

The Miracle of Beatrice. A Flemish Legend of c. 1300

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Introduction

In mediaeval Europe contacts between language groups were frequent and comparatively easy and a profound spiritual unity prevailed throughout the continent. Everywhere the cultured European lived in a nearly identical atmosphere of religious ardor and was surrounded by similar social institutions and concepts. Of necessity he responded in approximately the same manner to any spiritual or emotional stimulus. Certain literary themes seemed to spring up almost simultaneously in far removed places.

At present universal motives which provoke religious or moral emotion are restricted in numbers; symbols have been differentiated. For instance, Protestant and Catholic literary imagery differ widely, but in the Middle Ages, when every idea radiated from or reverted to the Catholic metaphysical conception of the world, such a universality was possible and effective for many centuries.

The elegant sentimentality of *Lancelot and Blanchefleur* appealed as much to the Italian as to the British nobility; the dire warnings and admonitions contained in *Everyman* were as good a lesson to the Flemings as to the

Germans; and the cynical individualism of *Reynard the Fox* found as favorable an audience in France as in the Netherlands.

Since the authors of the Middle Ages were possessed of little personal vanity, most of their works remained anonymous. Their later copyists had even less the fetishism of authorship and they often generously enlarged the texts with interpolations of sometimes doubtful value.

It is extremely difficult to trace the origin of the most popular mediaeval themes. Ardent philologists, who are most of the time equally ardent nationalists, are wont to claim for their respective countries the real authorship of various literary creations, but everything considered, these energetic efforts, seldom unbiased, are only a *jeu de l'esprit*, an expression of competitive nationalist spirit.

From the literary standpoint, it is far more interesting to establish which version of a certain universal theme surpasses and outshines all the other versions. It is worth while to find out which people in Europe, by passing the grain of a popular tale through the sieve of their sensitivity, have gathered the purest flour. From time to time a tale that was passed from one nation to another in skeleton form is taken up by an artist and handled in such a way as to give it a definite and final shape that helps it over the barriers the centuries keep building up between a work of art and an evolving world.

In doing so, the artist was as little indebted to the original version as a sculptor to his stone: on the contrary, out of an often ludicrous mass, he made a work of art

with a message. It gained power and impetus from the genius of one man and through him from the character of a whole nation. In that manner it crystallized the achievements of an entire country, its philosophy of life, its forms of devotion, its prejudices and its prides. Thus in the great Salt Lake, people dip a cross made of two thin steel wires and take it out a few hours later, transformed into a beautifully shaped white emblem.

The story of Beatrice the vergeress, in its oldest form, is to be found in Caesarius von Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*, written about 1222. It takes the author only a few paragraphs to tell this 'miracle' which he does not pretend to have invented or embellished. It belongs to an impressive compendium of miraculous happenings that Caesarius had compiled in different lands.

In his version, Beatrice, a nun very devoted to the Virgin, is unable to resist the entreaties of a monk; she leaves her convent where she was vergeress, and leads a worldly life with her paramour. After a while he abandons her and she is forced through poverty to become a whore, but she remains devoted to the Virgin and prays to her every day. Years pass and she is moved to go back to her convent. There she discovers that Mary has taken her place to hide her from shame. She resumes her duties, leaving her children to the care of a charitable woman.

This legend belongs to the impressive cycle of tales through which the Church in the thirteenth century tried to foster devotion to the Virgin. Pious tales of this kind were invented and circulated by the hundreds, and the authors cared as little as the public for strict veracity and

scientific historical certainty. The important thing was not that the story had a foundation in reality, but the effect it produced on the listener or the reader. It did not have to be true, but it had to be credible. From the religious point of view it was credible as soon as it impressed on the people's minds the manifold ways in which the intercession of the Virgin could operate in favor of even the most hardened sinners, for pardon was refused only to those who did not want to ask for it.

The fact that most of these legends resorted to miracles as elements of demonstration excluded discussion or doubt. Even if one could question a specific case of divine intervention, one could not, from the standpoint of strict orthodoxy, object to the tale being told. At that time the moral implication of the story was indeed far more important than its location in time and space. The atmosphere of the Middle Ages was impregnated with the idea of continuity and eternity; it was not fragmented as our life is now. It took Christian Europe three more centuries before Erasmus in his *Eulogy of Folly* could openly react against 'that kind of men, ... who love to hear or tell feigned Miracles and strange lies, and are never weary of any tale, though never so long, so it be of Ghosts, Spirits, Goblins, Devils or the like.'

Since Caesarius first wrote it down, the story of Beatrice the nun has spread all over Europe. The catalogue made by Robert Guiette of Flemish, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Icelandic and oriental versions comprises 200 odd numbers from 1222 to 1935. Lope de Vega treated it, Max Reinhardt took it to the stage in

a famous pantomime, Maeterlinck rewrote it in *Soeur Béatrice*, it was filmed twice, it was arranged for the theater in a dozen different ways, it was rewritten in prose and in verse. In an age which looks askance at the idea of miraculous interventions, it was treated by notoriously unbelieving authors: a clear proof that it contained in its naive essence enough human value and charm to carry it to any incredulous or skeptical audience.

Of all these versions, none is superior, none is more rounded and more moving than the version written in Flanders, probably about the end of the thirteenth or the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The only copy extant is a manuscript in the Royal Library at The Hague which was published for the first time in 1841.

When the anonymous poet, who has been tentatively identified as Willem van Assenede, wrote the *Sproke van Beatrijs*, the Netherlandish dialect which was considered the most elegant and the most refined was Flemish. It was only after the separation of the Northern Lowlands and the Southern Belgian provinces in the sixteenth century that the dialect of Holland proper became dominant. Although there are slight differences of vocabulary between Flemish and Dutch, the languages are really identical, and the entire Mediaeval Dutch literature is strictly Flemish. Therefore *Beatrice* belongs to the common heritage of Flemings and Hollanders. It is undoubtedly the gem of Mediaeval Netherlands letters; it is probably the most charming legend of Our Lady known in Western Europe.

In the Flemish version the poet has introduced a number of small changes which show infinite literary skill and

deep psychological insight. The nun Beatrice has been in love with a young knight from early childhood. When she is tempted to renounce her vows, the tempter is logically this man. Neither fasts nor prayers have availed against the call of her blood: she summons the young man and tells him that in a week she will come out to the garden and go away with him. He prepares everything, buys clothes, furs and jewelry (the best that money could buy) and is prompt at the rendez-vous. They leave on horseback, and when day breaks the lover exhibits an untimely ardor. Beatrice rebukes him, remembers with remorse her convent duties, but feels that her love for the knight is mightier than all. They spend seven years in a town and have two very beautiful children. A famine breaks out, the money is gone and the man leaves Beatrice. She does not know any craft and, to keep her children alive, she becomes a prostitute. However, after another seven years she drifts back to her nunnery, desiring to hear from a widow who lives close by how people feel about the vergeress who eloped. To her astonishment she learns that nobody has noticed her absence, and she understands that the Virgin has taken the place she deserted. After many a hesitation and with the encouragement of a heavenly messenger, she finally goes back to her former duties and finds everything exactly as she left it. When a visiting abbot comes to the nunnery, she confesses and tells him the story of the miracle. He is greatly edified and, under veiled circumstances, proclaims to the convent the miracle the Virgin Mary has wrought. He also takes care of the two boys, who are raised in a convent and become 'two

good men.’

The beauty of the Flemish version is not in the miraculous element of the story; it lies in its human significance, in its unerring charm and limpid simplicity. The way in which the struggle of the young woman is described has nothing of the vulgar or commonplace; it evokes sympathy and compassion. The lovers converse from time to time through the latticed window of the convent, but they are unable even to kiss each other once for old friendship's sake. The nun does not rush into her worldly adventure; she resists, but feels that ‘she must give up her conventual garb,’ that she belongs to the world. The forces that drive one to his final destiny are at work in her, and although she fully realizes her sinfulness, she obeys and ‘serves’ the world rather than the Lord. There is nothing Dionysian in her lust; she is reluctant but resigned to what fate seems to expect from her.

Her delicate psychology contrasts with the primitive attitude of the lover. He answers her call, he loads her with gifts and gives her command of the money he took along on the trip, but he is impatient and abrupt, wanting to satisfy his desire at the very first moment of their solitude. The dialogue between the lover and Beatrice, one of the few amorous dialogues in Mediaeval Flemish literature, is one of the most graceful and poetical pages that have come out of the so wrongly called dark ages. Beatrice is indignant at the young man's rash proposition. She calls him a boor for ignoring the gentle art of love and wanting to reduce it to a mere instant satisfaction of lust. A woman and therefore by instinct conservative,

she builds around the demonstration of her affection the protective barrier of a dignified and cozy intimacy. The lover has no other excuse but to blame 'Vrouwe Venus,' the symbol of earthly love. Even in her sin, Beatrice remains a Christian.

Many are the emotional and poetical highlights of this poem, even in the final pages which obviously are not the work of the original author. Every detail is indispensable and charming, every action of Beatrice is psychologically justified and credible. All the time she occupies the foreground. The man remains without a name throughout the poem, but he is not altogether a shadow; he is a weakling, unfaithful and vain, irresponsible and hard, but not a conventional character. Only in the apocryphal conclusion of the poem is Beatrice named; the narrator who completes the story tactlessly breaks the discretion which had protected the nun's secret.

Willem van Assenede, if he wrote this poem, was a very great poet: he loved his subject; he felt that the writer has only one subject, man, which often means woman; he had an eye for nature but he was not overpowered by it. In talking about the lovely scenery of the forest clearing his vocabulary is meager, - the air is 'beautiful and fine,' the trees are 'upright and tall.' The scenery is only a setting for that never exhausted subject: man and his behavior.

Of course he is a devout believer in the Virgin, but he is not didactic about it. The interpolator and finisher of his poem has added some more or less pedantic remarks of his own to tell the reader how the Virgin's

intercession really operates. In the basic text these digressions did probably not appear.

The Flemish *Beatrijs* has been translated into several languages. Robert Guiette produced an exquisite French version in 1930. In English, Harold De Wolf Fuller published a translation in 1910 at the Harvard Cooperative Society, under the title *Beatrice, A Legend of Our Lady*. Couched in archaic, Chaucerian language with a profusion of ‘whysom’s,’ ‘hear ye’s,’ and ‘eftsoon’s,’ it scarcely does justice to the original. Furthermore the translator has purged the text in an excess of modesty which the author would certainly not have understood.

In 1927 Professor Geyl published a translation in London, *The Tale of Beatrice*. It is a good, intelligent job, accurate, but as the translator himself avows in the introduction, a little ‘drier or harsher’ than his rendering of *Lancelot of Denmark*.

This present edition presents the translation made by a great friend of Belgium and of Flemish letters, Professor Adriaan Barnouw of Columbia University. As far as I know, Professor Barnouw is a unique phenomenon; his Dutch translation of the *Canterbury Tales* is a masterpiece of scientific accuracy and literary elegance, but he is no less proficient in English, and the translations he has made of old and modern Dutch and Flemish poetry are extraordinary achievements as well. He has surpassed himself in this rendering of *Beatrice*; it appears so fluent and readable in English that one would scarcely suspect it of being a translation. I am exceedingly grateful to Professor Barnouw for his permission to print his text.

In my opinion, it may be regarded as the definitive English version.

I hope it will be found that Beatrice is a valuable document for the study of life in the Middle Ages, but far more important is the possibility that through this translation the reader may receive the poetical message of a writer of seven centuries ago, who proclaimed with profound knowledge of the human soul that we all need strength and forgiveness and that mercy will be granted us if we ask for it humbly and with a contrite heart.

JAN-ALBERT GORIS

New York, August 23, 1944.

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Editions of the original text, since its first publication by W. J.A. Jonckbloet in 1841, are extremely numerous. Every series of classical Dutch literature and most of the anthologies devoted to Dutch and Flemish poetry contain the text of *Beatrijs*.

The Miracle of Beatrice

VAN dichten comt mi cleine bate;
Die liede raden mi dat ic 't late
Ende minen sin niet en vertare.
Maer om die doghet van Hare,
Die moeder ende maghet es bleven,
Hebb' ic een scone mieracle op heven,
Die God sonder twivel toghede
Marien teren, Diene soghede.
Ic wille beghinnen van ere nonnen
Een ghedichte; God moet mi onnen
Dat ic die poente moet wel geraken
Ende een goet ende daer af maken,
Volcomelijc na der waerheide,
Als mi broeder Ghijsbrecht seide,
Een begheven Willemijn;
Hi vant in die boeke sijn;
Hi was een out, ghedaghet man.

IN writing verse is little gain.
People tell me I should refrain
From wasting thus my weary mind.
Yet, for the flower of womankind,
Who mother was and maid remained,
I have begun a miracle quaint,
Which God, no doubt, showed to our luck
In honor of Mary, who gave Him suck.
It's of a nun I will begin
A tale. God grant me skill to spin
The thread aright and steer its trend
To the moral pointed at the end,
And to tell it truthfully
As brother Gilbert told it me.
He was a cloistered Williamite.
He found it in his books one night.
He was an aged, day-worn man.

DIE nonne, daer ic af began,
Was hovesche ende subtijl van zeden;
Men vint ghene noch heden,
Die haer ghelijct, ic wane,
Van seden ende van ghedane.
Dat ic prisede hare lede,
Sonderlinghe haer scoenhede,
Dat 's een dinc dat niet en dochte.
Ic wille u segghen van wat ambochte
Si plach te wesen langhen tijt
In 't doester daer si droech abijt:
Costersse was si daer,
Dat segg 'ic u al over waer:
Si ne was lat no traghe,
No bi nachte, no bi daghe,
Si was snel te haren werke;
Si plach te ludene in die kerke;
Si ghereide 't licht ende ornament
Ende dede op staen al 't covent.

THE nun of whom my tale began
Had fine manners and courtesy.
Ye would not find one easily,
Nowadays, who was her peer
In gracious demeanor and in cheer.
For me to praise her body were
A thing improper. I would not dare
Give a description of her beauty.
But I will tell what kind of duty
In the convent was assigned to her
Where she wore habit for many a year.
Sacristan was she there.
I tell no lies, I would not dare.
Her work she would never neglect or slight,
Neither by day nor by night.
She did her chores on time and well.
In church she used to toll the bell,
To light the altar and adorn,
And wake the whole convent in the morn.

DESE ioffrouwe en was niet sonder
Der minnen, die groot wonder
Pleecht te werken achter lande.
Bi wilen comt er af scande,
Quale, toren, wedermoet;
Bi wilen bliscap ende goet.
Den wisen maect si oec soe ries,
Dat hi moet bliven in 't verlies,
Ees 't hem lief ofte leet.
Si dwingt sulken, dat hi ne weet
Weder spreken ofte swighen,
Daer hi loen af waent ghecrighen.
Meneghe worpt si onder voet,
Die op staet, als 't haer dunct goet.
Minne maect sulken milde,
Die liever sine ghiften hilde,
Dade hij 't niet bider minnen rade.
Nocht vint men liede soe ghestade,
Wat si hebben, groet oft clene,
Dat hen die minne gheeft ghemene:
Welde, bliscap ende rouwe;
Selke minne heet ic ghetrouwe.
In const u niet gheseggen als,
Hoe vele gheloux ende onghevals
Uter minnen beken ronnen.
Hier omme en darf men niet veronnen
Der nonne, dat si niet en conste ontgaen
Der minnen, die se hilt ghevaen:
Want die duvel altoes begheert
Den mensche te become ende niet en cesseert,

THIS damsel was not without
Love, who worketh all throughout
The world wondrous happenings,
Whence at times sorrow springs,
Shame, wrath, misery,
Sometimes joy and ecstasy.
Love turns wiseman into fool,
So that he knows not how to rule
Himself, whether he like it or not.
A man who in love's power is caught
Knows not whether his profit be
In silence or in rhetoric.
None goes free, by Love subdued,
Unless Love's in a relenting mood.
Love makes a man generous with his pelf
Who would rather keep it for himself.
If not Love prompt him thereto.
Others again are so staunch and true
That all they own, whatever it be,
Is common between them, by Love's decree,
Happiness, gladness, need.
Such love I call true indeed.
I could not tell fully, though,
What happiness and mishap flow
Out of Love's running brook.
Therefore, I pray you, don't rebuke
The nun because she could not escape
Love, who held her in his grip.
For the devil will always plot
To tempt man, and ceases not,

Dach ende nacht, spade ende vroe,
Hi doet er sine macht toe.
Met quaden listen, als hi wel conde,
Becordi se met vleescheliker sonde,
Die nonne, dat si sterven waende.
Gode bat si ende vermaende,
Dat Hi se troeste dore Sine ghenaden.
Si sprac: "Ic ben soe verladen
Met starker minnen ende ghewont,
Dat weet Hi, Dien 't al es cont,
Die niet en es verholen,
Dat mi die crancheit sal doen dolen.
Ic moet leiden een ander leven,
Dit abijt moet ic begheven."

Day and night, early and late,
To do his worst, and lies in wait
With wicked wiles. He did begin
To tempt the nun with carnal sin,
That she thought she would die.
God she prayed insisently
That through His grace He comfort her.
She said, 'I am burdened with heavier
Load of love than I can bear.
He knows Whose eye is everywhere,
For nothing is hidden from His gaze.
Through love I am wandering in a maze.
Another life I must start,
And this habit I must discard.'

NU hoert, hoe 't er na verghinc:
Si sende om den ionghelinc,
Daer si toe hadde grote lieve,
Oetmoedelijc met enen brieve,
Dat hi saen te hare quame,
Daer laghe ane sine vrame.
Die bode ghinc daer de ionghelinc was.
Hi nam den brief ende las,
Die hem sende sijn vriendinne.
Doe was hi blide in sinen sinne!
Hi haest 'em te comen daer.
Sint dat si out waren twaelf iaer,
Dwanc die minne dese twee,
Dat si dogheden menech wee.

NOW hear what after this occurred.
To that yeoman she sent word
For love of whom she pined away.
In humble words she wrote, 'I pray,
Beloved, come soon to me.
I promise it will profit thee.'
She sent her letter by messenger.
The youth who was so dear to her
Read what his beloved wrote.
He was glad with her note
And hastened to her as he was told.
Since they were twelve years old
Those two had been in love's throes,
That they suffered many woes.

HI reet, soe hi ierst mochte,
Ten cloester, daer hi se sochte.
Hi ghinc sitten voer 't fensterkijn
Ende soude gheerne, mocht sijn,
Sijn lief spreken ende sien.
Niet langhe en merde si na dien;
Si quam ende woudene vanden
Vor 't fensterkijn, dat met yseren banden
Dwers ende lanx was bevlochten.
Menech werven si versochten,
Daer hi sat buten ende si binnen,
Bevaen met alsoe starker minnen.
Si saten soe een langhe stonde,
Dat ic 't ghesegghen niet en conde,
Hoe dicke verwandelde hare blye.
'Ay mi!' seitsi, 'aymie!
Vercoren lief, mi es soe wee,
Sprect ieghen mi een wort oft twee,
Dat mi 't herte conforteert;
Ic ben die troest ane u begheert!
Der minnen strael stect mi in 't herte,
Dat ic doghe grote smerte;
In mach nemmermeer verhoghen,
Lief, ghi en hebbet uut ghetoghen!'

HE rode, as fast as he could,
To where the nun's convent stood.
In front of the little window frame
He sat and waited till she came
Whom he would see and speak withal.
She tarried not, but soon did call
On him at the window, which with bars
Of iron crosswise covered was,
Just like a checkerboard.
Many were the sighs they poured,
He from without, she from within,
Both from strong love suffering.
Thus they sat for a century.
It were impossible for me
To say how oft they blushed and paled.
'Woe me, woe me,' she quailed,
'Dearly beloved, what to do?
Speak to me a word or two,
Such as will comfort me.
I want to be consoled by thee.
Love's arrow has pierced my heart.
The wound it made I feel it smart.
I'll never be glad and free from pain
Until thou'st pulled it out again.'

HI antworde met sinne:
‘Ghi wet wel lieve vriendinne,
Dat wi langhe hebben ghedragen
Minne al onsen daghen.
Wi en hadden nye soe vele rusten,
Dat wi ons ééns ondercusten.
Vrouwe Venus, die godinne,
Die dit brachte in onsen sinne,
Moete God onse Here verdoemen,
Dat si twee soe scone bloemen
Doet vervalven ende bederven.
Const' ic wel ane u verwerven,
Ende ghi d'abijt wout nederleggen,
Ende mi enen sekeren tijd seggen,
Hoe ic u ute mochte leiden,
Ic woude riden ende ghereiden
Goede cleder diere van wullen
Ende die met bonten doen vullen,
Mantel, roc ende sercoet.
In begheve u te ghere noet;
Met u will' ic mi aventueren,
Lief, leet, 't suete metten sueren.
Nemt te pande mijn trouwel?’
‘Vercorne vrient,’ sprac die ioncfrouwe
‘Die will' ic gherne van u ontfaen,
Ende met u soe verre gaen,
Dat niemen en sal weten in dit covent
Werwaert dat wi sijn bewent.
Van t'avont over acht nachte
Comt ende nemt mijns wachte

HE answered her tenderly,
‘Dearest, thou knowest well that we
Have loved each other many a year,
But in all that time we ne’er
Had so much freedom between us twain
That I could kiss and be kissed again.
May God curse Dame Venus
Who put this love into us,
Curse the goddess who was cause
That two such beautiful flowers
Fade and wither utterly.
I wish I could persuade thee
To lay this nun’s habit aside
And set a day for me to abide
On which I may come and take thee away.
I would prepare for that day
Good clothes of precious wool,
Lined with fur, and a full
Outfit of mantle, coat and skirt.
Whatever happens, I won’t desert
Thee ever, but share with thee
Good and bad, whatever it be.
There to I pledge thee my faith.’
‘Beloved,’ she answereth,
‘I accept it readily,
And will go so far with thee
That none in the convent ever will know
To what place we did go.
Come a week from today
And, until I find a way

Daer buten in den vergier
Onder enen eglentier.
Wacht daer mijns, ic come uut
Ende wille wesen uwe bruut,
Te varen daer ghi begheert;
En si dat mi siecheit deert
Ocht saken, die mi sijn te swaer,
Ic come sekerlike daer,
Ende ic begheert van u sere,
Dat ghi daer comt, lieve ionchere.?’

To leave, in the garden wait for me,
Under the wild rose tree.
I shall come, wait outside,
And I will become thy bride
To go whither thou choose with thee.
Unless sickness hinder me
Or obstacles I can't remove,
I shall certainly come, dear love,
And I beg thee earnestly
That thou comest there to me.'

DIT gheloeffde elc anderen.
Hi nam orlof ende ghinc wanderen
Daer sijn rosside ghesadelt stoet.
Hi sat er op metter spoet
Ende reet wech sinen telt
Ter stat wert over een velt.
Sijns lieves hi niet en vergat.
's Anders daghes ghinc hi in die stat;
Hi cochte blau ende scaerlaken,
Daer hi af dede maken
Mantele ende caproen groet
Ende roc ende sorcoet,
Ende na recht ghevoedert wel.
Niemen en sach beter vel
Onder vrouwen cledere draghen;
Si prijsden 't alle die 't saghen.
Messe, gordele ende almoniere
Cocht haer goet ende diere;
Huven, vingherline van goude
Ende chierheit menechfoude.
Om al die chierheit dede hi proeven,
Die eneger bruoet soude behoeven.
Met hem nam hi vijfhondert pont
Ende voer in ere avonstont
Heymelike buten der stede.
Al dat scoenheide voerd 'i mede
Wel ghetorst op sijn paert,
Ende voer alsoe ten cloestere waert,
Daer si seide, in den vergier,
Onder enen eglentier.

EACH gave other his consent.
He took his leave of her and went
Where he left his horse tied.
He mounted in the saddle and hied
On his way at a fast trot
Toward the town. He banished not
His beloved from his thought.
The next day he went and bought
Woven cloth, scarlet and blue,
Which he ordered made into
A good-sized mantle and cape,
A coat and skirt to fit her shape,
All lined fashionably.
Better fur one never did see
Worn under women's clothes.
It was praised by all those
Who saw it. He also bought for her
A girdle with knife and almoner,
A diadem, a ring of gold,
And jewelry manifold.
He asked for all the finery
Which a bride is glad to see.
Five hundred pound he took along,
And one day, at even song,
He left the town secretly.
That precious outfit carried he
Firmly packed upon his horse,
And to the convent took his course.
He sat down where the lass
Told him, in the garden grass

Hi ghinc sitten neder in 't cruut,
Tote sijn lief soude coomen uut.

Till the time he should spy her.
Underneath the wild brier.

VAN hem latic nu die tale
 Ende segghe u van der scoender smale.
 Vore middernacht lude si mettine.
 Die minne dede haer grote pine.
 Als mettenen waren ghesongen
 Beide van ouden ende van iongen,
 Die daer waren in 't covent,
 Ende si weder waren ghewent
 Opten dormter al ghemene,
 Bleef si in den coer allene
 Ende si sprac haer ghebede,
 Als si te voren dicke dede.
 Si knielde voer den outaer
 Ende sprac met groten vaer:
 'Maria, Moeder, soete name,
 Nu en mach minen lichame
 Niet langher in d'abijt gheduren.
 Ghi kint wel in allen uren
 's Menschen herte ende sijn wesen;
 Ic hebbe ghevast ende ghelesen,
 Ende ghenomen discipline,
 Het 's al om niet dat ic pine;
 Minne worpt mi onder voet,
 Dat ic der werelt dienen moet.
 Alsoe waerlike als Ghi, Here Lieve,
 Wort ghehangen tusschen twee dieve
 Ende aen 't Cruce wort gherecket,
 Ende Ghi Lazaruse verwecket,
 Daer hi lach in den grave doet,
 Soe moetti kinnen minen noet

MORE of him I will not tell,
But tell you of this damosel.
She sounded matins before midnight.
Through love she was in a sore plight.
After matins had been sung
Both by old and by young,
All who were cloistered there,
And when all the sisters were
Asleep again and still as stone,
She remained in the choir alone,
And she read her prayers o'er
As she had often done before.
She knelt down before the altar,
And said, while fear made her falter,
'Dear Lord, name so sweet,
Now it is no longer meet
That my body shall remain
In this habit. Man hides in vain
His inmost heart and being from Thee.
I've prayed and fasted, woe is me,
And have taken chastisement.
But all in vain I repent.
Love has overpowered me.
The world's servant I must be.
As truly as Thou, o dear Lord,
Between two thieves wert hanged and gored
And tormented upon the cross
And recalledst Lazarus
Back from death in the tomb,
So truly mayst Thou know my doom

Ende mine mesdaet mi vergheven:
Ic moet in swaren sonden sneven!

And forgive my trespassing.
I must succumb to mortal sin.’

NA desen ghinc si uten core
t' Eenen beelde, daer si vore
Knielde, ende sprac hare ghebede,
Daer Maria stont ter stede.
Si riep: 'Maria', onversaghet,
'Ic hebbe U nacht ende dach geclaghet
Ontfermelike mijn vernoy,
Ende mi en es niet te bat een hoy!
Ic werde mijns sins te male quijt
Bliv' ic langher in dit abijt.'
Die covel toech si ute al daer
Ende leid se op Onser Vrouwen outaer.
Doen dede si ute hare scoen.
Nu hoert, wat si sal doen,
Die slotele van der sacristiën
Hinc si voer dat beelde Mariën;
Ende ic seg 't u over waer,
Waer omme dat si se hinc al daer:
Of men se te priemtide sochte,
Dat men se best daer vinden mochte.
Het 's wel recht in alder tijt,
Wie vore Mariën beelde lijt,
Dat hi sijn oghen derwaert sla,
Ende segge 'Ave', eer hi ga,
'Ave Maria;' daer omme si ghedinct,
Waer omme dat si die slotel daer hinc.

SHE left the choir and went to a niche
That held an image, in front of which
She knelt down and spoke her prayer
To our Lady standing there.
She cried, 'Mary!' unafraid,
'Night and day to Thee I've prayed
And pitifully confessed my dread.
It has availed me not a shred.
I'll altogether go insane,
If in this habit I remain.'
She doffed the veil that she wore
Upon our Lady's altar floor.
Thereafter she took off her shoes.
Hear what course she now pursues:
In front of Mary's image she
Hung the keys of the sacristy.
I'll teil you what her reasons were
For hanging the bunch of keys just there.
At prime they'd miss the keys, she thought,
And easily find them in that spot.
For it is proper for everyone
To raise her eyes and look upon
Mary's image in coming nigh
And whisper 'Ave' passing by,
'Ave Maria.' This was the thought
Which made her leave them in that spot.

NU ghinc si danen dor den noet
 Met enen pels al bloet,
 Daer si een dore wiste,
 Die si ontsloet met liste,
 Ende ghinck er heymelijc uut,
 Stillekine sonder ghel uut.
 In den vergier quam si met vare;
 Die iongelinc wert haers gheware.
 Hi seide: 'Lief, en verveert u niet,
 Het 's u vrient, dat ghi hier siet.'
 Doen si beide te samen quamen,
 Si begonste hare te scamen,
 Om dat si in eene pels stoet
 Bloets hoeft ende barvoet.
 Doen seid' i 'Wel scone lichame,
 U soe waren bat bequame
 Scone ghewaden ende goede cleder.
 Hebt er mi om niet te leder,
 Ic sal se u gheven sciere.'
 Doen ghingen si onder den eglentiere,
 Ende alles dies si behoeft,
 Des gaf hi hare ghenoech.
 Hi gaf haer cleder twee paer,
 Blau waes 't, dat si aen dede daer,
 Wel ghescepen in 't ghevoech.
 Vriendelike hi op haer loech.
 Hi seide: 'Lief, dit hemelblau
 Staet u bat dan dede dat grau.'
 Twee cousen toech si ane,
 Ende twee scoen cordewane,

SHE left, since she could stay no more.
A hairy shirt was all she wore.
To a postern door she knew the way,
Which she unlocked without delay,
And went out stealthily,
Not making any sound, till she
Entered the garden full of fear.
The yeoman saw her appear
And said, 'Dearest, don't be afraid,
It is thy friend comes to thine aid.'
When those two together came,
She began to blush with shame.
For there she stood with nothing on
But a shirt, and nothing upon
Her head and feet. 'My dear,' said he,
'Thy beautiful body deserves to be
Dressed in good, beautiful clothes.
Blame me not for the ones I chose.
Come and I will give them thee.'
They went under the wild rose tree,
And all of which she was in need
He gave her, more than enough indeed.
Two suits he gave to her.
Blue was the one she put on there,
Cut so as to make it fit.
He looked at her wearing it
And said with a smile, 'Sky-blue, I'd say,
Suits thee better than convent grey.'
She put on stockings he did choose

Die hare vele bat stonden
Dan scoen die waren ghebonden.
Hoet cleder van witter ziden
Gaf hi hare te dien tiden,
Die si op haer hoeft hinc.
Doen cusse se die ionghelinc
Vriendelike aen haren mont.
Hem dochte, daer si voer hem stont,
Dat die dach verclaerde.
Haestelike ghinc hi t' sinen paerde,
Hi sette se voer hem in 't ghereide.
Dus voren si henen beide
Soe verre, dat began te daghen,
Dat si hen nyemen volghen en saghen.
Doen began 't te lichtene in 't Oest.
Si seide: 'God, alder werelt troest,
U moeti ons bewaren.
Ic sie den dach verclaren!
Ware ic met u niet comen uut,
Ic soude prime hebben gheloot,
Als ic wilen was ghewone
In den cloester van religione.
Ic ducht, mi die vaert sal rouwen;
Die werelt hout soe cleine trouwe,
Al hebb' ic mi ghekeert daeran;
Si slacht den losen coman,
Die vingherline van formine
Vercoept voer guldine.'

And a pair of cordwain leather shoes,
Which became her twice as well
As the sandals she left in her cell.
A coverchef which he had brought
He gave her there. He had it wrought
Of snow-white silk. She put it on
And pressed a tender kiss upon
The yeoman's mouth. It seemed to him,
As she stood there fresh and trim,
That the day began to dawn.
He went to his horse across the lawn
And into the saddle lifted her
In front of him, and gave the spur.
They rode till night began to fail
And no one seemed to be on their trail.
Then in the east the morning rose.
She said, 'God, comfort of all those
Who are in need, preserve us twain.
I see the day turn bright again.
Hadn't we absconded, I and thou,
I should be sounding prime just now,
As I every day have done
In the convent where I was nun.
I fear me, I shall rue this flight.
The world's faith is but slight.
Yet towards the world I've turned my feet.
The world resembles the crafty cheat
Of a chapman who falsely sold
Tinsel rings for rings of gold.'

AY wat segdi, suverlike,
Ocht ic u emmermeer beswike,
Soe moete mi God seinden!
Waer dat wi ons bewinden,
In scede van u te ghere noet,
Ons en scede die bitter doet.
Hoe mach u aen mi twien?
Ghi en hebt aen mi niet versien,
Dat ic u fel was ofte-loes.
Sint dat ic u ierst vercoes,
En hadd' ic niet in minen sinne
Ghedaen een keyserinne;
Op dat ic haers werdech ware,
Lief, en liete u niet om hare,
Des moghedi seker wesen.
Ic vore met ons, ute ghelesen
Vijfhondert pont wit selverijn,
Daer seldi, lief, vrouwe af sijn.
Al varen wi in vremde lande,
Wi ne derven verteren ghene pande
Binnen desen seven iaren.'
Dus quamen si den telt ghevaren
's Morgens aen een foreest,
Daer die voghele hadden feest.
Si maecten soe groet gheschal,
Dat men 't hoerde over al:
Elc sanc na der naturen sine.
Daer stonden scone bloemkine
Op dat groene velt ontploken,
Die scone waren ende suete roken.

WHAT art thou saying, love,' said he.
Wheresoever we may go,
'May God lay his curse on me
If I should leave thee evermo.
No need so great that severeth
Us twain, unless it be bitter death.
How canst thou have a doubt of me?
Did I ever prove to thee
False or wicked of design?
Since I first chose thee for mine,
There was no other for whom I'd care,
Although an empress she were.
Even if I worthy of her should be,
I wouldn't for her, my dear, leave thee.
Love, believe me thereto bound.
I carry with me five hundred pound
Of pure silver white of sheen.
Thou shalt be mistress of that, my queen.
Though we journey to lands unknown,
There won't be need for us to pawn
These seven years a single thing.'
Thus came they, easily cantering,
In the morning, to a wood.
The birds were in a festive mood.
They made music so loud
That one heard it round about.
Each sang as his nature him told.
One saw there beautiful flowers unfold
Their petals in the green moss bed.
Lovely they looked and fragrance spread.

Die locht was claer ende scone.
Daer stonden vele rechte bome,
Die ghelovert waren rike.
Die ionghelinc sach op die suverlike,
Daer hi ghestade minne toe droech.
Hi seide: 'Lief, waer 't u ghevoech,
Wi souden beeten ende bloemen lesen,
Het dunct mi hier scone wesen.
Laet ons spelen der minnen spel.'
'Wat segdi,' sprac si, 'dorper fel
Soud' ic beeten op 't felt,
Ghelijc enen wive die wint ghelt
Dorperlijc met haren lichame,
Seker, soe hadd'ic cleine scame!
Dit en ware u niet ghesciet,
Waerdi van dorpers aerde niet!
Ic mach mi bedinken onsochte.
Godsat hebdi die 't sochte!
Swighet meer deser talen
Ende hoert die voghele in den dalen,
Hoe si singhen ende hem vervroyen;
Die tijt sal u te min vernoyen.
Als ic bi u ben al naect
Op een bedde wel ghemaect,
Soe doet al, dat u ghenoecht
Ende dat uwer herten voeght.
Ic heb's in mijn herte toren,
Dat ghij 't mi heden leit te voren.'

Clear and radiant was the air.
Many tall trees stood there,
Each lifting a luscious crown.
He looked at that lovely one
To whom he bore a steadfast love.
He said, 'Dearest, if thou approve,
We should dismount and pluck a flower.
This is a pleasant place and hour.
Come and let us play love's game.'
She spoke, 'What sayest thou, for shame
Should I lie down in the wood
Like women who earn a livelihood
With their body boorishly?
Then were there little shame in me.
This wouldn't have come into thy mind
Wert thou not of boorish kind.
I have reason to be sad.
May God curse thee for such bad
Intentions. Speak of something else.
Listen to the birds in glens and dells,
How they carol and make glee.
Their music will pass the time for thee.
When I am naked in a bed,
Neatly made with sheets and spread,
Then mayst thou do thy will with me,
To whatever thy heart prompteth thee.
It maketh me sad and void of cheer
That thou didst propose it here.'

HI seide: 'Lief, en belghet u niet.
 Het dede Venus, die 't mi riet.
 God geve mi scande ende plaghe,
 Ocht ic u emmermeer ghewaghe.'
 Si seide: 'Ic vergheef 't u dan,
 Ghi sijt mijn troest voer alle man
 Die leven onder den trone.
 Al levede Absolon, die scone,
 Ende ic des wel seker ware
 Met hem te levene dusent iare
 In weelden ende in rusten,
 In liet 's mi niet ghecusten;
 Lief, ic hebbe u soe vercoren,
 Men mocht mi dat niet legghen voren,
 Dat ic uwes soude verghten;
 Ware ic in hemelrike gheseten
 Ende ghi hier in ertrike,
 Ic quame tot u sekerlike!
 Ay God, latet onghewroken,
 Dat ic dullijc hebbe ghesproken!
 Die minste bliscap in hemelrike
 En es hier ghere vrouden ghelike;
 Daer es die minste soe volmaect,
 Datter zielen niet en smaect,
 Dan Gode te minnen sonder inde.
 Al erdsche dinc es ellinde,
 Si en doeghet niet een haer
 Jeghen die minste die es daer.
 Die 're om pinen die sijn vroet,
 Al ees 't dat ic dolen moet

HEAR, do not be wroth,' said he.
'It was Dame Venus who prompted me.
May God give me shame and pain
If ever I mention it again.'
She said, 'I will forgive thee then.
Thou art my comfort above all men
Who under heaven live and thrive.
If handsome Absalom were alive
And I could have certainty
Of living with him in luxury
And peace for a thousand year,
I would still have rather thee, my dear.
Darling, I am in love with thee
So much that it were blasphemy
To say I could forget thy face.
If God should give to me a place
In heaven and thine were here below,
I would come to thee even so.
O God, do not punish me
For speaking such profanity.
The least of joys in heaven above
Is greater than all the joys of love.
So perfect is the least of them
That the soul knoweth no other aim
Than to love God endlessly.
All life on earth is misery.
It is indeed not worth a hair
Compared to the least that happens there.
Those are wise who strive for heaven.
I know, although myself am driven

Ende mi te groten sonden keren
Dore u, lieve scone ionchere.'

To an erring life of sinful joy,
For the sake of thee, dear handsome boy.'

DUS hadden si tale ende wedertale
 Si reden berch ende dale.
 In can u niet ghesegghen wel
 Wat tusschen hen tweek ghevel.
 Si voren alsoe voert,
 Tes si quamen in een poert,
 Die scone stont in enen dale,
 Daer soe bequaem 't hem wale,
 Dat sie 're bleven der iaren seven
 Ende waren in verweenden leven
 Met ghenuechten van lichamen,
 Ende wonnen twee kinder t'samen.
 Daer na den seven iaren,
 Alsoe die penninghen verteert waren,
 Moesten si teren van den pande,
 Die si brachten uten lande.
 Cleder, scoenheit ende paerde
 Vercochten si te halver waerde
 Ende brochten 't al over saen.
 Doen en wisten si wat bestaen;
 Si en conste ghenen roc spinnen,
 Daer sie met mochte winnen.
 Die tijt wart in den lande diere
 Van spisen, van wine ende van biere
 Ende van al dat men eten mochte.
 Dies hem wert te moede onsochte;
 Si waren hem liever vele doet,
 Dan si hadden ghebeden broet.
 Die aermoede maecte een ghesceet
 Tusschen hen beiden, al was 't hen leet.

THUS they bandied talk at will.
They rode through valley and over hill.
I cannot give account of all
That between them did befall.
Thus they rode up and down
Till they came unto a town
In a valley on a pleasant site.
There they found so much delight
That they remained there seven years,
Living in luxury and ease
And indulging in carnal joys.
They begot two little boys.
When the seven years came to an end,
They had no money left to spend.
They had to live on what they sold
Of their belongings manifold,
Horses, clothes, finery,
At half the price it ought to be.
But the proceeds soon were spent.
Then they knew not how to fend
For themselves. She was no good
At spinning for a livelihood.
At that time things were dear
In the land, food, wine, and beer,
And everything one might consume.
Hence their hearts were full of gloom.
They would rather have been dead
Than have begged for their bread.
Poverty cut these two apart,
Though it made them sad at heart.

Aen den man ghebrac dierste trouwe;
Hi liet se daer in groten rouwe
Ende voer te sinen lande weder.
Si en sachen met oghen nye zeder.
Daer bleven met hare ghinder
Twee uter maten scone kinder.

He was the first to be untrue.
He left her there in bitter rue,
And returned where he lived before.
She did not see him ever more.
Two children remained with her.
One never saw any lovelier.

SI sprac: 'Het 's mi comen soe,
Dat ic duchte spade ende vroe.
Ic ben in vele doghens bleven.
Die ghene heeft mi begheven,
Daer ic mi trouwen toe verliet.
Maria, Vrouwe, oft Ghi ghebiet,
Bidt vore mi ende mine twee ionghere,
Dat wi niet en sterven van honghere.
Wat sal ic doen, elendech wijf?
Ic moet beide, ziele ende lijf,
Bevlecken met sondeghen daden.
Maria, Vrouwe, staet mi in staden!
Al const'ic enen roe spinnen,
In mocht er niet met winnen
In twee weken een broet.
Ic moet gaen dor den noet
Buten der stat op 't feit
Ende winnen met minen lichame ghelt,
Daer ic met mach copen spise.
In mach in ghere wise
Mijn kinder niet begheven'
Dus ghinc si in een sondech leven.
Want men seit ons overwaer,
Dat si langhe seven iaer
Ghemene wijf ter werelt ghinc
Ende meneghe sonde ontfinc,
Dat haer was wel onbequame,
Die si dede metten lichame,
Daer si cleine ghenuechte hadde in
Al dede sijt om een cranc ghewin

SHE said: 'Now I've met the fate
That I dreaded early and late.
Life for me has become grim.
I have been forsaken by him
On whose faith I did rely.
Mary, our Lady, hear me cry!
Pray for my children and for me,
Keep us from starving in misery.
Hapless woman, what is thy dole?
I must sully body and soul
With sinful deeds that I dread.
Lady Mary, stand me in stead.
Though I could work the spinning wheel,
Yet my labor would not yield
In two weeks a loaf of bread.
I must needs go in stead
Outside town to a lonely spot
And with my body earn somewhat
That will buy me food for three.
It would be impossible for me
To abandon my little twins.'
Thus her life of sin begins.
For it is truly told of her
That she the length of seven year
As a common whore went wandering.
She succumbed to many a sin,
Much to her own disgust,
Which she committed without lust.
Her pleasure in it was but slight.
She did it for a paltry mite

Daer si haer kinder met onthelt.
Wat holpt al vertelt,
Die scamelike sonden ende die zwaer,
Daer si in was veertien iaer?
Maer emmer en liet si achter niet,
Had si rouwe oft verdriet,
Si ne las alle daghe met trouwen
Die seven ghetiden van Onser Vrouwen;
Die las si Haer te loven ende t'eren,
Dat Si se moeste bekeren
Uten sondeliken daden,
Daer si was met beladen.
Bi ghetale veertien iaer;
Dat seggh' ic u over waer.
Si was seven iaer metten man,
Die twee kindere an hare wan,
Die se liet in ellinde,
Daer si doghede groet meswinde.
D'ierste seven iaer hebdi gehoert;
Verstaet hoe si levede voert.

To keep alive her little sons.
It's better that my story shuns
The sins so heavy and depraved
In which for fourteen years she lived.
But never she neglected, though,
Were she in sorrow or in woe,
To read each day faithfully
The seven hours of Our Lady.
Those she read in Her honor and praise
That She might remedy her and raise
Out of that life of sin
Under the load of which she had been
During fourteen years all told.
It is all truth that I unfold.
She was with him for seven year
Who two sons begot on her
And left her in misery,
Suffering great adversity.
Ye've heard of the first seven years.
Hear now how she thereafter fares.

ALS die veertien iaer waren ghedaen,
Sinde haer God in 't herte saen
Berouwennessen alsoe groet,
Dat si met enen swerde al bloet
Liever liete haer hoeft af slaen,
Dan si meer sonden hadde ghedaen
Met haren lichame, als si plach.
Si weende nacht ende dach,
Dat haer oghen seldom drogheden;
Si seide: 'Maria, die Gode soghede,
Fonteyne boven alle wiven,
Laet mi in der noet niet bliven
Vrouwe, ic neme U t'orconden,
Dat mi rouwen mine sonden,
Ende sijn mi herde leet.
Der es soe vele, dat ic en weet
Waer ic se dede ocht met wien!
Ay lachen! Wat sal mijns ghescien?
Ic mach wel ieghen d'ordeel sorgen,-
D'oghen Gods sijn mi verborgen,-
Daer alle sonden selen bliken,
Beide van armen ende van riken,
Ende alle mesdaet sal sijn ghewroken,
Daer en si vore biechte af ghesproken
Ende penitencie ghedaen;
Dat wete ic wel, sonder waen.
Des ben ic in groten vare.
Al drogh' ic alle daghe een hare
Ende croep er met van lande te lande
Over voete ende over hande,

THEN those fourteen years were past,
God sent into her heart at last
Remorse so great that she said,
She would rather have her head
Cut off with a naked sword
Than to have sinned any more
With her body as was her way.
She would weep night and day
So that her eyes were seldom dry.
'Mary, who suckled God,' she would sigh,
'Fountain, above all women pure,
Let me not in need endure.
Be my witness, Mother of God,
That I rue the path I've trod,
And loathe my sins one and all.
There were so many, I can't recall
Where I did them and with whom.
Alas, what shall be my doom?
God turns from me His eyes away.
I well may dread the judgment day
When all sins shall come out,
Both of rich and poor, no doubt,
And all misdeeds be avenged,
Unless the sinners have been cleansed
By shrift, and have done penitence.
That I know too well. And hence,
I am living in great dread.
Though every day I wore a shred
And crept in it on all fours
From town to town by people's doors,

Wullen, barvoet, sonder scoen,
Nochtan en const ic niet ghedoen,
Dat ic van sonden worde vri,
Maria, Vrouwe, Ghi en troest mi,
Fonteyne boven alle doghet!
Ghi hebt den meneghen verhoghet,
Alse wel Teophuluse seen;
Hi was der quaetster sonderen een
Ende hadd'em den duvel op ghegeven,
Beide ziele ende leven,
Ende was worden sijn man;
Vrouwe, Ghi verloesst en nochtan
Al ben ic een besondech wijf
Ende een onghetroest keytijf,
In wat leven ic noy was,
Vrouwe, ghedinct dat ic las
t' Uwer eren een ghebede!
Toent aen mi U oetmoedechede,
Ic ben ene die es bedroevet
Ende Uwer hulpen wel behoevet,
Dies magh ic mi verhouden.
En bleef hem nye onvergouden,
Die U guete, Maget vrië,
Alle daghe met ere "Ave Marië".
Die U ghebet gerne lesen,
Sie moeghen wel seker wesen,
Dat hem daer af sal comen vrame;
Vrouwe, het 's U soe wel bequame,
Uutvercorne Gods Bruut.
U Sone sinde U een saluut

Barefoot, without shoes,
It would not be of any use,
It would not make me free of sin,
Unless Thou helpst make me clean.
Fountain above all virtue pure,
Thou oft hast gladdened rich and poor,
As was in Theophilus manifest.
He was among sinners the wickedest.
For he delivered body and soul
To Satan, and would have taken dole
From him as vassal from his lord,
Hadst Thou not saved him and restored.
Though I'm a woman foul with sin,
Whatever the life that I was in,
Lady, remember though that I,
Poor wretch, let never a day go by
Without saying my prayer to Thee.
Show Thy mercy unto me.
I am one who is sore afraid,
Mary, and one who needeth Thine aid.
My hope is in Thee, for I know,
Thou never letst unrewarded go
Who greeted Thee and daily prayed
An Ave Maria, merciful maid.
Those who gladly read thy prayer
May be sure that they ne'er
Will be left without reward,
Chosen bride of our Lord.
For thou likest such loyalty.
Thy son's salutation came to Thee

Te Nazaret, daer Hi U sochte,
Die U ene boetscap brochte,
Die nye van bode was ghehoert;
Daer omme sijn U die selve woert
Soe bequame sonder wanc,
Dat Ghij 's wet elken danc,
Die U gheerne daer mede quet.
Al waer hi in sonden belet,
Ghi sout hen te ghenaden bringhen
Ende voer Uwen Sone verdinghen.'
Dese bedinghe ende dese claghe
Dreef die sondersse alle daghe.
Si nam een kint in elke hant,
Ende ghinck er met doer 't lant,
In armoede van stede te steden
Ende levede bi der beden.
Soe langhe dolede si achter d'lant,
Dat si den doester weder vant,
Daer si hadde gheweest nonne,
Ende quam daer 's avons na der sonne
In ere weduwen huus spade,
Daer si bat herberghe doer ghenade,
Dat si daer 's nachts mochte bliven.
'Ic mocht u qualije verdriven,'
Sprac die weduwe, 'met uwen kinderkinen.
Mi dunct, dat si moede seinen.
Rust u ende sit neder;
Ic sal u deilen weder
Dat mi verleent Onse Here
Doer Siere Liever Moeder ere.'

At Nazareth, when the angel came
With a message in His name
Such as never messenger brought.
And that is why those same words ought
To be so very dear to Thee,
'That Thou givest thanks readily
To him who greeteth Thee therewith.
Though sins held him in their grip,
Thou wouldst to mercy lead him on
And plead for him before Thy Son.'
Thus did the sinner pray
Pitifully day by day.
She took a child in either hand
And went wandering through the land
From place to place in poverty
And kept alive by beggary.
Long she wandered here and there
Till she found the convent where,
Long ago, she had been nun.
Late at night, after the sun
Had set, to a widow's door she came,
And asked for shelter in Jesu name
Only till the next day.
'I could not bear to turn thee away
With thy children,' the widow replied.
'The little ones look very tired.
Rest yourselves, take a chair.
I will give you a share
Of what our Lord giveth me
For His mother's sake,' said she.

Dus bleef si met haren kinden
Ende soude gheerne ondervinden,
Hoe 't in den doester stoede.
'Segt mi,' seit si 'vrouwe goede,
Es dit covint van ioffrouwen?'
'Jaet,' seit si, 'bi miere trouwen
Dat verweent es ende rike;
Men weet niewer sijns ghelike.
Die nonnen die 're abijt in draghen,
In hoerde nye ghewaghen
Van hem gheen gherochten.
Dies si blame hebben mochten.'

Thus they stayed there out of the cold.
She was anxious to be told
How things in the convent were.
'Tell me, good woman,' she said to her,
'Is this a ladies' nunnery?'
'Upon my word,' answered she,
'A splendid house and very rich.
There is nowhere another such.
Of all its nuns who wear the veil
I never heard a scandalous tale
Or evil rumor by which the name
Of the convent could come to shame.'

DIE daer bi haren kinderen sat,
Si seide: 'waer bi segdi dat?
Ic hoerde binnen deser weken
Soe vele van ere nonnen spreken;
Als ic verstoet in minen sinne,
Soe was si hier costerinne.
Die 't mi seide, hi ne loech niet:
Het's binnen veertien iaren ghesciet,
Dat si uten cloester streec.
Men wiste noyt, waer si weec
Oft in wat lande si inde nam.'
Doen wert die weduwe gram
Ende seide: 'Ghi dunct mi reven!
Derre talen seldi begheven
Te segghene van der costerinnen
Oft ghi en blijft hier niet binnen!
Si heeft hier costersse ghesijn
Veertien iaer den termijn,
Dat men haers noyt ghemessen conde
In al den tiden éne metten stonde,
Hen si dat si waer onghesont.
Hi ware erger dan een hont,
Die 're af seide el dan goet;
Si draghet soe reynen moet,
Die eneghe nonne draghen mochte.
Die alle die cloesters dore sochte,
Die staen tusschen Elve ende der Geronde,
Ic wane men niet vinden en conde
Ne ghene die gheesteliker leeft!'

THE young mother, in amaze,
Asked, 'Art thou sure of this?
I happened to hear people speak
About one of the nuns last week.
I was given to understand
That she did duty as sacristan.
He was no liar who told me so.
It happened fourteen years ago
That the nun ran away.
Whither she fled none can say,
Nor in what country she died.'
Angrily the widow replied,
'Thou ravest! I warn thee, don't go around
Telling that story without ground
Of the sacristan. Tell it once more,
And out thou goest, there is the door.
She has been here sacristan
Fourteen years, and no one can
Remember that she failed one day
In all that time to serve and pray
At matins, unless sickness prevented her.
He were worse than a cur
Who spoke of her otherwise than well.
She is such a stainless damosel
As any nun might wish to be.
Search in every nunnery
Between the Elbe and the Gironde,
You would not find a nun more fond
Of the spiritual life in God.'

DIE alsoe langhe hadde ghesneeft,
Dese tale dochte haer wesen wonder,
Ende seide: 'Vrouwe, maect mi conder.
Hoe hiet haer moeder ende vader?'
Doe noeme si se beide gader.
Doen wiste si wel, dat si haer meende.
Ay God! Hoe si 's nachs weende
Heymelike voer haer bedde!
Si seide: 'Ic en hebbe ander wedde
Dan van herten groet berouwe.
Sijt in mijn hulpe, Maria, Vrouwe!
Mijn sonden sijn mi soe leet,
Sagh ic enen hoven heet,
Die in groten gloyen stonde,
Dat die vlamme ghinghe uten monde,
Ic crope er in met vlite,
Mocht ic mier sonden werden quite.
Here, Ghi hebt wanhope verwaten,
Daer op will' ic mi verlaten!
Ic ben, die altoes ghenade hoept,
Al ees 't dat mi anxt noept
Ende mi bringt in groten vare.
En was nye soe groten sondare,
Sint dat Ghi op ertrike quaemt
Ende menschelike vorme naemt
Ende Ghi aen den cruce wout sterven,
So ne lieti den sondare niet bederven;
Die met berouwenesse socht gnade,
Hi vant se, al quam hi spade,
Als 't wel openbaer scheen
Den enen sondare van den tween,

THESE words sounded strangely odd
To her who all that time had erred.
She said, 'Woman, one other word:
What was her mother and father's name?'
She gave them, and they were the same.
Then she knew, herself was meant.
O God, how sad a night she spent
Secretly by her bed's head.
'Heartfelt remorse,' she said,
'Is all I can offer for my release.
Our Lady, Mary, give me peace.
My sins make me suffer so.
If I saw an oven aglow
And burn so fiercely that the flame
Lept from its mouth, I'd all the same
Creep into it readily,
If I could burn my sins off me.
Lord, Thou hast condemned despair.
That gives me comfort in my care.
I still may hope for mercy, God,
Albeit that I feel the prod
Of sharp anxiety and fear.
There never was sinner since Thou here
Camest down among mankind
And letst Thyself be confined
In human shape and nailed on cross
Who was not saved from utter loss
If he remorsefully mercy asked;
Though he came late, it was given at last.
That was clearly shown to one
Of the two thieves who hung upon

Die t'Uwer rechter siden hinc.
Dat 's ons een troestelijc dinc,
Dat Ghi ne ontfinc onbescouden.
Goet berou mach als ghewouden;
Dat magh ic merken an desen.
Ghi seit: 'Vrient, due salt wesen
Met Mi heden in Mijn Rike,
Dat segg'ic U ghewaerlike,'
Noch, Here, waes 't openbare,
Dat Gisemast, die mordenare,
Ten lesten om ghenade bat.
Hi gaf U weder gout no scat,
Dan hem berouden sine sonden,
U ontfermeheit en es niet te gronden,
Niet meer, dan men mach
Die zee uut sceppen op enen dach
Ende droghen al toten gronde.
Dus was nye soe grote sonde,
Vrouwe, U ghenaden en gaen boven.
Hoe soud' ic dan sijn verscoven
Van Uwer ontfermeheit,
Ocht mi mijn sonden sijn soe leit?'

The cross to the right of Thee.
That is a comfort, Lord, to me
That Thou receivedst him unchastized.
By good remorse all wrong's revised.
By him Thou madest that clear to me.
Thou spokest, 'Today, I say unto thee,
Shalt thou be with me in paradise.
Verily, it shall not be otherwise.'
It is well known that at last
This malefactor Gisemast
Prayed for mercy to Thee, o Lord,
And gave Thee neither gold nor hoard
But only remorse for his sins.
We can no more, by any means,
Plumb Thy mercy than we may
Scoop out the sea in one day
And dry it down to the ground.
Such great sin was never found
That found not greater mercy in Thee.
How then could I repulsed be,
Lady, from Thy compassionateness
If, contrite, I my sins confess?

DAER si lach in dit ghebede,
 Quam een vaec in al haer lede
 Ende si wert in slape sochte.
 In enen vysioen haer dochte,
 Hoe een stemme aen haer riep,
 Daer si lach ende sliep:
 ‘Mensche, du heves soe lange gecarnt,
 Dat Maria dijns ontfarnt,
 Want si heeft U verbeden.
 Gaet in den doester met haestecheden:
 Ghi vindt die doren open wide,
 Daer ghi uut ginges ten selven tide
 Met uwen lieve, den ionghelinc,
 Die u in der noet af ghinc.
 Al dijn abijt vinstu weder
 Ligghen opten outaer neder;
 Wile, covele ende scoen
 Moeghedi coenlijc ane doen;
 Des danct hoeghelilce Mariën:
 Die slotele van der sacristiën,
 Die ghi voer 't beelde hinct
 's Nachs, doen ghi uut ghinct,
 Die heeft Si soe doen bewaren,
 Dat men binnen veertien iaren
 Uwes nye en ghemiste,
 Soe dat yemen daer af wiste.
 Maria es soe wel U vrient:
 Si heeft altoes voer U ghedient
 Min no meer na dijn ghelike.
 Dat heeft die Vrouwe van hemelrike,

AS she thus lay and prayed
She felt a drowsiness invade
All her limbs, and fell in a doze.
And in her sleep a vision arose
That called her name and clearly said,
Where she lay asleep in bed:
'Woman, thou hast cried so long
That Mary fakes pity on thy wrong.
Our Lady has interceded for thee.
Go to the cloister immediately.
Thou findest the door open wide
That let thee out that eventide
When the youth took thee away,
The lover who left thee in dismay.
Thou shalt find again thy veil
Lying by the altar rail.
Put it on, it is yours,
Not only veil, but cowl and shoes.
Gladly thank our Lady for these.
The sacristan's bunch of keys,
Which thou didst hang in the night
Of thine escape within sight
Before the image, she took care
Of those that none became aware,
In fourteen years, that thou wert gone,
So that thy flight was known to none.
Mary has been thy good friend.
To all thy duties she did attend
Wholly in thy similitude.
The Lady of heaven has been good

Sonderse, doer u ghedaen!
Si heet u in den doester gaen.
Ghi en vint nyeman op u bedde.
Het 's van Gode, dat ic u quedde!'

To thee, poor sinner, serving thy part.
She commands thee to go cloisterward.
Thou shalt find none upon thy bed.
God made me speak the words I said.'

NA desen en waes 't niet lanc,
Dat si uut haren slape ontspranc.
Si seide: 'God, gheweldech Here,
En ghehinct den duvel nemmermere,
Dat hi mi bringhe in mere verdriet,
Dan mi nu es ghesbiet!
Ocht ic nu in den cloester ghinghe
Ende men mi over dieveghe vinghe,
Soe ware ic noch meer ghescent,
Dan doe ic ierst rumde covent.
Ic mane U, God die goede,
Dor Uwen pretiosen bloede,
Dat uut Uwer ziden liep,
Ocht die stemme, die aen mi riep,
Hier es comen te minen baten,
Dat sij 's niet en moete laten,
Si en come anderwerf tot hare
Ende derde werven openbare,
Soe dat ic mach sonder waen
Weder in minen doester gaen.
Ic wil're om benediën
Ende loven altoes Mariën!'

NOT long after she awoke,
Startled by what the vision spoke.
She said, 'God, Lord of might,
Do not grant the devil the right
To bring me in yet greater woe
Than he did years ago.
If I entered the nunnery
And they caught me for thievery,
I should be ashamed even more
Than when I stole away before.
I beg of thee, merciful Lord,
By the precious blood that poured
Out of Thy wounded side:
Unless the voice that called me lied
And came only to do me wrong,
Let it not fail to come along
A second time and yet again
A third, that I may hear it plain
And need not doubt that I may
Return to the convent there to stay,
And to our Lady I shall give
Praise and laud as long as I live.'

S'ANDERS 's nachs, moghedu horen,
Quam haer een stemme te voren,
Die op haer riep ende seide:
'Mensche, du maecs te langhe beide!
Ganc weder in dinen cloester,
God sal wesen dijn troester.
Doet dat Maria u ontbiet!
Ic ben haer bode, en twivels niet.'
Nu heef si se anderwerf vernomen,
Die stemme tote haer comen
Ende hiet se in den doester gaen;
Nochtan en dorst sij 's niet bestaen.
Der derder nacht verbeyt si noch
Ende seide: 'Ees 't elfs ghedroch,
Dat mi comt te voren,
Soe magh ic cortelike scoren
Des duvels ghewelt ende sine cracht
Ende ocht hi 're comt te nacht,
Here, soe maecten soe confuus,
Dat hi vare uten huus,
Dat hi mi niet en moete scaden.
Maria, nu staet mi in staden,
Die ene stemme ane mi sint,
Ende hiet mi gaen in 't covint;
Ic mane U, Vrouwe, bi Uwen Kinde,
Dat Ghi se mi derdewerven wilt sinden.'

THE next night-attend and hear-
She heard again a voice appear
And call to her and clearly say:
'Woman, too long thou doest delay.
Go, return to the nunnery.
God will surely comfort thee.
Mary commandeth thee. Obey.
She sent me. Doubt it not, I pray.'
Now a second time she has heard
The voice that in her dream occurred
And said she should to the cloister go.
She dared not make the journey, though.
The third night she would await,
Saying, is it the devil's bait
That has shown itself to me,
Then let me shatter easily
Satan's power and his might;
And if he cometh back tonight,
Lord, do confound him so
That he out of doors must go
Ere he can do me injury.
Mary, lend Thy aid to me.
If it was Thou who sent me word
Through the voice that I heard,
I beg Thee, Lady, by Jesus' pain,
Send it to me yet once again.'

DOEN waecte si den derden nacht.
 Een stemme quam van gods cracht
 Met enen over groten lichte
 Ende seide: 'Het 's bi onrechte,
 Dat ghi niet en doet dat ic u hiet,
 Want u Maria bi mi ontbiet.
 Ghi moecht beiden te lanc!
 Gaet in den doester, sonder wanc,
 Ghi vint die doren op ende wide ontdaen,
 Daer ghi wilt, moghedi gaen.
 U abijt vindi weder
 Ligghende opten outaer neder.'
 Als die stemme dit hadde gheseit,
 En mochte die zondersse, die daer leit,
 Die claarheit metten oghen wel sien;
 Si seide: 'Nu en darf mi niet twien,
 Dese stemme comt van Gode,
 Ende es der Maghet Mariën bode.
 Dat wete ic nu sonder hone.
 Si comt met lichte soe scone;
 Nu en will' ic 's niet laten,
 Ic wille mi in den doester maken,
 Ic saelt oec doen in goeder trouwen
 Opten troest van Onser Vrouwen,
 Ende wille mijn kinder beide gader
 Bevelen Gode onsen Vader.
 Hi sal se wel bewaren.'
 Doen toech si ute al sonder sparen
 Haer cleder, daer si se met decte
 Heymelike, dat si se niet en wecte.

SHE stayed awake the third night.
A voice came from God's might
In a glory of light and said:
'Thou doest wrong by staying, instead
Of doing what I commanded thee.
For Mary sent thee word by me.
Tarry not till it is too late.
Go to the cloister, don't hesitate.
Thou wilt find a wide-open door.
Go wherever thou wilt, yea, more:
Thou shalt find thy shoes and veil
Lying by the altar's rail.'
When the voice thus had said,
The sinner lying there in bed
Could see the brilliance not too well.
She said: 'These words at last dispel
My doubt. They came from heaven above
And are a message of Mary's love.
I need not fear deceit. I know,
Heavenly light was in that glow.
Now I will not hesitate
But go through the cloister gate
And put my trust fully in Her
Who bore our blessed Saviour,
And recommend my little twins
To our Father's benevolence.
He will guard them on their way.'
Then she doffed without delay
Her clothes, which she gently spread,
So as not to wake them, over their bed.

Si cusse se beide aen haren mont.
Si seide: 'Kinder, blijft ghesont.
Op den troest van Onser Vrouwen
Late ic u hier in goeder trouwen,
Ende hadde mi Maria niet verbeden,
Ic en hadde u niet begheven
Om al 't goet, dat Rome heeft binnen.'
Hoert, wes si sal beghinnen.

She kissed them both upon their mouths
And said: 'Keep well, my little flowers.
Through our Lady's benevolence
I leave you here in confidence.
If Mary had not won me grace,
I would not leave you in this place
For all the wealth that Rome has amassed.'
Listen how she recovered her past.

NU gaet si met groten weene
 Ten doester waert, moeder eene.
 Doen si quam in den vergiere,
 Vant si die dore ontsloten sciere.
 Si ghinck er in sonder wanc:
 'Maria, hebbes danc,
 Ic ben comen binnen mure;
 God gheve mi goede aventure!'
 Waer si quam, vant si die dore
 Al wide open ieghen hore.
 In die kerke si doe trac;
 Heymelike si doe sprac:
 'God Here, ic bidde U met vlite,
 Hulpt mi weder in minen abite,
 Dat ic over veertien iaer
 Liet ligghen op Onser Vrouwen outaer,
 's Nachs, doen ic danen sciet!'
 Dit en es gheloghen niet,
 Ic seg 't u sonder ghile:
 Scoene, covele ende wile
 Vant si ter selver stede weder,
 Daer sij 't hadde gheleit neder.
 Si traec 't an haestelike
 Ende seide: 'God van Hemelrike
 Ende Maria, Maghet fijn,
 Ghebenedijt moetti sijn!
 Ghi sijt alre doghet bloeme!
 In Uwen reine magedoeme
 Droeghed i een Kint sonder wee,
 Dat Here sal bliven emmermee;

WHEN she went with many a moan
To the cloister all alone.
She entered the orchard and straightway hied
To the door and found it open wide.
She passed through unafraid.
'I thank Thee, Mary, blessed Maid.
I am back in the convent, back indeed!
May God give me now good speed.'
She found the door, wherever she went,
Open wide by clear intent.
Into the church she found her way
And there she silently did say:
'God, do grant me my orison
That I may put my habit on,
Which, fourteen years ago, I laid
On the altar of the blessed Maid
When in the night I went away.'
I swear to the truth of what I say.
This is not an old wives' tale:
She found her shoes, cowl and veil
Back again where, years before,
She left them on the altar floor.
She donned them without wavering,
Saying, God, heaven's King,
And our Lady, glorious Maid,
I thank you both for your aid.
Mary, Thou art virtue's flower.
Thou borest in a painless hour
A son in pure virginity
Who shall be Lord eternally.

Ghi sijt een uut vercoren werde,
 U Kint maecte hemel en erde.
 Deze ghewelt comt U van Gode
 Ende staet altoes t'Uwen ghebode.
 Den Here, die 's ons broeder,
 Moghedi ghebieden als moeder
 Ende Hi U heten lieve dochter.
 Hier omme leve ic vele te sochter.
 Wie aen U soect ghenade,
 Hi vint se, al comt hi spade.
 U hulpe die es alte groet;
 Al hebb' ic vernoy ende noet,
 Het 's bi U ghewandelt soe,
 Dat ic nu mach wesen vroe.
 Met rechte magh ic U benediën!⁷
 Die slotele van der sacristiën
 Sach si hanghen, in ware dinc,
 Vor Mariën, daer si se hinc.
 Die slotele hinc si aen hare
 Ende ghinc ten core, daer si clare
 Lampten sach berren in allen hoeken.
 Daer na ghinc si ten boeken
 Ende leide elc op sine stede,
 Alsi dicke te voren dede,
 Ende si bat der Maghet Mariën,
 Dat Si se van evele moeste vriën
 Ende haer kinder, die si liet
 Ter weduwen huus in zwaer verdriet.
 Binnen dien was die nacht ghegaen,
 Dat d'orloy begonste te slaen,

Thou art a chosen vessel of worth.
 Thy child made heaven and earth.
 This power was given Thee from God's hand
 And is for ever at Thy command.
 Jesus Christ, who is our brother,
 Taketh His orders from Thee His mother,
 And He may call Thee daughter dear.
 That's why I no longer live in fear.
 Whoever to Thee for mercy prayed,
 Received it though he long delayed.
 Thy help is beyond measure strong.
 Though I am in grief, though I did wrong,
 It has all been changed by Thee,
 So that now I may live happily.
 I may bless Thee on good ground.
 The sacristy's bunch of keys she found
 Hanging in front of the blessed Maid,
 Where she hung them when she fled.
 She hung the bunch of keys upon
 Her girdle and went to the choir anon.
 The lamps were lit there in every nook.
 She got for each of the nuns a book
 And laid them in place one by one,
 As long ago she had often done.
 She called to the Virgin Mary and prayed
 For release from evil through Her aid
 For her and her children left behind
 In the widow's house sad in mind.
 Meanwhile, in course of time,
 The cloister clock began to chime

Daer men middernacht bi kinde.
Si nam cloezeel biden inde
Ende luude metten so wel te tiden,
Dat sij 't hoerden in allen ziden,
Die boven opten dormter laghen.
Die quam alle sonder traghē
Van den dormter ghemene.
Si ne wisten hier af, groet no clene.
Si bleef in den cloester haren tijt,
Sonder lachter ende verwijt:
Maria hadde ghedient voer hare,
Ghelijc oft sij't selve ware.
Dus was die sonderse bekeert,
Maria te love, die men eert,
Der Maghet van hemelrike,
Die altoes ghetrouwelike
Haren vrient staet in staden,
Alsi in node sijn verladen.

Whereby one knew it was midnight.
At once she seized the bell rope tight
And tolled matins with so much zeal
That everywhere they heard the peal.
All who in the dortour lay
Came without a moment's delay
Down from the floor above.
They never knew the least hereof.
She never left the convent again,
And lived there without reproach or stain.
The Virgin Mary had served for her
As if the sacristan she were.
Thus was saved the sinner, in praise
Of Mary, to whose honor we raise
Our prayers, the Maid of Paradise,
Who always, in faithful wise,
Aids her friends when they are
Burdened with a load of care.

DESE ioffrouwe, daer ic af las,
Es nonne alsi te voren was.
Nu en will' ic vergheten niet
Haer twee kindere, die si liet
Ter weduwen huus in groter noet.
Si en hadden ghelt noch broet.
In can u niet vergronden,
Doen si haer moeder niet en vonden,
Wat groter rouwe dat si dreven.
Die weduwe ghinck er sitten neven:
Si hadd' er op ontfermenisse.
Si seide: 'Ic wille toter abdisse
Gaen met desen twee kinden.
God sal hare in 't herte sinden,
Dat si hen goet sal doen.'
Si deden ane cleder ende scoen,
Si ghinck er met in covent;
Si seide: 'Vrouwe, nu bekent
Den noet van desen twee wesen:
Die moeder heef se met vresen
Te nacht in mijn huus gelaten
Ende es ghegaen hare straten,
Ic en weet, West noch Oest.
Dus sijn die kinder onghetroest.
Ic hulpe hen gheerne, wist ic hoe.'
Die abdisse sprack er toe:
'Hout se wel, ic sael 't u lonen,
Dat ghij 's u niet en selt becronen,
Na dat si u sijn ghelaten;
Men gheve hen der caritaten

THIS damsel of whom I told
Is nun again as of old.
Now I do not mean to forget
Her two children whom she let
Stay with the widow sad of mood.
They had neither money nor food.
I cannot give a true account
Of their sorrow when they found
That in the night their mother had fled.
The widow sat down by their bed.
She took pity on their lot.
'I will go to the abbess forthot
With these two little ones,' she spake.
'God will soften her heart and make
Her willing to help them, I suppose.'
She put on their shoes and clothes
And took them to the nunnery.
'I'd gladly help them, knew I how.'
She said: 'Mother superior, see
The need of this orphaned pair.
Their mother left them oppressed by care
In my house during the night.
Where she went when she took flight
I do not know, whether east or west.
Now the children are distressed.'
The abbess answered her: 'If thou
Wilt keep them, I will pay the expense.
Thou'lt not regret thy benevolence,
Since their mother left them with thee.
Let them be given charity

Elcs daghes, om Gode.
Sint hier daghelijcs enen bode,
Die hen drincken hale ende eten.
Gheberst hen yet, laet mi weten.’
Die weduwe was vroe,
Dat haer comen was alsoe.
Si nam die kinder met hare
Ende hadd' er toe goede ware.
Die moeder, die se hadde ghesoghet
Ene pine daerom ghedoeghet,
Haer was wel temoede,
Doen si se wiste in goeder hoede,
Haer kinder, die si begaf
In groter noet ende ghinc af.
Si ne hadde vaer no hinder
Voert meer om hare kinder.
Si leide vort een heylech leven;
Menech suchten ende beven
Hadsi nacht ende dach,
Want haar die rouwe in 't herte lach
Van haren quaden sonden,
Die si niet en dorste vermonden
Ghenen mensche, no ontdecken,
Noe in dichten oec vertrecken.

Every day for God's sake.
Send us an errand boy to take
Food and drink to them every day.
Tell me their needs and I will pay.'
The widow was very glad
That things turned out as they had.
She took the children into her home
And cared for them as for her own.
The mother who had borne them in pain
And suckled them was happy again
When she knew them sheltered there
In the good woman's care,
Her little children whom she did
Abandon in extreme need.
Henceforth she never knew
An anxious thought for those two.
Herself a holy life she led.
She was in trembling and dread
Many a time, night and day,
For she felt remorse prey
On her heart for her wickedness,
Which she dared not confess
To any one, nor disclose,
Nor recount in verse or prose.

HIER na quam op enen dach
Een abt, die se te visenteerne plach
Eenwerven binnen den iare,
Om te vernemen oft daer ware
Enech lachterlike gheruchte,
Daer si blame af hebben mochte.
's Daghes als hi 're comen was,
Lach die sonderse ende las
In den coer haer ghebet,
In groter twivelingen met.
Die duvel becorese metter scame,
Dat si haer sondelike blame
Vore den abt niet en soude bringhen.
Als si lach in der bedhinghen,
Sach si, hoe dat neven haer leet
Een ionghelinc, met witten ghecleet;
Hi droech in sinen arm al bloet
Een kint, dat dochte haer doet.
Die ionghelinc warp op ende neder
Eenen appel ende vink hem weder
Vor 't kint, ende maecte spel.
Dit versach die nonne wel,
Daer si in haer ghebede lach.
Si seide: 'Vrient, of 't wesen mach,
Ende of ghi comen sijt van Gode,
Soe mane ic u bi Sine ghebode,
Dat ghi mi segt ende niet en heelt,
Waerom ghi voer dat kint speelt
Metten sconen appel roet,
Ende het leet in uwen arm doet!

THEREAFTER came upon a time
An abbot who used to visit them
Once in the course of every year
To ascertain if there were
Any rumor of infamy
That might harm the nunnery.
On the day he visited
The house the sinner knelt and read
Her prayers on the choir floor,
Torn by hesitation, for
The devil tempted her with shame
Lest she should bring her blame
Before the abbot and confess.
While praying thus in distress,
She saw a youth come within sight
And pass by, clad in white.
Upon his arm the youngling had
A naked child that seemed to be dead.
He kept tossing up and caught
Again an apple to disport
The child with his ball game.
The nun saw it, as he came
Past her where she lay and prayed.
'If thee please, friend,' she said,
'And if thou'rt come from God, I pray
By His commandments that thou say,
And not conceal from me why
Doest thou with that apple try
To entertain the little lad,
And in thine arm he's lying dead?

U spel en helpt hem niet een haer.⁷
 ‘Seker, nonne, ghi segt waer:
 En weet niet van minen spele
 Weder luttel no vele,
 Het 's doet, en hoert no en siet.
 Al des ghelike en weet God niet,
 Dat ghi leest ende vast;
 Dat en helpt u niet een bast;
 Het 's al verloren pine,
 Dat ghi neemt discipline;
 Ghi sijt in sonden soe versmoert,
 Dat God u beden niet en hoert
 Boven in Sijn Rike.
 Ic rade u: haestelike
 Gaet ten abt, uwen vader,
 Ende verteelt hem algader
 U sonden, al sonder lieghen.
 Laet u den duvel niet bedrieghen.
 Die abt sal u absolveren
 Van den sonden, die u deren.
 Ees 't, dat ghi se niet en wilt spreken,
 God sal se zwaerlike an u wreken!’
 Die ionghelinc ghinc ute haer oghen;
 Hi ne wilde haer nemmeer vertoghen.
 Dat hi seide, heeft si verstaen.
 's Morghens ghinc si alsoe saen
 Ten abt ende bat, dat hi hoerde
 Haer biechte van worde te worde.
 Die abt was vroet van sinne.
 Hi seide: ‘Dochter, lieve minne,

Thy playing helps him not a mite.’
‘True, sister, thou are right.
Of my game he is not aware.
Much nor little does he care.
He does not see or hear, he's dead.
Even so remaineth hid
From God thy praying and thy fast.
It boots thee not a straw. Thou hast
Wasted all thy discipline
Doing penance for thy sin.
Thou art in sin so deep immersed
That God heareth not the first
Word of thy prayer on high.
I counsel thee, quickly hie
To the abbot and confess
To the father thy wickedness
Fully and without deceit.
Beware of the devil; he's a cheat.
The abbot will absolve thee
From thy sins. But verily,
If thou wilt not make them known,
God will make thee atone.’
The youth vanished from her view.
He would not show himself anew.
She understood the words he spoke.
As soon as the morning broke
She went to the abbot and implored
The father to hear her word for word
Confess her sins. He was discreet.
He said: ‘Daughter dear, it's meet

Des en will' ic laten niet,
 Bepeinst u wel ende besiet
 Volcomelijc van uwen sonden.'
 Ende si ghinc ten selven stonden
 Den heyleghen abt sitten neven
 Ende ontdecken hem al haer leven,
 Ende haer vite van beghinne:
 Hoe si met ere dulre minne
 Becort was soe uter maten,
 Dat si moeste ligghen laten
 Haer abijt met groten vare
 Eens 's nachts op Onser Vrouwen outare,
 Ende rumedede den doester met enen man,
 Die twee kindere aen hare wan.
 Al dat haer ye was ghesciet,
 Dies ne liet si achter niet;
 Wat si wiste in haer herte gront,
 Maecte si den abt al cont.
 Doen si ghebiecht hadde algader,
 Sprac d'abt, die heyleghe vader:
 'Dochter, ic sal u absolveren
 Van den sonden, die u deren
 Die ghi mi nu hebt ghelijt.
 Gheloeft ende ghebenedijt
 Moet die Moeder Gods wesen!
 Hi leide haer op 't hoeft met desen
 Die hant ende gaf haer perdoen.
 Hi seide: 'Ic sal in een sermoen
 U biechte openbare seggen
 Ende die soe wiselike beleggen

For me to heat what thou shalt say.
Consider well and survey
The full extent of thy sins.’
She went and sat without a wince
By the holy abbot's side,
And bared to him the full tide
Of her life from the start:
How mad love tempted her heart
With such irresistible might
That she had to leave one night
Her nun's habit, much afraid,
On the altar of the Holy Maid
And absconded with a man, Godwot,
Who two children on her begot.
All that ever happened to her
She confessed without demur.
To the abbot she did impart
All that she knew in her inmost heart.
When her shrift had been made,
The holy father, the abbot, said:
‘I shall absolve thee, daughter dear,
Of the sins that gave thee fear,
And which thou hast confessed to me.
Praise and benediction be
Given to Mary, mother and maid.’
And upon her head he laid
His hand and gave her remission of sin.
He said: ‘I will tell thy confession in
A sermon for every one to hear.
And yet, so wisely shall I steer

Dat ghi ende u kinder mede
Nemmermeer, te ghere stede,
Ghenen lachter en selt ghecrigen.
Het ware onrecht, soude men 't swigen,
Die scone miracle, die ons Here
Dede doer Siere Moeder ere.
Ic sael 't orconden over al.
Ic hope, datter noch bi sal
Menech sondare bekeren
Ende Onser Liever Vrouwen eren.'

My discourse that never any disgrace
Shall evermore in any place
Attach to thy children and to thee.
To hush it up seems wrong to me,
The miracle wrought by Christ our Lord
To enhance His Mother's honor and laud.
I shall proclaim it in every way.
I hope that many sinners may
Be converted by the story
And spread our dear Lady's glory.'

HI deet verstaen den covende,
Eer hi thuus weder wende,
Hoe ere nonnen was ghesciet;
Maer si ne wisten niet,
Wie sie was, het bleef verholen.
Die abt voer Gode volen.
Der nonnen kinder nam hi beide
Ende vore se in sijn gheleide.
Grau abijt dedi hen an
Ende si worden twee goede man.
Haer moeder hiet Beatrijs.
Loef Gode ende prijs
Ende Maria, die Gode soghede,
Ende dese scone miracle toghede!
Si help haer uut alre noet.
Nu bidden wi alle, cleine ende groet,
Die dese miracle horen lesen,
Dat Maria moet wesen
Ons vorsprake in 't soete dal,
Daer God die werelt doemen sal.

Amen!

TO the convent he made known,
Ere he resumed his journey home,
What had happened to a nun,
But they never knew which one.
That remained a mystery.
The abbot left in God's custody.
He took along with him the nun's
Children, and guarded the little ones.
In grey habit he dressed the two.
Into virtuous men they grew.
Beatrice was their mother's name.
To God be given laud and fame
And to Mary who gave him suck
And showed this miracle to our luck.
She rescued her from misery.
Let all pray, whoever they be,
Who shall hear this miracle read,
That Mary stand in our stead
In the sweet vale where we shall meet
Before the Lord His judgment seat.

Amen!