

doorkeepers, handymen or other strong folk to perform the heavy work that from hour to hour must be done, and likewise laborers etc. And also tailors, shoemakers, bakers, pastry-makers, etc. And in particular how to set the household menservants and chambermaids to work, to sift and winnow grain, clean dresses, air and dry, and how to order your folk to take thought for the sheep and horses and keep and amend wines. The fourth article is that you, as sovereign mistress of your house, know how to order dinners, suppers, dishes and courses, and be wise in that which concerns the butcher and the poulterer, and have knowledge of spices. The fifth article is that you know how to order, ordain, devise and have made all manner of pottages,¹⁶⁹ civeys, sauces and all other meats, and the same for sick folk.

The third section tells of games and amusements that are pleasant enough to keep you in countenance and give you something to talk about in company, and contains three articles. The first article is concerned with amusing questions, which are set out and answered in strange fashion by the chance of dice and by rooks and kings. The second article is how to feed and fly the falcon. The third article tells of certain other riddles concerning counting and numbering, which are subtle to find out and guess.

Section 1, Article 7

The seventh article of the first section shows how you should be careful and thoughtful of your husband's person. So, fair sister, if you have another husband after me, know that you should think much of his person, for after a woman has lost her first husband and marriage, she commonly finds it hard to find a second to her liking, according to her rank, and she remains lonely and disconsolate for a long time, and the more so if she loses the second. So love your husband's person carefully, and I pray you keep him in clean linen, for that is your business, and because the trouble and care of outside affairs lies with men, so must husbands take heed, and go and come, and journey hither and thither, in rain and wind, in snow and hail, now drenched, now dry, now sweating, now shivering, ill-fed, ill-lodged, ill-warmed and ill-bedded. And nothing harms him, because he is upheld by the hope which he has of the care which his wife will take of him on his return, and of the ease, the joys and the pleasures which she will do

169. Pottage = soup or stew.

to him, or cause to be done to him in her presence; to be unshod before a good fire, to have his feet washed and fresh shoes and hose, to be given good food and drink, to be well served and well looked after, well bedded in white sheets and nightcaps, well covered with good furs, and assuaged with other joys and amusements, intimacies, loves and secrets whereof I am silent. And the next day fresh shirts and garments.

Certainly, fair sister, such services make a man love and desire to return to his home and to see his good wife, and to be distant with others. So I advise you to make such cheer to your husband at all his comings and stayings, and to persevere in this; and also be peaceable with him, and remember the rustic proverb, which says there are three things which drive the goodman from home: a leaking roof, a smoky chimney and a scolding woman. And therefore, dear sister, I beseech you that, to keep yourself in the love and good favor of your husband, you be unto him gentle, and amiable, and good-tempered . . . and beware of roofless house and of smoky fire, and scold him not, but be unto him gentle and amiable and peaceable. Have a care that in winter he has a good fire and smokeless and let him rest well and be well covered between your breasts, and thus bewitch him. And in summer take heed that there be no fleas in your chamber, nor in your bed, the which you may do in six ways, I have heard. For I have heard from several that if the room is strewn with alder leaves, the fleas will be caught on them. And I have heard that if you have at night one or two bread trenchers slimed with glue or turpentine and set about the room, with a lighted candle in the midst of each trencher, they will come and be stuck to them. Another way, which I have tried and which works, is to take a rough cloth and spread it about your room and over your bed, and all the fleas that hop onto it will be caught, so that you may carry them away with the cloth wherever you want. And also sheepskins. And I have seen blankets set on the straw [on the floor] and on the bed, and when the black fleas hopped onto them, they were more easily found on the white, and killed. But the best way is to guard oneself against those inside the coverlets and the furs, and the material of the dresses with which one is covered. For that I have tried this: when the coverlets, furs or dresses, in which there are fleas, are folded and shut tightly up, for instance in a chest tightly bound with straps, or in a bag well tied up and pressed, or otherwise put and pressed so the the aforesaid fleas are without light and air and are kept imprisoned, then they will perish forthwith and die. And I have sometimes seen in diverse chambers, that when one had gone to bed they were so full of mosquitoes, which at the smoke

of the breath came to sit on the faces of those that slept, and stung them so hard, that they had to get up and light a fire of hay, in order to make a smoke so that they had to fly away or die. And this may be done by day if they are suspected. And likewise he who has a mosquito net may protect himself with that.

And if you have a chamber or a passage where there are a great many flies, take little sprigs of fern and tie them to threads like tassels, and hang them up, and all the flies will settle on them at eventide; then take the tassels down and throw them out. . . . [Several more remedies for flies follow.]

And thus shall you preserve and keep your husband from all discomforts and give him all the comforts you can bethink of, and serve him and have him served in your house, and you shall rely on him for outside things, for if he is good he will take even more pains and labor in them than you would wish, and by doing what I have said you will cause him to miss you all the time and have his heart with you and your loving service, and he will shun all other houses, all other women, all other services and households. . . .

But there are certain old hags, who are sly and play the wise woman and pretend great love by way of showing their heart's great service, and nothing else; and be sure, fair sister, that the husbands are fools if they do not notice it. And when they do notice it, and the husband and wife grow silent, and pretend with each other, it is an ill beginning and will lead to a worse end. And there are some women who serve their husbands very well in the beginning, and then they find that their husbands are then so loving to them and so good-tempered, that they think those husbands will scarcely dare to be angry with them, if they do less, so they slacken and little by little they try to show less respect and service and obedience, but—what is more—they take upon themselves authority, command and lordship, first in a small thing, then in a larger, and a little more every day. Thus they attempt and advance and rise, they think, and they think that their husbands, who say nothing about this because they are so good-tempered or perhaps because they are setting a trap, do not notice it, because they permit it thus. And certainly, it is an ill thought and deed, for when the husbands see that they cease their service, and climb to domination, and that they do it too much, and that by enduring ill, good may come, then those women are all at once, by their husband's rightful will, cast down even as Lucifer was. . . . Wherefore you should be obedient in the beginning and ever persevere therein, according to this example.

Section 2, Article 3

Which tells how to choose serving men, servants and chambermaids, etc.

Concerning which matter, dear sister, if perchance you should desire to become a good housewife, or to help thereto some lady among your friends, know that serving folk be of three kinds. There are some who are hired as workmen for a fixed time, to perform some short piece of work, as porters who carry burdens on their backs, wheelbarrow men, packers and the like; or for one day or two, a week or a short season, to perform some necessary, or difficult, or laborious work, as reapers, mowers, threshers, vintagers, basket bearers, wine pressers, coopers and the like. Others are hired for a time and for a special craft, as dressmakers, furriers, bakers, butchers, shoemakers and the like, who work by the piece upon a particular task. And others are taken to be domestic servants, serving by the year and dwelling in the house. And of all these there is none who does not full readily seek work and a master.

As for the first, they are necessary for the unloading and carrying of burdens and the doing of heavy work; and these are commonly tiresome, rough and prone to answer back, arrogant, haughty (except on pay day), and ready to break into insults and reproaches if you do not pay them what they ask when the work is done. So I pray you, dear sister, that when you need such things done, you bid master Jehan the Dispenser¹⁷⁰ or other of your folk to seek out, choose and take, or cause to be sought out, chosen and taken, the peaceable ones; and always bargain with them before they set hand to the work, that there may be no dispute afterwards. Still, most often they wish not to bargain, but desire to fall upon the task without bargain made, and they say nicely: "Milord, it is nothing—there is no need; you will pay me well, and I shall be content with what you think fit." And if Master Jehan takes them thus, when the work is finished they will say, "Sir, there was more to do than I thought; there was this and that to do, and here and there to go," and they will not take what is given and will break out into shouting and foul words. So bid Master Jehan not to set them to work, not allow them to be set to work, without first making terms with them, for those that desire to earn are your subjects before the work is begun, and for the need that they have to earn they

170. Dispenser = household official similar to a butler.