

Guillaume de Machaut

**The Book of the True Tale
(Le Livre dou Voir Dit)**

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Introduction

Guillaume de Machaut (c1300-1377) is regarded as the last and greatest of the French 14th century poet-composers. A member of the *ars nova* movement in music, he further developed the motet, and various secular forms including the rondel and the ballade. Educated in Reims, he became a secretary to John I, the Count of Luxembourg and King of Bohemia, who died at Crécy in 1346. He was later employed by members of the family, including Jean, Duc de Berry. Guillaume also became a canon, ultimately of Reims (in 1337) where he spent the latter part of his life, writing and composing, and supervising the compilation of his manuscripts and scores. A prolific, disciplined and talented poet and composer, he also penned several prose works and narrative poems, including a treatise on poetry, the *Prologue*, and *Le Livre dou Voir Dit: The Book of the True Tale*, the story of his real or fictional love for, and correspondence with, a young female poet, Péronne d'Armentières. His work influenced many other musicians, and major poets including Christine de Pisan and Chaucer.

Le Livre dou Voir Dit is dated by internal evidence to the period 1362-1365, and appears to comprise a mix of real and fictional material. A combination of verse tale, individual poems, and prose letters, it is more precise in detail, but similar in manner to Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose* (written c.1230), Dante's *Vita Nuova* (written c.1294), and Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (written c.1327-c.1368), whereby, in the tradition of courtly love, the author's relationship with the beloved is idealised, and dramatized. The claim that it is a *True Tale*, is therefore valid spiritually, and to an unknown extent factually, even though the material has been subject to a literary refashioning. Conversely, there is a hint of irony in the title, even a hint of oxymoron, in that all 'tales' are part-feigning, and its truth is ultimately an artistic truth, which of course also begs the question as to whether, in reality, all remembered episodes in a love affair (and even the content of letters between lovers) are not, more or less, re-fashioned in the mind. What follows is a rhyming verse translation wherever the original Old French text is in rhyming verse, accordingly the verse forms have been altered here and there to achieve workable translations in English, though they embody the meaning and, wherever possible, the original form of the verse. (References in brackets, in Roman numerals, are to the Chichmaref edition of the poems, of 1909)

The Book of the True Tale

(Here begins *Le Livre dou Voir Dit*)

Lines 1-46: Guillaume's Dedication

IN lasting praise, and in honour,
Of Love refined, whom I honour,
And love and obey, serve and fear,
Who commands my intention, here,
Also, for my gracious lady,
To whom I grant soul and body,
Whom more than myself I love,
And to her a true lover prove,
And for Hope who, most valiantly,
Has ne'er failed or deserted me,
I wish to make, and fashion well,
A new work, wrought for '*Toute Belle*',
And, thus, I should toil, for, certainly,
Her manner's so noble, she so worthy
And so wise, there exists nowhere,
One so graced with virtue fair,
One so free of all treachery,
One so adorned with all beauty,
For Nature, who her shape did form,
Blessed her with so sweet a form
Ne'er so subtle a work did she
E'er mould; so pleasant and lively,
That she might study her closely,
Reflect, muse, ponder intently,
And yet ne'er create her equal,
In short, the world doth so marvel
At her virtue and her beauty,
And her unbroken loyalty,
That I intend to cease my praise

For twould be easier, always,
To halt the moving firmament,
(The zodiac's twelve signs are meant)
Than proper praise of her present,
Thus, unworthy, I'll fall silent.
I wish to commence my story
For the sake of my sweet lady,
May God save her soul and body
From slander and from villainy,
So, I will tell of my adventure,
That was neither sour nor bitter,
But rather fair, and agreeable,
Sweet and pleasant and delightful,
For I'd gone ever unrecognised,
And was of joyfulness deprived,
Yet sweetly was I comforted,
By her, and thus solaced instead.

Lines 47-70: He wishes to create a new work

A year has not yet passed since I
Disported myself in a place nearby,
Which is within a grove of trees
And so, both green and fair, did please
With its beauty, sweet and gracious,
And naught there to prevent it, thus,
From delighting; and in that glade
I laid me down, within its shade,
So, the heat of the sun, thereby
Ceased to grieve me, body or eye.
Of deep thought then I did partake
As to by what means I might make
Some new-fashioned work of art,
That might serve to gladden my heart,
Though inspiration I had none,
Nor theme or matter, to form one,
To prompt me in commencing it,

Or aid me in completing it,
Since Love who grips me so strongly,
Had then no mastery over me,
For he made me master in naught,
Rather drew me away from aught
Of his; worthless all I did finish,
Since it was wrought against Love's wish.

Lines 71-100: He meets his friend who tells him of a certain lady

WHILE I lingered there, thoughtfully,
All alone, and melancholy,
Walking towards me, did appear
A close friend, and he drew near,
Which drew me from my train of thought,
Since none could have imagined aught
That I'd have sought more willingly,
For twas a twelve-month certainly
Since I had laid eyes on my friend,
And now, indeed, my colour did mend
Which was no marvel since, you see,
My face was pale as pale could be,
Before this, for my state was plain,
I'd suffered greatly from the pain
Of a long illness, from which, truly,
I'd recovered but recently,
Though, little by little, I had quite
Regained my health and appetite;
In short, pleased, and free of care,
I had him sit beside me, there,
That I might hear his news, and all
Was good and fair he did recall,
Sweet, delightful, and gracious,
Pleasant talk of things amorous,
For such news he brought to me
As comforted me mightily,
And, by my faith, I did rejoice

At the very sound of his voice;
Now, point by point, I shall relate,
With truth in every word I state,
All that he chose to tell me there,
And here's the tale that he laid bare:

Lines 101-142: His friend describes her excellence

'FRIEND, companion, and sweet lord,
With one stroke, healing I'll afford
To yourself, for the news I tell
Should render you completely well.
In this realm there lives a lady,
May God save her soul and body,
Noble, young, elegant, happy,
Straight and slender, fine and pretty,
Wise of heart, and in her manner
Very humble and modest ever,
Fair and good, the finest singer,
For a hundred years none better,
Her dancing is beyond measure,
And she is so sweet a creature,
That she holds the highest place
In sense, and sweetness, and in grace;
She is the fair gem that doth light
And brighten the darkest night,
She's the gold-set diamond ever
That grants grace to every lover,
The sapphire, the enamelling
That healing for love's ills doth bring,
She is the pole-star, moreover,
That guides true hearts to love's harbour,
And the emerald that brings joy
To woeful hearts, free of alloy,
She's the Orient's pure ruby
Who, with a smile, cures, swiftly,
Every ill, she's the crimson rose

That peerless, without equal, shows.
I could speak about her further,
Yet in a thousand years never
Tell all the sense, good, honour, worth,
To which her gentle Self gives birth,
And for her generosity
And noble heart I prize her greatly,
Since from here to Constantinople
No lady owns a heart as noble;
All see it, when she doth appear,
And you will come to know it clear.'

Lines 143-202: The lady has sent him a rondel

'FOR someone has told the lady
A winter and summer nearly,
You have a malady displayed,
Yet fine ballads you have made,
And rondels, motets, virelays,
Complaints, and amorous lays,
And she said twas not easy,
When charged with some malady,
For hearts to find consolation,
And in a state of perturbation
She found her thoughts, whene'er she weighed
Your situation, and she bade
Me say that she commended you,
A hundred thousand times, anew,
To God, and that she knew of none
Howe'er rich, fair, and fine a one,
In this world she wished to view,
As much as you, or listen to,
And while she had never seen you,
Twas her greatest wish so to do.
And, were it possible, sweet sir,
For you to go and visit her,
She would offer you such cheer,

Filled with affection and sincere,
That satisfaction twould afford
To the wide empire's noblest lord,
And, by God, if she were a man,
Who could travel, and did so plan,
To journey, both late and early,
Then you her sweet face would see,
Within three days, four at the most
For she would, indeed, set out, post
Haste, and travel to this country,
To see and meet with you, solely,
And since she cannot yet do so,
And that pains her heart, you know,
Behold what she now sends to you
That she made, for, in God's purview,
I should not seek to hide the thing,
Who was present at its making.'
Then a rondel he handed me,
Neither ugly nor crude to see,
Nor was it badly constructed,
But rather so well-effected,
So well done, in every way,
None need amend the work, I'd say.
I took it with great reverence
Kissing it, my respect immense,
More than a hundred times or so,
And, after, doffed my cap also,
And, before it, knelt there, humbly,
Nor let the thing stray far from me,
But guarded it, most tenderly,
Next my heart, and right carefully,
And my kisses it oft did share,
Through the great pleasure I found there.
And, because so noble a thing
Should not be hid for anything,
I'll tell you what there was writ,
While in no way amending it:

Lines 203-215: Her first rondel 'Celle qui onques ne vous vit'

'SHE that never did you see,
Who yet loves you, and is true,
With all her heart now gifting you,

Says naught pleasing does she see,
Since she has not you in view,
She that never did you see,
Who yet loves you and is true.

By all the good things, freely
Said of you by others, too,
You have won, of your virtue,
She that never did you see,
Who yet loves you, and is true,
With all her heart now gifting you.'

Lines 216-299: He replies to his friend, pledging himself to the lady

When his speech had reached its finish,
One neither thoughtless nor foolish,
But rather uttered so discreetly,
Nothing there was base or ugly,
I replied, most courteously,
'My noble friend you have surely
Delivered your message truly,
As one should, and most wisely,
And, for that reason, my reply
Will naught conceal, but rather I
Wish to thank Love, straight away,
In all that I, at first, would say,
For keeping me in memory
So well, and sending you to me,
Thus, providing me sweet comfort,
Since no one could bring me aught

Destined to please me so, or could,
By doing so, bring me such good,
For I have been in such great need
Of winning joy and ease, indeed.
But now Love's labour brings release,
For I have gained both joy and peace,
And in Love's service one does well,
Since peace and joy come of his spell.
And so, I must, from this time on,
Fix all hope, and my devotion,
On Love, show all my loyalty,
Since he has thus remembered me.
For I cannot forsake Love ever,
Nor my lady, cease to serve her.
So, will I serve her all my days,
And do so faithfully, always,
And in her service so will die,
Without base thought or vice, say I,
And truly, I cannot believe
That fair lady could e'er conceive
Thought of me, or address me so,
Had Love not come to her also.
For love so subtly doth contrive
That he takes root, and is alive,
In hearts that ne'er knew each other,
Makes each, afar, play the lover,
And renders them lovers in love
That all the ills of love do prove.
If otherwise one claimed that she
Composed her work amorously,
From true and noble sentiment,
But without love being present,
I'd find it too much to suppose,
That love it did not there enclose,
And then, it seems impossible,
For, to me, twere not possible,
To compose in a lover's guise

Without Love's guidance and franchise.
Moreover, you've so praised, to me,
Her wit, honour, and courtesy,
All the good qualities Nature
Can grant to a human creature,
That I hold, God grant me joy,
That this rondel she doth employ
She offered me with true intent,
And her heart thus doth present,
Nor would she think or fashion
Aught contrary, for any reason.
Nor, if she loved not, would ever
Deign to name me as her lover.
Therefore, I think I am in love,
With one who good and true doth prove,
Lovely, pleasing and fair to know,
Since, for the last ten years, or so,
Seeming more than ten years, merely,
I have wished and still wish, truly,
That love would grant me a lady,
A woman good, and wise, and lovely,
Whom I could love without a doubt,
And who loved me within, without,
Such that through my true love of her
My heart would prove much happier,
Such that I could ne'er do so ill
As that fair sentiment to kill,
And her I would love, and praise,
And serve, and honour, her always,
And likewise, womankind, ever
All because of my love for her.'

Lines 300-373: He thanks the lady and his friend, and composes a rondel for her

AFTER this I thanked, most humbly,
My lady, who, of her mercy,

Had granted me hope, good and true:
‘For her renown, her great worth too,
The great beauty she doth possess,
Her most fine, sovereign sweetness,
And the goodness that in her dwells,
Give me hope that, since she excels,
She owns a true and loving heart,
And I am certain, for my part,
She would ne’er have called me lover
Had Love himself not moved her,
And since Love does with this agree,
Nor does my lady disagree,
Now let us form one trinity,
A single amorous unity,
Such that Love, I, and my lady,
Might but one soul and body be.
Also, dear friend and companion,
You, whom my lady sent, are one
Who with great hardship did seek
Myself, since, for nigh on a week,
You have ridden, day after day,
And willingly I would repay
My debt, God grant me paradise,
To you, if I could so devise,
For all the labour it cost you,
Not yet having paid all my due
To yourself as I should have sought,
And, to the full measure I ought,
I offer you my thanks, humbly,
And declare you may command me,
For you may take, I swear, on oath,
Myself, and my possessions both,
Without asking, all that’s of worth,
And as long as I’ve a sou on earth,
That, dear companion, you shall share.
But come tell me now, friend, where
You’ll head for when you leave this place.’

And he said: 'If God grants me grace,
 To where she is, I shall remove,
 She who calls you her own true love,
 And swiftly as I can, say I,
 For, indeed, as sure as I'll die,
 I am certain that she loves you,
 For she claims, to all, such is true,
 And she would never call you so
 If you were not her love, also.
 And if there's aught you'd write,
 Or send, or tell me of, outright,
 Give me the order, that I'll do,
 Be your messenger, good and true,
 For, by my faith, I'm eager, ever,
 To do aught that gives you pleasure.'
 I replied to him, straight away:
 'Dear friend, God help me, this day
 I would willingly write to her,
 And will tell you of my answer,
 That you may better speak for me,
 Once you are before her truly,
 And as my secretary you'll act,
 Speak, or be silent, with due tact,
 If you so will, at my behest.
 Now refuse not my request,
 And I will write to her, this time,
 As she wrote to me, thus, in rhyme.'
 So, I penned a rondel, right away,
 To my lady, brooked no delay,
 And he took it, when it was done,
 With no sign of hesitation,
 By which I saw he would ever
 Keep my secret, guard my honour.

Lines 374-386: His first rondel to his lady 'Tresbele riens ne mabelist'

'LOVELY woman, nothing cheers me,

Nor doth me any peace provide,
Save you, to whom I am allied.

Since your beauty, growing daily,
I view not, your fair form denied,
Lovely woman, nothing cheers me,
Nor doth me any peace provide.

And your sweetness that doth gently
Soothe my ills, and heal inside,
Doth, truly, far from me abide.
Lovely woman, nothing cheers me,
Nor doth me any peace provide,
Save you, to whom I am allied.'

Lines 387-416: He and his friend, who will act as his messenger, now part

This done, from me he did depart,
Leaving me with a trembling heart,
Half love-sick, half filled with joy,
With thoughts that do all woe destroy.
Since I had granted, sans demur,
Heart, and body, and love to her,
My lady, unrestrainedly,
I began to look about me,
And consider as to how
I might shun base error now,
And any form of vile misdeed,
For he who does not so, indeed
Does not deserve his lady's heart.
Thus, I forgot my ills, in part
Because Sweet Thought, most gently,
Soothed my sorrows, and so eased me;
I knew not her face, however,
Since I had not viewed her ever.
Yet Imagination shaped her

In my heart, assured, me further,
That I would gain her good grace,
And thus, by her be healed, apace.
So, I dreamed of pleasant things,
Delightful amorous meetings,
And grew, by all this, most loving,
My thoughts most sweet, and appealing,
That Imagination brought me,
With that image of my lady
She, the source of honour still,
Free of all bitterness, or ill.

Lines 417-474: He receives a letter, and a second rondel, from the lady

And while I was yet in that place,
I heard a man speaking, in haste,
Who asked for me, insistently,
His sole intent to meet with me.
And so, I had the man draw near,
And, in his hand there did appear
A letter that was folded tight,
And with green wax was sealed aright.
I was moved then to address him,
As he approached and speak with him,
For I knew not the reason, truly,
Why he should come to meet me,
And for news I sought to enquire,
And he to fulfil my desire.
Now, it had been five years or more,
For I had known the man before,
Since I had met with him, and he
Was fine and handsome, and truly
Wise and courteous in his manner,
I took his hand and, as ever,
We both did sit, for that did please,
So that we might be more at ease.
He spoke both well and wisely,

While I acted courteously,
For not a single word I uttered,
Until his wish he had furthered.
And thus, he spoke: 'Sir, I am come
To you, being your friend, in sum,
Because I look to, as I ought,
Your good and your true comfort.
There is a lady in this land
Who hates you not, you understand,
A hundred thousand times greets you,
And states that Love assails her too,
And beneath the breast he wounds her
With his amorous flame ever,
Through you whom she loves most dearly,
And if her sweet glance deceived me
Never shall a lady in love
Or virtuous or faithful prove.
The flower of all the world is she,
In short, all good in her we see.'
Thus, he sought to glorify her,
And to praise her and exalt her,
Both her and her deeds, every one,
More than the first friend had done.
The sign of the cross I did employ
While my heart was bathed in joy,
Since he had affirmed so strongly
That her heart she'd gifted to me.
I saw I had ne'er been deceived
By the message I'd at first received.
Then he, while handing me her letter,
Placed himself at my service ever.
I looked within, began to read,
And then I laughed with joy indeed,
For its commencement read like this,
Twas as sweet as any might wish:

**Lines 475-489: The lady's second rondel 'Pour vivre en ioieuse vie',
and her first letter**

'TO live life joyously
I've set my heart to loving
The best there is in being,

And naught have done in folly,
My heart none should go blaming.
To live life joyously
I've set my heart to loving.

And if Youth begs this of me,
Love is the more commanding,
He'll not find me refusing
To live life joyously;
I've set my heart to loving
The best there is in being.'

'My most dear lord, and true friend, I commend myself to you, as best I can, and with all my heart, and send you this rondel. And if it needs amending, I beg you to do so, and, if it please you, to compose a virelay on this theme; and, should you so wish, to send it to me, set to music, with this rondel and the other pieces, the one I sent you, and the one you sent me by the same person. For this, I thank you with all my heart and, pray you, most dear friend, if you would wish anything more of this kind, I shall compose it willingly and with a good heart, as for the man in this world I desire most to see. I ask you, most dear and good friend, to send along some of your excellent poems set to music, for you could do me no service that would please more. May Our Lord bless you with honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. Your good friend.'

Lines 490-535: He justifies himself to the reader, and replies to her in a second rondel

And if any should reproach me
Or think themselves ill-paid by me,

Since our messages I reveal,
Nor sweet nor bitter shall conceal,
These that one should call Epistles,
Granting them true names and titles,
I respond thus, to each demand,
Tis all done at the sweet command
Of my lady, who says yea or nay,
Good reason, then, I should obey
And should her wish fulfil with grace,
Through my love of her sweet face,
For if I should unwilling prove
I would wrong both her and Love.
I know not who might ill surmise,
Yet naught shall I do otherwise,
Rather twill be as she ordains,
She who my fondest hope maintains,
And if anything should be said
Or writ twice in the text instead,
Then, nobles all, show no surprise,
Since she, for whom Love opes his eyes,
Asks that in this true verse I utter,
All I've composed and written for her,
And all she has writ for me also,
Without hiding aught created so,
And asks that all of it I gather,
And assemble it here, together.
The True Tale, I would prefer
To call this I compose for her,
Since within it I tell no lie.
As for the rest, then cast an eye,
(By seeking them, diligently,
You'll find them, of a surety)
Over my verse to music set,
And the ballads unsung as yet,
Where to many a thought I own
Whose like not everyone has known,
Since those who wish such things to make

Must think those thoughts, or truth forsake.
Now from this subject I shall turn,
And to my previous theme return,
And say what I wrote in reply,
Privately, hid from watching eye,
In the form and rhyme displayed
By the rondel that she had made.

Lines 536-550: His second rondel 'Bele bonne et envoisie' and his first letter to her.

'FAIR, good, and charming lady,
Peerlessly sweet, and pleasing,
Ne'er too great is my praising.

My heart sings its song, wholly,
For you, your Self honouring,
Fair, good, and charming lady,
Peerlessly sweet, and pleasing.

If your love you'd deign to call me,
With a heart forever loving,
No more would I go seeking,
Fair, good, and charming lady,
Peerlessly sweet, and pleasing;
Ne'er too great is my praising.'

And here is the second letter
Replying fitly to the other.

'My very dear and sovereign lady, I thank you, as humbly as I can, for your sweet courtesies and loving words; for truly I feel great pleasure, great comfort, and delight whenever I hear them read, look at, or hold them. And, surely, I ought to thank you greatly because they have wrought, and still do, great miracles on my person, such as I have never seen wrought by any saint in paradise, either man or woman. For I had been as if deaf, dull, mute, and impotent, in that joy had completely abandoned and forgotten

me; but your sweet writings have given me the strength to hear and speak, to come and go, and have brought joy to me, who no longer knew where I was; yet from that moment joy found its true dwelling in my heart; and so, I am healed completely, thanks to you and Our Lord, but for desire, which will not let me live till I see you, though the sweet hope I have of seeing you vanquishes my desire completely. And since the sweet hope I have of seeing you cures me of all sorrows and grants me utter joy, what would I be if I could but sate my eyes and heart in gazing on you. Surely no man there is, or will be or ever has been, could dream, imagine, or come to understand in a hundred thousand years a hundredth part of the joy that would be mine. Yet it shall be soon, if God so pleases, and I can arrange it, and, accordingly, I have composed a ballad on this theme, which I send to you enclosed with this message, and I will compose music for it as soon as possible, and for the two poems you sent me. I am also sending you a ballad about the piteous state I have been in, asking you to learn the song which is not difficult, for the music pleases me very much. And though, therein, I beg ladies to dress in black for love of me, I will compose another, on this theme, in which I will pray them to wear white, as you have healed me. And, in truth, for love of you solely, women shall be served and praised by me more than ever because you have revived my body, my mind, and my small store of talent, which had been totally suppressed. My very dear lady, I commend myself to you as humbly as I can, and tell you that you should ask nothing of me but, rather, take me and whatever it is I have as your own, being one who is yours completely withholding naught. My most dear and sovereign lady, I pray that God give you honour, joy, peace, and health, such as you would have and, my most dear lady, I beg that if ever you write to me you do not call me lord, for whoever makes a lord of his slave adds to his enemies. And, by God, the title friend or lover is a much fairer name, for when lordship appears, Love takes flight on the spot. Your most loyal friend.'

Lines 551-609: He entrusts the rondel and letter to his friend

I entrusted him with my reply,
Made him my messenger thereby,
Saying: 'By my soul, sweet friend,
Your way towards my lady wend,

Given I cannot come and go,
Or speak to her, as you well know.
I've naught but imagination,
Sweet Thought, and its creation,
And all because my health is low,
And not because I wish it so.
Naught I could wish for were better,
My desire is fixed upon her,
All my heart and all my thought,
Beside her, I can think of naught.
She's my sovereign goddess, and more,
She is my peace, my joy, my war,
She's my joy and my true solace,
She it is makes me cry 'alas',
She it is to whom I yield all.
Would God were pleased it might befall
That we three shared a day or two!
My heart shakes and trembles anew,
Every time that I remember,
The perfect good that flows from her,
And all, I hear, that others say,
Yet cannot go to her today.
A hundred thousand times commend
Me to her, for these words I send
That I am hers, hers completely,
While she is life and death to me,
I'll love her sans deceit always,
Far above all things, truth to say,
Far more than myself, God save me,
And if I often had, within me,
Of her sweet gaze, all my fill,
I would be cured of all my ill,
And I shall see her when I may,
Not when I wish, I'm bound to say.'
In this state I was forced to linger,
Weeping profoundly as ever,
While my friend prepared to leave me,

And this I believe would, surely,
Have broken my heart completely,
Because of my sweet noble lady,
Had not sweet Hope been present there,
Who affirmed, beyond doubt or care,
That the lady loved me, indeed
Perfectly, in thought, word and deed;
So, I took solace in this for all
The pain I felt, which did appal.
My friend was not swift to go,
Thus, I was able to send also,
The two ballads to my lady,
And sang to him each melody,
So, he could sing them both to her,
Thus, she might learn to sing either,
For she would add, most certainly,
If she sang them, to their beauty.

Lines 610-672: His friend cannot go, he finds another messenger

HE listened, long and carefully,
But afterwards he said to me
That he could not so soon depart,
To speak to my lady, for his part.
Alas, I grieved, for I had thought
A swift journey he had sought,
And so, I was dismayed, rather,
As you shall hear of, hereafter.
For two whole months entire I spent
Where no single creature present
Brought news to me, in any way,
Nor did I hear for many a day,
Of my most sweet and pure lady.
Alas, I grieved, and most deeply,
Not knowing why, so far from me,
She dwelt, in another country,
So, I took to melancholy,

Thinking, musing, wretchedly,
How to survive my situation,
Knowing not a single person
In the place where she was living,
Ever my tender heart weeping.
And worse my situation grew,
My messenger was distant too,
Having gone to a far-off land,
So, sorrow held me in its hand,
And the harshest season was here,
The winter being most severe,
Ever filled with sleet and rain;
Quite melancholy I became,
Sad, pensive, filled with misery,
All worse than before for me,
For truly I was filled with doubt
That every hope I'd had was out,
And from illness I was weary,
And weakened almost entirely.
None knew of my situation
Because I had no companion
To whom I might utter complaint,
My complexion pale and faint;
Ever I felt my heart pounding,
And had lost the art of resting,
Eating little, and sleeping less,
Both joyless and comfortless.
I thus had reached a pretty pass,
Often weeping, sighing 'alas',
Secretly, alone in my bed,
Delight lost, and all pleasure dead,
Nor day nor evening good to see,
For nothing now mattered to me,
Save for my lady sweet and dear,
Thus, everything to me lacked cheer.
Good people now avoided me,
For I'd succumbed to misery.

I thought my end had surely come,
Yet loved 'Toute Belle', her person
Much beloved, with so pure a heart,
Such true affection, that apart
From herself, I regretted naught,
Nor any except her now sought.
So, I composed my testament,
And began it with this lament,
Which I sent to her, safe and sound,
Through a valet whom I had found:

Lines 673-696: His first ballad 'Plourez, dames, plourez votre servant'
(Ballad XXXVII, set to music)

'WEEP ladies, weep for your underling,
I who have set my heart, and my intent,
Body, and desire, and thought, on serving
Your honour, which may God guard and augment.
Dress yourselves in black for me,
My heart's sore, my face pales visibly,
And I find myself indeed at death's door,
If God and yourselves bring me no cure.

My heart I leave with you, at your command,
And offer my soul to God, devoutly,
And may the rest of me go where tis planned,
Flesh for the worms, tis their right most truly.
Let my possessions be
Given to the poor. Alas! In leaving, see
How on my deathbed here I ache, full sore,
If God and yourselves bring me no cure.

Yet I am sure there is such good in you,
You'll save me from this peril where I lie,
Devoid of hope, if, from the heart and true
You but pray to God to heal me thereby,
So, I beg, most humbly,

That you will raise a prayer to God for me,
For I must pay Nature's debt, such is sure,
If God and yourselves bring me no cure.'

**Lines 697-720: His second ballad, 'Amours, ma dame, et fortune et mi
oueil' (Ballad CCXXVII)**

'TRUE Love, my lady, Fortune, and my eyes,
And the great beauty that she doth possess,
Render my heart, mind, will, also, likewise,
My longing, subject to her sweet duress,
But tis Fortune only
That makes me languish here, most painfully,
Bringing me anguish, forcing me to suffer,
Since I love her most, yet see her never.

Of my lady, and of her fair welcome,
Of my tender eyes, of True Love, of pain,
I complain not, for this to me doth come:
Through longing I all worldly joy obtain.
And yet all my intent,
All my fine days and happy sentiment,
Fortune will end, if I die forever,
Since I love her most, yet see her never.

For Fortune, of whom I complain and sigh,
Ensures that my lady dwells far from me,
Stealing the hope that I once had, thereby,
And bringing despair to my heart, truly,
So, without any ease,
I live for my lady, whom I would please,
Moan, and weep, and sighs in secret utter,
Since I love her most, yet see her never.'

Lines 721-726: The lady's second letter in reply.

And when she had read my message

She, as one courteous and sage,
Did not muse on it forever,
But like a friend, good and clever,
Within the hour had sent to me
A letter, you may hear and see.

‘Most dear and sweet friend, I received your letter on the Thursday before Christmas, for which I thank you with all my heart, and indeed, by my faith, I have not felt such joy for many a day as I did upon receiving it, especially because I was pleased to learn the news of your good cheer, and because you wrote that the little composition I sent you brought you both health and joy; for surely no greater joy could come to me than to compose something that both healed and delighted you. And if you find great pleasure in seeing and holding what I sent to you, I believe I take even greater pleasure in looking over the things you sent; for by my faith, no day has passed since I received them that I haven’t kissed them two or three times at least. And I have rehearsed the two ballads sufficiently, especially the one set to music, that I shall learn them in time, while in regard to what you’ve written about your health, which has improved, thanks be to Our Lord, I am quite happy, and so I will be very diligent in learning this latter work well, against the time when please God I shall see you and accompany you in singing as best I am able. And, also, it pleases me greatly that you write that the music pleases you. For, assuredly, I take less pleasure in singing or listening to other songs or poems than I do those that come from you; both for the good I have heard spoken of them and because I believe there is more in them than can be uttered. I love and hold dear all that comes from you, and indeed I would not have believed, no matter who said it to me, that I could feel such great love for a man, without ever seeing him, as I have for you. For since the very first moment I heard the good and honour that are yours mentioned, not an hour has passed in which I have not loved you, and this love grows and will grow from day to day. And I am sending along a virelay on this theme, which I have composed, and if anything needs amending, please do so, because you know how to compose better than I, for I have little talent for undertaking such a task. And furthermore I’ve never had anyone to teach me, and therefore I beg you, most dear friend, to send me some of your works and poems please, so that I might learn from you how to compose the excellent verse and songs

you do, for it is my greatest pleasure to hear and sing excellent poems and songs if only I am able to. And when it shall please God that I see you, something I desire more than I can express in words or than you can imagine, please show me how better to write and compose, since I should learn more from you in a day than I would from another in a year. I have received the pages you sent to my brother, and I feel so confident about you and he that I opened and read them. And, by my faith, I would like you and he to have confidence in me in this matter, and in greater affairs. And, also, that same brother I mentioned is no longer here because he left me on the eighth day of December to go to Avignon. And that same day he and your secretary gave me news of you, and handed me a complete virelay set to music, telling me you had composed it. This I practiced until I had learned it. Most dear friend, I commend myself to you with all my heart, as much as I am able, and I beg you that if I can do anything which will please you, and bring you both health and joy, you should command me to do so, just as you would your sister, or your companion and friend. And I promise faithfully to do so, and with a good heart; and you would bring me very great joy and much comfort if you saw fit to send me news of your health. I pray that Our Lord grant you as much joy, health, and honour, as I would wish for the man in this world I most love. Your true and loyal friend.'

Lines 727-739: The lady's third rondel 'Celle qui nuit et iour desire'

'SHE, who does, each night and day,
Long to see you,
Am I; your heart's ills to allay.

Not to be drawn some other way,
Nor wishing to,
She, who does, each night and day,
Long to see you.

For, view your suffering, I may,
Bring my skill too,
In medicine, to heal you alway.
She, who does, each night and day,
Long to see you,

Am I; your heart's ills to allay.'

Lines 740-805: He receives her letter and rondel, and is much-comforted

BUT as I was, thus, musing quietly,
While waiting upon God's mercy,
A valet came to my chamber,
And, I swear, seeing him enter,
My heart was filled, every sense
Alive with joy, at his presence,
For I imagined that he brought
Something good for my comfort
And, indeed, the man did bring
That which solaced me, a thing
As fine as heart could e'er conceive,
Or mouth recount, I do believe,
One my folk found so wondrous
They made the sign of the cross,
And all marvelled, since before
I could not have purchased a cure,
Though I had the empire's wealth,
For I began to beam with health,
And raised myself higher in bed,
While he, full wise and well-bred,
Approached it, and then handed me
The letter laid out previously,
That you've already had in view,
And, I would trust, have read it too.
He said: 'Greetings from the lady,
Who is your friend, and seeks to be,
And who loves and longs for you so
She would be your doctor also,
And thus, will ease and cure all ill;
Sweet lord, now think of being well,
For she takes pains to see you better;
Come now, take and read this letter.'

I answered him, though quite weakly,
Smilingly, if ponderously:
'You are more than welcome here,
For most happily you appear,
And I thank you for doing so,
Since now I feel no pain or woe,
For you bring a letter, as well
As news, to me of 'Toute Belle.'
I took, and opened, the letter,
I still kept concealed, however,
The secrets that lay hid within,
Silently, its purport did win,
And once I'd seen what it said
I know not what joy filled my head,
For I was sweetly provided
With love's riches undivided,
And so, I doubt it will surprise
That I sighed more than twenty sighs,
And then I asked for food, promptly,
And ate and drank well, and freely,
Then slept a little while, quietly,
Yet keeping the letter with me,
That is to say, close to my heart,
Nor a word forgot, on my part.
After my sleep I felt happy,
Not like one lost in misery,
Discomforted, disconsolate;
You may be sure, I felt elate,
Within two days rose from my bed,
Bathed myself, and then was led
To render myself, as best I could,
Well-presented, as a man should,
So that many folk marvelled there
To see me look and act so fair.

Lines 806-879: He praises the lady and muses upon his previous state

THUS, was my state, as I have said,
Refreshed, the thoughts in my head,
Now pleasant, and full of gaiety,
Of all that makes one's heart happy,
And I set, mind, and body, and will
Howe'er lacking in strength and skill,
To doing my sweet lady honour,
Serving, loving, adoring her,
And, by God, so I had ought to,
With heart and wit rendered anew,
As my lady and my goddess,
Being my sovereign mistress,
Because I had ne'er seen, for sure,
So true a miracle before,
As that which she had worked on me.
Such great renown it won that she,
So folk do say, will, when she dies,
Become a saint in paradise,
For I can state, in verity,
That she's twice resurrected me,
For I was sunk in wretchedness,
Deaf to the sound of joyfulness,
All lost was my understanding,
As was my amorous feeling,
In my mouth no praise, I own,
For woman known or unknown,
Nor did I blame them either,
Saying naught of them ever,
Indeed, I lived unsociably,
Hating pleasure, and I did flee
The company, all free of strife,
Of those yet living the good life.
For about myself I cared naught,
The same worth it held, I thought,
To act with a shameful rudeness,
As to do a deed of gentleness.
Love loved me not, nor did I

Love him, resembling thereby
One who's like a great tree-stump,
Lying there in some torrid sump,
So, covered over by the water
That it serves no use whatever,
Nor can it be drawn forth ever,
Drowned as it is beneath the water.
The bread I ate I would address
Winning nor joy nor happiness,
And found myself much displeas'd
By everything that others pleas'd.
And all this I suffered because
Of a cruel and manifest loss,
For after the losing, suddenly,
Delight had fled my company,
Nor was my face full of happiness,
Till my lovely lady did me bless,
Who every ill doth tend and cure,
And of her grace saw me cared for.
It was with such melancholy
That I was curs'd, a malady
Bringing woe, and great mischief,
Afflicting me, without relief,
Yet a thing that none can amend
If God wills not, nor ease doth send;
Back to my theme then, my pen goes,
Which speaks of joy and of repose.
The lovely woman whom I adore
Cleansed me of all my ills and more,
Since joy, and life, she gifted me,
And all from generosity,
For she did not her labour sell
Being generous, and rais'd well,
Aiding, as one free and willing,
For this was all of her own doing,
And I had not a thought of her
Until she help'd me in this manner.

Lines 880-933: Concerning the love of women

LET us consider what women do,
What they do, and what they undo;
Good men at once by them are made,
While the wicked ones are unmade,
Since the wicked will ne'er do right,
While the good bring wrongs to light.
But let us think on the true lover,
He'll be so full of woe, he's ever
Afflicted, abased by weakness,
So feverish with love's sickness,
That if he's greeted grudgingly,
Or welcomed a mite less warmly,
He'll take to a couch for keeps,
Or the bed whereon he sleeps,
Can aid himself not, there will lie,
Doing naught other than to sigh
For death or mercy, alas, he'll prove
So entangled in the snares of love,
His body will tremble with doubt,
While the sweat, in rivers, pours out,
So over-heated and wildly stirred,
His appetite so badly impaired,
That he can neither eat nor drink,
All know the truth of it, I think.
His lady beside him will stand,
And touch his head with her white hand,
Or his throat, or hand, a tittle,
And make fun of him a little,
And say to him: 'My dear sweet friend,
Who now has brought you to this end?
You should not be so sore dismayed,
Since it was but a game I played,
If my welcome held little cheer,
Nor did I ever intend, my dear,

To be cruel, for I love you true,
Nor would wish for any save you.'
Then she'll gift him a little ring,
Or some such pretty plaything,
While saying to him: 'Come, rise,
And come eat, and drink likewise,
For, indeed, I'd not have it be
That you should live in misery.'
Within the hour he'll rise, at will,
Seemingly cured of every ill.
He'll drink and eat without alarm,
If he needs to, and then will arm
Himself, with mail and shield as well.
Now is that not a miracle?
Now find a saint can do the same
And, in an hour, a fever tame.
Saints can do much, I believe,
But I did never yet perceive,
Aught so miraculous, ever,
As such healing of a lover.

Lines 934-947: He sends his lady a second letter and four ballads

DURING those two months when I,
Through sickness, in bed did lie,
Four works I managed to compose,
That with my letter I did enclose,
Which I have also copied here,
And if repeats and faults appear,
Then my excuse is my malady
If those who read will pardon me.
Here are those three ballad songs,
Ne'er sung before, with them belongs
A ballad I made, carefully,
With joyful intent, as you will see.

Lines 948-968: His third ballad ‘Veoir n’oïr ne puis riens qui destourne’ (Ballad CCXXXVII)

‘I see and hear naught that makes me veer,
Nor my heart, wherever I choose to turn
Such that my mind from you might steer,
Or I prove not yours, nor cease to yearn.
So, from afar, I watch your elegant manner,
And noble form wherein no flaw I view,
Such that my thought is ever drawn to you.

And it would have me love you, this sweet thought,
Most faithfully, and this I’d seek to do,
But Desire on Memory has so wrought
That oft I turn from company, anew,
So, I turn away, and its attack I suffer,
Which assaults me and wounds me too,
Such that my thought is ever drawn to you.

But this Desire waits not, nor doth delay,
Dealing many an amorous turn,
So that my heart must sojourn and stay
In your prison, no tower or fort I earn,
And it is filled with delight and sadness,
So that it oft wins joy and suffering too
Such that my thought is ever drawn to you.’

Lines 969-1035: His fourth ballad ‘L’ueil qui est li droit archier’ (Virelay XXXV)

‘THE eye that is Love’s true archer,
In drawing, and darting, ever
Gracefully,
Lacked power to wound, truly,
My heart with desire,
So, I love with true heart entire,
Most loyally.

This is why. Assuredly,
Ne'er her noble form did I see,
Attractive and light,
That which joyfully
Binds me, in her seignory,
And holds me tight,
Nor she mine, yet hold her so dear
That I would ever wish her near,
Not leave her be.
Though he can, with cruel intent,
Seek to threaten me
Yet I think naught of that, you see,
Here, at present.

The eye that is Love's true archer,
In drawing, and darting, ever
Gracefully,
Lacked power to wound, truly,
My heart with desire,
So, I love with true heart entire,
Most loyally.

He's ne'er made me a present
Of either joy or torment;
Nor could his menace,
In any way, prevent me
From living full joyously.
Yet ne'er, face to face,
Can I draw near her, in longing,
Nor she me, except when dreaming,
Wherein, often,
My loving thoughts imagine,
And I think, tis true,
That he might pierce me through,
And full sudden.

The eye that is Love's true archer,
In drawing, and darting, ever
Gracefully,
Lacked power to wound, truly,
My heart with desire,
So, I love with true heart entire,
Most loyally.

Tis he who, very sweetly,
Captures a heart and, subtly,
Will bind it tight,
Constrains it so completely
He forces it, all humbly,
To yield outright.
He's the amorous messenger,
Using his sovereign power,
So wisely,
That he knows how to, swiftly,
Entwine hearts truly;
And such ties one cannot free,
I think, readily.

The eye that is Love's true archer,
In drawing, and darting, ever
Gracefully,
Lacked power to wound, truly,
My heart with desire,
So, I love with true heart entire,
Most loyally.'

**Lines 1036-1102: His fifth ballad 'Plus bele que le biau jour' (Virelay
XXXVI)**

'BRIGHTER than daylight's brightness,
Sweeter than e'er was sweetness,
A form forever
Graced with a noble manner,

Thus, sans redress,
All your peerless loveliness
Captures me ever.

Yet I've heard so much of you,
Your fame flourishing anew,
Night, day, ever,
Such the excellence on view,
The flower, and the fruit too,
Of all honour,
And you are of such great worth
Above all who are on Earth,
That if thus my heart
I relinquished, for my part
Too great would be
The honour, if so sweetly
It dwelt apart.

Brighter than daylight's brightness,
Sweeter than e'er was sweetness,
A form forever
Graced with a noble manner,
Thus, sans redress,
All your peerless loveliness
Captures me ever.

So, I wish not for mercy,
Indeed, you have so blessed me
That my tears prove,
And sighs, exhausted wholly,
Lady, I thank you, truly,
As I do Love,
Who's put an end to sorrow,
And his pleasure in my woe,
And enriched me,
With consolation, so sweetly
The flavour

Of that solace I can savour;
Thus, he's healed me.

Brighter than daylight's brightness,
Sweeter than e'er was sweetness,
A form forever
Graced with a noble manner,
Thus, sans redress,
All your peerless loveliness
Captures me ever.

So, there's no pain or worry,
Now nothing doth afflict me,
For my labour
Nourished, and nurtures, me,
In that stream, where hearts may be
Strengthened ever;
Tis bathed in the sweet odour,
Tis your goodness that forever
Ravished wholly,
My heart, that thus deserts me
For one better,
For a place superior,
With you, not me.

Brighter than daylight's brightness,
Sweeter than e'er was sweetness,
A form forever
Graced with a noble manner,
Thus, sans redress,
All your peerless loveliness
Captures me ever.'

**Lines 1103-1169: His sixth ballad 'Je ne me puis saouler' (Virelay
XXXIV)**

'I could never feel weary

Of thinking, dreaming sweetly,
Of what I'll say
Or do, what manner display
When, right clearly,
My peerless lady's beauty
I see one day.

Sure, am I, I'll be taken, so
Strongly that I'll not know
What to utter,
Without cold, I'll tremble though,
Without heat, I'll sweat also,
Sighing ever,
And fail and falter,
Concealing my sighs from her;
I'll find no way
To sound a word. Love must play
My part with her,
Who knows how, without error,
Love to display.

I could never feel weary
Of thinking, dreaming sweetly,
Of what I'll say
Or do, what manner display
When, right clearly,
My peerless lady's beauty
I see one day.

Ah! Lord, how to countenance
The ray of that loving glance,
The sight endure
Of those sweet eyes? Oh, what chance?
For ill enough, with the lance,
Pierce me, once more.
Such eyes I cannot, I'm sure,
Withstand; weakening blows, so sore,

I gaze askance.
If Hope, that my state doth know,
Comes not also
To comfort me, I must go,
While I've the chance.

I could never feel weary
Of thinking, dreaming sweetly,
Of what I'll say
Or do, what manner display
When, right clearly,
My peerless lady's beauty
I see one day.

I am troubled nonetheless,
For it pleases me, to excess,
To gaze upon
Her sweet eyes that, smiling, bless,
Like the rose in May's, no less
Sweet, guerdon.
And if I dared hope that she
Might deign, indeed, to love me,
All wretchedness
I'd forget, my ills address
Through thought, purely;
So, I should not fear, so deeply,
Those I profess.

I could never feel weary
Of thinking, dreaming sweetly,
Of what I'll say
Or do, what manner display
When, right clearly,
My peerless lady's beauty
I see one day.'

Lines 1170-1196: His second letter; he rides out to view the Springtime

‘MY most dear and sovereign lady, I am not such a man nor so wise as to know how to thank you fittingly for your sweet, courteous, and loving messages. Nonetheless, I swear to you, in all faithfulness, that these messages have done me so much good that not at any hour do I wake without recalling them; and that I have eyes, heart, and thoughts only for you, in order to do whatever might be to your praise and honour. And as for what you wrote, namely that if you were a man, you could see me more often, I beg you, for God’s sake, and by all the love you have for me, that you will pardon me if I do not travel or have not travelled to meet you; for, upon my soul, God knows that this is not through any lack of love or good will, but because I have been in such a state, so afflicted with illness for a year, and even more so since I recently returned, that I have lain ill without leaving my room much, if at all. And I think that you are so good and wise that you would not wish that I, who am your creature whom you have revived, and sweetly nourished, with your sweet and loving words, be put at risk of being lost forever, so as to journey to you, for otherwise I dare not. And, by Jesus Christ, I indeed desire this more than anything in the world. Though your sweet promises urge me on strongly. And, by God, if you were living in Rome, the great See, I would visit you as soon as I was able. And now the new season approaches when I shall be well, if God pleases. And my sovereign lady, as to your desire that I chase from my heart the mortal fear and sorrowful thoughts located there, all your words are commandments to me. And I will do so, in such a way that the sure hope I have, through the most sweet promise you have made me – namely that, if God wishes, I may see you – shall chase them away never to return, even though I am not worthy to receive, in a hundred thousand years, the least of the good things you would do for me. And regarding your sweet portrait, which you intend to send me, indeed I am very eager to see it, and I humbly ask that you are pleased to send it me, as soon as you well can do so. And if I can find a way, I shall see you around Easter-tide. I am going to have copied for you one of the works I have written previously, entitled Morpheus, and I will either bring it, or send it to you, if God wishes. I am thankful you do not find the length of my compositions annoying, for, truly, once begun I know not how to stop, so great the pleasure I find in thinking, speaking, and writing. I thank you most humbly for the fine and

lovely ring that you have sent. And truly you need not beg me to look after it carefully, because I prize it wholly. My most dear and sovereign lady, if I write to you in a more thoughtless, silly, or ill-advised way than I should, please pardon me because there are two things that affect a man's mind badly: excess joy and excess sorrow. And by my soul, when I view your sweet and loving words, your generous promises, which I might not hope for or desire being scarce worthy of such benefits, I feel such great and perfect joy as no human creature dare conceive. And when I think and see that there is no way for me to journey towards you, to satisfy my heart and eyes by seeing you, my joy changes to woe, of which I possess so much that there is no heart in the world, however hardened, that would not feel pity for me, or would fail of compassion in viewing me. But such is the nature of love: for one joy a hundred sorrows. I am not writing to you, thus, as respectfully and humbly as I should. My most dear and most sovereign lady, I pray that God give you such honour and joy as you yourself might wish, and such as my heart desires, as for the person in this world whom I love best, and most wish to see. My most sovereign lady, I ask you not to share the works I send to you, because I seek to write music for them, especially for those that best please you. And if I have not replied to you as swiftly as I ought, please forgive me, since, by my soul, it was not due to any lack of love for you, nor that I failed to remember you, for I think more upon you than any other in the world. And I think that I would have died some time ago, if I had not these thoughts of you, for I take joy and comfort from them, and the firm hope that I will yet see you, as is my heart's wish. I received your letter, today, which my secretary sent on to me, in which you tell me of your good health, which delights me. And truly the greatest joy I could possess is to hear good news of you. And concerning what you command me, as to my writing to you often: please be aware, I have found no messenger to my liking whom I dare trust. And that is the reason I fail to write to you more often. For, indeed, I think that you would willingly hear news of my health, and be pleased to know that I am quite well, and think that I would be fully able to ride out, if the weather turns a little warmer. And, certainly, if I possessed your sweet likeness, after God and yourself I would love, serve, and obey it, composing many new pieces in its honour and your own. I have composed the piece in regard to 'the great desire I have of seeing you', just as you requested, and have done so in the German manner. And truly it seems to

me strange and quite new, so I will send it you as soon as I can. By my faith, you sent me a very fine rondel that pleased me more than a little. My most dear and sovereign lady, I pray God grant you as much good and honour as you yourself might wish, and as I desire with all my heart. Your most faithful lover.'

Spring arrived, all fine and lovely,
And I too was bright and happy,
My mind full of pleasant thought,
My ills eased, nor was I fraught,
Well-provisioned, well-mounted,
My hopes high, blessings counted,
Since I sought to meet my lover,
And I was melting to see her,
So thus, I sat, upon my steed,
One tall, well-rested, plump indeed,
And set off through the countryside
To hear the sweet bird-song, betide,
And take the air, since, most truly,
The thing was like to profit me,
And, also, so I might discover
If I was as fit to ride as ever.
Twas in the month of April when
The birds, amidst the leaves, again
Perform their amorous effects,
Their sweet melodies and hockets.
I rode amidst a grove of alder,
Nor such delight did I know ever
As the birdsong that did me regale;
There sweetly sang the nightingale,
That made itself heard above all,
Thus, joy did to my heart befall,
Ne'er in my life heard I sweeter.

Lines 1197-1211: He returns home due to the heat of the day

YET I returned home, thereafter,

Because of the rising heat that dried
The dew, and drove me back inside.
And there I began to ponder deeply
On my lady to whom I'd, wholly,
Given myself, without reserve,
And now sought loyally to serve,
And wondered how it came about
That by my lady, within, without,
Heart and body, thus, I had been,
Ravished, yet her I had ne'er seen.
This seemed to me a great marvel,
Since I had ne'er known its equal;
Yet all may come to be, no heart
So hard it yields not to love's art.

Lines 1212-1267: He considers the nature of love from afar

IN this land dwelt many a lady,
Good, fair, of true nobility,
Young, well-bred, and charming,
Straight, and lithe, and winning,
Sweet, and pleasant, and gracious,
And disposed to prove amorous,
And I could gaze at them alway,
And sit beside them any day,
Dally there, tease them, laugh and sing,
Speaking of this, that, anything.
I could watch them carol and dance,
Withdraw gracefully, and advance.
I saw they were honest in all
They did, and virtuous withal,
And yet it never came to be
That love of them so ravished me,
That from the one afar I'd part,
Far from my eyes, yet near my heart.
Yet how could she be part of me,
And strike, from afar, so deeply,

All without my having seen her,
Or yet heard her sweet voice ever?
One might reply by speaking so:
Love knows how to come and go,
(This I doubt not, and can prove)
In one who's never seen his love,
And his true love will never see,
But hears so much about his lady,
Her fair renown has so approved,
That she will be by him beloved;
For Love who is subtle and wise,
Burns like hot coals and, likewise,
Will burn, within him, forever,
So that, while he lives, he'll ever
Be her bondsman, servant too,
Her lover, faithful, fine, and true.
So, I think he fares better than I,
If his love is strong, since I sigh,
Hoping that I might see my lady,
And she, welcome me cheerfully,
Greeting me with loving kindness,
Nor displaying proud haughtiness.
For in that way I may discover
If she loves me true; that other,
His lady need have no concern
If her lover she seeks to spurn,
Because he'll notice not a thing,
He'll persevere in everything,
Deep in the love that did him claim,
For love of her, and her fair name.
So, if some man from o'er the sea
Chooses to love, passionately,
A lady of this country, likewise,
It would cause me no surprise,
If Love had taught him to love her,
Without him seeing her, ever.

Lines 1268-1303: He praises his lady and receives her third letter

AND so, no one now should wonder
If, musing, I am sleepless over,
One who has never looked on me,
Nor I on her, and yet, sweetly,
Through her, my heart doth dance,
She is my joy and sustenance,
She's my delight, my pleasure she,
Truly, she is the fleur-de-lis
Kings, dukes, and counts adorning there,
For all indeed must her compare
To the lily-flower in whiteness,
To the rose for pure sweetness,
And the fixed Pole-Star for honour,
And to the Sirens as a singer.
Ah, Lord, when I hear of her fame,
And the sound of her sweet name,
Uttered now, in any manner,
There's no clerk could sum up ever
Nor e'er describe, conceive, compute,
The joy that doth within me shoot.
Now as I sat, in their company,
A serving-man did approach me,
And said: 'Sire, this is sent to you,
From one you know who loves you true,
Who sends you a thousand greetings,
Tis from Foix, I bring such things,
And I am journeying to Lorraine,
And next week will return again,
And if a reply you would write,
I shall bear it, for your delight.'
I said: 'I'll answer it willingly,
And speak of my wishes presently.'
Then we took leave of each other,
And I oped, and read the letter,
And here it is, all, word for word,

As I received it, and twas conferred:

‘My sweet heart and true friend, I have received your letter. On the fourth day, thereafter, I received those works of which you wrote, and also the songs, for which I thank you as graciously as I am able. And by my very soul, they are all most excellent and please me greatly, as does all you write to me; for I find no pleasure or comfort except in looking at them and hearing them read. And so great is the pleasure I take in them, I often neglect other matters. So, I beg you, my sweet heart, please send me them again, but set to music. And I also ask that you send them before showing them to anyone else, for, by my faith, with a sufficiency of your compositions, I would not seek to learn any others. And when I wrote that, if I were a man, I might have seen you often, by my faith, I spoke truly, but by no means would I wish you to come to me were it not safe and comfortable for you to do so. And so I beg you, by the love you have for me, do not set out, at least until the roads are better, and you are in better health, concerning which I pray to Our Lord that he grant you this, as my heart desires. And by my faith, I believe that your longing to see me is indeed as great as my own; and so I pray you, my sweet heart, cast out all frustration and sorrow from your heart, because in my own soul I cannot feel joy or pleasure as long as I sense you are wretched; for I cannot think that you, or any other man, might imagine how great is my wish to do whatever might banish all the pain from your heart, bringing it ease and perfect joy; and so do not doubt that my will to do so shall not alter as long as I live. And, I pray you, please compose, as soon as you are able, the music for the songs you sent me, especially for ‘The eye that is Love’s true archer’ and ‘Brighter than daylight’s brightness’, and please send me these two as soon as you can. And on the theme of the other ballad song, I have composed the like. And if you think that they could be sung together, then let them be so. I have only written one stanza thus far, because your own are so accomplished they put me wholly to shame. And so, I beg you to please amend anything that needs amending. And, for God’s sake, my sweet friend, do not take to the road until it is firmer, and your weather improves, as I would rather not see you for an entire year, which would cause me much grief, than for you to travel at the risk of peril to yourself. But, above all else, I pray that I might have news of you, as often as you

can write. My most sweet love, I pray that Our Lord grant you peace, health, happiness, and joy of all that your heart loves. Your faithful friend.'

Lines 1304-1330: She also sends a first ballad, a virelay, 'Ne vous estuet guermenter'

'BE not disturbed, nor fearful,
My sweet friend, nor doubtful,
Nor feel dismay,
For with love, I shall allay
All that's painful,
Bring you words of sweetness full,
Upon a day.

For, indeed, I wish to do
All that will comfort you,
All that I may,
And solace your sweet, true heart;
Know I shall do all, on my part,
Without delay,
Nor need you fear that you will
Be made to bear any ill,
While I yet stay
By your side, for, I dare say,
I'll cure you still,
Be your doctor, health instil,
In every way.

Be not disturbed, nor fearful,
My sweet friend, nor doubtful,
Nor feel dismay,
For with love, I shall allay
All that's painful,
Bring you words of sweetness full,
Upon a day.'

Lines 1331-1364: He is melancholy and doubtful, and composes a ballad

NOW, when Love wounds a lover so,
He is changeable, as all well know,
His thoughts are many and diverse,
And some are sweet, others perverse,
So I grew most melancholy,
Opposing my own self, in folly,
Thinking on my lady's greatness
And then, again, my pettiness,
Thus, at heart, I did imagine
That beside her I was nothing,
Thinking it great stupidity
To believe that she might love me,
And that every day she saw
Forty better fellows, or more,
In the place where she might be,
By God, or a hundred, truly.
And that, oft, the eye constrains
A heart, masters it and restrains
It, through the delight it teaches,
So that to purest love it reaches,
But when the eye sees one not,
It can do naught; rest is its lot;
Thus, her eyes lack power since she
Can, in no manner, gaze on me,
And who is distant from her eye
Cannot do aught as well, say I,
Since Love would a tight hold employ
On that which would, in him, find joy;
Yet, I composed a ballad apace
Before departing from that place.
Then the lad from Gascony came,
His errand done, in all but name,
And I gave him what I had writ,
And he then sped away with it.

Lines 1365-1388: His seventh ballad ‘Quant ma dame est noble et de grant vaillance’ (Ballad CCXXXIX)

‘SINCE my lady’s noble, and of great worth,
While I think myself of but slight estate,
I can scarce do aught else, on this earth,
But be concerned at my toilsome fate,
Ere I may gain her love.
For the clamour she will not approve,
Of my true heart, in its great loyalty;
And so, she’ll soon forget me, rightfully.

And if I have been slandered by any,
That are hateful to me and oppose me,
If she believed it, twere sin and folly,
For she’s the power to make and unmake me.
May she do what is best,
For my heart, in this love, doth all invest.
Against her will, I’ll be hers, and wholly;
And so, she’ll soon forget me, rightfully.

Love well knows that I feel much displeasure,
Daily, concerning what might displease her;
Devote heart, ease, desire, in full measure,
To all that doth please, and will please, her;
Now, twould mar her honour,
If all her sweetness transformed to bitter,
Such that I chanced to die, of her beauty;
And so, she’ll soon forget me, rightfully.

Lines 1389-1403: He sends his third rondel, and letter ‘Dame se vous n’avez aperceü’ (Rondel XIII)

AND with this rondel he did ride,
And with its music, there beside.

'Lady if you have not perceived
My heart loves you, without deceit,
Try me; if honest truth you'd greet.

Your great beauty will have deceived
Me quite; hurt me with all that's sweet,
Lady if you have not perceived
My heart loves you, without deceit.

For so has my heart all such received,
Urging my love, that I lack conceit
To think with joy or reward I'll meet,
Lady if you have not perceived
My heart loves you, without deceit,
Try me; if honest truth you'd greet.'

'My most dear and sovereign lady, when you call me your friend, surely I must call you my friend too, since it honours me greatly when you call me friend, for the true love in my heart would have me utter it. When you call me friend, I must call you friend also. And also, my very dear lady, I know not how to thank you enough for the great honour, the great joy, and the perfect goodness you afford me with your sweet writings, for, by my soul, I find joy, pleasure, and sweet nourishment in reading them, for I read them so often that the sweet savour of them remains in my heart at all times. And if I were the worthiest, wisest, and richest man there ever was, and were I to live a hundred thousand years, I would not be able to deserve even the least share of the good things you accord me. And, my very sweet lady, when you say that you take great pleasure in what I send you, I take a hundred thousand times greater pleasure in what you send me because your sweet writings bring every kind of goodness, causing me to live happily and joyously. And though I am worth nothing and know less, they lead me to love honour and loathe dishonour, and flee vice, sin, and every kind of baseness, so that I am much improved thereby because I would already have been dead if you and they existed not, since they provide the perfect satisfaction that I find there, with a sprinkling of mercy, and mercy is nothing but satisfaction. But aught I send cannot amend or beautify you, who are the flower of all ladies, the fruit of honour, the root of goodness

and all beauty, and thus possess all that God and Nature grant to a lady of fair fortune. Yet though I am perfectly satisfied with the sweet benefits you bestow upon me, no man is so provided for that he does not lack something; so please know my thoughts are very woeful, and I feel mortal fear, because you would have me live in peace and joy though far from you. And if I were to invade your presence, it might well be that I sought that which I ought not to possess. Here is the reason: I am of little account, coarse, foolish, and ill-mannered; nor do I possess the wit, worth, virtue or beauty that could give your sweet eyes reason to see me or even glance at me, moreover I am not worthy to think about you, and so your noble heart might be indignant toward me, regretting the sweet things you have done and still do, always, though I have never seen you. And then you view every day many men who are, beyond comparison, better and more handsome than I, who am naught in respect to you, such that you think not on me, for certain. Nevertheless, I take comfort in the fact that no woman could be as beautiful as you and yet lack pity, nor lack a gentle heart yet possess so noble a form as you, who would never say or do a thing that was disloyal or untrue. And, by God, if it turned out otherwise, it would kill me, because had I a single wish in this whole world, I would wish to sate my heart and eyes by looking at, and listening to, you. And be sure that no more than the ocean could be drained dry, or the force of the winds stifled, or the clouds rendered light or dark, or the brightness of the sun diminished, no more could my heart be parted from you this side of death. And after death, most sweet one, my virtue shall have been in loving you. And since I am hesitant to visit you, due to the above-mentioned fears, I beg you, as sweetly as I can, as my sovereign lady, to send me your living likeness, in miniature; for if this can be done well, anywhere on earth, it must be where you are. Indeed, I swear to you and promise, by my faith, that this portrait shall be well-loved by me, well-protected, honoured, adored, night and day, knelt to, sought for, and praised, and to no living creature will I reveal my thoughts of love. And if this were not so, I would be the falsest, most evil, most traitorous, most unnatural man who ever lived, and full of that vicious sin they call Ingratitude, which means to render evil for good. For you have revived me, and granted me the mercy that satisfies, granting me once more the inspiration I had lost completely, for I would never again have composed a song or lay, had it not been for you; but if God pleases, and I can do so, I will compose to your glory and

in praise of you, a work that will be truly memorable, and I swear and promise you, as best I can, that Lancelot loved not his Guinevere, nor Paris his Helen, nor Tristan his Iseult as faithfully as I will love and serve you, never deserting you. For I will love, obey, respect, and serve you as long as I live, with a loyal heart, and protect you and your good name, and when I die I will leave you my heart, and have it sent to you; this will be my last testament. The two works you have sent me are very well-made, according to my taste, but if I could spend one day with you, I would explain, and teach, that which I have never explained to anyone, such that you would compose in even better fashion. My most dear and sovereign lady, I am sending you a rondel with music I recently composed for love of you. I pray you, most humbly, to write to me of your health, and say when you will leave the place where you are, since I am eager to know this, and also let me know which of my books you would like, so I may have them copied for you, immediately. And if what I write is too lengthy, please excuse me, for the mouth speaks the heart's fullness, nor can I be satisfied in thinking of you, and speaking of you, to myself alone. My most dear and sovereign lady, I pray God grants such joy and honour to yourself and those you love, as you would wish, and as my heart desires. Your very loyal friend.'

Lines 1404-1425: The lady receives his letter, and composes a complaint

When my lady saw my letter,
She acted nobly, for the better,
Her understanding sound and true,
Placing it o'er her heart anew,
And acting without more delay,
Rather hastening, straight away,
To her chamber, yet discreetly,
And closing the door most neatly.
There she read it, once inside,
With a heart that tenderly sighed,
Crying that I was much in error,
My heart raw and foolish ever,
That I should doubt her in this way,

And so mistrust all she did say,
Whose heart was mine, completely,
And often she cried out 'ah, me!'
For Love would have her make complaint,
And so, she composed this plaint,
She spoke no evil of me though,
For do you know who told me so?
It was the maid who helped her dress,
To whom her thoughts she would confess.

Lines 1426-1463: Her 'plaint' 'Mes dous amis a vous me weil compleindre'

'MY sweet lover, now, to you, I would complain,
About the ill that my heart doth grieve and pain,
From you it comes, and this you ought to know,
For, without you, I find no comfort so.
Now, if you please, attend to my complaint,
And think on the love, without constraint,
I have for you, for soon my life must end
If with true heart you love me not, my friend.
Lover, I know no joy, in this my life,
Rather, I find melancholy and strife,
For I do naught but think, both night and day,
Of seeing you, yet muse in vain, alway,
For there is no trick, no plan, no subtlety,
By which I might, that I know, or can see.
And thus, my thought's my mortal enemy,
My mind is now and ever, opposing me,
And I've no solace, love, but in weeping,
Hiding my face with the tears yet flowing,
And when I've wept enough, for my part,
Memory comes to tear from me my heart,
For it brings me no joy, nor doth comfort,
Rather it brings but grief and discomfort,
Such that many a stifled sigh escapes me
Because I sigh so often, and profoundly.

And Desire, after, will not leave me be,
Nor have I the strength to last out, truly,
For I am weak, and should have died ere now,
Were Hope not here to ease my pain somehow,
Yet know not what this hope from Hope might be,
Which comes not to pass, so may deceive me,
And since I've cause to think things contrary
To all that he doth say, doubt it shall be.
Now let it be as the Lord shall decree;
And yet I have given myself so freely,
All my love, to you, I cannot withdraw,
And if my soul must quit my flesh, be sure,
Never shall this love cease, through my will,
For, after death, my soul will love you still.'

Lines 1464-1467: The lady's fourth letter, accompanying her 'plaint'

'AND she sent, in this manner, to me,
What is set down here, faithfully,
But she within did likewise present
What was writ before: her lament.

'Most dear and sweet friend, I thank you for your sweet and loving letter, for by my faith the thing in all the world wherein I take most pleasure is seeing and hearing all that comes from you. And the greatest desire I have is to see you. And if I could but journey through the country as a man does, I promise you, faithfully, that I would see you quite often, but I marvel greatly at the thoughts you have had and the doubt you are experiencing, namely that you fear to come to me, thinking I would love you less. For you well know that I have never set eyes upon you and that I love you not for any beauty or delight that I have garnered though seeing you; rather I love you because of your virtue and good name. And, indeed, I have learned so much regarding your renown, that were I a hundred times more blessed with virtues than I am, I am certain you would deserve a woman better than I. So, I beg you, most sweet friend, not to dream or fear that I might repent of loving you my life through, or of doing all in my power to please you, since you know that there have been many lovers who loved

those they had never seen, simply because of the good they had heard spoken of them, and thereafter achieved a perfect and faithful love, as did Arthur of Britain, and Florence, the daughter of King Emendis, as well as many others of whom I am certain you have heard mention. And I too hope that, when it pleases God for me to see you, this feeling of love on my part will not diminish at all, for I have the heart and will to say to you, and do for you, all the kind and loving things that a woman in love, in all faithfulness, says and does for her lover, as well as I know how, and am able. As for the portrait of myself that you have asked me, in your letter, to send as soon as it is done, know that I am having the image executed, and will send it to you as soon as it is completed. I have looked over the rondel you sent, and committed it to memory. Please know that I will not at any time depart this place before Easter. I know not the titles of your books, nor which are most worthy, but I beg you, as strongly as I can, to please send me the best, and also some of your songs as often as you can; for if I have sufficient of yours, I shall not be eager to sing those of others. Most sweet friend, you write that you seek my pardon for your lengthy messages, and you may readily have such a pardon from me. And, by my faith, if your letters were as long as the Romance of the Rose, or the Tale of Lancelot, it would not annoy me at all to read them, for if you write that you cannot sate yourself with speaking and thinking of me, in like manner I cannot too often view and read all that you send. And, as regards your saying that nothing you send can offer me any benefit, I say, saving your grace, that your messages have improved me and continue to improve me, every day, for I strive to compose well, in accord with my own ability so that good report of it might reach you. And your virtue makes me esteem all good who are good, and keep apart from the rest. I thank you for the ring and promise to keep it safe out of love for you. And I will send you one of my own and beg you to keep it safe out of love for me. My most sweet and true friend, I pray that Our Lord grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires, as much as I would wish it be granted to the man in the world whom my heart loves and desires the most. Your loyal friend.'

Lines 1468-1529: He is troubled by report of her, and sends his fourth letter

HER complaint she sent to me

With her letter, so bringing me,
Great joy, yet of sorrow a load,
For her poem was the straight road
And the true way to discomfort,
Though it also brought comfort,
Since I could find no happiness
While my lady was in distress,
And yet her letter also pleased,
Such that my woes were truly eased.
No middle path could I approve
In this bond of amorous love,
For joy and sorrow can never
Reside in the heart together,
And I had felt the thorn pierce me,
Of her womanly plaint, and deeply,
Which only made my sorrow grow,
And caused my heart to sigh with woe,
While the sweetness of her letter
Soothed me, rendering me better.
And the sweet hope I'd soon view
Her sweet and noble portrait too,
Which she'd promised, on her part,
Brought such great joy to my heart
So greatly benefited me,
By the God above who made me,
I wished for naught else, joy or good,
Or possessions, that any could,
Conceive of; thus, I longed for her,
And, most fervently, desired her.
Now I had not yet sent a further
Answer to her touching letter,
Nor to her complaint, so dolorous
It seemed both sweet and piteous;
And just as I thought to reply,
Someone informed me, by and by,
Of a wondrous alteration,
Causing me much consternation,

Being in such a state that slight
Mishaps made me fearful quite,
For twas said that my dear lady,
Whom my heart loved purely, wholly,
Questioned if I were not a lover
Who in fact preferred another,
And that it had grieved her greatly,
Though she'd said not a word to me.
And when I heard this woeful news,
I cried: 'My sorrow now renews,
I see that I am dead, most surely.
Where is Death, alas, who sadly
Comes to meet me, without delay,
To snatch my grieving heart away?
Indeed, I'd not have suffered so
Were it I that thought her false, no,
For my hope lay in her goodness,
And then, in her pure faithfulness,
But now all my hope seems lost,
My heart, despairing, pays the cost.'
And I replied, in such manner
As is revealed by this letter.

'My most dear and sovereign lady, it is said you fear lest I have betrayed you. And though I gave no sign to the person who told me, the impression of these words is printed so firmly on my heart that it will depart only if you were to cause it do so. And please know that I would not wish, be able, or deign to do such a thing, no more than would the truest man in this world. And if I did, God preserve me, I would be the most false and traitorous man who has ever lived, and full of the wicked sin of ingratitude, which is to return evil for good. Though I am hardly worthy of gazing on you or praising you, if your mind were against me, then I would be lost and dead because I would be devoid of all hope and consolation, in that you had thoughtlessly forsaken and forgotten me; yet that would be wrong. For, by my soul, if all the ladies in this world were met together, I would love you alone, above all others, because a heart once bestowed should not be recalled, though many a fool exists in town who loves wherever he fancies.

But I prefer languishing for you than delighting in another, such that every time I recall what I was told, I am taken with such trembling, and fear of losing you, that I own naught but what Hope provides and so my pained and woeful heart cries blood-wet tears. And, my sovereign lady, you may readily see and understand that my heart is as firmly fixed in you, as a precious stone in gold, as a fortress in the rock, for you know that nothing is as true or sure as experience, and you may see and understand, by means of your own sufficient experience, that all my works have been composed out of the feelings I have for you, and especially for you, ever since you sent me your first rondel ‘She that never did you see, who yet loves you, and is true’, for all my poems have been on like themes. And, by Jesus Christ, I have composed nothing since that was not for you, because I cannot, nor would wish to, make any feelings my theme but yours and mine, for whoever does not create from their own feelings composes but empty words and music. And so I beg you, as humbly as I am able and know how, you being the woman in this world whom I most love, and in whom I place the most trust, please do not think or believe anything that is against me, for by my soul, the moment I learn of this, I shall stop composing verse, poems of praise, songs, or lays until you forgive me or request them of me; for as you have made me, you can unmake me as it pleases you. I intend to see you shortly, if it pleases God and I am able, though, by God, that will not be as soon as I would wish. My most dear and sovereign lady, I pray God grants you peace and health, and the desire to love and honour me, such as my heart desires. Your most loyal friend.’

Lines 1530-1535: She sends him a fifth letter and her portrait

AND then I wept most tenderly,
And sighed, deeply and endlessly.
But a messenger came there straight,
And handed me her sweet portrait,
And this letter, ere we did part,
Which did awake my sleeping heart.

‘My own sweetheart, and most sweet love, I am sending you my portrait, painted from life, as well as might be done, so that you may be consoled for our inability to see each other. And I beg you, my sweet heart, not to be

displeased that I send it not sooner, but truthfully this could not be helped. And my sweet heart, I beg you by all the love that you have for me, as strongly as I may, please let not your heart suffer pain by crediting the words you have reported to me in writing because I have never thought such things by my soul, neither that you would wish or deign to do such to me or that I would do such to you, whom I love more than myself or any other. So have no doubts at all, my own sweetheart, and please to send me your book as soon as you can, for I take no pleasure or delight except in you and your works. I pray that Our Lord give you honour and joy of everything that your heart loves. Your loyal friend.'

Lines 1536-1627: He worships her portrait

THUS, her portrait she had sent me,
By her man, who, in privacy,
Had come to me and said, quietly:
'I bring I know not what with me,
Sir, that your lady sends to you,
Who, God save me, told me true,
Twas for no hand but your own,
Therefore, take it: tis yours alone.'
And I received it joyfully,
Accepting it respectfully,
And gave him a gold coin, gladly,
And once he'd had his gift of me,
I went swiftly to my chamber,
Alone, and free of every other,
And there I locked myself away,
Like one whose limbs would scarce obey
From joy, and with a trembling heart,
Filled with desire to sit apart,
And gaze upon this precious gift,
That to his lips a man might lift.
Alone, I unwrapped the portrait,
Which was bound up, close and straight,
Within my sweet love's scarves, and hid;
Those wrappings I at once, undid,

And when her beauty I could tell,
I granted her the name 'Toute Belle',
Performing my sacrifice to her,
Not of a bull or calf, but rather
An act of homage for I did start,
With devout mouth, hands, and heart,
To kneel, both my palms together,
For twas the least I might offer,
Now her image, pleasing and sweet,
Was printed on my heart complete,
So firmly, that I would never
Relinquish it, in this life ever,
Rather, by me, she'd be adored;
Love, service, honour I'd afford
To her as my sovereign goddess,
Who Love's sore wounds would heal and bless,
The wounds in me he did devise,
More than some saint in paradise,
For I was lost and gone astray,
Mazed, discomforted, cast away,
And yet twice she had revived me,
Through generosity, and pity.
I paid this image due reverence,
None better, due to the presence
Of worth and goodness in that same
Lady from whom the portrait came.
Above my bed, and in plain sight
I placed it, with joy and delight.
So, I could touch and view the thing,
On rising, and prior to sleeping.
The image I did adorn and dress,
Comparing her to Venus, no less,
As I worshipped her o'er my bed,
And e'en beyond that, for I said,
'Sweetest image, sweetest semblance,
More powerful than Venus' presence,
Sweet lady yours is every virtue,

And hence I shall adorn you too,
With damask cloth all woven fine
With golden thread, since you are mine,
And none with you do now compare.’
Her loyal servant, true friend, there,
I set it o’er my bed, and ever
Those who viewed it would wonder,
Whose portrait it was they did see.
It exalted me to such high degree,
And so enriched all my thought,
As none might credit, and I ought
Indeed, to have felt that very same,
For, by the faith in God I claim,
Whene’er a thought that’s contrary,
Or ill-conceived, occurred to me,
Yet her honest, pleasing manner
I saw portrayed, as I viewed her,
All such thought was banished quite
And all my ills cured, by that sight.
And she had sent this, my lady,
Because she realised that, plainly,
She could not come herself to me,
And nor could I, as she could see,
Meet with her, on any near day,
Yet wished to comfort me alway.
So, I would keep, in remembrance,
The sweet form of her countenance.
Was this not noble, on her part,
That, of her true and loyal heart
And without asking aught further,
She saved my life and my honour?

Lines 1628-1661: He contemplates the effects of being in love

THUS, her image I now possessed,
Both loved and prized o’er all the rest,
Apart from my lady, all debonair,

Who is the fairest of the fair;
Yet doubtless ere I could her ensure,
Many a frisson must I endure,
Many a pain, and many a woe,
Many a changed complexion know,
Often flushed, or turning paler,
And many a complaint must utter,
For who loves with a love that's true
Knows joy, but meets with trouble too,
Many a varied adventure,
Some sweet, others he must suffer,
Great longings, and thoughts forever
Churning, mingling with each other,
Often knowing not what to do,
And often suffering a lack anew
Of what he possesses in plenty,
Now he's sick, yet he's healthy,
Now at peace, his features happy,
Now lost in deep melancholy,
For such, in love, is customary,
Whoever loves all this must see.
In this state I was long present,
Now in delight, now in torment;
Thus, will a lady power attain,
When she has one in her domain.
Yet in the end my happiness
Did overcome all my distress,
Through the image there portrayed,
Fine and pleasing, her artist made.
For my ills were soothed, completely,
By her sweetness, born of beauty.

Lines 1662-1695: He decides to meet with her, and writes his eighth ballad and fifth letter

SO, healed, wholly, I looked out
On the fair Springtime all about,

Pretty and sweet in morning light,
The grass wet with the dew of night,
The buds, and flowers, and foliage,
And needs must make a pilgrimage,
To within two leagues of a place
Which my lady would shortly grace.
I determined to journey, now
So as to accomplish my vow,
Yet neath the cover of my journey,
Her sweet face I might then see,
The sweet eyes, the fair manner,
And the lovely, perfect figure,
Whose portrait I did now employ,
Acquainting me with peace and joy,
Restoring my strength and vigour
Through its most amorous power,
Making me live, and speak truer,
And pen this book for love of her.
But, prior to my departure,
I felt obliged to write further,
And give thanks to her, most humbly,
For the portrait she had sent me
That, beyond the power of a saint,
Had cured my grievous complaint.
And I dressed myself most neatly,
Finely, nicely, attractively,
To go, where I would be, that day,
A hundred times more than I could say,
Yet first this ballad I did present,
Out of my happiness and content,
To my love, sent with a letter,
That gave my lady great pleasure.

Lines 1696-1716: His ballad 'Ne qu'on porroit les estoiles nombrer'
(Ballad XXXVII) and letter

'NO more could the stars be counted anew,
When they all are shining at their brightest,
Nor the ocean's drops, nor the falling dew,
Nor grains of sand with which the ocean's blessed,
Nor the firmament be in some map expressed,
Than any could conceive, or render true
The great desire I have to gaze on you.

And if there's no way I can come to you,
Since Fortune will not let me be your guest,
Then I must stifle all my sighing too,
When I think of you, here among the rest:
And when I am alone, in silence dressed,
It pains me with torments, sufferings new,
The great desire I have to gaze on you.

It makes me lament and long to view
Your noble face, and, above all the rest,
Your sovereign beauty, none exceeds you,
And what flows therefrom, your great sweetness.
Thus, it has me languish in wretchedness,
Kindling my hope, and quenching it too,
The great desire I have to gaze on you.'

'My most dear and sovereign lady, rather be dead than not know this, for a good heart does not lie, and who loves well forgets tardily: you have done for me, and God reward you for it, so much that is good and honourable, so many favours and kindnesses, that no lady has ever done all you have for her servant and lover, no matter how worthy they may have been. And though there may have been and may still be a number of women who willingly would have provided those men comfort, they in no way possessed the sense and manner you possess, such that I hold myself to be the happiest man alive. And though, indeed, I know there are some who have told you that I am ugly, coarse, and ungrateful, by God, though I am a person of little account, I do most nobly possess the heart of lover. And I can see that your noble heart will not deign to listen to, or credit their words, and you show this clearly by sending me the gift of your sweet,

pleasing, and most lovely image, for which I cannot thank you as much as I ought, because, by my soul, I own not sense and understanding sufficient to the task of thanking you. But, within my soul, this image is my life, my solace, my delight, for as soon as I gaze upon or recall it, I can feel no pain or ill that is not healed or soothed. And, beyond a doubt, there shall ne'er be a day in my life when, for aught any might do or say, I could think or believe that you wished not to be my sovereign lady, or that you did not compose with a true heart all the good things I receive from you. And, my sovereign lady, a gentleman should have no other occupation, nor area of study, than arms, ladies, and the exercise of a good conscience. And so, I swear and promise faithfully that, as far as I can, I will serve you as loyally and diligently as I am able, and know how to do so, and all in your honour, as Lancelot and Tristan served their ladies ever. And I will adore you as my goddess on earth, and as the most precious and glorious object of reverence I have ever laid eyes upon, in any place where I have been. And, from now on, this portrait will be my heart, my fortress, my treasure, and my comfort, free of falseness, against every ill. If God please, I will see you during Pentecost because you and your sweet image have brought me to the point of complete cure, God be thanked. And I am now riding everywhere and would have departed some time ago, but there is a great band of brigands some six or seven leagues from us, which makes riding very perilous. I am sending you my poem about Morpheus, that is called The Fountain of Love, along with 'The great desire I have to gaze on you' for which I have composed the music as you commanded, and in the German manner. And, by God, it has been long since I composed anything good that pleased me as much, and the tenor parts as sweet as unsalted porridge. So, I beg you will deign to hear and learn the piece just as it has been written, without omission or addition, and it is intended to be sung to a slow measure, and whoever could arrange it for the organ, the bagpipe, or other instrument, that is its very nature. I am sending along a ballad as well that I wrote before receiving your sweet image, and so was still somewhat wounded in spirit, on account of what I had heard. But as soon as I set eyes on your sweet image, I felt healed and free of melancholic thoughts. My most sovereign lady, I would bring along my book to entertain you, which contains all the works I ever composed, but it is in more than twenty sections because I have had it made for one of my lords, and therefore I am having it notated, and for this it is necessary that it be in sections; and when

it is notated, I will bring it, or send it, if God pleases. My most sovereign lady, I pray that God may grant you your heart's desire and the kind of honour that I would wish for you, and thus would wish for myself. May God grant you solace and joy. Your most loyal friend.'

Lines 1717-1752: He sends her a number of works which she responds to in kind

THEN I set out on my journey,
By a route that led directly
Towards achievement of my end,
To see and greet my loving friend.
I was mounted on my good steed
That was plump, well-fed indeed,
And rode along quite cheerfully,
Content with my lot, and happy.
In this way I came to the city,
Full of more guile and trickery
Than any city I have known.
So, to the church I went alone,
And once there, upon entering,
Made a silent vow that, during
My whole stay, I would compose
New works each day to add to those
I'd made for love of my lady,
Who wishes and desires, truly,
All that pleases me, God bless her,
And she would be my sweet doctor.
There I offered my devotion,
And it was then my intention,
To perform my novena there,
But I was a fortnight in prayer,
Because, it chanced, I must wait
And not leave till a later date,
When I'd receive that lord's command
Than whom none's greater in our land
But one, and God guard him where'er

He may be, and send him joy there.
Yet the delay scarce bothered me
For my love I would surely see,
And oft I thought about her now,
As I commenced to fulfil my vow,
And she so understood my mind,
She responded to each work in kind.

Lines 1753-1773: His ninth ballad 'De mon vrai cuer jamais ne partira'

'FROM my true heart there never will depart
The imprint of your sweet face and figure,
For your image is set there with such art
It can meet no acid, no erasure,
No blade, no hand of such a skilful nature
That it could erase or mar it ever,
No more than one could dry the ocean's water.

Such my earthly goddess is, was, shall be,
So long as there's life within this creature,
And after death my soul will love her, truly,
The one whose beauty gave such pleasure,
Sustaining my heart in such sweet pasture
It could ne'er abandon nor desert her,
No more than one could dry the ocean's water.

And with this image she shall cure me,
Of all that love must suffer and endure,
And, every time my eyes and heart shall see
This portrait, firm my hope shall prove, and sure.
Because you are so good, so wise, so pure,
You could not seek to play me false, ever,
No more than one could dry the ocean's water.'

Lines 1774-1819: Her second ballad, a virelay 'Cils a bien fole pensée'
(Virelay XXIV)

'THEIR thoughts are full of folly,
All those who'd have me believe,
I'd leave one who's all to me,
And another love receive.

For it could not come about
I would leave
The one who is my treasure,
Nor that, I would ever tout
The pleasure
Of other love for, truly,
I am in love so firmly,
No other love may feature,
And for no living creature
Would I desert him ever.

Their thoughts are full of folly,
All those who'd have me believe,
I'd leave one who's all to me,
And another love receive.

For my thoughts, my memory,
My desire,
And then my whole love, you see,
All concern him, endlessly,
That for me
There can be no joy elsewhere
For without him all seems bare,
Without him sweet seems bitter,
I seek his love, no other,
Whom I love loyally ever.

Their thoughts are full of folly,
All those who'd have me believe,

I'd leave one who's all to me,
And another love receive.

No more than one could consume
The wide sea,
Or hold the waves motionless,
No more could one e'er presume
To suppress
Love, and stop me, loyally,
Loving him who pleases me.
So, to Love I grant praise, ever,
Since he who is my lover
Proves the best the world over.

Their thoughts are full of folly,
All those who'd have me believe,
I'd leave one who's all to me,
And another love receive.'

Lines 1820-1832: His fourth rondel 'Bele, vostre dous image'

'FAIR one, your sweet portrait,
That I love, passionately,
Has made me upon you wait,

Oft against my will, of late,
Makes me live delightfully,
Fair one, your sweet portrait,
That I love, passionately.

For when I pay homage straight,
It smiles at me, sweetly,
Such that all my ills abate;
Fair one, your sweet portrait,
That I love, passionately,
Has made me upon you wait.'

Lines 1833-1845: Her fourth rondel 'Amis pour ce l'envoiai ge'

'MY love, that's why I sent it,
To you, I love loyally,
Heart-felt, no falseness in it,

The longing thus to limit
That burns in you so fiercely,
My love, that's why I sent it,
To you, I love loyally.

If desire burns on, submit,
Suffer it debonairly,
Let her face a kiss permit.
My love, that's why I sent it,
To you, I love loyally,
Heart-felt, no falseness in it.'

Lines 1846-1853: His fifth rondel 'Se mes cuers art et li vostres estaint'

'IF my heart must burn, while yours grows colder,
Lady, then I shall never come to joy;

Since the longing that doth slay me ever,
If my heart must burn, while yours grows colder,

Will bruise my heart, and my face discolour;
Without you, naught can those flames destroy.
If my heart must burn, while yours grows colder,
Lady, then I shall never come to joy.'

Lines 1854-1861: Her fifth rondel 'Lamour de vous qui en mon cuer remaint'

'THE love for you that in my heart remains
My sweet friend, it never could grow colder,

For, never-endingly, my thought maintains
The love for you, that in my heart remains.

Nor is there any other it contains,
Nor, since it grows thus, could it prove lesser;
The love for you that in my heart remains,
My sweet friend, it never could grow colder.'

Lines 1862-1903: He journeys to meet her, and there is a further exchange of poems

AFTER these poems to each other,
The longer as well as the shorter,
My lady wrote, saying, sweetly,
How she desired, most fervently,
That I would go and meet with her
And, thus, abandon my novena,
Though demanding it not of me,
However, she did ask it, clearly,
And her words I did understand
As tantamount to a command.
So, I set out upon my way,
Travelling to where she did stay,
But before I had sight of her,
Or could utter a word to her,
Bless me if I felt not a shiver
Much greater than any other,
Of such great fear and such great doubt,
My body trembled, all about,
And the cause I knew not, other
Than that I was about to see her.
So, I summoned my secretary,
And told him what afflicted me
How painful this matter did prove,
Seized now by all the ills of love.
He told me to be of good cheer,
For there was naught that I should fear,

For she was little like to bite me,
So step by step I went on, slowly,
My heart and body, sans relief,
Shaking now like an aspen leaf.
I'll not reveal her letter here,
Too long this work might prove, I fear,
Were I to tell all, endlessly,
However charming it might be,
Of what I sent to her each day,
And she to me. What shall I say?
I'd not dare repeat our chatter,
Two words contain all the matter;
I'll be silent, through that alone,
For other things I must make known:
I wrought two things, for my woes,
That in this book I now enclose.

Lines 1904-1911: His sixth rondel 'Vos pensees me sont commandement'

'YOUR thoughts are as true commands to me,
And thus, I shall do as your heart demands;

Now your sweet messages I hear, and see,
Your thoughts are as true commands to me.

If joy, and relief, Love should grant to me,
From you, before whom my heart stands,
Your thoughts are as true commands to me,
And thus, I shall do as your heart demands.'

Lines 1912-1919: Her sixth rondel 'Amis venez vers moy securement'

'MY love, journey to greet me, safely,
There's naught my true heart could more desire.

You shall be looked upon most kindly;

My love, journey to meet me, safely.

I promise, and swear now, faithfully,
To render you joy for ill I'll aspire.
My love, journey to meet me, safely,
There's naught my true heart could more desire.'

Lines 1920-1972: His tenth ballad, a virelay 'Douce plaisant et debonnaire'

'SWEET, pleasant, and debonair,
Your sweet face, so beyond compare,
I've ne'er seen, nor your lovely form,
And yet I swear, come hail or storm,
I'll love you, and from all ill forbear.

Surely, I'll do all that's due,
Having witnessed the fair rescue
From death that you granted me.
Yet naught did you owe me, tis true,
Twas Love moved the heart in you,
Gentle, kindly, full of pity.
So, I should not prove contrary,
In doing what pleases, wholly,
You who now, in verity,
Own my heart and amity,
Never to leave your sweet repair.

Sweet, pleasant, and debonair,
Your sweet face, so beyond compare,
I've ne'er seen, nor your lovely form,
And yet I swear, come hail or storm,
I'll love you, and from all ill forbear.

You have scarce neglected me,
But rather acknowledged me,
Out of your great humility,

When, on my death bed I lay,
Lovely one, since, in that way,
It pleased you to recover me,
I should not stand silently,
But everywhere, speak, surely,
Of all I found in you: goodness,
Honesty, treasure, sweetness,
All dwelling in your heart, there.

Sweet, pleasant, and debonair,
Your sweet face, so beyond compare,
I've ne'er seen, nor your lovely form,
And yet I swear, come hail or storm,
I'll love you, and from all ill forbear.

And if Fortune brought scant good,
By doing the worst she could,
Your sweetness has overcome her,
Bringing me joy each hour,
Denying Fortune's power,
And her haughtiness forever.
And you own thus, my heart, always,
That Love, who'll conquer any day,
So kindly has granted you,
Which your heart delights in too;
Ne'er saw I so sweet a pair.

Sweet, pleasant, and debonair,
Your sweet face, so beyond compare,
I've ne'er seen, nor your lovely form,
And yet I swear, come hail or storm,
I'll love you, and from all ill forbear.'

**Lines 1973-1993: The lady's third ballad, a virelay 'Des que premiers
oy retraire'**

'SINCE I did first become aware

Of you, my love, sweet, debonair,
Your worth and your goodness too
My heart was grafted so to you,
I could not now this love forbear.

Though I ne'er knew you before
Nor your face have seen, I'm sure,
Love made me grant you my heart
And I'd ne'er have thought it true
That I could love and yet not view
The one I loved, thus, far apart.
But True Love urged me to care,
And the renown you garner there,
And both have my heart so fiercely
Set ablaze, that right willingly,
I love you with a love that's rare.

Since I did first become aware
Of you, my love, sweet, debonair,
Your worth and your goodness too
My heart was grafted so to you,
I could not now this love forbear.'

Lines 1994-2075: He meets his lady face to face

YET many a time I perceived
In my heart, and so conceived,
That I might find some stranger
Who might feign to be her lover,
And then I would bring him to her,
Presenting him in such a manner,
As to declare 'Here is your friend!'
To see if she might condescend
To recognise him, and thus hear
How she replied, and did appear,
And in her heart the same thought
Had she, although she said naught,

Yet she confessed so, however,
When I came to meet my lover.
But the thing ne'er came to be,
And that was for the better, truly.
I entered, in short, her presence,
And when I saw her countenance,
Her manner, her welcoming guise,
Her sweet face, and smiling eyes,
Her complexion, red and white,
Her noble form, all shaped aright,
Most wondrously straight and slender,
Neat, pleasing, lovely, tender,
And when I heard her sweet speech,
No coldness, folly did she preach,
Saying rather: 'My sweet lover,
Let us speak with one another,
For you are most welcome here,
Long seems it ere you might appear,
View me and, here, with me abide,
Come now, and sit you by my side.'
And when she took me by her hand
Whiter than snow on branch doth land,
And greeted me as her 'lover'
Then my heart could scarce recover
From the shock, such that I knew not
How to speak, nor how seemed my lot,
For I was rendered mute, astounded
More than a dumb beast, confounded,
While I felt a sudden fever,
Chilling my body, all over,
Causing it to sweat and tremble,
Some pallid leaf it did resemble,
But the lady, kind and debonair,
Had realised the whole affair,
And took pains to cover for me,
While to an orchard she led me,
Twas fine, pleasing and elegant,

To lead us apart was her intent,
She said to me: 'Sweet friend, indeed,
Take what I grant, in word and deed,
Myself and mine, whate'er I possess;
I am no jay, that in its address
Displays mere feathers and chatter,
Nor would I brook a lying matter,
Trust in me, I promise you yet
That heart and honour I will set
In your hands, now guard those two,
Sweet love come, have me in view.'
Then she put her hand to her breast,
And said: 'It harms not my interest,
To say what I now wish to say,
And accomplish my wish this day,
Here is my heart, I swear I would
Place it in your hand, if I could,
For you to bear away, but now
Comfort yourself, I hereby vow
You shall forgo melancholy,
For your faithful friend I'll be,
And desire to seek your pleasure
In whatever you might treasure.
And know friend that this love
Which both our hearts do approve
Comes from God, most truthfully,
For we both know of a certainty
We ne'er saw each other ere now,
Nor spoke a single word, you'll allow,
Yet I well know that you love me,
And so, I call you lover, you see,
And since God wishes we so do,
Naught but a good end can ensue.'

Lines 2076-2111: She puts him at his ease, before he departs

I replied to her words, I fear,

So softly she could barely hear,
Due to my voice trembling so,
And, it seemed, my body also:
'Fair one, you're my lady, ever,
And I, by my soul, your lover.'
But in saying this the moisture,
That about my heart did linger,
Poured forth from out my eyes,
And streamed down my face, likewise,
My heart being so greatly pained,
And by her beauty so constrained,
That I must weep most tenderly,
And then she asked me, quietly:
'My sweet friend, my true sweet heart,
Come, tell me why these tears start
From your eyes, why do they flow?
Say why your heart doth tremble so.
My friend, my love be now assured,
That for the ills you have endured
For my sake I'll recompense you
And most sweetly I shall heal you.'
Though too overcome to thank her,
I took her by the hand, however,
And humbly gave that hand a kiss,
And was somewhat calmed by this.
Once I felt more comfortable,
And could speak, then I was able
To take my leave, and so depart,
And yet this so distressed my heart
That the parting that must ensue
It nigh on broke my heart in two.
Yet I composed myself once more,
Departing through the rear door,
So that none there might see me go;
How pained and woeful I was though.

Lines 2112-2157: He describes his lady's attire

REGARDING her attire, of this
I've said naught, which is most remiss;
With finer clothes none were blessed,
No lady so charmingly dressed,
And so, I'll speak of it a moment,
Nor hide the truth from you an instant.
Of pure azure was her headdress,
And twas adorned each side, no less,
With a pretty popinjay, in green,
Of equal size and there was seen
A little clasped purse, striped in blue,
About the neck of each bird too,
While their wings were all pure white,
And they were posed, to left and right,
Such that one bird gazed straight ahead,
While the other looked back instead,
To show that she, beneath her hood,
Was to guard herself, as she should,
Looking to right and left, ever,
If she would preserve her honour.
In a fine robe was she arrayed,
Of the same style, and well-made,
A white ermine trim it did bear,
Fit enough for a queen to wear;
Sweet was she, generous, courtly,
In her white gown dressed nobly,
Cut from pure silk, richly displayed,
In Brussels, I believe, twas made,
And an ermine wrap she had on,
Elegant, pleasing, and thereon,
To clasp it, a chain of pure gold,
And a golden ring this did hold,
With enamelled letters, that read:
'Guard me well'. Her colours said:
'Truth, wisdom, hope and loyalty'.

You who know all love's misery,
And those hues, do no aid require
To find the meaning of her attire.
No more now on this matter, say I,
Since you know all that they signify.
Older than fifteen, not yet twenty,
She was twenty times more to me
So; no more now of the richness
Or the courtliness of her dress,
I cannot tell of it fittingly,
And thus, might speak improperly.

Lines 2158-2184: He praises her treatment of him on meeting

IF any should seek to criticise
My lady, and thereby would prize
Her less, because she spoke freely
To me like this, and generously,
Here's her goodness, worth and honour,
Here is that for which I praise her,
Here's tenderness, humility,
And kindness too, and sweet pity,
When a lover's heart feels woe
To ease all his wretchedness so.
Though I had spent ten months with her,
I'd not have dared ask such of her,
Yet none could have noted in her
Aught that a lady should not offer,
Though she'd not seen me before,
By granting me her love and law.
And, my sweet and lovely lady,
Tis surely no great villainy
If I should dare, eschewing dross,
To speak what is, and spare the gloss.
To do otherwise, you understand,
Were to disobey her command;
If she is pleased, I must agree,

To perform her wishes, utterly.

Lines 2185-2267: The lover is attacked by Shame

REACHING my lodgings once more
I was oppressed as ne'er before,
For Shame arrived to assail me,
Indeed, I believe, most firmly,
That she sought to strangle me there,
For ne'er have I seen boar or bear,
Nor any other maddened creature,
So filled with furious anger,
And when she came against me,
All the blood ran cold within me,
Since she cried out, full loudly:
'Friend you're enmeshed in folly,
Thinking to love a woman known
To be the loveliest, you must own,
From sea to sea, such all men say,
And deeply you will rue the day
When you first viewed her beauty,
And sat by her side, for truly
You are scarcely worthy, indeed,
In qualities, in word or deed,
To touch her shoe, and yet you
Audaciously now seek to woo,
And declare that you love her,
And as your lady describe her.
By my faith, tis pure wickedness,
An outrage, naught but foolishness,
That you involve yourself in such,
Who rate your powers overmuch;
Why, he who sought to hang you high
He would but waste the rope, say I.
All reason says you should forgo her,
Who are not worthy to know her,
Nor she love you, on that depend,

Though she addresses you as 'friend'.
Have you forgot how she has, ever,
Rescued you from mortal danger
That had laid you low, all through
Those letters that she wrote to you?
How, possessed of deep humility,
She resurrected you completely,
And saved you from pain full sore,
And granted health and joy once more,
And gave the power to love, also,
Through feelings you lost long ago?
And she made you into something,
You who were a good-for-nothing,
And are still a dumb fool at heart,
An ungrateful sinner for your part,
So idle, in your melancholy,
You failed to even thank the lady
For the benefits, and the honour,
You have gained through her favour,
And if you had the courage, in sum,
Of Hector the brave, the vast wisdom
Of Solomon, and the broad largesse
Of Alexander, the wealth to excess
Of Nero, with the wondrous beauty
Of Absalom, and the loyalty
Of King David, his faithfulness,
And of Ajax his great prowess,
With the youthfulness you desire,
Every grace, you'd dare not aspire,
To love that woman, truth to tell,
Not even if you'd served her well
All your life; unworthy of her,
No matter how much you suffer.
Think you she remembers not,
And for an upstart takes you not?
Surely, she does, doubt not ever,
She who is all worth and honour.'

And thus, lambasted by her advice,
Much as if I had lost, at dice,
All my hopes and all my honour,
After hearing her deliver
What had scarcely warmed my heart,
But rather torn my dreams apart,
I sought to defend myself to her,
But Shame ne'er ceased to mutter,
Nor would deign to hear my claim,
Crossing herself, time and again,
Due to that shame I'd brought upon
My lady, and the wrong I'd done.

Lines 2268-2371: Hope comes to reassure him

AFTER Shame, Hope dealt her share,
Saying: 'Sweet friend, are you still there?
Did Shame her vicious tongue employ,
Has she estranged you from all joy,
And for the loveliest in this land?
All because, as I understand,
You're too shy when you behold her,
Lacking both the voice and manner
That would enable what you'd say.
Sweet friend, cease, without delay,
To act so, for why thus take fright,
Be comforted, come what might.
The lady's wise in her perception,
And set you in the true direction,
Saying you should be reassured,
She loves you, fortune is assured,
Nor would she tell you this, say I,
Were it not so: she speaks no lie.
So sweet friend be not dismayed,
At Love's wounds, be unafraid;
The lady knows how you suffer,
And how Love pains you, ever,

She sees deep into your heart,
So never think that, by some art,
She'll leave you for another cause,
For you are hers, and she is yours.
You have heard what she doth utter,
That she would act as your doctor,
That she would never quit your side,
And think you she would be belied?
Or do you think, God grant you joy,
That a true lady would e'er enjoy
Listening to some shrewd advocate,
Who most ably his case will state,
In polished words, one who'd truly
Prove to her she should show mercy?
No indeed; rather, he'd annoy her,
More than a lengthy winter shower,
That is, if she's no foolish coquette,
Or a mistress of the snare and net.
For when a lady of true worth,
In whose heart lasting love has birth,
Sees such she prizes him but little,
And values him no more than cattle,
Yet you, in truth, ne'er spoke so well,
As when to her your ills you did tell;
A sick man worsens his position
Who hides his ills from his physician,
While you have spoken openly,
In a word, confessed your malady,
So, you ought not to contemplate,
In fear, that she will make you wait,
Or that she'll not cheer you, shortly,
So, celebrate now, and be happy.
As for Shame, I hate her greatly,
Would God but consume her wholly!
She's a sad wretch, full of folly,
And she does me much harm, truly,
When true lovers, thus, she reproves,

For deeds that Love himself approves.
She knows no more than does a beast,
Ne'er present at the smallest feast,
Or if she is, sits in some corner,
Far from everyone, moreover.
She's always full of resistance,
And consumes a mere pittance,
Feeling shame where'er she's been.
And if in company she's seen,
Folk engaged in fair employ,
Who are accompanied by joy,
Or where lover is with lover
And all is promising, moreover,
She'll thwart them in some way,
And steal the better part away,
If she can, since she cares not
For aught except woe is its lot;
Nor is she keen that any see her,
Out walking, or in her chamber,
Or bed, and does her best to hide;
Small joy would lovers be denied,
If there, beneath the Prussian ice,
She sank and drowned in a trice:
'For those ashamed, and cowardly,
Never a friend, life through, shall see,
While Fortune ever aids the brave,
And brings the coward to the grave'.
So sweet friend, now comfort you,
Weep not if she chastises you,
For it is, truly, a great folly
To drown oneself in melancholy.
You lady will summon you once more,
And do so much for you, I'm sure,
Her counsel you shall so approve,
You'll ne'er prove false to her true love.
And you shall never be denied,
But serve your lady-love with pride,

With a good heart, your whole life through,
Without deception, and prove true;
For that's the comfort that I bring.'
Twas then I heard a loud knocking,
Upon my door, as Hope did reach
This fine conclusion to her speech.

Lines 2372-2405: He is summoned again to meet his lady

I found my secretary was there,
Who saw to my every affair,
And he hastened towards me,
For I was on his mind, clearly,
And he said: 'I bring news for you,
Which is both fine and pleasant too.
Your lady summons you anew,
And asked that I attend on you,
And bring you to her straight away
For it is four weeks to the day,
A month indeed, since she saw you,
Or so it seems, and she asks you
To stir yourself, and come to her.'
Yet I turned pale an hour later,
For a great fear came upon me
That was terror's daughter, surely,
And of strange thoughts a score,
Opposing my affair, or more.
I rose though from my bed apace,
And then I washed my hands and face,
Though I was completely mazed,
And sluggish, and thoroughly fazed.
Then we two set out together,
Conversing with one another,
Until we came to where she was,
Though she was not within, alas,
Yet in her orchard she was sitting
Alone, but for a maid gathering

Flowers there, and wreathing posies
Of sweet violets and daisies.
I entered, greeting her most humbly,
Though I felt a change within me.

Lines 2406-2419: She sings and he composes a rondel for her

And then she took me by the hand
Saying: 'Lover, by Saint Germain,
I have been longing to see you.
And learn whatever I might do,
About the works that you create,
That seem in praise of me of late.'
And I gazed at her intently,
But never a word came from me,
And then she did begin to sing
And sweetly sang the following:
'Lover, by lover's heart beloved,
As loyal lovers are truly loved.'
So, I replied as best I may,
Making this rondel, sans delay.

Lines 2420-2429: His seventh rondel 'Douce dame quant ie vous voie'

'SWEETEST lady, when I see you,
My heart knows not what's happening,

Nor yet do I know what to do,
Sweetest lady, when I see you.

For Shame and Fear haunt me anew,
Set me shaking, and trembling,
Sweetest lady, when I see you,
My heart knows not what's happening.'

And she responded straight away,
And with a rondel, to me did say:

Lines 2430-2441: Her seventh rondel in reply: Tresdous amis quant ie vous voy'

'SWEETEST love, when you I see,
You fill all my heart, then, with joy,

Never a sorrow remains in me,
Sweetest love, when you I see.

There is no sadness nor annoy,
Nor mischief that may come to me,
Sweetest love, when you I see,
You fill all my heart, then, with joy.'

Then my lady asked me to find,
Some fresh theme, within my mind,
To make a work of imagination;
This I wrought for the occasion:

Lines 2242-2462: His eleventh ballad 'Le bien de vous qui en bonté florist' (Ballad CLXXIX)

'THE good in you, flowering in goodness,
Lady, makes me love with a love that's true.
Your beauty, growing ever in loveliness,
Brings me the savour of sweet hope, anew.
Your sweetness sweetens all my dolour too,
Correction, teaching, both you thus employ,
And your regard maintains my heart in joy.

Your sweet speech nourishes and sustains me,
With a flood of joy and utter sweetness,
And your wise manner so enriches me
It constrains me to eschew all falseness,
Your gentle heart grants me more tenderness
Than in a thousand years I might enjoy,

And your regard maintains my heart in joy.

Thus, my loving service, all unworthy,
Earns two hundred times what it doth merit,
Unasked; there is no word or deed in me,
Grace, goodness, sense, strength, valour, I admit,
Deserving of the least such benefit,
Yet, through your sweet smile, such do I enjoy,
And your regard maintains my heart in joy.'

Lines 2463-2498: The lover is caught between Fear and Desire

WHEN my ballad at last was done,
My sweet lady, my whole passion,
Said: 'Tis wrought well, God preserve me!'
And then, regarding me sweetly,
Ordered me to hand it to her
So that she might read it over,
For, mouthing the words to hand,
She might, thus, better understand.
And this I did, right willingly,
With all my heart, as you may see.
While my scribe set to copying,
My sweet lady began reading,
And so, she learned it all, apace,
Before she chose to leave the place.
There we sat both, side by side,
But a cruel guest did woe betide,
For Desire came and would not go,
And looked to break my heart also,
For gazing at her I could see
Her noble and shapely body,
Her sweet glance, her pretty smile,
Lips, red as a cherry to beguile,
So that they said, it seemed to me:
'Kiss me!' Lord, who might do so, he
Could find no paradise so fair.

Within myself I struggled there,
With ardent Desire, and the thought,
The wretched one that Fear brought;
She's the daughter of Cowardice.
Nor was Shame absent from this,
For she arrived despite fair Hope,
Exiled elsewhere, perchance to mope.
Thus, within, I felt an ardour,
Blended with the chill of fever,
Full of that same matter, entire,
That smoulders without smoke or fire.

Lines 2499-2572: The cherry-tree, the leaf and the kiss

IN that place was a cherry-tree
And one to be prized most highly,
For it was round as an apple,
With foliage as beautiful,
And was as lovely an affair
As Nature has formed anywhere.
Its fair coolness we did invade,
Moving neath its pleasant shade,
And sat down on the verdant grass,
And there many a word did pass,
Between us, I shall not repeat,
Too long twould take to complete;
But that woman of pure sweetness,
She rested there in my lap, no less,
And while my love was lying there,
I joyed anew, devoid of care.
I know not if she slumbered, truly,
But there she rested, against me,
And my secretary, being present,
He stood, off to the tree he went,
Plucked a little green leaf from it,
And then against her lips pressed it,
And told me to kiss the leaf, also;

So, Love, whether I wished or no,
Made me bend down, all smilingly,
To kiss the little leaf, gently,
Though I scarcely dared so to do,
Despite the desire I felt anew.
Then my secretary stole it away;
My face became as pale as clay.
I, rendered timorous, no less,
By the strength of my lovesickness,
Did give that sweet mouth, nonetheless,
An amorous touch, a soft caress.
Yet though I touched her lips lightly,
No more did I attempt there, truly,
And yet I was touched by regret,
A little, for once our lips so met,
She felt my boldness, and deeply,
For she said to me, most sweetly:
'Lover, your deed disturbs me so,
Is that the only game you know?'
And yet a smile was hovering there,
As the lovely woman did declare
Her outrage, leading me to dream
And hope, despite how it did seem,
That the kiss had not displeased her,
Who, silently, its touch did suffer.
Yet I so prized and cherished her,
That I decided, then and there,
To say to her: 'My dearest lady,
If there's aught for which you blame me,
If I have wronged you, then, indeed,
For God's sake punish my misdeed.
This, with pure heart, I ask of you,
Accept my excuse, for, tis true,
Pure Love led me to act so, surely,
Counselled by my secretary,
And Desire thus compelled me
Who ne'er acts faint-heartedly,

And so, the deed he did command,
Twas none but he made such demand,
While I so longed for it, tis plain,
I lacked the power to abstain.'
I excused myself, truthfully,
And she received it so calmly,
She said naught of it, thereafter,
Saying, doing, as regards the matter,
Not one thing, nor showing further,
That I, in any way, lacked her favour.

Lines 2573-2612: He visits her every day

I stayed there eight days together,
Directing my steps towards her,
My thoughts, my actions, my desire,
Each path I took; there I did retire,
Where lay my refuge, my resort,
All my delight, my strength in short,
All my powers of imagination,
All my cares and consideration,
All my manner, and my study,
Raw or foolish though it might be,
All so my lady I might see
To the best of my ability,
Thus many a time I did greet her
And yet as often failed to meet her;
Though her intention she made good,
To see me often as she could,
Not as oft as she wished, I know,
But when twas easy to do so.
Yet for the duration of my stay,
I saw her each and every day,
In the pretty orchard where she
Spent time, I beside her, sweetly,
Till love's pleasurable feeling,
Seemed every day more pleasing.

Twas every morn I entered, then,
That sweet and pleasant garden,
And waited for her while I read
A book, or said my hours instead,
And when my lady came to me
With a rondel she greeted me
Or a little song fresh and new
Or some other piece she knew;
And she sang them all so sweetly
Her sweet singing enchanted me,
And being thus enchanted by her,
I could do naught but sing for her.
I made this ballad, accordingly,
Without demur, most joyfully,
Which follows after; and will write
Music for the fair one's delight.

Lines 2613-2640: She weaves a garland, he composes a ballad

ONE day, while seated at her side,
I was lost deep in thought, betide,
And this my fair lady perceived;
Hear how by her it was received!
She slipped away, all silently,
And then began weaving, swiftly,
A fine little garland of flowers,
A sweet token of happy hours,
Wrought of lilies of the valley,
And roses, and violets, chiefly,
And, when twas done as I have said,
She came and placed it on my head,
She wove also the sweetest cincture,
The prettiest, that Mother Nature
Had ere wrought since her creation,
Or since the Lord did Eve fashion,
For it was formed of her two arms,
Long and slender, two fair charms

About my neck, whiter than lilies,
Resting a moment there, at ease,
And then she said: 'My sweet lover,
What is this you're pondering over?'
And so, I answered: 'My sweet love,
Tis a lament you might approve,
A gift you shall have, most willingly,
To learn if you will, from you to me.'
Then she begged me to recite it,
The which I did, as here tis writ:

Lines 2641-2664: His twelfth ballad 'Le plus grant bien qui me viengne d'amer'

'THE greatest good that I gain from loving,
So, easing my torment the most thereby,
Is but to lament my ills, sorrowing
Deep in my heart, that for hers doth sigh.
I know not how else to pray
For mercy, from one whom I love, always,
More than myself; see now, from my manner,
He prays enough who goes weeping ever.

For I have not courage enough for prayer,
Being scarcely worthy, if truth be known,
Of winning mercy, and so must take care,
Fearfully, lest from her door I'm shown.
For, should that thing occur,
You, indeed, would slay your faithful lover,
Sweetest lady, and you know, moreover,
He prays enough who goes weeping ever.

And so, I attend on you, peerless lady,
You, who are so wise and e'er so worthy,
The world entire could not suffice, surely
To praise your virtue, or laud your beauty,
And if your heart heard not

My weeping at the harshness of my lot,
Be pleased to listen now, and remember,
He prays enough who goes weeping ever.'

Lines 2665-2806: He speaks to her of his situation

TO tell the truth I often complained,
In her presence, as one who's pained,
While she reprov'd me most gently,
Every time it happened, believe me,
Saying: 'Of woes you make complaint,
My love, yet whence comes your plaint?
By my faith, love, indeed I would
Cure you of your ills, if I could.
For you should conceal naught from view,
And I should reveal all to you;
All to you I would discover,
For, from you, I'd hide naught ever.
And when my eye your illness sees,
My love, I cannot feel at ease.
Come, tell me of your malady,
And twill be cured, if such can be.
You have named me as your mistress,
And call me your sovereign goddess,
And yet you would ask naught of me;
Please to know, if you should try me,
The love that dwells within my heart,
And you will soon see, for your part,
That, more than any other creature,
I love you, with love true and pure.'
And when I heard her speak so plainly,
So openly, so directly,
Her sweetness so melted my heart
I could not refrain, by any art,
From tears, all reduced to weeping,
The moisture from my heart seeping
From my eyes, that gazed piteously

On her, and I wept lengthily,
The tears flowing fast as ever,
Until at last I gave her answer,
While breathing out a grievous sigh:
'Lady, that I should moan and cry,
Should be to you no great wonder;
I wonder how is any lover
Brave enough to address a plea
By word and deed, to his lady,
Seeking, indeed, something from her,
When he should restrain himself rather,
For his demands are but villainy,
While praise is the proper courtesy.
And I can merit, in no manner,
That you should indulge me ever,
Or grant me Love's least benefit.
So, tis better I sigh a bit,
And spend my days thus, lacking joy,
Than make request, and so annoy,
Tis ill to seek too much, ever,
Or long peace with war to sever.
I'll be silent, and so remain,
And then let Largesse act amain,
And True Love, who doth understand
My heart is all at your command.
Love's benefits are shared, you see,
Not by you and me, equally,
Rather Largesse distributes them
As Love devises, and then again
I'd be much more content with one,
If I were worthy, freely given,
Granted, through generosity,
And from the heart, and lovingly,
Than any joy Love might bring,
Merely achieved by demanding.
You are subtle enough and wise
To see by my visage, likewise,

All I am, my rank and manner,
And that I'm no false pretender;
I need not speak, it seems to me,
Of my plight, nor my malady,
Since all this, by heart, you know,
And have it in writing also,
And if you love me tenderly,
As you have told me, then, truly,
Your deeds and words will agree,
Or else dishonoured I shall be.
Do not, I pray, lightly, neglect
My sorrow's easement to effect,
For if I asked mercy of you
And my request failed of issue,
Why then, I would be dead for sure.
Rather this anguish I'd endure,
Which I now suffer covertly,
Than such; for when grace and pity,
And all your sweetness, display
Their worth, my ills are soothed away.
Thus, tis better all were well-paced,
Than break my bow drawing in haste.
You say to me that you love me,
And call me your true love, sweetly,
Tis the best you may do for me,
And all the fashion in Germany;
To heal with words is there the rule,
Such is, everywhere, taught in school.
And I will receive, with patience,
That dictated by your conscience,
For there's a rich treasure in you,
A hundred thousand good things too,
Such that whatever you withdraw
There yet remains an endless store,
Nor could you bestow it, ever,
Without your growing far richer.
Indeed, tis the whole world's plenty,

God's manna, riches of the sea,
Without a floor, without a shore;
He's but a fool who'd seek for more,
For none can diminish its greatness,
Nor, by extracting, render it less.
The more one takes, the more appears.
So, with your treasure, as my tears,
For yours grows each day in richness,
The more you extend your largesse.
Yet if you, fair one, prove miserly,
By the faith I owe Saint Peter, surely
You would be obliged to repent,
Because I say, and tis truly meant,
That everything has its season,
And I need give no other reason,
While you need not be taught tis so,
Since you understand me, I know.
Yet one thing troubles me greatly,
That on a crowded street, in every
Place you should say 'Come to me'
And your 'sweet friend', thus call me,
Wishing that everyone might know
That you love me, which I guard so
Closely, whene'er such things you say,
While striving to go some other way.
A lover's gift that's made covertly
Is worth a hundred sung openly.
Yet I'll conclude my sermon now,
Having lectured too long, I vow;
I've proven, by my plaint however,
"He prays enough who goes weeping ever."
We talked in this manner for a while,
My lady answering in briefer style.

Lines 2807-2842: The lady's reply to his complaint

MY love I've listened to your plaint,

And all your sorrowful complaint,
And that you lack the bravery
To request, proving but cowardly,
The one thing that you most desire,
So that in sighing you suspire;
And that you feel the bitter bite
Of ardent Desire, gripping tight
About your heart, a bite more sure
Than ever fine lover did endure;
And that I should not prove miserly
With my treasure but give, freely,
What nor by gift or by promise
Can e'er be shown to diminish;
And that perforce I should amend
My naming you 'my gentle friend'
To prove your contention, forever,
"He prays enough who goes weeping ever".
Thus, my friend, shall I now reply,
And grant you my answer thereby.
What do you wish to hear from me?
That faint heart ne'er won fair lady,
Nor is it any fault of mine,
Dear friend, that you weep and repine.
What would you have me do for you?
I see you face to face, sing too,
Ever I grant you true solace,
Call you 'my friend' in every place,
I love you above all, wholly,
Nor in this world is there any
Whom I indeed would rather receive,
Nor to possess my treasure give leave,
That you so prize, my love, that no
Price can be set upon it; for, know,
Love, I abandon it to you;
Take all, and I'll grant you your due.'

Lines 2843-2890: The lover is granted his wish, and then writes a rondel for her

THEN, at once, she heard me say:
‘Who grants me all takes all away.’
And she said: When I call you friend,
Publicly, tis a means to pretend,
For I can speak with you freely so,
And, as regards you, come and go.
And, you know, that is for the best,
And you are wrong as to the rest,
If you feel shame, I mean, at this,
Or say I shame you, or go amiss;
In future I’ll have naught to say,
And hide our love in every way.
Nonetheless, I’m happy if any
Notice our love, since its wholly
Good, whether in street or byway,
And pleasing to me, any day.’
And at once, I felt more shame
Than any that I did ever claim,
And no reply could I provide,
Wishing instead to run and hide.
But the beauty, who doth command
My heart, soon issued her demand
That I be happy and full of joy,
And shortly the means did employ,
For the lovely one shared with me
A benefit of two parts, for, truly,
I did bear the one part away,
While granted the other, that day.
Taking my leave, I, straight away,
Sped downstairs, and on my way,
Gaily, happily, glowing still,
Since assuaged was my every ill,
For the fair one had calmed me,
And had brought me peace, wholly.

I went and locked myself away,
To end my pilgrimage, that day.
And yet, nonetheless, our parting
Troubled me, beyond conceiving,
For all my heart remained with her,
To serve her, and attend on her;
And so, I did adore her image,
Worshipped it, paying her homage,
At all hours of the day, did ever
Labour in that high endeavour.
And this rondel I made for her,
On the road, sending it to her,
On parchment, and yet her reply
Eclipsed my effort, by and by.

**Lines 2891-2898: His eighth rondel ‘Sans cuer dolens de vous
departiray’ (Rondel IV)**

‘Mournfully, without my heart, I leave you,
And little joy shall have, till I return.

Now my body departs from yours, anew,
Mournfully, without my heart, I leave you.

Yet know not where to go, or what to do,
Since, full of tears and misery, I yearn.
Mournfully, without my heart, I leave you,
And little joy shall have, till I return.’

**Lines 2899-2906: Her eighth rondel ‘Sans cuer de moy pas ne vous
partirez’**

‘Without this heart of mine you’ll ne’er depart,
For it shall journey, everywhere, with you,

As company you’ll have your true love’s heart,
Without this heart of mine you’ll ne’er depart.

I am sure you'll guard it well, for your part,
While your own will keep me company too.
Without this heart of mine you'll ne'er depart,
For it shall journey, everywhere, with you.'

Lines 2907-2942: The lover attends church and sees his lady

NOW we had come to the ninth day
And while I thus prolonged my stay,
My lady chose not to forget me
But gathered a riding company
Of ladies and of demoiselles,
Elegant and noble young belles,
To visit, and to meet with, me,
And all to ease my melancholy.
Yet, in all my life, I maintain,
There was ne'er so heavy a rain,
So, to the church they went straight,
No house of clay was that, I'll state,
Its stones all hardened to a fault,
Mighty pillars, and a high vault.
Then my secretary came to me,
Saying: By Saint Eloi, sire, see
Your lady is here, in this place,
She of the fair form, and bright face.'
And no one had to urge me then
To approach her swiftly, again,
I'd quickly seen that it was she
I call 'Toute Belle', and rightly,
Though she did but abide the shower,
Thence departing within the hour,
Out of love for her companions,
Who, all fearful of their husbands,
Were on tenterhooks; men's hearts
Being pierced by Jealousy's darts
When their wives are in company,

If they seem happy, and run free;
That is, if the men perceive tis so.
Women are not so lacking though
As to fail to devise some way
To fool their husbands for a day.
We'll say no more about it though,
For how to work it, they all know.

Lines 2943-2990: He kisses her before she departs; he sends her a letter and a rondel

THAT sweet and most gracious beauty
Who doth assuage my ills, wholly,
The whole of the Mass she did hear,
While I stood, listening, at the rear.
But then, a blessing on my head,
While the Agnus Dei was said,
By the faith I owe Saint Caprais,
Between two pillars we did stray,
And she gave me the kiss of peace,
Most sweetly; I was more at ease,
Though it troubled my heart when she
Went from the place, most promptly.
I accompanied her, with a sigh,
Accomplishing my task, thereby,
Returning to my room to dine,
Taking bread, meat, salt, and wine,
Sharing all with my secretary,
Who appeared mortally hungry.
Since my lady had left me, swiftly,
And left me fretful as one could be,
I drank little there, and ate less,
Dreaming at table, I must confess,
As to the manner in which my lady
Had come there yet left so promptly.
It had been better had she stayed

Than but a brief hour's visit paid.
I pursued my devotions again,
Yet my mind dwelt more, tis plain,
On thoughts of my faithful beauty,
That is to say, on my little lady,
Than any saint, twas her I sought
Sore troubled by many a thought,
For a lover's never satisfied,
Nor solaced as his heart devised.
Know that he will oft discover
He lacks one thing or another,
And there was I, troubled at heart,
At what to do, since we must part.
I felt discouraged, utterly,
By this love, that seized me, wholly,
Since it was so hard to see her
That to joy I seemed a stranger.
Such that I knew not how I might
Maintain myself, or day or night.
So, I summoned my secretary,
And had him write a note, shortly,
And by him I sent the letter,
Enclosing this rondel for her.

Lines 2991-2998: His ninth rondel 'Toute Belle vous m'avez visete' and sixth letter

'Toute Belle, now you have met with me,
A hundred times, sweetly, I must thank you.

With good-heartedness, and true amity,
Toute Belle, now you have met with me;

And, by doing so, shown pity
In comforting a heart, all black and blue.
Toute Belle, now you have met with me,
A hundred times, sweetly, I must thank you.'

‘My dearest sweetheart, I pray you, for God’s sake, to excuse me for not writing to you since you left my side, for, God knows, it was not through any lack of love or good intent. But, by my soul, I could not help it, because of a certain thing that my secretary and I will speak to you about. In particular, it does not seem at all good to me to send you messages too often for fear of gossip, and because one cannot be too careful. Whatever I say and do is only for the best and for the sake of honour, for I desire to see you more than any creature in the world. And my dearest sweetheart, you must not think that what I do is meant to distance you from me. For of all the mischances and painful aspects of a lover’s life that exist, apart from being sent away, this is the greatest: to remain far from the one you love. For if he cannot see, hear, or touch the one he desires, and loves more than all nature might provide, a man knows not what to do. And if he cannot send messages to her often, it is a wonder his heart fails to break, or that a lover’s heart can suffer and endure such pain, especially since Desire inflames him and sets him burning, forcing him to long for one he can neither see nor possess. But Sweet Pleasure, Sweet Hope, Sweet Thought, and most Sweet Memory, nourish and sustain him. And, by my soul, my dearest sweetheart, were it not for this sweet portrait of you, which does me greater good than anything else in the world, nothing could ever console me or bring me joy, save only death. For Desire renders my life most difficult, nor am I ever in any place, anywhere, where longing does not seize my eyes and my heart; so that if I wished to abandon or forget you, and may God preserve me from such, by my soul, longing would not allow it. And thus, you should be sure of me, my heart, and my love. And, by the very God that made me, it could not come to pass that I could forget you, no more than I could ascend to the clouds without a ladder. And I trust in your goodness. So that I consign my soul, my heart, my life and whatever is mine to your guidance. And, my dearest sweetheart, sovereignty is silent and our words as one, since you said that your fate is mine, and mine is yours. God be with you, my very sweet love, and may He grant you peace and paradise, and the desire to love me as much as I think to serve you. Your most faithful friend.’

Lines 2999-3010: Her ninth rondel ‘Tres dous ami j’ay bonne volente’

MY lady waited but briefly,
Before replying, fittingly,
In the same rhyme and manner,
As the rondel I made for her.

‘I’m willing, my dear sweet lover, truly,
To bestow peace, joy, and mercy, on you.

To increase your well-being, entirely,
I’m willing, my dear sweet lover, truly.

For I’ve grafted my heart to yours, firmly,
Since there, I see, twould have me love true.
I’m willing, my dear sweet lover, truly,
To bestow peace, joy, and mercy, on you.’

Lines 3011-3020: The lady’s sixth letter

WHEN my secretary, once more,
Returned, twenty greetings he bore,
Nay, a hundred thousand truly,
And I very well knew that he
Gave them without deceit or lies,
Not daring to do otherwise.
And that rondel of hers he brought,
That she’d composed, for it was caught
Up with her letter, as I could see,
Which I oped, and read carefully.

‘My dearest heart and most sweet lover, I beg you, as sweetly as I can, not to be displeased that I have failed to write to you, for truly I lack the opportunity to write you as often as I would wish. And regarding what you wrote to me, namely that I should not be unhappy at having no news of you, know that I can think of naught you could do that would displease me; for I recognize and firmly believe that everything you do, you do with true love and in good faith. My sweetheart, I have learned for a fact that your novena will be completed Sunday next. And on that day my sister and I

must undertake a journey of some four leagues. And I am sure it will be Monday eve or Tuesday morn ere we return. And so, I pray you, be pleased to entertain yourself with those companions who are eager to see you. And we will make great cheer upon our return (and endure the wait as best we may) for I think that this delay will annoy you as much as it does me. And I would willingly avoid this journey if I could, or dared, readily, to do so. Yet my hope is that a single one of the days we shall spend together on my return will equal four of those we must lose, because of the great pains I shall take and the diligence I will show. And I beg you, my sweetheart, to take comfort and be happy at heart, in thinking how all my wishes and thoughts are the same as your own with regard to your situation. And my sweet friend, I would not have you think or imagine that I could ever leave or forget you; for, if God but granted me the joy of seeing you, whom I love more than all the world, you might witness all the Earth's rivers flowing backwards to their sources ere I would desert you. Nor could it happen that I would forget you for any reason there may be, no more than I could create a new world from nothing. And so, my sweet friend, I beg you to banish melancholy completely from your heart, for I could find no joy or good as long as I knew you were unhappy. I pray God grant you honour and joy in everything dear to your heart. Your loyal friend.'

Lines 3021-3042: He composes his tenth rondel 'Amis bien voy que tu pers tes deduis'

READING her letter, thoroughly,
There, despite myself, I could see
Several things that did trouble me
As, indeed, did my secretary.
For she from that place must fare,
On a day when I must be there.
And this the fair one knew also,
Yet nonetheless she still must go;
Since it made me melancholy,
Sad, pensive, full of jealousy,
I recommenced, without delay,
To fulfil my vow; yet, that day,
I composed in a sad manner,

All contrary to the last I sent her.

‘Long are my nights, and full long are my days,
And whate’er I see fills me with annoy,

Seeing her not, who doth harm me, always;
Long are my nights, and full long are my days.

Tis you, fair one, and Love also, that slays;
In tears my sad heart drowns, devoid of joy.
Long are my nights, and full long are my days,
And whate’er I see fills me with annoy.’

Lines 3043-3050: The lady’s tenth rondel ‘Amis bien voy que tu pers te deduis’

‘LOVER, I see that you are robbed of joy,
Since I am forced to go from here, this day;

And I am sad that tears you now employ;
Lover, I see that you are robbed of joy.

Yet, should I, on return, God’s grace enjoy,
With joy, peace, comfort, I’ll your woes allay.
Lover, I see that you are robbed of joy,
Since I am forced to go from here, this day.’

Lines 3051-3058: The lover’s eleventh rondel ‘Belle quant vous m’arez mort’

‘FAIR one, once you have slain me,
You will have lost your lover,

At my death you’ll feel pity,
Fair one, once you have slain me.

If you’d feel no remorse, ‘ah me’

I might well say; alas, forever
Fair one, once you have slain me,
You will have lost your lover.'

Lines 3059-3066: The lady's eleventh rondel 'Amis se dieus me comfort'

'MY love, thus God consoles me,
That you yet possess my heart,

Which loves you more than any;
My love, thus God consoles me.

So, forsake despondency,
My heart's yours, though I depart;
My love, thus God consoles me,
That you yet possess my heart.'

Lines 3067-3077: The lover's twelfth rondel 'Puis que languir sera ma destinee'

'SINCE languishing is thus my destiny,
My heart could not do so more pleasantly

Than for you whom I do long for wholly.
Twill be honour and fair renown, to me,
Since languishing is thus my destiny.

Should I die, my lady, born to beauty,
I'll be a martyr to your love, truly,
And yet twere best for me, assuredly.
Since languishing is thus my destiny,
My heart could not do so more pleasantly
Than for you, love, whom I long for wholly.'

Lines 3078-3079: He sends her his seventh letter

THUS, I'd sent my rondels to her,
Despatching them with this letter.

'My sweetheart and my very sweet love, I have read what you have written, most carefully. And may it please you to know that, were you not close by, I would not have come here for any reason, not for a great while. And at the moment I have nothing to do here other than to see you. Alas, you intend to depart the very instant I have arrived, which is a hard thing for me. Also, my lord has commanded me by letter that, once my novena is complete, I should go, to be at his side. My sweetheart, this journey of yours is, and will be, a very troublesome thing to me because a day waiting for you must seem a year. And if there is any way you can rightfully remain, saving your honour, nothing could please me more; for, sweetheart, you know that I must leave here in a short while, and then I will not be able to see you as often as I wish. And if your tender heart accords with your sweet words, you will do your best to remain nearby. And also, if you would keep your dazzled servant in mind, I beg you sweetly to reply in writing to tell me what you desire ere leaving. In all ways, I desire all that you do. So farewell, my sweetheart and my very sweet love. Your most faithful lover.'

Lines 3080-3098: Her twelfth rondel 'Vostre langueur sera par moy sanee', and seventh letter

I sent my letter on its way,
And she replied that very day,
In the form and the manner
Revealed to me by this letter,
And this rondel she sent to me,
Within it, folded carefully,
Replying to my last to her,
Composed and sent with my letter.

'My sweetest lover, I'll cure your languor,
Since I love you, and all without regret,
If you'll trust Love and I to do so yet.

I swear it, as your dear friend and lover,
My sweetest lover, I'll cure your languor.

You should hold me excused, moreover,
For tis against my will, do not forget.
On my return I promise, never fret,
My sweetest lover, I'll cure your languor,
Since I love you, and all without regret,
If you'll trust Love and I to do so yet.'

'My sweetheart and my sweet friend, I have received your letter, telling me of your good health, which gives me greater joy than anything else that might be. And if you well knew the good intent that I own, of doing what will please you, you would no longer write that I should take pains to do so, because, by my faith, my resolve and good intent are greater than those, I believe, that could be possessed by any other. And be sure, upon my return, I shall, as regards this, dedicate my heart and body, as well as a portion of my honour, the which I expect you to uphold firmly, to achieving for you that which, I know, will provide joy and comfort. And if you say you are troubled by my leaving, I do not believe at all that you are more troubled than I, because I have so many sad thoughts that whenever I recall them I possess naught that is good, and I often wish I could be your chaplain or clerk so that I could always be in your company. Adieu, my dear sweetheart, and may God grant you good health, peace, and joy of whatever you desire. Your faithful lover.'

Lines 3099-3162: He awaits news of her, and writes his eighth letter

AND thus, my lady went away,
Though I was there on the day
That she was forced to depart,
Full of sad thought, for my part,
For I must wait two days or three,
All distraught and melancholy,
And I found that nothing pleased me,
Rather everything displeased me,
The which, indeed, was no wonder

For I was only led there ever
By her sweet white and rosy face;
I had no business in that place
With any man nor aught in sight,
Naught but to set myself alight
At that blaze where a fool burns so,
The more the closer he doth go.
Now think not that I am saying
I hold myself foolish for loving
My dear, sweet, and noble lady,
For twas not my intent, truly.
I've ne'er wrought so well before,
Nor with such honour, I am sure,
As to undertake to love her,
Nor should one rebuke me ever.
And, in the end, she did return,
Though twenty times I did yearn,
As to her road, and the direction,
Where I might see her lovely person.
For I dared not write to her so,
Nor man or woman did I know
Where she was, who was aware
Of the amorous flames that flare
About my heart, that scorch ever,
And gnaw, if not quenched by her,
For nothing, indeed, could save it,
Except she that did afflict it.
So, at the window, day and night,
I sat and gazed to left and right,
For I was most concerned lest she
Had wished to send me, secretly,
Some person bearing a message,
Clerk, or woman, priest or page.
Thus, I remained there, endlessly,
Yet ne'er a messenger did see.
Then for my secretary I sent,
And said: 'I may not be silent;

I believe I'm forgot, outright,
Take some paper, I shall write.'
He did so, without argument,
And, sighing, I composed, and sent
A letter which he bore to her,
And reported, not long after,
That the fair one awaited me,
That, through him, she commanded me
Not to linger there much longer
But make haste to go and meet her,
For she was there and all alone,
Except for a maid, and he had shown
Her my note, and most eagerly
Had she read it, right willingly,
And began, he said, in a while,
Sweetly, and lovingly, to smile.

'My sweetheart and my most sweet love, I send to you as a man with such a longing to see you as no heart can conceive nor mouth say. And you should know that I have awaited you for three days in such a state and in such torment as God knows. And I pray you humbly, and for God's sake, to consider how I might see you; otherwise, I am dead. And regarding the fine intent you have of doing what would please and comfort me, I cannot, am unable, to thank you as profoundly I would wish, for I am hardly worthy of it. And concerning your honour, which I value a hundred times more than my own life, may God ne'er let me live long enough that, through me, or aught I do, it should ever be put at risk, either in whole or part. For, by God, I love it, and will love it, and uphold it as long as I live; nor shall I ever give thought to the contrary. And, by the faith I owe you, whom I love a hundred times more than myself or any other, I would rather suffer both a first and second death than do or say aught that might harm or diminish it. My dear sweetheart, I am at the place where I lodged before, but, for God's sake, my dear sweetheart, consider how I am to part from you, and ensure there will be none there but you and I, if you can manage it fittingly, for, by my soul, parting from you will be so hard that I doubt, wholly, my ability to suffer even those who know me not to see it in my face; and I would not have that happen for aught. Alas, my sweetheart, you

write that, in order to see me often, you would stay in humble circumstances with me; and, indeed, by God there's not the least thing in this world that I would be unwilling to do for you, my whole life through, so as to see and hear you as I would wish. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God give me joy of you, and grant you honour, and whatever your heart desires. Your true and faithful lover.'

Lines 3163-3178: He visits her, composing his thirteenth rondel
'Trembler, fremir, et muer, me couvient'

THEN I went to my lady dear,
With happy heart, full of good cheer,
Though, by God, I went fearfully,
To that place, feeling cowardly,
Yet not knowing why that should be,
Unless Love was chastising me,
I made this rondel on the way,
For love of her, chanting alway.

'Trembling, shaking, quivering, I suffer,
And oft know not what will become of me,

Every time your person I remember;
Trembling, shaking, quivering, I suffer.

Sweet lady, I know not whence, moreover,
It comes; yet, from a single memory,
Trembling, shaking, quivering, I suffer,
And oft know not what will become of me.'

Lines 3179-3220: His secretary departs leaving them alone

ONCE I'd appeared before her,
My fair and virtuous lover
Made me be seated at her side,
My secretary on her other side,
Yet he now desired to leave me,

Which did grieve me inwardly,
Saying that he had much to do,
Business that needed seeing to.
When she saw that he would go,
She bent towards him, speaking low,
And addressing him most sweetly:
'If it could be done fittingly,
Sweet friend, God aid us alway,
Twould please me if you would stay,
For there's a man close beside me
Who will but sigh and say: ah me!'
He answered: 'This I must realise,
For it cannot be otherwise,
Yet, if God please, I'll soon return
I'll not need long my leave to earn.'
He departed while I remained,
To savour the sweetness maintained
In her eyes, and in her sweet face,
Pleasing above all, with its grace,
And healing those who, to excess,
Are suffering from lovesickness.
Her grace I had, with sweetness blent,
And offered with such good intent,
So nicely, finely, generously,
And then so very lovingly,
That I could not hope for better.
And, certainly, if I were other
Than I, perfect in every way,
And all the world's wealth, this day,
Were mine, in coin fit to be spent,
Yet I could not be more content.
And if any call this boasting,
I care less than the wind blowing,
For the wealth that I might enjoy,
Came from the treasury of joy,
Which every good thing doth contain,
And its fair contents, I'll explain.

Lines 3221-3250: He lists his lover's virtues

HER fair welcome strengthened ever
My lovesick heart, sighing for her;
Her pure sweetness soothed once more
My sweet ills, for she brought the cure;
Here gaze, brightly, shone upon me,
And at once nourished me sweetly;
She pleased me, in her every guise.
Her sweet speech, it made me wise,
With the goodness that it conveyed;
Her kindness blessed and pain allayed.
Her noble heart ennobled me,
Her liberality did free me,
Her humility served me well,
Her largesse did my coffers swell,
Her joyfulness brought joy to me,
Her courtliness found me courtly,
And her noble person graced me,
Her features blossomed, lovingly,
Her manner enriched me ever,
Nor depleted was her treasure
As to the powers it possessed,
Or the good with which it was blessed.
Thus, it shunned the name of miser,
And if, from Auvergne, some stranger
Had come into my lady's presence,
He would have received fair presents,
And been enriched by her largesse,
And, therefore, I say this richness,
Which daily multiplies and grows,
Lessens not by what she bestows.

Lines 3251-3332: On treachery and betrayal in love

SHOULD not one such a woman love

Who healer of Love's ills doth prove,
And puts an end to misery,
With no thought of sin or folly?
And he who thinks that this is ill
Is naught but traitorous and evil,
For in this world no transgression,
Is as deadly, no foul treason,
As to prove a secret enemy.
Now such will claim a friend to be,
And by this cloak their true intent;
By God we should hate such men,
Who are but bent upon dishonour,
Beneath the guise of peace and honour.
Let them be dragged behind a steed
O'er hill and dale, let them not breed.
For, at all times, I would be silent,
By my manner show my intent,
So, she can read, and truly find
All that is in my heart and mind.
But traitors, faithless and disloyal,
Would have it seem they are loyal,
Loving with a love that is true,
Yet hate, with mortal hatred too.
However fair a woman may be,
She's naught so valuable, truly,
As her honour, and if tis lost,
Men will say, freely, to her cost,
'Regard her, her honour's forfeit.'
Listen now, as to the profit
Once can gain from such people;
In this world there's naught so evil,
No more dangerous a viper,
Than such folk, for sin none riper;
Nor doth any respect a master,
However great, that lacks honour.
Please God, who e'er judges aright,
That my judgement on those alight

That intend this kind of villainy,
For I would show them no mercy,
And they would die a shameful death,
Harsh, and painful, at every breath,
Losing their lives, and all they own;
Without joy or good let them moan.
How has any the effrontery
To plot such things, treasonously,
To say one thing and do another,
And thus, to betray their lover,
Cloaked by seeming peace and goodwill?
Such is treason, I know it still.
One man by Jesus Christ will swear
That all his life he'll love this fair
Woman, another has her believe
That he'll be hers, and never leave.
And all of this is to deceive
So she's unable to perceive,
His treason and his villainy,
And his most deadly enmity.
God, what a man, what a world!
Into the Somme he should be hurled,
Or from the bridge at Soissons,
And let the fishes feed thereon.
What can one expect of women,
Being so much sweeter than men,
So loving, of such kindness full,
So friendly, and so merciful,
That they can refuse a man naught?
And so, no tricks should be wrought
On them, none should seek to shame
The woman, but hold dear that same,
As dear as is one's own right arm.
As for me I'd not seek their harm,
I'd cherish them, most lovingly,
Without ill thoughts, or trickery,
And serve them truly all my days,

And forever speak their praise,
And try my very best to please,
No matter whom that might displease,
And without payment or reward,
Nor seek recompense, in accord
With my love for my gracious one;
In her honour, all shall be done.

Lines 3333-3402: His lady leaves; he hands her a ninth letter on parting

BUT now, I shall speak no more
Of all that has been said before,
Since I know wrongdoers seem
Not at all pleased with my theme,
Wishing to conceal their malice,
If they can, and their sins no less.
Instead I'll tell of what occurred,
And to what end this love stirred,
As my lady would have me do.
And what pleases her, I pursue.
Three days and nights I did remain,
The days a joy, the nights a pain,
For at night Desire deprived me
Of my sleep, as Love obliged me,
And I tossed and turned, instead,
All restless there, upon my bed.
Nonetheless Pity, each day, healed
The harm that Love, by night, revealed,
Through the aid and loving effort
Of my lady, whom God comfort;
For the true good that from her came
Sustained me yet, in spite of Shame,
Every day, or once or twice,
For I was happy, on her advice,
To accept it, and did receive
All as I ought to, I believe,

When Largesse did kindness offer,
And true Love did ever proffer.
And my sweet and lovely lady
Gave, and was more than happy,
Since all was done in her praise,
And any stranger would, always,
Receive the same should he appear,
And be sustained, if he came near.
And since I loved with a true heart
I delighted in this, on her part,
Nor should any man show wonder,
For naught can equal it, rather,
It exceeds all that one might name,
Or recall, imagine, or claim.
And yet all things must reach their end,
Naught is that doth not that way tend.
For I was forced to take my leave;
True pain it brought, as you'll conceive,
And I commenced to weep alway,
And from delight began to stray.
Then sorrow in my heart did move,
And, by experience, I did prove,
Ne'er a parting is as bitter
As that of lover from lover.
From my lady, my leave I took,
As I had seen would be my luck,
And I knew not, to sorrow wed,
What I did there, or what I said.
She said to me: Adieu, sweet friend,
My promise I once more extend,
Faithful, and true, to you I'll be,
And with true heart love you only.
Now, return as soon as you may,
Forget me not, since this I pray,
For you will do ill if you choose
Not to return, my love refuse.'
I left the place that very hour,

With sad heart, the tears did shower
From my eyes, yet, ere I did go
And mount my steed, I did also
Send her a letter, you understand,
Writ and folded by my own hand.

‘My dearest sweetheart and my most dear love, I fear, greatly, that you will think less of me, in that when I am in your presence, I have no sense, manner, or wit, and am like a man lost. And, by the faith I owe you, whom I love a hundred thousand times more than myself, I possess no strength that does not fail me, whenever I see you, for I must then sweat without heat, and tremble without cold. And when I cannot see you, and yet remember, and shall remember, the most sweet and satisfying food, with which your noble heart has generously and kindly sustained me many a time, without being asked, Desire so wounds me, attacks me so vigorously that of necessity my heart is so oppressed, that the water flows from my eyes. And, by my soul, if Hope were not there to console me at every turn, I would lack the body to suffer such blows or endure them. And then, your sweet portrait comforts me and will continue to comfort me, more than aught else, with the fact that there was ne’er a form so gracious nor heart so noble as yours, that lacked kindness or pity. And, my dearest sweetheart, I take leave of you, knowing not when I might see you, and lacking any who would serve well as a messenger, so that I could write to you as I have. And so, I have none left who ought to, or could, recommend me, or recall me to your thoughts. Thus, if true Love and your own goodness do not bring me to mind, I am lost and dead, for I could experience no misfortune as great as being forgot by you. So, I must allow you, and true Love, and your goodness to manage everything, while I live on in hope, waiting for that fine day when I can return to you, and this must be when I am able, not when I wish. My dearest sweetheart and most sweet love, I pray God grants you joy, and health, and grace such that we may see each other again shortly, and in joy. Your most faithful friend.’

Lines 3403-3456: He goes to join his lord, and sends her a tenth letter

I departed at the next morn,
Waking so early, with the dawn,

I watched the sun rise in the sky,
For, after that leave-taking, I
Felt it dishonourable to stay,
Lacking all pleasure anyway,
Since my lady I could not see,
Nor feast my eyes on her, for she,
By now, was far upon her way.
And so, I set out straight away,
Into the pretty countryside,
In fair, fine, sweet weather betide,
A land scarcely hostile to me,
For the true lord of that country
Did me honour; feasting only
His wish, and honest company,
And there I rested, and was served
Far better than e'er I deserved,
With the youths and knights out sporting.
Of our hunting, and our hawking,
There's insufficient room to speak,
But every day there I could seek
The company of my lord, the man
I love the most, by Saint Véran!
Many a fine gift he gave me,
Offering his wealth, sincerely,
Yet if I'd wealth, in abundance,
All that might now exist in France,
That in Apulia, Lombardy,
The Romagna, dear God, might be,
I would not prove as satisfied,
Nor feel delight, or any pride,
If I could not see my lady
The sacred fount of good, to me.
I only saw the fortnight through,
Yet once a week I sent, tis true,
A message to my 'Toute Belle',
So as to know if she were well,
And of her news, and state of mind,

And of her wishes, for I did find
That I was oft unsure of her,
Oft felt reassurance, rather
Dependent upon how my reason
Arrived at each diverse conclusion;
And, the better to dwell upon her,
And thus, more easily discover
If she were still faithful and true,
I sent her this message, anew,
For I was quite troubled, clearly,
And was, indeed somewhat weary
Of bearing, and enduring, woe,
Such that I must address her so,
Sending a letter as you'll find
To tell her of my state of mind.

‘My dearest sweetheart and my sweetest love, I write so as to learn of your well-being, something I wish to hear of more than I do that of any other creature born, or person now living. And regarding my own, if you wish to know, I am in that state a man in love must suffer. And just as you commanded when we parted, and as I promised, I shall not leave this region for any reason without first seeing you. But, my sweetheart, when this will be, I cannot see, unless you yourself bring it about, seeking out the time, place, occasion, and leisure to meet me, for from you comes my woe in love, and so from you must come my consolation also. And, for God’s sake, my dearest sweetheart, make sure that the day lasts as long as any four when I am with you, for I can ne’er stay as long as I would like, God knows! And parting will be so hard for me that, by my soul, I know not how I may bear or endure it, nor how I might be consoled. And I fear this greatly, and so beg you, for God’s sake, that the whole time we are together you will solace me for the time that must come. And, by God, there is no good, or joy, or consolation for me unless it comes from you. Never has a lady been loved so much, longed for so truly, as I love and long for you, without altering or straying. At this stake, I will die. My sweetest love, I will see you shortly, please God, and will lodge where I did before. And I commend myself to your grace, for you know I cannot readily see or speak to you unless you arrange it. And, my sweetheart, since I saw you, I

possess no one to serve as a proper messenger, as I did before. And I pray, for God's sake, that at this time you will show me all the love you say you feel for me; and then I will be cheerful, full of song, happy and joyful too, and your most faithful lover. Yet, for God's sake, do nothing to please me that would give others anything to talk about, since, by that same God who made me, I would rather die than never see you again, from which God deliver me! For, should that be so, I would certainly die. And my dearest sweetheart, I will remain three or four days where you are; such that you can grant me many a favour if you wish. And, please God, I will not depart as long as you are there. And my dearest sweetheart, a single favour given and received discreetly, and lovingly, is worth a hundred others. And a day well employed is worth a year, and is a remedy and a comfort against Death, against Desire, and against Fortune. I'll say no more, but you know well that "He prays enough that goes weeping ever." I am sending no rondels, for there are many people at this court and much noise, which so annoys me that I compose little. Nonetheless, I write all I can now in your book. My sweetheart, write me a reply, via this messenger, about your health, and how you feel. I pray God grant you peace and honour, health, and joy of whatever your heart desires. Your most faithful friend.'

Lines 3457-3460: She replies with her eighth letter

ONCE she had read my letter,
She then replied with another,
By my messenger, sans delay,
Listen well to what she did say.

'My heart, my love, and my whole desire, I have read, thoroughly, what you have written me, and with a very good heart I will perform, carefully and diligently, all you request in your letter. For, by that same God who made me, it seems impossible that I could do wrong, or aught bad could come of doing whatever pleases you, or that you advise or counsel. And doubt not, that if everyone advised or counselled something contrary to that which pleased you, I would yet fulfil your sweet wish, neglecting what others desired. Thus, you should be quite sure of me and the love I feel, for I know you to be most good and faithful ever, and that you so love my well-being, my peace, and my honour that you could never, would never

deign to, advise something that would not do me honour, more than anyone alive. So, I hold myself ready to perform the good things that would please you, to the best of my ability, and I will love you more than any human creature, most faithfully, all the days of my life, and longer if I might live hereafter. And, sweet friend of my heart, you say that you fear my leaving and that this will be quite hard for you. Yet, be assured, that I think it will be harder for me than for you. For tis what in the world I fear most in my soul, and what I think of more than aught else but you. But, please God, you and I will manage this in such a way that none will take notice. And, my sweet heart, we should comfort each other, for that is the thing to do, nor was it ever otherwise. And so, we should seize the hours God sends us. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God give you joy of what your heart desires and loves. Your most faithful friend.'

Lines 3461-3490: He contemplates her beauty

I was in the town of Crécy
When this letter of hers reached me,
The Duke of Normandy being there;
My rightful lord, no matter where;
Amongst his followers I feature,
So, I am rightfully his creature.
And when I gave it my purview,
Reading it three or four times through,
I could scarce have hoped for more
Comfort than doing so did secure
For my amorous malady.
My lady took pity on me,
And generously promised there
Joy, peace, and ease for all my care,
Through true and just experience,
And so, I found nary a grievance,
Nothing harsh that I must suffer,
Rather I lived in certain pleasure,
Because I loved her with true love,
And, in my pleasure, did approve
All her great and sovereign beauty,

More than Helen, she was lovely;
And then her goodness contemplated,
The which its powers I've related.
Here indeed is my conclusion,
Based on my honest opinion:
One should prize a beauteous thing
Only if there is goodness within,
For it has been created for naught
Beyond what is within it wrought.

Lines 3491-3564: No true beauty without inner virtue

THERE is no steed so wondrous
That, if you mount upon him, thus,
Feet in the stirrups, have him feel,
Or so we hope, the spurs' hard steel,
Yet he's ill-tempered in his manner,
Choosing to go backward rather,
Or lie down, or rear up on high,
As goats will do, towards the sky,
Kick, or balk, or bite, or prance,
But, on pain of death, ne'er advance,
'He's good for naught', all men must say,
'Fit for the lepers at Beauvais'.
Likewise, there's no knight at court,
No matter the battles he has fought,
So fine, and elegant, and fair,
And known to every lady there,
That if he flees from some battle,
Or from the foes retreats a little,
Will still be respected and prized;
Rather, by all, he'll be despised.
And if he wins some man's esteem,
The man but shames himself, I deem;
Yet be silent, spare your assaults,
Unless you wish to count their faults.
Tis a knight's duty, such the Order,

That they yield not to disorder,
Absent themselves, or take to flight,
But act in all ways like a knight.
Then, no woman is so lovely
That if she bows to infamy,
And forfeits her reputation,
She's not loved less, on occasion,
For her fault, and so less prized,
The very hour and day despised
That she was born, hated and cursed,
Because such deeds she has rehearsed.
And honour will flee her, I maintain,
As a cat flees water, or the rain,
Or at least for as long as she
Remains in a state contrary
To honour, which can never be
Her undoing; it shuns evil-doing.
And I declare, most veritably,
The sages did all, and equally,
Value folk more for their goodness,
Than their beauty or handsomeness,
For beauty's a lesser favour
Of all those bestowed by Nature.
So, if I love the fair and good,
If she as such is understood,
And with a pure heart, sans misdeed,
None should reproach me then, indeed,
For I will gain esteem and praise,
If I love, serve, esteem always,
But if some miscreant I love,
I should be hurled, from high above,
Into some flood, both wide and deep,
Or else a fatal slingstone reap;
Though, if I knew she was such, I,
By my faith, would such love deny.
So, I should always be on guard,
And keep myself, in that regard,

From doing or thinking, ever,
Aught that might damage her honour,
For if I did such things approve,
That would be a sin against Love,
And all the good I gain therefrom
Would indeed be buried and gone,
Nor would love remain with me,
But my sad heart die, utterly;
And so, I shall be faithful to her,
And never seek to love another.
Whoever wishes may say more
On this, I've exhausted my store.

Lines 3565-3600: He wins leave from his lord to go and meet her

I wished my return, and swiftly,
To my fair and pleasing lady,
So, I did little, it would seem,
But ponder, and reflect, and scheme
As to how I might win my leave
To see my lady, and did believe
On asking, that my lord would say
I might, yet I was made to stay,
Three days or more against my will,
At his grace's pleasure, until,
At last, he gave me leave to go,
And granted me fair gifts also,
As I have said he did before.
And so, I took my way once more
Without delay, that I might address
My beloved, and my goddess,
For my heart longed for her so,
And I sighed often, as you know.
Into her presence I did advance,
Wounded by a loving glance,
But that beauty, smiling ever,
Healed, sweetly, the ills I suffer

Merely by looking upon her,
And for my good gazing at her.
I'll say naught of my reception,
Or my honest, quiet discretion;
I was always one and the same.
If twere from Tunis I came,
The gracious lady, God save her,
Could not have been kinder ever,
In her fair welcome, and sweet gaze,
Later summoning me, as always,
Discreetly, and I tell you, in such,
Ne'er did too little nor too much.
But rather bore herself so wisely
She garnered praise, universally.

Lines 3601-3652: The lovers speak to each other of Love

AND so, I spoke with her awhile,
Then set me to forsake her smile,
And so leave with the rest, but she
Whispered low: 'Come here to me,
Sweet friend, so that I may see you,
And in the garden may find you,
After supper, for our delight,
When the sun withdraws his light.'
Nor did I neglect to do so,
Rather in haste I thence did go,
And she'd already made arrival,
And at my coming was most joyful,
And said to me, all smilingly,
'King Priam himself you must be,
To keep one waiting, so readily!'
And I said, unhesitatingly,
On bended knee, my hands together,
'Sweet one, let us two, forever,
Lead a love-filled life, instead;
Who knows fair word let it be said.

See me here, I would make amend.
And the fair one did mercy extend,
And there we did speak of our love,
Of the grief and pain that doth prove
Desire's gift to a love that's true,
Troubling men and fair ladies too;
How he comes, lance at the ready,
How he assaults them mercilessly,
Closes with one and then the other,
Aiming the sharp tip at each lover,
Wounding, undoing, in the end,
Whomever Hope does not defend.
And many a time Desire doth win,
When Hope fails to counter him,
And stands not firm in good fight,
And banner razed, is put to flight,
For sweetest Hope doth often flee,
Knowing naught of war and mastery.
The lover here's trampled underfoot;
For compare the tripod, that is put
On the hearthstone, above the blaze;
Tis scorched and burnt all its days,
And when the fire's quenched, by and by,
Is thrown into a corner nearby,
And since its role's not maintained
Is left blackened, scarred and stained.
So it is with those lovers still,
Who are full of amorous ill,
And who, when their defence proves slight,
Are mistreated by Love in the fight,
Forced to submit to torment ever,
Finding no comfort save to suffer.

Lines 3653-3690: He persuades his lady to go on pilgrimage with him

WHEN we had spoken of our love
I sought a new request to move,

That seemed honest enough to me,
And so, I said to my lady:
'Fair one, both virtuous and sage,
They tell me that a pilgrimage
You have pledged to Saint Denis,
And it would end my misery
If you chose to fulfil that vow,
For, if I were your squire now,
Every hour would be worth a week;
One good day, if God such did seek,
Would be worth a month moreover,
And so, my lovely and sweet lover,
I beg you to discharge your debt,
Without delay, since we are met.'
And she answered me right swiftly:
'Sweet friend, may God preserve me,
I'm not opposed to doing so,
Though indeed, you must surely know
I am hardly my own woman,
But we shall go, if I but can,
To Saint James, or to Saint Denis,
I and my sister, and you, and then
We will sojourn here once again,
When God permits us to return,
And thus, great merit we shall earn.'
So, I gave her thanks most sweetly,
Begging them to prepare swiftly.
And, secretly, she and her sister
Held a conversation together,
Summoning a neighbour also,
A lady they called cousin, though.
The very next day we set out,
On a pilgrimage most devout.
And, by Saint Lieffroy, the lady
Was mounted on my own palfrey,
Such that I love that horse so well,
The creature I shall never sell.

Lines 3691-3754: They commence their pilgrimage

THE Saint Denis Fair, they call it
The Benediction of the Lendit;
This was the day, and I have never
Seen any travel so together,
With such merriment and joy,
As those three women did employ,
And for my part, I thought it good
To seek amusement where I could.
Now each did wear a fair garland,
Of golden flowers, you understand,
With a twin strand of roses red,
That suited well, upon her head.
And I recall that, in this manner,
Through the fair we did wander,
Gazing at all the merchandise,
Yet like one who looks not buys,
Since our thoughts were certainly
On other matters, for my lady
Mused on her vow, with emotion,
Which humbly, and with devotion,
She now intended to fulfil,
While I was contemplating still
My love for her, devotedly,
While gazing at her, constantly.
Thus we, our several debts did pay,
And having done so without delay,
We went to dine, as it befell,
In a place they call La Chapelle,
In Paris; yet so many had made
The journey there, but little shade
Was there, scarce enough to cover
A shepherd, both head and shoulder.
Nonetheless, we were so at ease,
By Saint Nichaise, all so did please,

That in the seven years gone by,
Not seven times so well felt I.
When we had dined, we paid the host,
And then away from there did post,
Yet there was never so fine a day
For any lover, I should say,
Because my lady cried that she
Must sleep, feeling wondrously
Willing to lay down her head,
If there were but a room and bed.
A sergeant-at-arms was nearby,
Who was drunk enough to cry,
Full of good Saint-Pourçain wine,
Which all agree is more than fine,
Though it made the fellow reel
Far more than he could conceal.
The sergeant said: 'By Saint Julian,
There's a peasant nearby, a man,
Dwelling at the village's edge,
Who has a chamber they allege
Has clean beds, both good and sound,
And he'll not take penny or pound;
You'll be fine there, and quite alone,
And fresh green rushes strew the stone.
Come with me, and I'll lead you there,
And show you the path, if you'd care.'
My lady told him she agreed,
And, with all in accord, indeed
He marched on, and we after,
Following closely, all together.

Lines 3755-3790: He is persuaded to sleep in the same room overnight

WHEN the ladies reached the room,
All wearied by the heat of the sun,
There two good beds did them await,
Nor did the sister hesitate

To lie on the one bed, comfortably,
Twas all covered with fleurs-de-lis,
While my lady did claim the other,
Then, two or three times together,
Called to me, her sister the same,
Guillemette was her sister's name,
'Come, sleep between the two of us,
And be there naught but virtuous;
Here is your place, and ready too'
I answered: 'God shall never view
Me lying there, I'll rest outside,
And I'll await you there, betide;
Yet I shall wake you, full soon,
When tis three of the afternoon,
And the hour's rung.' Still, my lady
Begged me to come, most vehemently,
And I drew near her, with a smile,
Excusing myself all the while,
Saying I was scarcely worthy,
But she grasped my hand firmly,
And they set out to drag me there,
While I cried out in mock despair,
For God knows twas indeed my wish
To lie there, and obey in this;
No other pasture did I desire,
To naught sweeter did I aspire.
The sergeant, opening the door,
With two good cloaks he draped us o'er,
And then he shut the window tight,
Closed the door, and hid all from sight;
And there my lady took her rest
One arm draped across my breast.

Lines 3791-3828: The lovers embrace

LONGTIME I lay there at her side,
More shyly than a new-wed bride,

For not a word did I dare utter,
Sought not to touch or speak to her,
Since she appeared to be asleep.
I saw the power of Love ran deep,
For like a log I must lie there
Beside my lady, in this affair
I stirred no more than if someone
Had sought my life had I so done.
Howe'er, the lady, for her part,
Whom I love with a most pure heart,
Who, I thought, slept there, and dreamed,
Awakened, quite gently, it seemed,
And a discreet cough she did share,
And said: 'My lover, are you there?
Embrace me now, tis safe, you know.'
Most tentatively I did so,
But she spoke on, in a whisper,
Till I put my arms about her.
Not a thing could I see; e'en so
One thing I did certainly know,
That it was not her companion!
I was like one who bathes among
Founts of the earthly paradise,
For on me all that might suffice,
Was bestowed, all the good there is.
I was granted my every wish,
Through all the great abundancy
Of which I had my sufficiency,
For everything she said, deeply
Satisfied the longing in me;
True good, with which I was favoured,
Tasting of mercy, I now savoured,
Without ill-thought or trickery,
Because I cherished her so dearly.
To speak a word now is my wish,
Of the sort of thing mercy is.

Lines 3829-3864: Regarding mercy in love

ONE man loves, fears, serves his lady,
While shunning aught that's blameworthy,
Through naught but his own worthiness,
Oft setting his chances of success
In the balance with sudden death.
Asking naught else but, in a breath,
Goes seeking bitter warfare, ever.
He to far-flung lands will venture,
Embracing hunger and poverty,
And passing among folk who only
Wish to rob him of all he owns,
And leave him naught but broken bones,
Stealing all from him in the end,
Who his own life can scarce defend.
Another will but joust a bit,
For dancing, singing, he is fit,
He wishes but to kiss his lady
Desiring to clasp her closely,
Seeks only that and nothing more,
Gaining it, will all else ignore.
The former will be by her side
A hundred years and never try
To seek such things, nor dare to ask
For aught on earth, all his task,
By God, not e'en to seem to do,
His very heart would tremble to,
Like mine when I see my lady,
For he lacks true Love's leave, you see,
To show her signs of his longing,
Or speak a word of his suffering.
It is enough that he sees her,
Makes her company his pleasure,
And since the two this doth suffice,
Without need for further device,
I say that love's true satisfaction

Is in mercy, being of that faction.

Lines 3865-3924: They dine in an orchard

THUS, I was sweetly nourished too
By all the goodness that is due
To those who love right faithfully,
And only for such sufficiency;
For if such were insufficient
Twere slight reward for their intent,
Yet slight goodness pleases much
When one's an appetite for such,
And when tis granted joyfully,
With a good heart, and happily.
When it was time, we three arose
Making our company among those
Who so woke us with their singing,
That all the day we left off sleeping,
And games of bowls we played at then,
For fine wine, a capon, a hen,
Chicks, or rabbit kittens, e'en
A 'sautereau' cheese, one, I mean,
Made by the folk who live in Brie.
And after that, the company
With one accord, must sup together,
In an orchard whose sweetness ever
Recalled that paradisiac dell
Where Adam and Eve once did dwell,
For it was so verdant and flowery
A man set in the pillory
Would take such pleasure in the sight,
That he'd forget his shame outright.
There we dined well and fittingly,
There my sweet and lovely lady
Glancing at me with her sweet glance,
From her sweet eyes did advance
Many a dart that drew me to her,

Who was hers, and hers forever,
Like one who wastes their every
Effort to win what's theirs already;
She well knows that I'm hers, ever
Since she claimed me as her lover.
There we were served with sweet lays,
With ballads, and with virelays
That they call 'chansons baladées',
Well heard, and listened to always,
All manner of other music too
So ably performed that one knew
Not whom to attend to the most.
There one might have learned a host
Of things, for all strove mightily,
To sing well, sweetly, forcefully.
We stayed awake till twas nigh day,
And then the ladies we did convey
Each one to her own fair dwelling,
Torchlit we went, to each lodging,
Which was why Love tested me not,
Yet from him a rich reward I got,
Such as he knows to grant, truly,
Of that fine day that he owed me;
And, from her I thank, my lady,
Satisfaction received, in mercy,
By way of every sweetest thought
That honourable pleasure brought.

Lines 3925-3940: He stays with his lady and composes a ballad

THERE I stayed for several days,
In pleasant company always,
And dined beside my lady fine,
Taking but little bread and wine,
So happy to see her, rather
I sated myself on gazing at her.
For we were there privately,

And with us no one else, you see,
Twas she, and I, and her sister,
Who attended her, as ever.
And my lady who had command
Over me, asked, nay did demand
That I recite some verse or prose,
Or a fresh work should compose,
And so, a fair new ballad I made
To her sweet order, here displayed.

**Lines 3941-3961: His thirteenth ballad ‘Gent corps faitis, cointe, apert
et joli’ (Ballad V, not set to music)**

‘A noble form, sweet, pleasing, and lovely,
Young, finely dressed, in elegant attire,
Enriched with virtue, clothed in modesty,
Of beauty born, to sweetness all entire,
Has so, with sweetness, set my heart on fire,
And with the sweet glance of your bright eyes too,
That I shall seek no other love but you.

And I am right, since I have chosen nobly,
For were it mine to seek to love the flower
Of all this world, I could but fail completely
To choose one better, lady of honour,
So, my thanks to you, and Love, forever,
Who grants me such delightful thoughts, anew,
That I shall seek no other love but you.

So, since it is the case, my sweetest lady,
That I love you, sans thought of dishonour,
Who everywhere own the heart within me,
Whom I beg for mercy, humbly, ever,
Night and day, with tearful voice, I utter
A prayer that you’ll strive to prove this true:
That I shall seek no other love but you.’

Lines 3962-3975: Her thirteenth rondel 'Autre de vous jamais ne quier amer'

THEN she made this rondel in reply,
And it seems fair enough to my eye,
Naught here to reprove, I would say,
And twas composed without delay,
For she wished I might have the thing,
Ere the moment for our parting.

'No man but you shall I e'er seek to love,
Sweetest love, to whom I grant my heart,

There is no better that I might approve;
No man but you shall I e'er seek to love.

And I well know, nor is there need to prove,
That from my own your heart will ne'er depart.
No man but you shall I e'er seek to love,
Sweetest love, to whom I grant my heart.'

Lines 3976-4041: A parting, and a morning encounter

AT last, the moment had arrived
When I was forced to leave her side,
So, I took my leave most humbly,
With little accompanying me
Of sense or intellect or manner,
But she saw in my face, as ever,
That I was wounded in spirit,
For the colour had altered in it,
And I was much changed in hue,
Sad, and grieving, tearful too,
Being certain I must suffer
Dwelling, a long while, far from her,
Despite my wishes in the matter,
Which rendered me even sadder.

But that fair lady, ere we did part,
Wise, good, and generous of heart,
She took me by the hand, gently,
And said: 'At dawn return to me,
For I'll rise at the break of day,
And commend you to God alway,
Yet, not here, with all folk present.'
And I replied, being her servant,
'My lady, adieu, since tis your wish.'
I said no more, left it at this,
But, at dawn, obeyed her command,
And so quiet was I, you understand,
That the fair one was still sleeping,
And so, I woke her by opening
A little window, as she had said,
Twas on the left side of her bed,
And drawing aside a little curtain
Of red sendal, yet saw for certain,
She was not alone, for one other,
The fair young maid, was with her,
Who, in the green and leafy garden,
Had culled the flowers for a garland.
Quietly, I called to my lady,
As I gazed there, on her beauty,
Drawing now a little nearer,
Careful of her state and honour,
For I dared do no otherwise,
Fearing that she, in her surprise,
Might be angered, but waking she
Did, out of her great courtesy,
Turn her body to me, entire,
Nor was dressed in any attire,
But that granted her by Nature,
So fair that never a creature
Could compare to her, so richly
Endowed was she, and so lovely.
Then she called me by my true name,

Saying: 'Love, are you there?' 'The same,'
I answered, 'yes, my sweet lover,
Yet full of doubt and fear, however,
For yourself, should any enter.'
And she said I should endeavour
Not to fear, for none would come
Unless summoned there, to her room.
I gazed at her face, that did appear
All rosy, beauty without peer,
Her sweet face, her crimson, smiling
Lips, full sweet, and her gleaming
Neck, so smooth and tender, alway.
And I knelt down, without delay,
And thus, I commenced my prayer
To Venus, that with you I'll share.

Lines 4042-4089: The lover's prayer to Venus

'VENUS, I've served, obeyed your law,
Since your fair image first I saw,
And also heard tell, what is more,
Of your power.
And so, I humbly beg you, there,
Be pleased to listen to my prayer,
And so, attend to my affair,
Ease me this hour.
For here I witness, in my presence,
The beauty, the sweet appearance,
That wounds my heart, without a lance,
And ravishes.
And I lack strength to approach her,
Or to touch, fearing her anger,
That wounds and pierces, forever,
My heart, no less.
You are my lady, my goddess,
That wounds my heart, then doth bless
And heal it, through nobleness,

All, so sweetly;
Till there is no woe or dolour,
Joy, delight and pleasure, rather,
Of which you are mistress ever,
Assuredly.
You join hearts so they complement
Each other, with but one intent,
One good, one ill, one sentiment,
One sorrow too.
Now grant courage to my being,
That from this sweet face I'm leaving
I might gain true peace in parting,
Win wealth anew.
But if you fail to work this for me,
You that made me will undo me,
And to death you will dispatch me,
Without a lie,
For my heart is discomfited,
And you well know by you tis led,
So, be my advocate, instead,
And aid, thereby,
My peace, my comfort, my desire,
And seek my health, sound and entire,
And grant me courage, ne'er to tire,
In this, do right;
For if you should your help deny,
In time of need, prove no ally,
Then, farewell all, for here I die,
Without respite.'

Lines 4090-4133: Venus blesses their affair, and the lover composes a ballad.

WHEN my prayer came to an end
Venus proved herself my friend,
For she had not been neglected,
Nor was my plea to her rejected;

She heard and saw my situation,
The goddess was quick to station
Herself above, and then descend,
A dark cloud, all about, did bend,
Full of manna and purest balm,
That did the room sweetly embalm,
There working miracles openly,
So manifestly, and so clearly,
That, joyfully, as I had wished,
All my desire was accomplished.
And when the miracles were done,
I said: 'Such miracles are won
From you, Goddess, so openly,
That one may see them clearly,
For which I yield you thanks and praise,
Sans flattery's deceiving ways.'
Yet I must say this, nonetheless,
At the descent of the goddess,
My heart shook, I trembled there,
While my lady seemed, for her share,
Somewhat moved, such was my view,
And flustered by her coming too,
For her sweet face grew more lovely,
Which pleased me exceedingly,
Though it is no marvel at all
If one marvels at a miracle.
So, the dark cloud, in this manner,
Granted us its heavenly cover,
And we were so hid, moreover,
That naught was left to discover.
And greatly then it suited me,
That there was nothing there to see,
And all this lasted such a space
Of time, I made there in that place,
And before Venus went her way,
This song, which is a virelay.

**Lines 4134-4193: His fourteenth ballad, a virelay 'Onques si bonne
journee'**

'NE'ER such a fine day, truly,
Ever dawned for me,
As when I did take my leave
Of my beloved lady,
Who has won, from me,
Both heart and love I believe.
For manna descended there,
And that sweetness fair
That my soul did satisfy,
Fruit of the sweet gift did share,
Pity drew, I swear,
From her blushes thereby.
Therein did the honour lie,
That the renown, say I,
Of her lovely form, did wear,
Never an ill thought forming,
Nor none appearing,
Born betwixt her and I.
Ne'er such a fine day, truly,
Ever dawned for me,
As when I did take my leave
Of my beloved lady,
Who has won, from me,
Both heart and love I believe.

Satisfaction enriched me,
And Pleasure wholly,
Such that no living creature
Possessed a heart so fully
Contented, surely,
Or felt such pure joy ever,
For the goddess, all honour,
Who brings together
Love, lover, beloved lady,

With her blade, of true temper,
The head did sever
Of Constraint my enemy,
Ne'er such a fine day, truly,
Ever dawned for me,
As when I did take my leave
Of my beloved lady,
Who has won, from me,
Both heart and love I believe.

For she buried him swiftly,
Love aiding, gladly,
His soul briefly lamented,
And nor did Honour, thanks be,
Suffer there to be
A mass for his corpse chanted,
Rather it went, where the dead
And discontented,
Are scorned for eternity;
Thus, twice was I contented.
Honour held the key
To sweet Mercy's treasury,
Ne'er such a fine day, truly,
Ever dawned for me,
As when I did take my leave
From my beloved lady,
Who has won, from me,
Both heart and love I believe.'

Lines 4194-4259: The lovers exchange gifts

VENUS had later left the scene,
Vanishing in her cloud, I mean,
While I remained there amazed,
Like one who is utterly dazed,
My lady was astonished too,
And a little shocked, tis true,

So, I addressed her, most gently,
Speaking quietly, but intently:
'Sweet companion, sweet sister,
I believe no such adventure
E'er befell a pair of lovers,
Nor, in this way, any others,
Not one as sweet nor one as true
As this has proved, in my view.
Did you, as I did, thus perceive
The goddess, who, I do believe,
Revealed the beauty of her face,
Full of wisdom, power, and grace?
Saw you how she veiled us o'er
From her cloud the shade did pour,
How she served us graciously,
And not for any worth in me?
Nor could I such a thing deserve
Though I a thousand years did serve,
Feared and honoured her also,
Praised, obeyed, adored her so.'
She answered me: 'My sweetest friend,
To our hearts the goddess doth send
A love that increases every day,
Nor shall it wane, in any way.
Indeed, I witnessed her descent,
How she came, and how she went.
You must love firmly, faithfully,
For I promise you, most truly,
That you have so ravished my heart,
True love from it can ne'er depart;
I shall return that love, for never
Shall other love be mine, ever.'
I said: 'God look on you, always,
I love you more than I can say,
And never shall I prove untrue,
But rather I'll stay true to you.'
At this, the fair one embraced me,

About my neck her arm clasped me,
And with both arms I did embrace
Her, and her other arm did place
About my neck; next, a little key
In her hand, she took most gently,
A craftsman's work, and of pure gold,
And said: 'My love, keep a true hold
Of this key to my treasury,
And guard it well, for you must be
Its sole lord and master, say I;
I love it more than my right eye,
For there's my honour, my riches,
Of which I may grant you largesse;
Your work shall not decrease it ever,
But each day bring increase rather.'
I took the key, and then did tell
Her I would love and guard it well;
Next, took a ring from my finger
And, as I ought, gifted it to her,
Then of my lady took my leave,
Sighing now, for, I did perceive
The sun did rise in morning air,
Forcing me to depart from there.

Lines 4260-4285: He departs, and sends her his virelay and his eleventh letter

SO, I went away, with light tread,
Till I again reached my own bed,
And if I've said too much, in all,
Or too little, then, by Saint Paul,
I've done no wrong, twas her wish,
Lest I might lose her favour in this.
Such she would have all folk know,
Since there's no sin in acting so;
And if the contrary were true,
She could keep silent well as you,

And I'd have helped her conceal it,
And made sure never to reveal it.
I, who said what I've said to you,
Care not if tis repeated too.
At last, I mounted on my steed
And I rode all that morn, indeed,
Nor an end to it did I find
Until I came to where I dined.
Yet I could not wait for dinner
But first I must write a letter;
I took my pen, and writ this screed,
The which you may hear or read,
And there, within it, I enclosed
The virelay I had composed,
And, since I grieved at all delay,
Soon sent the letter on its way.

'My dear sweetheart and my most sweet love, I am writing to learn your state of health, the which may Our Lord keep as sound ever as I would wish it to be, with all my heart, and as you yourself would like. And, by my soul, I could not delay writing to you. And as regards my own state, be pleased to know that I should be in a very fair state could I but see you every day, but since I am, and must remain, far from you, I must recall the most sweet sustenance and satisfying nourishment with which you have so sweetly fed and nourished me. And if little joy and happiness are, and must be mine, no one should wonder. All the same, I take comfort in this: that what has not yet come to pass may yet do so, please God. And, my own sweetheart, I proved foolish and unpolished in taking leave of you so; please forgive me for not knowing how to thank you, for I was so struck to the soul and amazed by the great miracle the goddess performed in our presence that I knew not what had happened to me, and whenever I think of it I am utterly confounded, and by your great humility also. For if I were the most beautiful, wisest, and most perfect person in all the world, it would be because you and God had favoured me; nor am I worthy of meriting the least of the good things you have done for me. And I pray God that He grant me, till I die, the favour of doing or saying naught, all the days of my life, that might displease you. And I beg you, my sweetheart,

for God's sake, remember me, for by my soul I would not, nor could not, forget you, and if I did wish such a thing, Desire would not permit me, for, by God, never did I desire to see you, a hundredth as much, as I do now, and must do, and for good reason. And that will come to pass when it pleases God, and I can do so, and not when I might wish, God knows. Adieu, my own sweetheart, and may He grant you joy and honour and health. Your most faithful lover.'

Lines 4286-4291: She sends her ninth letter and a rondel

NOW she was not too idle
To reply, nor cared too ill,
But sent me by the messenger
What I copy here, her letter,
With the rondel she had made
About the miracle displayed.

'My most dear sweetheart, and my true friend, I have received your letter, as well as the verse you sent me, and for these I thank you with all my heart, and as best I may, especially for the true affection you show me, by telling me how you are, since that was my greatest desire next to wishing to see you again, namely to know that all goes well with you. And the day and hour I received your letter I felt more joy and benefit than I have felt since your leaving. And for the one wish I had to gaze upon you ere I saw you, I have now a hundred thousand, and that is surely right, for before then I had too little acquaintance with the goodness, honour, and sweetness I have found in you. And so, I swear by my soul, there is never an hour, no matter what state I am in, that I fail to imagine my seeing you standing there before me, or forget your manner, and all you said and did, and especially the day of the Benediction of Lendit, and that hour when you left, and I gave you my little golden key. So please guard it well, for it is my greatest treasure. And never did I spend two days so good and pleasant. And so, I think naught could ever happen that would make me forget you, for nothing dwells in my memory as much, except my prayers to God. Someone told me that, as you departed, he saw you leaving, and you sent me word that you had seen none but himself, and you said that this was because you had seen me not. And I understood at once what that meant,

for I well knew that exactly in the state you left me, taking naught with me, I had gone after you and watched you until you were outside. And in truth, it was not yet day, and tis at that very hour especially, that I remember you. I am sending you a rondel that was composed the very day and hour that the virelay was composed that you sent me, and at the hour when the miracle occurred. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God grant me such joy of you as my heart desires, and you the same of me also. Your faithful friend.'

Lines 4292-4299: Her fourteenth rondel 'Merveilles fu quant mon cuer ne parti'

'A wonder it was my heart failed to break,
As I watched him depart, my sweet lover.

For never did I feel such deep heartache;
A wonder it was my heart failed to break.

My sight, while it might, ne'er did him forsake,
Yet soon I could gaze at him no longer;

A wonder it was my heart failed to break,
As I watched him depart, my sweet lover.'

Lines 4300-4393: The lover meets with Hope and her entourage

NOW, once I had read her reply,
If Pygmalion's statue nearby,
Polixena, the noble Trojan,
Deiamira, and lovely Helen,
And that pretty queen of Ireland
Had begged me, all that fair band,
To love them right amorously,
I'd have refused them utterly,
For I was in a joyful state,
Fair expectation now my fate.
I rode along most happily,

Passing the watch, quietly,
Of the Archpriest and the Bretons,
Cared not a sou for such persons,
Till at last I entered the plain,
That good things did maintain,
Midst sweet air, and met a lady
Prettier, nobler, than were any
From Tournus to Courtrai, ah no,
Rather Paris to Tarento,
And travelling with her I did see
A fine and beauteous company,
And then that fair one closer came,
And she called out to me by name,
Took my bridle, as she rode near,
And filled my poor heart with fear,
Saying: 'You are taken, tis plain,
I'll lead you now to my domain.'
The rest approaching on that field,
Naught could I do but say: 'I yield,
Who are you who've captured me?'
'Come, she said, ride on with me,
For all of this you will be taught,
But at present you'll learn naught.'
And, as she spoke, she led me on,
And I said, as we went along,
Before all that noble audience,
'Sans warning, I am taken hence'
And she: 'Who does a wrongful deed,
He has warning enough, indeed,
And you have wronged me grievously,
So, you shall be corrected by me.'
And after that she spoke angrily,
Yet addressing me familiarly,
'Have I not seen to your comfort,
And from afar joy I have brought,
Granted you pleasure and delight,
Turned joy to sadness overnight,

And ever proved your champion
In your every tribulation?
And when Shame came to assail you,
With your heart about to fail you,
Did I not, for you, offer my gage,
Nor was there any other hostage
Except myself to wage the fight,
With my good sword, as your knight.
And I did so press her, on that field,
That Shame herself was forced to yield,
And every time Desire attacks you
I wage war, in the front rank, too,
Nor am I the last, but rather,
Everywhere, I bear the banner.
Desire's power doth not suffice
To trouble you, at any price.
You find me ready, in time of need,
Without your asking help, indeed;
I say, tis double the worth to you,
Though you value me not a sou;
You've said naught special of me
In this whole work of poetry,
Neither thanks nor praise, say I,
Have you rendered, now, do I lie?'
I said to her: 'By Saint Isabel,
Perchance it is the truth you tell
And you speak plainly, my lady,
Yet I would learn, if such may be,
Your name, for I'd apologise
To you if I might be so wise.'
'My name is Hope, and here advance
Moderation and Temperance,
Good Advice and Friendly Comfort,
Who with me I have ever brought.
Fair service, not out of duty,
But out of generosity,
Have they done.' Then, reverence

I did pay her, in their presence.
Accusing myself most humbly,
Nor offering excuse, for, truly,
Hope was right and I was wrong,
In every way, my shame waxed strong.
And then I thanked her, profusely,
For her grace (by comforting me
She had nourished and remade me)
And for all she had done for me.

Lines 4394-4427: The lover must make amends to Hope by composing a lay

THEN Good Advice spoke out clearly,
She who talks both well and wisely,
Temperately, in measured manner:
'Lady, if he's wronged you ever,
Then to you he shall make amends,
For, in the wrong, a good man bends
The knee; receive him so, I counsel,
It seems to me that all's then well.'
And so said each and every one,
And Hope's good favour I had won,
For she said: 'This I shall grant you.
Come forward now, the three of you,
To Advice's side, she'll tell us,
What amends he now shall make us.'
Friendly Comfort said, but gently:
'My most true advice is, lady,
That you should fine him for his wrong,
He should pay for it with a song,
Rondel, ballad, or virelay.'
And she said: 'Let it be a lay,
The Lay of Hope he shall it call,
And then he shall be quit of all,
And then away he may be sent,
Scot free of all impediment.'

Then I said: 'Lady, I agree
To such a treaty, willingly,
As you have here proposed, although
I lack the skill to write, I know,
As well as you'd have me devise,
And yet you are both good and wise,
Such that if it lacks anything
You will amend it, on the wing.'
For sufficient time I asked her,
And then departed shortly after.

Lines 4428-4461: He returns home, and there composes the lay requested

I was upon my guard however,
And said to my valet: 'Keep ever
A good watch, look all about you,
For with travel many risks ensue
As you can see in all this region,
Let us hasten now, come, ride on,
Spur your horse forward, briskly,
So we can journey more quickly,
And that will be all to the better,
In this land there's many a robber.
They capture folk and detain them,
Spring from nowhere, rob and kill them,
For in the shadows where they lurk
All harbour ill, tis their sole work.
Did I say all? Doubtless, there's one,
For each rule has its exception,
Who does not, yet many do gather,
And undertake such things together.'
Yet gainst any seven I had four,
Until I arrived at my own door.
Thus, I hastened along the road
And when into my room I strode,
Which was clean, fair, elegant,

Little danger did they present,
Nor feared I then their villainy;
God curse such thieves, eternally!
For there I was safe and secure,
Afraid of all their schemes no more.
I thought to quit my debt that day,
Beginning to work on my lay,
And, as I'd promised, sent it on
To Hope herself when it was done,
In true accord with all I'd said,
That it might then be sung or read.

Lines 4462-4717: The Lay of Hope 'Longuement me sui tenus' (Lay XVIII, with music)

'FOR a long while, I'd refrain
From making lays,
Void of love, I do maintain,
And yet these days
I write songs and virelays,
Am in that strain;
I yield now to love again,
And will always.

If I have seemed somewhat mute,
I shall no more,
Being taken in hot pursuit,
Heart stricken sore,
By twin darts, and to the core,
Eyes, bright, astute,
Grey, sweet, charming and acute,
Laughter their law.

For my lady, God save her,
Of her sweet smiling manner,
Made an arrow, then another,
Of Hope, then Desire;

He would slay me with his fire,
Sans warning, should I aspire,
Had not Hope, I value higher,
Assistance offered.

For when I first felt the glow
Of the glance that burns me so,
No third or fourth part did go
Of my calm and sense,
But all composure, and strength,
Until Hope made me, at length,
Take my pains on sufferance;
Her true art did show.

But I am filled with dismay,
Do not know
If this lover's wound, today,
Heart feels so,
Comes of Love or true heart; oh,
Any heart sweet glances slay
If she's another also.
Tis mortal woe
If so, yet I'll love alway,
If she's no foe.

I'd ne'er have the will or art
To retreat,
For that woeful piercing dart,
I'd compete,
True service would I complete,
For my lady, ne'er depart,
And when with sad death I meet
At her feet
I would lay my wounded heart,
Its last beat.

Who could know

Seized, by her,
Life, death, so,
She'd offer,
To hear no
Fair laughter,
Full of woe
Thereafter:
Nor sought I
Paradise,
Naught else I
Then did prize,
Felt thereby
Naught, likewise,
While her eye
Did surprise,
She whose love burns in this guise.

Nonetheless
I did find
Her sweetness
Calmed my mind;
Prayed, no less,
There, resigned,
She would bless
Me, prove kind;
Ne'er would I
E'er arise
Did she deny
My fond sighs,
By and by,
She needs prize
An ally,
Realise,
She must be my friend likewise.

Sleep I or wake, when I see
Her smiling glance alight,

Her body, formed peerlessly,
And all her welcome bright?
There I view her lovely face,
Honest, sweet, full of grace,
Her complexion, red and white,
A flower in woodland light,
Counselling me to love apace,
Who many an ill must embrace.

Her golden hair shines like the sun,
A gleam rests on her brow,
Counsel of no other one
Seek I, or wish for, now,
But rather I make ready
To obey her every
Wish, for service is my vow,
Such goodness hers, I'll allow,
I cross myself, all amazed,
All vice from me here erased.

Is it not good so to love her,
Desiring her,
Admiring her,
Finding in her,
Naught that's bitter,
Only pure sweetness to savour?
A noble destiny
Has he who can thus obtain her
Grace forever,
Peerless ever,
None above her;
And none better
Yet, nor nobler,
Could any lover see.

So, must I protect her honour,
Ceasing never,

To deliver
Loyal ever,
And naught other,
Devote all my powers to her,
With no evil thought.
For to cross the seas were better,
Return never,
Than neglect her
Sweet manner;
Harbour, ever,
Some ill thought that might harm her
True renown, in aught.

Pleasure doth my heart transport,
When my eyes her form have sought,
And, free of villainous report,
I hear that all men make effort
To prize her, at every thought,
Above every creature.
Then no ill thought doth feature,
No pain, no woe in Nature,
Nor aught that hurts me ever,
Instead, my mind feels pleasure,
Far sweeter yet and purer,
That, thanks to her, is brought.

Joy I find in viewing her,
Comfort so in serving her,
Solace find in loving her,
And in Hope, aiding ever
Against Desire the slayer,
Scorning his bite, you see;
If the lady's harsh to me,
Or treats me but carelessly,
No matter, I take, sweetly,
Nourishment from her, truly,
Nor fear aught can trouble me,

Love's pains nor ills, ever.

And since I may live thus alway,
Happily, free of care each day,
Twere great folly
For me to seek her mercy,
Or love, ever,
Unworthy still, forever,
In every way.

She'd soon tell me...depart, from here!
Alas, were I such words to hear
From one so sweet,
With tears in my heart I'd meet,
Deep down within,
For I would ache both out and in,
And so, remain
Her subject, in endless pain,
Reduced to fear.

All my joy in her doth lie;
There shall rest,
I now attest,
My faith gladly.
There I'd live most lovingly,
There would I die,
There I'd sigh,
There I'd lie,
There's my employ,
There, all my heart doth enjoy,
The whole entirely,
Most sweetly,
And most humbly,
And there serve I.

I can't refrain from loving,
When I see

The sweet beauty
Of her fair form,
So noble; to her I've sworn
Faith undying,
And no parting
Or repenting;
As I ought,
For the thousand pleasures bought
In torments' guise,
Otherwise,
Tis no surprise,
None suffering.

No life is
Sweet as this,
To desire one you would kiss,
Hope, each hour,
To amend
And defend
Gainst Desire downed in the end,
Sans power.

He destroys
All life's joys,
If Hope ne'er her power employs;
Thus, I'm sworn
Where'er I be,
Utterly,
To Hope's pleasant company,
Night and morn.

I'd have died long while ago
Had sweet Hope not been there,
When Desire's sharpened arrow
My vision did impair,
Which can be drawn forth never
Unless my love doth so,

Or fair Hope who did ever
As my physician show,
Comforting me, tenderly;
May God view her sweetly!

She's my keep, my strong fortress,
She doth calm my anger,
She's the treasure I possess,
Beyond reproach, ever.
She's my life's fairest haven,
She's my joy; truth to tell,
All the silver, gold even,
Of France, and Rome as well,
Is not worth her least favour
When Despair doth hover.

And when to the point I came,
Of loving, and was true,
Well furnished by Hope, that same,
Then happiness, anew,
Gracious and peaceful ever,
Did thus to me accrue,
To be far from me never
Whatever I may do.

For had I even more to bear
Than I do suffer now,
If I had more than my share
Of suffering, I vow,
Still I'd be sustained and healed,
Hope would myself endow
With gifts, her kindness revealed,
And so, to her I bow.'

Lines 4718-4731: He sends his lady the Lay of Hope, and his twelfth letter

ONCE I had finished composing
The words and music that I sing
Often, so as to remember
Sweet Hope, and my lady ever,
I had it copied and notated,
So well, that what I had created
Taught that in good hope I sought
To live, and serve my love in aught.
I folded it when it was done,
And, with this letter, sent it on
To my lady, by a valet,
Despatched for that purpose only.
And I wrote how, upon my way,
Hope had captured me that day.

‘My own sweetheart, my most dear sister, my sweetest love, never had I so great a desire to know and hear good news of you and your health, and also that you might hear from me as to what happened on my journey, and thereafter. And my most sweet love, you well know how the country is full of, and overrun by, armed men and hostile soldiers, and robbers of good people. May it please you to know, my sweet love, that I had never been in greater danger, were it not for the memory and the sweet thought of you that I harbour, and ever shall. For these have granted, and still grant me, such great strength that, thanks be to God and to you, I escaped the miscreants, yet nonetheless was unable to avoid and evade dangerous pathways, and was in great fear. And when I had traversed the most dangerous of these passes, thinking to be able to ride in greater safety, I came into a quite beautiful plain where I thought of the great beauty, and the perfect goodness, and the honourable courtesy that are yours, and also of the great benefits you have accorded me, of which I am unworthy, such that I cannot and do not know how to deserve or repay them. I was unwary, gazing aside, when I suddenly saw a considerable company of most noble folk riding straight towards me. And if I was afraid, none should wonder, for in front of all rode a lady who said: “You are taken prisoner.” And when I perceived that she was a truly noble lady and also that I thought more ardently of you since this lady was most noble, I answered most humbly: “Lady, I yield.” And I asked who it was who had captured me.

And she answered that this, indeed, I would learn, and that she had done many good things, performed much service for me, for which I had never repaid her, but that before I left her, she was certain that I would swear to so do. Finally, she told me her name was Hope, and at once I was much comforted. And then Moderation and Temperance came riding up together with the rest of the company, who were most noble, and they said to her: “Lady, may it please you to receive him in such a way that he might be reconciled with you.” And then she held a grave and lengthy council with her folk, and it was ordained, of her grace, that as she had achieved for me, and granted me, many honours and benefits throughout my life, then, as a restitution and repayment for these things, and also as a fine levied by her and her people, since in this book I had composed nothing of note that might be set to her account, I should write a lay, to be called “The Lay of Hope.” The which lay, my own sweetheart and most sweet love, I enclose with this. And I beg you, as lovingly from the heart as I am able, to learn it, since it is inspired by you, for I would have no need for Hope were it not for you. And my most sweet love, since it has been composed in your honour, it is right that you should learn it before any other should so do. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God grant you such benefit, honour, and joy as I would wish for myself. Your most faithful lover.’

Lines 4732-4739: She sends her tenth letter

THEN my sweet and pretty lady
With my happiness most happy,
And pleased, indeed, that I’d won free
From where Hope had captured me,
Let not my messenger delay
But swiftly sent him on his way,
As you may read, if you choose
To read her letter, and her news.

‘My own sweet heart, and my most sweet and very faithful lover, I have well noted from your loving letter how you have fared and the adventures you experienced on the road, and also that your health is good, and for this I feel more joy than for aught else in the world. And my own sweetheart, may it please you to learn that no letter has ever been as welcome as your

last for, truly, since your previous letter, I have been full of worry, care, and fear regarding the troubles you might encounter. But when I saw your letter, I felt joy penetrate my heart as never before. Indeed, I can hardly bear the joy I feel when I hold it in my hand, for all my heart failed me in such a way that the flock of ladies who were my companions wondered what ailed me. Nonetheless, my heart recovered, and I went to my room, saying that I would rest a while. And they all went from me, for they believed that I was quite ill, and so I was. And I locked myself in my room to read your sweet letter, comprehending all that had occurred, and I understood the truth of our two hearts, which can never be disjoined. For I know well, and understand clearly, that one can scarce live without the other. And so, while reading, I had many good and many ill feelings, and yet I suffer these well enough, and they are sweet to me. So, know well, my sweetheart, that I have embraced and studied the lay enclosed in your sweet letter. And I promise you I shall learn it as soon as I am able. And I will sing no other piece until I have learned the words and the notes, for they are words and notes that please me more than have any others, ever. My most sweet lover, may Our Lord grant you good health, peace, and such joy as your heart and my own desire. Your faithful friend.'

Lines 4740-4771: The lover is assailed by Desire and writes his thirteenth letter, in verse

YET as I have told you before,
And the work reveals, I am sure
Those who feel love's stings anew
Do not an even course pursue;
Many a pang they feel, rather,
One hour sweet the next bitter.
Now Desire, who has slain many,
Wished to put a swift end to me,
And so, assailed me everywhere,
At any hour, where'er I did fare,
Nor could I bear it patiently
For he would never let me be,
At church, abroad, or in the town,
Thus, twas but misery I found,

Living with such a pestilence
That neither Sweet Thought's fair presence,
Nor Hope, could gain the victory,
Rather he vanquished us all three;
Truly, our efforts were denied
So fiercely, my heart often sighed.
Such discomfort I did suffer,
In verse I composed this letter,
And sent it on to my lady
Since my heart ached so badly,
Nor let any know what dolour
Had thus robbed me of my colour.
And so, with tears I was blessed,
The only good that I possessed.

'My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Hear how your lover doth complain.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how true to you I remain.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Let my dwelling be at your side,
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Hear how Desire doth now abide
In my heart, and doth there reside.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Let me journey to be with you,
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Grant me to find fair day, anew.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Hear from afar how I must weep,
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how for you my tears run deep.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Dry up this flood of tears entire.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Quench the heat of this great desire,
Temper the fierceness of its rigour

That robs me now of all my vigour.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
On my great suffering take pity.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Let your heart display its mercy.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See my pain, my torment, ever.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how for your love I suffer.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See my sorrows, see how bitter.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See my trouble and my dolour.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Consider all my terrors here.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how, for my own self, I fear.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
My state of being view, now see,
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how I moan, thus, secretly,
For your fair and lovely body.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how for you is all my labour.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
See how for you I lose my colour.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Let flow the river of your sweetness.
My heart, my sister, my sweet love,
Revive me, and dispel this paleness.

Adieu, my own sweetheart,
And God grant you peace,
And the good your heart desires.
Your most faithful friend.'

Lines 4772-4775: The lady replies with her eleventh letter

THEN my lady, saddened in turn,
Delayed not, writing in return,
Such is certain, it doth appear,
As in her letter is made clear.

‘My own sweetheart and my most sweet lover, the letter you sent me has given me more to do and think about than any letter you have sent before. Know that I marvel very much as to why you make such complaint and clamour and why your life is so hard. For I think you have found no cause in me why you should act so, nor is it my intention that you should ever find one, though I am sure your heart fares ill because you are so far from me, and, indeed, I have experienced the same myself, for in truth I cannot tell you the great distress that is mine; and yet I take comfort because, God please, I will soon see you again. And I beg you, as strongly as I can, and command you with whatever power I have over you that you will drive all woe and care of every kind from your heart, that is, if you wish my own to be eased, and find good comfort for yourself. For I swear and promise, by my faith, that I have not bestowed on you one hundred thousandth part of the benefit and sweetness I would wish to bestow. Nor, while I live will you find me unwilling to do whatever may please you. So, you should not feel woeful, I think, but rather be joyful and happy. Be so, I pray you, if you love me at all. And, regarding this, I am sending you this ballad that I have drawn from the fount of tears in which my heart bathes whenever I see you in such misery, for, by God, I would not, and could not, feel joy or happiness as long as I knew you felt such pain and sadness; and that is why I have made the ballad that follows, with weeping heart and ailing body. Your loyal friend.’

Lines 4776-4799: Her fourth ballad, ‘Il nest douleur desconfort ne tristesse’ (Ballad CXCIV)

‘THERE’S no dolour, discomfort, or distress,
Sorrow, annoyance, or mournful thought,
Or pain or harshness, wound, or bitterness,
Or other mischief that true Love has brought,

I feel not; so, weep, and sigh,
Such that my heart's drowned by the tears I cry,
Yet every day from bad to worse I tend,
And all for you, fair, sweet, and loyal friend.

For when I see I've no means to address
My lack of gazing on your noble person,
And your sweetness that my heart no less
Afflicts, from afar, and for like reason,
I lack comfort all the more,
And so, must rue the day, and weep full sore,
My only joy to contemplate my end,
And all for you, fair, sweet, and loyal friend.

Yet if I'm far from you, my days endless,
Ne'er think that of such loving I repent,
For loyalty instructs me, nonetheless,
To love you ever, with most true intent,
Such that my mind, and loving
Heart, will, thought, and ceaseless longing,
I have reserved, and to none else extend,
And all for you, fair, sweet, and loyal friend.'

Lines 4800-4843: Somewhat chastened, he replies with his fourteenth letter

NOW, when I read of her distress
For love of me, her heart, no less,
Bathed in a faithful lover's tears,
All her joyful thoughts, it appears,
Having changed to thoughts of woe,
Such that she was but wretched so,
And that the fault was due to me,
Since I'd complained, relentlessly,
In the letter I had sent her,
Troubling her peace, moreover,
Then I bitterly repented

That feeling so discontented,
So stung by amorous desire,
I'd written her a note so dire;
Did not the fair one feel the same,
In that heart her breast did claim
That caused her now so much distress?
Yet she'd kept silent, nonetheless,
Suffering and hoping, patiently,
That what had not been might yet be.
For whoe'er feels such weight of care
Should not relapse into despair,
Because of their desire; instead
Must yet hope, e'er joy is dead,
That happiness may yet return,
Though the fires of longing burn,
And that, with mercy's sweetest dew,
Their ardour, that doth burn anew,
Shall be quenched, its powers fail
That render many a lover pale.
To cross myself I then began,
Though it cured me not, to plan,
Since too great my longing proved;
Intoxicated thus, I loved.
Many a time I read her letter,
All alone, with none there other
Than myself, and her fair portrait,
To which I offered, for my late
Misdeed, my error and my folly,
That offended gainst my lady,
My excuses, and straight away,
Wrote this letter, that very day,
And most humbly, and did accuse
Desire, my actions to excuse.

'My own sweetheart, my dear sister, and my most sweet love, I thank you as humbly as I am able and by no means as much as I ought for your most sweet and gracious letter, which has comforted me so much that there is no

sadness or pain that can come upon me. And I will do what you command, the best I may. And if my letter was in any way offensive, this was Desire's doing, in whom I have trusted more than I should. So please pardon me if you will. There is news from here, if you please to know it; several great lords know of our love, and have sent me a chaplain who is very much my friend, commanding me, by him, to send them some of your compositions with those I have written in response, especially "She that never did you see," And I have obeyed their command, having sent them several of your pieces and of my own. And they wish to know if it is true that I possess a portrait of you. And I showed it to their messenger, it looking fine, being richly adorned and placed above my bedhead. And everyone wonders what this might mean. Know that they are aware how you revived me, restoring my joy and health even though you had never seen me. And they think as much good of you, and of your sweetness and humility, as those of any lady they had heard tell of. And I have written to them, in praise of you, regarding the goodness and sweetness in the portrait, and how it seems to me, my sweetheart. And since it has happened that in the kingdom and Empire our love affair has been made known and revealed, especially to the nobler people, then any man who slanders us two must certainly have been born in an evil hour, for honour shall never be his. And, by my soul, my most sweet sister, I place such high trust in your noble heart, and in the purity of your sweetness (where I know for certain only loyalty could dwell) that I feel wholly secure. And I am at your service in every way. And as regards myself, I think that naught but death could remove my heart from you, or make me depart from you. So, you should put your mind at rest about this. And indeed, my most sweet sister, I take such joy and pleasure in your good reputation and in the praise granted you, that is heard everywhere and will continue to be heard if God grants me to live, that no pain or sadness could overcome me. And it is in my thoughts that all the good things and happiness that I see, which others possess, is trial and tribulation compared with the happiness and good things that are mine. And there is good reason for this, for were I the most perfect man in every respect who had ever lived, I would find in you a surfeit of benefit and sweetness. And, my sweetheart, in regard to that noble and rich treasure whose key is mine, by God I will find my way to unlocking it as soon as I am able. And these will be present at its unlocking: Faith, Loyalty, Justice, and Measure. And if Desire wishes to be the master, he will not be allowed

to be so, for you, and I, and Loyalty, and Good Hope are all allied against him. And, by my faith, he is already half undone. Nor would I concern myself with aught he could do to me, thanks to the sweet and loving letters you have written. I have composed a rondel that I am sending you. And you shall have the music by the first messenger I will send, and there is your name, as you will see, in the rondel enclosed with this letter. And, my sweetheart, if you remember me, by God, you will not do wrong, since for you I have abandoned all other memories and thoughts. And regarding what you have said about trusting me so much that I would prove unable to do anything that might displease you, may God bless you for it, for, by my soul, I shall keep far from any such thing, please God. My sweetheart, upon my soul, I have never in all my life heard aught said of you that was not all virtue, faithfulness, and honour. And I have driven all doubt and all suspicion from my heart, and I believe that your sweet pretty lips would never deign to lie. So, hold strongly to the fact that I live more with joy and celebration than any other lover in this land where I dwell, and I have begun once more on composing that book about you in which you shall be praised and honoured to the best of my poor ability, and so shall all ladies, through my love of you. And my most sweet love, your sensitive ears should be burning often, because I am never in company with any who do not speak constantly of you, and so favourably that all those who have seen you compare you to the precious red garnet that brightens the dark night, or the sapphire that cures all ills, or the emerald that makes every heart rejoice. In brief, every man considers you the very flower of womankind. And, by that same God who made me, I take more pleasure in this than I could say or write, and all this you will learn from others, not simply myself. And so I would not exchange my wishes, memories, and sweet thoughts for a fine kingdom, and when I contemplate your pure, refined, and noble sweetness, which is firmly enclosed within my heart, like a rich treasure within its coffer, and set like a precious stone in gold, it is often my thought that I am with you in as pleasurable a fashion as ever I was. And my sweetheart, if I fail to send you my compositions as often as I was accustomed to so do, I beg you, humbly, not to be displeased with me, for had I a head of iron, a heart of steel, and a body formed of diamond, I would not be able to labour over your book and also set my mind to composing other works, so that I must set aside the one for the other. I ask you, as humbly as I can, and with all my heart to be pleased to send

something that you wear nearest your heart so that I can lay it as near to mine as I am able. And, indeed, if you send such a thing to me, I will consider it a true and worthy relic. And you are so virtuous and so wise you know well what I mean. And, also, please make some fitting arrangement with your sister concerning me, so that when I visit, we can enjoy a pleasant time together without incurring any danger. Adieu, my own sweetheart, and may God give you the good things and the joy you desire. Your faithful lover.'

Lines 4844-4881: He praises her to himself, and receives her twelfth letter

MY lady thus revived my joy,
In the terms I did here employ,
Through a most gracious demand,
By means of her sweet command,
She, in whom my heart dwells entire;
And I pray God that my desire
To be with her He'll soon satisfy,
For I do need naught else, say I,
Nor may He let me live longer,
But take my life and my honour,
If I should desert her ever,
For when I go to be with her
Let there be no cause for regret,
And let whoe'er speak of it yet
As they may wish, but truthfully,
For certainly such folk will see
Without a doubt, lest they be liars,
Lilies growing from sharp briars,
Fruit upon bare roots appearing,
Spiny brambles balm producing,
A rose on a lily-stem growing,
Which would be the strangest thing,
Ere I might be seen to wander,
Or desert her or neglect her.
Such a thing could never be,

No more than I could, readily,
Suck honey from my little finger,
Since tis true loyalty I owe her,
For I am hers in every guise,
And nor could it be otherwise.
I hope that such she doth intend
Whenever she doth call me friend,
In goodness naming each her friend,
Yet loving but one, in the end.
And this I learn from her reply,
And naught else do I seek, say I;
I'll give it, as from her it came,
So as to lose naught of that same.

‘My sweetheart, my sweet love, and my very dear friend, may it please you to know that, thanks to God and yourself, I feel well, and so does my heart, because I know it is in so pleasant and sweet a dwelling-place that naught can harm it as long as it remains with you. For, by God, it is there always, and will be my life through. And when I consider that I have found it a lodging so fine that I could not own or wish for better, my body can feel no ill. And since I know that your heart is wholly within me, and that you feel secure in my love, and that you are joyful in celebration, I feel such joy as I cannot express. For, assuredly, I could not feel joy or comfort as long as I knew you were troubled. My sweetheart, I have received your letter in which you tell me that several great lords know of our love, and have requested that you send them some of your compositions and of my own. And it pleases me very much for you to send them these, for I would like very much for God and all the world to know that I love you and am fonder of you than any man living. And I consider myself more graced and honoured by your love than by that of any prince or king in the world, for, in my opinion, no woman in the world has a finer love than I. And for this I thank God, Amor, and Venus every day, and more than a hundred times. And I know for certain that I shall never play you false and thus merit blame; so, for all these reasons I care not if our love is revealed. Thus, you well know that all is for the best. And my sweetheart, you write that you feel such great joy for my good reputation that nothing ill can happen to you. And, by God, my sweetheart, I feel the same about yours (and ought

indeed to do so) for I believe that no one in all the world has won more renown among all the noblest people. And you know that this was the origin of our love, which began over-late for my liking. The greatest regret I feel is for the fair time we have lost, and there is naught I would not give for us to have begun sooner. And, my sweetheart, you write that you will come soon to unlock the treasure chest whose key you possess. And if those persons of quality whom you have suggested shall be at the unlocking are present, this gathering will be even more worthy, and I think very much that they will be present. Now do not believe, in the least, that should Desire appear he can in any way harm us, for this noble company will swiftly undo him. I have looked over the rondel that you have sent me, and I found my name there readily, and my joy is great that you have returned to composing our book, for I am more eager you work on that than anything else. And it will prove sufficient for me for you to send me any little rondel or new song you write, for I wish to learn none but yours. And, by my faith, I shall not be displeased at all if you send them to some other than me, for something that pleases you could not displease me, provided, if you will, that they are mine at first. I am not sending that which you requested, for it seems to me that it would not be good to have it delivered by this messenger. But I will send it by your valet as soon as you dispatch him to me with your prayer beads, for I cannot send it as soon as I would like. But I am sending along the hair-ornament and kerchief as well as the hair-ribbon that I wore the day I received your letter. My sister commends herself to you, and doubt not, for I will find opportunity enough for us to unlock the treasure chest at our ease. H... your friend, has been in Paris. He commends himself to you many times, and is most happy for your good-fortune and my own, and will gladly exert himself to enable us to gain more. By God, we should love him, for he is the one who presided over the beginning of our love-affair. And my sweetheart, I do not think ill at all that you have requested I send to you, what you ask, for I know well there is no ill intention in this. And I will send it along as soon as I can manage. By the God in whom I believe, you will never find me slow to do aught that I know will give you pleasure. I pray you commend me to my brother and your own, and give him this gold ring, and tell him that I wish him to wear it in my honour. My dear friend, I beg Our Lord grant you the good things and honour I would wish for you. Your true love.'

Lines 4882-4955: Regarding Queen Semiramis

THERE you have the pleasing letter,
My sweet lady, the only begetter,
Wrote to me, and I read it through,
Meditated upon it, too,
And indeed, when thinking of her,
To that queen I might compare her,
She who was named Semiramis,
Possessed of lovers and great riches,
And who of Nineveh was ruler,
In the marches of Chaldea,
As Valerius Maximus
In his 'Deeds and Sayings' tells us.
Queen Semiramis was noble,
Honourable, hating scandal,
Nor was her heart so awry
She would do harm to aught thereby.
No more was she prepared to see
Any bring shame through villainy,
On her people, or work damage,
But wished to guard her heritage;
Thus, she loved a friend greatly,
And felt hate towards an enemy,
While she preferred, assuredly,
For vengeance to yield to mercy,
Being generous, and forgiving,
Finding other's woes saddening.
It seems, to the palace one day,
One fair and fine, in every way,
Where were knights in vast company,
And of her household full many,
A messenger came, swift apace,
Crying to all: 'I come in haste.
I must speak to the queen' he said;
She being curtained, still, in bed.
The queen was yet dressing there,

When to that chamber he did fare,
And stood before her to proclaim
His news, the reason why he came,
Swearing, then, by Saint Anthony,
That Babylon, that mighty city,
Had lately rebelled against her.
The lady, with unfinished coiffure,
For one half was braided fully
While other tresses hung limply,
Dressed herself, in that very state,
And then proceeded at great rate
To her people in the palace hall,
Bravely, and wisely, telling all,
Of the trouble, and the outrage,
Announced by the present message,
Which she'd received, most suddenly,
Regarding Babylon, her city,
And that she would ne'er be happy,
Nor rest in that place or any,
Nor would she braid another tress
Until relieved of her distress.
Then she summoned her vast host
And ably sent all to their post,
So as to assault that city
And, thus, assert her sovereignty,
And laid it siege, until all came
To recognise her prior claim.
Was not this a thing of honour?
If that mighty warrior, Hector,
Had done the like, twere great, surely?
And so the people of that country,
To grant that effort its full due,
Honoured her with a bronze statue,
With half her tresses braided closely,
And half portrayed as unruly,
So as to show her look and manner
During the battle and, moreover,

Commemorate the victory,
And keep it long in memory.

Lines 4956-5039: He compares his lady to Queen Semiramis

NOW, I would compare my lady
To Semiramis, who would clearly
No more adorn her face or figure,
Maintaining it as twas by Nature,
Until she had worked a proper
Vengeance on the evil done her.
Here, I am Babylon, that city
Which belongs to her entirely,
By right, as part of her domain,
And she my sovereign, tis plain.
But Desire and Melancholy,
And fear of losing my lady,
Long delay, long hours waiting
To see her, pensive and grieving,
And then not knowing where she is,
And then no friend in all of this,
In all the world, ne'er a creature
Who might tell her how I suffer,
These things engender a million
Heart-aches, and stir rebellion,
Thus, extinguishing the lantern
Of Hope, who doth the city govern,
Such that Hope flees weary of me,
By night, and hurts me grievously.
Yet when my dear lady doth hear
Of my news she will soon appear
If someone begs her to help me
Indeed, none could conceivably
Know how she hastens to my aid,
Or how readily tis displayed,
For no matter where she may be,
As soon as my letter she doth see,

And hears of any trouble that I,
Her city, encounters, by and by,
She will be swiftly there at hand,
To help as greatly as she can,
In a manner as honourable
As it will be most suitable,
Restoring Hope to her true seat,
Sending the others in retreat,
Such that they go to destruction,
Or are captives, in subjection.
And as to the statue that was made,
Of Semiramis, there portrayed,
Then the people of the country
True-born liegemen of my lady,
Should a similar work create,
Great of form, scale, and estate,
In manner and in countenance
Equal to her face and semblance,
A work so lovely to the eye
As to please all folk, thereby,
And of its beauty all would tell
And call my lady 'Toute Belle'.
Discomforted should it not appear,
Then, indeed, I would greatly fear
Desire, and every other scoundrel
Allied, making noise and trouble,
Who show themselves, at his side,
Whene'er they can no longer hide.
Her country's Virtues would send me
Her statue, and those same would be
Generosity and Pity,
Pure Sweetness and true Amity,
Reason, Loyalty, and Measure,
All attending to the matter,
Hope bringing the fair work to me,
So as to sweetly comfort me,
Who yet brings comfort every day,

Guarding my heart's gate always,
So those wretches cannot enter,
And do the city harm ever.
And if Desire would come there
He must be as one sweet and fair,
And carry neither fire nor flame,
That might set ablaze that same,
Nor shall there be a single thought
That might oppose myself in aught.
And if I am too long apart
From my lady, yet, at heart,
I hope to view her joyfully,
Which cannot come too soon for me,
So, to that image I then turn
Of paradise, for which I yearn.

Lines 5040-5055: He sends his lady his fifteenth letter

MY lady then has been compared
To Semiramis who was prepared
To go with loosened hair until
She had true vengeance for the ill
Her errant subjects wrought on her.
Firmly correcting their error.
So, I must answer my lady,
The best that in this world may be,
That is, reply to her last letter,
For none could bestow upon her
A greater goodness or sweetness
While my eye saw in her no less
Than the purest truest ever
Form of any human creature.
So, I replied that very day,
As you shall hear, without delay.

‘My own sweetheart, my sweet sister, my sweet love and all that my heart desires, I have received your letter in which you give me to know of your

happy state, and this affords me such joy I could not own to a greater. For whenever I know that you are well, no ill can come to me. And if I should ever hear the contrary, yet may God protect you from such and I also, assuredly I would be lost and dead. So, I beg you, my own sweetheart, to take good care of yourself, for these times are most dangerous, especially where you are. And, my true sweetheart, if you are happy at my contentment, my joy, and my good fortune, you are not deceived, for your contentment and your joy are mine, nor do I make any distinction twixt you and me, for what is good for one must be so for the other. And, my sweetheart, your gracious letter has made me rejoice so much that by that same God who made me, every time I read it tears of pure and utter joy flow from my eyes, for it is a vale full of joy, a river of sweetness, a respite from death, to hear it, and I have read it more than twenty times. And any who has never loved, by my faith, should he hear it, he would love, providing he were not too foolish or unfortunate. My true sweetheart, you have made me the guardian and treasurer of the two noblest things in all the world, and those are your heart and your most rich treasure. And, please God, I shall keep such a true guard over them that God and yourself and all who learn of it will think themselves quite satisfied, for I well know that you protect my heart better than I could yours. And may it please you to learn that, when I received your letter, the lords I wrote about earlier inquired after your verses and my own, especially those regarding my viewing of your portrait and how I have honoured it and in what reverence I hold it, and indeed, I showed it to them. And they marvelled greatly, and assured me that you are peerless among women. And, my sweetheart, you tell me that you praise God, Love, and Venus for having provided you with so fine a lover, and that you would in no way accept the greatest man in the world in place of me, your lover. Surely, sweet friend of my heart, you are very much mistaken, for by my soul I am not worthy enough to look upon you, or even remove your shoes. And so you ought not praise Love; instead I am the one who should thank and praise him for having assigned me to one like you, the very flower of women, and who is so much mine that you say I can do naught to displease you, nor would you ever grow tired of doing what might please me. May God adore you, for this I cannot deserve, nor am I worthy of it, my own sweetheart. I thank you very dearly for what you have sent, and will send. And, by my soul, every night I sleep with these things against my heart, and kiss them a hundred times a day. Your

book I am addressing, and it is well advanced, for I write a hundred lines every day. And, by my soul, I could not keep myself from doing so, the subject pleases me so much; moreover, I know that you are very eager to see it. Yet I find considerable difficulty in ascertaining which letters correspond to which others. So, I ask you to date all the letters you send me from now on, but without identifying the location. I would have travelled to you, in company with the bearer of this letter, but for two reasons I shall inform you of below. And, by God, my sweetheart, I will come to unlock that precious and gracious treasure as soon as I am able; since, and may God give me joy in you whom I love more than anything in the world, never did I so desire anything in all my life, and I have gone without sleep more than thirty times this last month. And my own sweetheart, you are troubled that we have found each other so tardily; by God, so am I; yet, herein, lies the remedy. Let us lead as happy a life together as we can at this time, and in these circumstances, so that it shall prove recompense for the time we have lost, and thus our love affair will be spoken about for a hundred years after us, as wholly good and honourable. Now, if there was aught wrong therein, you would indeed conceal it from God if you could. But there has only been what is virtuous and ever shall be: and one can never do too much good. And thus, each of us two should rival the other in loving virtuously. Sweetheart, commend me very humbly to your sister; all my heart rejoices with the joy I await, and because I know you will find the means and opportunity for your treasure to be unlocked. I am sending you a ballad composed at the end of the month when I left you; afterward I began work on your book. And, my very sweet sister, I beg you to be very certain that you and your sister plan a pilgrimage to Saint-Nicaise of Reims, for both yourselves and her children. And by my faith, I promise to go to seek you at the Porte Saint-Antoine. And T... your brother, will come with me. My own sweetheart, you cause me to be wakeful most of the night, and to write most of the day, but by my soul this does not weigh heavily on me at all. Rather I take such great pleasure in it I cannot attend to other matters. And this for the love of 'Toute Belle', whom you should know well. Adieu, my true sweetheart, and my most sweet sister, and my dearest lady, and may God give you peace, and health, and joy in whatever your heart desires. Written this eighth day of August. Your faithful friend.'

Lines 5056-5079: His fifteenth ballad 'Huis ha .j. moy que je me departi' (Ballad CLXI)

'THIS day marks one whole month since I parted
From her, of whom is my every thought,
And ne'er has my weary heart imparted
So harsh a woe, to be endured, in aught,
As it has in this parting,
Nor 'to God I commend you', on leaving
My lovely lady, could I yet utter,
So grievous was my departure from her.

For, there, my grieving heart nigh broke in two,
So full was it of both grief and ardour,
When I perceived that I must leave, anew,
The sweet look, sweet glance and noble figure,
And most gentle countenance
Of my lady, and her fair elegance,
And truly my life was in grave danger,
So grievous was my departure from her.

And I, without a doubt, have never seen
Another who could so arouse my heart
To such delight; and tis but right, I mean
That naught, without her, comes, by any art
Of joy, or comfort, or sweet glance,
For to her I've granted such allegiance
My face could show but sorrow thereafter,
So grievous was my departure from her.'

Lines 5080-5103: Her fifth ballad 'Amis, si parfaitement' (Ballad CXCIX)

'Lover mine, so perfectly
I'm consigned to you,
There can ne'er a parting be
No space twixt us two;

As long as life is left me,
Ne'er shall my true heart stray,
And if another love me,
Then he shall fail, alway.

So truly, so lovingly,
I'm enamoured now,
Of your fair, noble body,
Beyond all, I avow,
That for none shall I allow
True heart to wend its way,
And if another love me,
Then he shall fail, alway.

So, my love, assuredly,
I but think of you,
And all my love completely
Is bestowed there too,
Nor will my heart change anew
Through any long delay,
And if another love me,
Then he shall fail, alway.'

Lines 5104-5107: She sends the preceding ballad with her thirteenth letter

THE ballad I have given here
Within the letter did appear
Which follows, and it answered me
As it ought, and most fittingly.

'My sweetheart, brother, companion, and true friend, I have received your letter from my brother T... who told me that it is long since he saw you in so good a state as you are now. And I take such great joy in this that I could not find greater joy in aught that might happen, except seeing you, which I desire more than all other things. And, if it please you, come to me at the place the bearer of these gifts will tell you of, where I aim to be, God

willing, during the eight-day period around mid-August. For we are to leave Monday next, and my sister and I will journey there because of the plague that is so very great where I dwell. And as soon as I arrive, I will let you know, so write nothing until you hear news from me. My own sweetheart, I am sending what you requested and your prayer-beads as well, and I promise faithfully that I have worn these things, in the very condition I am sending them, for two nights and three days without removing them. And as soon as the chain was made, I wore your prayer-beads just as I send them to you. And I ask you to please wear them, and I am sending another little set along with a little chain for your portrait, and these I have worn a long time around my arm. And I beg you, my true sweetheart, not to be unhappy that I send these things so tardily, for this I cannot remedy. And if I have anything else that might please you, do ask for it, and I will send it willingly, for, by my faith, I have naught that is not yours. And if you say you do not distinguish between my possessions and your own, such that what one owns the other owns too, you are correct, by my faith, for I make no distinction in the matter either, but consider, wholly, that all of your goods are my own, and that mine in turn are yours. And I could not feel better, to my satisfaction. And I swear to you, on my faith, that the love I have for you is so great that none could be greater. And I believe it increases every day and so the virtue of loving grows as well. And I am certain you believe the same, in turn. And it would be no light thing for a game to be lost where the stake ever increases. I have received the four ballads that you sent me and have sent one back as one who draws strength from you. But I am very much troubled regarding how hard you labour. And so, I pray you, my own sweetheart, not to work so hard that your health worsens, for, by God, this would cause me great grief. And I would be happy if, whenever you wrote, you but sent along a little song or some rondel, and let it be set to music. For I wish to sing none but yours, and yet many others are brought to me, but I do not intend making the effort to learn them, for I think that all the works others compose are valueless in comparison to those of yours. And so, I ask, my true sweetheart, that you send me less but that those you do send are set to music. And, if you please, send the virelay which you composed before ever you had seen me, which is called "The eye that is Love's true archer", or send me "Brighter than daylight's brightness", for they seem most fine to me. And, my sweetheart, you have written that I cause you to stay awake

by night and write most of the day, and by my faith you have the same effect on me, except that I do not write as much as you do; yet I think as deeply about the love between us, so that, by the God in whom I believe, I think more about that than anything else. And it often happens that I spend a whole day in my room or some other place, avoiding people so that they might not disturb my thoughts of you. And my sister, along with the people in the house, is concerned that I stay so frequently by myself, for such has not been my custom, but I cannot refrain from doing so, since I derive so much pleasure from thinking about you. My sweetheart, my sister commends herself to you, often, and is very eager to see you, and she came to me while this letter was being composed and asked if I was writing to my lover. And I answered her with a 'yes'. And she said to me "Commend me to him many times, for by God I would like to see him." And I ask you, my sweetheart, to commend me to your brother and my own, for, by my faith, he is one of the men in this world I most desire to see, after you. My sweetheart and my sweet friend, I pray that Our Lord grant you honour, peace, health, and joy of whatever your heart desires, if I might share therein. Written the Sunday before mid-August. Your loyal friend.'

Lines 5108-5132: Her sixth ballad 'Puis que tant a languir ay'

SHE did a new ballad enclose
With her letter, and I suppose
It written with her own fair hand,
In that sweet style she doth command.

'Since I here must languish so,
Due to all this long delay,
My love, I'll take comfort though
In the thought that I'm always
Loved by you in the true way
In which I swear love also,
For virtuous love doth grow.

And as soon as I may see
Your face again, my true love,
Of this pain I shall be free

From which I long seek remove,
And healed of all ill shall prove,
Joyfully, by this shall show,
That virtuous love doth grow.

And then, as well, I shall heal
Sweetly and most privately
The pain your heart doth reveal
Desire inflicts most cruelly,
And joy will redoubled be,
And a loving heart you'll know,
Where virtuous love doth grow.'

Lines 5133-5176: He speaks of Hebe and her rejuvenation of Iolaus

NOW have you heard, and at first hand,
How she who doth my heart command
Sent me her letters, portrait too,
Relics, and poems fresh and new,
And all these I worshipped, truly,
And guarded them, reverently,
As my true earthly deities.
In short, I loved naught more than these,
Except for my lady only.
And, at every hour, you'd see me,
Press these things closely, for my part,
To my body, right next my heart;
For the sweetness that thence did flow
Nourished me so sweetly, I know,
That it proved my greatest nurture,
Derived from pleasure, yet purer,
Which did myself, thereby, maintain,
And life in me did e'er sustain.
It was my heart, it was my joy,
Twas all I wished then to enjoy;
Thus, I may make comparison
Without committing any wrong,

Between Hebe and my lady,
For the goddess of youth was she,
Cup-bearer to the deities,
And she, when asked by Hercules,
Made old Iolaus young again,
On Tivulus' mount; I maintain,
He was wise Callirrhoe's son.
Of lords or pages there was none
Did not cross himself to see it;
For every man marvelled at it,
And even the gods were amazed,
Once its truth had been appraised.
And so, the deities often brought
Their aged relatives, and sought
From Hebe that they might be made
Young and fit again, and prayed
Her to rejuvenate them, though
She would not agree, even so,
For the goddess was most wise,
Responding cleverly likewise,
That it was not her place to steal
Nature's role, or her laws repeal.

Lines 5177-5196: His lady likewise rejuvenated him

MY lady did the same for me,
By the faith I owe Saint Remi,
Rejuvenated by her beauty,
Which did ever dwell within me;
By means of my imagination,
I there possessed its impression
And ever might act youthfully,
And feel happiness within me,
My spirit ever young and bright,
Which rendered my troubles light.
Though in the end none can hold
To life, indeed, and not grow old;

To Nature everyone must pay
The debt, the tax, they owe, someday;
And if one could do otherwise,
Nature would complain, likewise.
But my lady, of her noblesse,
Acted like a mother goddess,
One I adore, fear and desire,
To whom my wishes all aspire.

Lines 5197-5234: He is absent two months from his lady

A long time, thus, was I living,
Neither weeping nor complaining,
Since my way of life so pleased me,
For naught there was displeased me
That from those ladies came to me;
Letting Love command me, wholly,
Because I was full satisfied,
As every joy was at my side,
And I lacked naught one might desire,
Aught that a lover might require,
Except of course I could not see
My sweet, fair, and virtuous lady,
From whom I was too long away,
Hardly pleased she could not stay
Due to the epidemic there
Where she was, and so must fare
To a region where I knew none,
Not a single friendly person,
God save me, nary a creature,
Of whom I could ask a favour,
Or take into my confidence.
And if you say I should have hence
Despatched a message, I dared not,
Such was the nature of my lot,
For she forbade it altogether;
If you've attended to her letter,

No message might I send to her
Till I had certain news of her.
And it was two whole months entire,
For, now, to a third time did aspire,
Since I'd had news of her at all,
So, I knew not what did befall,
Nor whether she'd feigned this delay,
As a ruse, and her love did stray.
Thus, I was eager to meet her,
Since I'd not dared to write to her,
Nor did she write to me; rather,
Neither knew aught of the other.

Lines 5235-5292: He is plagued by Desire, and dreams of his lady dressed in green

TWAS now the unsleeping enemy,
That Desire, who oft has wronged me,
Approached to enact his treason,
Brandished his torch and, with one
Thrust, sent it deep into my heart,
Burning, despite me, with his art,
All its domain, and, by my soul,
Brought fire and flame upon the whole.
While Memory who, a thousand times,
Had brought comfort and joy betimes,
And granted me every benefit,
Stole all my joy, as she saw fit,
For strange and disordered thought,
To my troubled mind, she brought,
Thought that was shaped, wretchedly,
By anger and melancholy,
And naught else did Memory bring
Save discomfort with everything,
And thus, I was anxious that she
Whom I love, where'er I may be,
Freely, with a heart that's true,

Might be attired in green not blue.
With such thoughts as I had there,
I felt drowsy, weighted with care,
And, anxious yet, fell into slumber,
Though little good it did me, rather,
While sleeping, I dreamed a dream,
And, as I dreamt, then it did seem,
When I adored her sweet image,
My lady turned away her visage,
Nor would she deign to look at me,
Which pierced my heart grievously.
And all in green she now did dress,
Which signified mere fickleness.
Then of those images likewise,
Once fashioned by Virgil the wise,
I thought, that turned their heads away
When rebellion did the Romans sway,
Yet I had ne'er, all subjection,
A single thought of rebellion,
For no shade of wrong from me
Came to my beloved lady.
And, thus, if I felt as if dead
When she thus turned away her head,
Seeing her dressed so, all in green,
Ne'er a trace of blue to be seen,
Then no man should wonder at me,
For neath the sky, on land or sea,
No man has e'er in his dreaming
Known such ill of such ill-seeming,
In that her sweet and noble face
Denied my eye all its sweet grace.
There, from her presence I did go
Full of anxious thought, in woe,
Without a view of her sweet face
And so, proceeded to a place
Where were many a lady bright,
Many a maid, squire and knight.

Lines 5293-5454: The King That Tells No Lie

ONE man there, open and handsome,
Was seated on a silken cushion,
That was fine, and fair, and which
Was worked in an embroidered stitch.
His seat was higher than the rest,
And his hair was fittingly dressed
With a garland of violets, made
By his lovers, and there displayed.
I greeted all that company,
Who treated me most courteously,
And made me sit beside them there,
So as to view the whole affair.
Now I saw, for I sat nearby,
Here was 'The King That Tells No Lie',
And everyone, on either hand,
Obeyed and revered that man,
As did I; briefly, and in short,
All were presented at his court,
Where was many a fine request
Uttered, which, I would suggest,
I need not give; too long a piece
All that would make; I'll hold my peace,
Yet, when twas my turn for speaking,
In this guise, I addressed the king:
'King, you must needs speak truthfully,
Justly, loyally, charitably,
Loving all your good friends deeply,
Loathing your every enemy.
For he does much wrong, for one,
Who, while cruel as a lion,
In times of peace to his friend,
Every courtesy doth extend
To his enemy in time of war;
In this world he can do no more

To incur his good people's blame
Than to acquire such evil fame.
Truth is a most wonderful thing
In the mouth of a virtuous king,
While evil is the mouth that lies,
Whether tis royal or otherwise,
As well his teeth were of cement,
His mouth diseased, if his intent
Were to deceive; none would complain;
That would be wise for, sans doubt,
If lies are in, then honour's out,
Since it is sinful, rank deception,
To speak aught but one's intention.
In kings the fault shows clear ever,
To say one thing and do another.
True justice you should render all,
Weighing it fully, whate'er befall;
In other words, so faithfully
That all receive it equally,
While anger, favour, pity, love,
Hatred, rank, fear, none should move
You to exchange truth for a lie,
If you would gain honour thereby.
For if tis honour you would gain
You should never, in your domain,
Render the weak more wretched still,
Rather you should display goodwill,
Your heart eager to blunt the power
Of your enemy and theirs, each hour.
Noble hearts no ill should render
To those in need of a defender,
But if the strong they should conquer,
Then they win both praise and honour.
There the heart knows greater glory
Where noble victory's the story.
You should be filled with largesse,
Free of cowardice and idleness,

Give what you have with happy cheer,
Promise all that's yet to appear,
Bestowing all that you acquire,
Enough of giving ne'er desire,
Are you afear'd that you may lack?
You'll have plenty at your back,
More than you need, if you conform
To my words; upon that stag's horn,
In your hall, hang your great seal,
That no tongue may such ill reveal
That it earns not letter or gold;
Let your wide doors ever unfold,
Since largesse doth so command
Towards all those who make demand.
But guard yourself from avarice,
Tis in a king's heart a great vice,
That worth, honour, praise and grace
Must destroy, and renown efface;
It brings a king such infamy
That no man can love him, clearly.
Next, ever the ladies honour,
In word and deed; and endeavour
To keep your mind on honour set,
Thus, dishonour shall you forget.
Love God above and chivalry,
Good conscience, and live honestly,
And your wide lands you shall retain,
Great battles and fierce wars sustain.
King, I know that you judge fairly,
Loathe evil judges, equally,
And, judging honestly, thereby
Are named the King That Tells No Lie;
I know that you hate villainy,
And love all acts of courtesy,
Arms, ladies, honour, such enjoy,
So, these few words I will employ,
If they will cause you no annoy:

There's not a knight, squire, or mere boy,
Not one soul, shall fail to hate you,
If your lands you defend not, too,
But risk losing your realm entire,
Which is a grievous matter, sire.
Then some who love you are ever
Those who love you for your silver,
Caring naught for you or honour,
Except as long as wealth's on offer,
And if you seek to halt their pay
Then they'll not serve a single day,
Or, if they do, tis understood,
They'll do nothing to your good.
What worth has service without love?
No more than a kingdom doth prove
Of worth, whose absent lord will not
Defend it when ruin is its lot.
Unlit ovens, mills left idle,
They are worth, I think, but little.
And if you had, for your pleasure,
At this hour, the whole world's treasure,
Adored a hundred times a day,
Yet never gave a sou away,
Twould not be worth a pile of straw,
Twould prove idolatry what's more.
Heaps of treasure shall not defend
Realms that kings seek to contend.
But, truly, good companions may;
Wise men such treasure put in play.
They say a good friend, on the way,
Is worth bright coinage any day.
Let not the worthless counsel you,
Useless when battle doth ensue;
Nor let pretty boys be your care,
For by all the crosses I swear
That ever were in Jerusalem,
You'll win naught but ill from them,

Such as you'll never remedy
By your sword-blows, nor by treaty.
But you are wise and subtle too,
Generous, courteous, and you,
Well-born, noble, will stay clear
Of such, and keep but good men near,
Who, body and all, seek to acquire,
That honour which you most desire.
If you do what I now advise
You will dress in honour's guise,
And a good friend you shall be
Of Mars, the war-god, endlessly.
And if too wide my words do reach,
Then dreaming must excuse my speech;
But he achieves little who dares
Speak but little of his affairs,
And, since I'm obliged so to do,
I'll say why I'm here before you.'

Lines 5455-5506: In his dream, he complains of Love's ills to the King

'KING, I am come here to complain
Of Love's ills, that do bring me pain,
And make me pale, and of Desire
Who assails me, with many a gyre.
So, I'll speak of the whole affair,
And what I yet must do, I'll share.
I love a lady, with my whole heart,
More than all, though we are apart;
I see her little, distant from her,
But now and then I send a letter.
There is no one there, you see,
To tell her of my malady,
Or who could lead her to believe
In the ills that, through her, I receive.
Nor dare I go to seek her court,
All my journey would come to naught,

Since a single soul I know not
Where she abides, such is my lot.
And then, she may not come to me,
There's no way that such could be,
For hundred-eyed Argus guards her,
She's rendered afraid by Slander,
Fear makes her cowardly, and Doubt
Of misdeed; Fortune shuts me out,
And tis nigh on nine weeks or so
Since I heard news of her, also,
And so, I am concerned indeed
That some misfortune doth impede
Her love, or she loves another,
Because she sees many a better.
Nonetheless I have her image,
Drawn true from life, onto the page,
So skilfully and truthfully
None could have wrought more fittingly.
Twas but a moment hence, no more,
I praised, worshipped, and did adore
That image, but she turned her head,
Bringing me much woe, instead,
And more, this ill brought me, too,
That her gown which was of blue,
Thus, denoting her faithfulness
In which I trusted, and did bless,
Now altered to the colour green,
Denoting fickleness, was seen
Which hurt me so deeply that I
Felt not an ounce of joy, thereby.
Now, that she cannot come to me
Through some occupation, wholly,
That thus prevents her coming here,
Alas, it kills; tis death, I fear.
And I am wretched, endlessly,
Nor can find aught to succour me.'

Lines 5507-5576: He considers the ills of the age and his own

‘Now one thing doth annoy me, too,
That wealth all men too much pursue,
So, I am taxed a fortieth,
A thirtieth, a twentieth,
A thirteenth too, and a tenth thrice,
An eighth, sixth, fifth, tis a vice,
And there’s talk of a half as well,
By God, to a hundredth they tell.
The corn and wine are finished all,
So, folk have naught on which to call,
Thus, God on high wars against us,
As the Pope scorns not to tell us.
The Devil sets this war on hand,
Alongside the King of England,
Now returns the Great Company,
Marching as far as Germany,
About the Archpriest I complain,
Arnaud de Cervole is his name,
His Bretons, and their pillaging,
That destroy all in their raging.
Moreover, the wolves destroy us,
Ever choking and murdering us,
And there’s such great mortality
In every village, town and city,
All throughout the Low Country
Good folk are terrified, utterly,
So that there’s none but do foretell
Worse for the Church yet, and people,
Such that we all shall be brought low,
Since the people cry further woe.
Here’s sad and painful existence,
Here great mischief and pestilence,
And who can escape this alive
Who can endure it and survive?
For surely Egypt’s ten plagues might

Against such troubles seem but slight,
Since the Egyptians had hopes still
Of meeting with good times after ill.
Just as the savage, midst the trees,
Seeing the storm, hopes it will cease,
And fine weather be there again,
So, sings and revels midst the rain.
Yet we live in expectation
Of a mightier conflagration,
And the last, foretold, eruption,
That shall bring on our destruction.
If God of His grace aids us not,
Waiting upon Him is my lot,
For as He has made the creature
Man cannot be healed in nature
Nor can he be restored in soul
If He does not repair the whole.
But all these miseries and crimes,
This pestilence, and these harsh times,
Leave me neither cold nor hot,
For, by my faith, I heed them not,
Since what pains and annoys me
Is that I see not my lady,
Nor hear from her, many a day,
Such that my state doth me slay,
Living in hope thus, languishing,
That I or her achieve a meeting,
Or that some news I might hear
To grant me joy should such appear.
So, King, I beg you now to heed
My prayer, let your heart, indeed,
Be open to me, give counsel,
To hear such now would serve me well,
For I have need of true advice,
And only yours will now suffice.'

Lines 5577-5626: The King reassures the lover

THE King my lengthy speech had heard
Not uttering a single word,
Till I'd ended my oration
On honour and my situation,
And all the various conditions
That brought me such tribulations,
And then began to smile at me,
And so, addressed me, laughingly,
But wisely, and ever speaking
In the style that becomes a king:
'Friend, both my ears I did employ;
You have granted my heart much joy,
With courteous admonishment,
In a speech full great in content;
It would be as lengthy to reply
To every word, and so shall I
Pass over swiftly and briefly
My honour and your misery,
And twould be beyond me too
To recall all I heard from you,
And I must keep from straying
And not err in what I'm saying,
If I can, and God doth allow.
About this ill then, that doth now
Master you, and lead you astray,
In that the portrait turns away
Its face from you, and now is seen
To alter dress from blue to green,
Which hue denotes mere fickleness;
Sweet friend, it is pure foolishness
To think so, for it yet doth seem
You talk but only as in dream.
You dream, or so to me it seems,
And none should believe in dreams.
Reason would say, meet her again

Before you set out to complain,
And if you find that all is well
You'll then have naught ill to tell,
The lover who complains in error
Has a foolish heart harsh ever
And perverse; but wake and see her,
For she is not so false a lover
As to declare one thing to you
Then the contrary strive to do.
You'd be far more anxious, now,
Than a horned stag neath the bough,
More fearful and afraid if you
Ovid's Metamorphoses did view,
That tell of the strange mutations
That occurred in diverse regions.'

Lines 5627-5662: Of Sodom and Gomorrah

'JOSEPHUS tells us, and doth claim
That because of the sin and shame
Of those in Sodom and Gomorrah,
God confounded them with sulphur,
Burnt to ashes where they did stand,
And destroyed the surrounding land,
So that no man or woman there
Lived to inherit, as its heir,
For not one soul escaped its fall
Save Lot, his wife and children all,
For God, who all things formed and made,
Three angel shapes there displayed,
Who seemed to be as living men,
(Wise who serve such Goodness) then
Sent them to visit one Abram,
Who was named, later, Abraham;
He met them neath a tall oak tree,
Where he dwelt, for no house had he,
No palace of ash-wood or stone,

Handsome or ugly, did he own.
When they had parted from him, they
Out of Sodom led Lot away,
With his wife and his children too,
Who proved no slower to pursue.
Yet one angel admonished them,
On God's behalf spoke out again,
Telling them to go straight ahead
And never once to turn their head.
Lot's wife failed to obey that word
For she looked back, the speech unheard,
And was at once transformed to salt,
Changed to a pillar, there did halt;
Proven truth, for in form and figure
Her statue, there, once did feature;
Josephus claims so, and doth say
He saw it many times, in his day.'

Lines 5663-5684: Of Perseus and the Gorgon

'MOREOVER, the gods and goddesses
Transformed folk, Ovid confesses,
Into whatever shape they wished,
Twas quite openly established;
Some took on the forms of trees,
Others marble, at the deities'
Command. Perseus, through the air,
Flew changing things thus everywhere,
Polydectes did defame the man
And slandered him on every hand,
But Perseus turned him to stone
Such that he moved no more; I own,
The Gorgon's head he did employ,
The sight of which none might enjoy
And not become stone, instantly,
Wise or cunning though they might be.
Ovid declares so in his fables,

That possess well-proven morals.
Now, if such mutations you saw
Surely, you'd marvel even more,
When the mere changing of a gown
From your true joy doth steal the crown.'

Lines 5685-5700: The King admonishes the lover

'IT might well be that you deserve,
By the manner in which you serve,
Your lady's anger, it seems to me;
Perchance your heart's melancholy,
And your woe to you has taught
Many a wicked hostile thought.
Or perchance you serve her falsely,
With lips that lie, most faithlessly.
Whate'er the case, you seek in vain
My counsel in the matter; complain
Not to me, wake from your dream,
Seek a better counsellor; I deem
She might not now be at leisure
To write to you, at her pleasure,
Because she is so much on view.
Now, say you that she's killing you?'

Lines 5701-5806: Of wise men and lawgivers

'TIS seen and known, quite openly,
That they were wise who anciently
Founded the sciences and gave law
To all those who have gone before.
Now Lamech indulged in bigamy;
The first to have two wives, for he
Won a certain girl called Ada,
And a second wife named Stella.
Upon Ada he begat Jabal,
He lived not long after Abel,

And Jubal who was his brother,
Born of one father and mother.
Now, Jabal first the baskets wrought
That shepherds bear, and also sought
The means to pen his flock within,
And all that goes with shepherding;
He first tamed and set the creatures
To serve according to their natures;
While Jubal found out music's art.
Though Tubalcain was, for his part,
The first blacksmith, twas Jubal who
Hammered sounds and tones anew,
The notes and songs and ordinances
Of music, and its concordances,
And if folk changes did demand
It was not done at his command.
Twas Naamah discovered spinning,
And further the art of weaving,
For in her name fine cloth is made
And delicate fabrics are displayed.
Cush, son of Ham, son of Noah
That in the Ark did first seek shore,
Discovered that art to which he
Gave the name of necromancy.
He cast a statue out of metal,
Of such a form and guise that all
The questions he asked the statue
Received an answer, clear and true,
And this was the first such image
That was so made, so says the sage.
Phoroneus was the first to cause
The Greeks to abide by his laws,
And when Servius Tullius
Governed Rome, after Priscus,
Seven sages were known to fame,
Here I'll enumerate those same:
For the first was Thales by name,

From Miletus that wise man came,
The next Pittacus of Mytilene,
Taught by the woes he had seen,
Solon of Athens was the third,
Athens his birthplace in a word,
Chilon of Sparta made a fourth
Of Babylon's marches come forth,
While, from Corinth, Periander,
Was the fifth sage, in due order,
The sixth from Rhodes, Cleobulus;
Bias of Priene, I name, thus,
As the seventh, brave and noble,
Wise in his age, and right able,
So, have I listed those very same
Wise men, granting each his name.
Bias was the sage who stressed
That not one thing he possessed,
Since all might be snatched away,
Which all folk should note well, today.
Pythagoras lived then; were you
From Rome you'd still have in view
His laws and text where he presents
His science of the four elements;
He came from the African shore,
And was full of arithmetic lore,
And gave the manner of counting.
So, hesitate not in speaking
Of their wisdom, and their works,
Which every idle student shirks,
Like you, who are burdened so
By loving, and seized with woe.
Indeed, twould take a while to say
Whate'er they might have to relay,
And yet if all these men had sworn
To counsel you, your wits adorn,
About this she, who maddens you,
And you had Aristotle too,

Seneca, Virgil and Cato,
Solomon, Boethius, Plato,
As well as every advocate
Living in the world to date
They could advise you no more,
Nor, by God, could any counsellor
Of mine, and most are standing here,
Nor when such counsellors appear
Should you wonder that my renown
Spreads so to every single town.
At all events, this you must do:
Let Amor take command of you.
If you do so good will appear
Though also woe, perchance, I fear,
Since for one who wins his desire,
Four will as oft end in the mire.’
As he pronounced on the matter,
All around were filled with laughter,
Ladies, knights, and squires too,
And then a bird-dog, black of hue,
Began to bark at me so loudly
I woke from my dream, abruptly.

**Lines 5807-5832: The lover wakes from his dream, and receives her
fourteenth letter**

AND when from my dream I did wake
Good people all, make no mistake,
Nor feel surprised, I was shaken,
Witnessing, ere I did waken,
The marvels I’ve relayed to you.
At once I felt eager, anew,
To learn if her portrait, truly,
Would turn its sweet face towards me.
So, in the candlelight I went
And knelt before her, thus content
To gaze a long while upon her,

And truly it seemed that ever
She smiled upon me so sweetly
She urged my heart to love, wholly.
And then, in an instant, I came
To my senses, viewing that same,
For I saw clearly that my dream
A mere illusion now did seem,
And, as I rose to my feet once more
A man knocked loudly at my door,
Who had arrived in haste, rather,
And brought me another letter,
From my most sweet and dear lady,
Which I received right joyfully,
And read it thus, straight away,
As you may hear without delay.

‘My heart, my love, and my very sweet friend, may it please you to know that all is well with me, thanks to Our Lord, and may He grant you the like, and I have been in the place you know of since the twentieth day of August. And I believed that we would leave quite soon in order to journey elsewhere, but we were told that there were a great many hostile folk in the neighbourhood, and no one dared travel. And so, we have not been to that other place yet; but we did leave, about seventeen days after we should have arrived at that place, to go to Brie, in order to see my brother’s properties that my sister had not yet seen. And there we stayed fifteen days altogether. And there I felt a woe more intense than anything I have ever felt. Yet there was much diversion, for all we did on the road was sing and visit ladies, young ladies, and religious women. But the more I witnessed of good times and joy, the more I was displeased because I remembered I could not see you or send you messages. And there was one night when I was staying in one of my brother’s houses, and it was the eve of the Feast of Holy Cross. And I fell asleep thinking of you, and it seemed to me as I slept that I saw you lying in a room on a handsome well-adorned bed. And it seemed to me that you were very ill. And there was an old nurse by your side attending to you, as I thought. As soon as I approached your bed, I began to weep and kiss you passionately, and it seemed to me that you found me at fault me for having kissed you in front of that woman. And I

told you I cared not, that in doing something good for you I could not be blamed. And I thought you then arose in good health, saying I had cured you. And this made me very happy, or so it seemed to me in my sleep. And I passed the whole night with you in this way, such that all day I was melancholy, for I feared some ill had befallen you. And I thought of Morpheus. And when I recalled that I had cured you, I felt a little better and was in that same state of mind all day. So, I pray you, my sweetheart, please write and tell me if on that day you were troubled; tell me also how it goes with you, for this I wish greatly to learn. By my soul, it seems a year to me since I received any news from you. And, I pray you, please send me some of your songs to entertain me and put an end to my melancholy. My sister and I are as two prisoners here, and I know no one at all except those of my party. And I would have nothing pleasant to do at all if I had not your book to read, and those compositions you sent, as well as my thoughts of you. And were it not for the thoughts and memories I have of you, I would be very wretched. But, by the God in whom I believe, I think much on these at all times, and this is the sum of my consolation, nor could I direct my thoughts elsewhere. And if it pleases you to send me a copy of the book you have made, I would be most grateful, and you would be doing me a great favour, for you would give me much pleasure. And I am most eager to view it. And I will show it no one, if doing so would displease you. My own sweetheart, I beg you not to be discontent that I have not written sooner, but by my soul there was nothing I could do to avoid this. My brother is going to the king, and I beg you to see him and offer him, and his party also, the kind of greeting you know it right to offer. And if he visits your house, do not show him the portrait, for I do not think that would be good. However, I would wish you to say a little, though not too much, about how fond you are of me, and also that because I am an enthusiastic singer you had sent me songs on a number of occasions, before you ever laid eyes on me. I have not sent you any messages by my brother's servants whom I have mentioned, for reasons which I shall explain when God please that I see you, and I am more impatient that this come to pass than anything else. And it is no wonder, for without you I cannot possess any of the riches in that treasure chest whose key you possess. My own sweetheart, I pray you, be pleased to comfort yourself and rejoice, in every way you can; and think not that I intend, for a single day of my life, to repent of loving you, or doing whatever I can that might

please you. And, surely, if any woman should do so for her lover, I should do this much for you. For I can well see that, at every turn, you cherish and protect my honour as your own. And, by God, when I recall the day you left, and the honour and virtue I found in you, I rejoice with all my heart. My dear sweetheart, I think it will be a long time before we leave the place we now reside. So, I pray you, write to me as often as you can regarding how you are faring, and by this messenger how you have been since I had news from you. And do not be concerned about writing to me at length, for, by God, each time I receive a letter from you, the first thing I look at is how long it is, and whether it contains many compositions. And if I see the packet is rather thin, then I am most troubled. So, do not worry that anything you send might annoy me. And you can write to me at your leisure, for this messenger attends on you for no other reason than to carry this letter. Yet he does not know that it is I who send it to you, for I had one of my good friends hand him the letter, and that person I trust greatly, for he has been long in my service. I did this because I did not wish anyone to learn that I sent a messenger to you who had no other reason for making the journey. My very sweet friend, if something happens to bring peace secure enough that we can travel to the place you know of, we shall do so. And as soon as I am there, be certain I will so inform you. I pray that Our Lord grant you honour and joy of whatever your heart desires. Written this seventeenth day of September. My own sweetheart and true friend, I commend myself to you, from the depths of my heart, as that lady who is wholly yours, and misses your company more than ever did turtledove her mate. Your faithful love.'

Lines 5833-5846: The lady's seventh ballad 'Nuit et iour en tel travail'

'NIGHT and day, in such travail
Is this woeful heart of mine,
For naught did it so impale,
Nor so pained it, I divine,
For, without cease, I repine,
Missing one who worships me,
Lacking his sweet company.

For I sleep not, nor do I wake,

Without him in my thought,
Humbling himself for my sake,
Who every grace has brought,
Every pleasure that I sought;
Such that I weep, frequently,
Lacking his sweet company.'

Lines 5847-5874: He sends his sixteenth and seventeenth letters together

NOW I despatched the messenger
On the next day, after dinner,
But regarding life's adversity,
Which I've described previously,
I added this separate letter,
Which I now desired to send her,
Enclosing it with the former,
Which indeed had made me suffer
A thousand sad thoughts, God save me,
Though this must anger my lady,
She of the fair looks; as it was
Twould make me oft cry 'alas';
And if it lacked its wax and seal
And did no angry thought reveal,
When I did send it, still, however,
I'd wished to tell how I did suffer
Great trouble through my love of her.
Pale and wan it did me render,
For she replied most severely,
Harshly, altogether crossly,
As indeed I had much deserved,
Given that she was so ill-served,
For my sin and my negligence,
For which I must suffer penance,
Since she had but read it through
Ere straight into the fire it flew,
And my 'envoi' shall here inform

You of this errant letter's form.

'Alas, my sweet heart, I have told you several times that I am not worthy to serve you. So, you have wronged me by catching me in your net, where I am so tightly bound that I may never escape, and this you well know. And I am foolishly entangled, and yet, my sweetheart, I intended well. My sweetheart, you informed me, in person and in writing, that I should not send any messages to you until you had sent one to me. And I obeyed your command, which was and is a very difficult thing for me to do, since I knew not the reason for it. But I think that someone has slandered me, or claimed something to you about me, or you wish to distance yourself from me. For whoever

loves for little reason hates likewise; not that you could hate me at all, or anyone else, but whoever truly loves forgets tardily, while whoever frowns weeps readily. And, by God, I have not forgotten you, for since the Feast of the Magdalene, I have composed, for the sake of your love, more than I would have believed could be done in a year, as the messenger will tell you if you will but hear him out; for night and day I sleep but little what with working and thinking of you, though through lack of material, I must cease working. Now think not for a moment that anyone has told me of this, rather experience has been my teacher, and then, whoever is absent from the eye is likewise distant from the heart. And it could be that when you send for me, I shall be unable to make my way to you because of the noblemen who are in that house. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may He give you more joy and peace than I have, as well as the knowledge of what you have done to me. From your friend who knows not whether your heart loves or hates him.'

'My very sweet heart, my sweet love, and my sovereign lady, on Saint Michael's Eve I received your letter in which you tell me how you are, and for this I thank you as well as I am able, because, upon my life, this was the thing in all the world my heart desired most to learn. Nor would anything have kept me from writing to you, and several times in fact, had you not said in a previous letter, and through Th... 's mouth, that I should send you naught until I had news from you, and this has caused me great suffering, for I thought there must be some special reason for it. And so, I restrained myself. And my sweetheart, as regards my health, which you are interested

in knowing about, I am quite well, thanks be to Our Lord. Nor have I been ill, thanks to God, since I left you, except on account of Desire that makes my life difficult enough. And, by God, I have enquired of a number of people as to your whereabouts, yet not one of them could tell me for certain, and this has given me many anxious thoughts. And in regard to the fact that no game, amusement, or diversion can please you since you cannot see me, alas, I lament, and whence would joy come to me when I see you not, one so sweet, quiet, and demure? Surely, it could come not from any place but from you, for tis you who dealt the wound that cannot be healed except by you. And as regards your dream about the vigil of the Holy Cross, please know for certain that for four days before and five after, I was so wounded in spirit that I completely abandoned work on your book, and the pure hope in my heart was that I might never think of it, since I had heard no news of you; and I said several times to a number of close friends who were wondering what was ailing me, that you had forgot me. And, by my soul, I believed it so, and swore most intently that, if it were so, I would never love another, nor again trust any woman. And so, in despair, I wrote the letter that is enclosed with the present one, and some other things for you, though I would not have wished for any reason to send them at this time. And know for certain that I dreamed, at the Feast of Holy Cross, that your portrait had turned its head from me and did not deign look at me and was dressed all in green, which denotes fickleness; and this made me more melancholy that one could imagine, and at midnight I lit a candle to see if it was true. And when I saw all to the contrary, I kissed your portrait and began to laugh, saying that Morpheus was mocking me, and I lay all night thinking of you. And by my faith, if you had paid Morpheus ten thousand gold marks, he could have served you no better than he did. For as soon as my candle was out, he swept to his place and conjured all kinds of images that might and would please me, even though fear keeps me awake sometimes, crying "Long delay alters love." My own sweetheart, your brother visited me on Saint Michael's day in the morning, coming to visit me as soon as he had heard Mass. And I showed him all the respect I could, and he remained within my dwelling, from which, if I can manage it, he will not leave until I treat him as the greatest lord and the best friend I have in all this world, and his companions the same. My sweetheart, I would willingly learn why you do not wish to communicate with me by means of your brother's servants, and why you wrote that I should send nothing to

you until you write to the contrary. And I pray that you will let me know, for I will not think of sending any message to you until I know you wish it so. My dear sweetheart, by my soul, I do believe that you wish to see me, but I so long to see you that, even simply by thinking on this, I ignore all other things in this world. Alas, my sweetheart, if you cannot possess joy or good without me, nor any of the riches within your treasure chest, then I too, alas, cannot enjoy them without you. And I desire so much for that time to come that I cannot speak of it, or even imagine it. And, if God pleases, it will come, for there is nothing that does not. Alas, my sweetheart, you write that I should be happy and find comfort in everything, but that is very hard to do. For when I am far from you and know that I cannot see you soon, a single day seems as a year to me. And I believe, for such is my view, that you are the sum of all the goodness, joy, and sweetness this world holds. Nor without you could I possess goodness, joy, or sweetness. Enjoying no benefits, joy, or pleasure makes it hard for me to compose. However, I make a virtue of necessity and am like the minstrel who sings gaily in public, and yet none is sadder than he. And in regard to guarding your honour, I love it as much as I long for paradise, and there is no day of my life I do not think of it, nor would I act to the contrary because of aught that might happen. My own sweetheart, indeed I see that you are reluctant to write me, or so it appears from your letter. Assuredly, my heart tells me there is something you would not wish to write to me, which dismays me greatly, as I wrote above. And this is not without cause, for you used to write me privately and now you send your letters by strangers, and I know not what to think. And I do not intend to write you until I know what it means. My sweetheart, I have composed the music for the rondel in which your name appears, and I will send it to you by the first messenger travelling in your direction. I am so busy with composing your book that I cannot attend to anything else. Know that I have already composed three times as much as there is in Morpheus. And in regard to your message that I should send you a copy, this would be a task long in its completion, and I would be very upset if it were lost on its way to you. So, I may send it by your brother's chaplain, and I have written more since the Feast of the Magdalene than I thought to achieve in a whole year. I am sending you the coffer you gave me when you parted from me, and all the material it contained, for everything from it has been put in its proper place within your book. My sweet love, I thank you for your worthy

and precious “relics,” for your brooch, your prayer-beads, and your beautiful ballad. I shall send it a companion by the first person going your way. I am sending you a rondel set to music whose words and notes I composed some time ago. And it has been newly written with tenor and counter-tenor parts. So please study it, for it seems good to me. Adieu, my own sweetheart, and may God grant you the joy, peace, honour, and health my heart desires for you. Your loyal friend.’

Lines 5875-6076: The lady’s ‘complaint’ at his letters

‘WHEN my lady read my letter,
Amor, that doth the heart ever
Send great joy and woe, did alter
Her colour in such a manner
That all that was pink and rosy
Became quite pale, ashen, earthy.
She sank on a couch, for her part,
A woman stricken to the heart,
By Love, who must there complain,
Speaking thus, to express her pain:

‘Sweet friend, what error have I made?
In heart, thought, deed, what wrong displayed?
Your every wish have I obeyed,
Sans dishonour.
Loving you with a heart so true,
That all else seems counterfeit too,
For God’s perfection I see in you,
Every honour.
Yet you make my face change colour
Imprison my heart in such dolour,
In pain, and woe, and weeping ever,
All innocent.
See how I shed tears, my lover,
Hear my sighs and my clamour,
See the pain, my heart doth labour,
Within me, pent.

You tell me that a long delay
Alters lover and loved away,
But when you tested me, I say,
At every pass,
You did not find me false ever,
For never did the fair Medea
Love Jason, nor Dido, fairer,
Her Aeneas,
Byblis Caunus, nor Helen Paris,
As much as, oh, be sure of this,
I love you. To Semiramis
You compare me,
And say my heart's given elsewhere,
But sooner hill and valley, there,
Will be one than I seek to share
This heart freely.

Sweetest friend, were it ever true
That my pure heart strayed from you
The sun would never shine anew
There in the sky.
Nor would the moon light the night,
Nor would a single star shine bright,
Nor any tree leaf to our sight,
Of all we spy.
But all things would be dark perforce,
Rivers flow backwards to their source,
The Signs above war in their course,
The ocean dry.
Stones would fall down from the air,
The elements vanish, in despair
Nature would fail us everywhere,
And fall thereby.

With his entreaties, Ulysses
Won love from the sea-deities,

Those goddesses he did please
Speaking sweetly,
Yet I fail to reassure you,
By vows and pledges I renew,
By sweetness, and by loving you,
So completely.
My lover, you love me truly,
And claim tis ever faithfully,
And yet all this doth torment me,
With bitter art,
Since you distrust me, such that I
Believe that, surely, I must die,
If Venus does not soon, hereby,
Change your sad heart.

To Venus thus I make complaint
Who sees me now all pale and faint,
Weeping ever, full sore my plaint,
Tis her doing,
For she forced me to be as one
Drunk with love, to bear its burden;
To her, in good faith, for her action,
My woe I bring.
If she hears me, I shall adore her,
And if she does not, I'll deny her
For I believe not, nor shall ever,
In any saint,
Who brings me grief and annoy,
For sweeter things I should enjoy,
And yet do worse, by Saint Eloi,
Thus, my complaint.

What worth has all my angriness?
Love wounds me, Venus no less,
And you so full now of harshness,
Believing not
That I am free of fickleness

Nor any other do address,
But you, my love, who must bless
With joy my lot.
For, indeed, ne'er do I recall
That of mistrust did good befall,
Sinful those who rail gainst all
Nobility,
Such song or tale did I read, ne'er,
That was worth a wrinkled pear;
The Loire's depths I'd rather bear,
Than such misery.

Cephalus, who played the hunter
Went on foot, one day, an archer,
Through the woodland, a bearer
Of gleaming bow,
To spy on him there, his lover
Had hidden neath leafy cover,
Suspecting that some fair other
He sought to know.
But his sharp arrow there did glide,
Flew, by chance, to pierce her side,
So that, upon that spot, she died,
Most cruelly too,
Yet spoke once, ere her life had fled:
"Sweet love, you've slain me, I am dead,
And yet, with heart entire," she said,
"I've loved you true."

And when he saw what he had done,
Cephalus, he broke every one
Of his arrows, his bow did shun,
And made a vow,
That he'd slay himself for his sin,
Cried much; so pained was he within,
Beside her corpse all would begin
To weep, I trow,

At the woes that he did suffer;
His moans, his groans, his tears ever,
Those senses granted him by Nature
Dimmed utterly,
Would bitter tears let fall, I'm sure,
Such was his grave discomfiture,
Even Nero, had been touched sore,
And shown pity.

My love, it could not come to pass,
That I could part from you, alas,
No more than I could now surpass
Myself, and fly;
Since all my longing is for you,
My thoughts and my memories true,
Are of you, then, for your good too,
I ask, hereby,
That we make peace amidst this war,
That, swiftly, without saying more,
You'll quiet your erring heart, for
Without a lie,
Your anger doth so oppress me,
My joy you bury more deeply
Than could the closest treasury,
And so, I sigh.

On his statue, Pygmalion
Begot a bright and handsome son,
When the wedding feast was done,
Whom he did name
Adonis; fair of face was he,
And form, and lived courageously.
To hunt amidst the woodland, free
Went that same.
Now Venus dearly loved the lad
And reprimanded him; twas bad
She thought, and in her heart was sad

To see him go.
Yet he would not do otherwise,
The greatest pleasure to his eyes
Was the chase, yet, spite her sighs,
Death took him so.

Now take my counsel and be wise,
And do you now as I advise,
For see how moist are my two eyes
My breast also,
From the tears that rise within me;
Regard the sorrows that afflict me,
My longing, my pure love, and see
My pain and know
A love that will ne'er cease to grow,
Sweet friend, absorb my teaching so,
And all that from my lips doth flow,
This pain I show.
For thus you'll end all ill, my friend,
And to sweet joy my steps will wend;
If not, these ills will prove my end,
That bring me woe.

Thus, sweet friend, I admonish you,
If you would lead the life that's true,
Let not jealousy mar the view,
For that is death.
And if you have a lady friend
Upon her your affection bend
Let pride nor mastery offend,
Nor anger's breath.
So does a man who loves indeed.
But he who lets discomfort breed,
And to melancholy gives heed,
Where aid was sought,
As dead, that man I'd consider;
A love that unquiet doth utter,

Harsh and contrary, is ever
Reduced to naught.'

Lines 6077-6082: She sends her 'complaint' with her fifteenth letter

IN this way her complaint did end,
But twas not all that she did send,
For then she composed this letter,
And the complaint she did utter
Was carefully enclosed therein,
Without addition, and did begin:

'My own sweetheart, my sweet love, and my most sweet friend, I have received your letter. And know that I marvel greatly at how little faith you have in me, since you think that, because I have been somewhat tardy in writing to you, I must have forgot you, and no longer care for you. I am much wronged by this, for I do not think so ill of you as you do of me. For if you did not write to me, or see me, for a whole year, which would be very hard on me, I would still think your heart so good and steadfast as not to forget me. And every person who is possessed of virtue and loyalty should think thus of others. And since you have a very great desire to learn why I sent a message to you by my brother T... saying that you should not write me until you heard news from me, know that I did so because I knew not which route we might take, or how long our journey would last, and I was afraid that if you sent a message to me your messenger would fail to find me. And from day to day I thought of travelling to another place, and intended to write from there to tell you how I was. And since you are dismayed that I failed to send a message to you by my brother's people, know that I did so because I wished to send a messenger who could bring me genuine news of you, directly. And if I had written by his people, I would not have had news of you as swiftly. And as to to what you say about my sending messages to you by strange men, I did this deliberately too, for the people of the house where we lodge are honest, and know naught of you, and might think things to be other than they are. And the man I had carry the message was no stranger indeed, but one of my friends, and I would trust him with even greater responsibility. You may be sure I did so for no other reason in the world. And have no doubts, for never yet

have I found any who would blame me for what I have done for you. And so I beg you, as firmly as I am able, and with the same affection in which you hold my heart, body, and love of you, never again to have such suspicions of me, for, by my soul, you can cause me no greater anger than to impute to me what I have never intended, for, since I made your acquaintance, I have had no thoughts of deserting you, nor do I think to have such thoughts ever, throughout my life. And if indeed you knew the thoughts I have, at all hours, regarding you, you would not say a word about my having forgotten you. For, so help me God, I am ever in such a state that I think I see you before me. And I would not have wished, for aught, that you should send me the letter enclosed with this other, once it was written, for I do not think that you have done, or will do, as much to my good as you have done to my ill. And, by God, I would have preferred for you to torment yourself still, for I tried to read it more than ten times, yet could not finish it without becoming angry at heart, and my eyes filling with tears. So, I threw it in the fire to burn, so I might never see it again, because it upset me whenever I looked at it. Therefore. I beg you, my own sweetheart, please think of my loyalty as I do of yours. For, by my faith, with the weak and limited wit that God has bestowed upon me, I have done all I have done for the best. I have a rondel with music you sent me, but I have seen it before and know it well. I beg you, please, to send me others. And if you have any virelays you composed before setting eyes upon me, pieces set to music, please send them, for I am most eager to learn them, especially “The eye that is Love’s true archer”. In the packet you sent me, I found a sealed letter intended for yourself, and I opened it because I knew not why you sent it, and I found that it was a ballad previously sent to you. So, I am returning it, since I believe you never looked at it, as it is still sealed. My sweetheart, if some people should chance to visit you from here, please welcome them, so that when you travel to where I am, they will know you better. I beg you please write as often and as fully as you can, for I remain where I now am. And send all your messages to Bernard de Flourent, brother of the priest at St. Pierre, residing at the latter’s house. For this seems the best arrangement to me in the region where I now am. My sister commends herself to you. I beg you to commend me to my brother and your own. My own sweetheart, I pray God grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart loves. Written this fifth day of May. Your faithful love.’

Lines 6083-6103: Her eighth ballad ‘Ne soiez en nul esmay’

‘NOW be free of all dismay,
My love, and melancholy,
Since for ever and a day,
I shall love you most truly;
Love, that has the mastery,
Would till death ne’er see us part,
And I’ll be yours, dear heart.

So be happy, as you may,
And show a smile, for me,
And believe, without delay,
You shall gain your seignory,
As great as, o’er a lady,
Any may, except by art,
And I’ll be yours, dear heart.

And, as soon as you I see,
Here I promise, and affirm,
Your wounds shall be healed by me,
And I’ll be healed in turn,
For, sweet love, I’d have you learn
I too am pierced by Love’s dart,
And I’ll be yours, dear heart.’

Lines 6104-6247: The lover’s reply to his lady’s ‘complaint’

WHEN I’d read my lady’s letter,
I said: ‘Alas, I have wronged her,
And now, most clearly, I can see
In what way she understood me,
A manner I did not intend,
For long ago, word she did send
That true hearts must never move
To anger one they claim to love.

My fault I'll seek to remedy
By replying to her swiftly,
Addressing her sad complaint
Which seems a most loving plaint.'

'Lady, in whom all my fond hopes do rest,
My heart, love, pleasure, and my sweet unrest,
My mind, all loyalty with which I'm blessed,
If I have erred, twas blindly, I attest;
No certain knowledge led me to do so,
Rather twas Love dealt my heart a blow,
And often he strikes me with his arrow,
When your sweet face is far from me, but, oh,
Command me now,
Sweet lady, for amendment I'll avow;
Here is my heart in forfeit, for, allow,
The wretched thing to death itself must bow;
Loss of your favour, let not God allow;
May He ensure that I no more offend,
And never again, to you, let me send
Any letter that doth not peace extend;
To that my every thought shall attend,
My whole life through,
For I love, lady, with a heart so true
Body, and heart, and life I vow to you,
For ne'er to me shall benefits be due,
If not from you, indeed, such shall be few,
And I must suffer pain and misery,
Myself and my heart, for, foolishly,
I made it drunk with love of you wholly,
And granted it to you, and so must see
Suffering and pain,
For truly Desire takes every pain
To grieve me when you are far again,
And when you, my sweet, are near, I gain
Naught at all, for he doth so constrain
My heart and body, every nerve and vein,

That I but tremble, and my speech is lame,
Which you, my lady, do observe full plain,
Who are a thousand times, I would maintain,
More sweet and fair,
Than Helen was. Alas, since in your snare
I am tangled, if I lose you, despair
Shall be my lot, and I shall die, I swear,
Sad, weary, grieving; yet think not I share
One thought that you'd deny me healing,
Or not be my advocate, unceasing,
Or that Pity would not come hastening
To you, if she knew of my wrongdoing,
For, certainly,
I might compare you, and right honestly,
To the bee that yields us wax and honey,
That draws all that the tongue tastes bitterly,
And sweetens it. None claims the contrary.
So, your sweet heart, doth, God preserve,
Forever as my sweet physician serve,
Makes me smile as I weep, though I deserve
No such cure, who from good did swerve.
The wax takes fire,
And, soon and late, doth light the world entire,
More than a lightning-flash, it doth transpire,
Just as your fame doth spread, and doth inspire
Goodness, like yours, in men who do aspire,
Making true heroes of cowards, likewise,
Turning fools into men both firm and wise,
Reforming all those that the good despise,
Rendering the good still better to God's eyes.
Glance without blame,
Was not Lancelot made brave through that same?
Tristan, Paris, Perceval, I might name,
Who otherwise had not loved without blame,
And ten thousand more, unknown to fame,
And ten thousand living whom I blame not,
Who ne'er a dram of gold nor pepper had got,

If some good woman had not been their lot.
A man is wicked, he has all good forgot,
Of low degree,
Who does not bend to their service wholly,
And that is why, my sweet, noble lady,
I have given myself to you, completely,
To serve you all my days, virtuously,
For you are the exemplar, I believe,
Of all the good a man might yet conceive,
May Love ensure that my love you receive
For yours is the power to weave or un-weave.
So great your spell,
For your beauty, of which all men do tell,
They call you beauty's flower, 'Toute Belle',
Sweet in your sweetness as the dove you dwell,
True as the turtledove on bough, as well,
Perfumed like the springtime that doth renew,
Coloured like the rose, fresh, pink of hue,
While honour holds the stirrup there for you,
Reason your servant, wits e'er guiding too,
Resolve ne'er wavers in you, day or night,
As I say this the heart in me takes flight,
For one you are
In whom Joy dwells, Delight doth draw her car,
And Venus is your handmaid, for yet far
Above the goddess shall you rank, lodestar
That rich Juno shall serve, nor ever mar.
Wise Pallas will attend upon your fate,
And all the gods the news shall celebrate,
And with wealth so heaped upon your plate,
By those who shall serve you, soon and late,
Will you prove rebel then gainst my command?
No, for I'll gain, indeed, all I demand;
This I aver,
When the Romans killed Julius Caesar,
By treason slain, and undone by murder,
The gods grieved, as if to weep forever,

Because of his greatness and his valour,
Deified, he was peer to god and goddess,
Like Hercules, for whom they did no less,
Who o'er hill and dale did once progress,
Plain and ocean, every wilderness,
And was the first to cause great Troy to fall,
He midst the gods was set, high over all,
At their right hand.

Thus, in the same place, lady, you should stand,
For you, to right and left, do now command
Sense, Honour, Reason, being of their band,
And all the goods that Nature ever planned;
As for the virtues, priest or priestess never
Could in you, indeed, amend aught ever,
And thus, I am yours, by Saint Sylvester;
You might make me of your flock forever,
Do so always;

And, lady, whom men value and do praise,
That I shall love and serve for all my days,
I beg you, from a heart Love sets ablaze,
To welcome my poor self that e'er obeys;
And if aught I've done stirred hatred truly,
Grant pardon, of your generosity,
And, by the Church, I promise you shall see
The Thames flow through Damascus, ere in me
Lives any thought, that's not of you wholly.'

Lines 6248-6275: He re-affirms that she will be set among the stars

'NOR can I cease speaking awhile,
For I must yet your ears beguile
With Cesar's destiny, for they,
The gods, so welcomed him, I say,
They raised him to the firmament,
And with the stars his star they blent,
Placed near the Pole Star, to appear
Among the highest, bright and clear,

To illuminate the world by night,
And with so fair and true a light
That sailors take it as their guide,
And safely through the waters glide.
Consider the Roman history,
And such, no more or less, you'll see.
The gods will make you a star too,
And place you there for us to view,
In the firmament, near that star
That guides many a sail from far.
So, who would safe harbour find
Your good counsel keeps in mind,
Just as this fair and lovely world
Your great goodness, pure, unfurled,
Illumines, and shall do so yet,
When in the heavens you are set.
And thus, you shall be glorified,
Sweet lady, when the flesh has died,
By the Heavenly King's fair grace,
Who kept the other gods in place.'

Lines 6276-6281: He sends his eighteenth letter and his reply to her 'complaint'.

HERE indeed is the answer
To her complaint and its letter;
In it I sought to use no rhyme
That her poem had, on a time,
Employed, nor admit its metre,
And this is how I did greet her.

'My own sweetheart, my most sweet love, and my most beloved lady. I have looked over carefully what you wrote me. And you should not wonder at all, or so I think, about what I sent you, enclosed in my letter, for as you are well aware the heart that feels the pangs of love is not always in the one state, but has many strange thoughts and wild fantasies. Now virtuous hearts, secure and loyal, show how they feel without deception. And, by

my soul, my own sweetheart, it was not my intention to send you the enclosed letter that has made you somewhat angry with me. And yet I wrote it so that you might know what misery this business with the letters and the request you sent by your brother Th... have caused me. And my sweet heart, for God's sake please pardon me, and think not that I consider you aught but virtuous and faithful ever, for, by my soul, if I knew aught to the contrary, I would not leave off loving you for that reason, though joy would ne'er be mine; but it is as it was the other time, when I wrote to you that I was not worthy enough to love you, which gave me many a thought and pang I needed not. At all events, I expect, and trust in, your goodness, for I have none other on my side, and my faithfulness too, which will help me every day with you, if God so please. And then, God grant me joy, I love you so much, esteem so much your honour and virtue, I could ne'er conceive of any woman equal to you. And so, I could ne'er think there might be any ill in you, and I hold you well-pardoned in regard to all you have communicated to me. And, also, I know great joy since you have never been told by anyone of aught that would force me to abandon writing to you, nor you me. And, also, I feel sure that all you have done and do now is for the best. And if you say that I imputed something to you that you never intended, namely that you could leave or forget me, please forgive me, for, by my soul, I have no thought in all the world but of you. And I could and shall love and desire no woman but you, and shall never depart or change. And, by God, I have a hundred times repented of sending you that letter. And, my sweetheart, I promise you and swear, truthfully, that if you never write me or send another message to me, or if, God forbid, I never see you again, I shall never, to the best of my ability, write to you, or say or send anything to anger you. And if fate or the weather opposes me, I will suffer as best I can and let Love take command. My own sweetheart, I have composed music for the rondel that contains your name, and I would have sent it to you by this messenger, but, by my soul, I had never heard it, and it is not my custom to part with anything I compose until I have heard it. And be certain that it is one of the best things I have composed these last seven years, to my mind. You write that I should send "The Eye that is Love's True Archer" once it is set to music. You may be pleased to learn that I have been very occupied with composing your book and still am so, and with the King's people, and those of my lord the Duke de Bar, who entertains himself at my house, so that I could attend to

nothing else. But I will send, and quite soon, what has been completed of your book and the rondel as well. Now I pray you, by the affection you hold for me, not to show the book to anyone who is not close to your heart. And if aught, therein, needs amendment, please make note of it. For you have been pleased to request that I put there everything appertaining to our affair, and I know not if I have included too much or too little. And learn your rondel, if you please, for I am very fond of it. When you have read your book, take great care of it, for I have no copy and would be most angry were it lost and not included in the book where I have gathered all my compositions. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart loves. And may He grant us the grace to see each other, shortly. And, in this manner, all my desires shall be fulfilled. Written this ninth day of October. Your faithful friend.'

Lines 6282-6295: Her sixteenth letter

AS she read my apology
My lady learnt the reality,
And had no doubt that all was true
That I've related thus, to you.
And she gladly pardoned me,
For my misdeed, saying, sweetly,
That if I mistrusted her more,
I'd not be pardoned so, for sure,
And to be free of jealousy,
The jealous ne'er act loyally,
Instead they seek from their lover
What they'd not wish to discover.
Here follows the letter, closely,
Of my pure and pleasant lady.

'My dear sweetheart, my sweet love, and my loyal friend. I have read carefully all that you wrote to me: that never again will you doubt me or think I have forgotten you. Now with this in mind I pardon you for your misdeed. But if you commit such a wrong again, I believe I shall not forgive you so lightly. For, by my faith, I think not to do aught of my volition that might make you feel pangs of doubt. Yet you said something

which is quite wrong when you said that you were not worthy to love me, for, by my faith, you are in my opinion a thousand times more gracious to me than I to you. And I consider my liaison with you much fairer than one with the greatest lord of the Kingdom of France. I beg you to send me your book with this messenger, and have no fear of my failing to take good care of it. And you can write me in safety via this messenger, also. So, I beg you, make him feel welcome, and for this you will earn my very great thanks. I pray Our Lord grant you joy and honour in whatever your heart desires. Written the twenty-eighth day of October. Your loyal friend.'

Lines 6296-6331: He sends his nineteenth letter and a rondel that conceals her name

NOW, indeed, you have heard how she,
The one who holds sway over me,
Will be served by the gods on high,
And glorified, when she must die,
A star in the firmament, by night,
Set there by those gods to shed light
On this world, Earth illumining
With a virtue undiminishing;
And the joy that she brought me
By her pardoning me, sweetly,
For my villainy, and the error
That I'd committed towards her.
And if God e'er grants me pleasure
Of her, and forgives my blunder,
The gift of peace I'd seek from her,
As my reward, and no other.
Now, I contained myself awhile,
Since I had no means that while
To send aught to her sweet face
That all my sorrows doth efface,
Nonetheless, to her, in the end,
My book, well-wrapped, I did send
In well-waxed cloth so that naught
Would be marred; I sent, in short,

All that I had composed so far,
Safely bound, to journey afar,
With a rondel, that I oft sing,
That I wrought, words, notes, everything,
And in numbers spelt her true name,
For whoever counts will find the same;
As well as this letter along with it,
Of true sentiment made and writ,
Which she received with great delight,
And read with even more delight,
Here is the letter, so read it now,
That the fair one did share, I vow.

My own sweetheart, my dear sister, and my very sweet love, I am writing you to learn the state of your health, the which may Our Lord always make to be as good as you would like and I would wish, with all my heart. And, by God, tis one of the things I most desire in this world, to hear good news of you and to see you, also. And as to my own health, if you would like to know it, be pleased to learn that, thanks to Our Lord, I, my brother, and all of us were doing well at the time this letter was composed. And, my dear sweetheart, if I have not written to you as promptly as I should, please excuse me, for God knows that it was not for lack of love or goodwill, but because my lord the Duke de Bar and several other lords have been staying at mine. And there has been much coming and going, with me going to bed so late and getting up so early I could not remedy the situation, nor could I attend to the matter by day, or to your book, except a little which disappointed me greatly, the which I am sending along by this messenger, at least the part that has been finished. And so, I pray you as lovingly as I can, and am able, that you will guard it. And please return it to me when you have read it through so that I might complete it. For I would be most upset if the very great effort I have made, and further intend, should be wasted. Now shall come the noble, fine, and subtle compositions with which I intend to perfect it, and because of them you and others will read it most willingly, and may it achieve a worthy reputation for many a day. Know that all that then remains to do is to add the letters you have sent me, and those I have sent you since you left. Return to me the letter I have just sent you. My own sweetheart, you have written several times enjoining me

to be happy and joyful, yet, with the affection I bear you, and because you do not wish me to complain or moan about what I endure for your sake, be aware that this is a very difficult thing for me to do. And then, your book will be named “The Book of the True Tale”, for I do not wish to, nor should I, tell untruths therein. And my sweetheart, here is the reason why it proves difficult for me to behave so: I know well I cannot see you soon, and if I intended to journey to where you are, I would know no man or woman in the place where you are staying. And if I send you a message, this I must do by means of strangers whom I have never seen before, nor is there anyone who could speak of me to you, nor is it seemly for you to come to where I am. And if I had need of being resurrected a third time from the dead, you could not accomplish it. Moreover, you know well I can only compose from my feelings. But how can I compose about joyful things when I live in woe? By my soul, tis very difficult to accomplish. I am like the minstrel who sings gaily in public, and yet there is no one sadder than he. As for that, love and wearing a hair shirt seem much the same thing to me: “There’s too much woe and misery there, in those that love, and a hair-shirt wear.” Now grant me this, if you please, I pray, my sweetheart, that with your permission, I can at least moan and complain when I am quite alone, for, by my soul, I have no one to complain to regarding the woes and ills I suffer for your sake. And furthermore, with your permission, allow me to compose from the feelings I truly experience, either of pain or joy. And if you allow me this, I could bear more lightly the cruelties of Fortune, and my lovesickness, for the man is too abased who dare not complain. And my own sweetheart, there is something far worse. For that rich treasure whose key I bear, this I enjoy like a man who is king yet no one knows it but he, and so he gains no benefit from his kingdom and resembles Tantalus, who dies of thirst and yet stands in water up to his chin unable to drink; I resemble the rich miser too, who owns all the treasure in the world yet cannot bear to diminish it, and so instead knows deprivation. But it concerns me greatly that, so Reason informs me, Resistance has a key to this treasure as well and I cannot open it without him; and, also, that Argus with his hundred eyes does nothing but look about and keep watch, so that no man touches it. And if he sees any part of it seized, he will report immediately to Ill-Speech, who will sing the fact out openly to the four corners of the land. And so, I see no benefit for me in this, unless Reason is in accord with true Love. But this is something that

cannot be. And, my sweetheart, my last comfort and resort is this: that I know, for certain, that when it pleases you, and may God bring that happy hour, you will be so sweet and kind that Resistance will not dare cavil at your sweetness. And you will prove to be so clever as to put Argus to sleep, who will then see no more than doth a blind mole. And thus, Ill-Speech will stay silent. And so, my sweetheart, you can well see how my death and life, my pleasure and joy, my suffering and good health, all lie in your hands and under your control, and you may command me as a man who is yours with naught retained. My own sweetheart, I am sending you the music for the rondel that conceals your name. And, perforce, I have given it to others before sending it to you, for the strangers who were in Reims would not let me be. And know for certain that it has been seven years since I composed anything so good or sweet to the ear, and it gives me great joy to have fashioned it well, out of love for you and because your name is therein. And so, I pray you, out of the affection you hold for me, to learn it, please, if you are able, and without telling anyone that your name lies within, for I would then compose no more in this manner. But let the slanderers speak their slander; I am having something made for you in Paris, but this I cannot obtain as soon as I thought due to the plague. Yet, as soon as I have it, I will send it you. My own sweetheart, a clerk came to me, not long ago, who urged me strongly to write to you, but he brought no letters or true tokens from you. And thus, I paid him little attention and answered coldly. Yet do not consider yourself ill-served, I beg you, for by my soul it was he who gave me the material to compose “Long delay alters love”, in which I begged mercy from you and still do so, most humbly. My very dear sister, I intend to be at Saint-Quentin on All Saints’ Day, and from there make my way to my lord the Duke, and I know not how long he will wish to keep me by him. Do not think yourself ill-served if I fail to write soon. Yet I will compose all you have requested by this messenger and in the manner you command. I am sending you the ballad composed by T... Païen, and the reply I devised, which I composed upon the spot. But he composed first, and took all the grease from the pot that he could, while I but composed later. And so, you may judge if you like, but truly he possessed a great advantage. However, I shall compose music for it all. Do not give these pieces to anyone, I pray. However, he told me upon a time that if it were not that he had other matters to attend to, there would have been naught left for me to do. And I did not wish to write to you about this

earlier, for fear of arousing your anger, because of the faith I have in your goodness. Adieu, my dear sweetheart, and my very dear sister, and may God grant you the good things and honour and joy that I would wish for you, and grace us with seeing each other again, shortly. And my sweetheart, if my letter is too brief, pardon me. Written this seventeenth day of October. Your true love.'

Lines 6332-6343: His thirteenth rondel 'Dix et sept, cinq, trese, quatorse et quinse' (Rondel XIV)

'TEN and seven, five, three, fourteen, fifteen,
Has, with the purest love, seized me sweetly.

And, in loving embrace, she's captured me –
Ten and seven, five, three, fourteen, fifteen –

Through what all praise and love, her quality,
And peerless beauty, that they prize highly.

Ten and seven, five, three, fourteen, fifteen,
Has, with the purest love, seized me sweetly.'

(Translator's note: converting numbers to letters of the alphabet, and remembering that there is no letter 'j' in the Old French alphabet, the opening line gives 17, 5, 3, 14, 15 or R,E,N,O,P. Doubling of any letter is allowed, so doubling the letter 'E' and re-arranging gives PERONE, for Péronelle d'Armentières)

Lines 6344-6351: He receives her seventeenth letter

'My own sweetheart, and my faithful friend, I have received all you sent me by your servant. And fear not regarding my taking good care of your book. My sweetheart, you have written me that you will not be able to see me for a long time, nor come to where I now reside. And I would like it not, too, if you did not come. And it causes you to suffer much pain, of this I am certain, and I know that well, through my own experience, for I have none to complain to, any more than you. And this is something that causes

us much woe. And you have also written that, if I allowed it, you would complain about your suffering to yourself. Know that this pleases me well, as long as you find consolation and true hope within, since I feel as you do, nor for a day of my life will I forget you. You have also written that you are quite sad that Reason tells you Resistance also holds a key to the treasury that is yours, and that without him you could possess none of the good things therein. But fear not concerning this, for I intend to be of great help to you in this matter. For I know that the love you have for me is so faithful and honest you would not dare make an attempt on any of the good things in the treasury in a manner that might do harm, nor in regard to which Resistance might have any cause to complain. And so, I am not at all afraid of Argus, for even if he had as many eyes again as he does, he would not see there anything Ill-Speech might use to slander us. So, fear not that, when God pleases that I shall see you, I shall so bind them that none, there present, will dare protest. My sweetheart, you have written to me that you will be in Saint-Quentin, at All Saints, and from there go to my lord the Duke, and so I think it will be long before I have news from you. Also, I think I shall not be staying here long, but think to move elsewhere, shortly. And as soon as I am there, I will write to my brother, who will inform you of it. And, also, I beg you to write to him concerning how you are, and ask him to let me know. I have read what you have written concerning Thomas, most carefully. And, when it pleases God that I see you, I shall tell you all about this matter. Also, Henry will be able to inform you of it, most ably. I have received a letter you were sending to that same, but I have no means to send it to him, as I know not where he is. Yet I would feel safer sending it to him than entrusting it to others. I am returning the last letter you sent me, because that is what you requested, but I am not sending your book because I have not yet read it. Though when I have read it, I will send it back to you. My own sweetheart, I pray that Our Lord may grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. Written on the day of Saint Simon and Saint Jude, the twenty-eighth of October, your faithful love.'

Above, you have read the letter
From my sweet lady, its begetter,
Who is perfect, lacking in naught,
That good and fair may be sought,
And can see that, in her reply,

There's no barb or thorn, say I;
Naught is at fault in her letter,
For all is sweet and naught bitter.

Lines 6352-6383: Of Love and Desire

AND so, I viewed it willingly,
And read her words, delightedly,
For beneath her feet she'd set
The greatest of my enemies yet,
So, they would ne'er trouble me
As to the favour of my lady.
For I did greatly fear them all,
Since they were powerful in all
Such matters, and oft assailed me,
Such that I often cried: 'Ah, me!'
For Desire, that's sleepless ever,
In my heart, and slumbers never,
Came to remind me and report
That I'd failed to do as I ought,
And would not wish me to endure
But rather see me suffer more
Such that I might not life maintain
Unless some means I might obtain
To see my sweet love, my jewel,
For he considered me a fool,
And grew within me every day,
Nor did Love wane, in any way.
Love and Desire, it seems to me
Run on the one leash, mutually
Bound, and if Desire grows less
Hearts smile that lack faithfulness,
While those hearts that love truly
Weep; for the one, assuredly,
Must wax with the other and wane,
For worldly and cloistered, the same;
And thus, to a like step must go

One and the other, dancing so.

Lines 6384-6431: Of ill-fated and separated lovers

THUS, all alone, I did complain,
Of my great desire, and the pain,
Till I was lost in thought so deep
I brought to mind, as if in sleep,
Those whom I've spoken of before,
Pyramus and Thisbe, to be sure.
In twin towers, were they confined,
No way between could those two find,
Open to their eyes, however,
By which to seek joy together.
Their state did so oppressive prove,
That the passion and force of love
By which there were intoxicated,
Drove them forth, being so fated,
Seeking to meet now, face to face,
And kiss together, and embrace,
Only to find, in their last breath,
Each other, and a piteous death.
Love was Leander's master too,
Who swam the Hellespont to view
His lady, and his own true love,
Which in the end his death did prove,
For he was drowned, the which is yet
A fate to grieve for, and regret.
Did not Lancelot pass over
The Bridge of Swords for his lover
Guinevere, King Arthur's queen?
And they loved so that it was seen
They loved each other and, thereby,
Their cause was lost, who can deny?
Did not the son of Pierre Toussac
Have himself carried, in a sack,
By some man that over the shore

A heavy porter's burden bore?
Yes, that he might see face to face
His sweet lady, so full of grace.
Surely twas Paris witnessed this?
And was it not another Paris
Sailed, to see and abduct Helen?
And what of Vergy's Châtelaine,
Whose little dog played messenger,
So that she might meet her lover,
And delight in him at leisure,
Sweetly, and at her pleasure?
Like her true lover she too died,
He by the sharp sword at his side.
And Paris likewise was undone,
I find it writ, with Helen won.

Lines 6432-6463: Of the affairs of the gods, and the middle way

THE gods, who loved as lovers, too
Changed their forms, shaped anew,
And altered that of their lover
To a bird, sometimes a heifer,
Or whatever pleased them still,
Each changing their love at will,
Though, when they met their lover, they
Assumed their proper form, alway,
So as to work, most secretly,
Conducting their affairs wisely.
My ears, and eyes, and my temples,
Are full indeed of such examples,
And so, I say, and have no doubt,
Without trickery, and without
Exaggeration, that if I've seen
One fare well twelve others have been
Confounded, while the safest way
Proves the middle course, any day.
Tis, by my soul, as great a peril

To see her too oft, as too little,
And risk, in viewing your lady,
Seeing what you'd not wish to see.
Too oft, and then the slanderer
Cruel and foolish words doth utter,
Who near lovers doth ever hover,
Alas, and can keep silent never.
If Love too often would so meet
And a long stay would complete,
It will oft prompt her to withdraw
From love, where often less is more.
God keep me from such encounter,
For I would never dare oppose her.

Lines 6464-6493: He sends his lady two ballads and his twentieth letter

I was musing on these matters
And these examples of lovers
And their fates as I've retold them,
Which we see repeated often,
But could find nothing there
That proved that in this affair
I should go and see my lady,
So, I thought to write, briefly,
And despatch another letter
And thereby try to discover
What counsel she might offer me;
And I composed it, swiftly,
Nor forgot the ballads either,
To be enclosed with the letter,
I had them copied out also.
Thomas composed, as you know,
The first of these, I the other,
And he had taken, moreover,
All the grease from out the pot,
And so, the fairer was his lot
As to the soup; I made answer

In a like poetic manner,
And set it, four parts together,
To entertain and delight her.
None alive, howe'er my friend
Received what I to her did send,
For her had I, some time ago,
Made these two pieces and, lo,
Now copied the music for her,
And presented all this to her.

Lines 6494-6517: Thomas Paien's ballad 'Quant Theseus, Herculès et Jason' (Ballad XXXIX)

'WHEN Theseus, Hercules and Jason
Traversed the whole Earth and the deep sea,
To add to all the worth and fame they'd won,
And view the world in its entirety,
They deserved great honour,
Yet when I see beauty's humble flower
I am so satisfied withal, believe me,
I see enough, when I see my lady.

For, when sight of her beauty I attain,
Her form, her manner full of sweetness,
Such goodness as to win the good, I gain,
Since the great good in her doth progress
Through me, by true love's grace,
Binding me thus to loathe shame and disgrace,
All vice, such that I can say, blamelessly,
I see enough, when I see my lady.

I seek not the Golden Fleece to view, nor
The Indies, nor the waves of the Red Sea,
Nor on the infernal regions make war,
And so, part myself from the fair lady
Who brings joy, lightness ever,
And sweet thoughts too, for I hold it better

To count all else as a trifle merely.
I see enough, when I see my lady.'

Lines 6518-6541: His sixteenth ballad in reply 'Ne quier voir la biauté d'Absalon' (Ballad XXXVIII)

'I seek not the beauty of Absalom,
Nor Ulysses' great strength and eloquence,
Nor to try the power of mighty Samson
Whose hair Delilah trimmed, his true defence,
Nor would care to own
To Argus' eyes, nor greater joy be shown,
Since for pleasure, without help from any,
I see enough, since I see my lady.

To the statue wrought by Pygmalion
There was neither equal nor second,
Yet the beauty who holds me in prison
Is a thousand times lovelier reckoned:
She is the true source of all sweetness,
With a skill that heals all sadness;
Who then can blame me, if I decree:
I see enough, since I see my lady.

So, I ask not the wisdom of Solomon,
Nor that Phoebus prophesy and respond,
Nor meddle with Venus, or that Memnon
Whom Jove turned to a flock of birds anon,
For I say, since I adore,
Love, and desire, fear, and honour more,
She whose love inflames me, utterly,
I see enough, since I see my lady.'

'My own sweetheart, my sweet sister, and my very sweet love, I have received your letter from my servant, who tells me that you are well, and this gives me more joy than anything else in the world. And concerning my own health, may it please you to know that I am well in body, thanks to

Our Lord, who granted it, at the time this letter was written. I did not go to Saint-Quentin, nor to my lord the Duke because an enemy force is close to Beauvais, and this deterred me from doing so, and for this reason I have remained here. My own sweet heart, my most dear sister, and my very sweet love, you have not written as to my book or offered a judgment of the two ballads that I sent you, and whose composition was inspired by you, even though it was arranged that the other should compose his ballad first. And it seems to me that what you wrote was shorter in length than that which you usually send. And so, I know not if it is a question of the time you have available, or if you did so in order to prompt me to write more briefly in return. But that is something I would be uncomfortable doing, for once I start, I cannot make an end. My sweetheart, my dear sister, and my own sweet love, I beg you to guard my book well and show it to as few people as you can. And if there is anything in it that displeases you or as it seems to you might be amended, make a mark near that passage, which I can remove before making what improvements I can. My sweetheart and my own sweet love, I believe that one of the greatest benefits and favours that Love and Fortune may bestow on lovers is to love someone close by, and the greatest misfortune to love someone far distant. And I know well what I am saying, and I believe you do also. For were this not our case, I could wish for nothing more in the world than to live in order to see you as often as I desired, and to serve you. And I think endlessly about how this might be remedied, so much so that it is one of my most frequent thoughts, but I see no way, unless you can arrange something. And my very sweet heart, you know how Pyramus and Thisbe, who had been locked up in different places so that they could not see one another, sought some way that they could see one another; how Leander swam across the Hellespont so that he might go and see his lady, who otherwise could not make her way to where he was; and how the Châtelaine de Vergy sought out a means to see her lover; and how Lancelot crossed the Bridge of Swords and the men did all these things because of the love they had for their ladies. And my own sweetheart, though I am in no way as virtuous as were they, there is nothing in this world that my body would not suffer in order for me to do as you have commanded, and whereby I might see you, for your perfect beauty and your pure sweetness, which attract my heart and myself as a magnet attracts iron, would draw me and my heart toward them in such a sweet way that nothing I did in

obedience to your command could distress me. And you are quite wise and thus know very well that “He prays enough who goes weeping ever”, for I could not decide what to do about this unless it came from you. My own sweetheart, I am sending you written copies of the two ballads you saw previously which were composed for you. And I pray you, humbly, to learn them, for I have composed the songs in four parts and have heard them several times and they pleased me quite well. Adieu, my own sweetheart, my dear sister, and my very sweet love, and may God give you perfect joy in what your heart loves, as well as a long and virtuous life, and may He grant us time and opportunity to see each other soon. Written the third day of November. Your faithful friend.’

Lines 6542-6557: She sends him her fifteenth rondel, and a ballad, with her eighteenth letter

IT was not a great deal after
I’d sent the foregoing letter,
That my lady, good, fair, and wise,
Sent via the messenger, likewise,
So swift a note that very day
She had my letter, I may say;
I received a rondel from her,
With a fine ring, sent together.

‘As long as I’m alive, dear,
Your own true love I shall be,

Whether I am far or near,
As long as I’m alive, dear.

Doubt me never, know no fear,
Lover, for I pledge, you see,
As long as I’m alive, dear,
Your own true love I shall be.’

Lines 6558-6578: Her ninth ballad ‘Se par fortune la lasse et la dervee’

'If through wearisome and fickle Fortune,
She who is never certain, fixed, nor sure,
My sweet love cannot return full soon,
As far from me as if on foreign shore,
He has no cause my harshness to endure,
Or that I forget, or our love be maimed;
The heart once given's not to be reclaimed.

Certain am I his thoughts are all of me,
All his desire for me, and all his care,
Thinking of how he might return to me,
While suffering sad pain and trouble there,
Thus, to perform my duty, I must share
His grievous woe, and not let him be blamed;
The heart once given's not to be reclaimed.

Because of him I'm honoured everywhere,
Honour his virtue brings, that will endure.
So, now, let me ensure, while life I bear,
I love him with a love that's true and pure,
For in this world I think there's none could draw
My love from him, let him my love be named;
The heart once given's not to be reclaimed.

'My own sweetheart, my most sweet love, and my very dear friend, I have received your letter and am very happy you have not journeyed one step towards the place of which you wrote, for I feared greatly that you might be attacked on the way. Previously, I wrote naught to you concerning your book, the which you sent me, since I had not read any of it, but since then I have read it twice over, and it seems extremely fine to me. And when it pleases God that I see you, which will be soon, God willing, I shall tell you of various ways in which it might be improved. The two ballads you have sent me are so good that no one could find a way to amend them. Yet there is no comparison between the two, for what you have written ever pleases me more than what others compose. Moreover, I am sure that others will feel the same. You have written that there is no pain so great as to love someone far distant, and, by my faith, this I know well, for I do not believe

there is anyone in the world who could suffer more pain than I endure. And my sweet heart, because I know that you suffer the same as I, I promise you to remedy this: we will see each other soon and with great joy, and for this purpose alone I shall be where you know of, in eight days, without fail. And as soon as I am there, you will hear news to please you, for never did those lovers, those men and women you wrote of, exert themselves as much as will I, for, by God, this is the greatest wish I have in the world. My own sweetheart, if I write you but brief letters, I beg you not to be displeased, for if you knew the place where I am, and the people I must deal with, you would excuse me, readily. My sweetheart, I pray God grants you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. And my own sweetheart, I am sending you a rondel and a ballad I have composed out of love for you, as well as a ring you shall wear out of love for me if you wish, and I beg you to do so. Written this fifth day of November. Your true love.'

Lines 6579-6606: She changes her place of residence and writes her nineteenth letter

IT was not long after writing,
That my lady changed her dwelling,
And stayed at another mansion
Much longer than was her custom,
In the heart of a fine town, where,
This, by the Gospel, I do swear,
Once settled, she did write to me
Whom she was most eager to see
More often, and in a manner
Better suited to her pleasure.
And I was most happy to know
Her will, which was that I should go,
And take my secretary with me,
And some few others, discreetly,
To see her fair and noble person,
And to fear not, for this reason,
That, given every circumstance,
She would arrange, as if by chance,

That Argus would be fast asleep
My foe, Resistance, too would keep
Far from us, nor would Ill-Speech dare
To anger or annoy us there,
Nor reveal to us his envy,
If our time we passed joyously;
And she would imprison closely
In a stronger cell than any, ever,
Those who'd do us harm; never
Should Reason do aught, at all,
But burst to see what might befall.
And this you may see easily,
For here is what she wrote to me.

'My own sweetheart, my sweet love, and my very dear friend, may it please you to learn that I am where you know of, and in quite good health, thanks to Our Lord who granted you this. And know that when you are pleased to come here, you will find as much joy and sweetness as you could imagine or desire, because I have imprisoned Resistance and Ill-Speech, and I have put Argus to sleep in such a fashion that there is now no one here who could annoy you in the least. And my own sweetheart, though I wish to see you more than anything on earth, I pray you not to set out to come here if your health is not sufficient to the journey, for the roads are not safe. And I would never again have any pleasure or joy if you started on the road and some misfortune befell you. And, my sweet friend, when you do come, I beg you take lodgings in the place you know, for that seems the best to me. And I would like it very much if your secretary could accompany you. And if this cannot be, then bring with you some of your people whom you trust the most, and come so secretly that no one learns of your visit until I have spoken to you. And, in so far as I am able, the treasure chest will be opened before anyone has news of your arrival; and as soon as you have reached the lodgings spoken of above, send a message to me at my mother's house by one of your men, and write to me, through him, that you have come. And if, in my mother's house, he should meet anyone who asks him whence he comes, he is to say he is come from my sister and brings a letter from her. My own sweetheart, I beg you to write me how you are, by this messenger, and when you will come to my side, so

that I might be better advised about my circumstances, for I promise you, faithfully, that the most important reason I came to where I am was so that I would be able to see you, and more readily here than elsewhere. I am not sending your book with this, because, if God please, I will hand it to you myself. One of my companions and female friends, who is named Columbelle, commends herself to you many times. And I promise you that she is a woman who can do us much good, and yet I have to this point told her naught of your business, nor shall I do so until the right time comes. H... is out of the country, and for a certain reason cannot be here at the present time, and so I have opened the letter you sent him. And as soon as he returns, which will be shortly, if God please, I will send him to you so that he can guide you here. I pray Our Lord grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. Written this thirteenth day of November. Your most loyal love.'

Lines 6607-6654: His secretary advises against the journey

I summoned my secretary;
Who was in another country,
Three days journey, at least, away,
Yet he waited not half a day
Until he came to meet me there,
For more than any man, I swear,
He wished to know what I desired,
Since in such haste he was required.
Twas yet the month of November
The twenty-eighth as I remember,
Moreover, I'd have you know
I ne'er knew such a wind to blow
With roof-tiles flying through the air,
And chimneys toppling everywhere,
And several houses felled entire,
None had e'er known a storm so dire.
For no one dared to come or go,
Nor stand against the wind, that so
Blew, most horribly, that many
Were driven on willy-nilly,

And further, by Saint Peter, blown
Than a man could throw a stone.
When he arrived I did discover
My business to him, moreover,
I showed the letters which he read,
And at the last he turned and said:
'Why, truly, much is written here,
Sweetly composed it would appear,
Ennobled by a loving heart,
Who neglects you not, though apart.
Now let us look to what we'll do.'
I answered: 'We must ride anew,
I shall not fail to go to her,
So as in no way to wrong her,
For I would rather die this day
Than cause my love undue delay.'
At this, he did commence to smile,
Which turned to laughter in a while:
'Good sir,' he said, 'you need me not;
Go there, now my advice you've got,
But by the Blessed Virgin Mary
I shall not keep you company.'
And I replied: 'Why not, sweet friend?
For in the letter she did send
She said I should bring you along,
Without you all may turn to wrong.'
And he said: 'I shall tell you why,
And speak the truth, and ne'er a lie.'

Lines 6655-6726: His secretary expresses his fears

'SIRE, to begin with, I must say
That I love you so, that alway
I would advise you, willingly,
And ever your counsellor be.
Yet I see in this business, here,
Many a thing that brings me fear,

And which you should fear for one,
And all those who for your person
And your estate may have a care,
For he who tells you to go there,
And make that journey hastily,
Would give his counsel foolishly.
Now listen to me, this is why:
Though your lady, she of manner shy,
Would see you, of her affection,
Yet it was never her intention
That you risk peril, for her wish,
Dangers by which many perish.
Hostile men, in many a band,
Are spread abroad, through all the land,
The great and little join together
And bring to ruin all they capture;
By false and evil means moreover
And if they held you in some tower,
For three or four days, in distress,
Then I believe you'd die, no less.
For you're a most delicate person,
And should not go for that reason,
Nor would your fair lady be pleased,
If you met trouble and were seized,
Because she'd summoned you thus;
You'd but bring danger upon us.
See how the wind troubles people,
Rocking every house and steeple,
How none do dare to come and go,
For the rooftiles that fall like snow,
Lost, as the wind sets them flying,
In its strong and wondrous sighing,
It has been fifty years, at least,
Sixty, by God, ere was unleashed
Such a storm, such vile weather;
As such, twill be altogether
Too much should you and I suffer,

The snow, frost, and ice of winter.
No man, howe'er young and strong,
But must fear them; to go along
With you would put an end to me,
Yet you'd undertake the journey.
And there's more reason yet to doubt
Its wisdom, you oft feel the gout,
And if it came upon you, sire,
And seized your feet so or higher,
And you were halted in some den,
By my soul, sire, you'd die then.
And what would I tell your brother
Who is your all, lord, son, father,
And cherishes you, so sweetly,
It makes everyone smile gladly?
And what of all your company?
Each would become my enemy,
And cry: "To the grave he has brought
Our dearest friend, and cut him short."
In this way I'd be dishonoured,
Far less esteemed and less honoured,
Cursed indeed in every place,
Hateful to every noble face.
God save me from such a charge,
As to let you wander at large
In peril of your life, for sure;
Though I could strive no more
Willingly else in your employ,
As Hector did for those of Troy.'

Lines 6727-6814: Of Circe, Picus, and Caneus

'EVEN Circe, the true goddess
Of magic, that great enchantress,
Who the manner knew so well,
Of casting every kind of spell,
(And made Picus a woodpecker

To peck at the tree-bark ever,
And changed each envoy, what is more,
Of Ulysses, to a wild boar,
And tainted the water for Scylla,
Of whom Glaucus was the lover,
And he was a god of the sea
Whom Scylla loved not, so sadly,
She was poisoned and did suffer
Without reason, great dishonour,
Her body torn in many a place
By the wild dogs, to her disgrace)
Even she would fail to guide you,
No matter what spells she might brew,
Nor would you cease to repent
Of the peril to which you went,
To life and limb or, perchance,
Of the risk of other mischance.
It might be you know not the tale
Of Picus, but let truth prevail,
He was King of Laurentia,
So handsome in face and manner,
So noble, in body and mind,
So polished, so renowned, refined,
And then so virtuous also,
Nature ne'er made another so,
Such that of all the knights of Troy
He was the worthiest of employ
In steadfastness and devotion,
For his age, for tis my notion
He was scarcely more than twenty.
Now let me say there were many
Ladies who desired him greatly
And sought his love, most dearly.
All the nymphs of grove and river
Pursued him with many a prayer,
But never a one would he love,
Or name them as such, or approve

Except for one he loved, alone,
Who called him her friend, I own.
Circe, the lady enchantress,
She asked him for his love, no less,
But he would pay no heed to her,
Nor listen to her slightest offer,
Such that the goddess felt anger,
And into the green woodpecker
She changed Picus, a garish bird,
That in the woods is often heard.
The generous and noble queen,
Who loved him, the one, I mean,
That called him her sweet lord,
Respecting him, still, afterward,
Was the beautiful Caneus,
Who for her singing was famous;
For many she could do no wrong;
They called her the goddess of song,
Which is the meaning of her name,
In Greek, the wise affirm say the same.
Caneus sang with such great skill
She charmed every vale and hill,
And made the rocks to glide along
To the pure sweetness of her song,
The oak, the cedar and the pine,
Almond and fir would all incline
Their verdant crowns and so bend near,
When her sweet song they did hear,
And for the queen they made a glade
Against the heat, to grant her shade.
She made the rivers too change course,
And so, flow backwards to their source,
And make the savage beasts to yield.
Now, the nymphs of wood and field
Could not resist her, and would dance
To her song, which would entrance
Even the babe in the cradle,

Attending so if it were able.
Yet the singing of Caneus
Nor the bravery of Picus,
Nor Circe's spells could ever free
You from cold, wind, the enemy
That in the woods and fields roam free,
Or so charm them that, willingly,
They would conduct you to that place,
All unharmed, if such ills you'd face.'

Lines 6815-6890: Of Polyphemus and Galatea

'IMAGINE you're on the headland
Of that giant, who, there, did stand,
Hurling stones at passing vessels,
With rocks and boulders as missiles,
Great and strong, he's full of pride,
He wrecks and sinks them all beside,
Drowning them in the sea, like toys,
Whate'er he strikes he thus destroys.
So as to fill his greedy maw,
The men he seizes, what is more,
He slays, and crunches in his jaws,
So that the blood squirts forth, and pours
Down from his coarse beard, drop by drop;
His cruelty and wickedness ne'er stop.
Few can escape, whate'er the cost,
Whoe'er he captures is truly lost.
None can elude his grasp indeed,
Whom he corners on them to feed.
His wild and greasy hair hangs low,
He combs it with a mighty harrow.
Amidst his brow he's one eye yet,
Tis vast, and dreadful, and deep-set,
And there beneath the eyebrow burns,
Huge as a shield, it each way turns.
His eyebrow is of a fashion, I note,

Like to a hedgehog's prickly coat,
And in full armour one might hide
Inside each nostril deep and wide.
His beard reaches his waist beneath
With hairs like to the harrow's teeth,
Dense and large, but sharp indeed,
His mouth is like a ditch, its feed
Yielding a charnel house's stench,
From the sad flesh that fills its trench.
With a pine-tree trunk in his hands,
From atop his cliff, he commands
His cattle and, all unclothed there,
Just as they do, he goes all bare.
He has no house, room or chamber,
Except a sordid cave, where ever
The wicked creature takes his rest,
His stomach full, there to digest,
While at his left the tree-trunk lies,
A hundred feet long, of vast size,
With which, ere he seeks his sleep,
He gathers his returning sheep.
And when the sun shines forth again,
He will seek himself to entertain,
Taking his reed-flute in his hand,
A hundred reeds at his command,
And whene'er he makes it sound,
The earth and sea echo around,
For three or four leagues all about,
This delights him, but thereabout
All those who hear him, far or near,
Avoid encountering him, through fear.
He loved Galatea, however,
Who loathed him more than any other,
Since in manner he was terrible,
In face and form most horrible.
And then of Actis, her sweet friend,
This foul monster had made an end.

Wickedly, and treasonously,
Through anger and pure jealousy.
He launched a boulder at the man
That slew her lover, out of hand.
He'd have thus served Galatea,
Likewise, dishonoured and slain her,
But she fled deep into a cave
And so, her life did gladly save.
This giant was named Polyphemus,
Who'd threatened Jupiter and Venus,
Declaring that, if he caught them,
He would slay them both, and eat them.
For they had made him fall in love,
Though but bitter did loving prove.'

Lines 6891-6962: Ulysses wounding of Polyphemus

'NOW, Galatea told a tale
Of him, o'er him may God prevail!
There was a man of holy station,
Given to secret divination,
And Telephus was this man's name,
Who understood, so she did claim,
The meaning of birdsong; twas clear
As was hounds' yelping to the seer.
He went to the giant, and to him said:
'Guard well that one eye in your head,
Believe me, Ulysses will steal it,
And there is naught that can heal it.'
The evil thing, may God curse such,
Thought that he mocked him overmuch,
Yet Ulysses his sight did take,
And afterwards the cliffs did shake,
For when he found his eye was gone
He was so wretched, and undone,
The monster fell upon the ground,
The whole cliff splitting at the sound,

For like some mad beast he moaned,
Cried and bellowed, wept and groaned,
Yet, howe'er loud was his outcry,
He still could not regain his eye.
He menaced Ulysses on the deep,
Who'd robbed him of his eye in sleep,
And roused his one-eyed company,
Evil wretches, yet they'd ne'er see
That man again on their far shore,
Though they might threaten evermore.
Achimenides saw it all,
And related what did befall
After that eye was ruined so.
You shall ne'er a creature know
So greatly maddened, sense forsaken,
As he when his sole eye was taken.
For he forsook his rocks and trees,
And went about on hands and knees,
Searching the paths, about his lands,
With his soiled and blood-stained hands,
Tumbling gainst the stones about,
Till the blood came pouring out.
Then he cursed gods and goddesses,
Alters, temples, priests, priestesses,
Threatening all the Greeks around,
But they appeared not at the sound,
Keeping their distance, out of fear,
Hesitating to come too near.
Achimenides followed closer,
Fleeing when he turned, however,
For had he gone too close again,
The monster had his watcher slain.
Ulysses was possessed of courage
To dare to achieve that outrage.
When, later, Aeneas fled Troy,
The Greeks with fire did destroy,
Bearing his son and his father,

And, also, the noble Theneyta,
Who had nursed, at her pale breasts,
Which were with rich beauty blessed,
The wise and prophetic Sibyl,
Whose heart was both free and noble,
The Sibyl warned him of great danger
As did Venus his fair mother,
Who loved him so that, deified,
He by the gods was glorified.
Thus, he steered with his company,
By day and night o'er the deep sea
Sailing to larboard (far from sight,
The Cyclops' cliffs lay to the right)
Setting his course for Lombardy,
Of which he claimed the seignory.'

Lines 6963-6990: Of Polyphemus' love for Galatea

GALATEA, whom the monster
Greatly loved, claimed, however,
That Love scared him; for it appeared,
That where he loved he also feared.
See what this shows: that there is naught
A woman cannot gain, unsought;
If Amor but gives his consent,
Women can do much, sans intent;
Yet what can Love seek I wonder
Setting himself amidst such ordure?
Blame and reproach I afford him,
Whoe'er may their praise accord him.
Now, when Polyphemus was denied
His sole eye, he yet blindly sighed,
And oftentimes he sat alone
High on a massive seat of stone,
And there, when his pleasure he sought,
He played his flute, such her report,
All its hundred pipes together,

And made the whole landscape shudder.
So, it seemed to those who heard him,
And midst the thunder, they feared him.
And thus, the monster played, to suit
Himself, who knows what on his flute.
And yet one song he did compose,
So she tells, of his love and woes;
I find it here, but cannot say
If it's a song, or yet a lay.'

**Lines 6991-7222: Polyphemus' song addressed to her (cf. Ovid's
'Metamorphoses' Book XIII)**

“GALATEA'S body's whiter
Than the flowering meadow, nobler,
Fairer, sweeter, and yet more true
Than is the very straightest yew,
Brighter than the water shining,
Prettier, and yet more pleasing
Than little tender goats to me,
Soft as the shellfish from the sea,
Her flesh; fair one, more lovable
Are you and more agreeable
Than the sunlight is in winter,
Or the cool shade in the summer.
O lady of great worth, say I,
There you stand beneath the sky,
Taller, more graceful than the palm,
In all your noble perfumed charm;
Rosier, of brighter colour
Than the apple of sweet flavour;
Lady your brightness doth surpass
The brightness of shining glass,
Worthy lady, riper in shape
Than the sweetest ripened grape.
Lady, courteous, friendly ever,
Whiter than the white swan's feather,

Or the young quail's, or the gull,
More pleasant and more beautiful
Than a garden, moist and fertile,
Full of sweet fruits that lips beguile,
Come to your lover, who doth call
To you, hide not from him at all,
He who desires and loves you so,
Grant my wish, my pleasure also.
For should you deny me further
None indeed could e'er be crueller.
Should you do not do as I would wish,
Ne'er was bull crueller than this,
Undaunted in its arrogant pride.
Tougher were you than oak beside
Should you not prove amenable,
And vainer and more changeable
Than a running stream, more pliable
Than a willow branch, more flexible
Than a vine where white grapes grow,
Less merciful, I'd have you know,
Less moved by pity, or by kindness
Than the briar, that wounds us less;
More harmful than the ocean wide,
With all its depths, more full of pride
Than a peacock, praised fulsomely,
Spreading its tail, vaingloriously;
More hateful and more annoying,
More painful yet than fire burning
Dead brushwood, lard, or dry sedge;
Sharper than e'er is thorny hedge,
More savage than a bear in heat,
False as the Hydra in defeat,
And darker than the troubled water,
If you disdain to love me ever.
More fearful than the frightened doe
Or stag that runs before the bow,
And not like to the stag merely,

But more wont to flee me, truly,
Than is the wind; yet, if I could,
I'd cure your fickleness for good.
For if you knew my true intent,
I do believe you would repent
Of fleeing so readily from me,
Then you would rather stay with me
And you would take more pains than this
To accomplish my every wish.
For you would enter my domain,
The cave I dwell in, and remain,
Where the cliff arches high above.
Neath the mount that cannot move.
So strong and rock-bound is the place
No sunlight there shall mar your face,
However lengthy proves the summer,
Nor shall you feel the chill of winter.
In my garden are apple trees,
And they bear ample fruit to please,
Almost more than they can hold,
And, if you deign such to behold,
I've rich grapes on my vines growing,
That I'll keep against your coming,
Purple and white, and you shall eat
Of those that please you or, replete,
Partake of strawberries, if you wish,
You may gather there, and relish,
That grow in the woods; their treasure
You may heap there at your leisure;
And then sorb-apples too, and sloes,
Bud and blossom, whate'er there grows,
And ripe plums, both red and green,
You may gather, the leaves between.
Deign to take me for your spouse,
And you'll have chestnuts in your house,
And all the fruits of bush and tree,
In great plenty; rich shall you be,

If you agree that you'll be mine.
As my wife you shall never pine
For lack of aught. And better still
Are all my herds, of vale and hill,
About us here, below the mount,
And in the woods in vast amount,
And in my cave there, penned within.
And if you seek their count to win,
I've creatures there beyond number,
Such that I cannot tell their number,
For he's a poor man who can come
To a total, and his riches sum.
If you think it cannot be true,
All I have said, why then, come view
All that lies in my possession,
And you will know, without question,
If tis a lie. My cattle you'll see,
With udders so full they scarcely
Can contain the milk they hold,
And then the lambs not one year old
And the kids, and in the cavern
I drink milk whate'er the season,
And with it I have soup to please
And from it too I oft make cheese.
You may surely take your pleasure
Of what I have, in full measure,
All I have told you of and more,
For there are other gifts in store.
I'll give you roe and fallow deer,
Rabbits and hares too breed here,
All to please you, such is my care.
Of turtledoves I possess a pair
Had from the nest the other day,
With these you can gently play.
Two fledglings I have, of an age,
Of the same size and plumage,
That I found about the mountain,

And I declare, till a certain
Lady comes they shall be guarded
As a gift for her, ne'er discarded,
Fair one, refuse not then my offer,
Nor the lovely gifts I'd proffer,
Instead come turn your head away
From the sea, since I am, I say,
Worthy of love, and this I know,
For in the still pool, here below,
I have seen both my form and face
Reflected in that watery place,
And I am handsome and well-made,
Pleased to see myself so displayed,
The greatness of this form of mine,
How tall a youth I am and full fine.
I know not what god in heaven,
As you folk say, is as handsome,
As noble, or as huge, I say.
I have great locks of hair that stray
Down to my shoulders, o'er my brow,
That suit me well, for you'll allow
A horse without a mane is ugly,
And birds and their young should be
All clothed in feathers, without fail,
Or they're like fish without a scale;
As wool is fitting for the ewe,
So every man needs a beard too,
Or he's ugly, and unseemly;
The body-hair I have suits mine,
Long and thick, and like the swine
It bristles just as their hide does;
Such is the covering I'd choose.
I have but one eye neath my brow
But this becomes me, I'll avow,
Since it's vast, both wide and round,
As many a shield may be found;
There's but one sun, up in the sky,

And, likewise, I have but one eye,
While the world is a single sphere,
So though my hair bristles, tis clear
You should not for that despise me,
There's little value in the tree
That's barren of foliage, and so
Do not be proud towards me, no,
Sweet sister, take me as your spouse,
For I am come of a noble house,
Such that you ought to desire me,
As son to the god of the sea.
A great lord is he, my father,
You indeed could find none greater;
No more is required my lady
Than that you do, willingly,
All that I ask, respectfully,
Of you; for of yourself only
Am I the subject, and would be.
I hold Jove, or any other
Gods, their lightning and their power,
And all their virtues, as of naught;
Not worth a fig are they, in short.
On you alone I call, and more,
Alone do honour, fear, adore.
I dread not the lighting, ever,
As much as I do dread your anger.
And if you loved me well, why then,
Since you'd refuse all other men,
Just as you would refuse me now,
I would be more content, I vow,
And I'd endure it, patiently.
But I am wounded, grievously,
For you disdain the giant in me,
To love some wretched nobody,
Actis, in whom you seek solace,
One whom you kiss and embrace,
While my embrace you yet disdain;

No pleasure, comfort I obtain.
As much as he may please you, I,
If I can find where he does lie,
Will display all my great might,
I'll rob him of his heart, outright,
No matter whom it displeases
And tear him into little pieces,
And strew them all about the ways,
And o'er the fields, so you, always,
May see the one that you love so.
I'll spread him o'er the sea below,
So that you may be together,
Thus, I'd wish you joined forever.
Jealous am I, and thus accursed,
A scorching flame have I or worse,
That roasts, and burns, and doth grieve me
Like the fires of hell, believe me;
I languish for your friendship, yet
With no mercy from you am met."
Such is the outcry, the complaint
That ever is the monster's plaint,
Hold it not as some mere fable,
For tis the singing of the devil.'

Lines 7223-7260: The Secretary completes his advice

'NOW you have heard all that singing
From its very first beginning
Through to its finish, start to end,
Telling how the giant did extend
His heart's love to fair Galatea,
And his mad deed concerning her,
His treason and his cruelty
And his immense disloyalty,
And of the sad end men did meet,
Whom that mighty grip did greet;
And yet I promise, faithfully,

He would not treat you so harshly
If into his hands you should fall,
As those thieves that, you recall,
And enemies, and there are many,
With which the devil plagues this country;
Who could not thus afflict folk more
Except by slaying them, tis sure.
And ever the cold winds do blow
That destroy more than we know,
And overthrow the stoutest tree,
And sink brave vessels in the sea.
You would soon be dead I fear,
So, my advice is: rest you here;
And here indeed you should stay,
Yet twere best that, straight away,
You should write your love a letter
And within it you should tell her
The reasons why you'll not set out,
For she is such, without a doubt,
Who would never seek to blame
Or love you the less for that same.
And I'll write to your lady too,
And say the very same as you,
And tell her why you yet remain.
Now, let us write to her amain;
And let your heart be full of joy,
Such is your very best employ.'

Lines 7261-7304: The lover's friend enters and gives his counsel

WHEN his speech had reached its finish,
A speech which I thought most foolish,
I said: 'My friend, by Saint Simon,
You've preached me a lengthy sermon
As to why I should ne'er see her,
Yet prove but a vain counsellor,
For you are no true advocate,

If the only counsel you can state
Is counsel that does me no good,
For you know well I ever should
Obey the sweet commandment she
Ordains, whom I love faithfully.’
In this way, we sat debating,
With each his own viewpoint stating
In support of his contention,
Yet it reached no firm conclusion,
For a nobleman made entry
To my chamber, treading softly,
And ending thus our conversation
Brought about its termination,
Crying: God save this company,
From anger and from villainy,
Grant them peace, honour and joy
Such as I’d wish Love to employ.’
Straightway, we leapt to our feet
And humbly then the man did greet,
Doing him reverence, as we should,
All from the heart, as best we could.
By the right hand, as we did meet
He took me, and to a window-seat,
He led me, sat upon on a cushion,
And told me how, in what fashion,
He had just heard, from start to end,
All the argument, as my friend,
Twixt me and my secretary there,
And understood the whole affair,
The whole debate and argument,
Likewise, the fable, and its intent,
The urge and the desire in me,
To be with my lovely lady;
And from this he’d defend me,
If I would but listen closely,
And show him love, respectfully;
Which I did, most diligently.

Lines 7305-7341: The image of Friendship

FOR now he said: 'Friend, if I knew
Your greatest virtue I'd help you
To enhance it, raise your esteem,
Lessening what doth harmful seem.
For truly you have here, in me,
A friend of utmost loyalty,
And, for that reason, I'll relate,
Solely to aid your inner state,
How the ancients did once portray
Friendship's image, in their day.
The form of a youth they'd paint
Or carve, one lacking mar or taint,
As handsome in body and face
As a subtle hand could, with grace,
Achieve; bare of head, save, I mean,
For a fair garland, all in green,
Which was most noble; moreover,
Painted letters, in gold and silver,
Adorned its brow, saying, ever,
'Whether tis winter or summer.'
His chest lay open; by true art
One might readily view the heart,
And he had naught, as I have said,
To claim his rank, upon his head.
And, with a finger, he pointed to
His chest where there was writing too,
And there it said: 'Or far or near,'
I swear that it did so appear.
This figure, in a coat of green
Greener than any leaf is seen,
Seemed as though it drew breath,
And in pure gold 'In life and death,'
Was written at the hem; all bare
The feet, no boot or shoe was there.

Now I'll tell you, without delay,
If you will list to what I say,
What the image doth signify.'

Lines 7342-7414: The meaning of the image's attributes

'THE garland, pleasing to the eye,
Means that one should e'er defend,
From all his enemies, one's friend,
And that in all that's to be done
The two should ever act as one,
Since one adorns oneself e'en so,
For a garland doth beauty show;
Naught is more lovely, equally,
Than is, in truth, great loyalty;
While the garland, through its art,
Shows joy, a treasure in the heart.
That the head's uncovered there
Shows how, in mishap and despair,
In ill times and adversity
No less than in prosperity,
A friend will never help deny,
But rather will, with head held high,
Proceed without pride, lovingly,
To aid a friend, howe'er they be.
True friends provide assistance so,
For they are neither dull nor slow
To fight their fight, and advocate
Their cause, in friendship, soon and late.
The writing there, upon the brow,
Teaches, and thus makes clear, how
Perfect friendship, faithful ever,
Knows not cold, heat, winter, summer,
But ever the same point doth mark,
Nor doth to alteration hark,
Just, and firm, and loyal wholly;
Who loves well, forgets tardily.

Now, since you're listening closely,
That the heart one can clearly see,
Since the chest lies open, doth show
That by the heart a friend we know,
And that to naught they will aspire
Unless love proves firm and entire.
And shows, by its very manner,
That Friendship doth bear a banner
Meaning that true love, if complete,
Bears nor concealment nor deceit.
The coat of green, it wears likewise,
Shows that Friendship never dies,
Or withers, but is ever new
And like the lentil fresh in hue,
That hides its verdure in winter,
Yet reveals it come the summer;
Thus, true love though hid, indeed,
Is yet disclosed in time of need.
The lettering says that, sans regret,
In life and death there's Friendship yet,
The finger pointed at the heart
Says he is ever true, and the art
Of the gold letters set close by
Says that or near or far, thereby,
Present or absent, he's a friend
Who will love truly till the end.
Now tis my duty to explain
Why the feet are bare, again
Just as the head, and the face also,
Are uncovered, so all may know,
All folk, whether in their chamber
Or hall, or on the road, wherever,
That face and heart they should declare,
So the feet are portrayed as bare.
Nor should a true friend wait to don
Their boots or shoes ere they be gone
To aid their friend who is in need

Nor should they be afear'd indeed
Of rock or stone, pebble or thorn.
Such love of true affection's born,
Pure, not conceal'd nor hid away,
In town or field, or on the highway.'

Lines 7415-7474: The friend advises the lover to desist from his affair

'NOW I've told you of the image
Of true Friendship, and how the sage
Men of ancient times portrayed it,
And the significance they gave it.
And such a friend am I to you,
For what I say, I swear, is true,
And my friend, if my good counsel
You would take, then I shall tell
You of the path that you should go;
You're so mad for the lady, though,
So attached to her that, I fear,
By my soul, being held so dear
All my words will go for naught,
Yet no matter, for still I ought,
Whether it pleases you or not,
To speak out, for such is my lot,
And tis not right to rest silent;
Unvarnished truth is my intent.
Friend, by God, in this affair
There's more than one ass at the fair,
For several suitors has your lady,
Young and handsome, brave and merry,
And they oft go and visit there,
And I pledge you that, everywhere,
To one and all, many a letter
Of yours she goes showing ever,
Which prove a source of mockery;
Many do laugh your words to see.
For she boasts of your love, I know,

And even the wind that doth blow
Is not so readily perceived
As is the fact that you're deceived.
Think you that she doth love you true
Because 'friend' is what she calls you?
In just the same manner, I feel,
She'd name a stranger from Castile,
And her dear friend the man would be
While he was in her company,
For she's open and courteous,
Knows what friendship's worth to us,
And though I'll not say she loves him,
Yet as her 'friend' she'd address him,
For many a lady will term as 'friend'
One that she loves not in the end.
Upon your lady I cast no blame,
Virtuous, prudent, is that same,
Wise, honest, courteous and fair,
Nor is of a secretive air;
My counsel is for you, my friend,
For tis to her your heart doth tend,
With affection that ceases never,
Making of yourself a martyr,
For foolishly you spend your days
Caught fast, and yet deceived, always.
And, be sure, folk mock you too,
So, my friend I do advise you
To quit this amorous affair,
And end all your commitment there;
And trust, friend, in my counsel,
For, by my faith, I counsel well.'

Lines 7475-7514: The lover grows despondent

AFTER he'd spoken at leisure
And at length, to his good pleasure,
I was not swift in my reply,

For mind and sense were both, thereby,
Confused, more than one could conceive
And many a man might believe,
For all my limbs were set a-trembling,
My eyes with tears softly filling,
And so, I knew not what to say,
Such grief and anger came my way,
For one of my friends had written
Not long ago that I was smitten;
I'd sent him to her, he too had said
That I should seek her not, instead
I should leave her, reclaim my heart
Without delay, renounce my part.
I put these two things together,
Comparing one with the other,
And thought that both were likely true
If such was the counsel of these two,
The one the great lord present there,
Who was a friend beyond compare,
And the other whom I trusted, too,
To perform whate'er I sought to do,
As much as I myself, and sure
I think he loved me even more
Than the lord who now chastised me
Because my heart loved too deeply.
This was no trifle, no fancy,
No fable told to deceive me,
But must, of bare necessity,
Be most certain truth they told me,
Knowing that it was not all lies,
For they'd kept silent otherwise,
Not given indeed to play-acting,
As I well knew, nor gossiping.
So wounded was I in spirit,
My heart lost the joy within it;
I knew such melancholy then
I thought I'd never smile again.

Lines 7515-7568: He responds to his friend's advice

I said: 'My lord, of a certainty,
You have brought ill news to me,
News that finally makes plain
Such facts as but renew my pain.
This I shall suffer secretly,
Showing but little openly,
Until, indeed, I can learn more
Of what you say, and so am sure.
My lord, though I do believe you,
And am certain, were it not true,
You would ne'er have said a word
Of all this that but now I heard,
Yet it is right that I should do
As I intend, and privately too,
For ill haste will win no prize,
Or benefit, or honour, likewise.'
He said: 'And you will do no more?'
And I replied: 'I shall, be sure
To withdraw if I can so do,
Yet not suddenly, for my view
Is that sudden changes of plan
Prove harmful to many a man.
Her kindness, her generosity,
Have from death twice rescued me,
And base would be my attitude,
Betraying great ingratitude,
If I forgot all she's done for me,
Many a time, of her courtesy.
And I have promised, moreover,
To be always her fond lover,
And never seek another love.
Rather, loveless I would prove,
And love none other, losing her,
And so, call myself thereafter,

The most miserable of men,
And ill-fortuned for, I maintain,
Never have I lacked Love before,
He ever dwelt with me, tis sure;
And all my art I'd then forsake,
Doubtless I would no longer make
Rondel, ballad, or virelay,
Poem, fair song, amorous lay,
For after such pleasant employ
My heart could ne'er know perfect joy,
Rather it would prove melancholy,
Sad and pensive, more than ready
For fell death, without remission.
Now have I spoken my intention.'
Having heard all I did utter,
He said: 'I'll not meddle further!'
Then drank a little, and departed,
Leaving me nigh broken-hearted.

Lines 7569-7632: The lover meets the same counsel on every side

MY secretary had heard his speech,
And asked me: 'Sire, does he teach
Good counsel, as your guiding star?
By the faith you owe Saint Gringoire,
Tell me true.' but I answered naught,
And he began to grumble somewhat,
Saying: 'I had my doubts, although
I feared, my lord, to tell you so,
Much afraid I'd rouse your anger,
For such I thought was the danger,
And the agreement we two share,
Thus, be damaged beyond repair.
Tis why I ne'er do make a vow
To any woman to serve her, now;
Swift are they made, yet to our cost
Such vows are all too lightly lost.'

Upon hearing the sombre note
He sounded, my sad heart took note,
Such that, for many a long day,
I kept in mind all he did say.
Twas after forty days, or more,
I would say, though I am unsure,
A special friend of mine told me,
One e'er loyal and trustworthy,
'Some advocate she has with her,
Arguing his own case better
Than you could ever do, truly;
It seems he does it so expertly,
Fair sweet friend, you will be set,
Among the sins she would forget.'
In another three weeks or so,
Over hills and dales, I did go,
To see a lord I knew, greater,
A thousand times, than the other.
He began to smile, on seeing me,
And then addressed me, laughingly:
'About the bush you beat,' his words,
'From which other men take the birds.'
And this he pronounced openly,
To my face, and in company.
On finding myself greeted so,
I felt now so wretched and low,
So mute, rendered silent, was I,
I mustered not a word in reply.
Gathering myself, I wished him well,
And yet on having heard his counsel,
My heart within was quivering,
I knew not what I was saying,
God help me, for now everyone
Was telling me I was undone,
And all they said exhorted me
To forget my lady, wholly,
She whom I love, serve, praise and prize.

As I walked down the street, likewise,
Everyone hurled some jest at me,
All crying, by way of mockery:
'There's one owns to a fine lady!'
And they poked fun at me like this,
Because it was my lady's wish
That our true love be noised about
The streets and, once the news was out,
Everyone then did know and see
The truth of my lady's love for me;
So, common knowledge it was then
To one and all, women and men.
I'll tell you what I did, therefore;
It profited me, I am sure.

Lines 7633-7662: He hides her portrait and writes his seventeenth ballad

TWAS in the month of November
When fires heat hall and chamber,
And I, within the house, keeping,
Until the coming of the spring,
Composing no message to her,
Writing, sealing, not one letter,
To despatch and send her way,
Passing my time another way;
And many an hour so did spend,
Until the winter-time might end
And my eyes could weep no more.
I had no wish now to adore
Her lovely portrait but, instead,
Removed it from above my bed,
And in a little closet placed her,
That rested within one greater.
There it is yet, and so shall stay
And so, remain there, locked away,
Nor will it leave its prison soon,

But rather rest there night and noon,
Because of the wrong my lady,
In seeking a new lover, did me,
At least such was said about her,
Which robbed me of joy and pleasure;
But then, to lighten my dolour,
Which had stolen all my colour,
Composed this ballad, although still
With heart afflicted, weak and ill,
And filled so with love's malady
Tis ripe within the melody.

Lines 7663-7683: His ballad 'Se pour ce muir qu'Amours ay bien servi' (Ballad XLII)

'If for this I die, that I've served Love well,
Ill would it be to have served that lord so,
Since I have not deserved the parting knell
For loving, thus, and with loyal love also;
I do know my days are numbered though,
When I perceive, and openly tis seen,
That in place of blue, lady, you wear green.

Alas, lady, I have cherished you so,
In longing for the sweetness of mercy,
That from me all my sense and strength do go,
So, do these my tears and sighs oppress me,
While hope is dead, beyond recovery,
Since Memory shows me; and tis clearly seen,
That in place of blue, lady, you wear green.

And so, I curse these eyes that first saw you,
The hour, the day, your charm, your address,
The rare beauty that struck my heart anew,
All that delight, enraptured foolishness.
And I curse Fortune, and her fickleness,
And Loyalty, that suffers it to be seen,

That in place of blue, lady, you wear green.’

(Translator’s note: While the significance of medieval colours varied, green was often, as it is here, associated with ill-luck, fickleness, death and decay, while blue was associated with good-luck, steadfastness, mercy and hope; analogues as it were of Earth and Heaven)

Lines 7684-7693: He receives her twentieth letter

NOT long after there came to me
A messenger who, suddenly
Arriving at my very door,
Said: ‘Your lady greets you once more,
And, by me, sends you her letter,
And none ever wrote a better,
No syllable might it lose indeed;
Read it now, please, and take heed.’
So, acting upon what he said,
I opened her letter, and read.

‘My most dear and sweet friend, I send you this message due to the very great and perfect desire I have to hear some good news from you, and may Our Lord grant me the grace to hear such as my heart desires. For I have heard nothing from you since Candlemas, while I have written to you since that time, most recently through your secretary. I also told him several things directly that he was to tell you of, and he promised me that he would do this in such a manner that I would have a response from you shortly, but you deign to do nothing in this regard, and so it seems that you have discarded me utterly and cease to care for me, and that you no longer feel any love for me, and in this you are wrong and do what is bad and sinful. But I pray God may never grant me honour or joy in anything I request of Him if I have ever, in word, deed, or thought, done aught to you which gave reason that you should abandon me in so, or place my heart in the kind of distress it feels for you, as you are well able to understand. And yet you care not; so, you intend no remedy. And, by God, my sweetheart, my heart was never so towards you, for I never felt good or joyful as long as I knew your heart was suffering, and as soon as I was aware of it, I did my

best to comfort you. And I think you well know the great distress my heart feels concerning you, and yet you care naught about it, so I am more surprised at your manner than I would be by any other man in the world, for I believe there has never been any man who has protected and loved the peace, benefit, and honour of all women as much as you have done, even of those you never saw, who never loved you, nor did you any benefit. And I, who love you more dearly than all the men who are now alive, and more than any woman has ever loved you, feel through you so great a pain and anguish in my heart that I think no human heart could believe I endure even a tenth this much. And it is no wonder, for I run the risk, if you act not swiftly, of losing honour and all my joy, for you know that our affair is known to a number of good people, such that if they learned it had been broken off, they would believe I had played you false, or that you had found in me some vice or wickedness that had caused you to do so. And surely if this were the case, I would consider myself the most dishonoured woman in the world, and never would any good or perfect joy be mine. And so, my very dear and sweet friend, I beg you, please, as dearly and humbly as the sad and miserable heart of your true and loyal sweetheart yet can, you being the one in whom resides all my good, all my honour, and all my joy, that your tender heart, which has always been so sweet and humble toward all women, should not be so cruel toward me as to wish that I experience such pain. Rather may your great sweetness deign to rescue me from the great misery I am in, and grant me comfort and joy. And know for certain that this can never come from anywhere if it does not come from you. And if it is true that you have thrown me over completely without my having deserved it, and that your heart is so cruel toward me such that I cannot find either comfort or love there, I am the woman who should complain more of you than ever did a woman complain about her lover, more even than Medea did of Jason. And so I promise you faithfully, and I swear on all the holy things a Christian can swear upon, that if it is true that Love, whom I have served so long and so loyally, to whom I have entrusted my heart, thoughts, and affection, should take from me the thing I love most dearly in all the world, and of which he promised me benefit and perfect joy, I then renounce and deny him and his service completely. Nor will I ever be his slave, or endure such subjection, neither I nor any other woman I can turn away from him; nor will I ever grant benefit or pleasure to any man I know who claims to love me or to love any other woman over

whom I have influence. Rather I will do as much to annoy and disturb them as I can, and all this to spite Love, who has caused me so much suffering. But, if you please, my very sweet friend, you may swiftly soften this anger if you would but treat me as the virtuous, faithful, and true beloved I am and will be all my life and believe none who say anything against me. And then, if you would be to me the virtuous and loyal friend you used to be, know for sure, that Love will never have been served or honoured as much or as faithfully as he will be by me because of my love for you. So, I beg and ask as humbly and affectionately as I can, and as a favour to me, that you would please send something in writing, by this messenger, of such a nature that I might be comforted, for you may know for sure that all my good, all my honour, and all my joy depends upon you. Adieu, my sweet darling, and I pray to Christ with a virtuous and loyal heart, and his sweet Virgin Mother as well, that He may give you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires, and that He may grant you the wish to do something that might restore my joy. Written this thirteenth day of November. Your true love.'

Lines 7694-7715: He replies with his twenty-first letter

NOW you have, if it pleased you,
Seen her letter, and kept in view,
How I was harassed by all, alway,
At every hour of every day,
Due to the love I held for her;
Nor was made happier, but rather
More displeased, as you have read,
By what, every day, was said;
You know the portrait, of the one
I loved, I had locked in prison,
Which yet did not deserve its fate,
Rather was most unfortunate,
Alas, though I had served it so,
Thinking that I, by doing so,
Might yet save myself by the deed.
As it was, I pondered, indeed,
Upon the matter and I thought

To write a letter yet say naught
Of what others had claimed as true,
That she wore green instead of blue.
Here is the form of my letter,
To explain its contents better.

‘My own sweetheart and my very dear sister and my very true love, I have carefully considered what you have written, and I thank you very dearly for informing me about your good health for, by my soul, the greatest joy I can have is to hear good news from you, next to seeing you, which is what I long for above all things in the world. And, my own sweetheart, regarding your message saying that you are in that place we know of, and that I may come to see you when I please, and also the plan you made concerning it, which pleased me much, since by it I see clearly that, as regards me, your heart is true and you are full of good will, for all these things I thank you as humbly as I am able, and not at all as much as I ought. So, I have sent my secretary, and I will come myself to you as soon as I can after Saint Andrew’s day, or even sooner if I am able, because plans sometimes alter. And I shall bring only three of my servants besides my secretary, if I can have him with me. My dear sweetheart, I know well that you own the power to make Argus slumber, and to prison Resistance and Ill-Speech, and by my soul I am very happy that this is the case, and I beg you, most lovingly, that till I have seen you they may remain so. And as soon as I depart, may they be set free to perform their office of guarding you against all other men. And my own sweetheart, do not fear that when I come to you, and this will be very soon if God pleases and I can so arrange it, I shall perform most wisely and secretly all you have demanded, and as for the rest I will wait upon your noble heart. Recommend me, most humbly, to Columbelle, for I am most eager to greet her for your sake. And know that, where you are, I am acquainted with none except you, so it is most necessary while I am there for me to do as you may direct. Recommend me to H... when you see him, and, be sure that, if he can visit me, I would be most honoured, and it would be a great comfort to my brother, who can find nothing good or joyful when I am away. I was having something made for you, in Paris, but I am told the goldsmith has since died, so I believe I have lost both my commission and the gold. My own sweetheart, you write to me in so open a manner, and have always written in such a fashion, that I

know not if it is good that I should put your letters in my book exactly as they stand, so please tell me of your wishes in the matter. Adieu, my sweetheart, and may God grant you honour and joy in whatever you desire, and grant us grace that we might see each other in honour, joy, and good health, and that shortly. Written the thirteenth day of November. Your most faithful lover.'

Lines 7716-7737: The lover sleeps and dreams again

THIS letter to my lady went,
Written without plaint or dissent
Regarding the tales that I'd heard,
For I would not have said a word
To gain a county; not for aught,
Would I have spoken; I said naught,
For fear of rousing her anger
Had I relayed them in my letter,
And I would but have brought her woe;
No messenger can prove too slow,
Nor knock too tardily at the door,
Who carries such ill news, tis sure.
And now I lay down, on my bed,
Naked, joyless, to rest my head,
Musing upon this whole affair,
Its outcome sad and hard to bear,
Though sleep proved difficult to seek,
For, indeed, throughout that whole week
A hundred times more I had wept
Than ever I took my ease and slept.
I dreamt a dream; you shall read it,
Though perchance you'll not believe it.

Lines 7738-7791: His dream of the portrait

IN my dream it seemed to me
That I, before my face, could see
That portrait of my fair lady,

And all dishevelled now seemed she,
And weeping with great tenderness
Sighing deeply, and to excess,
And with her hair she wiped her eyes
Her face, her breast, amidst her sighs,
Saying: 'Wretched, alas, am I,
Within sealed casket here I lie,
Prisoned, my lord, and yet you know
There is no reason why tis so.
If someone's led you to believe
Your lady's seeking to deceive,
What then? What more now can I do?
Did I provoke it? No, yet you
Believe too readily that tis true,
And so twill turn out ill for you,
As shortly you will come to see,
And all the world, in company,
For you shall but lose your lady,
Who loves you, heart and soul, truly;
And suppose that she has played
You false, and your love betrayed,
For that must I now pay the price?
Alas, you'd dress me, in a trice,
In little love songs; I did hold
Precious gems and finest gold,
And cloth of gold from o'er the sea,
And now you would abandon me.
Is it right that I should suffer?
Why, no indeed, by Saint Peter,
For I've done naught. If aught's awry,
No wrong in word or deed wrought I,
And, surely, she is not to blame,
Owns to no sin to mar her name;
I deem that there's no truer lover,
God love me, the whole world over.
Play no games now, let her know,
And if she can disprove all, so,

Let her be cleared of infamy;
Whate'er the case, but hear the party,
For every true judge that we face
Hears both the parties in a case;
And yet you think to condemn her,
And from your good graces ban her,
Because some three or four folk claim
Falsehoods that must mar her name,
As venomous as snakes, pure lies,
Told by slanderers, serpent-wise.
Tis a sin such tales to credit,
And a greater to admit it;
And there's a tale, regarding this,
I might tell, if tis your wish.'

Lines 7792-7845: The tale of how the crow's feathers became black

'NOW, once upon a time, the crow
Had feathers whiter than the snow,
Or dove, or goose, or swan, whiter
Than the hawthorn-flower, and brighter.
In brief, he was in no way ugly,
Whiter than milk in his beauty,
And dearly did Phoebus love him,
And he delighted more in him
Than in his bow, or in his lyre,
On which to play was his desire.
I'll tell you how it came about
That black was in and white was out.
In Thessaly there lived a maid
Who put all others in the shade,
Fair, fine, more praised for her sweet grace
Than any other in that place.
Being a native of Larissa,
There was nothing coarse about her,
For she was courtly, witty, wise,
Her lineage naught to despise.

Coronis was this maiden's name,
And Phoebus truly loved the same,
With all his heart, his love so true
He ever kept that maid in view.
But a young man she preferred
More than Phoebus his white bird,
In brief, she cared for nothing more,
As the tale will show, I feel sure;
For the crow saw them together,
Conjoined, in the way of Nature,
Each partaking of their pleasure
As Mother Nature teaches ever.
Now, on spying their lechery,
The crow began cursing loudly,
And then a great oath he did swear
That, once he'd taken to the air,
Phoebus should the unchastity
Of his beloved know instantly,
He flapped his wings hard, then he flew,
Without another word and, true
To his oath, to tell Phoebus all
Of what betwixt them did befall.
How he had found them both, indeed,
Caught, in flagrante, in the deed.
Now the raven he did encounter,
Who flew up and asked wherever
Was he going, so eagerly,
As he passed her, full hastily;
The crow gave her a swift reply,
The tale he told, how he did spy
Coronis, her unchastity,
And that to Phoebus he did flee,
For he wished not to hide her shame
From his lord, but speak the same.'

Lines 7846-7881: The raven reproaches and corrects the crow

‘NOW, once she’d heard all the affair,
She answered: “Crow, this much I’ll dare:
Trust me on this, my words obey,
Turn around, fly the other way.
Attend to what I teach, for I
Speak never a word of a lie.
Tis not good always truth to utter;
Think you that Phoebus, your master,
Will not be sad, make no mistake,
Or that his sorry head won’t ache,
If sheer faithlessness you prove
In that Coronis who is his love?
Think you his gratitude to see;
That you’ll be raised to high degree?
No, for he, in truth, will hate you,
Never a good thing will wish you.
(The speaking portrait said a word
Above worth noting, as we heard:
Ne’er comes tardily anywhere
The one who doth ill tidings bear.)
Mischief befalls truth-speakers so,
And again, you must surely know
How ill-luck may thence befall you,
And I know what I’m saying too,
For I was mistress, once, alas,
In the house of grey-eyed Pallas,
And there I met with much honour,
And yet fell into dishonour,
And all for the true words I said;
To what injustice have they led!
Heed my warning; change direction,
Here now I’ll offer you correction;
For he amends his course nobly
Who’s taught by another’s folly.
Come, what happened to me, know;
Twas more than twenty years ago.”

Lines 7882-7987: The raven's story (cf. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book II)

“I was lady, once, and mistress,
In the mansion of the goddess,
Pallas, and I did please her so
She granted me more favours, know,
For my service than any other,
If you would learn why, however,
I was banished far from her court
Then listen to my tale; in short,
Vulcan, who's old and much despised,
(Fierce gout in him be realised!)
Who forges lightning-bolts that strike
On working days and feasts alike,
And does so solely out of anger,
Loved fair Pallas with such ardour
He asked her if she'd sleep with him,
Yet she refused to yield to him,
A woman pure and wise and good,
Thinking to guard her maidenhood.
For a long while he pursued her
But she fled before her suitor,
This enemy, wretchedly begot,
Upon a time, he grew so hot
He spilled his seed upon the ground,
And then the earth split all around,
And from the earth, there, was conceived
A child whom fair Pallas received,
Erisichthon he was named that day,
And, sadly, he was hid away,
Yet I exposed him, foolishly,
With my raucous minstrelsy.
I'll tell you, now, of the little one,
Who was shaped in wondrous fashion,
For Nature, who the child had made,
A dual form in him displayed,
And Pallas shut him in a coffer

And then she swore by Saint Onofre,
That she'd determine what might be,
And have him guarded carefully,
She not wishing it to be known
How in the earth that seed was sown.
Then to three Cypriot sisters,
Whom she considered wholly hers,
She handed him, in Athens to lie,
Ensuring none should cast an eye
Inside the coffer, that none might see,
Because she wished that secretly
They might raise the little creature,
Its birth so contrary to Nature,
For, in truth, it lacked a mother,
Born of the seed of its father.
Pandrosus was the eldest sister
Next came Herse, and then after
The youngest, Aglauros by name,
And most ill-advised, for that same
Forced open the infant's coffer,
And so, the secret did discover.
I was perched on a tall oak-tree,
Preening myself, whence I could see
All that was happening below,
How Aglauros, eager to know
What might lie inside the coffer,
Came now to unlock its cover.
And all this I could clearly see,
If not better, then as well as she.
I saw the child had snakes for feet,
Slithering thus about its retreat,
For I saw the dual form, once hid,
As Aglauros threw back the lid;
She opened it seated on a chair,
I know not if she closed it there,
For I took flight, straight away,
And then to Pallas made my way,

To give the goddess true report,
Croak by croak to her, hiding naught,
Saying who had its depths revealed,
And shown the secret it concealed,
Expecting indeed that she'd accord
Me the gift of a fine reward.
I knew not what brought it about,
But instantly she drove me out,
Banished forever, beyond recall,
And I dared never return at all.
And then, what is hardest to bear
In all this most sorry affair,
Is that she gave my place there
To the owl who's scarcely fair,
Rather is filthy, vile, unclean.
There her beaked, hooded face is seen,
In place of mine; she governs all;
In house and inn, she casts her pall,
That soiled wretch, that filthy bird,
May God consume her, in a word!
She only flies abroad by night,
All hate her, and all flee her sight,
Never a bird doth wish her well,
All complain of her; sad to tell
She e'en sleeps with her own father;
And yet Pallas so prefers her
I feel such pain with every breath
That surely it must cause my death.
Now you can readily perceive
What prize truth-telling doth receive,
And so, dear Crow, I counsel you,
To follow my advice; tis true,
And you'll recall, what all do say:
Ill doth the goat, scratching away.”

Lines 7988-8039: The crow reports the affair to Phoebus

‘THE crow replied that he would not,
That resting ne’er would prove his lot
Till he had flown and told Phoebus
The truth of the wretched business.
He flapped his wings and off he flew,
Though badly schooled in my view,
Since often things prove contrary
When one speaks that should silent be,
For they’ll be paid the wages earned
By gossips, who are rightly spurned,
Or those dealt out, with good reason,
By those who are of noble station.
The crow went sailing through the air,
Eager to tell of the affair,
Taking no known path or highway,
But searched about, and did so stray
He came at last to Thessaly,
And to Phoebus’ palace, richly
Adorned with gold, gems, and silver,
Where music from his harp did ever
Sound softly, sweetly through the hall
And then so wound about it all,
Ne’er a chamber or tower was there
That its melodies failed to share,
For all around could hear its voice;
And now the white crow did rejoice,
Hearing the rich notes sounding so,
Expecting a rich reward also.
And yet he failed of his intent,
Like the swan was he, all spent,
That on the brink of death doth sing;
He’s a fool that tells everything,
All of the truth that may displease,
To his master when he’s at ease.
And truly too much talk annoys
Especially that the gossip employs,
Unwelcome ever, day or night.

Spying Phoebus' house, outright,
The crow sped swiftly through the air
And with all speed descended there.
Phoebus saw him, and did demand
Why he came, as he sought to land,
Since he'd been absent many a day,
Gone seeking pleasure far away.
The crow at once relayed the tale
Of shame and outrage, without fail,
Of Coronis' vile lechery,
Said to his lord, most forcefully:
"Fair Sire, by every sacrament,
I spied them upon vileness bent,
And I was intent on telling you,
And here I am, and tis all true."

Lines 8040-8105: Coronis is punished by Phoebus

'WHEN Phoebus had heard the story
From the crow, about that lovely
Maid he loved with all his heart,
That she for another did depart,
From his head the crown did fall,
And the harp, that filled the hall
With its soft notes, fell at his feet;
His grief had not been more complete
Had he been pierced by twin sword-blows
Through the body, for, heaven knows,
Twas sorrow the crow had brought him,
Learning that she'd been false to him.
It is not necessary to tell
All the truth, if all would be well,
Nor even a quarter, truly,
Need be said; may God preserve me!
Phoebus tormented himself sadly,
Complaining, and raging madly,
Such was his misery and woe,

Filled with pain and anger also.
By chance the maiden he did spy,
Listen now to how he let fly:
He seized a bow, strung an arrow,
And pierced Coronis to the marrow,
Because he had been thus betrayed;
Deep in her breast he struck the maid.
Coronis fell straight to the ground,
Her heart failed, her sight she found
Grew dim, and from the wound there ran
A stream of blood, on every hand.
Dying she murmured, soft and low:
“Alas, to bring on me such woe;
I see that shortly I must die,
And yet tis undeserved, say I,
For I have served you faithfully,
My love, you’ve acted hastily,
For two you have killed with one blow;
I am with child, and you must know
Tis yours, and it has done no wrong;
Sweet friend, to you it doth belong.”
And with this her soul she rendered,
Phoebus saw naught could be mended,
And, hearing her reproach, no less
Was he shamed, and in sore distress.
And angered, bitter, made outcry
Against all birds that course the sky,
And most especially the crow,
Who had the fairest form also.
He cursed the arrow and the bow,
And the hand that brought him woe,
The hour, the season, and the dawn,
That this most evil day had borne.
He had the maid embalmed too,
With richest ointments, and tis true
That they so skilfully did strive
That she did seem as yet alive.

In the temple of the goddess
Venus, he placed her corpse, no less,
Yet, ere he placed her in the tomb,
He took the child from out her womb,
A child that later won great fame,
Aesculapius was his name,
And he of surgery knew more
Than any who had lived before,
For to life he restored the dead,
So, in the books, indeed, tis said.'

Lines 8106-8131: The crow receives his ill reward

'THE crow a fine reward now sought
Though twas ill-tidings he had brought,
Awaiting, and longing for, that same,
Yet the messenger shared the blame,
For Phoebus said: "In memory
Of this, your feathers black shall be;
Instead of white, now, on its back,
Let every crow be dressed in black,
Blacker than ink for evermore.
No other lot have you in store,
Due to your wicked gossiping
That robs me thus of the loving
Charms of the fairest ever sent
To this world, who yet innocent
May be, and all this but a lie
That makes me woeful, sad of eye;
Do naught but jabber now I say,
May the eagle snatch you away!
Be off! An exile from these shores,
Show your beak, and shame is yours."
With this reward the crow was paid,
He flew from there, quite dismayed,
And then, as all folk know, in brief,
Once banished, he became a thief;

And everywhere he doth repair
Does naught but caw and jabber there.'

Lines 8132-8179: The portrait image continues to admonish the lover

'MY lord, you've listened to my tale,
And learned I deem, without fail,
The lesson of raven and crow,
And I'd be amazed, it being so,
If such gossip you'd still believe.
Lend a deaf ear to all you receive
By way of news from those who seek
But to deceive you when they speak;
You'll sin gainst her nobility,
To credit what wounds so deeply.
Life and honour, by such action,
And your sweet love's affection,
You would forfeit, believing so,
Slay your lady and then, in woe,
Sigh with repentance, I dare say,
And curse, a hundred times a day,
The hour that brought you such report,
And those who all such gossip taught,
The place, the harm that did befall,
Now clear and evident to all,
As Phoebus did; and all too late!
And so, for God's sake, heed the fate
Of Phoebus who repented ever,
For he'd pledged to love no other
Than Coronis, who had deceived,
Him; he who had the crow believed.
Would it might please God that they
Who harm love, in this foolish way,
Through gossip, truthless and malign,
Be turned to wild and savage swine,
Or be transformed to trees, or bare
Black polished marble standing there,

So they might change from light to dark,
Dressed in coarse pelt, stone, or bark,
Just like the crow, banished no less,
For his sin, from the god's palace,
On pain of death, whom, you'll recall,
The other birds loathe, one and all.
My lord, now I've so lectured you
You can see my reasoning's true,
And from prison I should be freed,
And my honour restored, indeed,
I should be seated now on high,
As I once was; if not, then I
Shall appeal to fair Venus' grace,
And I shall plead your lady's case,
Before her thus, and contest yours,
For she's none to defend her cause.'

Lines 8180-8201: The dreamer wakes

BUT now the watchman gave his cry,
The cowherd sounded, loud and high,
His echoing horn that, as he blew,
Thus, served to waken me anew.
And, once from sleep I was freed,
I was full of wonder, indeed,
And all my blood within was stirred
By what I'd seen, for I'd ne'er heard
Of like image, in any age,
Whether on wall or written page.
And yet her lips spoke not to me,
Rather Morpheus, in his mastery,
Took on her portrait's form outright,
Came to my bed in darkest night,
Where I slumbered, dreaming deep,
And whispered to me, in my sleep,
The request and the true complaint
Of those lips reproduced in paint.

Whoever knows not Morpheus
To whom I've seemed oblivious,
They may read 'The Amorous Fount',
Wherein of him I give true account.

Lines 8202-8261: He reinstates his lady's portrait

AND so, I thought and thought again,
And, while thinking, it seemed plain
That I'd wronged her; and oftentimes,
He errs, and doth commit a crime
Who imprisons some poor creature,
Though never a misdeed did feature.
So, I rose from my bed and dressed,
And, once done, I unlocked the chest,
Where the portrait now did dwell
Of she whom I had named 'Toute Bele',
And said: 'Are you within, my beauty?
I ask forgiveness and pray mercy,
For having prisoned you so nearly,'
Addressing her with great courtesy,
With my right hand setting her free,
Placing her where she used to be,
Quite as honourably as before.
And afterwards I mused once more,
And pondered on the errant crow
And on the wise raven also,
Whom Phoebus and Pallas hated
Due to the truths they'd related,
Recalling all that they did discuss,
And I agreed with Morpheus
A fool he is who bears a message
That brings but anger and damage,
Especially where Love's concerned,
For none has such perfection learned,
That if he's struck so by Love's lance
He'll not feel, through that circumstance,

Anger, displeasure, at ill report
Of his lady in misdeeds caught;
Nor should you, if you're awake,
Wonder at all, if my mistake
Made me sigh and moan and weep,
And afforded me but little sleep,
Once the news was brought to me
That her beauty was lost to me.
My heart was so filled with worry,
That, by that same God that made me,
So greatly troubled then was I
My heart near broke, I'll not deny.
Then Love, and Fortune too, I cursed
That I so ill a fate rehearsed,
Though they'd promised endlessly,
A hundred times or more to me,
That she would forget me never
My Toute Bele, nor alter ever.
Yet her promise she'd not kept
If what I'd heard before I slept
Was true, her loyalty but lies,
Nor shall my tale say otherwise.
Yet the man who feels discomfort
Must look about to find comfort,
And so, did I; from a shelf I took
For like purpose, a little book,
Twas writ by one Fulgentius,
And therein Titus Livius
Describes how Fortune doth appear,
And what he says there, I'll give here.

Lines 8262-8311: Livy's description of Fortune according to Fulgentius

THE matrons of Rome long ago
Founded a temple, and did owe
Its creation to no man there;
It was solely Woman's affair.

They to Fortune's honour raised it,
 And agreed to further adorn it
 With her form in female semblance,
 An image of her true inconstance,
 For tis true they are unstable,
 Women that is, and variable.
 Fortune no one at all should prize,
 But rather her should one despise
 Who comes free from simplicity,
 Or in bare and ragged poverty.
 For such folk they do best, I say,
 As can hold to the middle way.
 The image I'll describe for you
 Was fair of face, and body too,
 Four little roundels met the sight
 Two on her left side, two her right,
 And a large one that did aspire
 To hold the four small ones entire.
 And the first circle there did hold
 This text, in Latin, writ in gold:
 'Free of limit, I grant and share;
 I make such games my true affair.'
 And in the second there was writ,
 As though to test the gravest wit:
 'Cherished am I, while I do last,
 Yet thought bitter when I am past.'
 The third text was most notable,
 Nor should it be thought a fable:
 'I render thought blind and, with ease,
 I cause the love of God to cease,'
 Yet one should love God faithfully
 Who made the sky, and earth, and sea.
 Now in the fourth was written, there,
 A thing of which all should beware:
 'I sing and sport, yet in such wise
 That my song lies, cheats, falsifies.'
 The fifth, encircling all, brings down

The king, the sceptre, and the crown,
Bearing all things to destruction,
Here appears the harsh conclusion,
For all those who fail to scorn her,
But rather follow her and prize her.
And here I give the true text, thus,
As writ by Titus Livius:
'Look on, and think what I may be,
And when you know, loathe me, and flee.'

Lines 8312-8327: The lover considers the image of Fortune

THUS, did one the likeness portray,
Of Fortune, there, who doth display
Spite, hatred; shames, works to deceive
All those who do her grace receive.
Long and hard I viewed her pose,
Took issue in my heart with those,
That once had taught me to believe
In her love, who did but deceive,
For I and joy must perish too,
If what was said of her was true.
Yet, by my faith, I was in doubt
So set myself to think about
My lady and to compare her
To Fortune and all her manner
Of behaving and, in this wise,
Viewed the two as I here advise.

Lines 8328-8343: His response to the first emblem

WHEN I, at first, did fall in love
With my lady who mine did prove,
So sweet the woman that I saw
That later I could not withdraw.
Yet I know not by what attraction
I lost my heart, so swift its action,

To one who thence did yet depart,
After she had so pierced my heart
With her glance and, fatal error,
Drove me on, at sight, to love her.
And so to Fortune I liken her,
And I can rightly compare her,
In heart and body, all her ways,
To Fortune and the games she plays,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8344-8359: His response to the second emblem

ALAS, I have held her so dear
Without deceit have loved her here,
That in truth I knew not whether
I saw and heard her, yet forever
She was my heart, she was my love,
She did my loving refuge prove,
My desire she was, my treasure,
My joy, my hope, all my pleasure.
Ah me! Ah me! Ah me! Ah me!
And yet her love has died for me,
Vanished is her grace and favour,
To gall doth her sweetness alter,
Which to me was nurse and mother,
Now like to death, sour and bitter,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8360-8375: His response to the third emblem

SO lovingly I've cherished her
And so humbly have I served her
That on her all my attention
Was bestowed, mind and intention,
My heart, my pleasure, all my thought

Never to be withdrawn for aught.
For her great beauty so fired me,
And her sweetness so inspired me
That I neglected my Creator,
For her person, every feature,
Nor in the world did any creature
Save her grant me such pleasure,
Yet in love she has betrayed me
And without due cause doth hate me,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8376-8391: His response to the fourth emblem

FAR sweeter than the Siren's call,
Filled with sweet melodies, in all,
Is her voice who, with her singing,
Lulls my heart, my flesh enchanting,
Just as cruel Fortune enchanted
All her sad slaves when she chanted
Her falsehoods, their minds deceived;
She's false, and ne'er to be believed.
My lady played me false; the same
Is she, and plays that wicked game,
She's like the fickle wind that blows,
And where it goes to no man knows;
So, she bestows her graces quickly
And then withdraws them as swiftly,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8392-8409: His response to the fifth emblem

WHEN I first did meet my lady
Viewed her person, sweet and lovely,
I looked not to the beginning
Foolishly, nor to the ending,

For tis said that he works wisely
Who his labour's end can see.
Yet foolishly I've gone astray
Since tis certain many a day
Of pain and care will be my lot,
For Fortune will ne'er be forgot,
And if one sees her, flee again,
Quick as a cat doth flee the rain.
Alas I have followed my lady,
When I should have fled her swiftly.
Deceived myself, I thus consider,
For I should have known her better,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8410-8423: He concludes his comparison of his lady to Fortune

NOW, my lady has been compared
To Fortune, all their likeness shared.
The two of them go well together
Since she, like Fortune, is forever
Marked by variability
In which lies no stability,
And truly she doth change anew,
As a sparrowhawk does, in mew;
Though its plumage it doth alter
While her heart it is doth falter.
She is skilled at changing course,
Varying in like flight, perforce,
If all is true that I've heard said;
Naught else my tale says, when read.

Lines 8424-8473: The treatment of the falcon that strays

ABOUT this I'll relate a story,
Recounted by the Count to me,
Who is my lord and noble friend,

And one who closely doth attend
To the fine sport of falconry,
For none knows more of it than he,
Nor enjoys the thing more fully,
Tis his great pleasure, certainly,
Therein is nigh all his delight.
Now when his falcon, in its flight,
Veers off course, he'll curse, call out,
Scream and yell, and cry and shout,
Until the falcon hears the sound.
All the falconers, I have found,
The sport entrances, do likewise,
And, when the falcon hears the cries,
If tis well-bred, twill find the way
To renew its course, sans delay,
Turn, and then, the true path seeking,
Set itself on the proper bearing,
To chase down its previous prey,
Seize its quarry, nor veer away.
The Count then shows it kindness,
Praises it and, with much sweetness,
Reveals a face of such good cheer
That e'en to the falcon it is clear
That the man is more than happy
With its service, since it has fully
Discharged the task that it was set.
And so, the Count must not forget
To yield it the heart of the prey;
That's why it flies: to hunt, I say.
He feeds it the bird's heart there,
On the lure; thus, ends the affair.
But if despite his shouts and cries,
Or whatever other means he tries,
The falcon chooses not to forego
The wrong quarry, it follows so,
And if it then takes it in the air,
The noble Count, in pure despair,

Treats the falcon rather brusquely,
Speaking to the ill thing harshly,
While if it bears back the quarry,
Which it seized erroneously,
The count throws it in the river
Or the mill sluice, or wherever;
So, of its feast the falcon fails,
Lost is the heart, and the entrails.
Naught else it gains for its mistake,
Such is the vengeance he doth take.

Lines 8474-8493: His attitude to his lady's fickleness

THUS, if the lady whom I prize
Sins somewhat against me, likewise,
I should also raise my clamour,
But piteously and in fear of her,
Like a man who dreads her anger,
Praying her not to stray further.
And, if she should amend her flight,
Then I should forgive her, outright,
And do so most affectionately,
And sweetly, and with courtesy.
And, if she fails to show reason,
And casts away the love she's won,
Then I must let her have her will
As she proves unreasonable still,
And, without further plaint or cry,
Yield her thanks, my head held high,
And say to her, and most politely:
'As you please, I concede wholly.'
For her love is worth less than naught,
To me, since others' love she's sought.

Lines 8494-8509: He sends his lady his twenty-second letter

YET in the end I concluded,

No longer foolishly deluded,
I could, no longer, live this way
Right melancholy, night and day,
With a heart now saddened wholly,
A thing which doth wound most deeply.
So, once more, I wrote a letter,
In which, courteously, I told her
Not the whole of what I'd heard
But that a true friend had brought word
That she was showing my letters,
Freely, to a host of others,
Which was but bitter news to me
Since I was now the butt of many.
That letter, you may read it now,
If its perusal you'll allow.

'My most dear and only lady, I am most anxious to learn how you fare, and so I beg you as humbly as I can, to let me know of your state, as soon as you can, for, God knows, one of the greatest joys I can attain is hearing good news of you. And if you wish to know how I am, I was in good health, and quite well when this letter was written. My most dear and only lady, if I repeat to you what has been told to me, I beg you not to be displeased. Be pleased to learn that a powerful man, who is very much my lord and friend, has told me, of a certainty, that you show what I send you to everyman, and thus it seems a fine jest to many. Do what you wish in this regard, but, though I am little worthy, I have been many a time in places where such things were not done, and where the man, or woman, who could best conceal their affairs from others was the one most worthy of reward. So, in order to protect you, I no longer intend to write aught that you could not show to anyone, and, my sweet love, I shall show the semblance of loving some other woman, entirely. And, to be sure, I have composed no more of your book since Easter, for the above reason, nor do I think to do so, for I lack material, and yet one should not believe everything one hears. I am sending you whatever I have composed lately of your book, and you may show it to whomever you please, for, by my faith, I took great pains in the making. And though you may consider it worthy of mockery, by my soul, there are hardly three persons in the world for whom

I would have undertaken to do such a composition, however easy it might prove to another. But if sweet pleasure and pure love be absent, it proves most difficult for me to compose. My most dear and sovereign lady, may the Holy Spirit bless and protect you, and grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. Written this 16th day of June. Your most faithful friend.'

Lines 8510-8525: His lady is distressed at his letter and composes a ballad

WHEN my lady read my letter,
Learning, as she looked it over,
Of the stories that some other
Had, it seems, reported of her,
My letter dropped to the floor;
Never had human form before
Suffered from such grievous pain,
The colour from her face did wane,
The crimson and the white grew pale,
A deathly hue did there prevail.
Fainting, she fell upon the bed,
Bowing down her face and head,
And weeping most piteously,
While moaning and sighing deeply;
Yet, in this state of woeful thought,
To make a virelay she sought.

Lines 8526-8572: Her tenth ballad, a virelay 'Cent mille fois esbahie'

'DISMAYED a hundred thousand times,
More angry, sorrowful, betimes,
Truly, than any, am I,
Since by this same man, hereby,
Am I cast aside, wholly,
Though he his friend, and lady,
Called me, and then so sweetly.
To my mind, there's none other

Who could e'er suit me better.
I'd feel joy, free of anger,
If I could listen longer
To his voice, and keep in view,
His fair form, for tis but true,
He has cast my love aside,
Suddenly, that love denied,
Without a trace of any
Fault in me, or known folly,
That could send him from my side.

Dismayed a hundred thousand times,
More angry, sorrowful, betimes,
Truly, than any, am I,
Since by this same man, hereby,
Am I cast aside, wholly,
Though he his friend, and lady,
Called me, and then so sweetly.
Now, I see comes upon me
Mischief, suffering, misery,
From every side, endlessly,
To break my heart, so fiercely,
Death alone can set me free,
Nor can I ward it from me.
My happiness is destroyed,
The strength lost that I employed,
So much so that, right sadly,
Constantly, and ceaselessly,
Pallid, tortured by such strife,
I curse the hour, curse my life,
Without aught to comfort me.

Dismayed a hundred thousand times,
More angry, sorrowful, betimes,
Truly, than any, am I,
Since by this same man, hereby,
Am I cast aside, wholly,

Though he his friend, and lady,
Called me, and then so sweetly.'

Lines 8573-8578: She sends the virelay with her twenty-first letter

ALAS, the debonnaire and sweet
One left the third verse incomplete,
So wearied, full of misery,
Sad, mournful, drowned in tears, was she,
Yet two, complete, did thus enclose,
In the letter that spoke her woes.

'My own sweetheart, my most dear and sweet friend, I received your letter and, for that reason, felt great joy because next to seeing you this was the thing I most desired in the world, for, in truth, it has seemed two years to me since I heard any news from you, and I have been so wretched I ne'er believed I could feel so ill on anyone's account. And if I wrote you somewhat brusquely, and with scant wisdom, by my soul, I could help it not, for I was so troubled, and my heart was so afflicted and anxious I could scarce do, or say, aught that might please a soul, nor was there aught that did not displease me, since I had no news of you. And then you had promised me to come to see me as soon as you could ride. And you have been in good health, and the roads are safer since Easter than they have been this last three years, and yet you came not to see me at all. By the God who made me, I would not have behaved so had I been in your position. And you promised me, a year ago this month when I was at Biau Chastel, that you would never doubt that I was your true and faithful friend, and would say naught ever to anger me, yet you have done the opposite. And thus, it appears by the letters you have returned at last, the ones I sent back to you to discover if there was aught that might trouble me, that, by the God who made me and all the oaths one can swear, there is today no man living in this world to whom I have promised my love save you, and for this reason I am angered that you believed the opposite. And for those two reasons I explained previously, I wrote that you are changeable, and hold not to the truth. And, by God, whatever I may write, I am very careful not to repeat aught there that may prove to your disadvantage. My sweetheart, and my most sweet love, I beg you, as firmly as I can, to maintain goodwill

and peace between you and I, so that all the anger, and all the discomfort, and all the words and phrases written or spoken between us, that have made or could make us angry may be forgotten, wholly, and neither you nor I remember a scrap of it; and we love each other loyally and sweetly, and take pleasure in one another when it pleases God that we may see each other. And this matter I think to look to diligently and according to such a plan as will well please you. My sweet heart, you say that a very great lord and several others have made mock and cast aspersions about me, regarding some matter of which you know naught. Yet, by God, I never did aught that would cause any man to learn of the love I have for you. And if I have said or done anything that might not seem right, please let me know, and arrange things in a manner that seems good to you. And I promise you faithfully that I will hold to the same. But, for God's sake, my own sweet dear love, no matter what someone tells you, please think not nor believe that I shall cease to be your true and faithful beloved as long as I live. For, by the God that made me, as regards that day on which I said to you that, if I could draw my heart from my body and place it in your hand, I would grant it to you so that you might feel more secure, well, I did grant it to you and set it within you thus, perfectly. For I could as readily seize and draw the teeth from your mouth without causing you harm and without your knowing anything, as I could reclaim or remove from you the heart which I have given you. Yet by God, I wish that not at all, for it pleases me more for it to be with you than with any man living in this world. And so, you may, and should be, completely secure. My sweetheart, I beg you, please write to me concerning your state of health and as often as you can, and say if I might see you. For, truly, if God had given me one single wish in this world, I would wish for nothing except to see you, for such is my whole desire and all my intent. Nor do I think to have perfect joy until that hour. My sweetheart, be pleased to know that I have seen not a sign of the servant you said you sent to me in May, nor have I had any news from him. Adieu, my dearest love, and may God grant you peace, health, honour, and joy in whatever your heart desires. My dear friend, I am sending you this virelay composed to express my feelings. And, I pray you, send some of your own, for I know that you must have composed a few since I had news from you, for I have viewed a ballad that has the line "That in place of blue, lady, you wear green" and I know not for whom you composed it, but if twas for me then you are in error, for, by the faith I owe you, whom I

love with all my heart, ever since you wrapped and enveloped my heart in pure azure and then locked it inside the treasure-chest whose key you possess, it has not changed colour nor shall it, all my life long, for even if I greatly wished it I could do naught without you, for nor I nor any other carries the key, only you. And of that you may be as sure as if you held my heart in your hand. My dear friend, I beg you to return by this messenger the first part of your book, which I returned to you some time ago, for I did not keep a copy of it and am very eager to see it. And if this letter is badly written, please to pardon me, for I cannot always find a notary to my liking. Written this tenth day of October. Your most faithful beloved.'

Lines 8579-8652: She writes again, sending her twenty-second letter

NOW I have brought before your eye
What Toute Bele wrote in reply,
All of her tearful lamentation,
All of her sad humiliation,
The pledges, all the anxious thought
Amassing there in her heart's court.
And, surely, whoe'er thinks on it,
A shame and misery would find it,
If to a good woman one swore,
And one's firm oath did then abjure.
No more the contrary I'd credit
Than a drawing of Mahomet.
In no more than a fortnight too,
On a Monday, the omen true,
A good friend of mine, a cleric,
One skilled in the art of logic,
Came to my house; he greeted me;
And then spoke to me, and wisely,
Saying I'd erred, most foolishly,
In crediting aught so readily
That appertained to my lady;
Body and soul, he swore that she
Had told him her every intention,
Her private thoughts, at confession,

And wished, and desired, he avowed,
That he should speak so, twas allowed.
Then he said she'd ne'er betrayed
Me, nor in such a manner strayed,
Ne'er in wish, or deed, or thought
Nor would she rob me of aught,
Neither her love nor her favour,
Through aught I did or said, ever;
Nor, for God's sake, should she suffer,
He said, such dire torment longer.
For she seemed so discomfited,
So weary, sad, as good as dead,
That he swore, by the Holy Spirit,
Twere but sin should she die of it.
When he'd spoken all his pleasure,
And at length, and in full measure,
He gave me a letter, and said,
As he presented it, all unread:
'Sir if tis damp in every fold,
This letter that you now do hold,
Be not annoyed I beg of you,
For, Jesus Christ may scorn to view
My very soul on Judgement Day,
If I saw not a flood, I say,
Of tears descending from the fount
Of Toute Bele's heart, as her account
Was uttered, and was written so;
And then, her tears condemned also
The speech of all false slanderers,
So strongly that in these ten years
Naught have I seen so condemned,
And, on this truth, you may depend:
Toute Bele wet, with many a tear,
The letter I now hand you, here.'
And once he'd finished speaking,
I, well-schooled in such learning,
Perused the letter, word by word,

Which he'd handed me, as you've heard,
And saw he was to be believed,
Nor did I doubt, now undeceived,
That what he'd told me, earlier,
As from my lady, came from her,
And that she, with the sweet dew
Of heartfelt tears, had wet it too.
Her very weeping had so wrought,
If the messenger lied in naught,
And him I trusted in this matter
Wise, loyal, truthful, as ever,
Nor did I think he swore falsely;
You may read it sans injury.

'My dearest friend, my heart's best beloved, I commend myself to you, as much as the heart of your true love can seek so to do, and as that woman who is always devoted to that which I have promised you, nor could I restrain myself, on any account, from writing to you and letting you know how I fare. And because I could not write down everything, for it would have taken too long, I have told the greater part of what I wished to say to the bearer of this letter, who is a very great lord and friend. And I know that he is yours also. And all that I have told him I spoke privily and he was charged, on his soul, with never repeating it to any person save you. And, for God's sake, I beg you be not displeased if I have charged him with this, for, upon my soul, I believe that my heart would have broken had I not revealed my distress to someone in this way. And I believe that he is so much your friend that you will not be angered by this. And so, I beg you please, as humbly as I can, to believe what he tells you on my behalf, and may God give me neither honour nor joy in anything I ask Him if there is any deceit in aught that I have said to your friend. My most dear friend, please reply and tell me how you are, which would give me great joy and much solace, and be pleased not to lose the key to the treasure chest that is mine, for if it were lost, I believe I would never have perfect joy because, by God, it shall never be opened by any key except the one you possess. And this will be when you please, since in this world I have no great desire for aught else. My dear friend, I beg you to send the book I wrote of that previous time, if you would, or some of your other compositions, to

entertain me, for it seems to me you are too reticent regarding them. My dear friend, I pray Our Lord give you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires, and that He will grant you, and maintain you in, the state you owned to when you left my side. By my faith, I am in that state still. Written this eighth day of March. Your faithful beloved.'

Lines 8653-8690: The messenger reproaches him

WHEN I had perused the letter
And, in heart and mind, knew better
All that her new missive contained,
Just as the messenger maintained,
He now began to speak once more,
And did myself somewhat deplore,
Saying I had, most grievously,
Done wrong to my noble lady,
I asked to know in what manner.
'The last ballad that you sent her,
Said he, 'your last composition
Is why you are in this position,
Where you said, and openly too,
That she's dressed in green not blue.
Know that this ballad, such its art,
Made her ill, and pained her heart,
Such that in my presence she swore
To wear the colour green no more,
And bear it not in cloak or dress,
Belt, collar, hat, but such repress,
And Persian blue, or pure azure,
Would, till death, be all she wore.
And then you sought to compare her
To fickle Fortune, said whatever
You pleased; she and I know tis true;
So, I'll not scorn to say to you
That you have acted villainously,
To speak so, and most foolishly,
And others think it villainous

As well, and most injurious,
Even though you wrote, as I've read,
"If all is true that I've heard said."
Thus, her cause I shall now defend,
If to my speech an ear you'll lend,
For you it is I shall now compare
To Fortune, whom, in this affair,
I may well liken you; and display
My portrait of Fortune, if I may.'

Lines 8691-8726: The ancients' description of Fortune

'I say in pagan times the wise
Pictured Fortune quite otherwise,
Not in the way you described her,
For in the texts I find her picture.
There was a city then, we see,
That, nobly, wielded authority.
There as both lady and goddess,
Fortune did woman's form possess,
Set midst a wheel, forever moving,
Nor was Fortune barred from turning
That same wheel; nor circumvented
Could her acts be, nor prevented.
Proud is she and most cruel also,
Ever perilous and false to know.
Two faces did the goddess show;
One with joy and mirth did glow,
The other by its hue made plain
The meaning of dolour and pain.
The first face shed its light on one,
For from it a great brightness shone,
While dark and black was the other,
No joy, there, could eye discover.
The goddess could see naught at all,
Though Cato doubted not, I recall,
But defended, his son who thought

The opposite, for such he taught,
That she could see and was not blind.
Yet she deceives, she renders blind
Her followers who dream of gold,
That offices of state they'll hold,
And almost all do dance her dance,
Except for those whom circumstance
Grants a sufficiency, and wish
No more honours or wealth than this.
Freedom and reason are their guide,
Such folk from her dominion hide.'

Lines 8727-8774: The Fountain and its five states

'Within the city I speak of here,
A fount, of five forms, did appear.
And when those who worshipped her
Wished to seek the goddess' favour,
Or obtain her grace, five maidens
Young and fair, most noble virgins,
Came to the fountain in the square
And richly attired were they there,
All dressed in the finest clothing,
Precious fabrics all were wearing,
And each one of that lovely band
Carried a flower in her hand,
And each fair maiden sang in turn,
A sweet song with which to earn
The grace, and soften the sternness,
Of the goddess, calm her fierceness.
Each virgin then would, by design,
Learn, truly, by a mark or sign,
Whether the goddess had accepted
Their prayer, and its plea respected.
Here's the sign the fount did offer,
If she'd accepted the first singer,
For then the fount began to flow;

The virgin by this mark did know
The goddess had deemed her request
With truth and justice to be blessed.
If, at the second virgin's song,
The fountain welled, the flow full strong,
Twas as if to say the goddess,
Promised honour, joy and riches.
If at the song of the third maid
The fountain filled, its depth displayed,
The goddess then was pacified,
Appeased, and sweetly mollified.
If, with the fourth maid to appear,
The fountain then ran bright and clear,
That virgin then needs have no doubt
The goddess was yet listening out,
And so, would not prove treacherous,
Grant peace not war, injurious.
But if, at the fifth maid's sweet song,
The water drained, was swiftly gone,
And left not a pint, a glass, behind,
But dried till ne'er a drop they'd find,
The meaning then was that Fortune
Takes on the likeness of the moon,
Which, at the full, is bright and clear,
Yet, in fifteen nights, will disappear.'

Lines 8775-8812: The messenger compares the lover to Fortune

'IN short, I shall describe to you
Why I may closely liken you
To Fortune, and the fountain's state,
How it overflowed, and so relate
The case as to make comparison
With its flow, and evacuation.
Sir, by my soul, here, I must say,
That a woman's traits you display,
Your heart's variable likewise;

Socrates, who was good and wise,
Appears less steadfast and stable,
Than you are fickle and unstable.
Like to the wheel you move at best,
That no more than the lark doth rest,
For that wheel lacks stability,
Shows restless changeability,
Just as, often, you seemed twinned
With the weathercock in the wind;
And you display a dual visage,
Exactly as does that image
Of Fortune; one face that cries,
One that laughs and never sighs;
Then, like her, you smile or weep
As you wish, nor one look keep;
And not a single thing you see
In crediting slander blindly,
That deceives, robs you of sight;
A fool is he who's faith is slight.
Five personages, one might say,
Great, small, and of the middle way,
Have sung to you, about Tote Bele,
A song indeed that flows not well,
With words ungracious to recall,
That I agree with not at all.
And those five, to speak quite clearly,
Resemble the five maids, nearly,
Except that these sing lies always,
While those virgins uttered praise.'

Lines 8813-8862: The messenger's interpretation of the five states of the fountain

'ABOUT the fountain I'll speak too,
And, thus, apply its states to you:
And now you shall hear, moreover,
Why you're like the first, in manner,

Of the states of the fount that flowed
At the virgin's song, for you showed
How strongly you were moved also
Robbed of your wits, as I well know,
Such that you lost your memory
Believing lies too readily.
Its second state suits you, I say,
Since, at the second virgin's lay,
The fount welled up, for your heart
Overflowed, and you sat apart,
Full of sad sighs, foolish fancies,
Notions that were but wild follies,
Thoughts that worked so against you,
That a white ewe seemed a black ewe,
You thought, in your anxiety,
Believing lies too readily.
And the third state of the fountain,
Filled at a virgin's chant, tis plain
Yields a fine example for you;
Were you not greatly swollen, too?
And yet yourself you deflated
By speaking in a most ill-fated
Way of Toute Bele, and rudely.
Who taught you that? For, surely,
You lost worth and honour, truly,
Believing lies too readily.
To the fourth state, when it ran clear,
At the maid's song, I liken, here,
You, who were clear, about the truth
Of those false reports lacking proof,
From vile slanderers you should blame,
Hate, and flee from, in pure disdain.
Why must you hear them out alway,
Lending credence to what they say?
You renounced love so easily,
Believing lies too readily.
And then the fifth, that saw it drained,

Vanished, and lost, all it contained,
At the maid's song; a state that says
That Love, the true emblem, always,
Of honour, has now fled your heart,
And from its confines doth depart.
So, peace and joy must follow after,
Present mirth, and present laughter,
Thus, you've forfeited Love's glory,
Believing lies too readily.'

Lines 8863-8890: He ends his comparison

'NOW have I made comparison
Between Fortune (who works treason
Against all whom she doth govern
Be it in church or in tavern,
In the palace, or the city,
Emperors, kings, laymen, clergy;
There is none she doth not deceive
Of those who do her grace receive)
And you, and that flowing fountain's
States, where, sweeter than the Sirens
In their song, they sought to appease
Fortune, those five virgins, and please
One they worshipped as a goddess
For granting those in pain, true rest,
Luck to those in adversity,
And wealth to those in poverty.
And so I beg you to agree
That most loyal love should be
Pledged twixt you and Tote Bele,
For, I swear, truly, all is well;
And with a love that's pure and true,
Above all others, she loves you,
And if a wrong you have done her,
In word or deed, I'll state further,
With a good heart, she'll forgive you,

Grant you her heart, and her love too,
And you too must forgiving prove,
And grant to her your heart and love.'

Lines 8891-8936: The lover is persuaded and writes a twenty-third letter

ONCE he'd reproached me, thoroughly,
Composing his speech so perfectly,
Saying all that he wished, I sighed:
'By my health, indeed,' I replied,
'You are my friend and my master,
Physician to my ills ever,
And God it is who led you here,
For your preaching flows so clear
That, truly, I no more believe
That my lady would e'er deceive,
Or would deign to commit a sin,
Or dream of disloyalty within
Her thought, and so, most willingly,
I forgive her, grant her my heart
And love, and then, for my own part,
Place them at her most sweet service,
Nor shall, lifelong, depart from this,
Nor desert her for another,
Rather I'm hers, and shall be ever.
And, if I believed things foolishly,
I beg her, in all humility,
With good heart to now forgive me,
And grant me her heart, and love me,
And, with tenderness, in a letter
I shall write to her of the matter,
And you'll play messenger again,
For I count you wisest of men,
Ever the best of friends to me,
And he whom I love most truly,
And you shall say that, for my part,

I love with a most loyal heart,
Beyond deceit or trickery,
In life and death, hers shall I be.
And that she may hear you better
I shall praise you in my letter
And tell her to trust you, wholly,
So please bear it to her swiftly,
When you leave, I beg of you,
And because I'm tardy, tis true,
In sending her the present letter,
If you so please, you may tell her,
That long ago she sent to me
A letter to which, as she'll see
My reply is included here,
Where thorn nor briar do appear,
But all is courtesy and sweetness,
Peace, love, honour and joyfulness.'

'My own sweetheart and my most sweet sister and my very dear lady, may it please you to learn that I have a great desire to learn of your well-being, above all that God and Nature created. And concerning my own, I am in a good state, thank the Lord, except for one thing, and that is my not seeing you. But I see and know that this is not due to any failing of yours, but to my own misery, which gives, and has given, me so mortal a wound in my pure, and loyal, and loving heart that it will never be healed if your sweetness does not achieve the cure. But by my soul, I cannot amend this, as you shall learn later, if God pleases and it is possible, for no more can be done. And, my sweetheart, you ought not to excuse yourself to me for failing to write more often, for, by God, it seems to me that you have done much, and far more than I could ever deserve. And I know, of a certainty, that you do all with good intent, nor could the whole world make me come to believe the opposite. And surely, my own sweetheart, I thank you deeply for your not being able to forget me for a day or even an hour. And the instances given in your sweet, courteous, and amiable letters assure me that what you send and write to me is the pure truth. But, my true sweetheart and dear lady, it seems to me that you are writing shorter letters than you used to do, and they are harder to read and the lettering increasingly ill-

formed. And it seems to me from your letter, which is pleasant to my eye sweet to my heart, and delightful on my lips, that you lack the leisure to write to me, or that you do so apprehensively, out of fear of someone, or something, which I know not of unless you tell me. And if you would be pleased to tell me, and I beg you as strongly as I am able to tell me, I would set myself to write to you for the sake of your honour and peace, and also for my own benefit and pleasure. For, by my soul, I could ne'er be happy again should shame and evil gossip prove your lot on account of me, even though God knows there is no reason for it and never shall be. My own sweetheart, my secretary has been with me and has said a number of things about you, and these I shall not write here because you know them well. And with regard to what he has said to me, I thank you as humbly as lips can say or heart conceive. And, if God please, around this Easter, I shall take such pain to accomplish what he told me of, that I shall not fail of it in any manner, for, by my soul, all my wishes are directed toward this, and all my thoughts too. But, my own sweetheart, though I love my secretary greatly and have firm trust in him, and in you also, you have sent, by him, jewels of yours, which have been drawn from your most rich treasure chest. By my soul, I want you to know for certain that if you could do aught to displease me, these presents you have sent to me, by him, would displease me. And I beg you humbly, if you care for my benefit, my peace, and my joy, that it will never happen that I receive, by him or any other, aught that by God, I would not receive by him or any other. For indeed too great familiarity breeds contempt. And although I am as certain as I am of dying that you would grant me such things more willingly now, I would prefer to wait twenty years for them than that you should send along a single one by him or any other. And also, my true sweetheart, I have pondered deeply, and listened to, and considered all that the bearer of this letter has said to me on your behalf in accord with your commendation to trust, conveyed to me in the letter. And I am most pleased with what you have revealed to him, for he has told and explained several things to me so ably and wisely that my heart has been totally appeased. So, I beg you, as affectionately and as humbly as I can, that all converse, all things said, done, or written between you and I be forgotten and forgiven, with a true heart, as between lover and beloved, and that they never be recalled. So, let us lead a good life, sweet, pleasant, and loving. And my own sweetheart, if I have written anything that has been told to me, I have done so, by my soul, to your

honour and benefit, and also to advise you of it, and so you should not trouble yourself so much about it. As regards the key that I bear to the rich and gracious treasure which resides in the chest where resides all joy, all grace, and all sweetness, have no fear that it will be guarded well, if it please God, and I am able, and I will bring it to you as soon as I may, in order to look upon the grace, the glories, and the riches of that treasure born of love. My own sweetheart, please know that I have informed the bearer of this letter of all my intentions in more detail than I could recount them to you; so, I beg you to believe what he will say to you on my behalf, as if it were I myself. And concerning your book, it will be completed, if God please and I am able, within a fortnight. And it would have been so completed some time ago, but it is a long while since I composed aught for it. And it will be in length about twelve quires, each leaf containing forty lines. And when it is complete, I will have it copied and then sent along to you. Adieu, my most dear lady, my own sweetheart, and my most sweet love, and may God grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart desires. Written this tenth day of April. Your most faithful lover.'

Lines 8937-9016: He asks the messenger to commend him to his lady

'SWEET sire,' I addressed him further:
'Go please, convey these words to her,
Toute Bele, for she commands me, friend.
Say then, that myself I commend
To her as many times or more
As there are folk now, and before,
And to come, all that speak and dance,
And through the carol's turns advance,
All those that to ring and spindle go,
And those who deal the hammer blow,
Ring bells, wield swords, or axes sport;
As many times as folk take thought,
Or make their pirouettes and turns
That present, past, or future earns;
As many as there are leaves in May,
Fruits, flowers, seeds, grass-blades, I say,
As many as there are bushes and trees,

And spices in vast quantities,
Peas and beans, all harvest treasure,
All the weights of every measure,
That will be, are now, and have been;
As many as all the seeds, I mean,
And grains of salt, and bits of gravel,
Sand, powder, hail, without cavil,
Barley and wheat, and oats, and rye;
As many as the stars in the sky,
As working days, feast-days also,
And nights, and wild beasts here below,
And birds of every kind that breed,
Upon this earth, and every reed,
And acorn and oak-leaf that falls,
The pointed tips of needles, awls,
And then large rocks, and pebbles too,
And little things nigh lost to view;
As many as the drops of water
In the seas, the waves moreover,
And all the fish that roam the deep,
And all that the world's rivers keep,
And all the drops of blood that flow,
Of oil, wine, milk as white as snow,
And of every other liquid known,
And all the teardrops eyes have shown
By which hearts mark their misery,
And all the souls that there may be,
In Paradise and Purgatory,
And Hell that grants little glory;
As many as the coins e'er made,
Or lengths of silk e'er displayed,
Whether but raw or richly dyed,
All the cloths, woven with pride,
In hemp, wool, linen, every coil
Of every fibre spun with toil;
As many as the hairs fated
To hide all that God created,

And all the feathers, all the flies,
Fair glow-worms, gnats, and vile horseflies,
That populate the world entire,
By so much, I say, humbly, sire,
Am I, my heart, my woes full sore,
Half a million-million times more
Than I can say; this you'll tell her,
Whene'er you commend me to her;
And five hundred thousand greater
Than all the broken pledges ever,
Those lies told, betrayals, despairs,
Especially of true love affairs,
Some full of sighs right amorous,
And others found but dolorous;
More too than shots from the bow,
From arbalest and swift crossbow,
And all the claws of every feather,
And all the morsels eaten ever,
From this world's first beginning,
Then, and now, and till its ending.'
He replied: 'Now, by Saint Martin,
I'd needs rise early in the morning,
If twere my intent to say all this;
And, by my faith, tis not my wish,
But what I can, and my duty too,
I shall perform; you know tis true.'

Lines 9017-9042: His lady responds with a twenty-third letter

THEN, he departed, on a day,
Twas the first in the month of May,
And journeyed, as far as desired,
To present my letter, as required,
Such that his embassy was done
So well, that in true union
Our two hearts he joined together,
So they might be parted never,

Nor from each could each remove
Since they were conjoined by Love,
And the goddess Venus too,
And the high gods hove in view,
And the other goddesses came,
All those who'd e'er loved in Love's name,
To this gathering, and union,
So that ne'er, in any fashion,
Might it be e'er dissolved again,
So that pleasure, joy, peace might reign,
And we, as one, sweet friend with friend,
Live so, with Paradise at the end.
Here is the letter witnessing
To that outcome, and every thing
That my true heart, my dear lady,
In joy and happiness wrote to me,
And which replies to my letter,
Takes it, expounds it, for the better.

'My own sweetheart, my most sweet true and faithful love, I have received your letter, in which you tell me of your good health, and that is the most sovereign joy I may come to possess, which is to hear good news in that regard. And as to myself, if it pleases you to know, I thank you as sweetly and as lovingly as I can, and it may please you to know that I have heard and listened to all that the bearer of this letter said, on your behalf and to which your letter bears witness. And this has revived my heart, my joy, my spirit, putting me in such a state that there is no joy in this world that would not seem sadness compared to the perfect joy I possess, to wit that God, Love, and Venus, my goddess, who has heard my prayers, my complaints, and my lamentation, has returned your heart to the place where it should be, and set it on the path of truth, for, by that same God who created me, never have I done or thought a single thing to make you distance yourself from me, nor will I do anything of the sort on any day of my life. And since all is forgiven on one side and on the other, for God's sake, my own sweetheart, let us defend, the two of us, our peace, honour, and perfect love from now on, and so we shall live in joy and pleasure and be perfectly satisfied thus. And furthermore, we will be beyond Fortune's risks. And my own

sweetheart, I swear to you, by all the oaths a woman can swear, that I will never believe anyone who works against you in anything said or reported to me. And I think you so good and faithful that I am certain you will do the same as regards myself. My own sweetheart, brother, companion, and most loyal friend, you have written that you will come to see me. And yet, I beg you, most affectionately, as you love my benefit, my peace, my joy, and my life, not to take a single step on your journey, if the country is not yet secure, for you could not anger me more, in doing aught in this world, than in travelling to me at risk of your life, for I would never have good or joy again if you experienced any hardship. My own sweetheart, you wrote to me some time ago in another letter to which I never replied that I wrote to you more succinctly and obscurely than I had used to; and indeed what you say is true, but this was because I could find never a clerk whom I might trust soundly enough to write you. And although I was accustomed ever to writing you openly, so that several people knew of the love twixt you and I, there is none who knows the whole truth of it save one other, and myself, and your secretary also. And, for God's sake, my sweetheart, have no fear that I do so for some other reason, but it is not good to trust just anyone. And someone might lay eyes on this who could surmise what is not so. And I would wish greatly, that you not write to me at all, unless it is to send a verse or song of some kind, except by means of your servant, who was here before and knows what is happening. And this seems best to me. My own sweetheart and my most sweet friend, I beg you, as sweetly as I am able, to feel no anger concerning the jewel I sent you, by your secretary, which was taken from my treasure chest, for I swear to you, by all the oaths anyone can swear, that since I saw you I have taken nothing from it save what I have sent you. And be assured that had I believed this would displease you I would rather have chewed my finger to the bone than send it to you. And thus, I pray you, for God's sake, my sweetheart please forgive me in this. And I promise you, by my faith never to do so again, but I did so because I was unhappy that I could not give it to you and also because I would willingly send you aught that may grant you comfort and joy. And, for God's sake, my sweetheart, if I own to anything that would please you and might yield you benefit and joy, send word, and I promise to send it to you with good heart. I am not sending your book because I am fearful that it might readily be lost, and besides it is all the diversion I possess, and I would amend several things, which I shall be

happy to tell you of with my own lips. However, I will send it to you, as soon as I have a trustworthy messenger. I do not yet have the two ballads you say you have sent, and this disappoints me greatly, since I am quite fearful of their being shouted through the streets before I can learn them, nor have I had news of you since the last time I wrote to you by your servant. My true sweetheart, I am sending a rondel in which your name appears. I beg you, most affectionately to treat it with kindness, for I would not have known how to compose it had the idea not come from you. I pray God grant you honour and joy in whatever your heart loves and desires. Your own true love.'

Lines 9043-9050: The lady's sixteenth rondel yielding Guillaume's name

'Five, seven, nine, one, eleven, twenty,
Has inflamed me with the purest love,

Since he first was known to me truly,
Five, seven, nine, one, eleven, twenty.

I was then his, he all mine, completely,
Because of his renown, whom all approve,
Five, seven, nine, one, eleven, twenty,
Has inflamed me with the purest love'

(Translator's note: converting, as before, numbers to letters of the Old French alphabet, and recalling that it contains no letter 'j', the opening line gives E, G, M, A, I, L, U. Doubling the letters 'L' and 'U' and re-arranging yields GUILLAUME, for Guillaume de Machaut)

Lines 9051-9070: The lover expresses their new-found concord

THUS, were we brought to an accord,
Just as I have sought to record,
Through a most amiable concord;
Great joy the memory doth afford.
There's great good in so recording,

A true accord, both hearts forgiving,
Greater in sealing an accord
Between two hearts in sad discord.
And so, I shall recall once more
Briefly, what I've expressed before,
How Toute Bele did bind my heart,
According herself to me, to part
Never, and did my heart control,
With her person, body, and soul,
While a song she did me afford,
In a true voice, in sweet concord,
All there so sweetly accordant
It could never prove discordant.
Rather she's ever in accordance;
And finer than all when she doth dance.

Lines 9071-9088: Their names encoded in the verse

AND, tis only right I tell you
The name of my lovely lady, too,
For whom I have composed this same,
'The True Poem' it has for name.
And if you'd hear, and comprehend,
Look to the ninth line from the end
Of this text, then eight letters win
With which the eighth line doth begin,
For our two names they do contain,
Which thus are shown, true and plain,
See how I've enclosed them there.
Tis pleasing all should be aware,
How deeply I do love my lady,
Sans lies or regret, so dearly,
That, by my soul, I'd wish never,
To change her for any other;
My lady shall know such is true;
No other woman shall I pursue.

(Translator's note: The ninth line from the end of the Old French text reads: 'Pour li changier nulle autre fame', and the first eight letters of the eighth line from the end read: 'Ma dame le'. It is possible by re-arranging the combined letters to extract the names 'Peronelle' and 'Guillaume de Machaut', leaving nine letters spare. The names match those in the previous cryptic rondels where numeric code was employed.)

Lines 9089-9095: His coda

I am hers, till death us do part,
And, after death, with a pure heart
To serve her is my spirit's lot;
May God grant it perishes not,
But so prays that He calls to glory
Toute Bele's soul, in all its beauty.
Amen.

Here Ends the Book of the True Poem