

among them, I was very glad and tried as hard as I could to ride up to them. But although I looked carefully I could not see him, since he was not among them. As I drew near and looked more carefully at the handsome throng, I saw a man riding in front of them, seated on a very beautiful horse, well worth looking at, and crowned with a golden diadem. Close after him followed a large and charming band of women, each of whom was mounted on a fair, fat horse with a gentle gait. Each woman was dressed in costly, many-colored garments with a gold-embroidered cloak and was accompanied by knights, one on the right hand and another on the left, while a third walked before her like a servant, holding her bridle in his hand all the time so that she rode gently forward on her horse without the least annoyance. Such was the dress and such the manner of riding of each woman in the first group. After them followed an unnumbered host of finely dressed knights who kept them from the clattering of those who followed them and from being annoyed by these people. Next to these there came a great multitude of women with various kinds of men, on foot and on horseback, pressing forward to serve them; but so great was the clatter of those who wished to be of service and so annoying was the crowd, that the women could not accept any services, nor could those who were ready to serve do so conveniently; and so the multitude of servants resulted in a great lack and deficiency of service, and the women would have considered it a great comfort, indeed, if they had been left to serve themselves.

“Then in the third group there followed a mean and abject troop of women. They were certainly very beautiful, but they were dressed in the most filthy clothes, wholly unsuited to the weather, for although they were in the burning heat of summer, they wore unwillingly garments of fox skins; besides that, they were very dirty and rode unbecomingly upon unsightly horses—that is, very lean ones that trotted heavily and had neither saddles nor bridles and went along with halting steps. No one tried to aid these women, who were without assistance from anyone, and besides, those on horseback and on foot who had gone ahead of them stirred up such a cloud of dust with their feet that the

The man says: “Listen, then, to the endless torments that are prepared for you.

“While I was attending as squire upon my lord, a certain very noble Robert,³⁸ on one very hot summer day I was riding with him and many other noble knights through the royal forest of France, and the woodland path led us to a most pleasant and delightful place. It was a grassy spot, surrounded on all sides by the trees of the forest. Here we all dismounted and turned our horses loose to graze; then after we had refreshed ourselves with a little nap we roused up and quickly saddled the wandering horses. But as my own horse had wandered a little farther in the pasture than the others, getting him ready took me so long that I found myself left alone in the glade. Not knowing the way, I was wandering around at a loss and looking carefully in all directions, when I spied an infinite number of mounted folk riding along at a walk near the edge of the wood. Believing firmly that my lord was riding

³⁷ Matt. 25: 41.

³⁸ There were so many noble Roberts at the time that it is difficult to tell which is meant; perhaps the best guess is that it is Count Robert of Dreux, brother of King Louis VII, or his son Robert II, who reigned from 1184 to 1218. As a cousin of Countess Marie he would of course have been well known to her, but he might be “a certain very noble Robert” to the lady whom the knight was addressing.

women could barely see each other, because the dust filled their eyes and clogged their lips.³⁹

"When I had carefully observed all these people and had commenced to wonder greatly what it all meant, a lady with a calm, dignified face, who after all the others had gone by followed them on a very thin and dirty horse that halted on three feet, called me by name and bade me come to her. When I approached and saw her charming and beautiful face and that she was sitting on such a dirty horse, I at once offered her mine. But she declined it and said to me, 'You are looking for your lord, but you cannot find him here, because you have wandered rather far from his course.'

"I answered, 'My lady, I beg you, please deign to show me the right way,' to which she replied, 'Until you have seen these troops established in their own camps I cannot show you a safe road.' Then I replied, 'Then I ask you to explain to me, if you will, whose army this is that I see, and why so beautiful a woman has chosen to ride such a common horse and to wear such mean clothes.'

"To this the woman replied, 'This army which you see is that of the dead.' When I heard that, my soul was immediately troubled beyond measure, and my color changed, and all my bones began to loosen in their joints. Trembling and greatly terrified, I would gladly have left the company, but she began at once to speak comforting words to me and promised to keep me unharmed from every peril. She said, 'You will be safer and more secure here than in your father's house.' When I heard this I regained the quickening spirit I had nearly lost, and, coming closer to her, I began to ask diligently about all these things. She answered all my questions in order, saying,

"That knight whom you see crowned with a golden diadem, going before all the people, is the God of Love, who joins this army one day in every week, and in a marvellous fashion gives to each one his

³⁹ Much the same story is told in the almost contemporary *Lai du Trot*. Apparently neither author borrowed from the other, but Trojel (*De Amore*, xiv) conjectures that both heard the tale at the court of Troyes; see also E. M. Grimes in *Romanic Review*, XXVI (1935), 313-21, and W. A. Neilson in *Romania*, XXIX (1900), 86.

deserts, according as he has done good or evil in life. And those women, so beautiful and so honored, who follow after him in the first rank, are those most blessed of women who while they were alive knew how to conduct themselves wisely toward the soldiers of love, to show every favor to those who wished to love, and to give appropriate answers to those who under pretense of love sought love falsely; for this reason these women now have their full reward and are honored with innumerable gifts. Those women who follow in the second group and are so pestered by the services of so many men are those shameless women who while they lived did not fear to subject themselves to the pleasure of every man, but assented to the lust of any man who asked them and denied entrance within their gates to no man who sought it. And in this court they have earned this kind of reward. In return for their excessive giving of themselves and their indiscriminate acceptance of men they are unceasingly wearied by the indiscriminate services of innumerable people, and for them such services are converted into their harmful opposites and cause them great annoyance and shame. Then those women who follow in the last group, so meanly equipped, going along with downcast faces, without help from anybody and wearied by discomforts of all kinds, as you can plainly see with your own eyes (in which group I find a place), are those most wretched of all women who while they lived closed the palace of Love to all who wished to enter it and would not give a fitting answer to any man who did good deeds or who asked of them a cause and approval of well-doing; they rejected all who asked to serve in Love's army and drove them away just as though they hated them, not at all considering what sort of person is this God of Love whom those who were asking for love sought to serve. So now we suffer these well-deserved punishments and receive from the King of Love, through whom the whole world is ruled and without whom no one does anything good in this world, payment appropriate to our sins. We are, besides these, subjected to so many other kinds of punishments which no one could know about unless he learned by experience, that it would be impossible for me

to tell you about them and very difficult for you to listen to the account. Therefore let those women who are still living in the world take care lest they join us in these torments, since after they are dead no penance can be of any use to them.'

"I answered the woman, 'As I see and understand it, he who has chosen to do the things well pleasing to Love shall receive his reward a hundredfold, while the god cannot pass over the sin of one who has dared offend him, but, it seems to me, will avenge more than a thousandfold the crime committed against him. It is unsafe, therefore, to offend such a god,⁴⁰ and it is safest to serve in all things him who can reward his own with such gifts and afflict with such heavy torments those who scorn him. Therefore, my lady, I ask and beseech you with all my might to give me permission to leave, so that I may tell the ladies what I have seen.'

"She answered, 'You may not have leave to go until you have learned of the heavier and harder torments that we suffer and have seen the greater joy and beatitude of the other ladies.'

"While we were talking thus we had gone a good distance and had come to a most delightful spot, where the meadows were very beautiful and more finely laid out than mortal had ever seen. The place was closed in on all sides by every kind of fruitful and fragrant trees, each bearing marvellous fruits according to its kind. It was also divided concentrically into three distinct parts. The first of these, the central one, was separated from the next part and surrounded on all sides by it, while the third, on the outside, was completely walled off from the first by the intervening part. Now in the middle of the first and innermost part stood a marvellously tall tree, bearing abundantly all sorts of fruits, and its branches extended as far as the edge of the interior part. At the roots of the tree gushed forth a wonderful spring of the clearest water, which to those who drank of it tasted of the sweetest nectar, and in this spring one saw all sorts of little fishes. Beside the spring, on a throne made of gold and every sort of precious stones, sat

⁴⁰ Ovid *Heroides* IV. 11.

the Queen of Love, wearing a gorgeous crown on her head, dressed in very costly robes, and holding a golden scepter in her hand. At her right hand was prepared a seat that glowed with everything costly and bright, but no one was sitting on it. This section, the inner one, was called 'Delightfulness,' because in it every sort of pleasant and delightful thing was to be found. And in this inner part were prepared a great many couches, marvellously decorated and completely covered with silken coverlets and purple decorations. From the spring I have mentioned many brooks and rivulets flowed out in all directions, watering the whole of Delightfulness, and every couch had a rivulet by it.

"The second part was called 'Humidity' and was arranged in this fashion: the brooks which stayed within their channels and watered Delightfulness, in this second part grew too large and overflowed all of Humidity so that you could see grass mixed with water just as you can in the fields in the rainy days of spring. And the water, after it flowed into this section, became so cold that no living being could bear to touch it, while from above the sun poured down an intolerable heat, for there wasn't a single tree to shade the place. But the water did not extend beyond the bounds of this part.

"The third and last part was called 'Aridity,' and with good reason for water was completely lacking, the whole place was arid, and the heat of the sun's rays was intense, almost like fire, and the surface of the earth was like the bottom of a heated oven. All about the place were innumerable bundles of thorns, each with a pole through the middle which stuck out a distance of two cubits at each end, and at either end of the pole stood a very strong man, holding the end of the pole in his hands. But there was a very beautiful road passing through Aridity and Humidity, leading to Delightfulness, and in it no one of these discomforts was felt in the least.

"When we came to this place, the King of Love entered first; and the Queen of Love received him with an embrace, and with her help he sat down on the throne prepared for him, holding a crystalline scepter in his hand, and after him, by the same road, followed all the

first band of women and knights. For each of the women there was prepared a most beautiful couch on which to sit, and the knights chose for themselves the seats they preferred. No human tongue could tell how great was the blessedness and the glory of these people, for the whole place of Delightfulness was appointed for their pleasure, and before them jugglers of every kind sported and sang, and men played all kinds of musical instruments there.

"Next, through the same road came the whole crowd of common women who had been following them, and the crowd of men who had been trying to serve these women. They came as far as the edge of Delightfulness, and when they could not pass beyond they began to slacken rein in Humidity and to find what comfort they could there, since this was the place appointed for them by the court of Love. And what noises and lamentings there were would be most difficult to tell! And the torments of these women were greatly increased by the glory which they saw of those who were in Delightfulness. Then, at the same place entered the third and last throng of women—those who would not have pity on the soldiers of Love—and they came as far as the edge of Humidity; but when they found no entrance, they commenced to spread out all through Aridity, since that was the place prepared for them from of old. And there was a seat on a bundle of thorns prepared for each of the women, and the men assigned to each, as I mentioned, kept shaking the bundle so that the women were very severely torn by the sharp thorns; and their bare feet rested on the burning ground. So great was the grief and suffering there that I believe the like is scarcely to be found among the infernal powers themselves.

"When I had seen these things I asked for permission to depart, and she said, 'I cannot give you permission, but leave your horse here and go quickly to the King of Love, along the way by which he entered, and ask permission of him as though he were your lord and pay careful attention to what he bids you do. And do not forget to intercede for me.' As soon as I had heard this I took the designated road and came before the King of Love and said to him, 'Mighty and glorious king, I

render you all gratitude for deigning to reveal to me your mighty works and the wondrous secrets of your realm. Therefore I pray unceasingly to Your Grace to deign to bid me, your servant, do those things that are pleasing to you, and to indicate truly what are the chief rules in love, and at my intercession graciously to free from the heavier punishments that woman through whose beneficence I have been blessed with a sight like this, and in your mercy to give her a place here in Delightfulness with those women whom I see here in such honor, and finally, if you please, to give me leave to depart.'

"To my request he answered, 'You have been permitted to see our mighty works that through you our glory may be revealed to those who know it not, and that this sight which you now see may be a means of salvation for many ladies. We therefore command and firmly enjoin upon you that wherever you find a lady of any worth departing from our pathway by refusing to submit herself to love's engagements, you shall take care to relate to her what you have seen here and shall cause her to leave her erroneous ideas so that she may escape such very heavy torments and find a place here in glory. Know, then, that the chief rules in love are these twelve that follow:

- I. Thou shalt avoid avarice like the deadly pestilence and shalt embrace its opposite. *hostility / greedily*
- II. Thou shalt keep thyself chaste for the sake of her whom thou lovest.
- III. Thou shalt not knowingly strive to break up a correct love affair that someone else is engaged in.
- IV. Thou shalt not choose for thy love anyone whom a natural sense of shame forbids thee to marry.
- V. Be mindful completely to avoid falsehood.
- VI. Thou shalt not have many who know of thy love affair. *Secrecy*
- VII. Being obedient in all things to the commands of ladies, thou shalt ever strive to ally thyself to the service of Love.
- VIII. In giving and receiving love's solaces let modesty be ever present.

- IX. Thou shalt spea no evil.
- X. Thou shalt not be a revealer of love affairs.
- XI. Thou shalt be in all things polite and courteous.
- XII. In practicing the solaces of love thou shalt not exceed the desires of thy lover.

There are also other lesser precepts of love which it would not profit you to hear, since you can find them in the book written to Walter.

“As for that woman for whom you pleaded, she may not find a place here within the bounds of Delightfulness, as you ask, because her own deeds have made it impossible for her to remain in so glorious an abode. However, in answer to your plea we grant her a fat and gentle horse with a saddle and bridle and that she may have no attendants to shake her bundle of thorns; and with our permission she may have a cold stone under her feet. Take now this crystalline staff, and with our grace depart; but throw the staff into the first stream you find.’

“I took my way back and returned to the lady who had led me there, and I found her sitting on a bundle without any attendants, resting her feet very comfortably upon a stone newly placed there, having a fat horse with fine trappings by her side, and feeling very little pain. She thanked me effusively and added, ‘Depart now with the favor of heaven, my friend, since you may not see more of the affairs of this court. For the others have a glory and we a torment twice as great as those you see, but it is not granted to any living person to behold them.’ When she had finished speaking I mounted my own horse, and in the twinkling of an eye I was led through the waters that surrounded the place. Into them I threw the crystalline staff and returned unharmed to my own home.