

Marie de France's Fable : The Cock And The Fox

Marie de France was a French woman who lived in England in the second half of the 12th century. She wrote a series of Lais, short romances with magical elements, and a set of 103 Fables of which some are based on Aesop's Fables. It is not clear in what form the fable she told of the Cock and the Fox came to Chaucer; it is not in Aesop and no medieval English version of it is known. The following is a whimsical 19th-century translation by the great medievalist W. W. Skeat.

A Cock our story tells of, who
High on a dunghill stood and crew.
A Fox, attracted, straight drew nigh,
And spake soft words of flattery.
'Dear Sir!' said he, 'Your look's divine;
I never saw a bird so fine!
I never heard a voice so clear
Except your father's -- ah! poor dear!
His voice rang clearly, loudly -- but
Most clearly, when his eyes were shut!
'The same with me!' the Cock replies, And flaps
his wings, and shuts his eyes.
Each note rings clearer than the last
The Fox starts up, and holds him fast;
Towards the wood he hies apace.
But as he crossed an open space,
The shepherds spy him; off they fly;
The dogs give chase with hue and cry.
The Fox still holds the Cock, though fear
Suggests his case is growing queer. --

'Tush!' cries the Cock, 'cry out, to grieve 'em,
"The cock is mine! I'll never leave him!"
The Fox attempts, in scorn, to shout,
And opes his mouth; the Cock slips out,
And, in a trice, has gained a tree.
Too late the Fox begins to see
How well the Cock his game has play'd;
For once his tricks have been repaid.
In angry language, uncontrolled,
He 'gins to curse the mouth that's bold
To speak, when it should silent be.
'Well,' says the Cock, 'the same with me;
I curse the eyes that go to sleep
Just when they ought sharp watch to keep
Lest evil to their lord befall.'

Thus fools contraiously do all:
They chatter when they should be dumb,
And when they ought to speak are mum.

The Nun's Priest's Tale by Chaucer

2821: A povre wydwe, somdeel stape in age
2822: Was whilom dwellyng in a narwe cotage,
2823: Biside a grove, stondyng in a dale.
2824: This wydwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
2825: Syn thilke day that she was last a wyf,
2826: In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,
2827: For litel was hir catel and hir rente.
2828: By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente
2829: She foond hirself and eek hir doghtren two.
2830: Thre large sowes hadde she, and namo,
2831: Three keen, and eek a sheep that highte malle.
2832: Ful sooty was hire bour and eek hir halle,
2833: In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel.
2834: Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
2835: No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;
2836: Hir diete was accordant to hir cote.
2837: Repleccioun ne made hire nevere sik;
2838: Attempree diete was al hir phisik,
2839: And exercise, and hertes suffisaunce.
2840: The goute lette hire nothyng for to daunce,
2841: N' apoplexie shente nat hir heed.
2842: No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed;

2843: Hir bord was served moost with whit and blak, --
2844: Milk and broun breed, in which she foond no lak,
2845: Seynd bacoun, and somtyme an ey or tweye;
2846: For she was, as it were, a maner deye.
2847: A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
2848: With stikkes, and a drye dych withoute,
2849: In which she hadde a cok, hight Chauntecleer.
2850: In al the land, of crowyng nas his peer.
2851: His voys was murier than the murie orgon
2852: On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon.
2853: Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge
2854: Than is a klokke or an abbey orlogge.
2855: By nature he knew ech ascencioun
2856: Of the equynoxial in thilke toun;
2857: For whan degrees fiftene weren ascended,
2858: Thanne crew he, that it myghte nat been amended.
2859: His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,
2860: And batailled as it were a castel wal;
2861: His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;
2862: Lyk asure were his legges and his toon;
2863: His nayles whitter than the lylie flour,
2864: And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
2865: This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce
2866: Sevene hennes for to doon al his plesaunce,
2867: Whiche were his sustres and his paramours,

2868: And wonder lyk to hym, as of colours;
2869: Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
2870: Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote.
2871: Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,
2872: And compaignable, and bar hyrself so faire,
2873: Syn thilke day that she was seven nyght oold,
2874: That trewely she hath the herte in hooold
2875: Of Chauntecleer, loken in every lith;
2876: He loved hire so that wel was hym therwith.
2877: But swich a joye was it to here hem synge,
2878: Whan that the brighte sonne gan to sprynge,
2879: In sweete accord, my lief is faren in londe!
2880: For thilke tyme, as I have understonde,
2881: Beestes and briddes koude speke and synge.
2882: And so bifel that in a dawenyng,
2883: As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle
2884: Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
2885: And next hym sat this faire Pertelote,
2886: This Chauntecleer gan Gronen in his throte,
2887: As man that in his dreem is drecched soore.
2888: And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,
2889: She was agast, and seyde, herte deere,
2890: What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere?
2891: Ye been a verray sleper; fy, for shame!
2892: And he answerde, and seyde thus: madame,

2893: I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief.
2894: By God, me mette I was in swich meschief
2895: Right now, that yet myn herte is soore afright.
2896: Now God, quod he, my swevene recche aright,
2897: And kepe my body out of foul prisoun!
2898: Me mette how that I romed up and doun
2899: Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest
2900: Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest
2901: Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.
2902: His colour was bitwixe yelow and reed,
2903: And tipped was his tayl and bothe his eeris
2904: With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heeris;
2905: His snowte smal, with glowynge eyen tweye.
2906: Yet of his look for feere almost I deye;
2907: This caused me my gronyng, doutelees.
2908: Avoy! quod she, fy on yow, hertelees!
2909: Allas! quod she, for, by that God above,
2910: Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love.
2911: I kan nat love a coward, by my feith!
2912: For certes, what so any womman seith,
2913: We alle desiren, if it myghte bee,
2914: To han housbondes hardy, wise, and free,
2915: And secree, and no nygard, ne no fool,
2916: Ne hym that is agast of every tool,
2917: Ne noon avauntour, by that God above!

2918: How dorste ye seyn, for shame, unto youre love
2919: That any thyng myghte make yow aferd?
2920: Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?
2921: Allas! and konne ye been agast of swevenys?
2922: Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is.
2923: Swevenes engendren of replecciouns,
2924: And ofte of fume and of complecciouns,
2925: Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.
2926: Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-nyght,
2927: Cometh of the grette superfluytee
2928: Of youre rede colera, pardee,
2929: Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes
2930: Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,
2931: Of rede beestes, that they wol hem byte,
2932: Of contek, and of whelpes, grete and lyte;
2933: Right as the humour of malencolie
2934: Causeth ful many a man in sleep to crie
2935: For feere of blake beres, or boles blake,
2936: Or elles blake develes wole hem take.
2937: Of othere humours koude I telle also
2938: That werken many a man sleep ful wo;
2939: But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.
2940: Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man,
2941: Seyde he nat thus, -- ne do no fors of dremes? --
2942: Now sire, quod she, whan we flee for the bemes,

2943: For Goddes love, as taak som laxatyf.
2944: Up peril of my soule and of my lyf,
2945: I conseilte yow the beste, I wol nat lye,
2946: That bothe of colere and of malencolye
2947: Ye purge yow; and for ye shal nat tarie,
2948: Though in this toun is noon apothecarie,
2949: I shal myself to gerbes techen yow
2950: That shul been for youre hele and for youre prow;
2951: And in oure yeerd tho herbes shal I fynde
2952: The whiche han of hire propretee by kynde
2953: To purge yow bynethe and eek above.
2954: Foryet nat this, for Goddes owene love!
2955: Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun;
2956: Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
2957: Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hote.
2958: And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote,
2959: That ye shul have a fevere tercaine,
2960: Of an agu, that may be youre bane.
2961: A day or two ye shul have digestyves
2962: Of wormes, er ye take youre laxatyves
2963: Of lawriol, centaure, and fumetere,
2964: Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,
2965: Of katapuce, or of gaitrys beryis,
2966: Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is;
2967: Pekke hem up right as they growe and ete hem yn.

2968: By myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn~
2969: Dredeth no dreem, I kan sey yow namoore.
2970: Madame, quod he, graunt mercy of youre loore.
2971: But nathelees, as touchyng daun catoun,
2972: That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,
2973: Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
2974: By God, men may in olde bookes rede
2975: Of many a man moore of auctorite
2976: Than evere caton was, so moot I thee,
2977: That al the revers seyn of this sentence,
2978: And han wel founden by experience
2979: That dremes been significaciouns
2980: As wel of joye as of tribulaciouns
2981: That folk enduren in this lif present.
2982: Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;
2983: The verray preeve sheweth it in dede.
2984: Oon of the gretteste auctour that men rede
2985: Seith thus: that whilom two felawes wente
2986: On pilgrimage, in a ful good entente;
2987: And happed so, yhey coomen in a toun
2988: Wher as ther was swich congregacioun
2989: Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage,
2990: That they ne founde as muche as cotage
2991: In which they bothe myghte ylogged bee.
2992: Wherefore they mosten of necessitee,

2993: As for that nyght,departen compaignye;
2994: And ech of hem gooth to his hostelrye,
2995: And took his loggyng as it wolde falle.
2996: That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,
2997: Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough;
2998: That oother man was logged wel ynough,
2999: As was his aventure or his fortune,
3000: That us governeth alle as in commune.
3001: And so bifel that, longe er it were day,
3002: This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay
3003: How that his felawe gan upon hym calle,
3004: And seyde,, -- alas! for in an oxes stalle
3005: This nyght I shal be mordred ther I lye.
3006: Now help me,deere brother, or I dye.
3007: In alle haste com to me! -- he sayde.
3008: This man out of his sleep for feere abrayde;
3009: But whan that he was wakened of this sleep,
3010: He turned hym, and took of this no keep.
3011: Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a vanitte.
3012: Thus twies in his slepyng dremed hee;
3013: And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
3014: Cam, as hym thoughte, and seide, -- I am now slawe.
3015: Bihood my bloody woundes depe and wyde!
3016: Arys up erly in the morwe tyde,
3017: And at the west gate of the toun, -- quod he,

3018: -- A carte ful of dong ther shaltow se,
3019: In which my body is hid ful prively;
3020: Do thilke carte arresten boldely.
3021: My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn.,
3022: And tolde hym every point how he was slayn,
3023: With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
3024: And truste wel, his dreem he foond ful trewe,
3025: For on the morwe, as soone as it was day,
3026: To his felawes in he took the way;
3027: And whan that he cam to his oxes stalle,
3028: After his felawe he bigan to calle.
3029: The hostiler answerede hym anon,
3030: And seyde,,sire, your felawe is agon.
3031: As soone as day he wente out of the toun.,
3032: This man gan fallen suspecioun,
3033: Remembrynge on his dremes that he mette,
3034: And forth he gooth no lenger wolde he lette
3035: Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond
3036: A dong carte, wente as it were to donge lond,
3037: That was arrayed in that same wise
3038: As ye han herd the dede man devyse.
3039: And with an hardy herte he gan to crye
3040: Vengeance and justice of this felonye.
3041: My felawe mordred is this same nyght,
3042: And in this carte he lith gapyng upright.

3043: I crye out on the ministres, -- quod he,
3044: -- That sholden kepe and reulen this citee.
3045: Harrow! allas! heere lith my felawe slayn! --
3046: What sholde I moore unto this tale sayn?
3047: The peple out sterte and caste the cart to grounde,
3048: And in the myddel of the dong they founde
3049: The dede man, that mordred was al newe.
3050: O blisful God, that art so just and trewe,
3051: Lo, how that thou biwryest mordre alway!
3052: Mordre wol out, that se we day by day.
3053: Mordre is so wlatom and abhomynable
3054: To God, that is so just and resonable,
3055: That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be,
3056: Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or thre.
3057: Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.
3058: And right anon, ministres of that toun
3059: Han hent the carter and so soore hym pyned,
3060: And eek the hostiler so soore engyned,
3061: That they biknewe hire wikkednesse anon,
3062: And were anhangid by the nekke bon.
3063: Heere may men seen that dremes been to drede.
3064: And certes in the same book I rede,
3065: Right in the nexte chapitre after this
3066: I gabbe nat, so have I joye or blis
3067: Two men that wolde han passed over see,

3068: For certeyn cause, into a fer contree,
3069: If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarie,
3070: That made hem in a citee for to tarie
3071: That stood ful myrie upon an haven-syde;
3072: But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,
3073: The wynd gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste.
3074: Jolif and glad they wente unto hir reste,
3075: And casten hem ful erly for to saille.
3076: But to that o man fil a greet merveille:
3077: That oon of hem, in slepyng as he lay,
3078: Hym mette a wonder dreem agayn the day.
3079: Hym thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,
3080: And hym comanded that he sholde abyde,
3081: And seyde hym thus: -- if thou tomorwe wende,
3082: Thow shalt be dreynt; my tale is at an ende.
3083: He wook, and tolde his felawe what he mette,
3084: And preyde hym his viage for to lette;
3085: As for that day, he preyde hym to byde.
3086: His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,
3087: Gan for to laughe, and scorned him ful faste.
3088: -- no dreem, -- quod he, -- may so myn herte agaste
3089: That I wol lette for to do my thynges.
3090: I sette nat a straw by thy dremynges,
3091: For swevenes been but vantees and japes.
3092: Men dreme alday of owles and of apes,

3093: And eek of many a maze therwithal;
3094: Men dreme of thyng that nevere was ne shal.
3095: But sith I see that thou wolt heere abyde,
3096: And thus forslawthen wilfully thy tyde,
3097: God woot, it reweth me; and have good day! --
3098: And thus he took his leve, and wente his way.
3099: But er that he hadde half his cours yseyled,
3100: Noot I nat why, ne what myschaunce it eyled,
3101: But casuelly the shippes botme rente,
3102: And ship and man under the water wente
3103: In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,
3104: That with hem seyled at the same tyde.
3105: And therfore, faire Pertelote so deere,
3106: By swiche ensamples olde maistow leere
3107: That no man sholde been to recchelees
3108: Of dremes; for I seye thee, doutelees,
3109: That many a dreem ful soore is for to drede.
3110: Lo, in the lyf of seint Kenelm I rede,
3111: That was Kenulphus sone, the noble kyng
3112: Of Mercenrike, how Kenelm mette a thyng.
3113: A lite er he was mordred, on a day,
3114: His mordre in his avysioun he say.
3115: His norice hym expowned every deel
3116: His sweven, and bad hym for to kepe hym weel
3117: For traisoun; but he nas but seven yeer oold,

3118: And therefore lite tale hath he toold
3119: Of any dreem, so hooly was his herte.
3120: By God! I hadde levere than my sherte
3121: That ye hadde rad his legende, as have I.
3122: Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,
3123: Macrobeus, that writ the avisioun
3124: In affrike of the worthy cipoun,
3125: Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been
3126: Warnynge of thynges that men after seen.
3127: And forthermoore, I pray yow, looketh wel
3128: In the olde testament, of Daniel,
3129: If he heeld dremes any vanitee.
3130: Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see
3131: Wher dremes be somtyme -- I sey nat alle --
3132: Warnynge of thynges that shul after falle.
3133: Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun pharao,
3134: His bakere and his butiller also,
3135: Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes.
3136: Whoso wol seken actes of sondry remes
3137: May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng.
3138: Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,
3139: Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
3140: Which signified he sholde anhangd bee?
3141: Lo heere Andromacha, Ectores wyf,
3142: That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,

3143: She dremed on the same nyght biforn
3144: How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,
3145: If thilke day he wente into bataille.
3146: She warned hym, but it myghte nat availle;
3147: He wente for to fighte natheles,
3148: But he was slayn anon of Achilles.
3149: But thilke tale is al to longe to telle,
3150: And eek it is ny day, I may nat dwelle.
3151: Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,
3152: That I shal han of this avisioun
3153: Adversitee; and I seye forthermoor,
3154: That I ne telle of laxatyves no stoor,
3155: For they been venymous, I woot it weel;
3156: I hem diffye, I love hem never a deel!
3157: Now let us speke of myrthe, and stynte al this.
3158: Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
3159: Of o thyng God hath sent me large grace;
3160: For whan I se the beautee of youre face,
3161: Ye been so scarlet reed aboute youre yen,
3162: It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
3163: For al so siker as *In principio*,
3164: *Mulier est hominis confusio*, --
3165: Madame, the sentence of this latyn is,
3166: -- womman is mannes joye and al his blis. --
3167: For whan I feele a-nyght your softe syde,

3168: Al be it that I may nat on yow ryde,
3169: For that oure perche is maad so narwe, allas!
3170: I am so ful of joye and of solas,
3171: That I diffye bothe sweven and dreem.
3172: And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,
3173: For it was day, and eke his hennes alle,
3174: And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,
3175: For he hadde founde a corn, lay in the yerd.
3176: Real he was, he was namoore aferd.
3177: He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,
3178: And trad hire eke as ofte, er it was pryme.
3179: He looketh as it were a grym leoun,
3180: And on his toos he rometh up and doun;
3181: Hym deigned nat to sette his foot to grounde.
3182: He chukketh whan he hath a corn yfounde,
3183: And to hym rennen thanne his wyves alle.
3184: Thus roial, as a prince is in his halle,
3185: Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture,
3186: And after wol I telle his aventure.
3187: Whan that the month in which the world bigan,
3188: That highte march, whan God first maked man,
3189: Was compleet, and passed were also,
3190: Syn march bigan, thritty dayes and two,
3191: Bifel that Chauntecleer in al his pryde,
3192: His sevene wyves walkynge by his syde,

3193: Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,
3194: That in the signe of taurus hadde yronne
3195: Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat moore,
3196: And knew by kynde, and by noon oother loore,
3197: That it was pryme, and crew with blisful stevene.
3198: The sonne, he seyde, is clomben up on-evene
3199: Fourty degrees and oon, and moore ywis.
3200: Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
3201: Herkne this blisful briddes how they synge,
3202: And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge;
3203: Ful is myn herte of revel and solas!
3204: But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,
3205: For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.
3206: God woot that worldly joye is soone ago;
3207: And if a rethor koude faire endite,
3208: He in a cronycle saufly myghte it write
3209: As for a sovereyn notabilitee.
3210: Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;
3211: This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
3212: As is the book of launcelot de lake,
3213: That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.
3214: Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.
3215: A col-fox, ful of sly iniquitee,
3216: That in th grove hadde woned yeres three,
3217: By heigh ymaginacioun forncast,

3218: The same nyght thurghout the hegges brast
3219: Into the yerd ther Chauntecleer the faire
3220: Was wont, and eek his wyves, to repaire;
3221: And in a bed of wortes stille he lay,
3222: Til it was passed undren of the day,
3223: Waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,
3224: As gladly doon thise homycides alle
3225: That in await ligen to mordre men.
3226: O false mordrour, lurkyng in thy den!
3227: O newe Scariot, newe Genylon,
3228: False dissymulour, o greek Synon,
3229: That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!
3230: O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe
3231: That thou into that yerd flaugh fro the bemes!
3232: Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes
3233: That thilke day was perilous to thee;
3234: But what that God forwoot moot nedes bee,
3235: After the opinioun of certein clerkis.
3236: Witnesse on hym that any parfit clerk is,
3237: That in scole is greet altercacioun
3238: In this mateere, and greet disputisoun,
3239: And hath been of an hundred thousand men.
3240: But I ne kan nat bulte it to the bren
3241: As kan the hooly doctour Augustyn,
3242: Or Boece, or the bisshop Bradwardyn,

3243: Wheither that Goddes worthy forwityng
3244: Streyneth me nedely for to doon a thyng, --
3245: Nedely clepe I symple necessitee;
3246: Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
3247: To do that same thyng, or do it noght,
3248: Though God forwoot it er that was wrought;
3249: Or if his wityng streyneth never a deel
3250: But by necessitee condicioneel.
3251: I wol nat han to do of swich mateere;
3252: My tale is of a cok, as ye may heere,
3253: That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
3254: To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
3255: That he hadde met that dreem that I yow tolde.
3256: Wommennes conseils been ful ofte colde;
3257: Wommannes conseil broghte us first to wo,
3258: And made Adam fro paradys to go,
3259: Ther as he was ful myrie and wel at ese.
3260: But for I noot to whom it myght displese,
3261: If I conseil of wommen wolde blame,
3262: Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.
3263: Rede auctours, where they trete of swich mateere,
3264: And what they seyn of wommen ye may heere.
3265: Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
3266: I kan noon harm of no womman divyne.
3267: Faire in the soond, to bathe hire myrily,

3268: Lith Pertelote, and alle hire sustres by,
3269: Agayn the sonne, and Chauntecleer so free
3270: Soong murier than the mermayde in the see;
3271: For Physiologus seith sikerly
3272: How that they syngen wel and myrily.
3273: And so bifel that, as he caste his ye
3274: Among the wortes on a boterflye,
3275: He was war of this fox, that lay ful lowe.
3276: Nothyng ne liste hym thanne for to crowe,
3277: But cride anon, cok! cok! and up he sterte
3278: As man that was affrayed in his herte.
3279: For natureelly a beest desireth flee
3280: Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,
3281: Though he never erst hadde seyn it with his ye.
3282: This Chauntecleer, whan he gan hym espye,
3283: He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
3284: Seyde, gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
3285: Be ye affrayed of me that am youre freend?
3286: Now, certes, I were worse than a feend,
3287: If I to yow wolde harm or vileynye!
3288: I am nat come youre conseil for t' espye,
3289: But trewely, the cause of my comynge
3290: Was oonly for to herkne how that ye synge.
3291: For trewely, ye have as myrie a stevene
3292: As any aungel hath that is in hevene.

3293: Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelynge
3294: Than hadde boece, or any that kan synge.
3295: My lord youre fader -- God his soule blesse! --
3296: And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse,
3297: Han in myn hous ybeen to my greet ese;
3298: And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
3299: But, for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye, --
3300: So moote I brouke wel myne eyen tweye, --
3301: Save yow, I herde nevere man so synge
3302: As dide youre fader in the morwenynge.
3303: Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
3304: And for to make his voys the moore strong,
3305: He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his yen
3306: He moste wynke, so loude he wolde cryen,
3307: And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,
3308: And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
3309: And eek he was of swich descrecioun
3310: That ther nas no man in no regioun
3311: That hym in song or wisdom myghte passe.
3312: I have wel rad in -- daun burnel the asse -- ,
3313: Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
3314: For that a preestes sone yaf hym a knok
3315: Upon his leg whil he was yong and nyce,
3316: He made hym for to lese his benefice.
3317: But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun

3318: Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun
3319: Of youre fader and of his subtiltee.
3320: Now syngeth, sire, for seinte charitee;
3321: Lat se, konne ye youre fader countrefete?
3322: This Chauntecleer his wynges gan to bete,
3323: As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,
3324: So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.
3325: Allas! ye lordes, many a fals flatour
3326: Is in youre courtes, and many a losengeour,
3327: That plesen yow wel moore, by my feith,
3328: Than he that soothfastnesse unto yow seith.
3329: Redeth ecclesiaste of flaterye;
3330: Beth war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye.
3331: This Chauntecleer stound hye upon his toos,
3332: Strecchyng his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
3333: And gan to crowe loude for the nones.
3334: And daun Russell the fox stirte up atones,
3335: And by the gargat hente Chauntecleer,
3336: And on his bak toward the wode hym beer,
3337: For yet ne was ther no man that hym sewed.
3338: O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
3339: Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
3340: Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!
3341: And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
3342: o Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,

3343: Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
3344: And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
3345: Moore for delit than world to multiplie,
3346: Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
3347: O Gaufred, deere maister soverayn,
3348: That whan thy worthy kyng Richard was slayn
3349: With shot, compleynedest his deeth so soore,
3350: Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy loore,
3351: The Friday for to chide, as diden ye?
3352: For on a friday, soothly, slayn was he.
3353: Thanne wolde I shewe yow how that I koude pleyne
3354: For Chauntecleres drede and for his peyne.
3355: Certes, swich cry ne lamentacion,
3356: Was nevere of ladyes maad whan Ilion
3357: Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
3358: Whan he hadde hent kyng Priam by the berd,
3359: And slayn hym, as seith us Eneydos,
3360: As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
3361: Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
3362: But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe
3363: Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
3364: Whan that hir housbonde hadde lost his lyf,
3365: And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage.
3366: She was so ful of torment and of rage
3367: That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,

3368: And brende hirselves with a stedefast herte.
3369: O woful hennes, right so criden ye,
3370: As, whan that Nero brende the citee
3371: Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves
3372: For that hir husbandes losten alle hir lyves, --
3373: Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
3374: Now wole I turne to my tale agayn.
3375: This sely wydwe and eek hir doghtres two
3376: Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,
3377: And out at dores stirten they anon,
3378: And syen the fox toward the grove gon,
3379: And bar upon his bak the cok away,
3380: And cryden, out! harrow! and weylaway!
3381: Ha! ha! the fox! and after hym they ran,
3382: And eek with staves many another man,
3383: Ran Colleoure dogge, and Talbot and Gerland,
3384: And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;
3385: Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,
3386: So fered for the berkyng of the dogges
3387: And shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke,
3388: They ronne so hem thoughte hir herte breeke.
3389: They yolliden as feendes doon in helle;
3390: The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
3391: The gees for feere flowen over the trees;
3392: Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees.

3393: So hydous was the noyse, a, benedicitee!
3394: Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee
3395: Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille
3396: Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille,
3397: As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
3398: Of bras they broghten bemes, and of box,
3399: Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and powped,
3400: And therwithal they skriked and they howped.
3401: It semed as that hevne sholde falle.
3402: Now, goode man, I prey yow herkenth alle:
3403: Lo, how Fortune turneth sodeynly
3404: The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
3405: This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
3406: In al his drede unto the fox he spak,
3407: And seyde, sire, if that I were as ye,
3408: Yet sholde I seyn, as wys God helpe me,
3409: Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
3410: A verray pestilence upon yow falle!
3411: Now am I come unto the wodes syde;
3412: Maugree youre heed, the cok shal heere abyde.
3413: I wol hym ete, in feith, and that anon!
3414: The fox answerde, in feith, it shal be don.
3415: And as he spak that word, al sodeynly
3416: This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,
3417: And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.

3418: And whan the fox saugh that the cok was gon,
3419: Allas! quod he, o Chauntecleer, allas!
3420: I have to yow, quod he, ydoon trespas,
3421: In as muche as I maked yow aferd
3422: Whan I yow hente and broghte out of the yerd.
3423: But, sire, I dide it in no wikke entente.
3424: Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente;
3425: I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!
3426: Nay thanne, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two.
3427: And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,
3428: If thou bigyle me offer than ones.
3429: Thou shalt namoore, thurgh thy flaterye,
3430: Do me to synge and wynke with myn ye;
3431: For he that wynketh, whan he sholde see,
3432: Al wilfully, God lat him nevere thee!
3433: Nay, quod the fox, but God yeve hym meschaunce,
3434: That is so undiscreet of governaunce
3435: That jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees.
3436: Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees
3437: And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
3438: But ye that holden this tale a folye,
3439: As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
3440: Taketh the moralite, goode men.
3441: For seint paul seith that al that writen is,
3442: To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;

3443: Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.
3444: Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,
3445: As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,
3446: And brynge us to his heighe blisse! amen.