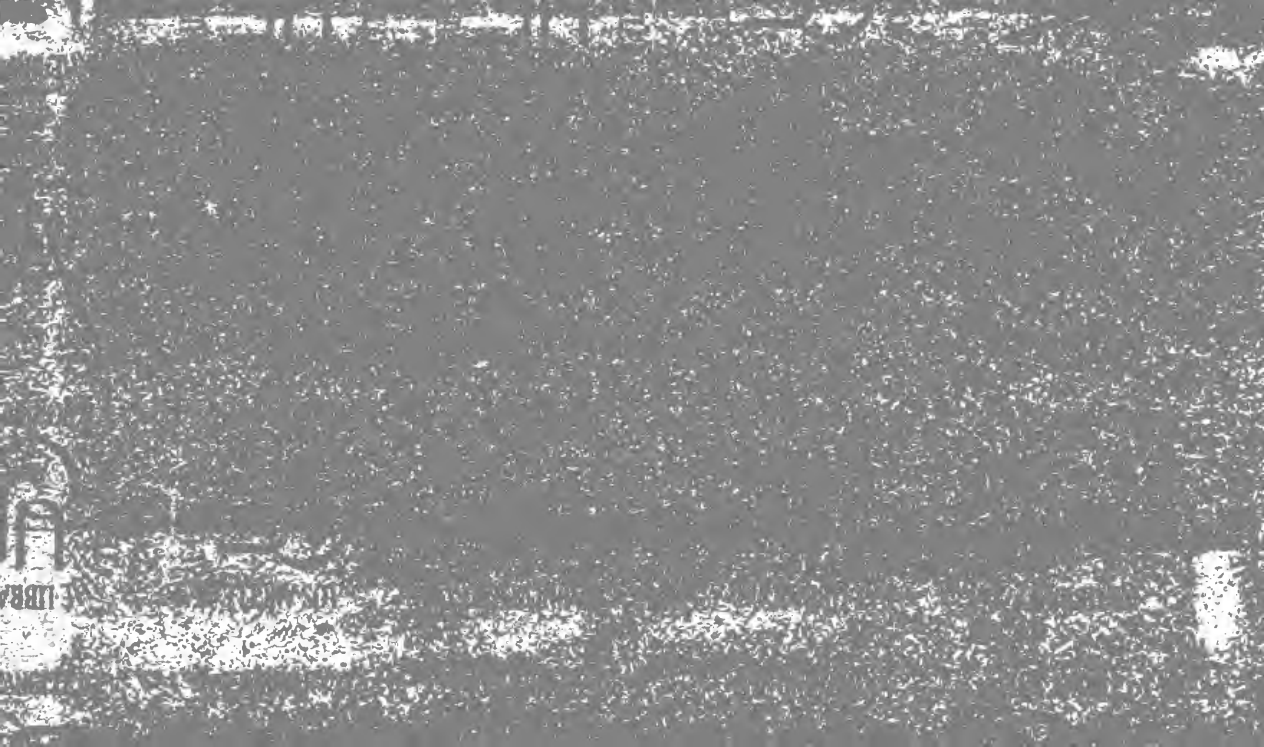


FABLIAUX OR TALES,

OF THE

TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES.

FABLIAUX OR TALES,

ABRIDGED FROM FRENCH MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE

XIITH AND XIIITH CENTURIES

BY M. LE GRAND,

SELECTED AND

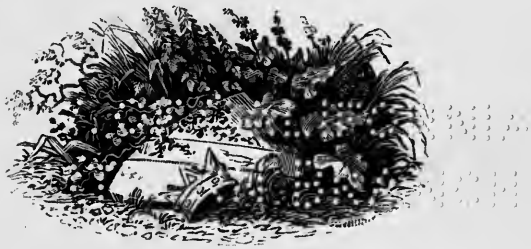
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE,

BY THE LATE G. L. WAY, ESQ.

WITH

A Preface, Notes, and Appendix,

BY THE LATE G. ELLIS, ESQ.



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The Knight and the Sword.

THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD.

Who seeks for solace? who delights in joy?
With me his listless hours shall find employ!
Haste all, with heedful ears! while I recite
The strange adventure of a peerless knight;
Whose soul all cowards and their deeds abhorr'd;
High was his honour, deadly was his sword;
Sworn foe to traitors; without fear or shame
He liv'd and died: Sir Gawaine was his name.

In Carduel's walls, retir'd from proud parade,
With his fair Queen the monarch Arthur stay'd;
Some chosen knights around their sovereign stood,
And good Sir Gawaine, of the royal blood.

And now came on the spring-time of the year;
Mild was the air, the sky was lovely clear;
Charm'd with the scene, the prince his steed bestrode,
And, unattended, to the forest rode;
At ease he far'd, nor cas'd his limbs in steel;
His spurs of well-wrought gold adorn'd his heel,
Girt with his sword, and in his hand a lance,
His shield alone he bore to ward disastrous chance.
The beauties of the calm unclouded sky,
The various birds' delightful melody,
And the fresh fragrance of the teeming earth
Where every moment gave new verdure birth,
So sooth'd the knight, so won upon his soul,
That his steed rov'd at will, without control:

He, rapt the while in ruminating muse,
Thoughts, such as vagrant fancy forms, pursues.
Rous'd at the last, disquieted and vex'd
He scans the wood with various paths perplex'd;
With fruitless diligence retracks his way,
Till sunk the westering sun, and clos'd the day;
Then various paths assays, the sport of chance,
Nor knows which ways recede, nor which advance.
Long had he wander'd, when from far he sees
A ruddy blaze that gleam'd betwixt the trees;
Led by the friendly flame, he shapes his course
Where to a tree was bound a warriour horse;
Not far beside there sat a stranger knight,
Close to a fire, conspicuous by its light.
With courteous guise Sir Gawaine prays him tell
Where lies the road to princely Carduel:
With equal courtesy the knight replied;
And, when day break, desir'd to be his guide,

Would but the wandering warriour rest the while,
And there the night's dull hours with him beguile.
The assenting Gawaine wraps his mantle round,
And seats him by the stranger on the ground:
Of nature loyal, and of temper free,
His converse paints his heart's integrity;
But all to guile the stranger's mind was bent:
Soon shall my audience learn his base intent.

Much they discours'd, then sunk in slumber lay
Till the first rays of morn proclaim'd the day:
'Tis far to Carduel,' then the stranger cried,
'And fasting hast thou pass'd the eventide:
'Hard by the forest's verge my castle stands,
'There let us seek what nature's waste demands;
'There take such food as favouring chance may send,
'Given with the cordial welcome of a friend.'
His specious words in Gawaine wrought consent;
Both warriours cross'd their steeds, and onward went.

Thus friendly journeying, they had scarcely pass'd
The outmost borders of the woody waste,
When, as they talk'd, the stranger knight express'd
Desire to lead the way, and to announce his guest:
'Sir Knight,' quoth he, 'since, as it chanc'd, alone,
'I lack due means to make thy presence known;
'Grace let me find, if, some few moments lost,
'I now fulfil this duty of a host.
'Thou seest where yonder lofty mountain's brow
'O'erhangs and terminates the dale below;
'That towering pile which on its summit stands,
'Is mine; 'tis there I wait my friend's commands.'
Ere well the words were past, he prick'd his steed,
And urg'd him to his utmost powers of speed:
The generous confidence of Gawaine's mind
Trusts his fair semblance, following slow behind.
On a wide down, at distance from the wood,
Guards of their flock four shepherd rusticks stood;

Sir Gawaine pass'd not unregardful by,
But spoke them fair with looks of courtesy;
His princely mien, his salutation kind,
With sympathy inspir'd each clownish hind;
'Fair sire!' his passing ear perceiv'd them cry,
'Wo worth the time! you seek your destiny.'
The voice he heard, but yet he mark'd it nought,
Till, as he mus'd, his mind revolves the thought:
Now, dubious grown, his course he backward bends,
To learn what hap that luckless cry portends.
With frank simplicity the hinds relate
That many a knight had pass'd that castle's gate,
Many had enter'd in, but none return'd;
This they had seen, and therefore had they mourn'd.
But how those knights had far'd, or what befell,
Nought but of vagrant rumour could they tell.
'Twas nois'd, that yonder pile's imperious lord
Could brook no gainsaying in deed or word;

That 'twas his custom, by vexatious proof,
When drawn by fraud or fortune to his roof,
To grieve the soul of each defenceless guest,
Till his worn patience shrunk beneath the test;
Then, should he aught resist, or aught deny,
Seal'd was his doom, the luckless wretch must die.

Stránge was the shepherds' tale, and full of ruth,
And told with the simplicity of truth:
Awhile Sir Gawaine, wavering in his mind,
Thence to return and shun the assay inclin'd;
Yet was he well aware what faith was due
To rumour's voice, malicious and untrue:
Scorn, more than all, that thus he might afford
Cause to impeach his unsuspected word,
Impell'd him on; nor could he brook to hear
That once in life he had acknowledg'd fear:
Before these thoughts all danger fades away,
And on he fares the adventure to assay.

Now, nigh at hand, he views the fortress' gate,
His wish'd approach the numerous menials wait;
Foremost their lord, with looks that joy express'd,
Stood, prompt to greet and to assist his guest;
Himself was first to curb the warriour's steed,
And from his arms himself the warriour freed;
On pass'd the pair like brethren, hand in hand,
To a proud hall magnificently plann'd;
Then, while the hastening feast employ'd his train,
Thus spake with generous air the castellain.
'Fair sir,' he cried, 'deem yours whate'er you see,
'Here take your ease, and live at liberty;
'Should aught displease, unmeet should aught appear,
'Use your free will, and reign sole master here.'
Smiling he spoke, and for a while retir'd;
Mute was his guest, and with a smile admir'd;
Much on his mind the shepherds' warnings hung,
And fear to give offence restrain'd his tongue.

Back to the hall the castellain repairs,
And in his hand his beauteous daughter bears,
And thus bespeaks the love-inspiring maid,
'Heed this my guest, and be his will obey'd.'
Then, lest constraint or listlessness should bind
The knight's free converse, and control his mind,
The sire, retreating as he clos'd the charge,
Leaves without ward the youthful pair at large.
His words, his conduct, more than all the rest
His damsel's charms, disturb'd Sir Gawaine's breast:
Amaz'd awhile he stands in speechless muse,
Of counsel void, unweeting what to choose:
Stak'd with the daughter of his wayward host,
Too cold, too courteous, life might be the cost.
With cautious language and embarrass'd air
He sues the maid to grant a warriour's prayer,
Implores permission to be nam'd her knight,
And consecrates his sword to guard her right.

The prince was circumspect, the maid was young,
Yet sure his conscious eyes betray'd his tongue;
For through perplexity's mysterious shade
She read the conquest that her charms had made:
Nor had the warriour's nobleness of air
Miss'd its full influence on the enamour'd fair;
Chill fear alone her struggling soul repress'd,
And froze the important secrets of her breast;
But love's superiour powers at last prevail,
And from her trembling lips extort the tale.
Bound by an oath's inviolable tie,
The prince now learns his dangerous destiny.
'Beware!' she cries, 'nor contradict my sire!
'Beware, sweet friend! for deadly is his ire:
'Nor, by the language of his lips beguil'd,
'Ask, in ill hour, obedience of his child.
'Had those smooth words seduc'd thy looks to show
'Aught like commandment, thou hadst died ere now.'

She ceas'd; for now return'd the mansion's lord,
To lead the warriour to the festive board:
'Whene'er,' quoth he, 'by favouring chance I find
'A guest who thwarts me not, but reads my mind,
'Just to his worth, o'er mine that man may claim
'Their lord's prerogative of praise or blame.'
So speaking, meats, from every dish the best,
Largely he culls, and proffers to his guest;
Deep draughts between from copious bowls supplied,
Given with an air not us'd to be denied;
And still with many a question, many a word,
If aught in chief his curious taste preferr'd:
But vain these sleights the fraudful master tries;
Sir Gawaine freely feeds, but nought replies:
(By looks, besure, by gestures, he conveys
Large thankfulness, and universal praise:)
Nor swerves he aught, when, as the banquet ends,
His daughter's hand the liberal sire extends,

And wills the roseate maid's unsullied charms
Should grace the warriour's couch and bless his arms:
With full content the prince receives the prize,
Yet only thanks with language of his eyes.

Now mounts the castellain his stately steed,
And hies him to the greenwood side with speed,
For 'twas his custom'd course to linger there,
And court, like errant knight, adventures rare.
Yet, ere he parts, he warns his guest to wait;
Patient to bide within the castle's gate,
On pain of death: within those precincts free
With his fair mate to sport at liberty;
For 'twas his joy that guests at ease should live,
And lack no pastime he or his could give.

Struck with the interdict, in wonder lost
At the contrarious conduct of his host,
The prince stood mute; his wit no clue might find
To such brute force and courtesy combin'd.

Yet for his gallant soul was nobly true,
He lean'd to vindicate the stranger's too;
Nor would he think that one who unconstrain'd
So much besought, so largely entertain'd,
Beneath this guise of bountihead profess'd
Could traitorously plot against his guest.
The softer maid, with worse disquiet wrung,
Forethought the dole that o'er her warriour hung:
Fain would she guess, and fain would she reveal,
Each secret snare, each lurking danger tell;
All that she might, with oft-repeated care
She paints her sire's caprice, and warns the knight beware.
'Twas night; and in the hall the banquet smil'd;
There sat the prince, the father, and his child:
Then once again, importunately press'd,
Feeds to the full the unresisting guest.
Then too, as now the festive board was clear'd,
He hears, yet scarce believes that he has heard,

The sire enjoin his menial train to spread
There, for himself to rest, some homelier bed,
That his own couch, with costliest care array'd,
Might lull the stranger knight and rosy maid.

Dumb was the prince, he scarcely seem'd to breathe;
Accepted or refus'd he ween'd it death:
Nor for his answer paus'd the menial train;
On to the bower they lead the lovers twain:
Within the bower twelve waxen torches blaze,
And o'er the damsel shed resistless rays;
While many a stern command constrains the knight,
Lest wariness should quench their dangerous light:
Thus bound, thus tempted, it behov'd him bide,
And dare the eventful proof, whate'er betide:
Clos'd was the door, the massy key was turn'd,
And lovely look'd the maid, and bright the tapers burn'd,
And down she lay, as one to sleep resign'd,
And gently by her side the knight reclin'd.

Who might have seen what now Sir Gawaine saw,
Nor felt the imperious power of nature's law?
When straight these words his wayward fancies marr'd—
'Beware!—I lie not here without a guard.'—
Amaz'd, incredulous, his curious eyes
He casts around, but nought of guard espies;
Till his fair mate directs his wondering sight
To a sword pendent from the window's height:
'That blade,' quoth she, 'by strong enchantment's power
'Keeps watch and ward o'er this mysterious bower!
'Here must each wight, whom favouring fate may guide
'Safe through the numerous snares thyself hast tried,
'Here must each wight, by custom most abhorr'd,
'Meet the last deadliest proof my sire has stor'd.
'Scarce may his will, by powerful fancy caught,
'Forget those precepts temperate foresight taught,
'Ere from its sheath the steel spontaneous flies,
'And the wretch bleeds, a certain sacrifice.

'Full twenty knights, all boon, as thou mayst be,
'Have press'd this sad funereal couch with me:
'Alas! of all this train not one survives!
'All paid the piteous forfeit with their lives!
'Now, sweet my lord! for grace forbear to prove
'These dire effects of disadventurous love!
'Nor swell these eyes, that dread to see the day,
'With tears which death alone shall wipe away!'

The damsel ceas'd; the knight, with new surprise,
Fix'd on her glowing charms his wistful eyes:
So strange adventure ne'er before he knew,
So passing strange he scarce may ween it true;
Half doubts, the maid this quaint device may try
As the last wile of dexterous modesty:
And now, resolv'd the prodigy to dare,
He mov'd more nigh: then shriek'd aloud the fair:
Down, like a bolt of thunder, shot the blade,
Stridulous down, and fearful entrance made:

Back to its sheath spontaneous up it pass'd:
Sir Gawaine speechless lay, like wight aghast:
'Ah me!' with mild reproach the damsel cried,
'Why were my friendly warnings thus defied!
'Bless'd, howsoe'er, thy favouring fates dispense
'Slight wounds, proportion'd to thy slight offence.
'Admonish'd thus, thy wild desires control,
'And with the dews of slumber still thy soul.'
Fain would the prince his lady's hests fulfil,
But that the treacherous tapers warp'd his will;
Full on her dainty form they shed their light,
Nor mark'd the sword the offences of the sight:
To dolorous penance doom'd, he yet awhile
Brav'd the full blaze, that shone but to beguile:
But who can aye?—constraint, commandment, fail'd,
And nature's sovereign power again prevail'd.
'What gibes!' he cried, 'what scorn! should e'er report
'Bear the strange tale to royal Arthur's court,

'How, scar'd by danger thus, their craven knight
'Shrank from adventure of such choice delight;
'What dire derision, when 'tis told the sword
'Leap'd from its sheath, and fought without its lord!
'Die! better die!'——ere yet the warriour ends,
Swift from its high abode the steel descends,
Through the thin air it whistled as it sped,
And once again it smote, again Sir Gawaine bled.

Well may ye ween, by such advisement taught,
The lusty knight now rein'd his wanton thought;
While, whatsoe'er his musings might explore,
The flouts of Arthur's court prevail'd no more.

So far'd the prince; nor less the sire distress'd
Lack'd the sweet solace of unbroken rest;
Stretch'd on his bed disquietly he lay,
And sought with longing eyes the dawn of day:
Then to the bower he sped, then wondering spied
The knight, yet living, by the damsel's side.

'Now, by my troth,' Sir Gawaine cries with glee,
'No death-deserving deed is done by me!'
Proud was Sir Gawaine of his sage conceit,
Till the shrewd coverlet bewray'd the cheat;
Its texture rare with sightless rents defac'd,
Drew frank confession from his lips at last.
His name the meed secures; the flower of fame
Who but has heard the peerless Gawaine's name?
To this in homage bends the castle's lord;
'Here ends,' he cried, 'the enchantment of the sword!
'Thine be the damsel;—in mine own despite
'Thy mastering fates I own, and thee the prowest knight.
'Full many a brave one, doom'd to sue the maid,
'With his dear life the desperate price has paid;
'Thee, thee alone, illustrious past compare,
'I read the wight predestin'd for the fair;
'To thee pertains my daughter; take her hand;
'And with her this my castle and my land.'

'Gramercy, Sir! the damsel may suffice,'
The prince return'd; 'I ask none other prize.'
Now through the land the buzzing rumour rife
Told how the sword had spar'd one lover's life;
From every part in joyful crowds they hie,
And the same day was held the feast of victory.
There might be seen how royally the board
From end to end with daintiest meats was stor'd:
Next, how the banquet to disports gave way,
The wide hall echoing with the minstrels' lay:
This sounds the pipe, with that the flute prevails,
These to the harp record their various tales;
This, reads romantick lore, and feats of blood;
That, fabling fancies penn'd in merrier mood:
Some guests the while, as various likings sway,
With tables or with chess beguile the day:
Nor ceas'd their cheer, till in the darkening west
The sun now sunk proclaim'd the hour of rest;

Then all retire; but first, with seemly state,
On the blithe pair the numerous menials wait;
Straight to the bower the gallant prince they guide,
The self-same bower, the damsel by his side;
Where, by the powerless sword no more dismay'd,
Nor mus'd he long, nor greatly she gainsaid.

Now fly the weeks amain: the jocund knight
Lies lapt in love, and dreams but of delight:
Care for his royal uncle's boding heart
Rous'd at the last, and warn'd him to depart;
So long an absence well he ween'd might raise
Desponding doubts, and bitterness of days;
Thus mov'd, he bids the castellain farewel,
And with his mistress parts for Carduel.
On a slim steed, with sumptuous trappings grac'd,
Her dainty form the beauteous lady plac'd;
Hard by her side, and lightly arm'd, the same
As to her sire's abode whilere he came,

Her stout companion on his palfrey rode,
Well limb'd, and large of size, as best beseem'd its load.
So forth they issued; when, in peevish haste,
Ere yet an hundred paces well were past,
The fair stopp'd short, and fretful all she pin'd
For her two favourite nurslings left behind,
Two darling dogs; while far away from home
Their reckless patroness was bent to roam.
Swift, as she spoke, the castle's opening gate,
With menials throng'd, beheld her hastening mate:
Back to the fair he spurs at utmost speed,
And, with the following fondlings, both proceed.

Now, o'er their heads extending far and wide,
The gloomy forest frown'd on every side:
Athwart their way a lonely knight there stood,
Arm'd at all points, and seem'd to guard the wood:
Scarce might the prince with courteous guise begin,
And greetings fair, to curb his palfrey in,

Ere the brute stranger prick'd his steed amain,
And rudely rush'd betwixt, and seiz'd the damsel's rein;
Nor could her starting steed resist his sway;
So back he turn'd, and dragg'd his prize away.

Hard were it sure, and bootless, to recite
What wrath, what fury, now inflam'd her knight!
Arm'd with a lance alone, a sword, and shield,
His foe in plate and mail completely steel'd,
What might he do?—he sternly spurr'd his horse,
The ravisher he pass'd, and cross'd him in his course;
'Vassal!'—aloud in threatening tone he cried,
'What deed of desperate baseness hast thou tried?
'If aught of chivalry thy days have known,
'Disarm! and face thy foe with weapons like his own!
'Or bide thou here, on honour of a knight,
'Anon in equal arms I court the fight;
'Then be it seen, so then the field thou dare,
'If thou or Arthur's blood may best deserve the fair.'

So spake Sir Gawaine, as in ire he burn'd,
And coldly thus the insulting foe return'd:
'By known disparity secur'd from harms,
'One, bare as thou art, rails at knights in arms:—
'Yet mark; this woman, if I read aright,
'Is thine, thy paramour, and thou her knight:
'From strong constraint, I guess, proceeds thy claim;
'Hence, seiz'd by me, my right becomes the same:—
'In fine, what boots it in despiteous mood
'That thou and I should waste each other's blood?
'Far wiser 'twere to stint this growing strife,
'And bide her doom, and spare the risk of life.
'Hence let us both retire a certain space,
'While the maid tarry in the middle place,
'Then, as to either her free steps are bent,
'His be the prize, and rest the foe content.'
'Content!' Sir Gawaine cries with gladden'd voice,
Sure, as he ween'd him, of his lady's choice,

Sure, not the proffer'd universe could move
Her loyal heart to hesitate in love;
'Now, damsel, judge! and be our fates decreed!'
He spoke; on either side the knights recede:
When—O the wondrous ways of womankind!
False as the seas! unstable as the wind!
With curious eye by turns she view'd the twain,
Compar'd them, balanc'd, view'd them o'er again,
And at the last, to mock prediction's power,
Fix'd on the man she had not known an hour.
The prince was shent; and mortified desire,
And proud disdain, awak'd a moment's ire;
But soon to aid his wonted wisdom came,
And self-commandment quench'd the gathering flame;
To the base pair no word he deign'd to say,
But calmly turn'd his steed, and hied him on his way.
Not far he journey'd ere the faithless fair
Miss'd the twain dogs, the nurslings of her care:

Chaf'd and impatient she enjoins her knight
To win these back, and vindicate her right.
'By thee 'twas argued, knight,' the prince replied,
'When late my title to the dame was tried,
'That both should bide their object's just award,
'Bless'd, or bereav'd, as her free choice declar'd:
'So be it now; let each the dogs invite;
'And whom they follow, his shall be the right.'
Ill could the knight, while justice he profess'd,
Refuse assent to such an equal test.
Each gave the word; but, deaf to sounds unknown,
The faithful brutes regard the prince's voice alone.
Him many a kind caress, and oft renew'd,
As in the castle late the maid he woo'd,
Endear'd at will: their grateful hearts record
Fond favours past; they fly to meet their lord.
'Friend,' quoth the prince, 'by sore experience bought
'I learn'd the lesson thou mayst soon be taught:

'Meantime receive it as a truth from me,
'That each day sees some woman's perfidy;
'Each day beholds some faithful friend eschew'd,
'And kindness paid by black ingratitude:
'Learn too, it has not yet been seen or said
'That dogs desert the hand that gives them bread.'

The stranger answer'd nought, but back return'd:
His mate with rage and disappointment burn'd:
'Restore my dogs! my darling dogs restore!'
Frantick she cried, 'or never see me more!'
Stung with the menace, short he turn'd his steed,
And fiercely spurr'd him on, and doom'd the prince to bleed.
The stout Sir Gawaine the quick trampling heard;
And now, with lance in rest, the foe appear'd:
By strong defence constrain'd, he grasp'd his shield,
And fac'd the foul oppressor in the field:
Adroit to ward, and stedfast as a rock,
He caught, with targe oppos'd, the assailant shock;

And in reply so stern a greeting gave,
Back from the sell to earth his lawless foe he drave.
Straight from his courser leaps the victor knight,
And bares his deadly blade to end the fight;
The uplifted hauberk's skirt he draws aside,
In his foe's flank the avenging steel is dyed;
Then loud he calls, his dogs the call obey,
And mounts his steed and calmly turns away.
Just then the faithless damsel reach'd the spot;
She sees her champion die, and shudders at her lot.
On the cold earth, in agony of soul,
While down her cheeks the tears of terrour roll,—
On the cold earth her dainty limbs she cast,
Then, clinging to the prince like one aghast,
'Forgive!' she cries, 'nor let the doleful night
'Here shut me in alone, and slay me with affright!'
'I leave but thee where I by thee was left,'
The prince replied, 'nor art thou here a weft:

'Where-e'er, methinks, those winning graces dwell,

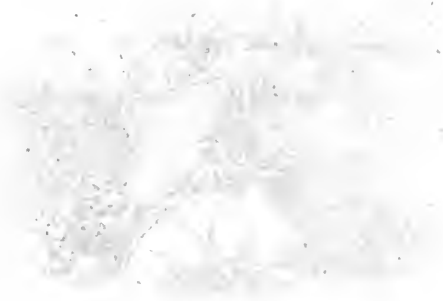
'Friends may be found at liking:—fare thee well!'

He spoke, and pass'd; and, ere dim twilight fail'd,

Imperial Carduel's lofty towers he hail'd;

There to the court his strange adventure told,

There listening scribes the wondrous tale enroll'd.'



The Vale of False Lovers.

THE VALE OF FALSE LOVERS.

The stout Sir Launcelot, as it once befell,
Pass'd the long year remote from Carduel;
Nor by his mistress once the knight was seen,
Fair Guenever, his mistress and his queen.

Far roam'd the warriour; captive knights he freed,
And dames he succour'd in their hour of need,
And many a lawless carle he did to die,
And evil customs quell'd with mastering remedy:

Yet oft he mus'd on Carduel and his fair,
For though his body stray'd, his heart was there;
Still, as he rov'd, he felt his flame increas'd,
And the last hour of absence lov'd the best:
And now to swift return his steps were bent,
When, on a swelling hillock's green ascent,
At the slant entrance of a fertile vale,
He spied a weeping damsel, deadly pale;
Her locks, dishevell'd all, she rent away,
And curs'd with piteous accent Mourgue the fay.
Nigh to the maid the gallant knight advanc'd,
And pray'd, with earnest kindness, what had chanc'd:
'Ah me! my lord,' the doleful damsel cries,
'Ah bitter fruit of baleful jealousies!
'By these, imprudent to my endless cost,
'My friend, the bravest knight on earth, I lost.
'Strong in my bosom beat desire to try
'By sure assay my lover's constancy;

‘ For this sad end I plied each female art,
‘ And moulded to my will his weetless heart;
‘ By me seduc’d, the abhorred Mourgue’s abode,
‘ Yon vale, the irremeable vale, he trod.
‘ There must he bide for aye! and I remain
‘ All hopeless here, till death conclude my pain.
‘ Too well I sped his fickleness to prove!
‘ For, though I know him false, I die for love.’

She ended here; and every word she spake
To marvel wrought Sir Launcelot du Lake:
Awhile he ween’d some strange delirious heat
Had thrust the powers of reason from their seat;
And, ever and anon, with looks intent,
He sought that fairy vale, the place of prisonment:
A cool and cheerful vale in truth he saw,
But nought there seem’d to thwart free nature’s law:
Throughout it ran a stream, like silver pure,
And deck’d with trees of goodliest garniture;

High circling hills the peaceful plat surround,

High circling hills with shadowy forests crown'd.

Again he questions then the mourning maid,

What hidden mystery this her tale convey'd;

And vows, if still he draw the vital air,

Back to her arms her captive knight to bear.

'Of royal Arthur's sister, and her deeds,'

Thus in her tale the weeping fair proceeds,

'And of her passing might in magick spell,

'Scarce needs it now the bruited fame to tell.

'This Mourgue, 'tis said, once lov'd a comely knight,

'And fed that treacherous passion to its height;

'Him above all the world the fay prefers,

'And fondly weens his heart enthrall'd like hers.

'The knight, howe'er, with specious semblance feign'd,

'By dread of magick power alone constrain'd;

'One young and boon was mistress of his soul,

'As beauteous as her rival Mourgue was foul.

‘ Soon as the fay this fatal secret learn’d,
‘ By turns her feverous bosom froze and burn’d;
‘ Heart-struck she was, as if about to die,
‘ But strong revenge forbade, and rankling enmity:
‘ Bent was her wit to dog that loyal pair;
‘ And, at the last, in yonder vale so fair
‘ She spied them both, unguarded as they prov’d
‘ With many a fond caress how well they lov’d.
‘ Forth from her covert then the monster burst,
‘ And dealt at large her calumnies accurs’d;
‘ And, when her venom’d railing all was spent,
‘ She thus pronounc’d their grievous punishment:
“ Here both be stay’d!—so long as life shall last
“ By power of mighty magick rooted fast!’
‘ So spake the fay; and now these lovers, each
‘ Some paces parted from the other’s reach,
‘ With looks of love, and eyes that never tire,
‘ Feed the full torment of unslak’d desire:

‘ Of motion void, denied the power to tell
‘ Their hearts’ sore anguish, here for aye they dwell.
‘ Nor this was all :—she thence devis’d a plan
‘ To wreak her sex’s wrongs on faithless man;
‘ Around the vale, by incantations dread,
‘ A huge transparent wall of air she spread;
‘ More firm than steel the liquid barrier’s bound
‘ Girds in on every side the fatal ground;
‘ No wight soe’er, whom conscious guilt shall read
‘ Disloyal to his dame in will or deed,
‘ May pass this precinct, journeying to the vale,
‘ But there must find his everlasting jail.
‘ A jail, in sooth; yet otherwise, I wis,
‘ No worse a grievance than confinement is;
‘ (The fay devising rather to impeach
‘ All future fault, than punish former breach;)
‘ For there, it seems, the pensive prisoners find
‘ Whate’er may recreate or recure the mind;

‘ Unshackled intercourse, delicious bowers,
‘ And dance and sports to fill the fleeting hours:
‘ Nay, should it e'er befall some loyal fair
‘ With a false paramour to enter there,
‘ To such the aerial walls no barrier prove,
‘ At will the guiltless maid may soothe or shun her love.
‘ Yet, maugre all, to be for aye confin'd
‘ So quells with languishment man's subject mind,
‘ That few are found of hardihood to bide;
‘ The most have quickly pin'd away and died.
‘ And now eighteen long years have pass'd away
‘ Since first this scheme of wrath inspir'd the fay;
‘ And travellers have nam'd the dreadful bourn
‘ THE VALE OF LOVERS FALSE, THE VALE WITHOUT RETURN.
‘ Still as the sun renews his bright career
‘ He sees some spouse or lover wandering here,
‘ And all this time, so faithless man is found,
‘ Not one, they say, has backward trac'd the ground.’

—‘ That shall they now, or e’er the day expire !’
Exclaim’d abrupt the warriour, fill’d with fire,
‘ With this good arm’——‘ Ah Sir !’ replied the fair,
‘ If life, if liberty be dear, forbear !
‘ Vain is all prowess in this strange assay,
‘ Here loyalty alone will win thy way.’
‘ That too is mine,’ rejoin’d the impatient knight,
‘ Though far beneath my sovereign lady’s right ;
‘ Yet, when a knight is resolute to try,
‘ And fears not dole, nor death’s extremity,
‘ What nobler gifts, what mightier virtues, need
‘ To warrant just success upon his deed ?’
‘ There needs,’ return’d the damsel once again,
‘ Faith to his mistress ; faith without a stain :
‘ Such faith, as, treasur’d in his soul’s recess,
‘ Ne’er for a moment wish’d her influence less ;
‘ Such faith, as ne’er could image power to rove,
‘ And knows no fear, but fear to lose her love.’

'How?' quoth the knight, 'if some fond fair be grac'd
'With one so true, so loyal, and so chaste?'
'Ah!' cried the maid, 'if such a knight there be,
'This deed will win him immortality!
'Now may he burst this vale's impervious wall,
'And free from hopeless bondage many a thrall;
'Now may he boldly on, secure from harm,
'And aye dissolve the abominable charm:
'But, wo the while! there never yet was found
'A man in whom love's grace did so abound,
'A man who, pledg'd in youth's gay prime to one,
'Priz'd her as life, and priz'd but her alone.
'The crafty Mourgue read mortal frailty well,
'When terms like these she chose to fence the spell.
'Now, trust me, Sir, and let my words seem wise;
'Preserve your gallant soul for happier enterprize:
'No wise man yet has deem'd it honour's stain
'To shun assay like this, where might is vain.

'For me, the solace of this world is o'er!
'To the sad vale I wend for evermore:
'There will I seek out him I love so dear,
'Ungrateful though he be, and insincere;
'There will I find him, there will I abide,
'And breathe my life's last accents by his side.'
'No, damsel, no!' the gallant knight exclaim'd,
'Nor shalt thou die, nor manhood thus be sham'd;
'Here stay thy steps; anon I trust thou'lt find
'That loyalty yet dwells among mankind.'
The warriour spoke; and, confident of right,
Spurr'd on his steed amain, and dar'd the fight.
Now had he reach'd the huge aerial bound
Stretch'd like a marish fog at eve around,
When, as he onward urg'd his snorting steed,
He saw the opacous volumes fast recede;
Back roll'd the parted clouds on either side,
Nor dimm'd his course, nor entrance fair denied:

So on he pass'd; but gathering thick behind,
As with the sweep of winter's mightiest wind,
Full on his rear the forceful vapour lay,
And with imperious blast prescrib'd his way.
Before him skies that cheer'd, and earth that smil'd,
E'en to a charm his wondering sense beguil'd;
Unnumber'd cells, in seemly rank dispos'd,
On right and left the lessening prospect clos'd;
And in the midst, by cunning artists rear'd,
A chapel meet for deeds of prayer appear'd;
A reverend pile; which Mourgue's regardful zeal
For her poor bondmen's everlasting weal
Had kindly plann'd, that ere the sun's decline
Each day in solemn Mass the assembled band might join.
What foes the knight o'erthrew, what monsters dread
Pil'd the green plain with miscreated dead,
I sing not here; nor yet what teen possess'd
The fairy's heart, to read her rival bless'd

With one whose fealty mock'd enchantment's charms,
Past peer alike in loyalty and arms.
Now proffer'd wealth she boasts; now, chang'd, appears
All suppliant, all seductive in her tears:
He on his way still forward press'd outright,
Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight,
Till, slackening fast, each spell's mysterious force
Bent back to nature's law, and she resum'd her course:
Then rang the air for joy; uprolling high
The foggy barrier fades into the sky;
And a huge host rush on with wild acclaim,
Now freed from caytive bands, and hail their champion's name.
The damsel boon, Mourgue's luckless rival long,
And her brave loyal lover, lead the throng;
Hard by their side comes he whose lady's plight
First to their aid had rous'd the conquering knight:
How chang'd their doom! this blissful hour at last
Chas'd, as it seem'd, all thought of penance past.

Mourgue, singly sad, with looks deject and pale,
Stay'd nigh the confines of that fatal vale ;
And, as she view'd the victor knight depart,
Thus spoke aloud the presage of her heart :
' Hence, Launcelot, hence!—improvidently gay !
' Blind to the future, Launcelot ! go thy way !
' Soon shall thy soul repent thy luckless deed,
' And deep remorse to self-applause succeed :
' Soon many a love-lorn maid this land shall see,
' And read the spring of wretchedness in thee.'

The Lay of Sir Lanval.

THE LAY OF SIR LANVAL.

It was the time of Pentecost the bless'd
When royal Arthur held the accustom'd feast,
When Carduel's walls contain'd the vast resort
That press'd from every land to grace his plenar court.
There did the sovereign's copious hand dispense
Large boons to all with free magnificence,
To all but one; from Bretany he came,
A goodly knight, Sir Lanval was his name.

Long had the king, by partial temper sway'd,
His loyal zeal with cold neglect repaid;
Yet from a throne Sir Lanval drew his birth,
Nor could all England boast more comeliness and worth:
Whate'er the cause, no gift the monarch gave,
The knight with honest pride forbore to crave,
Till at the last, his substance all forespent,
From his lord's court the hopeless liegeman went.
No leave he took, he told no mortal wight,
Scarce had he thought to guide his steps aright,
But all at random, reckless of his way,
He wander'd on the better half of day.
Ere evening fell he reach'd a pleasant mead,
And there he loos'd his beast, at will to rest or feed;
Then by a brook-side down his limbs he cast,
And, pondering on the waters as they pass'd,
The while his cloak his bended arm sustain'd,
Sadly he sat, and much in thought complain'd.

So mus'd he long, till by the frequent tread
Of quickening feet constrain'd he turn'd his head:
Close by his side there stood a female pair,
Both richly clad, and both enchanting fair;
With courteous guise the wondering knight they greet,
With winning speech, with invitation sweet
From their kind mistress, where at ease she lay,
And in her tent beguil'd the lingering day.
Awhile Sir Lanval reft of sense appear'd;
Then up at once his mailed limbs he rear'd,
And, with his guides impatient to proceed,
Though a true knight, for once forgot his steed.

And now, with costliest silk superbly dight,
A gay pavilion greets the warriour's sight;
Its taper spire a cowering eagle crown'd,
In substance gold, of workmanship renown'd.
Within, recumbent on a couch, was laid
A form more perfect than e'er man survey'd:

The new-blown rose, the lily's virgin prime,
In the fresh hour of fragrant summer-time,
Though of all flowers the fairest of the fair,
With this sweet paragon might ill compare;
And o'er her shoulders flow'd with graceful pride,
Though for the heat some little cast aside,
A crimson pall of Alexandria's dye,
With snowy ermine lin'd, befitting royalty;
Yet was her skin, where chance bewray'd the sight,
Far purer than the snowy ermine's white.
'Lanval!' she cried, as in amazed mood
Of speech and motion void the warriour stood,
'Lanval!' she cried, ''tis you I seek for here;
'Your worth has won me:—knight, I love thee dear;
'And of my love such proof will soon impart,
'Shall wring with envy thy proud sovereign's heart:
'Then slighted merit shall be fully known,
'And kings repine at wealth beyond their own.'

Words such as these arous'd the astonied knight,
He felt love's kindling flame inspire his spright,
And 'O pure paragon!' he straight replied,
'Thy love is all! I hold no wish beside!
'If bliss so rare thy favouring lips decree,
'No deed shall foil thy champion's chivalry;
'No toil shall wear, no danger shall dismay,
'Let my queen will, and Lanval must obey:
'So may I thrive as, from this moment bless'd,
'One hope I cherish, one sole boon request,
'Thy winning form, thy fostering smiles to see,
'And never never more to part from thee.'
So speaking ceas'd awhile the enraptur'd knight,
For now the two fair damsels met his sight;
Each on her arm resplendent vestments brought,
Fresh from the loom, magnificently wrought:
Enrob'd in these with added grace he mov'd,
As one by nature form'd to be belov'd;

And, by the fairy to the banquet led,
And plac'd beside her on one genial bed,
Whiles the twain handmaids every want supplied,
Cates were his fare to mortal man denied:
Yet was there one, the foremost of the feast,
One food there was far sweeter than the rest,
One food that most did feed the warriour's flame,
For from his lady's lovely lips it came.

What feeble wit of man might here suffice
To paint with colours dim Sir Lanval's ecstasies!
There lapt in bliss he lies, there fain would stay,
There dream the remnant of his life away:
But o'er their loves her dew still evening shed,
Night gather'd on amain, and thus the fairy said:
'Rise, knight! I may not longer keep thee here;
'Back to the court return, and nothing fear:
'There, in all princely cost profusely free,
'Maintain the honour of thyself and me;

'There feed thy lavish fancies uncontroll'd,
'And trust the exhaustless power of fairy gold.
'But should reflection thy soft bosom move,
'And wake sad wishes for thine absent love;
'(And sure such wishes thou canst never frame
'In any place where presence would be shame,)
'Whene'er thou call, thy joyful eyes shall see
'This form, invisible to all but thee.
'One thing I warn thee; let the blessing rest
'An unrevealed treasure in thy breast;
'If here thou fail, that hour my favours end,
'Nor wilt thou ever more behold thy friend:'—
Here, with a parting kiss, broke off the fay,
'Farewell!' she cried, and sudden pass'd away.
The knight look'd up, and prest without the tent
Beheld his faithful steed, and forth he went:
Light on his back he leap'd with graceful mien,
And to the towers of Carduel turn'd the rein;

Yet ever and anon he look'd behind
With strange amaz'd uncertainty of mind,
As one who hop'd some further proof to spy
If all were airy dream or just reality.

And now great Arthur's court beheld the knight
In sumptuous guise magnificently dight;
Large were his presents, cost was nothing spar'd,
And every former friend his bounty shar'd.
Now ransom'd thralls, now worthy knights supplied
With equipage their scanty means denied,
Now minstrels clad, their patron's deeds proclaim,
And add just honour to Sir Lanval's name.
Nor did his kindness yield a sparing meed
To the poor pilgrim in his lowly weed;
Nor less to those who erst in fight renown'd
Had borne the bloody cross and warr'd on Paynim ground:
Yet, as his best-belov'd so lately told,
His unexhausted purse o'erflow'd with gold.

But what far dearer solace did impart,
And thrill'd with thankfulness his loyal heart,
Was the choice privilege, that, night or day,
Whene'er his whisper'd prayer invok'd the fay,
That loveliest form, surpassing mortal charms,
Bless'd his fond eyes, and fill'd his circling arms.

Now shall ye hear how these delights so pure
Chang'd all to trouble and discomfiture.

'Twas on the solemn feast of sainted John,
When knights past tale did in the castle won,
That, supper done, 'twas will'd they all should fare
Forth to the orchard green, awhile to ramble there.
The queen, who long had mark'd with mute delight
The gallant graces of the Breton knight,
Soon from the window of her lofty tower
Mid the gay band espied him in a bower,
And turning to her dames with blithe intent,
'Hence all!' she cried; 'we join the merriment!'

All took the word, to the gay band they hied,
The queen besure was close to Lanval's side,
Sprightly she seem'd, and sportfully did toy,
And caught his hand to dance, and led the general joy.
Lanval alone was dull where all were gay,
His thoughts were fixed on his lovely fay:
Soon as he deftly might he fled the throng;
And her dear name nigh trembled on his tongue,
When the fond queen, who well had trac'd his flight,
Stepp'd forth, and cross'd his disappointed sight.
Much had she sought to meet the knight alone;
Now in these words she made her passion known.
'Lanval!' she said, 'thy worth, long season past,
'In my deserv'd esteem hath fix'd thee fast:
''Tis thine this prosperous presage to improve:—
'Say, gentle knight, canst thou return my love?'
The knight, ye wot, love's paragon ador'd;
And, had his heart been free, rever'd his word:

True to his king, the fealty of his soul
Abhorr'd all commerce with a thought so foul.
In fine, the sequel of my tale to tell,
From the shent queen such bitter slander fell,
That, with an honest indignation stung,
The fatal secret 'scap'd Sir Lanval's tongue:
'Yes!' he declar'd, 'he felt love's fullest power!
'Yes!' he declar'd, 'he had a paramour!
'But one, so perfect in all female grace,
'Those charms might scarcely win her handmaid's place;
'Those charms, were now one menial damsel near,
'Would lose their little light, and disappear.'
Strong degradation sure the words implied;
The queen stood mute, she could not speak for pride;
But quick she turn'd, and to her chamber sped,
There prostrate lay and wept upon her bed;
There vow'd the coming of her lord to wait,
Nor move till promis'd vengeance seal'd her hate.

The king, that day devoted to the chase,
Ne'er till the close of evening sought the place;
Then at his feet the fair deceiver fell,
And gloss'd her artful tale of mischief well;
Told how a saucy knight his queen abus'd
With prayer of proffer'd love, with scorn refus'd:
Thereat how rudely rail'd the ruffian shent,
With slanderous speech and foul disparagement,
And boastfully declar'd such charms array'd
The veriest menial where his vows were paid,
That, might one handmaid of that dame be seen,
All eyes would shun with scorn imperial Arthur's queen.

The weeping tale of her his heart ador'd
Wak'd the quick wrath of her deluded lord;
Sternly he menac'd some disastrous end
By fire or cord should soon that wretch attend,
And straight dispatch'd three barons bold to bring
The culprit to the presence of his king.

Lanval the while, the queen no longer near,
Home to his chamber hied with heavy cheer:
Much did he dread the luckless boast might prove
The eternal forfeit of his lady's love;
And, all impatient the dark doom to try,
And end the pangs of dire uncertainty,
His humble prayer he tremblingly preferr'd.
Wo worth the while! his prayer no more was heard.
O! how he wail'd! how curs'd the unhappy day!
Deaf still remain'd the unrelenting fay.
Him, thus dismay'd, the approaching barons found;
Outstretch'd he lay, and weeping, on the ground;
To reckless ears their summons they declar'd,
Lost was his fay, for nought beside he car'd,
So forth they led him, void of will or word,
Dead was his heart within, his wretched life abhorr'd.
They reach the presence; there he hears surpris'd
The mortal charge of felony devis'd:

Stern did the monarch look and sharp upbraid
For foul seducement on his queen assay'd:
The knight, whose loyal heart disdain'd the offence,
With generous warmth affirm'd his innocence;
He ne'er devis'd seduction:—for the rest,
His speech discourteous frankly he confess'd;
Inflam'd with ire his lips forewent their guard;—
He stood prepar'd to bide the court's award.

Straight from his peers were chosen judges nam'd:
These fix the trial, with due forms proclaim'd:
By these 'tis order'd that the accus'd assign
True men for pledge, or in a prison pine.

Lanval, 'tis told, had pass'd from foreign strand,
And kinsmen none there dwelt on English land;
And well he knew that in the hour of proof
Friends for the most part fail, and stand aloof:
Sue them he would not, but with manly pride
In silence turn'd, and toward his prison hied.

With generous grief the deed Sir Gawaine view'd,
Dear to the king was he, and nephew of his blood,
But liberal worth past nature's tie prevail'd,
And sympathy stood forth, if friendship fail'd.
Nor less good-will full many a knight inspir'd;
With general voice the prisoner all requir'd,
All pledg'd their fiefs he should not fail the day,
And homeward bore him from the court away.

His friends, for sure they well that title claim,
First thought the licence of his tongue to blame;
But, when they mark'd how deeply he was mov'd,
They sooth'd and cherish'd rather than reprov'd.
Each day, as sunk he sat in desperate grief,
They spoke kind words of comfort and relief;
Each day, howe'er they sought, howe'er they sued,
Scarce might they win his lips to taste of food:
'Come, welcome death!' for ever was his cry;
'Lo here a wretch who wishes but to die!'

So still he wail'd, till wo such mastery wan
They trembled for his nobler powers of man;
They fear'd lest reason's tottering rule should end,
And to a moping idiot sink their friend.

At length came on the day long since decreed
When the sad knight should suffer or be freed.
From every part the assembling barons meet:
Each judge, as foreordain'd, assumes his seat:
The king, too strongly sway'd by female pride,
O'er the grave council wills himself preside,
And, while the presence of his queen inspires,
Goads on the judgment as her wrath requires.
There might be seen that honourable band
Late for the prisoner pledg'd in fief and land;
Slow they advance, then stand before the board,
Whiles all behold the entrusted thrall restor'd.
With many a question next the accus'd was prov'd;
Then, while the votes were given, awhile remov'd.

But those brave warriours, when they weigh'd the plight
And the fair promise of this hapless knight,
His youth, for yet he reach'd not manhood's prime,
His gallant mien, his life without a crime,
His helpless state, by kindred unsustain'd,
In a strange court and in a foreign land,
All cried aloud, were Lanval doom'd to die
It were a doom of shame and cruelty.

At first 'twas mov'd that straight conducted thence
Some meet confinement should chastise the offence;
When one grave peer, in honest hope to wave
The dire debasement of a youth so brave,
Produc'd this purpose, with such reasoning grac'd,
'Twas with the general plaudit soon embrac'd:
'Twas urg'd,' he said, 'and sure the offence he blam'd,
'Their queen by base comparison was sham'd;
'That he, the prisoner, with strange fury mov'd,
'Had prais'd too proudly the fair dame he lov'd:

'First then 'twere meet this mistress should be seen
'There in full court, and plac'd beside the queen;
'So might they judge if passion's mad pretence
'Or truth had wrought the ungrateful preference.'

So spake the judge; Sir Lanval hears the doom,
And weens his hour of destiny is come:
Quench'd is the love that erst, in happier day,
Won to his whisper'd prayer the willing fay;
And the last licence pitying laws devise,
Serves but to close the count of miseries.

When lo! strange shouts of joy and clamorous cheers
Rose from without, and stay'd the astonish'd peers:
At hand two damsels entering in were seen,
Lovely alike their look, and noble was their mien;
On a gray dappled steed each lady rode,
That pac'd for pride, as conscious of its load:
'Lo here!' 'twas murmur'd round with new delight,
'Lo here the mistress of the Breton knight!'

The twain meanwhile pass'd onward undelay'd,
And to the king their graceful greetings paid,
Then told their lady's coming, and desir'd
Such harbourage as highest rank requir'd.

E'en as they spoke, twain others, lovelier fair,
Of stature loftier, of more royal air,
Came proudly on: of gold their purfled vest,
Well-shap'd, each symmetry of limb confess'd:
On goodly mules from farthest Spain ybrought,
This pair the presence of the sovereign sought.

The impatient king, ere well their lips had power
To claim fit harbourage of board and bower,
Led on their way; and, court'sies scantly done,
Back to the peers he sped, and press'd the judgment on;
For much, meseems, his vengeful heart misgave
Some thwarting chance the Breton knight might save.

Just were his boding fears: new shouts ascend
Of loud acclaim, and wide the welkin rend.

A female form the wondering peers behold,
Too bright for mixture of earth's mortal mould:
The gridelin pall that down her shoulders flow'd
Half vail'd her snow-white courser as she rode;
On her fair hand a sparrow-hawk was plac'd,
Her steed's sure steps a following greyhound trac'd;
And, as she pass'd, still pressing to the sight
Female and male and citizen and knight,
What wight soe'er in Carduel's walls was found,
Swell'd the full quire and spread the joy around.

Lanval, the while, apart from all the rest,
Sat sadly waiting for his doom unbless'd:
(Not that he fear'd to die; death rather sued;
For life was nought, despoil'd of all its good:)
To his dull ears his hastening friends proclaim
The fancied form and presence of his dame;
Feebly he rais'd his head; and, at the sight,
In a strange ecstasy of wild delight,

'Tis she! 'tis she!' was all his faltering cry,
'I see her once again, now satisfied I die!'
Thus while he spake, the peers with seemly state,
Led by their king, the illustrious stranger wait;
Proud Carduel's palace hail'd its princely guest,
And thus the dame the assembled court address'd.
'List, King, and Barons!—Arthur, I have lov'd
'A knight, most loyal in thy service prov'd;
'Him, by thy foul neglect, reduc'd to need,
'These hands did recompense; they did thy deed.
'He disobey'd me; I forebore to save;
'I left him at the portal of the grave:
'Firm loyalty hath well that breach repair'd,
'He loves me still, nor shall he lack reward.
'Barons! your court its judgment did decree,
'Quittance or death, your queen compar'd with me:
'Behold the mistress of the knight is come,
'Now judge betwixt us, and pronounce the doom.'—

All cry aloud the words of love were right,
And one united voice acquits the knight.
Back from the palace turns the parting fay,
And with her beauteous damsels speeds away:
Her, as she pass'd, the enraptur'd Lanval view'd;
High on the portal's marble steps he stood;
On her tall steed he sprang with vigorous bound;
Thenceforth their footsteps never wight has found.

But 'tis the Breton tale they both are gone
To the fair isle of fertile Avalon;
There, in the lap of love for ever laid,
By sorrow unassail'd, in bliss embay'd,
They make their won:—for me, where-e'er they dwell,
No farther tale befalls me here to tell.

The Lay of Sir Gruélan.

THE LAY OF SIR GRUÉLAN.

WHAT strange adventure once Gruélan knew,
E'en what I learn'd, I now relate to you:
Well may the tune in each man's memory dwell,
And the choice lay deserves an audience well.

A Breton born, and of illustrious race,
And passing praise for worthiness and grace,—
Such was Gruélan: fair his form, and join'd
With upright singleness of word and mind.

When bordering princes brav'd his sovereign's power,
And Bretany assay'd war's fearful hour,
First to his banner rush'd the dauntless knight;
First still was found in tourney or in fight:
Such were his deeds, so glorious was their end,
That his king lov'd and priz'd him as a friend.

High worth he had; and wide was nois'd his fame,
Till to his sovereign's spouse the rumour came;
And, as the tale was day by day rehears'd,
And the last tidings still surpass'd the first,
In her warm thought so strong did fancy move,
That admiration ripen'd into love.

So, in the end, resolv'd to ease her heart,
One day she call'd her chamberlain apart,
And 'Who?' quoth she, 'is this much-vaunted youth?
'This brave Gruélan—mark thou tell the truth:
'Doth universal fame report him right?
'For all men praise him:—Dost thou know the knight?'

'Great mistress mine!' the chamberlain replied,
'The knight I know, and know his courage tried;
'And, for his guise, 'tis of such courteous ease,
'He's lov'd alike by men of all degrees.'
''Tis now long time,' the shameless queen rejoin'd,
'His praise hath wrought within my secret mind;
'And in his cause my heart doth plead so strong,
'Thou must devise our interview ere long.'
The chamberlain his meet obeisance made;
'Such news, besure, must elevate;' he said;
'Such flattering sounds, besure, must glad his heart;'—
And, as he spoke, he turn'd him to depart:
Straight to Gruélan's lodge his course he bent,
And bade him to the queen, but vail'd the intent;
So to the castle's gate attendant hied
The weetless knight, the chamberlain his guide.
Now to the presence of his queen the guest
With such full forms as chamberlains know best

Was duly led: enraptur'd of his charms,
She clipp'd the lusty warriour in her arms;
Press'd on his ruddy lips her warm embrace,
And gaz'd o'er every feature of his face:
Then, on a carpet plac'd herself beside,
Each wile the fair seducing female tried;
Bent was her will the knight's dull sense to move;
Her voice seem'd friendship, but her looks were love.

Hard were it sure, I ween, for mortal wight
To see such signs, nor read their cause aright:
Yet was the crafty queen but ill appay'd,
With such grave reverence each reply was made:
Nor would she first declare love's mastering flame;
Pride, yet alive, forbade, and struggling shame:
Yet looks, she found, might little boot her here,
Plain speech at last must make love's secret clear:
Unrein'd desire prevail'd:—'Fair sir!' she cried,
'Hath ne'er thine heart fond female friendship tried?

'Such peerless charms must sure some dame inspire?

'And conquering love be thine, and uncontroll'd desire?'

'Liege lady mine!' (Gruélan thus return'd,)

'With love's bright fires this bosom ne'er hath burn'd.

'Love's sovereign lore, mysterious and refin'd,

'Is the pure confluence of immortal mind;

'Chaste union of two hearts by virtue wrought,

'Where each seems either in word deed and thought;

'Each singly to itself no more remains,

'But one will guides, one common soul sustains.

'Vain hope for me such boundless bliss to share,

'Young yet in years, and unconfirm'd in war:

'Some day, perchance, my deeds should glory crown,

'These joys may yet be mine, the guerdon of renown.'

Blithe was the queen, while thus the knight defin'd
Love's wondrous influence o'er man's subject mind;
Well to her wish each doctrine hope explain'd:
She ween'd Gruélan's heart already gain'd:

Reserve cast off, she now at large declar'd
Light was her sovereign in her love's regard;
Her vacant heart still sought some kindred breast,
Some sympathetick seat of blissful rest,
Some friend, some knight for gallant worth renown'd;—
Sure that accomplish'd knight at last was found!
Sure, courtesy, sure gallant worth was there,
Too great to cause a love-sick queen's despair!
The knight, confus'd, as one too closely press'd;
Deep sense of grace, all undeserv'd, profess'd:
Yet did his plighted faith renounce the thought;
Faith from his soldier with just stipend bought
A king might claim; to this, free bounty join'd,
Large as his generous lord's expansive mind,
Cried shame upon the deed; a deed imbued
With the foul blot of false ingratitude.
So spake the knight; so speaking, left the room:
The astonied queen remain'd with anguish dumb:

Sharp turns of passion shook her trembling frame,
But most quick grief prevail'd, and disappointed shame.
Yet, when the tempest of distress was pass'd,
Such fatal flattery sooth'd her hopes unchaste,
Still did she ween assiduous court might move,
And win wish'd recompence, and waken love.
Kind gifts she sent, kind interviews she plann'd,
Kind billets, written with her royal hand;
But all were vain: Gruélan's loyal mind
With stedfast modesty each lure declin'd;
Till, in the end, when now she well descried
All prayer was bootless, and all hope denied,
As one quite spent, she left the thriftless chase,
And enmity assum'd love's vacant place:
Her royal spouse she dup'd with dexterous sleight,
And sour'd his soul against the injur'd knight;
Cashier'd of pay, fiducial favours lost,
The knight now serves with unrequited cost;

Scant were his means to feed such waste of gold,
His arms, his chattels, piece by piece were sold;
Drain'd by degrees of this his last supply,
Nought now remain'd but grim despondency.
Which way, alas! might poor Gruélan turn?
What now devise, thus outcast and forlorn?
Scarce might ye marvel, scarce deny belief,
Should my sad lay record he died of grief.

One day it chanc'd that to his lodge he went,
There pensive sat and sole, and gave his sorrows vent;
His hosts, no matter why, from home were gone,
And their young daughter kept their house alone;
A winning form she had, and manners mild;
The sooth to say, she was a lovely child:
Sweet pity fill'd this little peasant's breast
To hear the sorrows of her sobbing guest:
Upstairs she stole, she gently op'd the door,
And, as she strove to cheer him, wept full sore;

Then, while she warmly press'd his languid hand
With simpleness that man might not withstand,
Thence with herself she pray'd the knight to go,
And share her homely noon-tide meal below.
The knight, whose soul, by sickening wo subdued,
Ill might abide the loathsome thought of food,
Smil'd on the eager maid, and thank'd her kind;
'Hunger,' he said, 'dwelt not with wounded mind:'
Then, as a wretch abandon'd to despair,
With quick resolve to pine no longer there,
His squire he calls, and gives commandment strait
Nigh, with his saddled steed, at hand to wait:
Bent was his will to shun that thankless ground,
To flee that thankless court, and never more be found.
Alas! no sell remain'd to dight the steed;
His own was barter'd long time past for need;
And, but for kindness of the darling maid,
There must the miserable knight have stay'd:

She, goodly child, retiring, sped like thought
Till in her arms her father's gear she brought;
Uncouth, I ween, such gear to gentle knight;
With this, howbe, his stately steed was dight,
And forth he far'd; while, as he pass'd along,
Close on his footsteps press'd the village throng:
From every lane pour'd in that rabble rout,
With scornful laughter loud, and boisterous shout;
Such is the course with folk of base degrees;
Ye ne'er shall win much courtesy from these.
The knight, susceptible of grief alone,
Mark'd not the press, but slowly journey'd on:
In ken a vast umbrageous forest lay,
So there he enter'd in, and urg'd his wandering way;
Down on his breast did hang his drooping head,
For wo-begone he was, his heart and hopes were dead.
When lo, all unawares, a spotless hind,
More white than snow, the comeliest of her kind,

Sprang up beneath his feet; then fled before;
Yet seem'd to pace with pain, as wounded sore.
Her timorous semblance and her limping flight
Rous'd from his mournful muse the errant knight;
Grief to a hunter's ardour now gave place,
Fair was the game, and easy seem'd the chase:
She still with faltering steps appear'd to toil,
Just far enough before to feed the hopes of spoil,
Till, many a fruitless turn and circuit past,
Into a flowery mead they came at last;
And there she stopp'd; and there awhile she stood
By the green margent of a crystal flood:
Within that flood did bathe a dame so bright,
So prime of youth, of skin so dainty white,
That my poor wit, too feeble all, doth fail
With her sweet image to adorn my tale.
Rich was her raiment, all her robe was gold;
A neighbouring tree the costly charge did hold;

And, seated on the bank, two damsels sheen,
The ready handmaids of her will were seen.
Scarce might the twain descry the stranger knight,
But up they sprang, and fled amain for fright:
He, all regardless of the maids' alarms,
Lost in the lustre of their sovereign's charms,
So lost that, as his eyes that vision caught,
His hind, his hunting, and his woes, were nought;
Leap'd from his steed; and hastening to his prey,
Snatch'd the rich treasure of the tree away.
Well may ye guess the youth no theft design'd;
The dame's dear jeopardy inspir'd his mind:
Yet, when he heard the insulted fair exclaim
How such base deeds to courteous knights were shame,
His heart was mov'd; he yielded to her prayer;
To the green bank he sped, and left the garments there:
Then, decently withdrawn, apart he stay'd,
While the fair lady of the stream array'd.

Now shone the dame with comeliest splendour dress'd;
And to the stream return'd the impatient guest:
Her by the hand he caught, and onward led
Where the thick trees their shadowy coolness shed;
And many entreaties tried the enamour'd knight,
And many a tender tale of love's delight:
So might he speed, as offering there he made
Of a pure heart, now first by love assay'd:
So might he speed, as from that moment bound
To live her own true knight, for loyalty renown'd.
Awhile, thus sway'd it seem'd by female pride,
All suit, all dalliance, well the dame denied;
Then own'd her fairy power; herself declar'd
(By love's sweet witchery erewhile ensnar'd)
Had sent the lingering hind, the waters wrought,
And lur'd the paramour her heart had sought.

Lo, westward roll'd, the sun with slanting gleam
Streak'd the green mead, and stain'd the glassy stream:

Then the fond fairy bade the knight depart,
Nor fear lest absence change her constant heart:
Still, vail'd by secret law from human eyes,
Clear to his sight alone, her form should rise,
Still loyal, kind; while stedfast wisdom held
His conscious lips inviolably seal'd.
She spoke; the circling waves receiv'd the fair;
Sole was the wondering warriour on the laire.

Now, back return'd, and lost in museful mood,
Gruélan leaning at his casement stood;
And, as in hope to lengthen past delight,
Full on the conscious forest fix'd his sight.
Not long he gaz'd ere issuing thence was seen
A gentle youth advancing o'er the green,
And by the rein he led a sumptuous steed,
And well the trappings with the beast agreed;
From the dear fairy friend a gift it came,
A palfrey brave, and Gedefer its name:

A squire the stripling was, well taught to yield
All service to a knight in court or field;
A male he bore with costliest garments stor'd,
These forth he drew, and tender'd to his lord:
Next, the long list of charges undefray'd,
The costs of desperate need, he gently pray'd;
'To him,' he told, 'was given injunction strait
'With boundless dole to quit the inglorious weight,
'And from that hour, where-e'er the knight should wend,
'His footsteps, treasurer and squire, to tend.'
So spake the youth; with joy Gruélan heard;
Then on his hosts a liberal boon conferr'd:
This gratitude ordain'd his first expence,
And gladden'd him in power of recompence.
Nor did he less regard, nor less repay,
All kindness shown in want's disastrous day;
While needy knights, Trouveurs the sires of verse,
And thralls, his large beneficence rehearse.

Erst was the knight belov'd; but, lov'd before,
Now judge that love was heighten'd more and more.
So all things smil'd: each eve, his prayer preferr'd,
E'en as he spake his beauteous dame appear'd;
Swift fled the time; a year soon roll'd away
In wishes all fulfill'd, and bliss without allay:
Till joy found peril in its own excess,
And misery sprang from fearless happiness.

'Twas Pentecost; and now, proclaim'd to all,
The king kept open court in bower and hall:
All knights, all barons of his land, repair'd
To the full feast, where nought of cost was spar'd;
Fair invitation to each wight was sent,
And thither, with the rest, Gruélan went.
In times like this when full carousal reign'd,
One custom passing strange the king maintain'd;
Proud of his spouse, whose beauty uncompar'd
Shone through the realm, he still that pride declar'd;

Still 'twas his course when now the rich repast
Drew toward its end, the richest as the last,
When the blithe heart forgot decorum's bound,
And the wit sparkled as the wine went round,
To the full hall to lead the royal dame;
There, plac'd on high, she sat, a candidate for fame;
There from her proud alcove o'erlook'd the feast,
While thus the uxorious prince his peers address'd.
'Say lords, say knights, have e'er your wanderings known
'A queen whose sovereign charms might match your own?'
Such was the custom: hence, as wont, was seen
On this feast's final day the imperious queen:
Straight through the hall loud shouts of praise resound;
'Lo here the loveliest queen! the loveliest fair on ground!'
So cried the rest; Gruélan mute the while
Held down his head to vail his secret smile;

For his fond fay was present to his mind,
With looks that left all earthly charms behind.
The scornful mirth that sparkled in his eye
Scap'd not the queen's regardful jealousy;
'Lo there!' she cried, as to her spouse she turn'd,
'A sight for kings to gaze on unconcern'd;
'Lo there alloy for such an hour as this,
'When all congratulate their sovereign's bliss;
'One man's untemper'd insult unreprov'd,
'One man, and he the man thyself hast lov'd.
'Err'd I, or nay? that long time past have plain'd
'Of thanklessness and licence unrestrain'd.'
The indignant monarch caught his consort's fire;
The knight he call'd, his visage glow'd with ire,
And on his fealty bade reveal what mirth
Had given that scornful smile of silence birth.
With mild respect the modest knight return'd,
'That long his eyes their sovereign's charms had learn'd;

'He saw, as all beside must sure have seen,
'What grace, what loveliness adorn'd his queen;
'Yet did he ween, within the world's wide bound
'Some dame more passing fair might still be found.'
'What? did he know the dame?' the king replied:
The knight rejoin'd, 'Truth might not be denied;
'A dame he knew, how strange soe'er the thing,
'Whose charms pass'd thirty fold the consort of his king.'

At these last words the queen wox furious quite,
And call'd down doom upon the luckless knight:
'O! let my royal spouse,' she cried, 'decree
'This paragon be brought and pair'd with me!
'Here should his deeds belie his proud pretence,
'Wo be his meed! the meed of insolence.'

Sharp was her speech; the festive hall was mute;
The monarch sternly ratified her suit:

Due forms of trial done, Gruélan's fate
Rests in the bosom of his fairy mate.
Awhile unmov'd she hears his piercing cries;
Then gives her wondrous charms to mortal eyes:
On the full court the thrilling beauties fall,
And claim just doom, and free the acquitted thrall:
Yet pity none she show'd; but turn'd in haste,
Nor deign'd one glance of pardon as she pass'd.
Ah! bootless boon of life's unthankful load!
Ah! gift in scornful cruelty bestow'd!
As by his strange distress to frenzy wrought
His peerless steed the abandon'd lover sought;
Swift o'er the land, where-e'er his mistress leads,
With prayers, and tears, and piteous cries he speeds,
And presses hard behind, still fancying, still
To bend her hard inexorable will,
Till now, far left the city, o'er the plain
The forest's verge the fay was seen to gain;

And straight both shroud them in the darksome wood,
Course the green mead, and ken the enchanted flood:
There stopp'd the fairy, thither sped the knight;
Then in the wave she sank, and vanish'd from his sight.
Love-lost Gruélan, resolute to die,
Since hope was none of happier destiny,
Plung'd headlong dauntless down; lo! back to shore
The struggling knight the refluent waters bore;
And 'Cease vain quest!' a voice was heard to say,
'Thine eyes can never more behold thy fay.'
He, reckless all, again sprang forward straight:
High dash'd the surging stream beneath his weight;
Round roll his limbs by circling eddies thrown,
Then senseless float the buoyant current down.
Such penitence sincere, such passing truth,
Mov'd the fay's menial pair to kindly ruth:
Their royal lady both fair damsels sued,
And soon to softness chang'd her haughty mood:

Her knight she now with snowy arm sustains,
And wakes the stagnant life-blood in his veins:
Awhile he rests upon the flowery strand,
Then both together part for fairy-land.

Rife goes the Breton tale Gruélan's lot
Is with the fairy still, where death is not.
But for the palfrey Gedefer, who stood
Reft of his lord beside that wondrous flood,
As with his loss distraught the peerless steed
Spurn'd the green sward, and madly scour'd the mead;
Shrill doleful neighings night and day were heard,
And still amain he fled when man appear'd.
So pass'd his life: e'en now, tradition holds,
Oft as that day the circling year unfolds,
By the stream side is seen the steed forlorn,
And for his fruitless search is heard to mourn.

Soon through the land the dittied story spread
Of the good knight and of his faithful steed:

And some choice mind, in rhyme's propitious day,

From the rude strain wrought out GRUE'LAN'S LAY.

The Lay of Sir Gugemer.

BY MADEMOISELLE MARIE.

THE LAY OF SIR GUGEMER.

WHILE Arthur reign'd—(so chim'd, in earlier day,
Loud to the twanging harp the Breton lay,)
While Arthur reign'd, two kingdoms born to bless,
Great Britain's king, and suzerain of the less;
A lord of Leon, one of fair report
Among the vassal barons of his court,
Own'd for his son a youth more bravely thew'd
Than aught both countries yet had seen of good.

Dame Nature gave the mould; his sire combin'd
Due culture, exercise of limbs and mind,
Till the rare stripling, now no longer boy,
Chang'd his fond parent's fearful hope for joy.

His name was Gugemer: as strength grew on,
To Arthur's court the sire consign'd his son.
There soon in feats of arms the youth excell'd,
Magnanimous, in sports, or deadly field.

Chief of the Table-round, from time to time
Illustrious Arthur mark'd his opening prime,
Then dealt him noble meed; the honour high,
From his own hand of glorious chivalry.

Knightly in arms he was; one grievous blot,
So deem'd full many a courtly dame I wot,
Cross'd the full growth of his aspiring days,
And dimm'd the lustre of meridian praise:
With bootless artifice their lures they troll'd;
Still Gugemer lov'd not, or nothing told.

The court's accustom'd lore and service done,
To his glad sire returns the welcome son.
Now with his father dwelt he, and pursued
Such pastimes as are meet for youth of gentle blood.
The woods of Leon now would shrilly sound
Oft with his joyous shout and choral hound.
At length, one morn his disadventurous dart,
Lanced, as the game was rous'd, at hind or hart,
Wing'd through the yielding air its weetless way,
And pierc'd unwares a metamorphos'd fay.
Lo! back recoiling straight by fairy craft,
Back to its master speeds the reeking shaft;
Deep in his sinewy thigh inflicts a wound,
And strikes the astonish'd hunter to the ground,
While with a voice that neither bray'd nor spoke,
Thus fearfully the beast her silence broke:
'Pains, agonizing pains must thou endure,
'Till wit of lady's love shall work the cure:

'Wo, then, her fated guerdon she shall find,
'The heaviest that may light on womankind!'
Sir Gugemer, who strove, with courage vain,
Up from the earth to rise, distraught with pain,
While hies his varlet home for succour strong,
Crawls slow with trailing limb the sward along:
'Twas part precipitate, steep rocky shore;
Hoarse at its foot was heard old ocean's roar;
And in a shelter'd cove at anchor rode,
Close in to land, where slept the solemn flood,
A gallant bark that with its silken sails
Just bellying, caught the gently rising gales,
And from its ebon sides shot dazzling sheen
Of silvery rays with mingled gold between.
A favouring fairy had beheld the blow
Dealt the young hunter by her mortal foe:
Thence grown his patroness, she vows to save,
And cleaves with magick keel the sparkling wave.

Now, by a strange resistless impulse driven,
The knight assays the lot by fortune given:
Lo, now he climbs, with fairy power to aid,
The bark's steep side, on silken cordage stay'd;
Gains the smooth deck, and wonders to behold
A couch of cypress spread with cloth of gold,
While from above, with many a taper bright,
Two golden globes sent forth their branching light:
And longer had he gaz'd, but sleep profound,
Wrought by the friendly fairy, wrapt him round;
Stretch'd on the couch the hunter lies supine,
And the swift bark shoots lightly o'er the brine.

Far, where the distant prospect fading dies,
And sea and land seem mingling with the skies,
A massy tower of polish'd marble rose;
There dwelt the fair physician of his woes:
Nogiva was the name the princess bore;
Her spouse, old, shrew'd, suspicious evermore,

Here mew'd his lovely consort, young and fair,
And watch'd her with a dotard's bootless care.
Sure, Love these dotards dooms to jealous pain,
And the world's laugh, when all their toil proves vain.

This lord, howe'er, did all that mortal elf
Could do, to keep his treasure to himself:
Stay'd much at home, and when in luckless hour
His state affairs would drag him from his tower,
Left with his spouse a niece himself had bred,
To be the partner of her board and bed;
And one old priest, a barren lump of clay,
To chant their mass and serve them day by day.

Her prison room was fair; from roof to floor
With golden imageries pictur'd o'er:
There Venus might be seen, in act to throw
Down to the mimick fire that gleam'd below,
The 'Remedies of love' Dan Ovid made;
Wrathful the goddess look'd, and ill-appaid;

And many more than I may well recall,
Illumining throughout the sumptuous wall.

For the old ghostly guide—to do him right—
He harbour'd in his breast no jailor's spite:
Compassionate and boon, he bore in mind
His prisoner's health might languish much confin'd,
And oft would let her feet and fancy free,
Wander along the margin of the sea.

There then it chanc'd, upon the level sand,
That aunt and niece were pacing, hand in hand,
When onward to the marble tower they spied
With outspread sail the fairy vessel glide.
Both felt a momentary fear at first,
(As women oft are given to think the worst,)
And turn'd for flight; but ere they far were fled,
Look'd round to view the object of their dread.
Then, seeing none on board, they backward hied,
Perchance by fairy influence fortified,

Where the trim bark was seen its course to end;
And now both dames its ebon deck ascend:
There on a couch, a silken pall beneath,
So wrapt in sleep he scarcely seem'd to breathe,
Sir Gugemer they spied, defil'd with gore,
And with a deadly pale his visage o'er:
They fear them life were fled; and much his youth,
And much his hap forlorn did move their ruth:
With lily hand his heart Nogiva press'd,
'It beats!' she cried, 'beats strong within his breast!'
So loud her sudden voice express'd delight,
That from his swoon awoke the wondering knight:
His name, his country, straight the dames demand,
And what strange craft had steer'd his bark to land.
He, on his elbow rais'd, with utterance weak,
Such as his feeble strength avail'd to speak,
Recounts his piteous chance, his name, his home,
How up the vessel's side erewhile he clomb,

And then sunk down in sleep; but who impell'd
Its ebon keel, or tissued canvas swell'd,
He wist not: faint, and lacking vital heat,
He sought some needful aid from looks so sweet.
'So brave a knight!—to yield of succour nought—
'What heart of flint could cherish such a thought?
'Yet where to harbour him, and how to hide?—
'The husband not at home, means must be tried:'—
So thought these dames, I ween, that fateful hour,
While feebly onward to the marble tower,
Propp'd, right and left, by snowy shoulders twain,
Sir Gugemer repair'd with mickle pain.
There on a bed of down they plac'd their guest,
Cleans'd the deep wound, with healing balsam dress'd,
Brought, for his plight most fit, choice simple food,
And watchful how he far'd attendant stood;
Till now returning strength grew swiftly on,
And his firm voice confess'd his anguish gone.

In sooth, the fay, protectress of his worth,
Had shower'd down balm unknown to wights on earth;
One night achieves his cure; but other smart
Plays o'er the weetless region of his heart:
Pains, such as beam from bright Nogiva's eyes,
Flit round his bed, and genial slumber flies.

Now, as the ruddy rays of morning peer,
Him seem'd his kind physician's step drew near:
She comes; his cheeks with new-found blushes burn;
Nogiva—she too blushes in her turn:
Love sure had neither spar'd; yet at the last
Faintly she asks him how the night had pass'd:
O how the trembling patient then confess'd
Strange malady at heart, and banish'd rest,
And sued once more for life, restor'd so late,
Now her's alone to grant, the mistress of his fate.
She speaks assurance kind with witching smile,
'No ill from sickness felt so little while!'

Yet nought the knight believes; a kiss I ween
Fell from her dainty lips, and clos'd the scene.
One year or more within some secret bower
So dwelt the knight beneath the marble tower;
Thoughts of his sire, at last, how he might bear
His son's long absence, so awaken'd care,
Needs must he back to Leon: vainly here
Sues fond Nogiva's interdicting tear.
'Sad leave reluctantly I yield!' she cries,
'Yet take this girdle, knit with mystick ties,
'Wed never dame till first this secret spell
'Her dexterous hands have loosen'd:—so farewell!'
'Never, I swear, my sweet! so weal betide!'
With heavy heart Sir Gugemer replied,
Then hied him to the gate, when lo! at hand
Nogiva's hoary lord is seen to stand,
(Brought by the fairy foe's relentless ire,)
And lustily he calls for knight and squire:

Now with his trusty blade of temper good
The stout knight clears his course to ocean's flood,
Sweeps right and left the scatter'd rout away,
And climbs the bark of his protectress fay;
Light glides the ebon keel the waters o'er,
And his glad footsteps press his native shore.

His father, who had long time, wo-begone,
Bewail'd the absence of his darling son;
Ween'd the best course to hold him now for life
Should be to link him closely to a wife.
Sir Gugemer, urg'd sore; at length avows
He never will take woman's hand for spouse,
Save her's, whose fingers skill'd in ladies' lore,
Shall loose that knot his mystick girdle bore.

Straight all that Bretany contain'd of fair,
Widows, and dainty maids, the adventure dare:
Clerks were they all, I ween; but knots like these
May not be loos'd when earthly beauties please.

Thus while it fares with those, in dungeon deep
See sad Nogiva never cease to weep!
Doom'd by her jealous lord's revengeful mood,
The well her beverage, bitter bread her food,
Lo there with iron gyves chain'd down she lies,
And wails unheard her hopeless miseries:
Scarce brooking longer life, but that the thought
Of Gugemer some gleams of solace brought:
Him would she name full oft, and oft implore
Heaven, but to view his winning face once more.
Long had she sorrow'd thus; her fairy friend
Hears at the last, and bids her sufferings end:
Burst by her magick touch the fetters fall,
Wide springs the gate, and quakes the obdurate wall;
Close to the shore the enchanted pinnace glides,
Feels its fair guest within its arching sides,
Then ploughs the foaming main with gallant state,
Till Bretany's far coast receives the freight.

Meriadus—(that name the monarch bore
Where first Nogiva's footsteps press'd the shore,)
Meriadus such charms not vainly view'd;
He saw, felt love, and like a sovereign woo'd:
She briefly answers:—'None this heart may move,
'This bosom none inspire with mutual love,
'Save he whose skill this girdle shall unbind,
'Fast round my waist with mystick tie confin'd.'

Much strove Meriadus, strove much in vain,
Strove every courtly gallant of his train:
All foil'd alike, he blazons far and wide
A tournament, and there the emprize be tried!
There who may loose the band, and win the expectant bride!

Sir Gugemer, when first the tidings came
Of the quaint girdle, and the stranger dame,
Ween'd well Nogiva's self, his dame alone,
Bore this mysterious knot so like his own,

On to the tournament elate he hies;

There his liege lady greets his wistful eyes.

What now remain'd?—'Meriadus! once more

'I view,' he cries, 'the mistress I adore;

'Long have our hearts been one! great king, 'tis thine

'Twain lovers, sadly sunder'd long, to join.

'So will I straight do homage, so remain

'Thy liegeman three full years, sans other gain,

'Thine with a hundred knights, and I their charge maintain!'

Brave was the proffer, but it prosper'd nought;

Love rul'd alone the unyielding monarch's thought.

Then Gugemer vows vengeance, then in arms

Speaks stern defy, and claims Nogiva's charms:

And, for his cause seem'd good, anon behold

Many a strange knight, and many a baron bold,

Brought by the tourney's fame, on fiery steeds

Couch lance to aid; and mortal strife succeeds.

Long time beleaguer'd gape the castle walls;
First in the breach the indignant monarch falls:
Nogiva's lord next meets an equal fate;
And Gugemer straight weds the widow'd mate.

The Three Knights and the Smock.

BY JACQUES BASIR.

THE THREE KNIGHTS AND THE SMOCK.

False lovers still, when most they mean deceit,
Wear true love's mask to speed them in their cheat;
Still fraught with subtlety, by night and day
They ply, they fawn, they flatter, to betray:
And, wo the time! too oft the ingenuous heart
Falls a sad victim in these snares of art.
Not such was he whose story I record;
He lov'd in very deed and not in word;

Yet did his dame nought yield her to his suit
Till well she prov'd his fealty by its fruit.
Fair dames and free, who risk an equal stake,
Mark what she did, and thence ensample take!
For sire she boasted not of noble blood,
No duke nor count, but yet her birth right good;
And, search the realm throughout, ye might not find
Such charms of face, such courtesy of mind.
A wealthy bachelor, a foe to strife,
Possess'd this lovely lady for his wife,
Of frank good humour, one who never tried
To mimick hardihood his heart belied,
But own'd whate'er more doughty wights maintain'd,
He thought fame dear at risk of being brain'd.
No niggard of his pelf, he kept good state,
Free for all comers stood his castle's gate,
And, as his table smok'd with plenteous fare,
All took delight to stop and sojourn there.

One day, so chance decreed, three knights there came,
Led by a neighbouring tourney's rumour'd fame:
Our host, as wont, each welcom'd as his guest,
And pray'd their social presence at his feast.
Of these three warriours, rich and proud were twain,
And many a menial throng'd their sumptuous train;
Poor was the third, and one poor squire possess'd,
But in high soul was mated with the best:
First in the lists, where-e'er those lists were found,
He claim'd the prize, nor ever yielded ground;
Nor, for the biting sword, nor thrilling spear,
With helm on head, was ever known to fear.

Scarce did the gallant three behold the dame,
But in their hearts they felt love's tingling flame;
(At this, forewarn'd her loveliness was such
As pass'd all peer, ye will not marvel much;)
And each in turn, chance favouring his design,
Cried 'List, dear dame!' and 'yield thee, mistress, mine!

'List, lovely dame! with countless vows I swear,
'So may'st thou deign to grant thy suppliant's prayer,
'For thy dear love all dangers to despise,
'And do such deeds of chivalrous emprize,
'That none on earth, how fair soe'er she be,
'Shall justly vaunt her paramour like me.'

So sued they all; the dame, with like disdain,
Heard all their vows, but nought assuag'd their pain:
So hope is quench'd; and soon as morning glows
Each bids farewel, and to the tourney goes.

This dame, howbeit, though in her guise severe,
Had heard the gallants with no heedless ear;
But wisely cast, far-sighted in her views,
To put them first to proof, and then to choose.

Within the castle dwelt a trusty squire,
A well-train'd knave for all that dames desire:
For him she sent, and culling from her chest
A fair fine smock, she thus her mind express'd:

'Hie to the place of tourney, seek those three,
'And to the stateliest bear this boon from me;
'Say, should his vows have well pourtray'd his will,
'Come life, come death, to do my service still,
'Thus, for my sake, I crave: the venturous knight
'Accoutred in this smock must join the fight:
'Armour or arms beside he none must wield,
'Save only hose of mail, and helm, and sword, and shield.
'His hardy deeds thus well his truth shall prove,
'And win fair claim to prosper in his love.
'But should he wave the gift, and shun the test,
'With the like terms accost the second guest:
'Then to the third, who with thyself of late
'Held parting conference at our castle's gate.'
So spake the fair; the squire without delay
Sped to the field of tournament away,
And bore the gift, and told the dame's request
To him she deem'd the goodliest knight and best.

He, prompt with thankfulness, the boon receiv'd,
And vow'd strange feats, and hard to be believ'd:
But when he ponder'd how that garb so thin
Might shield from harm the luckless corse within,
Erst wont, with temper'd steel environ'd round,
To bide war's baleful stour without a wound,
Fled was his joy; fear made his heart to quail,
And blanch'd his visage with a deadly pale.
To chase these recreant falterings vainly strove
The united powers of prowess and of love;
And both cried, Shame! and both pourtray'd the cost
Of a fair name for ever stain'd and lost.
Oppos'd stood Cowardice, whose boding breath
Spoke dreadful things, and shrilly menac'd death;
And call'd life passing sweet, and priz'd it high,
And lightly deem'd of love and loyalty.
What shall I tell? by cowardice subdued,
Awhile the craven paus'd, at length the gift eschew'd!

Straight to the next of those three suitors bold
The trusty messenger his mandate told:
Yet still with him, as with the first, he sped;
All joy awhile, anon reluctant dread.
Foil'd with the twain, he bore his dame's desire
To the poor knight that own'd the single squire.
He, low with knee to earth for reverence bent,
Hail'd the dear present his heart's sovereign sent,
And humbly kiss'd; and with enraptur'd zeal
Prais'd it for proof beyond a suit of steel.
'And thou, kind bearer of a gift so good!
'Accept,' he cried, 'some pledge of gratitude;
'Take this fair steed, a tourney's late-won prize;
'No gift beside my scanty store supplies.'
So spake the knight: and now day's orb was gone,
And the thick shades of evening fast came on:
Stretch'd on his couch with sleepless eyes he lay,
And kiss'd love's precious pledge, and mus'd the night away,

And watch'd for morn, when light the power might yield
To prove he well deserv'd it in the field.
Yet was he not with amorous passion blind,
The risk was plain, and present to his mind;
He, like the twain, forethought the sure mischance
Of ponderous mace, or cimeter, or lance,
Defenceless brav'd; he knew no mortal wight
Had shewn such desperate proof of loyal might;
Saw valour frustrate in the unequal strife,
And shudder'd with instinctive love of life;
But his high mind remain'd unshaken still;
'For why?' he cried, 'it is my lady's will:
'Her peerless worth may well require the deed;
'For her dear sake it fits her knight should bleed.'
E'en while he spoke, Love cheer'd his fainting sense
With powerful praise, and pictur'd recompense,
Told on his toils what choice delights would wait
In the free friendship of so fair a mate,

Sweet smiling looks, sweet interchange of wit,
And, not least sweet, the kiss that follows it:
'Tis fix'd!' he cries; 'thus loyal love decrees;
'Life well is hazarded for joys like these.'
Now dawn'd the day, and with its earliest light
The well-voic'd heralds loud proclaim'd the fight;
Through the long streets the shout resounds from far,
'Lace, lace your helms!' they cry, the custom'd word of war.
Upsprang the knight, his sinewy limbs he cas'd
In the fair smock that flutter'd round his waist;
Then fix'd his helm, and grasp'd his sword and shield,
And leap'd upon his steed, and sought the field.
Fierce in the lists he rush'd, and fierce assail'd
His countless foes invulnerably mail'd;
His shield, in shatter'd fragments, strew'd the plain,
And pity strove to spare, but strove in vain.
In the mid-press and fury of the fray
Huge blows he dealt around with hideous sway,

Still smote the mightiest in his ireful mood,
And gorg'd his ruthless steel with conqueror's blood.
Red ran his own from thirty well-springs wide,
But love still reign'd, he reck'd not aught beside;
Strong power of mind o'ermaster'd nature's waste,
And when the conflict ceas'd, he ceas'd the last.

Such was his deed; it met its due reward;
Him first in arms the general voice declar'd;
'His be the tourney's prize!' the heralds cry,
And his brave foes return their shout of victory.
All to the lodge whence late he sallied forth,
(Such seemly tribute worth still pays to worth,)
With warlike pomp and slow-succeeding state
Lead on the conqueror knight, and round him wait.
Forespent with toil, with wounds all haggled o'er,
Straight to his bed his tottering limbs they bore,
Then sought that griesly garment to remove,
All shreds, and stiff with gore, his signature of love;

But nought their prayer might move his stedfast will,
Come life, come death, he vow'd to wear it still,
Nought might they win him, nought would he endure
Of tent or salve's behooveful power to cure,
Till, at the last, they bent them to obey,
And to the wayward mood of love gave way.

Meanwhile the trusty squire had tidings brought
To his fair dame, how that day's field was fought;
Told how her knight, though conqueror in the strife,
Lay, faint and pale, and scarce assur'd of life.
Grief, as she heard, her wonted cheer depress'd,
Her heart reproach'd her for the ruthless test,
And back with speed she charg'd that squire repair,
To grudge no means, no secret cost to spare,
Till craft of leech, and med'cine's sovereign might
Should to his health restore her own true knight,
And therewithal this gracious word she sent:
'Love must be won by whom all love is meant:—

'Take mine for thine! to yield thee token sure,
'In a sweet kiss, I sadly wait thy cure.'

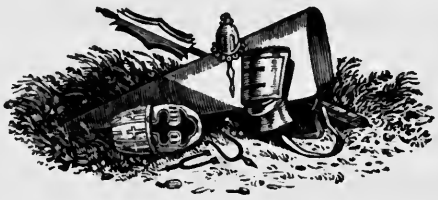
Words such as these, surpassing leech's power,
Wrought like a balm to heal her paramour;
Hope fills his veins, joy sparkles in his eyes,
To reap love's precious meed the warriour flies.

Just then, so chanc'd the time, the fair one's lord
Proclaim'd Court Plenary of bower and board;
From all parts gathering knights and gentles went,
For feast was there, and gorgeous tournament.
This told, the conqueror knight, or e'er he came,
Bethought him in his turn to prove the dame:
His squire he sent with love's triumphant vest,
And this brief prayer to her his heart lov'd best:
'Liege lady mine, behold thy garb again!
'This, when anon thou lead'st thy damsel train
'To thy lord's feast in wonted service there,
'O'er thy rich robes thine outmost garment wear.'

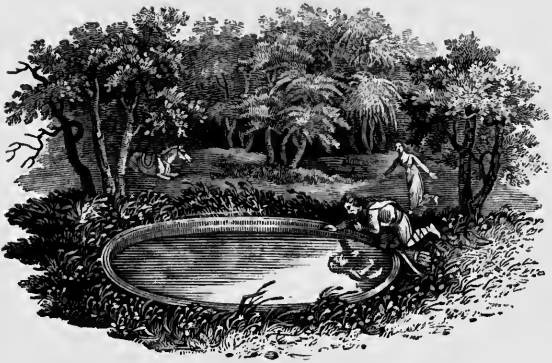
So spake the squire; the loyal lady heard,
Nor in her count'nance dread or doubt appear'd:
'Haste to thy gallant master!' she replied,
'And tell him I shall wear this garb with pride;
'Say, these dear stains are far more worth with me
'Than gold, than gems, or costliest broidery.'—
Then with warm lips each sanguine spot she press'd,
And in that griesly mantle sought the feast.

Marvell'd the guests; but soon, the cause divin'd,
(For the poor knight was full in each man's mind,)
To blind astonishment such praise succeeds
As love heroick claims, the nurse of dauntless deeds.
Mix'd with the rest beneath that festive roof
Sat the two base ones who had shun'd the proof:
Stung to the heart these brook'd not longer stay,
Their furious spleen sharp gushing tears bewray;
While the good spouse, (not bold, 'twas lately sung,)
Cast down his honest eyes, and held his tongue.

Speak! guileless damsels! Dames in love well read!
Speak, Sirs! in chivalry and honour bred!
Who best deserves? the lady or the knight?
He, death who brav'd? or she, censorious spite?
Doom, judges! doom, as loyalty inspires;
So Love with blessings crown your fair desires!



The Lay of Narcissus.



THE LAY OF NARCISSUS.

'Twill move my wonder nought, should harm betide
The wight who takes not reason for his guide.
The skilful pilot cautious watch doth keep;
Nor braves the uncertain bosom of the deep,
Nor to the winds commits his fluttering sail,
Till the fair skies portend a prosperous gale:
So should the youth beware, whose buoyant soul
Swells with its first-born love; for gulph, and shoal,

And tempest-troubled wave, and shifting sand,
Stretch their long perils o'er that faithless strand:
Soon shall he rue the hour, when swept from shore,
The weak sail splits, and snaps the splintering oar.
Yet, should ye find some loving heart and true,
Be not too cold; give loyalty its due;
For love's dread power ne'er suffers unchastis'd
His rites rejected, and his will despis'd:
Of this full many a proof myself have known,
Albeit for brevity I cite but one:
'Twas young Narcissus; he all love defied;
Love punish'd him: in hopeless love he died.

In days of yore there dwelt at Thebes a seer
Fam'd through the land, consulted far and near;
So wise, no oracle's ambiguous doubt
Surpass'd his skill to spy its meaning out.
To him, by rumour of such sapience won,
The tender mother of an only son

Set forth betimes, solicitous to know
Her darling's destiny for weal or wo.
'Long life, long time of sojourn here on earth,'
The seer replied, 'was given him at his birth;
'Yet shall this fated course of days be marr'd,
'If on himself the youth shall cast regard.'
Reply thus strange, ill answering what she sought,
She deem'd the oracle by time grown naught;
Ween'd, in good sooth, its inspiration o'er,
So vow'd to trust in prophecies no more:
And thus, long time, by slumbering fate beguil'd,
She mock'd the threat impending o'er her child;
Till, sure though slow, the direful mischief fell,
And prov'd its deadly certainty too well.
Meantime their course the circling seasons ran,
Till now the stripling's growth betoken'd man:
His form great Nature's happiest power display'd,
And Love with wondering eyes the work survey'd:

Pleas'd as he view'd, the god with fostering art
Shed winning witcheries o'er every part:
Each simple charm with amorous softness bloom'd:
His rose-red lips sweet dimplings smiles assum'd,
O'er his blue eyes delicious languors stole,
Looks, such as fascinate and melt the soul;
No maid so cold her coldness here might boast,
Narcissus once beheld, her heart was lost.

Such was his form; but of contrarious mind,
Dead to the charms of lovely womankind,
His pulse ne'er rose, no passion fir'd his blood,
Save when in war he met the sovereigns of the wood;
When with his dart he sought the wild-boar's laire,
Or from his den drove out the lingering bear.

One day it chanc'd, as from the sylvan game
Fresh through the woods the beauteous hunter came,
His steed, all fire, uprear'd with many a bound;
Far o'er the plain his thundering hoofs resound:

The doubling stroke fair Dana's tower invades,
Dana, the loveliest of the Theban maids,
Their sovereign's child: in haste the damsel rose,
Curious, alas! and weetless of her woes,
And to her casement ran, and thence beneath
Spied where the beauteous hunter cross'd the heath.
Then, rivetted in mute amaze, she stood;
Fix'd were her ravish'd eyes, she wist not what she wou'd,
Yet still she stay'd, and, wondering at her joy,
Gaz'd on the comely presence of the boy;
Mark'd with what skill, what gallant grace of mien,
His furious steed he rul'd with mastering rein;
Mark'd how his warmth each youthful charm improv'd;
Nor guess'd those charms were form'd to be belov'd.
Ah! guileless maid! just then with searching eye
The god of love look'd downward from the sky;

. . . . . .

A shaft he sped; the damsel at the smart
Sprang back, and smote her hand upon her heart,
As one who felt a wound:—Alas! too sure!
Invisible albe', 'twas past a cure.

Thoughtful and sad she turn'd, and straight retir'd,
For solitude and sighs her state requir'd;
Unwonted shiverings seiz'd her fainting frame,
And her breast kindled like a furnace flame;
And her looks chang'd; so sore the torment spread,
A few short hours had reft her cheeks of red.
Night came, but nothing night compos'd her care;
The image of Narcissus still was there:
Yet down she lay; but restless, discompos'd,
In vain her drooping eyes for sleep were clos'd;
She kept no posture long, for all displeas'd,
And her pulse quicken'd, and her pains increas'd:
'Ah me!' she cried, 'what troubles seize my spright,
'And chase the wonted slumbers of the night!

‘ Why beats my heart? what fear, what strange desire
‘ Wastes all within, and makes my breast a fire?
‘ What boots his comeliness of form? his mind
‘ Unlike perchance, and of a churlish kind:
‘ False heart may lurk beneath an outside fair,
‘ And loveliness be but a painted snare:
‘ Yet here too fondly sure dame Nature wrought,
‘ To scant his nobler comeliness of thought?
‘ Ay me! what say I?—Dana! lost to shame!
‘ Wake thy past worth! recall thy former fame!
‘ Scorn'd now and vile where late thy virtues shone,
‘ And lost in passion for a youth unknown!
‘ Yet he, of all things on this earthly ball,
‘ He wins me most; is most belov'd of all!
‘ Each look, each gesture, new-born charms attend;
‘ His only must I be, or life must end.—
‘ What?—will my sire then speed my fond design?
‘ This peerless youth—can he be ever mine?

'Ah no!—in evil hour I first drew breath,
'And my vain dreams of hope must end in death.'

So spake the princess, and so moan'd her plight,
And wept away the livelong hours of night:
At length, to calm that agony of woes,
The fresh cool breezes of the morning rose;
Then, spent with toil, awhile she ceas'd to weep,
And slowly, unawares, sunk down in sleep:
She slept, but present still Narcissus seems,
Haunts all her thoughts, and meets her in her dreams:
Sadly she doz'd, soon wak'd to grief again,
And her short slumbers but enhanc'd her pain.

Now had the vapourous reign of darkness ceas'd,
And the red sun was blazing in the east:
Uprose fair Dana with distemper'd mind,
And at the window of her tower reclin'd,
Fed the fond hope that o'er that self-same space
Perchance the beauteous youth might seek the chase.

E'en so it fell; that hour his course he bent
Across the plain, as to the woods he went:
From far the enamour'd Dana kenn'd the boy,
And shriek'd with an instinctive shout of joy:
More nigh he drew; she breath'd not for delight;
It seem'd her heart expanded at the sight;
Seem'd that her ardent eyes' attractive power
Had shap'd his devious progress to the tower;
(For now distinct beneath its walls was seen
Narcissus pacing o'er the champaign green:)
So Dana deem'd:—but he, still journeying on,
Pass'd, while she gaz'd, away, and soon was gone.
Then through her frame a shuddering chillness glides,
And the blood lingering creeps with feebler tides;
Then bow her knees; life's fainting powers decay;
As the fleet ghost would leave the breathless clay.
'Ay me!' at length with faltering voice she cried,
'Here greatness dwells! to misery most allied!—

'False lips!—to teach of Love's delicious wiles!—
'They feign'd the hideous phantom deck'd with smiles!
'Needs must I now devise this youth be taught
'What mad desires his witching form has wrought:—
'Best, were he present here; I, I alone,
'Have power to picture feelings all my own.
'But should he scorn the proffer'd heart I bear?
'Should pride, should cold indifference slight my prayer?
'So be it:—I go, I go, whate'er betide,
'Prest to the green-wood way, his mistress or his bride:
'There shall my sum of suffering fill his ears!
'There, bow'd to dust, I'll bathe his feet with tears!
'Sight such of woman's wo a man must feel,
'Or heaven has form'd him with a soul of steel.'

Fix'd on the deed, the morrow's glimmering ray
Scarce in the eastern sky foretoken'd day,
When Dana from her couch with trembling haste,
Stole through a postern to the greenwood waste.

Such power hath love!—by love possess'd, behold
This tender maid with desperate blindness bold,
Rank, reason, pudency, all quench'd and dead,
On to the wild-wood urge her guideless tread:
Beneath a tree's broad shelter down she lay,
And watch'd to cross the hunter in his way;
And sued high heaven in pity to inspire
Words form'd to waken love's congenial fire.
The troop already nigh the forest drew;
The distant cry of hounds now louder grew;
Anon the attendant menials came in view,
And some small interval from these apart,
Paced the dear object of fair Dana's heart;
Arm'd with a shaft his hand, and loosely strung
A well-fraught quiver o'er his shoulder hung.
Not unamaz'd, within that lonesome laire
To meet the semblance of a form so fair,

Narcissus, as he view'd the stranger maid,
Ween'd her some fairy-goddess of the shade,
And leap'd to earth, and lowly bending stood
In reverence of the mistress of the wood.
Fair Dana saw, and with delirious joy
Receiv'd the graceful homage of the boy;
With joy, that from her memory chas'd away
All she had thought, and all she wish'd to say;
But wide abroad her arms she wildly cast,
And clasp'd him to her heart with blushes fast.
Back stepp'd the frozen youth some little space,
And 'Who art thou?' he cried, 'and why this forc'd
embrace?'
'I,' quoth the miserable maid, 'am one
'By the hard rule of reckless love undone;
'By love thus borne to thee, whose fatal sight
'First made my aching eyes abhor the light.

'Come, make me live, by making life desir'd;

'Without this hope ere now I had expir'd:—

'Why turn aside with looks that love refuse?

''Tis Dana, daughter of thy king, that sues.

'Full many a prince hath told me I have charms,

'And sought in vain to win me to his arms;—

'These, with a heart to former loves unknown,

'Accept, dear youth, for they are thine alone:

'O, let me love! receive this heart from me!

'And yield me up thine own for sympathy!

'Good sooth, thou know'st not what delights there dwell

'With two young hearts that love each other well.'

So sued the maid; but with her piercing moan
Unmov'd the boy remain'd, and dead as senseless stone.

'Doth Love so grieve thee?' coldly he replied,

'Chase back the foolish phantom from thy side:

'A power that brings such bootless weight of wo—

'For me I know him not,—nor seek to know.'

E'en while he spoke, he turn'd to wend away,
But prostrate in his path poor Dana lay:
His knees she clasp'd, with bitter tears bedew'd,
Then rais'd her suppliant hands, and sadly sued
For one short interval, one parting breath,
Ere his lost presence clos'd her eyes in death:
And, as she strove, her falling robe confess'd
Charms might have made earth's mightiest monarch bless'd:
But not the charms that grac'd this harmless child,
Nor the big tears her swelling eyes distill'd,
Nor the red stains that streak'd her footsteps, torn
With the rough flinty path, and briery thorn,
Rous'd any touch of kindness in the youth,
Nor mov'd his cold obdurate heart to ruth.
The bloodiest tyrant that e'er plagued mankind,
The beast, by nature to fell deeds inclin'd,
Had here their wonted cruelty forgot,
And melted into tears: the boy did not.

With heedless ears he turn'd him from her moan,

And leap'd upon his steed, and straight was gone.

'No hope! no hope!' the wretched princess cries;

'Ill destiny prevails, and Dana dies.

'Now, wo is me! what undesign'd offence

'Hath griev'd my heart's desire, and driven him hence?

'Yet doth he flee in vain;—while life may last

'Shall sad remembrance hold his image fast:

'Still, spite of all his deeds, my love remains,

'And pardons still the author of my pains.

'Patience, and he, perchance, may yet be kind,

'And blush to call his cruelties to mind,

'And press my knees, and crave that slighted boon

'Of a poor heart that beats for him alone.—

'No—rather let my prayers prevenient go,

'And win him to compassionate my wo.—

'Ah fool! and hast thou not his hatred felt?

'And ween'st thou still that stubborn heart can melt?

'O powers! who rule earth, seas, and heaven above;
'Ye! who have all endur'd the pangs of love;
'Thou, Venus! and thou, chief, her faithless child!
'Fell spoiler of the heart thou hast beguil'd!
'Hear now, and soothe my pains! Avenge my doom
'On that cold youth that sinks me to the tomb:
'Let him too taste of love, let him too groan,
'And shed vain bitter tears, as I have done;
'Let that ungrateful boy, with like desire,
'Rave, wail, and waste, and unconsoled expire.'

So sued the desperate maid, then once again
Set forth to seek the author of her pain.
But the just gods his punishment prepare,
And in her own despite accept her prayer;
E'en Love himself was mov'd, and vow'd in ire—
'Dana shall be aveng'd, ere day expire.'

The youth meanwhile, regardless of her smart,
Chas'd till the hour of noon the fleeing hart,

Then tired and faint beneath the beams of day,
Far from his merry troop he roam'd away,
In search where chance some bubbling spring might burst,
And with its crystal current slake his thirst.
A pure translucent fountain nigh at hand
Rose through its glittering bed of pebbly sand,
Fair marble steps begirt its waters round,
And the thick dark-green herbage cloth'd the ground:
And thither, parch'd with drought, the boy was come;
But in that deadly bason lurk'd his doom;
For, forward as he bent, his eyes beheld
In the clear lymph his beauteous self reveal'd:
Astound, for so high heaven's avenging might
That hour beguil'd his fascinated sight,
Him seem'd the goddess of the flood was there,
With loveliness surpassing all compare.

O how he burn'd! how wildly oft assay'd
With vain embrace to clasp the illusive shade!
Still as he strook the wave, the troubled form
Distorted seem'd to perish in the storm.
Love wastes his springs of life, till deadly wan
Outstretch'd he lies, the phantom of a man.

Just then, ere lasting darkness clouds his eyes,
Fair Dana's form the fainting youth espies;
(Her to the fount Love's powerful god convey'd,
To witness thankless scorn with vengeance paid;)
Full on his mind her well-known features break,
But utterance fails; he strives, yet cannot speak;
His dying eyes alone he upwards rears,
And feebly stretches out his hand to her's,
As a lost wretch who own'd offended heaven,
Own'd its just doom, and sued to be forgiven.
Mute consternation seiz'd the trembling maid;
On her soft breast his languid head she laid,

And nourish'd all she might, and strove to cheer
With many a burning kiss, and many a tear:
But time was past, his final hour drew nigh;
She look'd, and in her arms beheld him die.
Wild with the sight, she fill'd the echoing air
With a long wailful cry, the presage of despair;
Then plied each fostering art that love might boast,
Back to its cell to woo the flitted ghost;
Till, at the last, distract and furious grown,
For that she saw all sign of hope was gone,
And deeming life itself a load abhorr'd,
Unless Narcissus liv'd, her love, her lord,
Down on his senseless corse, all wan of hue,
With what of strength remain'd herself she threw,
Close to his clammy lips her lips she press'd,
Heav'd one convulsive sigh, and sank to rest.
From the like destiny heaven shield each one
Whose loyal heart shall love as her's has done!

And ye draw wisdom from Narcissus fate,

Ye, who have won to love some melting mate;

For should ye leave her thus to die for need,

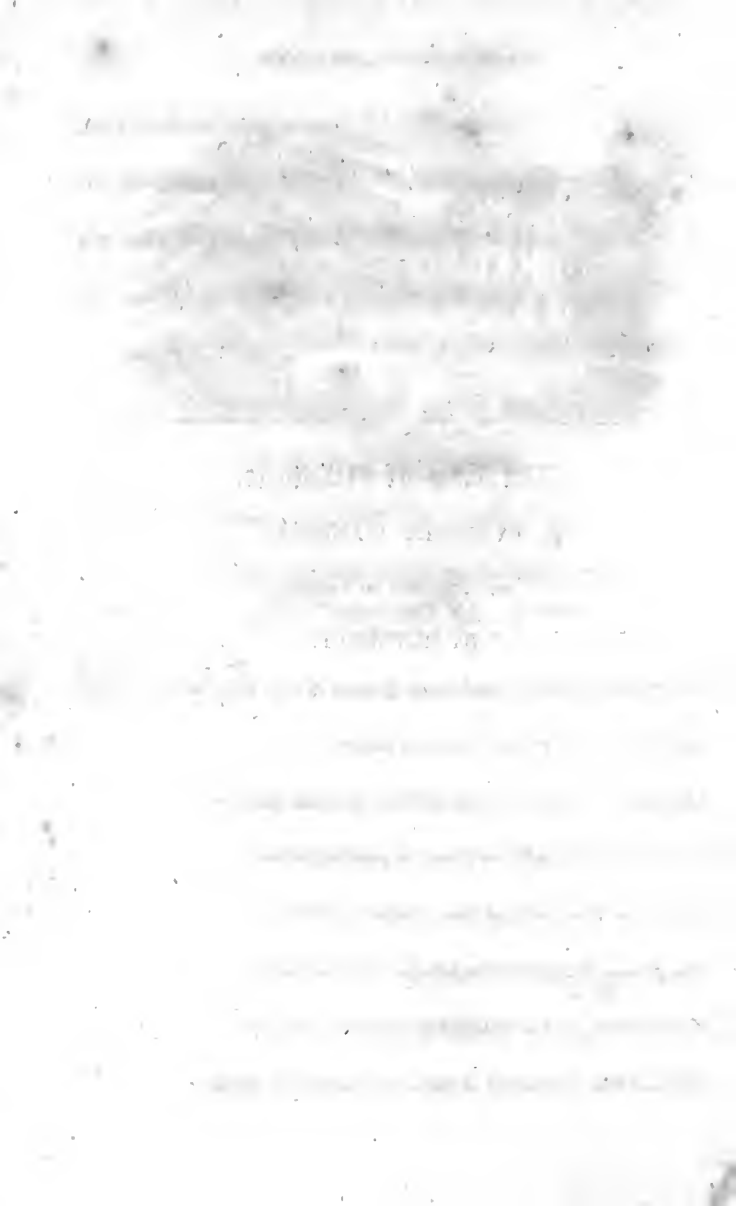
Heaven knows right well to recompense your deed.

The Lay of Aristotle.

BY HENRY D'ANDELI;

OR, ACCORDING TO LACOMBE,

BY RUTEBEUF.



THE LAY OF ARISTOTLE.

The wight, whose mind some pleasant tale hath stor'd,
Acts ill to be a niggard of his hoard,
And hold his peace; nor fail his hearers less
If they scant aught in heed or thankfulness:
For, if to him pertain the means to please,
The good, the power to profit, falls to these.
The following tale with such a choice delight
Fill'd, when I learn'd it first, my listening spright,

To shape it into rhyme methought I'd try,
So pleasant 'twas, and void of villany.
A villain tale, (this maxim fast I hold,)
Ne'er may a villain tale in courts be told:
Such ne'er by me were made, nor e'er shall be
So long as power or life remain with me.
List, gentles all, while I that power assay;
For 'tis a pleasant and instructive lay.

To you well known, I wot, that sovereign Greek
That was so royal, of whom all men speak,
Hight Alexander, fam'd for realms o'erthrown,
And hosts of princes trembling at his frown.
Now had the furious warriour's wasteful heat
Cast suppliant India down beneath his feet:
On every side his fiery boasts he hurl'd,
And menac'd to ingulf the remnant world:
When lo! at once the impetuous torrent ceas'd,
Check'd in its mid career; and sunk to rest.

Ask ye the cause? 'twas Love, that masters all;
Great Love, that makes the universe his thrall.
A lovely mate to quell this youth renown'd,
A lovely and a young, the godhead found;
At the first glance all dreams of conquest fade,
And his whole thought is of his Indian maid.

What wondrous power all other powers above!
How passing dreadful is this god of love!
That bows to dust these conquerors of mankind,
And blots each ray of glory from their mind.
Yet let us spare to blame: howe'er the best,
They too are mortal men, of passions like the rest;
Them too the mighty chief with mastering hand
Rules like the meanest vassal of their land.

Now the young Greek, all other cares foregone,
Liv'd for the mistress of his heart alone,
While griev'd, indignant of such base repose,
His host of knights and barons murmuring rose;

In close debate the assembled warriours met,
Stern discontent in all, and sour regret;
Yet was there found no wight so void of fear
To wake with warning voice their sovereign's ear,
Till Aristotle, guardian of his youth,
Stood forth the unwelcome messenger of truth:
To him long use with just esteem combin'd,
Had given dominion o'er the hero's mind,
But swoln with pride, his overweening will
Misdeem'd the imperial youth his pupil still;
So forth, with many a saw grown grey from age,
To rouse the slumbering lion far'd the sage.

Harshly he chid; his course of shame display'd;
And loud his murmuring chivalry pourtray'd:
The prince heard all; no word he interpos'd;
But, when at last the painful lecture clos'd,
Sighing, alone he cried, as inly mov'd,
'Alas! these men meseems have never lov'd!'

The grave rebuke, howe'er, fell not in vain;
It rous'd the manhood of his soul again:
Sad was his heart the while, yet still he strove,
And turn'd him from the bower that held his love.
She, for she fondly lov'd him, sore distress'd
At this strange absence of her wonted guest,
Pass'd her sad hours in solitude and tears,
And wail'd his faithless heart no longer her's,
Till gathering grief became too strong to bear,
And on to action urg'd the desperate fair:
To her heart's lord her silent steps she bent,
Eve's shadowy season favouring her intent,
And, swoln with tears, 'What strange offence,' she cried,
'Wakes my lord's ire, and weans him from my side?'—
'No fault is thine!' (and, as he spake, his arms
Clasp'd with a thousand folds her drooping charms,)
'No fault is thine!' the gallant prince returns;
'Still now, as erst, my constant bosom burns;

'Sage Aristotle's lore, severe, but just,
'Bids for a season part, and part we must.'
The fair provok'd, yet answer'd with a kiss,
But vow'd the pedagogue should smart for this:
'Sweet lord!' she cried, 'let morrow's morning hour
'But find thee at the window of the tower,
'And aye mistrust me if I fail to show
'Thy sage needs lessons full as much as thou.'
Now fled away the silent hours of night,
And the morn gleam'd, but with a doubtful light,
Till presently the gorgeous sun arose;
Then, while the rest were lapt in deep repose,
Upsprang the damsel, watchful where she lay,
And to the orchard hasten'd on her way,
For strong desire of vengeance fill'd her breast,
And from her eyelids chas'd their wonted rest.
The fair long flaxen tresses that she bore
Flow'd negligently down her shoulders o'er:

No wimple did she wear, no vail conceal'd
Her well-form'd face in all its charms reveal'd;
O'er her neat smock one simple vest was plac'd,
Shap'd to her shape, but open to the waist,
As freelier to inhale the buxom air,
And hint the witcheries that harbour'd there:
Blithe was her look, voluptuous her attire,
While nigh the casement of the graybeard sire
Lightly she stray'd, and as she tripp'd along
Thus with a voice of sweetness tun'd her song.

'Now—behold her! now behold!
'Where gently-gurgling waters are;
'My love—behold her! Iris there
'Blooms beneath the alder old:
'Now, behold! behold!—the fair
'Pretty!—now behold!'

Sweet was the strain, and from his studious page
Its melody arôus'd the startled sage:

Awhile he listening stood, then, curious grown,
To view the form that breath'd so choice a tone,
With noiseless footstep to the window stole,
And spied the syren that had thrill'd his soul,
Himself unseen, his gloating eyes employ'd,
And grudg'd the happiness his prince enjoy'd.
Full well the crafty damsel was aware
What wiles might lure the graybeard to her snare,
And bent to strike him with a dart so sure,
So deadly, as to mock all power of cure,
From a tall myrtle-tree a branch she rent,
Then playfully each flower of fragrant scent
Mix'd with the green, and deftly bound them there
As for a coronal to deck her hair;
And, as she wrought, her airy footsteps stray'd
Till just before that window's view they stay'd;
Then low she bent, then gently rising press'd
Close with her lily hand her throbbing breast,

And as she frolick'd thus the flowers among
She gaily warbled out this second song.

'Silly love doth hold me here
'With feign'd look demurely cold;
'Silly love doth hold me here
'Where now for pain my hand I hold.'

Wo worth the listening sire! forenam'd the wise;
Now wise no more, but lost in extasies.
Full on the fair his ardent eyes he cast,
Watch'd every look, and every gesture trac'd;
And greedily he glanc'd, as, ill conceal'd,
Her falling drapery's folds her skin reveal'd,
And strove to spy those countless charms beneath,
With sighs suppress'd, and suffocated breath.
Thus while he stood, with monitory tone
Grave Reason cried—'Thou doting fool, begone!
'Back to thy books!—behold that wrinkled brow,
'That pate besprent with straggling hairs of snow,

'That famish'd carcase, and that dusky hide:—
'Hope flies from these, and love is terrified.'
Thus Reason warn'd an hundred times or more,
Then, scorn'd and flouted, gave the conflict o'er.

Meanwhile with many a flower the Indian fair
Had wreath'd the chaplet to adorn her hair:
Then on her head the fragrant crown she plac'd,
And breath'd this strain, the loveliest and the last:

'All in a garden, on the tender grass,
'The daughter of a king did sadly lie:
'She call'd her love, and then, alas!
'She heav'd a sigh:
'Ah! County Guy!
'For love of thee my smiles and solace fly!'

And, at the close, as unawares, she went
So nigh the enamour'd graybeard's ambushment,
That, ere she pass'd, with eager hand he raught,
And by her vest the starting damsel caught.

'Who stays me thus?' the turning fair one cried;
'Tis I, dear dame!' the pedagogue replied;
'A wight who brooks no more the light of day,
'Thee, hope and solace of his heart, away;
'Prest here to hazard all things for thy sake,
'Though life, limbs, soul, and honour, were the stake.'

So spake the sage philosopher, the dame
Feign'd such a sweet surprise as fann'd his flame:
Then, more severe in semblance, fram'd her moan
Of Alexander, cold and reckless grown:
So 'tis with lovers all! she left to mourn
Ingratitude of too much kindness born.

With joy the graybeard heard, as weening sure
Spite now might plead his suit, and win her to his lure:
'Whate'er my power,' he ardently rejoin'd,
'Nor small my influence o'er my pupil's mind,
'For thy dear sake that power I straight employ
'Back to thy feet to bring the faithless boy:

'Yet let me first some sign of favour see—
'First, lovely dame, here enter in with me!'
Right well the crafty fair her joy conceal'd,
And with a comely coyness feign'd to yield;
Yet, ere the silly deed were done, from him
She claim'd one sacrifice to woman's whim;
A wayward fancy long had seiz'd her spright,
And pain'd by day, and haunted her by night;
In one brief word, with strange desire she died
Upon a wise-man's back to mount and ride.
Small were the boon from one who sought to prove
His life was nothing worth, oppos'd to love.
So sued the dame; and, blinded with desire,
Forth on the grass-plot crawl'd the groveling sire;
On his broad brawny back, uncouthly cas'd,
A gorgeous sell the officious fair-one plac'd;
Then round his neck made fast the mastering rein,
Leap'd up, and urg'd her courser o'er the plain,

And with a voice of triumph loudly cried—
'So speeds the man that mighty Love doth guide!—
'With Love for guide he needs must go!—
'Damsel, fair as fleece, I trow
'Master vizard bears thee merrily!—
'With Love for guide he needs must go
'Like all that Love have harbour'd, verily!'
The king forewarn'd, (as late my tale I told,)
At his tower's window plac'd, might scarce behold
The gamesome sire in such uncouth array,
Ere the loud peals of laughter burst their way.
Uplook'd the graybeard bent beneath his dame,
And, as he spied the monarch, shrunk for shame;
Then humbly own'd at Love's imperious call
Youth well may yield, since frozen age must fall.
Mark! ye who hear me! that no blameful shade
Be thrown henceforth on gallant or on maid:

For here, by grave example taught, we find
That mighty Love is master of mankind.
Love conquers all, and Love shall conquer still,
Last the round world how long soe'er it will.

Hippocrates.

AN EXTRACT.

HIPPOCRATES.

And now some months at Rome the leech profound
Had sojourn'd on, deservedly renown'd;
Grac'd, as beseem'd, by Rome's imperial lord,
And by the vulgar like a god ador'd;
When one shrewd female rose, the sage's pest,
And turn'd his homage to a scornful jest.
A Gaul she was, and of illustrious race,
And just her form, and lovely was her face;

Her great Augustus (for it seem'd his aim
To pay full honours to the stranger dame,)
Had for her won a royal mansion given,
With a strong tower that rear'd its head to heaven,
And many a dame and damsel had decreed
To do such service as the fair should need.
The first few moments left to choice alone
Were given to view the wonders of the town:
On all worth note she cast a heedful eye,
Nor past, besure, the twain new statues by.
The sculptor's excellence awhile she prais'd,
Then, 'What mean these?' she cried, 'and wherefore rais'd?'
The officious guide, accustom'd to repeat,
Makes known the inscription that records the feat;
Whereat loud bursts of laughter seize the dame—
'I wist not this!' she cried, 'whate'er her fame;
'I little ween'd that Rome, supremely bless'd,
'This hour within her walls a god possess'd;

‘ And since ’tis so, I marvel to behold
‘ How folk still die as erst, when sick or old.
‘ Would this divinity, methinks, agree
‘ To yield himself for one short day to me,
‘ My head be forfeit but his godship grow
‘ A sillier sot than mortal sots below.’

Some busy babblers who the dame o’erheard,
(Such still are found to spread each idle word,)
With headlong zeal retail’d the boastful speech,
And wak’d the notice of the curious leech.
Self-love was rous’d; he felt desire to see
This wondrous dame at least, whate’er she be.
Wo worth the while! soon was he doom’d to rue
The luckless sight!—her prophecy came true!
Her form so beauteous show’d, such sprightly grace
Flow’d from her lips and beam’d around her face,
That, harness’d as he was with strong mistrust,
The fair prevail’d: he loves, for love he must.

Wide spread the taint, till, all the man possess'd,
His reason tottering, lost his power of rest,
To a sick bed confin'd ere long was found
By Rome's great lord Hippocrates renown'd.
The emperor first condol'd, then ladies came,
And in the rear of these the stranger dame.
She, for she own'd a keen and searching wit,
Right well the secret of the ailment hit,
And, in an hour when all the rest were gone,
With friendly guise and sympathising tone
She question'd him, as one who sought to trace
The state, first cause, and progress of his case.
The luckless leech, who thought himself too bless'd
To pour his griefs into his lady's breast,
All bashful turns and windings laid aside,
Own'd frankly 'twas for love of her he died.
'Twas this she sought:—soft pity, as it seem'd,
Inspir'd her soul for wight so well esteem'd;

And thus she spoke: 'Deep blot of blame from all,
'And heavier self-reproach, on me must fall,
'Should I, possessing power, refuse to save,
'And quench such matchless merit in the grave:
'Yet, were my love to you like yours to me,
('Ask your own heart, and tell that heart's decree,)
'What mortal means remain such love to show,
'Known as I am, and eyed where-e'er I go?
'Let then this word thy kind acceptance meet:
'Rest satisfied awhile with my regret;
'Rest satisfied thy welfare fills my mind;
'And should thy luckier genius after find
'Apt means of intercourse, succeed or fall,
'I here anticipate and sanction all!'
Ceas'd the fair Gaul, then hasted to depart,
All blushing to have thus disclos'd her heart.
But, for the sage Hippocrates, her strain
Shot hope, health, lustihood, through every vein:

Soon to the palace, blithe of cheer, he hied,
Soon buzz'd about his Gaulish fair-one's side.
'Well!' quoth the dame, the first fit time she found,
'How prosper we? our budding hopes are crown'd?'—
'Ah me!' with doleful tone the leech replied,
'Or night or day I've known no thought beside,
'Yet, to this hour, it grieves me to confess,
'Device has fail'd, I cannot boast success.'
'Then list to me, and thank me as you hear,'
Return'd the dame with well pretended cheer;
'I too have pain'd me, and forsworn my rest,
'If not more eager in my search, more bless'd.
'Thou know'st right well my mansion and my tower;
'Beneath those walls at midnight's loneliest hour
'Wait thou besure; for furtherance of the plan
'Bear a large basket, fit to hold a man:
'Then, while my maids are hush'd in sleep profound,
'One lass, my cousin, to my interests bound,

‘ Shall with my aid a well-wrought cord let down;
‘ Make thou the pannier fast, and love’s our own.
‘ By our joint toil we’ll hale thee up on high:
‘ There joy shall reign in dreadless privacy.’

So counsell’d the fair Gaul, and amorous rage
To such a blindness wrought the insensate sage,
That the coarse snare begat no jot of doubt,
But seem’d a master-piece of skill throughout.
Brief leave he took, with thankfulness o’ercome,
Then for a spacious basket ransack’d Rome;
And, swoln with hope, and wild with strange delight,
Stay’d restlessly the lingering shades of night.

Night came at last; mankind in sleep lay dead;
Forth with his load in breathless haste he sped,
And spied—O judge his joy that blissful hour!
The long cord pendent from the lofty tower.
To the firm basket, with incessant toil
Of many a rugged knot and many a coil,

Its end he bound; then in the graybeard went,
And gave the appointed signal for ascent.
Straight rose the load, updrawn by female might,
Till, just as it had reach'd its midway height,
To a strong hook the dame made fast the cord,
And stay'd 'twixt earth and sky her pensile lord;
And 'O sweet slumbers on thy eyelids rest!
'Sweet sleep,' she cried, 'with joyous visions bless'd!
'May Love's light dreams around thy temples play!'
So spake the laughing dame, and tripp'd away.

Now wot ye all, what learned writers tell,
How, when in Rome this strange event befell,
A special custom reign'd, that mark'd the times,
Ordain'd the punishment for pettier crimes:
'Twas that the convict, pendent from a tower
Aloft in air, from morn till evening hour,
Should in a basket expiate his offence;
'Twas nam'd the BASKET OF THE JUDGES hence.

Grim with despair, Hippocrates look'd down,
Ensnar'd 'twas plain, the jest of all the town;
In countless mutterings spat forth spleen and gall,
And execrated love and ladies all.
But, bootless ire! and wisdom now too late!
The remnant hours of night he needs must wait;
Needs must he view the hateful blaze of morn,
And, helpless all, hang there the general scorn.
In vain, when light his luckless hap reveal'd,
His twain uplifted hands his face conceal'd;
The penal sign attracts each passer by,
And none but knew him as they drew more nigh.
There through the livelong day the rabble rout
With ceaseless mockery throng'd and boisterous shout.
The warders of the tower, who kenn'd his plight,
But ween'd the emperor had so doom'd the wight,
Bested him nought: and now the westering sun
Well nigh the circuit of his course had run,

When some bless'd chance led onward to the place
The emperor, that time hasting from the chase;
Upward his eye he cast, and wondering saw
A wretch suspended, uncondemn'd by law:
'Who were the wight?—the medicinal sire!'—
Loud menaces of vengeance spoke his ire:
But, when he learnt the wherefore and the why
That rais'd this graybeard mocking-stock so high,
He laugh'd full loud: the tale became the sport
Of him and every baron of his court.

The Priest who ate Mulberries.

BY GUERIN.

THE PRIEST WHO ATE MULBERRIES.

Ye lordings all, come lend an ear,
It boots ye nought to chafe or fleer,
As overgrown with pride:
Ye needs must hear Dan Guerin tell
What once a certain priest befell,
To market bent to ride.

The morn began to shine so bright,
When up this priest did leap full light

And call'd his folk around:
He bade them straight bring out his mare,
For he would presently repair
Unto the market-ground.

So bent he was on timely speed,
So pressing seem'd his worldly need,
He ween'd 'twere little wrong
If pater-nosters he delay'd,
And cast for once they should be said
E'en as he rode along.

And now with tower and turret near
Behold the city's walls appear,
When, as he turn'd aside,
He chanc'd in evil hour to see
All hard at hand a mulberry tree
That spread both far and wide.

Its berries shone so glossy black,
The priest his lips began to smack,
Full fain to pluck the fruit;
But, wo the while! the trunk was tall,
And many a briar and thorn did crawl
Around that mulberry's root.

The man, howbe, might not forbear,
But reckless all he prick'd his mare
In thickest of the brake,
Then climb'd his saddle bow amain,
And tiptoe 'gan to stretch and strain
Some nether bough to take.

A nether bough he raught at last;
He with his right hand held it fast,
And with his left him fed:

His sturdy mare abode the shock,
And bore, as stedfast as a rock,
The struggling overhead.

So feasted long the merry priest,
Nor much bethought him of his beast
Till hunger's rage was ended;
Then, 'Sooth!' quoth he, 'whoe'er should cry,
"What ho, fair sir!" in passing by,
'Would leave me here suspended.'

Alack! for dread of being hang'd,
With voice so piercing shrill he twang'd
The word of luckless sound,
His beast sprang forward at the cry,
And plumb the priest dropp'd down from high
Into the brake profound.

There, prick'd and pierc'd with many a thorn,
And girt with brier, and all forlorn,
Nought boots him to complain:
Well may ye ween how ill bested
He roll'd him on that restless bed,
But roll'd and roar'd in vain:

For there algates he must abide
The glowing noon, the eventide,
The livelong night and all;
The whiles with saddle swinging round,
And bridle trailing on the ground,
His mare bespoke his fall.

O then his household shriek'd for dread,
And ween'd at least he must be dead;
His lady leman swoon'd:

Eftsoons they hie them all to look
If haply in some dell or nook
His body might be found.

Through all the day they sped their quest;
The night fled on, they took no rest;
Returns the morning hour:
When lo, at peeping of the dawn
It chanc'd a varlet boy was drawn
Nigh to the mulberry bower.

The woful priest the help descried;
'O save my life! my life!' he cried,
'Enthrall'd in den profound!
'O pluck me out, for pity's sake,
'From this inextricable brake,
'Begirt with brambles round!'

'Alas my lord! my master dear!

'What ugly chance hath dropp'd thee here?'

Exclaim'd the varlet youth:

''Twas gluttony,' the priest replied,

'With peerless folly by her side:

'But help me straight, for ruth!'

By this were come the remnant rout,

With passing toil they pluck'd him out,

And slowly homeward led:

But, all so tatter'd in his hide,

Long is he fain in bed to bide,

But little less than dead.

The Land of Cokaigne.

THE LAND OF COKAIGNE.

WELL I wot 'tis often told,
Wisdom dwells but with the old;
Yet do I, of greener age,
Boast and bear the name of sage:
Briefly, sense was ne'er conferr'd
By the measure of the beard.

List, for now my tale begins,—
How to rid me of my sins,
Once I journey'd far from home
To the gate of holy Rome:

There the Pope, for my offence,
Bade me straight in penance thence,
Wandering onward, to attain
The wondrous land that hight Cokaigne.
Sooth to say, it was a place
Bless'd with Heaven's especial grace;
For every road and every street
Smok'd with food for man to eat:
Pilgrims there might halt at will,
There might sit and feast their fill,
In goodly bowers that lin'd the way,
Free for all, and nought to pay.
Through that blissful realm divine
Roll'd a sparkling flood of wine:
Clear the sky, and soft the air,
For eternal spring was there;
And, all around, the groves among,
Countless dance, and ceaseless song.

Strife, and ire, and war, were not;
For all was held by common lot;
And every lass that sported there
Still was kind, and still was fair;
Free to each as each desir'd,
And quitted when the year expir'd;
For, once the circling seasons past,
Surest vows no more might last.
But the chiefest, choicest treasure,
In that land of peerless pleasure,
Was a well, to saine the sooth,
Clep'd the living well of youth.
There, had numb and feeble age
Cross'd you in your pilgrimage,
In those wondrous waters pure
Lav'd awhile you found a cure:
Lustihed and youth appears
Numbering now but twenty years.

Wo is me! who rue the hour!

Once I own'd both will and power

To have gain'd this precious gift,

But, alas! of little thrift;

From a kind o'erflowing heart

To my fellows to impart

Youth, and joy, and all the lot

Of this rare enchanted spot,

Forth I far'd, and now in vain

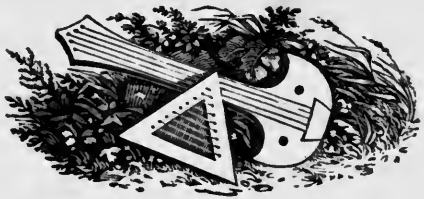
Seek to find the place again.

Sore regret I now endure!

Sore regret beyond a cure!

List, and learn from what is pass'd,

Having bliss, to hold it fast.



The Norman Bachelor.

THE NORMAN BACHELOR.

When Acre yielded to the hostile host,
('Twas but a year or two ago at most,)
A pleasant chance in Normandy befell,
Which, as my memory serves, I mean to tell.

A needy Bachelor had dwelling there,
Of worldly means in sooth so passing bare,
He once was fain his dinner meal to make
On the poor pittance of a farthing cake.

To help this miserable morsel down
He hied him to a tavern in the town,
And bade the vintner, as he meant to dine,
To draw him straight a farthing's-worth of wine.
The vintner, one it seems of churlish kind,
Who car'd but little how his neighbour din'd,
From the next vessel fill'd his measure up,
And, as he pour'd it thence into a cup,
Slubber'd with such ill grace the business o'er,
That half the draught was spilt upon the floor.
To crown the deed, with supercilious pride,
'You'll soon grow rich, sir Bachelor!' he cried,
'Wine spilt, they say, (be't true or falsely spoken,)
'Some sequent good doth evermore betoken.'
The Norman deem'd it were but labour lost
To chafe or wrangle with his boorish host;
His wit to artifice he wisely bent,
And thus devis'd the caitiff's punishment.

In his poor purse remain'd one farthing still;
This, with frank guise, as one who thought no ill,
He tender'd to his host, so would he please
To furnish him a farthing slice of cheese.

Up to the loft where all his cheeses lay
The vintner hied, but muttering all the way:
That selfsame instant turn'd the knight about,
And from the wine-cask pluck'd the spigot out;
Forth gush'd the guggling liquor, bright and good,
And the wide floor was delug'd with the flood.
Back sped the host, and, furious at the sight,
First pegg'd his cask, and next assail'd the knight:
But the strong Norman sternly shook the thrall,
Hurl'd back, and crush'd his wine-pots with his fall;
And, but that entering neighbours quell'd the fray,
The vintner then had seen his dying day.

The matter soon was to the king made known;
(Count Henry of Champagne possess'd the throne;)

And first the plaintive vintner stoutly spoke,
And claim'd redress:—wine lost, and vessels broke.
The prince doom'd not the knight to recompense,
But will'd him first to argue his defence:
He the plain truth from end to end expos'd,
Then with these words his frank recital clos'd:
'Great sire!' he said, 'this worthy host of mine
'Foretold much good would spring from spilling wine;
'That I, forsooth, whose cup was half thrown down,
'Should soon become the wealthiest wight in town:
'My gratitude, I own, o'ercame me here,
'And, weening wealth might ne'er be bought too dear,
'I strove to make him richer than myself,
'And shed full half a cask to purchase pelf.'
He ceas'd, loud plaudits rang through all the court;
No tale was ever told so full of sport;
All rang'd them seemly by the Norman's side;
While good King Henry laugh'd until he cried;

Then thus dismiss'd the parties and their suit,

'What's spilt, is spilt;—betide or bale or boot.'

NOTES.

NOTES

TO

THE KNIGHT AND THE SWORD.

Page 3, Line 8. . . . ‘ *Sir Gawaine was his name.*’ After the above spirited exordium, the author reproaches Chrestien de Troyes, whose pen had celebrated so many knights of the round-table, with the omission of Sir Gawaine. He informs us that he will endeavour to repair this injustice done to the reputation of his hero. He will at least sing of some of his exploits, since to recount all would be impossible. (For an account of Sir Gawaine, see notes to ‘ The ‘ Mantle made amiss.’)

Chrestien de Troyes flourished about the year 1168. It was usual among the poets of those times to distinguish themselves by the name of the place where they were born.

Chrestien was author of the metrical Romance ‘ du ‘ Graal,’ and that of ‘ Perceval le Galois:’ he also

began 'La Charette,' containing the adventures of Lancelot du Lac. (Gordon de Percel, Vol. II. page 228; yet consult Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, Vol. IV. page 61. note.)

Page 4, Line 10. *'His spurs of well-wrought gold*
'adorn'd his heel.'

The golden or gilt spurs were the distinctive mark of a knight: those of a squire being always of silver. The original spurs were mere goads, fastened to the heel of the shoe, as appears from a seal of Alain Fergent, Duke of Bretany in 1084, and many other instances. Rowels were afterwards invented, and the size of these was gradually increased to such a degree, that in the reign of Charles VII. they were nearly as broad as a man's hand, and the necks of the spurs were about six inches long. At the creation of a knight, the king or prince who conferred the order, generally buckled on the spurs with his own hands: and as this was the first ceremony of investment, so the hacking off the spurs was the first act of degradation.

Page 10, Lines 3, 4.

'Foremost their lord, with looks that joy express'd,
'Stood, prompt to greet and to assist his guest.'

On the arrival of a knight or other noble visitor, not

only all the servants, but the mistress of the castle, with her daughters, went out to meet him: they held his stirrup to assist him to alight, pulled off his armour, and presented him with loose and costly robes, which were kept in the wardrobe of every castle for the use of strangers.

Page 11, Line 2. '*And in his hand his beauteous*
'*daughter bears.*'

In the original there is a minute description of this beautiful damsel; and the author dwells with great complacency on her fair hair, and delicate complexion. This taste was continued for a long time; and to render the hair light was a great object of education. Even when wigs first came into fashion, they were all flaxen. Such was the colour of the Gauls, and of their German conquerors. It required some centuries to reconcile their eyes to the swarthy beauties of their Spanish and Italian neighbours.

Page 16, Lines 17, 18.

'*And down she lay, as one to sleep resign'd,*
'*And gently by her side the knight reclin'd.*'

It will perhaps be thought by many readers, that the machinery of the enchanted sword is not the most incredible part of this strange adventure, in which the *sage* Sir Gawaine is involved by the tyrannical hospi-

tality of his entertainer; and that no imaginable degree of caprice could possibly induce a father to weary the patience of his daughter by so many unavailing rehearsals of the bridal character. To suppose that such behaviour was consonant to general practice, and that female complaisance was habitually exposed to such severe trials, may appear still more incredible; and yet we are assured by all travellers that such a practice actually prevails in many parts of America, and their testimony has been confirmed to the translator by a native of that country.

'*Bundling* (he says) is commonly practised in the 'interior parts of New England, among the labouring 'farmers. A young man sees a girl that strikes his 'fancy, pays a visit to her at her father's, and pro- 'poses to *stay with her*, as it is called; which if she 'accedes to, he remains there until the old folks retire 'to rest at their accustomed hour, leaving the young 'couple together. As there are commonly beds in 'every room, they usually throw off their upper gar- 'ments and lie down, and frequently remain together 'till morning; and so little is thought of it, that he 'often stays to breakfast with the family. If he re- 'peats his visit, he is considered as her lover, and it 'commonly ends in matrimony. If a *gentleman* goes

'into the country, the girls are not easily persuaded 'to *bundle* with him, because they know he will not 'marry them, in case an accident should happen, 'which is not very unlikely, in such a critical situa-'tion; whereas they are tolerably secure with persons 'of their own rank, because the laws inflict on the 'defaulter so heavy a penalty as few are able to pay, 'and he must either marry her or fly the country. 'Besides, if any man among them should desert a girl 'in this situation, he would expose himself to universal 'contempt and detestation.'

Page 22, Line 10. '*The wide hall echoing with the* '*minstrels' lay.*'

The troops of minstrels and wandering musicians have been already noticed. These extraordinary men, whose indecent and profligate morals excited the contempt even of their cotemporaries, must still raise our surprise, by the variety and extent of their talents. They sang, played on various instruments, were versed in musical composition; they were expected to remember all the songs, tales, and even romances of the time; and some of them, as Rütebeuf and Baudouin de Condé, were tolerable poets.

The instruments mentioned in this Fabliau, are the

viele, the flute, the pipe, the harp, and the *rote*. It appears from the miniatures accompanying the old manuscripts, that the *viele* was not the instrument now called by that name, but a fiddle, at least it had nearly the same shape, and was played on with a bow. From an expression in the letters of Boniface archbishop of Mentz, ('*Citharizare in Citharâ quam nos appellamus* '*Rottæ*,') it seems that the *rote* was some species of harp. It occurs in Chaucer and all our early poets. The musick of the earlier times was written with square notes ranged on four lines, the fifth was not introduced till late in the reign of St. Louis.

Page 22, Line 16. '*With tables or with chess be-*
'*guile the day.*'

The game of *tables* appears to have resembled either trictrack or backgammon.

Chess, which, from immemorial antiquity, has been a favourite game in Asia, was either introduced into Europe by the Saracens of Spain, or learned from the Greeks or Turks by the pilgrims in the crusades. Both *chess* and *tables* are mentioned by Robert of Gloucester in describing King Arthur's coronation. 'Wyth pleyinge at tables, other atte chekere.' (Warton's English Poetry, Vol. I. p. 50.) How familiar

the language of chess must have been in Lydgate's time, may be inferred from the following passage in his prologue to the Fall of Princes :—

'And to princes, for they be not stable,
'Fortune full oft, for al theyr great estate,
'Unwarely changeth, and saith to them *checkmate*.'

Page 29, Line 14. '*And now, with lance in rest,*
'*the foe appear'd.*'

At the time this Fabliau was written, the lance-rest was probably nothing more than the *arçon* or bow of the saddle, against which the knight, in charging, rested the butt-end of his lance. Afterwards, on the introduction of *plate-armour*, hooks, and also moveable iron brackets, fixed to the right side of the cuirass, were employed for the purpose of supporting the lance: an expedient of which the construction of mail-armour would not admit.

NOTES

TO

THE VALE OF FALSE LOVERS.

Page 35, Line 1. '*The stout Sir Launcelot,*' . . . . Sir Launcelot of the Lake (Lancelot du Lac) is represented in the prose French Romance (3 volumes in folio, black letter, Paris, A. D. 1520) which bears his name, as the son of King Ban of Benoic, (one of Arthur's vassals in Gaul,) and his queen Helaine, a lady of the lineage of David. King Ban's territory being over-run by Claudas King '*de la terre deserte,*' he departs with his royal consort and their infant son Launcelot, to solicit succours from Arthur. Scarcely have they quitted their castle of Trible, when their treacherous seneschal surrenders it to the enemy. King Ban, looking back, sees his fortress in flames, and dies with grief. His queen, frantick at her loss, for a while forgets her infant. Recollecting herself at length, she discovers him by the side of a lake, in the

arms of an unknown damsel, '*qui le tient tout nud en* '*son geron, et l'estraint et serre moult doucement entre* '*ses deux mãmelles, et lui baise souvent les yeulx et la* '*bouche.*' The queen entreats her to restore the child: but the lady, seeing her approach nearer, instantly plunges with him into the lake. Helaine, overwhelmed with affliction, repairs to the '*abbaye de* '*monstier royal :*' '*illecques furent trenchees et couppees* '*les belles tresches de la royne :*' and she turns nun. Launcelot, however, is instructed, under the lady of the lake, in all knightly accomplishments: Queen Helaine is informed of his well-being by a '*preud-*'*homme :*' and his fame descends to posterity in three volumes in folio. The adventure of *the Vale of false Lovers* will be found in Vol. I. fueillet 193.

Sir Launcelot was among the bravest and comeliest of all the knights of the Round Table, and was the successful lover of Guenever, the consort of his sovereign. His fidelity to his mistress is much celebrated in romance, and indeed it seems to have been exposed to frequent and difficult trials. On one of these occasions, a lady having paid him a visit at night, and assuring him that the queen could not possibly be informed of his trespass, he answered, 'Though she should 'never know it, my heart, which is constantly near

'her, could not be ignorant.' This reply is in the genuine spirit of chivalry. On the French playing-cards, one of the four *knaves* (or *varlets* or *valets*, for these appellations were nearly, if not entirely, equivalent,) bears the name of Launcelot: a proof of the estimation in which that worthy was held at the time when cards were invented. His funeral eulogy, as it is given in the English Mort d'Arthur, (edit. 1634,) exhibits a compendium of knightly perfection. 'And 'now I dare say (said Sir Bors,) that, Sir Launcelot, 'there thou liest, thou were never matched of none 'earthly knight's hands. And thou were the curtiest 'knight that ever beare shield. And thou were the 'truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrood horse, 'and thou were the truest lover, of a sinful man, that 'ever loved woman. And thou were the kindest man 'that ever strooke with sword. And thou were the 'goodliest person that ever came among presse of 'knights. And thou were the meekest man, and the 'gentlest, that ever eate in hall among ladies. And 'thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that 'ever put speare in the rest.'

Page 35, Line 5. '*Far roam'd the warriour, cap-*
'*tive knights he freed, &c.*'

To deliver knights, succour dames, exterminate rob-

bers, and abolish evil customs, was the duty of every knight errant; and such an obligation would itself be a sufficient proof of the hideous anarchy that prevailed during the feudal ages, if history had not recorded its excesses. The smiles now excited by the adventures of Don Quixote are a strong eulogium on the benefits of a regular government.

Page 45, Line 14. '*Each day in solemn Mass the assembled band might join.*'

It is not entirely without surprise that we see a chapel and mass on this occasion, but the writers of romance are full of such incongruities. A hero, after passing the night with his mistress, never fails to hear mass the next morning. Even Merlin, engendered by a demon, in consequence of a solemn council held by the infernal spirits to destroy the *work of redemption*, is often employed as a zealous catholick in promoting by his enchantments the advancement of Christianity, and in raising up future defenders of the holy faith. It is true that the means he employs are more analogous to his nature, as the heroes to whose birth he is accessary are generally illegitimate, and in the celebrated instance of Arthur himself the fruit of adultery.

Page 46, Lines 5, 6.

'*He on his way still forward press'd outright,*

'*Nor turn'd aside for danger or delight.*'

This couplet the translator has borrowed, with slight variation, from Cowley's Davideis, Book IV. Line 360.

NOTES

TO

THE LAY OF SIR LANVAL.

Mr. Warton, in his History of English Poetry, mentions *Launval* or *Lanval* as the title of one of the French metrical tales in the British Museum, and notices a translation of it by Thomas Chestre in the reign of Henry the VI. under the name of Sir *Launfale*. At the conclusion of most of these tales it is said that these *Lais* were originally written by the poets of Bretany. They were translated into French by Marie, a poetess who also translated King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of Æsop. She is not mentioned in Le Grand's catalogue, though he has modernized and published her *Fables*. That she had written *Lays* he was therefore apparently ignorant, in common with the other French antiquaries. (Consult Tyrwhitt's Introd. to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, note 24. page 164, edit. 1775.) Yet he has published a

'Lai de Gugemer;' and a Lay of Guiguemar is quoted as Mademoiselle Marie's by Tyrwhitt, which probably is in substance the same. (Compare the quotation from Gugemer in Le Grand, note *A* to Lai de Lanval, with Tyrwhitt's, from MS. Harl. 978, fol. 146, in his notes on Canterbury Tales, verse 11021.)

The extracts from Chestre's translation published by Mr. Warton, differ in some particulars from the tale here given; but, as has already been observed, it seldom happens that any two manuscripts of a Fabliau are found to tell the story exactly in the same way.

Page 53, Line 13. '. . . . . *With costliest silk*
'*superbly dight.*'

Before the 6th century, all the silk used by Europeans had been brought to them by the *Seres*, the ancestors of the present Boukharians, from whence it derived its Latin name of *Serica*. In 551 the silk-worm was brought by two monks to Constantinople; but the manufacture of silk was confined to the Greek empire till the year 1130, when Roger King of Sicily returning from a crusade collected some manufacturers from Athens and Corinth, and established them at Palermo; from whence the trade was gradually disseminated over Italy. In the 13th century Bruges was the principal mart for this commodity. The varieties of

silk stuffs known at this time were velvet, satin, (which was called *samit* or *samyte*,) and taffety, (called *cendal* or *sandal*,) all of which were occasionally stitched with gold and gilver.

Page 53, Line 14. ‘ *A gay pavilion, &c.*’

In the English Lay of Syr Launfal (as quoted by Warton in his Dissertation on the Gesta Romanorum, page 35) the picture of the lady in the pavilion is given with a good deal of brilliancy.

‘ In the pavyloun he found a bed of prys,
‘ Yheled with purpure bys
‘ That semyly was of syzte;
‘ Withinne lay that lady gente
‘ That after Syr Launfal hadde sente,
‘ That lefsom beamed bryzt.

‘ For hete her clothes doun she dede,
‘ Almost to her gerdylstede;
‘ Then lay she uncovert:
‘ Sche was as whyt as lylye in Maye,
‘ Or snowe that snoweth yn wyntery's daye;
‘ He seygh nevir non so pert.

‘ The rede rose whan sche is newe,
‘ Azens her rode nes nauzt of hewe;

'Y dar say yn sert;

'Her hare schon as gold wyre,

. . . . . .

Page 54, Lines 7, 8.

'*A crimson pall of Alexandria's dye,*

'*With snowy ermine lin'd,*' . . . . .

In the original it is called *pourpre* (*purple*), by which the poets of the middle ages, as well as the ancients, expressed all the shades of red, from scarlet to the deepest crimson and violet. It is lined with ermine, though the scene of the Fabliau is laid in the summer season; and this was the fashion in all the north of Europe. Such a dress would be intolerable in a warm climate, and therefore mantles of ermine are very unusual in the heraldry of Spain, Portugal, and Italy. The ermine was so called from Armenia, then written *Herminia*, from whence it was brought.

Page 55, Line 14. '. . . . . *The two fair damsels.*' It has been already observed in the Preface, that the attendants on the great were always chosen from the young nobility of both sexes. In the original they are called *pucelles; maids;* or (as we should now say) *maids of honour.*

Page 58, Line 9 to 16. '*Now ransom'd thralls, &c.*' Though the achievement of almost every adventure in

romance terminates in the liberation of captives, the victims of oppression were so numerous in those times of anarchy, that the payment of their ransomes must have afforded a wide field to the liberality of the opulent. Distressed knights, holy pilgrims, and crusaders, were natural objects of munificence in an age of chivalry and devotion. But the authors of the Fabliaux very wisely consider generosity to minstrels as among the first of royal and knightly virtues. Among the presents most usually conferred on them were rich clothes; a custom said to be borrowed from the Arabians, in imitation of Mahomet, who gave his mantle to the poet Caab.

Page 65, Line 7. '*All pledg'd their fiefs*' . . . . . From all the circumstances of this trial, it seems that when the Fabliau was written, the forms of French and English criminal jurisprudence were almost exactly similar. On the subject of pledges or securities we have a curious anecdote in the Life of Saint Louis. On his return from Egypt to France, being in danger of shipwreck, his queen vowed to St. Nicholas a vessel of silver, and, as a farther security to the saint, insisted that Joinville should become her *pledge* for the execution of the promise.

Page 67, Line 8. '*It were a doom of shame and*
'*cruelty.*'

The punishment of death seems, indeed, rather disproportioned to the offence; but, in the times of chivalry, any insult offered to a woman was considered as a most heinous crime. When a tournament was proclaimed, the knights who intended to fight were obliged to suspend their shields during several preceding days in some publick place, and the judges of the lists had orders to conduct all ladies thither, in order that if any of them had cause to complain of a knight, she might touch his shield, and thereby indicate her displeasure. The accused knight was then examined by the judge, and, if found guilty, was either excluded the lists altogether, or else his offence being made known to the other combatants, he was attacked by the whole body, and beaten by them till he publickly implored the pardon of the ladies.

Page 70, Line 2. '*Too bright for mixture of earth's*
'*mortal mould.*'

See Milton's Comus, line 244:—

'Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
'Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?'

Page 70, Line 3. '*The gridelin pall that down her*
'*shoulders flow'd.*'

The expression here rendered *gridelin*, is *pourpre grise* (*gray crimson*). The old French writers speak also of *pourpre* and *écarlate blanches* (*white crimson*); of *pourpre sanguine* (*sanguine crimson*); and, in the Fabliau de Gautier d'Aupais, mention is made of '*un* '*vert mantel porprine*' (*a mantle of green crimson*). Hence M. Le Grand conjectures that the crimson dye being, from its costliness, used only on cloths of the finest manufacture, the term *crimson* came at length to signify not the *colour*, but the *texture*, of the stuff. Were it allowable to attribute to the weavers of the middle ages the art now common amongst us, of making what are usually called *shot* silks, (or silks of two colours predominating interchangeably as in the neck of the drake or pigeon,) the contradictory compounds above given (*white* crimson, *green* crimson, &c.) would be easily accounted for.

Page 70, Line 4. '*Half vail'd her snow-white*
'*courser as she rode.*'

A white horse was usually a sign of royalty. When Edward the Black Prince conducted his prisoner King John to London, he assigned a white horse to the captive monarch, and was himself mounted on a

small palfrey. At the entry of the Emperor Charles IV. into Paris, the king (Charles V.) rode a white horse, and mounted the emperor on a black one, lest, by a contrary conduct, he should seem to acknowledge his own inferiority.

Page 70, Lines 5, 6.

'On her fair hand a sparrow-hawk was plac'd,
'Her steed's sure steps a following greyhound
'trac'd.'

A falcon and a dog are the constant symbols of high rank, and for this reason the barons and their ladies seldom appeared in publick without their hawks and greyhounds. The treasurer of the church of Auxerre had the privilege of assisting at divine service with a hawk on his fist, and the Lord of Sassai enjoyed the distinction of perching his falcon on the edge of the altar. The portraits of illustrious persons, both in painting and tapestry, are often ornamented with hounds placed at their feet and hawks on their fists, and their tombstones are frequently embellished in the same manner. This distinction is common to both sexes. Indeed the ladies in those ages enjoyed privileges and held offices which at present appear extraordinary. The hereditary sheriffdom of Westmoreland was in a female.

Page 72, Line 6. *'High on the portal's marble 'steps he stood.'*

These steps, which occur in all the romances, were what we should now call *horse-blocks:* they were frequently placed on the roads, and in the forests, and were almost numberless in the towns. Many of them still remain in Paris, where they were used by the magistrates in order to mount their mules on which they rode to the courts of justice. On these blocks, or on the tree which was generally planted near them, were usually suspended the shields of those knights who wished to challenge all comers to feats of arms. They were also sometimes used as a place of judgment, and a *rostrum;* on which the barons took their seats when they determined the differences between their vassals, and from whence the publick criers made proclamations to the people.

Page 72, Line 10. *'To the fair isle of fertile 'Avalon.'*

This spot, which seems to be the Elysium of the Armorican fablers, is generally supposed to be Glastonbury in Somersetshire. In the British or Welch tongue it is called Ynys Afallon, the Isle of Apples; also Ynys Gwydrin, the Glass Island; the title of *island* being given it from its being encompassed by

water and marshes: or, to use Selden's words, (notes to Poly-Olbion, song 3d.) 'Selwood sends forth Bry, 'which after a winding course from Bruton (so called 'of the river), through part of Sedgemore, and 'Andremore, comes to Glastonbury, and almost '*inisles* it; thence to Gedney-moore, and out of 'Brent marsh into Severne.' The present appellation, *Glas*tonbury, perhaps retains a translated trace of its former name Ynys Gwydrin, or Wydrin, *Glass* Island; and the British *Ynys Gwydrin* is possibly a corruption of *insula vitrea*. Should we incline to the opinion of those who deduce its name from *glastum*, *woad*, which they say grew spontaneously thereabouts, we must remember that, both for *woad* and *glass*, the Latin word is *vitrum*.

An account of the foundation of its abbey may be seen in Grose's Antiquities, where the following relation is given of the discovery of Arthur's sepulchre. —'It is said King Henry II. on the faith of several 'ancient songs recording his (King Arthur's) being 'buried in this place, ordered search to be made; 'and, at about seven feet under ground, a kind of 'tombstone was found, with a rude leaden cross fixed 'on it, on which was a Latin inscription in barbarous 'Gothick characters, the English of which is,—'Here

'lies buried the famous King Arthur, in the isle of 'Avalonia.' About nine feet below this monumental 'stone was found a coffin, hollowed out of the solid 'oak, containing the bones of a human body, sup- 'posed to be that of King Arthur: these were, by 'the care of the abbot, translated into the church, 'and covered with a magnificent monument.' (Refer to note on 'Mantle made amiss,' line 2.)

In the Triades, the isle of Avalon is celebrated as having 'one of the three perpetual choirs of Bri- 'tain.'

'Tri dyfal gyfangan ynys Prydain.
'Un oedd yn ynys Afallach:
'Yr ail y'nghaer Caradawc:
'Ar trydydd ym Mangor is y coed.'

That is—

'The three perpetual choirs of the island of Britain.
'One was in the isle of Avalon:
'The second was at Caer Caradoc: (Salisbury:)
'And the third at Bangor Iscoed.'

Archbishop Usher, in his Antiquities of the British Churches, page 273, quotes the following account of the isle of Avalon from Giraldus:—'Glastonia dicta 'est insula, quoniam marisco profundo undique est

'clausa: quæ mediamnis magis propriè diceretur, 'quasi mediis scilicet amnibus sita; sicut melius in-'sulæ dicuntur, quæ in salo, hoc est in mari, sitæ, 'nascuntur. Avalonia vero dicta est, vel ab *aval*, Britan-'nico verbo quod pomum sonat, quia locus ille pomis 'et pomariis abundare solet; vel ab Avalone quodam, 'territorii illius quondam dominatore. Item solet 'antiquitus locus ille Britannicè dici *Ynys Gwydrin*, 'hoc est, insula vitrea, propter amnem scilicet, quasi 'vitrei coloris, in marisco circumfluentem: et ob hoc 'dicta est postmodum a Saxonibus terram occupan-'tibus, linguâ eorum, Glastonia; *glas* enim Anglicè 'vel Saxonicè vitrum sonat.' (Girald. in specul. ecclesiastic. distinct. 2. cap. 9.)

The same prelate gives likewise (Brit. Eccl. Antiq. folio, Londini, 1637, page 273.) from an ancient writer, whom he calls 'Britannicæ historiæ Meta-'phrastes,' and 'Pseudo-Gildas,' a description in Latin hexameters, of this British elysium; which the writer represents as one of the happy islands—the 'arva, beata arva, divites et insulas'—of Horace; (Epod. ode 16.) introducing the cure of Arthur, and his residence with the fairy Morgain. He assumes to himself that privilege which all poets are entitled to,

'quidlibet audendi,' by converting the marshes of Somersetshire into the main ocean; and sings as follows:—

'Cingitur oceano memorabilis insula, nullis
'Desolata bonis: non fur, nec prædo, nec hostis
'Insidiatur ibi: nec vis, nec bruma, nec æstas,
'Immoderata furit. Pax et concordia, pubes
'Ver manet æternum. Nec flos, nec lilia desunt,
'Nec rosa, nec violæ: flores et poma sub unâ
'Fronde gerit pomus. Habitant sine labe cruoris
'Semper ibi juvenes cum virgine: nulla senectus,
'Nulla vis morbi, nullus dolor; omnia plena
'Lætitiæ; nihil hic proprium, communia quæque.
'Regia virgo locis et rebus præsidet istis,
'Virginibus stipata suis, pulcherrima pulchris;
'Nympha decens vultu, generosis patribus orta,
'Consilio pollens, medicinæ nobilis arte.
'At simul Arthurus regni diadema reliquit,
'Substituitque sibi regem, se transtulit illic;
'Anno quingeno quadragenoque secundo
'Post incarnatum sine patris semine natum.
'Immodicè læsus, Arthurus tendit ad aulam
'Regis Avallonis; ubi virgo regia vulnus
'Illius tractans, sanati membra reservat
'Ipsa sibi: vivuntque simul; si credere fas est.'

Translation:—

By the main ocean's wave encompass'd, stands
A memorable isle, fill'd with all good:
No thief, no spoiler there, no wily foe
With stratagem of wasteful war; no rage
Of heat intemperate, or of winter's cold;
But spring, full blown, with peace and concord reigns:
Prime bliss of heart and season, fitliest join'd!
Flowers fail not there; the lily and the rose,
With many a knot of fragrant violets bound;
And, loftier, clustering down the bended boughs,
Blossom with fruit combin'd, rich apples hang.
Beneath such mantling shades for ever dwell
In virgin innocence and honour pure,
Damsels and youths, from age and sickness free,
And ignorant of wo, and fraught with joy,
In choice community of all things best.
O'er these, and o'er the welfare of this land,
Girt with her maidens, fairest among fair,
Reigns a bright virgin sprung from generous sires,
In counsel strong, and skill'd in med'cine's lore.
Of her, (Britannia's diadem consign'd
To other brow,) for his deep wound and wide
Great Arthur sought relief: hither he sped,

(Nigh two and forty and five hundred years
Since came the incarnate Son to save mankind,)
And in Avallon's princely hall repos'd.
His wound the royal damsel search'd; she heal'd;
And in this isle still holds him to herself
In sweet society,—so fame say true!

NOTES

TO

THE LAY OF SIR GRUÉLAN.

THE groundwork of this Lay is the same with that of Sir Lanval; but the incidents are so varied, as, perhaps, to obviate any objection to publishing both, arising from similarity. At all events they may be considered and compared as examples of the skill of the French fablers in the art of imitation. The scene is here laid in Bretany, under a king and queen whose names are not mentioned.

Page 82, Line 11. '*His hosts, no matter why,*
'*from home were gone.*'

The kings and great barons furnished only the officers, &c. of their household with apartments in their castles; except when court-plenary was held. During the remainder of the year, those who were attached to their service, or who had any business to transact with them, provided themselves with accommodations of this sort.

NOTES

TO

THE LAY OF SIR GUGEMER.

We have here another *Lay*, which, the writer informs us, originated among the inhabitants of Bretany, or Armorica.

Chaucer tells us, in the 'Frankelein's Tale,—

'These olde gentil Bretons in hir dayes
'Of diverse aventures maden *layes*,
'Rimeyed in hir firste Breton tongue:
'Which layes with hir instruments they songe,
'Or elles redden hem for hir plesance,
'And on of hem have I in remembrance
'Which I shall sayn with good wille as I can.'

On the subject of this passage Mr. Tyrwhitt remarks, that the word *Lay*, though it was supposed to have been originally a very general term, and nearly synonymous with our word Song, was afterwards particularly, and almost exclusively, applied to French translations from poems in the Armorican language.

'The chief (perhaps the only) collection of these 'lays which is now extant, was translated into French 'octo-syllable verse by a poetess who calls herself 'Marie; the same (without doubt) who made the 'translation of *Esope*, quoted by Pasquier and 'Fauchet, and placed by them in the reign of St. 'Louis, about the middle of the 13th century. Both 'her works have been preserved together in MSS. 'Harl. 978, in a fair hand, which I see no reason to 'judge more recent than the latter end of that cen-'tury.

'The titles of the poems in this collection, to the 'number of twelve, are recited in the Harleian Cata-'logue. They are, in general, the names of the prin-'cipal persons in the several stories, and are, most of 'them, evidently Armorican; and I think no one can 'read the stories themselves without being persuaded 'that they were either really translated from the 'Armorican language, or at least composed by one 'who was well acquainted with that language and 'country.'

Page 101, Line 4. '*Great Britain's king, and* '*suzerain of the less.*'

A *suzerain* was a feudal lord, possessing a fief under which other fiefs were held; and the use of such

a term as applied to Arthur, cannot be strictly justified, because it carries the antiquity of fedal tenures a few centuries beyond the period of their real establishment. But the supremacy of the British kings of this island over those of Armorica, is warranted by tradition.

'This territory (says Mr. Warton) was, as it were, 'newly peopled in the 4th century by an army of 'Welch, who migrated thither under Maximus, a 'Roman general in Britain, and Conan, Lord of 'Meiniadoc, or Denbigh-land. The Armorican lan- 'guage now spoken in Bretany is a dialect of the 'Welch; and so strong a resemblance still subsists 'between the two languages, that in our late conquest 'of Belle-isle, such of our soldiers as were natives of 'Wales were understood by the peasantry.'

Page 101, Line 5. '*A lord of Leon*, &c.'

A small city of Upper Normandy, seven leagues from Rouen, called Lyons, or Lions, (in Latin Leones,) whence the neighbouring forest of Lyons took its name, (vide Joinville, Table des Matières, p. cxxvii. edit. 1761, folio,) was probably the place in the contemplation of Mademoiselle Marie, when she translated the present lay: or, if we prefer restricting her

to Bretany, she might mean the city and neighbourhood of St. Paul de Léon.

It is here necessary to caution our geographical readers not to confound this Léon with the famous country of Léonais, the birth-place of Sir Tristram, and the scene of his numerous triumphs over the malice of his enemies, and the chastity of the charming Isoude, because the most patient of our poetical antiquaries cannot tolerate any mistake relating to this favourite hero. Even Mr. Tyrwhitt says, in his Glossary (see the word Isoude), 'a late French 'writer, in what he has been pleased to style His-'toire Litteraire des Troubadours, having quoted a 'passage celebrating the love of Tristan and Iseult, 'says coolly—*c'est une allusion à quelque roman* :— 'which is just as if a commentator upon Ovid should 'say of the Epistle from Paris to Helen, that it refers 'to some Greek story.' But in the present case a mistake is the more to be apprehended, because the real country of Léonais has ceased to figure in our maps, in consequence of its being at the depth of more than forty fathoms under water. The only antiquary, perhaps, who has fished up a good account of it, is Mr. Carew, in his Survey of Cornwall, who tells us as follows:

'The sea gradually encroaching on the shore, hath 'ravined from Cornwall the whole tract of country 'called *Lionnesse*, together with divers other parcels 'of no little circuite; and that such a country as 'Lionnesse there was, these proofs are yet remaining. 'The space between the Land's End and the Isles of 'Scilley, being about thirtie miles, to this day re-'taineth that name in Cornish Lethowsow, and car-'rieth continually an equal depth of 40 or 60 fathom '(a thing not usual in the sea's proper dominion), 'save that about the midway there lieth a rocke, 'which, at low water, discovereth its head. They 'term it the Gulphe, suiting thereby the other name 'of *Scilla*. Fishermen also, casting their hooks there-'abouts, have drawn up pieces of doors and windows. 'Moreover the ancient name of St. Michael's Mount 'was *Caracloase in Cowse*, in English, *the hoare rocke in 'the wood;* which now is at every flood encompassed 'by the sea, and yet at some low ebbes, roots of 'mightie trees are discryed in the sands about it. 'The like overflowing has taken place in Plymouth 'haven, and divers other places.'

Page 106, Line 15, &c. ‘ *There Venus might be*
‘ *seen, in act to throw,*
‘ *Down to the mimick fire that gleam'd below,*
‘ *The Remedies of love, &c.*'

Mr. Warton, in his criticism on the exordium of Stephen Hawes's TEMPLE OF GLASS, observes, ‘ We ‘ must acknowledge that all the picturesque invention ‘ which appears in this composition, entirely belongs ‘ to Chaucer. In the mean time there is reason to be- ‘ lieve, that Chaucer himself copied these imageries ‘ from the Romance of GUIGEMAR, one of the metri- ‘ cal tales or LAIS of Bretagne, translated from the ‘ Armorican original into French, by Marie, a French ‘ poetess, about the 13th century; in which the walls ‘ of a chamber are painted with Venus and the *Art of* ‘ *Love* (Le Grand says, "Remedy of Love"), from ‘ Ovid.'—He proceeds to observe, that the imagination of our old poets must have been greatly assisted by the constant contemplation of the paintings with which it was the fashion, during the middle ages, entirely to cover the walls of the more magnificent apartments in castles and palaces. Hence the author of *P. Plowman's Crede*, describes a chapter house of rich monks as being

'With semliche selure ysett on lofte,

'*As a Parlement hous ypeynted aboute.*'

An exactly similar description occurs in an old French Romance—

Lors moustiers tiennent ors et sals,

Et lors cambres, et lors grans sales,

Font lambroissier, *paindre* et *pourtraire.*

Thus in Chaucer's Dreme, v. 1320.

. . . . . in a chamber *paint*

Full of *stories old* and *divers.*

Again, ibid. v. 2167.

For there n'as no Lady ne creture,

Save on the wals *old portraiture,*

Of horsemen, hawkis, and houndes, &c.

In the year 1277, Otho, duke of Milan, having restored peace to that city by a signal victory, built a noble castle, in which he ordered every particular circumstance of that victory to be painted. Paulus Jovius relates that these paintings remained, in the great vaulted chamber of the castle, fresh and unimpaired, so late as the year 1547. 'Extant que adhuc 'in maximo *testudinatoque conclavi*, incorruptæ præ- 'liorum cum *veris ducum* vultibus imagines, *Latinis* '*elegis* singula rerum elogia indicantibus.' That the castles and palaces of England were thus ornamented

at a very early period, and in the most splendid style, appears from the following notices. Langton, bishop of Litchfield, commanded the coronation, marriages, wars, and funeral of his patron, king Edward the first, to be painted in the great hall of his episcopal palace which he had newly built. This must have been about the year 1312. The following anecdote, relating to the old royal palace at Westminster, never yet was published. In the year 1322, one Symeon, a friar minor, and a doctor in theology, wrote an Itinerary, in which is this curious passage. He is speaking of Westminster Abbey. 'Eidem monasterio quasi immediate conjungitur illud famosissimum palatium regium Anglorum, in qua illa VULGATA CAMERA in cujus *parietibus* sunt omnes HISTORIÆ BELLICÆ TOTIUS BIBLIÆ *ineffabiliter depictæ*, atque *in Gallico completissime et perfectissime constantex conscriptæ* in non modica intuentium admiratione, et maxima regali magnificentia.'—'Near this monastery stands the most famous royal palace of England; in which is that celebrated chamber, on whose walls all the warlike histories of the whole Bible are painted with inexpressible skill, and explained by a regular and complete series of texts, beautifully written in French over each battle, to the no small admiration of the

'beholder, and the increase of royal magnificence.' This ornament of a royal palace, while it conveys a curious history of the Arts, admirably exemplifies the chivalry and the devotion of the times united. That part of the Old Testament, indeed, which records the Jewish wars, was almost regarded as a book of chivalry; and their chief heroes, Joshua and David, the latter of whom killed a Giant, are often recited among the champions of romance. In France, the battles of the kings of Israel with the Philistines and Assyrians, were wrought into a grand volume, under the title of 'Plusieurs Batailles des Roys d'Israel encontre les 'Philistins et Assyriens.' Vide Warton's Hist. Eng. Poetry, vol. iii. p. 216, and vol. i. p. 303. This fashion, Mr. Warton says, preceded the employment of tapestry for the same purpose.

Page 116, Line 3, 4. '*Nogiva's lord next meets an*
'*equal fate,*
'*And Gugemer straight weds the widow'd mate.*'

The jealous lord here makes his appearance very opportunely for the purpose of being killed, and of thus legitimating Sir Gugemer's union with the fair Nogiva. It is evident that Mademoiselle Marie had very nearly forgotten him, and his arrival at this time could not

easily be explained, if we did not know that fairies, whether good or bad, were always enemies to husbands; and that the two great agents in this tale had probably united to promote his destruction.

NOTES

TO

THE THREE KNIGHTS AND THE SMOCK.

Page 121, Line 2. ‘ *Led by a neighbouring tourney's*
‘ *rumour'd fame.*'

It seems to be generally admitted that Tourneys, or Tournaments, are of French invention, and that the earliest exhibitions of this kind were those which were celebrated by Preuilli, a little before the time of the first Crusade. We hear indeed of combats between knights, which were exhibited at Strasburg, in honour of the reconciliation which took place there, in the middle of the 9th century, between Charles the Bold and his brother Louis; but these were probably nothing more than a kind of *review*, in imitation of those equestrian exercises which were common among the Arabians, and are still in use among the Turks, and various other Tartar nations. As our ancient cavalry was not formed into squadrons, its strength depended on the address of each individual, which could only be

acquired by exercises which probably took place in publick; but this does not amount to a regular publick shew or tournament.

Some time before the intended exhibition of a tournament took place, heralds were dispatched through the country, and into the neighbouring kingdoms, to invite all brave knights and squires to come and contend for prizes, and to merit the affections of their mistresses. If the tournament took place in a town, the mayor and municipal officers were charged with the accommodation of the strangers: if under the walls of a castle, an encampment was formed for their reception. None could be admitted to tourney but such as were without stain or reproach.

The place of combat was a large space surrounded by ropes covered with tapestry, or by double rows of railing, with an interval of about four feet. Within this interval were placed the minstrels, the heralds and kings-at-arms, to regulate the order of combat, and the attendants on the knights, to assist their masters when unhorsed or disabled. The people stood on the outside. An amphitheatre was erected for the kings, queens, ladies, judges of the tournament, and ancient knights.

In general, the arms of the combatants were lances

and swords, whose points and edges were blunted: these were called *courteous arms*. Sometimes indeed sharp weapons were used, but in this case the blows were numbered. In either kind of combat it was forbidden to thrust with the point of the sword, or to strike at the *limbs*, these being seldom perfectly defended.

There were two sorts of tournament. In the one, the combatants were arranged in two opposite lines, as in war, and charged each other with their lances; but a double boarded railing was sometimes extended along the lists from end to end, dividing the whole area into two equal parts. The shock of the horses was by this contrivance prevented, while the riders could nevertheless overthrow each other with their spears, and unhorsed combatants ran much less risque of being trampled to death. The other sort of tournament was perfectly irregular: every combatant attacked his neighbour indiscriminately; and on these occasions it required great attention to the several armorial devices on the shields and surcoats, to judge who had performed the most extraordinary feats, and merited the prize. In this species of tournament the offensive weapons were the sword, the hatchet, and the mace; but not the lance. Each day ended by the

exploits of some champions who undertook to break a certain number of lances in honour of the ladies.

The general superintendant of the tournament, who was called the *knight of honour*, and was invested with the power of terminating all differences, was chosen by the ladies, who presented to him some article of female dress, which he bore on his lance as the badge of his office. At the approach or touch of this sacred badge the most exasperated combatants dropped their weapons, and the conflict and confusion ceased in an instant.

Notwithstanding these precautions, however, accidents of the most fatal kind were not unfrequent. At a tournament given at Nuits in 1240, sixty knights and squires lost their lives, either from the wounds they had received, or from the trampling of the horses, or from suffocation: hence the many excommunications thundered out against tournaments. But the real use of these exercises as a preparation for actual service; the opportunities they afforded to the combatants of displaying their valour, their address, and their magnificence; the increased freedom of intercourse which took place on these occasions between the sexes; and the enthusiasm produced by the smiles of beauty, the applause of royalty, the praises of the

minstrels, and the acclamations of the people, all conspired to drown the censures of religion; and tournaments maintained their ground till the unfortunate death of Henry the IId of France, in 1559, by the lance of Montgomeri.

Page 121, Line 7. *'Poor was the third, and one 'poor squire possess'd.'*

Sovereigns were sometimes knighted in the cradle, but no other persons could receive the order without having previously passed through the rank of esquire: and thence the poorest knight, having the power of conferring the order, was sure of finding some young person of gentle blood, willing to learn the profession of arms under his tuition. The squire followed him in all his expeditions, carried his lance, helmet, and shield, cleaned his armour, took care of his horse, held his stirrup when he mounted, and, though of equal or perhaps superior birth to his master, performed every menial office about his person; and this was not considered as degrading, because the most important lesson in a military life is that of subordination. Upon the same principle the squire sat on a lower seat behind the knights; whatever was his rank he could not eat at the same table with them; if he gave a blow to a knight he was punished by the loss of his hand.

Page 125, Line 13. '*Take this fair steed, a tourney's late-won prize.*'

The poorer knights were frequently enriched by their feats at tournaments. When combatants fought in consequence of a formal challenge, the parties usually subjected themselves to all the laws of war: the horse and arms, and even the person of the vanquished, became the property of his conqueror, and he could only be released by the payment of his ransom. There was even (says M. Le Grand) a species of sword used in tournaments, called *gagne-pain*, from its affording its proprietor his only means of subsistence—

Dont i est gaignepains nommée
Car par li est gagniés li pains.
Pelerinage du monde par Guigneville.

In the fabliau of 'Guillaume au Faucon,' a knight returns from a tournament with fifteen prisoners.

The challenges were drawn up with every legal formality, and (as we find from Wyntown's Chronicle) were called *taillés indentures*, because (says Mr. Macpherson) they were bonds of which duplicates were made, having indentures *taillés* answering to each other. Wyntown has allotted 104 lines to the description of the justing between 'Schyr David de Lyn-'dyssay' and 'the Lord of the Wellis', on London

bridge in 1390, in the presence of Richard II. and his court. Sir David Lindsay had a safe-conduct for the purpose, and came to London with a retinue of 28 persons—

Where he and all his company
Was well arrayed, and daintily,
And all purveyed at device.
There was his purpose to win prize:
With the Lord of the Wellis he
Thought til have done there a *journée* (day's battle);
For both they were by *certane taillé*
Obliged to do there that deed, *sauf faillie* (without fail).

They began by justing with spears, and

The Lindsay there with manful force
Struck quite the Wellis fra his horse
Flatlyngis down upon the green;
There all his saddle *tume* (empty) was seen.

This exploit having occasioned a rumour that Sir David was tied to his horse, and the calumny having reached the king's ears, the good knight was of course much scandalized; and,

Even forth to the king he rode,
And off his horse *deliverly* (readily)

He lap down, that the king clearly
Ken'd well that they falsely lied
That said the Lindsay before was tied.

After this—

Withouten help of any man,
But by his own agile force
Again he lap upon his horse,
All the *lave* (remainder) for to fulfill
That 'longed by the taillé there till.

They then fought on foot, and Sir David was again victorious: the life of his prostrate adversary was at his mercy, and he had the king's permission to use his victory as he thought proper.

But the Lindsay nevertheless,
That in his deed all courteous was,
Said to them that stood him by
'Help, help now for courtesy.'
The Wells he took then by the hand
That on the green was there lyand;
'Rise, rise, Sir knight, and stand on feet.'——
Sir David the Lindsay in this wise
Fulfilled in London his journée
With honour and with honesté;
And to the queen then of England
He gave this Wells then in presánd

Thus quite wonnen all freely.
And she then of that courtesy
Thanked him. . . . . .

Page 130, Line 16, 17. '*This, when anon thou*
'*lead'st thy damsel train*
'*To thy lord's feast in wonted service there.*'

On particular occasions, when a knight gave an entertainment, his wife, together with all the ladies of her suite, used to serve at table. It was their interest to shew every mark of respect to a profession with which their own importance was so nearly connected.

Page 131, Line 17. '*While the good spouse, &c.*' Such an instance of complaisance in a husband may be probably thought excessive; but perhaps it would not surprise us if we were more familiarized with the opinions of the feudal ages on the subject of gallantry. A late traveller tells us, that even now, in Madrid, a married lady of rank cannot easily dispense with a *cortejo*, a male animal, (frequently an ecclesiastick,) who, while he usurps the privileges of a husband, does also, under the ordination of retributive justice, occasion, both to himself and his patroness, all the pangs of a most jealous one, from which the legitimate husband remains totally exempt. (Townsend's Spain, in 1787; vol. 2d.) In Italy, we all know that the same kind of

inmate is usually found in all families of fashion, under the title of a *cavalier servente*, (a *knight-servant*,) who, though not always a *knight*, is in every sense the *servant* of the lady he is appended to. In other countries this humble appellation having ceased to be used for expressing an admirer, its concomitant term, *mistress*, is become so equivocal as to be no longer an object of female ambition: but in the age of chivalry it did really express supreme control and dominion. In the heart of a knight, youthful, brave, amorous, and ignorant, the image of his mistress, however strange it may now appear, was most certainly blended with that of the Deity; and being accustomed to address his devotions to statues, pictures, and visible forms, he might with great simplicity adore his Creator in the fairest of his creatures. These objects of idolatry, it is true, were not always exempt from human weakness, but still the passion they inspired was judged by its tendency; it pledged high-toned valour to protect females from every outrage; and in the present instance the husband might consider himself as even honoured by the general respect and admiration of which his wife was the object. Perhaps the circumstance least analogous to common manners or common feeling, is the conduct of the lady; who, without

the least dislike to her husband, or fondness for any one of her three admirers, proposes to them a test by which she pledges herself to bestow her tenderest affections on a person for whom she feels no preference, and whose life she has previously exposed to almost certain destruction.

NOTES

TO

THE LAY OF NARCISSUS.

THERE is some ground for supposing that this lay was composed about the close of the 12th century. The well-known story in Ovid's Metamorphosis, evidently furnishes the basis of the tale; but the superstructure is so amplified and enriched, as perhaps to give pre-eminence to the *barbarian* rhymer over one of the most celebrated *trouveurs* of the age of Augustus.

Page 151, Line 10. '*But in that deadly bason*
'*lurk'd his doom, &c.*'

Thus too in Chaucer—

The water was so wholesome and so vertuous
Through might of herbes growing it beside;
Not like to the welle where as Narcissus
Islain was through the vengeance of Cupide,
Where *so wonder covertly he did hide*
The grain of death upon each fatal brinke,
That death mote followe who that ever drinke.

NOTES

TO

THE LAY OF ARISTOTLE.

This tale, assigned by M. Le Grand to Henri d'Andeli, is, by Lacombe, in his Dictionnaire du Vieux Langage, attributed to Rutebœuf: it is apparently borrowed from the Arabians. In M. de Cardonne's Melanges de Littérature Orientale, we have the tale of *Le Vizir Sellé et Bridé;* in which the general idea is evidently the same, though the details, of which we cannot judge from a short extract, may possibly be different from our fabliau. It is to be observed, however, that the original Arabian story, in which the principal characters are a sultan, his minister, and an odalisque, would have excited very little interest in Europe; whereas our Trouveur, by attributing the adventure to Aristotle, whose character was regarded with an almost idolatrous veneration, has exhibited the omnipotence of love in the strongest possible colours.

It is to this fabliau, or at least to this anecdote, that Gower refers in his Confessio Amantis, where he says,—

I saw there Aristotle also,
Whom that the queen of Greece also
Hath bridled, that in thilke time
She made him such a syllogesime
That he forgate all his logike.

Montfaucon, in his Antiquité Expliquée, (Tom III. part iii. p. 356.) gives some bas-reliefs which he supposed to be ancient, but which apparently cannot be assigned to a much earlier age than that of the fabliaux; since, of four subjects, one is the representation of Aristotle, with Alexander's mistress on his back, and another of Hippocrates in the basket (see the next fabliau). The classical image of Cupid bestriding a lion, is substantially the same thought.

Page 162, Line 14. '*And to the orchard hasten'd*
'*on her way.*'

We have here, and indeed in almost every line of the fabliaux, a proof how exactly the poets of an ignorant age assign to their actors the manners of their own day. Alexander has his knights and his barons, his tower and his orchard; and he listens to his preceptor as the princes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

overpowered by papal supremacy, listened to an arrogant ecclesiastick.

Page 163, Line 1. '*No wimple did she wear, no 'vail, &c.*'

A wimple was a covering for the neck. It was distinguished from a veil, which covered the head also. Tyrwhitt's Glossary.

Page 163, Line 11. '*Now—behold her!—now—be- 'hold!*

Mr. Way has here given a version of the original song as it stands in the fabliaux, published by Barbasan in 1756. It is as follows:

Or la voi, la voi, la voi!
La fontaine y sort serie,
Or la voi, la voi, m'amie,
El glaiolai desous l'aunoi,
Or la voi, la voi, la belle
Blonde, or la voi.

M. Le Grand tells us, that he did not think this worth copying, and therefore substituted another, *with some slight alterations*, from the MSS. poetry of Eustache Deschamps, a poet of the 14th century:

Enfant j'etois, et jeunette,
Quant à l'escole on me mit,

Mais je n'y ai rien appris,
Fors qu'un seul mot d'amourette;
Et, nuit et jour, le repete
Depuis qu'ai un bel ami.

Of this also Mr. Way has left the following very close translation,—

Young I was, a little one,
When to school they bade me go:
Nothing learnt I there, I trow,
Save this note of love alone:
Since a paramour I've known
Night and day I carol so!

Page 164, Line 14. '*As for a coronal to deck her hair.*'

The word in the original is *capiel*, which expresses either a covering, or an ornament for the head. The ornament used by both sexes on occasions of ceremony, was a band of metal, or diadem; and in times of festivity, a wreath of flowers or chaplet. The diadem used by sovereigns, barons, and knights, was of gold; frequently studded with jewels: and these diadems being added to an ermine or velvet cap, form the different crowns and coronets of the nobility. There is a curious example of this in Barbour's Bruce, (B. 16. v. 419.)

where Douglas kills Sir Thomas of Richmond, whom he does not know, but of whose rank he is assured by the *furred hat* which he wore over his helmet.—

The Richmound borne down there was:
On him arrested the Douglas,
And him reversed, and with a knife
Right in that place reft him the life,
An hat upon his helm he bare
And that took with him Douglas there,
In tokening, for it furred was, &c.

Joinville mentions that at a plenary court held at Saumur, the King of Navarre wore at table a diadem (*chapel*) of pure gold. Those worn by the ladies were usually of silver, and similar ornaments were sometimes bestowed upon the principal minstrels. Chaplets of flowers were worn by brides, and by monks in some religious ceremonies. When Charles VIII. made his entry into Naples, the ladies of that city placed upon his head a chaplet of violets. These wreaths of flowers were so universally used, that several fiefs were held by a quit-rent of roses.

Page 169, Line 5. '*Master vizard bears thee merrily.*'

The whole of this little saucy burst of female exulta-

tion is introduced from the edition of 1756. Le Grand gives only the first line. The original is as follows:—

Ainsi va qui amors maine!
Pucelle plus blanche que laine,
Mestre musars me soustient!
Ainsi va qui amors maine
Et ainsi qui les maintient.

Page 170, Line 3. '*Love conquers all, and love shall conquer still.*'

There may be a great deal of truth in these concluding lines; but M. Le Grand very shrewdly observes, that they appear at first sight to form a very singular moral to a tale which professes to be no less instructive than pleasant; and which, after having exhibited the most striking example of inordinate passion, might naturally be expected to conclude with some sage exhortations to caution and vigilance. He therefore reverts, at some length, to his former explanations of the passion of love, as it was understood in the ages of chivalry, for the purpose of excusing his friends the Trouveurs for holding out, as 'a grave example,' what has much the appearance of a very ludicrous incident. But it may be doubted, whether the metaphysical and mystical theories of an ignorant age are

worth the trouble of unraveling. If Gower had been censured for writing, at a very advanced period of life, his long, and learned, and elaborate, but whining poem about love, he would probably have answered, that this passion, in his acceptation of it, was the foundation of every virtue: but many young ladies of that time might have assured him, from their own experience, that some of our virtues, those for instance of patience, self-denial, and chastity, are very apt to totter when placed on such a foundation; and it would have required a much longer poem than the Confessio Amantis to prove that they were mistaken.

NOTES

TO

HIPPOCRATES.

In the former part of the fabliau here extracted by M. Le Grand, the poet had stated that Hippocrates, before he had attained that high reputation which has since immortalized his memory, visited Rome during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. He found, on his arrival, the whole city in mourning for the Emperor's nephew, who was just dead. On being conducted to the palace, he poured into the mouth of the deceased, the juice of certain plants, and thus restored him to life. Augustus, in grateful acknowledgment, caused two statues to be made; the one representing his nephew, the other the physician, and placed these upon one of the gates of the city, with an inscription, announcing that Hippocrates, by his divine knowledge, had recovered the prince from the dead.

This fabliau of Hippocrates, however absurdly amplified, has some shadow of truth for its foundation. A physician, named Musa, recovered Augus-

tus from a fit of sickness, and a statue was, in consequence, erected to him by the side of the statue of Esculapius.

Page 174, Line 4. '*With a strong tower that rear'd*
'*its head to heaven.*'

As the whole scheme of society in the middle ages was founded on military subordination, and the place of every individual in this scale was distinguished, as far as possible, by some visible mark, which was kept sacred from the inferior orders, so the architecture of every castle indicated in a certain degree the rank of its possessor; and a royal habitation was pointed out, either by the number, or loftiness of its towers. This was a distinction of which the kings of France were particularly jealous. Philippe Augustus, in 1206, refused his permission to the Countess of Troyes to raise any towers for the defence of her castle, at a time when she was menaced with an immediate siege: and in general the policy, no less than the pride, of a monarch was interested in proscribing these fortifications which tended to render their vassals independent. But such ornaments to the royal palaces were multiplied to a most ridiculous excess. The Louvre had fifteen towers, and the *Palais* (a palace afterwards appropriated to the courts of

justice) still retains a considerable number, after having lost at least twelve by fires or other accidents. In these towers were lodged the several great officers of the crown; the central, or great tower, which was accompanied by a smaller one called the *donjon*, contained the royal apartments; and in these, which were very spacious, the king received the homage of his subjects. Nearly all the great fiefs of the crown were held of the great tower of the Louvre, or of that of the Chatelet; and this practice continued even after the Louvre was rebuilt in its present form. As soon as the kings began to relax from the rigour with which they had prohibited these buildings, the fashion of raising towers became quite epidemical, and they were considered as a necessary appendage, not only to every noble mansion, but to every convent. The mode was not less universal in Italy; and the town of Pisa is said to have contained no less than 10,000. Froissart, in his description of the various machines exhibited at the Palais, at the marriage of Isabeau de Baviere, in 1389, mentions a wooden castle, having a tower at each of its angles, to represent the city of Troy; and a central tower of smaller dimensions, which formed the palace of Priam.

NOTE

TO

THE PRIEST WHO ATE MULBERRIES.

PAGE 189, Line 15. '*His lady leman swoon'd.*' These female companions of the priesthood frequently occur in the fabliaux; and the pen of the historian agrees with that of the poet, in representing the manners of the clergy, during the middle ages, as disorderly and licentious. In the present case, however, it is not impossible that the lady might have been really *wife* to the priest. A council held at Rheims had indeed excommunicated all ecclesiasticks who were married, prohibited the faithful from attending them to hear mass, declared their children bastards, and their benefices vacant: yet the Abbé de Longuerue remarks, that in the year 1204 many of the bishops of Normandy were married men.

NOTE

TO

THE LAND OF COCAIGNE.

Etymologists seem to be agreed in deriving this word from the Latin, coquina; and the original description of this imaginary country was perhaps nothing more than an improvement of the ancient ideas concerning the golden age, and a substitution of various culinary delicacies for the 'acorns,' which, however grateful to the first sober inhabitants of the earth, did not suit the taste of our Norman ancestors. To this simple sketch were afterwards added various ornaments, apparently borrowed from the Arabians, such as groves of spices, springs of milk and honey, wine, and young women, beautiful and kind as Houris, &c. &c. The tree and fountain of life, the fruit and waters of which have the power of conferring immortality, are also, says M. Le Grand, an Eastern fiction; but he adds, that the European poets have considerably improved the idea, by adding eternity of youth to the privilege of endless existence.

NOTES

TO

THE NORMAN BACHELOR.

PAGE 201, Line 1. '*When Acre yielded to the hostile* '*host.*'

Philip Augustus, and Richard Cœur-de-Lion, took Acre in 1191. The Sultan Mélech-séraf, recovered it from the Christians a hundred years afterwards. These are the only two epochs which will accord with the date of the fabliaux; and it will be difficult to find in either of them a Henry Count of Champagne, and King of Normandy.

Page 201, Line 8. '*On the poor pittance of a* '*farthing cake.*'

The translator has made use of the English word *farthing*, in place of *maille* and *denier*, the coins specified in the original; which, from being less familiar terms, would perhaps have borne an air of stiffness in a comick tale.

Page 203, Line 14. *'Hurl'd back, and crush'd his 'wine-pots with his fall.'*

Our modern bottles were unknown in the 12th and 13th centuries. Wine was either drawn for use directly from the cask, or otherwise was kept in skins, or in pots or jars. It was some of these which the vintner is represented as crushing by falling over them.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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