

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Le Châtelain de Coucy**

**- poems -**

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### **Le Châtelain de Coucy (1170 - 1203)**

French trouvire of the 12th century. He is probably the Guy de Couci who was castellan of the castle of that name from 1186 to 1203. Some twenty-six songs are attributed to him, and about fifteen or sixteen are undoubtedly authentic. They are modelled very closely on Provençal originals, but are saved from the category of mere imitations by a grace and simplicity peculiar to the author. The legend of the love of the Chhtelain de Coucy and the Lady of Fayel, in which there figures a jealous husband who makes his wife eat the heart of her lover, has no historical basis, and dates from a late 13th century romance by Jakemon Sakesep. It is worth noting that the story, which seems to be Breton in origin, has been also told of a Provençal troubadour, Guilhem de Cabestaing, and of the minnesinger Reinmar von Brennenberg. Pierre de Belloy, who wrote some account of the family of Couci, made the story the subject of his tragedy Gabrielle de Vergy.

## Chanson d'Amour

I thought to live without true love  
All my life through to be at peace,  
But this heart, once again, would prove  
Its folly from which I had won free.  
Greater the folly is in me  
Than child crying foolishly  
To possess the lovely star  
He sees shining clear and far.

However much I may despair  
Love has well rewarded me  
For serving him with all the care  
I possess, without treachery,  
Making Folly's King of me.  
Let all beware his deceit  
Who grants such a gift, we see,  
To those who serve loyally.

If I show anger it's no wonder  
To one who wounds me so sore  
God! If I had him in my power  
For just one day and no more:  
Then he'd pay for his folly  
As God my witness be!  
He'd pay with his death, unless  
He vanquished my lady blessed.

Ay! Noble heart, that is so wise,  
Don't scorn all my foolishness.  
I know I've not the slightest right  
To love you, just a lover's right:  
But folly drives us recklessly  
Like a storm-tossed ship at sea,  
That's blown where the wind will blow,  
Until all's wrecked and brought low.

My lady who lacks never a grace,  
Generous, kind, show me mercy:  
Since there's no evil in that face  
But all good shines there clearly,  
You know from whence this folly  
That takes my life comes to me.  
To whom can I cry again,  
Except to you, in pain?

Song, pay her your respects, she  
Is my sweet folly, and please  
Beg her for God and honour  
Never to prove a traitor.

Le Châtelain de Coucy

## **The First Approach Of The Sweet Spring**

The first approach of the sweet spring  
Returning here once more,--  
The memory of the love that holds  
In my fond heart such power,--  
The thrush again his song assaying,--  
The little rills o'er pebbles playing,  
And sparkling as they fall,--  
The memory recall  
Of her on whom my heart's desire  
Is, shall be, fixed till I expire.

With every season fresh and new  
That love is more inspiring:  
Her eyes, her face, all bright with joy,--  
Her coming, her retiring,  
Her faithful words, her winning ways,--  
That sweet look, kindling up the blaze,  
Of love, so gently still,  
To wound, but not to kill,--  
So that when most I weep and sigh,  
So much the higher springs my joy.

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