

¶ The works of
Geoffrey Chaucer

newly printed, including
various works which
were never in print
before:

As in the Table of Contents
more plainly does
appear.

with
special permission
for this sole printing.

¶ Printed by William Bonham,
dwelling at the sign
of the king's arms in
St. Paul's Churchyard.
1 5 4 2.

The Squire's Tale

AT Sarray, in the land of Tatory
did dwell a king who made war on Russy' 10
in which there died many'a feisty man.

This king was called the noble Genghis Khan,
who in his time was of such great renown
that there was nowhere and in no region
so excellent a lord in everything:
he lacked nothing that belonged to a king.
As for the faith in which he had been born,
he kept the laws to which he had been sworn;
he was also brave and wise and wealthy,
compassionate and just, always friendly, 20
true to his word, benign and hon'able.
His courage, like a centrepoin, stable;
young, fresh and strong, in arms as bold
as any active knight in his household.
He was a fair person and fortunate
and always kept such a royal estate
that nowhere was there such another man.

This noble king, the Tartar Genghis Khan
had two sons born to Eltheta, his wife,
of which the elder was called Algarsyfe 30
and the other's name was called Camballo.

¶ This worthy king had a daughter also,
his youngest child, who was called Canacee.
But to tell you all about her beauty
is neither in my tongue or my cunning.
I dare not undertake so high a thing,
and my English is not quite sufficient.
It should be an orator excellent
who knows all the colours used by his art
if he's to describe her in every part. 40
I am not him; I must speak as I can.

And so it happened that this Genghis Khan
for twenty years had borne his diadem.
As usual (from year to year I deem),
he had the feast of his nativity
proclaimed all across Sarrai, his city,
for the next ides of March, the coming year.

Phebus, the sun, was most jolly and clear,
approaching his highest elevation

in Mars' face and celestial mansion 50
 in Aries, the short-tempered lover's sign.
 The weather was most lusty and benign
 for which the birds, out in the sun's bright sheen,
 according to the season and fresh green,
 did sing most loudly of their affections,
 as if they'd gotten themselves protections
 against the bite of winter, keen and cold.
 ¶ This Genghis Khan, of whom I have you told,
 sat in royal vestments on his dais
 with his diadem, up in his palace 60
 and held his feast so lavish and so rich
 that in this world there has not been the like;
 if I should tell you of the whole array,
 then it would occupy a summer's day.
 And I also do not need to devise
 at each course the order of its service.
 I will not tell of the outlandish stews,
 nor of the swans, nor of the heronstews.
 In that land, too, report the knights of old,
 there is some food that men most dainty hold 70
 that, in this land, men would count merely small:
 there is no one who can report it all.
 I won't delay you so; it's time to go.
 To waste nothing, I don't want you to slow
 so I to my first plan will have recourse.
 ¶ It happened that, right after the third course
 and while the king nobly thus there did stay
 listening to what his minstrels then did play
 before him at his board most tastefully,
 then at the door to the hall suddenly, 80
 in came a knight upon a steed of brass
 and, in his hand, a wide mirror of glass.
 Upon his thumb he wore a golden ring
 and, by his side, a naked sword hanging,
 and like this he then rode to the high board.
 In the whole hall no one there spoke a word
 to marvel at the knight; him to behold,
 they attentively stared, both young and old.
 ¶ The strange knight who arrived thus suddenly
 all armed except his head, most royally 90
 saluted king and queen, and the lords all
 in order of their seating in the hall

with such high reverence and deference,
both in his speech and in his countenance
that Gawyn, with his dated courtesy –
though he'd returned from the land of Faerie –
could not improve upon a single word.
And after this in front of the high board,
he with a manly voice spoke his message
according to the form of his language, 100
perfect in each syllable and letter.

So that his tale should seem all the better,
his attitude was most agreeable,
an art one learns to make enjoyable.

Although I cannot imitate his style
(nor would I pass over such a high stile),
I think I know his general intent
this is the sum of all he ever meant
if it is just what I have in my mind.

¶ He said: “The king of Araby and Inde, 110
my sovereign lord, on this solemn day
salutes you (as best as he can and may)
and sends to you (in honour of your feast)
through me (who stands ready at your behest)
this horse of brass that easily and well
can in the space of a day natural

(that is to say, in four and twenty hours)
whereso you want, in drought or in showers,
to bear your good self towards every place
that your heart is dearly yearning to pace 120
without danger to you, through foul or fair
or, if you'd like to fly into the air
like an eagle, just when it needs to soar.

This same steed will bear you forever more
safely, till you need not more have progressed,
although you sleep upon his back and rest
and turn back home by twisting on this pin.
He who made it could make most anythin'.

He saw many'a star constellation
before he'd finished this operation 130
and knew many'a magic seal and bond.

“This mirror, too, that I have in my hand,
has such power that men in it may see
when there has been any adversity
towards your reign (or to yourself also)

and clearly see who is your friend or foe.

“And over all this, if any young lady
has set her heart on a young man shady,
and if he’s false, she will the treason see,
his new love as well as his secrecy 140
so openly, that there’s nothing to hide.

“That’s why, against this lusty summer tide
this mirror and this ring, that you may see
he has sent to my lady Canacee,
your excellent daughter who is right here.
¶ “The virtue of this ring, if you will hear,
is this: that if she wanted it to wear
upon her thumb, or in her purse it bear,
there is no bird that flies under the sky 150
of which she will not understand its cry
and know its meaning openly and plain,
and answer it in its language again.

And every herb that grows out of a root
she will know well, and for whom it will boot,
though his wounds be ever so deep and wide.
¶ “The naked sword that hangs down by my side
has such virtue, no matter whom you smite,
throughout his armour it will carve and bite,
were it as thick as is a branching oak.
And the man who is wounded by your stroke 160
will not be whole, till you give him the grace
to strike him with the flat in the same place
where he is hurt; this is as much to say
you might with the flat of the sword agai’
strike him upon the wound, and it will close.
This is the complete truth without a gloss;
it cannot fail while you the sword do hold.”

And when the knight had thus his story told
he rode out of the hall and did alight.
His steed, which shone just like the sun so bright, 170
stood in the yard as still as any stone.
The knight was into his room led anon
and when disarmed, he to the meal was set,
and all the harness was before him set,
that is, the sword as well as the mirror.
These were then carried into the high tow’r
by certain officers ordained therefor,
and unto Canacee, they the ring bore

where she sat solemnly at the table.
 But, of course, without telling a fable, 180
 the horse of brass, that could not be removed,
 stood, as it were, to the ground tightly glued.
 There no one could it out of the place drive
 with an engine or winch or pulley-drive.
 And why? Because they did not have the heft,
 and that's why they it in the place then left
 until the knight showed how it to upbear
 to remove it, as you will later hear.

¶ Great was the crowd, that did swarm to and fro 190
 to gawk upon the horse, that did stand so,
 For it was so high and so broad and long,
 so well proportioned for to be so strong,
 as if it were a steed from Lombardy:
 and what a noble horse, so quick of eye,
 as if it a horse from Apulia were.
 For certainly, from its tail to its ear,
 neither Nature nor art could it amend
 in any way, as all did comprehend.

But all the time, their greatest wonder was 200
 how it could move since it was made of brass;
 to the people, a Faerie horse it seemed.
 Various people variously deemed:
 so many heads, so many wits t'appease.
 They kept murmuring like a swarm of bees,
 making arguments from their fantasies,
 retelling all of the old poetries
 and saying it was just like Pegasus,
 the horse that had the wings to flee all this.

Or else it was the Greek horse of Sinon 210
 that brought ancient Troy to its destruction,
 as booklovers in these old stories read.

"My heart," said one, "is evermore in dread;
 I think you'll find some soldiers are therein
 who intend this city over to win.
 It would be good if we such things did know."
 Another to his fellow whispered low
 and said he lied, for it was rather like
 an illusion made with some magic trick
 which jugglers perform at festivals great.

On many thoughts, they'd argue and debate 220
 as untaught people blather foolishly

of things that have been made more cleverly
than they in their ignorance comprehend;
they prefer outcomes that have a bad end.

Some of them wondered about the mirror
that had been borne up to the highest tow'r
how people might in it such visions see.

Others answered, of course, it might well be
naturally done by compositions
of angles and of crafty reflections 230
and said in Rome could be found such a one.
They spoke of Alocen and Vitulon
and Aristotle who, during their lives,
wrote of complex mirrors and perspectives,
as all those who know their writings have heard.

Yet others, who wondered about the sword
that would pierce right through any single thing,
fell to talking of Telophus the king
and of Achilles and his splendid spear
for with it he could either kill or cheer, 240
just as how men could now do with this sword
of which one had up to now only heard.
They spoke of ways to harden the metal
and then did speak of treatments therewithal,
and how and when it should then hardened be,
which was unknown—especially to me.

¶ Then did they speak about Canacee's ring,
and they all said of such a wondrous thing
in jewelry they had never heard done,
except that Moses and King Solomon 250
both had a name for cunning in such art.
Thus said those who then drew themselves apart.

But nonetheless, some did say that it was
wonderful from fern ashes to make glass,
and yet glass is not like ashes of fern;
but they have always known it's made from fern:
that's why they stopped their dissent and wonder.

So some did wonder what causes thunder,
what causes ebbs and floods, cobwebs and mist:
in their search for causes, they did persist. 260

Thus they argued with questions and outcries
until the king from his board did arise.

¶ The sun had passed the meridional,
but still ascending was the beast royal,

the gentle Leo with his Aldiran,
at the time that the Tartar, Genghis Khan,
rose from the board where he had sat most high.
He was led out by the loud minstrelsy
and went to his chamber of ornaments
in which they played various instruments
which was a sound most heavenly to hear. 270

Now did dance lusty Venus' children dear,
for in Pisces their Venus sat most high
and looked down on them with a friendly eye.
¶ The noble king was sitting on his throne.
The stranger knight was called to him quite soon,
and in the dance he went with Canacee.

Here was such frolic and such jollity
that even a dull man could not devise:
he must have known of love and its service 280
and been a cordial man, as fresh as May,
or he'd not have devised such an array.

¶ Who could tell you the form of the dances,
such uncouth and such fresh countenances
such subtle glances and masqueradings
for fear of jealous mens' recognizings?
No one but Lancelot, and he is dead!
Thus I pass by the lustiness they led
and say no more but, in this jolliness,
I leave them now while they for supper dress. 290

¶ The steward bade them serve the meal (and hie!)
as well as wine, all to the melody.

The ushers and the squires were then gone;
the foodstuffs and the wine then came anon.
They ate and drank, and when this had an end,
to the temple, of course, they then did wend.
The service done, they ate while it was day.

Why should I once more describe the array?
Everyone well knows that at a king's feast
there is plenty, from the most to the least, 300
and more dainties than are in my knowing.

And after supper went the noble king
to see the horse of brass with his whole train
of lords and ladies who 'round him remain'.
Such wond'ring was there on this horse of brass
that, ever since the siege of Troy did pass
when men wondered about a horse also,

there was more wond'ring now than long ago.
But finally, the king did ask the knight
this horse's advantages and its might
and prayed him to tell of its governance. 310

The horse at once began to trip and dance
whenever the knight laid hands on its rein
and said, "Sir, there's no more to entertain
but, when you want to ride it anywhere,
you must turn a pin that is in its ear;
I'll tell you more later between us two.
You must also tell it where to ride to
or to what country you would like to ride.

"And when you come where you want to abide, 320
ask it to stop, and turn another pin
(the whole point of the device lies therein),
and he will then stop and perform your will;
then on that spot he will remain stock-still.
Though the whole world had the contrary sworn
it won't to there be drawn or away borne.

But if you want to ask it there to go,
just turn this pin, and he will vanish so,
completely out of every creature's sight
and come again, whether it's day or night 330
when you would like to call it back again.
In such a way, as I'll to you make plain
later between us two, and that quite soon.
Ride when you wish, there's no more to be done."

¶ When the king was instructed by the knight
and had conceived in his mind aright
the manner and the form of this whole thing,
then most glad and cheerful, the noble king
went back to the feast from which he'd felt torn.

The bridle was into the tower borne 340
and kept among his jew'ls, costly and dear.
Who knows how, but the horse did disappear
out of their sight (you'll get no more from me).
But thus I leave in lust and jollity
King Genghis Khan and all his lords feasting
till well nigh when the day began to spring.

¶ End of the first part.
The second part follows.

THe aid to digestion, a slumber deep,
began to make them nod and bade them sleep,
since mirth and drink and labour all need rest.
So with an open mouth he them all kissed 350
and said it was time for them to lie down,
for at night blood was in its dominion.
“Value the blood, friend of Nature,” said he.

They thanked him yawning, by two and by three,
and everyone then drifted off to rest
as sleep drew them, and they agreed t’was best.

Their dreams will now not have been told for me:
their heads were full of fumes of wine, you see,
which causes dreams that have no deep meaning.
They slept until it was fully morning 360
for most of them, but not for Canacee.
She was quite consistent (as women be),
for from her father she had taken leave
to go to bed soon after it was eve’.

She wanted not to seem too pale to be
and, next day, as not unfestive to see.
She slept her first deep sleep and then awoke
with such a joy that she in her heart stoke
because of the strange ring and the mirror
that caused her twenty times to change colour. 370
And in her sleep, under the impression
made by her mirror, she had a vision.
So even before the sun up did glide
she called out to the lady by her side
and stated her desire to arise.

¶ These old women are usually wise,
and so her lady tried her down to slow
and said: “Madam, where do you want to go
so early, because folks are still at rest.”
¶ “I want,” said she, “to get up from my nest 380
(for I can’t sleep), and walk around again.”

Her lady called a great many women,
and they rose from their sleep, some ten or more.
Up rose Canacee, whom sleep did restore,
as jolly and bright as the rising sun
that up in Aries four degrees did run;
no higher was it when she ready was.
And so she walked out at an easy pace,

dressed like the pleasant season, mild and sweet,
lightly to play and to walk on her feet, 390
with some five or six of her company,
and on a path out in the park went she.

¶ The mist, which from the earth rose to the sky
made the sun red and did it magnify.
Nevertheless, it was so fair a sight
that it gave all their hearts cause to delight,
both for the season and for the morning,
as well as for the birds that she heard sing
for, right away, she knew what they had meant
in their birdsong, and she knew their intent. 400

¶ The point in any tale that's ever told—
if it's dragged on till interest grows cold
in those who happen to've heard it before,
the curiosity wanes all the more
for overdoing its verbosity.
And for the same reason, it seems to me
that I should to the point now condescend
and make of her walking an abrupt end.

¶ Within a dried-up tree, as white as chalk,
while Canacee was playing on her walk, 410
there overhead sat a falcon up high
that with a plaintive voice started to cry
so the whole wood resounded with her cry.
She had beaten herself so grievously
with both her wings till her red blood
ran all down the tree trunk, there as she stood.

And always the same way, she cried and shrieked
and with her beak, herself so badly pricked
there was no tiger or more cruel beast
that did dwell in the woods or the forest 420
and that would not have wept, if weap they could,
in sorrow for her, for she shrieked so loud.

There has never been anyone alive
who could a falcon's description contrive
who had heard of another quite as fair
in terms of her plumage and her grand air,
her shape and all else that might reckoned be.
A peregrine falcon then did seem she,
from foreign parts; and always as she stood,
she fainted now and then from loss of blood 430
till she well nigh did fall out of the tree.

¶ Now the king's fair daughter, this Canacee,
who on her finger wore the curious ring
through which she well understood everything
that any bird might in its language say
and could reply in its language agai'
did understand what the falcon had said;
due to her grief, she felt herself nigh dead.
Then to the tree she went quite hastily
and at the falcon looked most pitifully. 440

She held her apron wide, for she did know
the falcon would from the branch fall below
when she next fainted from the loss of blood.
For a long time she then waiting there stood
until at last she spoke in this manner
unto the hawk, as you'll presently hear:
¶ "What is the cause, if you can bear to tell
that you've been in this furious pain of hell,"
said Canacee unto the hawk above,
"is this for grief of death or loss of love? 450

For I believe these are the causes two
that cause a noble heart the greatest woe.
Of other harms, there is no need to speak
for you upon yourself reprisal wreak,
which goes to prove, that either ire or dread
might be the reason for your cruel deed
since I don't see another chasing you.
For love of God, yourself a favour do
and get the help you need; in west or east
ere now, I never saw a bird or beast 460
that dealt with itself so pitifully.

You slay me with your grief absolutely.
I have for you such a great compassion:
for the love of God, come from the tree down.
And because I am a king's daughter true,
if I the particular causes knew
of your disease (and it lay in my might),
I would heal them, of course, before tonight.
So wisely help me, great God of mankind,
and I will more than enough herbs now find 470
to heal all of your wounds quite hastily.

The falcon then shrieked still more pitifully
than ever, and fell to the ground anon
lying stock-still in a swoon like a stone

till Canacee her in her lap did take
 until she did out of her swoon awake.
 As soon as she th'effects of the swoon shed,
 then in her own language, the falcon said,
 "That pity soon runs in a noble heart
 (feeling her sympathy for her pain's smart) 480
 is proven every day, as men can see,
 as much by works as by authority,
 for gentle hearts will harbour gentleness.
 I see well that you have (for my distress)
 compassion, my fair-minded Canacee,
 the kind of wom'nly generosity
 that Nature in your temp'rament has set,
 but not hoping that I will better get,
 but to obey your heart that is so free
 and make others take heed because of me, 490
 as young pups are chastised by the lion
 just for that cause and for that conclusion;
 while I still have the leisure and the space,
 I will confess my crimes ere I do pace."
 And all the while that she her sorrow told,
 the other wept and she her eyes out bawled
 until the falcon asked her to be still
 and, with a sigh, she thus expressed her will:
 ¶ "There I was bred, alas that same hard day
 and fostered in a rock of marble gray 500
 so tenderly, that nothing did ail me.
 I did not know what was adversity
 till I could fly, up high under the sky.
 "There lived a young falcon to me close by
 who seemed to be the soul of gentleness
 though he was full of treason and falseness.
 He was quite wrapped up in his humble cheer
 under the guise of truth; he did appear
 so pleasant and seemed to take ev'ry pain
 such that no-one thought he all that could feign, 510
 so deeply ingrained were dyed his colours.
 As a snake hides itself under the flow'rs
 until it deems it's the right time to bite,
 this so-called 'god of love', this hypocrite,
 did to his speeches and his deference
 with all the disguises and fair pretence
 that apply to the nobleness of love.

As in a tomb, all that is fair's above,
and under is the corpse, as you did note:
such was this hypocrite, both cold and hot. 520
And in this way, he did serve his intent
that, bar the fiend, no-one knew what he meant
till he for so long had wept and complained
and many'a year his service to me feined
until my heart, too pit'eous and too nice,
fully innocent of his cruel malice,
fearing he'd die, as it did seem to me,
upon his promises and guarantee,
granted him love, on this one condition:
that, from then on, my honour and renown 530
were saved, both privately and publicly.
When he got what he wanted so dearly,
I gave him all my heart and all my thought,
God knows and he, but in other ways not,
and traded his heart for mine for ever;
they say, of all those who come back never:
'A real man and a thief don't think as one.'
"And when he saw matters had so far gone,
that I'd fully granted him all my love
in such a guise, as I have said above, 540
when I'd given him my true heart as free
as he swore he'd given his heart to me,
"So this tiger, full of duplicity,
fell on his knees with such humility,
his deep rev'rence as well as seeming cheer
like a gentle lover, and in manner
so overcome that it did seem from joy,
that never Troilus or Paris of Troy,
Jason, of course, nor any other man
since Lamech, our ancestor who began 550
to love two wives, as writers then had sworn.
No-one's ever, since the first man was born,
not even by a twenty thousandth part,
contrived the deceitful tricks of his art
nor had any close bragging rights been earned
where falseness or pretending was concerned,
nor could so thank someone, as he did me.
His manner was a heaven for to see
for any woman if she were not wise,
so did he paint and comb his looks' disguise, 560

and his words as well as his countenance.
And so I loved him for his deference
and for the truth that I deemed in his heart
so if something should ever make him smart,
no matter how slight, and if I did know,
I'd feel my heart twist with a fatal blow.
And before long, the further this thing went,
my will then became his will's instrument;
that is to say, my will obeyed his will
in everything, as far as reas'nable, 570
keeping the bounds of my good name ever.
I had nothing as dear that I'd prefer
to him, God knows, nor ever will again.
For a year or two, this he did maintain,
and I thought he'd bring me nothing but good.

“But finally, thus at the end it stood
that Fortune had decided he would go,
leaving the only place that I did know.
Whether I then felt woe, you must not ask:
to describe that, I'm not up to the task. 580

But there's one thing that I can state boldly:
I know what the pain of death is thereby;
I felt such anguish that he would not stay.
¶ “So then one day, he did go on his way,
so sadly, too, that I believed that he
felt as much pain as I had within me
when I did hear him speak and saw his hew.
But nonetheless, I thought he was so true
that he would back to me again have flown
within a little while, if truth be known, 590

and reason would dictate that he must go
for his honour, as often happens so,
that I made virtue of necessity
and took it well, since it was bound to be.
As best I could, I hid from him my sorrow,
took him by the hand (Saint John to borrow)
and to him said: ‘Look now, I am yours, all.
As I have been to you, remain faithful.’

“What he answered, there's no need to rehearse.
Who speaks better than he? Who does it worse? 600
When he had all well said, then he had done.
‘That's why one should always use a long spoon
when supping with a fiend, as I heard say.

“So in the end he did go on his way
and on he flew to where he did think best.
When it came to him that he needed rest,
I trust that he had the text in his mind
that ‘Everything returning to its kind
gladdens itself,’ as all men say, I guess.
Men, like their own kind, love newfangledness, 610
as do the birds that men in cages feed.

Though night and day you may of them take heed
and line their cages with straw soft as silk,
and give them sugar, honey, bread and milk,
yet just as soon as you let their door ope’
they with their feet would still knock down the cup
and to the woods they’d go, and there worms eat,
so newfangled are they choosing their meat
and love the novelties of their own kind;
no noble blood in them can ever bind. 620
So fared the young falcon on that sad day.

“Though he was born noble, was fresh and gay
and so handsome to see, humble and free,
he once happened a soaring kite to see
and suddenly he did love this kite so
that all his love did fully from me go
and did his promise pervert in this wise.
Thus has the kite my love in her service,
and I feel bereft without remedy.”

And with this word the falcon ’gan to cry 630
and often swooned in Canacee’s apron;
great was the sorrow for the hurt falcon
that Canacee and her women did feel.
They didn’t know how they’d her falcon heal,
but Canacee bore her home in her lap
and softly her in plasters ’gan to wrap
where with her beak she had herself injured.

Now Canacee set to work in her yard,
digging for herbs from which to make salves new;
the costly herbs were of exquisite hew 640
with which to heal the hawk. From day to night,
she applied all her sweat and all her might,
and by her bed’s head she set up a mew
and covered it with velvet fabric blue,
a pledge of faith that is in women seen.
The outside of the mew was coloured green

on which were painted all those false fellows,
as are all titmice, male falcons and owls.
To spite them, there were painted right beside,
magpies on them to cry out and to chide. 650

Thus I leave Canacee, her hawk keeping;
I will no more for now speak of her ring
till I come back when the reason's germane
to tell how the falcon won love again,
repentant as the story will tell us,
by the intervention of Cambalus
the king's son, of whom I earlier told.
But from now on, I'll to a new path hold
to talk about adventures and battles
of which were never heard such great marvels. 660

First I will tell you about Genghis Khan
who in his time many'a city won,
how he won Theodora as his wife
and, after, I will speak of Algarsyfe
for whom he often in great peril was
had he not been helped by the horse of brass.

And after that, I'll speak of Camballo
who fought in contests with the brethren two
for Canacee before he her could win.
Where I left off, I will again begin. 670

¶ Here ends the second part.