

## The Portrait of the Franklin

From *The General Prologue*, lines 333–62

A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye.  
 Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;  
 Of his complexioun he was sangwin.  
 Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;  
 To liven in delit was evere his wone,  
 For he was Epicurus owene sone,  
 That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit  
 Was verray felicitee parfit.  
 An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;  
 Seint Julian he was in his contree.  
 His breed, his ale, was always after oon;  
 A bettre envined man was nowher noon.  
 Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous  
 Of fissh and flessch, and that so plentevous,  
 It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,  
 Of alle deyntees that men koude thinke.  
 After the sondry sesons of the yeer,  
 So chaunged he his mete and his soper.  
 Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,  
 And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe,  
 Wo was his cook but if his sauce were  
 Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.  
 His table dormant in his halle alway  
 Stood redy covered al the longe day.  
 At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;  
 Ful ofte time he was knight of the shire.  
 An anlaas and a gipser al of silk  
 Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.  
 A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.  
 Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.

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 Excerpt  
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The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

*complexioun* temperament  
*morwe* morning  
*To liven . . . felicitee parfou* see pages 69–70  
*Seint Julian* patron saint of hospitality  
*after oon* up to the same standard  
*envined* stocked with wine  
*mete* food  
*mewed* snowed, proliferated  
*muwe* coop  
*luce* pike  
*stuwe* fish-pond  
*poynaunt* pungent  
*table dormant* fixed table  
*At sessionis . . . sire* he presided over the justices of the peace  
*knight of the shire* member of parliament for his county  
*anlaas* dagger  
*gipser* purse  
*shirreve* sheriff  
*contour* pleader in county court  
*vavasour* landholder.

## The Franklin's Prologue

Heere folwen the wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squier, and the wordes of the Hoost to the Frankeleyn.

‘In feith, Squier, thow hast thee wel quit  
 And gentilly. I preise wel thy wit,  
 Quod the Frankeleyn, ‘consideringe thy yowthe,  
 So feelingly thou spekest, sire, I allow the.  
 As to my doom, ther is noon that is heere  
 Of eloquence that shal be thy peere,  
 If that thou live; God yeve thee good chaunce,  
 And in vertu sende thee continuaunce!  
 For of thy speche I have greet deyntee.  
 I have a sone, and by the Trinitee, 10  
 I hadde levere than twenty pound worth lond,  
 Though it right now were fallen in myn hond,  
 He were a man of swich discrecioun  
 As that ye been. Fy on possessioun,  
 But if a man be vertuous withal!  
 I have my sone snybbed, and yet shal,  
 For he to vertu listeth nat entende;  
 But for to pleye at dees, and to despende  
 And lese al that he hath, is his usage.  
 And he hath levere talken with a page 20  
 Than to comune with any gentil wight  
 Where he mighte lerne gentillesse aright.’  
 ‘Straw for youre gentillesse!’ quod oure Hoost.  
 ‘What, Frankeleyn! pardee, sire, wel thou woost  
 That ech of yow moot tellen atte leste  
 A tale or two, or breken his biheste.’  
 ‘That knowe I wel, sire,’ quod the Frankeleyn.  
 ‘I prey yow, haveth me nat in desdeyn,  
 Though to this man I speke a word or two.’  
 ‘Telle on thy tale withouten wordes mo.’ 30

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'Gladly, sire Hoost,' quod he, 'I wole obeye  
 Unto your wil; now herkneth what I seye.  
 I wol yow nat contrarien in no wise  
 As fer as that my wines wol suffice.  
 I prey to God that it may plesen yow;  
 Thanne woot I wel that it is good ynow.'

The Prologe of the Frankeleyns Tale

Thise olde gentil Britouns in hir dayes  
 Of diverse aventures maden layes,  
 Rimeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;  
 Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe, 40  
 Or elles redden hem for hir plesaunce,  
 And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,  
 Which I shal seyn with good wil as I kan.  
 But sires, by cause I am a burel man,  
 At my biginning first I yow biseche,  
 Have me excused of my rude speche.  
 I lerned nevere rethorik, certeyn;  
 Thing that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn.  
 I sleep nevere on the Mount of Pernaso,  
 Ne lemed Marcus Tullius Scithero. 50  
 Colours ne knowe I none, withouten drede,  
 But swiche colours as growen in the mede,  
 Or elles swiche as men dye or peynte.  
 Colours of rethorik been to me queynte;  
 My spirit feeleth noght of swich mateere.  
 But if yow list, my tale shul ye heere.

## The Franklin's Tale

In Armorik, that called is Britaine,  
 Ther was a knight that loved and dide his paine  
 To serve a lady in his beste wise;  
 And many a labour, many a greet emprise 60  
 He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.  
 For she was oon the faireste under sonne,  
 And eek therto comen of so heigh kinrede  
 That wel unnethes dorste this knight, for drede,  
 Telle hire his wo, his peyne, and his distresse.  
 But atte laste she, for his worthinesse,  
 And namely for his meke obeisaunce,  
 Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce  
 That prively she fil of his accord  
 To take him for hir housbonde and hir lord, 70  
 Of swich lordshipe as men han over hir wives.  
 And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lives,  
 Of his free wil he swoor hire as a knight  
 That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne night,  
 Ne sholde upon him take no maistrie  
 Again hir wil, ne kithe hire jalousie,  
 But hire obeye, and folwe hir wil in al,  
 As any love to his lady shal,  
 Save that the name of soverainetee,  
 That wolde he have for shame of his degree. 80

She thanked him, and with ful greet humblesse  
 She seyde, 'Sire, sith of youre gentillesse  
 Ye profre me to have so large a reine,  
 Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,  
 As in my gilt, were outhere werre or stryf.  
 Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf,  
 Have heer my trouthe, til that myn herte breste.'  
 Thus been they bothe in quiete and in reste.

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For o thing, sires, sauffy dar I seye,  
 That freendes everich oother moot obeye, 90  
 If they wol longe holden compaignye.  
 Love wol nat been constreyned by maistrye.  
 Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon  
 Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon!  
 Love is a thing as any spirit free.  
 Wommen, of kinde, desiren libertee,  
 And nat to been constreyned as a thral;  
 And so doon men, if I sooth seyen shale  
 Looke who that is moost pacient in love,  
 He is at his avantage al above. 100  
 Pacience is an heigh vertu, certeyn,  
 For it venquisseth, as thise clerkes seyn,  
 Thinges that rigour sholde nevere atteyne.  
 For every word men may nat chide or pleyne.  
 Lerneth to suffre, or elles, so moot 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 somtime amis.  
 Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,  
 Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of complexioun 110  
 Causeth ful ofte to doon amis or speken.  
 On every wrong a man may nat be wreken.  
 After the time moste be temperaunce  
 To every wight that kan on govemaunce.  
 And therfore hath this wise, worthy knight,  
 To live in ese, suffrance hire bihight,  
 And she to him ful wisly gan to swere  
 That nevere sholde ther be defaute in here.  
 Heere may men seen an humble, wys accord;  
 Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord – 120  
 Servant in love, and lord in mariage.  
 Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.

Servage? nay, but in lordshipe above,  
 Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;  
 His lady, certes, and his wyf also,  
 The which that lawe of love acordeth to.  
 And whan he was in this prosperitee,  
 Hoom with his wyf he gooth to his contree,  
 Nat fer fro Pedmark, ther his dwelling was,  
 Where as he liveth in blisse and in solas. 130

Who koude telle, but he hadde wedded be,  
 The joye, the ese, and the prosperitee  
 That is bitwixe an housbonde and his wyf?  
 A yeer and moore lasted this blissful lyf,  
 Til that the knight of which I speke of thus,  
 That of Kayrrud was cleped Arveragus,  
 Shoop him to goon and dwelle a yeer or tweyne  
 In Engeland, that cleped was eek Briteyne,  
 To seke in armes worshippe and honour;  
 For al his lust he sette in swich labour; 140  
 And dwelled there two yeer, the book seith thus.

Now wol I stynten of this Arveragus,  
 And speken I wole of Dorigen his wyf,  
 That loveth hire housbonde as hire hertes lyf.  
 For his absence wepeth she and siketh,  
 As doon thise noble wives whan hem liketh.  
 She moometh, waketh, waileth, fasteth, pleyneth;  
 Desir of his presence hire so destreyneth  
 That al this wide world she sette at noght.  
 Hire freendes, whiche that knewe hir hevye thoght, 150  
 Conforten hire in al that ever they may.  
 They prechen hire, they telle hire night and day  
 That causelees she sleeth herself, allas!  
 And every confort possible in this cas  
 They doon to hire with al hire bisnesse,  
 Al for to make hire leve hire hevinesse.

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By proces, as ye knowen everichoon,  
 Men may so longe graven in a stoon  
 Til som figure therinne emprented be.  
 So longe han they confortid hire, til she 160  
 Received hath, by hope and by resoun,  
 The emprenting of hire consolacioun,  
 Thurgh which hir grete sorwe gan aswage;  
 She may nat alwey duren in swich rage.

And eek Arveragus, in al this care,  
 Hath sent hire lettres hoom of his welfare,  
 And that he wol come hastily again;  
 Or elles hadde this sorwe hir herte slain.

Hire freendes sawe hir sorwe gan to slake,  
 And preyde hire on knees, for Goddes sake, 170  
 To come and romen hire in compaignye,  
 Awey to drive hire derke fantasye.  
 And finally she graunted that requeste,  
 For wel she saugh that it was for the beste.

Now stood hire castel faste by the see,  
 And often with hire freendes walketh shee,  
 Hire to disporte, upon the bank an heigh,  
 Where as she many a ship and barge seigh  
 Seillinge hir cours, where as hem liste go.  
 But thanne was that a parcel of hire wo, 180  
 For to himself ful ofte, 'Allas!' seith she,  
 'Is ther no ship, of so manye as I se,  
 Wol bringen hom my lord? Thanne were myn herte  
 Al warissshed of his bittre peynes smerte.'

Another time ther wolde she sitte and thinke,  
 And caste hir eyen downward fro the brinke.  
 But whan she saugh the grisly rokkes blake,  
 For verray feere so wolde hir herte quake  
 That on hire feet she mighte hire noght sustene.  
 Thanne wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene, 190



And pitously into the see biholde,  
 And seyn right thus, with sorweful sikes colde:  
 'Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce  
 Ledest the world by certein governaunce,  
 In idel, as men seyn, ye no thing make.  
 But, Lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,  
 That semen rather a foul confusion  
 Of werk than any fair creacion  
 Of swich a parfit wys God and a stable,  
 Why han ye wrought this werk unresonable? 200  
 For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,  
 Ther nis yfostred man, ne brid, ne beest;  
 It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.  
 Se ye nat, Lord, how mankinde it destroyeth?  
 An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde  
 Han rokkes slain, al be they nat in minde,  
 Which mankinde is so fair part of thy werk  
 That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.  
 Thanne semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee  
 Toward mankinde; but how thanne may it bee 210  
 That ye swiche meenes make it to destroyen,  
 Whiche meenes do no good, but evere anoyen?  
 I woot wel clerkes wol seyn as hem leste,  
 By argumentz, that al is for the beste,  
 Though I ne kan the causes nat yknowe.  
 But thilke God that made wind to blowe  
 As kepe my lord! this my conclusion.  
 To clerkes lete I at disputison.  
 But wolde God that alle thise rokkes blake  
 Were sonken into helle for his sake! 220  
 Thise rokkes sleen myn herte for the feere.'  
 Thus wolde she seyn, with many a pitous teere.  
 Hire freendes sawe that it was no disport  
 To romen by the see, but disconfort,

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And shopen for to pleyen somwher elles.  
 They leden hire by riveres and by welles,  
 And eek in othere places delitables;  
 They dauncen, and they pleyen at ches and tables.  
     So on a day, right in the morwe-tide,  
 Unto a gardyn that was ther biside, 230  
 In which that they hadde maad hir ordinaunce  
 Of vitaille and of oother purveiaunce,  
 They goon and pleye hem al the longe day.  
 And this was on the sixte morwe of May,  
 Which May hadde peynted with his softe shoures  
 This gardyn ful of leves and of floures;  
 And craft of mannes hand so curiously  
 Arrayed hadde this gardyn, trewely,  
 That nevere was ther gardyn of swich prys,  
 But if it were the verray paradis. 240  
 The odour of floures and the fresshe sighte  
 Wolde han maked any herte lighte  
 That evere was born, but if to greet siknesse,  
 Or to greet sorwe, helde it in distresse;  
 So ful it was of beautee with plesaunce.  
 At after-diner gonne they to daunce,  
 And singe also, save Dorigen allone,  
 Which made alwey hir compleint and hir moone,  
 For she ne saugh him on the daunce go  
 That was hir housbonde and hir love also. 250  
 But natheles she moste a time abide,  
 And with good hope lete hir sorwe slide.  
     Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,  
 Daunced a squier biforn Dorigen,  
 That fressher was and jolier of array,  
 As to my doom, than is the month of May.  
 He singeth, daunceth, passinge any man  
 That is, or was, sith that the world bigan.