

The poure man, whan he goth by the weye,  
 Before the theves he may singe and pleye.<sup>2</sup>  
 1195 Poverte is hateful good and, as I gesse,  
 A ful greet bringere out of bisynesse,  
 A greet amendere eek of sapience  
 To him that taketh it in pacience.  
 Poverte is this, although it seme alenge  
 1200 Possessioun that no wight wol chalenge.<sup>o</sup>  
 Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,  
 Maketh his God and eek himself to knowe.<sup>o</sup>  
 Poverte a spectacle is, as thinketh me,  
 Thurgh which he may his verray freendes see.<sup>o</sup>  
 1205 And therefore, sire, syn that I noght you greve,  
 Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.  
 "Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me.  
 And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee  
 Were in no book, ye gentils of honour  
 1210 Sayn that men an oold wight sholde doon favour  
 And clepe him 'fader' for your gentillesse.  
 And auctours shall I finden, as I gesse.<sup>o</sup>  
 Now there ye seye that I am foul and old,  
 Thanne drede you noght to been a cokewold.  
 1215 For filthe and elde, also moot I thee,  
 Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee.  
 "But nathelees, syn I knowe your delit,  
 I shall fulfille your worldly appetit.  
 Chese now," quod she, "oon of these thinges tweye:  
 1220 To han me foul and old til that I deye  
 And be to you a trewe humble wif,  
 And nevere you displese in all my lif,  
 Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,  
 And take your aventure of the repair  
 1225 That shall be to your hous by cause of me,  
 Or in some oother place, may well be.  
 Now chese yourselven, wheither that you liketh."<sup>3</sup>

*walks along  
 thieves  
 a despised virtue  
 encourager of industry  
 improver also of wisdom  
 (poverty) patiently*

*magnifying glass  
 see who his true friends are  
 give you a hard time  
 no longer reprove me  
 old age  
 no authority  
 is written in a book  
 do favors for an old person  
 "father" out of respect*

*Now whereas  
 fear not becoming a cuckold  
 so may I thrive  
 guardians of chastity  
 since / what you want*

*Choose / two*

*faithful and humble*

*have  
 chances about the visitors  
 come / because  
 perhaps  
 whichever*

1199-1200. **Poverte is . . . challenge:** Although poverty seems to be an unwellcome possession, no one will try to take it away from you.

1201-02. **Poverte ful . . . knowe:** When a man is low in spirit, poverty often helps him to know both his God and himself.

1203-04. **Poverte a . . . see:** The notion that we can better see who our friends are when we are poor than when we are rich is commonplace. See, for example, *Roman de la Rose*, lines 4949-56.

1212. **auctours shall . . . gesse:** I suppose, if I searched, I could find authors to support this position. The old bride is perhaps growing weary of the subject of gentility and decides to stop citing the "authorities."

This knight aviseth him and sore siketh,  
 But atte laste he seyde in this manere:  
 1230 "My lady, and my love, and wif so deere,  
 I put me in your wise governaunce.  
 Cheseth yourself which may be moost plesaunce  
 And moost honour to you and me also.  
 I do no fors the wheither of the two,  
 1235 For as you liketh it suffiseth me."  
 "Thanne have I gete of you maistrie," quod she,  
 "Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"  
 "Ye, certes, wif," quod he. "I holde it best."  
 "Kys me," quod she. "We be no lenger wrothe,  
 1240 For, by my trouthe, I wol be to you bothe,  
 This is to sayn, ye, bothe fair and good.  
 I prey to God that I moote sterven wood  
 But I to you be also good and trewe  
 As evere was wif syn that the world was newe.  
 1245 And but I be tomorn as fair to seene  
 As any lady, emperice, or queene,  
 That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,  
 Do with my lif and deth right as you lest.  
 Cast up the curtin!<sup>o</sup> Looke how that it is."  
 1250 And whan the knight saugh verrailly all this,  
 That she so fair was, and so yong therto,  
 For joye he hente her in his armes two.  
 His herte bathed in a bath of blisse,  
 A thousand time a-rewhe he gan her kisse.  
 1255 And she obeyed him in every thing  
 That mighte doon him plesance or liking.  
 And thus they live unto hir lives ende  
 In parfit joye. And Jhesu Crist us sende  
 Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,  
 1260 And grace t'overbide hem that we wedde.  
 And eek I pray Jhesu shorte hir lives  
 That wol not be governed by hir wives.  
 And olde and angry nigardes of dispence,  
 God sende hem soone verray pestilence!

*considers / sorrowfully sighs*

*under your wise control*

*Chose / joyful*

*honorable*

*I don't care which*

*suffices for me*

*gotten / mastery*

*choose / as I like*

*longer at odds*

*yes*

*may die mad*

*Unless*

*since / created*

*tomorrow morning*

*empress*

*as you like*

*saw truly*

*clasped her*

*was bathed in happiness*

*in a row*

*give him pleasure*

*perfect*

*to outlive*

*shorten*

*skinflints*

*a veritable plague*

1249. **curtin:** Curtain. No previous mention has been made of a curtain, but because we know that the two are in bed (line 1084), she presumably means a drapery around the bed that, if raised, would let in enough light that he can see her.