

Love is Patient

from the FRANKLIN'S TALE
by GEOFFREY CHAUCER
translated by ADAM F McCUNE

Original Middle English

For o thyng, sires, sauflly dar I seye,
That freendes everych oother moot obeye,
If they wol longe holden compaignye.
Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.
Wommen, of kynde, desiren libertee,
And nat to been constreyned as a thral;
And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shal.
Looke who that is moost pacient in love,
He is at his avantage all above.
Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,
For it vanquysseth, as thise clerkes seyn,
Thynges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.
For every word men may not chide or pleyne.
Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so must I goon,
Ye shul it lerne, wher so ye wole or noon;
For in this world, certein, ther no wight is
That he ne dooth or seith somtyme amys.
Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaunging of complexioun
Causeth ful ofte to doon amys or speken.
On every wrong a man may not be wreken.
After the tyme moste be temperaunce
To every wight that kan on governaunce.

Modern English Translation

There's one thing, sirs, that I can safely say:
That loving friends each other must obey,
If they'll together long hold company.
Love will not be constrained by mastery.
When mastery comes, the God of Love anon
Beats his wide wings, and farewell, he is gone!
Love is a thing as any spirit free.
Women, by nature, desire their liberty
And not to be constrained and held in thrall;
And so do men, if I speak truth at all.
Look who is the most patient one in love:
He is at his advantage all above.
Now patience is a high virtue, no doubt,
For it can vanquish, as the clerks point out,
The things that rigor never would attain.
For every word men can't chide or complain.
Learn to endure, or else, so I must say,
You shall endure it, if you wish or nay;
For in this world, be sure, there no one is
That does not act or speak sometimes amiss.
Ire, sickness, changes stars imbued,
Wine, woe, or else a changing mood
Cause men to often act amiss, or speak.
For every wrong man cannot vengeance wreak.
To suit the time there must be temperance
From everyone that knows self-governance.