

Classic Poetry Series

Le Châtelain de Coucy
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

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Le Châtelain de Coucy(1170 - 1203)

French trouvère of the 12th century. He is probably the Guy de Coucy 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 Châtelain 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 Coucy, 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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