

The Book of the Duke of True Lovers

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[image]

THE BOOK OF THE DUKE OF TRUE LOVERS

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED FROM THE MIDDLE FRENCH OF
CHRISTINE DE PISAN WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ALICE
KEMP-WELCH. THE BALLADS RENDERED INTO THE ORIGINAL
METRES BY LAURENCE BINYON & ERIC R. D. MACLAGAN

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[image]

*The Book Of The Duke Of True Lovers Now First Translated From
the Middle French of Christiné de Pisan, by Alice Kemp-Welch.
Chatto and Windus. London MCMVIII.*

The title on the reverse of this page, engraved upon the wood, was designed by Miss BLANCHE C. HUNTER, and embodies the only authentic portrait of CHRISTINE DE PISAN, engaged in writing, from the MS. now in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels.

[image]

Ci commence le liure du duc des vrays amans.

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The only two known MSS., both early fifteenth century French, of the love-story here rendered into English prose, are the one in the Bibliothèque Nationale (836), and that in the British Museum (Harley, 4431).

The MS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale forms one of the treasures of the famous collection of MSS. made by Jean, Duc de Berry, the Mecænas of illuminated MSS. At his death it passed into the possession of his daughter Marie, who, by marriage, had become Duchesse de Bourbon. When, in the reign of François I., the Connétable de Bourbon, to whom it had descended, was disgraced, the king seized his books and MSS., and carried them off to Fontainebleau, well pleased to add by any means, righteous or unrighteous, to the treasures of the royal library. Here this MS. and others remained until the reign of Charles IX., when they were removed to Paris, and placed in the Bibliothèque du Roi, now the world-famous Bibliothèque Nationale.

The MS. in the British Museum has also had an interesting and chequered career. It was originally presented by Christine de Pisan to Isabelle of Bavaria, the queen of Charles VI. of France, whose books and MSS. were, in 1425, acquired by John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France. It is more than probable that this MS. was amongst these and was brought to England, for the various signatures on the enclosing parchment would certainly seem to indicate that this was the case. Late in the fifteenth century the MS. was sold to one of the most celebrated bibliophiles of the day, Louis of Bruges. After this, there is a blank in its history, until, in the seventeenth century, we find it once more in England, in the possession of Henry, Duke of Newcastle, whose grand-daughter married Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford, the founder of the splendid collection of MSS. and books purchased in 1754 for the British Museum, and now known as the Harleian Collection.

The writer of the story, Christine de Pisan, was one of the world's many famous women, and one who, by her life and work, created an ideal for womankind—that of sweetness and strength. Born in Venice in 1363, she was, when five years of age, taken by her mother to Paris, to join her father, Thomas de Pisan, who had been summoned thither by the king, Charles V., to serve as his astrologer, in which service he remained until the king's death. The Court of Charles V. was, in spite of the constant warfare that troubled his kingdom, at once most cultured and refined, and it was in such surroundings that Christine was brought up. At the age of fifteen she was married to the king's notary and secretary, Etienne de Castel, a gentleman of Picardy, who, however, died some ten years later, leaving her with three children to provide for. Like many another, she turned to letters as both a material and a mental support. She wrote not only purely lyrical poetry, of extraordinary variety and abundance considering that the subject is almost invariably the joys and sorrows of love, sometimes, as she tells us, expressing her own sentiments, sometimes those of others at whose re-

quest she wrote, but she also wrote sacred and scientific poems, and moral and political prose works, and a kind of romantic fiction, of which the story of The Duke of True Lovers is an example, although it is quite possible, and indeed probable, that it has some historic basis.

Christine begins her story by saying that it had been confided to her by a young prince who did not wish his name to be divulged, and who desired only to be known as The Duke of True Lovers. It has been suggested, with much likelihood, that this is the love story of Jean, Duc de Bourbon, and Marie, Duchesse de Berry, who has already been alluded to as the daughter of the famous Jean, Duc de Berry, and the inheritor of his MSS. This Marie had been married, when quite a child, to Louis III. de Chatillon, Comte de Dunois, and afterwards to Philippe d'Artois, Comte d'Eu, Constable of France, whose wife she was at the time when the incidents which have been woven into this story are supposed to have taken place. Philippe d'Artois only survived the marriage three or four years, and after three years of widowhood, the already much-married Marie wedded (1400) our hero, Jean, Duc de Bourbon.

The principal facts which seem to afford strong evidence in favour of connecting this love story with the two princely houses of Bourbon and Berry are (1) that the MS. originally formed part of the library of the Duc de Berry, and subsequently passed on marriage to that of the Duc de Bourbon; (2) that although Christine's MSS. generally were so copied and multiplied during her lifetime that they number even now at least two hundred, there is only one other copy—the one already referred to as being in the British Museum—known of this particular MS., this alone seeming to indicate that its contents were regarded as of a private family nature; and (3) that to add to the mystery, and to ensure secrecy, there is no definite ending to the romance. The story merely tells us that the ducal lover, harassed by mischief-makers, and unable to bear the pain of a separation in his own country which her position and his own gallantry alike demanded, departs with the army for an expedition in Spain. For ten years the lovers meet from time to time during the intervals between journeying and war, and further solace each other with short love-poems, expressive of pensive longing, and with these the story ends vaguely. But if we accept the story as being founded on real life, history supplies a more definite ending. As already stated, soon after the death of Marie's second husband, Philippe, the lovers are married, and spend a few happy years in their castle at Moulins, the chief town of the Duke's domains, surrounded by and enjoying rare works of art and literature, their happiness only marred by the unsettled state of France, and by consequent calls on the Duke to fight for his country. It was on one of such occasions—the memorable and decisive battle of Agincourt (1415)—that the Duke was made prisoner, and taken to London, where he died in captivity, and Marie, his Duchess, was left to mourn,

and this time in real sorrow.

Thus ends the story, which Christine has told with her wonderful gift as painter-poet. Besides making the lovers, and that noxious growth of civilisation, the inevitable scandal-monger, intensely living through her womanly sympathy and psychological insight, and introducing, in the form of a letter, a most comprehensive and remarkable treatise on feminine morality, the dangers of illicit love, and the satisfaction of simple wifely duty, she takes us in imagination to a royal castle of the fifteenth century. There we seem to live the daily life of its courtly circle, and, through the vivid description of the sumptuous pageant, to take part in the three days' tournament, and in the merry revels which bring each day to a close. As we read, we realise the extraordinary power of this woman, who seems in description to use the exact and detailed brush of a Meissonier, whilst in her outlook on life she possesses the broader and freer touch of a Puvis de Chavannes. Truly is it a master-mind indeed which can see life largely, and see it well!

Much might be written about the interesting and talented Christine, but we must bid her farewell now and here. Still she must ever be held in remembrance for her untiring championship of two things very near to her heart—a patriotic love for the land of her adoption, and an ardent devotion to the cause of womankind. She had the happiness before her death, which occurred about 1430 in the Convent of Poissy, near Paris, to which she had retired, of seeing France aroused to patriotism, and that, too, by a woman—Joan of Arc.

[pg!1]

THE BOOK OF THE DUKE OF TRUE LOVERS

Here begins the Book of The Duke of True Lovers

Although I might have no desire or intent at the present time to discourse of love, since all my mind is occupied with other matter the which is more pleasing to me, I am willing, for the sake of others, now to commence a wondrous story, for to this I am besought by one who, instead of making request, has the right to give command to one even more worthy than I. And this is a lord whom it

behoves one duly to obey, and who of his grace has desired me to make known the trouble which, whether he has been wise, or whether he has been foolish, he has, during many winters and summers, long been in by reason of love to the which his heart is still in bondage. But [pg 2] he would not that I should make known his name. It contents him who tells this story for their sake, to be called the Duke of True Lovers. And it is his pleasure that I recount, even as he has told them unto me, the grievous distresses, the joys, and the strange adventures, through the which, during many bygone years, he has passed. And he would that to this rehearsal I should at the same time add other matter, the which I grant him, for I know him to be of such disposition, and of such good sense, that his humility will take in good part the imperfection of my little poem, and, with his consent, I will relate on his behalf the facts even as he has set them forth.

[pg 3]

THE DUKE OF TRUE LOVERS

I was a mere lad when I first experienced a great desire to become a lover. And for that I heard it maintained that a lover is courteous above other folk, and better esteemed amongst men, I desired to be one. To this end I resorted thither where I might choose a lady whom I might serve, but ne'ertheless I was longwhile without one, for, on my soul, I had not the understanding to make choice, and although I had enough of leisure, I ne'ertheless understood not how to discover the way to this. And because of my desire, I frequented much fair company of dames and maidens, and saw many very fair damsels, but youth still kept possession of me, so that in nowise did I know how to determine whom to choose. Thus I was longwhile happy, content with this gay and pleasing life. [pg 4] But when the time dured too long for me, in this manner did I make sore plaint to love:—

Very God of Love, who art of lovers Lord,
And Venus, thou, Love's Lady and Goddess,
Since in love only is set my happiness,
Vouchsafe to turn my heart soon thitherward.

Vouchsafe, that I be with right courage stored,
 Soon to bring unto me my heart's mistress,
 Very God of Love, who art of lovers Lord.

And may I choose, if thou the grace accord,
 One that shall pardon me the simpleness
 Of youth, and honour on my days impress;
 Out of a great desire have I implored,
 Very God of Love, who art of lovers Lord.

And because of the desire which I had in view, oft did I discourse thus until that true love heard me, and gratified my longing. And I will rehearse unto you in what manner love first took possession of my heart and made it captive, and never after set it free.

[image]

“On a day for my diversion ... we mounted on to our horses”

On a day, for my diversion, with one of my kinsfolk and four others of my gentlemen, we mounted on to our horses. A longing for the chase took possession of me, and, to ensure success, I caused the huntsmen to take greyhounds and ferrets. Then, without ado, [pg 5] we entered on a path the which I had oftentimes followed, but not far had we gone when a wide beaten track led us whither I knew there were many rabbits. And near by, I assure you, there was a strong and very goodly castle, but its name I will not make known.

At that time there was come to this place a Princess who was held of every one as so good and beautiful, and of so great worth, that she was had in honour of all. In nowise did we know that she was there, since we came thither by chance. Here and there, without the castle, her attendants amused themselves, some singing, some casting the weight, and others, afoot, exercising with the bar. And as they remained there, we turned our steps toward them. Then they all turned them toward us, and when they perceived us, and recognised who we were, the chief amongst them at once rose up. And when they had saluted us, they tarried not, but, as it seemed to me, by twos and by threes repaired them to their mistress. And methinks they did not hide from her that we were come there, for as soon as we were come quite nigh unto the castle, we saw a goodly company of ladies coming [pg 6] forth to meet us. And these gave us welcome with gracious bearing.

And we straightway turned toward them, and saluted them on bended knee. And there was amongst them both a lady and a maiden who were kinsfolk of her who was mistress of them all. And without giving affront, and without rebuke, I kissed the maiden with fair tresses, as well as the lady. And my cousin and I escorted the maiden, who was high-born, and the noble lady, and in suchwise entered the castle.

And the Lady, of whom every one spake well, had already come forth from out her chamber, and stood there with noble mien, neither proudly, nor haughtily, but in such manner as befitted her noble estate and royal person. And as soon as we saw her, we duly saluted her, and, in a little space, she came forward, and took me with ungloved hand, and kissed me, and said, "I knew not of your coming, fair cousin. You are right welcome, but what brings you here now?"

Then said my cousin, "Certes, my Lady, we set out for amusement, and knew not that you were here. Chance brought us hither, but praised be God who [pg 7] has so favoured us that we have found at your hands so warm a welcome."

And the good and gracious lady laughed at this, and made answer, "Then let us go amuse ourselves."

So we descended down into a green meadow, and then, accompanying us, she went to a very fair place, and drew me to her right side to sit down beside her. And without more ado, large cushions of gold and of silk were brought to her, under the shade of a willow, where, beneath the trees, the waters of a spring ran fair and clear along a straight channel fashioned and cut with skill through the green and tender herbage.

And no longer did she remain standing, but she seated herself with me beside her, and then the others withdrew them to a distance from us, and sat them down, here and there, beside the stream. Then she began to question me, for I confess that I knew not at that time how to converse with her or with others, for I was still somewhat young.

And she began her discourse by making enquiry of me concerning a journey from the which I was newly come, and, in especial, of the demeanour and the appearance of the ladies, and, further, in what manner [pg 8] the Court, the which the King and Queen held, was ordered. And I made her answer according to my knowledge. And I remember me that we discoursed together there of many things.

[image]

*"And now it is time that I tell how the grievous malady began ...
for love's sake."*

And now it is time that I tell of how the grievous malady began the which has made me to suffer right cruelly for love's sake. Truly it is a marvel to understand how it came to pass that love of her whom I had oftentimes seen, but whom I had never before thought on, took possession of my heart. It is like unto one who passes over the sea, exploring many lands to discover that which he might find close at hand, but the which he perceives not until another makes it known unto him. Thus in truth did it befall me, for, by reason of my want of understanding, in nowise did I perceive the grace of my precious lady until love put me in the way, and I had but desired to see such an one in order to yield my heart to her. For long had I seen her oft, but, until that day, no thought had I given to her. Thus I had ready to my hand that which I went elsewhere to seek. But, in order to allay my passion, love at length willed to release my heart from this strife. And now, when this perfect [pg 9] one, who has caused me sore trouble, spake to me, her speech and her gentle and gracious bearing pleased me more than ever aforetime, and made me wholly dumb. Intently did I observe her, and right well did I contemplate her beauty, since she seemed to me to be more distinguished, and to have much more of grace and sweetness, than I had ever before observed.

Then love, the playful archer, who saw my silent demeanour, and that I was inclined unto love, took the arrow with the which it is his wont to surprise lovers, and bent his bow, and drew it silently. But I heeded it not. The arrow of a tender glance, the which is so pleasing and so powerful, pierced me to the heart. Then was I sore bewildered. Verily did I think myself to be lost when I felt the loving blow, but my heart yielded itself to the amorous wound. In nowise was the wound mortal, for it came to pass that the sting pierced me again and again.

Then her gentle, laughing eyes, all fraught with loving fetters, so stirred my heart, that I knew not how to make answer unto her. Truly must she have thought my look and my manner to be foolish, since [pg 10] I moved neither hand nor foot, and I so oftentimes changed colour at her glance, that it might have been thought that my heart trembled with fear. How shall I set the matter forth briefly? If I longed to be made captive, then in this I failed not.

Thus ended the life of my early youth. How to live otherwise, true love now taught me. In this manner was I made captive from that hour.

Longwhiles did I remain there, and I discoursed in a simple manner, like unto a child, and, without ceasing, I kindled the burning fire-brand in my heart. When I gazed on her beauty, I was caught as is the moth in the candle, or the bird in the lime, and no heed did I take of it.

And when I had tarried in this place nigh unto the third of a summer's day, my cousin no longer remained in meditation, but said to me, "Take your leave now, for, on my soul, methinks you have detained my Lady too long here, and it is the time to sup."

Then the noble and courteous one, who is called fair and good, besought me much to sup with her, but I excused me. For but a short while longer did I linger there, and then I arose, and would have taken my [pg 11] leave, but it behoved us first to take wine, and so we drank. And when we had drunken and eaten, I besought her that of her grace it might please her that I should escort her to her dwelling, but the fair one consented not. So, without tarrying, I took leave of her and of them all.

Then love, the more to pierce my tender heart, caused me of a sudden to receive a loving glance from her, the which came to me like a tender greeting as I left the place, for, whiles I was departing, I turned towards her, and, as I turned me away, the tender, fervent look from her fair, loving eyes, fell upon me in such wise that never, since love lodged there, has it faded away. And thus I departed with love's arrow.

And when we were without the walls, we straightway mounted on to our horses, and made all haste to set forth because of the night, the which was already come. And by the way, my cousin made great endeavour to be merry, but as for me, certes I spake not a word, but kept silence, and bowed my head in a very pensive way, for the burning and living flame with the which the tender glance had pierced and wholly [pg 12] taken possession of my heart, left me not, and I so thought without ceasing on the beauty of the gentle countenance where I had left my heart in pledge, and on her fair and faultless body and her winning eyes, that all came up before me. Thus I rode forward in pensive mood. And my cousin conversed much with me by the way, and spake with much good sense, but since I was wrapped in thought, I listened not to him until he said to me, "Fair Sir, what do you thus think on in silence, and what is the cause of this? Have you not had great joy there from whence you come, that you bear yourself so pensively? Certes, it seems to me, so help me God, that whoso desires a lady, could not have one fairer and more perfect than, without doubt, is the one from whom you but now come. What say you to this? Do I not speak truly? Is she not courteous and kind? Have you ever in your life seen a lady in every way more perfect? To my thinking, she is beautiful to look on, and excels all others in discretion, in honour, in grace, and in nobility, and, in fine, never on my soul have I seen her like, save only the lady who is mistress of mine own heart, for her pure heart displays such surpassing [pg 13] virtue that there is none other to be compared to her, save only her of whom I have spoken, and this God would allow."

And when I heard another praised more than her whom I thought on, although before I had held my peace, no longer for all the gold in the world could I remain silent, and therefore, pondering deeply, I sighed and said, "Certes, I will say what I think, if it be only that I believe it certain that, if God would choose

an earthly mistress and friend, none other could he desire if he would possess the one in the world the most beyond compare, and in pledge of this I offer my body in combat. If you take not up this gage, then you love not this same lady of yours who is without equal in the world, and once again do I avouch that all other ladies are, to this one, only as are the small sparks from a candle to the brightness of the stars.”

And when he heard me speak thus, he began to smile, and verily do I believe that he perceived my heart to be already gone out to her.

And then he went on in front, and we, riding in all haste, came in a short space to the place where I [pg 14] dwelt, and the night had already closed in. And at the time, my father was looking out into the court, and he sternly made enquiry where I had been all the day long, and I, who had made great haste for that I feared and dreaded his anger, saw him at a window, and much did I wish that he had been elsewhere. Howsoever I dismounted, and then, without waiting, I knelt to greet him. Then said he, turning his head, “Whence come you, fair Sir? Is it the time to return home when the night is already come? But all is well with him who returns.”

And I said not a word to him, and he left me, and I departed to my chamber. And there I supped, pensive and sad, albeit there were many youths there who were at great pains to divert me, and who related many tales to me, but know that without ceasing my thoughts were elsewhere, for it ever seemed to me that I saw, face to face, her who knew not how she had made captive my heart. And when the time to retire to rest was come, I laid me down in a well-prepared and comfortable bed, but I believe not that I slept one hour and a half, and if there was one thing which disquieted me more than another, it was that I was [pg 15] fearful lest perchance she for whom I felt such sweet, joyous longing, might not look upon this as I desired, for, as it seemed to me, nowhere could I obtain solace which could give me so much pleasure, and from the which my heart could derive such happiness, and, in this mood, I pondered, and said:—

BALLAD

Verily, Love, I have no language, none
 Of thanksgiving sufficient for thy grace
 That moved me unto love, and such an one
 Gave me for mistress as doth all abase
 Beside her, queen of beauty and of grace
 And precious worth; O, when on her I muse,

Truly my speech with my thought keeps no pace.
Thanks be to thee, who mad'st me her to choose.

Now all that I desired so dear is won,
Having a lady to serve all my days,
Who holds my heart in joy to think upon
Her beauty, and in every hour and place
Makes my heart high and glad, so to embrace
Her soul with mine, joy that I may not lose.
Mine was the choice, but thine shall be the praise.
Thanks be to thee who mad'st me her to choose.

O now, Love, into whose dominion
I yield my heart, vouchsafe my service space
That to my lady I suffice alone,
Being all hers, and that her beauteous face
[pg 16]
And her regard that doth all pain erase,
Bend pitying on me and not refuse
Her tender eyes; I ask no other grace.
Thanks be to thee, who mad'st me her to choose.

Ah, God of Love, ere that I run my race,
Vouchsafe I may alone content her, whose
I am always, in good and evil case.
Thanks be to thee, who mad'st me her to choose.

In such wise did I commune with myself, and as yet I felt not the fierce onset of the ardent desire which assails lovers, and makes them to burn, to grow pale, to pine away, and to fret. This was not yet come. Thus I only bethought me at the time to consider how I might be blithe and gay, and possess a very fine equipment and fair raiment, and give away very freely and without stint, and behave so honourably that in all things I might everywhere be praised of gentlefolk in such sort that my lady might regard me with favour on account of my well-doing. Thus I desired to perfect my conduct, and thereafter to abandon the childish ways which until then had made me wayward, and to take heed that thoughtlessness did not overtake me, and to learn how to have a care for that which is worthy.

[pg 17] All these thoughts had I at that time, and thus I sought how, in my bearing and conduct, I might put all this into practice. So I much changed my ways, and now all my endeavour was to think, and to say, and to do, that which

was in every way pleasing and gracious, and on no account to do aught that was discourteous.

And I was neither sad nor foolish, but was cheerful, happy, contented, and prudent, and so as to become familiar with the ways of love, I took pains to learn to sing and to dance, and also to give myself up to the pursuit of arms, for it seemed to me that it was said truly that credit of a surety results from the pursuit of love, of arms, and of valour.

Then forthwith I so importuned my father and my mother, that I came by that which I sought after, the which was that I might have gold and silver to spend freely, and that in all ways I might be richly attired; and then I chose a device and a motto, in the which was the name of my lady in such form that none could recognise it; and I commanded chargers for jousting, and caused a festival to be arranged in order to make essay at the joust, and, as I have said, other things beside did I purpose.

[pg 18] So the festival was prepared, to the which many a noble lady was bidden, but ere I had answer that my lady would come to it, I made request of him to whom this was due, and who was distantly related to me; and he most heartily gave consent to it, and gave me welcome to his castle. And there I saw my lady at my leisure, but how wholly I loved her and held her dear, I told not unto her, but my face, methinks, made it quite manifest, for Love which, the more to arouse my passion, taught me its devices, made me to be all silent, and to pale, and then to regain colour, but the fair one held her peace concerning it, as if she perceived it not, and so little did she take notice of it, that I bethink me she in nowise perceived the cause of all that happened to me, and that all came from love of the which she was the cause, and the one from whom flashed the loving spark which pierced my heart which made no complaint of it. Ne'ertheless I lived happily, and oftentimes did I see her, and this it was that comforted my heart, the which rejoiced, and, aside to myself, I thus addressed her whom I so loved:—

[pg 19]

BALLAD

My lady, and my sovereign, flower most rare,
 In whom honour and worth are glorified,
 Fountain of all things wise, gracious, and fair;
 Who art my way toward virtue, and the guide
 That over all my goings dost preside;
 Lady, to whom humbly is vowed my fate,

Serving in that sweet service at thy side,
All of my days to thee I dedicate.

How else, since none could with thyself compare?
Thou Beauty filled with sweetness, O provide
Ensample kindling me to do and dare,
And bring my ship in honour's port to ride!
So sweet my joy, Lady, it cannot hide;
Therefore, in my simplicity elate,
Out of my heart and body have I cried;
All of my days to thee I dedicate.

Most noble Duchess, surely the hours prepare
That time, when thou shalt well be certified
How my heart serves thee with its every prayer.
Then shall my life be brimmed and satisfied,
When thou its full devotion having tried
Know'st it all truth; O honour's path and gate!
Fame's flowering tree! O valour's starry guide!
All of my days to thee I dedicate.

Princess, who dost in power and praise abide,
Early I learnt to love thee; and love, being great,
Lifts up my heart above all thought of pride,
All my days, all, to thee I dedicate.

[pg 20] And now I must turn me again to the former matter.

In all haste, a great and fair festival was prepared, where many folk had much diversion. And proclamation was made of the jousts, at the which whosoe'er would combat lustily might win jewels of great worth and the prize, and that to this tournament there would come twenty knights who would joust with all comers.

And on the day appointed, the meeting was held in a fair meadow, where, well placed at the end of a lake, was a castle the which had six high towers. And in this meadow were set up large and spacious tents and scaffolds, and pavilions in great number, and all was made ready for the festival and the jousts. And without adding more of this, I tell you that when the day named was come, my sweet lady arrived before nightfall, and there met her a goodly company of noble folk, and, certes, minstrels with drums, of the which there were more than three pairs, and trumpets the which they blew so loudly that the hills and valleys resounded.

And know that I had great joy when I saw my goddess coming toward me, and never could aught beside happen from the which I could derive such [pg 21] joy. So I met her in the way with a very noble retinue, and I approached her litter, and saluted her, as she did me, and then my fair lady said to me, "You take great trouble, fair cousin, for it puts you to inconvenience to come at such a time."

Thus holding, with joyful countenance, much converse with my sweet and dear lady, we came nigh unto the castle, and riding beside her litter (and, certes, it seemed to me that I had for my service sufficient recompense, since my great joy was doubled in that it appeared to me that she then looked on me more tenderly than she had ever done afore), we arrived at the castle, where we found awaiting her many fair ladies, who kneeled before her in seemly manner.

And in the courtyard she descended down from the litter, and was received there with great rejoicing; and I forthwith escorted her through the rooms to her tiring chamber. And all the house had been made ready for her whom I thought on, and at whose dwelling I had sojourned.

Then those whose duty it was brought wine and comfits, and the fair one desired that I should partake of them with her. And after this we withdrew, and [pg 22] retired elsewhere, so as to suffer her to have repose for a while, and I straightway withdrew me elsewhere, and dressed and attired me.

And so as to dance in the German fashion, and to the end that naught should be wanting to make the festival perfect, I had caused an hundred rich liveries to be made according to my device, and I remember me that the five-and-twenty of them the which the knights had on this occasion, were of green velvet, and of cloth of gold broidered. But on the day following the joust, the esquires and the gentlefolk, but not the waiting-men, apparelled them, whatsoe'er it cost, in satin, broidered with silver.

And when that we were dressed, we appeared before my mistress. And there we found a goodly assemblage of ladies and damsels of the country who were already come to this festival. Then, without tarrying, I saluted my lady and them all, and verily do I believe that I changed colour. Ne'ertheless I said, "My Lady, it is time to sup." And straightway I took her by the hand, and led her to the hall. Then each one descended thither. The knights led the ladies, and the minstrels blew their trumpets in such manner [pg 23] that everything re-echoed with the sound, and the feast gave such pleasure, that it made a goodly sight to witness.

And my lady seated herself on the large raised dais, and I think not that it was displeasing to her that next to her I placed my mother, and that, after her, four countesses, who entertained her well, seated them close by, following down the hall each one according to her rank. And the gentlewomen-in-waiting all sat them down in order of rank. And the gentlemen seated them apart. And I hope

and believe that in all respects they were well served at the supper with meats and with wine.

And, without making any excuse, I tell you that, when we had supped, after taking comfits, we drank. Then the minstrels came forward, and began to sound their horns in pleasing harmony. And, in a short space, there began the dance, joyous and gay, and at it every one, because of the happy festival, made merry.

Then no longer did I tarry, but I went straightway to beseech my lady to dance. And for a little she made excuse, but at last she gave consent. So I took her by the hand, and led her to the dance, and then [pg 24] I escorted her back to her seat, and misdoubt not that I was so carried away by love of her, that I seemed to myself to be altogether overcome of delight to be near her. I bethink me that I conceived this to be indeed the celestial paradise, and desired naught better. And that which pleased and rejoiced me the most, was her very sweet countenance, the which, fearlessly and without frowardness, and with a gentle, tender glance, looked upon me so sweetly and so kindly, that it seemed to me that all I said and did was pleasing unto her. And I observed her very intently, and then I cried for joy, for I seemed to possess the great happiness which I desired.

And it was right fitting that I should now approach her joyously. And so we danced merrily a greater part of the night, and then the revel ended, for it was time to make ready to retire to rest. Then I led her who was as fair as amber to her chamber, and there many a courteous word was spoken. And when she had gazed on me with her eyes the more to inflame my passion, after partaking of comfits, I took leave of her and of all. And we laid us down, here and there, on fair beds, with rich coverlets, but all the night long I [pg 25] ceased not to think on her beauty, and I gave utterance to these words, the which were in my heart:—

ROUNDEL

When you are come, joy is so all complete,
The heart leaps in my breast, beholding you,
O flower of beauty, O rose fresh and new,
Whose slave I am, whose servitude is sweet.

Lady of gracious ways, whom all men greet
Most beautiful of women and most true,
When you are come, joy is so all complete.

For you the happy festival shall meet

In glee; with none else have I need to do
 For my delight; from you alone I drew
 The life and joy that make my heart to beat,
 When you are come, joy is so all complete.

And like unto one who is consumed with love, I was impatient for the morn, when I might see my mistress. So I arose from my bed as soon as I saw that the time was fitting. And already was the house full of brave and valiant knights, and esquires who even now were jousting with foils and overthrew many an one.

And when that I was ready, and mass was said, I went out, and because I saw not my lady, I remained [pg 26] pensive. Then I went to meet her, and in a short space I found her. For the nonce she was at mass, but after hearing it, she hastened to make ready her attire.

And when, after she was come forth from the chapel, she had attired her fair form, the which of a truth was fair above all, I courteously made her salutation. And she said tenderly, "Welcome, fair cousin. Take good heed, for every one who would win a fair lady will appear at the joust."

Then I smiled, and took courage to say, "I would make a request of you, my Lady, and if you will grant it, right glad shall I be. It is that you give me, if so it pleases you, a sleeve from off one of your bodices, and a chaplet of periwinkle, to wear on my helm. Methinks it would not please me more, or give me greater joy, if that you gave me a kingdom!"

Then my lady pondered awhile, and at length she said, "Certes, fair cousin, it would profit you more to have agreement with some other lady for whom to adventure knightly and brave deeds. There are here many ladies of high degree, but right certain it is that you cannot have a lady here without jeopardy of your [pg 27] life if you would have of her, to place on your helm, a token for the which it behoves you to go forth to do deeds of chivalry. This you should receive from your mistress and friend, and not from me, but I tell you that I am by no means willing to refuse you your request, for even more would I do for you, though I would not that any one should know of it." Then she drew a knife from beneath her bed-hangings, and cut out the sleeve with the ermine from one of her bodices of cloth of gold, and gave it to me. And for this I gave her much thanks, and I likewise received from her the green chaplet, wherefore I was happy and joyous, and said that I would bear it on my helm, and would joust for love of her, but she must be willing to take all in good part, for I had still to learn how to do this.

Then my gracious lady was silent, without letting it be seen whether this was pleasing unto her, or whether it gave her displeasure, and more I dared not say. And I took my leave, for it was time to go.

And the dinner was made ready early on that summer's day. We all dined

hastily in our chambers, [pg 28] and then repaired to the meadow where the jousts were to be held, and dismounted before the gorgeous pavilions set up around. The armour was there already, and the lances were got ready, and the chargers were examined. And there you might see high saddles with stirrups, and covered with devices, white, and red, and green, and shields of many colours, and painted lances; and already there was a great assemblage, in many rows, of the common folk, and much quarrelling and uproar.

And then I armed me, and made me ready, in my pavilion, but I tarried there awhile, for it fell not to me to sally forth to begin the joust. And there were twenty of us, apparelled alike, and all akin, and we were knights prepared to joust with all comers. [pg 29]

[image]

“My cousin, without long waiting, found his challenge taken up”

And my cousin, of whom I have before spoken, and who was very courageous, was the first in the field. To this he was well accustomed, and in such array did he enter the lists, that verily he looked like a kinsman of the king. And he had his helm laced for to tourney in proper manner; and painted lances, and banners, and much fair company were to be seen there, and, as was fitting, many a player on the pipes was to be heard, the which gave delight to all around. But of this we will say no more.

And I had caused many pavilions to be set up there for the service of strangers, where they could lodge and refresh them. And you may be assured that before the appointed hour there came thither many valiant knights who failed us not at the joust. Others, who came to look on, remained on their horses.

And my cousin, without long waiting, found his challenge taken up by a knight who touched his shield with the point of his lance, and he avoided it not, so that if it should chance unto him to be overthrown in the encounter, then must his blood be spilt.

And it was our part to be the first to take the field, and the heralds might be heard making proclamation in a loud voice of the name of this one, who was known in England and in many lands. And then five of our company sallied forth from the tents, and in nowise did they fail to joust with all comers, and of a truth each one did his duty there so exceeding well, that it is indeed right that the renown of their achievements should endure.

Then the general tourney began, and, in double [pg 30] file, and much increased in numbers, our company sallied forth, and, as it behoved them, tour-

neyed bravely. The trumpets sounded joyously, and the heralds made proclamation, and the knights on noble battle horses, and according to their several ranks, tourneyed lustily. And my lady, and many other ladies, each one of whom was fair to look upon, twenty ladies with fair tresses, nobly born, and adorned with chaplets, of whom the sovereign and mistress was her who was in my thoughts, were seated apart, in order of rank, on scaffolds richly bedecked. And, certes, they were all apparelled in gowns of white silk, broidered with gold of special design. They seemed like unto goddesses from heaven, or fairies fashioned as faultlessly as one could desire.

And you may know of a surety that many a glorious course was run that day, and, certes, it must have been not a little pleasing to those who watched such beings, since they made great endeavour to merit their regard, and to overcome each other, the better to win their favour. Thus you could here see many a thrust quickly parried, and how that one overthrew another in the shock, and another aimed at the opening of the [pg 31] visor, or else struck at shield or helm. One was unhelmed, or at once cast to the ground, and another came who carried him off. Lances were broken, and blows resounded, and the trumpets were sounded so loudly, that God's thunder could not be heard. And hard blows were given on either side.

At length, with lance in rest, I sallied forth from my pavilion swifter than a merlin, well planted in the stirrup, and armed all in white on a charger, the which had a white caparison. Neither red, nor green, nor any other colour whatsoever was there, save fine gold. And there came forth with me all those of the place, and these meted out many a good blow, and all were armed in white, and the lances the which our folk bare were all of white. And I had caused the sleeve, the which my lady had given me, to be right well disposed, and fastened firmly to my helm, so that it could not be torn off. And I placed the green chaplet on my helm, and set me forth with a goodly company, for exceeding great desire had I to see my very sweet goddess.

Then, all full of gladness, I arrived at the place of jousting. And I turned my eyes to where she was, [pg 32] and met with her tender glance, and thus I feared not any mischance. I passed before her, and then quickly closed my helm and went to my place. And, in her presence, a noble count forthwith brought me my lance, at the same time saying unto me that much shame would it be to me if I jousted not worthily since I bare so noble a crest.

Then, with lance lowered, being desirous that it should be rightly placed, without ado I spurred my charger against another, and you could see him come towards me. And we faltered not in the encounter, but, since it is not seemly to relate one's own deeds, I will not here tell aught with regard to my exploits on that occasion, save that the fair one held what I performed that day so well

done, that, of her grace, she gave me very great praise for it, and, in the end, she awarded the prize for those who were of the place to me, and, right joyous, I took it with the ready assent of the ladies, and thus you may know of a truth that, according to my age, I did my duty there, all the day, as much as in me lay. If I did aught that was valiant, no praise do I deserve for it, for you may know of a surety that it was love, and not I myself, [pg 33] which was the cause of it all. Without doubt there were to be found in this company many proven knights more doughty than myself, for, of a truth, as was well known, there were come there, from all parts, both nobles and those of lesser degree who were more worthy of the prize. But I trow that the ladies did this for that they saw how eager I was, and because of this favourable disposition, I believe that when they awarded me the prize, they were really desirous that I might be constrained to joust the more readily.

And the prize which was decreed for strangers, was given to a German, an able and skilful jousting amongst a thousand.

Thus did the tournament dure all the day, and, without ceasing, fresh jousting came to it, and our men maintained themselves against all comers. And how shall I sum it all up? Every one jousting well and fairly, but the blows which were given, and by whom, and in what manner, it concerns me not to recount, for that is not what I have in view, nor what I purpose to tell.

And night came, and the joust ended. Then every one departed quickly, and all returned to the castle, [pg 34] where the cooks made haste with the supper. And I sent my gentlemen to those who were lodged without, as to friends, with a message that, in the name of the noble ladies, and in my own name, I earnestly besought of all gentlefolk, both strangers and neighbours, that they would come and keep festival with us. Thus on all sides I caused a knightly entertainment to be proclaimed, and that whoso would, might come and keep the feast.

Then straightway there came those of both high and low degree. There were barons from many lands, and it needs not to ask if there was a great assemblage, and, certes, there were received there, with ever increasing pleasure, so many folk, that the castle was filled. And I received them with glad countenance. And there was a great number of barons and of gentlefolk from many parts, and, with right goodwill, I did honour to each one according to his rank. And the supper was plenteous and choice.

And when that we were risen from the table, the minstrels sounded their horns, and those of noble rank appalled them for the dance, and none were there amongst them who did not wear rich brodered [pg 35] doublets, all sewn over with lace of beaten gold and silver, and the ladies were arrayed in like manner; in suchwise did they make ready to dance gaily. Then merrily commenced the glad festival, at the which many a gracious lady and fair damozel courteously

besought the strangers to dance, and led them forth.

Then the dancing commenced throughout the hall, and every one strove to dance gaily. But I, whom love had filled with ardent passion, thought only of my lady, and gave no heed to this. I essayed to dance a little, so that my longing might not be perceived or known. Then I joined the elder knights, until word was brought to me to go without tarrying into the hall, for that my lady, who eagerly made enquiry for me, sent for me. And truly did I rejoice at this. So with a goodly company of gentlefolk, I turned me to the hall, where all were merry for that they vied with one another in the dance.

And when I was come to my lady, she said to me, "Fair Sir Cousin, wherefore do you not dance?"

And I made answer, "Do *you* dance, my Lady, and thus set me the example."

And she said that I must dance first; and so, to [pg 36] make commencement, I led to the dance a fair lady with a merry countenance, and escorted her round once or twice, and then led her back to her seat. Then I took my lady by the hand, and with her assent, gaily led her forth to the dance.

Thus the dance dured the most part of the night, and at last it ended, and each one retired to rest, and laid him down on fair white sheets. But I who had lady and mistress, and who in my heart felt the torment of the desire to be loved of her with the which I was consumed, spake thus under my breath:—

ROUNDEL

Laughing grey eyes, whose light in me I bear,
 Deep in my heart's remembrance and delight,
 Remembrance is so infinite delight
 Of your brightness, O soft eyes that I fear.

Of love-sickness my life had perished here,
 But you raise up my strength in death's respite,
 Laughing grey eyes, whose light in me I bear.

Certes, by you my heart, I see full clear,
 Shall of desire attain at last the height,
 Even that my lady, through your sovereign might,
 May me continue in her service dear,
 Laughing grey eyes, whose light in me I bear.

[pg 37] And the day dawned, and what shall I tell concerning it? Wherefore should I longer stray from my subject without good cause? On the morrow, throughout the whole day, the esquires, who bore them fairly and well in every way, likewise jousted. And there were also twenty, clad all in green, who maintained the combat, and the ladies assembled to watch them, and to bestow the prizes. And there were twenty damsels there, apparelled in green, and they wore golden chaplets on their tresses, and were all very noble ladies, comely, and fair to look on. And during the encounter, many high-saddled chargers were overthrown, and shields were struck, and lances broken. And many a blow deserving of praise was given and endured. But I will not stay me further to give a long account of this, for it pleases me better to rehearse that for the sake of which I began this story, and that which I thought and did and said in this love affair, about the which at that time I made great dole.

For three whole days—this is no fable—the pleasing festival dured, at the which all were made welcome and at their ease. Then the revel ended, but my [pg 38] lady departed not for the space of a whole month. I besought of him who was her lord to grant this, and he granted it, and if that I had dared, right willingly would I have made a recompense unto him for this.

And you may know right well what joy I must needs have had from this pleasing sojourn. Each hour my only care was to devise perfectly how I could best give her diversion.

And on a day I caused baths to be made ready, and the stoves to be heated, and the tubs to be placed in white pavilions in a fitting spot. And it chanced that I went thither when my lady was in the bath, and she received me not with pleasure, but I had perfect joy when I looked upon her fair flesh as white as a lily. Greatly did this delight me, as you who hear tell of it can well believe. On another day we went to the chase, and on another we descended down to the river to fish. In suchwise did we pass the whole month, following many gladsome pursuits.

But know that in the midst of this my happiness, love bound my heart in its toils more firmly than ever, and laid so violent hold on it, that a great desire to be [pg 39] loved was so kindled within me, that, ere the festival was ended, never did any other miserable being endure such stress of mind. No happiness had I if I could not see her and gaze constantly upon her, of the which I never wearied, for, as it seemed to me, never could I be enough in her presence, and moreover this mood made me so to crave after her kindly goodwill, that dolour laid grievous hold on me, and you may well believe that I was not skilled enough to know how wholly to hide the grievous sorrow I endured. And albeit I would not discover my thoughts to either man or woman, ne'ertheless so troubled was I in mind, and in such great tumult, that, in spite of myself, my face revealed my state.

I was now pensive, now merry. And like unto one forsaken, I oftentimes wept so bitterly, that I seemed to myself like to die in grievous sorrow from despair and from loss of the hope of ever gaining her love; wherefore I paled, and trembled, and reddened, and oft changed colour, and sweated from fear, and became disquieted, so that at times my courage altogether failed me, and then it oft happened that in bed I became quite calm. I neither drank nor ate [pg 40] meat with relish, nor could I in anywise sleep, the which threw me into such state, that I grew worse and worse. And no one knew what ailed me, for in nowise would I speak to any one of my condition, nor for my life would I confess it even to her whom I loved. Ne'ertheless she oftentimes enquired of me what ailed me, and bade me tell unto her my condition, and hide it not from her, and that I should speak to her without fear, for I must not doubt me that she would do all that in her lay to ease me.

Thus longwhiles my lady comforted me, but ne'ertheless I dared not, for all the gold in the world, make known or confess unto her the load which my heart bare, and thus, in deep thought, I wept and sighed.

And at that time I became so filled with love, that I know not what more to say concerning it, save that I had troublous and painful acquaintance with it, and from that time lacked the quiet and pleasurable peace of mind which aforesaid I enjoyed, and plunged my heart into another peril, for I came to reject all solace, and to make of sorrow my very pitiless guest. Longwhiles did I remain in this state, without daring to pray for mercy, for fear of refusal. And thus, [pg 41] bewailing my ill-fortune, I made complaint in these words:—

BALLAD

Love, I had not ever thought
 Thou would'st bid thy servant share
 Grief to which all else is naught,
 Grief whereunder I despair:
 Thus unfaltering I declare
 That in death I pass away
 If thy saving grace delay.

In a burning passion caught
 I grow faint, and may not bear
 All the torment it hath wrought:
 Thine the fault, be thine the care!

Loose me from this evil snare!
 Other help is none to pray,
 If thy saving grace delay.

Rather had I death besought,
 (So without deceit I swear),
 Since my heart is all distraught
 With thy flame enkindled there.
 Murmuring is not mine to dare:
 I must perish as I may,
 If thy saving grace delay.

Love, with gladness meet my prayer,
 Cleanse my soul and make it fair,
 Since in sorrow I must stay
 If thy saving grace delay.

[pg 42]

[image]

And at the end of the month it behoved my mistress ... to quit the castle

And at the end of the month it behoved my mistress, by reason of whom I lived in anguish, to quit the castle afore-named, for no longer could she remain there, and so she departed. Then was I truly in grievous plight, since I lost from sight the very perfect fair one without whom I could not live. Now was all my happiness ended, for longwhiles had I been used to look on her, and to be with her, at all times. But now it befell that perchance three months or four would pass ere I should hear of her, or see her, the which was very grievous unto me to endure. And I so grieved over the past, and felt such dolour at her departure, that I lost my colour, my judgment, my demeanour, and my self-command. Thus I believe that, as it might well be, many folk perceived my yearning, about which they made gossip, the which caused her disquiet. And so much did this weigh upon me, that I thought to die of grief. And when I heard it noised abroad that I loved my fair lady, my grief was the more increased, for, because of this, I had suspicion that this great friendship made discord between me and her friends, and this grief caused me very dire distress, for I much [pg 43] feared me that she

was constrained to leave because of this, and so much did this disquiet me, that I know not how to tell of it. Howsoever, as far as in me lay, I hid my sorrowful anger better than was my wont, and, enduring great grief, sighing, I uttered these words:—

BALLAD

Now in good sooth my joy is vanished clean,
 And all my gladness changed to grievous ire:
 What profits it, dear flower! since I have seen
 Thy going hence, that I could never tire
 When thou wast here
 To greet thee every day in every year?
 Delight that was is grown disaster fell:
 Alas! How can I bid thee now farewell!

My love, my choice, my lady and my queen,
 For whom my heart is kindled in desire,
 What shall I do when love from what hath been
 Taketh the gold and leaveth me the mire?
 Nor far nor near
 Is comfort found, nor any pleasant cheer.
 Gone is thy beauty, that did all excel:
 Alas! How can I bid thee now farewell!

Thine is the deed, O evil tongue and keen!
 Forged for my fate upon an anvil dire:
 Fortune, that loveth not my hand, I ween,
 Nor yet my pen, did in the task conspire.
 [pg 44]

 No help is clear
 Save Death, when God shall grant him to appear;
 Else thou alone could'st win me out of hell.
 Alas! How can I bid thee now farewell!

 Ah, simple and dear!
 At least behold me and my mourning drear.
 Thy loss is torment more than I can tell.

Alas! How can I bid thee now farewell!

And the day of departure came, and my lady set forth, and I verily believe that she would have still delayed her going if she had dared, but it was meet for her to do her lord's will, since it behoved her to guard his good name. And she gave thanks to all, and took her leave, and set out on her way.

And I, unhappy being, who attended her, rode beside her litter, and the fair one, who could well perceive how that, without disguise, I loved her with a true love, looked at me fixedly with so tender a glance, that methinks she desired to cheer my drooping heart, which was sad, and moreover she might perchance have conversed with me but that on her left hand there rode another, who came so nigh unto us that we were not free to say aught which he [pg 45] might repeat, for the which I hated him fervently, and I saw well that I should oft have to endure much vexation.

In such manner we rode for a day and a half, until that we were come to her dwelling, but in nowise did the journey seem long to me, but quickly ended, and in truth it wearied me not, albeit I verily suffered. And I would have taken my leave of her, but her Lord, making much false pretence of welcome, endeavoured to detain me, but I knew from his demeanour that he was beside himself on account of me. And this jealousy had been put into his head by one who was at our feast, and to whom I had afterward made a recompense, and never did I think that he would keep watch on her. This caitiff had the charge of the fair one whom I worshipped, and for whom I was dying of grief. So I took my leave, and went on my way, and out of regard for my sovereign lady I dissimulated, and hid the sorrow that was mine, and never did any eye discover that which was such grievous pain to me, and scarce could I restrain my feelings. But this was needful for fear of the slanderer, and so I departed, saying:—

[pg 46]

BALLAD

Farewell, my lady dear and dread,
 Farewell, of all sovereign and queen,
 Farewell, perfect and sacred head,
 Farewell, who dost all honour mean,
 Farewell, true heart, loyal and clean,
 Farewell, best flower the world doth bear,
 Farewell, yet not farewell, O white and fair!

Farewell, O wise, that no ill said,
 Farewell, river that made life green,
 Farewell, in whom fame harboured,
 Farewell, voice that all ears could win,
 Farewell, solace of all my teen,
 Farewell, whose grace is wide as air,
 Farewell, yet not farewell, O white and fair!

Farewell, soft look that through me sped,
 Farewell, more fair than Helen queen,
 Farewell, body and sweet soul wed,
 Farewell, thou most gracious demesne,
 Farewell, pole-star, joyous and keen,
 Farewell, fountain of valour rare,
 Farewell, yet not farewell, O white and fair!

Farewell, Princess of noblest mien,
 Farewell, thou aweing smile serene,
 Farewell, without fault, sin's despair,
 Farewell, yet not farewell, O white and fair!

Thus did I commune with myself, and, sighing, I departed, and made great haste to reach my dwelling. [pg 47] And I was weighed down and troubled with grievous sorrow when I no longer saw there her whom I had dared choose as my lady, and whom my heart held so dear.

Now I made known at the beginning how that I desired to be a lover, and to be gentle, and how love wounded me with his dart, of the which my heart will never be healed, and as I have spoken of the ill that came to me from that time, so is it meet that I tell you of the good. And this distemper increased, by reason of which my strength diminished, so that in a little I grew pale, and thin, and sad, and ofttimes sighed from grief, for no solace had I, since I knew not how to discover any good way to see my sweet lady, and, certes, so much did I fear her rebuke, that I dared not approach her, however grievous it was, and this plunged me into tears, and troubled me. Thus I was sick a-bed, and then I uttered this ballad:—

BALLAD

Since, O my Love, I may behold no more
 Thy sovereign beauty that was all my cheer,
 My heart is given up to sorrows sore:
 For though the wealth of all the world were here,
 [pg 48]
 There is no ease but in beholding thee
 Who art afar! Whence I of tears am fain
 Mourning the happy days that used to be:
 Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Doubt not of this, true love whom I adore,
 Thine image in my soul is ever clear:
 I think but on the blessedness of yore
 And on thy beauty, simple-sweet and dear.
 So fiercely smiteth love, I may not flee
 Nor may my soul the dread assault sustain:
 Death could not bring a sorrier weird to dree,
 Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Alas! one only mercy I implore.
 When I am dead (as I to death am near)
 Pray for me, and thy praying shall restore
 My wounded spirit: shed one tender tear—
 Great were my comfort if my piteous plea
 Might touch thy heart, if sorrow might constrain
 Thy lips to sigh, such need of sighs have we.
 Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Sweet flower, to whom I do abandon me,
 My heart is broken down with bitter pain
 For one whom Fortune would not have me see:
 Yet unto none but thee may I complain.

Here is set forth how the Lover made Complaint

unto his Friend

Thus did my sorrow increase until my heart endured very grievous torment, and without doubt this sore [pg 49] trouble would have killed me if God had not betimes brought back my kinsman of the whom I have made mention, and who

[image]

Comment l'amant se complaint a son compaignon

delivered me from destruction. And when he was come back from the country, he well perceived and understood from my countenance the sorrow which possessed me. Thus he found me very sick and without colour, the which caused him great disquiet. And he came to me as soon as ever he was able, and I was o'erjoyed when I heard his voice, for right dearly did I love him. And he wept when he saw me thus grown worse. And I drew him near to me, and embraced him lovingly, and he said to me, "My God, what a face! Is there cause for it? In good sooth you must tell me truly of your state, without reserve, and naught must you conceal from me of your condition which you would not do from a priest to whom you would make confession, and, certes, very foolish would you be to keep sealed up in your heart the trouble which robs you of your peace of mind and your health. So much have I frequented the world, that I perceive and understand your sorrow, for I have been in danger of the like malady. This is not sickness; rather is it passion, for doubtless [pg 50] such love has come to you as consumes you like as fire does straw. Of this, naught have I to learn of you. And greatly do you misconceive our close fellowship if you fear that in aught I would betray you, and that I would not screen you more than I would myself. When you have told unto me the trouble which has cruelly taken possession of you, doubtless you will find your grief diminished, for very great hurt comes to him who suffers from love-sickness without speaking of it to any one. Therefore tell me the whole matter, my dear cousin, my lord and my master, without keeping aught back, or, if you do not so, for longwhiles will I go into Germany, for believe me that it grieves me not a little to see you thus, and not a whit can I rest."

And when this one, who held me dear, had thus, to the utmost of his power, urged me to make confession unto him of my inmost thoughts, his gentle speech so touched and melted my heart, that I began to sob and to weep piteously enough to kill me, since it seemed as if I neither ought nor could tell unto him the grief which everything caused me. And he, cast down and sad by reason of the trouble from the [pg 51] which he saw that I suffered, out of great compassion wept bitterly, and began freely to make offer to me of himself and his possessions for to make me happy, and in every way, no matter how great it was, he strove to this end, and without ceasing he strongly counselled me rather to take comfort, and to weep no more, since this was neither reasonable nor dignified.

In suchwise did my good friend exhort me to be happy once more. Then I at

once made him answer, "Sweet cousin and friend, I know well that you have great love for me, even as I, forsooth, have for you, therefore it is meet that we conceal not from one another our joys, or our misfortunes, or aught beside. Therefore I will tell unto you truly all my state, although to none other, however much I loved him, would I speak of it. You know, very sweet cousin, and you have in remembrance, how that we went together, not long since, to a place nigh unto this, where we met with a lady whose coming I have since paid dearly for, for from that time my very simple youthfulness has left me, and, without intent to do me harm, love has brought this trouble upon me, from [pg 52] the which I am dying, but in nowise must I blame any one, for truly no lady is there who is her equal in beauty, in prudence, or in worth. And you know how that I devised our festival, the which was gorgeous, and that all this was for love of her. And after the feast was ended, I besought of him who is her lord, to allow my sweet lady to remain all the summer at our castle for her diversion and pleasure, and to hunt in the forest, the which was green then, and is so still. And you know that he willingly gave consent, but you stayed not, methinks, three whole days after that, for you soon departed thence, but life was joyous to me because of my lady whom I saw the while without hindrance. But, with intent to make me sorrowful, misfortune, which busies itself with bringing much hurt to lovers, caused one, whom may hell-fire consume, to keep watch on my doings, and this one, like unto one full of malice, well perceived my state (for I was very inexperienced), and that my heart was altogether in bondage to her. In nowise do I know how he was able to perceive it, for, to deceive every one in this affair, I took much pains to dissemble, and so much the more frequented the company of other [pg 53] ladies, and never did I discover my thoughts to any one, nor did I even speak of them to her whose liegeman I am, and who wots not aught of that which weighs heavily on me. And this disloyal one noised abroad such report, that her jealous lord constrained the fair lady to depart without more delay. Wherefore, if I had not feared me to bring dishonour upon her, I would have made him who brought this about to feel regret for it, and greatly to repent it, and to experience my vexation and displeasure. Thus have I lived in distress for the space of three months, and sooner would I die, so as to be delivered from this sad grief, than live thus, since I can no longer see her, albeit she has since, of her grace, made enquiry regarding my state, and has caused me to know that in a little while I may count upon seeing her, although I must not let this be known, and that a time will come when a change in affairs will come about, and that I must be of good cheer. So I know, or at least bethink me, that my dear lady perceives and knows without doubt that I love her sincerely, but scarce can I endure the strain of the longing which possesses me, for greatly do I long for her. Ne'ertheless I have since [pg 54] seen her, though unknown to others, for I disguised me so that

I might not be recognised, and, from a distance, I have seen her pass by. Thus you can understand that I have since lived in such grief that a speedy death has been my only desire. But I see not how either you or any other can succour me, for it is not possible that this jealous one, with his spies, would not discover it, and be assured that I must either endure this or die, but if that you will give heed for a while, you will understand wherefore it behoves me to rejoice over this grievous experience of love, and how I maintain this in my song.

BALLAD

Thou, O Love, the traitor art!
 Tender once as any may,
 Then the wielder of the dart
 That is pointed but to slay.
 Thee with reason, by my fay,
 Double-visaged we declare:
 One is as the ashes grey,
 But one is as an angel fair.

Loth am I to find my part
 In the night without a ray,
 Yet desire hath stung my heart
 And I sigh in sorrow's sway.
 [pg 55]
 Gentle hope will never stay
 In the mansions of despair:
 One to death would point the way,
 But one is as an angel fair.

Hope might in my spirit start,
 Death thy servant bids her nay:
 While beneath thy scourge I smart,
 Doleful still must be my lay,
 Since to set my steps astray,
 Thou at once art wheat and tare:
 One is like a devil, yea,
 But one is as an angel fair.

Love, thou teachest me to say
 Double tribute is to pay
 For thy servants everywhere:
 One is grievous, well-a-day!
 But one is as an angel fair.

Much did this ballad charm my cousin, but greatly was he distressed at my grief, and in this manner did I, who never wearied of, or ceased from, weeping, make an end to my discourse. And thereby my distemper was diminished, but my cousin was forthwith angered when he saw me thus discomforted. And he spake thus to me: "Alack-a-day! Right well do I perceive that you possess little discretion and courage. What reason have you, fair Sir, to demean you thus? [pg 56] Certes, you should be happy, methinks, since your lady, by her messenger, makes promise to you of solace at a fitting time. You are foolish when you relinquish the hope which gives you comfort, for be assured that your lady is mindful of your love, and that she longs to give you pleasure. How can such grief enter your foolish thoughts, so as to allow you to be thus cast down and to die of despair? Many a lover, without any hope of being loved by his mistress, has longwhiles served in great anguish without any solace either of soul or body, and not a single glance from her has he received, nor has he dared to approach her for fear of slander. If you have patience, and believe what I say, certes, you have but to make plaint as I have done, and you will soon be able to attain your desire. Since your lady takes pleasure in your doings, you may be assured that no fear will be strong enough to restrain her. But however grievous it may be, it may lead to your undoing that you have allowed so long time to pass by without making her acquainted with your state. Very certain is it that never will she importune you, and I know not wherefore you were so foolish that, when you had opportunity, and were [pg 57] unhindered, you spake not to her of all the love with the which you loved her, instead of giving yourself up longwhiles to dreams!"

Then I forthwith made answer, "Alas, Cousin! I dared not, even if I had fitting opportunity, for I was afraid, and so much did I fear her, that I dared not tell her of it, even if I died because of this. For this reason I faltered, and greatly do I repent me of it, but never had I the courage to do it, for in her presence I was greatly disquieted, although when I was alone I thought to myself that I would speak to her. And it oftentimes happened to me thus, but, certes, I persevered not when I was in her presence. The delight of her loving glance, the which was so sweet to me, filled me with such great ecstasy, that it seemed to me that she would perceive my distress of mind without my saying aught."

Then my cousin made answer, "Foolish is the lover who hides from a lady the love he bears her, for, on my soul, the delay may do him sore hurt. But since

you dared not speak to her because of the fear which possessed you, as you know well how to write, wherefore do you not send her a letter or missive? And I [pg 58] am still more surprised at your folly that, when you received her messenger, you sent not back word to her of your state since the time when you parted from her. And wherefore did you delay? His coming was indeed timely had not your folly held you back, and in this I without doubt speak the truth, for, since she so desired to give you gratification that she took thought to hear news of your doings, you can perceive that your love was in her thoughts. She must indeed regard you as a novice since you sent not to her! Never a day let fall from your lips a single word in anywise touching upon sadness, but rather be cheerful, and leave all to me, and so well shall I know how to deceive every one, that I am willing to become a monk if there is any one on this earth who will be able to hinder you from seeing the fair one without this ever being noised abroad, if she so wills it, and you desire it. So grieve no more, but make glad countenance, for, without preaching longer to you, I make promise and swear to you that ere the week is passed, more than once shall you see your lady. And if God guides me in this, verily shall I find out the way to accomplish this."

Then, even as the light illumines the darkness, and [pg 59] the exceeding brightness of the sun banishes the gloom, so was the cruel torment of my suffering subdued and ended by this one, who so truly comforted me that he filled me with joy and gladness, and stayed my grief, so that I had naught left of the which to make complaint.

And in nowise did he make default, but when that an hour and a half was gone by, he set forth to my lady. To be brief, he spoke prudently to the fair one, and right gladly did he plead on my behalf, and of his own free will he told unto her all the truth concerning my sad trouble, and how that he had found me nigh unto death, and knew not whether I could recover from the sickness the which constrained me not to stir from my bed, and he told her all, and, in a word, that he could not comfort me. Then he counselled her that, for God's sake, she should not suffer one so young to be placed in peril of death by reason of too great love of her, and that she would be to blame if she were the cause of my death.

In such manner did he, by his gentle and wise speech, entreat my lady to feel pity for the sickness from the which I was languishing on account of her, since never did I waver in the desire the which [pg 60] brought misery unto me and made me long to see her. And he told me that when he had ended his discourse, he saw that the fair one, who was very silent, was pale as death, and of very sad countenance, and he well perceived from her demeanour that my sickness grieved her, and aroused her compassion, but she ne'ertheless desired it to appear quite otherwise. And she spake in this wise: "This is a strange thing that you tell unto me, fair Sir, that my cousin and yours is in this state. By the

Apostle Paul, scarce can I believe that he could ever have thought on this! Good God, that this should have entered his thoughts! But if this be so, doubtless it is naught but youthfulness and great lack of prudence which plunges him into sadness, and, with God's help, in a little while this will pass away. Turn him from this if you can, and counsel him that he put an end to it, and turn his thoughts elsewhere, for never could he come near me without great ill coming of it if that he were seen. I wot not how it came to the knowledge of that spy (God curse him), by reason of whom I have not the courage to speak to any living man, and if he were within, I should not dare to hold converse thus with [pg 61] you. Since he discovered that this young man had the daring to love me, he has filled my lord with bitter anger, and has aroused such jealousy of me, that in nowise do I dare speak to any one alone, and wheresoe'er I am, there the varlet must be, and I have him ever at my heels, for he is set to keep watch on me. And I fear me that all this is only because of suspicion of your cousin, for he pays close attention to that which is said to me, and oftentimes goes to the gate to see who enters here. And by God I swear to you that, if it were not for qualms of conscience, I would have him so well beaten by my kinsfolk that, unless he were very foolhardy, never would he dare return to keep watch on me. And so that this espial, the which is so irksome to me, might come to an end, I sent word to your cousin, and urged him much that for awhile he would refrain from coming hither, so that this spy might not see him, and that when this watchfulness was somewhat abated, he could come to see us, and more he could not look for. It indeed seems to me certain that it will come to an end by degrees, and thus I believe that doubtless my lord will no longer give thought to jealousy, so that he will soon be able [pg 62] to come here, but sincerely do I believe that, if he has a care for me, it will be better that he keep away, and come not here. Of a truth, as every one bears witness, the love which dwells only in the imagination, fades away."

Thus strangely did she make answer, and not a word more did she utter for my comfort. And he forthwith made answer in this wise: "You are so full of compassion, my Lady, that, whatever you may say, I tell you truly I believe not that you will leave him, who is wholly yours, to perish both in body and soul. You have said that I can turn him from it. Yea, truly, by rending his soul from his body! No other way do I know. Certes, I have made every endeavour to divert him from it, but I tell you, forsooth, that he will die if he is left without hope, and naught will you have profited if his days are cut off through losing you. Worthy Lady, give me your answer, for I care not a whit for the jealous one, and never will his spies make use of such cunning that I shall not altogether deceive them. But, since I perceive you pity him, grant him this favour. I speak thus much of him to you so that you may be willing that he come here with [pg 63] me, and I will apparel him duly and fittingly, and will so much concern me with this, that he

shall be recognised of none provided you tell me how you would that he should deport himself in order to see you. So hesitate no longer, for the matter moves too slowly for him.”

And she said: “In nowise believe that I am so much his enemy that his grief and his sorrow do not cause me much discomfiture, for you may know of a truth that right well do I love him, and he is right in guarding mine honour, and without delay I shall do all that should content him, but I am not willing to say more now concerning this matter save that he demean himself with prudence, and come not here as yet, but *you* may come oftentimes provided you hold but little discourse with me before this spy. Let me know of your doings by one who is prudent, who shall go to you. This messenger is loyal, I give you my faith, and if you and he trust not one another, I shall be uneasy, for none other dare approach me. And now we have discoursed together long enough, and we know not whether we are being watched. So tell your friend that he may be joyous and happy, and [pg 64] that you have so prevailed with me that, if violence does not intervene, he will not fail in that which he asks for. Thus you will commend me to him, and cheer him, saying that ere a week is gone by he will be able to see much of me. And let us hold counsel together no longer now, and do you trouble yourself no more about the matter. We have indeed been fortunate in that we have not been disturbed whiles that we have so long time discoursed together at our ease. Await, however, my lord, who, as I well know, has not for long time had such pleasure as he will have when he knows of your coming. Meanwhiles, we will play at chess. We may amuse ourselves in this manner for a while.”

And then, without more ado, they forthwith commenced to play at a side table. And at the end of the game the master and lord entered the chamber. Then my cousin went towards him, and when the latter met him, he gave him hearty welcome, and said that his coming was very pleasing, and that he was welcome. In a word, without detaining you longer, he treated him with great deference, and said that all that was his was at his command, and that whensoever [pg 65] he stayed in those parts, nowhere else must he lodge, but he must come there. This would give him happiness above all things, but otherwise he would be displeased. And the latter gave him much thanks for this. And on the morrow, after meat, he took his leave and departed thence, and he hastened his return, for he knew how I was longing for this and that it would bring me very great delight.

And when he was returned, he related unto me all that had happened to him on his journey, and that he believed that my affairs would prosper right well provided it were pursued yonder quickly and with skill, wherefore, as he had made promise to my lady, he would have all things, both great and small, under his ordering, since he had so agreed with her. Thus did he tell and recount all to me.

Then much joy had I in my heart, the which had erewhile been in sorrow which harassed it. But in order the sooner to advance my affair, he advised me that in the first place I should write a letter, in the which I should wholly set forth my condition, and how that love of her weighed heavily upon me, and that she should hearken to the plaint of her slave who [pg 66] besought her love and asked naught beside, and that I should put all suchlike things in a sealed letter, and he would be the bearer of it for to assuage my grief. And I trusted in him, and so I wrote a letter in the which I set forth how it fared with me by reason of love of her, and all that grieved me. And I enclosed two ballads with the letter, the which I sealed, to the rehearsal of which give heed all you who incline unto love.

SEALED LETTER

To her who surpasses all, and whom my heart fears and worships

Lady, the flower of all of high degree, very renowned and revered princess, the desire of my heart, and the joy of my eyes, who art exalted above the consideration of the lowly, my much loved and coveted lady, deign, for pity's sake, to hearken unto and to accept the sad plaint of your servant, who, since he is under restraint, is like to one who is nigh unto death, and who takes perilous remedies in order that he may either [pg 67] end his days or live. To you, very sweet Lady, who, by your refusal, can slay me, or, by the tender solace of your consent, can give me life, I come to entreat either swift death, or a speedy cure. Most beautiful one, I know well that you have such discernment that you have been able to perceive how that, because of you, love has longwhiles held me, and still holds me, in its toils, and how that the fear and dread with the which great love has filled my heart, has robbed me of the courage to tell you of it, sweet lady. And I know that you are so gracious, that if you had perceived and known all the pain and the torment which I have since suffered, and still endure, through desire for your tender love, then, albeit I have not yet performed enough deeds of valour, and have not enough of worth, to have deserved the love of even one of less noble birth than yourself, the gentle pity of your kindly heart would not have suffered me to endure such disquiet. Ah, Lady, if you have regard to your worth

and your great renown for that, by reason of my youth, I have not yet been counted valiant, it will be my death! But, my honoured Lady, know that you can so strengthen me as to give me heart and courage [pg 68] to undertake and to achieve, according to my ability, all honourable things that the mind of a lover dare think on or do for love of lady. And, sweet Lady, and my goddess on earth, since you can, with much ease, greatly gladden him who loves and worships you as his most coveted possession, deign to recognise how that, by your tender solace, he may be saved from death, and life may be restored to him. And if you would ask or would know what has brought him to this, I tell you that it is your very sweet, pleasing, beautiful, laughing, and loving eyes. Ah, Lady, since it is by them that this cruel wound has been inflicted, it seems to me but just that it should be soothed and healed by the delight of your compassion. Therefore may it please you, very winsome and honoured Lady, to make me acquainted with your good pleasure, and whether you would that I die or recover. By no means would I weary you with a long letter, and be assured that I know not how to tell or to write fully how matters stand with me, but you will indeed come to know this, whether I win your love or not, for, if I fail in this, you will see me die, but if by good fortune I win it, the result will be seen in willing service. So I send [pg 69] you these two ballads here enclosed, the which may it please you to receive kindly. Very beautiful and fair one, whose praise I am not able duly to set forth, I pray God that He will vouchsafe to you as many favours and delights as the tears the which I have shed for love of you.—Written with a fervent and longing heart,

Your very humble and obedient slave.

BALLAD

Sweet Lady, fair and gentle without peer,
 Have mercy on me, who all thy words obey
 Body and soul do I abandon here
 Unto thy will, and humbly thus I pray:
 Come quickly nigh,
 Have pity, and cure my sickness when I cry:

Oh, I beseech thee, graciously attend
And so consent to take me for thy friend.

To thee I give myself, O flower most dear.
For mercy I beseech, and wilt thou slay?
I charge thee by that Lord whom we revere
To lift this wrong that crushes me away.

No help have I
From any other: leave me not to die!
See, faithfully I serve thee to the end,
And so consent to take me for thy friend.
[pg 70]

Seest thou not how I shed full many a tear:
And if thy help for longer shall delay
I am but shent, what need to speak more clear?
Ah, love me, Love so holds me in his sway!

Then hither hie,
Be merciful, for near to death I lie:
'Tis truth, thou knowest, I have no hope to mend,
And so consent to take me for thy friend.

Lady, I thank thee, and all my duty send,
And so consent to take me for thy friend.

ANOTHER BALLAD

In this sad world have pity, my lady dear,
Dear to me more than any other there:
Their pride you know not; let not gracious cheer
Cheer me at so great cost, oh white and fair!
Fare I thus ill, yet canst thou bid me see
Seasons of solace that may comfort me.

If for unfitness I be slighted here,
Here am I dead, and arrows of despair
Spare not to pierce my heart, and life grows drear,

Drear as my brooding on the doom I bear.
 Bear witness, Love withholds in obduracy
 Seasons of solace that might comfort me.

O loveliest one and sweetest, without peer,
 Peerless in honour, of all bounties heir,
 Ere I thy servant pine in sorry fear
 Fear not a kind and gentle guise to wear.

[pg 71]

Where shall I find, 'mid this deep dolorous sea,
 Seasons of solace that may comfort me?

Dear Lady, grant in gracious courtesy
 Seasons of solace that may comfort me.

Thus as you have heard did I write to my lady, and by my letter I made known to her my trouble, for to gain her solace. And my cousin bare the letter. For awhile he remained on his guard, and carefully watched for the time when he could safely have speech of her. And then he told her of my letter, at the which she in nowise made complaint, but received it gladly. And, smiling, she read the letter and the ballads twice or thrice, and then the fair and gracious one said, "I will write in reply to your cousin, and more I will not say to you now, but I will set me about it. And whiles that I am so occupied, do you divert yourself with chess, and checkmate my kinswoman here."

Then she withdrew to an inner chamber with her secretary, who well knew how to keep her counsel, and than whom she had none other more confidential, and she commenced to express her thoughts in writing, and composed the letter the which is here set forth.

[pg 72]

REPLY OF THE LADY TO THE AFORE-MENTIONED LETTER

To my Courteous Friend—

My fair and courteous knight, may it please you to know that I have received your tender and loving letter and ballads in the which you make known to me that, unless you have speedy succour, you will die. So I write you this letter in reply. If you feel assured that it is

on account of me that you are so ill at ease, I am heartily sorry for it, for I would not be the cause of sorrow to any one, and it grieves me the more in your case than in that of any other, since so long time have I known you. But when, dear friend, you ask of me to give you solace, I understand not the meaning of your request, but so that you may know my determination, be well assured that if you asked of me, or I discovered that you meant, aught that would be dishonouring or shameful, never would you obtain your desire, and wholly would I banish you from me. Of this you can be certain, for rather would I die than that, for aught in the world, I should consent to soil mine honour. But if so it be that the love of a lady, given honourably and without evil intent, can suffice you, you may [pg 73] know that I am the one whom love has made disposed to hold you in esteem, both now and for aye. And once again I make confession unto you that, when I know of a surety that your desire is satisfied with that which I am willing to grant, I shall think on you as my one dearly loved friend, if I see your loving purpose and goodwill continue. And if it be, as you have declared in your aforesaid letter, that I can be the means of your advancement in valour, I would ask of God no greater favour. Therefore be pleased to write to me all your wishes in the matter, but have a care, ne'ertheless, that no desire make you false in aught which may hereafter prove to be anyways contrary to that which you avouch, or wholly shall I banish you from me. So I would that you put away from you all melancholy and sadness, and be merry and contented and cheerful, but above all I charge and enjoin you to be discreet, and, as far as in me lies, I forbid you to concern yourself with the habit common to many of your age, the which is, not to know how to keep aught secret, and to make boast of being even more favoured than others. And have a care that you reveal naught to friend or companion, however intimate you may be, [pg 74] save what, for your aid, it is needful that your best friend should know. And if you do thus, and hold to it, you may be sure that love will in nowise fail to bestow its favour on you in large measure. My dear and good friend, I pray God to give you all that you can wish for, for methinks not that this is beyond what is seemly.—Written in gladsome mood,

Your friend.

When this letter was finished, my lady arose, and returned to my cousin. And she gave it to him, and told him that, despite its contents, I must no longer be

sad, and that she would take pains to heal me of my sickness, and ere long would appoint a day, hour, and place, when I could without fail have speech with her, and that she sent the letter to me with the message that she trusted herself in my hands, and charged me to be no longer ill at ease.

Then he gave her thanks, and departed, and on his return he related unto me how gracious and good he had found my lady to be. And I, who awaited him with the fierceness and fervour of a great longing, held out my hands with joy, saying, "I thank Thee, my God, for Thy mercy to me."

[pg 75] And he delivered the letter to me, and I, whom this filled with great joy, straightway took it. And as soon as I had read it, I kissed it, I think, an hundred times, and I read it, I assure you, not once only, but more than twenty times, for never did I tire of this when I understood its contents, the which cheered me. Wherefore I made merry, and ceased to grieve, for I would be joyous, since my sweet lady so ordained. Thus was hope wholly restored to me, and no longer had I fear of refusal as had been my wont, but I desired to make answer to her letter. So I took pen and paper, and pounce and ink, and withdrew me. Then gladly, and without hindrance, I wrote in suchwise as I here set forth.

TO THE FAIREST OF ALL

My very Honoured Mistress—

Very fair and kind, and indeed I could, from the bottom of my heart, say, very loved, honoured, and coveted Lady, for whose sake love, through the charm of your beauteous eyes, has made me willingly become your true bondsman, and in whose sweet service I [pg 76] would, as far as I am able, even if not as far as I should do, unre-servedly spend all my life, I give you thanks for your very gracious and pleasing letter, which, through the comfort of sweet hope, has imparted vigour and strength to my heavy-laden heart, the which was sorrowful and almost broken through despair of ever gaining your love. And, my much longed-for and honoured Lady, in answer to one of the matters you treat of in it, the which is that you understand not the meaning of my request, whilst on your part you would have me to know that you would rather die than that your honour were soiled, I tell you truly, very sweet Mistress, and give you assurance, that my wish is altogether and entirely like unto your own. Of a truth, if I could desire aught but your goodwill, in nowise could I

hold you as the lady of my heart, nor myself as your liegeman. And touching your warning to me to take heed that I so demean me as not to make boast of aught which may afterward prove to be untrue, I verily make promise unto you, very gentle Lady, and I swear faithfully on my word of honour, that all my life long you shall find me such an one, and if in this I make default, I am willing, and [pg 77] bind myself, to be cut off from all joy, and to be counted as vile. And as to concealing my secret, and refraining from telling it to either companion or friend, save to the one from whom I may not hide it, be assured, sweet Lady, that of this I take good heed, and, as far as in me lies, neither in this, nor in aught beside, shall you find me wanting, and I give you thanks for your good counsel, kind Lady. And since I give you assurance on all matters which might embroil me, may it please you to perform that which you make promise of in your letter, the which is, that of your grace you will hold me as your one loved friend, and if in aught you find me disobedient, I am willing to be banished, and to accept great disgrace as my due, and may God never suffer me so much as to live if at any time I have desire to be false or untrue to you. And when, moreover, you say that it would give you pleasure to be the cause of my advancement, know, sweet Lady, that this could never come to pass save through you, for none but you can either save me, or be my undoing. Therefore, sweet Lady, may it please you to comfort me, and give me perfect happiness, by according to me your sweet love, and may you be willing to satisfy [pg 78] my famished heart and eyes by granting them opportunity to see your loved and much-desired self. And may you be minded to send me the very joyous news concerning this the which I long for. Sweet and winsome one, who art renowned above all others, I plead for your help more often than I can tell unto you, and I pray God to grant you a happy life, and the will to love me well.—Written right joyously, in the hope of better fortune,

Your humble slave.

Thus did I finish my letter, and, at the end, I added a short ballad, so that she might not be wearied in the reading. Therefore listen to the device of it, for it is after a strange manner—

BALLAD

Kind and fair Saint,
 My heart's repose,
 Whose sweet constraint
 Doth all enclose
 That the world knows
 Of graciousness,
 Vouchsafe me grace!
 [pg 79]

Fresh without taint
 As the new rose,
 This my heart's plaint
 That overflows,
 Ere my breath goes,
 Pity and bless.
 Vouchsafe me grace!

Ah, sweet dove pent,
 Shy dove, for whose
 Dear grace I faint,
 So my heart glows
 It dares disclose
 Love, Love, nought less.
 Vouchsafe me grace!

Save thy heart close
 To longing's throes,
 O Loveliness,
 Vouchsafe me grace!

And I despatched my letter by my cousin, and thus sent forth on his way him whom I loved, imploring him to entreat of my lady that it might please her that ere long I might have speech of her, else my wretched and weary life would soon be ended.

And he tarried not until he was come to her dwelling. And there he was in nowise denied, but was made very welcome. And he wisely restrained him [pg 80] until he saw the fitting time to report his errand. Then he spake well and wisely in my behalf, praying her that, for God's sake, she would no longer suffer me, who was dying of love, so to languish that such hurt would ensue to me that I could not recover. Then he gave her the letter, and she read it, and

scanned it quite leisurely. To be brief, she made answer that she well believed that I spake from the bottom of my heart when I made request for her love, since dissimulation was not usual in one so young, and she thought it certain, and without doubt, that the jealous one would depart within three days, and would go far away. And it seemed that at the same time all danger would be at an end, and then we should be able to hold converse together without hindrance, and, when she perceived it to be the fitting time, she would that I should come secretly with my cousin in the evening, dressed as a varlet, although she would have me to be concealed when I was come there, so that neither stranger, nor kinsfolk, nor any save her secretary, should know of it. And touching this, she would not fail to make known by this one what she would that I should do, provided he failed [pg 81] not to warn me to demean me so modestly towards her as not to do aught to provoke her displeasure or reproach.

And he gave her full assurance of this, saying that she might be certain of it, for rather would I die than venture to do aught contrary to her will.

Thus he returned with this news, the which was so good and pleasing unto me, that I seemed to myself to be in a very happy dream.

And I thought on this without ceasing, but the delay seemed long to me. And she who held my heart in bondage forgot me not on the day on which she had made promise to send to me. Therefore it behoved me to give hearty welcome to the very distinguished messenger who brought to me the pleasing news for the which I was longing, the which was that I should go at nightfall to her to whom my heart went out, and who made known to me by this one what she would have me do, and that I should speak of it to no one save only to him who knew of it, and that he, and I, and her secretary, should set out, and should take none other thither.

Then we set out quickly, and parted from our followers, [pg 82] discreetly telling them not to be uneasy about it, but to be of good cheer, for it was needful for us to arrange some business between us three, the which would occupy us the whole day, and that we should return on the morrow.

And right joyously did we ride without drawing rein, and exactly at the hour named, we arrived at the place where my dear lady sometimes sojourned. And we dismounted without a torch, and then I divested me of my tunic, and put on another one.

And my kind and prudent cousin went up undisguised, and I took charge of the horses, and was careful not to be recognised. And on the instant he invented the excuse that he was come there at that hour upon a pressing matter the which had just arisen, and upon which he must without fail speak unto the lord as soon as possible, for very great need made this urgent. And he was told that he was not there, and would not return for some months. And he said that great hurt

would happen to him in consequence.

Then my very sweet lady made haste, and came on a sudden to a lattice window the which overlooked the courtyard. And she said, "What chance brings my [pg 83] cousin here? Go and let down the bridge quickly. Thus shall I learn what he wants. I know not but that some one sends me urgent news by him."

Then was my cousin escorted to her by two damsels. And when he was come, she asked of him, after that he had saluted her, "Is any one dead, or what brings you here so late? I have not seen you for a week. Tell me what you want."

Then he said that it was of no avail for him to remain since he had not met with the lord and master, the which grieved him. Thus it was meet that he return.

And she made answer that he must not do so, but must without fail make all his affair known unto her.

Then he said, "My varlet, who holds my horses at the gate, must bring me a letter the which I gave into his charge, and some one must tell him to come without delay."

And my lady, in a haughty manner, gave command to her secretary to do this, and he, with much haste, put the horses into a stable, and then escorted me up. And my cousin, who took great precautions, came to the door of the chamber, and he turned him [pg 84] to me, saying, "Give me that letter quickly." Then he said to the secretary, "Let him be gone at once, for there is naught beside for him to do here, and it is not convenient for a varlet to remain in the chamber at this present."

My cousin said all this for that a light was shining in the chamber, by the which I might be recognised, and thus I should be found out.

And he took a long letter the which I had placed in my bosom, and then he drew my lady aside, and, reading it, showed how weighty a matter was set forth in it. Meanwhiles the secretary, as my lady had commanded him, made me to withdraw without a light into the chamber, the which communicated with that of my sweet and fair lady, of a lady who was prudent, reserved, and without reproach, and who was acquainted with everything.

And as soon as the letter had been read in the presence of all, my cousin was bent on departing, and made semblance of great regret, but she forbade him to go, and said that without fail he must remain there, or she would make complaint of it to her lord, and thus she made him tarry.

[pg 85] And she held long converse with him, and at length, so that this might not create wonderment, she said that it was time to rest, and that there was no cause for any one to keep watch in her chamber. And to the end that there might be no suspicion or doubt wherefore he was come there at that hour, his bed was made ready in a distant chamber, to the which he was escorted to rest, and thither was he accompanied by the most trusted of the esquires who had

the charge of her within the castle, since they no longer waited on her because of the hour.

Then without delay she disrobed her, and laid her down in the presence of her gentlewomen, but not long did she remain there, but arose and apparelled her, and made complaint that she suffered somewhat, and because of this she would that a fire were prepared in the chamber where I was. So I was hidden until that the serving-woman had made a fire in the chamber.

Then my lady came wrapped in a long mantle, and she brought not with her any of her waiting-women save one, the whom was the lady before mentioned, whom she had chosen above all, and on whose breast [pg 86] she leaned, and she dismissed the serving-woman to bed, for she said she would not that she remained up, so that she might not be wearied. And after she was gone, the door was bolted.

Then the lady came to fetch me, and led me to my lady. And scarce did I salute her, for so perturbed did I feel, that I knew not where I was. Ne'ertheless I said, "Sweet Lady, may God preserve you, both body and soul."

"Friend," made she answer, "you are very welcome."

Then she made me to sit down beside her, and as soon as I looked on her, I became like one beside himself. And well did my lady perceive this, and she received me with a kiss, for the which I many times humbly gave her thanks.

And my lady, revered of my fearful and doubting heart, commenced to speak after this manner. "Have I, who have caused you to come hither thus secretly, done your will, fair Sir? Is this the deed of a friend? In nowise deceive me now, but I earnestly entreat of you to tell me, if you can, and whiles that you have opportunity, all your desire."

[pg 87] Then all trembling with joy, sighing, I said, "Ah, sweet Lady! by my troth I know not how to utter that which I would. Therefore, very dear Lady, take it in good part, and recognise how that I am wholly yours, both body and soul, and more I cannot say."

And she drew nearer, and put her arm around my neck, and, laughing, she spake thus. "It behoves me, then, to speak for us both, since you cannot call to mind aught to say, and yet I verily believe that love bestows on me so goodly a portion of his favours, that I trust I could in nowise utter a single word concerning that which I presume you speak of, beyond what it is meet for me to say."

Then the other lady who was there began to smile, and she said aloud, "Since I see you thus already in friendly accord in this matter, truly do I perceive and know that love makes fools of the wisest."

And my lady said to me, "My friend, since love has made us of one mind, no longer is it needful to enquire if we love one another, and I well believe that love claims us, or can claim us both, as his servants, the which grieves me

not. Ne'ertheless, dear friend, however much I trust you in this matter, I would, notwithstanding, [pg 88] make known to you all my will without concealing aught, and I know not what is your purport, but I tell you that, whatever love you perceive in me, and whatever semblance I may make, in word or look, of being trusting, pleased, or mirthful, and although I may kiss or embrace you, never for a moment must you imagine that I have the mind or the desire to do aught that is dishonouring, or in the which I may not be in every way free from reproach. Dear friend, I give you this warning, since never would I have you to say that in the smallest degree I had surrendered myself to you, for I swear that never will I do aught the which may tarnish mine honour. And so, once for all, I swear to you, of a truth, that as soon as I perceive, either from your demeanour or your look, that you cherish other desires, never again shall you see me. I know not whether I err in this, but I seek not to refuse you any other pleasure by the which it is permitted to a lady to enslave her lover, and but that I should be acting foolishly, and doing wrong to myself, I would surrender my heart altogether to you, and would give up all that I possess for you to use as you will, but I make promise unto you of loyalty and [pg 89] true friendship, and am willing to prefer you above all others if that this will content you, and this do I say truly. So tell me what you desire whiles that you have time and the opportunity, for I would understand your purpose."

And when she whom I revered had ceased speaking, I made answer, "Ah, my Lady! Almost does it kill me to hear you speak thus. The love, the goodness, and the favour which you extend to me, should well content me, and I trust that you will never imagine that I am not willing to agree to all that you command. And believe me truly that, as I wrote in answer to your letter, I make promise unto you on my oath—and in this I perjure myself not—I would that I should never be had in honour, but should always be held disgraced, if that ever, for a single day, in deed, word, or thought, I should do or think aught, either in secret or openly, the which could displease you, and you may put me to the proof in such manner as you will, for never will aught that your heart desires be unwelcome to me, nor will it befall that aught which may be your wish can grieve me, and thus it behoves me not to distress me concerning this, for are you not my loved one? Is it [pg 90] not meet that I demean me according to your will? When I shall be moved to do otherwise, may I be destroyed, body and soul, and brought to ruin! Good God! how satisfied I ought to be since I perceive that you love me, and call me your dear friend! I possess that which I coveted, and naught beside do I strive after, and I think myself well recompensed. And as you are disposed alway to love me thus, I indeed perceive that there is no guile or malice in your heart, and I bethink me, moreover, that I shall do such service, that I shall be yet more loved by you. Therefore command me even now, for I am your liegeman, and

my heart is wholly pledged to you, fair one. Declare now your pleasure, or send me whither you will, and I will go, and will obey in all things, without opposing your humour. Thus you can do as you will with me more than I know how to tell, and may God watch over you, and reward you abundantly for that you thus make promise wholly to love me. I ought not to speak ill of love, the which puts me in the way of attaining to such great joy. Therefore, fair and kind one, I give you humble thanks, for henceforth I shall wear the lover's crown, and I shall put away from me [pg 91] every evil habit, and take virtue into my service, the which I would seek above all things, in order to be like unto the valiant. Thus will you make me a wise and prudent man. In fine, sweet Lady, I could not be more happy, however much I might say concerning it."

Then my lady, in whom dwells every grace, very tenderly embraced me, and kissed me more than an hundred times. And I remained thus happy all the night, and be assured, you lovers who hear this, that I was very contented. Many tender words full of delight were spoken that night, and she, in whom is all goodness, showed me how and where, in spite of every one, I might see her very often. Thus I asked for naught beside, for I had all that I desired. Ne'ertheless she earnestly charged me to be very mindful of her honour, even if at any time I had to defer seeing her, although the delay might cause annoyance, for I should put her in peril if that I took not careful heed beforehand of the proper time to come, and to depart when she admonished me.

Thus we passed the time, but shortly dured the night for me. And when the day was come, the which [pg 92] grieved me, embracing and kissing me an hundred times, and giving me sweet loving glances, she said, "Farewell, dear love." And she bolted me in there all alone, and retired to her room. And, later, dressed as a page, I was released by the astute secretary, who was in the secret, and albeit I was not versed in the business, I resumed my former office, for, as he well said, it was meet for one who received so sweet a recompense, to take charge of the horses at the gate, and doubtless I would not wish to busy myself in any other office, and oftentimes did I take upon myself this pleasing service. Thus you see how it is sometimes needful for a master to turn varlet, and perchance in this manner he oftentimes comes by that which he desires.

And my cousin no longer remained dreaming, but arose betimes noiselessly, for he would not that any who slept should be awakened, and he had taken his leave of my lady yesternight. And he went out. And I awaited him, and led the horses to and fro like a good and trained varlet, and he said, "Come hither, fellow. How an-angered I could be with you when you lean on the saddle-bow!" Thus did he speak before those present, for some knights and men-at-arms [pg 93] would fain escort him to his dwelling, and they blamed him in that he had not more of his own men with him, but he assured them that, for a certain reason, he

had done it quite designedly. He had thought to find the lord there, for never in his life had he had greater need or desire to speak with him. And then he desired that none should accompany him. And he set out on his way.

And so we departed, and as we rode, we held much friendly and gracious converse together, for the pleasing remembrance which I had on my return of the sweet joy which had comforted me, gave me so great solace, that no one could have had greater joy of aught. And we were quickly come to our journey's end, so much did we spur our horses, but I had put on my tunic again. Then, as soon as they perceived us, my retainers, who loved me and held me in esteem, received us with great delight, and we also were glad, and with great joy sang, in cheerful refrain, this quite new virelay:—

VIRELAY

Sweet, in whom my joy must be,
 Now my heart is full of glee
 [pg 94]
 For thy love: and loosed from care
 All my song is, "Lady fair,
 Living I consume for thee."

But thy gentle love hath sent
 The fair comfort that I need:
 I therewith am well content.
 Gladness doth my spirit lead.

Rightly am I glad, pardie!
 For of old my jollity
 Drowned in woes I had to bear:
 Of thy help when I was ware
 Gone was all my misery,
 Sweet, in whom my joy must be.

Since the day that thou hast lent
 Thy dear heart, my life is freed
 From the sorrows I lament:
 Peace and gladness are my meed.

Lady, love despatcheth me
 Succour sweet, who thus am free
 From my sickness: pale despair
 Rules no longer when I share
 Hope that I thy face may see,
 Sweet, in whom my joy must be.

Now have I recounted unto you how that in the first instance I was surprised and subdued by love, and was afterward grievously constrained by great [pg 95] longing, and how my dear kinsman gave himself much trouble, with the result that I was delivered from my trouble by my lady, who had mercy on me, thanks be to her. And I will tell how that from that time I went to and fro. Thenceforth I was happy even as you have heard, and because of the joy which I had, I devised this ballad:—

BALLAD

In all the world is none so happy here
 Nor is there any joy to match with mine,
 Since she that hath no rival and no peer
 Doth mercifully to my suit incline.
 Her slave am I till death, for all my pain
 In very truth hath met with guerdon meet:
 She was my help on whom I called amain,
 For she hath granted me her love so sweet.

Fair queen, in whom all nobleness is clear,
 Thou would'st not have me for thy presence pine:
 Nay, bid me cry in every lover's ear,
 "Thirsty was I for Love's immortal wine!"
 Not all my weeping might the gift obtain,
 Yet she, enthroned on beauty's mercy-seat,
 Hath pardoned all: too soon did I complain
 For she hath granted me her love so sweet.

Now to delight returns the torrent drear
 That of my mourning was the sorry sign:
 [pg 96]

Now am I joyous and of merry cheer,
 More than aforetime in her grace divine.
 Love bade me follow in his chosen train
 Where gladness walks beside my lady's feet,
 Nor any loss is mingled with my gain,
 For she hath granted me her love so sweet.

Princess of love, my sorrow I disdain
 Since out of mourning cometh joy complete
 By grace of her who is love's suzerain,
 For she hath granted me her love so sweet.

So I demeaned me prudently and wisely, and I desired to have apparel and horses and beautiful things in much plenty, and great pains did I take to make me acquainted with all matters which become honest folk, and, as far as I was able, I avoided those which are unworthy, and I always had the desire to increase my fame, to the end that my lady might hold herself loved of a brave man. Thus I spared no pains to become rich, in order to dispense freely, and it appeared as if I made no count of riches.

But to shorten my story, I tell you truly that none other thought had I than to follow in the path of true lovers, and oft, thank God, did I come to enjoy the welcome favours the which Love and Dames dispense to those who are faithful to them, for I well knew how [pg 97] to compass this, although it became expedient to be very careful where I saw my sweet goddess each week, so that no one, save those who were trusted, should come to know of it. And the first time that I returned to her, I took her this new ballad, the which greatly pleased her, and I brought back one from her.

BALLAD

Command of me, my Lady and my queen,
 All thy good pleasure, as I were thy slave,
 Which I shall do with glad and humble mien
 That whatso'er thou willest, thou may'st have.
 I owe no less
 Being bound thereto for so great pleasantness,
 More than to other lovers may betide:
 For sweeter are thy gifts than all beside.

Thy love delivered me from dule and teen,
 All that was needful to my soul it gave:
 Is there not here in truth good reason seen
 Thy love should rule the heart thy love did save?

Ah, what mistress

So guerdoneth her servant with largess
 Of love's delight? The rest have I denied,
 For sweeter are thy gifts than all beside.

Since such a harvest of reward I glean,
 Love in my heart hath risen like a wave:
 Thy slave am I, as I thy slave have been,
 While life shall last. Ah, damsel bright and brave,

[pg 98]

Sweet patroness

Of spirit and strength, and lady of noblesse,
 All other comfort doth my heart deride,
 For sweeter are thy gifts than all beside.

Most dear princess

Of joy thou art the fount, as I confess:
 I thirst no longer, but am satisfied,
 For sweeter are thy gifts than all beside.

Ere I parted from this very sweet being, I received an answer to my ballad, the which gave me more than a little very ardent rapture, for the enchanting fair one, whilst reading it, put her arms about my neck. And here it is:—

BALLAD

Ever blessed be the day,
 Be the place and be the dwelling,
 That hath ended my delay,
 Shown the truth I shrank from telling.

Dear friend, behold

My love is yours, a costlier gift than gold:
 To Love be praise, that first the bond hath knit,
 For I am filled with perfect joy from it.

Since I yielded to thy sway
 When thy heart with grief was swelling,
 Swiftly speeding as he may
 Joy is come, my care dispelling:

[pg 99]

Now am I bold
 To give thee love, that guerdons manifold
 May heal thee from thy sorrow every whit,
 For I am filled with perfect joy from it.

So my soul, with God for stay,
 The new blissful years foretelling,
 Finds in thee, for whom I pray,
 Grace and gladness all excelling.

I that of old
 Gave thee but sorry cheer and comfort cold,
 Am straightway turned to serve thee, as is fit,
 For I am filled with perfect joy from it.

When I had told
 My love, my heart was yours to have and hold:
 To grief I yield not, nor to blame submit,
 For I am filled with perfect joy from it.

In suchwise was happiness granted to me, even as you hear, and I pursued it with joy and gladness. But fortune, who is ready, whensoever she can, to do harm to lovers, straightway thought to do me very grievous hurt, as I will relate in a few words.

It chanced, in a short while, that the lady who knew of our love, and who concealed our doings, had business at home, from the which loss would happen to her inheritance if she did not go there forthwith, wherefore, sad and sorrowful, she departed from the [pg 100] Court. And as for me, this caused me great grief, for I well knew that my lady would essay naught without her. And on this account I was much distressed, for, certes, I could in nowise rest without seeing her. And my lady knew this well, and I am persuaded that it was not otherwise with her. So she then bethought her of a lady who had likewise been in her service all her life, and who was prudent and discreet, and good, loyal, and reserved, although no longer did she live at Court. So she resolved to inquire of her if she was willing to return. Therefore without delay she wrote this letter to her, and received an answer from her.

THE DUCHESS

*To my very dear and good friend,
The Lady of La Tour.*

VERY DEAR AND KIND FRIEND,—Concerning my estate, be pleased to know that I am in health, and I pray God to grant the same to you. I write to you because of the desire which I have to see you, and to speak with you, for I have not forgotten the good and faithful service which you have always rendered me, for [pg 101] the which I hold myself so much bounden to you, that I can never repay it. And be sure that you have a friend in me, and you can put this to the proof whensoever you will. Dear lady and friend, you well know how that I am controlled, and held in great subjection and fear, and am harshly treated, and that my lot is a very hard one, and allows me but little happiness, and that I have no friend to whom I can make plaint and tell my secret thoughts, the which I would not make confession of to any save to you, from whom I would not hide aught any more than I would from my confessor, for I know you to be so loyal, that I can trust in you. You must know, therefore, that it is a very grievous sorrow to a young heart always to live in disquiet, and devoid of happiness. So I would that you were near me, and I would tell you of very pleasing things, concerning the which, with good reason, I do not write to you. And thus I have great need of your aid and good counsel, wherefore I pray you, by all the love you bear me, that, as soon as you have read this letter, you so arrange your affairs that you may be ready to come to me within a week from this, and I will send to fetch you with [pg 102] all due honour. And do not be in anywise troubled about leaving your household, for I pledge you my faith to make so liberal recompense, that it will always be to the advantage of you and yours. And I pray you not to fail me in this, and to send me, by the bearer of this letter, your favourable reply. I commend me to your daughter-in-law. Dear, kind friend, may the Holy Spirit have you in His keeping.

Written in my Castle, the eighth day of January.

And my lady despatched a messenger, and sent this letter to the lady whom she wholly regarded as her friend, and whom she much loved. And she sent a

reply, the which disquieted me, for it was very much to my prejudice, and in this manner did she counsel her:—

MY VERY REVERED LADY,—In the first place I send you my very humble respects, and may it please you to know that I have received your very loving and tender letter, for the which, with all my unworthy heart, I thank you, and in the which you do me so great honour as to have in remembrance the trivial services, in nowise worthy of your honoured and noble [pg 103] self, which I rendered you in the past, and thus I am beholden to you more than I can ever deserve. As concerns my going to you at this present, I very humbly beseech you, my very dear Lady, to hold me excused, for, on my faith, my daughter is so grievously sick that on no account can I leave her, and God knows how I am troubled because of her sickness. But since, my very revered Lady, I cannot hold speech with you as soon as I would, and I am bound to counsel you as to your conduct, as one who has been under my guidance from childhood until now, however unworthy I have been of this, methinks I should be wrong if I kept silence touching that which I knew might bring any trouble upon you if I failed to make it known to you. Wherefore, dear Lady, I write what follows, for the which I very humbly entreat of you in no way to bear me ill-will, for you may be assured that very great love, and the desire that your great renown and honour may ever increase, moves me to this. My Lady, I have heard certain rumours touching your conduct which grieve me from the bottom of my heart because of the fear I have of the ruin of your good name, to the which, as it seems to me, they tend, for it is right and fitting [pg 104] for every princess and high-born lady, since she is exalted in honour and estate above others, to exceed all others in goodness, wisdom, manners, disposition, and behaviour, to the end that she may be an ensample by the which other dames, and even all womankind, should regulate their conduct. And thus it is meet that she be devout toward God, and have a tranquil, gentle, and calm demeanour, and in her diversions be restrained and without excess, that she laugh with moderation and not without cause, and have a stately carriage, modest look, and dignified bearing, with a kindly response and a courteous word for every one, her dress and attire rich but not too affected, gracious in her welcome of strangers, in speech restrained and not too familiar, not hasty in judgment or fickle, never appearing harsh, capricious, or ill-humoured, or too difficult to serve, humane and kind to her waiting-women and servants,

not too haughty, in giving bountiful within reason, knowing how to recognise those who are the most worthy in goodness and prudence, and her best servants, and to draw all these to her, and recompense them according to their deserts, not trusting or putting faith in flatterers, but recognising them, [pg 105] and driving them from her, not lightly believing gossip, not given to the habit of whispering either to stranger or to intimate friend in any secret or solitary place, and in particular not to any of her retainers or serving-women, so that none may be able to think that he knows more than another of her private affairs, never saying in jest to any one whomsoever, in the presence of others, aught which may not be understood of all, so that those hearing it may not imagine there to be some foolish secret between them, and keeping herself neither too much confined to her chamber, or to herself, nor too much in the sight of other folk, but sometimes retiring, and at other times appearing before others. And although the foregoing conditions, and all other usages befitting a noble princess, were aforetime observed by you, you now act quite otherwise, it is said, for you amuse yourself much more, and have become more communicative and mirthful than was your wont, and it is when the outward signs are changed, that one usually judges the disposition to be altered, and now you desire to be alone, and withdrawn from others save one or two of your waiting-women, and some of your dependants, with whom, [pg 106] even in the presence of others, you consult privately, and titter, and talk secretly, as if you well understood one another, and naught but the company of such pleases you, and the others can in nowise serve you to your liking, the which things and doings arouse envy in your other servants, and cause them to think that your heart is enamoured of some one. Ah, my very sweet Lady, for God's sake remember who you are, and the high position to which God has raised you, and consent not, for the sake of any foolish pleasure, to be forgetful of your soul and your honour, and do not put trust in the vain fancy which many young women have, who permit themselves to believe that there is no wrong in loving with tender passion provided this is not accompanied by any wrongful act (and I am convinced that you would prefer death to this), and that it makes life more pleasurable, and that one thus makes a man gallant and renowned for aye. Ah, my dear Lady, it is quite the reverse, and for God's sake do not deceive yourself, or let yourself be deceived as to this, and take warning from such noble ladies as you have seen in your time (and such there are), who, through being merely sus-

pected of such [pg 107] love, have, without the truth ever becoming known, on this account lost both honour and life. And yet on my soul I am satisfied that they had neither sinned nor done aught that was wrong. Ne'ertheless their children have seen them reproached and thought lightly of. And however dishonourable such foolish love is in any woman, be she rich or poor, it is still much more unbecoming and harmful in a princess or a high-born lady, and the more so the more exalted she is, and the reason of this is just, for the fame of a princess extends everywhere, and hence, if there is any stain on her good name, it is more known of in foreign lands than in the case of simple folk, and, moreover, gives rise to doubts concerning their offspring, who are destined to be rulers in the land, and the princes of other folk. And it is a great misfortune when there is any suspicion that they are not the rightful heirs, and much trouble may come of it, for even if there has been no wrong-doing, this will in nowise be believed by those who have but heard it reported, "This lady is in love." And because of a few tender glances, perchance given thoughtlessly and without evil intent, malicious tongues will pass judgment, and will add [pg 108] things about it the which were never done or thought of, and thus the story, the which is never diminished, but is ever being added to, passes from mouth to mouth. And thus it is the more necessary for a noble lady than for other women to pay great attention to all her words and ways and demeanour, and the reason of this is, that, in the presence of a noble lady, every one pays attention to her, both to hear what she will say, and also to attentively take note of all her doings. And thus the lady cannot look, speak, laugh, or jest, without all being put together, discussed, and borne in mind of many, and then reported broadcast. Bethink you, therefore, my very dear Lady, that it may have a very bad appearance when a high-born lady, and indeed any woman, becomes gay and mirthful, and willing to listen to amorous discourse, more than is her wont, and then, when for any reason she changes her mind, of a sudden becomes discontented, ungracious, and on her defence, and no one can serve her to her satisfaction, and she takes no trouble about her dress or apparel. Certes, folk then say that she must have been in love, but is so no longer. My Lady, this is in nowise demeanour becoming to a lady, for, whate'er [pg 109] may be her intentions, she should alway have a care so to demean and conduct herself, that such judgments cannot be passed on her, and although it may well be that, in a matter of love, it is difficult to maintain such moderation, the most sure way

to this end is to wholly eschew and shun it. Thus you may know, dear Lady, that every noble lady, and every other woman likewise, should be far more desirous to acquire a fair name than any other treasure, for this reflects honour on her, and ever dures to her and her children. Revered Lady, as I have erewhile observed, I wholly realise and bear in mind that the influence which can dispose a young woman to incline to such love, is that youth, and ease, and indolence cause her to say to herself, "You are young, you must enjoy yourself, you can well love without wrong-doing, and this is in nowise evil when it is without sin, you will make a man valiant, no one will know of it, you will live more merrily because of it, and you will have won a true servant and a loyal friend, and, therefore, all your desire." Ah, my Lady, for God's sake have a care that you be not deceived by such foolish fancies; for, as far as concerns happiness, be assured that in love affairs there is [pg 110] an hundred thousand times more of grief, of care, and of perilous risk, especially for the ladies, than there is of happiness. Moreover, whiles that love of itself brings in its train many divers troubles, the fear of the loss of honour, and that this may become known (the which makes such pleasure dearly bought), continually haunts the mind. And as to saying, "There can be no harm in this, since it will not result in sin," alas, my Lady, no one can by any means be so sure of herself as to be certain that, however good her resolution may be, she will always keep herself in restraint in the matter of love made in this wise, or that it will not be discovered, as I have said before. Of a truth, this is not possible, for never is there fire without smoke, but there is often smoke without fire. And to say, "I shall make a man valiant," certes, I declare that it is very great folly to ruin oneself in order to advance another, even if he be made brave thereby, and surely does she bring ruin upon herself who degrades herself for the sake of exalting another. And as to saying, "I shall have gained a true friend and servant," good God! in what manner could such a friend or servant advantage a lady? For if she were in any [pg 111] trouble, he would not dare concern himself in anywise on her behalf, for fear of her dishonour. Therefore how could such a servant, who would not risk himself in her service, be of profit to her? And though there are some who say they serve their ladies when that they achieve great things, either in arms or in other ways, I say that they serve themselves, since the honour and the profit of it remains to them, and in nowise to the lady. And yet again, my Lady, if you or any other would make excuse by saying, "Mine is a

sad lot, the which allows me but little freedom and happiness, and because of this I can, without wrong-doing, have pleasure in another in order to dispel melancholy and to pass the time," assuredly never, with submission to your honoured self and all others who speak thus, does such excuse avail aught, for very foolish is he who sets fire to his own house in order to burn that of his neighbour, but she who bears with such a husband patiently, and without discrediting herself, so much the more increases the good renown of herself and of her honour. And as to having pleasure, certes a noble lady, and indeed every woman, can, if she will, find, [pg 112] without such love as this, enough of lawful and fitting pleasures to the which to give herself up, and with the which to pass the time without melancholy. For those who have children, what more agreeable or delightful pleasure can be desired than to see them oft, and to have a care that they are well nourished and instructed as befits their noble birth and estate, and to train the daughters in suchwise that from childhood they may, from the example of good company, form the habit of living in a proper and seemly manner? But if the mother is not prudent in all ways, what sort of an ensample is she, alas, to the daughters? And for those who have no children, certes it is not unworthy of any noble lady, after she has had care for her household, to betake her to some work, in order to avoid idleness, either working fine linen or silken apparel with rare broidery, or other things of the which she can make fitting use, and such occupations are wise, and prevent idle thoughts. But in nowise do I say that a young and noble lady may not rightly divert herself, and laugh, and play, at seasonable times, even in the presence of lords and gentlemen, or that she may not, so far [pg 113] as is befitting to her position, do honour to strangers, to each one according to his rank, but this should be done so soberly, and in such modest fashion, that there be not a single glance, or laugh, or word, the which is not under due restraint, and within proper bounds, and she should ever be on her guard that it may not be possible to discover in her aught that is unworthy or unseemly, either in word, look, or behaviour. Ah, God! If every noble lady, and in truth every woman, rightly knew how such virtuous demeanour becomes her, the more would she be at pains to possess this adornment rather than any other whatsoever, for no precious jewel is there which can adorn her so well. And further, my very dear Lady, it remains to speak of the perils and difficulties which accompany such love, the which are without number. The first and greatest is that it angers God, and then

if the husband or kinsfolk discover it, the woman is ruined, or falls under reproach, and never after has she any happiness. And again, even if this does not come to pass, let us consider the disposition of lovers, for though all were loyal, secret, and truthful (the which they by no means are, since it is well [pg 114] known that they are generally faithless, and, in order to deceive the ladies, say that which they neither think on nor would do), ne'ertheless of a surety it is true that the ardour of such love does not dure for long, even with the most loyal. Ah, dear Lady! be warned that truly you cannot conceive the troublous thought which dwells in her breast when it comes to pass that this love is at an end, and the lady, who has been blinded by the environment of foolish delight, grievously repents her when she perceives and meditates on the distractions and the divers perils the which she has oftentimes encountered, and how much she would, whatever it had cost her, that this had never chanced to her, and that she could not be thus reproached. And, moreover, you and every lady can see what folly it is to put one's person and one's honour at the mercy of the tongues, and in the power, of such servants, for they call themselves servants, although, for the most part, the ending of the service is such that, although they have made promise unto you, and have sworn, to keep the secret, they in no wise hold their peace concerning it, and in the end the ladies are oftentimes left with [pg 115] the reproach of such love, and the gossip of folk concerning it, or, at the very least, with the fear and dread in their hearts that those very ones in whom they have put their trust, talk of it, and make boast of it, to any one else who knows of the affair, and thus they are delivered over from freedom to bondage, and behold the end of such love! Do you not perceive, my Lady, that it seems to these servants to be greatly to their credit to say, and to make boast, that they are, or have been, loved of a very noble mistress, or a woman of high rank, and how that they suppress the truth concerning it? But God knows how they lie, and may He grant that, as regards you, my Lady, you may know it well, for you will have need to bear it in mind. And since, my Lady, you love ballads and ditties, I send you one touching on this subject, written by a clever master, if you will do me the favour to take notice of it. And the servants, too, who know your secret, and whom it behoves you to trust, think you, i' faith, that they keep silence concerning this, albeit you have made them swear to do so? Certes, the greater number of them are such that they would be very much [pg 116] vexed if it were not noised abroad that they have much

greater intimacy and authority with you than have the others, and if they do not openly proclaim your secrets, they hint at them by means of divers covert signs, the which they think are duly observed. Good God, what a slave is the lady, and any other woman in the like case, who dares not reprove or blame her serving men or women, even if she sees that they behave them very ill, for that she perceives herself to be in their power, and that they have risen up against her in such arrogance that she dares not utter a word, and is thus constrained to endure at their hands that which she would not endure from any other! And what, think you, do those say who see and pay heed to this? These only pay attention to that which they see, and be sure that they oftentimes whisper it abroad, and if it chances that the lady is angered, or sends away her servant, God knows that all will be revealed, and made known everywhere. And yet it oftentimes happens that they are, and have been, the means and the cause of bringing into being this love, the which they have encouraged with zeal and great diligence, in order to gain for themselves [pg 117] either gifts, or offices, or other emoluments. Very honoured Lady, what shall I say concerning this? Be assured that as soon as one sifts the matter to the bottom, one discovers all the mischievous perils which this amorous life entails; and do not doubt this, for so it is. And because of this, very dear Lady, do not cast yourself into such peril, and if you have any thought of it, for God's sake withdraw from it before greater evil to you comes of it, for better is it to do this betimes than late, and late than never, and already you can see what will be said about it if that you persevere in your unwonted ways, when even now they are perceived, and in consequence of this are talked of in many places. Thus I know not what further to write to you, save that, to the utmost of my power, I humbly entreat of you not to take this from me in bad part, but may it please you to be assured of the good intent which constrains me to say it, and very much rather would I do my duty by loyally admonishing you, and causing you to be an-angered, than either counsel you to your ruin, or keep silence concerning it in order to have your goodwill. My Lady, be pleased to pay heed to my bal-lad, [pg 118] the which I enclose herewith. Very honoured Princess, and my dear Lady, I pray God to give you a happy and long life, and paradise.—Written at La Tour, this 18th day of January

Your very humble servant,

SEBILLE DE MONTHAULT, Lady of La Tour.

BALLAD

Most noble ladies, cherish your fair fame,
 And for God's love the contrary eschew
 Of good report, lest thus you come to blame:
 Nor make your choice of all acquaintance new.
 For some might tell (such evil tongues have they),
 How wanton manners in your life they see,
 Though never yet in any fault you lay:
 And from such faithless rascals keep you free.

For little would it serve to bear the name
 Of one whom many love, yet find for due
 Nought but dishonour that from slanderers came
 Telling abroad how in your works they knew
 Your wantonness: so well it is always
 To hold aloof, ere any trial be,
 From ill that follows after foolish play,
 And from such faithless rascals keep you free.

Nay, be ye rather armed against the same
 With perfect wit, so tirelessly they sue
 To stain your honour, whence full often shame
 Comes without cause, yet they to pleasure you
 [pg 119]
 Feign courtesy: my warning may not stay,
 So oft I hear how those ye hold in fee
 Blame you no less: withdraw from these, I pray,
 And from such faithless rascals keep you free.

Most noble ladies! be not wroth to-day
 That I have ever counselled you to flee
 These traitors: trust me, though no more I say,
 And from such faithless rascals keep you free.

In such wise did the Lady of La Tour, who made me very sad by the letter the which she wrote, make answer to my Lady, who was sore dismayed by it albeit she was not displeased with her on account of it, but said forthwith, "Ah! if it had pleased our lord that she had been alway with me, she would have exhorted me wisely, and thus I should not have been beguiled by evil counsel, but ne'ertheless I shall abandon this, and abide me by her counsel, for I well perceive the grievous peril which pertains to a life of love, but it is meet that he who is oft in my thoughts should abandon it likewise." Then she wrote a letter to me, even as is here set forth.

SEALED LETTER

MY GOOD FRIEND,—It is indeed true that foolish love, the which deceives many, and the sincere pity [pg 120] which I had for your plaint, have led me much to forget that which I ought ever to have had in remembrance, the which is, to preserve my soul and mine honour. And I have fully come to see how that I have already exposed myself to many great dangers and perils in order to fulfil your youthful wishes and mine own. Thank God, however, that there has been no evil in it, nor ever will be as long as I live! Yet the world would in nowise believe this if any ill chance befell me, from the which may God preserve me! And I well perceive that whosoe'er pursues foolish love, is in nowise master of himself or of his demeanour, so that it comes to pass that he may be discovered, as you can see by the long letter which the good and prudent woman, the Lady of La Tour, has written to me, the which I send you in order that you may perceive the reason which constrains me to withdraw from it. For, when I gave myself up to this love, I took no thought for the perils into the which I rushed, but this wise lady has opened mine eyes to examine and consider my doings, and if I do this not, I shall be defamed [pg 121] and ruined, and this, dear friend, you could in nowise desire. And because of this, I beseech you to withdraw from it, and know that I ask this of you in spite of my love, and with my eyes full of tears, for none could be more loved than I love you. Therefore in nowise believe that this comes to pass through want of love, for I swear to you on my portion in Paradise, and make promise to you by every oath that can be made, that, as long as I live, you shall be my only friend, and you alone will I love alway, if this will content

you, neither do I withdraw my love from you, for you have in nowise deserved this, nor could my heart, which loves you, consent to it, but it at least behoves you to cease from seeing me, because of the harm which might come to me through it, the which, I well know, will be very grievous to you, and full of sorrow, but whiles that your heart may be sad about it, in nowise will mine be happy. And I know not what more to say to you, nor can I write more, for my desolate heart, my eyes, and my face are suffused with tears, and I bid you farewell, my sweet Love.

Your sorrowing Lady.

[pg 122]

And when that I had read this sad letter, my pulse and my colour failed me, and I became like unto one dead, and it was long ere I came to myself again, for I swooned because of the grief which I felt to hear that it was needful for me to keep away from my lady. Never had such a sorrow chanced to me, and so sorely did I weep because of this, that my heart was well nigh broken. And I read the long letter the which had set this thing agoing, and God knows how, when I read it, I cursed the old lady who had sent it. I would have drowned her but that this was not possible. And when I had longwhiles borne this grievous sorrow without that it was diminished, I wrote this letter, moistening it with my tears.

To the most noble of ladies.

Alas, my sweet and honoured Lady, my peerless love whom I serve, fear, obey, and worship! Where can I find words sufficing to declare unto you, and to make you wholly to know, my grievous sorrow? Tears and weeping so dull my mind and my memory, that I know not where I am, or what I do. Ah, my Lady! [pg 123] you have indeed discomforted me by your cruel letter, the which tells me that it behoves me to keep away from you! Certes it is indeed true, whatsoe'er the Lady of La Tour says of Lovers, that I am more to you than aught that you have in the world beside, and that I have made promise unto you (the which I will keep truly all my life), that, as far as in me lies, I will obey you in all things, without doing aught that is contrary to your wishes. But when your wish is that I withdraw me from this, I cannot obey, for I have abandoned my life to it. Thus it is not in

my power to give it up, even if I die for this. And, dear Lady, as to obeying your command that I see you no more, if it is your pleasure that it be always thus, it is meet that I resist this with all my might, since if you bid me do that which would kill me or drive me mad, I know of a truth that in this I cannot obey. And so that you may perceive that I desire your honour more than does she who has written so much to you concerning it, and to prevent any suspicion that you are the cause of my death, I shall go beyond the seas to end my days, and nevermore shall I return from thence, and I pledge [pg 124] you my faith that you will find this to be so. Alas! where has this one, in order to compass my ruin, discovered that already there is rumour and talk of our love? Truly she must have imagined it. Saving her reverence, it is not possible, for naught was ever conducted more prudently or secretly than, up to this present, our sweet love has been, and always will be if God wills. For God knows that I would rather suffer death than do aught that would cause you dishonour. Ah, my Lady, my Lady! Shall I never see you again? If this must be so, God grant that I may lose my sight, and that I may never again look on anything, for naught beside could delight me. How could my heart dure and remain alive when it no longer has the joy the which it receives when it is nigh unto yours? Ah, woe is me! This thought, alas, is a lance which pierces right through my sorrowful heart. It cannot be that I must thus lose, and without cause, the tender comfort, the amorous delights, the pleasing glances, and the winsome words, the which I receive from you, and of which the sweet remembrance, which remained in my thoughts with the hope of their renewal, made [pg 125] me more gladsome and contented than aught beside. And, my very sweet Lady, since I must needs die without deserving it, one favour only do I beg of you, for the sake of all the love your tender and noble heart erewhiles had for me, and do not be so cruel to your poor servant as to deny it to him, the which is that, ere I take leave of you for ever, I may for once have speech with you, so that I may bid you farewell, and say adieu to all the delights the which you have so lovingly bestowed on me, for never, on my soul, have I thought on that which is evil, or contrary to your desires. Alas, my Lady! Well do I know how you do wrong to those desires, and unjustly cause them to endure misfortune, for boldly do I declare that this farewell is in nowise in accordance with their assent or wish. May this favour be vouchsafed to me, dear Lady. And I know not what more to say to you, but be assured that I shall obey you unto death. May it please

you to make known to me forthwith what you would have me to do, and whether you would that I go beyond the seas as I have said, or what is your pleasure. And be pleased to pardon me that this [pg 126] letter is blotted with my tears, for, on my soul, it has not been possible for me to restrain them whiles that I have been writing it. Honoured Lady, I commend me to you more than I know how to say, and I pray God to grant you all good things that are to be desired.—Written in great grief, with tears and weeping.

Your poor lover, the most unhappy of men.

And I sent this letter to my lady, and wept sorely whilst delivering it. And I remained cast down, sad, and silent, making plaint unto myself. And I said in my grief—

BALLAD

Ah, Death, Death, Death, to thee I make my prayer!
 Come, rend me from this dolorous world apart!
 Life lures no longer: since my lady fair
 Would have me shun her, let my hapless heart
 Be very prey to pain and sorrow's sword.
 Gladness I leave and all delight for aye,
 And thee alone, O Death, have I implored
 Because my lady hath bidden me good-bye.
 [pg 127]

Alas, alas, what doleful news is there!
 Never to knight assailed with glaive or dart
 Came heavier trouble than the woes I share,
 I, who have gathered up in shame and smart
 An evil greater than I may record:
 Since now my love from all adventure high
 Must needs withdraw, and death be my reward
 Because my lady hath bidden me good-bye.

Ah, lady of mine, can'st thou such hardness dare
 And suffer me in anguish to depart

For love of thee? Yet Love must witness bear
 Who knoweth no age can show, nor any art,
 Servant more faithful both in deed and word
 Among all lovers that he might espy:
 But my mishaps a worsers end afford
 Because my lady hath bidden me good-bye.

Ah, God of love, why sufferest thou, fair lord,
 That thus in sorrow undeserved I die?
 All things I leave, of all to be abhorred,
 Because my lady hath bidden me good-bye.

In such manner as I have told you did I write in answer to my Lady. And when that she had opened my letter, and saw it so covered and defaced and blurred with tears, certes it was told unto me that she was much discomforted, and that as she read it, she wept so much, that the tears ran down her face. And [pg 128] then, of her grace, she wrote back to me in great haste, and charged the messenger that he lose no time in conveying the letter duly. And he pledged him not to tarry by the way until he had brought it to me. And the messenger hasted him all the night, and stayed him not until that he was come at daybreak to the gate of the Castle. Then he brought me the letter, the which calmed my grievous distress, and banished my sorrow. And great need had I of this, for certes I was like to die or to lose my reason. So listen now to the purport of the letter which she sent, and of the which my heart had great joy.

*To the noblest and best of all,
 My true and loyal friend.*

MY TRUE, LOYAL, VERY KIND AND DEAR FRIEND,—It is the fact that, although I was fearful of losing mine honour, the which I ought to dread above all things, as is counselled, as you have been able to see, in the letter of the Lady of La Tour, to whom I am much beholden for it (for certes I know that she has said this for my well-being), it was against my wish that I wrote to you, in my last letter, that which I made [pg 129] known to you therein, for, my kind and gracious friend, I well perceive that Love cannot suffer us to part from one another, and I repent me much that I declared this unto you, for I know that you have had, and still have, much sorrow because of this. Wherefore I pray you to forgive me, and I beseech your pardon for it. And it much grieves me that our good friend, your cousin, is not

beside you to cheer you. And I regret me that he is gone on so long a journey. So by all the influence I may have over you, and by the love you bear me, I entreat you in all things to possess your mind in peace as aforetime, for greatly do I fear me that you have become so sad, that I may not be in time to comfort you, and that some sickness (from the which may God preserve you), may overtake you. Therefore I shall have no ease until I have news of you. So I write to you in great haste, beseeching you to be cheerful and happy, for I have very good news to tell you, and this is that our good friend, in whom we trust, will be here within four days. So you shall come to see me, and I will keep you advised concerning this, and we will welcome one another heartily as heretofore. [pg 130] For, so help me God, even if it be my ruin, I cannot part from you, and I have hope that, by God's aid, our doings may be well hid, and also that you will always guard mine honour well, for on this I rely. My sweet and dear Love, I pray God to give you perfect joy. Written in haste.

Your true and loyal friend.

And when I received this letter, I was wholly freed from my grief, and no longer did I weep, but instead I praised God for this very good news. And I answered the letter, and gave much thanks to my sweet lady, and I further besought of her that I might see her right soon, so that I might tell unto her the sorrow the which the letter I had received had caused me. And I know not wherefore I should rehearse more of this matter, for it is time for me to end. You have heard how that I had, without dishonour, such joy of love as I desired, and I gainsay him who would avouch that there was ever any wrong-doing or evil whatsoever in our love, or that there was aught in it by the which honour was violated, wherefore our love should be the [pg 131] more esteemed. Moreover I have told unto you the pain and the grief which I endured aforetime, and how that I persevered until my lady had pity on me. And now it is time this story were ended, for if I rehearsed all the adventures, some pleasing, and others painful, the which chanced to me in this love, and the evil and the good which came to me of it, perchance I should become wearisome, for I should have much to tell, and it would be a matter without end. But, to sum up briefly, I tell you that I oftentimes afterward with great delight saw the fair one in whom I put my trust, and joyously did I receive from her, in large measure, loving comfort the which still dwells in my memory. And for full two years did this dure, for she would not let me depart from out her country, and right well did this please me, for so ardent was I, that I cared for naught save to be near her. Thus I bethink me that I resorted thither more than was fitting, so

that anger, stirred up by evil speaking, burst forth on account of our doings, and because of this, I was troubled and ill-at-ease, for I could not stay it, and thus I was no longer able to see my lady as was my wont, the which [pg 132] grieved me sorely. Moreover I was blamed by friends, and called recreant, in that I remained so much in retirement, and only frequented jousts and tourneys and feasts which were held near by, and not those at a distance. This, indeed, did not become one of noble birth, and thus I should be quite the most despicable of my lineage if that I remained there longer, and pursued not arms in many lands for to win praise and renown. So spake my kinsfolk, and I felt assured that they descanted to me thus for my good, but I feared me that it might be displeasing to my lady to do this without her consent, and my heart was exceeding sad.

And I besought of her that she would so contrive, that I might have speech with her, since, chiefly for the sake of her good name, it was needful that I should depart thence for awhile, and assuredly might she believe that never for a single day should I forget her, and thus I would go into Spain, whatever might come of it, and it was better to do this before worse happened to her. And moreover she should have in remembrance that I had made promise unto her that, for [pg 133] love of her, I would achieve so much, that in the end I should be known as a brave man.

And so much did I talk, that she scarce uttered a word, and for very short whiles did she remain, for at great risk was she come to a place where I was.

And there was much weeping and great dole and sad countenance at our parting, and scarce would she consent that I should go to the wars. And wetting her face and neck with tears, and kissing her in haste, I very fervently commended her to God, and thus I commended me to her a thousand times, and submitted myself to her will. And I made promise unto her that wheresoe'er I went, I would send tidings unto her, and thus she could send back word to me how it fared with her.

And thus I departed, weeping and in sad case at leaving my beloved one. And I joined a Spanish force, and was absent, and far from the fair one, for the space of a year, and then I came back, being moved thereto by a longing to see her. And when she heard of my return, she so contrived, that I had speech with her without this being known of [pg 134] others. And joyously was I received, and verily did we welcome one another heartily, and rejoice over our reunion.

Thus from time to time I went to meet her, but there was risk in my having speech with her, and so she came stealthily, in fear and trembling, for fear of being observed, by reason of which she was quite cast down. Therefore when I saw her so distraught, much of my joy was taken away, because of the peril to the which I perceived that she, for my sake, exposed her honour, and in the which she placed herself. And because of this, I undertook many journeys, and

sailed beyond the seas for fear of evil-speaking. And in the manner did I spend ten years, and oftentimes did I go to and fro. And at times, when it was opportune, it chanced that I saw my dear lady.

And in suchwise did I explore many lands. And in a severe encounter I was made a prisoner of war, at the which my lady was disquieted. Thus I endured many misfortunes ere the ten years passed by. Even love brought many upon me, and saved me not from them, for albeit I never, on my soul, saw aught in my lady [pg 135] the which should have caused me to mistrust her, jealousy, which is like unto madness, brewed for me such a potion, that I became like unto one mad, for once, on my return from afar, I bethought me, as soon as I saw her, that her heart was changed toward me, and that, as it seemed to me, she had wholly cast me off, the which filled my heart with such grief, that I was mad with rage. Thus all my happiness was gone, and for longwhiles I could not calm or appease my heart, the which was sorely troubled, and my lady was so displeased with me on account of this, that for awhile I somewhat lost her favour. Moreover, if I may venture to say so, I once saw her a little jealous, the which distressed me much, for I knew not the reason of it, for God knows that neither in thought nor in demeanour was I ever false to her, nor did I so much as raise mine eyes to notice any other lady. But I well perceived that he whose heart is wholly possessed of the passion of love much needs become a prey to jealousy, for he who bears within him a great and perfect love, can scarce restrain him from it.

And many songs were written touching our affair, [pg 136] some sad, and some joyous; and for divers occasions I devised ballads, and lays, and plaints, and other conceits, of the which there was one that was joyous amongst ten which were sad, for such is the wont of the foolish heart which dissembles love; and my lady sent some to me in her turn when that she was able. And our ditties eased our troubles when that we were far from one another, for in such manner did we divert us in the hope of coming by something better, however long this might be in the coming.

And I have made known everything, from first to last, touching the love from the which, for full ten years, I had very sad and painful thoughts, but our love is in nowise ended, nor will it pass away until that our bodies perish. But slanderers (whom may God confound, for there are too many of them in the world) have forced me to abandon the fellowship of her to whom I had made promise of my whole love. And in this she shall not find me to fail. But I perceived that dishonour came to her because of me; wherefore I hated my life which dured so long, for every one gossiped about her. And in order to preserve [pg 137] her honour and her peace of mind, I shrank from seeing her whom I loved above all, but ne'ertheless, sorrowful and sad, I long made lament for that she was so blamed on my account. But notwithstanding, my body, my goods, and all that I

have to bestow, are hers, and if it were needful, I would die for her, and this is no fable. So I pray Almighty God to give her peace, and honour, and a happy life, and perfect joy without end. And now my story is ended.

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