

Fall of Princes

John Lydgate (ca. 1431-8)
 Bk. I: "Theseus & Ariadne"

¶Off Duk Theseus and Adriane that saued his liff in the Caue
 and hou he lik a forsworn man forsook hir and weddid faire Phedra
 whiche aftirward slouh hirsilf

<p>4243 ATHENES whilom whan it was in his floures Was callid norice of philosophres wise</p> <p>4245 Princesse off poeteis & expert oratoures Sonne off all sciences as clerkis can deuse Whens al cunningg most cleerli dede arise Named off Grece the lanterne and the liht Which thoruh al erthe shadde his beemys briht</p> <p>4250 With noble titles which been out of noumbre In eueri coost his reonoun dede shyne The fame theroff was clipsed with non ouble All other scooles it dede so enlumyne ffor in that cite pleyntli to termyne</p> <p>4255 Off the seuene artis as doun from on hedspryng Ther ran out ryuers and stremys off al cunningg These sciences were callid liberall Onli off fredam fraunchise and liberte ffor off a stok that were preued thrall</p> <p>4260 Ther sholde no braunche studie in that cite But thilke blood that were founde fre Bothe be discent & lyneal hih noblesse Ther to scoleie sholde haue interesse This cite was sacrid to Mynerue</p> <p>4265 ffor ther wisdam and ther sapience Off Mercurie the feestis thei obserue ffor rethorik and for eloquence And myhti Mars gaff hem influence With glade aspectis ther parti to a mende</p> <p>4270 Noblesse off knyghthod ther clergie to diffende This toun was nobleied be title of other thynges And most glorious reknyd in that age Be successioun off dukes and off kynges A monges which duk Theseus by lynage</p>	<p>ATHENS, once upon a time, when it was in its prime, Was called the nurse of wise philosophers, Princess of poets and expert orators, Sun of all sciences, as clerks can describe. Whence all cunning did most clearly arise, Named Greece's lantern and light, Which throughout the world shed its bright beams. With innumerable noble titles, In every land its renown did shine, The fame of which was eclipsed by no shadow, All other schools it did so illuminate. For in that city, [it was] plain to see, From the Seven Arts, as flowing from one source, There ran out rivers and streams of knowledge. These sciences were called "Liberal," Only in the sense of freedom, independence, and liberty. For of a stock [of people] who were proven enslaved, No branch [of it] should study in that city. But those bloodlines found to be free, Both through descent and high, noble lineage, Should have an interest in studying there. This city was sacred to Minerva, For their wisdom and their sagacity, They observe the feasts of Mercury, Of Rhetoric and Eloquence. And mighty Mars gave them influence, With glad aspects, to improve their situation, Nobility of knighthood to defend their clergy. This town was ennobled on account of other things: And reckoned the most glorious in that age, For its succession of dukes and kings. Amongst which, Duke Theseus: by lineage</p>
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4275 Sone of Egistus ful fressh of his corage
Excelling alle of prudence & manheede
That euer dede the crowne ther possede
ffor to that cite thoruh his hih noblesse
In ther diffencis such trust such affiaunce
4280 He gaff to hem bi his expert prowesse
Off his triumphes so gret habundaunce
And speciali ther renoun to auaunce,
He made hem fre ther truage for to lete
Ageyn Mynos the myhti kyng of Crete
4285 ffor bi his force the story is weel couth
Them to fraunchise and al that regioun
The Mynotaur he slouh in tendre youth
And afftirward he off deuocioun
Taquite hymself lik a champioun
4290 Theroff made solempne sacrefise
To Iubiter in most humble wise
And in a theatre callid Maratoun
Duk Theseus hadde this victorie.
Afftir he wente to Colchos with Iasoun
4295 Cheeff off counseil as makid is memorie
And bi processe to augmente his glorie
With Hercules his brother to conveie
Geyn Amazones he wente to werreie
Conquered hem his manhod was weel seene
4300 His force his noblesse in that mortal stryff
And afftir that Ypolita the queene
This Theseus took onto his wiff
And for his brother he list iupartie his liff
Duk Pirotheus whan he dede vndirtake
4305 The centaures to outraie for his sake
This centaures poetis specefie
And Seruyus maketh menciou
How thei were whilom engendrid on a skie
Whan first ther fadir called Yrion
4310 Was enamourid ful many day agon
Vpon Iuno because she was so fair
Gouerneress and goddesse of the hair
This Yrion was hir secretarie

Son of Ægeus, spirited of heart,
Surpassing all in prudence and manhood
Who ever did possess the crown there.
For to that city, through his great nobility,
In their defense such trust and loyalty
He gave to them through his expert prowess,
From his triumphs, such great abundance,
And especially to advance their renown,
He made them free to discontinue their tribute
To Minos, the mighty king of Crete.
For through his power—the story is well-known—
To liberate them and all that region,
He slew the Minotaur in his tender youth.
And afterward, out of his devotion,
To acquit himself like a champion,
He thereupon made a solemn sacrifice
To Jupiter, in the most humble fashion.
And in a theater called Marathon,
Duke Theseus celebrated this victory.
Afterwards, he went to Colchis with Jason,
As chief advisor, as it is etched in memory,
And in due course, to further enhance his glory,
To help out Hercules, his brother,
He went to war against the Amazons.
He conquered them; his manhood was displayed,
His power, his nobility, in that mortal strife.
And afterwards, Hippolyta, the queen,
Theseus took as his wife.
And, for his brother, he again risked his life,
[For] Duke Perotheus, when he undertook
To vanquish the Centaurs for his sake.
These Centaurs, poets specify,
And Servius makes mention,
How they were once upon a time begotten on a cloud,
When their father, named Ixion, first
Became enamored, many a day gone by,
Of Juno, because she was so fair,
Governoress and goddess of the hair.
This Ixion was her secretary,

4315 And for hir fairnesse & excellent beute
 Loued hir ful hote al be she was contrarie
 To his desire in Bochas ye may see
 Hym to delude he writith how that she
 Hirsilff transfourmyd as she myhte & coude
 Into the liknesse of an heuenly cloude
 4320 This Yrion pleyntly supposyng
 It was hirsilff and euene thus he wrouhte
 The cloud enbracyng withoute mor tarieng
 Off his foli the goddesse there he souhte
 And with ther medlyng atwen hem foorth thei brouhte

 4325 The centauris these beestis merueilous
 Which off nature be founde contrarious
 Halff man halff hors parted thus on tweyne
 And wonderful bi ther descripcioun
 Off fals malice ded hemselff ordeyne
 4330 On Pirotheus to make invasioun
 And hym to putte out off possessioun
 Off his wiff callid Ypodamen
 And hir to rauysshe maugre all his men
 Ther were of hem an hundred in noumbre
 4335 Swift as the wynd in ther course rennyng
 Which off malice cast hem to encoumbre
 Duk Pirotheus the day off his weddyng
 And to rauysshe his wiff at ther comyng
 Yiff for his parti ther were no diffence
 4340 Ageyn ther power to make resistance
 But Theseus list nat to delaie
 Pirotheus his brother to diffende
 ffirst the centaures he knyhtli dede outraie
 So mortalli thei durste hym nat offende
 4345 Afftir this conquest to helle thei descende
 Duk Pirothe and worthi Theseus
 Maugre the daunger off cruel Cerberus
 There thei rauysshe in ther mortal teene
 Thoruh ther knyhtod yiff ye list to lere
 4350 Despiht of Pluto Proserpyna the queene
 Which off Iubiter was the douhter deere

And for her fairness and excellent beauty,
 Loved her hotly, albeit she did not reciprocate
 His desire, as you may read in Boccaccio.
 In order to delude him (he writes) she
 Transformed herself, as she had the ability to do,
 Into the likeness of a heavenly cloud.
 This Ixion, clearly perceived
 It was herself, and he acted thusly:
 Embracing the cloud, with no further delay,
 In his folly he sought the goddess there.
 And through their joining, between them
 they produced
 The Centaurs, these marvelous beasts,
 Which are considered contrary to nature:
 Half man, half horse, divided thus in two,
 And wonderous in appearance.
 Out of malice they decided
 To invade [the land of] Perotheus
 And to deprive him
 Of his wife, named Hippodamia,
 And to ravish her, in spite of all his men.
 There were a hundred of them in number,
 Swift as the wind they ran,
 Out of malice they planned to attack
 Duke Perotheus on his wedding day,
 And to ravish his wife on their arrival,
 If on his part there were no defense,
 Against their power to make resistance.
 But Theseus did not wish to delay,
 In the defense of his brother Perotheus.
 First, he vanquished the Centaurs in knightly fashion,
 So deadly he was they dared not attack.
 After this conquest, they descended into Hell,
 Duke Perotheus and worthy Theseus,
 In spite of the danger of cruel Cerberus.
 There they ravished, in their deadly anger,
 Through their knighthood—if you wish to know—
 In despite of Pluto, Proserpina, the queen,
 Who was the dear daughter of Jupiter.

And Pirotheus fond first the manere
Off wilful force thoruh his hih renoun
Rewmys to conquere and holde possessioun
4355 But bi writyng sothli off Ouyde
He pleynli tellith how duk Theseus
Arested was in hell and must abide
Bi the force off cruel Cerberus
And Pluto was to hym contrarious
4360 Til Pirotheus to fynden a rele
The cas declared onto Hercules
Which off his knythod a remedi fond
To helpe his freend dede his besi peyne
ffirst bi his prowesse Cerberus he bond
4365 At helle gatis with a treble cheyne
And off his manhod he dede so ordeyne
Duk Theseus from daunger to discharge
Maugre Pluto for to gon at large.
Thei were in armys brethre bothe tweyne
4370 Loued as brethre bothe in werre and pes
That nouthere coude onto other feyne
Ther liff to iupart & putte hemsilff in pres
And bothe as brethre wer callid Hercules
To signefie poetis can weel tell
4375 This name in conquest all other doth excell
Bi old tyme thei that were pereles
ffor ther noblesse in dyuers regiouns
All thei for manhod wer namyd Hercules
Such as were noised for famous champiouns
4380 Tigres to daunte boores and leouns
And renowmed among hem euerichon
Bookis afferme that Theseus was on
ffirst as I saide bi his knyhtli trauaile
Whan Athenes stood in dyuysioun
4385 A mong hemsilff bi werre and bi bataile
Bi his wisdam and his discrecioun
He sette accord withynne that noble toun
Them that were exiled & stood in nouncertayn
He off his knyhtod made hem resorte ageyn
4390 He gaff hem lawes wherbi thei sholde hem gie

And Perotheus found first the way
Through willful force and through his wide renoun,
To conquer realms and hold them.
But in the true writings of Ovid,
He tells plainly how Duke Theseus,
Was arrested in Hell, and must remain,
Because of the power of cruel Cerberus.
And Pluto was against him,
Until Perotheus, to plan an escape,
Told the story to Hercules.
Who through his knighthood found a remedy,
Worked mightily to free his friend.
First, through his prowess, he bound Cerberus
At Hell's gates with a triple chain.
And by his manhood, he arranged
To discharge Duke Theseus from his danger,
In spite of Pluto, to set him free.
They were both brothers in arms,
Loved as brothers, both in war and peace,
Such that neither could deny to the other
To risk his life and throw himself into the throng.
And both, as brothers, were called "Hercules,"
To signify, as poets can well recite,
This name, in conquest, excels all others.
In olden days, those who were peerless,
For their nobility, in diverse places,
All those who for their manhood were named "Hercules,"
Those who were touted as famous champions,
Able to subdue tigers, boars, and lions,
And renowned among them, everyone,
Books affirm, Theseus was one.
First of all, as I said, for his knightly labors,
When Athenians stood divided
Among themselves, by war and by battle,
Through his wisdom and his discretion,
He reached an accord within that noble town.
Those who were exiled and stood in uncertainty
He, in his knighthood, allowed them to return.
He gave them laws whereby they should govern themselves:

Noble statutis foundid on resoun
Sette among hem so prudent policie
In ther lyuyng that no discencioun
Sholde arise bi non occasioun
4395 A mong hemsilff in hih or low estat
Prouydyng euere that there were no debat
Thus gan the cite encrece and multeplie
To wexe famous off wisdam and richesse
Ther sprang the welle first of philosophie
4400 Ther first off knythod ros the hih noblesse
Bi Theseus Bochas bereth witness
Thus thynges too lik as it is founde
Clergie and knythod dede there habounde
And for to sette the cite in quieete
4405 He made pes thoruh al that regioun
And off knythod he manli dede meete
The cruel tiraunt that callid was Creoun
Maugre hym made restitucioun
Off lordis bonys that were at Thebes slayn
4410 To the ladies wheroff thei were ful fayn
Thus thoruh Grece abrod his renoun spradde
His knyhtli fame gan gretli multeplie
And longe in ioie thus his liff he ladde
While that Fortune list hym magnfie
4415 But ay hir gladnesse is meynt with sum envie
ffor she froward list no mor soiourne
With Theseus but gan hir face tourne
Awey from hym wex peruers and froward
Off his glorie ongoodli gan to dulle
4420 Doun from hir wheel she made go bakward
Off his good fame she gan the fethres pulle
Whan his noblesse was hiest at the fulle
I meene the fulle off his felicite
Ther folwed an ebbe off gret aduersite
4425 And morouer hir frowardli to quite
His onhappis rehersyng on bi on
On the firste as Bochas list endite
Was whan he lay in Crete among his fon
And out off prisoun sholde into Grece gon

Noble statutes, founded upon reason,
Established among them such prudent policies
Governing their lives, that no dissension
Should arise for any reason
Among themselves, either in high or low estate,
Providing forever that there would be no debate.
And thus the city began to increase and multiply,
To wax famous for their wisdom and wealth.
There sprang up first the well of philosophy.
There first arose the knighthood of high nobility,
Through Theseus, as Boccaccio bears witness.
These things, too, as it is written:
Clergy and knighthood did there abound.
And in order to settle the city in quietude,
He made peace throughout that regioun.
And through his knighthood he did manly meet,
The cruel tirant who was called Creon.
In despite of him he made restitution
Of the lords' bones who were slain at Thebes,
To their ladies, for which they were very grateful.
Thus, throughout Greece his renown spread.
His knightly fame began greatly to multiply.
And long in joy thus he led his life,
As long as Fortune favored him.
But always her pleasure is mixed with some envy,
For she, perverse, wished no more to tarry
With Theseus, but began to turn her face
Away from him, to wax perverse and fickle.
From the zenith of his glory he began to slide,
Down from her wheel, she made him go backwards,
From his good fame she began to pluck the feathers
When his nobility was at its greatest—
I mean the fullness of his felicity—
There followed a wave of great adversity.
And, in sum, her wicked requital,
Reciting his misfortunes one by one:
The first, as Boccaccio wishes to record,
Was when he lay in Crete, among his foes,
And out of prison, must go into Greece,

4430 Repeiryng homward & himsilff withdrawe
 The Mynotaur whan he hadde slawe
 The firste emprise that he vndirtook
 Was whan he scaped thymportable peyne
 Off Mynotaurus lik as seith my book
 4435 And with hym ladde the kyngis douhtren tweyne
 That he off malice falsli list disdeyne
 Geyn Adriane which that dede hym saue
 From the deth whan he lay in the caue
 Sholde ha be slayn hadde nat hir socour be
 4440 In his repair he took theroff non heed
 He leffte hir sool in gret aduersite
 Withynne an yle in myscheef sorwe & dreed
 And fair Phedra with hym he dede leed
 Weddid hir lik a forswore man
 4445 Thus with ontrouthe his myscheeff first began
 How Phedra quit her the story is weel knowe
 In his absence Bochas writith thus
 Whan that she withynne a lital throwe
 Loued ageyn kynde his sone Ypolitus
 4450 But he to hire was contrarious
 Nolde assente to so foul a deede
 ffor shame he fledde & parcel eek for dreede
 To his fader for she hym dede accuse
 As ye toforn ha the story sayn
 4455 And for he dede hir cumpany refuse
 He wente his way & cam neuer agayn
 ffor ye haue herd how that he was slayn
 Withynne a char thoruh his vnhappi chaunce
 And how Phedra throuh myscheeff & vengauce
 4460 Slouh hirsself ageyn al womanheed
 Here in this book toforn as I you tolde
 Of which thyng whan Theseus took heed
 Thouhte it was vengauce for his offencis old
 ffor he nat quit hym lik as he was holde

Returning homeward, and withdrawing himself,
 When he had slain the Minotaur.
 The first enterprise that he undertook,
 Was when he escaped the unbearable pain
 Of the Minotaur, so my book says,
 And with him took the king's two daughters,
 That he, out of malice, falsely wished harm
 Against Ariadne, who saved him
 From death, when he lay in the cave.
 [He] should have been slain, had she not succored him,
 On his return, he took no heed of that,
 He left her alone, in great adversity,
 On an island, in peril, sorrow, and dread.
 And fair Phedra he took with him,
 And wedded her, as a perjured man:
 Thus with an untruth his misfortune first began.
 How Phedra acquitted herself (that story is well known!)
 In his absence, Boccaccio writes thus:
 When she, within a short space of time,
 Loved—against Nature—his son Hippolytus,
 But he was unfriendly to her,
 And would not consent to so foul a deed,
 He fled out of shame, and partly also for fear,
 Of his father, for she accused him
 (As you have read the story before).¹
 And because he refused her company,
 He went on his way and never returned.
 For you have heard how he was slayn,
 In a chariot, as his luck would have it,
 And how Phedra, through misfortune and vengeance,
 Slew herself—contrary to all womanhood—
 As I have told you before in this book.
 When Theseus took heed of this thing,
 He believed it was payment for his old sins,
 For he did not acquit himself as he should have,

¹Lydgate tells the story of Phedra and Hippolytus earlier in Book I (2808-2884). Hippolytus is killed when his chariot is buried by an avalanche.

4465 To Adriane which sholde ha been his wiff
Bi whos socour he scaped with the liff
This infortune and this vnhappy chaunce
Was to his noblesse ful contrarious
The deth also was to hym a vengauce
4470 Off his sone callid Ypolitus
ffor sorwe off whom this duk Theseus
With salte teris sore gan compleyne
At the exequies of these ilke tweyne
I trowe also it dede hym sore greue
4475 Duk Pirotheus whan he sauh li ded
Slayn with a beeste & myht nat releue
Kyng Orchus hound which hadde a treble head
Whos teth horrible off his blood were red
Which infortunye whan he gan beholde
4480 Onto the deth he felte his herte colde
And for to rekne the grete wrechidnessis
Thunhappy chaunces that fill hym in his liff
Amongis alle his other gret distressis
Was non so mortal nor so ful off striff
4485 As whan that he gave credence to his wiff
Phedra called which of entencioun
Compassid ontreuly an accusacioun
Vpon Ypolitus off hatreed and envie
Because he nolde do so gret offence
4490 As for tassente to hir lecherie
Therefore off deth he felte the violence
And for his fade to soone gaff credence
Bochas forbit husbondis al ther lyues
Withoute preeff nat leeue to soone her wyues
4495 Nor be hasti talis for to leeue
Off flaterers in chaumber nor at table
fforgers of lesyngis myn auctour doth weel preeue
Tabide with lordis that thei be nat able
Heeron he maketh a chapitle ful notable
4500 And off his writyng this was the cause whi
That pryncis sholde examyne ech parti
Off wisdam also and of discrecioun
Withoute a preeff nat be parciall

With Ariadne, who should have been his wife,
Through whose succor he escaped with his life.
This misfortune and unhappy occurrence
Ran counter to his nobility.
The death also seemed to him a vengeance
[That is the death] of his son, called Hippolytus.
For sorrow of whom this Duke Theseus
With salt tears began to sorely grieve,
At the funeral rites of these same two.
I believe it also made him grieve sorely,
When he saw Duke Perotheus lie dead,
Slain by a beast, and he might not recover—
[By] King Orchus's hound [Cerberus], who had three heads,
Whose horrible teeth were red with his blood.
This misfortune, when he beheld it,
He felt the cold death within his heart.
And in order to reckon the great wretchedness,
The unhappy misfortunes that befell him in his life,
Among all of his other great distresses,
There was none so deadly nor so full of strife,
As when he gave credence to his wife,
Named Phedra, who willfully
Made a false accusation
Against Hippolytus, out of hatred and envy,
Because he would not commit so great an offense,
As consenting to her lechery.
Therefore, he felt the violence of death.
And because his father too readily gave credence
Boccaccio forbad husbands all of their lives,
Without proof, not to believe too readily their wives,
Nor to be too hasty to believe tales
Of flatterers in his chamber or at table.
Forgers of lies, my auctor proves well,
That they are unable to dwell with lords.
On this he makes a very notable chapter,
And this was the purpose for his writing:
That princes should examine each side,
With wisdom and with discretion,
To be impartial in the absence of proof

ffor to a prynce it is confusion
 4505 Yiff atween parties he be nat founde egall
 Causid many on for to haue a fall
 God suffred such nat longe to contune
 Withdrouh ther grace & hyndred ther fortune
 Thus Theseus for his hastynesse
 4510 His happ his grace descrescid day be day
 The fame appallid off his worthynesse
 And froward Fortune in a wait eek lay
 ffor his diffautis to hyndre hym yiff she may
 Caste she wolde his noblesse disauaunce
 4515 And thanne his kyngdam bi disobeisaunce
 ffrom him withdrouh honour and reuerence
 fful frowardli thoruh al his regioun
 Thei of Athenys bi cruel violence
 ffill agyen hym in rebelloun
 4520 That he was fayn to fleen out off the toun
 Thus hath Fortune dirked the brihtnesse
 Off al his nobley and cast hym in distresse
 This was the eende bi gret contrariouste
 Off Theseus afftir his daies glade
 4525 Whan the fressh floures off old felicite
 Fortune aduerse made hem for to fade
 Ech thyng mut bowwe whan it is ouer lade
 Worshepis & honouris whan thei brihtest shyne
 With vnwar chaunges than rathest dound declyne

4530 **T**HE onseur gladnesse the ioie transitorie
 Thunstable seurnesse the transmutaciouns
 The cloudi brihtnesse the fals eclipsed glorie
 Off erthly pryncis which han possessiouns
 Monarchies and dominaciouns
 4535 Ther sodeyn chaung declareth to vs all
 Ther pompous sugre is meynt with bittir gall
 This blynde goddess in hir consistorie
 With hir plesaunce medlith discenciouns
 Afftir tryumphes conquest and victorie
 4540 Reueth fro pryncis ther sceptres & ther crouns

¶ **Lenvoy**

For it fares badly for a prince
 If between parties he be found inequitable;
 This has been the cause of many a fall.
 God does not suffer such ones to continue,
 [He] withdraws them from grace and damages their fortune.
 Thus Theseus, for his hastiness,
 His fortune, his grace decreased day by day,
 His fame made feeble from his unworthiness,
 And fickle Fortune in ambush lay,
 To punish him for his faults if she may.
 She contrived to eclipse his nobility.
 And then his kingdom, through disobedience,
 Withdrew from him honor and reverence,
 Treacherously throughout his region
 Those of Athens, through cruel violence,
 Moved against him in rebellion,
 Until he was forced to flee the town.
 Thus Fortune has darkened the brightness
 Of all his splendour, and thrown him into distress.
 This was the end, through great "contrariosity,"
 Of Theseus, following his happy days,
 When the fresh flowers of old felicity,
 Adverse Fortune made fade,
 Each thing must bow when it is overburdened,
 Worships and honors when they shine the brightest,
 Then, with unforeseen changes they most quickly decline.

THE uncertain happiness, the transitory joy,
 The unstable security, the transmutations,
 The cloudy brightness, the false-eclipsed glory
 Of earthly princes, who have possessions,
 Monarchies, and dominions:
 Their sudden change declares to us all
 Their pompous sugar is mixed with bitter gall.
 This blind goddess in her court,
 Mixes her pleasure-giving with dissension,
 After triumphs, conquest, and victory,
 Separates princes from their sceptres and their crowns,

Troubleth the peeple with fals rebellious
Seeth bi these dukis which from her wheel be fall
Al worldli sugre is meynt with bittir gall
This tragedie maketh a memorie
4545 Of dukis tweyne & off ther hih renouns
And off ther loue writ a gret historie
And how thei conquered dyuers regiouns
Gouerned cites contres and eek touns
Til Fortune ther prowesse dede appall
4550 To shewe ther sugre was meynt with bittir gall
Pryncis Pryncessis seeth how deceptorie
Been alle these worldli reuolucious
And how Fortune in hir reclynatorie
With her triacle tempreth fals poisouns
4555 So merueilous been hir confecciouns
Off frowardnesse she will what so be fall
Ay with hir sugre off custum tempre gall

¶Here Bochas repreuyth all thunstabilnes of Princis & othir persones that geue hasti credence to euery report with out preef

Lydgate goes on for 175 lines, detailing how, if Theseus had not been so hasty to give credence, things might have turned out better, and he would not have caused his son's death

Disturbs the peeple with false rebellions:
See by these dukes, who are fallen from her wheel,
All worldly sugar is mixed with bitter gall.
This tragedy makes a memory
Of two dukes and of their high renown,
And of their love writes a great history,
And how they conquered diverse regions,
Governed cities, countries, and also touns,
Until Fortune diluted their prowess,
To show their sugar was mixed with bitter gall.
Princes, Princesses, see how deceptive
Are all of these worldly changes,
And how Fortune in her couch,
With her treacle tempers false poisons.
So marvelous are her concoctions,
Of fickleness, she will, whatsoever befall,
Always with her sugar, by custom, temper gall.

¶Here Boccaccio reproves all the instability of Princes & other persons who give hasty credence to every report without proof