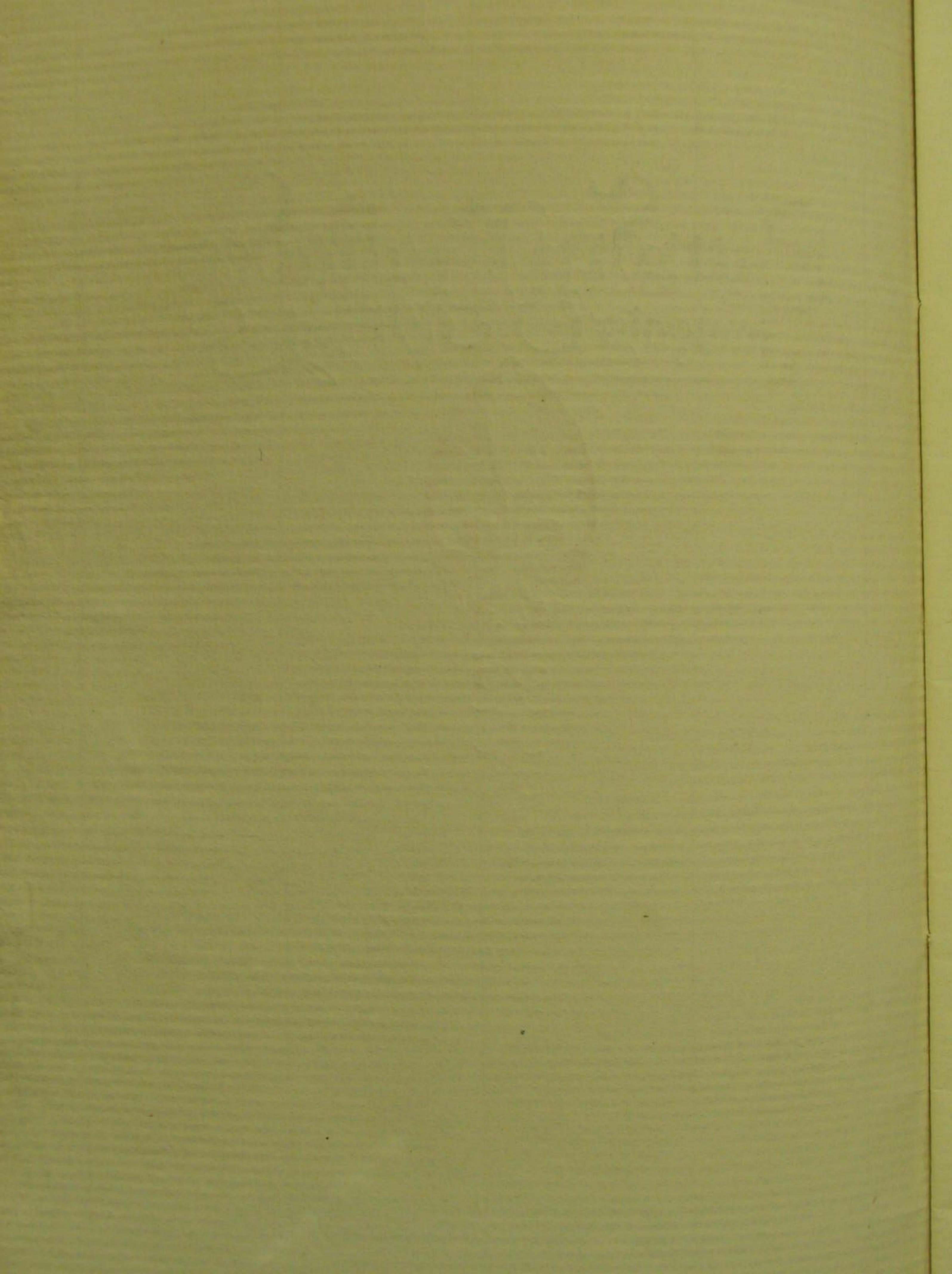


Sundry Ballades
François Villon





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Christmas
1922

x

Lady of Heaven, Regent of the earth,
Empress of all the infernal marshes fell,
Receive me, Thy poor Christian, 'spite my dearth,
In the fair midst of Thine elect to dwell:
Albeit my lack of grace I know full well;
For that Thy grace, my Lady and my Queen,
Aboundeth more than all my misdemean,
Withouten which no soul of all that sigh
May merit Heaven.' Tis sooth I say, for e'en
In this belief I will to live and die.

Villon's Ballade
for his Mother

xi

Say to Thy Son I am His,—that by His birth
And death my sins be all redeemable,—
As Mary of Egypt's dole He changed to mirth
And eke Theophilus', to whom beseech
Quittance of Thee, albeit (so men tell)
To the foul fiend he had contracted been.
Assoilezie me, that I may have no teen,
Maid, that without breach of virginity
Didst bear our Lord that in the Host is seen.
In this belief I will to live and die.

Wiston's Ballade
for his Mother

XXX

A poor old wife I am, and little worth:
Nothing I know, nor letter aye could spell:
Where in the church to worship I fare forth,
I see Heaven limned, with harps and lutes and Hell,
Where damned folks seethe in fire unquenchable.
One doth me fear, the other joy serene:
Grant I may have the joy, O Virgin clean,
To whom all sinners lift their hands on high,
Made whole in faith through Thee their go/between.
In this belief I will to live and die.

ENVOI

Thou didst conceive, Princess most bright of sheen,
Jesus the Lord, that hath nor end nor mean,
Almighty, that, departing Heaven's demesne
To succour us, put on our frailty,
Offering to death His sweet of youth and green:
Such as He is, our Lord He is, I ween!
In this belief I will to live and die.

*Ballade of
Old Time Ladies*

I Tell me where, in what land of shade,
Bides fair flora of Rome, and where
Are Thais and Archipiade,
Cousins german of beauty rare,
And Echo, more than mortal fair,
That, when one calls by river flow
Or marsh, answers out of the air?
But what is become of last year's snow?

II

Where did the learn'd Heloisa vade,
For whose sake Abelard might not spare
(Such dole for love on him was laid)
Manhood to lose and a cowl to wear?
And where is the queen who willed whilere
That Buridan, tied in a sack, should go
Floating down Seine from the Turret/stair?
But what is become of last year's snow?

III

Blanche, too, the lily/white queen, that made
Sweet music as if she a siren were;
Broad/foot Bertha; and Joan the maid,
The good Lorrainer, the English bare

Ballade of Captive to Rouen and burned her there;
Old Time Ladies Beatrix, Eremburge, Alys,—lo!
Where are they, Virgin debonair?
But what is become of last year's snow?

ANATOR

Prince, you may question how they fare
This week, or liefer this year, I trow:
Still shall the answer this burden bear,
But what is become of last year's snow?

x
Where is **C**asixtus, third of the name,
That died in the purple whiles ago,
four years since he to the tiar came?

And the King of Aragon, Alfonso?
The Duke of Bourbon, sweet of show,
And the Duke Arthur of Brittaine?
And Charles the Seventh, the Good? Heigho!
But where is the doughty Charlemaine?

*Gallade of
Old Time Lords*

xi
Likewise the King of Scots, whose shame
Was the half of his face (or folk say so),
Vermeil as amethyst held to the flame,
from chin to forehead all of a glow?
The King of Cyprus, of friend and foe
Renowned; and the gentle King of Spain,
Whose name God 'ield me, I do not know?
But where is the doughty Charlemaine?

xii
Of many more might I ask the same,
Who are but dust that the breezes blow;
But I desist, for none may claim
To stand against Death, that lays all low.

*Ballade of
Old Time Lords*

Yet one more question before I go:
Where is Lancelot, King of Behaine?
And where are his valiant ancestors, trow?
But where is the doughty Charlemaine?

ENDOR

Where is Du Guesclin, the Breton prow?
Where Auvergne's Dauphin and where again
The late good duke of Alençon? Lo!
But where is the doughty Charlemaine?

x
Alies in the milk I know full well:
I know men by the clothes they wear:
I know the walnut by the shell:
I know the foul sky from the fair:
I know the pear-tree by the pear:
I know the worker from the drone
And eke the good wheat from the tare:
I know all save myself alone.

*Ballade of Thing^s
Known & Unknown*

xi
I know the pourpoint by the fell
And by his gown I know the frere:
Master by varlet I can spell:
Nuns by the veils that hide their hair:
I know the sharper and his snare
And fools that fat on cates have grown:
Wines by the cask I can compare:
I know all save myself alone.

xii

I know how horse from mule to tell:
I know the load that each can bear:
I know both Beatrice and Bell:
I know the hazards, odd and pair:

Ballade of Things

Known & Unknown

I know of visions in the air:
I know the power of Peter's throne
And how misled Bohemians were:
I know all save myself alone.

ANUOR

Prince, I know all things: fat and spare,
Ruddy and pale, to me are known
And Death that endeth all our care:
I know all save myself alone.

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