

Be·m Platz

Bertran de Born (Provençal)

I love the joyous time of Easter,
which makes the leaves and flowers bloom;
I love to hear the pleasant twitter
of birds whose cheerful little tunes
ring throughout the forest;
I love to see, across the plains,
the tents and the pavilions raised;
it brings me happiness,
to see armed knights and steeds arrayed
upon the field in their brigades.

I love it when the scouts come in
and scatter people and possessions;
I love to see the hosts of men
march in behind them with their weapons;
I love, with all my heart,
to see strong castles under siege,
the ramparts broken down and breached,
to see the grounded guards,
hemmed all around by moats dug deep
with sharpened pales around their brink.

And just as well, I love a lord
when he's the first to join the fight,
armed and fearless upon his horse,
who thus emboldens all his knights
to valiant vassalage.
And when the combat is at hand,
they must be ready, to a man,
to follow without grudge,
for there's no man who's worth a damn
until he's battled hand to hand.

Bright-colored helms, maces and swords,
and shields stabbed through and smashed apart—
we'll see them when we go to war,
and many vassals fighting hard;
and, wandering free, the horses
of all the wounded and the dead.
And when he's gone to battle, let
each man of high importance
think naught but splitting arms and heads—
life in defeat is worse than death.

I tell you, I find less delight
in eating, drinking, and in sleep,
than when I hear them crying "Fight!"
from every side, and hear the shrieks
of horses in the dusk;
and "Help me! Help!" I hear them cry,
and see the small and great alike
fall in the grass and mud,
and see the dead pierced through their sides
by javelins and bannered pikes.

Baron, you'd best give up
your castles, villages and forts,
before you shy away from war.

Minstrel, without a grudge,
to Yay-and-Nay, go say your piece,
to tell him he's too much at peace.