

DESCRIPTION OF THE WIDOWS' SPENDING HABITS

William Langland's *Piers Plowman C-text*, Passus IX, lines 71-97.

Middle English Version

Ac that most nedden aren oure neyhebores, and we nyme gode hede,
As prisonnes in puttes and pore folk in cotes,
Charged with childrene and chief lordes rente;
that they with spynnyng may spare, spenen hit on hous-huyre,
75 Bothe in mylke and in mele, to make with papelotes
To aglotye with here gurles that greden aftur fode.
And hemsulue also soffre muche hunger,
And wo in winter-tymes, and wakyng on nyhtes
To rise to the reule to rokke the cradle,
80 Bothe to carde and to kembe, to cloute and to wasche,
And to rybbe and to rele, rusches to pylie,
That reuthe is to rede or in ryme shewe
The wo of this women that wonyeth in cotes;
And of money other men that moche wo soffren,
85 Bothe afyngred and afurste, to turne the fayre outward,
And ben abasched for to begge and wollen nat be aknowe
What hem nedeth at here neyhebores at noon and at eue.
 This I woet witterly, as the world techeth,
What other byhoueth that hath many childrene
90 And hath no catel but his craft to clothe hem and to fede,
And fele to fonge ther-to, and fewe panes taketh.
There is payne and peny-ale as for a pytaunce ytake,
And colde flesche and fische as venisoun were bake.
Fridays and fastyng-days a farthing-worth of modkeles
95 Were a feste with suche folk, or so fele cockes.
These are almusse, to helpe that han suche charges
And to conforte such coterelles and crokede men and blynde.