

# 'Tale of a nun'

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## Tale of a nun

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SMALL good cometh to me of making rhyme; so there be folk would have me give it up, and no longer harrow my mind therewith.

But in virtue of her who hath been both mother and maiden, I have begun the tale of a fair miracle, which God without doubt hath made show in honour of her who fed him with her milk.

Now I shall begin and tell the tale of a nun. May God help me to handle it well, and bring it to a good end, even so according to the truth as it was told me by Brother Giselbrecht, an ordained monk of the order of Saint William; he, a dying old man, had found it in his books.

The nun of whom I begin my tale was courtly and fine in her bearing; not even nowadays, I am sure, could one find another to be compared to her in manner and way of looks. That I should praise her body in each part, exposing her beauty, would become me not well; I will tell you, then, what office she used to hold for a long time in the cloister where she wore veil. Custodian she was there, and whether it were day or night, I can tell you she was neither lazy nor slothful. Ever was she quick to do her work, ringing the bell in church, making ready with the ornaments and lights, and causing the whole convent to rise in due time.

This maiden was not free from Love, who is wont to work so great wonders over all the world. Sometimes he bringeth shame and torment and sorrow; sometimes joy and happiness. Who is wise he maketh so foolish that he must needs come to grief whether willing or unwilling. Another he so vanquisheth that he knows no more whether to speak or to be dumb be to his boon. Many a one he trampleth under foot, who may not rise but when he giveth leave. Others Love causeth to be

\* The 'Tale of a Nun,' given here in an English form, is translated from the verse of a mediaeval Dutch legend, written probably about the year 1320 by an author whose name is now unknown. The origin of the legend is to be found in *Caesarii Cisterciensis monachi in Heisterbacho, Dialogus miraculorum*, where, in *Distinctio Septima*, cap. xxxv., a short story of the Virgin's miraculous intervention is given. Readers of mediaeval French literature, who know Méon's collection of *Fabliaux*, will be able to compare the French and Dutch versions, and no doubt will agree that the latter has the better claim to a rendering into English.

generous who would fain keep their gifts to themselves, were it not for Love inspiring them. Also one shall find folk so true one to the other, that whatsoever Love bringeth them, be it little or great, bliss, joy, or sorrow, they bear it both together. Such Love I call true.

Nor could I ever tell you of all the happiness and misery that flow out of the brooks of Love. Therefore one should not condemn the nun that she could not escape from Love, which kept her fast in his net. For the fiend seeketh always to tempt man, and taketh no rest night or day, but bringeth all his wiles to work.

By vile cunning, as best he could, so did he tempt the nun that she believed she must die. Unto God she bade, and implored Him that He should comfort her by His grace. 'How burdened I am by streng love and wounded, He knoweth to Whom all things are open, from Whom naught is hidden, nor how that this weakness shall lead me astray. I must lead a new life; I must lay off this garment.'

Now, hearken, how she fared further on:

She sent word to the young lord to whom she bore such deep love, with a letter full of sweet passion, praying him to make haste to come to her, and it should be to his boon. The messenger went to where dwelt the young lord, who took the letter and read what his friend had sent to him. Then he was joyful in his mind and hastened to come to her. Ever since they had been twelve years old, had these two borne love together, suffering great dole from it.

So fast as he could, he rode unto that nunnery where she was to be found. Before the little window he sat down, and would fain see her and speak to his love, if that might be. No long time did she tarry, but came before the little window which was crossed all over with bars of iron.

Many a time they heaved a sigh, he sitting without and she within, so deep was the love that troubled them. For so long a while did they sit there that I could not tell you how oft she changed her colour. 'Oh, me!' she said; 'Oh, my sweet friend, my chosen love, I am in such grief; do speak unto me one word or two that may comfort my heart! I am so longing for thy solace, the arrow of love stings so in my heart, that heavy dole have I to suffer; never may I be glad again till thou hast drawn it forth.'

He answered her soothingly. 'You know quite well, dear love, how long we have borne love to each other all our days, and yet never

was so much leisure ours that we might kiss each other for once. May God doom our Lady Venus, the goddess who hath so steeped our senses with this longing, in that she causes two such tender flowers to fade and to wither away! If only I could entreat you to lay down your veil and name a set time when you would give me leave to lead you hence, I would fare out at once and get you made fine costly attire, of woollen cloth lined with fur - mantle, skirt, and tunic. Never in any distress will I forsake thee; with thee, my love, will I adventure life, its sweetness and sourness: take, now, my troth in plight!

‘My well-beloved, dear friend,’ quoth the damsel, ‘most gladly will I take from thee that pledge, and go so far away with thee that no one in this cloister shall know whither we have fled. To-night - a week on - come here, and wait for me outside, in yonder orchard under a sweet-briar! There wait for me, and I will come out to be your bride, and go with you wheresoever you choose. Unless it be that sickness trouble me, or other hindrance make it too heavy for me, be well assured that I shall be there, and I beseech thee to be there also, my lief lord!’

So they made promises each unto other. Then he took leave, and went where his steed stood saddled, and, without tarrying, took horse and rode away in haste across green meadows till he came to the city.

There in naught was he forgetting of his dear love. On the morrow, going his round of the city, he bought for her blue and scarlet cloth, and had it made into a fine mantle and cape, with skirt and tunic to match, each of them well lined, the best that might be. No one ever saw better stuff worn under lady's attire; they that looked on it all praised it. Knives, girdles, pouches, both good and costly, did he buy; gold rings, head-gear, and many kinds of treasure; all those treasures did he purchase that are becoming to a well-bred bride. Also he took with him five hundred pounds of silver, and one night at dusk went forth from the town by stealth. All that costly gear he carried with him, well piled on the back of his steed, and so rode on to the nunnery till he came into the orchard under a sweet-briar, as she had said.

Then he sat down on the grass and waited for his well-beloved to come forth.

Of him now I shall not speak for a while, but will tell you about that fair, dainty she.

Before midnight she rang the bells to first prime, and was in great dole through love. Then when matins had been sung by all the nuns, elder and younger of the convent, and when all had retired to their common dormitory, she alone remained in the choir, muttering her prayer as she was wont to do. She knelt down before the altar, and in deep dread spake she:

‘Maria, Mother, name sweet, no longer may my body wear this habit. All ways and at all times thou knowest the heart and soul of man. I have fasted and prayed and done myself bodily grief, yet it is all in vain that I chasten myself. Love has me in thrall, and I must take me to the world's ways. So verily, as Thou, my dear Lord, hast been hung between two thieves, and hast been stretched along the Cross, and hast brought resurrection to Lazarus while he lay a dead man in his grave, so must Thou know my pains, and pardon my misdoing. I must fall deeply into heavy sin.’

After this she turned from the choir unto a statue of Our Lady, before which she knelt down and said her prayer. ‘Maria,’ spake she without fear, ‘night and day have I cried, and meekly laid my sorrow before thee; yet I have never been one straw the better for it. My mind would give way altogether were I to remain any longer in this habit.’ So she put off her veil and laid it upon the altar of the Blessed Virgin; her shoes she untied, and behold, the keys of the Sacristy she hung before the statue of Mary. This she did, as I will explain to you, in order that they might be found with ease when sought for at early prime, for none would ever pass by the statue of Mary but would cast a glance thereto, and mutter ‘Ave’ before going thence.

Clad only in her smock, driven thereto by necessity, she went out by a door which was known to her: she opened it cunningly, and passed through it by stealth without making a sound. Trembling she came into the orchard, and was seen then by the young lord, who, drawing near, said: ‘Yea, sweet one, do not fear; it is your friend whom you meet here.’ But as they were standing thus, she was covered with shame, because she had on naught save her smock. Howbeit, said he, ‘O body most fair, far better would beautiful attire and rich raiment befit you: if you will not be angry with me, therefore, I will give them straightway into your hands.’ So they went together under the sweet-briar, and there he gave to her whatsoever she might need in two changes of clothes (blue was the one which there she put on, and well

it fitted her). Lovingly looked he on her, and said: 'My beloved, far better does the blue suit you than did ever the grey!' Also she put on two silk stockings, and two shoes of Cordova leather, that became her better than the lappet-shoes she had worn before. Also he gave her a head-gear of white silk to throw over her head. Then the young lord kissed her lovingly on the mouth; and it seemed to him while thus she stood before him that the day unveiled itself in beauty.

In haste he went to his steed, and made her mount before him in the saddle; and on they rode together till, in the gathering light, they saw that none followed after them. And as day began to shine in the east, she said, 'O Lord, solace of all the world, now Thou must have charge of us, for day is breaking! Ah! if I had not come out unto thee, I should have been ringing the bells for first mass, as I was wont to do in the convent. Great fear have I that I shall live to repent this flight. The world holds so ill to its word; 'tis like the cunning hawker who sells counterfeit gold rings for true ones.'

'Ah, me! what sayest thou, my pure one? May God damn me if ever I should forsake thee! Whithersoever we go, I shall not leave thee, unless it be that Death bring severance between us! How is it that thou shouldst be doubting of my good faith? Thou hast not found me a man cunning or untruthful toward thee. From that moment, when I chose you to be my love, not even an empress could have won hold on my mind; and even were I worthy of her, I would not leave thee for her sake. Be full sure of this, dear love! With me I bear five hundred pounds of white silver: of all these shalt thou be mistress, sweet. And though we go to a foreign country, we shall have no need to pledge anything till a seven year be gone.'

Thus riding on, they came that morning near to a forest wherein were birds making great melody among themselves. So loudly did they pipe, one might hear it any way off. Each sang according to its kind. In the green grass stood beautiful flowers, full-blown, shedding abroad their sweet scents. The sky was clear and bright; and many a tall tree flourishing in full leaf stood there.

The young lord looked at the pure maid, for whom he bore love so constantly, and said: 'Dear love, if so it pleaseth thee, why should we not get down and gather flowers? So fair seems this place, let us here play the game of love!' 'What sayest thou, villain churl? Shall I lie down on the grass like a vile woman that must sell her body

for gold; then must I have little shame in me! Never wouldst thou have spoken to me so, if thou were not basely bred. Well may it cause me pain; may God damn one who could think of such a thing! Now, speak not again of it; but listen to the birds in the valleys how they sing and are glad; and the time shall not be long to thee. When once I am lying with thee naked on a well-appointed bed, ay then thou mayst do as thou longest and as thy heart desires; but great pain have I at heart that thou shouldst have put this to me now.'

Quoth he, 'My dear, nay, do not scorn me thus: it was Venus herself that did inspire me. God may bring me to shame and grief if ever I let speak of it again!' And spake she, 'Then I will forgive thee. Thou art my solace above all men that live under Heaven. If fair Absalom were alive now, and I full sure that I might live with him a thousand years in exceeding joy and rest, I should not wish for it. Beloved, so I set thee before all, that nothing might be offered me for which I would forsake thee. Were I sitting in Heaven, and thou here on earth, surely I would come down to thee. Nay, God, punish me not for that I have talked thus foolishly! To the least of the joys of Heaven no earthly joy may compare; there so perfect is the smallest joy, that the soul longs not but to worship God without end. All earthly things are but poor, and not worth a hair as against those one meets with in Heaven. Well are they counselled that suffer for it, though I have to go astray and fall into deep sin for thee, my well-beloved, my beautiful friend.'

Thus they spake and exchanged sayings as they rode across mountains and valleys. Naught would it behove me to tell you what passed between them. On they rode till they were come to a town's gate lying in a valley. So well did they like that place that they remained there for seven years, leading a joyous life in the embraces of love, and had together two children. Then after those seven years, when all their money was spent, they had to live on the goods which they had brought with them; clothes, ornaments, and horses, these they sold at half their value; and soon they had again spent all. And now they knew not by what means to live; for not even a skirt could she spin, or by that something might have been earned.

And there came a time when meat and wine and provisions and all things that are for food grew very dear; and much suffering they had

to bear. Far rather had they died than begged for bread; and poverty brought parting between them, though it grieved them sore. The man it was who first broke troth; he left her behind him in heavy sorrow, and went back again into his own land. Never they beheld each other again; there remained with her two children very beautiful to look upon.

Said she: ‘Now at last that has happened which was ever my dread early and late; I have remained behind in bitter suffering. He in whom I had placed all my trust has forsaken me. Mary, Virgin, if thou would but pray for me and my two little ones, that we may not perish with hunger! But what shall I, wretched woman, begin to do? Both body and soul I must foul by wrong-doing. Ay, Virgin Mary, come to mine aid! Even if I could spin a skirt, I would not make by it one loaf of bread in a fortnight. I cannot help myself; I must go outside the walls, and in the fields earn money with my body, wherewith to buy meat. For my two childrep I may not forsake.’

And thus she entered into a sinful life. In truth, I have been told that for seven years she lived as a common woman, and became laden with many a sin. Dearly did she loathe it, and was hard pushed from it; but did it for a poor wage, by which she made provision for her children. What good would come were I to tell you them all - the shameful and heavy sins in which she thus lived for fourteen years?

Yet whatever sorrow or repentance befell, never did she forget, but every day said the Seven Dolours in honour and praise of our Lady, praying to her to be set free from those acts of sin wherewith she was burdened.

Now, when the fourteen years of her sinful life with her beloved knight, and that which followed, were ended, God put into her heart such deep contrition that she would rather have had her head cut from her body by a bare sword than again give up her flesh to sin as she had been wont. Night and day she cried, with eyes never dry from tears; and said she: ‘Mary, Cradle of God, highest fountain of all womanhood, do not thou forsake me in my distress! I call upon thee, Our Lady, to witness how I sorrow for my sins, and how deep is the grief they cause me; so many they be, I cannot tell where or with whom they were done. Alas, what shall be my fate! Well may I tremble for the last judgment where all sins will appear revealed,

whether of poor or of rich, and all those will be punished that have not before been told in confession and done penance for. Well do I know this, and can have no doubt of it; therefore do I live in such great dread. Even if I went about in sackcloth, crawling upon bare feet and hands from place to place, I could not win absolution unless thou, Mary, were to take pity upon me. Fount of Mercy, so many hast thou stood by! Yea, though I am a sinful woman, a wretched caitiff, yet remember, Mary, that whatever life I led, never did I forget to read a prayer in honour of thee. Be gracious unto me, for I am one full of woe and in great need of thy solace; therefore I do well to implore it. Thou Bride, chosen of God, thy Son when He made annunciation of Himself to thee at Nazareth, sent thee a salutation such as never messenger before had spoken; therefore are these same words so well favoured of thee that whosoever hath it in his heart to say to thee, "Ave Maria!" to him thou avowest thanks. Were he fallen into deepest sin thou wouldst gain grace for him, and be advocate for him with thy Son.'

To such prayers and bewailings the sinner gave herself for many days. At last she took a child in each hand, and wandered with them in great poverty from place to place living upon charity. So far did she traverse the country that at last she found herself back again near the convent where she had lived as a nun. At a late hour, after the sun had set, she came to the house of a widow, and begged that, for the sake of charity, she might rest there for the night. 'I could not very well send you away with your little ones,' said the widow. 'How tired they look! Do you sit down, and take some rest; and I will give you of what the good Lord has bestowed on me, for the honour of His dear Mother.' Thus she stayed with her two children, and would fain have known how matters stood in her old convent. 'Tell me,' she said, 'my good woman, is this a nuns' convent?' 'In truth, yes,' answered she, 'and, on my faith, a magnificent one it is, and rich. Nowhere would one find another to equal it. The nuns that live there have not their like for virtue; never did I hear tell of any of them a rumour to their shame.'

The woman, sitting there beside her children, said: 'How canst thou say such a thing? for I have heard much talk of late about a certain nun; if I mistake not she must have been monitress here. She that told me spake no lie; fourteen years it must be now since she fled

from the convent, and no one has heard tell of her since, nor knows where she may have died.' Then the widow grew angry, and said: 'It seems to me as if thou wert mad; nor will I have thee here to repeat such evil things about the monitress. All that time she has been here, and never did she fail in her duty unless her health gave way. He would be worse than a vile dog who could say anything of her but good. She has as pure a mind as ever nun had; were you to search all the cloisters that are built between the river Elbe and the Garonne I am sure you could find no nun that leads a holier life.'

The woman who had so long been soiled by sin, - ay, how wonderful this talk seemed to her! And she spake thus: 'Wilt thou make known to me by what names her father and her mother were called?' Then she named them both, and Beatrice knew well that it was herself that was meant. O God! how she wept at night, kneeling before her bed, and praying. 'No other pledge,' she cried, 'but my deep penitence have I to offer thee; and yet, O Mary, come to mine aid! Such grief have I for my sins that if I saw a furnace hot and red, so burning and fiery that the flames tongued out of its mouth, I would be fain to creep therein, could that but free me from my sins. Lord, Thou art loath to see man in misery; on this I will put my trust, and will ever hope for solace, though I be in anguish and great dread. Thy loving-kindness cannot be brought to an end, no more than one can scoop out the great sea in one day, and lay bare its nether deeps. Never was sin so terrible that could not win pardon by Thy grace; how, then, shall I be shut away from Thy mercy, since my sins are so hateful to me.'

While she was thus stretched in prayer, a heaviness came on all her limbs, and, without knowing, she fell asleep. And while thus she was lying in her sleep, it seemed, in a vision, that a voice called to her: 'Woman, so long hast thou lifted thy lamentation that Mary has taken pity on thee, and has prayed for thee that thou mayst be free from condemnation. Now, get thee in haste unto this cloister; the doors, the same through which thou fleddest with thy love, thou shalt find opened wide. And all thine attire thou shalt find lying upon the altar, the veil, and the habit, and the shoes; thou shalt put them on without fear. Then for all this thou shalt render Mary high thanks. The keys also of the sacristy which thou didst lay before her statue on that night when thou wentest away, so well hath she cared for them that in all

these years no one has found thee missing. So well is Mary thy friend, that in the very image of thee she took up thine office. This, O sinner, hath our Lady of Heaven done for thee. By her command thou shalt return unto thy cloister: there is no one on thy bed there. Harken, it is in God's name that I speak unto thee.'

It was not long after this that she started out of her sleep. 'God, Lord Almighty,' quoth she, 'nay, do not let the fiend throw me into heavier grief than that from which I now suffer! If I were now to go into that convent and be taken for a thief, then I should be in yet deeper shame than when first I left the nunnery, I beseech thee, good Lord, by Thy precious Blood which ran out of Thy side, if the voice that has spoken be really to my boon, then let it not cease, but make me to hear it once again; yea, even a third time; then shall I know that I may return to the cloister, and will extol and praise Mary for it without end.'

Now hearken, the next night a voice seemed to come thus admonishing her: 'Woman, thou makest too long tarrying! Go back into thy convent, there God shall solace thee. Do what Mary commandeth thee. Her messenger I am, Doubt it not any more.'

But although this was the second message bidding her to return, even yet dared she not venture. A third night she waited and prayed. 'If it be fiend's folly that is practised upon me, then put an end to the devil's power and malice. And if so be he appear again to-night, Lord, put him to such confusion that he must fly out of the house, having no power to do me harm. Now, Mary, be thou my help. If thou hast sent a voice to bid me back into the nunnery, by thy Child, I beseech thee, make me hear it a third time to-night.'

So she watched a third night: and a voice came forth from the power of God, with an all-prevailing light, saying: 'Thou doest wrong not to fulfil what I have commanded thee, for it is Mary who speaks through me. Thou mayst tarry all too long. Go into the cloister without trembling: the door stands wide open for thee, so thou mayest pass where thou wilt: and thou shalt find thine attire waiting for thee upon the altar.'

When the voice had thus spoken, the sinner beheld the radiance; and she said: 'Now I may doubt no longer; this voice is my Lord's,

and this message is Mary's. It comes to me in a radiance so beautiful, well, now, may I feel sure! And therefore I will not be disobedient; I will go into the cloister and do this with a good faith in our Lady's solace. My children I will commend to God, our Father; in His care they will be safe.'

Then she took off her clothes and covered them with them silently so that they should not wake; and kissing them both on the lips: 'Children, fare you well!' said she, 'I leave you here in our Lady's good keeping. Had she not pleaded for me and given me release, I would never have forsaken you for all the riches of Rome.'

Hear what she did next. In a trance, all alone, she went toward the nunnery. When she came through the orchard she found the door open for her, and went in without trembling: 'Mary, I thank thee, now I am safely within these walls; may God make good adventure befall me further on!'

Wherever she came the door stood wide open for her; and in the chapel, where on the altar she had laid off her habit fourteen years ago, truly I tell you, that on the same spot she found it all again, shoes, and habit, and veil. She put them on in haste, and kneeling down cried: 'Lord of the realm of Heaven, and thou, Virgin Mary, Immaculate, blessed must ye be! Thou, Mary, art the flower of all virtue. In thy pure maidenhood thou borest a Child without sorrow, that shall be Lord for evermore. Thou art the chosen of Grace; thy Child made heaven and earth; the Lord, our Saviour, thou mayst command as Mother, and He may greet thee, His well-beloved daughter. For all this I live in better ease; for whosoever seeketh grace from thee, he findeth it though he may come late. Thy help is so high that my sorrow and grief in which I have been living so long have been changed by thee into joy and blessing. Well may I give blessing unto thee!'

And before our Lady's statue, where she had hung them once, lo! she found again the keys of the sacristy. She hung them upon her belt, and went into the choir, where she found the lamps burning in every corner. Thence she went to the place of the prayer-books, and laid each one on its own desk, as often she had done before; and again she prayed to Mary to save her from all misfortune, and have her poor children in good keeping, whom she had left at the widow's house in great sorrow.

Meanwhile the night had worn away, and the clock began to strike,

sounding the midnight chime. And now she caught hold of the bellrope and began to ring for matins, so regularly as to be clearly heard all over the convent. And those who had been sleeping in the dormitory came down all without tarrying, and none of them knew what had happened. Thus she stayed in the convent without reproach or disgrace. The sinner was saved in honour of Mary, the Virgin of Heaven, who never forsakes her friends in their distress and anxiety.

This lady having now turned to be a nun as before, I will not forget her two children whom she had left behind at the widow's house in great need. Neither bread nor money had they; and I could ill tell you into what deep grief they fell when they no longer found their mother. The widow came and sat by them in true pity; and said she: 'I will take these two children to the abbess of the convent; God will certainly put it into her heart to be good to them.' Then she dressed them in their clothes and shoes, and took them with her to the convent. Quoth she: 'My lady, see the need of these two orphans; their mother has left them at my house, and has gone her way - I know not whether to east or west: and now these poor ones are helpless, though I would fain do for them what I could.' The abbess answered, 'Keep them with you, I will recompense you for it; and you shall not complain that they have been left with you. Every day they shall receive of God's charity. Send some one here daily for meat and drink, and, should they be in want of anything, forget not to let me know.'

Full glad was the widow now that all this had thus come about; she took the children with her, and cared well for them. And now how happy was the mother who had nursed them and suffered for them, when she knew them to be in such good keeping; from that time she needed no longer to have for them any fear or dread.

But while she was thus leading a holy life, much sighing and trembling was hers night and day; for the bewailing of her great sins lay heavily upon her, yet dared she not avow them, or openly make confession of them.

At length one day there arrived an abbot who was wont to visit the sisterhood once a year to know whether anything shameful had happened which might bring blame on them. The same day that he came, the sinner lay down in deep prayer within the choir, wrought

with doubt and inward struggle. But the devil so pressed her with heavy shame that she dared not lay bare her sinful deeds before the abbot. While thus she lay and prayed, she saw moving toward her a youth who was all in white. Naked in his arms lay a child that to her seemed to be quite dead. The youth was throwing an apple up and down and catching it before the child, playing to it. This the nun at her prayers saw well, and said: 'Friend, if so be thou art a messenger of Heaven, in God's name I do beseech thee to tell me and not hide from me why thou art thus playing to the child with yon fair red apple, while yet it lies a dead body in thine arms? Thy playing, therefore, cannot move it one hair.' 'Forsooth, dame, thou speakest truly; the child does not know of my playing little or much. It is dead, and hears not nor sees. Even so, God knoweth not how thou prayest and fastest. It is all labour lost to chastise thyself. So deeply art thou buried in sin that God cannot hear thy prayer. I admonish thee, go straightway to the abbot thy father, and make confession of all thy sins without cloak or deceit. Do not be misled by devils prompting! Absolution of all thy sins shalt thou receive from the holy abbot. Shouldst thou not dare to speak, the Lord will punish thee heavily for them.' With that the youth disappeared, nor even showed himself again.

Well had she understood all that he said. So, early the next morning, she went and found the abbot, and prayed him to hear her confession from word to word. The abbot was a full wise man, and said he: 'Dear daughter, I will certainly not refuse this. Examine thyself well of all, so that thou hide from me nothing of thy sins.' Then, at that moment she went and set herself down by this holy father, and opened to him her whole life. Whatsoever thing had befallen her she hid it not then; and what she knew in the depth of her heart, she made it all known to the wise abbot. When she had now finished her full confession the abbot spoke: 'Daughter, I will give thee remission of the sins that trouble thee, of which thou hast now made confession. Praised and blessed be Mary our Mother, most holy.' With that he laid his hand upon her head and gave her pardon. And quoth he: 'In a sermon will I tell thy whole story, and devise it so cunningly that on thyself and thy children no blame shall fall. It would be unjust to withhold this miracle which God hath done in honour of His Mother. Everywhere will I tell it, in good hope that thereby many a man may be converted and learn to honour our blessed Lady.'

Before he went he told to all the sisterhood what had happened unto a nun, but there was no one that knew who she was; a close secret did it remain. And when he made farewell, both her children he took with him, and clothed them in grey; and both of them became good monks. Their mother's name was Beatrice.

Give praise to Mary and to her Son our Lord whom she nursed, for that she brought to pass this fair miracle, and freed her from all her pains. And we all of us that hear or read it, let us pray that Mary may be our advocate in the sweet valley where God shall sit and doom the world. AMEN.