

But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede!

- Sire, I releesse thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were copen out of the ground,
1615 Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.
For, sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
For al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille.
It is ynogh, and farewel, have good day!
1620 And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordynges, this question, thanne wol I aske now,
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende,
I kan namoore; my tale is at an ende.

doubt

skill
foodnoble
go
know

HEERE IS ENDED THE FRANKELEYN'S TALE

- 1611 That a scholar should not do a noble deed.
1614 i.e. as though you were newly born. (Cf. 1536.)

Fragment VI (Group C)

THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

HEERE FOLWETH THE PHISICIENS TALE

- THER was, as telleth Titus Livius,
A knyght that called was Virginius,
Fulfuld of honour and of worthynesse,
And strong of freendes, and of greet richesse.
5 This knyght a doghter hadde by his wyf;
No children hadde he mo in al his lyf.
Fair was this mayde in excellent beautee
Aboven every wight that man may see;
For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
10 Yformed hire in so greet excellence,
As though she wolde seyn, 'Lo! I, Nature,
Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature,
Whan that me list; who kan me countrefete?
Pigmalion noght, though he ay forge and bete,
15 Or grave, or peynte; for I dar wel seyn,
Apelles, Zanzis, sholde werche in veyn
Outher to grave, or peynte, or forge, or bete,
If they presumed me to countrefete.
For He that is the formere principal
20 Hath maked me his vicaire general,
To forme and peynten erthely creaturis
Right as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
Under the moone, that may wane and waxe;
And for my werk right no thyng wol I axe;
25 My lord and I been ful of oon accord.
I made hire to the worshipec of my lord;
So do I alle myne othere creatures,
What colour that they han, or what figures.
Thus semeth me that Nature wolde seye.
30 This mayde of age twelve yeer was and tweye,
In which that Nature hadde swich delit.
For right as she kan peynte a lilie whit,

Livy

full of
wealth

more

formed

carve

either

Creator

care

ask

whatever

in whom; delight

7-8 Excelling in beauty all other creatures to be seen.

13 When I desire; who can imitate me?

14 Not Pygmalion, though he for ever forge and hammer.

20 'Vicar General' (i.e. chief deputy) was a title often given to the Pope, as head of the Church under Christ.

- And reed a rose, right with swich peynture
 She peynted hath this noble creature,
 35 Er she were born, upon hir lymes fre, *graceful*
 Where as by right swiche colours sholde be;
 And Phebus dyed hath hire tresses grete
 Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete.
 And if that excellent was hire beautee,
 40 A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.
 In hire ne lakked no condicioun
 That is to preyse, as by discrecioun.
 As wel in goost as body chast was she; *spirit; chaste*
 For which she floured in virginitee *flowered*
 45 With alle humylitee and abstinence, *temperance*
 With alle attemperaunce and pacience,
 With mesure eek of beryng and array.
 Discreet she was in answeyng alway;
 Though she were wis as Pallas, dar I seyn,
 50 Hir facound eek ful wommanly and pleyn, *artificial phrases*
 No countrefeted termes hadde she
 To seme wys; but after hir degree
 She spak, and alle hire wordes, moore and lesse,
 Sownyng in vertu and in gentillesse.
 55 Shamefast she was in maydens shamefastnesse, *modest*
 Constant in herte, and evere in bisynesse
 To dryve hire out of ydel slogardye.
 Bacus hadde of hir mouth right no maistrie;
 → For wyn and youthe dooth Venus encesse,
 60 As men in fyr wol casten oille or gresse.
 And of hir owene vertu, unconstreyned,
 She hath ful ofte tyme syk hire feyned,
 For that she wolde fleen the compaignye *escape from*
 Where likly was to treten of folye,
 65 As is at feestes, revels, and at daunces,
 That been occasions of daliaunces. *wanton play*
 Swich thynges maken children for to be
 To soone rype and boold, as men may se,
 Which is ful perilous, and hath been yooore. *of old*

33 With just such art.

36 Where such colours should rightly be.

38 (A colour) like that of his own hot burnished beams.

41-2 No quality was lacking in her that a serious person would wish to praise.

47 With moderation in bearing and in dress.

50 Her eloquence of a simple, womanly kind.

52 According to her station.

54 Were conducive to virtue and good breeding.

56-7 And always diligent in shunning idleness and sloth.

58 Bacchus had no power over her mouth.

62 Often pretended to feel ill.

64 Where there was any likelihood of folly.

- 70 For al to soone may she lerne loore
 Of booldnesse, whan she woxen is a wyf.
 And ye maistresses, in youre olde lyf, *governesses*
 That lordes doghtres han in governaunce, *charge*
 Ne taketh of my wordes no displeaunce. *displeasure*
 75 Thenketh that ye been set in governynges *put in charge*
 Of lordes doghtres, oonly for two thynges:
 Outher for ye han kept youre honestee, *virtue*
 Or elles ye han falle in freletee,
 And knowen wel ynough the olde daunce,
 80 And han forsaken fully swich meschaunce *bad ways*
 For everemo; therfore, for Cristes sake,
 To teche hem vertu looke that ye ne slake.
 A thief of venysoun, that hath forlaft *given up*
 His likerousnesse and al his olde craft, *gluttonous appetite*
 85 Kan kepe a forest best of any man. *take care of*
 Now kepeth wel, for if ye wole, ye kan.
 Looke wel that ye unto no vice assente,
 Lest ye be dampned for youre wikke entente; *condemned*
 For whoso dooth, a traitour is, certeyn.
 90 And taketh kep of that that I shal seyn: *heed*
 Of alle tresons sovereyn pestilence
 Is whan a wight bitrayseth innocence. *betrays*
 Ye fadres and ye moodres eek also,
 Though ye han children, be it oon or mo,
 95 Youre is the charge of al hir surveiaunce.
 Whil that they been under youre governaunce.
 Beth war, that by ensample of youre lyvyng,
 Or by youre negligence in chastisyng,
 That they ne perisse; for I dar wel seye, *perish*
 100 If that they doon, ye shul it deere abeye.
 Under a shepherde softe and negligent
 The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb torent. *torn to pieces*
 Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,
 For I moot turne agayn to my matere.
 105 This mayde, of which I wol this tale expresse,
 So kepte hirself hir neded no maistresse;
 For in hir lyvyng maydens myghten rede, *way of life*
 As in a book, every good word or dede

70-1 Learn to be brazen when she becomes a wife.

78-9 Or else because you have been weak enough to fall, and so know all the tricks of the trade.

82 See that you do not slacken in your efforts to teach them virtue.

91 The most pestilential sort of treason.

95 Yours is the responsibility for seeing that they get proper supervision.

100 You shall pay for it dearly.

103 One parable is enough for now.

105 Of whom I wish to tell this tale.

106 Governed herself so well that she needed no governess.

- That longeth to a mayden vertuous,
 110 She was so prudent and so bounteous. *belongs bounteous*
 For which the fame out sprong on every syde,
 Bothe of hir beautee and hir bountee wyde, *ample goodness*
 That thurgh that land they preised hire echone *all*
 That loved vertu, save Envye allone,
 115 That sory is of oother mennes wele, *good fortune*
 And glad is of his sorwe and his unheele. *misfortune*
 (The doctour maketh this descripcioun).
 This mayde upon a day wente in the toun
 Toward a temple, with hire mooder deere, *mother*
 120 As is of yonge maydens the manere. *judge*
 Now was ther thanne a justice in that toun,
 That governour was of that regioun. *eyes*
 And so bifel this juge his eyen caste
 Upon this mayde, avysynge hym ful faste,
 125 As she cam forby ther as this juge stood. *by where*
 Anon his herte chaunged and his mood,
 So was he caught with beautee of this mayde,
 And to hymself ful pryvely he sayde,
 'This mayde shal be myn, for any man!'
 130 Anon the feend into his herte ran,
 And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte
 The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte.
 For certes, by no force ne by no meede,
 Hym thoughte, he was nat able for to speede;
 135 For she was strong of freendes, and eek she
 Confermed was in swich soverayn bountee,
 That wel he wiste he myghte hire nevere wyne
 As for to make hire with hir body synne.
 For which, by greet deliberacioun,
 140 He sente after a cherl, was in the toun,
 Which that he knew for subtil and for boold.
 This juge unto this cherl his tale hath toold
 In secree wise, and made hym to ensure *promise*
 He sholde telle it to no creature,
 145 And if he dide, he sholde lese his heed. *lose*
 Whan that assented was this cursed reed,
 Glad was this juge, and maked him greet *made much of him*
 cheere,

111 For which reason the fame spread far and wide.

117 doctour, i.e. St Augustine.

124 Narrowly appraising her.

129 In spite of everyone.

134 It seemed to him, would he be able to succeed.

137-8 Well he knew he could never prevail on her to sin with her body.

140-1 He sent for a low fellow (who) lived in the town, well known to him for his craftiness and impudence.

146 When this wicked plan was agreed on.

- And yaf hym yiftes precieuse and deere.
 Whan shapen was al hire conspiracie
 150 Fro point to point, how that his lecherie *gave planned in detail accomplished*
 Parfourned sholde been ful subtilly,
 As ye shul heere it after openly, *was called*
 Hoom gooth the cherl, that highte Claudius.
 This false juge, that highte Apius,
 155 (So was his name, for this is no fable,
 But knowen for historial thyng notable;
 The sentence of it sooth is, out of doute),
 This false juge gooth now faste aboute
 To hasten his delit al that he may.
 160 And so bifel soone after, on a day,
 This false juge, as telleth us the storie,
 As he was wont, sat in his consistorie, *court*
 And yaf his doomes upon sondry cas. *judgments; cases*
 This false cherl cam forth a ful greet pas,
 165 And seyde, 'Lord, if that it be youre wille,
 As dooth me right upon this pitous bille,
 In which I pleyne upon Virginus;
 And if that he wol seyn it is nat thus,
 I wol it preeve, and fynde good witenesse,
 170 That sooth is that my bille wol expresse.'
 The juge answerde, 'Of this, in his absence,
 I may nat yeve diffynytyf sentence. *final*
 Lat do hym calle, and I wol gladly heere; *have him summoned*
 Thou shalt have al right, and no wrong heere.'
 175 Virginus cam to wite the juges wille, *learn read content*
 And right anon was rad this cursed bille;
 The sentence of it was as ye shul heere:
 'To yow, my lord, sire Apius so deere,
 Sheweth youre povre servant Claudius
 180 How that a knyght, called Virginus,
 Agayns the lawe, agayn al equitee,
 Holdeth, expres agayn the wyl of me,
 My servant, which that is my thral by right,
 Which fro myn hous was stole upon a nyght,
 185 Whil that she was ful yong; this wol I preeve
 By witenesse, lord, so that it nat yow greeve.
 She nys his doghter nat, what so he seye.
 Wherefore to yow, my lord the juge, I preye,

156 As a notable historical fact.

157 The substance of it is true, beyond a doubt.

158-9 Quickly sets about hastening his pleasure in every way he can.

164 Came forward quickly.

166 Do me justice in my pitiful petition.

170 That what is set down in my petition is true.

186 If it will not offend you.

187 She is not his daughter, whatever he may say.

- Yeld me my thral, if that it be youre wille.
 190 Lo, this was al the sentence of his bille.
 Virginius gan upon the cherl biholde,
 But hastily, er he his tale tolde,
 And wolde have preeved it as sholde a knyght,
 And eek by witnessyng of many a wight,
 195 That al was fals that seyde his adversarie,
 This cursed juge wolde no thyng tarie,
 Ne heere a word moore of Virginius,
 But yaf his juggement, and seyde thus:
 'I deeme anon this cherl his servant have;
 200 Thou shalt no lenger in thyn hous hir save.
 Go bryng hire forth, and put hire in oure warde.
 The cherl shal have his thral, this I awarde.'
 And whan this worthy knyght Virginius,
 Thurgh sentence of this justice Apius,
 205 Moste by force his deere doghter yiven
 Unto the juge, in lecherie to lyven,
 He gooth hym hoom, and sette him in his
 halle, *home; sat down*
 And leet anon his deere doghter calle,
 And with a face deed as asshen colde
 210 Upon hir humble face he gan biholde,
 With fadres pitee stikyng thurgh his herte,
 Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte.
 'Doghter,' quod he, 'Virginia, by thy name,
 Ther been two weyes, outhur deeth or shame,
 215 That thou most suffre; alas, that I was bore!
 For nevere thou deservedest wherfore
 To dyen with a swerd or with a knyf.
 O deere doghter, endere of my lyf,
 Which I have fostred up with swich pleasaunce
 220 That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce!
 O doghter, which that art my laste wo,
 And in my lyf my laste joye also,
 O gemme of chastitee, in pacience
 Take thou thy deeth, for this is my sentence.
 225 For love, and nat for hate, thou most be deed;
 My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heed.
 Allas, that evere Apius the say!
 Thus hath he falsly jugged the to-day'—
 And tolde hire al the cas, as ye bifore
 230 Han herd; nat nedeth for to telle it moore.

192 But quickly, before he (Virginius) had time to speak.
 196 This wicked judge would not brook a moment's delay.
 199 I rule forthwith this fellow must have his servant.
 208 And at once sent for his dear daughter.
 212 Although he would not be deflected from his purpose.

- 'O mercy, deere fader!' quod this mayde,
 And with that word she bothe hir armes layde
 Aboute his nekke, as she was wont to do.
 The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,
 235 And seyde, 'Goode fader, shal I dye?
 Is ther no grace, is ther no remedye?'
 'No, certes, deere doghter myn,' quod he.
 'Thanne yif me leyser, fader myn, quod she,
 'My deeth for to compleyne a litel space;
 240 For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace
 For to compleyne, er he hir slow, alas!
 And, God it woot, no thyng was hir trespass,
 But for she ran hir fader first to see,
 To welcome hym with greet solemnpnitee.'
 245 And with that word she fil aswowne anon,
 And after, whan hir swownyng is agon,
 She riseth up, and to hir fader sayde,
 'Blissed be God, that I shal dye a mayde!
 Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;
 250 Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes navel'
 And with that word she preyed hym ful ofte
 That with his swerd he sholde smyte softe;
 And with that word aswowne doun she fil.
 Hir fader, with ful sorweful herte and wil,
 255 Hir heed of smoot, and by the top it hente,
 And to the juge he gan it to presente,
 As he sat yet in doom in consistorie.
 And whan the juge it saugh, as seith the storie,
 He bad to take hym and anhangen hym faste;
 260 But right anon a thousand peple in thraste,
 To save the knyght, for routhe and for pitee,
 For knowen was the false iniquitee.
 The peple anon had suspect in this thyng,
 By manere of the cherles chalangyng,
 265 That it was by the assent of Apius;
 They wisten wel that he was lecherus.
 For which unto this Apius they gon,
 And caste hym in a prisoun right anon,
 Ther as he slow hymself; and Claudius,
 270 That servant was unto this Apius,
 Was demed for to hange upon a tree,
 But that Virginius, of his pitee,
 So preyde for hym that he was exiled;
 And elles, certes, he had been bigyled.

242-3 God knows, her only crime was that she ran.
 255 Smote off her head, and took it by the hair.
 259 He ordered him to be seized and hanged forthwith.
 264 Because of the way in which the fellow had brought his charge.

- 275 The remenant were anhangd, moore and *rest; hangd*
 lesse,
 That were consentant of this cursdnesse.
 Heere may men seen how synne hath his merite. *its deseris*
 Beth war, for no man woot whom God wol *beware; knows*
 smyte
 In no degree, ne in which manere wyse
 280 The worm of conscience may agryse
 Of wikked lyf, though it so pryvee be *secret*
 That no man woot therof but God and he.
 For be he lewed man, or ellis lered,
 He noot how soone that he shal been afered.
 285 Therfore I rede yow this conseil take: *advice*
 Forsaketh synne, er synne yow forsake.

HEERE ENDETH THE PHISICIENS TALE

- 276 Who had been party to this wickedness.
 279-81 In any rank of society, nor how the worm of conscience may
 shudder at a man's wicked life.
 283 *lewed . . . lered*, ignorant . . . educated, i.e. layman or cleric.
 284 He doesn't know how soon he will be terrified (by the approach
 of death).
 286 Forsake sin before sin forsakes you, i.e. before you die.