250 Marie de France

Pur quei n'as tun sac deslié?
32 'Jeol l'ai,' fet il, 'trop esparmié.
Jeol te di bien, mezj amereie
Tun sul engin, si jeol l'aveie,
Que ces dunt ai ma puche pleine.
36 'Jeo te vei delivere de peine.'
'Bien me deit,' fet il, 'remembrer
De ceo que jeo ai oí cunter:\nSuvent est ateint li gupiz,
40 Tut seif il quointes par ses diz!
Del menteur avient suvent:
Tut parot il raisnablement,
Sil put li sages entrendre,
44 S'il veut a sa parole entendre.
Del leial humme est mezj creûe,
Une parole e entendue,
E plus put en un grant pleit,
48 Que quanque li mentere feit.

251 Fables

Why haven't you your sack untied?
32 'I've saved too long,' the fox replied;
'I tell you truly I'd prefer
Your single trick, if mine it were,
To all I have in my pouch here.
36 I see that you are safe and clear.'
Said cat, 'I must remember well
And keep in mind what I've heard tell:
A fox will meet his nemesis
40 However smart he claims he is!
With lying men the same is found:
However logical they sound,
A sage can trip them up, if he
44 But listens to them carefully.
An honest man is held more true,
His words more often heeded, too,
More suasive in a legal case
48 Than anything a liar says.

100 Del riche humme ki volt aler utre mer

Uns riches hum voleit aler
Utre mer pur converser.
A Deu priâ qu'il amenast
4 A sauveté, qu'il ne dutast.
Einz qu'il se fust aparciez,
Dedenz la mer est enbatuz.
Lors prie Deus qu'il meint a tere –

100 The Rich Man Who Wished to Cross the Sea

A rich man wished to go one day
Across the sea, a call to pay.
For passage safe, to God he prayed,
4 Also that he'd not be afraid.
Before he realized it, he
Had sailed far out upon the sea.
That God would lead him to the shore
8 He prayed – and that’s all he prayed for.
The more the man did cry and shout,
The more his ship went farther out.
And when the man became aware
12 That God would not fulfil his prayer,
And that to shore he could not come,
He prayed to God His will be done.
After these words, he came to land
16 Exactly where he’d wished and planned.
A wise man should be sensible
And pray to God all powerful
To do with him whate’er His wish:
20 Great goodness then can come from this.
Our needs the Lord can better know
Than hearts can, shifting to and fro.

The Knight and the Old Man

I wish to tell you of a knight,
So heed this lesson I will cite.
The knight met an old man one day
4 And joined with him upon his way.
Thinking that this man’s mind was keen
And he’d to many places been,
The knight wished he’d advise him so:
8 Unto which country should he go?
For he himself had not a clue.
The old man answered him thereto:
He should go seek another land
12 Where he’d be loved by every man.
‘And if I don’t find that,’ he said,
‘Tell me where I can go instead,
Where I can stay for a long time.’
16 The old man wisely answered him,
‘Here’s what I think you ought to do:
Go where they’re all afraid of you.’
‘What if I find no land,’ said he,
20 ‘Where people are afraid of me?’
‘Go where you’ll see no man, and where