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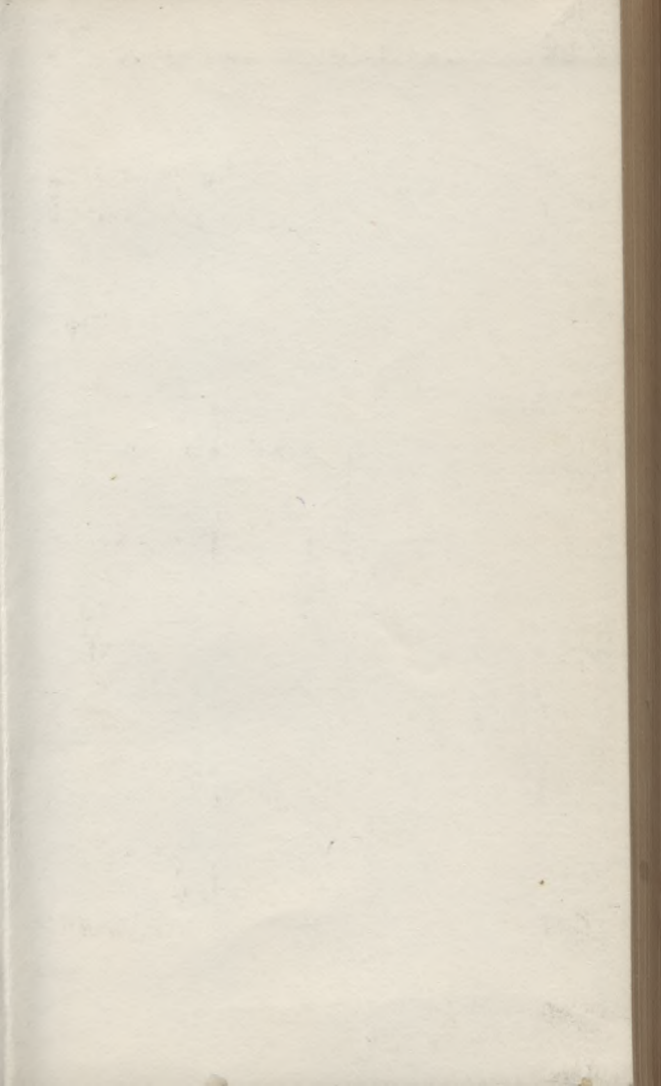
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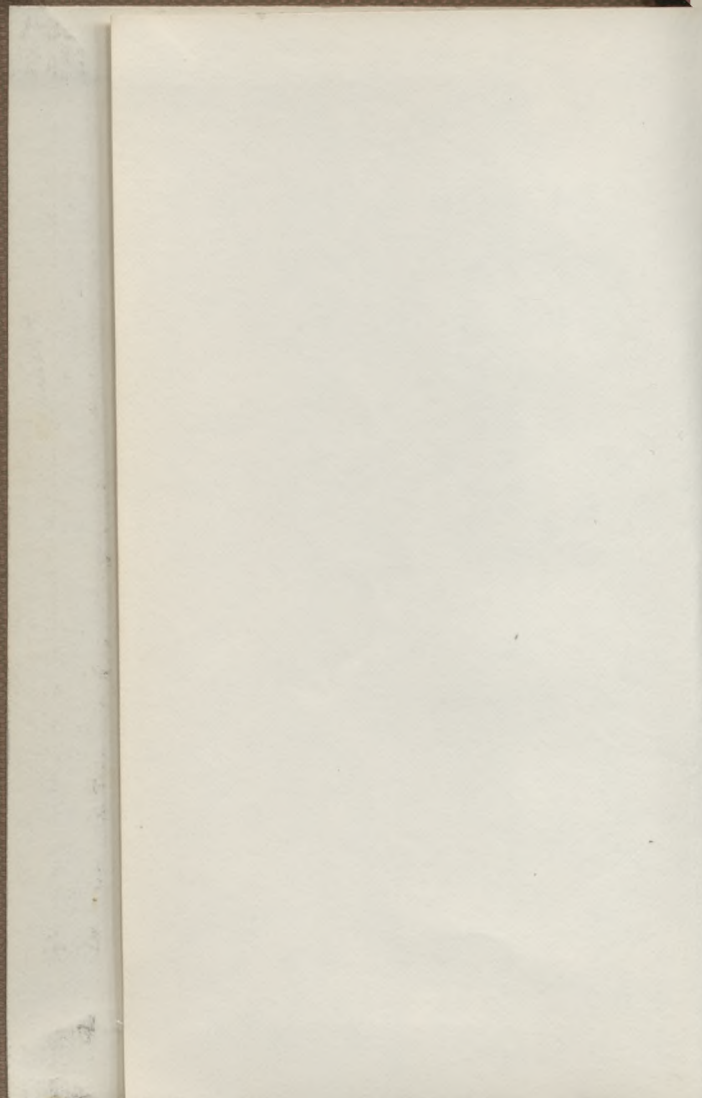
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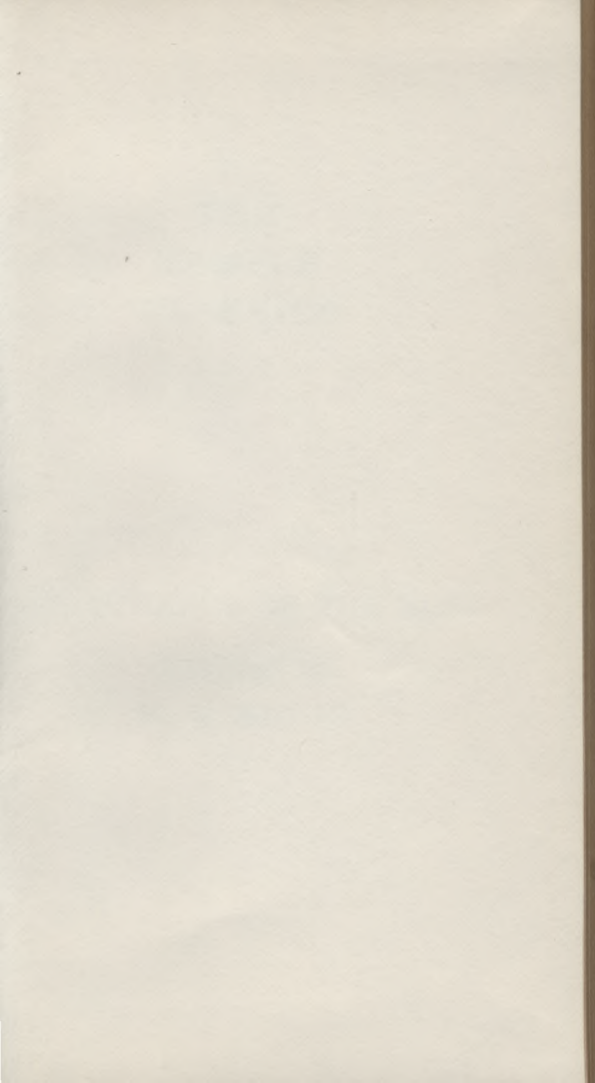


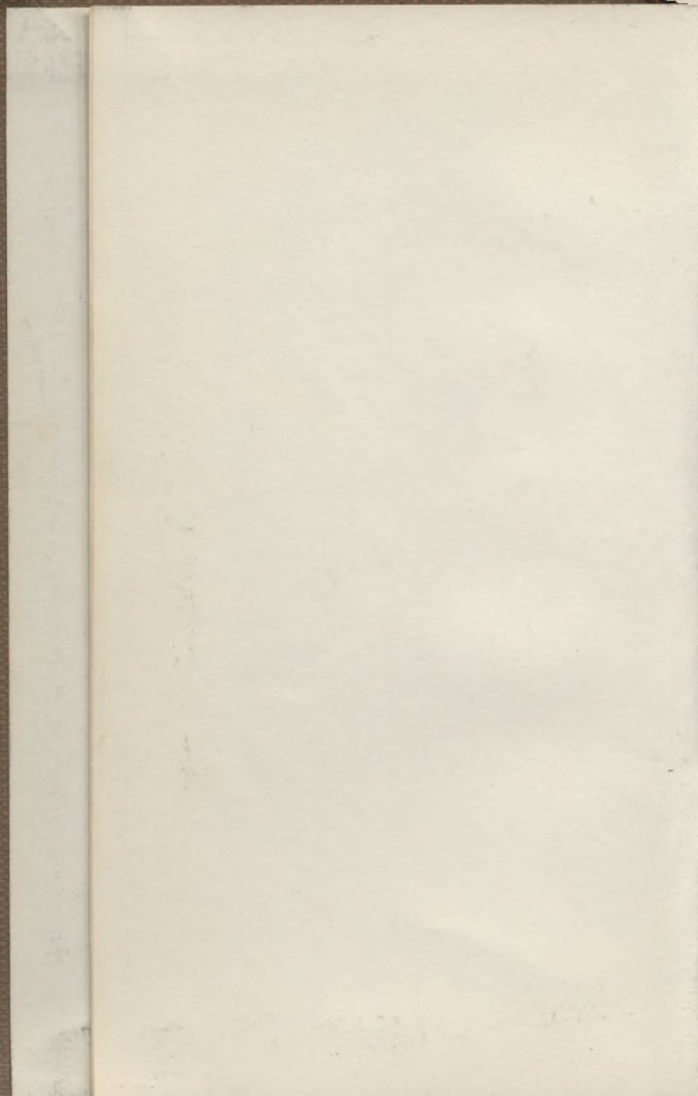
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THE
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THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

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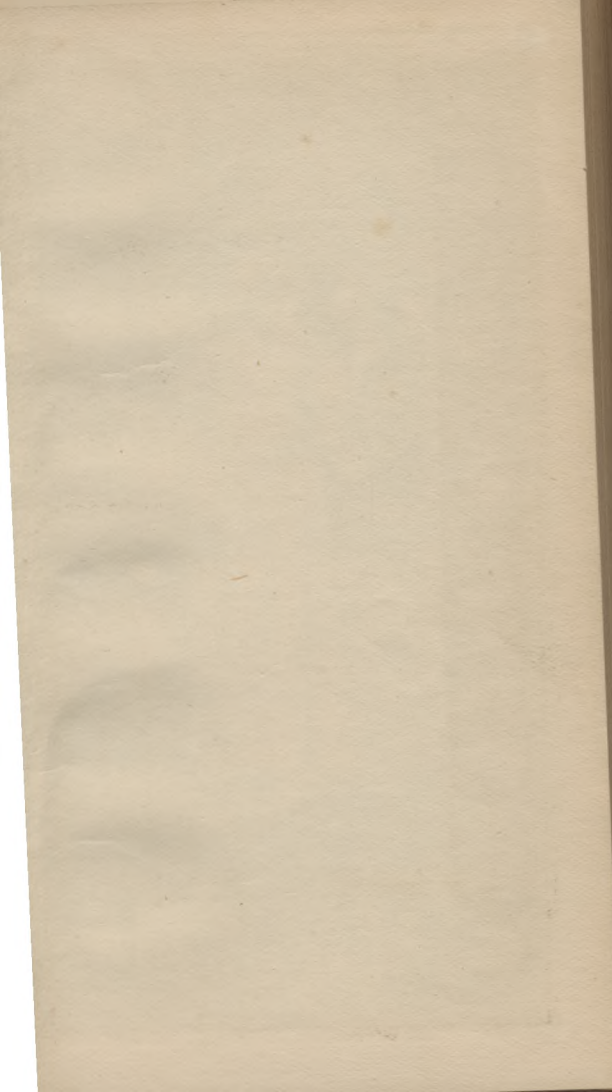
F. S. ELLIS

THE
TEMPLE
CLASSICS

THE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

Englished by

R. S. ELLIS





THE LOVER
GATHERING
THE ROSE



THE 
ROMANCE

of the ROSE

by W LORRIS

& J CLOPINEL

ENGLISHED

by F SELLIS

VOL THREE



THE LOVER
GATHERING
THE ROSE



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ROMANCE

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VOL THREE

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SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS
IN VOLUME III

The Duenna tells the Lover that she will leave the postern gate open by which he may enter. For that service he promises her a piece of fine blue or green cloth. He enters the enclosure and sees the God of Love leading the Barons to his aid. Though False-Seeming and Hypocrisy are among the host, he is content, so long as they fight for him. He is rejoiced to behold Sweet-Looks once again, who points out Fair-Welcome to him.

Cap.
LXXVI.
F. 15308-
15378.

Fair-Welcome thanks the Lover for the chaplet, and declares himself at his service, to which declaration he gets a complaisant reply, and then the Lover, saying that to possess the Rose is his one desire, advances towards it.

Cap.
LXXVII.
F. 15379-
15428.

But no sooner does he approach the Rosebush than forth starts Danger and bids him fly as he values his life. Fear and Shame come to the aid of Danger, and all three load Fair-Welcome and his companion with abuse. The Lover is driven from the tower, and Fair-Welcome is secured with a triple lock.

Cap.
LXXVIII.
F. 15429-
15558.

Cap.
LXXIX.
F. 15559-
15698.

The Lover is overcome with grief at the fate of Fair-Welcome, and implores that he may share his prison. Danger, Fear, and Shame laugh at his proposal, for which they reproach him roundly. Thereupon he calls with a feeble voice on the Barons of Love's host, whom he has seen approaching, to come to his assistance.

Cap.
LXXX.
F. 15699-
15758.

The Barons call to arms, and the Lover declares that but for their timely arrival he would assuredly have been killed.

Cap.
LXXXI.
F. 15759-
15786.

The Author begs his readers to bear with him, both as to what he has already written, and proposes further to write, concerning the art of love.

Cap.
LXXXII.
F. 15787-
15824.

He asks the pardon of lovers if he makes use of some words or phrases which are displeasing to them.

Cap.
LXXXIII.
F. 15825-
15934.

He trusts also that dames and damosels, whether they have lovers or not, will believe that he has no ill-feeling towards their sex, notwithstanding that which he has written already or shall write hereafter. He says no more, he avers, than may be found in writers of old days. His arrows, he asserts, are but directed against evil-doers. Lastly, should anything that he has written give offence to Holy Church, he is willing at once to submit himself and make amends.

The Author here takes up the thread of his story. Franchise engages in single combat with Danger, and is nearly overcome by him when Pity rushes to her aid: Shame appears to the rescue and puts Pity to flight, though she is aided by Pleasure; but Shame in her turn is discomfited by Hide-Well.

Cap.
LXXXIV.
F. 15935-
16146.

Fear, ordinarily so faint of heart, overcomes Hide-Well and gets the better of Audacity, whom he has called to his assistance. But she is forthwith engaged in mortal combat with Surety.

Cap.
LXXXV.
F. 16147-
16247.

The God of Love, seeing that his Barons are in danger of defeat, dispatches Franchise and Sweet-Looks to summon his mother, the sworn enemy of Chastity, to come to their aid. A truce is proclaimed meanwhile.

Cap.
LXXXVI.
F. 16248-
16302.

The envoys proceed to Cythera, where they find Venus engaged with Adonis in following the chase.

Cap.
LXXXVII.
F. 16303-
16346.

Venus eloquently implores Adonis to hunt only such quarry as may not do him injury. The death of Adonis is told. Venus declares herself ready to put Jealousy to the rout.

Cap.
LXXXVIII.
F. 16347-
16430.

The Goddess of Love bids her attendants yoke eight doves to her car, and hastens to her son's aid, who had already broken the truce.

Cap.
LXXXIX.
F. 16431-
16456.

Cap. XC.
F. 16457-
16552.

The Barons make grand preparations for the siege of the castle. Venus addresses her son, and bids him swear his men to fealty. In default of the relics of saints they make vows to conquer or die, on their bows, arrows, quivers, and other arms.

Cap. XCI.
F. 16553-
16850.

When this oath is sworn, Nature enters her workshop, where she ever occupies herself for furthering generation, whether of man or the lower animals, thereby combating Death, who seeks by killing individuals to destroy all life. Art strives to imitate Nature, but is only a bungler, for he cannot endow his work with animation. In sculpture, carving, painting, or alchemy alike, he falls short of Nature's work. The most skilful artist is powerless to impart feeling or speech to his creations. The alchemist, for all his study, vies but ineffectually with the operations of Nature. The greatest masters and philosophers must acknowledge themselves but feeble in her presence.

Cap. XCII.
F. 16851-
16954.

The great painter Zeuxis confessed himself unable by his art to equal the forms of the five fair damsels who displayed to him all the perfections of their bodies that he might thence paint a picture for the temple of Venus. When God created Nature he made in her the source and fountain of all beauty, such as human hands can never attain to. Nature laments that she has committed one great fault, of which she will disburden her mind at full to her priest, Genius.

Nature declares the remorse she feels for having bestowed being upon man, who continually transgresses her laws. Genius expresses his willingness to hear her confession, but then, without any apparent occasion or excuse, launches forth into a long tirade against women, and dilates specially on their inability to keep counsel.

Cap. XCIII.
F. 16955-
17062

Genius continues his discourse against women in form of a debate betwixt husband and wife.

Cap. XCIV
F. 17063-
17220.

Genius continues in the same strain, and, when he has finished his tirade, declares himself ready to hear the confession which Nature desires to pour into his ear, and which the Author avows his intention of recording word for word.

Cap. XCV
F. 17221-
17412.

Nature falls on her knees and begins her confession. It is an exposition of Jean de Meun's apprehension of cosmogony, astronomy, and optics. When God created all things he appointed Nature his chamberlain. Natural phenomena of the earth and heavens are quaintly and naïvely illustrated. Man cannot escape death, but may shorten his days by folly, or somewhat prolong them by reasonable living.

Cap. XCVI.
F. 17413-
17724.

Empedocles and Origen both were guilty of outrages against Nature's laws, the one in seeking death, the other in mutilating himself. A long discussion follows on Freewill, Necessity, and Destiny.

C. XCVII.
F. 17725-
18300.

C. XCVIII.
F. 18301-
19296.

How Deucalion and Pyrrha restored the human race. If men could foresee the future as those two foresaw the flood they might make provision against famines, whether caused by extreme heat, storms, floods, or droughts. If the brute creation had more intelligence, how grievous would then be man's estate. The folly of seeking to know too much is illustrated by the story of Vulcan's discovery of his wife's amour with Mars. A discourse on optics, mirrors, visions, and dreams follows, with a curious folk-lore discussion on the power of the spirit to leave the body and return to it during sleep. The heavens do not trouble themselves to announce the deaths of kings by portents any more than they do those of common people, and have no more effect on the one than on the other. Kings, forsooth, resemble pictures, in that they are better seen from a distance than looked at too closely.

Cap. XCIX.
F. 19297-
20028.

Should any one, priding himself on his lineage and ancestry, ask whether those who are of such noble birth as to be entitled to carry arms should not be considered of more importance than mere tillers of the earth, Nature would flatly answer: No. Men are to be valued and esteemed only for their virtue and nobility of heart. Clerks, who have given themselves to study, have great advantages over other men; but if, notwithstanding the knowledge they have acquired, they love vice and neglect virtue, proportionably great shall be their punishment. In old times poets and men of letters were nobly rewarded, as

witness the examples of Virgil, of Ennius, and of others. Far different, alas! is it in these days. Nature has no cause to complain of the elements, nor of plants, nor of beasts, nor of insects—all fulfil her laws after their different kinds. 'Tis man, man only, formed by Nature in the image of her Master, her last and most glorious work, who sets her at nought and despises her commands. Man it was who put to death his Creator, whose human birth had been foretold by Virgil and by Albumasar. A denunciation of man's wickedness follows, and a description of the punishments which therefore await him.

Nature deposes her priest Genius to visit the army, and engage Venus and the Barons of the host in her service. False-Seeming and Constrained-Abstinence she much dislikes, yet fears they are necessary evils. Genius then divests himself of his chasuble and rochet and takes wings to fly to the host.

Cap. C
F. 20029-
20136.

Nature re-enters her smithy, and sets to work at her forge. Genius arrives at the host, and is invested by the God of Love with chasuble, ring, crozier, and mitre. He thereupon mounts a stage, whence he may harangue the assembly.

Cap. CI.
F. 20137-
20206.

Genius delivers his exhortation, which is neither more nor less than an earnest and vigorous exhortation to fecundity.

Cap. CII.
F. 20207-
20408.

Genius continues his discourse, which becomes a strange medley of ideas. He exhorts the

Cap. CIII.
F. 20409-
20806.

Barons that the great work of man's life is to repair the gaps made in the human race by the shears of Atropos. If men do their duty in this respect they shall be received into the flower-decked meadows of paradise, where the Lamb of God leads his chosen flock through pleasant pastures. There reigns day eternal and perpetual spring, more sweet and perfect than that which ruled on earth in the days of Saturn.

Cap. CIV.
F. 20807-
21428.

Genius continues his discourse in the same strain, and insists on the fact that the paradise he now describes, and promises to those who follow his behest, exceeds, beyond power of words to tell, the Garden of the Rose as described by the Lover in the opening of the poem.

Cap.
CV.-CIX.
F. 21429-
22608.

Venus directs the attack on the tower, which falls before her potent leadership. [The remainder of the poem, in which the story of Pygmalion and the image is introduced, is mixed with a symbolism which certainly could not be put into English without giving reasonable offence, and the translator has therefore had the hardihood to bring the story to a conclusion by an invention of his own. Whether he is to be pardoned for so doing, apart from any defect in his work, those will be the most competent judges who take the trouble to read the original, which is given by way of appendix.]

THE
ROMANCE OF THE ROSE

LXXVI

Herein doth the Duenna teach
The Lover means by which to reach 15410
His end, and, whispering, doth relate
How he may pass the postern gate.
And good her lesson proved to be,
For soon he entered secretly.

THE safer entry will you find,
Quoth she, through that low door behind
The castle wall; I first will go,
Since somewhat dark the path doth grow
That thither leads; it hath not been
Opened above ten weeks, I ween, 15420
And thou art first to enter there.

The Lover.

Cried I: By Saint Remy I swear,
Though every yard cost ten to twenty
Gold marks, (my friend had said that plenty
Must be my promises, e'en though
I should some afterwhiles forego,)
Fine cloth I'll give you, green or blue,
If that small door you pass me through.

The
Duenna's
reward

The From thence the hag betook her straight,
 entry And I ran towards the postern gate 15430
 won She'd told of, putting up a prayer
 To God for safe arrival where
 I fain would be. I spake no word,
 But joy supreme within me stirred
 To find the door ajar, and in
 I sprang, then fixed again the pin,
 Breathing more freely, since I knew
 That Evil-Tongue his guerdon due
 Had gained, and in the moat lay dead;
 Then erst was death to joyance wed. 15440
 There I espied the broken door,
 And, passing through, beheld before
 Mine eyes the God of Love and all
 The host that had obeyed his call
 For my behoof; what thanks I owe
 To those who brake that doorway through!
 God and Saint Benet help and speed
 The men who did that worthy deed.
 They hight: False-Seeming, traitor vile,
 Son of Hypocrisy by Guile 15450
 Or Lying, who with Virtue wars,
 And oft-times deals her ugly scars.
 Next stood Constrainèd-Abstinence,
 Friend of False-Seeming, and who thence
 By him with Antichrist is great,
 E'en as the holy books relate.
 In any case I raised a prayer,
 For them since they so friendly were.

Would one his soul to treachery trim,
 False-Seeming master is for him; 15460

And liars who true men would seem,
 Constrainèd-Abstinence should deem
 Their model.

Sweet-
 Looks
 reappears

When I thus had found
 The door-shards scattered on the ground,
 And all the gathered host inside
 Ready for war whate'er betide,
 If joy were mine, no man need ask!
 And while I set myself the task
 To find Sweet-Looks, all suddenly
 He came : I cried ' Ben'dicite ' ! 15470
 The God of Love to ease my pain
 Had sent me this dear friend again,
 And so extreme was my delight
 I well-nigh fainted at the sight.
 Soon as he saw me, from his eyes
 Shot forth bright beams of glad surprise,
 And he with finger pointed out
 Fair-Welcome, who with joyous shout
 Ran towards me, with that courtesy
 Which from his mother learned had he. 15480

LXXVII

How in the fastness of the tower
 The Lover gains Fair-Welcome's bower,
 Who offers his desire to speed.
 False-Seeming 'twas who helped his need.

I DID him reverence as he came,
 Who graciously returned the same,
 With thanks abundant for the wreath.
 Sir, cried I, with respondent breath,

Mutual It scarce becomes me to receive
 courtesies Your courteous words, for I believe 15490
 Ten thousand thanks to you I owe,
 Who my poor offering honoured so
 By your acceptance ; be you sure
 Deep sense of your kind love will dure
 Long in my breast ; command me what
 You will, and I will fail you not ;
 Nor doubt you I should think to swerve
 From aught that your desire may serve.
 Do you but utter a command,
 And I straightway will set my hand 15500
 Thereto, my life and goods will I
 Devote to you ungrudgingly.
 Yea ! though you claimed my very soul
 'Twere yours forthwith, entire and whole.
 Essay me then, that I may prove
 Myself well worthy utmost love.
 Or if I fail, God grant that thence
 I lack all joy in each sweet sense.

Fair-Welcome.

Cried he : I thank you, gentle sir,
 To do not so would cast a slur 15510
 On my good name—if I possess
 Aught that can give you happiness,
 Accept it—freely share with me
 Goods, honour, all are yours, pardee !

The Lover.

Fair sir, I cried, for love so tender
 A hundred thousand thanks I render,

And for your proffer, more than kind,
 But nowise could I bring my mind
 To ask for further gift than you
 Have given already, which in my view 15520
 Exceeds all Alexander's gold.

Vain
 hope

I raised my hand in hope to hold
 At last that lovely Rose that I
 Had craved so long and ardently,
 Deeming the converse sweet and soft
 That had betwixt us passed so oft,
 And that fond friendship, kind and dear,
 Whereby our hearts were drawn so near,
 Were tokens that my end was gained,
 Alas! false hope, my heart that fained. 15530

LXXVIII

How the fond Lover's hope to gain
 The Rose, through Danger fell, proved vain,
 For soon as his attempt he spied,
 With fearsome shout the monster cried.

ALAS! fools' projects oft fall short!
 Of fate I seemed the toy and sport,
 For even as I raised my hand,
 Foul Danger in the path did stand.
 The villain may a wolf devour!
 Hid in an angle, near the flower 15540
 He stood, and, watching us, each word
 Set down that he betwixt us heard,
 And then with rage and fury yelled,
 The while his club aloft he held:

Danger to the Lover.

Again
chased
forth

Fly, varlet! quick! I bid you fly
Forthwith, unless you long to die,
The devil 'tis that brings you here,
The fiend accurst, the ravisher,
In this base robbery fain would he
Take part, I doubt not, readily. 15550
Although no saint afford me aid,
God help me! be you well afraid
O vassal, lest I break your head.

The Lover.

Then Fear and Shame together sped
Towards me when they heard him cry
"Fly! fly! thou varlet," lustily.
Ah! had he merely used his tongue!
But he the devil brought among
Us there, and drove the saints away;
What tricks the treacherous wretch doth play!
And then, fulfilled of rage, the three, 15560
With one accord fell foul of me,
Thrusting my hands behind my back.
Cried they, "Of more you needs must lack
Than what you have already won.
'Tis plain by what you now have done
That you Fair-Welcome understood
But ill when he would work you good.
His all he lightly offered you
With heart, kind, generous, frank, and true, 15570
And you with utter disregard
Of honesty his goods had shared
Beyond the sense in which 'twas meant,
For, though unspoken, the intent

The
 Lover re-
 proached

Is clear when one doth nobly make
 An offer for politeness' sake.
 What more than that could mortal do?
 But we, sir trickster, ask of you
 Wherefore his words in plainest sense
 You take not, free of all pretence? 15580
 To understand his words awry
 Convicts you of stupidity,
 Or else perchance you deem it fit
 To play the part of foolish wit.
 To you the Rose he offered not,
 And indecorous 'twere, we wot,
 For you to ask him such a thing,
 Or snatch it, he not offering.
 Straightly we ask with what intent
 Your offering unto him was sent; 15590
 Was not your end, as we suppose,
 To cozen him, and steal the Rose?
 With treachery vile and falseness you
 Profess to him that you will do
 Some service, though in truth his foe
 You prove. Ne'er yet in book, we trow,
 Was writ a crime more wholly curst.
 Therefore, although your heart should
 burst
 With grief, this precinct must you flee,
 Wherefrom we drove you formerly. 15600
 The devil 'twas that brought you back,
 For scarce can you remembrance lack
 How you from out this place were driven;
 Be off, and seek another heaven.
 Small sense displayed that guardian who
 Chose to admit a fool like you,

Fear and For had she known your treacherous mind,
 Shame She ne'er had suffered you behind
 speak The hedge to win. Grossly deceived
 Fair-Welcome was when he received 15610
 Your visit here, he thought to be
 Your friend, and found but treachery.
 You're like a dog that swims a-land,
 And on the bank doth barking stand.
 Be off! go seek your prey elsewhere,
 And let your footsteps quickly bear
 You hence; away! our stairs descend
 Forthwith, or ware you evil end;
 For chance it is one cometh here
 Eftsoons whose face you well may fear, 15620
 For simple reckoning will he measure
 With one who hither comes on pleasure.

 Sir madman! vile, presumptuous sot!
 Who neither faith nor truth doth wot,
 What hath Fair-Welcome 'gainst you done?
 By some foul crime hath he then won
 Your anger and undying hate
 That you his life would desolate?
 And when all things that you possessed
 You proffered him, 'twere lightly guessed 15630
 That 'twas with hope he would receive
 You hither, and our watch deceive
 For your behoof, and e'en his birds
 And dogs give you for your fair words.
 Right foolishly hath he behaved,
 But, by the God who all men saved,
 And by St. Faith, so great a wrong
 Hath he committed, that in strong

And cruel durance shall he lie
 From day to day all hopelessly. 15640
 Bound shall he be with many a chain,
 Nor ever while he lives shall gain
 Freedom, whereby he might once more
 Vex us again as heretofore.
 'Twas to your loss that e'er you saw
 This caitiff, who defies our law.

Fair-
 Wel-
 come's
 evil case

The Author.

Then not alone they beat him, but
 Within the tower they closely shut
 Their victim, and, with insults great,
 'Neath three strong locks incarcerate 15650
 Him hopelessly; handcuff and chain
 Are needless, for three locks make vain
 All chance of flight. 'Twas but a taste
 (Since now were they oppressed with haste)
 Of pain to come when they returned,
 For 'gainst him hot their anger burned.

LXXIX

This tells how Danger, Fear, and Shame
 In force against the Lover came
 And beat him, till for mercy he
 Begged, with profound humility. 15660

The Lover.

THE three to words confined them not,
 But coming quickly to the spot
 Where I, alarmed and helpless, stood,
 O'ercome with fear and dreariness,

The My body set they to torment
 Lover And vex ; God grant they may repent
 ill-treated One day the outrage on me done.
 Alas ! my death I well-nigh won
 Thereby, though offered I to yield,
 But 'gainst all ruth their hearts seemed steeled.
 At last, their fierceness to assuage, 15671
 Proposed I that they should engage
 Me with Fair-Welcome in his cell.
 Danger, quoth I, whom all know well
 To be a frank and generous knight,
 With every gracious virtue dight,
 And you, dear Shame, and kind-heart Fear,
 Sweet virgins, of all blemish clear,
 Who deed or word unfit would scorn,
 Of Reason's noble lineage born, 15680
 Permit me to become your slave,
 And shut me close, as 'twere my grave,
 Beside Fair-Welcome in the tower,
 For ever helpless 'neath your power ;
 And loyal promise will I give
 Therein contentedly to live,
 And such good service render you,
 As must your hearts with joy imbue.
 Good Lord ! if caitiff wretch I were,
 A traitor, thief, or ravisher, 15690
 Or if I feared a murderer's fate,
 I scarce need ask that prison gate
 Might close on one who could not fail
 To find him lodged within a gaol,
 For whether I would or not, pardee,
 The law's long arm would stretch to me.
 And if it were adjudged that I
 Should be dismembered by-and-by,

Why then, I trow, the chance is nought
 But what I should ere long be caught. 15700
 For God's dear love I beg you, then,
 That I may with this best of men
 Be caged; but if it e'er be proved
 That I have been by aught else moved
 Than wish to serve him, let me be
 Hence banished ignominiously.
 No man exists but hath some fault,
 But if I in your service halt,
 Then bag and baggage drive me hence,
 To purge my folly and offence. 15710
 And if your wrath I yet excite,
 On me let chastisement alight,
 But let none others judge of me
 Than you, most honourable three,
 Since justice true, for high or low,
 Ye most inevitably know;
 And were Fair-Welcome joined with ye,
 He judge supreme o'er all might be;
 And should occur some difference
 Betwixt you, he would judge the sense 15720
 Of right and wrong, and hold the scale
 With such clear wit as could not fail.
 Fear not that I from hence will budge,
 Though stripes or death ye should adjudge.

Danger.

Then loudly Danger laughed, and said:
 A fair request now, by my head!
 Into one gaol to thrust ye twain!
 You, with your merry heart and fain,

The
 Lover's
 proposal

Danger's And he, so sweet and debonair ;
 scornful To trust together such a pair 15738
 reply Would be the foxes with the geese
 To cage, that both might dwell in
 peace.
 Betake yourself elsewhere, I pray,
 'Tis clear that you but come this way
 To bring upon us foul disgrace,
 Hence, nor show here again your face.
 To ask us that your friend may rule
 As judge, but stamps you for a fool.
 A judge! by Him who judges all!
 In wondrous wise would judgments fall 15740
 Should we for blindfold justice' sake
 An umpire of a culprit make.
 As one condemned Fair-Welcome stands,
 And droll 'twould be if now our hands
 Should make him judge and arbiter!
 No! till the deluge reappear
 Fast shall he stay within the tower.
 To keep him fast we'll use our power,
 Before it haps that every Rose
 To ruthless spoilers he expose. 15750
 Each robber will good greeting get
 If by Fair-Welcome he be met,
 And therefore needful 'tis that he
 Be prisoner kept unendingly.
 No man shall to the Roses find
 Access, except he ride the wind,
 Unless, perchance, he prove so strong
 As seize the prize by roughshod wrong,
 And playing such a prank, may he
 As goal attain the gallows-tree. 15760

The Lover.

Cried I: Most grievous wrong you do,
 One to confine and punish who
 Is innocent of any crime,
 And whose sole thought throughout all time
 Is to befriend the world around him.
 Wherefore in prison have you bound him,
 Except for that he hath to me
 Shown kindly love and sympathy?
 Without occasion more than this
 In prison lies he, reft of bliss,
 And therefore might with reason be,
 An't please you, set at liberty.
 Great sir, most humbly I implore
 That you will punish him no more:
 Long hath he suffered dolorous pain,
 I pray you set him free again.

The
 Lover's
 best
 friend

15770

Danger, Fear, and Shame.

I'faith, cried they, this fellow mocks,
 Or deems us dull as stones or stocks,
 When he proposes we should render
 Full freedom to this gross offender.
 But he shall find that never more
 Through window-bar or prison door
 His rascal friend shall show his head.

15780

The Lover.

And then all three against me sped,
 Each striving who should thrust me out,
 Which scarce had grieved me less, I doubt,

The call Than if I had been crucified.
 to arms And therefore piteously I cried
 For mercy, though low-voiced I spoke,
 To summon up the friendly folk
 And sentinels about the gate,
 Misdoubting else a cruel fate,
 And when my cries for help they heard,
 A shout rose that the welkin stirred :

LXXX

How all the Barons of the host
 Together run, for fear that lost
 May be their friend, who cruelly
 Is beaten by the guardians three.

The Barons.

TO arms! to arms! brave barons all,
 Hasten ye to aid, ere worse befall,
 Now were the faithful Lover lost
 Unless God help him, and our host.
 He by the watch-dogs, arms fast tied,
 Is strangled, bruised, and crucified.

The Author.

He cried for mercy in a tone
 So low that scarce they heard his moan,
 Yea, verily so faint and hoarse
 His voice was, and devoid of force,
 That with good reason might they think
 The wretch it rose from neared the brink
 Of death, or one whose throat was bound
 With cruel, throttling cord around.

Or sounds it as the voice of one
 Who unto death is being done,
 Yet know we nought of his estate,
 Though seemeth it right desperate,
 And nearing death if help come not.
 Thence flees Fair-Welcome at full trot,
 Who hath to him such comfort been,
 And needful now it is, I ween, 15820
 Fair-Welcome should return again,
 To which end all take arms amain.

The
 Lover
 hard
 bestead

The Lover.

Most surely to my last long home
 I'd gone if succour had not come.
 But quickly all the Barons flew
 To arms, so soon as e'er they knew
 By sight and sound of my distress.
 For me, alas! I must confess
 That, tangled in the snares of love,
 I stood, bereft of power to move, 15830
 Spectator of the desperate fight
 Which 'neath my wondering eyes was dight.
 For soon as e'er the guardians saw
 This mighty host anigh them draw,
 The three a league between them sware,
 Good faith to keep, great deeds to dare,
 And in united phalanx stand,
 Till bowed 'neath death's all-conquering hand,
 A strong and helpful brotherhood:
 And I who saw from where I stood 15840
 Their fierce expression of defiance,
 Trembled at this most dread alliance.

The
guar-
dians'
league

And soon as by the host was seen
This compact and firm league between
The guardians, they a bond likewise
Fast swore, and pledged them to the eyes
To stand together in that place
Till grim death met they, face to face.
With warlike rage their bosoms glow
The guardians' pride to overthrow, 15850
And one and all prepare to meet
The foe, for victory or defeat.
Now hear you how the battle went,
As each 'gainst each his fury spent.

LXXXI

Herein the Author doth disown,
To save his honour and renown,
Unseemly words, and prays that he
May not be taken wrongfully.

The Author.

O UNDERSTAND, ye lovers true
(May Venus' son keep watch o'er you
For ever, with a gentle eye), 15861
Within this bosket you the cry
May hear of dogs as they pursue
The coney, and the ferret too
Shall drive him onwards towards the snare
Which subtle hands for him prepare.
In noting all that I have said,
You will in love be well bestead,
And if you aught of trouble find,
Thereon will I illumine your mind, 15870

For you shall hear me, bit by bit,
 Set forth the dream and gloss on it,
 And lightly then may you explain
 Love's art to those who deem it vain.
 Clear shall be made by that I write
 E'en now, what I did erst indite,
 And also that which followeth.
 But ere I further spend my breath,
 I fain would say one little word,
 Lest evil tongues be 'gainst me stirred. 15880
 No purpose have I to abuse
 Pure minds, but would my faith excuse.

The
 Author's
 intent

LXXXII

The Author prays that his intent

Be kindly ta'en—no harm is meant.

O GENTLE lovers, all and each,
 By love's sweet pleasures I beseech
 Of you, that if herein ye see
 Some words which smack of ribaldry,
 Whereof foul slanderous tongues might make
 Occasion 'gainst us to awake 15890
 Contempt for that we've said or writ,
 Ye courteously naysay their wit;
 And when you've given such folk the lie,
 And treated them conformably,
 If there shall fall within my task
 Some things whereof I pardon ask,
 Past doubt you will forgive me them,
 And strive men's censuring speech to stem,

Value of plain phrase Explaining how the matter needs
 That 'mid fair flowers must sprout some weeds;
 And for my subject must I use 15901
 Plain words, sans liberty to choose.
 And ever find I fair and right
 The phrase Dan Sallust doth indite,
 Wherein he saith: If equal praise
 Deserveth not the man who lays
 A noble deed within a book,
 Whereon the world at large may look
 With him who did the deed, yet he
 Who sings the achievement faithfully, 15910
 With words well suited to the tale,
 Is to the world of great avail:
 For if the author be no fool,
 But writeth after wisdom's rule,
 Then should the words and phrase, wherein
 He sets his facts, be close akin
 With them; I therefore choose my way
 Plain things in plainest phrase to say.

LXXXIII

The Author trusts that not askance
 Will ladies view this fair Romance. 15920

AND, ladies fair, I trust, as well,
 That (whether dame or damosel,
 Love's bond, or whole as yet of heart)
 If found you in the former part
 Some words which you unseemly think,
 You'll kindly let your eyelids wink

Thereon, nor rashly deem that I
 Would women treat despitefully,
 Nor therefore heap too much of blame
 On this my book, which nowise shame 15930
 Would do you, but instruct your wit :
 For therein not one word unfit,
 Of anger or malevolence,
 Or passion, or ill-will prepense,
 Nor envy, hatred, or despite
 'Gainst any woman have I dight,
 For no man would his finger stretch
 'Gainst women, but some cold-heart wretch.
 And if you some rude phrases find
 In this my poem, bear in mind 15940
 That good and healthful 'tis for me
 And you alike ourselves to see.

The
 Author's
 apology

But ladies, if you deem I fail
 Of truth or justice in my tale,
 As liar hold not me in scorn,
 But those who wrote, ere I was born,
 The words I once again repeat.
 And count you not those words unmeet
 And false, unless you would condemn
 The sages whence I gathered them, 15950
 And deem that they but fables told
 Who framed the famous books of old ;
 But faintly I confess, forsooth,
 I deem those sages wrote but truth
 Of women's ways, for they were not
 Foolish, or drunk, or mad I wot,
 But all by long experience knew
 What women dream of, say, and do ;

Wisdom For all alike from age to age
 of old Are they writ down in history's page. 15966
 days

Forgive me then, fair ladies, nor
 Scold me for what men wrote of yore,
 Which I but follow, save at times
 Some innocent word to help my rhymes
 I add, as poets needs must do,
 Would they their matter carry through,
 By some invention of their own.
 For all true poets work alone,
 For delectation and delight
 Of those who read their work aright. 15970

And if some people grumble still,
 And of my work and me speak ill,
 Because they keenly feel the bite
 Of that sharp tooth wherewith I dight
 False-Seeming's words, and so conspire
 And plot to punish me with dire
 And grievous chastisement, because
 With rage they read my rasping saws,
 Then here declare I before all,
 I ne'er from out my lips let fall 15980
 A word to injure living man,
 Who doth his life on virtue plan
 Beneath the Church's holy care,
 Whatever robe or frock he wear.

But though a sinner I confess
 Myself to be, I ne'ertheless
 Catch up my bow, and thence let fly
 My arrows, which shall grievously

Wound such vile folk (and tear to bits
 Their mask) as Christ for hypocrites 15990
 Condemned, all one it is to me
 If monks or secular they be ;
 Though some of these with will to show
 Their holiness will fain forego
 Flesh meat, and by their abstinence
 Parade make of their penitence,
 As though they kept the fast of Lent,
 Far better 'twere if they forewent
 Their neighbours to devour, forsooth,
 And bite with slander's cruel tooth. 16000
 Of such alone my targe I make,
 To wound and tear and bruise and
 break.

Evil only
 censured

At those I shoot as e'en I may,
 But if one sets him in the way
 Whereas my shaft of needs must fly,
 And so receives it wilfully,
 Misled by foolishness and pride,
 When lightly might he stand aside ;
 Though he reproached me, being hit,
 I should not blame myself one bit, 16010
 Although his death he thereby found,
 For no man will mine arrow wound
 Who fain would keep him safe from me,
 If he but guard him honestly.
 And whosoe'er a wound doth feel
 Delivered by my piercing steel,
 May quickly of his sore be quit
 If he but cast the hypocrite.
 And howsue'er some men profess
 Instinct to be with nobleness, 16020

Fran- Nought have I said, whereof I know,
 chise That they in any wise can show
 combats At variance with the books of old,
 Danger Or men's experience manifold;
 Or which fair reason doth condemn:
 Agree they not?—the worse for them.
 And were there found, by closest search,
 One word in slight of holy Church,
 Ready am I to make amend,
 For 'neath her rule my soul I bend. 16030

LXXXIV

Here doth the Author turn again
 Unto his tale, and tells amain
 How Dame Franchise with Danger sought
 To combat, but all vainly fought.

THEN firstly Franchise, gentle dame,
 Against dread Danger humbly came,
 Whose bearing proud and angry eye
 Outrage bespoke, and felony.
 A club he grasped within his fist,
 Which dexterously he knew to twist 16040
 And twirl, that ne'er against it shield
 Could stand, and so he knew to wield
 His weapon, that the man who dared
 Anigh it come, but evil fared,
 Unless right well he knew the way
 Of subtlest skill in battle play,
 And bold was he who dared to face
 The potence of that monstrous mace.

From out Refusal's wood was ta'en
 That club, of lovers' bar and bane. 16050
 His buckler broidered was of strife,
 With tales that vilify fair life.

The arms
 of Fran-
 chise

Franchise was so well armed that she
 Would not be vanquished easily,
 For well could she her cause defend.
 Against her foeman did she bend
 Her lance, prepared to force the gate,
 For fashioned was it fair and straight,
 And had been, as it seemed to me,
 Cut in the wood of Flattery, 16060
 From trees that grow but in Bière,
 Well steeled with courteous speech and fair.
 Her shield was supplication sweet,
 Such as 'tis rare on earth to meet,
 And all around 'twas fringed with words
 Soft as the piping of small birds,
 With promises, and hands clasped tight,
 And oaths and confidences dight,
 All painted most entrancingly.
 Gazing thereon one could but be 16070
 In heart assured that 'twas Largess
 Coloured and carved its loveliness,
 So richly was its field bedeckt.
 And Franchise, who did well protect
 Therewith her body, lightly shook
 Her spear-staff, and the monster strook
 Boldly, though he no coward were,
 But fearlessly his weapon bare
 (As Renouard of the Staff were he,
 Come back to life all suddenly), 16080

Danger's And with his club her shielding split,
 onslaught So furiously he battered it.
 And he, forsooth, such might had got,
 That arms and armour feared he not,
 But with his buckler hid his paunch
 So well, that vainly did she launch
 Her lance against it, for the stroke
 Therefrom the tempered steel-head broke.
 Then, though his harness hindered him
 A moment's space, the felon grim,
 Enraged and maddened by the blow,
 Hurl'd all his force against his foe,
 Seized on her lance with one great
 bound,
 Which fell in shards upon the ground
 Beneath his club, then loud he cried :

Danger to Franchise.

Why 'neath my arm hast thou not died,
 Thou ribald wretch, devoid of grace?
 How dar'st thou still to show thy face
 In arms against a noble knight?

The Lover.

And then her shield with all his might
 He brake, and made the damsel sweet
 Recoil before his furious feet,
 And fall upon her knees, while he
 Strikes and insults her ruthlessly.
 Nor had her life his blows withstood,
 Had been her shield mere oaken wood.

Danger to Franchise.

Vile woman, and abandoned quean,
 Most foully I deceived have been
 In days gone by, by your false tongue,
 Which hath my watchful care unstrung, 16110
 To that vile libertine the bliss
 Permitting, my sweet Rose to kiss ;
 The devil 'twas that drove me on,
 Good-natured fool, to grant the boon,
 But, by the holy body of God,
 My patient kindness you've out-trod,
 And now past doubt shall surely die.

Pity aids
 Fran-
 chise

The Author.

Then doth the helpless damsel cry
 Mercy in name of God's sweet love,
 Unable thence one step to move, 16120
 While shakes the boor his club in air,
 Rages, and by all saints doth swear
 That die she must without delay.
 Pity looks on in dire dismay
 One moment, then all unafraid
 Of Danger, runs to Franchise' aid.
 Within her hand she grasped a sword
 Of steel, yclept a misericorde,
 By way of weapon, which with tears
 She bathed, o'ercome with hopes and fears. 16130
 This sword, unless the author lie,
 Will adamant pierce readily,
 (The keenness of its point is such,)
 How slight soe'er may be the touch.
 Her shield of solacing was made,
 And round its edges were displayed

Shame re- Soft sighs, and groans, and sad complaint.
 proaches Pity, whose tears knew no restraint,
 Danger Thrust the foul caitiff through and through,
 Though fought he fierce as leopards do. 16140
 But when she had in tears immersed
 The villain and his arms accurst,
 He felt a softening of the heart,
 And trowed his spirit must depart
 O'erwhelmed within the plenteous flood.
 Ne'er yet before had hardihood
 Of words or deeds so conquered him.
 He felt strength fail and senses swim;
 Tottering and weak he fears to fall,
 And fain would flee. Then Shame doth call:

Shame.

O Danger, Danger, trusted knave, 16151
 If you, whom all account so brave,
 Should recreant prove, Fair-Welcome will
 Escape, and all our care prove nil;
 And then will he betray the Rose
 That we with such great pains enclose
 And guard, and unto villains give
 That treasure which not long will live,
 But wan and pale will fade away;
 O heed my speech or rue the day. 16160
 Boasting apart, full well I know,
 That if a certain wind should blow
 Herein, while stands the gate ajar,
 It would the Rose blooms sadly mar,
 For 'twould too much its own seed shed,
 Or else strange seed be scatterèd,

Whereby the Rose might burdened be,
 May God stay such calamity.
 And even though this grain should not
 Flourish and grow, it well I wot 16170
 May to the Rose cause suffering,
 Or e'en its death thereof may spring.
 Or if 'twere spared by cruel death,
 Yet might the wind's unruly breath
 So mix the grain in some ill hour,
 That through such burden failed the flower,
 Or that the leaves should feel the shock
 In such wise that they sway and rock,
 Till lastly falling they display
 Red buttons to the light of day ; 16180
 Which God forbid, for then 'twere said
 That ruffians had its ruin sped.
 And thus should we incur the hate
 Of Jealousy, and dread our fate
 Would be, behind death's shadow sunk ;
 The devil himself hath made you drunk.

Shame
 scolds
 Pity

The Author.

Help! help! cried Danger, help, I say!
 And thereon Shame sped straight away
 To Pity, and with menace plied
 Her soft heart, as she loudly cried : 16190

Shame.

You've lived too long, vile Pity, yield!
 Or in a trice will I your shield
 Destroy, and you quick death shall win,
 Thou fool! this combat to begin.

The Author.

Shame's A sword Shame brandished, straight and long,
valiancy Fine tempered, and exceeding strong.
 On secret stithy was the blade
 Of suffering and long vigils made,
 And she a wondrous shield had framed
 Which Fear-of-ill-renown was named ; 16200
 Of wood it was, on shoulder slung,
 And painted o'er with many a tongue.
 Pity, she struck across the head,
 Who yielded her as life were fled.
 But to her aid swift ran Desire,
 A noble knight with heart afire,
 And joined with Shame in furious strife.
 A sword he bare, called Joyous-Life,
 And did a shield called Ease employ,
 Decked out with happiness and joy. 16210
 He struck at Shame, but she his drift
 Forefended, with her shield uplift,
 And 'scaped his sword-point void of scratch.
 Then she with ready hand did catch
 Her chance, and brought her shield adown
 With murderous force against his crown,
 And might, as prone he lay beneath
 Her feet, have clove him to the teeth,
 Had God not stayed her purpose fell,
 And sent a champion hight Hide-Well. 16220

A warrior skilled and good was he,
 Yet secret and right hard to see.
 The sword he held, of peace was fain,
 Like to a tongue half cleft in twain,

And when he shook it, though anear
 One stood, he nought thereof would hear,
 For shrieked it not, nor sang on high,
 Although of wondrous potency.
 His target was Retreat-obscure
 (No bird e'er in a place more sure 16230
 Laid eggs), set round with alleys blind,
 Through which no man his way could find.
 On Shame he brought down such a stroke
 With all his force, as well-nigh broke
 Her neck, and left her all amazed.

Hide-
 well's
 promises

Hide-Well.

O Shame! he cried, with voice loud raised,
 The caitiff wretch vile Jealousy
 Nought of the deed shall ever see,
 That swear I faithfully, with hand
 Uplift, as I before you stand, 16240
 A thousand oaths thereto I swear,
 Shall that not ease your heart of care?
 And since that Evil-Tongue is slain,
 You must within my ward remain.

LXXXV

This tells how Hide-Well overcame
 In well-fought field the recreant Shame.
 And Fear and Courage in like way
 Show forth their skill in weapon-play.

HERETO could Shame scarce make reply,
 But Fear upleapt right wrathfully 16250
 (Though commonly so faint of heart),
 On whom doth Shame quick glances dart;

Courage And when Fear saw she in such state
combats Equipped, her sword, keen-edged as fate,
Fear She set her hand upon, which hight
 A Touch-of-Pride (thereof 'twas dight),
 And when it flew from out the sheath,
 More bright than beryl-stone beneath
 The new-born sun's first rays 'twas seen.
 Terror-of-Peril, as I ween, 16260
 Fear had for shield, set round with pain
 And labour; and she then would fain
 Cleave Hide-Well through, and thereby take
 Swift vengeance for her cousin's sake.
 With mighty force against his shield
 She struck, which 'neath the blow did yield,
 And tottering helplessly, he fell.
 Courage, with cry like tocsin bell,
 He called, who ran in great alarm
 Thither, for if Fear's potent arm 16270
 Had once more struck his bruised head,
 For aye had Hide-Well lain stark dead.

Courage, alike in deed and word,
 Was ever bold and true; his sword
 For gleaming brightness well beseen,
 Was with the steel of fury keen.
 Unto his shield, of glorious fame,
 Scornor-of-Death, he gave the name,
 And all around its border bright
 With Joy-in-Danger was it dight. 16280
 With madness against Fear he rushed,
 With one stroke deeming to have crushed
 Her might. But she the stroke let fall,
 Leaping aside, for knew she all

Surety
attacks
Fear

The art of fence, and then she gave
One stroke unto her foeman brave,
That stretched him supine on the field,
For suchlike blow no targe could shield.
When Courage finds him thus adown,
Fear begs he, in God's name, to crown ¹⁶²⁹⁰
Triumph with mercy. No reply
Fear makes, except—Nay, caitiff, die!

Surety speaks to Fear.

But suddenly doth Surety call,
Pardee! 'tis you, O Fear, must fall
Whate'er you do. Times past you'd dare
Less than a coward trembling hare
A hundred times; you brave are now,
And to the devil 'tis you owe
The spirit that enabled you
'Gainst Courage this bold deed to do, ¹⁶⁸⁰⁰
Who tourneying-lists frequenteth much,
And knows with skilful hand to clutch
The wasting sword, ne'er yet till now
Beneath your arm he quailed, I trow.
In every fight but this men see
You fly, or yield you readily.
'Twas thus that you in days of yore,
With thievish Cacus fled before
The club of mighty Hercules,
Then fled you as the heron flees ¹⁶³¹⁰
The falcon, for to Cacus lent
You wings, alone on safety bent,
When he the sacred heifers stole,
And hid them in his cavern hole,

Fear Dragging them thither by the tail,
victorious That thus all clue and trace might fail
 Of whither went they; then you showed
 To all the world how little glowed
 Of daring in your faint-heart breast,
 A coward base you stood confessed 16320
 Thenceforth, and since that day you
 nought
 Of knowledge in the field have bought
 Of war, except to run away
 Whene'er you see the blade-steel grey;
 Now shall you dearly suffer for
 Your rashness, venturing thus on war.

The Author.

A precious sword-blade Surety bare,
 Tempered with diligence and care;
 Her shield, hight Peace, was bordered
 round
 With good accord, and judgment sound. 16330
 At Fear she struck as fain would she
 Destroy her, but she suddenly
 Behind her shield her body hid,
 And when the sword-stroke fell, it slid
 From off the targe, and harmless lay
 Deep buried in earth's senseless clay.
 Then Fear did unto Surety deal
 A blow, that made her senses reel,
 And little lacked it of that she
 Had killed outright her enemy. 16340
 Both shield and sword from out her hands
 Are dashed—defenceless there she stands.

LXXXVI

This tells how Fear 'gainst Surety fought,
 And each the other's ruin sought,
 While many a champion interwove
 Fierce combat, and for mastery strove.

WHAT think you was by Surety done,
 When that the fight had thuswise gone,
 To give example? Fear she grasped
 By both her ears, while Fear tight clasped 16350
 Her enemy, and thus the two,
 With others, tried who best could do,
 And never yet in combat were,
 I trow, beseen an angrier pair,
 Nor e'er before in tourney fierce
 Such play was made of thrust and tierce.
 Hither and thither leapt they then,
 Till both sides summoned up their men,
 Who towards them hasting came pell mell,
 And round about the sword-strokes fell, 16360
 As thick and sharp as April hail,
 While each doth murderously assail
 His neighbour. Ne'er before that hour,
 Or since, hath been more deadly stour.
 Abhorring lies, I'm bound to say,
 That those who 'gainst the castle lay
 Their siege, had little of success,
 And Love's fair god, in deep distress,
 Seeing his warriors doomed to death
 Unto his mother, in a breath, 16370
 Sweet-Looks dispatches, with Franchise,
 Begging that she, despising ease,
 Will haste her straightway to his aid.
 But in the meantime have they made

**The fight
 renewed**

Love's A truce, which shall for eight days dure,
 truce Or more or less, by no means sure
 Am I which 'twas. Indeed, for ever
 It well might hold, should none endeavour
 To force or break it. Truth to tell,
 If only had the war gone well 16380
 With Love, he surely ne'er had made
 The armistice his plans to aid ;
 And if the guardians had supposed
 That Love was purposed and disposed
 To break the truce, they had agreed
 By no means to their foeman's need,
 Nor had they willingly excused
 The treachery wherewith Love abused
 Their confidence. They had denied 16390
 All truce, knew they that Venus tried
 To join therein, but now 'twas done,
 And articles agreed upon.
 And then the host retired somewhat,
 As doth an army which hath not
 Scattered the foe, but draws aback
 To gather force for fresh attack.

LXXXVII

This tells how messengers, by Love,
 Are sent Queen Venus' heart to move
 In such wise that she condescend
 Her help to Cupid's host to lend. 16400

STRAIGHT from the host the couriers twain
 Journey afar, till they amain
 To Cythera fair isle are come,
 And welcome find in Venus' home.

Venus
and
Adonis

Sweet Cythera is a mountain high,
Set in a plain surrounded by
A thick-grown wood, so high indeed,
That mightiest archer ne'er could speed
A shaft its battlements to reach.
Venus, who doth all women teach, 16410
Lights up this spot with sweetest grace,
Making its courts her dwelling-place.
Its joys would I describe, but fear
I might therewith but tire your ear,
And doubt I might grow weary too,
Therefore 'tis passed with brief review.

Queen Venus to the woods was gone
A hunting, but not all alone,
For with her bright Adonis went,
On whom her fondest love was spent. 16420
Almost a boy was he in years,
But huntsman good, untamed by fears,
A comely well-beseeming youth,
Just ripening into man, forsooth.

The hour of noon was overpast
And Venus, wearied, down had cast
Herself beside him on the grass,
Where shadowed by an aspen 'twas,
Near to a bubbling, laughing pool,
Whence panting hounds lapped waters cool. 16430
Their quivers, and their bows unstrung,
Amid the leaves above them hung,
And filled with joy in peace they heard
The carol sweet of many a bird,

Venus Perched in the branches overhead.
 counsels And then, by amorous longing led,
 Adonis Venus her dear companion pressed
 With glowing kisses to her breast,
 And taught him how to hunt the wood
 In suchwise as to her seemed good. 1644

LXXXVIII

Venus, possessed with boding fear,
 Doth counsel her Adonis dear,
 That he in nowise should pursue
 Fierce beasts, lest she his death may rue.

Venus counsels Adonis.

DEAR friend, when you with pack unlesht
 Arouse some noble woodland beast,
 Which hath nor wit nor will to fight,
 But forthwith takes to hasty flight,
 Pursue it well and hardily ;
 But if some quarries fierce there be, 16450
 Who tusks or horns against you turn,
 Engage you not in combat stern
 And perilous, but show you slack
 Towards all that fear not thy attack,
 For 'gainst rude beasts of savage strain
 Full oft is desperate courage vain,
 And mortal proves the combat when
 At bay they pit them against men.
 Roebuck and goats, young stags and hinds,
 And harmless game of lesser kinds, 16460
 Are such as I would have you chase,
 With blithesome heart and gladsome face.

But wild boars, dight with deadly tooth,
 Bears, wolves, and lions, void of ruth,
 Pursue not—I forbid it you,
 For they defend themselves and strew
 The dogs around them, maimed or dead,
 And many a hunter bold hath bled
 'Neath their attack, and rued the day
 He sought to make such foes his prey. 16470
 O list my ardent prayer, for I
 Were rest of light if you should die.

Adonis
 heeds not

Thus lovingly doth Venus scold
 Adonis, praying him to hold
 Fast fixed in memory all she saith,
 Lest in the woodland find he death.
 Adonis but a careless ear
 Afforded to his leman dear ;
 Whether or true or false might be
 Her words, while seeming to agree, 16480
 He heeded them no single straw.
 In vain she strives 'neath love's sweet law
 To bring his will—he heeds her not,
 Nor for her warning cares one jot.
 He for his scorn did dearly pay
 With life, when Venus was away,
 Too far to lend him timely aid,
 And long 'twas ere her tears were stayed.

One day he chased a furious boar,
 The which he deemed to triumph o'er 16490
 And carve on board, but out, alas !
 Nor killed, nor carved by him it was,

Heed For in his rage, the angry beast
 Love's Turned on the hunter, and ne'er ceased
 warnings His fury till his tusks had rent
 Adonis' thigh, whose life was shent.

Fair sirs, what thing soe'er may be,
 From this example learn may ye,
 That those who sweethearts' words despise
 Approve themselves aught else but wise, . 16500
 For well behoveth it, their rede
 As words of Holy Writ to heed.
 Swear they that love for you they foster?
 Believe them like the paternoster.
 To credit them ne'er hesitate,
 But to dame Reason show the gate.
 Nay, though an oath on crucifix
 She sware to you—despise her tricks—
 For had Adonis but believed
 His love, much longer had he lived. 16510

When they together, little coy,
 Had spent long hours in loving joy,
 To Cythera once more they made
 Their way. Then ere yet rearrayed
 Was Venus, forth the heralds tell
 From point to end how all befell.

Cried Venus: Ne'er shall Jealousy
 A castle keep 'gainst Love and me,
 The guardians will I burn with fire,
 Unless both keys and fort entire 16520
 They yield, or soon my torch and bow
 Will men account mere sticks, I trow.

LXXXIX

How eight young doves the glorious car
 Of Venus bore to where afar
 Her son's great hosting was arrayed,
 And how she brought him speedy aid.

THEN Venus bade her suite with care
 Her chariot, golden wrought, prepare,
 For ne'er with miry ways she deals.
 But her bright car, whose glittering wheels 16530
 Are set with fairest orient pearls,
 A train of doves through ether whirls.
 From out her dove-cot chosen are they,
 Pink-footed, but of plumage grey.
 In twink of eye the car is dight,
 And Venus setteth forth to fight
 Her battle against Chastity.
 The well-trained birds one moment try
 Their wings, and then the air they beat
 Untiringly, till rest their feet 16540
 Where lies the host. Venus descends
 From out her chariot, and straight wends
 Her son to meet her, who that day
 The late-made truce had cast away,
 For Love soon proved that little loth
 Was he to break his faith and troth.

**Love
 breaks
 the truce**

XC

The host, with will the fort to take,
 Against it fierce assault doth make,
 Yet hath the god but small success,
 Though fight his troops with hardiness, 16550
 For those within resistance stout
 Make to assailants from without.

The fort attacked **T**HEN the two hosts their fury spend,
 Attacking these, while those defend.
 Labours the mighty mangonel,
 Casting great rocks, with purpose fell,
 Against the walls, whose guardians make
 Stout wattled palisades, to break
 The force thereof, with limber wood
 From Danger's thickets deftly hewed. 16560
 Against them the besiegers send
 Great flights of keen-barbed arrows, penned
 With earnest vows and giftings fair,
 Which hope they in the end will bear
 Good recompense, for every shaft
 Hath graven on its polished haft
 Fair promises, and each steel head
 Is with strong oath or vow bestead.
 But well the guardians know the charge
 To parry, covering each with targe 16570
 His body, which might well resist
 The deadliest shaft that ever hissed
 In air, for made were they of wood
 From Danger's forests, gnarled and good—
 'Gainst them were keenest arrows vain.

As thus the combat goes amain,

Cupid towards his mother flies,
 Declares his perilous state, and cries
 On her for help to break the wall.

The
 vow of
 Venus

Venus.

Exclaims she: May foul death befall 16580
 The very heart and soul of me
 If I, despite of Jealousy,
 Permit that of a woman's heart
 Cold Chastity claim chiefest part,
 Too oft she brings me pain and care.
 Fair son, see thou that all men swear
 Within your pleasant paths to tread.

The God of Love.

Right willingly, God Cupid said;
 No living man shall be acclaimed
 For noble, or as gentle named 16590
 Who loveth not, or hath not been
 By damsel's loving eyes beseen.
 What grief! to know some mortals live
 Who shun the joys 'tis mine to give;
 Casting my dear delights away,
 But they therefor shall smartly pay!
 All those I hate, who love me not,
 And dark and drear will make their lot.
 Of such men will I far and wide
 Complain, nor my displeasure hide 16600
 Or cloak, but will in many a mode
 Lay on their backs some grievous load

Love's Until I have my vengeance spent,
joys And they avow them penitent,
 Or sink beneath my hate and scorn.
 A curse on those of Adam born
 Who dare to cross my sovereign will,
 Their very life-blood will I spill,
 Should they reject my dear delight !
 Yea, should some show me such despise 16610
 As fell me to the earth with blows,
 They'd do me no more hurt than
 those.

I am not mortal, mother mine,
 But if it were so, I opine
 That 'neath such misery soon should I
 Wither and perish utterly.
 For if my pleasures men gave o'er
 To me were left then nothing more
 Saving my body and attire,
 My bow and chaplet ; all the fire 16620
 Of love extinct, then were men's power
 Of joyance dead, woe worth the hour !
 For counting me of none avail
 They must beneath life's burden fail ;
 For where could mortal happier be
 Than wrapt in fond arms lovingly ?

The Author.

Straightway that oath, the host all swore,
 And, that it might be made more
 sure,
 In place of relics brought they rows
 Of quivers, arrows, pikes and bows, 16630

And all Love's implements of war,
And cried :

The
barons'
oath

The Barons of the host with one voice.

Are these not better far
Than relics? Upon them will we
Make oath and pledge most solemnly ;
If on such things false oaths we sware
Our credit lost for ever were.

The Author.

They swore on these, and nought beside,
For therein did their hearts confide,
And true their oath was, as might be
Sworn on the Holy Trinity.

16640

XCI

How Nature's stithy doth supply
Earth's sons and daughters constantly,
For fear the race of men were spent,
If thereof proved she negligent.

AND while the barons rent the air
With shouts, as this great oath they sware,
Nature, who tendeth everything
That lives 'neath heaven's blue sheltering,
Into her workshop entered straight,
Where swinketh she both rathe and late,
To forge such pieces as may be
Used for the continuity

16650

Nature's Of life ; for she doth mould things so
 method That ne'er shall any species know
 The power of death, but as one dies
 Forthwith another may arise
 To fill his place. In vain doth death
 With hurrying footsteps spend his breath ;
 So closely Nature followeth him,
 That if some few are by his grim 16660
 And massive club destroyed who are
 His due, (for some of them no bar
 Oppose to him, but readily
 Give welcome wheresoe'er they be,
 Wasting themselves in common course,
 While others through their waste gain
 force)
 When he perchance doth fondly think
 That one and all his cup must drink,
 He is deceived, for though he catch
 One here, another there doth hatch, 16670
 This one he taketh on the right,
 But on the left a new one's dight.
 If Death perchance the father kill,
 Mother, or son, or daughter still
 Remain, though they the father dead
 Have seen, and when their day is sped,
 They too must fall beneath death's power,
 Nought stays the inevitable hour ;
 Nor subtlest leechdom, vow, nor prayer.
 Nephews and nieces straightway fare 16680
 Afar, with hurrying feet, upbuoyed
 With hope they may dread death avoid.
 One doth him to the dance betake,
 Another doth the minster make

His refuge, and a third the school,
 While a fourth bends him 'neath the rule
 Of merchandise, or arts, which he
 Perchance had studied formerly.
 And some will chase off care with fine
 Luxurious meats and luscious wine, 16690
 While others with desire to fly
 From death or moveless destiny,
 You may on prancing steeds behold,
 Their stirrups bright with glistening gold ;
 Thinking that thus they may escape
 More speedily Death's grisly shape.
 Another on frail planks doth set
 His hope, and trusts thereby to get
 O'er sea, if so the stars avail
 To guide his boat and help him sail 16700
 Afar from death. Another tries
 By base hypocrisy and lies
 'Neath guise of prayer to give the slip
 To death when he his foot would trip ;
 Though of a truth must all men know
 His life by what his actions show,
 And thus it is that all men try
 Vainly the grip of Death to fly.

None
 escape
 Death

But he, with hideous blackened face,
 To all these fugitives gives chase, 10
 Until he treadeth on their heels,
 And each in turn his weapon feels
 At ten years, twenty, or two score,
 Or may be double that or more,
 Nay, some to four score years and ten
 Escape, or five score, but all men

The
Phoenix

His foot doth overtake at last,
 And though it seem as though he passed
 Some few, he turneth him again
 To strike them down ; futile and vain 16720
 Is leechcraft in the end, each one
 He catcheth when his course is run.
 Nay, even the great physicians he
 Doth seize, how skilled soe'er they be.
 Hippocrates and Galen eke,
 Though strong of wit, 'gainst death were weak.
 Constantine, Razis, Avicene,
 All bowed 'neath his strong rule, I ween,
 For far though men may run, Death will
 With tireless foot run further still, 16730
 For he, whom nought can satisfy,
 Will as voracious glutton try
 All to devour, and therefore he
 Pursues them over land and sea.
 Yet howsoever much he strive,
 He ne'er all living things can drive
 At once within his net, nor shape
 His snares so well that none escape.
 For if but only one remain,
 That one will soon bring forth again ; 16740
 And this we through the Phoenix know,
 Which, though but one, anew doth grow
 Unerringly.

On all the earth
 One Phoenix only comes to birth
 In five-and-twenty score of years ;
 And when the wondrous creature nears
 Its end, it builds a funeral pyre
 Of spices sweet, then setteth fire

Thereto, and burns itself to dust,
 In such wise, as 'twould seem it must 16750
 Perish, but straight doth it arise
 From out its ashes and bright skies
 Seeketh once more, and so 'tis done
 By God's behest, that soon as one
 Is dead, forthwith Dame Nature straight
 To fill its place doth one create
 Unceasingly, for did she not
 The species must be sped, I wot,
 And so 'twould come about, I ween,
 No Phoenix in the world were seen. 16760
 But as 'tis, though a thousand died,
 Nature another doth provide.
 And in likewise doth everything
 That dies, through Nature once more
 spring
 To life anew. Beneath the moon
 Whatever fails shall late or soon
 Revive if only one remain
 From whence the race new life may gain,
 For Nature, pitiful and good,
 Abhors and hates Death's envious mood, 16770
 Who ruthlessly would mar and break
 The fairest thing her skill doth make,
 And seeing nought more fair can be,
 Her own form ever stampeth she
 On all her works, as men who mint
 New coins, put on them their imprint,
 And form and colour give to each;
 And thereto striveth Art to reach
 In copying Nature's models, though
 Such perfect work no man can show. 16780

Nature
 abhors
 death

Art inferior to Nature
 Art, falling on his knees before
 Dame Nature humbly doth implore,
 Beseech, and earnestly require
 In suppliant form, that she inspire
 His heart, if but in small degree,
 How he may copy carefully
 Her handiwork, and reproduce
 Its form, for ornament or use,
 Acknowledging inferior far
 His works to be than Nature's are. 16790
 Each method Art doth closely watch
 And painfully essay to catch
 Of Nature's working, as an ape
 His doings upon man's doth shape;
 But vainly, vainly, Art may try
 To come near Nature's mastery.
 To nought that through man's hand doth
 live
 Can he her touch supernal give.
 For Art, though he no labour shirk
 To imitate great Nature's work, 16800
 And set his hand to every kind
 Of thing he may around him find,
 Of whatsoever sort it be,
 Painting and decking curiously
 (And none of all the arts men leave
 Untried, but paint, dye, carve and weave)
 Armed warriors on their coursers dight,
 Adorned and trapped in colours bright,
 Purple and yellow, green and blue,
 And many another varied hue; 16810
 Fair birds that pipe 'mid branches green,
 And fish in crystal waters seen,

And all the wilding beasts that roam
 In forest haunts, their native home ;
 And flowers and herbs in sunny glades,
 Which merry youths and gladsome maids
 Go forth in pleasant days of spring
 To gather in their wandering :
 Tame birds, and beasts all unafraid,
 And games and dances 'neath the shade, 16820
 And noble dames in vesture fair,
 In metal, wax, or wood with care
 Portrayed, as they in life might stand,
 And lovers clasping hand with hand :
 But ne'er on panel, cloth, or wall,
 Can subtlest art, whate'er befall,
 Make Nature's figures live and move,
 Or speak, or feel joy, grief, or love.

Of Al-
chemy

Or if of alchemy Art learn
 So much that he can metals turn 16830
 To varying colours, ne'er can he
 Work them that they transmuted be,
 Unless he by his skill may lead
 Them back to that whence they proceed,
 Nor working deftly till he die
 Can pierce the subtle mystery
 Of Nature. Nay, that he attain
 The knowledge to transmute again
 Metals to primary estate
 'Twere needful first to calculate 16840
 Their qualities of tempering
 If he would his elixir bring
 To issue good, and thence produce
 Pure metal for his later use.

Nature's But those who wot it best agree
 mysteries How great an art is alchemy,
 And whoso gives thereto his mind
 In study wondrous things shall find ;
 For as in every species we
 Find parts which taken separately 16850
 Are isolated, yet compose
 One body when these join with those,
 And this with that doth ever change
 Throughout all Nature's varying range,
 And in such fashion they revolve
 Till that doth into this resolve
 Its nature, and they reappear
 In different guise to what they were,
 Ere purged and tried.

Behold we not
 What different form the fern hath got 16860
 When 'tis by fire to ash reduced,
 And straightway thence clear glass produced
 By depuration, as we learn ?
 And yet we know glass is not fern,
 And none would say that fern is glass.
 And when we note the lightning pass
 Which thunder brings, why do we see
 Stones from the clouds fall presently
 Which are not formed of stone at all ?
 Would we know this we needs must call 16870
 On learned men, for they alone
 Can say why vapours turn to stone,
 And how 'tis things so wide apart
 Are changed by Nature or man's art.
 And so may men change metals who
 Know with their substance what to do,

Al-
chemical
science

Drawing the dross apart from gold
Till nothing base the metals hold,
And brought together then shall be
Pure metals by affinity. 16880

Fine gold is of its special kind,
However Nature hath combined
Aught else therewith in divers ways
Which 'neath its mother's bosom stays
Entombed, till 'tis, when time hath worn
Of sulphur and quicksilver born,
For so by learned books we're taught.
Thence men have knowledge duly sought,
And whosoe'er thereby hath found
The means these spirits to compound, 16890

And cause them so to mix and lie
That they no more apart can fly,
But in one mass with welding sure
Together come, purged clear and pure,
And force the sulphur to lie dead,
Coloured at will, or white or red,
That man shall have, who worketh so,
All metals 'neath his power, I trow.
And thus of quicksilver, fine gold
Those make who perfect knowledge hold 16900
Of alchemy, and colour add
And weight, through things that may be had
At little cost, and precious stones
From gold men make, whose worth atones
For all the labour.

In likewise

Men may with subtle art devise
How to pure silver may be turned
All baser metals, when they've learned

Nature's By means of drugs, strong, clear, and fine,
 distress To bring to end this art divine. 16910
 But this alone is for the ken
 Of learned and right worthy men,
 Who labour hard, nor seek to shirk
 The perfecting of Nature's work.
 Quacks and impostors strive in vain,
 To them her marvels sealed remain.

Then busy Nature, whose desire
 Is ever to keep bright the fire
 Of life in all her works, raised high
 Her voice and wept so plaintively, 16920
 That not a piteous heart and tender
 Beats but would fain its tribute render
 To her deep grief, the which so keen
 And deep was for one fault I ween,
 That prompting strong, she felt to shirk
 Her duties and forego her work,
 But that she greatly feared offence
 To give her lord by indolence.
 It little needs to seek what thing
 Upon her heart such suffering 16930
 And misery brought. Gladly would I
 Apply myself ententively
 All Nature to describe to you
 Deemed I my wit sufficed thereto.
 My wit! alas! what have I said?
 For none of those wise men, long dead,
 Great Aristotle or Plato,
 Who knew far more than most men know,
 Either by written word or speech,
 Could unto that great secret reach; 16940

Albus, or Ptolemy, or Euclid,
 From whom scarce anything was hid,
 In vain might exercise their wit,
 Therefrom would grow small benefit,
 Though they should boldly undertake
 Research profound and long to make.
 Nay, e'en Pygmalion might essay
 In vain her fairness to portray;
 Parrhasius and Apelles eke,
 Great masters both, might vainly seek
 Her wondrous beauties to express,
 And show forth all her loveliness;
 Nor Polycletus nor Myron
 Her faultless form by art have shown.

XCII

How Zeuxis, famed of old, did try
 To paint fair Nature perfectly;
 And on his glorious task intent
 Great care and labour freely spent.

ZEUXIS, the painter, strove in vain,
 That he might Nature's skill attain,
 Who one time did for models take
 Five virgins, who for beauty's sake
 Had all comparison defied,
 (Although their equals far and wide
 Were sought, who for perfection rare
 Of body might with them compare,)
 When would he for the temple paint
 A picture that might scorn complaint

Nature Or question, and before him stood
 beyond The five all unadorned and nude 16970
 imitation As Venus' self, that he in them
 Might seek to spy defect or wem,
 Whether of body, limbs, or skin,
 And signally he failed therein,
 As all may read in Tully's book
 Of rhetoric, who care to look
 Within its pages. Zeuxis nought
 Could equal these whenso he sought,
 Though in the art of painting he 16980
 To no man ever bowed the knee,
 So deft is Nature's subtle skill,
 Who doth the earth with fairness fill.
 Zeuxis, nor any other who
 Hath e'er been born could reach
 thereto,
 How well soe'er they understood
 All Nature's loveliness, and would
 Employ their hands to imitate
 Her works—thereof enamorate.
 For God alone it is who can
 Such glories work, not puny man. 16990
 Most gladly would I, dared I hope,
 Such matters stood within my scope,
 Describe all Nature unto you,
 But power of words would lack thereto,
 Though to that task, surhuman I,
 Addressed my spirit earnestly
 A hundred times: nay, nay, far more
 Than I shall e'er gain credit for;
 Presumption were it most extreme
 That I should ever dare to dream 17000

That such a mighty work could be
 Achieved by my capacity.
 Far better were it I had died
 Than venture to indulge such pride
 As think that I could comprehend,
 For all the pains I might expend,
 Fair Nature's glorious paradise—
 Beyond all words—past thought of price ;
 Nor though aloft my thoughts had flown,
 That I should dare to write thereon ; 17010
 No—in my spirit so am I
 Abashed, that fear my tongue doth tie,
 And so doth shame my being steep,
 That silence it behoves me keep ;
 For e'en as more and more I think
 Of Nature's loveliness, I shrink
 From lauding, in my faltering phrase,
 Her perfect works and wondrous ways.

Nature
 surpasses
 all
 thought

When God, whose glory is above
 All measurement, in bounteous love 17020
 Created Nature, he did make
 Of her a fountain (whence should break
 Unceasingly a thousand rills)
 Of beauty, which the whole world fills.
 This fount wells ever and cannot
 By time be wasted as I wot,
 More high than heaven, and than the sea
 More deep, 'tis called immensity.
 How then describe that body or
 That countenance, that hath far more 17030
 Of beauty than the fleur-de-lis,
 Which we new blown in May-tide see ?

Nature's
repent-
ance

The rose is not more red, more white
No snow which clads the mountain height,
But 'tis a folly to compare
That which beyond all thought is fair,
And Nature's beauty doth o'ergero
All that man's heart or mind can know.

When Nature heard the Barons swear
Their solemn oath, it brought to her
Great solace for the woe that weighed
Her heart down, yet scarce unafraid
She cried :

17040

Nature.

Alas! what have I done?

On me returns, unhappy one!
The memory of a fault that I
Committed in days long gone by
When first this beauteous world was made,
And justly had by penance paid
Therefor, since fain am I to win
Pardon for my unwitting sin.

17050

Alas! how many a thousand time
Must I repent me of my crime!
How have I then my pains employed?
Am I of wit so far devoid,
That I who thought my friends to serve,
And thence their praise and thanks
deserve,

Must yet acknowledge in the end
That 'tis my foes whom I befriend?
My kindness brings me but distress.

The Author.

Then to her priest doth she confess, 17060 Nature's
 Who in her chapel hastes to say confes-
 The mass, although in no new way, sion
 For alway had he service due
 Performed, since he was priest thereto.
 Boldly, in place of other mass,
 The priest, whose knowledge doth surpass
 All others, called before the queen
 Each creature that hath ever been
 Born in this mortal world, then writ
 Within his book whate'er of it 17070
 Great Nature unto him revealed,
 Which else had been a mystery sealed.

XCIII

This tells how Nature, Goddess sweet,
 Knelt low at her confessor's feet ;
 Who gently bid her calm her fears,
 Comfort her heart, and dry her tears.

GENIUS, quoth she, my gentle priest,
 Master o'er greatest as o'er least
 Of all created things, and who
 Directs and charges them to do 17080
 Such works as are to them assigned,
 Each one according to his kind,
 Now do I feel remorse oppress
 My spirit, and would fain confess
 A folly that my heart hath riven,
 And yet remaineth unforgiven.

Genius.

Grief avails not Queen of the world, quick answered he,
 Before whose face all bow the knee,
 If aught doth rob your heart of peace,
 Whereof you fain would find release, 17090
 I pray you put full trust in me.
 What thing soe'er the matter be,
 Of brightest joy, or darkest grief,
 You may from me gain full relief;
 Confess to me whate'er you will
 And your desire will I fulfil,
 And all within my province do
 To help, to guide, to succour you,
 The while I keep your counsel hid,
 Fast locked, if secrecy you bid. 17100
 And should you absolution ask,
 To grant it were my grateful task,
 But first, from tears your eyelids keep.

Nature.

Alas! quoth she, if now I weep,
 Good Genius, that small marvel is.

Genius.

Before all else I counsel this,
 Dear mistress, that you dry your tears,
 Then if your heart confession cheers,
 Tell me at full whatever thing
 It is that doth thy spirit wring. 17110

Virgil and
Solomon

Great must your grief be, as I trow,
 For noble hearts will ne'er allow
 Slight woes to wear them, vile must be
 The wretch who works you misery.
 But oft a woman's heart will fire
 For smallest cause with bitterest ire.

To Virgil I the case refer,
 Who well knew woman's character.
 A woman's heart is nowise stable,
 Saith he, but ever variable, 17120
 Capricious, and by anger led.

And Solomon declares her head
 Is than an angry serpent's worse,
 Which merited God's primal curse.
 Nought else, saith he, is so with spite
 Possessed, and ne'er hath man aright
 Described in rathe, or later time
 Her evil ways in prose or rhyme.
 And Titus Livius, (who well knew
 The modes and manners through and
 through 17180

Of women, and their minds perverse,)
 In language vigorous and terse
 Declares, he best succeeds who tries
 To warp their minds with japes and lies;
 So foolish are they and unstable,
 That truth they hate, but cling to fable.
 And in the Holy Scripture we
 This judgment plainly writ may see:
 That at the bottom of all vice
 In women is foul avarice. 17140

Value of The man who trusteth to his wife
silence His secrets, risks both fame and life,
 For never man of woman born,
 But sot, or one of wit forlorn,
 Would to a woman e'er reveal
 A thing 'twere prudent to conceal,
 Lest he should hear it back again.
 Much better had one flee to Spain
 Than trust unto a woman's care
 A secret, e'en though debonair 17150
 And loyal she be. Nor any act
 That best were hid, if he have tact,
 Will any man perform and do
 In woman's presence, or he'll rue.
 For though it peril his estate
 Or life, she will or soon or late,
 However long she may delay,
 His secret counselling betray
 And tell, though no one should demand
 Or seek the matter at her hand. 17160
 Nought can a woman's silence buy,
 For surely she'd expect to die
 If she her tongue should curb, yea though
 She knew great peril thence must grow.
 And whoso tells some deadly thing
 To any woman, soon will bring
 Vengeance upon him if he dare
 His hand lift in chastising her
 Once only, soon as e'er the blow
 She feels, she'll let the whole world
 know 1717
 His secret, and loud-voiced proclaim
 Her knowledge, though it blast his name.

The man who trusts a woman's lost,
 Peace of his life will be the cost.
 Know you what such an one doth do?
 He binds his arms, and shutteth to
 His mouth, for if he dare to scold
 Her foolish ways, or maketh bold
 To raise his arm in chastisement
 'Gainst her but once, forthwith were spent 17180
 Her fury on him, and if he
 Deserveth death, straightway will she
 Unto the handling of the grim
 Relentless judge deliver him,
 Or through assassin's hand will bring
 His death to pass, by blade or string.

Trust not
 women

XCIV

Herein much labour have I spent
 With honest purpose and intent,
 Of showing forth to every man
 How to defend him from the ban 17190
 Of taking such a mate as may
 His goods despoil and life betray.

BUT if some fool repose his head,
 Pillowed beside his wife in bed,
 Where scarce he dares to hope for sleep,
 Since of some crime he fears to reap
 Ill consequence or death if he
 By evil chance betrayed should be,
 And therefore wallows, turns, and sighs,
 In vain attempt to close his eyes, 17200

The wheedling wife With fawning voice towards him turns
 His wife, who for his secret yearns,
 Nurses his head betwixt her breasts,

The wife speaks to her husband.

And saith: Your restlessness attests
 Dear man, some grief; what makes you sigh
 And toss about uneasily?
 May we not feel, as lie we here,
 Secure from dread or irksome fear?
 Of all the world, the special twain
 'Twixt whom sweet confidence should reign 17210
 We well may be with reason reckoned,
 You as the first, and I the second:
 No pair of hearts than ours could be
 Together knit more lovingly;
 My hands have made secure the door,
 Thick are walls, and stout the floor,
 The rafter beams are set on high
 And through the windows none can spy,
 Seeing that we well hidden are
 Therefrom, and with strong shutter bar 17220
 They're fastened that could nowise stray
 Our secret thence, whate'er we say.
 Nay here, unless with warning noise
 Some rash rude hand the door destroys,
 We're sure and safe from all unkind
 Disturbance, save of boisterous wind.
 Briefly, you need in nowise fear
 That any living soul can hear
 Your voice except myself, and I
 Therefore implore you piteously 17230

By all our love, amain you tell
Your wife what drags your soul to hell.

A wife's
plea

The Husband.

Fore God! the thing that doth oppress
My mind, quoth he, with heaviness,
Had better far be left unsaid.

The Wife.

Alas! dear husband, are you wed
To one whose counsel you reject
As of disloyalty suspect?
When we in holy wedlock came
Together in the precious name ¹⁷²⁴⁰
Of Jesu Christ he was to us
Of his sweet grace so generous,
That closed within the sacred mesh
Of marriage are we but one flesh:
And seen that thus one flesh are we
By every right we ought to be
In no one single thing apart
But have betwixt the twain one heart.
My heart is yours, by that same sign
Your heart should be all wholly mine, ¹⁷²⁵⁰
Nor should its inmost chambers hold
A secret thought or wish untold
To her who loves you. Therefore say
To me, whate'er of grief, I pray,
Afflicts you, free from all deceit,
For till your heart with mine doth beat

Where-fore mis-trust
 T will know no peace. If you refuse,
 Alas! 'twill then be clear I lose
 Your confidence, but well I know
 What tender love for me doth flow 17260
 Through all your being when I hear
 You say, 'Sweet love' and 'Sister dear.'
 And 'gainst whom is it that you guard
 This chestnut, kept with watch and
 ward?
 For if you hide from me your grief
 'T would seem as though a traitor thief
 You but esteem me—I, who ne'er
 From that first day 'twas mine to share
 Your name, concealed, whate'er betid,
 The secret thought my bosom hid, 17270
 But leaving father dear, and mother,
 Uncles and cousins, sister, brother,
 On you alone do I depend
 My one relation, love, and friend.
 Forsooth, a sad exchange I've made
 If you should show yourself afraid
 To trust me, though I ne'ertheless
 Love you with fondest tenderness.
 But no more than a garden leek
 Can you esteem me, if you seek 17280
 This trouble from me to withhold,
 Possessed with fear lest it be told
 Abroad. By Christ, our Lord in heaven!
 Into whose hands could it be given
 So safely? Think the matter out,
 And if my loyalty you doubt,
 My body's in your power to do
 Therewith whatever pleaseth you,

And if that pledge sufficeth not,
 What more you'd have I fain would wot. 17290
 Would you assign me place below
 My women friends around, who know
 Their husbands' secrets? Other men
 Speak freely to their spouses when
 In bed o' nights with them they lie,
 Telling them all their privy
 As openly, to say the least,
 As though they shrived them with their priest.
 All this I know for gospel truth
 Since I from their own mouths, forsooth, 17300
 Have learned things many a time when fain
 Were they, in confidential strain,
 To tell when all alone we've been
 The secrets they have heard and seen.
 But you would do me grievous wrong
 Should you suppose that I belong
 To women of such sort, for I
 Ne'er blab or speak unseasonably.
 So am I of my body too,
 Fore God and man, fair-lived and true. 17310
 You never heard that any one
 With me adultery had done,
 Or if some one with ill intent
 Said so—a lie did he invent.
 Have you not often proved me well?
 And can you aught against me tell?

Wed-
lock's
oath

Remember you, fair sir, I pray,
 The oath that on our wedding-day
 You pledged to me? The offering
 You then made of a wedding-ring 17320

Secresy I now look back on with surprise,
 promised Knowing your vows for barefaced lies.
 If you to trust my faith are loth,
 Why sware you then that spousal troth?
 I charge you by that oath to say
 What thing it is you hide away
 In secret from me. Let me know
 This once what palls your spirit so,
 And by St. Peter it shall sleep
 With me as safely as if deep 17330
 'Twere buried 'neath a pile of stone.
 I should but for a fool be known
 If out my lips a single word
 Were to your hurt or damage heard;
 Moreover, 'twould my lineage shame,
 Whereof I'm proud to guard the fame,
 And cast on me disgrace so great
 That death I'd count a worthier fate.
 A saying is there, just and true,
 That whoso cuts his nose atwo 17340
 For ever after shames his face:
 If faith in God still find a place
 Within your heart, confide to me
 Your grief, or you my death will be.

Genius.

Then with her head and breast laid bare
 No amorous dalliance doth she spare,
 Nor pleadings of false tears she misses,
 With treacherous smiles and Judas kisses.

XCV

The husband lets the cord around
 His neck be by his folly bound, 17350
 Telling his secret to his wife—
 Her soul she loses—he his life.

THEN doth the fool to her relate
 His secret, and thereby his fate
 Is sealed—in peril is his head,
 His words repents he, scarcely said,
 But once a word has taken wing,
 'Tis lost past chance of cancelling.
 Forthwith he prays his wife that she
 Will keep her tongue most rigidly, 17360
 For thrice more anxious is he now
 Than when thereof she nought did trow,
 Although most solemnly she swears
 That safely she his secret shares.
 The idiot! What could he expect?
 By silence failed he to protect
 Himself, and now would he restrain
 His wife! Oh foolish hope, and vain!
 Now hath the dame the upper hand,
 Assured no more will he withstand 17370
 Her thousand whims, or dare to scold,
 For hers 'tis now the whip to hold,
 And meekly may he still his tongue,
 For o'er his reign the knell is rung.
 'Tis possible that she may keep
 Silence awhile, nor seek to reap
 Advantage till some feud arise
 Betwixt them, which her temper tries

The
 husband
 blabs

Beware Too sorely, but, so doing, she
of women Will struggle most unwillingly
Against the promptings of her heart,
Which burns with longing to impart
The tale.

17380

Now whoso wisheth good
To men will tell this all abroad,
For well 'twould be if far and wide
'Twere known, to serve as signal-guide
Against great peril. 'Twill displease
Women who love to spite and tease
Their husbands, but sound truth should not
Be pared or pruned one single jot.

17390

Fair sirs, of womankind beware ;
If you for soul or body care,
Speak not, nor act you in such wise
As layeth bare to woman's eyes
The things your hearts hold secretly.
Fly ! fly ! I bid you, fly ! fly ! fly !
Fly womankind, if you would live
In safety. I this counsel give,
Free of all afterthought and guile ;
But note you Virgil's words the while,
Which to your hearts 'twere well to take
And plant them there for safety's sake.
Children, who fragrant flowrets cull,
And rosy-ripe sweet strawberries pull,
Keep ever in your memories
That 'neath their leaves the serpent lies.
Flee then, O children, lest he sting
On you the poison of his sting,
When come ye nigh his lair.

17400

Woman's
value

And so,
 Young folk, as through the world ye go 17410
 Agathering fruits and flowrets sweet,
 Beware the serpent 'neath your feet,
 Which lurketh venomous and cold,
 An adder which doth venom hold
 Until fit moment she perceives
 To spit it forth from 'twixt the leaves,
 Harming and wounding mortally ;
 Fly from her, children, haste to fly.
 For such vile venom bears the beast,
 That if with head or tail the least 17420
 Of touches she your body gives,
 'Tis death, for poison in her lives,
 And those who once that virus feel,
 No leech can save, no art can heal ;
 In vain for remedy he yearns
 Within whose veins the venom burns,
 One medicine alone hath might
 To heal the wound—'tis instant flight.

But think you not from what I say
 Hereof, I'd have you cast away 17430
 All women's love, nor be you led
 To think no man I'd have to wed,
 Or woman's company enjoy.
 Nay, I exhort you be not coy,
 Fair dames and damosels to prize,
 But trick them forth in braveries
 From head to foot, and give them fair
 And courteous greeting wheresoe'er
 They cross your life-path, if you would
 The ravages of death make good ; 17440

House- For 'tis through them that lineage
wifery Is carried on from age to age.
 But nowise let it so betide
 They secrets learn 'twere well to hide.
 Permit it that they go and come,
 And busy them with house and home,
 And that with care they buy and sell,
 Suffer them all the tale to tell
 Of stock and store, as it may be,
 Of household stuff and husbandry. 17450
 Or, if some useful trade they know,
 Fail not to set them thereunto.
 But let them nothing wot or see
 Of things demanding secrecy.
 For, if in some unguarded hour
 You put you 'neath a woman's power,
 Most bitterly will you repent
 Your folly ere the day be spent.
 In Holy Scripture is it said,
 That when the wife becomes the head, 17460
 Against her husband will she run
 Whate'er by him be said or done.
 But, watch you well from day to day,
 Your house falls not in evil way,
 'Neath trustiest guard oft faileth pelf,
 The wise man guards his goods himself.

And you who hold your lemans dear,
 Show you towards them gracious cheer,
 And suffer them to have some hand
 In common cares they understand. 17470
 But if you prudent are and wise,
 When 'twixt your arms your minion lies,

And clips you close with fondling kiss,
 Silence your one great safeguard is,
 (Then is the time to keep your tongue,
 For nought of good, and much of wrong
 Betides of secrets then made known,)
 Or soon you'll find your sweetling grown
 Proud and imperious, prone to grasp
 At power, and venomous as an asp. 17480
 But when a fool is in such case,
 And feels sweet kisses on his face
 And lips, and whiles the time away
 With gestings soft and amorous play,
 He nought doth know to keep and hide
 His secrets, but throws open wide
 His heart. Fond, foolish husbands oft
 Let slip their tongues for clippings soft,
 And thereof follows many an ill
 Which well life's cup with dole may fill. 17490

Samson
 and
 Dalila

Dalila with deceitful smile
 And venomed kisses did beguile
 The mighty Samson, warrior great,
 In her false lap to rest his pate
 In slumber, gentle, soft, and deep,
 And then with treacherous hand did reap
 His locks and strength at one fell blow,
 For when the traitress came to know
 His secret, which were best kept shut
 Within his lips, at once she cut 17500
 His hair, and this befel because,
 Though strong, a babbling fool he was
 Further examples in a trice
 Could I adduce—let this suffice

Solo-
mon's
counsel

The wise King Solomon hath too
A proverb I commend to you,
Because, God wot, I love you well :
Beware lest you your counsel tell,
Quoth he, to her who on your breast
Doth sleep, but keep your teeth close pressed 17510
If peril you would fain avoid,
Nor find your peaceful days destroyed.
This should be preached abroad by all
Who fain would see fair luck befall
To men—that they should keep close shut
Their lips, nor faith in women put.
But this word holdeth not for you,
Dame Nature, for that ever true
And loyal is your heart, indeed
That may we in the Scripture read, 17520
How God hath set you far above
All folly, in his boundless love.

The Author.

And thus doth Genius comfort bring
To Nature by his counselling,
Exhorting her to dry her tears,
And cast aside her grief and fears,
For nought of good can e'er be gained
By sorrow, nor a heart be fained
By tears, joy wakes when tears are sped.

When all his mind he thus had said, 17530
He stayed his mouth from speech or prayer,
And sat him in the shriving chair

Beside the altar—Nature knelt
 Adown and full confession spelt.
 But much it irked the worthy priest
 When found he that nowise decreased
 Her grief for aught that he could say,
 But on the winds were cast away
 His words. Then gave he silent ear,
 While she confessed with many a tear 17540
 Her miseries, and the shrift he heard,
 I here report you, word for word.

Nature's
 confes-
 sion

XCVI

Here note you how, with loving care,
 Nature doth in confession fare.

WHEN God, whose goodness knows no
 bound,
 First made fair earth's most glorious round,
 Whereof the wondrous plan had been
 Mirrored by his prevision keen,
 How everything at last should be
 In time, from out eternity, 17550
 (For he from out himself evolved
 That which should be at last resolved,
 Since, though he high or low might look,
 Nought yet was writ in Nature's book
 From whence he could example take,
 For heaven and earth were yet to make ;
 Sun, moon and stars, and air and sea—
 'Twas chaos in immensity,
 And all from nothing-did create,
 That God who is himself innate, 17560

God the creator Though to this work nought else did move
 His will, but all-abounding love ;
 Perfect and pure, past envious strife,
 Exists he, fount and spring of life,)
 Athwart infinity of space
 He made the world and fixed its place ;
 From out a rude unshapely mass
 To form and order all did pass
 Beneath his will ; the parts estranged
 In perfect symmetry he ranged, 17570
 And marked and set the bound to each
 Division, whereto it should reach ;
 And formed all things in circles so
 That each one should its function know.
 Those that should shift, their ways to
 wend,
 And others' movement to forefend
 And hold them fast, and thus each kind
 Fulfil the work to it assigned.
 The lighter made he up to fly,
 The heavier in the centre lie, 17580
 With medial interposed between.
 All this by God hath ordered been
 Aright, both as to time and space.
 And when he had through bounteous grace
 Disposed his creatures here and there
 With perfect knowledge, love, and care,
 He then my humble heart made fain,
 Appointing me his chamberlain ;
 To such high dignity no right
 I claim, but bless the hand that dight 17590
 For one unworthy of his care
 This mansion, spacious, bright and fair.

Wherein his love appointed me
 His faithful chamberlain to be.
 His chamberlain! nay, over all
 He made me vicar general,
 And constable—his own right hand,
 Whom no man scatheless may withstand.
 Though but for his good grace am I
 Unworthy of such dignity. 17600

Nature
 God's
 chamber-
 lain

God honoureth me as fit to hold
 Within my hands the chains of gold
 Which the four elements enlace,
 And bow they all before my face.
 On me bestowed he all the things
 Enclosed within those ruddy rings,
 Commanding me to watch their fate,
 And all their forms perpetuate.
 My laws must all God's work obey,
 Following where'er I point the way, 17610
 Forgetting or omitting ne'er,
 Closely by my commands to fare
 Through time to all eternity.
 And this hath been, and aye shall be
 Observed, wherever shines the sun,
 By all my creatures—save but one.

Nought of the heaven may I complain
 Which wheels him round and round again,
 And beareth in his circling bright
 The brilliant stars that gem fair night, 17620
 Whose virtues are to men more worth
 Than all the precious stones on earth.
 To make the whole world glad and gay
 Forth from the east he takes his way,

Course And never till he reach the west
of the Turneth aside or seeketh rest,
heavens O'ercoming all the circles which
 Against him work, with will to hitch
 His movements, and his march retard,
 But nowise can his course be marred ; 17630
 For surely will he reappear
 When round hath rolled the circling
 year,
 Thirty-six thousand times in space
 To come where God first fixed its place,
 According to the width of track
 Marked for it by the zodiac.
 Unerringly doth heaven pursue
 That course its maker set it to,
 And therefore it aplanos hight
 As deviating ne'er one mite : 17640
 A Greek word 'tis, and means in French
 A thing that ne'er can err or blench.
 And though those other heavens no man
 Hath ever yet been known to scan,
 I can by Reason prove their state,
 And all their movements demonstrate.
 Nor plain I of the planets seven
 Glowing and sparkling in the heaven,
 For each one followeth out its course.
 The moon indeed hath little force 17650
 On certain days, for then nor clear
 Nor bright of face doth she appear,
 But through her double nature 'tis
 That shows she these obscurities.
 One portion dark, another bright,
 At once possessed and void of light,

The
moon

Sometimes her light seems passed away,
 For that she nought reflects the ray
 The sun affords her, but, I trow,
 Her night o'ercomes the mighty glow 17660
 He sheds. That I may make this thing
 More clear, I will before you bring
 A fair example, which may better
 Explain my meaning—word and letter.

Behold you a transparent glass,
 Through which the sun's rays pierce and pass,
 If of all substance it should lack
 Both fore and aft to cast aback
 His rays, no figures can it throw,
 Or forms to meet one's eyes, I trow, 17670
 The rays its mass will intersect,
 And nought at all therefrom reflect.
 But if some solid substance you
 Should put, which rays can pierce not through,
 Then on the opposing side you'll see
 Your face reflected perfectly.
 Or any polished surface take,
 Dark of itself, or made opaque,
 So that it casteth back the light,
 There will you get reflection bright. 17680
 So with the moon, that portion clear
 (Like a transparent crystal sphere)
 The rays of light may not retain,
 Nor, therefore, casts them back again,
 But that part of its rounded shape
 Through which no light can e'er escape,
 Holds it awhile, and then casts back
 Bright rays, else earth its light would lack,

The And therefore while one side's obscure,
 planets The other shines with radiance pure. 17690

On the moon's darker part we see
 A figure pictured wondrously
 Of some most strange outlandish beast ;
 A serpent 'tis, which towards the east
 Turneth his tail, the while his head
 Looks where the sun's bright couch is
 spread.

Upon his back a tree doth stand,
 Its branches towards the orient land,
 Looking as they were upside down,
 And mounted there a country clown, 17700
 Who seemeth on his arms to rest,
 His feet and legs turned towards the west.

And neither of the planets shirk
 To labour, but do worthy work,
 So that the seven rest them never,
 But by their houses twelve they ever
 Pursue their course, through all degrees,
 Nor till their work is done take ease,
 And with desire to make complete
 Their service, all their steps repeat. 17710
 Thus through the heavens each day they gain
 The parts which unto them pertain,
 And having round the circle run,
 Resume their work, for ne'er 'tis done ;
 And so the planets, by their force,
 Restrain the heaven's unending course,
 Guarding the elements, or they
 Must fall to nought and pass away.

The glorious sun, which 'neath my laws,
 Is of the daylight spring and cause, 17720
 From 'mid the heaven his rays doth fling
 Across the world, as lord and king.
 Enthroned he sits in splendour dight,
 There fixed as of eternal right,
 Since God, all-powerful, true and wise,
 His place determined 'mid the skies,
 For if towards earth more near he came,
 'Twould parch and shrivel 'neath his flame,
 And if he farther drew, then lost
 The world were through dread ice and
 frost. 17730

Night's
 jewels

The moon and stars alike but shine
 Through his great gift of light divine,
 And thus made beautiful, the Night,
 For candles chose those jewels bright
 To deck her hall with whenso she
 Desires less terrible to be
 Unto her husband Acheron,
 Who thereat feels but woe-begone,
 For liefer would he, if he might,
 In pitchy darkness clasp his Night, 17740
 E'en as it happed in days gone by,
 When first did they together lie
 In amorous strife, whereof were born
 The Fury sisters, trine forlorn,
 Stern ministers of judgments fell
 Within the gloomy realm of hell.
 But, whenso'er in some dark place,
 Night looketh on her own dread face,
 She sees she would too hideous be
 In unadorned obscurity, 17750

The elements And therefore loves to deck her hair
 With sparkling stars of beauty rare,
 Which gleam and glitter in their spheres,
 And circle through the unending years,
 As God the Father's wisdom erst
 Appointed, ere the earth was cursed.
 Sweet harmonies amongst them make
 The stars, and melodies thence take
 Their spring, and diverse tones we get
 Therefrom, and in sweet accord set 17760
 For chant and song of varying kind,
 Wherein men's hearts fair joyance find.
 And unto men the stars dispense,
 By their all-powerful influence,
 Whate'er befalleth 'neath the moon
 For good or ill—at night or noon.
 The stars it is that make appear
 The elements or dark or clear;
 Moisture and drought, and cold and
 heat,
 Through them within one body meet 17770
 As in a coffer, there to cease
 All difference and exist in peace,
 Whatever variance between
 Or this or that foretime had been.
 Thus these four enemies are taught
 Agreement, and in accord brought
 By suitable attempering,
 As reason may decide each thing,
 And weld to worthier form and state
 That which my hand should recreate; 17780
 And if things of perfection halt
 Then must the substance be at fault.

But those who closely look will see

Life
wastes

That howsoever good may be
 The harmony, from day to day
 The sap of life must waste away,
 Till Death's sure step will lastly come
 By nature's course to bear men home
 As I decree, unless, perchance,
 Some accident their death advance, 17790
 And ere the body's strength be worn,
 From out its house the soul be torn.
 For 'tis within no mortal's power,
 When comes the inevitable hour,
 To stave off death with leech or herb,
 Or his strong arm one moment curb,
 Though on the other hand one may
 Shuffle life's coil ere nature's day.
 But ere the sap hath run its course
 Many their lives abridge perforce, 17800
 Setting their souls from trammels
 loose
 By whelming wave or strangling noose ;
 Or some great perils undertake
 Whereon their lives they freely stake,
 And long before they're tired or sick
 Of life, get burned or buried quick.
 Or swift destruction have men won
 Through some rash act of folly done,
 Or else by foes are some entrapp'd
 To death, for oft times hath it happed 17810
 That men have others put to sword,
 Or slain with poison-cup or cord ;
 And many have lain on death's cold bed
 Too rathe, through life unwisely led,

Life often Too much of vigil-watch or sleep,
 shortened Labouring too hard, or drinking deep,
 Getting too fat or eke too thin,
 (For men in all these ways may sin,)
 Going too long devoid of food,
 Or doing what were well withstood, 17820
 Being o'erburdened with misease
 Through seeking joys a wise man flees,
 Loving too well good meat and drink,
 Then suddenly from food to shrink,
 As clearly shown when rash folk range
 From heat to cold with sudden change;
 Then health foregone and life ill spent
 Too late men turn them to repent,
 And many a one who well trod ways
 Hath left, thereby hath clipped his days. 17830
 For sudden change by Nature is
 Abhorred, and oft I show men this
 By leaving those who violate
 My laws to die, nor heed their fate.
 But howsoever I lament
 When men incur the punishment
 Of death too soon, I yet confess
 That greater far is my distress
 When I perceive them on life's road
 Toiling beneath a cruel load 17840
 Of dire disease, which ne'er had been
 Their lot, had they but earlier seen,
 That riot and excess must breed
 A host of miseries that lead
 To death much sooner than should be,
 If turned they not deaf ear to me.

XCVII

Nature relates what griefs and cares

She for the sake of mankind bears.

EMPEDOCLES but evil sped
 For all the learned books he read, 17850
 And the philosophy that he
 Studied but made him melancholy,
 And therefore death he dreaded nought,
 But in the depths of Etna sought
 His end, feet bound, with will to prove
 Those men but weak of heart who love
 Their life so much that when anear
 Death draws, their spirits sink with fear.
 No honeysweet he gained thereby,
 But rashly gave himself to die 17860
 Within a boiling sulphurous wave:
 And Origen his cullions clave
 (Which was to me an insult sore)
 Because he deemed that he could more
 And better holy women serve
 Without suspicion he might swerve
 From virtue's path. But such dread fate
 Some say for these was designate,
 Vowing that destiny is writ
 For each, and all are born to it, 17870
 E'en as the constellations roll
 Above them when they reach the goal
 Of birth, and dire necessity
 Declareth sternly what must be,
 Without the power to turn or stem
 The fate the stars provide for them.

Viola-
 tions of
 Nature

Influence of the stars
 But I past doubt or question know
 What natural powers the stars bestow,
 Making the hearts of men to bend
 Either towards good or evil end, 17880
 Obeying the material force
 Which of their lives doth shape the course.
 But if men are with wholesome food
 Of nurture sweet and doctrine good
 Supplied, and virtuous friends should be
 Assigned to bear them company,
 And wholesome medicines be given
 The influence of the stars to leaven,
 Then will they wisely do amain
 And inborn wickedness restrain. 17890
 For e'en though men and women spurn,
 By nature, what is good, and turn
 Towards evil, yet if they but give
 Their ears to Reason, they shall live
 Anew, embracing what is good
 During their days of lustihood,
 E'en as behoveth them to do.
 The stars, within whose vast purview
 Man wakes to life, have influence great,
 But Reason all doth dominate : 17900
 Against her force can they do nought
 For 'neath their power she was not brought
 At birth, and therefore ne'er can they
 Reduce her might beneath their sway.

But to resolve the question how
 Predestination doth allow
 God's prescience, and how man's free-will
 May coexist with both and still

Free-will

Survive and work, is not a thing
 Suited to lay folk's questioning ; 17910
 And whose'er should undertake
 This matter clear and plain to make,
 Will find that when one point is solved,
 Another straightway is evolved.
 For, firstly, no man would insist
 But what the trine may co-exist,
 For free-will absent, then no meed
 Could e'er be claimed for worthy deed,
 Nor those whose lives in crime are spent
 Were justly cast for punishment, 17920
 If once by perfect proof 'twere shown
 All by necessity is done ;
 For then this man nought else could do
 But what is honest, just, and true,
 And that man who all law defies
 Could act by no means otherwise ;
 Whether man would or not must he
 Do right or wrong by destiny.

And true it is, a man might say,
 To give his disputation play : 17930
 That God can nowise be deceived
 Of that which he in thought hath weaved,
 But everything must hap past doubt,
 Which he erewhile hath known about ;
 For kens he how all matters tend,
 And how they work, and where they end :
 For otherwise, should it be so,
 That God did not all things foreknow,
 He were not of unbounded might,
 With knowledge filled as morn with light, 17940

Destiny The sovereign master, lord, and king
 Of man, and every living thing :
 Our inmost thoughts he would not then
 Divine, but simply rank with men,
 Who in dark ignorance are left,
 And doubt, of perfect knowledge reft,
 And to suppose that God could be
 Thus blind were downright devilry ;
 Such thoughts all men would scorn to hear,
 Whose minds are blessed with reason clear. 17950
 Thus, if a man some special thing
 Should do, or into action bring
 His thought or speech against his will,
 Necessity doth he fulfil,
 For this thing is predestinate,
 Fixed and determined as by fate,
 And thus 'tis clearly seen, I wot,
 That free-will man hath nowise got.

But if stern destiny no change
 Permits to aught within life's range, 17960
 As needs this argument must prove,
 Which saith necessity doth move
 All things, and no man ill or well
 Can do, but acts beneath fate's spell,
 What thanks would man then owe to God ?
 Or wherefore fear his vengeful rod ?
 Though this or that a man might swear,
 Fate would his purpose overbear—
 Alike unjust were God if good
 He cheered or evil ways withstood. 17970
 In such a case—what else could be ?
 For he who thinks thereon will see

That if nor virtue were nor vice
 Vain were the altar's sacrifice,
 And vain were prayer to God, I wot,
 If good and ill, alike, were not.
 And if, when God the throne did mount
 Of justice, took he no account
 Of vice or virtue, surely then
 Unjust his ways would be with men, 17980
 For righteous folk with murderers
 And vilest thieves and usurers
 Would be amerced, and hypocrites
 Would with God's holy saints cry quits,
 The whole in equal balance weighed.
 And thus would righteous folk be made
 Ashamed, who give them heart and soul
 To God, in hope to reach the goal
 Of heaven, for if no man could gain
 His grace, good works were wrought in vain. 17990

God is
 perfect

But God, who died upon the rood
 For man, is perfect, just, and good,
 For otherwise would be defect
 In him, whom shade of sin ne'er flecked.
 But unto every man that lives
 In equal recompense he gives
 Of praise or blame; right good reward
 Find worthy works, and by the board
 Go destinies—at least so far
 As they esteemed by laymen are— 18000
 Who unto them impute whate'er
 Befalleth, whether foul or fair,
 But still free-will exists, although
 She's mauled and cuffed with many a blow.

Necessity But if one's purpose 'twere to end
 denied Free-will, and destiny defend
 (As many a one ere this hath tried),
 He would aver that things must tide
 To their fulfilment, once foreseen,
 Though they had all uncertain been 18010
 Until they lastly came to pass.
 For if one, who foreseeing was,
 Should say : Such thing must come
 about,
 Beyond all questioning or doubt,
 Is it not clear that thing must be
 Of absolute necessity ?
 And thus when all is said and done,
 Necessity is clearly one
 With certainty, and certitude
 Necessity doth thus include, 18020
 For nought is absolutely sure
 But what must be past hope or cure.
 How then must we our answer shape,
 Would we this argument escape ?
 A man's foretelling may be true,
 Yet none perforce the act need do,
 For, notwithstanding his foreseeing,
 The thing foretold may have its being
 Not by necessity at all,
 But that it chanceth so to fall ; 18030
 So 'tis but, as you clearly see,
 A relative necessity,
 And by no means compulsion simple :
 The argument's not worth a wimple,
 That everything that's bound to be
 Is therefore pure necessity.

Nor is it wisdom to confound
 A prophecy, which proveth sound,
 With that which is quite absolute
 And necessary past dispute, 18040
 Such arguments as these can ne'er
 Prove free-will but a thing of air.

Destiny
 con-
 sidered

For otherwise, if we but think
 One moment, tell me, who would swink
 At any project, or set out
 To finish that he dreamed about,
 In such a case, or counsel take,
 This thing to scheme, and that to make,
 If all within this world were planned
 And fixed by Destiny's stern hand? 18050
 In counsel, craft, and handiwork
 All men alike would labour shirk,
 And nought of praise nor aught of scorn
 Would old things have or those new-born;
 Vain were things done or things to do,
 And vain were words, or false or true.
 No man would need to learn his trade,
 For ready to his hand 'twere made
 As though a painful lifetime he
 Had spent in honest industry. 18060
 But none would e'er agree to this,
 Since evident and clear it is
 That nought in all the world is done
 By pure necessity alone,
 But whether, or for good or ill,
 Man acts by prompting of free-will,
 Nor is there any force outside
 Himself that doth his actions guide,

God's
fore-
know-
ledge

This thing he does, and that he dompts,
E'en as his reason lets or prompts. 18070

But endless work it were, I trow,
Through all the arguments to plough
That have against free-will been brought ;
But some in this regard have taught
That God's foreknowledge in no wise
Fast bound necessity implies
For all the ways and works of man
On one inalterable plan.
'Tis not because God surely knows
Beforehand all things men propose, 18080
That therefore deeds and thoughts must be
Fast bound to sheer necessity ;
But since that, unto him is clear
The way each man his life will steer,
Therefore that way it needs must go.
But surely these folks little know
How this dark tangle to unknit.
For he who doth their meaning wit,
And followeth up the strain throughout
Must see that then it comes about, 18090
If their imagining be true,
Because that God all things foreknew
That plainly proves Necessity.
But he a fool must surely be
Who doth so little understand
God's power, as think his mighty hand
Needs human aid—they who proclaim
Such doctrine put their God to shame ;
'Tis to belittle his foresight
With vain discourse, and mock his might. 18100

But Reason doth reject and spurn
 The thought that God from men may learn,
 For then assuredly were not
 His wisdom free from taint or blot.
 Worthless, therefore, were this reply,
 Which God's foresight would stultify,
 And hide his gracious providence
 'Neath shades of darkest ignorance.
 For certain 'tis God ne'er can gain
 Knowledge from man—blind, weak, and vain ;
 Nay, such a doctrine would impute
 To God less power than absolute,
 Which were a thought too dread to speak,
 Lest he thereon should vengeance wreak.

God om-
 niscient

Others have otherwise discussed
 The matter, saying that we must
 Thus understand it : They agree
 That whatsoever things may be
 Done of free-will, as men elect,
 And thence disposed to full effect, 18120
 God knows the way that each doth tend,
 And with clear vision sees the end,
 With slight addition thereunto :
 Namely, the method they pursue,
 To bring their purposing about.
 Therefore maintain they that past doubt,
 Since God knows all, though things may be
 By no means of necessity,
 They yet must hap, and he the end
 Must surely see, nor aught forfend. 18130
 All things on earth, he well doth know,
 Must either this or that way go,

Necessity
ques-
tioned

This one by positive negation,
Or that indeed by affirmation,
Yet not so certainly but what
Some otherwise might fall the lot,
For nought can hap for good or ill
But by the working of free-will.

And who, but one devoid of sense,
Dare limit God's omnipotence, 18140
Saying that his all-seeing eye
Doth ineffectually try
To pierce the future, and can see
That which must hap but doubtfully?
For then, though he the end should know,
He were not sure it might not go
In adverse course to that foreseen.
And if it turned so, that must mean
That his foreknowledging is able
To be deceived as thing unstable, 18150
As I erewhile have pointed out.
But other folk have solved the doubt
In different fashion, for some say
That: What befalls from day to day,
Whether it be of ill or good,
Comes only in all likelihood
By sheer necessity, since God
Rules all that passes on the sod
Of earth, or in the azure sky,
Great things and small, and low and high. 18160
For he doth absolutely know,
(Whichever way free-will may go)
All things before they come to birth,
And whether they in dole or mirth

Shall end, and thus doth he foresee
 And know all of necessity.
 And these speak truth, for all allow,
 And to this plain conclusion bow,
 That from eternity's far goal
 God's prescience hath beheld the whole 18170
 That e'er hath been or e'er shall be,
 Unclouded by obscurity.

Necessity
 unreason-
 able

He sees how all things needs must go
 In heaven above and earth below
 The starlit skies, yet sets he not
 Upon himself or man I wot
 Smallest constraint. For knowledge clear
 Of all that haps, or far or near,
 And all that possibly may be,
 Comes to him through the power that he 18180
 Wieldeth unchecked, and through the light
 Of goodness and all piercing sight
 Which nought can mar, or let, or dim.
 And who should say he bendeth him
 Before Necessity, would speak
 As one of wit, dull, vain and weak.
 For 'tis not God's all prescient lore
 Makes things to hap, nor any more
 Is it because they are to be
 That he their happening doth foresee, 18190
 But in that he all powerful is,
 And therefore must of that and this,
 Both good and ill, know everything
 Where all must end, whence all doth
 spring.

Nothing is dark to him, but lies
 Naked and clear before his eyes.

Free-will And whosoe'er should undertake
 proved This matter straight and plain to make
 To folks unlettered, would do well
 The cause and argument to tell 18200
 In simplest phrase, unclogged, and free
 Of learned gloss and subtlety.

Suppose a man had will to do
 Some thing, yet failed to carry through
 His work because he feared to be
 Surprised therein, and probably
 Win blame therefor, and so let stand
 Unfinished that he took in hand ;
 And then suppose that no one knew
 Aught of the work that man would do, 18210
 Or that which he had put away,
 Unfinished till a future day ;
 He who should later learn the thing
 Were done or not, its perfecting
 Would neither hinder nor advance,
 And if thereof he'd known perchance
 A little sooner, he perforce
 Would hinder not his neighbour's course
 Of action, whether he had done
 The thing that he had once begun, 18220
 Or stayed his hand, for good or ill,
 E'en as he exercised his will,
 For thus hath he free-will amain
 To do, or from his deed abstain.

But God, whose ways of working are
 More absolutely perfect far
 Than man's, knows all things ere they loom,
 And what shall be their final doom :

How by the master's will may this
 Or that affair be turned, ywis; 18230
 Who may determine to elect
 This course, and that one to reject,
 To go straight onward, or aside,
 Turn as good sense or folly guide.
 God also knows what things have been
 Ere men had their inception seen,
 And he the reason doth perceive
 Of those who work half finished leave,
 And how, forsooth, their course they sped
 By interest, shame, or reason led. 18240
 For certain am I, into crime
 May men be tempted many a time,
 But yet therefrom have power to turn
 If that their hearts towards goodness
 yearn.
 And some men will from evil cease,
 And tread the paths of holy peace
 For love of God—such folk I've known,
 Though, of a truth, they're sparsely sown.
 Another, who to sin hath mind,
 Assured therein no let to find, 18250
 Will ne'ertheless his passions curb,
 Lest that remorseful fear disturb
 His soul. All this God's piercing eye
 Sees quicker than the lightnings fly,
 And every motive, force, and spring
 Perceives from their engendering.
 From him no matter e'er were hid,
 Nor kept aback whatso betid.
 For nought can be so far away
 But plain and clear as light of day, 18260

Indi-
 vidual
 will

God's 'Tis spread in his all-piercing sight.
 mirror Though years on years of day and night
 Had through a hundred thousand frown,
 Whether in acre, mart, or town,
 Of good or ill, God seeth all
 Clearly as that which doth befall
 To-day, and he hath always seen
 Each thing that in the world hath been
 Enacted, for all things appear
 Reflected in his mirror clear, 18270
 Which none but he have power to make
 More bright, unless free-will they break :
 That perfect mirror is, in truth,
 Himself, whence all things spring, forsooth.

Within this burnished surface fair,
 Kept 'neath his watchful love and care,
 He sees whatever is to be,
 Present before him constantly.
 The fate of those beholds he who
 To him fair loyal service do, 18280
 And likewise of those men who right
 And justice hold in foul despite,
 And unto each within his thought
 Awardeth what their works have bought,
 Salvation sweet—damnation drear.
 Predestination doth appear
 Herein, and foresight doth express,
 Which, knowing all, need nothing guess.
 And he sweet grace to those doth give
 Who strive within his laws to live, 18290
 But yet in nowise doth supplant
 The free-will he saw good to grant.

By free-will worketh every man ;
 Whether his life it bless or ban,
 It lieth clear within his ken.
 And whosoever among men
 Should solve eternity's close knot,
 Were in possession, as I wot,
 Of life unending—such as ne'er
 Can cease or be devised to heir.

Power of
 the stars

18300

But God, by all-wise providence,
 Doth order through the world dispense,
 And rule and stablish things to wend
 By due succession towards their end,
 Working, by unsuspected cause,
 To due effect through hidden laws.
 And so shall be throughout all time,
 For therewith shall the stars keep chime,
 Pursuing their eternal course,
 And by their revolutions' force

18310

Shall use their powers, unseen, immense,
 By necessary influence
 On one and all alike of those
 Strange things the elements enclose,
 As on them fall the starry rays
 Unceasingly till end of days.
 For all things that have power to give
 New life, their likes shall cause to live
 Again by combination sure,
 Of nature's work, which aye shall dure

18320

According as they find each one
 In close affinity to run.
 That doomed to death shall surely die,
 That born to life, live equally.

Stars Even as natural longings burn,
 may be So different men their hearts will turn,
 crossed Some unto pleasures void and vain,
 While others are of virtue fain.

But yet perchance man's fate may be
 Not always mapped out perfectly 18330
 According to the stars' intent,
 For sometimes things by accident
 Arrested are, which had obeyed
 Their influence were their course not stayed.
 Or chance, or some erratic will,
 May oftentimes push men to fulfil
 That thing towards which their hearts incline ;
 I therefore destiny define
 As a predestination which
 May, as men's hearts and feelings twitch 18340
 Their wills, be shaped and modified
 To this or that on either side.

Thus, happiness a man may find,
 Whether it chance that Fortune kind
 Hath to him from his birth-hour been,
 With friends and wealth right well beseen,
 Hardy and bold whereso he fare,
 Bright, generous, blithe and debonnair,
 Or the blind maiden on him frown.
 But let him of his fair renown 18350
 Be jealous, lest his life he stain
 With vice, or unto sin give rein,
 Or let his palms and fingers itch
 With avarice, whence no man grows rich.
 Who takes dame Reason for his guide,
 Will with sufficiency abide

Content, and with a generous heart,
 Food, weed, and goods will he depart
 To those who need, yet nought will he
 Fall to vain prodigality. 18360

Benefits
 of fore-
 know-
 ledge

Yea, let him avarice despise,
 Whence love of hoarding doth arise
 In men, until they daily live
 In torments great as hell can give,
 For so doth it constrict and bind
 Their souls, that unto honour blind
 They soon become: all virtue spurns
 The wretch whose heart with avarice burns.
 So may a man, who's not a fool,
 Take keep no other vices rule 18370
 His life, or if he fain astray
 Will go, may virtue cast away,
 For free-will hath such potent might
 For him who knows himself aright,
 That he his path may guarantee,
 If true unto himself he be;
 For casting from his heart all sin,
 He victory o'er the stars may win.

But if that man could have fore-view
 Of what the heavens propose to do, 18380
 He might protect himself therefrom.
 Suppose, for instance, heat should come
 From heaven, so ardent, all must die:
 Could men foresee it, hastily
 They'd build them shaded grottos near
 Cool marshlands formed by rivers clear,
 Or spacious caverns would they mine
 Beneath the rocks, where ne'er could shine.

The flood foreseen The sun. Or if they should foresee
 That some great deluge needs must be, 18390
 Forewarned thereof, they'd quickly seek
 Safety on high-built mountain peak,
 Or else in huge tall-sided boat
 Above the flood's breast bravely float,
 E'en as in ancient books we're told
 Deucalion did in days of old
 With Pyrrha—who from death escaped
 In the great ark their labour shaped,
 Or else had they succumbed to fate
 'Neath the wild waters desolate. 18400
 And when aland once more they stood,
 And witnessed how the rolling flood
 Between the fertile valleys sank,
 Each lake hemmed in by grass-bound bank,
 But saw no spark of human life,
 Forth went Deucalion and his wife
 To Themis' temple to confess
 Their thanks, for her farwittingness
 It was that ordered what should be
 And shaped the hand of destiny. 18410

XCVIII

How Themis to Deucalion gave
 Such counsel, as would surely save
 The human race, if only he
 With Pyrrha wrought discernin

THEN prone at Themis' feet the pair
 Fell on their knees, beseeching her
 To teach them how they might restore
 The human lineage as before.

The goddess listed the request
 To her thus piously address, 18420
 Saying: As forthward hence ye go,
 Be careful, both of you, to throw
 Your mother's bones behind you. Great

Deuca-
 lion and
 Pyrrha

Was Pyrrha's anger, and she straight
 Refused the counsel, crying: Nay!
 An outrage 'twere to cast away
 My mother's bones, in such rude sort,
 Of wind and storm to be the sport;
 But soon Deucalion made all plain:
 The action that you deem profane, 18430

Quoth he, behold I in another
 And better sense, earth is our mother,
 And we with reason may the stones
 And rocks thereof account her bones,
 And those must we behind our
 backs

Throw to restore the race that lacks.
 Straightway with one consent they did
 The action subtle Themis bid,
 And instantly around them grew
 Of carles and queans a plenteous crew. 18440

From out the stones Deucalion cast
 Behind him, as he onward passed,
 Sprang mankind, while a goodly band
 Of women fell from Pyrrha's hand,
 And e'en as pebbles were forbears
 Of all the human race, man wears
 A nature hard and tough as stone,
 And surely was their work well done
 And wisely, who the flood withstood
 Within their ark, well built of wood. 18450

Famine And so might all, had they but known
fore- Beforehand, that dread wrath have flown.
fended

Or should fell Famine come anear,
Whose blighting hand the corn makes sere,
Till all the folk be like to die
Therethrough, and perish wretchedly ;
They might with careful hand retain
Within their garners plenteous grain,
Saw they the spectre loom before
Their eyes for years, two, three or four, 18460
For then with well-filled granaries dight
They could their gaunt-eyed foeman fight,
And all alike, or young or hoar,
Keep the fierce wolf from off the door,
As Joseph erst in Egypt did,
And thus the years of dearth outrid,
Making within his garners great,
Provision for all Egypt's state,
So that none pain of hunger knew.

Or could men but foresee when due 18470
Was direful frost, to wrap the wold
In dread extremity of cold,
Then fore all else their care would be
To set their hands industriously
To weave and fashion garments warm,
Their bodies to protect from harm
Of frost, and stacks of wood they'd raise,
On glowing hearth to spit and blaze
Through yule-tide nights, and freely draw
Forth, from the heaped-up grange, white straw,

And therewith thickly thatch each house 18481 Indoor
 Against the season perilous, pleasures
 And doors and windows tightly close
 Whene'er the boisterous northwind rose,
 And so with stoves would warm the air
 That, though they mother-naked were,
 From cold they'd suffer no mischance,
 But mirthful song' would join to dance,
 While they might hear the storm without
 Bluster and rage with deafening rout, 18490
 Destroying beasts in field and wood,
 And binding every stream and flood
 With ice-chains strong as iron. No care
 They'd feel for what in outer air
 Might hap; but make the rafters ring
 With strains of merry carolling,
 And while they trod the tuneful measure,
 'T would greatly quicken up their pleasure
 If they from time to time should peer
 Through casements on the landscape drear, 18500
 Then hug their comforts and rejoice
 That safe were they; for though the voice
 Of winter raged for nights and days,
 Still jolly sports and roundelays
 Would glad all hearts.

But if men nought

By God through miracle were taught
 Or oracle, then, mark you well,
 Unless one knoweth how to tell
 The stars, and what their functions be,
 By science of astronomy, 18510
 And how it is their piercing rays
 Rain influence upon mundane ways,

Despise He ne'er with sure effect can learn
 destiny How matters yet unborn may turn.

And if man's body be so strong
 That it may overcome the wrong
 Of astral influence, and work
 Against the fates that therein lurk,
 More powerful still the soul must be
 To battle 'gainst fatality, 18520
 Since 'tis the soul alone that gives
 The body force by which it lives.
 It follows, therefore, that Free-will
 More easily and lightly still,
 By usage of a ready wit
 Successfully may shelter it
 From grief or trouble, since it may
 Of this or that prefer the way.
 'Twere well by heart this clause to know,
 That from one's self one's troubles grow, 18530
 And by no means a man can claim
 Of right to cast elsewhere the blame.
 Let him then destiny despise;
 If his nativity he tries,
 And feels affiance of his state,
 Why fear what men prognosticate?
 He lives above all destiny,
 Whatever it may threat to be.

Full many a case might I untruss,
 And destiny at full discuss, 18540
 Explaining each thing, bit by bit,
 And showing pro and con for it,

Consult a
cleric

And many a fair example spread
To view, ere I my cause had said.

But far too long 'twould be should I
Explain the question utterly.

Let him who deems my matter dark,
Consult some grave and learned clerk

Thereon. 'Tis true I might have kept
From further speech hereon, except

That I must somewhat more explain,
Lest that my foe should cry amain,

Hearing me thus his crimes lament,
That I his case misrepresent,

And that from his creator he
Blame and disgrace wins wrongfully.

Full often have I heard one say
That nowise Will can have free play,

Since God by his foreknowledge so
Doth curb Free-will in man, that lo!

Fatality rules all, and nought
Is human work or human thought,

To that degree, that if, forsooth,
Some good man doth, 'tis God, in

truth,
Directs it, or if one do ill,

By God's right hand 'tis ordered still,
Who by the finger so doth lead

A man, and all his actions speed,
That whether of theft or alms they be,

Or prayer divine, or ribaldry,
Or kindly words, or slanderous speech,

Or plunder rude, or murderous breach
Of peace, or marriage duly dight,

Whether arranged of wrong or right,

Unto- The plan, saith he, by God is laid,
ward This woman for that man is made,
spousals And nought can shake or alter it,
 Nor force of arms, nor wealth, nor wit,
 So falleth all by destiny.

 And if a spousal mismade be, 18580
 And man and woman wild with rage,
 In wordy contest should engage,
 Cursing all those who gave consent
 To celebrate the sacrament,
 Then the insensate madman cries :
 ‘ To God it is we owe these ties,
 Through him alone hath come about
 This wretched matrimonial rout.’
 And then doth he with oath aver
 It could no otherwise occur. 18590
 No! No! This false is, as I live,
 Such sauce to folk God doth not give
 As cause them to agree unto
 A lie, our God is just and true.
 It is of men’s foul passions rise
 Unholy thoughts and love of lies,
 Which urge them on to deeds they ne’er
 Need do unless they willing were,
 For those who know themselves may spurn
 Ill ways, and towards fair virtue turn. 18600
 Let them unto their God address
 Their prayers, and he their hearts will bless,
 For those most wisely love, I trow,
 Who their own hearts most throughly know.

 The creatures that we reckon mute,
 And of all reason destitute,

By nature left in ignorance,
 Were they endowed with reasoning sense,
 Would put mankind in evil case.

If beasts
 but knew

Think you the wild horse, swift of pace, 18610
 Would then let man his back bestride,
 Or bit, and rein, and curb abide ?

Ne'er then had oxen, armed with horn,
 The plough-yoke or the wain-shaft borne,
 Nor mule, nor ass, nor camel proud
 His back beneath a burden bowed.

The elephant of cumbrous form,
 Whose nose can raise a trumpet storm,
 Yet hath therewith the skill to feed
 Himself, as man with hands, at need, 18620

E'en as the cat and dog likewise,
 Would, as a master, man despise.

The lion, tiger, boar and bear
 Man's lineage would betwixt them share,

And on him, when abed at night,
 The rats would feast with rare delight.

No bird would flutter to his lure,
 But perch on high 'mid boughs secure,

And now and then would downward
 sweep

To peck his eyes out while asleep. 18630

And if hereto he made reply
 That all must at his mercy lie,

Since he strong armour would prepare,
 And sword and helm and buckler wear,

And dight stout bows and arbalests—
 Why so, forsooth, would do the beasts.

Would not great apes and suchlike brutes
 Fashion and forge them perfect suits,

Men's
tor-
mentors

With doublets, leather, brass, and steel,
And shafts which deadly strokes would
deal? 18640

For great apes thrive in distant lands,
Furnished, as well as men, with hands,
And therewith well might learn to write.
And should they join, in man's despite,
To work him injury and harm,
Not vainly 'twould his fears alarm,
For many a thousand might they make
Of engines which his power would break.

Even the earwig and the flea
To man might most vexatious be, 18650

If they in furtivewise should creep
Within his ear while locked in sleep.

Nay, verily, the bug and louse
A mortal of his rest may chouse,

And so his skin may fret and grieve
That he perforce his work must leave,

And wriggle, fidget, dance and skip,
Until at last he's fain to strip

His clothes from off him, and about
Will twist him well-nigh inside out. 18660

E'en paltry flies, when men at meat
Are sitting, spoil the food they eat,

And boldly will attack an earl
Or king in face, as page or churl.

The very ants and vermin small
Might keep strong men beneath a thrall

Of torment, if their power they knew,
Their lucky ignorance is due

To nature. But a being dowed
With reason, whether of the crowd 18670

Of mortal men, or angels high,
 (Who both should praise God equally)
 If he forgets him, like a fool,
 'Tis that he lies 'neath sin's dark rule,
 Which doth his clear perception drown,
 Or he fair Reason's sway would own,
 And let Free-will his actions guide ;
 Who doth not so, casts God aside.
 And if within this chapter I
 Have treated Free-will lengthily, 18680
 'Tis that I wished to clear away
 Error, and make all clear as day.

The
 elements

But with intent to carry out
 The end that first I set about,
 Namely to heal the grief and dole
 Which pierce with wounds my heart and soul,
 This matter I'll discuss no more,
 But to the heavens, whereof before
 I spake, will now return ; they do
 Their devoir ever towards all who 18690
 Are subject to their influence,
 E'en as they prove dark, light, or dense.

Contrarious, boisterous winds they raise,
 And set at times the air ablaze,
 Clearing the heavy atmosphere
 With lightning, then anon men hear,
 Quick following on the vivid flash,
 Its drum-beat with a deafening crash,
 And thence are powerful vapours born,
 Whereby the clouds are rent and torn, 18700

Nature's Making their very bellies burst
 war With thunderbolts, like furies curst,
 And breaking up the earth's hard crust,
 With wild tornado-storms, to dust,
 And casting strongest towers adown,
 And mighty trees with roots fast grown
 Into the entrails of the earth,
 Whence, years long gone, they took their birth,
 Their branches broken, torn, and rent
 By blasts from heaven's high firmament. 18710

Some say that all this fearful moil
 Is fruit of spiteful demons' toil,
 With grapples, talons, cords and picks,
 But such tales are not worth two sticks,
 Being but vain imagining ;
 For 'tis but wind and tempest bring
 This hideous havoc. Now will I
 Describe the ruin wrought thereby
 To everything on earth in turn ;
 Fierce winds lay corn, and vineyards burn, 18720
 And fruits and flowers alike illtreat,
 With withering cold or scorching heat,
 Bruising and beating them ere yet
 They're on the branches duly set
 And ripened. Then, forsooth, the air
 Weepeth, as it in sorrow were,
 And so great pity have the clouds
 That they divest them of their shrouds
 All naked, valuing not a straw
 Their mantles, black as rook or daw, 18730
 For such extreme of grief they feel
 That they themselves will rend piecemeal,

Rains and
floods

Or sometimes turn them inside out,
 And falling as a waterspout,
 With such profound distress they weep,
 That o'er their banks the rivers sweep,
 And through the fertile champaign rush,
 Uprooting hedgerow, tree, and bush,
 And, ravaging dense forests hoar,
 In foaming cataracts roll and roar, 18740
 And flood broad acres sown with wheat,
 Till costly grows the bread men eat,
 And many a yeoman's brow is crossed
 And furrowed for his labour lost.
 And when the whelming floods are out,
 The fish at pleasure scud about
 Through vineyard, orchard, croft, and
 mead,
 And there as lords and masters feed,
 Claiming of right o'er all to roam
 Unlet, for native house and home 18750
 To them the waters are; 'mid ash,
 Oak, elm, and beech trees, sport and flash
 Their coats of mail, expelling thence
 The savage beasts, whose heritage
 They seize: but when o'er pastures swim
 The fish, look on with aspect grim
 Bacchus and Pan and Cybele
 And Ceres, grieved and mazed to see
 The scale-clad, fin-winged tribes in bands
 And shoals usurp the fruitful lands, 18760
 And merry satyrs, fauns, and fays
 Lament the memory of fair days
 Gone by, when they 'mid fragrant flowers
 Danced, or reposed in shady bowers.

Fair days The nymphs their fountains in the woods,
 return Weeping behold o'erwhelmed with floods,
 Dryads and wood sprites, dwarfs and gnomes,
 Shrieking, see now their ancient homes
 Ruled by the waters, and complain
 Unto the god, whose wide domain 18770
 Extendeth o'er all floods, that he
 Should thus entreat them cruelly,
 Though innocently have they spent
 Their lives, devoid of ill intent.
 And through the streets of many a town,
 'Neath heights which lordly castles crown,
 The fish hold undisputed sway;
 Through cellar, barn, and hall they stray
 Unhindered, nor do they forbear
 The fanes of deities, but there 18780
 Freely disport themselves, and chase
 The gods from forth each holy place
 And dim-lit chamber, where on high
 They stand, and look on wrathfully.

 But when from meadow, hill, and plain
 Fair weather driveth foul amain,
 The heavens (as weary of the storm
 And rain that ruined earth's bright form)
 Assuage the rudeness of the air,
 Which once again sweet smiles doth wear; 18790
 And when the clouds perceive that they
 Are fed with lightsome air, then gay
 And joyous are their spirits, and
 Forthwith they deck themselves in grand
 And glorious robes of tints diverse,
 More fair than poets can rehearse,

Or limners paint, and set to dry
 Their fleeces in the sun's soft eye,
 And for their carding call the air
 To help them, when 'tis bright and fair, 18800
 Then spin the wool, and when 'tis spun,
 From off their distaff make it run,
 Which threads for mighty bodkins weaves,
 As fain were they to lace their sleeves.
 And should it please them to engage
 In distant, far-off pilgrimage,
 Swift coursers they to chariots dight,
 Wherein they mount, and vale and height
 Rush o'er like men whom madness
 blinds.
 For Eolus, the god of winds 18810
 (Such name unto this god belongs),
 When he hath fixed their harness thongs,
 (For he alone, as charioteer,
 Knoweth their headlong course to steer),
 With suchlike wings endues their feet
 As far outstrip the swallows fleet.
 Then dons the air his mantle blue
 As woneth he in Ind to do,
 And blazons it from west to east
 As one bedecked for lordly feast; 18820
 Then waits serenely till the pack
 Of snow-fleeced clouds return aback,
 Who, willing to beguile sad earth,
 In huntsman's harness issue forth,
 Within their hands borne many a bow,
 The which as rainbows mortals know,
 Though only he who's learned the rule
 Of optics, in some famous school,

Of rain- Can to his fellow-men explain
 bows How 'tis that from the sun they gain 18880
 Their glorious hues, and how 'tis they
 Are born, and why they pass away,
 And to what purpose they are sent
 To blazon the wide firmament,
 And why such wondrous form they take.
 Whoso would all this learn should make
 Him Aristotle's pupil, who
 Better the ways of nature knew
 Than any man since Tubal Cain,
 Or Al-Hakim (Mahound profane), 18840
 Who wrote on optics such a book
 As men most learned yet may look
 Upon with profit.

And each man,
 Who of the wondrous bows that span
 The heavens would fain the secrets
 learn,
 In nowise can afford to spurn
 The study of geometry,
 But an adept therein must be,
 And of this book of optics should
 Obtain a thorough masterhood ; 18850
 Therein too may he learn the cause
 Why mirrors, through some subtle laws,
 Have power, to objects seen therein
 (Atoms minute or letters thin),
 To give appearance of fair size,
 Though naked, unassisted eyes
 Can scarce perceive them ; grains of sand
 Seem stones, when through these glasses
 scanned ;

These may we count, and those may read, Mars and
 From such a distance, that, indeed, Venus
 If one should tell the things he'd seen, 18860
 Small credit would he win, I ween,
 From him who'd seen it not, nor knew
 How 'twas that such great marvels grew.
 But to these matters, blind affiance
 No man need give, they're proved by science.

If Mars and Venus, who were trapped
 In bed together, had but happed,
 Ere they began their amorous dance,
 In mirrors of such sort to glance, 18870
 They'd ne'er been ta'en within the net,
 So subtly wrought and delicate,
 Which Vulcan's jealousy prepared
 To spoil the sport they fain had shared,
 But had perceived, as I opine,
 His carefully-contrived design;
 For though the net had been a braid
 Finer than webs by spiders made,
 Yet by these mirrors had they seen
 Its threads, and so had Vulcan been 18880
 Deceived, for they had entered not
 Therein, since every thread, I wot,
 Had then shown forth so coarse and thick
 That they must have perceived the trick
 Of Vulcan's snare for them, and he
 Had proved not their adultery,
 Nor aught thereof the gods had known
 Had they but had the luck to own
 Such mirrors, for beholding spread
 The net, they had foregone that bed, 18890

Value of And sought some place secure where they
mirrors Their amorous game might hope to play
In perfect safety, void of fear
That prying eyes might come anear.
Say plainly by the faith you owe
To me if I have failed to show
Herein the very ground of truth?

Genius.

The priest said: You speak well, forsooth,
Such mirrors must have, without fail,
Been to that twain of great avail, 18900
For otherwhere they then had found,
Seeing their danger, safer ground,
Or with the sword Mars knows so well
To wield, he quickly would that fell
And envious net in shards have rent,
And on the bed have made content
Dame Venus, or on other ground
An all-sufficient couch had found,
Where they in surety might repose
Unspied or mocked by jealous foes. 18010
Or if Fate looked on them askance
So far that by unlucky chance
Vulcan espied them while they wrought
The work wherein they solace sought,
Venus, whose wit is most acute
(Right well intrigue doth woman suit),
Soon as she heard the door-hinge creak,
Her nakedness had clothed, and meek
And innocent as lambkin seemed,
For Venus ne'er, 'twere safely deemed, 18020

Had lacked some plausible excuse, Woman's
 Whereof she might forthwith make use, guile
 Until within her house again
 She and her lover made them fain,
 Causing her husband to believe
 That surely did his wrath deceive
 His senses, and therefore agree
 To cast aside his jealousy.
 Nay, though his very eyes had seen
 Her crime, she would declare he'd been
 Mised by them, and that his sight
 Was no more use by day than night,
 For in five minutes woman's tongue
 May to a dozen tunes be rung,
 And thousands of evasive pleas
 She mingles with her sophistries,
 (For than a woman none can lie
 More sweetly or more hardily),
 And speaking so had Mars gone quit.

Nature.

Right good, sir priest, I find your wit, 18940
 Courteous and worthy and discreet.
 The hearts of women are replete
 With every crafty turn and wile,
 (He's but a fool who doubts their guile,)
 To champion them is not my cue.
 With more effrontery they eschew
 The truth than any man, and swear
 Black's white if 'tis their fate to bear
 Suspicion of some gross misdeed.
 Right keen of wit and quick of rede 18950

Of optic That man must be who finds them out ;
 glasses Whence I conclude that, past all doubt,
 Whoso should woman's heart laid bare
 Behold, would yet unwisely dare
 To say he knew her well, for she
 Would cheat him most assuredly.

The Author.

Nature and Genius seem to me
 Herein to be in sympathy,
 And Solomon, long years ago,
 Willing the same sad truth to show, 18960
 Declared that man were blest who should
 Find but one woman throughly good.

Nature.

Those mirrors also have, quoth she,
 Full many another property,
 For things of size, which stand anear,
 Through them far-off and small appear.
 Even the highest Alp between
 France and Sardinia would be seen
 A mite by one who spied it through
 These mirrors, so they cause the view 18970
 To shrink, and dwindle, and contract
 By the strange mode they light refract.

Through other mirrors may the eyes
 Behold things in due form and size,
 If those who look therein know how
 To use and handle them, I trow.

And others, if so be you turn
 Their faces on to objects, burn
 And scorch their substance, if the rays
 Are focussed from divergent ways 18980
 To one small point when clear on high
 The sun shines forth resplendently.
 And others will reflections cause
 To show themselves, by varied laws,
 Oblong and straight, and upside down,
 According as the lights are thrown.
 And he who handleth well the glass
 Can make one form for many pass ;
 While in one head can show four eyes
 He who with skill the mirror plies. 18990
 Most curious phantoms may be seen
 By those who look within, I ween,
 And outside living forms appear,
 Whether in air or water clear,
 So that between the eyes and glass
 A thousand spectres seem to pass
 By lines and angles deftly cut
 In squares and little flats, so put
 That in the facets figures dance
 As sun-rays through them gleam and glance, 19000
 Some seen reversed, and some upright,
 According to the varying light,
 All multiplied in such strange wise
 As to confuse, and maze men's eyes,
 For all the rays they thus receive,
 Cross, and deceptive visions weave.

Won-
 drous
 sights

All this hath Aristotle shown,
 To whom such matters well were known

Magni- (For every science loved he well);
 fying He saith: 'A man in sickness fell, 19010
 glasses And his affliction proved to be
 That nought could he distinctly see,
 But dim and dark seemed all the air,
 And whitherso he chanced to fare
 Or here or there, from place to place
 In front of him he saw his face.'

In mirrors, if nought comes between,
 A thousand wonders may be seen,
 But lack of them will oft-times make
 Men fall in many a strange mistake 19020
 Of distance, for afar men see
 Two things that seem conjoined to be,
 Or one thing seemeth to be two
 By some diversity of view,
 Or three seem six, or four seem eight,
 And he who cares to cogitate
 Thereon, shall, as his eyes are set,
 Fewer or more in focus get;
 Or numerous things seem one to be,
 Through glasses ordered skilfully. 19030
 A mannikin, whom men would call
 A dwarf, these mirrors make as tall
 As ten great giants, (though he could
 Pass 'neath low branches through a wood,)
 So that folk seeing him would tremble;
 And in like way make dwarfs resemble
 Giants, for by their eyes are they
 Through these strange mirrors led astray.

And many a time when men have been
 Deceived through shadows they have seen 19040

By suchlike mirrors brought about,
 Seeming to leave no room for doubt,
 They straightway to their neighbours vaunt
 That they have been where devils haunt,
 Ne'er dreaming there could be deceit
 In mirrors thus their eyes to cheat.
 An eye diseased and out of gear
 Maketh one object twain appear,
 Two candles then appear for one,
 And o'er the heaven would seem to run 19050
 Two moons. The man existeth not
 Who sees so clearly, as I wot,
 That ne'er his eyesight may deceive
 His wit, and cause him to believe
 Amiss, and thus it often haps
 That wrongful judgment rightful caps.

Visions
 and
 dreams

But yet 'tis nowise my affair
 Of all these mirrors to declare
 The form and manner, nor the ways
 In which they cast their varied rays, 19060
 Nor need I of their angles write
 (Thereof full many a book is dight),
 Nor wherefore 'tis the things we see
 Shown in their faces needs must be
 Again reflect within our eyes,
 Nor why deception in them lies.
 Nor further will pretend to say
 Dear priest, how come, or in what way,
 These sprites, in mirrors or elsewhere,
 And I moreover will forbear 1 070
 To tell how other visions thus
 Evolved, or fair or dolorous,

Dreams All unexpectedly arise :
 and Whether such be deceptive lies
 mirrors Or real and substantial truth,
 I venture not to say forsooth ;
 I have no lust therewith to deal,
 Far better 'tis for woe or weal
 To let such matters bide—as I
 Have said erewhile—I pass them by 19080
 Untouched on : far too deep and wide
 The subject is on either side,
 To tell of or much more pretend
 In perfect wise to comprehend.
 And if one should to lay folk teach
 This science, vainly would he preach,
 For when his tale were fully done,
 Of all his auditory, none
 The mirrors' virtues would believe,
 But deem that he would fain deceive 19090
 Their eyes and understandings, though
 His hands the instruments should show
 With will to demonstrate perchance
 Their virtues and significance.
 Most surely would the vulgar ne'er
 Agree such wondrous visions were
 Of simple truth, though they might be
 Cleared and explained most carefully.
 Nor know we what those fictions are
 That come upon us from afar 19100
 In visions, sleeping or awake,
 And oft men's minds with 'mazement
 shake.
 Therefore I wholly pass them by
 For fear they weary wofully—

Both me to speak, and you to hear—
Of prolix talk I'd fain keep clear.

Sleep-
walking

Women are liable to become
In speech oft times most troublesome;
And in good truth all this I see
Before my eyes so vividly, 19110
That since I am of speaking fain,
I pray you list me once again.

A dream will sometimes so deceive
Sleepers, that they their couches leave,
And, donning shoes and other gear,
Their course from forth their dwellings steer;
Then seemeth reason lulled to sleep,
And fantasy alone to keep
Dominion o'er them: staff and scrip
They take, or else, perchance, in grip 19120
Seize pickaxe, sickle, bow, or bill,
And wander forth o'er plain and hill,
Uncertain whither, or their course
Follow perchance astride a horse,
By valleys deep, or mountains high,
Or marshlands, or roads hard and dry,
Until they gain some far off-land,
Then wake they, and a-wondering stand,
Till, mixing among other men,
Return they to their wits again, 19130
Swearing their escapade a revel
Or machination of the devil,
Who fetched them forth from out their beds,
Though 'twas in truth their dream-struck heads.

Hallucinations
of fever

Or when a frenzy haps to seize
Some man laid low by dire disease,
And friends but careless vigil keep
Anear him, deeming him asleep,
And so it chance that he arise
From bed, eluding watchful eyes, 19140
And wander forth in solitude
Until he reach some forest rude,
Bosquet or vineyard, wood or mead,
Without a friend to guide or lead,
And fall half famished to the ground.
There by his friends perchance he's found,
When thither run they, all too late
(Seeing they left him to his fate,
Or hirelings to his care off-told), 19150
Dying of hunger, pinched with cold.
And many men are seen, who though
They sound of limb and body go,
Are ne'ertheless with frenzy stricken,
Till wretched fancies rise and quicken
Within their brains, and melancholy
And self-bred fears possess them wholly.
Within themselves they conjure up
Dread images to fill their cup
Of misery, and before their eyes
Foolish imaginations rise, 19160
Whereof forsooth we spake before
Discoursing of the mirrors' lore :
But these folk take for real and true
Their visions which alone are due
To brains confused.
One will with great
Devotion muse and meditate,

Until before his mind is brought
 The objects that his soul hath sought,
 And with his eyes he thinks to see
 Things of substantiality, Things
seen in
dreams
 Though all is false, and doth but seem, 19170
 In fashion as a man may dream
 That sees he clearly with his eyes
 Objects, which are but shadowy lies,
 (Even as Scipio dreamed how heaven
 And hell unto his view were given,
 And sky and earth, and air and sea,
 And all things that therein may be);
 He sees the twinkling stars appear,
 And noteth how birds wing the air, 19180
 And fishes swim in pathless seas,
 And beasts disport 'neath leafy trees,
 And noteth men build towers and halls,
 And marketh what to them befalls;
 While this man loveth chamber play,
 Another to the chase all day
 Betakes him on the mountain wide,
 Or to the woods or river-side:
 One dreams of judgments, suits, and
 pleas, 19190
 Another of wars and skirmishes
 And tournaments, while song and dance
 A third man dreams of, and perchance
 Another solaceth his soul
 With fiddle-bow or sweet citole,
 Eats well and snuffs the savorous air
 Which doth sweet scent of spices bear,
 And lastly full contentment grasps
 When in his arms his love he clasps;

The Then sees perhaps anigh him stand
 fancy's Foul Jealousy, with club in hand, 19200
 midwife Who hath through Evil-Tongue found out
 What 'tis the twain are set about,
 Since deeds he by the forelock takes,
 And lovers fond unhappy makes.
 For lovers who devoted are,
 To ardent passions set no bar,
 And thence oftwhiles great dolour find
 When Morpheus' hands their senses bind
 In slumber, for within their cup
 Of joy is bitterness stirred up. 19210
 A prey to sufferings intense
 (This know I by experience),
 They deeply dream of her whose love
 Their hearts are set upon above
 All others in the world, while those
 Whom for her sake they hate as foes
 Are mingled in their dreams, and keep
 The brain in torment while they sleep.
 Or if some angry quarrel vex
 Their souls all night with woes complex, 19220
 Alone of vengeance, wrath, and hate
 Men dream, and how to fix the fate,
 With all the might that in them lies,
 Of those they count their enemies,
 Working manœuvres in their brain
 To reach the ends whereof they're
 fain.
 Or if in gaol they pass their time
 For treason, or some kindred crime,
 They dream deliverance to achieve,
 Unless despair her web doth weave, 19230

Then dream they of the gallows-tree
 (Whereon by day most wretchedly
 They muse), or other grievous thing
 Doth o'er their souls dark shadows fling,
 For all these visions vain, forsooth,
 The semblance bear of earnest truth,
 And thus are joy and grief amain,
 Immixed and meddled in the brain,
 Which every sense in turn deceives
 By shadows which its fancy weaves ;

Dame
 Habundia

19240

Whence many foolishly declare
 That men by night mere phantoms are
 Who forth with Dame Habundia speed,
 For, of all children born, indeed,
 Some say that at the least one third
 Are of her nature wild and weird,
 And wander forth three times the week,
 Feeling stern fate within them speak,
 Through all the dwellings round about,
 And bolts and barriers scorn and flout,
 Since they of entries find no lack
 Through cat-hole, rift, or window crack,
 Seen that, their bodies left behind,
 Their spirits roam with pixies kind
 Through places where men haunt and live,
 And if asked why, for reason give :
 That all the wondrous things they see,
 To them in bed ne'er brought could be,
 And therefore through the world afar
 Go forth their souls which nought can bar.
 Nor do they stay them there, forsooth,
 But fain would preach as gospel truth,

19250

19260

Body That should the body be turned o'er,
 and soul The soul can enter it no more.
 But monstrous folly count I this,
 For unto men well known it is
 That each man's body lieth dead
 When once therefrom the soul is sped.
 And none can doubt that if 'twere so,
 That three times weekly souls must go 19270
 Forth from the body, and amain
 Three times re-enter it again
 Within a week—thus would there be
 Each week, of resurrections three.

But this point need no man discuss
 For clear it is to all of us,
 That never mortal yet drew breath
 Who twice hath passed the gate of death,
 Nor spirit e'er put on its clay
 Again before the judgment-day, 19280
 Unless some miracle should be
 By God's hand worked out specially,
 As of Saint Lazarus we read,
 Which His unchallenged power bade speed.
 And, on the other hand, when say
 Some men, that if the soul away
 Goes from the mortal frame, and then
 The corse is turned, it ne'er again
 Can enter, who can that receive
 For truth, and such false tale believe? 19290
 'Tis certain, and beyond all doubt,
 That when the soul hath passed from out
 The body, 'tis more quick and free
 Than while it lives constrictedly

Therein, for its complexion gives
 Temper to that which in it lives,
 And therefore 'twould, as I'm inclined
 To think, more lightly entrance find
 Than exit from the body, though
 'Twere turned since thence the soul did go. 19300

The soul
 as an
 entity

But if of all the human race
 A third part strays from place to place
 With Dame Habundia (as we might
 Believe if old wives' tales tell right),
 Then surely must that fate befall
 Not to a third part, but to all
 In turn, for none, by likelihood,
 Exist, who dream not ill or good;
 And that not thrice a week I ween,
 But fifteen times in nights fifteen, 19310
 Or may be more, or may be less,
 As fancies sleepers' brains oppress.
 'Tis not my business to decide
 If truth or falsehood dreams provide,
 Or whether they esteemed should be,
 Or scoffed at for absurdity,
 Or why some hideous aspects wear,
 While others teem with promise fair,
 E'en as they severally appear
 To augur hope or threaten fear, 19320
 Or prove of different sorts and kinds
 Through differing moods of varying minds,
 Or if in visions God doth send
 Us revelations, or the fiend
 Thereby doth in men's hearts inspire
 Such thoughts as lead them to hell fire;

Rain-
bows and
comets

All this I leave aside perforce,
And take the thread of my discourse.

Already have I told you how
The clouds, when they aweary grow 19330
Of casting arrows through the sky,
(Which are more often moist than dry,
Since with soft showers and dew are they
Refreshed and watered day by day
Unless upon them fiercely beat
The thirsty rays of ardent heat),
Then slack they all their bows as one
When deem they well that so 'twere done.
But wondrous, truly, is the law
That rules the bows these archers draw, 19340
For quickly all their colours fly
When they their quivers would supply,
And ne'er they use again I ween
Their bows when once have they been seen,
For if to speed new shafts they're fain,
Fashion must they their bows again,
Which only can the sun indue
And tire with many a glorious hue.

Moreover 'tis with power intense
The heavens work out their influence 19350
Alike o'er earth, and air, and sea.
Great comets cause they, which are free
To speed their flames across the sky
Unhindered, till they waste and die,
And of their portents many a tale
Men tell, but all of small avail.

The deaths of princes they declare,
 Cry some, who rash predictions dare,
 But comets in good truth no more
 Watch over death of kings than o'er
 The passing of poor peasants, nay,
 Of neither heed nor care have they.
 But this most certainly we know,
 That all around the world they go
 As they the ordering may find
 Of climates, beasts, and human kind,
 Which 'neath the influence and power
 Are of such stars as rule the hour,
 Or planets which bestud the heaven
 And all earth's doings guide and leaven,
 Controlling things men count as chance
 With hidden, deep significance,
 And thus the world's affairs arrange,
 Subjecting all to many a change.

Signifi-
 cance of
 comets

19360

19370

I say not that a king should be
 Esteemed a rich man more than he
 Who goeth barefoot by the way,
 Earning his bread from day to day ;
 For 'tis content that makes richesse,
 And avarice brings but wretchedness.
 And whether king, or bare of store,
 But poor is he who craveth more ;
 And written in a certain book,
 We find that kings and pictures look
 Alike, for Ptolemy made note
 Of this when Almagest he wrote,
 Saying: Who would a picture see
 Right well, should at some distance be,

19380

Fortune For all the faults we see anear,
 rules all Which at a distance disappear, 19390
 And things which from afar we deem
 Most fair, but rudely handled seem
 When closely viewed.

So, powerful friends
 Oft willing seem to serve one's ends,
 When little known, but who should try
 Them hand to hand, will speedily
 Discovery make how vain it were
 Favours to ask, and lest he fare
 But evilwise, will hesitate
 Rashly to tempt an evil fate. 19400
 All this is but what Horace saith
 Concerning great men's truth and faith.

No! No! the heavenly powers deign not
 More to note deaths of kings I wot,
 Than those of honest churls, nor are
 Kings' bodies dead, one dab of tar
 More worth than those of clerk and squire,
 Or honest men who work for hire;
 Each cries alike on gossip's knee
 Newborn—what difference can we see? 19410
 Naked and impotent are all,
 High-born or peasant, great and small:
 That human nature is throughout
 The whole world equal, none can doubt.
 'Tis fickle Fortune doth confer
 Her gifts whereso it pleaseth her,
 And as she gives, so takes away,
 Uncertain she, from day to day,
 Freely she gives, and doth reclaim
 As freely, recking nought men's blame. 19420

XCIX

Here Nature brings before our eyes
 The source whence only can arise
 Nobility, and so displays
 Its modes and manners, works and ways.

AND if some man, with pride elate,
 Should vow that I herein misstate
 The case, declaring that he can
 Lay claim to name of gentleman,
 As people phrase it, seen that he
 Long lineage boasts and blazonry,
 Above rude folk who are but born
 To till the earth, with labour worn,
 I should reply that, 'tis alone
 By virtue noblemen are known,
 And only he should men count base
 In whom fair virtue giveth place
 To hideous vice. An upright heart
 Doth true nobility impart,
 But mere nobility of birth
 I reckon as of little worth.
 The nobleman who lives to-day,
 Before his fellows should display
 Those qualities which his forbears
 Won bright renown in far off years.
 Now from the world's vain show they're gone,
 Leaving unto their heirs, alone
 Their wealth, but with them bearing hence
 Their nobleness and excellence
 Of soul, and so their sons remain
 Inheritors of nought but vain

Who is a
 gentle-
 man?

19430

19440

19450

Clerks Titles and wealth—unless they buy
 should be With noble deeds nobility.
 noble

Much fairer chance the learned have
 To prove them noble, wise, and suave
 (The wherefore will I straightway show),
 Than mighty kings and lords, who know
 No whit of books, for every clerk
 Who studieth scriptures needs must mark
 The wit and wisdom taught therein,
 And deeply pondering them may win 19460
 Such knowledge as will lead him straight,
 Eschewing ill, to heaven's fair gate.
 For whatso'er the world hath seen
 Of good or ill, inscribed hath been
 In chronicles of bygone times,
 Which memory keep of basest crimes,
 While close beside them may be read
 The glorious deeds by heroes sped.

Briefly, a man from books may learn
 Virtue to love and vice to spurn. 19470
 Noble each clerk is, or should be
 (Whether a learned master he
 Or scholar), and of gracious mind,
 Noble and courteous, sweet, and kind;
 For if they be not so, then they
 Thereby but evil hearts betray.
 Advantage scholars have above
 Rude men who chase and woodcraft love,
 And therefore none are valued less
 Than clerks in whom lacks gentleness, 19480

Since they, with consciousness awake
 To virtue, her fair paths forsake,
 And clerks who wed their souls to vice
 Will, in the Lord of Paradise,
 When comes the dreadful dooming day,
 Find sterner judge than people lay,
 Who ne'er in books were trained to read
 How vice to shun and virtue speed.
 And though a king should chance to be
 A man well lettered, yet would he 19490
 Have far less time, amid state cares,
 To read, than one who cassock wears
 In cloistered cell.

True
 nobility

And therefore less

Princes oft gain of true noblesse,
 Than studious monk or well-read clerk,
 Who scriptures may digest and mark
 Unhindered.

If men fain would learn

How they for high noblesse may earn
 Distinction, with this golden lore
 Their minds and memories let them store : 19500

Whoso would practise true noblesse
 Must cast off pride and idleness,
 Himself to arms or study give,
 And pure of soul and spirit live.
 In sweet humility attired,
 His heart should be with kindness fired
 Toward every man, except he meets
 Some foe who scornfully entreats
 His gentleness. In every way
 To dames and damsels let him pay 19510

Praise of Due honour, yet affiance great
 study Repose not in them lest too late
 He find, alas! that cruel scorn
 Is all the fruit his grace hath borne.
 Honour such men should find, and fame
 Be theirs, unstained or scathed by blame,
 And they alone win praising wide,
 By name of Noble dignified.
 A knight should never shame his sword,
 Nor ever let unseemly word 19520
 Escape his lips, of honour fain
 And scorning sloth, like good Gawain,
 Or Robert of Artois, whose ways
 Were noble from his cradle days,
 Through all his life, for largess free
 Renowned, and unstained chivalry,
 And in the field of honour great
 Ere yet his years reached man's estate.
 A knight who holds him in such guise, 19530
 Noble and valiant, pure and wise,
 Beloved shall be where'er he go,
 The good man's friend, the recreant's foe.

And that man eke should honoured be
 Who spends his lifedays patiently
 In study, and, by learning led,
 In virtue's paths delights to tread.
 And gathered from the days of yore
 Of bright examples many a score,
 Could I recount, but sorely doubt
 To tire you ere my tale ran out. 19540
 In olden days—good times were then,
 Kings, emperors, and great noblemen

Poets
honoured
of old

To learned clerks much honour showed,
 And goodly gifts on them bestowed.
 To poets who life's burdens leaven
 Were villas and fair gardens given.
 Virgil, the sweet-voiced, was apaid
 Right generously, and master made
 Of beauteous Naples, city fair,
 Which Lavardins and Paris dare
 Not vie with. In Calabria's plains
 Had Ennius gardens, for the pains
 Wherewith he wrought sweet verse—but no,
 'Twere vain o'er all the roll to go;
 With names could I fill many a page
 Of men who, though their lineage
 Was lowly, yet to fame did mount,
 By genius, above king or count,
 And worthily were held to be
 The flower of all nobility.

19550

19560

19570

But those good days are dead, alas!
 And now may men a lifetime pass
 In studying deep philosophy,
 Faring therefor o'er land and sea
 In poverty and misery great,
 Begging their bread at Dives' gate,
 Barefooted, clad in threadbare gown,
 Wending their way from town to town,
 Esteemed by kings not worth a hen,
 Although far worthier gentlemen,
 (May God preserve me from the shivers)
 Than sparks who daily fill their quivers
 To shoot poor hares, or those one
 sees
 Stablished in princely palaces.

Alex-
ander the
Great

And he who claimeth to inherit
Noblesse, though void himself of merit,
By forbears won in earlier day,
Shall he be counted noble? Nay!
A common wretch should he be deemed,
Far less by honest men esteemed, 19580
Than had he been base beggar-born.
To bow to such an one I'd scorn,
Although he chanced to be the son
Of Alexander great, who won,
By bold adventure, empire o'er
The wide-stretched earth, from shore to
shore.

And when his arms had brought a low
Beneath his rule each vigorous foe,
And many a tribe of timorous folk
Had tamely bent beneath his yoke, 19590
Grew then to vanity so great
That earth proved incommensurate
With his desires, and he exclaimed
That, all too narrowly was framed
The world for him, and so amain,
His soul of mightier conquests fain,
He smote upon the gates of hell,
Yearning the powers thereof to quell.
And when the gods of Hades heard
His stroke, alarm their bosoms stirred, 19600
Lest this was He who by the Cross
Should compensate for Adam's loss,
Break down hell's bars, subdue their pride,
And heaven's bright portals open wide,
Delivering those from hell for whom
On Calvary He suffered doom.

Let us suppose, though ne'er it can
 So happen, that no gentleman
 I ever formed, nor e'er allowed
 Great men to rise from out the crowd, 19610
 Who then could claim nobility?
 Therefore to all it clear must be,
 Who care hereof to face the truth,
 That no nobility, forsooth,
 Can any boast, unless he strives
 To emulate the noble lives
 Of his forbears. And this to do
 Should be the aim of all those who
 Would fain be stamped with honour's
 seal,

Yet scorn from ancestors to steal 19620
 A glory which they merit not.
 For all men will agree, I wot,
 That nothing can confer noblesse
 On any living man, unless
 His hand some noble work hath done;
 For glory by a father won
 Can no more give his children fame
 Than can his misdeeds shadow blame.
 Honour to him who merits it!
 But he who vilely spends his wit 19630
 In wasteful sin and harmful vice,
 Or usury and avarice,
 Or boastfulness and foolish pride,
 And is in leasing double-dyed,
 A wastrel of his goods, though he
 Spends nought in alms or charity,
 While in his heart all crimes abound;
 (And of such sort, alas! are found

What
 men are
 noble?

Nobility Plenteous examples, people born
intrans- Of parents who would hold in scorn 19640
missible A villain deed,) unjust it were
 That one of such a sort should share
 In glory by his fathers won,
 Through valiancy in days long gone :
 He should, forsooth, be held more base
 Than one who springs of meanest race.

And men of sense will all agree
 That a wide gaping gulf must be
 'Twixt those who noble actions do 19650
 For fair renown, and misers, who
 Expend long days of life and health
 To win and garner boundless wealth
 With restless zeal that nought can tire.
 For he within whose heart desire
 Rages to bring beneath his hands
 Great heaps of treasure, houses, lands,
 Jewels and coin, although he hold
 A hundred thousand marks of gold,
 May leave his goods to whom he will.
 But though a man his blood should spill 19660
 To garner honour, or should store
 His heart abrim with learned lore,
 Neither his valour, worth, or wit
 Can he to well-loved heirs transmit.
 Can one bequeath his learning? Nay—
 Nor honour, nor renown, he may
 Devise, but can instruction give,
 If heirs will learn, how well to live ;
 But no man others' hearts can fire
 With virtue if they lack desire 19670

The name
of gentle-
man

Thereto; good counsel some folk find
 Less value than an apple-rind;
 Much rather they, forsooth, are fain
 Goods, lands, and chattels rich to
 gain.

Each cries: A gentleman am I!
 Since that's the name those commonly
 Are called by, who inherit what
 Their ancestors by merit got,
 The prize of wit or fair endeavour;
 But they love hawking by the river, 19680

Or following up with horse and hound
 The merry chase, the full year round,
 And though but idle oafs they be,
 Pose as the flower of chivalry.

Such men are not of noble birth,
 But only trade upon the worth
 Of others, and when they appeal
 To ancient lineage make, but steal
 The honoured name of those who won
 Nobility in days bygone. 19690

For though all men are born through me
 Equal, straightway they wish to be
 Of other nobleness than that

I give, which they, forsooth, find flat,
 Although no name can be more fair
 Than native freedom, which all bear
 Of my free gift, and with it too
 Reason God gave, which makes all, who,
 As human beings draw life's breath,
 Like gods and angels—save for death. 19700

But man a mortal is, and hence
 'Twixt God and man wide difference

Ancestry Is set, and thus must men achieve
 is nought Such noblesse as they ne'er receive
 From God or Nature. Well, I wot,
 If one low-born inherit not
 Fair virtue, neither doth a king
 Or count. A far more shameful thing,
 I hold it, if a king's son strays
 From virtue's paths to evil ways, 19710
 Than if a man prove reprobate,
 Born of a sire of low estate,
 As shoemaker, or swineherd, or
 Ploughman, or other rustic boor.
 More honourable 'twere, I ween,
 To noble Gawain, had he been
 Son to some coward who had stayed
 At home, of valiant deeds afraid,
 Than if, though born of Renouard, he
 Had shown him base and cowardly. 19720

But fool were he who dared gainsay
 That, when Death flits a king away,
 Of more note is his passing than
 That of a churl or borel man,
 And farther reaching is his word.
 But thence ariseth the absurd
 And foolish creed that, when the sky
 With comets flames, a king shall die,
 For though nor king nor prince there were
 Throughout the world who sceptre bare, 19730
 And though all rank and rule should cease,
 Alike in time of war or peace,
 Yet will celestial bodies breed
 Comets with flaming hair, and speed

Con-
cerning
comets

Them o'er the arc of heaven to blaze
 By night, the wondering world to maze,
 Provided that the air supplies
 The matter whence their flames arise.
 Like fiery dragons do they fly,
 Scattering bright stars across the sky, 19740
 Appearing as they fell from out
 The heavens, as some folk vainly doubt.
 But reason teaches nought at all
 Can from the heavens escape or fall,
 Nor ever can corruptive worm
 Affect their fabric fast and firm,
 For all therein is so arranged
 That nought can perish, nought be
 changed.
 No matter can derange their state,
 Or to their substance penetrate ; 19750
 However subtle it may be,
 Nothing can enter possibly
 Therein, nor can aught pass indeed
 Therefrom, except the rays which speed
 From out them and swift passage take,
 Yet ne'er their matter waste or break.
 Within their power the laws they hold
 Of summer's heat and winter's cold,
 And snow and hail they cause to fall,
 Now thickly sown, now thin and small, 19760
 And by their oppositions they
 Have influence great in many a way ;
 Even as they retreat afar,
 Or coming near conjoinèd are
 To one another, till some die
 Almost with fear when in the sky

Astral influence They see eclipses ; others think
 The world is on destruction's brink
 When brilliant planets disappear,
 As move they with the circling year, 19770
 Though, if they understood my laws,
 'Twere clear to them that little cause
 They have for fear.

By tempests driven
 And lashed to madness, towards high heaven
 Big waves rush up, the clouds to kiss,
 Then fall, as they by them, ywis,
 Were vanquished, and forthwith no more
 The sea dares bellow, rage, and roar,
 Nor cause his waves to spring on high,
 Save those which must eternally 19780
 By the moon's influence fall and rise ;
 Restraint they laugh at and despise.
 And if some man were fain to know
 What miracles on earth below
 The bright stars work, so great are
 they,

I answer, that should one display
 Them all at full, no book would hold
 Their tale by when 'twere fully told.
 Thus note I that the heavens acquit
 Themselves in manner fair and fit 19790
 Towards me, and in no point fail
 To prove them of right good avail.

Nor do I of the elements
 Complain, which work out my intents,
 Blending together as it were
 The revolutions of the air.

Plants
obey
Nature

All living things beneath the moon
 Are mortal, as I've said eftsoon,
 And never creature yet so well
 Nourished itself, but that it fell 19800
 'Neath death as Nature doth direct
 At last by definite effect.
 This is a rule so absolute
 And fixed, that vain is all pursuit
 Of means whereby to change its course ;
 It varieth ne'er, nor slacks its force.

Nor will I of the plants complain,
 Which all are of my hestings fain
 And faithfully respect my laws,
 As being primal spring and cause 19810
 Of life ; they duly send forth roots,
 And boles and branches, flowers and fruits ;
 And, in succession, being give
 To others when they cease to live.

Nor with the birds or scale-bound fish
 Do I find fault ; my every wish
 Fulfil they with abundant care,
 Proving what love they towards me bear ;
 Each one I find a worthy scholar,
 And all set shoulder to the collar 19820
 According to their kind and use,
 All breed, engender, and produce,
 While none are left to fail and die,
 Which fains my heart exceedingly.
 Nor of the beasts whose heads are prone
 To seek earth's face I make my moan,

Man For ne'er against me they rebel,
 insults But love my yoke, and serve me well :
 Nature To me they cling, and as I bid
 They act, as erst their forbears did. 19830
 Right merry festivals they keep,
 When males upon the females leap,
 Engendering in their lustihood
 What time soe'er to them seems good.
 Thereof but small debate beasts make,
 But simply love for love's sweet sake ;
 What this desires, will that afford
 With kind and debonair accord ;
 And with the blessings I provide
 All vow their hearts full satisfied. 19840
 The smallest creatures men despise,
 Beetles, ants, gnats and butterflies,
 And worms that from corruption come,
 Finding in carcasses a home,
 And snakes and adders (in whom lurk
 Fell poison) joy to do my work.

Man only, unto whom I've given
 Freely of all things under heaven,
 Man, whom alone I formed with face
 Uplift to seek God's dwelling-place, 19850
 Man, whom alone from earth's dull sod
 I made in image of his God—
 My last and fairest work—'tis he
 Alone insults and angers me.
 Yet hath he not in all his frame,
 Except what through my bounty came,
 One single quality or member
 More precious than a lump of amber ;

Nay, even to his very soul
 My debtor is he for the whole, 19860
 Saving one thing.

Through me, who hold
 O'er him dominion manifold,
 Man hath three powers of body and soul,
 Nay, soothly may I say his whole
 Existence he derives from me,
 The power to live, to feel, to be,
 And would the wretch prove good and wise,
 A glorious field before him lies,
 For God's great love to him hath given
 What things soe'er exist 'neath heaven, 19870
 That he may at his will employ
 Their uses, nor thereof be coy.

His being hath he from the bones
 Of mother earth, Deucalion's stones ;
 With thriving herbs he lives and deals,
 And with mute living beasts he feels.
 Nay more, in understanding he
 May with God's angels equal be.
 What more of man then can I say ?
 Whate'er he wills to do he may ; 19880

A small world in himself is he,
 But worse than wolf entreateth me.
 Man's wit I clearly recognise
 As something that beyond me lies,
 A subtle and mysterious thing
 Which was not of my fostering.
 Whate'er is mortal count I mine,
 But have no hand in things divine.
 And Plato clearly showeth what
 Belongs to me, and what doth not : 19890

Plato's When speaking of the gods that ne'er
 words Shall suffer death, he saith: They were
 By their creator ordered so,
 That death they ne'er should undergo,
 But subject to his will must be
 Their gift of immortality.
 All Nature's works, moreover, saith
 Great Plato, are foredoomed to death;
 In God's sight mean are they, and must,
 Their part outplayed, return to dust. 19900
 Nature before the Almighty power
 Of God hath but a passing hour,
 He as in lightning flash doth see
 Time past, time present, time to be.
 Great Emperor is he, lord, and king;
 Unto the gods he saith: Ye spring
 From me as father. This well know
 All learned men who read Plato;
 The words he wrote when Greece was young
 Read thus in our rude English tongue: 19910

'O gods, your God am I, creator,
 Father, and prime originator
 Of all your being, every feature
 You own proclaims each one my creature.
 Nature but made you mortal, I
 Alone give immortality.

For nought there is by Nature made,
 But what must in due season fade
 And perish, whatso care thereto
 She gives, but whatsoe'er is due 19920
 To God's right hand is pure, and clear
 Of all defect, and hath no peer,

Birth of
Christ

Nor ever can corruption see,
 Since made 'tis incorruptibly.
 Hence must it be perforce allowed,
 That though ye all are freely dowed
 With life by my supremest will,
 Yet in some measure are ye still
 Beneath corruption's power, unless
 I save ye from that wretchedness : 19930
 By nature must ye surely die,
 But my strong will may death defy,
 For undivided power is mine
 O'er all things, human and divine,
 That bind your life, therein must lie
 Your hope to live eternally.'

Herein you have the pith and wit
 Of what, erewhile, great Plato writ,
 Who might of God with reason dare
 To write, since none like him have e'er 19940
 Such knowledge of His nature shown,
 Nor to their fellow-men made known
 The depth of His great love, or how
 They must to Him in reverence bow ;
 But even his mind could not suffice
 To grasp God's all-surpassingness,
 For in no place on earth was room
 E'er found for Him, but in the womb
 Of one pure Virgin, who, when she
 Her God within her felt to be, 19950
 His nature better understood
 Than Plato, through sweet motherhood ;
 For when she knew what blessed weight
 Moved in her, was her soul elate,

Plato Assured that he whose gentle strife
 over- Brought joyance to her, was of life
 passed The source eternal, centre he
 Of all existence, though none see
 The bounds of his circumference,
 His limit being but space immense. 19960
 The wondrous triangle is he
 Whose angles are but unity,
 And though the triple corners run
 Apart, they are, forsooth, but one.
 The circle 'tis triangular
 And the triangle circular,
 Which in the Virgin harboured it.
 And this great mystery the wit
 Of Plato overpassed, for how
 Could he suppose that God would bow 19970
 To human flesh, or unity
 Conceive, combined with trinity.
 Man's understanding God alone
 Created, and on him the boon
 Freely bestowed, a gifting great.
 Alas! that I must needs relate
 How to betray his God he used
 That gift; but when he so abused
 This blessing, thinking to deceive
 His God, he fatally did weave 19980
 His own deception, and alas!
 My master thence through death must
 pass,
 When without me man's flesh he fain
 Took on him to spare men the pain
 Of hell's fierce fire. Yes, without me!
 I know not how, except that he

Sybil's
prophecy

Almighty is. Amazed I stood
 When I beheld the motherhood
 Of holy Mary, in whose breast
 Her Maker for a while took rest,
 And then for wretched man was born,
 And lastly died on tree forlorn.

By me was ne'er such wonder wrought
 As that a virgin should be brought
 To childbed's pains. And yet, forsooth,
 Through Jews and paynims was the truth
 (Of that great incarnation done
 Of God the Father's only son,
 By prophesy made clear and plain,
 Whereof our hearts may well be fain : 20000

In Virgil's book, Bucolics hight,
 He tells how Sybil's utterance dight
 Words by the Holy Ghost inspired,
 Saying: 'A lineage long desired
 Shall from high heaven on earth be sent
 To cheer the nations worn and spent ;
 Back shall the age of iron be rolled,
 And once more reign the age of gold.'

And Albumazar, Arab great,
 In this wise did prognosticate : 20010
 'Within the sign of Virgo shall
 A glorious Virgin's birth befall,
 A virgin, yet a mother blest,
 Shall to her father give the breast,
 And as a brother's love shall be
 Her husband's in its purity.'

These words all men may read who
 look

In Albumazar's famous book,

Man un- And all good Christians will remember
grateful That golden day of rich September, 20020
When to a longing outworn earth
Befell that boon—our Lady's birth.

E'en as my words the tale afford,
'Tis known to Jesus Christ our Lord,
With what strong zeal and labour I
Have striven for man unceasingly.
He is the end of all my work,
Yet doth he ever seek to shirk
My laws, and dares my hand upbraid ;
Nor to the traitorous renegade 20030
Will all that I can do suffice.
What words can paint his ingrained vice?
The benefits my hands have wrought
For him are countless, though as nought
He reckons them, but on my head
Heaps contumelies unnumberèd.

Most worthy chaplain, gentle priest,
Am I not wrong to love this beast,
And still with gifts his life to bless,
While he returns but bitterness? 20040
God's holy rood I call to aid !
Alas ! that e'er vile man I made !
But by the death He underwent,
Whom Judas' kiss betrayed and shent,
And 'gainst whom Longius bent his lance,
I will make known man's insolence
Before that God who first displayed
To me the man his will had made

In his own form—ah! misery!
 Being a woman nought can I
 Restrain my tongue, but must reveal 20050
 The indignant anger that I feel.
 A grievous insult 'tis that he
 Hath thus estranged himself from me,
 And therefore I his vice and crime
 Will paint, to shame him for all time.

Man-
 kind de-
 nounced

Man is a murderer, proud and base,
 A thief, a felon void of grace,
 A hateful, despitous self-seeker,
 A gluttonous wretch, an evil-speaker, 20060
 A forger, a disloyal traitor,
 A recreant vile, a false delator
 Of honest folk, a perjured liar,
 Immersed, nay steeped, in avarice dire,
 A hypocrite, whom hell befall,
 A miscreant wretch unnatural.
 In short, he sells him for a price
 As bond and thrall to blackest vice,
 Which harbourage within him gains,
 And binds his will more fast than chains 20070
 Of iron. Seeks not that man death
 Who to vile sin surrendereth
 His soul? And since all things must go
 Back to the source from whence they flow,
 Bethink you, when vile man shall stand
 To hear his sentence at the hand
 Of him to whom unending love
 He should have rendered far above
 All else, and kept his body pure,
 How shall he venture to endure 20080

Punish- His God's stern glance? And with what
 ment eye
 threat- Shall he, who sits the wretch to try,
 ened Regard him who hath travailed so
 On earth that he hath nought to show
 Of worthy work, but hath abused
 The talent he should fain have used
 To serve his Lord? Both great and small
 'Neath equal condemnation fall,
 As though they had alliance sworn
 Evil to love and good to scorn, 20000
 And honour thus full oft is seen
 Held but of low account, I ween;
 And thence men needs must undergo,
 Or grievous death, or worldly woe.
 Alas! how must the caitiff shrink,
 As all his crimes he needs must think
 And ponder over, ere he comes
 To stand before the judge, who sums
 And weighs his crimes with balance true!
 What refuge shall he turn him to? 20100
 What guerdon can he then expect,
 Save that his wretched throat be decked
 With cord to drag him down to hell,
 Chained and confined in dismal cell,
 Or forced to join the torturous revels
 Of Satan and his million devils?
 Then shall he be in cauldron boiled,
 Or roasted, fore and aft, well oiled,
 O'er glowing coals on red-hot grill;
 Or on a wheel, which ne'er stands still, 20110
 Be, like Ixion, turned by hands
 Of demons armed with flaming brands.

Hell's
torments

Or else with hunger dire and thirst
 Suffer like Tantalus accurst,
 Who, while immersed in rippling waves,
 One slaking sup of water craves,
 But ne'er the tide, that laps his chin
 And mouth, can find its way therein ;
 And still fierce hunger's pangs outwear
 His body and his entrails tear, 20120
 Until at last of famine he
 Must perish, raging horribly,
 Yet void of power is he to close
 His teeth on fruit which beats his nose,
 For when he fain his mouth would ply,
 Forthwith the apples upwards fly.
 Or else some miserable wretch,
 His limbs and sinews all astretch,
 Must push uphill a monstrous stone,
 Which o'er him rolls as falls he prone, 20130
 Like thy dread task, O Sisyphus !
 Whose weary years are wasted thus.
 Or wretches fill a sieve-made tun
 With water—task fulfilled of none,
 Though labouring restlessly as bees—
 Witness the sad Danaïdes.
 And you, fair Genius, know right well
 How Tityus in the nether hell
 Was cast supine, his limbs outspread,
 While vultures on his entrails fed. 20140

And many another torment dire
 Of numbing ice, or scorching fire
 Shall fall upon this rebel race,
 Who dare insult me face to face,

Cupid's
complaint

Until I be revenged on those
Whose crimes declare them as my foes.
For there the impartial judge doth sit,
Who doometh with unerring wit :
And if to pity gave he rein,
Then mercy might the bargain gain 20150
Sped by some usurer merciless ;
But just is He, nor more nor less.
Therefore let him take heed who hath
His feet let stray from virtue's path.

Leaving to God the task to deal
With men's misdeeds, assured I feel
That with unerring wisdom he
Will doom and pardon righteously.
But the complaint that Cupid makes
Strikes loudly on mine ear and shakes 20160
My very being, and to you,
O father, earnestly I sue
To help me in my deep distress,
The root whereof I fain confess
To be that recreant men refuse
My blessings to accept and use.

C

Herein is told how Nature sends
Genius to Cupid and his friends,
That he their courage may excite
With unabated zeal to fight. 20170

GENIUS, whose lips so sweetly speak,
My charge is that you forthwith seek
The God of Love, whose heart doth feel
For me more yearning than the steel

Nature
salutes
Cupid

Hath for the loadstone, ever he
Speedeth my bidding joyously.
Assure him Lady Nature sends
Warm salutations, and commends
Her likewise to his mother sweet,
Dame Venus, since their hearts aye beat 20180
In unison; and greetings give
To all the valiant lords who live
And fight beneath his banner, save
False-Seeming, base and treacherous knave,
Seeing that he associates
With felons, thieves, and reprobates,
And men who play the hypocrite,
And thence are dubbed in holy writ
False prophets, Satan's friends elect.
Forced-Abstinence I too suspect 20190
Doth to that rabble-rout belong,
Who love to do me spite and wrong.
For she possesseth to my deeming
A wondrous kinship with False-seeming:
And I, forsooth, am little fain
To welcome either of the twain.
Perceiving how they seem to be
At home 'mid evil company,
'Twere well, methinks, at any cost
That Love should drive from out his
host 20200
Such miscreants, though in mind I bear
How useful are the accursed pair,
And what small progress can be made
In lovers' war without their aid.
For true 'tis, this unholy twain
The cause of Cupid oft sustain,

Nature's And those who through them win their end,
 message A charitable eye will lend
 To their misdeeds.

Dear friend, away,
 Seek out the God of Love and lay 20210
 My griefs before him ; not that he
 Can right and justice gain for me,
 But that your news may salve the smart
 Of sorrow that afflicts his heart,
 The while his cruel foes may thence
 Dejection great experience.
 Say you are sent with orders straight
 And strict to excommunicate
 All those who dare insult his cause,
 And bless his friends who keep my laws 20220
 With willing hearts, as they are writ
 Within my book for benefit
 Of those who love me, and ne'er cease
 To study how they may increase
 Their race, and worthy homage pay
 To love throughout their shortlived day.
 Such folk I count my faithful friends,
 And for their woes will make amends
 To them by days of dear delight.
 But bid them hold in dire despite 20230
 The vices and gross crimes which I
 Have told of antecedently,
 While to the full love's joys they taste.
 Moreover, prithee, pardon haste
 To give them, not for ten short years,
 But plenary, and thus their fears
 Wipe out for all that they have done
 When free confession shrift hath won.

And when the host, as nought I doubt,
 Have welcomed you with deafening shout, 20240
 And courteous salutations due
 Both given and received have you,
 Then in full audience shall be shown
 The pardon, and my will made known
 Without delay, thereof take note.

Genius
 absolves
 Nature

The Author.

Then she dictated, whilst he wrote.
 That done, Dame Nature sealed the
 sheet,
 And bade him forth with hurrying feet,
 Saying that if she'd failed in aught,
 She absolution humbly sought. 20250

Soon as Dame Nature thus had made
 Her shrift as laws and custom bade,
 At once she reaped the blessed fruit
 Of pardon full and absolute
 At Genius' hand, her kindly priest,
 Who much her happiness increased,
 By giving some slight penitence
 Proportioned to her small offence.
 Then he enjoined her to go
 Back to her forge, and labour so 20260
 As she was wont, cast off her fears,
 Comfort her heart, and dry her tears,
 And faithful in her work to be,
 Until the King should set her free
 Therefrom, whose power and mightiness
 May all undo, and all redress.

Nature.

Nature's
work-
shop With willing heart, fair sir, she cries.

Genius.

Quoth Genius: Straightway I arise
To do your bidding, and give aid
To those who love's deep waters wade. 20270
But this silk chasuble I first
Must cast, wherein I'm now immersed,
And likewise doff both alb and rochet.

The Author.

Then all three hung he on a crotchet,
And in a secular garment dight
His limbs, more comely far and bright,
As if he would the dance essay;
And with spread wings took thence his way.

CI

This tells how Lady Nature went
To work—as on much labour bent— 20280
Within her forge straightway, for she
Loves to do all things thoroughly.

THEN to her workshop Nature goes,
Wielding her sledge with mighty blows
Deftly, as she erewhile had done.

The Lover.

The wings of Genius had outrun

Meantime the wind itself, and he
 Soon reached Dan Cupid's company.
 But there False-Seeming found he not :
 For soon as ever wind he got 20290
 Of how the harridan was caught,
 Who had for me an entry wrought
 Within the close, that I therein
 Might parlance with Fair-Welcome win,
 Forthwith decamped he out of view,
 Nor stayed one wink to bid adieu.
 But as it happed, not yet from thence
 Was gone Constrainèd-Abstinence,
 Who set herself at once to fly
 And gain False-Seeming's company 20300
 Whene'er she saw the priest appear,
 So that they scarce could hold her there,
 For greatly feared she, as I ween,
 To be with priest in converse seen,
 And four gold bezants would forego,
 Ere that False-Seeming saw her so.

Genius
 and the
 host

Genius thereon, without delay,
 In fashion due, I scarce need say,
 The host saluteth, and straight out
 Declares what 'tis he comes about, 20310
 Omitting not one single word.
 You well may judge what welcome stirred
 The air, as with unbounded joy
 The lords beheld the new envoy,
 And therefore shorten up my tale,
 Lest ears grow tired, and patience fail.
 For those who preach at weary length,
 Their hearers tire with waste of strength,

Venus is And longsome preachers all alone
 merry May find them ere their sermon's done. 20320

By Cupid Genius was arrayed
 In chasuble, right richly made,
 And decked with ring and cross, and
 mitre
 Than glass more clear, than crystal brighter;
 But none would further tiring stay,
 Consumed so with impatience they,
 To hear him read from out the book.
 Dame Venus so with laughter shook,
 That nowise could she hold her still,
 O'erpowering joyance seemed to fill 20330
 Her every vein; and to enforce
 The anathema when the priest's discourse
 Was done, she gave a taper bright
 Into his fist, which scarce was dight
 Of virgin wax.

Genius no more
 Delayed, but brief in hand, made for
 The vantage of a high-built stage,
 Whence might he all men's ears engage.
 The barons placed themselves around,
 Seated on many a grass-grown mound; 20340
 And then his charter he displays,
 While, with his hand, the wind's four ways,
 He signs to them to hold their peace,
 And all with wink and nudge surcease
 Their noise and listen, whilst that he
 Thus speaks with bold authority.

CII

In Venus' presence Genius stands,
 And sets forth Nature's high commands,
 While all within the mighty host,
 Who Cytheræa's service boast, 20350
 Give ear, till makes he clear and plain
 What work doth most his mistress fain.

Genius.

BY Lady Nature's high behest,
 Whose rule extends from east to west,
 As constable and vicar-general
 Of God, the emperor sempiternal,
 Who sits as in a tower above
 The world which owns his power and love,
 And over which appointeth he
 Nature as queenly deputy, 20360
 Who all administers and rules
 By the bright stars, which are but tools
 Beneath her sway, to influence
 All mundane things, by ordinance
 Of him who doth on her confer
 The office of his minister,
 Through whom all creatures have been born
 Since first on Eden broke the morn,
 And who describeth limits to
 Their fullness and increase, and who 20370
 No living thing hath made in vain
 Beneath the heavens, which aye are fain
 To move round earth by night and day
 Without cessation or delay,
 And duly measured distance keep,
 Whether aloft or in the deep:

Oration
 by Genius

Nature's true friends
 May those be excommunicate,
 As men disloyal and reprobate,
 Accursed for aye, past all respite,
 Who fail those works to use aright
 Whereon hath Nature lavished all
 Her love, or whether great or small
 They chance to be.

20380

But if one spends
 His life to further Nature's ends,
 And loves her, that will well suffice
 To set the gates of Paradise
 Ajar for him. Yea, even so
 Shall he be meet for heaven as though
 Good shrift he'd made, and shall through
 me
 Find grace; his sins my load shall be.

20390

In vain hath bounteous Nature given
 To those dull folk, whom sloth doth leaven,
 Tablets for styles, and hammers strong
 For anvils, and stout coulters long
 To ear the earth, by laws which she
 Administers benignantly:
 And pastures, not with rocks bestrewn,
 But well with grass and herbage grown,
 Which loving culture will repay
 Of spud and hoe from day to day:
 But if her children choose to shirk
 Her will, all vain must prove her work.
 Kind Nature's self do they destroy,
 Who of their labour prove so coy
 As let her fertile fallows lie
 Untilled, while they stand idly by,

20400

That she hath made so fair and good,
 With will, if they but understood
 Her ways, to give her works new birth,
 Lest death triumphant ride o'er earth. 20410
 Well may those hang their heads for
 shame

Death to
 be with-
 stood

Whose thriftless sloth my words proclaim,
 Who wilfully the trouble spare
 Themselves upon the tablets fair
 To write their names, or to achieve
 Such work as may hereafter leave
 Their stamp upon the world. Alas!
 Their despite leads to such a pass,
 That soon the anvils will be seen
 Moss-grown for want of use, I ween; 20420
 Stout hammering doth their vigour cherish,
 But if that cease, ere long they perish,
 For rust will soon to anvils cling
 When no more hear they hammers ring;
 And fallows, if men spare the plough,
 Must barren lie year long, I trow.
 Quick burial men deserve who take
 No heed to things God's hand did make,
 With fashioning of love and care,
 And to my lady give, that ne'er 20430
 Her creatures, which perforce must die,
 Should perish, but eternally
 Engender still from age to age
 A never-dying lineage.
 And grievously those people err
 Who Nature's work would fain defer
 Till sixty years be flown, for then
 Few children born would be to men:

Repair And should this God's good pleasure be,
 Nature's loss Man's race must perish utterly, 20440
 And earth's fair plains remain untilled,
 By beasts devoid of reason filled,
 Unless it pleased him to replace
 Man's lineage by some worthier race,
 Or unto those again give breath
 Who once had passed the gates of death.
 Or if all women should remain
 Virgins till sixty years, amain
 The world must die, and then were
 need
 Once more creation's work to speed. 20450
 If it be said that God's good grace
 Doth out of one man's heart erase
 The great desire, another's not,
 (For so is he all-wise, I wot,
 That ne'er his judgment goes astray,)
 Then 'tis his pleasure, one must say,
 That each in equal sort should do,
 For that one grace befits the two,
 And thence, alas! must we conclude
 Of Nature's loss the certitude. 20460
 Saving that faith belief makes clear,
 To answer this would cost me dear,
 For God made all things as we see
 In the beginning equally,
 And reasonable souls gave then
 Alike to women as to men,
 And not for one but both, his will
 It is, they should his law fulfil,
 Keeping the straight and narrow road
 That soonest leadeth unto God. 20470

And if he unto some doth give Neglect
 Command they should as virgins live, of duty
 Why should he not with reason strike
 A balance just, for all alike?
 And so 'twould seem he nought displeas'd
 Would be if man's engendering ceased.
 Whoso these questions would resolve,
 May let them in his mind revolve;
 To wise divines I fain would leave
 Such points, let them the knot unweave. 20480

But those who scorn with styles to write,
 Which give to mortals life and light,
 On tablets delicate, alas!
 Nature's intention never was
 In moulding them that they should lie
 Barren in cold sterility,
 But wisely ordered each to each
 Should lessons of inscribing teach.
 But those who, dight with hammers twain,
 Neglect to use their force amain 20490
 On the appointed anvils, those
 Who kindly Nature's laws oppose
 With foolish pride, and mask their vice
 By scorning her fair paradise,
 Pleasant and fruitful, and aside
 Turn them o'er barren ways to ride,
 Where none may gather fair renown,
 Nor worthy fruit their labours crown,
 'Tis in the end but labour lost,
 And grievous shall they find the cost, 20500
 Though sheltering them behind the vile
 Example Orpheus set erewhile,

A curse on sloth Who scorned to bend him to the work
 Appointed, but essayed to shirk
 His office, and was therefore sent
 To hell, doubt not, for punishment.
 All suchlike folk were worthily
 Strung high to deck a gallows tree.
 For he who valueth Nature not
 Is but a worthless wastrel sot, 20510
 And she all wretches will disown
 Who read her scriptures upside down,
 Perverting thus their worthy sense
 To mischief under vain pretence ;
 And who, when Nature's books they read,
 Give to her fair behests small heed.

May they be excommunicate
 As worthless, vile, and reprobate,
 Who thus themselves in crime enwrap !
 Ere comes their death-day, may it hap 20520
 To them to lose the staff and scrip
 They bear as signs of fellowship
 With worthier folk ; may direst curse
 Fall on their misused, well-filled purse.
 And may the style wherewith to write
 They scorned, be shrivelled in despite,
 Since never showed they heed or care
 To use it for the tablets fair,
 As Nature's hand designed. And since
 'Twere well that other men should wince 20530
 To see what punishment is given
 To those who have 'gainst Nature striven,
 Their hammers, styles, and bones shall be
 Cast forth and scattered shamefully.

Obey
Nature

And may all those who follow in
Their steps, partakers of like sin,
Be steeped in misery to the lips,
And scourged to hell with knotted whips.

But, for God's sake, I pray that ye,
Great lords, such vile examples flee. 20540
In Nature's service be ye quick
As squirrels 'mid the branches thick,
Swift as the wind, or merry bird,
To love by happy springtide stirred.
Plenary pardon I bestow
For all ye do where'er ye go.
In following Nature's high behest
Be diligent, and only rest
That work you may once more begin
When morrow dawns, new joys to win, 20550
Wage Nature's war ere stiff and cold
Your limbs become—worn, weak, and old.

CIII

An excommunication dread
Genius pronounces on the head
Of all and each who dare reject
Dame Nature, and her work neglect.

TO work, my masters, then, to work,
Seek not Dame Nature's laws to shirk;
Unless in labour ye engage
With right good will, your lineage 20560
Must perish. Seize ye then the plough
With ready hands, and cheerly bow

Restore Your backs in manner of the sail
 death's That bellies to the ruffling gale.
 ravages The plough-bales let your sturdy hands
 Grip, and across the fallow lands
 Drive the bright coulter, while the share
 Plays its due part, and then with care
 Scatter around the precious grain,
 In faith 'twill render back again 20570
 In autumn-tide a manifold
 Rich harvesting of bearded gold,
 Which stored within fair barns may keep
 The wolf afar while winter's sleep
 Enwraps the world. The human race,
 If labour lacks, from off the face
 Of earth must perish, nought can live
 Unless with heart and soul men give
 Themselves to work, and earnest will
 Possess them all the gaps to fill 20580
 Wrought in their ranks from day to day
 By death, whose scythe knows no delay.
 For as by Nature's laws men die,
 So 'tis her will that they supply
 Successors who may carry on
 The same good work themselves have done
 With unremitting ardour, and
 With sons and daughters store the land
 Which God created for man's use,
 That done ye well may have excuse 20590
 From hard laborious toil to rest.

Cadmus, to Pallas' high behest
 Obedient, a full acre ploughed,
 And then, by her directing, sowed

The spot with dragons' teeth, from whence
 Arose an armèd crowd immense
 Of knights, who fell to mutual strife,
 And so rest each from each the life,
 Save five, who Cadmus' fellows were
 To raise the walls of Thebes in air, 20600
 When he thereto would fain set hand,
 And, by the aid of this small band,
 Peopled the city came to be,
 Which claimeth high antiquity.
 A wondrous crop did Cadmus raise,
 And won thereby much wealth and
 praise,
 And even as he wrought, so may ye
 Increase your lineage equally.
 Confederates good possess ye twain
 If ye to multiply are fain ; 20610
 And if a third should lack to ye,
 'Twill be through your fatuity.
 'Tis yours to fight a deadly foe,
 And well may three one overthrow—
 Nay, 'twere in truth a foul disgrace
 If three stout champions should give place
 Before one foe, and should they not
 O'ercome him would deserve their lot.
 Know then I speak of sisters trine,
 Of whom two in the strife combine 20620
 With you, the third alone shall be
 Ever your tireless enemy.
 Through Clotho, who the distaff bears,
 It is that each man hither fares,
 While Lachesis draws out the thread
 Of life, which Atropos the dread

Clotho
 and
 Lachesis

Man's Cuts short ; her sisters deal forth joy,
duty Her office is but to destroy
 Man's lineage, and she casts about
 Hither and thither to spy out 20620
 Fresh victims, and e'en now doth watch
 If she perchance yourselves may catch.
 No other beast so fierce, I ween,
 In earth's wide confines may be seen ;
 For pity's sake, great lords, I cry,
 Guard you 'gainst this dire enemy.

Bethink you of your fathers then !
 And of your mothers ! act like men ;
 Prove by your deeds that ye are great
 Of soul, not fallen degenerate ! 20640
 Arouse ye ! and example take
 From those who laboured for your sake.
 Saving that they so well maintained
 Life's battle, never had you gained
 Existence ; their activity
 It was, alone, gave life to ye.
 Bethink you of your lineage,
 Fair sirs, which still from age
 Should follow on ; be not dismayed,
 But set you boldly to your trade ; 20650
 Your arms unto the shoulders bare,
 And all your energies prepare,
 To hammer, forge, and blow the fire,
 To work out Nature's high desire.
 Aid Clotho and fair Lachesis
 To mend life's loss, and if they miss
 Six threads through spite of Atropos,
 With twelve straightway make up the loss.

Bend all your powers to multiply
 The human race, and so defy 20660
 The work of Atropos, though she
 Strive hard to win the mastery.
 This felonous and caitiff wretch,
 Who keeps her murder-shears astretch
 To snap men's lives, doth love right well
 Foul Cerberus, the hound of hell,
 Who leaps, and bays deep-mouthed, with
 joy,

The dam
 of Cer-
 berus

Whene'er he sees his dam destroy
 A human life, and through and through
 Shivers with rage, unless some new 20670
 Fat morsel his dread mistress cast
 Into his maw for rich repast ;
 For well he knows his almoner,
 And for his nurture looks to her ;
 And oft, when stricken with dire thirst,
 Straight hies he to her breast accurst,
 And from her dugs assuagement wins ;
 A trine are they in lieu of twins,
 To suit the triple-headed beast
 Who growling sucks his loathsome feast. 20680
 Her gruesome foster-child she never
 Hath sought to wean, nor doth he ever
 Seek other drink or aliment
 Than that and men whose lives are spent.
 Though heaps of men and women she
 Casts in his throat unceasingly,
 No foison the great gulf can fill,
 But hungers he and ravens still
 For more ; however great her pains
 To feed him, nought his maw refrains, 20690

The And if some tainted morsels he
 furies Lets pass him, fierce Tisiphone,
 Alecto, and Megaera dread
 Seize on them for ambrosial bread.
 These furies three lay wait for men
 In hell, whom, once within their den,
 They bind and beat and scourge and strangle,
 Burn, scorch and grill, and drown and
 mangle
 Before three provosts dread who wait,
 All pitiless, within hell's gate 20700
 For those whose feet have trod the ways
 Of crime and wrong in lifetide's days.
 And this fell three with torments dire
 Confession absolute require
 Of all the unhappy wretches whom
 Forthou they mercilessly doom
 To expiate all the crimes they've done
 Since first they saw the rolling sun.
 Coward were I did I not dare
 To speak the names these provosts bear ; 20710
 One, Rhadamanthus hight, the others
 Minos and Æacus, his brothers,
 While Jupiter is known to be
 The father of the stern-heart three.
 They, while on earth, so well maintained
 Unblemished justice, that they gained
 The office down in darksome hell
 Of judges, whenso death befell
 Their bodies, since stern Pluto saw
 How well their arms upheld the law, 20720
 And for their guerdoning did he
 Give them their dread authority.

For God's sake, noble lords, I pray
 That you your valiancy display
 Against such crimes as Nature told
 Into mine ear (as teardrops rolled
 Adown her cheeks) while said I mass—
 Their names I willingly let pass,
 Yet nought shall wrong her if I fix
 The tale full told at twenty-six. 20730
 But if from crime and vileness free
 You hold yourselves, the Furies three
 Shall have no power to drag you where
 The provosts judgments dread declare.
 I fear 'twould shock you if I told
 Those crimes and vices manifold,
 But briefly does the whole expose
 That fair Romance which hight the Rose,
 And he who runs may read therein
 How vice to shun and virtue win. 20740

Judgment
 on mis-
 doers

Strive then a virtuous life to lead,
 Loving, each one, his love indeed,
 Kiss and embrace unlet by shame,
 Wrapt in sweet pleasures none dare blame,
 And when you have your devoir done,
 Listing the rede my tale hath spun,
 Then before Nature's master bow,
 Your Lord and God, and he I trow
 Your hearts' door against fear will shut
 When Atropos your thread shall cut. 20750
 The life is he alike of soul
 And body—mirror, where the whole
 Of Nature shows—she ne'er had been
 Unless she had this mirror seen,

Listen to Nature
 Since it directs and guides her ways,
 And only lives she in its rays.
 Whate'er she knows she did but gain
 From God, when made his chamberlain :
 And know, fair sirs : to every word
 Which you in my discourse have heard, 20760
 My mistress claims that you should
 give
 Attention while on earth you live,
 (For e'en though in her book you might
 Read all, 'twere wearisome to write)
 And strive to learn the whole by heart,
 In view that whereso ye depart
 In city, castle, thorp, or town,
 Ye may right widely make it known,
 In summer soft or winter keen,
 To those who have not hither been. 20770
 Whate'er is well and wisely said
 Should be with care rememberèd,
 And more 'tis spread the more will it
 Gain praise, and all men benefit.
 My counsellings right worthy are,
 And unto men more precious far
 Than sapphires bright or rubies red.
 Fair sirs, my mistress 'twould bestead
 Vastly, to scatter far and wide
 Her hests, and fools and caitiffs chide 20780
 Who set themselves to violate
 Her laws, 'gainst wisdom obdurate.
 But if ye should in worthy sort,
 By deeds and words yourselves comport,
 And also by example teach
 To other folk the good you preach,

God will not close to you those plains
 Where bliss uninterrupted reigns,
 But take you for his very own
 Among that flock whose names are known 20790
 To him familiarly: all they
 Who are his sheep unhindered stray
 Through fresh green pastures, gently led
 By him whom the unblemishèd
 Pure Virgin bore, the Lamb divine,
 Arrayed in spotless robes that shine
 With dazzling lustre 'gainst the green
 Untrodden grass, all fair beseen
 With fragrant flowrets; lambkins sweet
 There wander, and each other greet 20800
 With tender love, 'neath heaven's pure
 light,
 Amid the fields with blossoms dight.
 But know ye that the pastures there,
 So fresh by nature are and fair,
 That evermore the lovesome flowers,
 Which wake to life through all the hours
 (Spring tire for maids of soft allure),
 Bear petals, new, and fresh, and pure
 As stars that sparkle in the sky,
 Lighting the lush meads twinklingly, 20810
 At dawn besprent with pearly dew,
 Which noonday heat endureth through,
 So that at eventide the lawn
 Is fresh as when first broke the dawn,
 As those may prove who fain would win
 The fresh and fragrant blooms therein.
 Nor are those flowers though thickly sown
 Or immature or overblown,

Promised
 rewards

Heavenly But perfect in their bright array,
 pastures For by no scorching sun are they 20820
 Destroyed or withered, but the dews
 Which nourish their bright forms effuse
 Delicious fragrance ere they shoot
 'Neath earth to feed each tender root.

And should you say that sheep cannot
 Browse ever on the selfsame spot,
 Since every tender blade and flower
 In suchwise must they soon devour,
 Then learn that as they browse, amain
 New flowers and grass spring forth again. 20830

Deem it no fable if I say
 That ne'er this herbage wastes away,
 Although of pasturing the sheep
 No stint or measure need to keep.
 Their fine white fells are never sold,
 Or shorn to keep off winter's cold
 From men as woven cloth, or fine
 Or coarse as webster's hands incline.
 Their bodies ne'er the knife shall know,
 Nor be on feast-boards set arow, 20840
 Their limbs shall never know disease,
 Nor foul corruption on them seize.
 But the good shepherd who doth lead
 His well-loved sheep abroad to feed,
 Although in dazzling robes arrayed,
 From off their backs no lock hath
 frayed,
 For ne'er despoils he their estate
 Of one poor hair or feather's weight,

But only loveth to be dight
 Like them in raiment pure and white. 20850

Eternal
 day

But that to weary you I fear,
 I'd tell how never night-tide drear
 Darkens those plains; the perfect day
 Never to evening falls away
 Nor daylight's dawning doth await,
 For there is time nor rathe nor late,
 Day unto night and night to day
 Succeed in one soft heaven-born ray.
 So is it with each hour that flies,
 Within one moment's space it lies, 20860
 Yet every moment doth delay
 Its flight to form unending day
 That falleth never unto night,
 For on it smiles eternal light,
 Nor record how Time speeds I wot,
 Is kept in that all-blissful spot.
 For day endures, yet nothing it
 Of future knows or preterite,
 For, in good truth, the tenses three
 Are ordered so that they may be 20870
 All present, which can never die
 Into the past, nor open lie
 As future—'tis one sphere-like day,
 Which can nor fade nor pass away,
 Preterite, present, future, all
 Into one blissful moment fall,
 Which wasteth not nor passeth by,
 But beams through far eternity.
 The unsetting sun pours down such rays
 As cheer and gladden fairest days 20880

Un- Of springtide, for unchanging spring
 changing Reigns there, and knows no worsening.
 spring Forsooth, the earth was not more pure
 When erstwhile Saturn 'neath his cure
 Held it, and ruled the golden age,
 Ere yet he suffered from the rage
 Of Jove, his tyrant son, who reft
 His manhood's tokens—treacherous theft.

Nowise despite more cruel can
 Be wrought upon a mighty man 20890
 Than to despoil him of that power
 He had through bounteous Nature's dower ;
 For whoso robs him of that thing
 Not only cruel suffering
 Inflicts on him, but sets afire
 His heart with impotent desire,
 And kills, moreover, the fond love
 Of her who erstwhile set above
 All else his kindness, and alas !
 Hath he a spouse, 'twill come to pass 20900
 In likelihood that henceforth she
 Will count him but a nullity,
 And give her fondness elsewhere.
 Great sin those folk commit who dare
 To reive a man of that which should
 Bear witness to his lustyhood,
 For not alone is he thereby
 Robbed of his native potency,
 But often men in suchlike case
 Grow to be coward, mean and base, 20910
 And leaving chivalry, oft win
 To ways and manners feminine.

Eunuchs are ne'er accounted good
 For any deeds of hardihood,
 Or virtue or nobility
 Of soul, but well are known to be
 Courageous only in foul vice,
 Detraction, spite, and avarice.
 Women to eunuchs sisters are,
 Who hold with them more strongly far 20920
 Than men, for dearly women love
 Like them the devil's work to move.
 Forsooth, although no murderer
 A gelder be, nor furtherer
 Of felonies, but conscience clear
 Of mortal sin can boast, yet near
 To grievous crime he comes, since he
 Outrageth Nature wofully
 Who casts fecundity aside,
 Which men should ever guard with
 pride. 20930
 But howsoever great this crime
 Of gelding be, in olden time
 Jove fell therein, as well ye wot,
 And thereby the world's empire got
 Beneath his sceptre, and thus grown
 Almighty, caused all men to own
 His rule, and humbly bend the knee
 To whatso'er he might decree.
 Forthon, as lord supreme he sat,
 Ordaining this, commanding that, 20940
 And teaching all mankind how they
 Should shape their lives from day to day.
 If ye thereof have will to hear,
 Give to my words attentive ear.

Nature
 disgraced

CIV

How Jupiter the pleasant saw
 Affirmed, that every man a law
 Should be unto himself, and scoff
 At what his neighbours thought thereof.

Jupiter's
 reign

GREAT Jupiter, who ruleth all
 The world, would have it so befall 20950
 That each man should enjoy his ease,
 And do alone such things as please
 His appetite: no other law
 He laid on men except to draw
 As much of joyance and delight
 From all around them as they might.
 Pleasure before all else, quoth he,
 The study of mankind should be—
 The foremost thing which all men should
 Pursue as life's supernal good: 20960
 And that he might example give
 To mortals, how he'd have them live,
 Dan Jupiter his every sense
 Indulged, that all his followers thence
 Might mark each fancy and strange whim,
 And duly take their cue from him.
 And he who the Bucolics wrote,
 Biddeth us, in the Georgics, note
 That in the Greekish books he found
 How Jupiter the world turned round: 20970
 Before the days of Jove no plough
 Man drove afield with sweat of brow,
 Nor strove to win from out the soil
 His scanty food with weary toil.

Nor had men any limits set
 Of lands, but lived, devoid of let
 Or hindrance wheresoe'er they would
 In free community of good.
 Laws to divide the earth Jove framed
 Which heretofore no man had claimed, 20980
 But now each grasped his acres' foison.
 To serpents gave he deadly poison,
 And taught the wolves to hunt their
 prey—

The
 golden
 age de-
 stroyed

So went the world—woe worth the day.
 The honey-bearing ash trees cut
 He down, and springs and sources shut
 Of vinous brooks, and fire put out
 Till men were driven to search about
 For warmth through his unkindly stint,
 And flame drew forth from frigid flint; 20990
 From newborn arts he raised the veil,
 And taught men how to tell the tale
 Of stars; he showed them how to make
 Nets that the wildwood beasts would take,
 And made the dog man's call obey,
 An art unknown before that day.
 This God, whose despite was the same
 Towards creatures all, fierce fowls o'ercame,
 And hatred and deep rancour stirred
 'Twixt them and many a lesser bird, 21000
 And everlasting enmity
 'Twixt hawk and partridge caused to be,
 And tournaments of kite and crane
 And falcon 'mid the clouds was fain
 To further, for the cruel sight
 To him afforded quick delight.

Man's in- Then as device and method sure
 ventions To make them flutter to the lure,
 He let them see that morn and eve
 They might from him their meat receive. 21010

And this same practice hath depraved
 Gallants in suchwise that enslaved
 Are they by birds, whom until this
 Were counted as man's enemies,
 Because they so destructive were
 To other birds that wing the air,
 The which he fain, had he the chance,
 Would catch as grateful sustenance,
 Much relishing the small birds' flesh.
 And Jove taught men the tangling mesh 21020
 To set around the conies' holes,
 While ferrets drive them forth in shoals.
 And such great pleasure and delight
 Took man to feed his appetite,
 That fish from river, lake, and sea
 He seethed and broiled, and skilfully
 Thereto concocted sauces rare,
 Of spice and herbs, with subtle care.

Thus then it was that arts arose,
 For from necessity outgrows 21030
 Invention, and by anxious toil
 Man learns his enemies to foil,
 And 'neath the prick of hunger's pain
 To win life's needs he strives amain.
 And this saith Ovid plainly, who
 Himself 'twixt youth and age passed
 through

Honour and shame, and good and ill,
 As in his books may read who will.
 In short, Dan Jupiter cared not
 When 'neath his heel the earth he'd got, 21040
 But changed all things from good to
 bad,
 And bad to worse, like tyrant mad,
 Proving himself an evil king.
 Into four parts the eternal spring
 He clove, and made the rolling year
 To vary as the times came near
 Of spring's delight and summer's heat,
 And autumn's bounteousness replete
 With fruits, and winter's bitter cold,
 When men seek house and flee the wold. 21050
 But the unending spring no more
 Men revelled in as heretofore,
 For Jupiter would have it so
 No longer, nor forsooth was slow
 When once in power, with envious rage
 To break the glorious golden age.
 And soon the silver age, alas!
 Declined to that of baser brass.
 And ever as time went, I trow,
 Mankind fell lower and more low, 21060
 Till in the iron age at last
 His lot, fulfilled of woe, is cast,
 Though this affordeth but delight
 Unto hell's Gods, who in despite
 Hold all earth's denizens, and seek
 Fierce vengeance on their heads to wreak.
 Tangled within their nets they hold
 The black-fleeced wanderers from the fold,

Black Who ne'er can out their toils escape.
sheep Poor scabby sheep, ill grown of shape 21070
 Are they who from the narrow line
 Have wandered, of the Lamb divine,
 But would had they within his sight
 Remained, have washed their fleeces white,
 But having by that broad path strayed
 That leadeth to the deadly shade
 Of Hades, there they thickly stand
 As autumn leaves that strew the land.

But of the flock that wandereth there,
 None pure unblemished fleeces bear 21080
 Whereof fine cloth might websters weave,
 But hair which would one's body grieve
 Worse than a garment lined within
 With prickly spinous urchin skin,
 Designed the tender flesh to fret
 Whene'er it is athwart it set.
 Far different is it with those sheep
 Who white and pure their fleeces keep ;
 For out their delicate soft wool
 Men finest cloth may card and full, 21090
 If so they will, and garments fit
 And beautiful may weave from it
 For mightiest emperor or king,
 Or raiment bright and glistening
 For God's archangels. Whosoe'er
 The fortune hath such robes to wear
 As these I sing, would certes be
 Enraimented most royally,
 And well should guard such treasures, for
 These noble beasts are found no more. 21100

The faithful shepherd watch and ward
 Keeps o'er his flock, and well doth guard
 Their pasturing ground, that ne'er may come
 Black sheep within their peaceful home.
 Vainly most earnest prayer some use
 For entrance there, but He doth choose
 The white sheep with unerring choice,
 Who know the faithful shepherd's voice,
 And follow, where his footsteps lead,
 Midst herbage delicate to feed.

The true
 shepherd

21110

But yet beyond all others fairest,
 Most gentle, beautiful, and rarest
 Of all this white-woolled flock is He
 Who leads their footsteps tenderly
 To pastures new with loving care—
 That joyous Lamb past all compare.
 Right well he wotteth if astray
 One sheep should go, for near the way
 Watcheth the wolf his chance to seize
 A wanderer, though it scarce appease

21120

The ravening of his ruddy jaws
 One moment. Pity's gentle laws
 He scorneth, nor delays to eat
 His victim, though its heart still beat.
 Fair sirs, this Lamb awaiteth you,
 But thereof shall my words be few,
 Saving to bid you humbly pray
 To God the Father that he may
 Unto his Mother's prayer give ear,
 In suchwise that, untouched by fear

21130

Of that dread wolf, his sheep may be
 In peace led everlastingly

Mirth's
garden Through fair green pastures sprinkled o'er
With violets, daisies, and rich store
Of fragrant blossoms, while on high
Hang roses which nor fade nor die.

For whoso of that garden fair,
Closed with the little wicket, (where
The Lover saw by happy chance
Sir Mirth and Pleasure lead the dance,) 21140
Should make comparison with this
Bright spot I tell of, would, ywis,
Err greatly, for no mortal sight
Hath e'er beheld such radiant light
As shines therein; it were, forsooth,
Fable to pledge 'gainst spotless truth:
For he who in this park should tread,
And mark its loveliness outspread
Before him, readily would swear
That fairer far past all compare 21150
Is this bright spot, whereof I tell,
Than that where Mirth and Pleasure dwell,
For that between four walls was bound,
But this is formed in subtle round,
So perfect, that there ne'er hath been
Bright sphere of pearl or beryl seen
More lovely. What then shall I say?
Lend me a patient ear, I pray,
While I recall in fewest words
What things the Lover saw—the birds, 21160
Trees, flowers within, and on the wall
Those paintings which might well appal
His heart, so terrible were they.

But who outside this park should stray

Would creatures far more fierce and
 fell
 Encounter, very fiends of hell,
 Fearful alike to ear and eye
 Of those who trembling pass them by,
 And every crime and foul disgrace
 That make of hell their dwelling-place, 21170
 And Cerberus with triple head
 Guarding the gate. Before him spread,
 Moreover, all the world should he
 Behold in its immensity,
 And all its riches from of old,
 And wealth of wonders manifold ;
 And he should see the unknown deep,
 And fishes that free revels keep
 In bitter waters, and the strange
 Great beasts that ocean's caverns range, 21180
 And waters fresh, both dark and clear,
 With denizens of stream and mere,
 And air between the earth and skies
 Peopled with gnats and butterflies
 And bright panned birds, whose carolling
 The welkin makes with music ring,
 And brightness that doth all surround,
 And all the movements that abound,
 To dominate the ways and bents
 Of earth's mysterious elements ; 21190
 And of the wondrous stars that night
 Reveals he'd see the glorious light,
 Whether of those that wander or
 Those that stand fixed for evermore.
 Forsooth, whate'er fair things there be
 Within this wondrous park, should he

The
 world
 seen

A fleeting Behold portrayed in suchlike guise
 show As paints them clearly to men's eyes.

Now let us to Love's garden win
 And joys recount contained therein. 21200
 The Lover saw bright Pleasure lead
 The dance across a fragrant mead,
 Ringed round by youths bedeckt with flowers,
 Or idly whiling summer hours
 'Neath leafy trees where many a bird
 The air with gentle cadence stirred,
 Or near cool founts and waterfalls
 More tuneful than sweet madrigals,
 That ripple above gravel bright
 Unceasingly through day and night, 21210
 Beside that pine tree which none e'er
 Excelled since Pepin reigned, and where
 That fountain all-surpassing springs.

Fair sirs, but vain imaginings
 Were these fair sights and sounds, I trow,
 A vain and fleeting worldly show
 Which soon must perish, for on all
 That joyous crew dim death must fall
 Ere long, and, dance and dancers spent,
 An end be of their merriment; 21220
 Since things corruptible amain
 Must unto dust return again.
 For that vile nurse of Cerberus,
 The dark and treacherous Atropos,
 From whom no creature can escape
 That ever took on mortal shape,

Unceasingly in wait doth lie,
 Man's ever watchful enemy,
 And smiteth young and old alike,
 The gods alone she dare not strike,²¹²³⁰
 Since they by nature are divine
 And drink not death's destructive wine.

A perfect
 spot

Now would I fain the glorious things
 Recite, which that fair park enring,
 Yet must thereon but lightly touch,
 Although my heart it grieveth much
 To think my words can no wise reach
 To paint the joys I fain would teach.
 No thought of man could hold in view,
 Nor human tongue give utterance to²¹²⁴⁰
 The marvels that bright spot contains,
 Where peace endures and radiance reigns
 Supreme o'er all, nor tell how sweet
 Those blest ones are whose happy feet
 Keep measure on a sward of flowers
 Through one long day of countless hours.
 For all things that afford delight,
 With peace and life eternal dight,
 Have those who find a dwelling there
 Where all is good : a fountain fair²¹²⁵⁰
 All drink of, whose abundant wealth
 Of waters giveth blissful health,
 And dwindleth not, but all the place
 Keeps fresh 'neath heaven's unclouded face.
 All those drink this life-giving wave
 Who, the black flock forsaking, crave
 Admittance to this blest abode ;
 And when once through their veins hath flowed

The contrast These waters, thirst they nevermore,
 Or sickness know, as wont of yore, 21260
 But live untouched by death or fate.
 When once they pass that happy gate,
 The joyous Lambkin glads their sight,
 Whom they may follow day and night
 Along the straight and narrow path
 'Neath the good shepherd's eye, who hath
 Kind care to harbour in his fold
 His well-loved sheep, their tale full told.
 This fountain is not that which he
 Who dreamed beheld beneath the tree, 21270
 Of marble made; for those who drink
 Hereof need never fear to sink
 In death's long slumber, and may mock
 That lover as a laughing stock
 Who praised the fountain where Narcisse
 Died for the lack of self-sought bliss.
 The fountain perilous that is
 Bitter and poisonous, ywis,
 Nor doth the dreamer hesitate
 Its waters thus to designate, 21280
 Nor seek its bitterness to hide,
 But boldly hath to it applied
 (As 'twere a warning unto us)
 The name of mirror perilous.
 Saying that when he dared admire
 Himself therein, he felt a dire
 Unhappiness his soul surmount,
 Good Lord! A sweet and precious fount!
 A pleasant mirror that, forsooth,
 Which, when a bright and blithesome
 youth 21290

Would in the water view his face,
 Gives back a sick man in his place!
 Moreover, of this fount he tells
 How that from two exhaustless wells
 It bubbles forth, but truth I wot
 It is, that fountain surgeth not
 Thence of its own resistless force,
 But borroweth from an alien source
 Its waves: and he moreover saith
 More bright than silver 'tis i' faith! 21300

A
 treacher-
 ous fount

Behold what trumpery and lies
 He spins with will to blind your eyes,
 For 'tis, forsooth, so foul and dark
 That he were clever who could mark
 His face within its mirror; sad
 A glance would make one, or stark mad.
 He saith too that beneath its waves
 A glittering heap of crystals paves
 The floor, and when the sun's rays
 glow

Thereon, one sees set out arow 21310
 One half of all the lovesome things
 That garden's high-built wall enrings,
 And from the other side may be
 Beheld the second moiety,
 So clear the waters, pure and bright!
 But thick and turbid in my sight
 Are they, or wherefore show they not
 At one fair view that amorous spot?
 Yet no man e'er that sight hath won,
 Unless bright sunrays fall thereon. 21320
 Obscurity to them, forsooth,
 Is natural, and they in truth

Three Can never of themselves make good
 streams The form of one who in their flood
 Looks down, except the sun's bright glance
 Their clearness greatly should enhance.
 But that fair fount, beyond all price,
 I tell of, decketh Paradise.
 O give attentive ears while I
 To sing its marvels humbly try. 21330

The fountain whereof I declare
 The glories is beyond compare,
 And such its virtues are, that whole
 They render many a way-worn soul,
 And ceaselessly through conduits three
 Of bright streams flows a trinity.
 Yet each the other runs so near
 That they one single stream appear,
 And though they triple surely are,
 Yet nought their unity can bar, 21340
 And though these three and one you count
 Ten times, to four they'll ne'er amount,
 For 'tis their common property
 To be at once both one and three.
 No other fount wide nature knows,
 Itself the source from whence it flows,
 And its own conduit, seeking not
 For aid extraneous as I wot,
 Differing therein from founts that fain
 Appear from alien source to gain 21350
 New strength. It hath its source and stock
 More deep and firm than native rock,
 And needs no fount of marble made,
 Nor asks of trees their sheltering shade,

For from its source so high doth spring
 Its jet, that over everything
 It towers, and ever from on high
 Descend the waters plenteously.
 A little olive tree below
 They find, 'neath which they gently flow, 21360
 And when that olive's tender roots
 Feel the soft wave that round them shoots,
 Then gains the tree new nourishment,
 And through its veins fresh life is sent,
 Whence push young leaves or luscious
 fruit ;
 And grows it from its firm-fixed root,
 So tall and strong, that ne'er the pine
 He tells of, the horizon line
 O'ertopped as this tree doth, nor made
 For man and beast such grateful shade 21370
 Of close-grown leaves. This noble tree,
 This olive, guards umbrageously
 The fountain, and the beasts that roam
 Around find there a friendly home
 Of shady boughs, and pearly dews
 Enjoy, which scatter and diffuse
 The fount's bright waves amid the sweet
 Soft grass and flowers around their feet.
 Against the olive's well-grown bole
 Is fixed, small writ, a parchment scroll, 21380
 Which saith, to those who heedfully
 Read as beneath its shade they lie :
 ' Under this olive tree's firm root
 The fount of life runs, and the fruit
 Of sweet salvation bears the tree ; '
 What pine of such great worth can be ?

The olive
tree

The carbuncle Within this fountain (though a lie
 Fools call it, and some doubtfully
 Withhold their judgment,) hangs a stone
 More glorious far to gaze upon 21390
 Than diamond; it carbuncle hight,
 And radiates a flood of light;
 Round is it, with three facets cut,
 And in the fountain's midst 'tis put
 So high that all about the park
 Its burning rays dispel the dark,
 With power so great that neither cloud,
 Nor wind, nor storm, nor rain can
 shroud
 Their splendour. As you gaze upon
 The facets three, you see each one, 21400
 As all its radiance bursts on you,
 Is equal to the other two,
 And in the selfsame manner are
 The twain with that upon a par,
 For such the virtue is of each
 That neither one can overreach
 Its fellow, but repeats amain
 Its perfect beauty o'er again.
 None can by taking thought decide
 What 'tis that ever doth divide 21410
 That stone, yet trow I, ne'er it can
 Divided be by any man.
 The sun's strong light it needeth not,
 For it within itself hath got
 A brightness so resplendent that,
 Though the meridian sun fell flat
 Upon the crystal water pure,
 Beside this stone 'twould look obscure.

What more thereof then needs to say?

No sunbeams, e'en at full noonday, 21420
 Could equal that carbuncle's bright
 And dazzling rays, which more delight
 Give to men's eyes than e'er the sun
 Through all the lapse of time hath done.
 The night it doth to exile send,
 For perfect day that knows no end
 It makes, and as no fine in view
 It hath, it ne'er beginning knew,
 But keepeth ever on one line,
 Free of degree or zodiac sign; 21430
 It knows not midnight, nor the art
 Which hours from minutes sets apart.
 This jewel hath a power so great,
 That whatso mortals, blessed by fate,
 Behold it there suspended high,
 Soon as they cast a downward eye
 Upon the water, and therein
 Behold themselves, forthwith shall win
 A perfect view from side to side
 Of all the park both far and wide, 21440
 And whatsoever things may be
 Contained within its boundary;
 And soon as they enjoy that sight,
 Bursts on their souls an inner light,
 In suchwise that they nevermore
 Shall be deceived as heretofore,
 Whate'er the chance or case may be,
 But o'er all wit have mastery.

Perfect
day

Nay, further marvels shall you hear.
 This sun-like gem the sight will cheer 21450

Paradise Of those who on its brilliance gaze,
 excelled But yet their vision nowise daze
 Nor injure, for, in truth, so great
 Its virtue, 'twill invigorate
 The eyesight, giving new-born strength,
 And vision of amazing length;
 And that carbuncle is the seat,
 Moreover, of soft gentle heat
 And odour, which doth every glade
 With fragrant incense-clouds invade. 21460
 Hereof no more behoves to say,
 But ever keep in mind, I pray:
 That they who all the marvels know
 Of this fair place, will straight avow
 That many a way doth it excel
 The paradise whence Adam fell.

For God's sake, lordlings, say amain,
 What think ye of these gardens twain?
 In faith and loyalty declare
 Which deem ye better and more fair, 21470
 Bethinking well of their intents,
 Their substances and accidents.
 In turn regard each fount and see
 Which waters must more healthful be,
 More virtuous, precious, clear, and pure:
 And to the conduits give mature
 Considering; of each precious stone
 Judge, and say which the nobler one
 Ye deem; and unto which assign
 Ye greater virtue, to the pine 21480
 Or to the olive, at whose root
 The fount flows, whence it bears such fruit.

Follow
wise
counsel

To your conclusion then I look
With confidence, if by the book
Ye judge, whence I have given to you
Lessons past price, wise, just, and true.
No false or flattering phrase I spend,
For high and low to me must bend
Alike; but should you practise wrong,
Speak falsely or withhold your tongue 21490
From truth—'tis well that this ye learn—
My face I would towards others turn.
And in the hope that we the better
May find agreement, to the letter
Once more permit me to set forth
Of these two founts the differing worth:
Through one do mortals drink in death,
The other gives the dead new breath.

Fair sirs, take ye my words for true,
Namely, that if with wisdom you 21500
But set yourselves to live aright,
Your lips shall taste that fountain bright
And undefiled. And since 'twill fain
My heart to think that ye retain
My lessons (and good counsels sped
Briefly are best remembered),
I will to you, ere hence I go,
In fewest words the substance show
Of all my rede, and howso he
Should live who would a true man be. 21510

Honour ye Nature, be your aim
To do her work, unlet by blame,

Full But whatsoever haps, I trow,
 reward Ye should to Reason's counsels bow.
 If goods of others ye possess,
 Restore them of your gentleness,
 And if thereto should be some bar,
 Wait till in better case ye are,
 Then make return in kind or gold
 In measure full, nay, manifold. 21520
 'Mid strife or slaughter be not seen,
 But hands and mouth alike keep clean ;
 Be loyal, kind, and piteous,
 And then shall you that marvellous
 And beauteous park at last attain,
 And golden chalices shall drain
 At that sweet fountain pure and clear,
 The while your footsteps follow near
 Those of the Lamb, and ye shall be
 His friends through all eternity. 21530
 Grim death shall lose all claim on you
 When once your lips that fountain's dew
 Have quaffed, and thenceforth shall ye go
 Chanting, attired in robes of snow,
 Sweet canzonets and roundelays,
 O'er grassy meads and flower-grown ways
 While dancing 'neath the olive tree.
 But what is this I pipe to ye ?
 'Tis time I put my flute aside
 Ere yet its tune hath too far tried 21540
 Your patience, and right long it were
 Should you at full my sermon hear.
 I look to see your goodly throng
 Mounting with sturdy limbs and strong
 The embattled wall or deadly breach.

The Author.

Thus Genius spake and unto each
 Gave life and resolution new,
 And then amid the host he threw
 A waxen torch with loose flax dighted
 Whence all the world around was lighted ; 21550
 And Venus thence the fire dispersed
 Till all Eve's daughters it immersed ;
 And soon the flames were driven so high
 That every woman presently,
 Alike in body, mind, and thought,
 Was with the torch's incense fraught,
 And Love erelong the message spread
 All wide abroad that Genius sped,
 Until its drift each baron knew,
 And stout allegiance sware thereto. 21560

Genius'
torch

Greatly the warriors felt elated
 When Genius thus his case had stated,
 (For none, they said, ere this had heard
 A message that so deeply stirred
 Their hearts, nor had, since first conceived,
 So fair a pardon e'er received ;
 Nor ever since to manhood grown,
 Anathema so just had known),
 And cried to show their joy thereat :
 Amen ! Amen ! Fiat ! Fiat ! 21570

All matters thus appointed, they
 Impatient grew—nor brooked delay.
 Each one the sermon word for word
 Within his heart's recesses stored,

The cry For deemed they all that profit great
 to arms Would spring to them and their estate
 From that full pardon therein sped.
 Then straightway Genius vanishèd,
 Nor knew they whither he was gone ;
 But twenty sang, with voicing one : 21580
 ‘ To arms ! to arms then, hasten we
 Who thus have heard our lord’s decree,
 Our foemen fear our dread assault.’
 Then towards the walls they leap and vault
 With right good will to carry on
 The war till every tower is won.

CV

Then Venus, bending forward, stood
 To catch the breeze within her hood,
 And to the castle came, I wot,
 Right quickly though she entered not. 21590

VENUS, all ready for the fray,
 Demandeth of the guards that they
 Yield straight the fort—but quick reply
 Make Shame and Fear right haughtily.

Shame and Fear to Venus.

Venus ! cried Fear, you lose your pains,
 Herein your foot no entry gains.
 Nay ! Shame cried, though I all alone
 Stood guard, I’d yield no single stone.

The Author.

Then, hearing Shame, the goddess spake :

Venus.

Vile trull! What! dare you then to make 21600 **Shame**
 Resistance to my sovereign laws? reproved
 Submit! or you shall have good cause
 To rue your folly, and all vain
 Will find your efforts to retain
 The fort, for by God's body I
 Will storm the stronghold presently,
 And on hot coals all quick will stretch
 Both you and Fear—O caitiff wretch!
 The whole enclosure will I burn,
 And towers and battlements o'erturn; 21610
 Before I'll scorch you and behind,
 And walls and pillars to the wind
 I'll scatter, and filled in shall be
 Your moats with earthworks utterly;
 And barbicans that you employ
 To shoot through will I clean destroy,
 However high they may be set.
 Fair-Welcome, doubt you not, shall get
 Roses and rosebuds, which shall drift
 Into his hands by gold or gift; 21620
 And fierce and furious though you be,
 You shall in long procession see
 The whole world pass where bud and rose
 Bloom free, when I love's lists unclose.

And Jealousy to scorn and flout,
 Lovers shall wander all about
 The meadows fresh and gardens fair,
 Unlet by Shame, or Fear, or Care,
 O'er flower-grown paths, and at their ease
 Gather such roses as they please; 21630

Satan's
scourges

Whether they clerks or laics be
All shall alike bow down to me.
And little reck I if they are,
Or regular or secular,
All shall alike their penance make,
And willingly my shrifting take.
Some secretly their court shall pay,
Some openly, in eye of day,
But those who come in secret wise
Are far the nobler in mine eyes ;
The others are but little worth,
Vile ribalds who disgrace God's earth.
And others are there who, I wot,
Earn censure, yet incur it not ;
For true it is that many a man
(God and the Holy Father ban
His ways and leave him in his
need)

21640

Who scorns a rose, yet loves a weed.

But Satan, who such folk doth urge
To crime, with nettle rods shall scourge
Their backs ; for Genius, by command
Of Nature, all this wretched band
Hath outlawed, and they ranged, ywis,
Shall be among our enemies.

21650

Vile Shame, I will your body tear
Piecemeal, and scatter to the air
The fragments, or else hide my head,
For ne'er will I be let or led
By you, or Reason, your dull mother,
Who lovers hates and fain would smother,
For those who listen to ye twain
Will of my service ne'er be fain.

21660

The Author.

Then Venus deemed that might suffice
 Alike for threats and good advice,
 And scorned the matter to debate
 Further, as one exasperate :
 Her bow she seized and nocked to it
 A goodly shaft of measure fit,
 And drew with well-skilled arm and
 strong

(The weapon was a fathom long) 21670

The bowstring, till it touched her ear :
 Then loosing it, with whistle clear
 [The shaft across the enclosure flew,
 And with unerring aim cleft through
 The heart of the Rose.

Ah! how declare,

When Venus' arrow pierced it there,
 What tumult rose of passions wild
 Within the bosom of that child
 Of nature. Through the magic power
 Of Venus, in that self-same hour, 21680

A wondrous miracle befell,
 The Rose became a damosel
 Of form and beauty past compare,
 Clothed in her own rich golden hair,
 Which somewhiles fell apart to show
 Skin whiter than the driven snow.
 So perfect was she in each part,
 That vainly might the sculptor's art
 To marble strive to give such grace
 As shone alike in limbs and face. 21690

For cold is marble as dread death,
 While this fair maid instinct with breath,

**The Rose
 trans-
 formed**

Medusa's head And warm with ruby life-blood bright,
 To touch was grateful as to sight.
 And in her native beauty drest,
 Like some sweet goddess stood confest ;
 Then Courtesy with heart aflame
 The Rose's tiring maid became,
 And cast about her limbs a smock
 Of finest lawn, the while a frock 21700
 Of silken woof most rarely wrought
 She drew around her. Pleasure sought
 To make fit garland for her head
 Of flowers with golden orfreys wed,
 While quickly gentle Franchise dight
 Her feet with sandals, jewel bright.

As in far days Medusa's head
 Caused those who looked upon it dead
 To fall like stone, so she as wife
 Inspired the Lover with new life. 21710
 Those fierce and tangled snake-wreathed locks
 Turned, as we read, all men to rocks
 Who rashly dared to gaze thereon,
 Till Perseus, god-protected son
 Of Jupiter and Danäe,
 O'ercame her through the targe which he
 Did of Minerva's gifting win,
 And right good stead it stood him in ;
 For ever in the deadly field
 Of strife it caused his foe to yield 21720
 Before him, turned to death-cold stone,
 And fall beneath his winged feet prone.
 But this fair may would rather make
 Stones turn to men for her sweet sake,

And she not death would deal, but life ;
 Warring alone in Love's blest strife.
 Then Venus, with good will to free
 This maiden from the bondage she
 Had with Fair-Welcome suffered, threw
 Over the heads of all the crew 21730

The
 tower
 ablaze

Around the tower, her blazing torch,
 Which on a distaff in the porch
 Fell flush, and set the place ablaze.
 The janitors with wild amaze
 Saw that the end approached, and cried
 One to another : Now defied
 Are we by Venus and betrayed,
 The Lover's cause she hers hath made,
 Let each one cast his keys away
 And save himself as best he may. 21740

Danger, that very spawn of hell,
 Soon as he caught the burning smell,
 Fled as a stag flies o'er the mead,
 And others, taking little heed
 Of how their fellows fared, made haste
 To run, their skirts tucked round the
 waist,

As though they'd gone stark staring mad.
 Fear flew, and Shame, downcast and sad,
 Pressed on her heels, when all alight
 The castle saw they blazing bright, 21750
 Counting those lessons less than nought
 Which Reason painfully had taught.

But thither then sped Courtesy,
 (So noble, kind, and fair to see,)
 When she beheld this utter rout,
 With eager will to save thereout

Fair-
Welcome
delivered

Her son, Fair-Welcome, and with her
Came Pity and her fosterer,
Franchise, and through the raging fire
They rushed ere yet destruction dire 21760
Had seized the child of Courtesy,
Whom, when she saw in safety, she
Bespake in gentle fluting voice.

Courtesy to Fair-Welcome.

Now may my heart once more rejoice,
Fair son, which hath been rackt with fear
While that you lay imprisoned here.
God grant the gates of hell hold fast
The wretch who in vile dungeon cast
Your fair-formed limbs, O well-loved son,
But now full victory have we won, 21770
And buried in the foss-ditch lie
Evil-Tongue's bones, while Jealousy
Shall let you not, whate'er you do,
For she no more can come on you
By quick surprises, since that he
Who told her all hath ceased to be.
And for your other foes, all fled
Are they, with terror well-nigh dead,
Nor dare again within this place,
Where blooms the Rose, to show their face. 21780

Fair son, you now, by Venus' power,
Are snatched from out the burning tower,
And I, Franchise and Pity, pray
That you consent without delay
To let this faithful lover dress
His heart in that pure happiness

For which he so hath yearned and longed,
 While many a way hath he been wronged
 By Evil-Tongue and Fear and Shame
 And Jealousy, accursed beldame, 21790
 And Danger, who hath lastly found
 His strength but vain against profound
 And faithful love. His very soul
 He offers now, and free from toll
 Or tax, I pray you let him come
 To make in this fair spot his home,
 With her who is no more a flower,
 But hath become, through Venus' power,
 A beauteous maiden.

Love the
 conqueror

Love it is
 That all things conquereth, and this 21800
 Hath Virgil told us in that fine
 And ever memorable line,
 Which runneth: 'Omnia vincit Amor,'
 And we to him must bow therefore.
 O'er all is LOVE supreme, and we
 Are bound his servitors to be.
 What Virgil saith of that great word
 Is true, for it through time hath stirred
 Men's spirits, till they have defied
 The world for it, and lightly died. 21810
 Fair son, I now beseech thee, give
 Consent that with the Rose may live
 This Lover till their hands death part.

Fair-Welcome.

Fair-Welcome cried: With ready heart
 I give to him his full desire,
 And pray him to forget the dire

The
 Lover
 wins

Vexations that his path beset,
 Ere he might full possession get
 Of that which shall henceforward be
 The crown of his felicity. 21820

The Lover.

What more remaineth then to say,
 Saving that thus I gained the day
 By Venus' aid, and now at last,
 My pains and perils safely past,
 To all and each who helped me I
 Shall worship give unendingly?
 For 'tis through them that I am rich
 Beyond the highest treasure which
 Men most desire; and praise is due
 To Cupid and his mother, who 21830
 Gave aid and comfort in my woe,
 And to the barons who each foe
 O'erthrew and conquered (may God speed
 To all true lovers in their need
 Such help), and therefore to all those
 I worship give by whom the Rose
 Came to my arms. But little cause
 I have to render, for her saws,
 Dame Reason thanks, and Riches hath
 Small claim to laud, for she the path 21840
 Of love against me strongly barred,
 Keeping the gate with watch and ward:
 But now complete my triumph is
 O'er all my bitter enemies.

Then ere from out that garden close
 I issued with my hard-won Rose,

I fain a chaplet fair would make
To deck her head ; and—thus did wake.]

Love's
promise
kept

The God of Love, and eke my friend,
Their promise gave that in the end, 21850
If I but served Love loyally,
My heart's desire fulfilled should be.
And now 'tis clear that he a fool
Must be accounted who Love's rule
Despises, or dares hold in scorn
Sweet visions of the night-tide born,
For this fair dream I certify
To be no mockery or lie,
But all herein set down forsooth,
Pure gold refined, and spotless truth. 21860

Here the Romance that hight the Rose
Hath end—Love's art its leaves enclose—
Dame Nature smiles—for so 'twould seem
Are *hic et haec* conjoined in dream.

APPENDIX

With a view to justify the plan adopted of giving a summary conclusion to the story in place of following the author's text to the end, the original is here printed of the lines which the translator of the rest has forborne to put into English.

He believes that those who read them will allow that he is justified in leaving them in the obscurity of the original.

The lines are numbered according to the original text (Orleans ed. 1878), from where the translation breaks off.

L'Acteur.

Venus à plus dire n'entent, 21505
Que bien li sofisoit atant.
Lors s'est Venus haut secorcie,
Bien sembla fame corrocie,
L'arc tent, et le boujon encoche :
Et quant el l'ot bien mise en coche, 21510
Jusqu'à l'oreille l'arc entoise
Qui n'iert pas plus lons d'une toise ;
Puis avise cum bonne archiere,
Par une petitete archiere
Qu'ele vit en la tor reposte
Par devant, non pas par encoste,
Que Nature ot par grant maistrise
Entre deux pilerés assise.

Cil dui pilers d'ivire estoient,
Moult gent, et d'argent sostenoient 21520
Une ymagete en leu de chasse,
Qui n'iert trop haute ne trop basse,
Trop grosse, trop gresle non pas,
Mès toute taillie à compas,
De bras, d'espaules et de mains,
Qu'il n'i failloit ne plus ne mains.
Moult ierent gent li autre membre,
Et plus olans que pomme d'embre :
Dedens avoit ung saintuaire
Covert d'ung précieux suaire, 21530
Li plus gentil et li plus noble
Qui fust jusqu'en Constantinoble,
Tel ymage n'ot nus en tor.
Plus avienent miracle entor
Qu'ains n'avint entor Medusa ;
Mès ceste trop meillor us a.
Vers Medusa riens ne duroit,
Car en roche transfiguroit
(Tant faisoit felonnesses euvres
Par ses felons crins de coleuvres,) 21540
Trestuit cil qui la regardoient.
Par nul engin ne s'en gardoient,
Fors Perséus, li filz Jovis,
Qui par l'escu la vit où vis
Que sa suer Pallas li livra.
Par cel escu se delivra,
Par l'escu le chief li toli,
Si l'emporta tous jors o li.
Moult le tint chier, moult s'i fiot,
En maint estour mestier li ot ; 21550

Ses fors anemis en muoit,
 Les autres à glaive tuoit.
 Mès ne la vit que par l'escu,
 Car il n'éüst jà puis vescu.
 Ses escus li ert miroers,
 Car tiex ert où chief li poers,
 S'il la regardast face à face,
 Roche devenist en la place.
 Mès l'ymage dont ci vous conte,
 Les vertus Medusa sormonte, 21560
 Qu'el ne sert pas de gens tuer,
 Ne d'eus faire en roche muer :
 Ceste de roche les remue,
 En lor forme les continue,
 Voire en meilleur c'onques ne furent,
 Ne c'onques mès avoir ne purent.
 Cele nuist, et ceste profite,
 Cele occist, ceste resuscite,
 Cele les eslevés moult griève
 Et ceste les grevés relieve : 21570
 Car qui de ceste s'aprochast,
 Et tout véist, et tout tochast,
 S'il fust ains en roche mué,
 Ou de son droit sens remué,
 Jà puis roche ne le tenist,
 En son droit sens s'en revenist ;
 Si fust-il à tous jors garis
 De tous maus et de tous peris.

Si m'aist Diex, se ge pöisse,
 Volentiers plus près la véisse ; 21580
 Voire, par Diex, par tout tochasse,
 Se de si près en aprochasse ;

Mès ele est digne et vertueuse,
 Tant est de biauté precieuse.
 Et se nus usant de raison
 Voloit faire comparaison
 D'ymage à autre bien portraite,
 Autel en puet faire be ceste
 A l'ymage Pymalion,
 Comme de souris à lion. 21590

Story of
 Pygma-
 lion

CVI

The story of Pygmalion here
 Is told, and of his image dear.

PYGMALION hight a sculptor good,
 Who equally stone, wax or wood,
 Or metal wrought, but chiefly he
 Loved carving fair white ivory;
 And one day with desire he might
 His skill display, (for never wight
 Hath since his day such cunning shown
 Of hand, nor to such honour grown,) 21600
 He set himself to counterfeit,
 In ivory white, a maiden sweet.
 Nor, thereon working, did he fail
 To carve with care each least detail,
 Until 'twould seem as though his knife
 Gave to the ivory image life,
 With power almost to breathe and move,
 And thus the sculptor's art approve.

Both Helen, and Lavinia were,
 Though famed for beauty, far less fair 21610

An un-
known
passion

Than she, for form of limbs and face,
And gentle and surpassing grace,
By nine good tenths. Pygmalion stood
Entranced by her sweet womanhood
So thoroughly that he noticed not
How strait the God of Love had got
His toils around him. Bitterly
He plained his lot, yet nought knew he
To cure his grief. He cried: Alas!
Doth some strange sorcery o'er me pass? 21620
Full many an image I ere this
Have sculptured, whereof none, ywis,
Could sum the worth, yet ne'er before
Did one awaken love's sweet sore
Within mine heart; but now fond rage
And passion all my soul engage
In tireless conflict. Whence can rise
These strifes that thus my soul surprise?
I love a statue! deaf and mute!
From out whose lips no gentle bruit 21630
Of speech can come, nor burns the fire
Of love to answer my desire
Within its breast. Whence can this love
Have birth, my spirit thus to move?
Of love so strange no man e'er spake
Or dreamed—it sets my heart aquake.
Am I more mad than all my race?
How then to act in suchlike case?

If I, pardee, on some great queen
Had set my love, there then had been 21640
A hope she might return again
My passion, of my genius fain;

But suchlike criminal desire
As this could Nature ne'er inspire.
I can but be her base-born child
To give me to a love so wild.
Therefore I dare not lay the blame
On her, and say she lit the flame.
Should I then blame some other one?
Nay! since I hight Pygmalion, 21650
And learned upon two feet to range
The earth, ne'er knew I love so strange.
But do I love so follily?
For if old histories do not lie,
Full many a man wild love hath known.
Did not Narcissus cast him down
Beside a fount, his thirst to slake,
And weep himself to death for sake
Of his own visage seen therein?
O folly unto madness kin! 21660
For which he found nor help or cure,
But lost himself within the pure
Pellucid wave—in history writ
Is this, nor need we doubt of it.
'Fore heaven, I'm not so mad as this,
For I, when so I will, may kiss,
Fondle, and touch my image dear,
And therein find at least sweet cheer
And consolation, while that he
Could in the fount himself but see. 21670
And otherwhiles it oft hath been
That love-lorn men fair dames have seen
And served them well, yet ne'er could
gain
One smile or kiss to salve their pain.

Is it mad-
ness?

Passion
unre-
turned

But love to me is less unkind,
 Since I some consolation find—
 But, no! herein I greatly err,
 For in their breasts at least might stir
 Fond hope to win a loving kiss,
 Or other sweet and tender bliss ; 21680
 But unto me the door is shut
 Faster than kernel in a nut,
 For when I would with amorous play
 Approach my sweetling—well-a-day!
 I find her senseless as a block
 Of ebon wood, or sea-beat rock ;
 And eke so cold that frost-bite nips
 My mouth whene'er I kiss her lips.
 Ah! pardon, dearest friend, I pray,
 The rude, harsh words I've dared to say. 21690
 Take vengeance on me if you will,
 But, oh! what joy supreme would fill
 My heart if you should gently deign
 To smile ; swift then would die my pain :
 Sweet looks sad lovers' wrongs redress,
 And brim their souls with happiness.

CVII

Pygmalion earnestly demands
 His pardon with uplifted hands
 Towards the image, begging she
 Will of his plaints forgetful be. 21700

THEN on his knees Pygmalion fell,
 The while his eyes became a well
 Of earnest tears, and vows he spends,
 But thereto nought his love attends—

She neither sees his gestic nor hears
 His plaintive sighs, nor notes his tears,
 So that, alack! his pains doth he
 Expend and waste all uselessly,
 Yet would not willingly again
 Recall that love he gave amain. 21710

Love's
 devices

He now by Cupid's power is left
 Of wit and reason so bereft,
 That scarce he knows if she be dead
 Or living. Then from foot to head
 His fingers wander, and her breasts
 Seem soft and supple as he tests
 Them gently, but the suppleness
 His hand affordeth. Deep distress
 Then strikes Pygmalion, rest or peace
 His spirit knows not—without cease 21720
 He loves, he hates, he laughs, he cries,
 Smiles wreathes his face, tears blind his
 eyes

In turn. Then next his hands array
 The ivory limbs with vestments gay
 Of finest webs and costliest silk,
 This scarlet, that more white than milk,
 This emerald, that of Tyrian hue,
 This tinged with over-sea's deep blue,
 That bordered round with precious fur
 Of ermine, grise, or miniver. 21730
 Now he removes, and now in haste
 Restores, to suit his varying taste,
 Each robe in turn; now silk he deems
 Most comely, and now satin seems
 The daintier; or fine sendal weft,
 Or velvet rich, he draws with deft

The
statue
attired

And loving fingers round her ; dyes
Brown, vermeil, blue, and green he tries,
With fringings bright of precious gold.
Each seemed an angel to enfold, 2174
As all unmoved she silent stood,
A type of perfect maidenhood.
And then he crowns her with a wimple,
Surmounted by a veiling simple
Of finest tissue, which her head
Adorns, but leaves uncoverèd
Her face, in despite of the mode
Of Saracens, whose heathen code
Instructs to hide 'neath tamise cloth
A woman's face (e'en though she loth 21750
May be thereto) when by the way
She passes in the light of day,
So doth their heathen hearts engage
Foul jealousy's insensate rage.
And then anon with fickle mind,
The robes off-stript, he loves to bind
Her delicate limbs with ribands fair
(Varied of hues as tint the air
When rainbows rise), and glistening
strings
Of brilliant pearls and decorings 21760
Of sparkling gems. And then above
Her coifing, with the hand of love
A brooch he clasps, the while to hold
Her veil in place, a crown of gold
He sets thereon, of fretwork dight
And decked with diamonds, wells of light,
And necklaces surpassing fair,
Of jewels, angled, round, and square,

Gems and
flowers

And many a gem of lesser price
Which yet might raise men's avarice. 21770

And next, her shell-like ears he tires
With precious stones on golden wires,
While to hold close the coif, which gapes
Apart, he two gold brooches shapes,
And rarest jewels hangs between
Her virgin breasts' sweet ivory sheen.
Then round her girdlestead he ties
A cincture which for fairness vies
With that which erst Queen Venus bore,
Whence hangs a dainty purse with store 21780

Of gold bedight, and therein set
Five stones are, such as divers get
From out the sea-depths, wherewith play
Young maids when fain to while the day.
Then next, with gentle care, her two
Small mignon feet with hose and shoe
He tires, most deftly carved and so
Designed that safely may she go
Two inches out the mire. No boots
Were hers of suchlike sort as suits 21790

Parisian dames, too delicate
Her feet for gear so cramped and strait.
Then with a golden bodkin he
Braideth her armsleeves cunningly
With glistening thread. Then flowers he
brings,

The gentle springtide's fosterlings
(Wherewith young maidens bind their hair
And love to fashion garlands fair
With fingers deft), and these did he
Enweave and handle skilfully 21800

Music's In posies, knots, and strange shaped birds,
 charms Varied beyond the power of words
 By practice of his subtlest art.
 And for the treasure of his heart
 A ring he fashioned, and thus spake :
 Dear maid, the love that you awake
 I pray you to bestow again,
 For thereof is my wrackt heart fain.
 If Hymen, with the Queen of Love
 Conjoined, should hear me from above 21810
 The skies, and deign to grace the feast
 Of our troth-plighting, neither priest
 Nor mitred prelate shall we need,
 Those gods espousals best may speed.

Then, voice uplift, did he express
 In song his joyful-heartedness,
 And, in the place of masses, sang
 Soft love-songs, till the echoes rang,
 And made his instruments resound
 As though the gods on earth were found, 21820
 For in a hundred manners he
 Struck the loud chords more merrily
 Than did Amphion in old days
 The walls of mighty Thebes to raise.
 Sweet zitherns, harps, and lutes he played
 In concert, and soft music made
 E'en as it pleased him. Then of clocks
 The tongues he skilfully unlocks,
 With subtle wheels arranged that so
 They may in halls and chambers go 21830
 With tireless motion. Organs he
 Wrought out and schemed so skilfully,

And in such subtle fashion planned
 That whoso bore them, with one hand
 Both wind and music might produce,
 And with sonorous voice give loose
 To tenor or sweet treble notes
 Of rhymed motets. And tuneful rotes
 And cymbals made he speak, and shalms
 Which more of love-songs knew than
 psalms, 21840
 And tambourine and flute and bell
 Spake tunefully with fall and swell,
 And psaltery and viol he
 Discourse drew from entrancingly ;
 And lastly roused a merry wail
 From bagpipes, hight of Cornouaille ;
 Then seizes he her little hand
 As fain he'd dance a saraband ;
 But like an arrow through his heart
 It strikes to find she takes no part 21850
 Nor joys therein, nor kens to sing
 Response to his sweet musicking.
 But still his arms he interlaces
 Around her form in fond embraces,
 Then, lain upon the couch, with kiss
 And touch he striveth amorous bliss
 To wake within her limbs, ah vain !
 Her lips no kisses give again.
 With doting fondness well-nigh dead,
 Yet still unto his folly wed, 21860
 Pygmalion, most unfortunate
 Of lovers, battles yet with fate.
 He now this image deaf and blind
 Bedecks in restlessness of mind,

Response
lacks

A feast of Venus
And now her lovely limbs all nude
Regards in fixed beatitude.

Then happed it that the countryside
A festival would fain provide
Where many wonders came about.
To Venus' temple swarmed a rout 21870
Of lovers, and Pygmalion came,
'Mong others, to avow his flame,
And with a piteous voice laments
The passion that his soul torments
Before the gods, for whom had he
Carved many an image skilfully,
Yet ever had he held him chaste,
Nor deigned Queen Venus' joys to taste.

Pygmalion.

Fair Gods, he cried, whom all men
fear,
I pray you my sad plaint to hear. 21880
And thou, great goddess of this fane,
Saint Venus, hear my prayer amain,
Though I perchance have angered thee
In worshipping fair chastity;
But now with heart abased I must
Own thy hot wrath for right and just,
And bitterly, foregone delay,
Repent me, and thy pardon pray,
Imploring thy sweet grace to give
To me my love that I may live 21890
With her as wife who seems to be
Now but insensate ivory,

Fulfilling her with warmth and fire
 Of love to answer my desire ;
 Do this, blest goddess, with quick haste,
 And if I longer hold me chaste,
 Command that I be straightway hung,
 Or cut in pieces and be flung
 To Cerberus, hound fierce and fell,
 Who guards and keeps the gates of hell. 21900

Venus
 gives aid

The Author.

With kindly heart the goddess heard
 Her supplicant's repentant word
 And faithful promise to forego
 The chastity which grieves her so,
 Within the arms of her whom he
 Loved and adored so ardently.
 And with desire to ease his pain
 And let him see that not in vain
 He sought her aid, she filled with life
 The image, and no fairer wife 21910
 Or maiden e'er hath lived, I ween,
 Since Eve by Adam first was seen.

No longer in the fane delayed
 His steps Pygmalion, when once made
 Had he his prayer, for yet again
 Of sight and touch his heart was fain.
 Nought of the miracle he knew,
 Yet humbly rendered reverence due
 To God—but when he cast a look
 On her he loved, his being shook 21920

The
statue
wakes

Within him, and his spirit burned
With eager hope, for as he turned
Him towards her, there a maiden stood
Incarnate, living flesh and blood,
While all around her body fair
Fell wavelets rich of golden hair.
His hand with doubtful daring steals
Around her limbs, her pulse he feels,
And finds quick movement! Can it be
God's truth, or some foul jugglery?
He falls aback, almost afraid
Lest he the victim hath been made
Of deep deception. Then he cries :

21930

Pygmalion.

What is it? May I trust mine eyes?
Wake I, or sleep? Do I then dream?
Nay! all my senses quick I deem!
No vision e'er was like to this!
Whence comes such change, if change it is?
Or doth some evil phantom dare
Keep revel in that body fair?

21940

The Author.

Then spake amain that new-born may,
More lovely she than dawn of day,
Embosomed in rich tresses blond :

The Image to Pygmalion.

No evil phantom, but a fond

And loving maid am I, who fain
 Would love you and be loved again ;
 My proffer of fond love receive,
 And let our souls as one inweave.

Desire
 fulfilled

The Author.

When sees Pygmalion that this thing
 Is true, past doubt or questioning, 21950
 He comes anear as fain would he
 More certain make sweet certainty,
 And vows amain with right good-will,
 That lovingly will he fulfil
 All she desires, and speaking thus
 They interlace in amorous
 And fond embraces. E'en as doves
 In cooing murmurs tell their loves,
 So they in words all unexpressed
 The praises of the gods confessed, 21960
 And specially to Venus made *passion wins*
 Their vows for her all-powerful aid,
 Assured her power alone could make
 Cold ivory to warm love awake.

Or est Pymalions aise,
 Or n'est-il riens qui li desplaise,
 Car riens qu'il voil el ne refuse ;
 S'il opose, el se rent concluse ;
 S'ele commande, il obeist,
 Por riens ne la contredéist 21970
 D'acomplir-li tout son desir.
 Or puet o s'amie gesir,
 Qu'el n'en fait ne dangier ne plainte.
 Tant ont joé, qu'ele est ençainte

De Paphus, dont dit renommée
 Que l'isle en fu Paphos nomée,
 Dont li rois Cyniras nasqui.
 Prodons fu, fors en ung cas, qui
 Tous bons éurs éust éus,
 S'il n'éust été décéus, 21980
 Par Mirra sa fille la blonde :
 Que la Vielle (que Diex confonde!)
 Qui de pechié doutance n'a,
 Par nuit en son lit li mena.
 La roïne ert à une feste,
 La pucele se mit en heste
 Lez li rois, sans que mot séust
 Qu'o sa fille gesir déust.
 Ci ot trop estrange semille,
 Li rois let gesir o sa fille ; 21990
 Quant les ot ensemble aünés,
 Li biaus Adonis en fu nés,
 Puis fu-ele en arbre muée
 Car ses peres l'éust tuée,
 Quant il aparçut le tripot.
 Mais onques avenir n'i pot,
 Quant ot fait apporter le cierge ;
 Car cele, qui n'ere mès vierge,
 Eschapa par isnele fuite,
 Qu'il l'éust autrement destruite. 22000
 Mais c'est trop loing de ma matire,
 Por ce est bien drois qu'arriers m'en tire :
 Bien orrés que ce signifie
 Ains que cest euvre soit fenie.

Ne vous voil or ci plus tenir,
 A mon propos m'estuet venir,

Qu'autre champ me convient arer.
Qui voldroit donques comparer
De ces deus ymages ensemble
Les biautés, si cum il me semble, 22010
Tel similitude i puet prendre,
Qu'autant cum la soris est mendre
Que li lions, et mains cremuë
De cors, de force, et de valuë,
Autant, sachiés, en loiauté,
Ot cele ymage mains biauté
Que n'a cele que tant ci pris.
Bien avisa dame Cypris
Cele ymage que ge devise
Entre deus pilerez assise, 22020
Ens en la tor droit où mileu :
Onques encores ne vi leu
Que si volentiers regardasse,
Voire agenouillons l'aorasse ;
Et le saintuaire et l'archiere
Jà ne lessasse por l'archiere,
Ne por l'arc, ne por le brandon,
Que ge n'i entrasse à bandon.
Mon pooir au mains en féisse,
A quelque chief que g'en venisse, 22030
Se trovasse qui le m'offrist,
Ou sans plus qui le me soffrist.
Si m'i sui-ge par Diex voés
As reliques que vous oés,
Ou, se Diex plaist, ges requerrai,
Si-tost cum tens et leu verrai,
D'escherpe et de bordon garnis.
Que Diex me gart d'estre escharnis

Et destorbés par nule chose,
Que ne joïsse de la Rose! 22040

Venus n'i va plus atendant ;
Le brandon plain de feu ardant
Pout empené lesse voler
Por ceus du chastel afoler ;
Mais sachiés qu'ains nule ne nus,
Tant le trait sotilment Venus,
Ne l'orent pooir de choisir,
Tant i gardassent par loisir.

CVIII

Comment ceulx du chastel yssirent
Hors, aussi-tost comme ilz sentirent 22050
La chaleur du brandon Venus,
Dont aucuns jouterent tous nudz.

QUANT li brandons s'en fu volés,
Es-vos ceus dedens afolés,
Li feus porprent tout le porpris ;
Bien se durent tenir por pris.
N'est nus qui le feu rescossist,
Et bien rescorre le vossist.
Tuit s'escrient : Trahi ! trahi !
Tuit sommes morts ! ahi ! ahi ! 22060
Foïr nous estuet du païs ;
Chacuns giete ses clefz laïs.
Dangiers, li orribles maufés,
Quant il se senti eschaufés,

S'enfuit plus tost que cerf en lande.
 N'i a nul d'aus qui l'autre atende :
 Chascuns les pans à la ceinture
 Met a foïr toute sa cure.
 Fuit-s'en Paor, Honte s'eslesse,
 Tout embrasé le chastel lesse, 22070
 N'onc puis ne volt riens metre à pris,
 Que Raison li éust apris.
 Estes-vous venir Cortoisie
 La preus, la bele, la proisie ;
 Quant el vit la desconfiture.
 Por son filz geter de l'ardure,
 Avec li Pitié et Franchise
 Saillirent dedens la porprise,
 N'onc por l'ardure ne lessierent,
 Jusqu'à Bel-Acueil ne cessierent. 22080

Cortoisie prent la parole,
 Premier à Bel-Acueil parole,
 Car de bien dire n'ert pas lente :

Courtoisie à Bel-Acueil.

Biau fiz, moult ai esté dolente,
 Moult ai au cuer tristece éuë
 Dont tant avés prison tenuë.
 Mal-feus et male-flambe l'arde,
 Qui vous avoit mis en tel garde !
 Or estes, Dieu merci, délivres,
 Car là fors, o ses Normans yvres, 22090
 En ces fossés est mors gisans
 Male-Bouche li mesdisans ;

Véoir ne puet ne escouter.
 Jalousie n'estuet douter ;
 L'en ne doit pas por Jalousie
 Lessier à mener bonne vie,
 N'à solacier méismement
 O son ami privéement,
 Quant à ce vient qu'el n'a pooir
 De la chose oïr, ne véoir :
 N'il n'est qui dire la li puisse,
 N'el n'a pooir que ci vous truisse.
 Et li autre desconseillié
 Foïs s'en sunt tuit essillié,
 Li felon, li outrecuidié
 Trestous ont le porpris vuidié. *enclos*

Biau très-douz filz, por Diex merci,
 Ne vous lessiés pas brusler ci :
 Nous vous prions par amitié,
 Et ge, et Franchise, et Pitié, 22110
 Que vous à ce loial Amant
 Ôtroiés ce qu'il vous demant,
 Qui por vous a lonc tens mal trait,
 N'onques ne vous fist ung faus trait.
 Li frans qui onques ne guila,
 Recevés le et quanqu'il a ;
 Voire l'ame neis vous offre :
 Por Diex, ne refusés tel offre,
 Biau dous filz, ains le recevés,
 Par la foi que vous me devés, 22120
 Et par Amors qui s'en efforce,
 Qui moult i a mise grant force.
 Biau filz, Amors vainc toutes choses,
 Toutes sunt souz sa clef encloses.

Virgile néis le conferme
 Par sentence esprovée et ferme,
 Quant Bucoliques cercherés,
 Amors vainc tout, i troverés
 Et nous la devons recevoir.
 Certes il dist bien de ce voir ; 22130
 En ung sol vers tout ce nous conte,
 Ne péust conter meillor conte.
 Biau filz, secorez cel Amant,
 Que Diex ambedeus vous amant,
 Otroiés-li la Rose en don.

Bel-Acueil.

Dame, ge la li abandon,
 Fet Bel-Acueil, moult volentiers,
 Coillir la puet endementiers
 Que nous ne sommes ci que dui,
 Pieçà que recevoir le dui : 22140
 Car bien voi qu'il aime sans guile.

L'Amant.

Ge qui l'en rens mercis cent mile,
 Tantost comme bons pelerins,
 Hatis, fervens et enterins
 De cuer, comme fins amoureux,
 Après cest otroi savoreus,
 Vers l'archiere acueil mon voiage
 Por fornir mon pelerinage ;
 Et port o moi par grant effort
 Escherpe et bordon grant et fort, 22150

Tel qu'il n'a mestier de ferrer
 Por jornoier, ne por errer.
 L'escherpe est de bonne feture,
 D'une pel souple sans cousture ;
 Mès sachiés qu'ele n'est pas vuide :
 Deus martelez par grant estuide
 Que mis i ot, si cum moi semble,
 Diligemment tretout ensemble
 Nature, qui la me bailla,
 Dès lors que premiers la tailla, 22160
 Sotilment forgiés li avoit,
 Cum cele qui forgier savoit
 Miex c'onques Dedalus ne sot.
 Si croi que por ce fait les ot,
 Qu'el pensoit que g'en ferreroie
 Mes palefrois quant g'erreroie.
 Si ferai-ge certainement,
 Se g'en puis avoir l'aisement ;
 Car, Diex merci, bien forgier sai.
 Si vous di bien que plus chier ai 22170
 Mes deus martelez et m'escherpe
 Que ma citole ne ma herpe.
 Moult me fist grant honor Nature,
 Quant m'arma de tel arméure,
 Et m'en enseigna si l'usage,
 Qu'el m'en fist bon ovrier et sage :
 Ele-méismes le bordon
 M'avoit appareillié por don,
 Et volt au doler la main metre,
 Ains que je fusse mis à letre. 22180
 Mès du ferrer ne li chalut,
 N'onques por ce mains n'en valut ;

Et puis que ge l'oi recéu,
 Pres de moi l'ai tous jors éu,
 Si que nel' perdi onques puis,
 Ne 'nel' perdrai jà se ge puis :
 Car n'en voldroie estre délivres
 Por cincq cens fois cent mile livres.
 Biau don me fist, por ce le gart ;
 Et moult sui liés quant le regart, 22190
 Et la merci de son présent
 Liés et jolis, quant ge le sent.
 Maintes fois m'a puis conforté
 En mainz leus ou ge l'ai porté ;
 Bien me sert, et savés de quoi,
 Quant sui en aucun leu requoi,
 Et ge chemine, ge le boute
 Es fosses où ge ne vois goute,
 Ausinc cum por les guez tenter ;
 Si que ge me puis bien venter 22200
 Que n'i ai garde de naier,
 Tant sai bien les gués essaier,
 Et fier par rives et par fons :
 Mès g'en retruis de si parfons,
 Et qui tant ont larges les rives,
 Qu'il me greveroit mains deus lives
 Sor la marine esbanoier,
 Et le rivage costoyer ;
 Et mains m'i porroie lasser,
 Que si perilleus gué passer. 22210
 Car trop grans les ai essayés,
 Et si n'i sui-ge pas naiés :
 Car si-tost cum ge les tentoie
 Et d'entrer ens m'entremetoie,

Et tex les avoie esprovés,
 Que jamés fons n'i fust trovés
 Par perche, ne par aviron,
 Ge m'en aloie à l'environ,
 Et près des rives me tenoie,
 Tant que hors en la fin venoie : 22220
 Mès jamais issir n'en péusse,
 Se les arméures n'éusse
 Que Nature m'avoit données.

Mès or lessons ces voies lées
 A ceus qui là vont volentiers ;
 Et nous les deduisans sentiers,
 Non pas les chemins as charretes,
 Mès les jolives senteletes,
 Joli et renvoisié tenons,
 Qui les jolivetés menons. 22230
 Si rest plus de gaaing-rentiers
 Viez chemins que noviaus sentiers,
 Et plus i trueve-l'en d'avoir
 Dont l'en puet grand profit avoir.
 Juvenaues méismes afiche
 Que qui se met en vielle riche,
 S'il vuet à grant estat venir,
 Ne puet plus bref chemin tenir ;
 S'el prent son service de gré,
 Tantost le boute en haut degré. 22240
 Ovides méismes aferme
 Par sentence esprovée et ferme,
 Que qui se vuet à vielle prendre,
 Moult en puet grant loier atendre ;
 Tantost est grant richece aquise
 Por mener tel marchéandise.

Mès bien se gart qui vielle prie,
Qu'il ne face riens, ne ne die
Qui ja puist aguet ressembler,
Quant il li vuet s'amor embler, 22250
Ou loiaument néis aquerre,
Quant amors en ses laz l'enserre :
Car les dures vielles chenuës,
Qui de jonesce sunt venuës
Où jadis ont esté flatées,
Et surprises et baratées
Quant plus ont esté décéuës,
Plus-tost se sunt aparceuës
Des bareteresses faveles,
Que ne font les tendres puceles 22260
Qui des aguez pas ne se doutent,
Quant les fléutéors escoutent ;
Ains croient que barat et guile
Soit ausinc voir cum Evangile :
Car onc n'en furent eschaudées.
Mès les dures vielles ridées,
Malicieuses et recuites,
Sunt en l'art de barat si duites,
Dont eus ont toute la science
Par tens et par expérience, 22270
Que quant les flajoléors viennent,
Qui par faveles les détiennent,
Et as oreilles lor taborent,
Quant de lor grace avoir laborent,
Et soplient et s'umilient,
Joignent lor mains et merci crient,
Et s'enclinent et s'agenoillent,
Et plorent si que tuit se moillent,

Et devant eus se crucifient
 Por ce que plus en eus se fient, 22280
 Et lor prometent par faintise
 Cuer et cors, avoir et servise,
 Et lor fiancent et lor jurent
 Les sains qui sunt, seront et furent,
 Et les vont ainsinc decevant
 Par parole où il n'a que vent :
 Ainsinc cum fait li oiselierres
 Qui tent à l'oisel, comme lierres,
 Et l'apele par dous sonnés,
 Muciés entre les buissonnés, 22290
 Por li faire à son brai venir,
 Tant que pris le puisse tenir ;
 Li fox oisiaus de li s'apprime,
 Qui ne set respondre au sophime
 Qui l'a mis en decepcion
 Par figure de diccion ;
 Si cum fait li cailliers la caille,
 Por ce que dedans la rois saille ;
 Et la caille le son escoute,
 Si s'en apresse, et puis se boute 22300
 Sous la rois que cil a tenduë
 Sor l'erbe en printens fresche et druë ;
 Se n'est aucune caille vielle,
 Qui venir au caillier ne veille,
 Tant est eschaudée et batuë,
 Qu'ele a bien autre rois véuë
 Dont el s'ert espoir eschapée,
 Quant ele i dut estre hapée
 Par entre les herbes petites.
 Ainsinc les vielles devant dites, 22310

Qui jadis ont esté requises,
Et des requeréors surprises
Par les paroles qu'elles oient,
Et les contenance que voient,
De loing lor aguez aparçoivent,
Par quoi plus envis les reçoivent ;
Où s'ils le font néis acertes
Por avoir d'amor les desertes,
Comme cil qui sunt pris es las,
Dont tant sunt plesant li solas, 22320
Et li travail tant delitable
Que riens ne lor est si gréable
Cum est ceste esperance grieve
Qui tant lor plect et tant lor grieve,
Sunt-elles en grant sospeçon
D'estre prises à l'ameçon,
Et oreillent et estudient
Se cil voir ou fable lor dient,
Et vont paroles sospesant,
Tant redotent barat present, 22330
Por ceus qu'el ont jadis passés
Dont il lor membre encore assés.
Tous jors cuide chascune vielle,
Que chascun decevoir la vuelle.
Et s'il vous plect à ce flechir
Vos cuers por plus-tost enrichir,
Ou vous qui délit i savés,
Se regart au délit avés,
Bien poés ce chemin tracier
Por vous déduire et solacier. 22340
Et vous qui les jones volés
Que par moi ne soiés bolés,

Que que mes mestres me commant,
 (Si sunt moult bel tuit si commant)
 Bien vous redi por chose voire,
 (Croie-m'en qui m'en voldra croire),
 Qu'il fait bon de tout essayer
 Por soi miex és biens esgaier,
 Ausinc cum fait li bon lechierres
 Qui des morsiaus, est congnoissierres 22350
 Et de plusors viandes taste,
 En pot, en rost, en soust, en paste,
 En friture et en galentine,
 Quant entrer puet en la cuisine ;
 Et set loer et set blasmer
 Liquex sunt dous, liquex amer,
 Car de plusors en a goustés.
 Ausinc sachiés, et n'en doutés,
 Que qui mal essayé n'aura,
 Jà du bien gaires ne saura ; 22360
 Et qui ne set d'honor que monte,
 Jà ne saura congnoistre honte ;
 N'onc nus ne sot quel chose est aise,
 S'il n'ot avant apris mesaise ;
 Ne n'est pas digne d'aise avoir,
 Qui ne vuet mésaise savoir ;
 Et qui bien ne la set soffrir,
 Nus ne li devroit aise offrir.

Ainsinc va des contraires choses,
 Les une sunt des autres gloses, 22370
 Et qui l'une en vuet definir,
 De l'autre li doit sovenir ;
 Ou jà par nule entencion
 N'i metra diffinicion :

Car qui des deus n'a congnoissance,
Ja n'i congnoistra difference,
Sans quoi ne puet venir en place
Diffinicion que l'en face.

Tout mon harnois tel que le port,
Se porter le puis à bon port, 22380

Voldrai as reliques touchier,
Se je l'en puis tant aprouchier.

Lors ai tant fait et tant erré
A tout mon bordon defferré,

Qu'entre les deus biaux pilerés,
Cum viguerous et legerés,

M'agenoillai sans demorer,
Car moult oi grant fain d'aorer

Li biau saintuaire honorable
De cuer dévost et pitéable : 22390

Car tout iert jà tumbé a terre,
Qu'au feu ne puet riens tenir guerre,

Que tout par terre mis n'éust,
Sans ce que de riens m'i n'éust.

Trais en sus ung poi la cortine
Qui les reliques encortine :

De l'ymage lors m'appressai
Que du saintuaire près sai ;

Moult le baisai dévotement,
Et pour estuier sainement, 22400

Voil mon bordon metre en l'archiere
Où l'escherpe pendoit derriere.

Bien le cuidai lancier de bout,
Mais il resort, et ge rebout,

Mès riens n'i vaut, tous jors recule,
Entrer n'i pot por chose nule,

Car ung palis dedans trovoi,
 Que ge bien sens, et pas nel' voi,
 Dont l'archiere iert dedans hordée. 22410
 Dès-lors qu'el fu primes fondée,
 Auques près de la bordéure
 S'en iert plus fort et plus séure.
 Forment m'i convint assaillir,
 Sovent hurter, sovent faillir.
 Se behorder m'i véissiés,
 Por quoi bien garde i préissiés
 D'Ercoles vous péust membrer,
 Quant il volt Cacus desmembrer.
 Trois fois a la porte assailli,
 Trois fois hurta, trois fois failli, 22420
 Trois fois s'assist en la valée
 Tout las por avoir s'alénéé
 Tant ot soffert paine et travail :
 Et ge qui ci tant me travail,
 Que trestout en tressu d'angoisse,
 Quant cest palis tantost ne froisse,
 Sui bien, ce cuit, autant lassés
 Cum Hercules, et plus assés.
 Tant ai hurté, que toutevoie
 M'aparçui d'une estroite voie 22430
 Par où bien cuit outrepasser,
 Mès convint le palis casser.

Par la sentele que j'ai dite
 Qui tant iert estroite et petite,
 Par où le passage quis ai,
 Le palis au bordon brisai.
 Sui moi dedens l'archiere mis,
 Mès ge n'i entrai pas demis.

Pesoit moi que plus n'i entroie,
 Mès outre pooir ne pooie ; 22440
 Mès por nule riens ne lessasse
 Que le bordon tout n'i passasse.
 Outre le passai sans demore,
 Mès l'escherpe dehors demore
 O les martelez rebillans
 Qui dehors erent pendillans.
 Et si m'en mis en grant destroit,
 Tant trovai le passage estroit ;
 Car largement ne fu-ce pas ;
 Que ge trespasasse le pas ; 22450
 Et se bien l'estre du pas sé,
 Nus n'i avoit onques passé :
 Car j'i passai tout li premiers,
 N'encor n'ierent pas coustumiers
 Li liex de recevoir passage.
 Ne sai s'il fist puis avantage
 Autant as autres cum à moi,
 Mès bien vous di que tant l'amoï,
 Que ge ne le poi onques croire,
 Néïs se ce fust chose voire ; 22 60
 Car nus de legier chose amée
 He mescroit, tant soit diffamée,
 Ne si ne le croi pas encores ;
 Mès au mains sai-ge bien que lores
 N'iert-il ne froès ne batus,
 Et por ce m'i sui embatus,
 Que d'autre entrée n'i a point
 Por le bouton cuillir à point.
 Li saurés cum ge m'i contins,
 Tant qu'à mon gré le bouton tins. 22470

Le fait orrés et la maniere,
 Por ce que se mestier vous iere,
 Quant la douce saison vendra,
 Seignors Valets, qu'il convendra
 Que vous aillies cuillir les Roses,
 Ou les ouvertes, ou les closes,
 Que si sagement i aillies
 Que vous au cuillir ne failliés.
 Faites si cum vous m'orrés faire,
 Se miex n'en savés à chief traire. 22480
 Car se vous plus largètement,
 Ou miex, ou plus sotivement
 Poés le passage passer,
 Sans vous destraindre ne lasser,
 Si le passés à vostre guise,
 Quant vous aurés la voie aprise.
 Tant aurés au mains d'avantaige,
 Que ge vous aprens mon usaige
 Sans riens prendre de vostre avoir :
 Si m'en devés bon gré savoir. 22490
 Quant g'iere ilec si empressiés,
 Tant fui du Rosier apressiés,
 Qu'à mon voloir poi la main tendre
 As rainsiaus por le bouton prendre.
 Bel-Acueil por Diex me prioit
 Que nul outrage fait n'i oit ;
 Et ge li mis moult en convent,
 Por ce qu'il m'en prioit sovent,
 Que jà nule riens n'i feroie
 Fors sa volenté et la moie. 22500

CIX

La conclusion du Rommant
 Est, que vous voyez cy l'Amant
 Qui prent la Rose à son plaisir,
 En qui estoit tout son desir.

PAR les rains saisi le Rosier,
 Qui plus est frans que nul osier,
 Et quant à deus mains m'i poi joindre,
 Tretout soavet sans moi poindre,
 Le bouton pris à eslochier,
 Qu'envis l'éusse sans hochier. 22510
 Toutes en fis par estouvoir
 Les branches croler et movoir,
 Sans jà nul des rains depecier,
 Car n'i voloie riens blecier :
 Et si m'en convint-il à force
 Entamer ung poi de l'escorce,
 Qu'autrement avoir ne savoie
 Ce dont si grant desir avoie.
 En la parfin tant vous en di,
 Un poi de graine i expandi 22520
 Quant j'oi le bouton eslochié
 Ce fut quant dedens l'oi tochié,
 Por les foilletes reverchier,
 Car ge voloie tout cerchier
 Jusques au fond du boutonet,
 Si cum moi semble que bon est.
 Si fis lors si meller les graines,
 Que se desmellassent à paines,
 Si que tout le boutonet tendre
 En fis eslargir et estendre. 22530

Vez ci tout quanque g'i forfis ;
 Mais de tant fui-ge bien lors fis,
 C'onques nul mal gré ne m'en sot
 Li dous, que nul mal n'i pensot :
 Ains me consent et sueffre à faire
 Quanqu'il set qui me doie plaire.
 Si m'appelle-il deconvenant,
 Que li fais grant desavenant,
 Et sui trop outrageus, ce dit ;
 Si n'i met-il nul contredit, 22540
 Que ne prengne, debaille, et coille
 Rosiers et Rose, flors et foille.

Quant en si haut degré me vi,
 Que j'oi si noblement chevi,
 Que mes procès n'ert mès dotable,
 Por ce que fins et agréable
 Fusse vers tous mes bienfaitors,
 Si cum doit faire bons detors :
 Car moult estoie à eus tenus,
 Quant par eus iere devenus 22550
 Si riches, que por voir afiche,
 Richece n'estoit pas si riche :
 Au Diex d'Amors et à Venus
 Qui m'orent aidié miex que nus,
 Puis à tous les barons de l'ost,
 Dont ge pri Diex que ja nes ost
 Des secors as fins amoreus,
 Entre les baisiers savoreus,
 Rendi graces dix fois ou vint ;
 Mès de Raison ne me sovint 22560
 Qui tant en moi gasta de paine,
 Maugré Richece la vilaine

Qui onques de pitié n'usa,
 Quant l'entrée me refusa
 Du senteret qu'ele gardoit ;
 De cesti pas ne se gardoit
 Par où ge sui céans venus
 Repostement les saus menus,
 Maugré mes mortex anemis
 Qui tant m'orent arriere mis, 22570
 Espéciaument Jalousie
 O tout son chapel de soussie,
 Qui des Amans les Roses garde :
 Moul en fait ores bonne garde.
 Ains que d'ilec me remuasse,
 (A mon voil encor demorasse)
 Par grant joliveté coilli
 La flor du biau Rosier foilli :
 Ainsinc oi la Rose vermeille,
 Atant fu jor, et ge m'esveille. 22580

Et puis que ge fui esveillié
 Du songe qui m'a traveillié
 Et moul i ai éu à faire
 Ains que ge péusse à chief traire
 De ce que j'avoie entrepris :
 Mès toutevois si ai-ge pris
 Le bouton que tant desiroie,
 Combien que traveillié m'i soie,
 Et tout le solas de ma vie,
 Maugré Dangier et Jalousie, 22590
 Et maugré Raison ensemment
 Qui tant me ledengea forment ;
 Mès Amors m'avait bien promis,
 Et ausinc me le dist Amis,

Se ge servoie loiaument,
 Que j'auroie prochainement
 Ma volenté toute acomplie.
 Folz est qui en Dieu ne se fie ;
 Et quiconques blasme les songes,
 Et dist que ce sunt des mençonges, 22600
 De cestui ne le di-ge mie,
 Car ge tesmoingne et certefie
 Que tout quanque j'ai récité,
 Est fine et pure verité.

Explicit li Rommans la Rose
 Où l'art d'Amours est toute enclose :
 Nature rit, si com moi semble,
 Quant *hic* et *hec* joignent ensemble.

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Herein doth the Duenna teach
 The Lover means by which to reach
 His end, and, whispering, doth relate
 How he may pass the postern gate.
 And good her lesson proved to be,
 For soon he entered secretly.

LXXVII. lines 15481-15530, Fr. 15379-

15428 3

How in the fastness of the tower
 The Lover gains Fair-Welcome's bower,
 Who offers his desire to speed.
 False-Seeming 'twas who helped his need.

LXXVIII. lines 15531-15656, Fr. 15429-

15558 5

How the fond Lover's hope to gain
 The Rose, through Danger fell, proved vain,
 For soon as his attempt he spied,
 With fearsome shout the monster cried.

LXXIX. lines 15657-15794, Fr. 15559-

15698 9

This tells how Danger, Fear, and Shame
 In force against the Lover came
 And beat him, till for mercy he
 Begged, with profound humility.

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29

This tells how Hide-Well overcame
In well-fought field the recreant Shame.
And Fear and Courage in like way
Show forth their skill in weapon-play.

LXXXVI. lines 16343-16396, Fr. 16248-
16302

33

This tells how Fear 'gainst Surety fought,
And each the other's ruin sought,
While many a champion interwove
Fierce combat, and for mastery strove.

LXXXVII. lines 16397-16440, Fr. 16303-
16346

34

This tells how messengers, by Love,
Are sent Queen Venus' heart to move,
In such wise that she condescend
Her help to Cupid's host to lend.

LXXXVIII. lines 16441-16522, Fr. 16347-
16430

36

Venus, possessed with boding fear,
Doth counsel her Adonis dear,
That he in nowise should pursue
Fierce beasts, lest she his death may rue.

LXXXIX. lines 16523-16546, Fr. 16431-
16456

39

How eight young doves the glorious car
Of Venus bore to where afar
Her son's great hosting was arrayed,
And how she brought him speedy aid.

CHAP.	PAGE
XC. lines 16547-16640, Fr. 16457-16552	40
<p>The host, with will the fort to take, Against it fierce assault doth make, Yet hath the god but small success, Though fight his troops with hardiness, For those within resistance stout Make to assailants from without.</p>	
XCI. lines 16641-16954, Fr. 16553-16850	43
<p>How Nature's sithy doth supply Earth's sons and daughters constantly, For fear the race of men were spent, If she thereof proved negligent.</p>	
XCII. lines 16955-17072, Fr. 16851-16954	53
<p>How Zeuxis, famed of old, did try To paint fair Nature perfectly ; And on his glorious task intent Great care and labour freely spent.</p>	
XCIII. lines 17073-17186, Fr. 16955-17062	57
<p>This tells how Nature, Goddess sweet, Knelt low at her confessor's feet ; Who gently bade her calm her fears, Comfort her heart, and dry her tears.</p>	
XCIV. lines 17187-17348, Fr. 17063-17220	61
<p>Herein much labour have I spent With honest purpose and intent, Of showing forth to every man How to defend him from the ban Of taking such a mate as may His goods despoil and life betray.</p>	

CHAP.	PAGE
<p> XCIV. lines 17349-17542, Fr. 17221-17412 The husband lets the cord around His neck be by his folly bound, Telling his secret to his wife— Her soul she loses—he his life. </p>	67
<p> XCVI. lines 17543-17846, Fr. 17413-17724 Here note you how, with loving care, Nature doth in confession fare. </p>	73
<p> XCVII. lines 17847-18410, Fr. 17725-18300 Nature relates what griefs and cares She for the sake of mankind bears. </p>	83
<p> XCVIII. lines 18411-19420, Fr. 18301-19296 How Themis to Deucalion gave Such counsel, as would surely save The human race, if only he With Pyrrha wrought discerningly. </p>	100
<p> XCIX. lines 19421-20166, Fr. 19297-20028 Here Nature brings before our eyes The source whence only can arise Nobility, and so displays Its modes and manners, works and ways. </p>	133
<p> C. lines 20167-20278, Fr. 20029-20136 Herein is told how Nature sends Genius to Cupid and his friends, That he their courage may excite With unabated zeal to fight. </p>	156
<p> CI. lines 20279-20346, Fr. 20137-20206 This tells how Lady Nature went To work—as on much labour bent— Within her forge straightway, for she Loves to do all things thoroughly. </p>	160

CHAP.	PAGE
CII. lines 20347-20552, Fr. 20207-20408	163
In Venus' presence Genius stands, And sets forth Nature's high commands, While all within the mighty host, Who Cytheræa's service boast, Give ear, till makes he clear and plain What work doth most his mistress fain.	
CIII. lines 20553-20944, Fr. 20409-20806	169
An excommunication dread Genius pronounces on the head Of all and each who dare reject Dame Nature, and her work neglect.	
CIV. lines 20945-21586, Fr. 20807-21427	182
How Jupiter the pleasant saw Affirmed, that every man a law Should be unto himself, and scoff At what his neighbours thought thereof.	
CV. lines 21587-21864, Fr. 21427-21504	202
The English version does not follow the French beyond line 21504.	

APPENDIX

Containing the French version from line 21505 to the end, 22608, including part of Chap. CV. and Chaps. CVI.-CIX., the story of Pygmalion only being translated.

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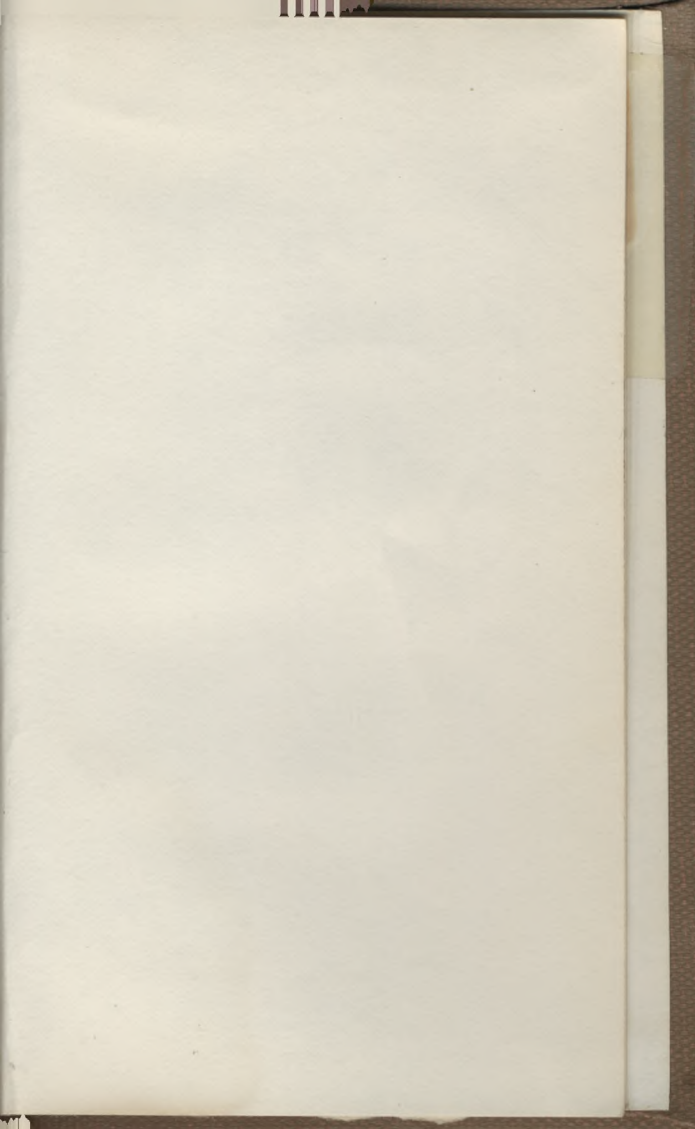
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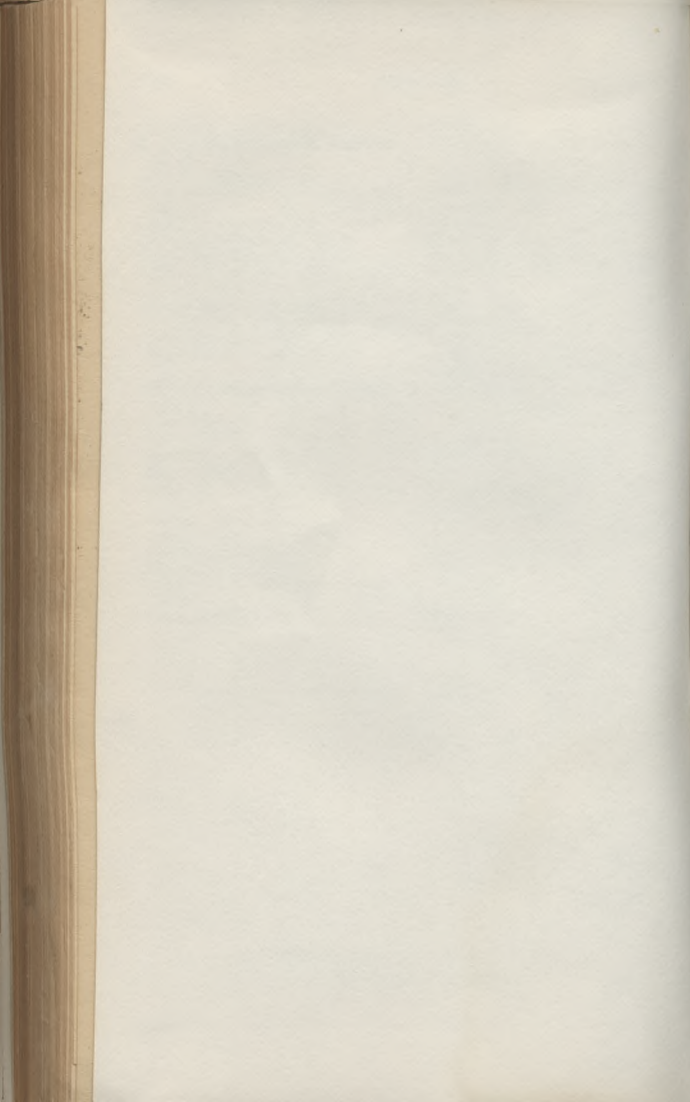
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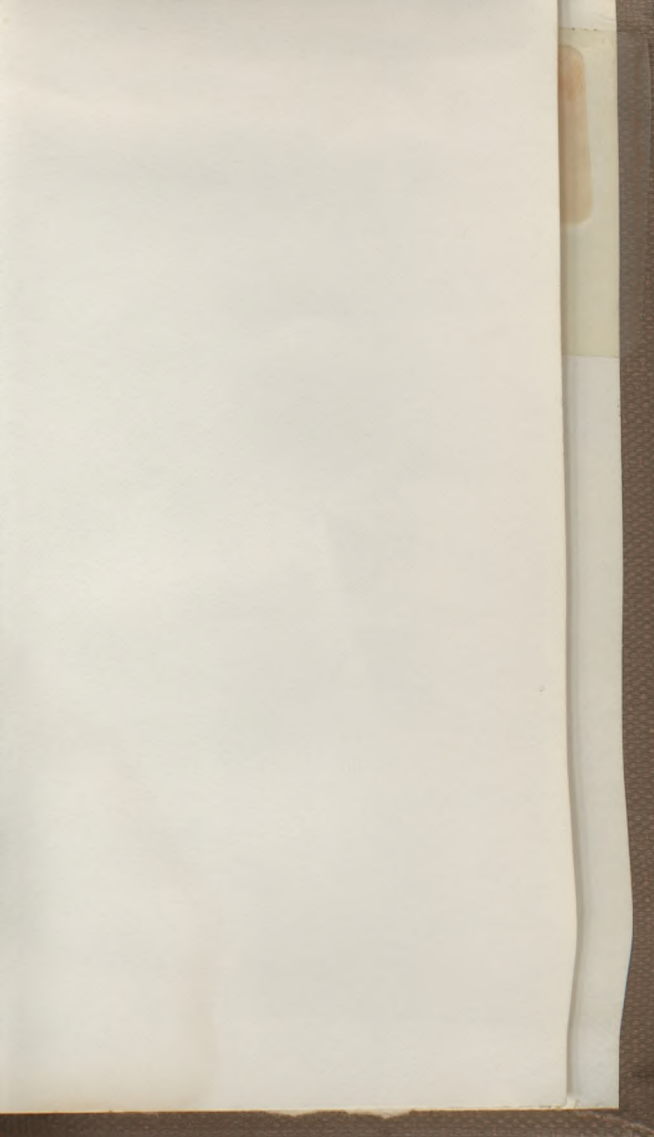
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