

**FOUR  
MIDDLE ENGLISH  
ROMANCES**

Sir Isumbras  
Octavian  
Sir Eglamour of Artois  
Sir Tryamour

Edited by  
Harriet Hudson

SECOND EDITION



TEAMS  
Middle English Texts Series

FOUR MIDDLE  
ENGLISH ROMANCES

Sir Isumbras, Octavian,  
Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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*Sir Isumbras*, *Octavian*, *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, and *Sir Tryamour* are important works in a major literary development of the fourteenth century: the flourishing of Middle English popular romance. These four narratives were among the most popular; all survive in multiple manuscripts and continued to circulate in prints through the sixteenth century. All were composed in the northeast Midlands in the fifty years between 1325 and 1375, and they appear together in several manuscripts. Furthermore, they employ the same style, stanza form, and plot elements. The basic story concerns the separation and reunion of a family accompanied by a fall and rise in social and/or spiritual status. Sometimes called family romances, these narratives can be distinguished from those of the earlier hero alone pattern that originated in twelfth-century France. Stephen Knight notes that the family-based romances grant a larger role to women and embrace a wider range of values than the earlier works, adapting the feudal ideology to a different social context.<sup>1</sup>

The tale the romances tell — of exiled queens, orphaned children, and penitent fathers — was one of the most prevalent medieval stories. Sometimes called the Constance/ Eustace legend (after two well-known pious versions), its influence can be seen in numerous romances. In addition to the four works in this volume, there are *Emaré*, *Sir Degaré*, *The King of Tars*, *The Erle of Toulous*, *Florence of Rome*, *Sir Torrent of Portengale*, *Chevalier Assigne*, *Robert of Sicily*, *Sir Gowther*, and others. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century audiences must have found the story compelling. Individual treatments may emphasize the vicissitudes of the wife, the tribulations of the father, or the adventures of the children, or a combination of all three. The wife's story often conforms to the type known as the calumniated queen, the husband's follows the pattern of the man tried for his faith. The calumny takes three well-defined forms: the heroine is falsely accused of sexual misconduct and exiled by either her jealous, sometimes incestuous father (*Eglamour*), her jealous mother-in-law (*Octavian*), or her seducing steward (*Tryamour*). The man tried for his faith is tested by exile and poverty (*Isumbras*). Frequently exile is accomplished by a voyage, children are carried off by animals and raised by foster parents, sons engage in combat with their fathers and are married at the reunion of their parents. The romances' composers developed various possibilities inherent in the formulaic plot: *Isumbras* is a lesson in penance and family devotion, *Octavian* deals in exotic romance and social comedy, *Tryamour* focuses on loyalty and combat, *Eglamour* combines chivalric adventure with family conflict.

With the exception of *Octavian*'s story, which was first composed in French, these four romances are all original English compositions. They have no direct sources, but similar stories had long circulated in pious legends of Sibelle, Charlemagne's exemplary queen, and

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<sup>1</sup> Knight, "Social Function," p. 111.

tales of Constance were current in England at the time, as evidenced by Gower's story of Constance in Book 2 of the *Confessio Amantis*, Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, and a variant in the *Gesta Romanorum*. Legends of St. Eustace exist in numerous English manuscripts; some version of this saint's life was doubtless the model for *Isumbras*.

Almost nothing is known of the authors who fashioned these four narratives. The southern version of *Octavian* (which is not the one printed here) is sometimes attributed to Thomas Chester, author of *Sir Launfal*, and L. H. Loomis, following Sarazzin, indicates that *Isumbras* and northern *Octavian* are by the same author, but we know nothing of him.<sup>2</sup> It used to be assumed that these romances were the work of minstrels; however, that now seems unlikely. More probably, the poems were composed by clerics, both ecclesiastical and secular, since they could read, write, and have access to books and patrons. It is possible that some of the romances were composed in association with bookshops, as Loomis has suggested of the earlier romances in the Auchinleck manuscript.

All the authors wrote in an indigenous English verse form, tail-rhyme, which was used almost exclusively for romances and, from the mid-fourteenth century on replaced the French-derived couplet of earlier Middle English narratives.<sup>3</sup> The basic unit of the tail-rhyme stanza is the triplet rhyming *aab*; in general, the couplet lines have four stresses, the tail (or tag) lines have three. The form may be derived from the French octosyllabic couplet. The stanzas consist of from two to five triplets, all with the same rhyme in the tail line, though six and twelve line stanzas are the norms. The shorter is more common in poems in southern dialects, the longer in those from eastern regions. Usually the stanzas are fairly discrete units relating individual episodes, exchanges of dialogue between characters or descriptions of particular things. Enjambment is the exception. Each line tends to be a clause; often each three-line unit constitutes a loose sentence.

The tail-rhyme romances are notable for their use of syntactic and lexical formulas. Susan Wittig's analysis of their language shows *Isumbras* to be 22% formulas, *Octavian* 25%, *Tryamour* 25%, and *Eglamour* 29%.<sup>4</sup> Because the romances are highly formulaic, and because the tail lines lend themselves to conventional rhyming expressions, there are many instances of repetition and near repetition. Sometimes the tail lines are mere filler, but they also serve to emphasize, to regulate the pace of the narration, and to establish a relationship between the narrator and the audience.

The oral style of narration, based on formulas of direct address to the audience, suggested to early scholars that the romances were composed by minstrels, or by others writing for minstrel performance. While minstrels undoubtedly did recite romances, evidence suggests that such performances declined in the fourteenth century (when our romances were composed), as the roles of minstrels changed.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the minstrel style may be a nostalgic feature of genre validation. The texts in the fifteenth-century manuscripts edited here were probably copied from written exemplars and owe little to minstrel performance, though there are some signs of oral transmission. The audiences would have heard the story read from a manuscript. The romances' lengths and episodic structures are such that they could be conveniently related in a couple of sessions.

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<sup>2</sup> Loomis, *Medieval Romance*, p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> The Chester cycle plays and a life of St. Eustace also make use of tail-rhyme.

<sup>4</sup> Wittig, *Stylistic and Narrative Structures*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Southworth, *English Medieval Minstrel*, pp. 96–98.

Texts of these romances survive in many of the same manuscripts. They were frequently included in compendium-type manuscripts — those large collections of diverse instructional and entertaining works common in the fifteenth century. Often texts of the four romances occur near each other, as though they circulated together in the scribes' exemplars. Murray Evans, in his study of romances in their manuscript contexts, identifies them as part of an "*Isumbras* group."<sup>6</sup> In the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript, one booklet<sup>7</sup> (fols. 53–153) contains *The Alliterative Morte Arthur*, *Octavian*, *Isumbras*, *Erle of Toulous*, *Sir Degrevant*, and *Eglamour of Artois*. Cambridge Manuscript Ff. 2.38, folios 63–102, contains *Erle of Toulous*, *Eglamour*, *Tryamour*, and *Octavian*. Manuscript Cotton Caligula A.2 contains *Eglamour*, *Octavian*, and *Isumbras*. *Isumbras* and *Eglamour* appear together in the sixteenth-century manuscript Douce 261. In the seventeenth century *Tryamour* and *Eglamour* were copied together in the Percy Folio.

The principal manuscripts postdate the composition of the romances by fifty to one hundred years. Despite the names found in the manuscripts, few specifics are known about their original owners or the romances' original audiences, with the exception of the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript, which was compiled by Robert Thornton, a knight of Yorkshire. But we do know something about the social class to which the audiences belonged, namely the gentry (used in the broad sense to include professionals and members of the upper bourgeoisie as well as landed families). The gentry class was evolving and proliferating in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and it is tempting to see a relationship between this and the simultaneous proliferation and evolution of romance in English. This class seems to have been particularly concerned with social advancement. Through the ownership of books, especially works of chivalric literature and private devotion, they aligned themselves with the aristocracy. Many of the romance manuscripts contain items of instruction in etiquette and appropriate behavior bespeaking a concern for gentility. The romances themselves doubtless served as exemplars of courtesy. The anonymous eulogy for John Berkeley, a Leicestershire knight of the fifteenth century evokes something of the romances' cultural function. He is described as a generous host with whom one could hunt or read romances in the company of fair ladies — the very picture of a gentleman. Larger romance manuscripts also contain works for religious instruction and devotional use, including saints' lives, and items of a domestic nature as well. Such volumes contained material for all members of the family and provide a fascinating glimpse of the tastes and interests of their owners.

A note on stanza form and punctuation: in the manuscripts, stanzas and tag lines are not indicated, though some do have brackets to mark rhymed tail lines. I have followed the fairly standard editorial practice of printing the stanzas separately and indenting tail lines. Punctuation has been introduced for clarity; the manuscript texts are not punctuated.

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<sup>6</sup> Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance*, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> A booklet is a series of quires forming a self-contained unit. Often composed of several texts, booklets were produced independently but could be bound together in one larger volume. See Robinson, "Booklet," pp. 46–64.





## INTRODUCTION TO *SIR ISUMBRAS*

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*Sir Isumbras* is one of the most popular Middle English romances, surviving in more manuscripts and prints (nine and five, respectively) than any other romance. It relates a version of one of the most widespread stories of the European Middle Ages, the man tried by fate. This plot was often developed in hagiographic narratives. Indeed, *Isumbras* is a secularized retelling of the legend of Saint Eustace, which circulated widely in England in martyrologies, legendaries and homilies. No immediate source for the romance of *Sir Isumbras* has been found. However, certain treatments of the Eustace story, such as that in the Middle English *Gesta Romanorum* where the concluding martyrdom is omitted, or that in Digby MS 86, which employs tail-rhyme, may have suggested ways in which the story could be cast as romance. The romance was circulating in England before 1320, when William of Nassington referred to it in his *Speculum Vita*. His comment is revealing, for he disparages stories of Isumbras as vanities (along with those of the equally popular and pious Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton), an indication that he saw a generic difference between it and the legends of saints. However, in several manuscripts, *Isumbras* is grouped with saints' legends and other religious materials.

*Isumbras* is aptly described as a "homiletic romance," a term used by Dieter Mehl to refer to narratives that occupy a middle position between the genres of saint's legend and romance.<sup>1</sup> The author of *Isumbras* adapted his hagiographic material to the patterns of romance. The Eustace legend consists of three main episodes: the visionary conversion of a Roman officer including the foretelling of his suffering and eventual martyrdom; his exile and separation from his family; and their reunion and martyrdom in battle against the Romans. Isumbras is not converted, for he is already a Christian; rather his vision warns him of his separation from God through pride and gives him the choice of atoning for it in youth or age. The alteration in the terms of the heroes' suffering — Eustace suffers for his faith, Isumbras for his sins — casts the romance's hero in a more worldly light. The "choice of woe" motif, too, has been adapted to a worldly frame of action; by converting, Eustace rejects well-being in this life for joy in heaven. Isumbras knows his atonement in youth will be followed by well-being in this life. The romance also elaborates the episode of the separated family, which was the basis for numerous other romances. There it is often a vehicle for the exploration of secular problems relating to social status and family structure, but the composer of *Isumbras* focused on more spiritual matters. Unlike the families of Octavian, Tryamour, and Eglamour, which are separated by internal conflicts, Isumbras' and Eustace's families are separated by causes which lie outside the family, in spiritual relationships. *Isumbras* follows the formulas of romance in its secular comic ending. There is no martyrdom. Rather, the

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<sup>1</sup> Mehl, *Middle English Romances*, p. 121.

family is reunited and restored to wealth and exalted social status. *Eustace*, of course, concludes with the spiritual comic vision of the hero freed from earthly ties, and the soul reunited with God in heavenly bliss.

Though they follow the patterns of romance, some parts of *Isumbras* seem to challenge the values of romance. At the beginning of the story, Isumbras is described as a paragon of chivalry and renowned patron of minstrels, living lavishly with his beautiful wife and three sons. However, he has become estranged from God by his “pryde of golde and fee” (line 45), as he is told in his vision. “Gold and fee” is a formula common to tail-rhyme romances; it is almost always used in a positive sense. Pride, of all the seven deadly sins, is the one most suited to treatment in romance, since it was usually depicted as the sin of nobles and other members of the wealthy and powerful classes. Following his vision, the hero is stripped of his chivalric accoutrements: his hawks fly away and his hounds and horse die; his estates are ravaged, the buildings burned and his workers and their chattel destroyed. The episode culminates in an emotional scene of Isumbras’ simultaneous relief to learn of his family’s survival, and his pity to see them running naked toward him “that erste were comely cladde” (line 105).

The adventures which follow are related with little attention to features often embellished in romances such as romantic love, combats, and occasions and objects of chivalric display. His only battles are against the enemies of Christendom. The closest *Isumbras* comes to armorial description is the cross the hero carves on his own shoulder as a badge of his pilgrim status. Isumbras humbly submits to God, acknowledging His power and accepting His punishment: “All the sorow that we ben inne, / Hit is for owre wykked synne, / Worthy we be well more” (lines 112–14). The family sets out for the Holy Land, but two children are carried off by animals. Isumbras approaches a sultan’s ship to beg for food and is spurned. When a courtier points out his noble features, the sultan offers to make Isumbras his knight in his campaigns against Christendom. The hero refuses to forsake his faith, but is unable to prevent the sultan from buying his wife to make her queen. Before her departure, she is able to give him food, a ring, and promises of aid if he can undertake to kill the sultan. The next day, an eagle carries off Isumbras’ payment, and a unicorn abducts his remaining son.

Bereft of worldly goods and human ties, Isumbras prays for guidance, and from this point on, his fortunes slowly reverse themselves. The mechanism of reversal is a kind of economic initiative seldom found in the heroes of romance or saint’s legend.<sup>2</sup> Havelok, the industrious cook’s knave, comes to mind, but that romance is exceptional for its realistic and sympathetic treatment of laborers. Isumbras is one of the few romance heroes who actually earns his way back to chivalric status. Coming upon some ironworkers, he asks for food, appealing to their charity. The smiths propose instead that he work for his food as they do. For seven years he labors with them, progressing from lowly stone carrier to apprentice to paid craftsman. Eventually he is able to make himself a suit of armor, giving new meaning to the term “self-made knight.” This episode contains precise references to various smelting operations and to the trade hierarchy of smiths. The author chose to embellish the motif of hero, unrecognized, performing lowly tasks, and to embellish it in this particular way, while other, more chivalric episodes such as combats are not embellished at all.

When the sultan attacks Christendom, Isumbras rides to battle on a blacksmith’s horse. The homemade armor and inferior mount are conventional in tales of knights in reduced circumstances, and here, as in other tales, they play a role in the initial combats by which

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<sup>2</sup> Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 116 and 129.

the hero demonstrates his prowess, but are then replaced by proper arms, signifying his achievements and restoration of status.

Vanquishing the enemies of Christendom and killing the sultan who had seized his wife would seem to prepare the way for Isumbras' reunion with her and rule in the sultan's lands, but this culmination is delayed until he has fulfilled his vow of pilgrimage. Significantly, he maintains his humble identity, telling the king he is a smithy man, and leaves the court before he can be knighted. Only after seven years of begging and doing God's will does he complete his penance. Arriving famished at Jerusalem, he stops at a well where an angel appears to tell him his sins are forgiven and that he may return home. He journeys to the castle of a great queen renowned for her generosity to the poor; from among a crowd of beggars, he is brought into the hall and fed.

Throughout this episode of penance, and in the earlier episode of exile, the many references to hunger heighten the pathos of the hero's suffering. At every encounter Isumbras begs food and drink. Embarking on their exile, he tells his family to trust to God to "sende us our lyves fode" (line 132). The angel who brings him news of God's forgiveness also brings him food. This hunger can be read allegorically, as a spiritual hunger (just as Jerusalem has allegorical significance), but it is always treated simply as a physical need so its larger implications are not dwelt upon; rather it is a measure of the hero's misery and humility.

Pathos is a major feature of the reunion episode as well. Seated in the joyous hall, Isumbras is overcome by memories of his former happiness and weeps, unable to eat. Remarking this, the lady inquires of his journeys, then takes him into her court. The reunion of husband and wife seems imminent, but it is postponed, offering another depiction of Isumbras' suffering for the loss of his family. In a wood one day, he discovers the mantle and the sultan's gold taken from him by the eagle. He keeps these in his chamber, meditating upon his loss; his sadness and isolation are noted at court, and their causes sought. His treasure is found and brought to the queen. Recognizing it, she asks the palmer to tell how he acquired it and he relates the story. Thus, in large part, Isumbras regains his wife, not as a result of combat, or of courteous service, but because his grief attracts the lady's sympathetic notice.

The bond between husband and wife is both spiritual and emotional, a model of Christian union rather than romantic love. They are faithful, not only to each other (the sultan sends the wife to rule his countries in his absence; they never cohabit), but also to God and the sacrament of marriage. When the sultan asks to buy his wife, Isumbras replies that he can not sell her because he has "weddyd her in Goddys lay [law]" and will "holde here to myn endyng day, / Bothe for wele or woo" (lines 283–85). To be parted from her willingly is tantamount to forsaking his faith. His wife affirms this, saying she prefers to meet her end rather than live apart from him. Later, when they have been reunited (and remarried), she insists on being armed and fighting the infidel beside her husband so that, by God's grace, they might die together.

This battle is the culminating step in the hero's spiritual career as well as the occasion of the family's complete restoration. The couple is about to be slain when three knights arrive riding a lion, a leopard, and a unicorn. They vanquish the remaining 20,003 Saracens before identifying themselves to Isumbras as his children. After a celebration, father and sons conquer and convert three kingdoms. At their deaths, we are told, their souls go to heaven. The near-martyrdom of the parents, coupled with the more conventional reference to their souls' destination, may have been suggested by the apotheosis of the martyrs at the end of St. Eustace's legend.

Isumbras' adventures are spiritually motivated, but his sufferings and his reward are presented in material terms of poverty and wealth. He interprets his choice of woe economically, asking to be given poverty in youth and wealth in age, and comforts his ravaged tenants saying ". . . God bothe geveth and taketh / And at His wyll ryches maketh / And pore men also" (lines 94–96). The sultan's attempt to buy Isumbras' wife, and the importance of his treasure as an identifying token have no counterpart in the Eustace legend. At the end of the story it is explicitly stated that Isumbras is even richer than he was before his loss. The restoration to wealth and high social status can be read spiritually, but they are employed as literally as the hunger of earlier episodes.

*Sir Isumbras* is among the shortest of the Middle English romances. At 771 lines, it is half the length of most romances of separated and reunited families. Events unfold at a brisk pace in very regular stanzas of twelve lines. There is little elaboration, no doubling or tripling of episodes, and few descriptive details. The composer limits the narration to the father's adventures, providing no information about the careers of the sons or of the wife, apart from her husband. *Isumbras*' brevity heightens the plot's symmetry. The structure is bipartite, consisting of the fall and rise of Isumbras. The turning point comes halfway through the romance when he prays for guidance. Each half is comprised of two main episodes: Isumbras loses his worldly goods and then his family in the first; he becomes a smith and then a palmer in the second. Both episodes in the second half conclude with battles against the infidel.

As was mentioned earlier, *Sir Isumbras* survives in nine manuscripts and numerous prints. The earliest manuscript, Gray's Inn, is a 104-line fragment dated around 1350. This text closely resembles that of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge MS 175, the second oldest manuscript, dating from 1425–50, which is the basis for the present edition. These texts differ significantly from the Thornton, Ashmole, and Advocates' manuscripts, which give the story a more "heroic" treatment. The Cotton and Naples manuscripts form a third group; their versification closely resembles that of the Gonville and Caius text. For that reason the Cotton was chosen to supply the lines of folio 91, which is missing from the Cambridge volume.

The Cambridge manuscript was produced in the southeast Midlands; its text of Isumbras shows a mixture of dialectal forms, as the poem itself was composed in the northeast Midlands. Characteristic northeast Midland features include the use of *are* (rather than more southerly *bee[n]*) for the indicative present plural of *to be*: the use of *-ande* (not *-ing*) for the participial ending, as in *wayvande*; and the spellings *swyche* and *mekyll*, among others. However, characteristically southeast Midland forms are present in the third-person plural pronouns, which begin with *h-* (*hem*), not northerly *th-* (*them*), and in the initial spelling *sch-* (*schal*) rather than *s-* (*sall*).

#### MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTS

Indexed as item 1184 in Boffey and Edwards, eds., *New Index of Middle English Verse*:

- London, Gray's Inn MS 20 (1350), fol. 228, 104-line fragment corresponding to Gonville and Caius, MS lines 216–308.
- Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 175 (1425–50), fols. 98r–106 [Base-text for this edition].
- Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, called the Thornton MS (c. 1440), fols. 109r–114v.

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- Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale MS 13 B 9 (1457), fols. 114r–115r, a fragment containing the first 122 lines.
  - London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.ii (1450–1500), fols. 130r–134r.
  - Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61 (1475–1500), fols. 9r–16r.
  - Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 19.3.1 (1475–1500), fols. 48r–56v.
  - Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 261 (1564), fols. 1r–7v.
  - Oxford, University College MS 142 (end 14 c), fol. 128r, a 17-line fragment.
  
  - Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce fragment f 37. London: Wynkynde Worde or W. Copland, 1530? 1550? (*STC* 14281), one leaf.
  - Oxford, Bodleian Library 1119. London: William Copland?, c. 1530 (*STC* 14282), one leaf.
  - London, British Library C 21c61, Garrick Collection. London: William Copland, c. 1530 (*STC* 14282), fifteen leaves.
  - Boston, Harvard University Library. London: John Skot, c. 1525 (*STC* 14280.1), eight leaves.
  - Boston, Harvard University Library. London: I. Treveris, c. 1530 (*STC* 14280.2), one leaf.





## SIR ISUMBRAS

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	Hende in halle and ye wole her Off ildres that before us wer That lyfede in are thede.	<i>Gentlefolk; if you; hear Of earlier times</i>
5	Jhesu Cryst, hevene kynge, Geve hem alle hys blessing And hevene unto oure mede. I wold yow telle off a knyght That was bothe hardy and wyght And doughty man of dede.	<i>them reward  able valiant</i>
10	Hys name was callyd Sere Ysumbras; So doughty a knyght as he was There levyd non in lede.	<i>among those folk</i>
	He was mekil man and long With armes grete and body strong And fair was to se.	<i>powerful; lean</i>
15	He was long man and heygh, The fayreste that evere man seygh; A gret lord was he. Menstralles he lovyd wel in halle And gaf hem ryche robes withalle, Bothe golde and fe.	<i>lanky; tall saw</i>
20	Off curteysye he was kyng And of his mete never nothyng In worlde was non so free.	<i>gave them rich robes, moreover property courtesy meat (hospitality) generous</i>
25	A fayr lady hadde hee As any man myghte see, With tungge as I yow nevene.	<i>tell</i>
	Bytween hem they hadde chyldren thre, The fayreste that myghte on lyve be Undyr God off hevene.	<i>alive</i>
30	Swyche pryde in his herte was brought, On Jhesu Cryst thoghte he nought Ne on His names sevene. So longe he levede in that pryde	<i>Nor</i>

- 35 That Jhesu wolde no lenger abyde;  
To hym he sente a stevenne. *voice (summons)*
- So hit byfell upon a day  
The knyghte wente hym to play,  
His foreste for to se.
- 40 As he wente by a derne sty, *secret; place*  
He herde a fowle synge hym by  
Hye upon a tre. *High*
- He seyde, "Welcome Syr Isumbras,  
Thow haste forgete what thou was  
45 For pryde of golde and fee.  
The kynge of hevenn the gretheth so: *greet you thus*  
In yowthe or elde thou schall be wo, *age; afflicted*  
Chese whedur hyt shall be." *choose which*
- With carefull herte and sykynge sore *sighing*  
50 He fell upon his knees thore, *there*  
His hondes up he helde.  
"Worldes welthe I woll forsake,  
To Jhesu Criste I wyll me take,  
To Hym my sowle I yelde. *entrust myself*
- 55 In yowthe I may ryde and go, *walk*  
In elde I may nocht do so, *old age*  
My lymes wyll wex unwelede. *limbs will become unsteady*  
Lorde, yf it Thy wyll be,  
In yowthe sende me poverté  
60 And welthe in myne elde."
- Away that fowle toke hys flyghte  
Alone he lette that drurye knyghte, *left; dejected*  
Full sone he wente his wey;  
And whenne he that fowle had lore, *bird; lost sight of*  
65 His steede that was so lyghte byfore,  
Dede under hym ley. *Dead*  
His hawkes and his howndes bothe  
Ronne to wode as they were wrothe *Fled; forest as if crazy*  
And eche on taketh here weye. *one; their*
- 70 What wonder was thowgh hym were wo?  
On fote byhoveth hym to go, *foot obliged*  
To peyne turned his pleye. *pain*
- And as he by the wode wente  
A lytyll knave was to hym sente,  
75 Come rennyng hym ageyne. *Came running toward*  
Worse tydynge he hym tolde,  
"Syr, brent be thy byggynges bolde, *burned; buildings*

- Thy menne be manye sleyne.  
 Ther is noght lefte on lyve  
 80 But thy children and thy wyfe, *Except*  
     Withouten any delayne.” *delay*  
 He seyde, “If they on lyve be,  
 My wyfe and my children thre,  
     Yet were I never so fayne.” *happy*
- 85 Forth he wente hymself alone;  
 His herdemen he mette eche one,  
     He seyde, “What eyleth yowe?” *troubles*  
 “Owre fees ben fro us revedde, *livestock; taken*  
 There is nothyng ylevelandde, *left*  
 90 Nowghte on stede to thy plowe.” *one horse for*  
 The wepte and gaf hem yll, *They; were upset*  
 The knyghte badde they schold be still: *still*  
     “I wyte nowght yow this wo,  
 For God bothe geveth and taketh *caused*  
 95 And at His wyll ryches maketh  
     And pore men also.”
- A dolfull syghte thenne ganne he se,  
 His wyfe and his chylderen thre  
     Owte of the fyre were fledde.  
 100 As naked as they were borne  
 There they stode hym byforne,  
     Were browghte out of here bedde.  
 Yette chaunged no thyng his ble *expression*  
 Tyll he sawe his wyfe and children thre  
 105 That erste were comely cladde. *before*  
 The lady badde her children be blythe;  
 “For yette I se your fader on lyve, *alive*  
     For nothyng be ye dradde.”
- They wepte and gafe hem ylle, *were upset*  
 110 Her fader badde they sholde be styll *Their*  
     And wepe nowghte so sore; *sorely*  
 “All the sorow that we ben inne,  
 Hit is for owre wykked synne;  
     Worthy we be well more. *We deserve even more suffering*  
 115 And we full evell kan wyrke, *poorly*  
 Owre frendes of us wyll yrke, *will be annoyed with us*  
     Of londe I rede we fare. *From [this]; advise we depart*  
 Of myselfe have I no thowghte  
 But that I may geve my menn noghte,  
 120 For hem is all my kare.”