

LADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS

Various

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BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Various

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 - VII. EPITAPH
 - NOTES

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A BALLAD OF FRANCOIS VILLON

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

Bird of the bitter bright grey golden morn
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shad as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for they starveling peers
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.
—Algernon Charles Swinburne

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BALLADS FROM FRANCOIS VILLON

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON
THREE TRANSLATIONS BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

I. THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human?...
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Heloise, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such a dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine?...
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaid,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then?...
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Save with thus much for an overword,—
But where are the snows of yester-year?

II. TO DEATH, OF HIS LADY

Death, of thee do I make my moan,
Who hadst my lady away from me,
Nor wilt assuage thine enmity
Till with her life thou hast mine own;
For since that hour my strength has flown.
Lo! What wrong was her life to thee, Death?

Two we were, and the heart was one;
Which now being dead, dead I must be,
Or seem alive as lifelessly
As in the choir the painted stone, Death!

III. HIS MOTHER'S SERVICE TO OUR LADY

Lady of heaven and earth, and therewithal
Crowned Empress of the nether clefts of Hell,—
I, thy poor Christian, on thy name do call,
Commending me to thee, with thee to dwell,
Albeit in nought I be commendable
Such mercies as thy sovereign mercies are;
Without the which (as true words testify)
No soul can reach thy heaven so fair and far.
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

Unto thy Son say thou that I am His,
And to me graceless make Him gracious.
Sad Mary of Egypt lacked not of that bliss,
Nor yet the sorrowful clerk Theophilus,
Whose bitter sins were set aside even thus
Though to the Fiend his bounden service was.
Oh help me, lest in vain for me should pass
(Sweet Virgin that shalt have no loss thereby!)
The blessed Host and sacring of the Mass..
Even in this faith I choose to live and die.

A pitiful poor woman, shrunk and old,
I am, and nothing learn'd in letter-lore.
Within my parish-cloister I behold
A painted Heaven where harps and lutes adore,
And eke an Hell whose damned folk see the full sore:
One bringeth fear, the other joy to me.
That joy, great Goddess, make thou mine to be,—
Thou of whom all must ask it even as I;
And that which faith desires, that let it see.
For in this faith I choose to live and die.

O excellent Virgin Princess! Thou didst bear
King Jesus, the most excellent comforter,
Who even of this our weakness craved a share
And for our sake stooped to us from on high,
Offering to death His young life sweet and fair.
Such as He is, Our Lord, I Him declare,
And in this faith I choose to live and die.

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

TEN TRANSLATIONS BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

**I. THE COMPLAINT OF THE FAIR
ARMOURESS**

I

Meseemeth I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said;
'Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art ever fain;
Who holdeth me? who? Would God I were dead!
Would God I were well dead and slain!

II

'Lo, thou has broken the sweet yoke
That my high beauty held above
All priests and clerks and merchant-folk;
There was not one but for my love
Would give me gold and gold enough,
Though sorrow his very heart had riven,
To win from me such wage thereof
As now no thief would take if given.

III

I was right chary of the same,
God wot it was my great folly,
For love of one sly knave of them,
Good store of that same sweet had he;
For all my subtle wiles, perdie,
God wot I loved him well enow;
Right evilly he handled me,
But he loved well my gold, I trow.

IV

'Though I gat bruises green and black,
I loved him never the less a jot;
Though he bound burdens on my back,
If he said "Kiss me, and heed it not,"
Right little pain I felt, God wot,
When that foul thief's mouth, found so sweet,
Kissed me—Much good thereof I got!
I keep the sin and the shame of it.

V

'And he died thirty year ago.
I am old now, no sweet thing to see;
By God, though, when I think thereon,
And of that good glad time, woe's me,
And stare upon my changed body
Stark naked, that has been so sweet,
Lean, wizen, like a small dry tree,
I am nigh mad with the pain of it.

VI

'Where is my faultless forehead's white,
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair,
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air;
The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
The small carved ears of shapliest growth,
Chin dimpling, colour good to wear,
And sweet red splendid kissing mouth?

VII

'The shapely slender shoulders small,

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
Fit for all amorous masteries;
*** ***, ***, ***(Ces larges rains, ce sadinet)
***** ***(Assis sur grosses fermes cuisses,)
** * ***(Dedens son petit jardinet?)

VIII

'A writhled forehead, hair gone grey,
Fallen eyebrows, eyes gone blind and red,
Their laughs and looks all fled away,
Yea, all that smote men's hearts are fled;
The bowed nose, fallen from goodlihead;
Foul flapping hears like water–flags;
Peaked chin, and cheeks all waste and dead,
And lips that are two skinny rags:

IX

'Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! All fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin;
** ***, ***(Du sadinet, fy! Quant des cuisses)
** ***, ***(Cuisses ne sont plus, mais cuissetes)
**** ***, ***(Grivelees comme saulcisses.)

X

'So we make moan for the old sweet days,
Poor old light women, two or three
Squatting above the straw–fire's blaze,
The bosom crushed against the knee,
Like fagots on a heap we be,
Round fires soon lit, soon quenched and done;
And we were once so sweet, even we!

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Thus fareth many and many a one.'

II. A DOUBLE BALLAD OF GOOD COUNSEL

Now take your fill of love and glee,
And after balls and banquets hie;
In the end ye'll get no good for fee,
But just heads broken by and by;
Light loves make beasts of men that sigh;
They changed the faith of Solomon,
And left not Samson lights to spy;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Sweet Orpheus, lord of minstrelsy,
For this with flute and pipe came nigh
The danger of the dog's heads three
That ravening at hell's door doth lie;
Fain was Narcissus, fair and shy,
For love's love lightly lost and won,
In a deep well to drown and die;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

Sardana, flower of chivalry,
Who conquered Crete with horn and cry,
For this was fain a maid to be
And learn with girls the thread to ply;
King David, wise in prophecy,
Forgot the fear of God for one
Seen washing either shapely thigh;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

For this did ammon, craftily
Feigning to eat of cakes of rye,
Deflower his sister fair to see,
Which was foul incest; and hereby
Was Herod moved, it is no lie,
To lop the head of Baptist John
For dance and jig and psaltery;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Next of myself I tell, poor me,
How thrashed like clothes at wash was I
Stark naked, I must needs agree;
Who made me eat so sour a pie
But Katherine of Vaucelles? Thereby
Noé took third part of that fun;
Such wedding-gloves are ill to by;
Good luck has he that deals with none!

But for that young man fair and free
To pass those young maids lightly by,
Nay, would you burn him quick, not he;
Like broom-horsed witches though he fry,
They are sweet as civet in his eye;
But trust them, and you're fooled anon;
For white or brown, and low or high,
Good luck has he that deals with none!

III. FRAGMENT ON DEATH

And Paris be it or Helen dying,
Who dies soever, dies with pain.
He that lacks breath and wind for signing,
His gall bursts on his heart; and then
He sweats, God knows what sweat! Again,
No man may ease him of his grief;
Child, brother, sister, none were fain
To bail him thence for his relief.

Death makes him shudder, swoon, wax pale,
Nose bend, veins stretch, and breath surrender,
Neck swell, flesh soften, joints that fail
Crack their strained nerves and arteries slender.
O woman's brody found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?
Yes; or pass quick into the skies.

**IV. BALLAD OF THE LORDS OF OLD
TIME**

(AFTER THE FORMER ARGUMENT)

What more? Where is the third calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alfonso king of Aragon,
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine?
And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

The Scot too, king of mount and mist,
With half his face vermilion,
Men tell us, like an amethyst
From brow to chin that blazed and shone;
The Cypriote king of old renown,
Alas! And that good king of Spain,
Whose name I cannot think upon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

No more to say of them I list;
'Tis all but vain, all dead and done:
For death may no man born resist,
Nor make appeal when death comes on.
I make yet one more question;
Where's Lancelot, king of far Bohain
Where's he whose grandson called him son?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

Where is Guesclin, the good Breton?
The lord of the eastern mountain-chain,
And the good late duke of Alençon?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

V. BALLAD OF THE WOMEN OF PARIS

Albeit the Venice girls get praise
For their sweet speech and tender air,
And though the old women have wise ways
Of chaffering for amorous ware,
Yet at my peril dare I swear,
Search Rome, where God's grace mainly tarries,
Florence and Savoy, everywhere,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

The Naples women, as folk prattle,
Are sweetly spoken and subtle enough:
German girls are good at tattle,
And Prussians make their boast thereof;
Take Egypt for the next remove,
Or that waste land the Tartar harries,
Spain or Greece, for the matter of love,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Breton and Swiss know nought of the matter,
Gascony girls or girls of Toulouse;
Two fishwomen with a half-hour's chatter
Would shut them up by threes and twos;
Calais, Lorraine, and all their crews,
(Names enow the made song marries)
England and Picardy, search them and choose,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Prince give praise to our French ladies
For the sweet sound their speaking carries;
'Twixt Rome and Cadiz many a maid is,
But good girl's lip out of Paris.

**VI. BALLAD WRITTEN FOR A
BRIDEGROOM**

WHICH VILLON GAVE TO A GENTLE-
MAN NEWLY MARRIED TO SEND
TO HIS WIFE WHOM HE HAD WON
WITH THE SWORD

At daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
No whit for grief, but noble heart and high,
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and sprigs,
And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh;
Such good I wish you! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get;
Know that Love writes it in his book; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try;
Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit or fume of jealousy,
You sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke; such power sits in your eye.
Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry;
This is the end for which me twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget,
Shall never be: like trust in you put I:
This is the end for which we twain are met.

**VII. BALLAD AGAINST THE ENEMIES
OF FRANCE**

May he fall in with beasts that scatter fire,
Like Jason, when he sought the fleece of gold,
Or change from man to beast three years entire,
As King Nebuchadnezzar did of old;
Or else have times as shameful and as bad
As Trojan folk for ravished Helen had;
Or gulfed with Proserpine and Tantalus
Let hell's deep fen devour him dolorous,
With worse to bear than Job's worst sufferance,
Bound in his prison-maze with Dædalus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May he four months, like bitterns in the mire,
Howl with head downmost in the lakesprings cold
Or to bear harness like strong bulls for hire
To the Great Turk for money down be so!
Or thirty years like Magdalen live sad,
With neither wool nor web of linen clad;
Drown like Narciss', or swing down pendulous
Like Absalom with locks luxurious,
Or liker Judas fallen to reprobance;
Or find such death as Simon sorcerous,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

May the old times come of fierce Octavian's ire,
And in his belly molten cold be told;
May he like Victor in the mill expire,
Crush between moving millstones on him rolled,
Or in deep sea drenched breathless, more adrad
Than in the whale's bulk Jonas, when God bade:
From Phæbus' light, from Juno's treasure-house
Drive, and from joys of Venus amorous,
And cursed of God most high to the utterance,
As was the Syrian king Antiochus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

ENVOY

Prince, may the bright-winged brood of Æolus
To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous
Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,
For worthless is he to get good of us,
Who could wish evil to the state of France!

VIII. THE DISPUTE OF THE HEART AND
BODY OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

Who is this I hear!—Lo, this is I, thine heart,
That holds on merely now by a slender string.
Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart,
The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing,
Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—
Yea, and for what?—For that thy sense found sweet.—
What irks it thee?—I feel the sting of it.—
Leave me at peace.—Why?—Nay now, leave me at peace;
I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

What are thou, trow?—Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—
Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,
Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—
Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with flies,
I can make out.—No more?—Nay, in no wise.
Shall I begin again the count of these?—
Thou are undone.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.
Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,
Then might'st thou plead this pretext with thine heart;
But if thou know not good from evil a whit,
Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,
Or shame, not honour, gives thee most content.
What canst thou answer to this argument?—
When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—
God! What good luck!—Thou art over eloquent.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill?—From sorrow and not from sin.
When Saturn packed my wallet up for me
I well believe he put these ills therein.—
Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee?
Her now the wise king's counsel; thus saith he;
All power upon the stars a wise man hath;
There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—
Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

What say'st thou?—Truly this is all my faith.—
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Wouldst thou live still?—God help me that I may!—
Then thou must—What? turn penitent and pray?—
Read always—What?—Grave words and good to say;
Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.

**IX. EPISTLE IN FORM OF A BALLAD
TO HIS FRIENDS**

Have pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace!
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn–tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace,
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle–ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
And run like folk light–witted as ye be
And have in hand nor current coin nor base,
Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
Rymers of lays and roundels sung and read,
Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed;
Your poor old friend, what will you leave him there?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
Come and behold him in this piteous case,
Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
But only God in heaven; behold his face
Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
Which makes his teeth like rakes; and when he hath fed
With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
With board nor stool, but low on earth instead;
Your poor old friend, what will you leave him there?

Princes afore–named, old and young foresaid,
Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,
And hoist me in some basket up with care:
So swine will help each other ill bested,
For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

X. THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND
HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE
HANGED ALONG WITH THEM

Men, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men yet give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; yet know that all alive
Have not wit always to walk righteously;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows; never are we free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall.
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pay to God that he forgive us all.

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

**SEVEN TRANSLATIONS BY JOHN
PAYNE**

I. BALLAD OF OLD-TIME LORDS

No. 2

I

Where are the holy apostles gone,
Alb-clad and amice-tired and stoled
With the sacred tippet and that alone,
Wherewith, when he waxeth over bold,
The foul fiend's throttle they take and hold?
All must come to the self-same bay;
Sons and servants, their days are told:
The wind carries their like away.

II

Where is he now that held the throne
Of Constantine with the hands of gold?
And the King of France, o'er all kings known
For grace and worship that was extolled,
Who convents and churches manifold
Built for God's service? In their day
What of the honour they had? Behold,
The wind carries their like away.

III

Where are the champions every one,
The Dauphins, the counsellors young and old?
The barons of Salins, Dôl, Dijon,
Vienne, Grenoble? They all are cold.
Or take the folk under their banners enrolled,—
Pursuivants, trumpeters, heralds, (hey!
How they fed of the fat and the flagon trolled!)

BALLADS DONE INTO ENGLISH FROM THE FRENCH OF FRANCOIS VILLON

The wind carries their like away.

ENVOI

Princes to death are all foretold,
Even as the humblest of their array:
Whether they sorrow or whether they scold,
The wind carries their like away.

**II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAIR
HELM-MAKER TO THE LIGHT
O' LOVES**

I

Now think on't, Nell the glover fair,
That wont my scholar once to be,
And you, Blanche Slippermaker, there,
Your case in mine I'd have you see:
Look all to right and left take ye;
Forbear no man; for trulls that bin
Old have nor course nor currency,
No more than money that's call in.

II

You, Sausage-huckstress debonair,
That dance and trip it brisk and free,
And Guillemette Upholstress, there,
Look you transgress not Love's decree:
Soon must you shut up shop, perdie;
Soon old you'll grow, faded and thin,
Worth, like some old priest's visnomy,
No more than money that's called in.

III

Jenny the hatter, have a care
Lest some false lover hamper thee;
And Kitty Spurmaker, beware;
Deny no man that proffers fee;
For girls that are not bright o' blee
Men's scorn and not their service win:
Foul eld gets neither love nor gree,
No more than money that's called in.

ENVOI

Wenches, give ear and list (quo' shee)
Wherefore I weep and make this din;
'Tis that there is no help for me,
No more than money that's called in.

**III. SEEMLY LESSON OF VILLON TO
THE GOOD-FOR-NOUGHTS**

I

Fair sons, you're wasting, ere you're old,
The fairest rose to you that fell.
You, that like birdlime take and hold,
When to Montpipeau or Ruel
(My clerks) you wander, keep you well:
For of the tricks that there he played,
Thinking to 'scape a second spell
Colin of Cayeux lost his head.

II

No trifling game is this to play,
Where one stakes soul and body too:
If losers, no remorse can stay
A shameful death from ending you;
And even the winner, for his due,
Hath not a Dido to his wife.
Foolish and lewd I hold him who
Doth for so little risk his life.

III

Now all of you to me attend:
Even a load of wine, folk say,
With drinking at last comes to an end,
By fire in winter, in woods in May.
If you have money, it doth not stay,
But this way and that it wastes amain:
What does it profit you, any way?
Ill-gotten good is nobody's gain.

**IV. BALLAD OF GOOD DOCTRINE TO
THOSE OF ILL LIFE**

I

Peddle indulgences, as you may:
Cog the dice for your cheating throws:
Try if counterfeit coin will pay,
At risk of roasting at last, like those
That deal in treason. Lie and glose,
Rob and ravish: what profits it?
Who gets the purchase, do you suppose?
Taverns and wenches, every whit.

II

Rhyme, rail, wrestle and cymbals play:
Flute and fool it in mummer's shows:
Along with the strolling players stray
From town to city, without repose;
Act mysteries, farces, imbroglios:
Win money at gleek or a lucky hit
At the pins: like water, away it flows;
Taverns and wenches, every whit.

III

Turn from your evil courses I pray,
That smell so foul in a decent nose:
Earn your bred in some honest way.
If you have no letters, nor verse nor prose,
Plough or groom horses, beat hemp or toze.
Enough shall you have if you think but fit:
But cast not your wage to each wind that blows;
Taverns and wenches, every whit.

ENVOI

Dougllets, pourpoints and silken hose,
Gowns and linen, woven or knit,
Ere your wede's worn, away it goes;
Taverns and wenches, every whit.

**V. BALLAD CRYING ALL FOLK
MERCY**

I

Freres, be they white or be they grey;
Nuns, mumpers, chanters awry that tread
And clink their pattens on each highway;
Lackeys and handmaids, apparellèd
In tight-fitting surcoats, white and red;
Gallants, who boots o'er their ankles fall.
That vaunt and ruffle it unadread;
I cry folk mercy, one and all.

II

Wantons who all their charms display,
That so more custom to them be led,
Brawlers and jugglers and tumblers gay;
Clowns with their apes and carpet spread;
Players that whistle for lustihead,
As they trudge it 'twixt village and town and hall;
Gentle and simple, living and dead,—
I cry folk mercy, one and all.

III

Save only the treacherous beasts of prey,
That garred me batten on prison bread
And water, many a night and day.
I fear them not now, no, not a shred;
And gladly (but that I lie a-bed
And have small stomach for strife or brawl)
I'd have my wreak of them. Now, instead,
I cry folk mercy, one and all.

ENVOI

So but the knaves be ribroastéd
And basted well with an oaken maul
Or some stout horsewhip weighted with lead,
I cry folk mercy, one and all.

VI. BALLAD, BY WAY OF ENDING

I

Here is ended (both great and small)
Poor Villon's Testament! When he is dead,
Come, I pray, to his funeral,
Whilst the bell tinkles overhead.
Come in cramoizin garmented;
For to Love martyr did he die.
Thereof he swore on his manlihead
Whenas he felt his end drawn nigh.

II

For me, I warrant it true in all;
For of his love, in shameful stead,
He was beaten off, like a bandy-ball.
From here to Roussillon as he fled,
There's ne'er a bramble but tore some shred of hose or jerkin from hip or thigh;
So, without leasing, Villon said,
Whenas eh felt his end draw nigh.

III

In such ill places his life did fall,
He had but a rag when he was sped:
And (yet more luckless) when death did call,
Love's prickle galled him; its wounds still bled
In him. His heart was heavy as lead
And salt tears stood in his dying eye:
At his despair we were wonderèd,
Whenas he felt his end draw nigh.

ENVOI

Prince, that art gent as a yearling gled,
Hear what he did with his latest sigh:
He drank a long draught of the vine—juice red,
Whenas he felt his end draw nigh.

VII. EPITAPH

Here lies and slumbers in this place
One whom love wreaked his ire upon:
A scholar, poor of goods and grace,
That hight of old François Villon:
Acre or furrow had he none.
'Tis known his all he gave away;
Bread, tables, tressels, all are gone.
Gallants of him this Roundel say.

ROUNDEL

Æternam, Requiem dona,
Lord God, and everlasting light,
To him who never had, poor wight,
Platter, or aught thereon to lay!
Hair, eyebrows, beard all fallen away,
Like a peeled turnip was his plight.
Ætername Requiem dona.

Exile compelled him many a day
And death at last his breech did smite,
Though, 'I appeal,' with all his might
The man in good plain speech did say.
Æternam Requiem dona.

NOTES

I

The Complaint of the Fair Armouress.

Mr. Swinburne is responsible for the omitted lines.

They are to be found, of course, in all the modern French texts and are rendered into English in Mr. Payne's Villon Society edition. The last three lines of stanza IX have since been turned into English and are given in Swinburne's *Collected Poems*, (London and New York, 1904) Vol. III, p. 136.

II

Fragment on Death.

In the original here follows Villon's masterpiece, the matchless Ballad of the Ladies of Old Time, so incomparably rendered in the marvellous version of Mr. Rossetti; followed in its turn by the succeeding poem, as inferior to its companion as is my attempted translation of it to his triumph in that higher and harder field.—A.C.S.