

**THE BOOK OF THE DUKE OF
TRUE LOVERS: NOW FIRST
TRANSLATED FROM THE MIDDLE
FRENCH OF CHRISTINE DE PISAN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649507733

The Book of the Duke of True Lovers: Now First Translated from the Middle French of
Christine De Pisan by Laurence Binyon & Eric R. D. Maclagan

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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LAURENCE BINYON & ERIC R. D. MACLAGAN

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THE BOOK OF THE DUKE
OF TRUE LOVERS: NOW
FIRST TRANSLATED FROM THE
MIDDLE FRENCH OF CHRISTINE
DE PISAN: WITH AN INTRODUC-
TION: BY ALICE KEMP-WELCH. THE
BALLADS RENDERED INTO THE
ORIGINAL METRES BY LAURENCE
BINYON & ERIC R. D. MACLAGAN



CHATTO AND WINDUS : PUBLISHERS
LONDON 1908

ILLUSTRATIONS

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE only two known MSS., both early fifteenth century French, of the love-story here rendered into English prose, are the one in the Bibliothèque Nationale (836), and that in the British Museum (Harley, 4431).

The MS. in the Bibliothèque Nationale forms one of the treasures of the famous collection of MSS. made by Jean, Duc de Berry, the Mecænas of illuminated MSS. At his death it passed into the possession of his daughter Marie, who, by marriage, had become Duchesse de Bourbon. When, in the reign of François I., the Connétable de Bourbon, to whom it had descended, was disgraced, the king seized his books and MSS., and carried them off to Fontainebleau, well pleased to add by any means, righteous or unrighteous, to the treasures of the royal library. Here this MS. and others remained until the reign of

Charles IX., when they were removed to Paris, and placed in the Bibliothèque du Roi, now the world-famous Bibliothèque Nationale.

The MS. in the British Museum has also had an interesting and chequered career. It was originally presented by Christine de Pisan to Isabelle of Bavaria, the queen of Charles VI. of France, whose books and MSS. were, in 1425, acquired by John, Duke of Bedford, Regent of France. It is more than probable that this MS. was amongst these and was brought to England, for the various signatures on the enclosing parchment would certainly seem to indicate that this was the case. Late in the fifteenth century the MS. was sold to one of the most celebrated bibliophiles of the day, Louis of Bruges. After this, there is a blank in its history, until, in the seventeenth century, we find it once more in England, in the possession of Henry, Duke of Newcastle, whose grand-daughter married Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford, the founder of the splendid collection of MSS. and books purchased in 1754 for the British Museum, and now known as the Harleian Collection.

The writer of the story, Christine de Pisan, was one

of the world's many famous women, and one who, by her life and work, created an ideal for woman-kind—that of sweetness and strength. Born in Venice in 1363, she was, when five years of age, taken by her mother to Paris, to join her father, Thomas de Pisan, who had been summoned thither by the king, Charles V., to serve as his astrologer, in which service he remained until the king's death. The Court of Charles V. was, in spite of the constant warfare that troubled his kingdom, at once most cultured and refined, and it was in such surroundings that Christine was brought up. At the age of fifteen she was married to the king's notary and secretary, Etienne de Castel, a gentleman of Picardy, who, however, died some ten years later, leaving her with three children to provide for. Like many another, she turned to letters as both a material and a mental support. She wrote not only purely lyrical poetry, of extraordinary variety and abundance considering that the subject is almost invariably the joys and sorrows of love, sometimes, as she tells us, expressing her own sentiments, sometimes those of others at whose request she wrote, but she also wrote sacred and scientific poems, and moral and