

# The Project Gutenberg eBook of The cõforte of louers

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Author: Stephen Hawes

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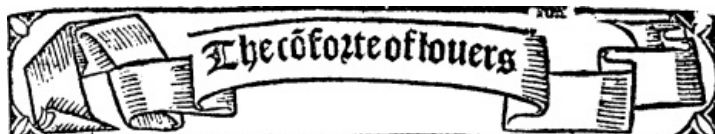
\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CÕFORTE OF LOUERS \*\*\*

This e-text includes characters that will only display in UTF-8 (Unicode) file encoding:

ãëïöÿ (vowel with "tilde" or overline for following m/n)

If any of these characters do not display properly—in particular, if the diacritic does not appear directly above the letter—or if the apostrophes and quotation marks in this paragraph appear as garbage, you may have an incompatible browser or unavailable fonts. First, make sure that the browser's "character set" or "file encoding" is set to Unicode (UTF-8). You may also need to change your browser's default font.

Spelling and punctuation are unchanged; possible errors are noted with mouse-hover popups. Reconstructions are shown in *italics*. Folio numbers in iii-vi were added by the transcriber. Details about abbreviations and reconstructions are given at the [end of the text](#).



The comferte of louers made and compyled by Steuen Hawes somtyme grome of the honourable chambre of our late souerayne lorde kynge Henry y<sup>e</sup> seuenth (whose soule god pardon). In the seconde yere of the reygne of our most naturall souerayne lorde kÿge Henry the eyght.





He gentyll poetes / vnder cloudy fygures  
Do touche a trowth / and cloke it subtylly  
Harde is to cōstrue poetycall scryptures  
They are so fayned / & made sētēcyously  
For som do wryte of loue by fables pryuely  
Some do endyte / vpon good moralyte

Of chyualrous actes / done in antyquyte

Whose fables and storyes ben pastymes pleasaunt  
To lordes and ladyes / as is theyr lykyng  
Dyuers to moralyte / ben oft attendaunt  
And many delyte to rede of louyng  
Youth loueth aduerture / pleasure and lykyng  
Aege foloweth polycy / sadnesse and prudence  
Thus they do dyffre / eche in experyence

I lytell or nought / experte in this scyence  
Compyle suche bokes / to deuoyde ydlenes  
Besechyng the reders / with all my delygence  
Where as I offende / for to correct doubtles  
Submyttinge me to theyr grete gentylnes  
As none hystoryagraffe / nor poete laureate  
But gladly wolde folowe / the makynge of Lydgate

Fyrst noble Gower / moralytees dyde endyte  
And after hym Cauncers / grete bokes delectable  
Lyke a good phylozophre / meruaylously dyde wryte  
After them Lydgate / the monke commendable  
Made many wonderfull bokes moche profytable  
But syth the are deed / & theyr bodyes layde in chest  
I pray to god to gyue theyr soules good rest

¶ Finis prohemii.

Whan fayre was phebus / w<sup>t</sup> his bemes bryght  
Amyddes of gemyny / aloft the fyrmament  
Without blacke cloudes / castyng his pured lyght  
With sorowe opprest / and grete incombremment  
Remembryng well / my lady excellent  
Saynge o fortune helpe me to preuayle  
For thou knowest all my paynfull trauayle

A.ii.

I went than musyng / in a medowe grene  
Myselfe alone / amonge the floures in dede  
With god aboue / the futertens is sene  
To god I sayd / thou mayst my mater spede  
And me rewarde / accordyng to my mede  
Thou knowest the trouthe / I am to the true  
Whan that thou lyst / thou mayst them all subdue

Who dyde preserue the yonge edyppus  
Whiche sholde haue be slayne by calculacyon  
To deuoyde grete thynges / the story sheweth vs  
That were to come / by true reuelacyon  
Takyng after theyr hole operacyon  
In this edyppus / accordyng to affecte  
Theyr cursed calkyng / holly to abiecte

Who dyde preserue / Ionas and moyses  
Who dyde preserue yet many other mo  
As the byble maketh mencyon doubles  
Who dyde kepe Charles frome his euyll fo  
Who was he / that euer coude do so  
But god alone / than in lyke wyse maye he  
Kepe me full sure / frome all inyquyte

Thus as I called to my remembraunce  
Suche trewe examples / I tenderly dyde wepe  
Remembryng well / goddes hyghe ordynaūce  
Syghyng full oft / with inwarde teres depe  
Tyll at the last / I fell in to a slepe  
And in this slepe / me thought I dyde repayre  
My selfe alone / in to a garden fayre

This goodly gardyn / I dyde well beholde  
Where I sawe a place / ryght gaye and glorious  
With golden turrets / paynted many afolde  
Lyke a place of pleasure moste solacyous

The wyndowes glased / with crystall precyous  
The golden fanes / with wynde and melody  
By dulcet sounde / and meruaylous armony

The knottes flagraunt / with aromatyke odoure  
With goodly sprynges / of meruaylous mountaynes  
I dyde than tast / the redolent lycoure  
Moost clere and swete / of the goodly vaynes  
Whiche dyde me ease / somewhat of my paynes  
Tyll to me came / a lady of goodly age  
Apareyled sadly / and demure of vysage

To me she sayd / me thynke ye are not well  
ye haue caught colde / and do lyue in care  
Tell me your mynde / now shortly euerydele  
To layne the trouthe / I charge you to beware  
I shall for you / a remedy prepare  
Dyspeyre you not / for no thyng that is past  
Tell me your mynde / and be nought agast

Alas madame / vnto her than I sayd  
It is no wonder / of myne inwarde payne  
yf that my herte be meruayllously dysmayde  
My trouthe and loue / therof is cause certayne  
Dyuers yeres ago / I dyde in mynde retayne  
A lady yonge / a lady fayre of syght  
Good // wyse / and goodly / an holsome sterre of lyght

I durst not speke vnto her of my loue  
Yet vnder coloure I dyuers bokes dyde make  
Full pryuely / to come to my aboute  
Thus many nyghtes / I watched for her sake  
To her and to hers / my trouthe well to take  
Without ony spotte / of ony maner yll  
God knoweth all myn herte / my mynde & my wyll

The hygh dame nature / by her grete myght & power  
Man / beest / and foule / in euery degre  
Fro whens they came at euery maner houre  
Dooth trye the trouthe / without duplycyte  
For euery thyng must shewe the properte  
Gentyll vngentyll / dame nature so well tryet  
That all persones it openly espyeth

The lorde and knyght / delyteth for to here  
Cronycles and storyes / of noble chyualry  
The gentyll man gentylnes / for his passe tyme dere  
The man of lawe / to here lawe truely  
The yeman delyteth to talke of yomanry  
The ploman his londe for to ere and sowe  
Thus nature werketh / in hye degre and lowe

For yf there were one of the gentyll blode  
Conuayde to yomanry for nourysshement  
Dyscrecyon comen he sholde chaunge his mode  
Though he knewe not / his parentes verament  
Yet nature wolde werke / so by entyndment  
That he sholde folowe / the condycyons doubtles  
Of his true blode / by outwarde gentylnes

In all this worlde / ben but thynges twayne  
As loue and hate / the trouthe for to tell  
And yf I sholde hate my lady certayne  
Than worthy I were / to dye of deth cruell  
Seynge all ladyes / that she doth excell  
In beaute / grace / prudence and mekenes  
What man on lyue / can more in one expres

yf she with me sholde take dyspleasure  
Whiche loueth her by honoures desyre  
What sholde she do / with suceh a creature  
That hateth her / by inwarde fraude and yre  
I yet a louer / do not so atyre  
My fayth and hope / I put in her grace  
Releace to graunt me / by good tyme and space

Thretened with sorowe / of may paynes grete  
Thre yeres ago my ryght hande I dyde bynde

A.iii.

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Fro my browes for fere / y<sup>e</sup> dropes doune dyde sweet  
God knoweth all it was nothyng my mynde  
Vnto no persone / I durst my her to vntwynde  
yet the trouthe knowyng / the good gretest P  
Maye me release / of all my / p / p / p / thre

A.iii.

Now ryght fayre lady / so sadde and demure  
My mynde ye knowe / in euery maner thyng  
I trust for trouthe / ye wyll not me dyscure  
Sythes I haue shewed you without lesyng  
At your request / the cause of my mournyng  
Whiche abyde in sorowe / in my remembraunce  
Without good conforte / saufe of esperauce

Fayre sone sayd she / sythens I knowe your thought  
your worde and dede / and here to be one  
Dyspayre you not / for it auayleth nought  
Ioye cometh after / whan the payne is gone  
Conforte yourselfe / and muse not so alone  
Doubt ye no thyng / but god wyll so agre  
That at the last / ye shall your lady se

Be alwaye meke / let wysdome be your guyde  
Aduenture for honoure / and put your selfe in preace  
Clymbe not to fast / lest sodenly ye slyde  
Lete god werke styl / he wyll your mynde encrece  
Begynne no warre / be gladde to kepe the peace  
Prepence no thyng / agaynst the honoure  
Of ony lady / by fraudulent faouore

Alas madame / vnto her than sayd I  
About .xx. woulues / dyde me touse and rent  
Not longe agone / delyng moost shamefully  
That by theyr tuggyng / my lyfe was nere spent  
I dyde perceyue / somewhat of theyr entente  
As the trouthe is knowen / vnto god aboute  
My ladyes fader they dyde lytell loue

Seyng theyr falshode / and theyr subtylte  
For fere of deth / where as I loued best  
I dyde dysprayse / to knowe theyr cruelte  
Somwhat to wysdome / accordyng to behest  
Though that my body had but lytell rest  
My herte was trewe vnto my ladyes blood  
For all theyr dedes I thought no thyng but good

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Some had wende the hous for to swepe  
Nought was theyr besom / I holde it set on fyre  
The inwarde wo in to my herte dyde crepe  
To god aboute / I made my hole desyre  
Sayng o good lorde of heuenly empyre  
Let the mount with all braunches swete  
Entyerly growe / god gyue vs grace to mete

Soma had wened for to haue made an ende  
Of my bokes / before he hadde begynnyng  
But all vayne they dyde so comprehend  
Whan they of them lacke vnderstandyng  
Vaynfull was & is theyr mysse contryuyng  
Who lyst the trouthe of them for to enfuse  
For the reed and whyte they wryte full true

Well sayd this lady I haue perceueraunce  
Of our bokes / whiche that ye endyte  
So as ye saye is all the cyrcumstaunce  
Vnto the hyghe pleasure of the reed and the whyte  
Which hath your trouthe / and wyll you acqyete  
Doubte ye no thyng / but at the last ye maye  
Of your true mynde yet fynde a Ioyfull daye

A.v.

Forsothe I sayd / dysdayne and straungenesse  
I fere them sore / and fals reporte  
I wolde they were / in warde all doutles  
Lyke as I was / without conforte  
Than wolde I thynke / my lady wolde resorte  
Vnto dame mercy / my payne to consyder  
God knoweth all / I wolde we were togyder

Though in meane season / of grene grasse I fede  
It wolde not greue me / yf she knewe my heuynesse  
My trauayle is grete / I praye god be my spede  
To resyste the myght / of myn enmyes subtylnesse  
Whiche awayte to take / me by theyr doublenesse  
My wysdome is lytel / yet god may graunt me grace  
Them to defende / in euery maner of cace

Lerne this she sayd / yf that you can by wytte  
Of foes make frendes / they wyll be to you sure  
yf that theyr frendshyp / be vnto you knytte  
It is oft stedfast / and wyll longe endure  
yf alwaye malyce / they wyll put in vre  
No doubtte it is / than god so hyght and stronge  
Ful meruaylously / wyl soone reuenge theyr wronge

And now she sayd come on your waye with me  
Unto a goodly toure whiche is solacyous  
Beholde it yonder / full of felycyte  
Quadrant it was / me thought full meruaylous  
With golden turrets / gaye and gloryous  
Gargayled with greyhoüdes / and with many Lyons  
Made of fyne golde / with dyuers sondry dragons

The wyndowes byrall / without resplendysshaunt  
The fayre yuery / coloured with grene  
And all aboute there was dependaunt  
Grete gargayles of golde / full meruaylously besene  
Neuer was made / a fayrer place I wene  
The ryght excellent lady toke her intresse  
Ryght so dyde I / by meruaylous swetnesse

Whan we came in / I dyde aboute beholde  
The goodly temple / with pynacles vp sette  
Wherin were ymages / of kynges all of golde  
With dyuers scryptures / without ony lette  
Aloft the roofe / were emeraudes full grette  
Set in fyne golde / with amyable rudyes  
Endented with dyamondes / and mayn turkyes

The wyndowes hystoried / with many noble kynges  
The pyllers Iasper / dyuersed with asure  
By pendaunt penacles / of many noble rynges  
The pauement calcedony / beynge fayre and sure  
The aras golde / with the story pure  
Of the syche of thebes / with actes auenturous  
Of ryght noble knyghtes / hardy and chyualrous

Than sayd this lady / I must now go hence  
Passe ye tyme here / accordyng to your lykyng  
It maye fortune / your lady of excellence  
Wyll passe her tyme here / soone by walkyng  
Than maye she se / your dolefull mournyng  
And fare ye well / I maye no lenger tary  
Marke well my lesson / and from it do not vary

Whan she was gone / the temple all alonge  
I went my selfe / with syghtes grete and feruent  
Alas I sayd / with inwarde paynes stronge  
My herte doth blede / now all to torne and rent  
For lacke of conforte / my herte is almost spent  
O meruelo<sup>us</sup> fortune / which hast i loue me brought  
Where is my conforte / that I so longe haue sought

O wonderfull loue / whiche fell vnto my lotte  
O loue ryght clene / without ony thought vntrue  
Syth thy fyrst louyng / not blemysed with spotte  
But euermore / the falseshede to extue  
O dolorous payne / whiche doste renue  
O pyteous herte / where is the helthe and boote  
Of thy lady / that perst the at the roote

What thyng is loue / that causeth suche turment  
From whens cometh it / me thynke it is good questyõ  
Yf it be nature / from nature it is sent  
Loue maye come of kynde by true affeccyon  
Loue maye appetyte / by naturall eleccyon  
Than must loue nedes be / I perceyue it in mynde

A thyng fyrst gyuen / by the god of kynde

Alas o nature / why mayst not thou truely  
Cause my lady loue / as thou hast me constrayned  
Hath she power to domyne the vtterly  
Why mayst not thou / cause her *be* somewhat payned  
With natures moeuyng / for *loue is* not fayned  
Alas for sorowe / why madest thou her so fayre  
Without to loue / that she lyst soone repayre

Two thynges me conforte / euer in pryncypall  
The fyrst be bokes / made in antyquyte  
By Gower and Chaucers / poetes rethorycall  
And Lydgate eke / by good auctoryte  
Makyng mencyon / of the felycyte  
Of my lady and me / by dame fortunes chaunce  
To mete togyders / by wonderfull ordynaunce

The seconde is / where fortune dooth me bryng  
In many placys / I se by prophecy  
As in the storyes / of the olde buyldyng  
Letters for my lady / depeynted wonderly  
And letters for me / besyde her meruayllously  
Agreyng well / vnto my bokes all  
In dyuers placys / I se it in generall

O loue moost dere / o loue nere to my harte  
O gentyll floure / I wolde you knewe my wo  
Now that your beaute / perst me with the darte  
With your vertue / and your mekenes also  
Sythens ye so dyde / it is ryght longe ago  
My herte doth se you / it is for you bebledde  
Myne eyen with teeres / ben often made full redde

Where are ye now / the floure of Ioye and grace  
Whiche myght me conforte / in this inwarde sorowe  
Myne excellent lady / it is a ryght pyteous case  
Good be my guyde / and saynt George vnto borowe  
O clere Aurora / the sterre of the morowe  
Whiche many yeres / with thy bemes mery  
Hath me awaked / to se thyne emyspery

Thus as I mourned / I sawe than appere  
Thre goodly myrours dependaunt on the wall  
Set in fyne golde bordred with stones clere  
The glasses pure / they were of crystall  
Made longe ago to be memoryall  
And vnder the fyrst glasse ryght fayre wryten was  
Beholde thy selfe / and thy fautes or thou passe

By a sylken threde / small as ony heere  
Ouer I sawe hange / a swerde full ponderous  
Without a scauberde / full sharpe for to fere  
The poynt downwarde / ryght harde and asperous  
All this I sawe / with hert full dolorous  
Yet at auenture / to se the mystery  
In the myroure / I loked than full sodenly

In this glasse I sawe / how I had ledde my lyfe  
Sythens the tyme of my dyscrecyon  
As vnto wyldnesse / alwaye affyrmatyfe  
Folowyng the pleasure / of wylfull amonycyon  
Not vnto vertue hauyng intencyon  
Ihesu sayd I / thou hast me well preserued  
From this swerdes fall / whiche I haue oft deserued

O ye estates / aloft on fortunes whele  
Remembre this swerde / whiche ouer you dependeth  
Beware the fall / before that ye it fele  
Se your one euyll / se what vengeaunce ensueth  
Correcte none other / whan that your fautes renueth  
Calke not not goddes power / bryef not y<sup>e</sup> tens future  
Beholde this glasse / se how he may endure

Many one *weneth* / *the future tens to brefe*  
By calculacyon goddes power to withstande  
Bathyng the swerdes / in blode by myschefe  
Tyll at the last as I do vnderstande

||

B.i.

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This swerde doth fal by the myght of goddes hande  
Vpon then all / whiche wolde his power abate  
Then they repent but than it is to late

This goodly myrour / I ryght well behelde  
Remembrynge well / my dedes done in tymes past  
I toke forwytt / than for to be my shelde  
By grace well armed / not to be agast  
Thus as I stode / I dyde se at the last  
The seconde myrour / as bryght as phebus  
Set rounde about / with stones precyous

Ouer whiche dyde hāge / a floure of golde ryght fyne  
Wherin was set / an emeraude full bryght  
Ryght large and grete / whiche wōderfull dyde shyne  
That me thought it was / grete conforte to my syght  
Bordred with dyamondes / castyge a meruaylo<sup>us</sup> lyght  
This floure dyde hange / by a ryght subtyll gynne  
With a chayne of yron / and many a pryue pynne

Besyde whiche there was / a table of golde  
With a goodly scrypture / enameled of grene  
The sentence wherof / I dyde well beholde  
The whiche sayd thus / it is openly sene  
That many a one / full pryuely dooth wene  
To blynde an other / by crafte and subtylnes  
That ofte blyndeth hym / for all his doublenes

In this myrour whiche is here besyde  
Thou shalt well lerne / they selfe for to knowe  
Passe forth no ferder / but loke and abyde  
Se what shall come / lest that thou ouer throwe  
A sodayne rysynge dooth oft fall alowe  
Without the grounde / be ryghe sure and perfyte  
Beholde well this glasse / & take thy respyte

Whan thou hast so done / to this floure resorte  
Laboure to gete it / from this harde yren chayne  
Unto the gynnes / vnto thy grete conforte  
Yf that thou canst / and take it for thy payne  
To be they helpe / in thy Iournaye certayne  
Lo here the vertues vnder wryten be  
Of this ryall floure in euery degre

This ryche emeraude / who so dooth it bere  
From his fyrst werynge / his syght shal not mynysshe  
Payne of the heed he nedeth not to fere  
By dynt of swerde / he shall neuer perysshe  
Ne no thynge begyn / but he shall well fynysse  
Yf it be ryghtfull aftyr a true entent  
Without resystence of grete impedymnt

Of all nygromancy / and fals enchaument  
Agaynst hym wrought / he shall knowe the effecte  
They can not blynde hym by cursed sentement  
But he theyr werkes may ryght soone abiecte  
No maner poyson he nedeth to sussepecte  
Neyther in mete not yet in ale ne wyne  
Yf it beset well besyde a serpentyne

Yf he vntrue be vnto his gentyll lady  
It wyll breke asondre / or crase than doubtlesse  
It kepeth close / neuet the auoutry  
This gentyll emeraude / this stone of rychesse  
Hath many mo vertues / whiche I do not expresse  
As saynt Iohan euangelyst doeth shewe openly  
Who of his makynge lyst se the lapydary

When I had aduerted / in my remembraunce  
All the maters / vnto the glasse I wente  
Beholdynge it / by a longe cyrcumstaunce  
Where as I dyde perceyue well verament  
How preyu malyce / his messengers had sent  
With subtyll engynes / to lye in a wayte  
Yf that they coude take me with a bayte

I sawe there trappes / I sawe theyr gynnes all  
I thanked god than / the swete holy goost

Whiche brought me hyder so well in specyall  
Without whiche myroure / I had been but loost  
In god aboue / the lorde of myghtes moost  
I put my trust / for to withstande theyr euyll  
Whiche dayly wrought / by the myght of the deuyll

I sawe theyr maysters blacke and tydyous  
Made by the craft of many a nacyon  
For to dystroye me / with strokes peryllous  
To lette my Iournaye / as I make relacyon  
Peryllous was the waye / and the cytuacyon  
Full gladde was I of the vertu of this glasse  
Whiche shewed me / what daungers I sholde passe

O all ye estates / of the hygh renowne  
Beware these gynnes / beware theyr subtylte  
The deuyll is grete / *and redy* to cast downe  
By calculacyon / of the *cursed* cruelte  
Of the subtyll beestes / full of inyquyte  
In the olde tyme what snares were there sette  
By fals calkyng / to dystroye lordes grete

Than after this to the yron gynne  
I wente anone my wyte for to proue  
By lytell and lytell / to vndo euery pynne  
Thus in and out / I dyde the chayne ofte moue  
Yet coude I not come / vnto myne aboue  
Tyll at the last / I dyde the crafte espy  
Vndoynge the pynnes / & chayne full meruaylously

Full gladde was I than / whan I had this floure  
I kyst it oft / I behelde the coloure grene  
It swaged ryght well / myn inwarde doloure  
Myn eyes confortd / with the bryghtnes I wene  
This ryall floure / this emeraude to shene  
Whan I had gotten it by my prudence  
Ryght gladde I was / of fortunes premynence

O fortune sayd I / thou art ryght fauorable  
For many a one / hath ben by symylytude  
To wynne this floure / full gretely tendable  
But they the subtylnes / myght nothyng exclude  
Sythnen by wysdome / I dyde this fraude conclude  
This floure / I sette nere my harte  
For perfyte loue / of my fayre ladyes darte

So this accomplysshed / than incontynent  
To the thyerde myroure I went dyrectly  
Beholdynge aboute by good auysement  
Seynge an ymage made full wonderly  
Of the holy goost with flambe ardauntly  
Vnder whiche I sawe with letters fayre and pure  
In golde well grauen this meruaylous scrypture

Frome the fader and the sone my power procedynge  
And of my selfe I god do ryght ofte inspyre  
Dyuers creatures with spyrytuall knowynge  
Inuysyble by dyuine flambyng fyre  
The eyes I entre not it is not my desyre  
& am not coloured of the terrestyall grounde  
Nor entre the eres for I do not sounde

Nor by the nose for I am not myxte  
With any maner of the ayry influence  
Nor by the mouthe for I am not fyxte  
For to be swalowed by erthly experyence  
Nor yet by felyng or touchynge exystence  
My power dyuine can not be palpable  
For I myselfe am no thyng manyable

Yet vusyble I may be by good apparaunce  
As in the lykenesse of a doue vnto chryste Ihesu  
At his baptyisme I dyde it with good countenaunce  
To shewe our godhed to be hygh and true  
And at his transfiguracyon our power to ensue  
In a fayre cloude with clere rayes radyaunt  
Ouer hym that I was well apparaunt

B.iii.

||

B.iiii.



Also truly yet at the feast of pentecoste  
To the sones moder and the apostelles all  
In tonges of fyre as god of myghtes moost  
I dyde appere shewynge my power spyrytuall  
Enflambynge theyr hertes by vertues supernall  
Whiche after that by languages well  
In euery regyon coude pronounce the gospell

And where I lyst by power dyuine  
I do enspyre oft causynge grete prophecy  
Whiche is mysconstrued whan some do enclyne  
Thynkyng by theyr wytte to perceyue it lyghtly  
Or elles calke with deuylls the trouth to sertyfy  
Whiche contrary be to all true saynge  
For deuylls be subtyll and alwaye lyenge

Whan I had aduerted with my dyligence  
All the scrypture I sawe me besyde  
Hãge a fayre swerde & shelde of meruailous excellẽce  
Whiche to beholde I dyde than abyde  
To blase the armes I dyde well prouyde  
The felde was syluer / and in it a medowe grene  
With an olyue tre full meruaylously besene

Two lyons of asure vpon euery syde  
Couchande were truly besyde this olyue tree  
A hande of stele wherin was wryten pryde  
Dyde holde this ryall swerde in certaynte  
A scrypture there was whiche sayd by subtylte  
Of a grete lady hondred yeres ago  
In the hande of stele this swerde was closed so

No maner persone / mayes *touché* this swerde  
But one persone / chosen by *god* in dede  
Of this ladyes kynred / *not* to be aferde  
To *touché* this hande / his mater for to spede  
And to vndo it / and take it for his mede  
But yf that he / be not of the lygnage  
The hand wyll sle hym / after olde vsage

This ryall swerde / that called is preprudence  
Who can it gette / it hath these vertues thre  
Fyrst to wynne ryght / without longe resystence  
Secondly encreaseth / all trouth and amyte  
Thyrddy of the berer through duplycyte  
Be pryuely fals / to the ordre of chyualry  
The swerdes crosse wyll crase / and shewe it openly

This shelde also / who so dooth it bere  
Whiche of olde tyme / was called *perceuraunce*  
Hath thre vertues / fyrst he nedeth not fere  
Ony grete blodeshede / by wronge incombraunce  
Secondly / it wolde make good apparaunce  
By hete vnto hym / to gyue hym warnynge  
To be redy / agayst his enmyes comynge

The thyrde is this / yf this calenge be ryghtfull  
Neuer no swerde / shall through his harneys perce  
Nor make hym bloody / with woundes ruffull  
For he there strength / may ryghtfully reuerce  
Yet moreouer / as I do well reherce  
This ryall shelde / in what place it be borne  
Shall soone be wonne / and shall not be forlorne

These thynges sene / to the thyrde myroure clere  
I went anone / and in it loked ryght ofte  
Where in my syght / dyde wonderly appere  
The fyrmament / with the sonne all alofte  
The wynde not grete / but blowynge fayre and softe  
And besyde the sonne / I sawe a meruaylous sterre  
With beames twayne / the whiche were cast aferre

The one turnynge towarde the sterre agayne  
The other stretched ryght towarde Phebus  
To beholde this sterre / I was somewhat fayne  
But than I mused with herte full dolorous  
Whyder it sygnifyed thynges good or peryllous  
Thus longe I studyed / tyll at the last I thought

What it sholde meane / as in my herte I sought

This sterre it sygnyfyeth the resynge of a knyght  
The bowynge beame agayne so tournynge  
Betokened rattonnes of them whiche by myght  
Wolde hym resyst by theyr wronge resystynge  
The beame towarde Phebus clerely shynynge  
Betokened many meruaylous fyres grete  
On them to lyght that wolde his purpose lete

In the fyre clerest of euery element  
God hath appered vnto many a one  
Inspyrynge them / with grete wytte refulgent  
Who lyst to rede many dayes agone  
Many one wryteth trouthe / yet cōforte hath he none  
Wherfore I fere me / lyke a swarme of bees  
Wylde fyre wyll lyght amonge a thousande pees

¶ Sepe expugnauerunt me a iuuentute mea: et enim non potuerunt michi.

As the cantycles maketh good mencyon  
They haue oft expugned me / syth my yonge age  
Yet coude they haue me / in theyr domynyon  
Though many a one / vnhappely do rage  
They shall haue sorowe that shytted me in a cage  
In a grete dyspyte of the holy goost  
He maye them brenne / theyr calkyng is but loost

¶ Supra dorsum meū fabricauerūt peccatores: prolongauerūt iniquitatē suā.

Vpon my backe synners hath fabrysed  
They haue prolonged theyr grete inyquyte  
From daye to daye it is not my mynysshed  
Wherfore for vengeaunce by grete extremyte  
It cryeth aboue / now vnto the deyte  
Whiche that his mynysters haue suffred so longe  
To lyue in synne and euyll wayes wronge

Whan I had perceyued euery maner thyng  
Of this ryall myroure / accordynge to effecte  
Remembrynge the verses / of the olde saynge  
Whiche in my mynde I dyde well coniecte  
Than to the swerde / I thought to haue respecte  
Ryght so I went / than at all auenture  
Vnto the hande / that helde the swerde so sure

I felte the hande / of the stell so fyne  
Me thought it quaked / the fyngers gan to stretche  
I thought by that / I came than of the lyne  
Of the grete lady / that fyrst the swerde dyde fetch  
The swerdes pomell / I began to ketch  
The hande swerued / but yet neuer the lesse  
I helde them bothe / by excellent prowes

And at the last / I felte the hande departe  
The swerde I toke / with all my besynesse  
So I subdued / all the magykes arte  
And founde the scauberde / of meruaylous rychesse  
After that I toke the shelde doune doubtlesse  
Kyssynge the swerde / and the shelde ofte I wys  
Thankynge god / the whiche was cause of this

Gladde was I than / of my ryall floure  
Of my swerde and shelde / I reioyced also  
It pacyfyed well / my inwarde doloure  
But fro my ladyes beaute / my mynde myght not go  
I loued her surely / for I loued no mo  
Thus my fayre floure / and my swerde and shelde  
With eyen ryght meke / full often I behelde

Than sayd I (well) this is an happy chaunce  
I trust now shortly / my lady for to se  
O fortune sayd I / whiche brought me on the daūce  
Fyrst to beholde her ryght excellent beaute  
And so by chaunce / hast hyder conueyde me  
Getynge me also / my floure my shelde and swerde  
I nought mystrust the / why sholde I be aferde

O ryght fayre lady / as the bryght daye sterre  
Shyneth before the rysynge of the sonne  
Castynge her beames / all aboute aferre  
Exylynge grete wyndes / and the mystes donne  
So ryght fayre lady / where as thou doost wonne  
Thy beautefull bryghtnes / thy vertue and thy grace  
Dooth clere Illumyne / all thy boure and place

The gentyll *herte is plunged in dystresse*  
Dooth walowe and tomble in somers nyght  
Replete with wo / and mortall heuynesse  
Tyll that aurora / with her beames bryght  
Aboute the fyrmament / castynge her pured lyght  
Ageynst the rysynge / of refulgent tytan  
Whan that declyneth / the fayre dame dyan

Than dooth the loue / out of this bedde aryse  
With wofull mynde / beholdynge than the ayre  
Alas he sayth / what nedeth to deuyse  
Ony suche pastyme / here for to repayre  
Where is my conforte / where is my lady fayre  
Where is my Ioye / where is now all my boote  
Where is she nowe / that persed my herte rote

This maye I saye / vnto my owne dere loue  
My goodly lady / fayrest and moost swete  
In all my bokes / fayre fortune doth moue  
For a place of grace / where that we sholde mete  
Also my bokes full pryuely you grete  
The effectes therof / dooth well dayly ensue  
By meruelous thynges / to proue them to be true

The more my payne / the more my loue encreaseth  
The more my Ieopardy / the truer is my harte  
The more I suffre / the lesse the fyre releaseth  
The more I complayne the more is my smarte  
The more I se her / the sharper is the darte  
The more I wryte / the more my teeres dystyll  
The more I loue / the hotter is my wyll

O moost fayre lady / yonge / good / and vertuous  
I knewe full well / neuer your countenance  
Shewed me ony token / to make me amerous  
But what for that / your prudent gouernaunce  
Hath enrached my herte / for to gyue attendaunce  
your excellent beaute / you coude no thyng lette  
To cause my herte vpon you to be sette

My ryght fayre lady / yf at the chesse I drawe  
My selfe I knowe not / as a cheke frome a mate  
But god aboute the whiche sholde haue in awe  
By drede truely euery true estate  
He maye take vengeaunce / though he tary late  
He knoweth my mynde / he knoweth my remedy  
He maye reuenge me / he knoweth my Ieoperdy

O thou fayre fortune / torne not fro me thy face  
Remembre my sorowe / for my goodly lady  
My tendre herte / she dooth full oft embrace  
And as of that it is no wonder why  
For vpon her is all my desteny  
Submyttyng me / vnto her gracyous wyll  
Me for to saue or sodaynly to spyll

O ryght fayre lady of grene flourynge age  
you can not do but as your frendes agre  
your wyte is grete / you mekenes / dooth not swage  
Exyle dysdayne / and be ruled by pety  
The frenshe man sayth / that shall be shall be  
yf that I dye / loue was neuer none  
Deyed in this worlde / for a fayrer persone

Your beaute causeth all my amyte  
Why sholde your beaute / to my dethe condyscende  
your vertue and mekenes / dyde so arest me  
Why sholde ye than to dame dysdayne intende  
your prudence your goodnes / dooth mercy extende  
Why sholde ye than enclyne to cruelte

Your grace I trust wyll non extremyte

A dere herte I maye complayne ryght longe  
you here me not / nor se me not arayed  
Nor causes my paynes for to be stronge  
It was myn eyes / that made me fyrst dysmayde  
With stroke of loue / that coude not me delaye  
My ryght fayre lady / my herte is colde and faynt  
Wolde now to god / that you knewe my complaynte

Thus as I mourned I herde a lady speke  
I loked asyde I sawe my lady gracyous  
My herte than fared / as it sholde breke  
For perfyte loye whiche was solacyous  
Before her grace / ryght swete and precyous  
I kneled doune / saynge with all mekenesse  
Please it your grace / & excellent noblenes

No dyspleasure to take for my beyng here  
For fortune me brought / to this place ryall  
Where I haue wonne this floure so vertuous & dere  
This swerde and shelde / also not peregall  
Towardre hym aduenture to be tryumphall  
And now by fortunes desteny and fate  
Do here my duety vnto your hygh estate

Ihesu sayd she than / who hadde wende to fynde  
Your selfe walkynge / in this place all alone  
Full lytell thought I / ye were not in my mynde  
What is the cause / that ye make suche mone  
I thynke some thyng / be from you past and gone  
But I wonder / how that ye dyde attayne  
This floure / this swerde / the shelde also certayne

For by a lady in the antyquyte  
They were made to a meruaylous entente  
That none sholde get them / but by auctoryte  
Whiche onely by fortune / sholde hyder be sent  
Full many knyghtes by entendement  
Hath them aduentred / to haue them in dede  
But all was vayne / for they myght neuer spede

Wherfore surely / ye are moche fortunate  
Them for to wyne by your aduenture  
But it was no thyng to you ordynate  
And you dyde well / to put your selfe in vre  
To proue the leoperdy / whiche hath made you sure  
Leue all your mournynge / for there is no wyght  
Hath greter cause / for to be gladde and lyght

I behelde well her demure countenaunce  
Vnto her swete wordes / gyuyng good audyence  
And than I marked in my remembraunce  
Her pleasaunt apparayle / with all my dylygence  
Whiche was full ryche of meruaylous excellence  
Fyrst alofte her forheed / full properly was dressed  
Vnder her orelletes / her golden heere well tressed

About her necke whyte as ony lyly  
A prety chayne of the fynest golde  
Some lynkes with grene enameled truely  
And some were blacke / the whiche I dyde beholde  
The vaynes blewe / in her fayre necke well tolde  
With her swete vysage tydynges to my herte  
That sodynly my thoughtes were asterte

Her gowne was golde / of the clothe of tissewe  
With armyns poudred / and wyde sleues pendaunt  
Her kyrtell grene of the fyne satyn newe  
To bere her longe trayne / was well attendaunt  
Gentyll dame dylygence / neuer varyaunt  
Than as touchynge her noble stature  
I thynke there can be / no goodlyer creature

As of her aege / so tendre and grene  
Fayre / gracyous / prudent / and louynge humylyte  
Her vertue shyneth / beyng bryght and shene  
In her is nether pryde ne sybtylte

C.ii.

||

Her gentyll herte / enclyneth to bounte  
Thus beaute / godlynesse / vertue / grace / and wytte  
With bounte and mekenesse / in this lady is knytte

¶ Amour.

Thus whan my eyes hadde beholde her wele  
Madame I sayd how may I now be gladde  
But sygh and sorowe with herte euey dele  
Longe haue I loued / and lytell conforte hadde  
Wherfore no wonder though that I be sadde  
Your tendre age / full lytell knoweth ywys  
To loue vnloued / what wofull payne it is

¶ Pucell.

*Thoughe* that I be yonge / yet I haue perceueraũce  
*That* ther is no lady / yf that she gentyll be  
*And* ye haue with her ony acquayntaunce  
And after cast / to her your amyte  
Grounded on honoure / without duplycyte  
I wolde thynke in mynde / she wolde condescende  
To graunt your faouore / yf ye none yll intende

¶ Amour.

A fayre lady I haue vnto her spoken  
That I loue best / and she dooth not it knowe  
Though vnto her / I haue my mynde broken  
Her beaute clere / dooth my herte ouerthrowe  
Whan I do se her / my herte booth sobbe I trowe  
Wherfore fayre lady / all dysparate of conforte  
I speke vnknownen / I must to wo resorte

¶ Pucell.

Me thynke ye speke / now vnder parable  
Do ye se her here / whiche is cause of your grefe  
Yf ye so dyde / that sholde I be able  
As in this cause / te be to your relefe  
Ryght lothe I were to se your myschefe  
For ye knowe well / what case that I am yn  
Peryllous it wolde be / or that ye coude me wyne

¶ Amour.

Madame sayd I / thoughe myn eyes se her not  
Made dymme w<sup>t</sup> wepynde / & with grete wo togyder  
Yet dooth myn herte / at this tyme I wote  
Her excellent beaute / ryght inwardly concyder  
Good fortune I trust / hath now brought me hyder  
To se your mekenes / whiche doth her rapyre  
Whose swete conforte / dooth kepe me fro dyspayre.

¶ Pucell.

Of late I sawe a boke of your makyng  
Called the pastyme of pleasure / whiche is *wõderous*  
For I thynge and you had not ben in *louyng*  
Ye coude neuer haue made it so sentencyous  
I redde there all your passage daungerous  
Wherfore I wene for the fayre ladyes sake  
That ye dyd loue / ye dyde that boke so make

¶ Amour.

Forsothe madame / I dyde compyle that boke  
As the holy goost / I call vnto wytnes  
But ygnorauntly / who so lyst to loke  
Many meruelous thynges in it / I do expresse  
My lyue and loue / to enserche well doublesse  
Many a one doth wryte / I knowe not what in dede  
Yet the effecte dooth folowe / the trouthe for to spede

¶ Pucell.

I graunt you well / all that whiche you saye  
But tell me who it is / that ye loue so sure  
I promyse you that I wyll not bewraye  
Her name truely to ony creature  
Pyte it is / you sholde suche wo endure  
I do perceyue / she is not ryght ferre hence  
Whiche that ye loue / withouten neclygence

¶ Amour.

Surely madame / syth it pleaseth your hyghnesse  
And your honour to speke so nobly  
It is your grace / that hath the intresse  
In my true herte / with loue so feruently  
Ryght longe ago / your beaute sodanly  
Entred my mynde / and hath not syth de kayde  
With feruent loue / moost wofully arayde

¶ Pucell.

And is it I / that is cause of your loue  
yf it so be I can not helpe your payne  
It sholde be harde / to gete to your aboue  
Me for to loue / I dyde not you constrayne  
ye knowe what I am / I knowe not you certayne  
I am as past your loue to specyfy  
Why wyll ye loue where is no remedy

¶ Amour.

A madame you are cause of my languysshe  
ye maye me helpe / yf that it to you please  
To haue my purpose / my herte dooth not menysshe  
Thoughe I was seke / ye knewe not my dysease  
I am not hole / your mercy maye me ease  
To proue what I am / the holy goost werke styll  
My lyfe and deth / I yelde nowe to your wyll

¶ Pucell.

Fortune me thynke / is meruaylous fauorable  
To you by getyng / of this ryall floure  
Hauyng this swerde / and shelde so profytable  
In mortall daungers / to be your socoure  
But as touchyng your loue and faouore  
I can not graunt / neyther fyrst ne last  
ye knowe what I am / ye knowe my loue is past

¶ Amour.

Madame the floure / the swerde and shelde also  
Whiche fortune gate me / are not halfe so dere  
As your persone the cause of my wo  
Whose grace and beaute / shyneth so ryght clere  
That in my herte your beaute doth appere  
Nothyng is past / but that fortunes pleasure  
May call it agayne / in the tyme future

¶ Pucell.

I denye not but that your dedes do shewe  
By meruaylous prowes / truely your gentylnesse  
To make you a carter / there were not afewe  
But tho by crafte / whiche thought you to oppresse  
To accombre them selfe applye the besynesse  
yet thynke not you / so soone to se a cradle  
I graunt you loue / whan ye were golden sadle

¶ Amour.

Madame truely / it is oft dayly sene  
Many a one dooth trust / his fortune to take  
From an other man / to make hym blynde I wene  
Whiche blyndeth hym / and dooth his pompe aslake  
Often some hie / do fall alowe and quake  
Ryght so maye they / whiche dyde fyrst prepece  
My wo and payne for all theyr yll scyence

¶ Pucell.

To loue me so / whiche knoweth my persone  
And my frendes eke / me thynke ye are not wyse  
As now of me conforte haue ye none  
Wherefore this answeere / maye to you suffyse  
I can not do / but as my frendes deuyse  
I can no thyng do / but as they accorde  
They haue me promest / to a myghty lorde

¶ Amour.

Madame in this worlde ben but thynges twayne  
As loue and hate / ye knowe your selfe the trouthe

yf I sholde hate you / deth I were worthy playne  
Than had you cause / with me to be wrothe  
To deserue dyspleasure / my herte wolde be lothe  
Wherfore fayre lady / I yelde at this hower  
To your mekenes / my herte my loue and power

¶ Pucell.

I thynke you past all chyldy ygnoraunce  
But gladde I am / yf prudence be your guyde  
Grace cometh often after gouernaunce  
Beware of foly / beware of inwarde pryde  
Clymbe not to fast / but yet fortune abyde  
For your loue I thanke you / yf trouthe haue it fyxte  
As with yll thought / neuer for to be myxte

¶ Amour.

Surely my mynde / nor yet my purpose  
In ony cause by foly dyde vary  
Neuer doynge thynke open ne close  
That to your honour sholde be contrary  
As yet for grace I am content to tary  
For myn enmyes fraude and subtylnes  
Whiche pryuely begyne theyr owne vnhapynesse

¶ Pucell.

Now of trouthe / I do vnto you tell  
The thyng<sup>t</sup> to your enmyes is moost dyspleasure  
Is for to gouerne you by wysdome ryght well  
That causeth enuy in theyr hertes to endure  
But be ye pacyent and ye shall be sure  
Suche thynges as the ordayne vnto your gref  
Wyll lyght on them to theyr owne myschefe

¶ Amour.

Surely I thynke / I suffred well the phyppe  
The nette also dydde teche me on the waye  
But me to bere I trowe they lost a lyppe  
For the lyfte hande extendyd my Iournaye  
And not to call me for my sporte and playe  
Wherfore by foly yf that they do synne  
The holy goost maye well the batayle wynne

¶ Pucell.

Yf fortune wolde / for the payne ye haue taken  
I wolde graūt you loue / but it may nothÿge *auayle*  
My loue is past / it can not be forsaken  
Therefore I praye you leue your trauayle  
Full lothe I were / your deth to bewayle  
There is no nette / nor no tempted snare  
But ye them knowe / wherfore ye maye beware

¶ Amour.

The snares and nettes / set in sondrye maner  
Doone in tyme past / made many a byrde a dawe  
The tempted gynnes / were sette so cyrculer  
But euermore it is an olde sayd sawe  
Examples past dooth theche one to withdrawe  
Frome all suche perylles / wherfore than maye I  
By grace of god / beware full parfytylly

¶ Pucell.

Ye saye the trouthe / and I do not submytte  
My wyll and thought to the lady Venus  
As she is goddesse / and doth true loue knytte  
Ryght so to determyne / the mater betwene vs  
With assent of fortune / so good gracyous  
Besechynge you now for to holde you styll  
For these two ladyes / maye your mynde fulfyll

¶ Amour.

My ryght dere lady / I do therto consente  
Swete are your wordes they confort my thought  
Of Venus and fortune / I abyde the Iugement  
But ryght dere lady / whome I longe haue sought  
Forgete me not / remembre loue dere bought  
Of my herte / I wolde ye knewe the preuyte

Than as I thynke ye wolde remembre me

\* \* \* \* \*

. . . . that came ladyes . . . *yght* . . . .  
. . . . she our talkyng / þ<sup>t</sup> tyme dyde surrendre  
. . . . madame / ye do well here repayre  
To that goodly temple / for to take the ayre  
With that sodaynly / I truely awoke  
Takyng pen and ynke to make this lytell boke

¶ Go lytell treaty se submyte the humbly  
To euery lady / excusyng thy neclygence  
Besechyng them / to remembre truely  
How thou doost purpose to do thy dylygence  
To make suche bokes by true experyence  
From daye to daye theyr pastyme to attende  
Rather to dye / than thau wolde them offende

¶ Enprynted  
by me Wynkyn de  
Worde.



### About the Text

**Abbreviations** are shown as superscripts. The word shown as **y<sup>e</sup>** was printed with the **e** directly above the **y**: **y<sup>e</sup>**. Not all browsers can display this form correctly. Abbreviations in <sup>t</sup> (*what, that*) were similarly written; note that the second occurrence of **p<sup>t</sup>** uses true thorn, not the more common **y**. The “-us” abbreviation, similar to a small <sup>9</sup>, is shown here as <sup>us</sup>. In verse, abbreviations were used only when a long line had to be shortened to fit the width of the page.

**Damaged Words** were reconstructed based on surviving parts of letters. Some reconstructions are more secure than others.

Page A.vi.

cause her be somewhat payned  
for loue is not fapned  
why madest thou her so fayre

Page B.i.

Thus as I mourned / I sawe than appere

Page B.i. verso

The word “tens” was used in the text because it occurs elsewhere in conjunction with “future”.

Whanyone weneth / the future tens to bryfe



Other possible pairs:

fe re se te

Page B.iii.

and redy to cast downe  
of the curled cruelte

Page B.iii. *verso*

The words "mayes touche" are not completely satisfactory, but the text demands a word-final s.

mayes touche this swerde  
cholen by god in dede  
not to be aferde

Page B.vi.

And at the last/

Page B.vi. *verso*

The gentyll herte is plunged in dystresse

Page C.ii.

Her pleasaunt apparayle/with all my dyligence  
Whiche was full ryche of meruaylous excellence  
Fyrt alofte her forheed/full properly was dyressed  
Under her dyelletes/her golden heere well tressed

Page C.iii.

Thoughe that I be yonge/  
That ther is no lady/  
And ye haue with her

Page C.iii. *verso*

Note the ð abbreviation, indicating that the line spanned the full width of the page.

pleasure/whiche is woderous  
had not ben in lounge  
made it so sentencyous

Page C.iiii.

And is it I/  
yf it so be I can not  
It holde be harde/  
We for to loue/  
ye knowe what I am/

Page C.v.

I thynke you past  
But gladde I am/  
Grace cometh often  
Bedware of foly/

Page C.v. *verso*

The complete line was compared against long lines from other pages to make sure the length was not excessive.

but it may nothþge auayle

Page C.vi.

Much of this is obviously conjectural. The likeliest endings for the first two lines are “tendre” and “fayre”.

~~That came laoyes~~ ~~yg~~  
he our talkyng / h tyme dyde surrendre  
madame / ye do well here repayre  
To that goodly temple / for to take the ayre  
Wich that todaynly / I truly awoke  
Takynge pen and ynke to make this lytell boke

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