé :  
“ She knew no more of all of this hot fare,  
“ By Jove, than knew a cuckoo or a hare.  
“ But all must once be tried, or hot or cold,  
“ A man must be a fool once, young or old,  
“ I know it by myself : ’tis long ago ;  
“ For in my time I was a suitor too : 1070  
“ And therefore having tasted lover’s pains,  
“ And knowing well how manhood it constrains,  
“ As he, that hath been often caught i’t’h’ snare,  
“ This trespass wholly I forgive, and spare  
“ Your lives, at the queen’s asking, who kneels here,  
“ And Emily’s soft tears, my sister dear :  
“ But ye shall swear to me, nor night nor day  
“ To war my country, nor my men to slay :  
“ But be my friends in every way you may :  
“ And I forgive you all your fault this day.” 1080  
And fair and well they swore, as he requir’d,  
And bolder then, and by free love inspir’d,  
His loving grace and mercy they desir’d :

And grace and mercy gave the gentle duke.

“ Or to your state or royal line to look,  
“ Albeit she were a princess or a queen,  
“ Ye were entitled, it is clearly seen,  
“ When God shall please, that either of you wed,  
“ To take the greatest lady to your bed.  
“ I speak now for my sister Emily, 1090  
“ The lovely cause of strife and jealousy:  
“ To marry both at once there is no way,  
“ Although ye fight until the judgment-day:  
“ My sister Emily may not wed both:  
“ Ye know it well: and, therefore, on my troth,  
“ One of you two, take it in joy or grief,  
“ He must go piping in an ivy leaf.  
“ For, after all your jealous rage and ire,  
“ But one of you, young men, can have his great desire:  
“ Therefore I will an ordinance enact; 1100  
“ To put your destiny in shape and act:  
“ Harken you both:”

“ My will is this; that each of you shall go,  
“ No ransom shall he give, no peril know,

“ Wherever he shall please, and have no fear,  
“ And this day fifty weeks again be here,  
“ And bring with him a hundred knights in mail,  
“ Arm’d at all points in battle to prevail :  
“ Then fight it out, and, as I am a knight,  
“ What party ever shall possess the might 1110  
“ To slay the other hundred, or to drive  
“ Out of the lists, he Emily shall wive ;  
“ For whom that hundred have so bravely fought :  
“ This is my will, and substance of my thought.”

“ The lists in this place shall I make : and may  
“ God on my soul, upon the after day,  
“ Have without fail so much of pity and ruth,  
“ As I shall be a judge of equal truth :  
“ There shall be one of you, or dead, or ta’en :  
“ Hearken ye men ; my sentence is said plain : 1120  
“ Consider, and declare your mind : this way,  
“ And only this, can ravel up the fray.”

Who now but Palamon looks light and fair ?  
Who but Arcita springs up in the air,  
For very joy ? and all the company  
Prais’d with high voice the kingly clemency ;

And thanked him with all their might of heart,  
Who in this strife had ta'en so noble a part ;  
And fell upon their knees, and said, " long live  
" The duke, who can these foreign knights forgive : " 1130  
And both the Thebans often prais'd his name.

And with good hope, and blither than they came,  
Their hearts o'er-running with their several joy,  
The Thebans took their leave, and 'gan employ  
Both spur and wand ; and like the fire they ride  
To Thebes ; whose old walls now are wasted wide.

I should be call'd a man of negligence,  
If I forgot to reckon the expense  
By Theseus made, in framing of the place,  
Wherein the knights shall combat, by his grace : 1140  
In all the world I say it, and aver,  
There is not such another theatre.  
That very day the noble work began,  
And through all coasts the glory of it ran.  
The circuit was a perfect mile about,  
Walled of stone, and ditched all without ;  
The space as round as by a compass drawn ;  
And, from the level floor-way of the lawn,

It rose majestick sixty paces high  
Of marble steps, to seat the company: 1150  
One rank offended not the other's eye.  
Eastward, there stood a gate of marble white:  
Another, westward, laughed to the sight,  
Marble the same, and plac'd right opposite.  
And, to be brief, upon the earth a place  
Was ne'er so perfect, in so little space:  
For in the land of Athens there was none,  
Who knew the builder's craft of oak, or stone;  
Or had the science of geometry,  
Or fine arithmetic, to measure by; 1016  
Or could draw colours, or carve images;  
But he might have, according to degrees,  
Of the duke Theseus, noble be his name!  
Wages and meat, the theatre to frame.

And then, for rite and sacrifice, he made  
Upon the Eastern gate, and finely laid  
A lovely chapel, and an altar fair,  
To which you mounted by a pleasant stair,  
To worship Venus, queen of pity there.  
And, in the west, another did he frame, 1170  
To worship Mars, the king of bloody game,



Of bruising battles, and of groaning war :  
The gold, that paid it, even fill'd a car.  
And to the north, upon the tow'red wall,  
Of alabaster white, and coral red withall,  
A chapel fram'd he, beautiful to see,  
To worship Dian, and her chastity :  
These things made Theseus in his majesty.

But shall I then forget, (I will not sure :)  
The noble carving ? and the portraiture ? 1180  
The shape ? the countenance ? that ye may see  
Whatever had been work'd within the chapels three.

First, in the chapel of the Paphian queen,  
Wrought on the wall, there may by you be seen,  
A sight indeed full piteous to behold,  
The broken sleep ; and the sighs deadly cold ;  
The sacred tears ; the wailings, a whole quire ;  
The fiery strokes of the unrein'd desire ;  
All, that love's servants in this life endure ;  
And all the oaths their covenants assure ; 1190  
Pleasure ; and hope ; desire ; fool-hardiness ;  
Beauty ; and youth ; and purchas'd wantonness ;  
Gold ; charms ; and force ; and lies ; and flattery ;  
And waste expense ; bus'ness ; and jealousy,

Upon whose head a golden sun-flower band,  
And the false cuckoo sate upon her hand ;  
Feasts ; instruments ; and carols ; and ripe dances ;  
Lust ; and array ; and all the circumstances  
Of Love ; that I may reckon, and reckon on  
'Till the mid-summer, and yet ne'er have done ; 1200  
All these were painted the fresh wall upon,  
And more than I can tell to any one ;  
For Mount Cithæron was depicted there,  
Where Venus hath her princely dwelling fair,  
All the world glow'd with the delightful place,  
The fount, eye, soul of passion and of grace ;  
There was the garden, and the lustiness :  
Be sure they not forgot the porter, Idleness ;  
Nor fair Narcissus, that from love is gone ;  
Nor yet the folly of King Solomon ; 1210  
Nor strength of Hercules, that tore hell up ;  
Nor Circe, nor Medea's charmed cup ;  
Nor Turnus, and his hard and fiery rage ;  
Nor golden Cræsus in the Persian cage :  
By which it may be seen, that neither gold,  
Nor stronger wisdom, nor the courage bold,  
Nor strength, nor art, nor beauty's powerful face  
Can hold with Venus any equal pace :

What party in her realm have they, who rules  
The rolling world, and makes all people fools; 1220  
Such as these were, who in her snare were caught,  
And often cried "Alas!" and all for nought:  
And these examples may suffice: although  
Ten thousands more may date from her their woe.

The froth-born Goddess, ravishing to see,  
Was naked, fleeting in the ample sea;  
And, downwards from the waist, was hid from sight  
By the green waves, as any crystal bright:  
A citole in her right hand softly held;  
And on her head, a type of summer, swell'd 1230  
And blush'd like fire, and like all Eden smell'd,  
A garland of the rose, and a white pair  
Of doves above her flicker'd in the air:  
And her son, Cupid, stood before her feet;  
Two wings upon his shoulders, fair and fleet,  
And blind as night, as he is often seen:  
A bow he bare, and arrows bright and keen.

And now to tell you, on the westward side,  
What colours the great painters did provide,

What portraiture upon the wall was spread,       1240  
Within the temple of grim Mars the red ;  
All painted was the wall, in dismal grace,  
Like to the inward of the grisly place,  
Call'd the great temple of the God in Thrace,  
Where Mars his sovereign mansion still doth hold,  
In frosty regions, and eternal cold.

A forest on the wall was there exprest,  
In which there never wons nor man nor beast,  
With knotty, knarry, barren trees, right old,  
And sharp with stubs, and hideous to behold,       1250  
Where, like the thunder, ran a rumble through,  
As though a storm would break down every bough,  
And downward, (and a savage hill o'er-bent,)  
There stood the fane of Mars armipotent ;  
Wrought all of burned steel: the entrance keen  
Was long, and strait, and ghastly to be seen ;  
And thereout came a rage, and air, God knows,  
The gates from their great hinges heav'd and rose :  
The northern light in at the door there shone ;  
For window on the massy wall was none,       1260  
Through which men might the open light discern :  
The door was all of adamant eterne,

And clenched overthwart, and end-ways long,  
With iron tough, and, for to make it strong,  
Every great pillar of this house of war  
Was tun-great, of bright iron blazing far.

There saw I first the dark imagining  
Of felony, and all the compassing;  
The cruel ire, as red as burning coal;  
The pick-purse; and pale fear, with ghastly soul; 1270  
The smiler, with the knife under the cloke;  
The stables burning with the pitchy smoke;  
The treason of the murdering of the bed;  
The open war, whose wounds for ever bled;  
Contest with bloody knife, and menace keen;  
And full of scritchng cries the doleful scene.  
The slayer of himself then saw I there,  
His own heart-blood had bathed all his hair;  
The nail, too, driven in the skull at night;  
The cold death with the gaping mouth upright; 1280  
Amidst of all the temple sate Mischance,  
With great discomfort, and pale countenance;  
And saw I Madness, laughing in his ire;  
Armed Complaint; Outcry; and fierce desire

Of fiery outrage ; in the bushes put,  
I saw the corpse of him, whose throat was cut ;  
And flow'd the crimson blood on slaughters bed,  
A thousand slain, and not of sickness dead ;  
The tyrant, with his prey from subject reft ;  
The town destroy'd, and not a rafter left ;        1290  
The burnt ships dancing on the wave I saw ;  
The hunter strangled in the wild bear's paw ;  
The child, eat by the fretting sow in cradle ;  
The cook, too, scalded, maugre his long ladle ;  
And every mortal act in every part ;  
The carter, over-ridden with his cart,  
Under the wheel full low he lay adown.

The armourer was there with visage brown ;  
The bowyer ; and the smith ; whose furnace roar'd,  
To forge upon the anvil the sharp sword :        1300  
And, above all, depicted in a tower,  
Saw I great conquest, sitting in his power,  
And state ; but, ah ! above his crowned head  
A sharp sword, hanging by a subtle thread.  
There Julius Cæsar's slaughter was made plain ;  
And Nero, and Mark Antony were slain ;

Albeit they were not yet born, their death  
Was painted there, before they had their breath;  
By menacing of Mars, who came to Fate:  
And there were colour'd in their true estate, 1310  
As clearly as is drawn in heaven above  
Who shall be slain, or else be dead for love.  
Suffice then one example of these old  
Stories, since all of them cannot be told:  
Like storms in winter they are manifold.

And Mars stood armed on an iron car,  
And grimly frown'd interminable war;  
His mad eye set the bleeding towns on fire,  
And stabb'd whole kingdoms in his warlike ire:  
Let kings fall down before his iron feet. 1320  
The God was clad in mail from top to toe complete:  
And over his broad head two figures shone  
Of stars, that in the books are styl'd one  
Puella, and one Rubeus, and display'd  
One Mars direct, and one Mars retrograde:  
A gaunt wolf stood before him at his feet,  
With eyes of fire, and of a man he eat:  
Subtle the pencil, that could draw the story,  
To honour the grim God, and his wide-wasting glory.

As nimbly as I can, I now will haste                   1330  
To cold Diana's temple, cold and chaste;  
Upon whose marble walls to let you see  
What the brave painters have imagin'd free,  
Of hunting and of shame-fac'd chastity.  
Callistope was drawn with woeful air,  
With whom Diana would no longer bear,  
But chang'd her from a woman to a bear:  
And after she was made the pilot's star,  
And twinkles in the north, and lights the sea from far:  
Her son too is a star, as men may see,                   1340  
Both are immortal stars, the mother and her progeny.  
And there too Daphne, turned to a tree,  
Daughter of Peneus; and Actæon, he  
Whom the queen made a hart, for having seen,  
Her bathing in the brook without a screen;  
So fatal have Diana's angers been:  
Ah! his own hounds have his rough haunches torn,  
And lick'd his blood, and eat him for his scorn:  
Who knew him not, who struggled with his foes,  
The tears big rolling down his leathern nose.                   1350  
And there was painted in a further space,  
In a green leafy wood, and after a fleet chase,  
Fair Atalanta spearing the wild boar,  
And Meleager, and full many more,



Who in the woodlands did unhallowed go,  
For which Diana wrought them care and woe.  
Many great wonders there were painted high :  
But I forbear their present memory.

Diana's picture shall ye have complete :  
She had upon a hart her lofty seat, 1360  
The small hounds running all about her feet :  
And underneath her feet she had a moon ;  
It waxed now, but shall be waning soon :  
Clothed in gaudy green did her brave statue stand,  
Her arrows in a case, her bow was in her hand ;  
And downwards cast her eyes, and very low,  
And look'd into cold Pluto's realm of woe :  
A woman in her travail lay before ;  
So long was it, ere she her infant bore,  
Full piteously she 'gan Lucina call, 1370  
And said, " help ! help ! for thou may'st best of all."  
A painter to the life this picture wrought :  
With many a florin he the colours bought.

The lists are made ; and Theseus at his cost  
Has greatly cloath'd each pillar, and each post :

The theatres and chapels, who shall tell?  
When it was done he lik'd it won'drous well:  
Leave I then Theseus in his ripe delight;  
Of Palamon I speak, and of Arcite.

The day approaches, when they shall return,      1380  
Each with his hundred knights: the war shall burn  
For Emily the fair: the day is come,  
And with a hundred knights each travels home:  
And Athens in her gates the war doth see,  
Two hundred knights, and armed cap-à-pee.  
And surely it was thought of many a man,  
That never since the living world began,  
To speak of knighthood and of honour free,  
As far as God hath spread the land and sea,  
So few ne'er made so noble a company.      1390  
For every wight, that loved chivalry,  
And would; great thanks too! have a passing name,  
Pray'd night and day he might be of that game:  
Happy was he, on whom election fell:  
For if to-morrow, as ye know right well,  
The breathing trumpets should make speech of war  
To all the knights of all the nations far;

As this for a fair maid, wherever are  
The beams of Morning, they would let no bar  
Impede the spur, but to the lists away, 1400  
All, each, and every, for the love of play:  
All, each, and every honour-thirsting knight,  
That loveth, *par amour*, and bath his might,  
In England, or elsewhere, would for a lady fight:  
Who would not for a lovely lady joust,  
Is marble, stone, and undiscerning dust.

In company with Palamon there came  
Many a great knight, and many a noble name,  
The flower of honour, and the light of fame:  
Some in a hauberk armed for the war, 1410  
And in a breast-plate, and a cassock are;  
Some in a strong pair of large plates; and some  
Or with a Prussian shield, or targe are come;  
Some arm'd upon the legs; and, death to deal,  
Hold the great biting axe, or pounding mace of steel  
Whatever we have now, they had of old;  
And separately were arm'd, as I have told,  
Each to his mind.

With Palamon did pace  
The black Licurgus, the great king of Thrace;

Black was his beard, and manly was his face. 1420  
The circles of his eyes, that terror shed,  
Burn'd 'twixt a yellow and a fiery red;  
Much like the hue, that the hot iron shews,  
That, from the furnace, on the anvil glows,  
And, being soft with fire, accepts the forger's blows:  
And, like a griffon, look'd he round about,  
The strait hairs combed on his temples stout,  
And great his limbs, his muscles hard and strong,  
His shoulders broad, his arms were round and long:  
And, as the guise did in his country hold, 1430  
Full high he stood upon a chair of gold,  
Whom four white bulls in the great traces drew,  
Their glossy sides like summer milk in hue:  
No armour had he of device, and rivetted  
With nails of gold, that a bright lustre shed;  
But had a bear's skin, even black for age,  
A coal-black bear, whom in his sullen rage  
The king had kill'd with a cross-barred spear,  
In the cold Thracian wilds, where winter rages drear.  
His long strait hair was comb'd behind his back, 1440  
And shone, like any raven's feather, black:  
A golden circle of enormous weight,  
And thick as a man's arm, upon his head there sate,

That blaz'd, like Morning, with th' inserted light  
Of noble rubies, and of diamonds bright:  
And all around his chair went alans\* white,  
Twenty and more, as great as any steer,  
To hunt the tawny lion, and the deer;  
And follow'd him, with muzzles fastly bound,  
And golden collars, and rings filed round: 1450  
And lords a hundred had he in his rout,  
Their armour proof, their hearts were stern and stout.

Came with Arcita, as in books we find,  
The great Emetrius, the king of Inde,  
(Inde is a country, where all wealth is born,  
Against the blazing chambers of the Morn;)  
Came on a bay horse, trapped all in steel,  
And, from the ruddy haunches to the iron heel,  
Cover'd with cloth of gold, wherein was wove  
Massy, both every flower, and great tree of the grove; 1460  
Came riding, like the god of battle, Mars:  
His ripe coat armour was of cloth of Tars,  
A weighty silk, and vestiture of state,  
Frosted with noble pearls, and white, and round, and great;

\* Alano is the Spanish name of a species of dog, which the dictionaries call a mastiff.

MR. TYRERWHITT.

His saddle of burnt gold, and newly beat  
By the apt hammer, for a God a seat;  
And a brief mantle from his shoulders flowing,  
Brimful of rubies, like the bright fire, glowing;  
His crisp hair into jolly rings was run  
Of yellow hue, and glitter'd as the sun; 1470  
His nose was high, his eyes were citron bright,  
Swelling his lips, his cheek of sanguine light;  
And a few freckles, sprinkled o'er his face,  
Something 'twixt black and yellow, gave a grace;  
And cast his looking like a lion bold,  
That doth the kingdom of the forests hold:  
Of five and twenty years his age at most,  
His chin yet for his beard at early cost,  
For there the golden harvest 'gan to spring;  
His voice was like a trumpet thundering: 1480  
Upon his head he wore of laurel green  
A garland fresh, and lovely to be seen;  
Upon his hand he bore, for his delight,  
An eagle tame, as any lily white;  
An hundred lords did in his suit appear,  
All armed, save their heads, in all their gear,  
Full richly in all sort of warlike things:  
For trust ye well, that earls, and dukes, and kings

Were gather'd in this noble company,  
For love, and for increase of chivalry: 1490  
About this king there ran, a sylvan guard,  
Many a tame lion, many a spotted pard.

And in this wise the lords of gracious fame  
To Athens on the happy Sunday came;  
About the prime, upon the Sunday bright. .

And Theseus, ever a most courteous knight,  
Gave them great welcome, and a noble inn,  
According to the state, that each was in ;  
And feasted them, and did them honour all,  
That men could ask ; a gracious prodigal: 1500  
That, since the first day of the golden Sun,  
A feast, like this, he never look'd upon.  
The minstrelsy ; the service at the feast ;  
The great gifts to the most, and to the least ;  
The rich array o'er Theseus' palace cast ;  
Who sate upon the rais'd floor first or last ;  
What lady danc'd the best, or look'd most fair ;  
Or sung or carol'd the most heavenly air ;  
Or who most feelingly could speak of love ;  
What hawks there sate upon the perch above; 1510

What hounds there lay upon the floor adown ;  
I say not this : let thought the action crown :  
All was the best : now Mars begins to frown.

The Sunday night, ere day began to spring,  
The lark of Palamon was heard to sing ;  
The lark was heard to sing two hours ere day,  
Or fair Aurora in the East 'gan play  
Her ruddy reins, and drive her chariot on the way ;  
Yet sang the lark ; and Palamon arose :  
With courage, and a holy heart he goes,                   1520  
To say his prayers before the marble shrine  
Of lovely Venus, blissful and divine :  
At her own hour he left his balmy bed,  
And to the lists, and to the forest sped ;  
His heart was brave, but humble and resign'd ;  
And down he knelt ; and, at her feet inclin'd,  
Pour'd forth in tears his love-devoted mind.

“ Fairest of fair, by whom I rule my life,  
“ Daughter to mighty Jove, and Vulcan's wife,  
“ Thou gladder of Cithæron's holy hill,                   1530  
“ Lo, here I bend me to thy sovereign will :  
“ The love thou had'st to Adonis, let it be  
“ The cause, that thou have pity too on me ;



“ Accept my bitter tears, and soothe my smart,  
“ And take my humble prayer into thine heart.”

“ Alas ! I have no soul, or speech can tell  
“ Th’ effect, and cruel torment of my hell :  
“ My heart cannot its dreadful hurt betray :  
“ I am too much confounded, e’en to say  
“ The pangs of love, that kill me every way : 1540  
“ But mercy, lady bright ! thou knowest well  
“ My thoughts, and all the harms I cannot tell :  
“ Consider all my grief, and all my truth ;  
“ O Goddess ! and have pity on me, and ruth :  
“ With gentle hand bind up my bleeding sore ;  
“ As truly as I shall, for evermore,  
“ Even with all my might, thy faithful servant be ;  
“ And hold war always with pale chastity :  
“ That make I my fast vow : O ! give me aid :  
“ For boast and glory, arms are not my trade : 1550  
“ I ask not victory to morrow morn,  
“ Nor in triumphant chariot to be borne :  
“ Vain glory and renown are utterly my scorn.  
“ I ask not, nor desire to have my name  
“ Blown up and down by silver trumpet of fame,  
“ The shouting people giving loud acclaim :

- “ No; but I ask, O Goddess; and I die,  
“ If thou not grant; to have my Emily:  
“ With Emily to live, with Emily to die:  
“ My Emily to serve; for this I pray: 1560  
“ Find thou the manner how, and in what way.  
“ Shape thou my fate, and make thou the decree;  
“ Whether ’t be better, that they conquer me,  
“ Or I bind them in cord of victory:  
“ I care not, and I reck not, queen of charms;  
“ So that I have my lady in my arms.  
“ For though Mars be the God of spear and targe,  
“ And walk upon the Thracian mountains large,  
“ Having of barriers and of lists the charge;  
“ Yet, for all that, in the high courts above, 1570  
“ Thou hast such mighty force with sovereign Jove  
“ That, if thou please, I shall possess my love:  
“ I know I shall; and therefore every day  
“ Upon thy holy altar will I pray,  
“ And in thy temple worship thee alway;  
“ And make the sacrifice, and light the fires:  
“ O thou my sovereign queen! now hearken my desires.  
“ And if thou wilt not, O my goddess dear!  
“ Patron of lovely love! whom most I fear,  
“ And only I desire my life to sway, 1580  
“ Grant, that Arcita, with the morning ray,

“ May drive the sharp spear through my heart, and tear  
“ My life away, and with that life my care :  
“ I shall not see, when I have lost my life,  
“ Nor care then, that Emilia be his wife :  
“ Behold the end, and object of my prayer ;  
“ Give me my love : well, Venus, may I fare !”

When Palamon had breath'd out his desires  
In holy prayer, he lit the holy fires,  
And did all things, that Venus' law requires : 1590  
He did them with a low and humble grace,  
And tears ran streaming down his pallid face,  
For love of Emily ; how wan his look !  
'Till the soft statue of smooth Venus shook,  
And made a sign ; which for a proof he took,  
That She his prayer accepted on that day :  
And yet he saw the sign show'd a delay :  
But then he knew She granted had his boon ;  
And with a light heart went he home full soon.

The third hour after Palamon had sought 1600  
The temple of Venus in distracted thought,  
Uprose the Sun, and uprose Emily,  
And to Diana's temple travell'd modestly.

Her maidens in their hand contain'd the fire,  
The clothes, the incense, and the whole desire  
Of all the sacrifice, the horns of mead :  
There lacked nought with Dian to succeed.  
Smoking the temple, full of vestments fair :  
And Emily, with pure heart debonnaire,  
Bath'd in the limpid water of a well : 1610  
But how she did her rites I dare not tell ;  
And yet to paint the maid would please Apollo well :  
But I will be at large : her golden hair  
Was combed, and untressed all, and bare,  
And flow'd adown her shoulders : o'er her head  
A green oak cerial garland there was spread :  
Two fires upon the altar then she made,  
And did all things, the Goddess to persuade :  
And when the fire was kindled, with a cheek,  
Wherein the soul of modesty did speak, 1620  
A downcast eye, a tongue like any muse,  
She spake unto Diana, as ensues :

“ O thou chaste Goddess of the forest green,  
“ To whom both heaven, and earth, and sea are seen ;  
“ Queen of the reign of Pluto, dark and low ;  
“ Goddess of maidens, that my heart dost know,

- “ Full many a year, and know’st that I desire  
“ To keep me from thy vengeance, and thine ire,  
“ For which Actæon bled so cruelly,  
“ O Goddess chaste, well knowest thou, that I 1630  
“ Desire to be a maiden all my life,  
“ And will no love, and never would be wife;  
“ I am, thou know’st, yet of thy company,  
“ A maid; and love with spear and hound to fly  
“ After the hart, and walk in the woods wild,  
“ And not to be a wife, and be with child;  
“ Nought would I know the company of man:  
“ Now help me, lady, since ye may, and can;  
“ For those three forms, that aye thou hast in thee,  
“ Help me, Diana, and, O, set me free 1640  
“ From Palamon, and Arcite equally,  
“ From both these knights, who eagerly love me:  
“ I pray thee for thy grace, send peace and love  
“ Between these two, who will the battle move;  
“ And turn from me their hearts, and burning fire,  
“ All their hot love, and all their fierce desire,  
“ And all their busy torment: of thy grace  
“ Quench it, or let it burn in other place;  
“ Some fairer woman and some lovelier face:  
“ Or, if my destiny be shap’d, that I 1650  
“ Must needs have one of them, O queen on high,

“ That viewest heaven, and earth, and flowing sea,  
“ Give me the knight, (thy will shall holy be,)  
“ Who has most love, and most desire to me.”

“ Behold, thou Goddess of clean chastity,  
“ The tears, that on my cheeks in pity fall.  
“ Since thou art maid, and keeper of us all,  
“ Keep thou my maiden flower, and well preserve;  
“ And, while I live, a maid I will thee serve.”

The two fires burn'd upon the altar clear,                    1660  
The while she pray'd unto her mistress dear:  
The fires burn'd clearly with a lovely light:  
But suddenly she saw a wondrous sight;  
For right anon one fire was quenched quite;  
Quickly it flam'd again; and then anon  
The other fire was quench'd, and wholly gone;  
And in its quenching hiss'd, as brands will do,  
Burn'd on the household hearth, when wet and new:  
And at the brands' end there outran anon,  
As it were bloody drops, ah! many a one:                    1670  
Whereat so sore aghast was Emily,  
That she was well nigh mad, and 'gan to cry;  
For she knew not what this might signify:

For fear of it she wept, and cried: for fear  
Madly cried out, that pity was to hear.

And therewithal Diana 'gan appear,  
With bow in hand, and like a huntress clad,  
And said, " Emilia, daughter, be not sad;  
" It is declar'd among the Gods above,  
" Th' eternal word is written of thy love, 1680  
" Thou shalt be wedded unto one of those,  
" Who taste for thee so bitter care and woes :  
" But unto which of them I may not tell :  
" Farewell ; for here I may no longer dwell.  
" Daughter, thy faultless soul may well discern  
" By the two fires, which on my altar burn,  
" Thy fate in love, ere henceforth thou shalt turn."

Emilia, aw'd by her celestial face,  
Submissive heard: the arrows in the case  
'Gan fastly clatter, and 'gan loudly ring: 1690  
And forth the Goddess went, and made a vanishing.  
Said then the maid, as forthway she did pass,  
Astonish'd, " what, O Queen, amounteth this? alas !  
" I mean Diana, all my life to place  
" In thy protection, and thy holy grace :"

And said no more: but homeward, in dismay,  
And with a gentle foot-fall took her way.

The next hour, that to Mars was dedicate,  
To pray unto the God of bloody hate,  
To light the fires, to make the sacrifice,                   1700  
According to the savage Pagan wise,  
With a firm foot and slow, Arcita sped  
To the strong temple of grim Mars the red :  
With high devotion, and an humble heart  
He said his prayers, and thus absolv'd his part.

“ O thou strong God, that in the kingdom cold  
“ Of Thrace men honour, and their lord behold ;  
“ And hast in every reign, and every land,  
“ Of wild war all the bridle in thy hand ;  
“ In whose great voice the bloody conquest lies ; 1710  
“ Accept of me my piteous sacrifice !  
“ If my youth merit, and my arm have might,  
“ To serve thy Godhead in the burning fight ;  
“ If I am worthy to be one of thine ;  
“ Have ruth upon me, for that rage of thine,  
“ That killing pain, and that hot thrilling fire,  
“ In which, grim God, thou burnest for desire



And use of Venus, and her beauty free,  
“ Who gave her youth, and her fresh form to thee,  
“ And lay within thy arms, and did thy will: 1720  
“ Though once misfortune did thy cup o’er fill,  
“ When Vulcan trapp’d thee in his meshy net,  
“ And saw thee with his wife, and rages yet:  
“ For all the grief, that then was in thy heart,  
“ Have ruth upon me, and controul my smart.  
“ For I am young, and ignorant, thou know’st;  
“ And, as I think, with love offended most  
“ Of any living man, or living thing,  
“ That ever was or is: for she, the spring  
“ And source of all my woe, and life made dim, 1730  
“ Cares nothing if I sink, or if I swim:  
“ And well I know, before I mercy gain,  
“ I must with strength compel her, and constrain:  
“ And well I know, that all my strength is vain  
“ Unless thy grace and godhead I obtain:  
“ Then help me, lord, to morrow in the war;  
“ For that fierce fire, that burned thee so far;  
“ For this fierce fire, that now burneth me;  
“ And do, that I to morrow may have victory;  
“ The travail shall be mine, the glory be with thee: 1740  
“ Thy sovereign temple will I honour most  
“ Of any place, and labour with great cost

“ In thy strong craft, and in thy pleasure strong,  
“ And hang my banner thy great walls along,  
“ And all the armour of my company :  
“ And evermore, until the day I die,  
“ Eternal fire before thee will I burn ;  
“ And make this vow, (and hear it, and discern !)  
“ My beard, my hair, the growth of many a year,  
“ That never felt the razor, or the shear,           1750  
“ I will to thee, the God of warriors, give ;  
“ And be thy steadfast servant, while I live :  
“ Now, lord, have ruth upon my sorrows sore :  
“ Give me the victory : I ask no more.”

The strong Arcita's orison is o'er :  
The rings, that hung upon the temple door,  
And eke the very doors did clatter fast :  
At which Arcita somewhat was aghast.  
The red fires burn'd upon the altar bright :  
'Gan all the temple to be fill'd with light :           1760  
Anon a sweet smell came up from the floor :  
Anon Arcita his great hand up bore,  
And more ripe incense in the fires cast :  
With many other rites : and, at the last,  
The statue of Mars began his hauberk ring,  
And with that sound he heard a murmuring

Full low and dim, that said thus, " Victory !"  
And glory and honour to Mars render'd he ;  
Glory and honour to his deity.

And thus with joy, and hope to have his prayer, 1770  
And sure in the hard battle well to fare,  
Arcita to his happy inn is gone,  
As glad, as is the eagle of the Sun.

But, for the gift of Mars unto his knight,  
Great strife began, in the high realms of light,  
Betwixt the laughing queen of lovely charms,  
And Mars, the stern God, powerful of arms :  
Jove was unequal the debate to stay,  
Though mighty busy on that angry day :  
'Till pale Saturnus, he surnam'd the cold, 1780  
That knew so many accidents of old,  
Found in his old experience and his art,  
A method to assuage the mind of either part :  
As truly is it said ; " Age hath great power,  
" Though cold and feeble in it's wintry hour :  
" In age is wisdom, and the use of it :  
" Men may the old outrun, but not outwit."

Saturn, anon, to stay debate and strife,  
 Albeit against the current of his life,  
 For war was ever pleasing to his mind, 1790  
 Of all their strife a remedy 'gan find.

" My daughter, Venus," quoth Saturnus drear,  
 " My course of action, that all mortals fear,  
 " Hath more of power, than can be known to man.  
 " Mine is the drenching in the sea so wan,  
 " Mine is the prison in the dark confine,  
 " The hanging by the throat, the strangling mine,  
 " The churls' rebelling, and the murmuring,  
 " The discontent, the privy empoisoning,  
 " Vengeance I do, and plain correction digne, 1800  
 " Whenso I dwell in the dark lion's sign :  
 " Mine is the ruin of the lofty halls,  
 " The falling of the tow'rs, and of the walls  
 " Upon the miner, or the carpenter :  
 " In fashioning of ill I never err :  
 " Sampson I slew, when he the pillar shook :  
 " Of me the cold, dim maladies are took ;  
 " Hence the dark treasons, the ensnarings hence ;  
 " I look, and I beget the pestilence.  
 " Now weep no more ; I shall use diligence, 1810

“ That Palamon thy knight, and sworn to thee,  
“ Shall have the wife, that thou hast giv’n him free :  
“ Yet, nevertheless, shall Mars his knight sustain,  
“ Sometime there must be peace between you twain ;  
“ Although of one complexion are ye not,  
“ By which great strife is every day begot :  
“ I am thy grandfather, to do thy will :  
“ Weep now no more ; I shall thy wish fulfill.”

So Saturn said : but let us leave the sky ;  
Which cannot bar debate, and jealousy : 1820  
With iron wings up into heaven they fly :  
Now listen to our great heroick tragedy !

Great was the feast in Athens on that day :  
The lusty season of the flowery May  
Made every man to be in such delight,  
They just and dance untill the Monday night :  
Aye, all of Monday in thy service high,  
Spent they, great Venus, to thy deity :  
But (early, in the morn to rise, and see the fight,)  
Reluctant from the dance they went to bed at night. 1830  
And on the morrow, when the day ’gan spring,  
Of horse and harness noise and clattering

There was in all the hostelries about:  
And to the palace rode there many a rout  
Of lords on steeds and palfreys: such a morn  
There had not been, since the great World was born.

There might'st thou see, and revel in the sight,  
The ordering of harness for the fight,  
Rich, strange, and wrought with a prodigious deal  
Of goldsmithry, of broidering, and of steel;      1840  
The bright shields, head-pieces, and trappings brave,  
Gold-hewen helms, and hawberks, God me save!  
Blazing coat-armours, that their nations gave;  
Lords, in great cloth of state, on coursers free,  
And knights of retinue, and squires there be;  
Nailing the spears, and buckling the helms strong,  
Rubbing of shields, and lacing up the thong;  
There is great need, that they are nothing idle,  
The foamy steeds upon the golden bridle  
Gnawing, and armourers, and fast they go,      1850  
With file and hammer pricking to and fro;  
Yeomen on foot, and commons many a one,  
With short staves, thick as they can march; anon  
Pipes, trumpets, brazen drums, and clarions,  
That in the battle blow the bloody sown;  
The palace full of people up and down,

Here three, there ten, and weighing of renown,  
And holding question, of these Thebans two,  
Divining what the warring knights shall do,  
Some said it shall be thus, some said it shall be so; 1860  
Some held with him, that had the great black beard ;  
Some with the bald ; and some with the thick hair'd  
Some said, " yon man looks grim, and he will fight ;  
" That axe as twenty pounds is not so light."

With busy tongues the royal hall thus rung,  
Long after that the golden Sun upsprung ;  
With busy tongues, and with divining thought :  
Each man with expectation greatly fraught.  
Duke Theseus, of his balmy sleep betray'd  
With minstrelsy, and the great noise they made, 1870  
Held yet the chamber of his palace fair,  
Until the Theban knights, a warlike pair  
With honour to the palace carried are.

Duke Theseus at a window sate alone,  
Arrayed, like a God, upon his throne :  
Thither the people press'd with duteous sense,  
To see him, and to pay high reverence ;  
Also to hearken to him with great awe,  
And gather from his lips of this dread fight the law.

An herald on a scaffold cried, "Ho!" 1880

And all the people fell in silence low:

And, when he saw the people's noise was still,

Thus he declar'd the Duke, his Sovereign's will.

"The lord hath in his high discretion thought,

'That gentle blood shall not to death be brought,

"To mortal battle, and disastrous fight,

"In this fair quarrel of sublime delight:

"Wherefore, to rule it that they shall not die,

"The duke will his first purpose modify."

"Therefore no man, on pain of loss of life, 1890

"Nor bolt, nor shot, nor poleaxe, nor short knife

"Shall send, or bring into the list; nor draw,

"Nor bear a short sword: 'tis against the law,

"That any man shall ride at his compeer,

"Even one course, with a sharp-grounded spear;

"Foin may be, if it please him so, on foot

"For his defence: and then it must not suit,

"Nor be allow'd, that any shall be slain,

"But, who is beat, shall to the stake be ta'en,

"Fix'd upon either side, by force, and there remain: 1900

"And, if it fall so, that the chief be ta'en



“ On either side, or else shall fly his mate,  
“ The tournament is over at that date.  
“ God speed you; go ye forth, and lay on fast  
“ With long sword, and with mace; and break your fast,  
“ Ye noble knights! and have of war your fill:  
“ Go now your way; ye hear Duke Theseus’ will.”

The voice of the people touched to the heaven:  
So loud they cried with merry voice, that riven  
Was the great sky; “ God save a lord so good! 1910  
“ He will have no destruction of the blood!”

Up go the trumpets and the melody,  
And to the lists rode all the company,  
By ordinance, throughout the city large,  
Hanged with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.  
Full like a lord this noble duke ’gan ride,  
And these two Thebans upon either side,  
And after rode the the queen and Emily,  
And after that another company,  
Of one and another, after their degree: 1920  
And thus they pass’d throughout the city free,  
And to the lists are come in lovely time:  
It is not of the day yet fully prime.

When Theseus on his throne was set full rich and high,  
Ipolita the queen, and Emily,  
And other ladies severally about,  
Unto their seats then press the universal rout.  
And Westward through the gates, and under Mart  
Arcita, and the hundred of his part,  
With banner red, is enter'd right anon : 1930  
And, in the self-same moment, Palamon  
Is, under Venus, Eastward on the place,  
With banner white, and hardy cheer and face :  
Look through the world, and look through every time'  
And see, if any war more equally can chime ;  
If ever yet two companies were met,  
Or can be, with more just proportion set ;  
None had the wit to say, that either had  
Th' advantage, or the other's hope forbad ;  
So were they equal in estate and age, 1940  
So tantamount in skill, so poiz'd in warlike rage,  
Neither was any more, and neither any less :  
In two fair ranks they 'gan themselves address :  
And then the names were read of every one,  
That in their number guile there might be none,  
Then were the gates shut, and was cried aloud,  
" Do your devoir, young knights ! ye noble, and ye proud !"

The heralds left their pricking up and down :  
Now ring the trumpets loud, and now the clarion.  
There is no more to say ; but, East and West, 1950  
In go the spears, and steady in the rest ;  
In goes the sharp spur into the horse-side ;  
Then see men, who can just and who can ride ;  
There shiver the shafts upon the shields so thick ;  
He feels through the breast-bone the spear to prick :  
Up spring the spears, and twenty foot in height ;  
Outgo the swords, as any silver, bright ;  
The helms they hew, and cut them into shred ;  
Outbursts the dismal blood in rivers red ;  
With mighty maces the great bones they burst ; 1960  
He through the thickest of the throng can thrust ;  
There stumble the steeds strong, and down goeth all ;  
There rolls he under foot, as doth a ball ;  
There foins he at his foe with truncheon strong ;  
There hurtles he at him, and throws his horse along ;  
He through the body is hurt ; and him they take,  
Maugre his head, and bring him to the stake ;  
As the pact was ; right there he must abide :  
Another too is led upon the other side ;  
And sometimes Theseus causes them to rest, 1970  
To drink the spiced wine, and be with thrifty meat refresh'd.

Full oft upon the day the Thebans two  
Together met, and wrought each other woe;  
Unhors'd each other: no, there cannot stray  
A tiger in the vale of Galaphey,  
Whose little whelp is stolen from her sight,  
So cruel on the hunter, as Arcite,  
So cruel in his ire; and would have gone  
The sword right through the heart of Palamon:

Nor any lion, in wild Belmarie, 1980  
Or hunted, or for hunger mad, can be  
So thirsting for the blood and for the prey,  
As Palamon, his foe Arcite to slay:  
The jealous strokes upon their helmets bite;  
Outruns on both their sides, a woeful sight!  
The crimson blood, and all beholders doth affright.

Sometimes there is an end of every deed:  
The fight can not for ever glow, the knights for ever bleed:  
For ere the Sun, that stopp'd th' event to see,  
Dropp'd into rest in the Atlantic sea, 1990  
And vanish'd with a crimson majesty,  
The great strong king, Emetrius, 'gan assault  
This Palamon, and took him at default,

Engag'd in raging battle with Arcite ;  
And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite :  
The force of twenty men avails to take  
Th' unyielding Prince, and drag him to the stake :  
And in the rescue of this Palamon,  
The great strong king, Licurgus, is borne down ;  
And king Emetrius, for all his strength, 2000  
Is borne out of his saddle a sword's length,  
So fierce hit Palamon, but all for nought ;  
To the mad stake, and struggling, he is brought :  
His hardy heart, and his amazing might  
Avail him now no longer in the fight :  
Though anguish rent his heart, he must abide  
His cruel fate, and the unhappy tide :  
And madly he foam'd to have in the battle died :  
Yea, at the stake poor Palamon must stand ;  
Such is the final pact, and such the duke's command. 2010

Think ye he grieves, that can no longer play  
His bright sword flashing in the burning fray ?  
Think ye he grieves, as doth a tyger foil'd,  
Or brindled lion in the meshes toil'd ?  
Duke Theseus, when he saw the chief was ta'en,  
No longer would have blood run out, like rain :

He rose up from his chair, and cried to every one,

“ Ho ! hold the fight : the tournament is done.

“ A true judge, and no party will I be :

“ Arcite of Thebes shall marry Emily : 2020

“ Fortune hath given him her, in giving victory.”

Anon there was a noise of people rose,

As when the north wind over Euxine goes,

For joy of this ; so loud, and high withal :

It seem'd the very lists, like Jericho, shall fall.

Ah ! what can Venus do in heaven above ?

What can she say, the weeping queen of love ?

She weeps, to want her will : her tears o'er-flow ;

That all the Gods were melted at her woe :

She murmur'd, and she sobb'd ; “ I am ashamed.” 2030

But old Saturnus with grave voice exclaim'd,

And all the Gods a deep attention bore,

“ O daughter, hold thy peace, and weep no more :

“ Mars bath his will ; his knight hath all his boon :

“ And by my head thou shalt be eased soon.”

Behold ! the trumpeters 'gan blow on high,

And fill the heavens with shrilling minstrelsy,

And all the herakds loudly yell and cry,  
To *saluer* Arcite for his victory:  
But stint your noise awhile, and heark to me,      2040  
Ye clamourers: why should ye noisy be,  
And make heaven tremble with your revelry?  
A miracle shall fall out presently!

The fierce Arcita hath his helm undone,  
To let the shouting people gaze upon  
His conquering face; and pricketh all along  
Upon his courser through the greedy throng:  
(The greedy throng exalt their voices high:)  
And still looks upward on his Emily,  
And she on him looks with benignant eye,      2050  
And gives her heart unto his victory,  
(For every woman through the world's round marge  
Will follow fortune, and her favours large,)  
And was his own, as well in cheer as heart:  
Behold! out of the ground a fury' infernal start,  
From Pluto sent, at begging of Saturne;  
For which his horse for fear began to turn,  
And leap'd aside, and founder'd as he leap't:  
And, ere Arcita any caution kept,  
He pitch'd him on the pommel of his head,      2060  
That in the place he lay, as he were dead:

His breast was broken with the saddle bow :  
As black he lay, as any coal, or crow :  
The blood run to his face, and more refus'd to flow.

Arcita straightway from the place they bore  
To Theseus palace ; but his heart was sore :  
Then was he cut out of his harness strong ;  
And in a bed full gently laid along :  
For he yet liv'd, and was in memory ;  
And always crying after Emily. 2070  
And the duke Theseus, with his company,  
To Athens is come home right royally,  
With every bliss and great solemnity :  
For, though this sad misfortune did befall,  
He would not throw discomfort on them all :  
And men said, " Of the hurt Arcita shall not die :  
" He shall be healed of his malady :"

Then they had joy too, that no man was slain  
In all the battle : though with grievous pain  
Full many were sore hurt ; and, namely, one ; 2080  
That with a spear was pierc'd through the breast bone.  
To other wounds, to broken ribs and arms  
Some had soft salves, and some had sacred charms ;



And medicines of herbs to some they gave;  
And some drank sage, for they their lives would have:  
And then the noble duke does all he can,  
To comfort, and to honour every man;  
And made a revel all the live-long night  
Unto the stranger lords; and surely he was right:  
Nor was there a discouraging event, 2090  
Save as at justs, or at a tournament  
It well may happen: for, to fall from horse,  
Or to be led unto a stake by force  
Of twenty knights, unyielding to the same,  
And dragg'd by arms and feet, cannot be blame,  
One against twenty, to Achilles' name:  
And have his steed too driven forth with staves  
Of footmen, whether yeomen, or mere knaves;  
Men justly count it fortune, and not fault.  
And Theseus bade the heralds cry unto the vault 2100  
Of heaven with silver tube, and loudly to declare  
All acted in the lists was noble, brave, and fair:  
To stint all rancour, and let envy die,  
And give the grace and honour equally,  
As well to those of one side, as the other;  
And either side alike, as each man were a brother  
Unto his foe: and noble gifts he gave:  
And three days held a feast, a jolly feast and brave:

And did the kings, and chivalry convey  
Out of his city largely on the way: 2110  
And home went every man, the nearest way:  
“ Farewell” now was the word, and “ have good day:”  
The tournament is o’er: the knights are gone:  
Now let me turn t’ Arcite, and Palamon.

Old Homer says, and wisely does he say,  
The lives of men for ever fall away;  
Are like the leaves of trees, which greenly fall,  
Or, sere and late, acknowledge Autumn’s thrall,  
Strewing the golden brooks: this general truth  
Arcita proves, and perishes in youth. 2120  
For all the wise physician’s noble skill,  
The wound suffices the brave knight to kill:  
Nor bleeding in the vein, nor cupping glass,  
Nor drink of herbs can give him help, alas!  
The clotter’d blood refuses more to pass.  
Nature’s expulsive virtue cannot throw  
The venom off, nor void the fatal woe:  
The spirits at his heart are now most weak and low:  
All pharmacy is vain: the man must die:  
And darkling rolls, and heavily his eye: 2130  
He thinks of heaven above on earth of Emily.

For Emily, and Palamon he sends,  
His love the first, and both his dearest friends:  
And each with pity and love at the bed-side attends.

" Nought can the woful spirit in my heart  
" Declare one point of all my sorrow's smart,  
" To you, my lady, whom I love the most:  
" But I bequeath the service of my ghost,  
" If spirits be sensible of former love,  
" To you all other creatures far above;                      2140  
" Since life no longer I may hope to prove."

" Alas, the heavy woe! the anguish strong!  
" That I for you have suffer'd, and so long!  
" Alas, the death! alas, my Emily!  
" Alas, departing of our company!  
" Alas, my heart's fair queen! alas, my wife!  
" The lady of my heart! the ender of my life!  
" What is this world? what ask vain men to have?  
" Now with his love, and now in his cold grave:  
" Alone, without the shadow of company.                      2150  
" Farewell, my sweet! farewell, my Emily!  
" Soft take me in your gentle arms, I pray,  
" For love of God, and hearken what I say."

“ I have here with my cousin, Palamon,  
“ Had strife and rancour many a day agone,  
“ For love of you, and for my jealousy;  
“ And Jupiter so guide my soul into felicity,  
“ If in all things, that do belong to love,  
“ Wherein a maid her happiness shall prove,  
“ In truth, in honour, knighthood, and estate, 2160  
“ High kindred, and a mind, that will not bate  
“ Of wisdom, and of sweet humility,  
“ And whate’er graces true nobility,  
“ To me a man, through all the world is known,  
“ So worthy to be lov’d, as Palamon;  
“ That serves you, and will serve you all his life:  
“ And, if thou purpose ever to be wife,  
“ Forget not Palamon, the gentle man!”

And with that word his speech to fail began;  
The cold of death crept upward from his feet, 2170  
And spread towards his heart, and quench’d the sovereign  
heat:

The intellect dwelt there, and slowly left her seat:  
The soul ’gan falter, when the heart felt death:  
Dusk grew his eyes, and trembled his low breath:  
But on his lady yet he cast his eye,  
And his last word was, “ mercy Emily!”

His spirit chang'd her house; and went her way,  
Whither I have not been, and therefore cannot say,  
Who am not a divine, and find no word  
O'th' dwelling of pure souls in this record;      2180  
Nor have I love th' ascendant thoughts to tell  
Of those, who show us where the spirits dwell.  
I doubt not, that he went to bliss on high:  
Now let me speak of weeping Emily.

Shriek'd Emily, and senseless she became:  
Howl'd Palamon, and charg'd with bitter blame  
The cruel fates, that tore his friend away.  
Then, from the room, where cold Arcita lay,  
Duke Theseus hath his swooning sister borne:  
To tell you, how she wept both even and morn, 2190  
What boots it, in this case? all women so,  
Like rivers, in fast tears of sorrow flow,  
Whose husbands from their fond embraces go;  
Or else, for want of tears, fall in such malady,  
That at the last most certainly they die.

Infinite sorrows be, and infinite tears  
Of old folks, and of folks of tender years,  
In all the town, for this brave Theban's death:  
Wept both the child and man, and sorrow had great breath.

Troy did not weep so largely, when she car 2200  
 Brought Hector home, fresh-bleeding from the war:  
 Alas! alas! the pity, that was there!  
 Tearing of cheeks! and rending of the hair!  
 "Why wouldst thou be dead?" these women cry,  
 "And had'st of gold enough, and Emily?"

No man could comfort the Athenian duke,  
 Save his old father, Egeus: whose wise look  
 Had pierc'd the world, and knew its every change,  
 And all its transmutation, and its range  
 Of joy and woe, and woe and joy; and had 2210  
 Example, by which sorrow is forbid.

"Right as there never died a man, quoth he,  
 "But that he liv'd on earth in some degree;  
 "Right so there never liv'd a man, he said,  
 "In all this world, but sometime shall be dead:  
 "This world is a full thoroughfare of woe;  
 "And we are pilgrims, passing to and fro;  
 "Death is an end of the world's grief below.

And over all this yet much more he said;  
 Which he had learn'd by age, on the same head: 2220  
 And very wisely bade the people stay  
 Their great lamenting: "Sorrow has its day."

Now Theseus all his thought employs, and care,  
That good Arcita's sepulture be fair,  
That with all honour it adorned be,  
And all the grace of war, that knew antiquity,  
He thought it just to have it in that grove,  
Both sweet and green, where both the knights for love  
Had keenly fought, their passion to approve:  
Where Arcite fed his amorous desires, 2230  
Where he complain'd, and knew love's burning fires;  
In that same grove a fire will he make,  
(Of Athens, and the world the grief to slake,)  
A fire, wherein he may accomplish all  
The office of the Theban's funeral.  
Anon he gave command to hack and hew  
All the old oaks, and they were not a few,  
That that old forest in it's confines knew;  
And lay them in whole trees upon a row,  
And transverse, that the fire may justly glow. 2240  
His officers with swift feet run, and ride,  
To fell the mighty oaks throughout the forest wide;  
And do all other things, that Theseus may provide.  
A bier was had, and over it was spread  
The richest cloth of gold the loom can shed;  
And loving Theseus clad the good Arcite  
In the same cloth of gold, like mid-day, bright;

A melancholy task! a passionate delight!  
And on his warlike hands the gloves were white,  
And on his head a crown of laurel green,      2250  
And in his hand a sword full bright and keen.

He laid him bare the visage on the bier;  
Therewith he wept, that pity was to hear:  
And, for the people should behold him all,  
When it was day, he brought him to the hall,  
That roareth of the crying, and the moan.

Then came the woful Theban, Palamon,  
With flöt'ry beard, and ragged hair, whereon  
The mournful ashes ruefully were strown,  
In black clothes, dropping all with tears, alone;      2260  
And, (passing o'er of weeping Emily,)  
The ruefullest of all the company.

And, that the service shall more noble be,  
More rich and equal the dead knight's degree,  
Duke Theseus bade the royal grooms to bring  
Three pacing steeds, fit either for a king,  
Trapped in polish'd steel, like light'ning, glittering;  
All cover'd with the arms of lord Arcite:  
And sate upon those steeds, so great and white,



The man, who bare his shield; the man, who bare 2270  
His spear up in his hands; the man, who bare  
His bow of Turkey, with a duteous care;  
(The case of burnt gold, and the harness were :)  
And rode forth a foot's pace, with sorrowful cheer,  
Towards the grove, as ye shall after hear.

The noblest of the Greeks, that then were there,  
Upon their shoulders bore the golden bier,  
With a slack pace, and eyes full wet and red,  
And through the main street of the city sped,  
All carpeted with black, and wondrous high 2280  
The houses hang with black, and clothed mournfully.  
Upon the right hand travell'd Egeus old,  
Duke Theseus on the left his way did hold,  
With vessels in their hand, of gold full fine,  
All full of honey, milk, and blood, and wine;  
And Palamon, with full great company;  
And after that came woful Emily,  
And bore the fire in hand, and burning bright,  
To do the office of the funeral rite.

Great preparation and high labour were, 2290  
The service of that lighting to prepare,  
That the great doleful fire might blaze into the air;

The funeral stage was twenty fathoms broad,  
 That with his green top, and his verdant load,  
 Reach'd up into the heavens, that was Arcite's abode:  
 A forest for the bed of his remains:  
 Of straw there first were laid, in base, a hundred wains.

But how the fire was waken'd up on high,  
 The names of all the trees, that there did die,  
 As oak, fir, birch, and aspin, alder wet, 2200  
 Holm, poplar, willow by the rivers set,  
 Elm, plane, ash, box, and lime-tree, chesnut rich,  
 Laurel, thorn, maple, hazel, yew, and beech,  
 And all the general forest growing free,  
 How they were fell'd shall not be told by me;  
 Now how the Gods ran up the wood and down,  
 Spoil'd of their several homes, and of their leafy town;  
 In which they greenly liv'd, in pleasing rest and peace,  
 The Nymphs, the Fauns, the Hamadryades;  
 Nor yet how the wild beasts, and the birds all 2310  
 For fear fled, when the forest 'gan to fall;  
 Now how the ground aghast was of the light,  
 That was not wont to see great Phæbus bright;  
 Nor how, what shall anon be fire, was laid  
 At first with the dry straw, as I have said,

And then with the dry sticks, and cloven in three,  
And then with green wood, and with spicery,  
And then with cloth of gold, and jewels a bright dower  
And garlands hanging ripe with many a lovely flower;  
The myrrh, the incense, with sweet odorous bliss; 2320  
Nor how Arcita lay amongst all this;  
The richness of the world about his body is;  
Nor how Emelia touch'd the pile with light,  
And did with trembling hands the funeral rite,  
And turn'd away her face, and fell in night,  
And swoon'd beside the flames, which she had waken'd  
bright;

Nor what she spoke of prayer, and of desire,  
Ere yet her knight was wrapped in the fire;  
Nor what brave jewels in the fire men cast,  
When it was great, and broad, and burning fast; 2330  
Nor how some cast their shield, and some their spear,  
And some their vestments, and what's'er was dear,  
A chariot-wheel, a helmet glist'ring drear;  
Cups full of wine, and milk, and blood they had  
Into the fire, that burnt as it were mad;  
Nor how the warlike Greeks, with a huge rout,  
Three times had ridden all the fire about,  
On the left hand, and made the heavens to ring,  
Thrice shouting, and their spears thrice clattering;

And how the ladies thrice 'gan unto heaven to cry; 2340  
Nor how unto her home was helped Emily;  
Nor how Arcite is burnt to ashes cold;  
Nor how the wake around the fire they hold  
All the same night; nor how the Greek men play;  
Of all the wake-games hardly can I say;  
Who, naked, wrestled best, with oil anointed,  
And bare him so, he was no way disjointed;  
I will not tell: nor yet how all are gone  
Home into Athens, when the play is done:  
But shortly to the port my course I bend, 2360  
And make of my long tale a worthy end.

By length, and process of down-flowing years  
The mourning was withheld, and quench'd the tears  
Of all the Greeks by general assent:  
And annual games were held at Arcite's monument.  
About this time was held a parliament  
At Athens: and the point was in debate,  
To have alliance with a foreign state:  
And, also, to have Thebes, that prostrate lay,  
In right obedience to the gentle sway 2360  
Of the duke Theseus, and the Athenian laws:  
And Palamon, unknowing of the cause,

Was sent for by the duke: and came the knight,  
But not in cloth of state, adorned bright,  
But mournfully, and in his black clothes clad:  
And dismally he look'd, and very sad:  
His tears yet for Arcita were not dry:  
He came: and Theseus sent for Emily.

When they were set, and hush'd was all the place;  
And Theseus had abode a little space,                   2370  
Ere any word came out of his wise breast;  
His thoughtful eye on heaven he did rest;  
And somewhat sad his face; he sighed still;  
And, after that, right thus he said his will.

“ The first great Mover of the cause above,  
“ When he first fashion'd the fair chain of love,  
“ Great was th' effect, and high was his intent;  
“ Well wist he why, and what thereof he meant:  
“ For bound he with that lovely chain and band  
“ The fire, the air, the water, and the land,                   2380  
“ In certain bounds, that they may never flee:  
“ The same great Prince, and Mover eke,” quoth he  
“ Hath stablish'd, in this wretched world below,  
“ A certain sum of days for men to know;

- " Yea, all that are engender'd in this place,  
" Over which day they can in no wise pace;  
" Albeit their days they frequently abridge.  
" I need not an authority alledge:  
" Experience proves it; and it causes me  
" To speak, that ye my final will may see. 2890  
" Then may men, in this order, well discern  
" That Mover is both stable and eterne:  
" Well may men know, unless it be a fool,  
" That every part deriveth from it's whole:  
" Nature hath not beginning, nor her spring  
" From any part, or fragment of a thing;  
" But from a perfect cause, imperishable;  
" Descending, till it be corruptible:  
" And therefore, in his wise providing, he  
" Hath so well order'd, what he rules shall be, 2900  
" All kinds of things, and their progressions pure  
" In just succession only shall endure;  
" Are not eternal, nor can ever be;  
" This may'st thou understand, and plainly see.  
" Lo, the strong oak, that from it's springing first  
" A hundred years must fruitfully be nurs'd,  
" And stands a hundred years in noble sway,  
" And bends a hundred years to it's decay,

- " Having so long a life, as ye may see,  
" Yet at the last all wasted is the tree. 2410  
" Consider ye besides, how the hard stone  
" Under our feet, we tread and walk upon,  
" It wastes upon the road, where it doth lie:  
" And sometime the broad river shall be dry:  
" The great towns we wane to nought, and wend:  
" Then may ye see, that all things have an end.  
" Of man and woman also we may see,  
" So is it rul'd by hard necessity,  
" That every man in youth, or else in age,  
" He shall be dead; the king, as shall a page: 2420  
" Some in his bed, and some in the deep sea,  
" And some in the large field, as ye may see:  
" There is no help; all go the self-same way:  
" All things must die: that I may plainly say.  
" What causes this, but Jupiter the king,  
" The principle and cause of every thing,  
" Converting all unto his proper will,  
" From which it is deriv'd, and shall be still?  
" And here again, no creature is alive,  
" Whom it avails against his will to strive. 2430  
" Then is it wisdom, as it seems to me,  
" To make a virtue of necessity,

- “ And take that well, which we cannot eschew ;  
“ The certain fate, that to us all is due.  
“ And whoso murmurs aught is but a fool,  
“ And rebel unto him, that all doth rule.  
“ And, certainly, a man hath honour’s dower,  
“ Who dieth in his excellence and flower,  
“ When his name nobly sounds and lacketh blame,  
“ And his friend loves him, and he knows not shame; 2440  
“ And gladder ought his friend be of his death,  
“ When with pure honour he yields up his breath,  
“ Than when his honour has grown pale with age,  
“ And time has quite forgot his warlike rage :  
“ That is the season best, in point of fame,  
“ To die, when a brave man is best of name.  
“ The contrary of this is wilfulness.  
“ Why murmur we ? why have we heaviness,  
“ That good Arcite, of chivalry the flower,  
“ With duty and honour, in a happy hour, 2450  
“ Departs from the foul prison of this life ?  
“ Why murmur here his cousin, and his wife,  
“ At his good state, that lov’d him so entire ?  
“ What would they, that he not enjoys, desire ?  
“ And can he thank them ? nay ; and to what end,  
“ That both his soul, and his fair state offend ?



" And yet, though they know this, they cannot stay  
" Their tears, and love him in a better way."

" Of all this series what may I conclude?  
" That, after sorrow, it is wise and good, 2460  
" And I advise, we turn us now to joy;  
" And all our minds to Jupiter employ  
" In thanks, and honour for his love and grace:  
" And, ere that we depart from out this place,  
" I counsel that we make, of sorrows two,  
" One perfect lasting joy; which men shall view  
" To last for ever: look ye now, wherein  
" Most sorrow there is, (as always there has been,)  
" That will I first amend, and there begin."

" Sister," said he, " this is my full assent, 2470  
" With all the advice here of my parliament,  
" That gentle Palamon, your own true knight,  
" Who serves you with all will, and heart, and might;  
" And ever hath so clearly run his race;  
" Ye shall look on him both with pity and grace,  
" And take him for your husband, and your lord:  
" Lend me your hand; for this is our accord."

“ Now let us of your womanly pity know.  
“ He is the nephew of a king : and though  
“ He were no more than a poor bachelor, 2480  
“ Since he has lov'd you for so many a year,  
“ And had for you so great adversity,  
“ It ought to be consider'd, trust ye me,  
“ Where all has been perform'd so faultlessly,  
“ You owe him pity and benignity.”

Then said he thus to Palamon, the knight,  
As happy as the lark at morning light ;  
“ I think there needs but little argument,  
“ To have in this your absolute assent :  
“ Come near, and take your lady by the hand.” 2490

And then, to knit them in the holy band  
Of marriage, and conjoin their happy years,  
By all th' united counsel of the peers,  
A contract was drawn up, the trumps on high  
Breath'd the fair tale unto the laughing sky,  
And all the heralds gave the fame on high,  
And all the people shouted joyously,  
And, crown'd with bliss, and led by melody,  
Brave Palamon hath wedded Emily ;

And God, that all this spacious world hath wrought, 2500  
Send him his love, that hath it dearly bought !  
For Palamon is now a king in wealth,  
Living in bliss, in richness, and in health;  
And Emily him loves so tenderly,  
And he again her serves so perfectly,  
There never was a jealous word between  
The happy pair, to mar the golden scene ;  
Their life was, like a Summer's lake, serene.

And thus ends Palamon, and Emily :  
God to each loving pair give like felicity ! 2510

*FINIS.*



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