

LAK OF STEDFASTNESSE

Balade

Somtyme the world was so stedfast and stable
That mannes word was obligacioun,
And now it is so fals and deceivable
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,
Ben nothing lyk, for turned up-so-down 5
Is al this world for mede and wilfulnesse,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

What maketh this world to be so variable
But lust that folk have in dissensioun?
For among us now a man is holde unable, 10
But if he can by som collusioun
Don his neighbour wrong or oppressioun.
What causeth this but wilful wrecchednesse,
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse?

Trouthe is put down, resoun is holden fable, 15
Vertu hath now no dominacioun;
Pitee exyled, no man is merciabile.
Through covetyse is blent discrecioun.
The world hath mad a permutacioun
Fro right to wrong, fro trouthe to felnesse, 20
That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.

Lenvoy to King Richard

O prince, desyre to be honourable,
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.
Suffre nothing that may be reprevable
To thyn estat don in thy regioun. 25
Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse.

Explicit

2 **obligacioun** surety, bond; 6 **mede** payment; 9 **lust** pleasure;
10 **holde unable** consider ineffectual; **fable** falsehood;
18 **blent** deceived; 24 **reprevable** damaging, a reproof