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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

Warton, Thomas

London, 1774

Section XIII. The subject of Chaucer continued. His Romaunt of the Rose.
William of Lorris and John of Meun. Specimens of the French Le Roman de
la Rose. Improved by Chaucer. William of Lorris ...

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51377](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51377)

S E C T. XIII.

CHAUCER'S ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE is translated from a French poem entitled, LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE. It was begun by William of Lorris, a student in jurisprudence, who died about the year 1260^a. Being left unfinished, it was completed by John of Meun, a native of a little town of that name, situated on the river Loire near Orleans, who seems to have flourished about the year 1310^b. This poem is esteemed by the French the most valuable piece of their old poetry. It is far beyond the rude efforts of all their preceding romancers: and they have nothing equal to it before the reign of Francis the first, who died in the year 1547. But there is a considerable difference in the merit of the two authors. William of Lorris, who wrote not one quarter of the poem, is remarkable for his elegance and luxuriance of description, and is a beautiful painter of allegorical personages. John of Meun is a writer of another cast. He possesses but little of his predecessor's inventive and poetical vein; and in that respect was not properly qualified to finish a poem begun by William of Lorris. But he has strong satire, and great liveliness^c. He was one of the wits of the court of Charles le Bel.

The difficulties and dangers of a lover, in pursuing and obtaining the object of his desires, are the literal argument of this poem. This design is couched under the allegory of

^a Fauchet, p. 198.

^b Id. *ibid.* p. 200. He also translated Boethius *De Consolatione*, and Abelard's *Letters*, and wrote *Answers of the Sybills*, &c.

^c The poem consists of 22734 verses. William of Lorris's part ends with v. 4149. viz.

"A peu que je ne m'en desefpoir."

a Rose,

a Rose, which our lover after frequent obstacles gathers in a delicious garden. He traverses vast ditches, scales lofty walls, and forces the gates of adamantine and almost impregnable castles. These enchanted fortresses are all inhabited by various divinities; some of which assist, and some oppose, the lover's progress^d.

Chaucer has luckily translated all that was written by William of Lorris^e: he gives only part of the continuation of John of Meun^f. How far he has improved on the French

^d In the preface of the edition printed in the year 1538, all this allegory is turned to religion. The Rose is proved to be a state of grace, or divine wisdom, or eternal beatitude, or the Holy Virgin to which heretics cannot gain access. It is the white Rose of Jericho, *Quasi plantatio Rosæ in Jericho*, &c. &c. The chemists, in the mean time, made it a search for the Philosopher's Stone: and other professions, with laboured commentaries, explained it into their own respective sciences.

^e See Oecleve's *Letter of Cupide*, written 1402. Urry's *Chaucer*, p. 536. v. 283. Who calls John of Meun the author of the *Roman of the Rose*.

^f Chaucer's poem consists of 7699 verses: and ends with this verse of the original, viz. v. 13105.

"Vous aurez absolution."

But Chaucer has made several omissions in John of Meun's part, before he comes to this period. He has translated all William of Lorris's part, as I have observed; and his translation of that part ends with v. 4432. viz.

"Than shuldin I fallin in wanhope."

Chaucer's cotemporaries called his *Roman of the Rose*, a translation. Lydgate says that Chaucer

—Notably did his busynesse
By grete avyle his wittes to dispoze,
To translate the ROMANS OF THE ROSE.
Prol. Boob. st. vi. It is manifest that Chaucer took no pains to disguise his translation. He literally follows the French, in saying, that a river was "lesse than

"*Saine*." i. e. the Seine at Paris. v. 118.
"No wight in all Paris." v. 7157. A grove has more birds "than ben in all the relme of Fraunce, v. 495. He calls a pine, "A tree in France men call a pine." v. 1457. He says of roses, "so faire werin nevir in Rome." v. 1674. "That for Paris ne for Pavie." v. 1654. He has sometimes reference to French ideas, or words, not in the original. As "Men clepin hem Sereins in France." v. 684. "From Jerusalem to Burgoine." v. 554. "Grein de Paris." v. 1369. Where Skinner says, *Paris* is contracted for *Paradis*. In mentioning minstrells and juglers, he says, that some of them "Songin songes of Loraine." v. 776. He adds,

For in Loraine there notis be
Full swetir than in this centre.

There is not a syllable of these songs, and singers, of Loraine, in the French. By the way, I suspect that Chaucer translated this poem while he was at Paris. There are also many allusions to English affairs, which I suspected to be Chaucer's; but they are all in the French original. Such as, "Hornpipis of Cornevaile." v. 4250. These are called in the original, "Chalemeaux de Cornouaille." v. 3991. A knight is introduced, allied to king "Arthur of Bretaigne." v. 1199. Who is called, "Bon roy Artus de Bretaigne." Orig. v. 1187. Sir Gawin, and Sir Kay, two of Arthur's knights, are characterized, v. 2206. seq. See Orig. v. 2124. Where the word *Keulx* is corrupt for *Keie*. But there is one passage, in which he mentions a *Bachelere* as fair as "The Lordis sonne of Windifore."

original, the reader shall judge. I will exhibit passages selected from both poems; respectively placing the French under the English, for the convenience of comparison. The renovation of nature in the month of May is thus described,

That it was May, thus dremed me,^f
 In time of love and jollite,
 That all thing ginnith waxin gay,
 For ther is neither bushe nor hay^h
 In May that it n'ill shroudid bene,
 And it with newe levis wreneⁱ:
 These wooddis eke recoverin grene,
 That drie in winter ben to fene;
 And the erth waxith proude withall
 For fote dewis that on it fall,
 And the povir estate forgette
 In whiche that winter had it sette:
 And than becometh the grounde so proude,
 That it will have a newe shroud;
 And make so quaynt his robe and fayre,
 That it had hewes an hundred payre,

“Windifore.” v. 1250. This is added by Chaucer, and intended as a compliment to some of his patrons. In the *Legende of good Women*, Cupid says to Chaucer, v. 329. For in plain text, withoutin nede of glose, Thou hast *translatid* the *Romaunt of the Rose*.

^e Qu'on joli moys de May songeoye,
 Ou temps amoureux plein de joye,
 Que toute chose si s'esgaye,
 Si qu'il n'y a buissons ne haye,
 Qui en May parer ne se vueille,
 Et couvrir de nouvelle fueille:
 Les boys recouvrent leur verdure,
 Qui sont sces tant qui l'hiver dure;
 La terre mesmes s'en orgueille
 Pour la rougee qui ta mouille,
 En oubliant la povrete
 Ou elle a tout l'hiver este;

Lors devient la terre si gobe,
 Qu'elle veult avoir neuve robe;
 Si sçet si cointe robe faire,
 Que de couleurs y a cent paire,
 D'herbes, de fleurs Indes and Perces:
 Et de maintes couleurs diverses
 Est la robe que je devise
 Parquoy la terre mieulx se prise.
 Les oiseaulx qui tant se font teuz
 Pour l'hiver qu'ils ont tous sentuz,
 Et pour le froit et divers temps,
 Sont en May, et par la printemps,
 Si liez, &c. v. 51.

^h Bush, or hedge-row. Sometimes Wood. Rot. Pip. an 17. Henr. iii. “Et Heremite sancti Edwardi in *bag* de Birchenwade, xl. fol.”

ⁱ Hide. From *wrie*, or *wrey*, to cover.

Of

Of grasse and flowris Inde and Pers :
 And many hewis ful divers
 That is the robe I mene iwis,
 Through which the ground to praisin is,
 The birdis, that han leste thir songe
 While they han suffrid cold ful stronge,
 In wethers grille ^k and darke to fight,
 Ben in May, for the sunnè bright
 So glad, &c ^l.

In the description of a grove, within the garden of Mirth, are many natural and picturesque circumstances, which are not yet got into the storehouse of modern poetry.

These trees were sett as I devise ^m,
 One from another in a toise,
 Five fadom or fixe, I trowe so,
 But they were hie and gret also ;
 And for to kepe out wel the funne,
 The croppis were so thik yrunne ⁿ,
 And everie branch in othir knitte
 And ful of grene levis fitte ^o,
 That sunnè might ther none discende
 Lest the tendir grassis shende ^p.
 Ther might men does and roes ise ^q,
 And of squirels ful grete plente,

^k Cold.

^l v. 51.

^m Mais fachiés que les arbres furent
 Si loing a loing comme estre durent
 L'ung fut de l'autre loing assis
 De cinque toises voyre de six,
 Mais moult furent feuilluz et haulx
 Pour gardir de l'este le chaulx
 Et si elpis par dessus furent
 Que chaleurs percer ne lis peuvent
 Ne ne pouvoient bas descendre
 Ne faire mal a l'erbe tendre.

Au vergier eut dains & chevreleux,
 Et aussi beaucoup d'escureux,
 Qui par dessus arbres failloyent ;
 Conuins y avoit qui yffoient
 Bien souvent hors de leurs tanieres,
 En moult de diverses manieres. v. 1368.
ⁿ "The tops, or boughs, were so thick-
 "ly twisted together."
^o Set.
^p Be hurt.
^q See.

From

From bow to bow alwaie lepinge ;
 Connis^r ther were also playing^r ;
 That comin out of ther clapers^r ;
 Of fondrie colors and maners ;
 And madin many a turneying
 Upon the freshe grassie springing^r .

Near this grove were shaded fountains without frogs, running into murmuring rivulets, bordered with the softest grafs enamelled with various flowers.

In placis sawe I wellis there^v
 In whichè ther no froggis were,
 And faire in shadow was eche wel ;
 But I ne can the nombre tel
 Of stremis smale, that by devise
 Mirth had don com thorough condise^x,
 Of which the watir in renning,
 Gan makin a noisë ful liking.
 About the brinkis of these wellis,
 And by the stremes ovir at ellis
 Sprange up the grassie as thick ifett
 And soft eke as any velvett.

^r Conies.

^s Chaucer imitates this passage in the *Assemble of Foules*. v. 190. seq. Other passages of that poem are imitated from *Roman de la Rose*.

^t Burroughs.

^u v. 1391.

^v Par lieux y eut cleres fontaines,
 Sans barbelotes^a and fans raines,
 Qui des arbres estoient umbrez,
 Par moy ne vous seront nombrez,
 Et petit ruisseaulx, que Dedit
 Avoit la trouvés par conduit ;
 L'eau alloit aval faisant
 Son melodieux et plaissant.
 Aux borts des ruisseaulx et des rives
 Des fontaines cleres et vives

Poignoit l'erbe dru et plaissant
 Grant soulas et plaistr faisant.
 Amy pouvoit avec sa mye
 Soy deporter ne'r doubtiez mye.—
 Violette y fut moult belle
 Et aussi parvenche nouvelle ;
 Fleurs y eut blanches et vermeilles,
 Ou ne pourroit trouver parcelles,
 De toutes diverses couleurs,
 De haulx pris et de grans valeurs,
 Si estoit soef flairans
 Et reslagrans et odorans. v. 1348.

^a A species of insect often found in stagnant water.

^x Conduits.

On which man might his leman ley
 As softe as fetherbed to pley.—
 There sprange the violet all newe,
 And fresh perwinke^γ riche of hewe;
 And flouris yalowe white and rede,
 Such plenti grew ther ner in mede:
 Full gaie was al the grounde and queint
 And poudrid, as men had it peint,
 With many a fresh and sondry floure
 That castin up ful gode favoure^z.

But I hasten to display the peculiar powers of William de Lorris in delineating allegorical personages; none of which have suffered in Chaucer's translation. The poet supposes, that the garden of Mirth, or rather Love, in which grew the Rose, the object of the lover's wishes and labours, was enclosed with embattled walls, richly painted with various figures, such as Hatred, Avarice, Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, and Hypocrisy. Sorrow is thus represented.

SORROWE was paintid next ENVIE^z
 Upon that wal of masonrie.
 But wel was seen in her colour,
 That she had livid in languour;
 Her seemid to have the jaundice,
 Not half so pale was AVARICE,

^γ Periwinkle.

^z v. 1411.

^z De les ENVIE estoit TRISTESSE
 Painte aussi et garnye d'angoisse.
 Et bien paroît à sa couleur
 Qu'elle avoit a cœur grant douleur:
 Et sembloit avoir la jaunice,
 La n'y faisoit riens AVARICE,
 Le palisseur ne de maigresse
 Car le travaille et la destresse, &c.

Moult sembloit bien que fust dolente;
 Car el n'avoit pas este lente
 D'esgratignier toute sa chiere;
 Sa robe ne luy estoit chiere
 En mains lieux l'avoit desirée,
 Comme culle qui fut yrée.
 Ses cheveulx derompus estoient,
 Qu'autour de son col pendoient,
 Presque les avoit tous defroux
 De maltalent et de corroux. v. 300.

Ne nothing alike of leneneffe
 For sorowe, thought, and grete distresse.
 A f'rowful thing wel semid she;
 Nor she had nothing flow ybe
 For to bescrachin of hir face,
 And for to rent in many place
 Hir clothes, and for to tere her swire^b;
 As she that was fulfilled of ire:
 And al to torn lay eke hir here
 About hir shoulders, here and there;
 As she that had it all to rent
 For angre and for male talent^c.

Nor are the images of HATRED and AVARICE inferior.

Amiddis sawe I HATE ystonde^d.—
 And she was nothing wel araide
 But like a wode woman afraide:
 Yfrowncid foule was hir visage,
 And grinning for dispiteous rage,
 Her nose yfnortid up for tene^e
 Full hideous was she forti sene,
 Full foul and rustey was she this,
 Her hed iwrithin was iwis,
 Full grimly with a grete towaile, &c^f.

The design of this work will not permit me to give the portrait of Idleness, the portres of the garden of Mirth, and of others, which form the groupe of dancers in the garden: but I cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing those

^b Neck.

^c v. 300.

^d Au milieu de mur je vy HAYNE.
 Si n'estoit pas bien atournée,
 Ains sembloit estre forcence
 Reçignée estoit et froncé
 Avoit le nez et rebourcé.

Moult hydeuse estoit et souillée
 Et fut sa teste entortillée
 Tres ordement d'un touaille,
 Qui moult estoit d'horrible taille. 143.
^e Anger.
^f v. 147.

of Beauty, Franchise, and Richesse, three capital figures in this genial assembly.

The God of love, jolife and light ^f,
 Ladde on his honde a ladie bright,
 Of high prise, and of gret degre,
 Thi ladie called was BEAUTIE.
 And an arowe, of which I told,
 Full well ythewid ^h was she holde:
 Ne was she darke ne browne, but bright,
 And clere as is the monè light.—
 Her fleshe was tendre as dewe of floure,
 Her chere was simple as birde in boure:
 As white as lilie, or rose in rise ⁱ,
 Her face was gentil and tretise ^k;
 Fetis ^l she was, and smal to se,
 No wintrid ^m browis heddè she;
 No popped ⁿ here, for't neded nought
 To windir ^o her or to peint ought.
 Her tressès yalowe and long straughten ^p
 Unto her helis down the ^q raughten ^r.

Nothing can be more sumptuous and superb than the robe, and other ornaments, of RICHESSE, or Wealth. They are

^s Le Dieu d'amours si s'estoit pris
 A une dame de hault pris,
 Pres se tenoit de son costé
 Celle dame eut nom BEAULTE.
 Ainsy comme une des cinque fleches
 En ille aut toutes bonnes taiches:
 Point ne fut obscur, ne brun,
 Mais fut clere comme la lune.—
 Tendre eut la chair comme rousée,
 Simple fut comme une espoufée.
 Et blanch comme fleur de lis,
 Visage eut bel doux et alis,
 Elle estoit gresse et alignée
 N'estoit fardée ne pignée,
 Car elle n'avoit pas mestier
 De soy farder et affaictier.

Les cheveux ent blons et si longs
 Qu' ils batoient aux talons. v. 1004.
^h Having good qualities. See *supr.* v.
 939. seq.
ⁱ On the bush. Or, In perfection. Or,
 A budding rose.
^k Well proportioned.
^l *Fetious.* Handsome.
^m Contracted.
ⁿ Affectedly dressed. Properly, dressed
 up like a puppet.
^o To trim. To adorn.
^p *Stretch'd.* Spread abroad.
^q Reached.
^r v. 1003.

C c c 2 imagined

imagined with great strength of fancy. But it should be remembered, that this was the age of magnificence and shew; when a profusion of the most splendid and costly materials were lavished on dress, generally with little taste and propriety, but often with much art and invention.

RICHESSE a robe of purple on had^a,
 Ne trow not that I lie or mad^t,
 For in this world is none it liche^u,
 Ne by a thousand dele^v so riche,
 Ne none so faire: For it full wele
 With orfraies^x laid was everie dele,
 And purtraied in the ribaninges^y
 Of dukis stories and of kinges;
 And with a bend^z of gold taffiled,
 And knoppis^a fine of gold amiled^b.

^a De pourpre fut le vestement
 A RICHESSE, si noblement,
 Qu'en tout le monde n'eust plus bel,
 Mieux fait, ne aussi plus nouvel:
 Pourtraictes y furent d'orfroys
 Hystories d'empereurs et roys.
 Et encores y avoit-il
 Un ouvrage noble et subtil;
 A noyaux d'or au col fermoit,
 Et a bendes d'azur tenoit:
 Noblement eut le chief paré
 De riches pierres decoré
 Qui gettoient moult grant clarté,
 Tout y estoit bien assorté.
 Puis eut une riche sainture
 Sainte par dessus sa vesture:
 Le boucle d'une pierre fu,
 Grosse et de moult grant vertu
 Celluy qui sur soy le protoit
 De tous venins garde estoit.—
 D'autre pierre fut le mordans
 Qui guerissoit du mal des dens.
 Cest pierre portoit bon cur,
 Qui l'avoit pouvoit estre assure
 De sa santé et de sa vei,
 Quant à jeun il l'avoit vei:
 Les cloux furent d'or epuré,
 Par dessus le tiffu doré,
 Qui estoient grans et pesans,
 En chascun avoit deux befans.

Si eut avecques a Richesse
 Uns cadre d'or mis sur la tresse,
 Si riche, si plaisant, et si bel,
 Qu'onques ou ne veit le pareil:
 De pierres estoit fort garny,
 Precieuses et aplanay,
 Qui bien en voudroit deviser,
 On ne les pouvoit pas priser
 Rubis, y eut saphirs, jagonces,
 Esmérandes plus de cent onces:
 Mais devant eut par grant maistrise,
 Un escarboucle bien assise
 Et le pierre si clere estoit
 Que cil qui devant la mettoit
 Si en pouvoit veoir au besoing
 A foy conduire une lieue loing,
 Telle clarté si en yfoit
 Que Richesse en resplandissoit
 Par tout le corps et par sa face
 Aussi d'autour d'elle la place. v. 1066.
^t "That I lie, or am mad."
^u Like.
^v Parts.
^x Embroidery in gold.
^y Laces laid on robes. Embroideries.
^z Band. Knott.
^a Knobbs. Buttons.
^b Enameled. Enameling, and perhaps
 pictures in enamel, were common in the
 middle

About her neck, of gentle' entaile^c,
 Was set the richè chevefaile^d;
 In which ther was ful grete plente
 Of stonis clere and faire to se.
 RICHESE a girdle had upon
 The bokill^e of it was of ston
 Of vertu grete and mokill^f might,
 For who so bare the ston so bright
 Of venim durst him nothing doubt
 While he the ston had him about.—
 The mordaunt^g wrought in noble guise
 Was of a ston ful precious,
 That was so fin and vertuous
 That whole a man it couth ymake
 Of palsie, and of the tothe ake:
 And yet the ston had soche a grace
 That he was fikre^h in evvrie place
 All thilkè daie not blinde to bene
 That fasting might that ston sene.
 The barrisⁱ were of gold full fine
 Upon a tissue of fattin,
 Full hevie, grete, and nothing light,
 In everiche was a besaunt wight^k.

middle ages. From the Testament of Joh. de Foxle, knight, Dat. apud Bramhill Co. Southampt. Nov. 5. 1378. "Item lego domino abbati de Waltham unum annulum auri grossi, cum una saphiro infixâ, et nominibus trium regum [of Cologne] sculptis in eodem annulo. Item lego Margarite forori mee unam tabulam argenti deaurati et amelitam, minorem de duabus quas habeo, cum diversis ymaginibus sculptis in eadem. — Item lego Margerie uxori Johannis de Wilton unum monile auri, cum S. litera sculpta et amelita in eodem." Registr. Wykeham, Episc. Winton. P. ii. fol. 24. See also Dugd. Bar. i. 234. a.

^c Of good workmanship, or carving.

From *Intagliare*. Ital.

^d Necklace.

^e Buckle.

^f Muckel. Great.

^g Tongue of a buckle. *Merdeo*. Lat.

^h Certain.

ⁱ I cannot give the precise meaning of *Barris*, nor of *Cloux* in the French. It seems to be part of a buckle. In the wardrobe-roll, quoted above, are mentioned, "One hundred garters cum boucles, barris, et pendentibus de argento." For which were delivered, "ccc barrs argenti." An. 21. Edw. iii.

^k "The weight of a besant." A byzant was a species of gold-coin, stamped at *Byzantium*. A wedge of gold.

Upon

Upon the tressis of RICHESSE
 Was sett a circle of noblesse,
 Of brende¹ gold, that full light yshone,
 So faire, trowe I, was nevir none.
 But he were konning for the nones^m
 That could devisin all the stones,
 That in the circle shewin clere,
 It is a wonder thing to here:
 For no man could or praiseⁿ, or gesse,
 Of hem the value or richesse:
 Rubies ther were, saphirs, ragounces^o,
 And emeraudes more than two ounces:

¹ Burnished.

^m "Well-skilled in these things."

ⁿ Appraise. Value.

^o The gem called a *Jacinth*. We should read, in Chaucer's text, *Jagounces* instead of *Ragounces*, a word which never existed; and which Speght, who never consulted the French *Roman de la Rose*, interprets merely from the sense of the context, to be "A kind of precious stone." Gloss. Ch. in V. The knowledge of precious stones was a grand article in the natural philosophy of this age: and the medical virtue of gems, alluded to above, was a doctrine much inculcated by the Arabian naturalists. Chaucer refers to a treatise on gems, called the *LAPIDARY*, famous in that time. *House of Fame*, L. ii. v. 260.

And thei were sett as thicke of ouchis
 Fine, of the finist stonis faire

That men *redin* in the *LAPIDAIRE*.

Montfaucon, in the royal library at Paris, recites, "Le *LAPIDAIRE*, de la vertu des pierres." Catal. MSS. p. 794. This I take to be the book here referred to by Chaucer. Henry of Huntingdon wrote a book *De Gemmis*. He flourished about 1145. Tann. Bibl. p. 395. See a Greek Treatise, Du Cange, Gloss. Gr. Barb. ii. Ind. Auctor, p. 37. col. 1. In the Cotton library is a Saxon Treatise on precious stones. *TIBER. A.* 3. liii. fol. 98. The writing is more ancient than the conquest. See *supr.* p. 10. *SECT. I.* Pelloutier men-

tions a Latin poem of the eleventh century on Precious Stones, written by Marbode bishop of Rennes, and soon afterwards translated into French verse. Mem. Lang. Celt. part. i. vol. i. ch. xiii. p. 26. The translation begins,

Evax fut un mult riche reis
 Lu reigné tint d' Arabeis.

It was printed in *OEUVRES* de Hildebert Eveque du Mons, edit. Ant. Beaugendre, col. 1638. This may be reckoned one of the oldest pieces of French versification. A manuscript *De Speciebus Lapidum*, occurs twice in the Bodleian library, falsely attributed to one Adam Nidzarde, Cod. Digb. 28. f. 169.—Cod. Laud. C. 3. *Princ.* "Evax rex Arabum legitur scripsisse." But it is, I think, Marbode's book above-mentioned. Evax is a fabulous Arabian king, said to have written on this subject. Of this Marbode, or Marbodeus, see Ol. Borrich. *Diss. Acad. de Poet.* pag. 87. §. 78. edit. Francof. 1683. 4°. His poem was published, with notes, by Lampridius Alardus. The eastern writers pretend, that king Solomon, among a variety of physiological pieces, wrote a book on Gems; one chapter of which treated of those precious stones, which resist or repel evil Genii. They suppose that Aristotle stole all his philosophy from Solomon's books. See *Fabric. Bibl. Gr.* xiii. 387. seq. And i. p. 71. Compare Herbelot, *Bibl. Oriental.* p. 962. b. *Artic. KETAB alahgiar.* seq.

But

But all before full subtilly
 A fine carboncle set sawe I:
 The stone so clere was and so bright,
 That al so fone as it was night,
 Men mightin se to go for nede,
 A mile or two, in length or brede;
 Soche light ysprang out of the stone,
 That RICHESSE wondir bright yshone
 Both on her hedde and all hir face
 And eke about her all the place^p.

The attributes of the portrait of MIRTH are very expressive.

Of berde unnethe had he nothing³,
 For it was in the firste spring:
 Ful young he was and merie⁴ of thought,
 And in samette⁵ with birdis wrought,
 And with golde bete ful fetously,
 His bodie was clad full richely;
 Wrought was his robe in straunge gife,
 And all to flittered⁶ for queintise,
 In many a place lowe and hie,
 And shod he was, with grete maistrise,
 With shone decopid⁷ and with lace,
 By drurie⁸ and eke by solace;

^p v. 1071.

³ Et si n'avoit barbe a menton
 Si non petit poil follaton;
 Il etoit jeune damoyseaulx;
 Son bauldrier fut portrait d'oiseaulx
 Qui tout etoit è or batu,
 Tres richement estoit vestu
 D'un robe moult desgyfée,
 Qui fut en maint lieu incisée,
 Et decouppée par quointise,
 Et fut chaussée par mignotise
 D'un souliers decouppés à las
 Par joyeufete et foulas,

Et fa neye luy fist chapeau
 De roses gracieux et beau. v. 832.

⁴ *Samite*. Sattin. Explained above.

⁵ Cut and flathed.

⁶ Cut or marked with figures. From
Decouper, Fr. To cut. Thus the parish
 clerk Abfolon, in the *Miller's Tale*, v. 210.
 p. 26. Urr.

With Poulis windowes carven on his shose.

I suppose *Poulis windowes* was a cant phrase
 for a fine device or ornament.

⁸ Modesty.

His

His lefe * a rofin chapelet
Had made and on his hedde it fet *.

FRANCHISE is a no less attractive portrait, and sketched with equal grace and delicacy.

And next him daunfid dame FRANCHISE ^γ,
Arayid in ful noble guise.
She n'as not broune ne dunne of hewe,
But white as snowe ifallin newe,
Her nose was wrought at point devise ^z,
For it was gentill and tretise ^z,
With eyin glad and browis bent,
Her hare down to her helis went ^z:
Simple she was as dove on tre,
Ful debonaire of hart was she ^β.

The personage of DANGER is of a bolder cast, and may serve as a contrast to some of the preceding. He is supposed suddenly to start from an ambuscade; and to prevent Bialcoil, or *Kind Reception*, from permitting the lover to gather the rose of beauty.

With that anon out start DANGERE ^c,
Out of the place where he was hidde;
His malice in his chere was kidde ^d;

* Mistres. * v. 833.
γ Apres tous ceulx estoit FRANCHISE,
Qui ne fut ne brune ne bise;
Ains fut comme la neige blanche
Courtoise estoit, joyeuse et franche,
Le nez avoit long et tretis
Yeulx vers rins, soureils faitis,
Les cheveulx eut tres-blons et longs,
Simple feut comme les coulons.
Le cuer eut doulx et debonnaire. v. 1190.
z With the utmost exactness.
z All the females of this poem have grey eyes and yellow hair. One of them is said to have "Her eyen graie as is a faucon." v. 546. Where the original word, translated *graie*, is *vers*. v. 546. We have this colour again, Orig. v. 822. "Les yeulx eut

"*vers*." This too Chaucer translates, "Her eyin graie." 862. The same word occurs in the French text before us, v. 1195. This comparison was natural and beautiful, as drawn from a very familiar and favourite object in the age of the poet. Perhaps Chaucer means "grey as a falcon's eyes."
β v. 1211.
c A tant faillit villain DANGERE,
De là on il estoit muee;
Grant fut, noir et tout hericè
S'ot, les yeulx rouges comme feux,
Le vis froncè, le nez hydeux
Et scerie tout forcenez. v. 2959.
d "Was discovered by his behaviour, or "countenance." Perhaps we should read *cheke*, for *chere*.

His

Full grete he was, and blacke of hewe,
 Sturdie and hideous whofo him knewe;
 Like sharpe urchons^e his heere was grow,
 His eyes red sparcling as fire glow,
 His nose frouncid^f full kirkid^g stoode,
 He come criande^h as he were woodeⁱ.

Chaucer has enriched this figure. The circumstance of DANGER's hair standing erect like the prickles on the urchin or hedge-hog, is his own, and finely imagined.

Hitherto specimens have been given from that part of this poem which was written by William de Lorris, its first inventor. Here Chaucer was in his own walk. One of the most striking pictures in the style of allegorical personification, which occurs in Chaucer's translation of the additional part, is much heightened by Chaucer, and indeed owes all its merit to the translator; whose genius was much better adapted to this species of painting than that of John of Meun, the continuator of the poem.

With her, Labour and eke Travaile^k,
 Lodgid bene, with forowe and wo,
 That nevir out of her court go.
 Pain and Distresse, Sicknesse and Ire,
 And Melanc'ly that angry fire,
 Ben of her palais^l senators;
 Groning and Grutching her herbegeors^m;
 The day and night her to tourment,
 With cruill deth thei her present,

^e *Urchins.* Hedge-hogs.

^f Contracted.

^g *Crooked.* Turned upwards.

^h "Crying as if he was mad."

ⁱ v. 3130.

^k Travaile et douleur la hebergent,
 Mais ill le lient et la chargent,

Que mort prochaine luy presentent,

Et talent de seq repentir;

Tant luy sont de beaux sentir;

Adonc luy vient en remembrance,

En cest tardive preference,

Quant et se voit foible et chenuë. v. 4733-

^l Palace.

^m Chamberlains.

D d d

And

And tellin her erliche^a and late,
That DETH stondith armid at her gate.
Then bring they to remembraunce,
The foly dedes of hir enfance^o.

The fiction that Sickness, Melancholy, and other beings of the like sort, were counsellors in the palace of OLD AGE, and employed in telling her day and night, that "DEATH" stood *armed* at her gate," was far beyond the sentimental and satirical vein of John of Meun, and is conceived with great vigour of imagination.

Chaucer appears to have been early struck with this French poem. In his DREME, written long before he begun this translation, he supposes, that the chamber in which he slept was richly painted with the story of the ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE^p. It is natural to imagine, that such a poem must have been a favorite with Chaucer. No poet, before William of Lorris, either Italian or French, had delineated allegorical personages in so distinct and enlarged a style, and with such a fullness of characteristical attributes: nor had descriptive poetry selected such a variety of circumstances, and disclosed such an exuberance of embellishment, in forming agreeable representations of nature. On this account, we are surprised that Boileau should mention Villon as the first poet of France who drew form and order from the chaos of the old French romancers.

Villon sçeut le PREMIER, dans ces siècles grossiers
Debrouïller l'ART CONFUS de nos vieux ROMANCIERS^q.

But the poetry of William of Lorris was not the poetry of Boileau.

^a Early.

^o v. 4994.

^p v. 322. Chaucer alludes to this poem

in THE MARCHAUNT'S TALE, v. 1548.
p. 72. Urr.

^q Art. Poet. ch. i. He died about the year 1456.

That

That this poem should not please Boileau, I can easily conceive. It is more surprising that it should have been censured as a contemptible performance by Petrarch, who lived in the age of fancy. Petrarch being desired by his friend Guy de Gonzague to send him some new piece, sent the ROMAN DE LA ROSE. With the poem, instead of an encomium, he returned a severe criticism; in which he treats it as a cold, inartificial, and extravagant composition: as a proof, how much France, who valued this poem as her chief work, was surpassed by Italy in eloquence and the arts of writing'. In this opinion we must attribute something to jealousy. But the truth is, Petrarch's genius was too cultivated to relish these wild excursions of imagination: his favorite classics, whom he revived, and studied with so much attention, ran in his head. Especially Ovid's ART OF LOVE, a poem of another species, and evidently formed on another plan; but which Petrarch had been taught to venerate, as the model and criterion of a didactic poem on the passion of love reduced to a system. We may add, that although the poem before us was founded on the visionary doctrines and refinements concerning love invented by the Provençal poets, and consequently less unlikely to be favourably received by Petrarch, yet his ideas on that delicate subject were much more Platonic and metaphysical.

* See Petrarch. Carm. L. i. Ep. 30.

D d d 2

S E C T.