

mud and mire than an untipped one. {3780} And the deeper it sticks, the more it slows down those who carry it—more than those who carry one that is untipped. And therefore I have given you this kind, for I do not want you to be bogged down in a swamp or a quagmire or to have any difficulties."

"Ah, Lady," I said, "one more word. I am not a fool, I think. {3790} I am mentioning this not because of what you have said, but because of what you have not talked about. If dogs or thieves attack me and my staff is not iron-tipped, do you think they will fear it as much as if it were? I mention it for this reason only, and no other."

"I will give you an answer for that," she said. "The staff is not {3800} for striking blows or fighting but only for you to lean on. And if you are saying that you only want to defend yourself and not to attack at all, I will give you armor soon enough to defend yourself well and vanquish your enemies, for I know exactly where to find it."¹⁰⁵

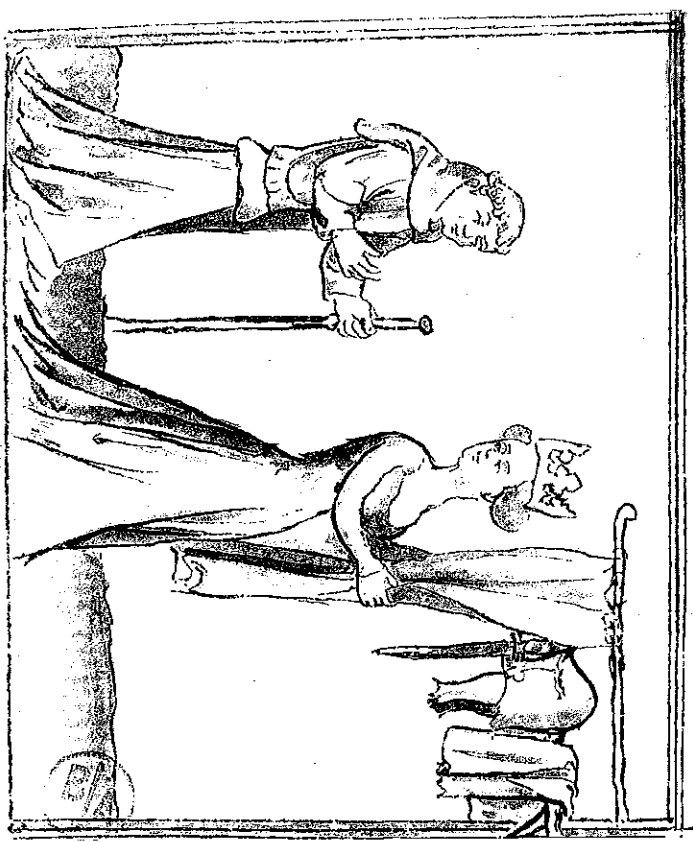
"Ah, Lady," I said, "in that case I am very pleased with the staff. {3810} I ask you to go get that armor and give it to me!"

Then Grace went in through the arras and called to me. "Now look up on this rack," she said, "and see if I must go far to find armor. You see plenty to arm yourself with. There are helmets and habergeons, gorgets and gambesons, {3820} shields and everything else that might be needed by those who want to defend themselves. Now take what you want and arm yourself. You have permission."

When I saw this fine armor, I rejoiced in its beauty, although I was not sure which pieces would be best for me, since I had never dealt with armor and I had never been dressed in it. {3830} "Lady, I ask you to show me, if you will," I said, "which pieces of armor I should take and how I should arm myself. If you do not help me to arm, you will have done nothing."

Then she took up a gambeson of an unusual kind. I certainly never saw or heard tell of one like this. {3840} There was an anvil set right in the back, placed there to take hammer-blows. She gave this to me as a present, right at the outset.

"Here is the best gambeson that anyone ever wore," she said. "Someone with no hands or feet, who was tied to a post {3850} but who was wearing this and nothing else, would never be defeated but would conquer all enemies and win great renown."



Grace Shows the Pilgrim His Armor

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And I tell you something else—and do not be at all surprised by it. Those who wear this piece of armor find profit in what others see as misfortune and adversity. Storms make their grain grow, {3860} tempests fill their barns, and plagues fill their cellars. They make a soft bed of great hardship and they make of trouble a great delight. They take pleasure in poverty and find solace in adversity. Fasting makes them grow stout and sickness strengthens them. For them, anguish and tribulation make up their recreation. {3870} The more they are pricked the tougher they become, just as the gambeson is made tough with stitching. This is why it is aptly called a 'counterpoint.'¹⁰⁶ Those who have it on their backs are armed against pricking. It shows its value against pricking and without any pricking it is useless. If you want to know its name, it is called Patience. {3880} It is made to suffer pain and to withstand great pricking, to be like an anvil that does not stir at the touch of a feather, to take everything with good will and to endure it without complaining.

"Jesus wore this gambeson when he was hung on the cross for you. It was fitted to him, stitched and measured exactly. {3890} He suffered everything and endured everything. He said not a word and he made not a sound. He showed himself to be an anvil to all the blows that struck him. And because of this, your ransom was minted and hammered out on him. The evil smiths minted and hammered it out on his back. And so you surely ought to assume that, when the king arms himself {3900} with this armor,¹⁰⁷ it is good and it is not to be refused. Take it and put it on, and you will be better prepared to put on the other arms that must be put on over this, for the gambeson goes on underneath for those who would arm themselves in accord with reason."

And then I took this piece of armor and put it on—I do not know how. {3910} It seemed heavy and tight, and wearing it made me very uncomfortable.

"Lady," I said, "your 'counterpoint' does not fit me at all,¹⁰⁸ so I cannot wear it without great discomfort."

"This counterpoint would certainly fit you perfectly," she said, "if you were the right shape. But you do not fit into it, and it pinches you, {3920} because you are too flabby and you have too much fat under your wings. You are too well-fed, you are too much of a reveler and you are too well-stuffed. These things have made you so fat that you cannot wear the counterpoint on your back

without discomfort. Therefore, you must in all ways shape yourself to it, not it to you, getting rid of everything in you that is in excess. {3930} You must be a good deal slimmer if you want to be dressed in it properly."

"Lady," I said, "now teach me, for my information, how you think I can be shaped and fitted to its shape unless, like a carpenter, I trim and plane myself."

"You are certainly rather quarrelsome and disagreeable," she said. {3940} "You should know that the counterpoint will shape you rightly, if you want. If you wear it without taking it off, you will need no other carpenter. It will plane you to its shape and fit you to itself. If it seems uncomfortable to you at first, this is only to shape you. Afterwards, when you are in shape, it will not be at all troublesome or uncomfortable to you. {3950} If people speak ill of you or do you evil, turn your back on them, laugh in your heart and say not a word. It should not bother you at all to hear dogs barking. Turn the anvil and let them strike away as they please, for with the blows they give you, they will shape you to the counterpoint. {3960} And so I tell you that through this you shall have the reward of coronation, for with this pounding and forging and hammering will be fashioned for you the crown no human being knows how to make, the one that crowns the martyrs armed with the counterpoint, who suffered so much pounding and hammering on the anvil. {3970} The crown was forged and made ready for them with these blows. Therefore, I advise you, in good faith, to wear the counterpoint at all times, for you will have need of it in a time soon to come. Tribulation will lie in wait for you in the field, on the road, or at home, and attack you and send servants against you {3980} to strike such heavy blows on you and hammer you so hard that if you did not have the gambeson you would be in great danger of death. Now do whatever you like about this, for I have done my duty in speaking."

"Lady," I said, "what you say pleases me very much, and I dispute none of it, only my strength is not great enough. {3990} I think, to tolerate the gambeson and endure it. Nevertheless, I will force myself to wear it as long as I can. If you want to give me more, consider what I will need. I want to be armed adequately, even if it weighs me down."

Then she took a habergeon of a beautiful and pleasing design {4000} and said to me: "Take this piece of armor. It was made in

ancient times for doing battle against Death and against all her army—that is, against pain and torment and all their horrors, for Death is a beast so savage that those who see her are driven mad, and they lose good sense and self-restraint and the staff of Hope. {4010} They are ill-equipped and lost if they are not clothed in this armor. But those who are clothed in this habergeon think Death of little account. They go confidently into all battles, to win honor and reward. They would not think of turning back for fear of death—nor would they want to. This piece of armor was forged once by the smith of the high country, {4020} who forged the dawn and the sun without hammer or tongs. At that time there was no other armor recognized or approved, and even now those who are not clothed and armed with it are not well-armed.

"This habergeon is called Fortitude, worn in ancient times by the champions of Jesus Christ, who were so constant and so strong in war and tournament {4030} that they thought nothing of death. That was because of the habergeon, so strongly made that the mail was never broken through by a sharp weapon. But there was a reason, fully proven, and it should not be concealed. The mail-rings were all firmly fixed and attached with the nails that nailed and fastened the son of the smith. {4040} The iron was also tempered in the blood that came from his wounds, and this made the habergeon much harder and more secure. Because of that, all those who put it on were so strong then that there was no mortal battle or tournament, no matter how deadly, {4050} that they feared worth a straw. Therefore, if you trust in me, you will put it on over the counterpoint and see if it fits you."

Then I took the habergeon, and soon afterwards I said: "Lady, I ask you kindly, before I put on this piece of armor, to show me everything you want to arm me with, {4060} for I will get ready to arm myself according to what I see."

Then right away she brought me a gorget, a helmet and a shield, a pair of gloves and a sword, and she said to me: "You must arm yourself with all these arms, at least. They will be enough, if you know how to defend yourself well with them, {4070} although I would give you others if I found you had great strength. But I will keep them for others whom I find to be stronger than you. You shall arm yourself first with the helmet and the gorget to protect your entire head when you have put on the habergeon. And then you shall take the gloves and put them on your hands, {4080} for

if you did not protect them with these gloves, you would not be well-armed.

"The helmet, you should know, is Temperance, in seeing, hearing, and smelling things that might disturb you. Just as the helmet covers, restrains, and confines the senses, so Temperance serves to guard the eye so that it is not too open {4090} or too vulnerable to folly and vanity. If the visor were not narrow, an arrow could enter and go straight to the heart and without remedy wound it mortally. This helmet also keeps one from hearing grumbling, backbiting and foolish talk, so that no dart of that kind can harm the heart or the mind, {4100} no matter how hard it is shot. A wicked neighbor can shoot arrows, as a catapult fires its charge at the gate, but they will not get inside easily. I tell you also about the sense of smell, for this helmet covers it so that the heart is not harmed in any way through excess in that sense. {4110} And so to guard yourself in this way, it is good to arm yourself with this helmet, for it was long ago called the helmet of salvation, which St. Paul tells people they must put on their heads.¹⁰⁹

"Now I will tell you about the gorget. It must protect your entire throat. It is called Sobriety, in this country and beyond the sea. {4120} It is part of Temperance, and it was fashioned to restrain Gluttony, because she takes people by the throat and overcomes them. But you should know that this armor is made of double mail-work, for if it were not double it would not be strong enough. And the reason is that Gluttony has a double madness, {4130} the madness of overeating and the madness of insulting speech. In overeating she moves her teeth and she can kill herself with them. She makes weapons out of words and she kills her neighbors with them, as you will understand more fully later, when you see her. And so against such a slattern it is good to have a gorget. {4140} Although it is a small piece of armor, it protects very well, and therefore I earnestly advise you to arm yourself with it carefully. Never be finicky about your food and drink. Take what you find gladly and be satisfied with little. Regarding speech, I tell you also, watch your mouth, speak no evil {4150} of anyone and always speak reasonably to everyone. Once, the Abbot of Chaalis, St. William, your good patron saint,¹¹⁰ was armed with this gorget, for although he had only bread and water, he was as satisfied as if he had plenty of other food. In his biography, you can find that he knew how to fast {4160} and be thirsty in the midst of plentiful

food.¹¹¹ And there you can also see that in speaking to everyone he was not only even-tempered himself, but he restrained backbiters when he heard them. He said, 'Say to someone trembling with a fever that he is not trembling and see if he will stop.' He also said: 'Certainly, the one {4170} you speak of would be very glad to stop, if he could.' And so, when such a man as this armed himself with this gorget and covered up his throat, you should also gladly close up and arm your throat.

"I tell you further it is good for you to be equipped with gloves, for if your hands were wounded you would do little with the rest. {4180} The hands that are to be clothed and armed with the gloves are feeling, handling, and touching, for although the sense of touch can be found all over the body, nevertheless it is recognized and known more through the hands, because they do more handling and touching. {4190} For this reason, most people think there is no other way of touching, and therefore I take it that the sense of touch is, in general, in the hands. You should arm this sense of touch, these hands, with the gloves I have shown you. Among armorers they are named as the third part of Temperance, called Continnence. {4200} The word is singular but it is equivalent to a plural, because its name must be doubled in both act and will, for the act is not enough if the will is not joined with it. No one can have good gloves or be well-armed with one glove, so that both are clearly required, for it is necessary to have both act and will. {4210} Both together are good and proper, it seems to me. Some call Continnence, doubled in this way, 'Breadwinners,' for they win the bread with which the human heart is filled.¹¹² This was represented long ago in the bread that David asked for. Ahimelech never wanted to grant it or give it to him {4220} until he knew that he was armed and gloved with Breadwinners. If you want to look into this, you can find it in the Book of Kings.¹¹³ St. Bernard had these Breadwinners once, when the woman was placed beside him in his bed completely undressed and naked.¹¹⁴ No matter how she might touch him and try to arouse and excite him, {4230} he never turned toward her nor did he feel her touch. She found his hands so well-armed that she thought he was a man of iron. That is why she left in confusion and departed without doing him any harm. And this was done by the Breadwinners with which he had armed his hands. I earnestly advise you to arm yourself in the same

way. {4240} That is why I have brought them straight here and presented them to you.

"As for the sword, you should know that you could not have a better weapon. If you knew how to protect yourself with it well and you had no other armor, you would certainly be more formidable than if you were armed with other weapons and did not have this one or did not know how to protect yourself with it. {4250} This sword is called Justice, the rarest and best that king or count ever put on or wielded. The sword of Ogier, or of Roland, or of Oliver was never so mighty and powerful¹¹⁵ and never had such virtue. It gives to all their due, when it is time. {4260} It is a sword for an emperor, for a regent and ruler, and with it all those in his household are governed rightly, for it always stands guard so that no one does evil. It keeps the body from rebelling, it compels the heart to love God, and it makes the mind turn aside from deception and abandon deceitfulness. {4270} It orders and chastens the will, the emotions, the understanding, and the intentions, the soul and all its household, so that they dare not do any wrong, on pain of having both eyes put out, for they will soon be corrected by the sword without delay. You have an example of this in St. Benedict, who wore this sword. {4280} Long ago, the king had put it on him, when he made him master of the law.¹¹⁶ When he saw, as an emperor and a good ruler, that his body was tempted and did not want to obey him, he struck it with this sword and punished it so cruelly that it was almost killed, and after that it was never {4290} rebellious or disobedient to his command.

"You shall wear this sword and defend yourself with it against all those I have told you about before, your close enemies, for you can have no more dangerous or wicked or perilous enemies than those who are your companions and those related to you. {4300} And so when you sense any of them rebelling or going against your well-being, strike them so hard that they will no longer be defiant toward you. When you notice any of them wandering, when you see the heart going astray and thinking of some deception, when you see the mind going off the good and righteous way, {4310} when you see the will inclining toward a wicked deed, then let the sword be thrust in front of them and brandished. Let them all be set right by it and driven back to their place. Now do this wisely, for I am passing over it very briefly."

"Lady," I said, "it would be very fitting, {4320} it seems to me, if you gave me some sort of scabbard to put the sword in, for I cannot always carry it like this without it being a burden to me. Besides, St. Benedict did not carry it bare like this, but wore it belted around him, the way the king had put it on him. You have taught me this, and so I think {4330} the sword once had a belt and a scabbard to put it in. I would like to have it, if that is your will."

"Certainly you have spoken very well," she said, "and I am pleased that you have been attentive to my words. Therefore, just as you wish, you shall have the scabbard for the sword and the belt to strap it on." {4340}

Then I saw her go right away to the fine armor-rack, that is, to the rack where the other armor was hanging. She took down a scabbard and brought it to me and said: "St. Benedict once put the sword in this and carried it. It has a good belt for strapping it on and a good buckle to secure it. {4350} Now take it, guard it well, and do not lose it for any reason. The true name of this scabbard is Humility, and you should shelter the sword and hide your righteousness in it. If you see any good in yourself, that you have done this or that, you must hide it in this scabbard, which is made of dead skin, {4360} and ponder and think, acknowledging at all times that you are mortal and that you have not done it by yourself, but through me. Remember the publican and the pharisee. They kept their swords differently and carried them differently, for the one who kept it in the scabbard and acknowledged himself a sinner {4370} was praised and exalted, and the other was brought low, because he had unsheathed his sword and taken it out of the scabbard. It is much better to accuse oneself and consider one's weakness, pay attention to the scabbard and the skin, than to show off one's righteousness and say: 'Look at my sword. I have unsheathed it for you.' {4380} This is what the proud do, braggarts and people full of wind, who seek only vainglory and to be remembered always. You shall not do this, but hide the sword in the scabbard, lowering yourself without pretence and humbling yourself, for you will find reasons enough when you look at yourself closely. {4390}

"And then, when you have put it in the sheath this way, you shall put on the belt and fasten your weapons on with it, so you

may wear them more safely and securely, for no one should be called well-armed, no matter how good the armor, if it is not made secure outside with a belt or a baldric. {4400} And so the belt will be as good as a baldric to you, when you have put it on and tightened it and fastened the buckle. The belt is called Perseverance and the buckle is called Constancy. They should be bound together at all times and they should never be parted, for in time of need and in the assault, one without the other is worth very little. {4410} Because of its great length the belt keeps the armor strong. It keeps it secure, together with the sword it supports, and it keeps it on always, ensuring that it is not taken off for any reason at any time or season. The buckle holds the belt and keeps it tight, so that it does not come unfastened. {4420} It holds everything firmly in place and keeps everything secure, for that is the correct and safe way to fasten armor. When you asked me about these things, I was very pleased, for there is nothing about them that is not most useful and profitable to you. Now use them as you should and you will do yourself great honor." {4430}

When I heard these words, I became concerned and dismayed, for this explanation was not what I had in mind. I certainly thought I would have a less burdensome belt and scabbard, to tell the truth, and, although I would have liked to take off the counterpoint I was wearing, I endured it nonetheless and made no response then. {4440}

When she had spoken to me about the scabbard, she went on. "Now I will tell you one word more about the shield," she said. "Without a shield no man is well-armed or well-equipped or well-defended, for the shield protects the other armor from harm. It guards it against being damaged {4450} and as long as it is held in front the rest is protected. This shield is called Prudence, and long ago King Solomon used to carry it to do right and make judgments. ¹¹⁷ This shield was worth more to him than those two hundred shields and three hundred bucklers made of gold that he put in his new house, ¹¹⁸ {4460} for it was on account of this shield that he was honored and praised in his time. Later, when he lost it, all his honor was ruined and all his other shields and bucklers of gold were not worth a dried herring to him, for they were lost. ¹¹⁹ This shield protected him as long as he carried it with him, {4470} but as soon as the shield was lost, he was lost. And so you can see and understand by this, if you want, the value of this

shield. It is worth more than five hundred made of gold. I advise you, therefore, to carry it to protect yourself and your armor, and to handle it and brandish it when you see enemies coming. {4480} If you do not know how to handle the shield or how to protect yourself well with it, it will teach you how to use it, and you will need no other master. Now take it up, when you are armed with your other pieces of armor. It is high time for you to take them up and put them on, if you would like. That is why I gave them to you, why I brought them out and showed them to you. {4490} Put them on right away and arm yourself well with them, for you need nothing else."

When I heard these words, my heart was very troubled, for I was not used to wearing armor, as I have said. Moreover, I was made very uncomfortable by the counterpoint I had on. To please her and do what she wanted, however, {4500} I tried to arm myself, and I began with the habergeon. I put it on over the counterpoint, but I will not say that it was good. When I had put that on, I then took the double gorget and put it around my neck. Next I showed my head into the helmet and covered it up. After that I took up the Breadwinners and I put on the sword. {4510} When I was armed this way, I put the shield at my side. I did everything just as she had asked, although it did not please me much.

When I saw that I was armed this way, I felt the armor was very heavy and burdensome and it seemed to be squeezing me. I said to Grace: "Lady," I said, "I ask you kindly {4520} not to be displeased at all if I tell you about my discomfort. This armor is so burdensome to me that I cannot go on. I must either stay here or remove all of it. First of all, the helmet is so burdensome to me that when I am inside it I feel stupefied, blind and deaf. {4530} I see nothing that pleases me, I hear nothing I want to hear, and I have no sense of smell. This seems to me a great torment. And then that terrible gorget—a plague on it!—takes me by the throat so that it seems it will choke me. It restrains me so that I cannot speak as I want to {4540} or swallow anything that gives me pleasure or does my body any good.

"Furthermore, I am sure I will never win my bread with these Breadwinners. Gloves like these are not good for people who have soft hands. I am concerned that mine are tender and the gloves are

extremely hard. I could not endure them long without hurting myself. {4550} I say the same thing about the rest, to be brief. They all burden me so much that I could never tell about it in a few words, if I had greater sense than I have. I am overwhelmed like David, who had not learned about armor. {4560} Therefore, I would like to do as he did, because his example is very pleasing to me. I will put off all this armor and make my way with the staff. I would rather go forward easily than to remain here safely. If I do not lay down this armor, I cannot go on, and so I will be prevented from going to the beautiful city. {4570} I ask you not to be annoyed and do not take it as an insult."

"This certainly shows," she said, "that you have retained nothing of what I have said to you, or you remember very little of it. Or perhaps you think that I am so untrustworthy that what I have said is false or deceitful. {4580} Is that what you think? God save you, tell me now rather than later."

"Lady," I said, "for God's mercy, you must never think that. I know very well that you say only what is meant for good. I am not strong enough to wear this armor for long, but not because I have forgotten {4590} what you said about anything. I remember very well you said to me that if at first this armor was an encumbrance to me it would not be so for long, when I got used to it. But I tell you I cannot get used to it, because I find it is very burdensome and I am very weak, {4600} and these are very dissimilar and discordant things."

"Then why have you put me to this trouble?" she asked. "And why did you ask for armor, when you could not wear it or did not want to wear it?"

"Lady," I said, "I was not thinking of that when you set me on the way. I had asked you {4610} only for a staff tipped with iron, but when you told me about the armor and advised me about it, I asked for it, because I thought I had the strength to wear it. But it is quite otherwise. I have no strength in me. I see this clearly, for I am worn out unless I get out of this armor at once."

"You have no strength," she said, "because you have no heart. {4620} It is not because you do not have the shoulders and the bones for it. You would be strong and powerful enough, if you had any heart, for the strength of a man comes from his heart as the apple comes from the apple tree. What could someone small say,

if you, who look like a champion, refuse to wear your armor and excuse yourself on the grounds of weakness? {4630} And what would you do, I ask you, if you had to bear arms for the sake of others, when you cannot, as you say, carry them to protect yourself? I ask you, again, what will you do when you go on your way unarmed and your enemies assault you and try to kill you? Then, surely, you will say: 'Oh God! Why did you ever disarm yourself? {4640} Why did you not believe Grace? Now you are completely deceived. Now you know what misfortune is, and you know that it is not so great a burden to wear armor as it is to endure these evils. This armor would be a great comfort to me now, if I had it. Oh God! Can I ever find Grace again, who wants to arm me?' {4650}

"When you have cried out in this way and you are mortally wounded, do you think, God help you, that then I will gladly set out for that place on your behalf, when you have not believed me about anything? Furthermore, if I went there, God help you, what would I do there? You ought to be much stronger now than you will be then, {4660} for then you will be weakened by great wounds, and since you cannot endure wearing armor now, I would go there then for nothing and I would trouble myself for nothing. Now is the time to learn to bear arms without further delay. If you believe me, you will keep them on and take care of them, {4670} so you can help yourself with them when there is need. If they are heavy, go along easily, for one goes far by going easily. Often the old woman who goes steadily on her way gets to St. James or St. Judoc¹²¹ sooner than someone who strikes and spurs his horse and goes pell-mell, for he runs into trouble much sooner {4680} than the old woman who goes quietly on her way.

"As for what you said about David putting off his armor once, I tell you I would not blame you at all if you want to take him as an example, but understand how you will base your argument on that. First, you should take his youth into account, {4690} for he was a young boy at that time¹²² and he was small, as the story says. Moreover, the armor was not meant for a lad but for the son of Gys,¹²³ and it was the largest in the country. You should realize that it was big and thickly-padded and heavy, so that—these two things considered and thought about carefully {4700}—David quite rightly took off the armor and laid it down. For Saul it was good, but for David it was worthless. What is good for the colt is not

good for the stallion, as Aristotle says. It is written in the Ethics,¹²⁴ But if David had been as big and strong as you are, {4710} and then he disarmed himself, you would truly have cause to take him as an example and do as he did. But he never did this and he never taught you to do so, for when he became a man, he was armed in all battles. No one would dare to suppose that he went into battle unarmed, {4720} for if he had done so he never would have returned alive. He always loved armor and when he put off the armor of Saul he took up other arms, and he killed Goliath with them. Then these were suited to him and fitting for him. If you were a youth like him, you could do as he did. {4730} I would certainly allow that in your youth you would not have such a great burden. But you are big enough to wear this armor, if you want to prove yourself, and you should be ashamed if you refuse to wear it."

"Lady," I said, "I see very well that I will gain nothing by resisting or arguing, or by debating with you, {4740} but I tell you that I must lay it all down right away. I will take all of it off, because none of it gives me any joy. All this armor has chafed and squeezed and crushed me."

And then I undid the buckle and unlaced the armor. I laid down the belt and the sword and the irksome shield. {4750} As soon as she saw me do this, she spoke to me and said: "Since you want to disarm yourself this way and take off all your armor, you should at least ask me to go find someone strong who could bear the arms, who could shoulder them and carry them along after you, {4760} so that you could take them up whenever you needed them."

"Lady," I said, "I have offended you so much that I did not dare ask you for that, but now I ask for it, I beseech you."

"Then wait for me a little while," she said, "and I will bring you someone who can shoulder the arms well, I think, and bear them for you." {4770}

Then Grace went away, I am not sure where, and I remained all alone there, and I disarmed myself completely. I took off the gorget and the habergeon, the helmet and the gambeson, and I kept only the scrip and the pilgrim's staff.

When I saw myself disarmed, I was all upset. {4780} "Dear God," I said, "what shall I do? I have given so much trouble to Grace, my mistress and my good provider. She had arrayed me

elegantly and nobly. She had armed me like a count or a duke, and I lacked nothing. But against her teaching and her sweet counsel {4790} I have cast off everything, I have taken it all off and kept nothing at all. Dear God, why have I lost my strength? Where did I put it? Why am I not bolder and harder, sturdier and stronger, so I might bear up under these arms and endure them? I would surely be much worthier for it and Grace would love me better. {4800} And everyone would respect and fear and love me more. But it is no use. There is no way I could endure them. I will entrust myself to Grace and I will be guided by her in everything. I think that she will help me still and that she will not fail me. She has already shown this, and it makes my comfort greater. {4810} She has gone quickly to find and bring back someone who can carry the armor and do this work for me."

As I was at this point, thinking to myself alone, I saw Grace, bringing with her a maidservant who had no eyes—as I thought when I first saw her. {4820} But when she had come near me and I was able to see her clearly, I saw that her vision was in the back of her head. She had eyes in the back of her head and she saw nothing at all in front. This was a very hideous and monstrous thing, it seemed to me, and I was greatly astonished and perplexed. {4830}

As I was considering this, and wondering deeply about it, Grace said to me: "Now I see clearly," she said, "now I see what a bold knight you are. When you should be doing battle, you have laid down your arms and you are defeated without a blow being struck. You need a bathrub to bathe in, a soft bed to lie down on, {4840} and a doctor to soothe and heal your bruised muscles."

"Lady," I said, "you will be my physician and comforter in this. I am so weary, in truth, that I cannot bear up well under the armor and I have no more strength to do it. So do not be displeased or angry, I ask you, {4850} for in all things I still have trust and hope in you."

"Now I have found this maidservant for you," she said, "and I have brought her from a faraway land to help you with this need, for I see clearly that you would soon go the wrong way if I did not help you. You shall lead this maidservant and give her your armor {4860} and she will carry it with you, so that when the need arises, as I have told you, you will always find it ready and put it on. If

you did not have it near you always and did not put it on in when you needed it, you would soon be in a bad way, struck down and killed."

"Lady," I said, "I would very much like to know the name of this beast {4870} you have bestowed on me and why she is like this. This is something strange and extraordinary to me. Moreover, I thought, as I had learned from you, that you would bring me a strong and agile servant to help me. A maidservant's job is only to carry a bucket. {4880} A maidservant like this could never endure carrying armor."

"I will tell you about that briefly and answer you," she said. "This maidservant's true name is Memory.¹²⁵ She perceives and sees nothing of the time to come, but she knows well how to speak about and recount the past. {4890} Her eyes and her vision are fixed behind, on the past. This is not a beastly or hideous thing, as you think, but something necessary to all those who want to gather their resources and provisions from any kind of learning or knowledge. The clerks in the university would long ago have become poor {4900} if they had not kept the goods they had gained and their learning, for a thing gained is worth little if it is not kept after it is gained. So if she has eyes facing backward, understand from this that she is the treasurer and the keeper of knowledge and great wisdom. And you should know then that she carries with her all the learning and understanding {4910} she guards, and she has it with her in all places, so that if you have her guard this armor, she will also be willing to carry it for you without any hesitation. She is as hardy in carrying it as she is strong in guarding it. So do not hold her in contempt—as when you said earlier {4920} that you thought her a maidservant who should only carry a bucket. But you should despise yourself and praise yourself very little, if you knew about these things, for what you cannot carry, she will carry without difficulty. That will be more disconcerting and embarrassing to you than if a strong, hardy manservant carried it, {4930} and therefore I have intentionally and deliberately brought her to you, so that when she has the armor and carries it, you would either help to carry it or you would be greatly embarrassed."

"Lady," I said, "since this is so, I say nothing to contradict what you say, and I cannot oppose you at all well in anything. {4940} Now let us pick it all up and load it on her and then I will go on

ahead and she will follow me." Then she and I picked it up and brought it to Memory, who took it up willingly, as there was great need to do so.

When it was loaded up, Grace—God bless her!—spoke to me {4950} very gently, saying: "Now you are ready to go to the fair city," she said. "You have Memory, your pack-horse, who will go along behind you and carry your armor to arm you when the time comes. You have the scrip and the staff, the fairest that ever a man carried. {4960} You would be well-appointed at every point if you had some of Moses' bread. Go, take some of it. You have permission to do so, although you have not deserved it. But be very careful that you do not fail to do everything that you should do, just as you have seen and understood what should be done."

Then I went to Moses and asked him for some of his bread. {4970} This was the remainder that he gave and dispensed to pilgrims. He gave it to me and I took it and put it in my scrip.

Then I returned to Grace and I thanked her for her kindness, asking her not to leave me or be far from me, {4980} for, as I told her, I knew very well that without her I could do nothing.

"Certainly," she said, "without me you truly can do nothing and you would soon be undone if I did not protect you. You act like the wise when you ask for what you know you need. And because I find nothing dishonest in your request, {4990} I therefore intend to go with you now, and I have no thought of leaving unless it is through your wrong-doing."

"Lady," I said, "I thank you very much. Now, I think, I have what I need."

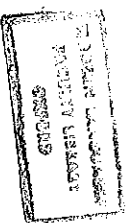
"Now understand how I intend to go with you," she said. There are some who have such great trust and hope in their friends {5000} that they are much the worse for it, for they think that they will be protected and cared for by them, if they have done—or do—something evil. Therefore, so that you do not trust too much in me or lean on me too much, so that you do no wrong by relying on a support, I will not be visible at all, to your eyes and your vision. {5010} I have a stone that makes me invisible whenever I want. I will conceal myself with this and hide from your eyes, so that when you think I am with you, I will then perhaps have turned and gone another way. That will be when you behave badly, when you do not see fit to ask the way or you will not follow it, {5020} when you leave the good road and take the bad roads. So

you are advised to go along most wisely from now on, for I will use that stone now and from now on I depart from your view and your sight." {5030}

As soon as she had said this, I saw her no longer. My sorrowing heart did not laugh at this but it could do nothing more. I did not want to give up the idea of going on my journey as I had planned, however, so I wanted to get on my way right then. I told Memory to come after me and follow me, {5040} to carry my armor and to forget nothing, and indeed she did so, bringing everything along and losing nothing. This was very much needed, for later I encountered so many difficulties that if at any time I had not been equipped with armor, I would have been killed. Not that I always took it up and put it on when I needed it, {5050} for many times, through my laziness, I suffered the wound of a lance or an arrow that I might not have sustained if I had been well-armed.

Now I have told you, in all honesty, one part of the dream. I will tell you the rest later, when I have time. And you will be more willing to hear it when you have rested a little. {5060} Everything is tiresome without a pause, both fair weather and foul. Come again another time if you want to hear more, and meanwhile I will consider how to tell exactly what I dreamed. {5066}

The End of Book I





The Pilgrim Encounters Rude Wit

Book II

I told you earlier something about what I saw while I was sleeping, and now I want to tell you about some other wonderful things I saw then, as I promised you, {5070} for I should not keep them to myself.

As I was getting myself all ready to go on my way, I began to think a good deal about why I was not strong enough to wear my armor and why I was not as strong as the maidservant who was carrying it after me. {5080} I said, "Now, I am a man who looks like a champion. I know I am not crippled, all my limbs are sound, and I am strong enough to carry both this maidservant and her burden. Why am I so feeble and so weak I could not bear for one hour what I see her carrying?" {5090} I am ashamed and embarrassed to see that she is stronger than I am."

As I went along, thinking about this continually, I encountered on my way a big misshapen churl, husky and scowling. He was carrying a club of cornel-wood¹ and he seemed to be a very nasty rogue and a bad pilgrim. {5100}

"And what is this!" he said. "Where is this pilgrim going? My God, where is he going? Now, he thinks he is very well decked out and equipped. But he will soon get it from me, and he will answer some questions."

When I heard him say this, I became very upset, because I thought he would assault me right then. {5110} But I spoke to him courteously and humbly: "Sir," I said, "I ask you not to harm me or keep me from going on my way, for I am on a long pilgrimage and a little difficulty would be a great trouble to me."

"Surely the trouble comes from your insolence," he said. {5120} Who do you think you are, God help you? And how come you dare to break the law the king has chosen to establish? The king long ago forbade anyone to take up a scrip and carry it with him or to use a staff.² And against his order, through your foolish insolence, {5130} you have presumed to carry both, I think. How come you are so bold and brazen? You were wrong to come here, you were wrong to set out, and you were wrong to bring them here. Never in your life have you done anything more foolish."

When I heard these words, I was even more upset than before. I had no answer and I did not know what to say. {5140} I would gladly have hired an advocate, if I could have found one or if I had known where to look for one, for I needed one badly. But as I was thinking how I could escape, I looked up and saw someone coming whom I was very glad to see. {5150} It was Lady Reason, the wise, who is easily recognized by her words, for she says nothing that is not well-ordered and measured. I had seen her before, and that is why I recognized her. I was very happy to see her, for I thought that the scowling churl who had snarled at me so fiercely would be defeated by her. {5160} And so he was in the end, and I ask you to listen to how.

Reason came right up to him and said to him: "Tell me, you churl, God help you, what you do and why you seem so disagreeable. Are you a watchman or a reaper or a look-out for wayfarers? What is your name and where did you get hold of that big club? {5170} A club is not at all fitting or proper for a good man."

Then the brute leaned on his club and said to her: "What is this! Are you a mayor, or a new inquisitor? Show me your commission, so I will know your name at least and whether you have such great power as you seem to show me. {5180} Unless I am convinced of this, I will answer nothing to you."

Then Reason reached in through the opening of her gown, drew out a case, and took a letter out of it. Then she said to him: "I certainly want you to know about my power. Look, here is my commission. Read that, so you will know my name, {5190} my power, who I am and why I have come here."

"I am certainly no clerk," he said, "I know nothing about these papers of yours. Read them, if you like, for I think they are not worth very much, you know."

"Gentle knight," she said, "not everyone is of your opinion. They are valued and loved and prized by many. {5200} Nevertheless, you shall hear them, if I have not lost all my clerks. I want to remove all your doubts and to show you what power I have.

"Come forward, clerk," she said to me, "unfold these letters and read them to this young gentleman, who thinks he is a baron. When he hears them read here, then he will answer me, God willing." {5210}

Then I took them and read them. The churl was not very pleased by this, for he grumbled continually and kept wagging his chin. I saw him grind his teeth at every word I read. If you want to know the sense of the letters, you will hear it now.

"From Grace, by whom, they say, kings govern and rule, {5220} greetings to Reason, our good friend, well proven in all good deeds. Execute fully what we command. Recently we have heard something not at all pleasing to us. A foul-smelling, ugly, surly and arrogant churl who calls himself Rude Wit,³ {5230} has set himself up as a lookout on the roads and a waylayer of pilgrims. He wants to take their staffs away from them and remove their scrips, deceiving them with foolish lies. And so that he might be more fearsome, he has borrowed from Pride his evil and cruel club, called Obstinacy. {5240} This displeases me much more than the surly churl himself does, and for this reason we command and order you to go there and warn this fool to put down his club and stop doing the other things. And if he resists in any way or will not obey, {5250} assign him a suitable day before the court of judgment. We give you full power and make you executor of this. Given in our year that everyone calls 1331."

When all this was read, Reason took her letters again and put them in safekeeping, and then she addressed the churl and said to him: {5260} "Now, gentle knight, you have heard of my power and why I have come here. Will you answer me what I have asked you?"

"Who are you?" asked the churl.

"God, who am I? By Saint Germain,"⁴ said Reason, "did you not hear what was read here just now? Are you thinking of your lovers, or of building castles or towers?"⁵ {5270}

"I have heard clearly, by Saint Simon⁶ that you are named Reason," he said, "but I asked you who you were—and rightly so—because that is an infamous name."

"Infamous name?" said Reason. "By Saint Benedict, where did you get that?"

"I heard it at the mill," he said. "You give false measure there and steal people's grain."⁷ {5280}

"Gentle knight," she said, "now listen to a few little words and understand them. Slander is shameful and you do not speak like a wise man. At the mill you have perhaps seen a measure that is called a 'reason' in order to hide its great unfairness, but it is not therefore Reason but a fraud and a deception. {5290} I would like very much to distinguish between name and existence. It is one thing to be Reason and another thing to have that name. People can use a name as a covering to hide their filth. This happens often and in many places. Those who are not beautiful adorn themselves, and those who are not good pretend to be innocent. {5300} All the vices do it eagerly. Many times they cover themselves with the name of the contrary virtue, in order to be less displeasing to people. Yet virtue is not worth less by a single straw, but rather it is a sign that it is good, when vice dresses and clothes itself in it. And if this measure wants to adorn itself with my name and pretend to be innocent, {5310} I am not defamed by that but I should be honored even more for it by men of good understanding."

"What is this!" he said. "God help us! Are you handing the stick back to me?⁸ Do you want to be praised for what would be blameworthy in someone else? I would be greatly misled by what you are saying if I could not tell when there is a fly in the milk. {5320} Do you think I do not know very well that when I call something a cat or a dog it is not an ox or a cow but the one thing is a cat and the other is a dog? I know each one very well by their names, because they and their names are the same. So if you are named Reason, then I say also that you are a 'reason,' and if a 'reason' steals grain, I say that you stole it. {5330} The water that turns the mill cannot wash you clean of that. Do not imagine you can make me think otherwise, for all your clever words and foolish sayings."⁹

Then Reason, smiling, turning everything into a joke, said to him: "Now I see you have had some schooling and you have learned something. {5340} You know how to argue cleverly and bring forward good examples. If you had thought about it more, you would seem quite brilliant."

"Oh, you are mocking me!" he said.

"That is just what I am doing, you know," said Reason, "and I will continue to mock you until I know your name as well as you know mine. Understand that you get {5350} no honor by hiding it. I do not know what you will get by revealing it."

"Honor!" he said. "What are you saying? The dishonor is yours. You have my name in your papers, and then you ask for it? You are like someone who is sitting on a donkey and looking all around for it. I do not know what that is, if it is not mockery." {5360}

"Ah!" said Reason. "Are you the one set down in my letters? I knew the name there very well, but I did not know you. I was of the opinion that my name and I were not the same thing, for every thief who goes stealing can cloak himself in my name. Therefore, I thought the same of you, since I had not yet learned {5370} that you and Rude Wit were one and the same. But now I see clearly that you are doubtless the same, without distinction. Your examples have taught me this, and what you have said, for it is so clever. I know by your words that you are truly Rude Wit. You can no longer argue that you are only named that, {5380} for you are that in fact, with no distinction. So I pardon the rude things you have said out of spite, for you thought—I see it very clearly—that what was true of you was also true of me. Rude wit taught you this, for your wit is quite rude—as everyone sees—and malicious, and that is why you were given this name." {5390}

At these words the churl was cut to the heart. He said nothing, for he could not. He only ground his teeth. But Reason did not stop. She sang him another tune.

"Now, since I know your name," she said, "I have no great need to ask about the rest, for it is all clear in my letters {5400} that you are a spy of the roads and a waylayer of pilgrims. You want to take away their staffs and remove their scrips. Why do you do this, upon your soul, against the will of my lady?"

"Because," he said, "they deliberately go against the Gospel I have heard read in our village and they keep it badly. {5410} All are forbidden there, as I understood it clearly, to carry a staff or a

scrip outside their home. So when I see them carrying them, against the prohibition of the king, I set upon them eagerly and make them give them up, in order to keep the law."

"Oh, it is quite otherwise," said Reason. This prohibition was {5420} completely turned around and reversed long ago. It is true that it was forbidden, but later it was commanded again. There was good cause for this, for the change was quite necessary. It is no dishonor to the king if he changes his law for a good reason. If you wish, I will tell you briefly the reason for this change. {5430} Those who are at the end of their journey have no need to be pilgrims, and those who are not pilgrims would do little with a scrip and a staff. Jesus the King is the end to which every good pilgrim is headed. He is the end of the good journey and the good pilgrimage. His good pilgrims came to this goal and this end {5440} by his calling, when he told them not to carry a staff or a scrip any more, but to lay them down and abandon them.¹⁰ He was sufficient for them, able to provide for them in abundance whatever they would need, without being under obligation to anyone else. Moreover, when he sent them to preach, {5450} he wanted their listeners to provide them with food and take care of them, for every laborer is worthy of his hire. They all did this so well that when they returned none of them complained. You have read that he asked them one time, when it seemed good to him: 'Did you lack anything when I sent you {5460} without a scrip to preach to the people and announce the word of God?' And then they said to him: 'Surely, sir, nothing at all. We had plenty and we lacked nothing.'¹¹

"This is the reason the holy Apostles were forbidden to carry a scrip or use a staff. {5470} But later, when he had to leave and pass over the bridge of death, when he saw that he who was the end of their journey was leaving them, he wanted to change his law, like a mild and tractable king. He told them that they might take up their scrips and put them on again. 'Anyone who has a bag, take it and put it on as a scrip,'¹²{5480} just as if he were to say openly and plainly: 'Although I commanded you not to have a scrip or carry one, because you had come to the end of your journey, now, because I must go away from you and leave you, I want you to take up everything as you did before, {5490} for I know very well that when you lose sight of me you will need a

scrip, as well as a staff to lean on. You must be pilgrims once more and set out on the road again. Otherwise, you cannot follow me or come to me. Moreover, you will find no one, when I am gone, {5500} who will be happy to do good for you or who will say anything to you from the heart. Hold fast to your scrip, until you come to me again. Now take up all this. I authorize you to do so, because I see it is needed.' And so here is clearly and plainly the sufficient cause for carrying a scrip and a staff. Therefore, you must not interfere {5510} by stopping those who have them and who are carrying them where they are going. They have permission to do so and there is good reason for it, until they all come to the end of their journey and their pilgrimage."

"What is this you are babbling to me!" said the churl. Do you want to treat the Gospel as a fable and a lie? {5520} You say that what God had ordained has been repealed. If this were so, then all his ordinances should be taken out of the book, erased and scratched out."¹³

"Not so," said Reason, "for it is right to know about the past, how they acted, how they spoke, why this was so, what was the cause of that, {5530} why there were changes in what was done and in the narratives. The Gospel is not refuted or false for that, but it is more elegant and pleasing to those of good understanding. The more varied the flowers in a field, the more elegant it is, and the more diverse their shapes the more gladly one looks upon them." {5540}

The churl crossed himself with his rough and crooked hand. "What is this!" he said. "Do you want to bewitch me and cast a spell on me? Whatever I say, you change it and turn it all around. Falsehood you call beauty, and beauty you say is falsehood. What the king prohibited, you say is commanded, {5550} turning the Gospel upside down and distorting it with cunning words. You only trick people and tie them up in knots. Leave me alone, for I think your words and your actions are not worth a hill of beans. I will hold to my purpose and I will not believe you about anything."

"At the very least," said Reason, "you will put down that big club, {5560} for you know very well that Grace has commanded and ordained this."

"Ah, Grace!" he said. "I do not see how it can harm her at all. Besides, I need it for what I have to do. I lean on it and I defend myself with it. I have less regard for all other people on account of

it and I think I am much more fearsome and dreaded. {5570} And therefore, if I were to put it down, I would be a big fool, a great simpleton."

"Oh, that is not well said," said Reason. "You need to think differently. Grace would never love someone who would carry such a club. It has never seemed good to her. She hates it more than the goat hates the knife. So you would not be very wise if you did not put it down." {5580}

"Oh, what a fool you are to say such a thing!" said the churl. "If the club does not harm her, why should it displease her?"

"I will tell you coarsely, with all the bran," said Reason, "for I see clearly that your crude gullet asks for no other food. If you had a friend to whom someone did an injury, {5590} it would not harm you except as it displeased you. Grace loves everyone and she wants everyone to do well. And therefore when anyone has trouble or is injured, although she is not harmed by it, she is displeased by it. This club is an enemy to those she wants to have as friends. {5600} If it did not exist, the Jews would come to her and convert, all heretics would leave their errors and mend their ways. Nabal and the Pharaoh were confounded by it, for they relied on it so much that they brought about their death through it.¹⁴ If it did not exist, obedience would rule and command everywhere. {5610} All people would do what they ought to do and they would not disobey at all. If it did not exist, all rude minds would bow down and humble themselves. If you yourself, who are rightly called Rude Wit, did not lean on it so much, you would believe me and mend your ways. And so I tell you to put it down and lean on it no more." {5620}

"Ha, God!" he said, "how little I think of this kind of talk. I will not obey you in any way and I will not let go of my club. I will lean on it, whether you like it or not, you can be sure."

"Oh," said Reason, "now I see that I have nothing more to say to you except to summon you to the court of judgment. {5630} I summon you there without further delay. Come there and do not send anyone else!"

Then Reason turned to me again and called me. "Go along boldly," she said, "without fearing Rude Wit. Say nothing to him and do not answer him, for Solomon teaches us not to answer a word to someone we find to be a fool."¹⁵ {5640}

"Lady," I said, "right after that, Solomon says something quite different. He says that one should answer him in order to put him to shame."¹⁶

"Certainly, that is true," she said. "But you must understand that I held these words back, in order to answer when it was time, and I have done enough of that, although my labor {5650} is wasted, for he is in no way changed or put to shame. A soft feather would as soon penetrate an anvil as my words would penetrate him and be of profit to him. He is harder than adamant, harder than steel or a diamond. What he gets in his mind at first, he will not let go for anything, {5660} and so talking to a churl like this cannot win you any praise. Go along without arguing with him, and leave him to grumble away, shake his bridle and his chin, and gnaw on his club!"

"Lady," I said, "I thank you for what you have taught me, but I tell you for certain that if I did not have you to accompany me I would not dare to pass by boldly, {5670} on account of this churl. And so I ask you to come with me and lead me past him, for I also have something to speak to you about. I want to ask you about something important having to do with my business."

Then she took me by the hand right away and led me past the churl. {5680} She set me on my way, and this made me very happy. The churl stayed there grumbling on his club and growling, but I cared nothing about that and Reason laughed out loud at it.

When I saw that I had escaped and that I was well on my way, I began to ask Reason about what you have heard me speak of. {5690}

"Lady," I said, "I have thought a good deal—and I am still thinking—about why I cannot bear my armor or tolerate and endure it. I see a maidservant bearing it, which is a disgrace to me, when I cannot also bear it—I who should be stronger and more powerful by half again, if I had any heart. {5700} So I ask you, please teach me the reason for this, because I would like very much to know it."

Then Reason answered me: "What is this!" she said. "I saw you in the house of Grace not long ago and you talked with her many times. Why were you so foolish not to ask her this? {5710} Besides, I think she must have said something that concerned what you are asking about."

"Lady," I said, "I will tell you: I have forgotten much of what she said, and I remember only that she told me I was too fat. But if I made myself thinner or did myself any harm, {5720} people would call me wicked. And, besides, I could not bear my armor as well as if I were stout and strong. These things confuse me, for they are not customary. I did not ask the truth of Grace, for I was afraid I might annoy her or offend her. {5730} So I ask you to teach me and help me understand this."

"Do you know who you are?" she asked. "Whether you are alone or double, whether you have anyone but yourself to nourish and guide and look after?"

Then, all confused, I said: "Lady, in faith, I think I have no one but myself to take care of and no one else to think of. {5740} I am all alone, as you can see. I do not know why you are asking this."

"Now pay attention," she said, "and understand and listen closely, for I will tell you something else and I will teach you the contrary. You should know that you nourish someone who is your great enemy. Every day you give him food and drink and provide him with shoes and clothes. {5750} There is no rich, expensive, delicious food that you will not give him, no matter what it may cost you. He was given to you to serve you, but you have become his servant. You want to put fancy shoes on him and give him fine robes. You array him with jewels, medallions, knives, {5760} thin studded belts and decorated purses. You want to adorn him elegantly every day with fancy silk laces, mingled red and green, and lay him down softly every night and make him comfortable. One day you heat up his bath and then you soak him in it the next. {5770} You bleach his hair and comb it, and you smooth and primp him. You find him as many delights and diversions as you can, both day and night. Such as he is, you have nurtured him, and you have been more concerned about him than a woman is about the child she nurses and feeds. You began a long time ago and you have not stopped since then. {5780} If I said thirty-six years, I think I would not be far off. And although you have served him and entertained him at his pleasure this way, you should know that he betrays you and deceives you and brings you trouble. It is he who will not let you bear your armor or endure it. It is he who is your adversary whenever you want to do good." {5790}

"Lady," I said, "I am astonished at what you have told me. If you did not have such good sense, or if you were not so wise, I would think that all this was a lie or that it was a dream. But I know you are so good that you would not tell a lie for anything. So, I ask you, tell me who this evil traitor is, {5800} what his form and shape is, where he was born, and what his name is, so I may recognize him and punish him harshly, for if I tore him limb from limb,¹⁷ I would not be completely revenged on him."

"Certainly," she said, "you are right, for in addition you should know that if you did not exist, there would be little or nothing of him. {5810} No one would have any regard for him, or value him or respect him, for he is a pile of corruption, an image made of dung, a statue made of mud, a scare-crow. By himself, he cannot do anything, cannot move or work, for he is powerless and crippled, deaf, blind and malformed. {5820} He is a worm, cruel and wicked, born in the earth of worms, a worm breeding and nourishing worms in himself, a worm that in the end will decay and become food for worms. Although he is made this way and he has such a nature, yet you make him lie down by you and sleep in your bed with you, {5830} and you go looking for everything that pleases him, as I have said to you before. And even worse, something that is disgusting. When he has eaten and he is full, you carry him to the privy or out into the fields to empty his belly. Now consider whether you are not greatly dishonored and disgraced, for he does not thank you for all this, but he is so wicked that he is more puffed up {5840} and more eager to harm you.

"Lady," I said, "why do you not tell me his name right away, for I would take quick revenge on him and go and kill him now."

"Oh, you are not allowed to kill him," said Reason, "but you may chastise him and beat him and break his habits, {5850} give him pain and labor, make him fast often, and submit him to Penance. Without her, you will never get just revenge on him, nor will you ever truly be avenged, for, as you saw a while ago if you understood it rightly, Penance is his mistress and his only chastiser, {5860} and she takes just vengeance on him when it is the time and season. If you bring him to her, she will beat him so and chastise him so with her switches that he will be a good servant to you from then on. And you ought to desire this and seek to accomplish it rather than kill him, for he is given to you to lead him to a share {5870} of life and of salvation, and to make him

cross over. He is your body, your flesh. I do not know what other name to call him."

"Lady," I said, "what are you saying? Have I been dreaming? Or are you dreaming? You are calling my body, my flesh, something other than me, and yet you see that I am all alone with you, and there is no one here except the two of us. {5880} I do not know what this means, unless it is a magic spell."

"It is not that," said Reason, "for spells or lies never came out of my mouth, or anything that could be called a dream. But tell me, by the faith you owe to God, if you were in a place where you had what pleased you, good food to eat, a soft bed, white bed-linens, {5890} joy and ease and great delight—whatever you wanted, day and night, may I know, truly, would you linger and stay there?"

"Yes, certainly," I said.

"Yes?" she said. "What are you saying? Then you would leave your pilgrimage and your journey?"

"Lady," I said, "I would not do that. Later on, I would go quickly." {5900}

"Quickly!" she said, "You miserable creature! There is not a man or woman alive in this world who can arrive there quickly, no matter how fast they can run. And suppose that, after the comfort and the ease, you were able to go straight there quickly by work and labor. I ask you if you would set out on your way, as long as you found such pleasure and comfort?" {5910}

"Oh God!" I said. "Lady, I do not know how to answer that, except I know very well I would want very much to stay and I would also want very much to go."

"Then you have two wills and you are of two minds," she said. "One wants to go, and the other to stay. One wants to rest, the other to work. {5920} What one wants, the other does not want. The one is usually opposed to the other."

"Lady," I said, "I certainly feel in me what you have said."

"Then you are not one alone," she said, "and so you and your body are two, for two wills do not come from one but from two, as everyone knows."

"Lady," I said, "now I ask you to tell me, who am I? {5930} Since I am not my body, then tell me who I am. I will never be at ease unless I know something about this."

"Ha!" she said, "what have you learned? You do not know much, I think. It is much more valuable to know oneself, than to be an emperor, a count, or a king, than to understand all learning and to have all the goods in the world. {5940} But since you have not learned this, you are well advised to ask, and so I will tell you very briefly something I know about it."

"Apart from the body—I have spoken about that and it is set apart in every way—you are the picture, the image and likeness of God. He made you out of nothing and created and shaped you in his likeness. {5950} He could not have given you or impressed on you a nobler form. He made you beautiful and clear-sighted, lighter than the bird on the wing, immortal, never to die, enduring forever. If you consider yourself well, except for your transgressions, nothing, not the heavens, the earth, the sea, {5960} the birds or any other creature, except the angels, can compare to your nobility.¹⁸ God is your father and you are his son. You must not think that you are the son of Thomas de Deguileville, for he never had a son or daughter who was of this kind or of such a noble race. Your body—your enemy—you have from him. {5970} It came to you from him, for he begot it, as Nature ordained. It is right that the trees bear such fruit as Nature teaches them. Just as the thorn tree cannot bear or produce figs, so the human body can bear no fruit but what is disgusting and weak, vile filth and corruption, rottenness and foul mud. {5980} But you are no such thing, for you were not made by a mortal man, but by God, your Father. God made with his hands only two human bodies in the world, and these two he commissioned to make others according to the model.¹⁹ But he reserved the making of the spirit, for a certain purpose. {5990} He wanted to make all of them, without interference from anyone else. He made you, for you are a spirit, and he placed you in the body you are in. He put you there to live in it for a while, to prove whether you were truly virtuous and brave, and to see whether you would conquer the body or yield yourself up to it. {6000} You are always in battle with it and it with you, if you do not give up. It overthrows you by flattery and deceives you and defeats you. It keeps you under its rule, if you trust it, and you must defeat it by strength. It would never have power over you, except by your will. You are Samson, it is Delilah. You have strength in you, but it has none. {6010} It can only flatter you and deliver you to your enemies. It will bind you, if you

let it, and shear off all your hair, and when it knows your secrets it will reveal them to the Philistines. This is the friendship it has for you, the loyalty and the fidelity. Now consider whether you will give in to it without striking a blow, {6020} whether you will be deceived and made a fool of like Samson."

"Lady," I said, "I am hearing strange things. I think I am dreaming or I am asleep. Here I am, thrust into my body, and you call me a spirit and you say I am clear-sighted. And yet I see neither more nor less. And you have said that my body, which sees well, is blind, {6030} and many other very strange things that are fleas in my ears.²⁰ So I ask you to teach me and instruct me more plainly, for I do not know what to ask, because I am confused by what I am hearing."

Then Reason began again. "Now understand this," she said. "When the sun is obscured at noontime, hidden {6040} behind a cloud, and it cannot be seen,²¹ I ask you, for the sake of true love,²² to tell me where the daylight comes from."

"I think it comes from the sun," I said. "It is hidden and it makes its light pass through the cloud and shine down."

"How can its light be seen through the cloud?" asked Reason. {6050}

"Just as it is seen through a glass," I said, "or as a flame can be seen in a lantern."

"Certainly," Reason responded, "if you have understood what you have said, by the sun you will understand the soul you have in this mortal body. The body is a cloud and a smoky lantern, {6060} through which, however it may be, the light within can be seen. The soul that lives in the body shines outward and makes foolish people think that everything is illuminated by the poor cloud that obscures the soul. But if there were no cloud, the soul would have such great light {6070} that it would see quite plainly from east to west, and it would see and know and love its creator. The eyes of the body are not eyes, but windows through which the soul gives light to the body outside. But you must not think, for that reason, that the soul has any need {6080} of these eyes, these windows. It sees its spiritual good before it and behind it, without bodily windows. And sometimes it would see it better if the body had no eyes. Tobit once was blind in body but not therefore blind in soul, for he taught his son {6090} how to conduct himself and

what path to take.²³ He would never have taught him this if he had not seen it with his soul. The soul saw and knew clearly the things he said to him. So if I say you see clearly, I want to reaffirm this, for it is you who can see, not the body, which is blind both inside and out. {6100} It would never see anything, if it were not by your light. And as I have told you about sight, so I tell you about hearing and about all its senses, for they are only instruments by which it receives from you what it has. It sees and hears nothing except through you. And so I tell you plainly {6110} that if you were not carrying it and supporting it, it would be like a pile of dung and never move."

"Lady," I said, "now I ask you, please, how is it that the soul carries the body, when it is inside and the other is outside? It makes more sense to me that the one carried is the one inside. {6120} And it makes more sense to me that the carrier and bearer is the one outside, for the one that carries is the one that contains and the one that is carried is the one inside."

"Now understand something," she said. Your clothes and your habit contain you and you are inside them. You would be greatly astonished if I told you that they carried you or controlled you in any way." {6130}

"Is that so, Lady?," I asked.

"Yes, indeed," she said, "but with this difference I put to you, that the soul both carries and is carried. The soul carries the body by principle, but the body carries the soul only by accident, taking power from the soul and restoring it to the soul. If you have ever seen a boat being piloted and steered on a river, {6140} you could take an example from that, without doing yourself any harm. The pilot who is inside it both steers it and is steered by it.²⁴ He steers in such a way that if he did not steer his boat, it would not steer him. Your soul is the steerer, the pilot, of the body. It steers it and carries it, and in steering the body, it carries itself. {6150} The body carries the soul according to the soul's will and according to what the soul consents to. The body would not carry the soul at all, if the soul did not carry the body. And, therefore, you must take pains to pilot the body rightly so that, through your steering, it can bring you to a safe harbor after death."

"Lady," I said, "I certainly think what you have said {6160} would be most helpful to me, if you would be so kind as to take me out of my boat and divest me of my body, show me this blind

and lame creature that has done me such harm so many times—as you have said—and still cannot be at rest, so that I might prove and confirm what you have said. {6170} Not that I have any doubt that you have spoken very well to me, but I do not understand what you have said clearly or completely. So I ask you to attend to this and teach me a little."

Then Reason said: "I am sure you do not understand me very well. Do you know why? Because the body is a great and heavy obstacle in your way. {6180} It can do nothing but be contrary to you always. But because you have asked for it, I will divest you of the body, if I can. And you will also work at it and struggle along with me, for I can do little by myself, unless I have your help. But you will have to take up the body again and put it on your back once more, {6190} for it is not in my power to keep it off you for very long and it is difficult even to take it off for a single moment. This is the work of Death, who often comes without being called for. Now you take hold there and I will take hold here, and pay no attention to anything else."

Then Reason took hold of me and I put myself at her command. {6200} She pulled and I pushed, and we made such an effort, she and I, that the crippled one was lifted off me and fell away.

When I was unburdened this way, I was carried off high into the air. It seemed to me that I was flying and that I weighed nothing. I could go everywhere I wanted, both up and down, and I could see far away. {6210} It seemed that nothing in the world was hidden or concealed from me. I was greatly delighted by this. I was unhappy only that I must once more live and dwell and remain in the body, for I saw little or nothing in it but an obstacle in my way. I saw that what Reason had preached to me was true. {6220} I saw clearly that my body was dung, and that to value it would be useless. I saw that it would always stay where it was unless it were driven out. It lay there stretched out on the earth, and it did not hear or see. Its face showed that it had no strength in it. I circled all around it to find out if it was asleep. {6230} I felt its pulse, but understand that I did not find, in muscle or passage or vein, any pulse or breath—any more than in a log. I saw clearly that it was nothing. The devil with it and all its ways!

When I had considered all this, Reason then said to me: "Here you see clearly your enemy," she said, "and now you know him.

{6240} This is the one who will not allow you to carry or bear your armor, the one who knocks you down with flattery and overwhelms and conquers you, the one who keeps you from rising up and flying on high to your creator. I have said a good deal about this to you before, and it should be enough for you. You must enter into the body again, put it on and take it up again, {6250} carry it on your journey and your pilgrimage."

"Lady," I said, "it was my intent and purpose to arm myself with the armor and to wear it for a while to find out if I could carry it now, for I truly think that they weigh nothing at the moment." {6260}

"Certainly, you are right," she said. "They weigh little, and so you must realize that if you put them on now you would have no merit from it. You must put them on when you are clothed in the crippled one, who is blind and dumb. He must hold up his burden well, for he will surely want to share in the good. You will never have any good that he will not want to share. {6270} Now take the body up and put it on again and then try to arm yourself."

When she had said this, I found myself wrapped up in the body right away. In one moment, all the strength I had and all the good I rejoiced in was lost, all hidden, all obscured by the shadowing cloud, under which there is no clear vision. {6280} I began to love once more the cloud that I hated so much and valued so little before, to reconsider and to think that I might give in to it and do its will. But when I saw later that I would be deceived that way once more, I started to break into tears and weep and sigh, and say: "Oh God! What will you do? {6290} Which of these two will you agree with?"

Then Reason said to me: "What is the matter with you? Why are you grieving? Weeping is for women, but it is not fitting for men."

Then I said: "I am weeping because just now, before I had taken up and put on again this poor body, {6300} I was so powerful I thought surely I was as strong as two men. I could fly above the clouds, higher than the herons or cranes. I could see and I could understand, and I met with no adversary. Now the tables are turned, and so I have found my adversary again. The body oppresses me and throws me down and holds me under it, completely vanquished. {6310} I have no strength to resist it and I am unable to oppose it. I have lost my will completely, and I do

not know what has become of it. My strength is like that of someone buried alive in the earth. Just as a monkey hitched and tied to a clog cannot climb up high, and when it climbs up it falls down again right away, {6320} so the body is a heavy clog and a great encumbrance to me. It brings me down when I want to fly and it holds me back when I want to climb up. For I was told,²⁵ it seems, what I have seen written a while ago, that the body, which is corrupt and crude and heavy, weighs down the soul and oppresses it so that it keeps it in misery.²⁶ {6330} Just so am I subdued, just so am I held down, just so am I enslaved. It is no wonder, then, that I say, weeping: 'Oh God! I am greatly troubled and I am full of sorrow.'

"Then you see clearly," said Reason, "that I have not lied to you about anything, and that the body is your adversary in everything good you want to do." {6340}

"Certainly," I said, "this is so, and I see it clearly, thanks to you. But tell me a little more about why he is stronger than I or why I am not, and cannot be, as strong as he?"

"He is not stronger," she said, "but you cannot conquer him in his own country as you could in your own, if you were there. {6350} All are strong on their own dung-heap and they make themselves fearsome in their own land. He is here in his own country, set on his dung-heap and his muck, and so he is stronger and more fearsome and more arrogant towards you. But if, on the other hand, you had him in your country, you would be stronger. There, he could not resist or oppose you at all. {6360} I do not tell you this to put you in a lethargy, and I do not mean that you cannot checkmate and overthrow him, for, if you want, you will make him check and mate, if you know anything about chess, here on his own dung-heap, no matter how much he argues. Drinking little and eating little, resting little, working hard, {6370} disciplines and chastisements, prayers and lamentations, and the instruments of Penance should give you justice and vengeance. They will make you the victor, to your great honor, whether he likes it or not. And when he is subdued and subject to you, then you can arm yourself well with the armor, for, to tell the truth, {6380} you have no greater hindrance and no greater encumbrance than that he is too fat, too unruly and too well-stuffed, as Grace told you when she spoke to you."²⁷

"Lady," I said, "now I understand this for the first time, but I understood nothing about it then, although she spoke to me about the body. {6390} I thought that my body and I were the same, but it is not so. From you I have learned the truth, according to what I asked about it."

"Yes," she said, "and you could have learned the whole truth from her, if you had asked, for I have learned everything from her. If she did not exist, I would know nothing and I would not exist. {6400} Whatever I have said comes from her. If I say your body is your enemy, you will find this out later, for whenever you want to go on a good path, he will turn you aside from it and make you take another. And supposing that once he lets you go the way you ought to go, I tell you that you will find him lazy and sluggish. {6410} He will want to rest for a long time and roll over onto his side. When you sit him down to eat, he will leave the table late and sullenly. He will want to do everything slowly, so as to be a hindrance to you. He will be very quick to see his chance, when the time comes, to flatter you, and then, when you are off guard, you will find you have been deceived. {6420} So I advise you always to stay on guard and never to trust him or his flattery. For when you do what he wants, you must know for certain that you make him stronger against you and give him the weapons to attack you and turn you aside from your way. {6430} And so if you have understood me rightly you can know him well. You can clearly see that he is your mortal enemy, the one who prevents you from carrying or enduring your armor."

"Lady," I said, "thanks to you, I see very well that this is so. You have distinguished me from my body very well and you have shown clearly {6440} how he is always opposed to me in everything good I want to do. And so, because I know you are wise and I will always need you, I very much want you to come with me on the way to the city where I am going, for I think I will meet with many delays along the way, because of difficult paths I do not know about. {6450} If you are with me, you will bring me great comfort for this, so I ask you to come along, if you will."

"If you have Grace with you," she said, "that is enough. You will never in your life have anyone more helpful. It is not that I want to excuse myself, or that I do not want to go with you. {6460} I will go, since you want it, but I tell you that between us there will sometimes be clouds or vapors arising, or mists or smoke,

that will hide me from you. Sometimes you will see me darkly and obscurely. At other times, you will see me neither more nor less, neither much nor little. {6470} Sometimes you will see me clearly and plainly. You will see me according to the path you take. But if you need me, look around you, for if you look for me earnestly, you will find me very quickly. Now go along steadily, for you do not need to stop or tarry. {6480} Take the good road, and do not believe your body, for he is disloyal to you."

Then, thanking her again and again for her good deeds, I set out on my path right away. Often I found what she told me about and I saw all that she taught me. I saw little of her, unless I put great effort into it. {6490} The cloud the body made between us hid her from me. Now God keep me from harm! For I know of no sure path, and I cannot think of one, that leads to the city where I intend to go. I must think carefully about what I will have to do, for when I find that someone I have tenderly cared for is my adversary, I think that someone {6500} who never sees me will do me even more harm.

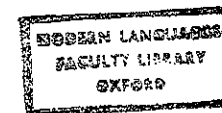
As I went along, thinking this way all the time, I saw that my path split up and divided in two. These paths were not very far apart and they were not very different from each other, but between them I saw a marvelous hedge {6510} that seemed to extend far off. There were holly-bushes and brambles growing in it, with many briars full of thorns planted among them, thickly intertwined with them. One path was on the left, the other on the right. It seemed that the two would have been one path if it were not for the hedge in the middle. {6520}

On the left there was a young lady sitting on a rock, leaning back. She had one hand tucked under her arm and in the other she had a glove she was playing with. She wrapped it around her finger and twisted and turned it. I saw by her face that she did not have many cares, {6530} and that she was not very concerned about spinning or working at any other task.

On the right path I saw a workman sitting, reweaving and repairing old mats. And I was even more astonished to see that he kept pulling apart completely everything he had made and then reweaving it. {6540} It seemed clear to me that he was a fool and that he had no sense at all. I did not think much of him, but I was the fool, as I saw very clearly soon after. I spoke to him first,



Ainsi comme tousiours aloie
 Et en allant ainsi pensoie
 Mon chemin qui se fourchoit
 Et en n'voies se partoit
 Mon pas que de moult se flomagnassent

The Two Paths

however, although I was not very eager to do so, and I said to him: "Now tell me, friend, I ask you, which of these paths is better? I see two here before my eyes. {6550} I have never been along this way. Tell me, which one shall I take?"

"Where do you want to go?" he asked.

"I want to go across the sea to Jerusalem," I said, "where the bishop was born of a virgin."

"Come over here by me," he said, "for I am directly on the path. The way of Innocence and the right road begins here by me. {6560} This is the way you can travel to the city across the sea."

"I would like very much to know if what you say is true," I said, "for your work tells me that you do not have much sense. I see you are busy weaving mats, a poor and lowly craft, and I see you are taking apart what you have finished and making it over again. {6570} And that does not seem to make much sense to me, unless you teach me the reason."

Then he answered me: "If I am of a poor craft, that is no cause to blame me or to call me a fool. Not everyone can forge crowns of gold or exchange gold. Some do one thing, others do another. What one person does, the other does not do. {6580} If all were of one craft, they would profit poorly. And I tell you truly that the poor craft is the most needed and it is often more necessary than one that is rich and grand. One is maintained and guided and supported by the other. There is none that is evil, if it is done honestly, {6590} or that cannot be profitable, if the people are not idle, wherever they are. A poor, honest craftsman is worth more than the idler in the royal court. If I pull things apart and remake them, so I will not be idle, you should not blame me for that. If I had something else to work at, I would busy myself with that, and I would not pull apart {6600} what I have made in order to remake it. But you see clearly that I have nothing to do except tear apart my work and reweave it. This ought to satisfy you, if you love me as you should.

"Love!" I said. "Who are you? And where did you get that idea? You have never done me any good, and I do not think you can. How can I love you? {6610} People might think I was a fool if I loved you without knowing something more about you. In you I see nothing but stupidity, ignorance, and folly. You value those who exert themselves more than those who are at ease, and you value workers more than idlers. {6620} I do not know who taught

you this, or who has made you say this either, for I know very well it is better to rest than work and better to be idle than hoe and dig. As long as you think otherwise, you will always be considered a fool."

"Oh, my dear friend," he said, "you know little about me, I think. {6630} And you know little about Idleness and her dangerous companionship as well. I ask you now to answer me! What is the reason iron that is shining and polished, and steel that is bright and burnished rust and corrode and do not keep their beauty always? What is the reason?"

"If what you told me before is so," I said to him, {6640} "then I am wrong to argue with you any longer, for you have confounded me with these words."

"Certainly that is so," he said, "for just as iron no one uses is in danger of rusting soon, so those who are idle and do nothing are in danger of rusting soon, through vice and sin. {6650} But when they occupy themselves and keep busy with work, it will keep them from sin and from becoming stained with rust. It will serve to polish them and burnish them like a file."

"I ask you to tell me," I said, "where you got these words, what your name is and who you are, for I am greatly astonished that you answer me so well, {6660} and I thought you were a foolish man."

"It is not I who speak to you," he said, "but Grace, whom you do not see. She puts in my ear whatever I say and she guides me. Do not be surprised, for you must know that I am the one who gives bread to people, and without that all the descendants of Adam would long ago have died of hunger {6670} and Noah's ark would have been of no use. I am the one who makes time pass quickly and without boredom, the one all men were born for, through the bitter bite of the apple. I am called, by my right name, Labor or Occupation. Call me either one, as you please, for it does not matter to me. {6680} Those who go to the city across the sea, the one you told me about at first, pass by me. Now do what you have decided to do. Come by me or take your path on the other side, but be careful not to make a fool of yourself by choosing the worse way."

When the mat-maker had told me who he was and what his name was, {6690} I had it in mind that I would go by his path, by

his way. But at this point, my crippled body began to flatter and deceive me, saying: "What are you thinking of, you fool? Do you believe this fool, this scatterbrain? Do not believe him! Leave him behind! He does nothing but torment and torture people. {6700} Go and talk to the young lady who has her hand tucked under her arm. Ask her the way, too, just as you asked him. She will perhaps say such things to you that you will not care about the road to the right but you will go along the other to the left."

"Oh, I know you well, very well indeed," I said to my body. "I will do nothing of the sort, {6710} for I am sure that if I believed you I would soon go the wrong way."

"And if I tell you the truth," he said, "will you believe me?"

Then I said, "Yes."

"The path on this side," he said, "is not very far from the path on the other side. They are the same in every way, except that the hedge of thorn-bushes is between them. A hedge is not a wall with battlements for enclosing towers and castles. {6720} Every hedge is broken through or torn down somewhere, or at least one can break through it or tear it down at some point. Even if you were diverted or led away from your path, you could surely pass through the hedge soon enough and return to your path. And so if you understand what I say, {6730} it could not harm you greatly to go talk to the fair lady who is sitting on her rock."

Then I said, "Let us go there. I see clearly that I will never have any peace unless I believe you about something."

I went to the young lady who was sitting at the end of the other path and greeted her, and she said: "God keep you, friend! {6740}"

"Young lady," I said, "by my faith, you would do me a great favor if you showed me my path, if you know it."

"If you come by me, you cannot miss the path," she said, "for I am the porter and gatekeeper of many fair paths. I lead people to the green-wood to gather violets and nuts. {6750} I guide them to the realm of delight, diversion and pleasure. There I have them listen to songs, roundelays and ballads, to the sweet sounds of harps and vielles, 28 organs and other instruments²⁹—it would take a long time to tell about them all. There I have them watch dancers and the tricks of tumblers and jugglers, {6760} games of backgammon and chess, bowling and merells, dice, sleight-of-hand

tricks and many other amusements. If you want to go to this place, you should pass by me. Now see whether or not you will go there, for you have your counsellor with you."

"Oh God! What a miserable counsellor!" I said. "I have a counsellor, but he has no desire {6770} to counsel me rightly. He has become an advocate, in order to wage war against me. I was very much deceived when I agreed to provide him wages to counsel me, and I am deceived even more now, for always—yesterday and today—he wants these wages and I must provide them to him. {6780} I do not know if I will ever get even with him or if I will ever get revenge."

"Why do you say this?" she asked. "You are foolish. Did he not give you good counsel when he led you to me?"

"Certainly," I said, "I wish that were so, but I would have to cross myself, for it would be the first time he ever gave me good counsel." {6790}

"Now tell me," she said, "how he counselled you, and do not lie about it. Tell me what words he used to make you come to me and what he said to you, and I will tell you right away whether his counsel is good and true."

"He told me," I said, "that if I came to talk to you I could not be diverted or led away from my path very far, {6800} and even if I were diverted or led astray by you, he told me the hedge would be broken through or torn down soon enough, so that I could quickly return to my way. These words brought me to you, and may God grant that I was right to come."

"Now you can see that he does not want to deceive you," she said. {6810} "He is willing to suffer in order to save you and protect you, for when he talks about breaking through the hedge to set you back on the right path, you can clearly see that he is not looking for his pleasure or comfort, for if there is any pain there, only he will have it and not you. He will be scratched and pricked and bloodied. {6820} Trust him in all this. You can lose nothing by it. Come by me. This is your path. You are not the first pilgrim to come here. The path is well worn."

"Lady," I said, "since you want me to pass by you and you advise me to do so, tell me what you do and what your name is. {6830} I would like to know this before I go along your path."

"There cannot be much good in that, if you please," she said, "for many have passed by me who have not asked about this at all.

I was so pleasant to them that they never said a word about it. Since you want to know, however, you must understand {6840} that I am one of the dolls Lady Sloth once made and set up here. You will see her and meet her later. I am her daughter, and my name is Idleness, the gentle paring.³⁰ I would much rather put on my gloves and comb and part my hair, and look at myself in the mirror,³¹ than do any work. {6850} I look forward to feast-days and Sundays, to reading falsehoods,³² to gathering up lies and making them look like the truth, to telling trifles and fables, romances and deceitful things. I am your body's friend. When you are awake and when you sleep, I make sure he has no pain and he has no blisters on his hands. {6860} Often I give him a green garland and make him look at himself to see if he is handsome, if he is well-turned out, well-dressed, and wearing fine shoes. Sometimes I make worms come into his hands and dig in them, hoeing, cultivating, and plowing them, without sowing anything.³³ Now consider what you will do, what you have in mind, what counsel you have. {6870} If you intend to pass by me, say so now and do not delay. Tuck your robes up in your belt and set yourself on the path."

When she had said this to me, I said to her: "Since my body is your friend, if you love him truly, you must not deceive him. And you know that if he were led astray he would be deceived, for I would pass through the hedge clumsily and roughly. {6880} I would make a hole with his elbows so I could find my path again. I would have little pity, even if he were pricked and scratched."

"Go along," she said, "and say no more. He chose the path himself and he cannot blame me or accuse me of false love." {6890}

Then I passed by Idleness and entered upon her path, and I ignored the other path and forgot about it completely. I took this one through my folly, and it could not be worse for me. I am led astray, but I do not know it. But soon enough I will see it clearly. Now God grant that I may go along this path and pass through the bad going {6900} in such a way that sometime before I come to the end of the evil path, I can pass through the hedge and return to the other path.

As I went along, always following the hedge, I heard a voice from the other side calling me and saying:

"You simpleton, what are you doing? Where are you going? Why did you believe in the counsel {6910} of that babbling liar, that blabbermouth, Idleness? The counsel she has given you will lead you straight to ruin. It will lead you straight to death, although the path is round-about. She has deceived you very quickly. St. Bernard did not call her the wicked stepmother of virtue for nothing, when he came to know her.³⁴ {6920} She is even more a wicked stepmother to pilgrims than a kite is to chickens. I think you will understand this soon enough and find her to be so, if you do not cross over to this path and leave that one."

Then I was completely confused, and completely at a loss as well, for I could not see who was speaking and I could not tell who it was. {6930} But I answered: "Tell me, please," I said, "who is speaking to me. I will never be at ease, if I do not know something about this."

Then the one who had spoken answered: "You should know very well who I am, for I have done you much good, if you remember any of it. {6940} I am the one who brought you to my house and showed you many beautiful treasures and gave them to you. I am called Grace."

When I heard this, I said: "Dear lady, since it is you, I thank you, as I ought to, for even speaking to me. I have long wanted to talk to you about the way, to ask you what this hedge is doing here {6950} in the middle. So I ask you, teach me and show me the truth about this, and then later I will do my best to pass through it. If my body has to suffer there, I think he should suffer. He has been my counsellor, and I am not concerned if he is hurt by this." {6960}

"You certainly ought to pass through the hedge soon," she said, "if you have the heart for it, for as you go further along, it will get thicker."

"Lady," I said, "I am happy about that, for then the body that betrayed me by making me come this way will be punished that much more."

"Now understand then," said Grace, "that the hedge in the middle {6970} of the two paths belongs to the lady whom you have seen with the mallet, the stinging switches and the broom between her teeth. She is called Penance, in heaven, on earth, and on the sea. She planted the hedge for those who go on that road,

so that they cannot pass over to this one without suffering pain. {6980} She planted it also to get switches and brooms from it and handles for her mallets, whenever she needs them, for she has to use them in many places to bring back sinners from evil. At its beginning the hedge is not very wide. I advise you to pass through it soon, for very soon you could meet with {6990} something that will stop you and not let you pass over here."

Then I began to look this way and that, to think about whether I could find a hole I might pass through. But while I was thinking about this, I saw Reason on the other side, and this astonished me greatly. I knew her well, by her face. "Lady most wise," I said, {7000} "how is it that you have left me on this side? I thought that you would always come with me, step for step, and never leave me."

"It is not my fault," she said. "You left me first. If you had come on this side, you would still have me with you. Do not think that I would go by a way that is disgraceful. {7010} I will keep to the good path the good pilgrim takes. Come here and believe Grace, for she has offered you all the best of the game, and you would be a fool to go on that path any longer."

When she had said this to me, I began again to look around to see if I could find where the hedge was the least thick and thorny, {7020} for I had more pity on my body than I should. Now God save me through his pity, for I am close to a bad fall. Just in this way a bird looks around, turning its neck this way and that, and it is often caught in the net laid in its path, or it gets stuck in birdlime or it is killed by an arrow. We are fools not to act when we can, {7030} for we cannot always act when we want.

Now I will tell you what happened to me, and it was a great misfortune. As I went along looking for a hole in the hedge there were cords and nets in my path that I did not see. Suddenly I felt myself tied up in them, caught by the feet, {7040} and I was greatly astonished and heartsick at this. I stopped talking to Reason and I forgot about Grace for a while. I made no effort to look for a gap or hole in the hedge. I had enough to do, and enough to think about, just untangling the cords. I could not break them very easily, for I was not as strong as Samson. {7050} An old crane—ugly, hideous, deformed and foul—was holding the cords and nets, gripping them in one hand. I had not seen her before because she was following me.

When I turned around and looked at her, I was even more astonished than before, for I saw that she was all mossy, completely covered with moss {7060} that was shaggy, filthy, black, vile, and dirty. There was something ugly in the hall where she came to dance. Under her arm she had a poleaxe for killing swine and she had bundles of cords wrapped up and hung around her neck. When I saw the way she looked, I was sure that she was an otter-hunter or a wolfhunter. {7070} I have seen the king's wolf-hunters and otter-hunters with this kind of gear.

"What is this, you stinking old thing!" I said. Why are you following me here? Who are you, and by what right are you stopping me? You should not come up like this, without speaking or coughing. It is clear that you never came from anywhere good. {7080} Get away from here and let me get these nets off my feet! I am not a gyrfalcon or a falcon, or sparrow hawk or merlin, or any other falconer's bird, to be bound with jesses like this."

Then the old crone answered: "By my head, you will not escape, as you think you will" she said. You were wrong to come here and you will get it from me. {7090} You called me a stinking old thing. I am old, but you misnamed me when you said I was stinking, for I am not stinking, I believe. I have been in many fine places before this, both summer and winter, I have slept in the chambers of emperors and kings and other great lords, I have sat inside the bedcurtains of bishops and abbots, prelates and priests, {7100} and I was never once called stinking. How come you dare to speak to me this way? You are caught and tied up in my nets. I think you would be very arrogant and you would speak to me very harshly if you had not fallen into them. And therefore, since I have hold of you, I think I will take my full revenge for that. {7110} I will put you in such a position that I will make you believe in my god."

"You old crone, you have such a bold heart. Who are you?" I asked. "Since you are threatening me this way, you must tell me your name."

"Certainly," she said, "I do not want to conceal anything from you—my name, who I am, and what I do. I am the wife of the butcher of Hell, {7120} and with my cords I lead to him, like swine, the pilgrims I can catch and bind by the feet. I have led many to him already and I will lead many more, and the first of

them will be you, if you do not escape from my nets. Therefore, I came here secretly and stealthily to bind you. {7130} If I had come in some other way, I think I would have wasted my time, for you would already have passed by me and gone on your way.

"I am the old crone who lies with children in their beds. I make them turn over on their side and I make them hate to get up. I was born to rock them and put them to sleep, to close their eyes {7140} so they do not see the light. I make the helmsman sleep by the mast in the middle of the ship when he has lost or broken his rudder, although he is in the middle of the ocean and he sees the wind coming up. After he loses control, I make him give up completely {7150} and allow his ship to go into danger and let everything founder and perish. I make thistles come into gardens without plowing—brambles and nettles and cockles without sowing. I have often put off until the next day what was ready to be done, and then did no more about it. I am usually glad {7160} to wait for the time to come, and I have often put off many a good work. I am called Sloth, the gouty, the cramped, the lame, the crippled, the wounded, the sodden, the frozen. And if you want to call me by another name, you can call me Ennu, ³⁵ {7170} for whatever I see displeases me. And just as a millstone grinds itself into powder and dust, when it has nothing to grind, so I watch myself grinding and consuming myself completely with annoyance. Nothing pleases me, unless it is done according to my wishes and my desires. And because everything annoys me so, I carry this poleaxe. {7180} It is called *Accedia*, and it stuns and dazes people like a lead club. This is the same pole-axe I used to stun Elijah once and put him to sleep under the juniper. ³⁶ If it had not been for the angel who awakened him twice, he would never have escaped me by his own strength. {7190} I stun the clerks in church with this poleaxe and put them to sleep. I make them so sluggish and sleepy that, if they were weighed and sold by the pound, one of them would weigh as much as three. I spare no one I can find and stun.]

"These nets and cords binding you are made of my guts, {7200} and therefore they are strong. You can stretch them but they will not break. They are not cords from Clairvaux, but they were made at Nerraux, ³⁷ all black and dark, drawn out of my belly. If you want to know what they are called, one is called *Negligence* and the other is called *Lethargy* and *Weariness*, the faint-hearted. {7210} They are supple, for they are dried and stretched and

cured. I make them so that they tie up well and wrap around tightly, in order to catch people without tearing their garments. You know very well whether I am telling you the truth or not, for I am holding you with these two.

"I will say nothing for now about those you see hanging in bunches around my neck. {7220} I will leave them for another time. You will find yourself and feel yourself trussed up in them soon enough. I will only speak to you of one, because I will try to ensnare and catch you in that one more than in the others. This cord is known as Despair, by its right name. {7230} It is the one that hanged Judas, when he betrayed Jesus the King.³⁸ It is the cord of the hangman of Hell, who is blacker than ink, and with it he drags off and hangs on his gallows those he catches by surprise. I carry it around the country, because the hangman has given it to me, so that if I find some fool, I make a knot around his neck, {7240} I drag him off and lead him away and he has a bad time of it. Now see whether the wind of the North³⁹ has brought you to a good haven, whether Idleness, my daughter, has served you well with her guile. She has made you come on this side, and you shall die here, if I am not just prattling."

When the old crone had spoken and talked of her craft, {7250} I said to her again, with great contempt: "Old mossy one, it seems to me that knowing you is worthless. Let me go. You are making trouble for me. You have already made trouble for me." Then she took the pole-axe from under her arm and hit me such a blow that I was struck to the ground. If I had had my habergeon it would have been very useful to me then, {7260} for the blow I was struck was a mortal one, if I had not had with me in my scrip the ointment the king makes.⁴⁰ This is the spiritual ointment that no mortal can make. Grace had put this in my scrip, when I took it up. She knew I would have need of it and that is why she put it there. {7270}

"Oh God!" I said, when I saw that I was down, "Good Lord, King Jesus, have mercy! This old witch has knocked me down and killed me with her pole-axe. If you do not help me right away, I see no tomorrow for me. Come to my aid, help me, and get me out of this trap!"

As I was lying there, moaning and groaning, {7280} the old crone put down her bundle and was about to take out the

hangman's cord to wrap it around my neck, and I did not like that at all.

"Do you think you will escape by moaning and crying?" she asked. "I will put the hangman's cord around your neck and tie it, and then I will be your hangman and executioner. {7290} That will make the chief executioner approve of me and please him well."

When I heard these threats and I saw very clearly these preparations, I remembered my staff. I clung to it and my courage came back. I grabbed it, took it in both hands and leaned on it. And I made such an effort that I got up on my feet again, {7300} and I would have made off towards the hedge. But the old crone was neither sleepy nor slow in following me. She came after me with her pole-axe and she held me back with the nets that still entangled me.

"Stop! Stop!" she said. "You are not getting away yet, I think. It does you no good to resist. You must forget about the hedge. {7310} You must submit completely to my pole-axe and my cords." So she pursued me again with her pole-axe and pulled me back by the cords. I was dragging behind me. I was very worried, and I was afraid that she might make a knot around my neck with the cord of false Judas. {7320} Because I obeyed her completely in everything, however, she wrapped it around her neck again as before and let me go free of it. She let the others fall and trail on the ground, saying that if I dragged myself even a little towards the hedge she would take them up again right away and pull me back. {7330}

So she did as she said, and she kept her promise. Every time I tried to go towards the hedge and reach it, she frightened me with threats and waved her pole-axe at me. She pulled on her nets and held me back and dragged me away from the hedge.

And so I went along this way, moving away from the hedge, {7340} as the old crone made me go wherever she wanted. On the brink of a hideous valley, horrible, deep and dark, I saw two other awesome and frightening old hags coming straight at me. One was carrying the other on her shoulders, and the one who was being carried was so fat and bloated {7350} that her grossness was beyond measure. She was no work of nature, as her appearance showed. She was carrying a cudgel around her neck and she had a horn on her forehead, and this made her look very fierce. She was dressed and arrayed in a white mantle. {7360} She had a horn

in her hand and she was wearing like a scrip a great pair of bellows on a thong. She was wearing spurs, fitted with fine rowels as sharp as a bluejay's beak. She seemed to be the mistress of the old crone who was carrying her. She made her go where she wanted and she herself held a mirror in which she looked at her image, at her face and her features.

When I saw these two old crones, {7370} I said, "What is this! Sweet God, have mercy! There are nothing but old crones in this country, old crones here and old crones there. I do not know if I am in Femina, where women rule.⁴¹ If I am killed by them, it would be better if I had not been born. I would be more grieved by that than if I were to die in mortal battle."

Then a voice came to me. It was Grace, I thought, {7380} and she said to me loudly: "It is no use being downhearted. You will fight with these old hags, or you will give yourself up without a fight. You have entered into their country, and no one enters there, on horseback or on foot, without being assailed and attacked. Do not be dismayed by two or three, for later you will find {7390} plenty of others who will keep a close watch on you, and I am telling you that if you are not armed or arrayed differently—and if you do not protect yourself—you will be dealt with harshly."

Then I said to her: "I ask you to tell me who these creatures are that I see coming. They are astonishing to me" {7400}

"You shall ask them soon enough," she said, "when you want to. Just as the one who is leading you and walking you along with her cords has told you who she is, so those others will also tell you who they are, without lying, for I have instructed and commanded them to do so."

As I listened to the loud voice I was hearing, {7410} the old crone with the horn who was riding on the other one came up to me, pricking and spurring the other old crone. She took up her horn and blew it, and then said to me:

"You there, wait for me! You were wrong to come here. Give yourself up or you will meet your death with one blow!"

"Who are you, that I should surrender myself to you? I asked her. {7420} Unless I know your name, I will never surrender to you."

"And I will teach it to you," she said. "You should know that I am acclaimed as the oldest of the old crones. None of them is as old as I am. I boast of it and I do not deny it. Before the world

was made or heaven was completed, {7430} I was engendered, conceived, and hatched in the nest of heaven. A bird that was once called Lucifer hatched me. There never was a worse hatching from a brooding bird, for as soon as I was out of the shell and I saw my father I blew so strongly with these bellows I have with me {7440} that I made him tumble down from the high nest and plunge into hell. Before, he was a white bird, noble and gentle. He shone more brightly than the sun at high noon. Now he has become so black, so ugly and filthy, that he is uglier than death. He has become a fisherman in the sea, a rapper of birds and beasts. {7450} You will see him clearly later, when you go along the sea.

"Now I tell you, when I had pushed him out of his nest, I tumbled down with him and I remained in heaven no longer. I came to earth, which was just newly made. This did not please me at all, for I saw one creature there who was made to climb high up into the nest {7460} from which I had fallen and from which I had made my father tumble down into the abyss. When I saw this, I was filled with anger, and I thought that I would make him fall right away as well, if I could, and keep him from climbing up. I did what I had in mind. I came to him and I took my bellows {7470} and blew into his thoughts and puffed up his belly⁴² so that he thought that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would become as filled with knowledge as his Lord God. And in this way he was completely overcome and deceived. For that, he was driven out of paradise and exiled, {7480} and he lost the right to climb up and go into the nest.

"When I had finished these two childhoods,⁴³ while I had milk-teeth and I was still young, I thought about what trouble I might still make. I have done many evil things, and I still do them and I always will. I cause wars and I provoke them. I breed discord and strife among the lords of the countries {7490} and I make them challenge and attack one another out of malice. I am the lady and commander, the captain, the leader, of all battles and campaigns where banners are displayed, helmets and headgear, timbrels, furs and velvet garments {7500} embroidered with gold or silver. Novelties are fashioned by me, and I make many more of them than the king. I make hoods trimmed with silk and banded with gold, hats tufted and high-crowned, with a shaggy coxcomb,⁴⁴ coats with tight sides and hanging sleeves, {7510} white surcoats with red sleeves, dresses cut very low to allow the neck and white bosom to

be gawked at, garments too short or too long, hoods too large or too small, boots tiny and tight, or big enough to make three out of them, belts too narrow or too wide, and with these things even the lame, {7520} the halt, the spavined, the one-eyed, the humpbacked, and the crippled adorn themselves. I make these things because I want everyone to look at me and to say that I am unrivalled and unique in my clothing, so that I have everyone's regard and no one can match me. I never have any concern for a peer or companion, {7530} and my heart would break right away if anyone were compared to me. I will support and maintain whatever I say, good or bad. And I will not take back anything I have said that is mistaken. I will have no critic, no master, no teacher. Just as a scabrous beast hates being curried, and a lice-ridden head hates a comb, {7540} so I hate teaching and counsel and advice. I place no value at all on the knowledge of others. I think that my own is better and that I know more than anyone else and that nothing is ever done well or said or arranged rightly, unless I thought of it first. And if someone says or does anything well, {7550} no matter how well it is said or done, I have such resentment in my heart that it almost breaks in two because I have not done it. I want to have all the praise, the honor, and the renown for myself, and I must say I am annoyed when anyone other than me is honored or praised. If others are less intelligent than I, I am quick to treat them with contempt. {7560} I say that they are nothing, or that they are baptized donkeys.

"If I hear people praise me, I pretend I do not hear them. Or I say to them: 'You are mocking me. You should not do that. I know very well I am not as clever as you say. I see and recognize my fault well. I know nothing, and that grieves me.' {7570}

"And do you know why I say this and why I humble myself so? Do not think that I say it so that someone will answer: 'You are right. You know nothing. You know yourself well.' If someone said this to me, my heart would break with sorrow. I would be killed with the spear I had forged. {7580} But I say it because I want the press to wind the other way, to wind as it did before, turning to my acclaim, so that once again my reputation is confirmed and recounted, so that someone says: 'Lady, God save you, from here to *Boulogne la crasse*'⁴⁵ there is no one who can do what you do.

{7590} Your understanding is so remarkable it makes people praise it and prize it. I say this without a bit of mockery or flattery.'

"And then, when I hear such wheedling and such windy puffery, my heart beats and hops and jumps for joy. I become swollen and puffed up and pompous, as you see. {7600} I must have a larger place, a great chair, a big bench. I must sit alone like a princess. I must go first, like a duchess, surrounded by people who are kept at a distance, without crowding me, for I would soon be crushed if I were crowded at all. Then I am as arrogant as a leopard, and I look about me haughtily. {7610} I look at people askance and I stretch my neck with pride and lift up my eyebrow and my chin. I make myself look like a lion,⁴⁶ spreading out my shoulders and stretching my neck this way and that, and I swagger along, flaunting every joint and every muscle. I am the scum that rises up and floats on good water. {7620} I like to make a scaffold of the good work of others and I set myself high up on it like a monkey. I have only wind and fumes inside me, and I am like a puffed up bladder that has nothing in it but a stink when it is burst or united. Because I am gross and puffed up, I do not see my feet or where I am walking, and I never see any fault in myself. {7630} I see very clearly the faults of others, but I do not see their good deeds at all. And therefore I mock and scorn everyone. None like me can be found at *Chateau Landon*⁴⁷ for any money. In times past, I was acclaimed and crowned as a queen, but when Isaiah saw me, he soon cursed my crown.⁴⁸ {7640} He was full of sorrow when I wore it and when I was called queen.

"I am Pride, the vain, the fierce horned beast, and I have taken a horn and fixed it in the middle of my forehead to strike people with. The horn is called Arrogance and Cruelty, a unicorn's horn, crueler than a pitchfork⁴⁹ or a carpenter's chisel. No steel in the world, no matter how it is tempered or ground, is so pointed or sharp that it can pierce the human heart or enter it and not rebound, if this horn did not help it and make a pathway for it. I make the pathway for daggers and swords and sabers, {7660} for all the iron things that are made for killing people. I attack on the right and on the left, without sparing clerk or priest, striking more cruelly than a savage and fierce bull. And understand that I strike most harshly and cruelly those who think they have purged themselves of their sins.⁵⁰ {7670} I carry with me a pair of bellows,

spurs, a staff and a horn, and I am clothed in a mantle to show my state the finer.

"My bellows is called Vainglory. It is made for stirring up the coals, for making fools who are all black and dirty with old sins think that they are sparkling clean and that they are better than other people. {7680} Nebuchadnezzar, who said that he had founded Babylon in its power and beauty, had these bellows in his forge.⁵¹ The sparks he threw off showed clearly that there was a great stirring up of coals inside him, and this was done by some device.

"Just as the wind loosens the fruit and makes it fall from the tree, {7690} so this bellows brings all virtues down to earth. It blows down whatever it aims at. It lets nothing good remain in its sight. It blows the birds out of their nests on high and blows down their food. It makes them lose, through their folly, what they need to live on. Have you ever heard the story of the raven who once had a piece of cheese? {7700} Reynard said to him: 'Oh, raven, God save you, sing me a song. I want to hear the sweet sound of your shining throat.'⁵² It is sweeter than a dulcimer. I would rather hear your voice than the sound of the organ or the psaltery. So do not fail me, I ask you, for that is why I have come here.' {7710} When he felt this wind, this hard puffing, he could no longer hold onto the cheese and he let it drop. He started to sing right away, like one with a joyful heart, for he thought that the fox had spoken the truth. But it was not so. He did not like his singing. He only wanted the cheese. {7720} He carried it off, as he wanted, and so the raven was deceived.

"By this example you can clearly see that the wind of the bellows makes those with the finest feathers let go of what they have and lose it. That is to say, when I see any virtue in them, or good of grace or fortune, so I can draw for one {7730} and take away their paw,⁵³ I puff this bellows and I blow on what they are holding, so that it falls away and they lose it.

"The wind of the bellows cannot tolerate powder or ashes, that is, human mortals, for it is said they are ashes and powder and smoke. This powder, when it is blown upon, is lifted up by a little puff {7740} and it is soon scattered and cast to the winds. This bellows makes reeds sound, and flutes and shawms, and those that are devoid of virtue or sense. With this bellows I blow upon the

hearth of those who would bake their souls into a cake for the devil. And even more, I say to you {7750} that if anyone has a light in his bosom I extinguish it with this bellows. I test whether they are grain or chaff—worth something or worth nothing—by blowing hard. If they are chaff, I soon make them fly away, but if they are grain, they will do nothing on account of my wind.

"With this bellows I know how to draw in wind and gather it up, {7760} for when people go puffing and blowing in my ear, when they tell me that I am fair, and that I have a very beautiful dress, that I am noble and strong, wise, courteous and valiant, then I draw in this wind and I hold it in my belly. I become fat with it, as you see. I have told you this before. {7770} This wind makes me preen like a peacock and lift my tail up high, so people can see my embarrassment.⁵⁴ I trust those unseeing hundred eyes of Argus⁵⁵ spread out in my tail, and I believe their judgment, rather than my own eyes, with which I see myself clearly.

"I am puffed up with the wind of this bellows, {7780} so that if I were not deflated I would soon burst or I would die without bursting. And therefore, instead of a vent, I have a special horn to expel and void the wind I have in my body. This horn should be called by the name Vaunting or Breakwind. I frighten all the beasts of the country {7790} with it and I make them lift up their heads, when I want to trumpet loudly. I blow 'taken'⁵⁶ many times when I have taken nothing in the fields or the woods, for I often boast of something I do not have, and I say I have done things in the past I never thought of doing. I say that I come from a great family of high and noble ancestry, {7800} that I was born in a fine house with great holdings, that I know how to do this or that well, that I am well-known to the king, and many other horn-blowings that are nothing but loud noises. And fools who do not understand the trick think that I have 'taken' something. I also blow it when I have won a prize or when I have done anything that is valiant, to my way of thinking, {7810} for, to gain honor, I would never hide it or be quiet about it for the death of me. Just like a hen that has laid an egg, I tell everyone about it right away. 'Cluck, cluck,' I say, 'cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck! Have you heard what I have said, have you seen what I have done? What do you say? Is this well done? {7820} Do you think I have done it skillfully and cleverly? Do you think this one or that one would have done it this way? Whenever I want to consider doing something or think a little about it, I have

no doubt that no one knows better than I how to do it and that no one could do it better.

"A great wind comes from this horn, for it is blown with a full belly. {7830} And someone who blows it is no doubt miserable when there is no one to hear it and no one wants to listen or pay attention to the horn-blowing. A fool like this—who is called a Horn-Blower on account of the horn—always wants people to listen to him talk and he wants no one else to say anything but him, and he wants to talk about himself all the time. {7840} He is like the cuckoo, who knows how to sing and charter only about himself. Such a horn-blower, such a blowhard—on account of his wind he is called a windbag—says that he knows very well and understands completely whatever people want to say. He interrupts what they are saying and he thinks it is all foolish. He answers everyone without being asked and lets his opinions fly. {7850} He argues, he solves, he concludes, and out of such cloth he often makes a tattered rag. And if someone were to say to him that it is not of a certain color, he would be ready to quarrel right away, to make the lightning-bolts fly, to start earthquakes and bring down claps of thunder. These people know very well how to denounce vices {7860} and glorify fasts, how to praise virtues and penances, although they have none in their belly.⁵⁷ They have nothing in them but horn-blowing and wind to make people gape at them.

"This horn makes him a poor hunter, for he is seldom a 'taker.'⁵⁸ He drives everyone away with his horn. Just as the magic, with its cries and charter, lets no birds nest {7870} near it but makes them fly away and makes itself hated by all, so everyone leaves and flies away when they hear the noise of this blowhard. No one wants to nest near him, because of his prattling and chartering.

"This horn is not the one Roland blew as he was dying. It is not made of the horn of an ox, and it is a long time since it was new. {7880} It was made when I was born and it was given to me. As long as I live, I will never let go of it and I will never stop blowing it. People can always recognize me and be warned of me by it, if they want.

"I will tell you also about my spurs, for I am well known by them. They show that I like to ride fine horses, {7890} and that I would not deign to go on foot if I did not have a horse. They tell that I am more ready to balk and make trouble, that my heels are

more apt to go backwards. One is named Disobedience and the other is called Rebellion. The first one Adam put on when he ate of the forbidden fruit.⁵⁹ {7900} He could not have eaten it at all, without going backwards, and he could not have gone backwards, if he had not first had the spur.⁶⁰ The way was not well worn. Eve alone had gone that way, and he went after her. Evil came from that and it will come again. The spur that made him bold hooked him and put him to death. {7910} It was unfortunate that the gentleman was spurred to eat. And it is unfortunate he had a mount at all, if he had to put on this spur to ride it. If the mount had not been the one formed from his right side,⁶¹ he would never have put on the spur or have been spurred to eat.

"The other spur Pharaoh put on his heel one time, {7920} when the sovereign king wanted to deliver the people of Israel from the Pharaoh's rule and power and to bring them out of his land. But because he wanted to show his might against one stronger than he, his spur was a great trouble and hindrance to him, for when he had pricked and spurred long and hard, {7930} in the end he went backwards so hard that he was thrown into the sea.⁶² Such people think they will attack others, but they are felled by their own stroke. They are not wise, it is said, who press up against a sharp point. But no matter what will happen, the proud cannot hold back. They trust so in their spur that in the end they lose their life. {7940}

"Now I will tell you about the cudgel I carry for a staff. I support myself with it and I lean on it, when I find anyone who delays me, when anyone would trip me up with sermonizing and preaching. I fight with it and I defend myself with it, when anyone would attack me with reason, against my will, and would take my equipment away from me. {7950} I defend vices and sins with it. None of them, new or old, will let themselves be conquered, as long as I defend them. This is the cudgel that Rude Wit, the churl, had in his hand, as you saw, when Reason debated with him. Obstunacy is its name, as you were told then. {7960} It is the same one Saul leaned on when Samuel took back from him the booty he had seized and taken away from Amalek.⁶³ It is a cow-herd's cudgel, one that can never bend, for it is hard and gnarled, twisted and knotted. My father found it in the woods of Egypt and brought it to me. {7970} It is unfortunate that it was found, for those who will be beaten with it. I beat and strike the hearts of churls very

hard with it, in order to harden them and make myself hated by those of right understanding. I drive out Grace and make her flee from all places and I use it as an obstacle against those who are eager to return {7980} to the hedge of Penance. And to make it a greater obstacle, I have used it as a stake for fixing and attaching the nets of Sloth, in order to hold back more firmly those I want to detain, as I please. Now see whether or not you should cry 'Oh God!' when you have come upon me. I will soon show you the game I can play. {7990}

"But first, since I have told you this much, I will tell you about my mantle, this cloak in which I am arrayed and dressed, as you see. This cloak was made long ago to cover my ugliness, to hide my faults and to conceal my filth. Just as the snow decorates a dungh-heap and makes it white on the outside, {8000} or as painting makes a vile and stinking sepulchre shine, so this cloak covers me up and tells people I am beautiful, that I am some holy thing. But if I were uncovered and seen clearly within, no one would value me. If you ever saw a magician do the trick of lifting up a hat, {8010} how he makes people think that something is under it, and often there is nothing at all, then you can understand clearly that, whatever fine cloak and hood I may have on the outside, anyone who saw me clearly within would say: 'Pah! This is nothing.' A bird called the ostrich signifies {8020} my cloak and me. It has wings and feathers, but it cannot rise up into the air and fly. Someone who did not know it might think it could fly, just as some people believe, according to the mantle they see on the outside, that I am an exalted bird, heavenly and contemplative, {8030} that I am some spiritual thing, and that I ought to fly to heaven. I live on earth, however, and everything there delights me. I cannot fly. I do not know how to fly. I have a mantle and wings for nothing. This mantle I have long called by its right name, Hypocrisy. It is lined, length and breadth, with fox fur, although {8040} on the outside it is woven, made and knitted of the wool of the white sheep. ⁶⁴ I often wear it to church, I dress in it when I go to pray to God, and I clothe myself in it when I fear that someone might push me out of the status and dignity I have held for a while. I also dress in it when I have been dismissed and thrown out {8050} and I recite the '*sanctificetur*' to get some good luck. ⁶⁵ I do what Reynard did, who pretended to be dead on the road, so he was thrown into the

cart and got some herring, ⁶⁶ In this way, I have often been in high places and high positions, like a monkey who has mounted up high and is looked upon as a goddess. {8060} I am a monkey, and those who wear this cloak ⁶⁷ are monkeys, for it makes people imitate and practice crafts they know nothing about. ⁶⁸ And it is nothing but monkey-business to make people waste their time this way. The Pharisee ⁶⁹ was a monkey. On the outside, he showed himself clothed in goodness, pretending he was just and austere. {8070} He fasted twice a week, he said, and he was not a sinner like the publican, who showed his weakness to God. The monkey that once made himself a cobbler was like this, for he meddled so much with that craft that in the end he cut his own throat. ⁷⁰ Only fools meddle with things they do not understand. {8080}

"I am not the only one to wear this mantle. It is made for all these old hags. They all borrow it by turns, in order to be more beautifully dressed. Sloth is haughty in it. I make myself humble in it. The other women also cover their vileness with it. The more it is put on and worn, the stronger and less worn-out it is. {8090} Soon I will clothe you in it. I will make you try it on, and then, if I have time, I will do with you as I please."

When Pride had told me about her array, I still wanted very much to know who the other one was, the one carrying her and bearing her.

"You old crone, who are you?" I asked "You are carrying Pride, {8100} allowing an evil beast like that to be placed up over your head. I think you are not worth much, when you carry her this way."

Then she answered me: "Since you want to know who I am, I will tell you right now. You are right when you say, without flattering me, that I am worthless. That is true: I am the foolish old crone who {8010} bleats to everyone about her beauty. I busy myself in hailing great lords, plucking off their feathers until they have none left. I praise them all, right or wrong, serving them up a '*placebo*.' ⁷¹ I say nothing to displease them, for I have learned well how to lie. To fools, I say they are wise. To the hasty, I say they are even-tempered. {8120} To the negligent, I say they are diligent, and to tyrants I say they are compassionate. I know how to strew a muddy place with rushes and to brush a lice-ridden head. And I know very well how to grease a bad squeaky wheel, so

that later on it squeaks louder and is usually even worse. I am always welcome and well-received in the courts of kings. {8130} No juggler brings greater joy there than I do. But they are all fools, for I deceive them all with a flute.⁷² I am the Siren of the sea, and with my sweet singing I often make those who want to hear my song drown and perish. I am called Flattery, the cousin of Treachery, {8140} the elder daughter of Falseness, and the nurse of Iniquity. All the old crones you see, and have seen before, are fed and nourished and sustained by my breasts. And although I am nurse to them all with my vice, I feed and sustain Pride in a special way. {8150} I carry her, I support her and uphold her, as you see. If I did not exist, she would soon fall down, for she does not know how to go on foot."

"Now tell me," I said, "what is the purpose of that mirror I see you have?"

"Have you ever heard about the unicorn?" she asked, "how it loses all its fierceness of the wild when it looks in a mirror, {8160} and how it holds still when it sees its head there?"

"I have heard about it," I said.

"I would compare Pride with the unicorn for good reason," she said. "If she did not look at herself often in the mirror, she would gore everyone in turn and do nothing out of love. But when she has seen herself and looked at her face, {8170} she becomes more pleasant to the one holding the mirror. This mirror is agreement and accord with what people say. When the proud say nothing, they want people to say: 'You are right, you say the truth, that is so. I am a good mirror, look at yourself here.' But if they did not find a mirror, they would not conceal their fierceness. {8180} They would right away raise their horn and strike like a unicorn. And therefore, so that I might be treated well and I might not be gored, I carry the mirror and agree with whatever I see and hear. I am Echo of the deep woods, and I answer everyone with my foolishness and I repeat whatever I hear said, whether it helps or harms." {8190}

While Flattery was holding me as she wanted and speaking to me, as she was telling me about her craft and the tricks she knew how to perform, another old crone came towards me, and a great fear of her came into my heart. She had two spears fixed and attached to her two eyes. She crawled upon the ground on four

feet like a lizard and understand {8200} that she was so thin and so dry that she had no flesh or blood. All her joints and muscles appeared to be exposed. Two other old crones, just as frightening, horrible and dreadful—or worse—were sitting on her back. One was hiding behind a false face. She had concealed {8210} her face and her features so that no one could see her. She had a dagger in her right hand and a box in her left hand. But she was hiding the dagger behind her and concealing it.

The other old crone was holding a spear full of human ears that were pierced {8220} and skewered on it. She pointed one end towards me and she had the other end between her teeth, together with a red, bloody bone she was gnawing on like a dog. A hook was fixed to the iron of the barbed spear. It was made for piercing and hooking pilgrims. The old crone acted very fiercely. May the plague strike her! {8230}

When I had seen these old crones clearly and taken note of their array, I thought that I would like to know their names, if I could.

"You old crone," I said to the first one, who was carrying the other two, "tell me your name and what you do, if you would. You astonish and frighten me very much, you and these two vile old crones." {8240}

Then she answered me: "Certainly, if you are astonished it is not without cause, for I would soon deliver you up to Death. I am Envy, conceived once by Pride, when Satan, whose daughter I am, lay by her. There is no castle or town under heaven where I have not slaughtered many women and many men. {8250} I am the beast that once killed Joseph. Jacob said that a wild beast had devoured him⁷³ and he spoke the truth. I am the wild beast that no one should be glad to see or give a penny for. I live on all that is bitter. And I would never be at ease if I tasted anything sweet. {8260} The leanness of others nourishes me, and the anger of others makes me rejoice. The misfortune of others is my food, and the grief of others is like a breast to me. If I had plenty of this food things, I would be soon be quite big and fat. But, because I cannot always get it as I like, I am lean and wasted, pale and wan. {8270} The prosperity of others kills me and makes me lean and pale. The well-being of others sucks my blood and consumes it like a leach. I truly believe that if I were in Paradise I would soon die of sorrow. The happiness of that place would kill me. And so

whoever put me there would do me an injury, for Death has assured me and promised me {8280} that I will never die until the world ends, and I do not believe that I will lose my life even then. Death promised it to me, for she got herself into the world through me. She came into the world and entered it through me, and she rules it and will rule it through me. I am the serpent-beast that plots evil things. {8290} I have all those who do good and I confound them with my power. There is nothing I can love, in heaven, on earth, or in the sea. I defy Charity and I am at war with the Holy Spirit. I pursue everyone with these two spears you see coming out of my eyes and I make war on them. One is called Anger at the Joy of Others {8300} and the other is called Joy at the Misfortune of Others. With the first, Saul strengthened himself to strike David as he was playing the harp.⁷⁴ He was spiteful and very angry when people loved David better than him. With the second, Jesus the King was once pierced and wounded in the side. These spears mockery the Jews made of his torment did him more harm {8310} than the lance that Longinus⁷⁵ thrust into in his side. These spears are rooted and planted deep in my heart, but they come out at my eyes, to make me the horned beast, to make me spit venom from my eyes and poison my neighbors with a single look, without leaving toll or tithe.⁷⁶ {8320} My eyes are those of the basilisk. They kill those who settle down or live near me. As soon as I look at them, they are dead. I do many other evil things that my daughters can tell you about, if you will ask them. They are riding on my back and they can speak more easily than I, who get no rest at all. {8330} If you inquire and ask them who they are and listen to what they say, you can know, if you want, who I truly am."

"And I will gladly ask them right now," I said. "Who are you sitting in front upon Envy the fierce?" I asked, "You have hidden your face and your features under a false mask, {8340} and you are carrying a box and ornament and pulling a knife in secret. I cannot think any good of you, if you do not tell me otherwise."

Then she answered me: "If everyone knew who I am, no one would come near me or become acquainted with me. I execute and fulfill {8350} the will of my mother, Envy, and, because she cannot do harm to everyone she wants, she long ago sent me to school and asked me to learn the skill and the malice to accomplish her evil intentions. Now I tell you that I went to a school and there I

found {8360} my father, who was his master and who taught my sister to eat human flesh raw and to gnaw on bones, as you see. When he saw me, he said: 'Now then, my daughter, I see clearly that you want to learn some guile or malice to deceive people. I will gladly teach it to you, and that will please me greatly.' {8370}

"Then my father opened a hutch and took out of it this box and this false face, and provided me in secret with this knife that I carry hidden and concealed. 'Daughter,' he said, 'someone who wants to deceive birds must not put the scarecrows in the peafield or the hemp-field where they are, {8380} for if they see the scarecrow there they will fly off right away. However, my daughter, I tell you, if you want to deceive others, you must not make your ugly face a scarecrow to them or let them see your monstrous face—somber and loathsome and hideous—for you would lose all the work you put into it. {8390} But you must have, dear daughter, a subtle approach, show them a fair appearance and a pleasant manner in front, and then act like the scorpion, that simulates a fair appearance and a pleasant manner and then stings from behind with its tail. And therefore, so that you can do this and accomplish it without fail, {8400} I present you with a knife, a box with ointment, and a false face. These are the instruments and tools through which many have been destroyed. Joab, when he slew Amasa and Abner, once used these.⁷⁷ Judas did not lack them when he sold Jesus the King.⁷⁸ Tryphon also, and many others were not reluctant to use them.⁷⁹ {8410} I advise you, daughter, to carry them to comfort your mother, to aid her in doing what she cannot do all by herself. With the ointment, anoint those whom you want to stab with the knife. And with the false painted face, cover up your face, that is to say, hide your thoughts with lies {8420} and look different on the outside than you are on the inside. Then use words that are oily and soft. This is the ointment with which kings and prelates are often anointed. There is no count or baron who does not want this ointment. They always want people to tell them things that do not hurt them. {8430} So, daughter, oil them with this sweet ointment and then, after anointing them, wound them so that they cannot recover.'

"Now I tell you, when my father had said this to me, I left the school. I am seated this way on my mother, as you see. I am mistress, I think, of all that has been taught me. {8440} I know how to put on my false face, how to avail myself in every way of

the box and the ointment, and how to smile to the roots of my teeth. I know very well how to bite without barking and to put on a pleasant face, to stroke and oil on one side and strike and stab on the other. I am the adder that lurks in the grass, until someone comes along. {8450} and when he sits down next to me on the grass I kill him. If you see my outside array, you do not see me truly. One cannot know about people by their clothing or about wines by their barrels. Often the willow in leaf, clothed in beautiful foliage, is all hollow or full of worms inside. {8460} I am a worm-eaten willow, a plank that is broken when it is needed, a floor with broken joists and fallen supports. Those who rely on me are lost, and even though they do not trust me, yet they cannot escape me, for they cannot guard themselves against me. I take no account of people's strength, {8470} or their great riches, or their wits, for when I have put on my false face, and shown them a false smile, they are all lost and deceived and at my mercy.

"I am Treachery, and I have made many deceitful moves many times. I never played a game of merells or chess where I did not take the piece I wanted. {8480} There is neither rook nor king that I do not take when I want. And because your life has long been a cause of pain to my mother, Envy, she has commanded me and told me that I should seize you right away and present you to her dead. So now I cry out and say, 'Death to you!' You shall get it from me. You were wrong to have come here. St. Nicholas, {8490} who raised up the other clerks, will not get you out of my clutches."⁸⁰

Then as she came near me and was about to strike me and kill me, the other one who was sitting with her spoke to her and said: "Sister, do not be so hasty. I pray you, let him live until he knows my name, and then we shall assault him together. {8500} I would die of sorrow and grief if I did not hurt him as much as you."

"And I will be glad to do that," she said, "but I ask you to hurry. I cannot wait for us to have the honor of dishonoring him." Then the slatternly birch—may the plague strike her!—spoke to me, barking and gnawing on her bone. {8510}

"Why are you so bold as to bring a staff here?" she asked. "I hate staffs, both straight and crooked, that are pointed at the bottom end. I have no love at all for those who carry them, but when I see my chance, I eagerly bark at them and bite them from

behind, although, like my sister, I turn towards them a pleasant aspect and a fair appearance. {8520} And because you have a staff, even though it is not crooked, ⁸¹ you shall get it from me, because Envy, my mother, never loved you or your father. You are unfortunate to have come here. I will eat you alive. I will gnaw you to the bone and tear the skin off your back. You never in your life saw a mastiff or a bitch in a butcher shop {8530} that eats raw flesh as ferociously as I do. I have a maw as bloody as a wolf that has gobbled up a sheep in the fold and has licked his chops. I am of the lineage of the raven ⁸² that has made its nest in hell. I love to eat carrion. The more it stinks, the better I like it. {8540} I never bite into a wholesome morsel as long as I can find a rotten one. Although I had apples stored up, I would never taste one until I saw that it was foul or rotten. But if I found it was rotten, then I would bite into it right away. I would taste it and savor it and chew it. {8550} This is my nourishment and my life, as it is for my mother, Envy."

As she was telling me this, although I was very dismayed, I began to smile a little. "Old crone," I said, "you would be a good one to choose and store my apples. If you will please not bite me, I will get you plenty of spoiled and rotten ones. {8560} And if that is not enough for you, I know very well where there is a lot of rottenness. I will find plenty for you, rather than have you growl at me."

Then she began to speak again and she said to me: "I do not have to go far if I want to find rottenness. I have the tools to make it in my mouth. {8570} If there were none left in the world, it would be made again between my teeth as I was taught by the master who taught my sister."

"I think if you had the material" I said, "you would make it. But without material no one makes anything, however well they know how to craft things. A smith cannot very well make an axe without iron or steel." {8580}

"I find plenty of material," she said, "for I know how to interpret falsely all the good I can find and turn it into evil. I know how to turn wine into water and fine medicine into poison. I know how to spoil good apples and defame good people, and then I devour them and eat them like raw flesh." {8590}

"What is your name?" I asked her.

"Detraction," she said. "I pull people apart and tear them in pieces to make a broth for my mother, who is sick, to spoon up for her porridge. She has made me her steward and master chef. I serve her the pierced ears that are skewered [8600] on my sharp-pointed spear⁸³ like meat cooked on a spit. I call my tongue my spear, because of its cruel wound. It pierces and strabs more cruelly than any spear or blade. A barbed arrow, even if it were shot from a crossbow, could not make a more grievous or dangerous wound. [8610] The ears you see pierced and spitted on this spear are the ears of those who hear what I say and listen to it. Those who eagerly listen to my words put their ears on my spear to serve my mother, whom they see languishing."

"And why is there a hook on the head of this spear?" I asked. "I will tell you," she answered. "When I have pierced one ear, or several, and poked my spear through them as I please, I eagerly hook and snag someone's name with it. I steal a good name more eagerly than a thief steals a great treasure."

"Then are you a thief?" I asked. [8630] "For a good name is worth more than riches."

"Yes, you are right," she said, "but Solomon has taught you that I am a proven thief of all good reputations.⁸⁴ There is no finer thing in this land that I can steal, I think, for if I do not make restitution for it, I cannot be pardoned. But I would be quite unwilling to do that, because of the great shame it would bring me. [8640] If Pride knew of it, she would never agree with it."

"And what do you do," I asked her, "when you have hooked this good name with the ears that listened to you and robbed some worthy man of it?"

"But I have already told you about that," she answered. "I turn it into poison and feed my mother with it." [8650]

"I think I have not seen a more horrible beast than you this year," I said to her.

"Yes," she said, "I truly believe that. I am more horrible than hell, for hell cannot harm those who are not in its realm or who are people of holy life. [8660] For if Saint John⁸⁵ were in hell, it would not harm him. His great perfection would protect and shelter him. But I tell you I torment those who are absent as well as those who are present. It does not cost me more to hurl my spear across the sea than to hurl it for a league or two. And so I

tell you that I hurt those who live a holy life as well as those who do not. [8670] If St. John were on earth, he would still feel my spear. I would strike him soon enough in heaven as well, if I wanted. I have tried this before. I have struck others, and I will strike again. So I tell you that now I will not hold back any longer from striking you and knocking you down." [8680]

Then Treachery said: "Sister, let us do it together. You strike him on one side, and I will annoy him and then I will strike him on the other side. He will not be able to escape, unless he has an excellent physician."

"I would like that," said the other, "but first let us throw him out of his saddle so he cannot ride any longer." [8690]

When I heard these words, I was puzzled and dismayed, for I had no idea I had a horse. "In what way do I have a horse?" I asked Treachery. "Why has Detraction said this? If you know, tell me!"

"Reason taught me so," she said, "when she spoke to me and told me [8700] that those who are renowned for a good name are mounted on a horse. This horse must have four feet, as everyone should know, for if it had no more than one or two or three, it would limp. None who were mounted on such a horse would be well-regarded. The first foot of this horse is that they have no evil in them [8710] that smacks of dishonor. The next is that they are not in a condition of servitude. The third is that they were born into a good, legitimate marriage, and the fourth is that they have never in their lives had any frenzy or madness. These are the four feet proper to those who bear witness.⁸⁶ [8720] And because you feel that you are mounted upon this horse, my sister has said that she will throw you down, and I am going to help her."

Then she spoke again to her sister: "Sister," she said, "where shall we assault him first?"

"Do you know the song that Israel sang of Dan?" she asked. 'Let Dan be a serpent in the way.'⁸⁷ [8730] I am Cerastes, the horned one,⁸⁸ and Dan, the twisted adder that does not go the straight way and bites people in stealth. I will go very quietly and I will bite the hooves of his horse, and so, I think, he will fall, that is to say, right when he does not notice me at all, [8740] I will bite him secretly and bring him down. For if I made him aware of me and I bit him openly, he would strike right away and hit me in the face with his iron foot. Hooves do not feel anything and they will not notice that my teeth are biting from behind, until his horse

stumbles and he falls over backward {8750} so he cannot get up again."

Then Treachery answered: "Now then, let us attack him. I like very much the way you have explained and glossed this saying of Jacob."⁸⁹

Then Detraction threw her spear at me and wounded me with it. Then she ran at me with her mouth agape like a madwoman. {8760} She seized my horse by the hooves in her teeth and made him stumble badly. She spared me nothing as well. She seized me in her teeth, and she showed clearly that she was of the serpent's lineage. She knocked me down and I was badly hurt, but I did not escape for all that. Envy came straight towards me. She struck me with her two lances and stuck them in my body. {8770} Treachery did not hang back, for as her sister was biting me and gnawing on my sides, she took her ornament and anointed me with it on one side, while on the other she struck me in the belly with her knife and her dagger. The old crone with the big cudgel⁹⁰ also approached me with all her equipment and said "Give yourself up! {8780} You see clearly that you cannot escape." Then she began to push me and beat me, to strike me and inflict great pain on me. When I saw that I was trapped this way, there is no need to ask whether I was greatly distressed. I might well cry "Oh God!" Sloth had time to trouble herself with detaining me. {8790} I was stopped completely and I could not move. But I held tight to my staff and it did not fall away from me. I was hopeful I might get away by using it.

As I was in this predicament, looking this way and that, I saw another old crone come running from a knoll. {8800} "Hold him tight! Hold him tight!" she said to the others. "I am coming! Be careful he does not get away from you with the staff he is clinging to!"

This old crone was strange, for she was armed with spikes all over her like a hedgehog. She had a scythe on a sling like a scrip, and in her hands she had two grey flints, it seemed to me. {8810} Fire was coming from her face and I tell you truly that if she was not mad it did seem that way. She had a saw in her mouth, but for what purpose I did not know until I asked her.

"You old crone," I said, when she had come near me, "tell me why you are acting this way and why you are arrayed like this?"

What is your name? Do not lie to me about anything. {8820} I am eager to know this, although I may have to suffer for it." Then she struck her two flints together and she made a flame leap into my face.

"Certainly," she said, "I will soon make you feel my skills and I will tell you about my name. I am the old prickly one, ill-kempt and disheveled, {8830} the daughter of the spiny hedgehog, who bristles to make himself strong. He has armed me with his barbs so that I will be feared, and so that those who come near me will get stuck with a barb. I look for vengeance, defying God and offending against his power, {8840} and I will take vengeance on all those I know have offended me. I am sure that I will pay for this, because I know that vengeance is taken by his hand as the sovereign hand. I have seen a sure text of it.⁹¹ I am prickly and hateful, impatient and contemptuous, thornier than the burdock, the bramble, the brier or the gooseberry. Those who want to close in a garden with a strong hedge {8850} will put me in it, if they are clever, for no hedge will do as well as I will. My name is *Noli Me Tangere*.⁹² I send up a cry of woe⁹³ right away for little cause, and I jump away when I am pricked with a barb, abandoning someone who was my friend before. I make people screech-owls at mid-day, unable to see. {8860} I make them blind and bestial and I trouble all their thoughts. I serve up vinegar and gall and bitter things, green and sour, and I give them to the choleric rather than to the phlegmatic. In the firmament of human beings, who are called microcosms, or little worlds, I raise up winds and thunder and I cause tempests. {8870} I obscure reason and I eclipse the understanding. I am Anger, the puffed up one, the poison toad, the sullen mother of dogs, who has no sweetness at all in her. I am sharper than the thistle and more bitter than wormwood. I am tinder that flares up when someone attacks me, no matter how little. {8880} The slightest wind blowing my way makes me smoke, I must strike and clash my flints and make the flames leap up. If I had enough dry kindling I would soon set fire to it. One flint is named Spite and the other is called Quarrel. These are flints that foolish people often strike together. {8890} They were once struck together by the two women who asked Solomon to judge which of them would have the living child.⁹⁴

"With these flints I once forged the saw I have in my mouth. The hammer for this was called Quarrel and the anvil was Spite. The iron of it is Impatience, made in hell and brought from there. {8900} The more one strikes it, the less malleable it is. The more one hears it, the harder it is. One time I cleverly put teeth on it. Now listen to how I did it. Dame Justice, the smith and forger of virtues, has a file called Correction. This is the file that files sin away from the top down to the bottom. {8910} It cannot abide rust or filth, but files it all away and cleans it up. And because she wanted once to file me and remove my rust, I set up against her this evil iron I have spoken about. When she intended to file me, she filed my iron and put teeth on it. She made it into a saw, as you see clearly. Its teeth are as big as a hound's. {8920} It is called Hatred, and it cuts and saws apart the union of brotherhood and the alliance of unity. {8930} You have seen the figure in Jacob and Esau. {8940} I sawed them and cut them apart. I sent one far away from the other. I have done the same to many others as well, but it would take too long to tell about it. {8950}

"I have this saw between my teeth so that when I say my Our Father I am sawed off and cut away from God the Father. For, when I pray that he have mercy on me and pardon me my misdeeds as I pardon them, and I pardon none of them, I know very well that I pray against myself and turn the saw against myself. {8960}

"In this saw, there is so little honor, praise, and worth that those who take it up and master it place themselves beneath what they saw, that is, in the low pit where Satan lives. {8970} I think that you will try it and master it, and afterwards I will put on you the scythe I am wearing. {8980} I dub murderers with it when I make them my knights. Barrabas was wearing it once when he was captured and put in prison. It is called Homicide, by its right name, and Murder. It mows down and cuts out the life and spirit of the body, and the tyrants put it on when they killed the saints. {8990} Those who wear this scythe are beasts, not human beings. The scythe makes them savage and it makes them hunt their prey in many woods. These beasts are dangerous to those who go through their country. The king should hunt them rather than the stag, the doe or the wild boar. And because you are a pilgrim, I have put

myself in your way. {8970} I will either put the scythe on you or I will mow down your life with it."

As I was in this predicament, and I awaited only death, I saw Memory near me, and she said: "Tell me, why do you not put on your armor? You cannot excuse yourself, for I am near you, and your armor is always ready, if you want it. {8980} You see it there, as Grace told you. Do not make your bed here, for you would be dishonored if you stayed here any longer. It is shameful that you have stayed so long and have gained nothing by it. If you had had your armor on earlier you would not have been delivered up to these old crones who have stopped you, pulled you down and fallen upon you." {8990}

When I saw that my maid-servant was accusing me and blaming me this way, I was sad at heart and dismayed that I might lie this way any longer. I grabbed hold of my staff and, little by little, I raised myself up again slowly, for I was weak and I had lain there a long time. I wanted to put on my armor, but I had no time or opportunity. {9000} Sloth came forward and threatened me, saying that if I went near the armor, I would get hit with her pole-axe right away. I was afraid of her and I did nothing, for I had learned her tricks earlier. I remained as I was before, unarmed, weary, tormented and defeated.

Now God keep me from worse things, for I no longer have any strength. {9010} I have nothing in me any more that I trust, except the staff I am leaning on. My scrip is of little use to me. I do not dare touch the bread that is there for my benefit, as long as I am wandering on this side of the hedge. {9020} If I were to eat it, Grace would not take it as a game. I am famished right next to the bread. I was wrong to believe Idleness at the beginning. {9030} She deceived me when I believed her. Because of her I have become a miserable creature, delivered up to the old crones, the robbers and waylayers of pilgrims. I shall die at their hands, if Grace does not help me.

As I went along brooding, chewing on my bridle, I saw before me a deep valley filled with woods, horrible, hideous and wild, {9040} and I had to pass through them, if I wanted to go forward. I was very much dismayed by this, for people soon lose their way in the woods and there are many dangers for pilgrims who go there alone. Thieves and wild beasts wait there in hiding, and many gruesome things are often found there. {9050} I met with such

things when I passed through there, as I will tell you. But before I tell you more about them, so that I do not bore you, I will say good night and pause here. Come back tomorrow, if you want, and then you will hear the rest. I will tell you plenty about the troubles and difficulties I met with. {9050} You will take pity on them, I think. Now take care of yourself, everyone, for in the troubles of others there is a mirror for all.

The End of Book II

BOOK III

Now listen, good people, to my adventures, how I was ill-used and mistreated in the woods I told you about. As I went down into the deep valley, {9060} I saw in my path an old crone of a different sort of ugliness than I had seen before. She was very strange, and it seemed that she was deliberately lying in wait for me as her prey, and that she was going to attack me. I do not remember ever seeing any such beast described in Daniel or in Ezekiel, {9070} and none more hideous in the Apocalypse. ¹ She was lame, crippled, and humpbacked, dressed in a big old table-cloth edged with pieces of old rags and patches of cloth. She had a sack hanging from her neck and it seemed that she was not about to fly, because she was stuffing brass and iron into it. {9080} She had struck out her tongue, which was helping her to do this, but it was all leprous, ulcered and scabrous. She had six hands and two stumps. On two hands she had the claws of a griffin, and another was behind her in a sinister way. In one of her other hands she had a file, as if she were going to file bridle-bits, {9090} and a scale, in which she was weighing the zodiac and the sun very carefully, in order to offer them for sale. In another hand she had a bowl and a sack for bread. In the fifth, she had a hook. On her head she had a Maunnet² that made her lower her eyes and look down. {9100} She rested the sixth hand on her crippled haunch and she kept lifting it up and touching her tongue with it.