

Gregorius

A Medieval Oedipus Legend

Hartmann Von Aue
translated by
Edwin H. Zeydel and
Bayard Quincy Morgan

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COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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PREFACE

The legend of Gregorius, familiar to readers of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1948) and *The Holy Sinner* (1951), is one of the most widespread tales of the Middle Ages. The best-known medieval version, the 4000-line Middle High German poem of Hartmann von Aue, written about 1195, is presented here for the first time in a faithful line-for-line English verse translation. Only a few spurious verses, as well as about two hundred lines not pertinent to the main action, have been omitted. However, the latter have been fully summarized.

This legend, which the writers believe is more closely akin to the Greek story of Oedipus as told by Sophocles than many critics admit, will afford the reader an excellent means of comparing and contrasting the medieval point of view with the ancient. It is therefore a human document of great value not only for a better understanding of medieval civilization, but also for a deeper appreciation of the changes that occurred in men's thinking in the sixteen hundred years separating Sophocles and Hartmann. To a similar end it can be compared with Mann's *Holy Sinner* and the more sophisticated outlook of today.

Pains have been taken to reproduce not only the thought but also the form and spirit. Hartmann's style is terse and lapidary, but clear. The meter of his poem is basically iambic tetrameter; if however a couplet has feminine endings (a long syllable followed by a short one), such as *betwungen:sungen* in lines 1 and 2, only three beats are allowable. Undoubtedly the poet wished to avoid monotony; at any rate, we observe a remarkable variety in his verses, which range in length from five to eleven syllables (verse 1951). As a rule no two consecutive verses are identical, and a number of couplets seem to pair a three-beat with a four-beat line. (Of course we cannot know how these verses were recited.) To reduce a normally octosyllabic line to five syllables without altering the number of stresses, the poet had to leave out one or more unstressed syllables, thus making stresses consecutive and producing an effect not unlike syncopation in music, achieved in words by such lines as "Three blind mice,/ See how they run." (Incidentally, the consecutive stress is a characteristic of Germanic poetry throughout its history and probably a Germanic invention; two of the Sievers "types" regularly used in *Beowulf* are marked by it.) Wishing to preserve

this effect, we employ a device which we believe to be new, and which may prove to be important for English poetry. To insure correct scansion, we simply leave a space between the consecutive stresses. Taking another analogy from music, one may regard this space as a rest: the voice makes a pause roughly equivalent to the time which would have been claimed by the omitted arsis.

The structure of English is such that we have a central pause more frequently than Hartmann does; but we also parallel his practice in such lines as 22 "And causes life's sinking"; 61 "And join God's children here"; 70 "And throw trust in God away"; 72 "To seek Heaven's favor"; 202 "He eyed his twins then." It is our impression that Hartmann's recitation was pleasingly varied, at times dramatic; also, he could play for laughs, as in the tantalizing passage beginning with line 3379 and ending with the drollery, "He might have tarried elsewhere" (3402). Even now one can hear the burst of laughter that surely ensued.

Occasionally too we italicize a word to help in scanning. Line 179, for instance, should be scanned with three beats: "Near the *ocean* is its státion."¹

The first two sections of the Introduction are based largely upon the eighth Hermann Paul edition of *Gregorius*, revised by the late Albert Leitzmann (Halle, 1948), and upon Gustav Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* II, 2, 1, München, 1927, pp. 141 ff. (on *Gregorius* especially pp. 184 ff.). The section on Mann's treatment of the theme is deeply indebted to an article by Hermann J. Weigand in *The Germanic Review* XXVII, 1 and 2 (February-April, 1952), pp. 10-30 and 83-95. The brief notes, which have benefited from the notes of Fedor Bech in his edition in *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters* (2. Teil, 3. Auflage, Leipzig, 1891), but which also embody the results of independent research, aim to explain obscure allusions and to present parallel passages and the like. Our deep gratitude is extended to the Charles Phelps Taft Memorial Fund at the University of Cincinnati for a grant to subsidize this publication.

EDWIN H. ZEYDEL
BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN

¹ See also lines 1158, 1851, 2699, 3073, 3076, 3089, 3371, 3535, and 3873.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Legend of Gregorius in Literature

The medieval legend of Gregorius, recently brought home to present-day readers by Thomas Mann, has been handed down in many widely ramified versions. While Hartmann's poem is undoubtedly the most satisfactory medieval treatment of the theme from the point of view of poetical conception, but even more as a statement of the orthodox medieval poet's reaction to the quaint story, his version is neither the earliest nor the only authentic one. His source was either a lost Latin work or a French poem, *Vie du Pape Grégoire*, which has reached us in five manuscripts falling into two classes, usually referred to as A and B.¹ If one of these French versions was his source, he used a manuscript of Class B.

One of the manuscripts of Class A is the basis of a Middle English poem of the thirteenth century on the same theme, preserved in three widely varying versions, represented by the Auchinleck, the Vernon, and the Cotton manuscripts, all three published. Also derived from the same source are a brief but lively treatment in Latin prose in Chapter 81 of the *Gesta Romanorum*, with some variations of detail, and, possibly dependent upon it, a Coptic version which, while otherwise faithful to the original, changes the hero's name to John and ends with his becoming patriarch instead of pope.

Numerous other variant versions seem to stem from the tale as told in the *Gesta*, among them a German chapbook, a retelling by Albrecht von Eyb (1472), and a French translation (1521). In a Spanish *novela* by Juan de Timoneda (1576) the marriage of mother and son is prevented in the eleventh hour, while in a Spanish drama by Juan de Matos Fragoso, *El marido de su madre* (about 1650), there are many divergences from the source. Three Italian dependents of the *Gesta* version have also been recorded, all seeming to date from the nineteenth century: a

¹ The three manuscripts of class A are: 1. in Tours, published by Luzarche in 1857, 2. in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (unpublished), and 3. in the Paris Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (unpublished); the two of B in 1. the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal and 2. the British Museum, the latter published by Telger in 1933.

popular Venetian poem, and two tales recorded from hearsay in Tuscany and Sicily. All three give the action a middle-class setting and relate the survival of the father and his participation in the penance. Here too the hero's name is no longer Gregorius. The story as told in the *Gesta* was also translated into Polish (1663), and from Polish into Russian, with considerable differences in plot. The Russian version led to a still more divergent Russian tale, and in the Caucasus another Russian tale, apparently based upon a garbled hearsay version of the *Gesta*, has been noted.

Hartmann does not follow the French source slavishly, if indeed he used it. His handling of source material in *Gregorius* seems much more independent than in his Arthurian romances *Erec* and *Iwein*. But he changes very little in the narrative itself. His freedom of treatment lies rather in his attempt to practice restraint in dealing with details and to devote more attention to motivation. Moreover, while the French author stresses the natural feelings of his characters, Hartmann is more concerned with the legend itself and with the transcendental ideas it contains.

Many of the motifs in Hartmann were already traditional in courtly romance, among them that of incest—a favorite perhaps because this sin was considered particularly heinous—, exposure of children, the search for the hero's parents, and the lady in distress. Others were familiar in the lore of legends: the rediscovery of a ring or key in a fish, sustenance without food, automatic pealing of bells, and miraculous healing. But side by side with the miraculous element there is a strong strain of realism running through Hartmann's tale, though it is the typical figural realism of the Middle Ages, which, as Erich Auerbach has shown in *Mimesis*, prefigures the story of Christ's sufferings.

Several other versions stem directly from Hartmann. A Latin poem, mostly in short couplets, by Arnold of Lübeck (about 1210, published by von Buchwald in 1886), follows him closely, while a second shorter Latin version in hexameters, patterned in style on Ovid, contracts the tale. A reworking in German prose is found in *Der Heiligen Leben* of the late four-

teenth century and has appeared also in abbreviated editions, one of them in Swedish.

With many variations, then, the tale has been preserved in nine languages: Latin, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Polish, Russian, and Coptic.

2. Related Legends

Numerous other legends are more or less intimately related to that of *Gregorius*. Several motifs seem to stem from the *Shahnama* of Firdausi and the Byzantine legend of Martinian. The Bulgarian legend of Paul of Caesarea (Kaisarie), existing in a manuscript of the seventeenth century, and two Serbian folk songs about the foundling Simeon, seem to be akin to *Gregorius*. They may be indirectly dependent upon the French poem or, what is less likely, derive from the same source.

Not as closely related to *Gregorius* are the legends of Albanus and Vergogna, in both of which the first (witting) incestuous union takes place between father and daughter instead of brother and sister but is followed, as in *Gregorius*, by unwitting incest between mother and son. In another legend, that of Judas Iscariot, the exposure of the son is prompted by a dream that he will slay his parents, but otherwise it coincides with that in *Gregorius*. Returning home, Judas kills his father and weds his mother. After he has learned her identity he joins the disciples of Jesus.

It cannot be proved that Hartmann was familiar with this legend. To be sure, he mentions Judas in his poem (l. 2623) after mother and son have discovered that their relationship has been incestuous, but this allusion is apparently to the biblical narrative in 27 Matthew 3 ff., and not to the legend. Most recent writers link the Judas legend more closely with the Oedipus story, which will be discussed below.

Still another related legend, which appears in Russia and Karelia, is that of Andrew. It has some features in common with the tale of Judas, others, such as the rediscovery of the key, with *Gregorius*. A prophesy that Andrew will slay his father and wed his mother points to Judas and Oedipus. But the nature of the atonement reminds us of the legend of Paul

and more vaguely of *Gregorius*, while Andrew's final elevation to bishop of Crete seems to be a reminiscence of *Gregorius*. Hermann Paul tentatively places *Oedipus* at the start of a possible development and *Gregorius* at the end, with Judas, Andrew, and Paul as intermediaries in that order. However, all such attempts at a genealogy are uncertain.

3. *Oedipus* and *Gregorius*

Paul, Leitzmann, and others agree that the Judas legend is probably derived from that of Oedipus, but they find only a remote connection between *Oedipus* and *Gregorius*. They feel that the single common motif which seems to them to exist—the marriage between mother and son—does not prove a close relationship. While agreeing that Hartmann was unfamiliar with Sophocles, we would point out that variations of the Oedipus legend as such were known in the Middle Ages through the *Thebaid* of Statius (I, 46 ff.; VIII, 240 ff.; XI, 482 ff.) and the twelfth-century French *Roman de Thèbes*. Therefore the two legends may be more closely related than these critics have assumed. Additional reasons for this are that 1. the legends have several motifs, not only one, in common, and 2. in *Gregorius* two of these occur twice each—a common practice when legendary materials are reworked. These points require explanation.

Oedipus threatens and maligns Teiresias for calling him the murderer of Laius and later, when he hears that he had been in a shepherd's hands, thinks that Jocasta is ashamed of what she believes is his humble lineage. Gregorius, speaking to his mother-wife, threatens and curses the man who he suspects told her evil tales about his birth (Hartmann, ll. 2575 ff.). Teiresias says Oedipus will be called father and brother by his children. Hartmann calls Gregorius' mother his aunt (l. 3831; see also l. 736), and his father is referred to as his uncle (l. 737). Thebes is visited by a plague, the city of Gregorius' mother by a siege (l. 1842). Oedipus assumes Polybus and Merope of Corinth are his parents, Gregorius thinks the fisher and his wife are his (ll. 1402 ff.). He like Oedipus fares forth to seek his real parents after learning that he is a foundling. After blinding himself Oedipus begs to be taken away to solitude. Gregorius implores

the fisherman to lead him to a solitary spot (ll. 2971 ff.). As an infant Oedipus' feet are pierced and laid in bonds, so that he is lamed. Gregorius' ankles are locked in a fetter (ll. 3088 f.) and bleed constantly while he is exposed (ll. 3449 ff.). Oedipus curses the man who removed the bonds from his legs. Before he is certain of his divine mission Gregorius struggles against release from the fetter (ll. 3513 ff.; 3596 ff.).

Two Oedipus motifs appear twofold in *Gregorius*, that of incest (brother - sister, deliberate; mother - son, unwitting) and that of exposure (ll. 699 ff., 3085 ff.). As we have noted, there are numerous examples of this practice of duplication whenever saga or legendary material is retold. One of the most striking is the lay of Gudrun.

Even if these and other similarities are disregarded, the two legends are closely enough related in pattern to offer anyone concerned with comparative literature a first-rate opportunity to appraise the vast differences between the ancient Greek outlook upon life and medieval Christian philosophy. There we see the gods, often malign in their attitude toward men, and their oracles at work; here the devil (ll. 333 ff., 351 ff.) struggling with but overcome by God (l. 3610). There we are confronted with man's helplessness before the gods; here we witness a miraculous act of salvation as a reward for repentance and penance. In *Gregorius* the miraculously restored key (an anecdote traceable in general to Herodotus III, 39-44) is a visible token of God's benign favor, but in *Oedipus* no key to the desperate situation can be found. Oedipus is snatched from the earth, at least in Sophocles, while the curse of the gods continues to haunt his sons. Gregorius attains the highest honors by virtue of Christian love, humility, and repentance. The path of Oedipus goes downward. His every move draws him deeper into the mire. Gregorius' path leads upward—*per aspera ad astra*—because he humbly surrenders to God. In *Oedipus* we are seized with fascinated horror and never forget that man is only a plaything in the hands of higher powers. As David Greene has said: "Sophocles has written a story out of a profoundly tragic conception of existence, which envisages the shipwreck of a life through some malicious quirk of fate's logic as it tries to save itself—a destruction brought about by accident

and chance, yet controlled by an inexorable planless plan."¹ In the medieval philosophy underlying *Gregorius* there is also a plan, but it is not planless, however much it may be beset by an atmosphere of miracles and other-worldliness at which many readers of our time will scoff. There is no parallel in *Oedipus* to the miracles of *Gregorius*. In ancient Greek literature we come closest to them perhaps in the *deus ex machina* of Euripides.

4. Thomas Mann and *Gregorius*

If a comparison of *Oedipus* and *Gregorius* throws light upon the chasm separating two former philosophies of life, Thomas Mann's treatment of the theme affords a welcome opportunity of comparing a contemporaneous writer's attitude with that of a medieval poet. Weigand's article, referred to in the Preface, facilitates such a comparison. In Chapter 31 of *Doctor Faustus* Mann tells the tale briefly in the guise of a musical puppet play based upon the story as he had found it in the *Gesta*, but with original turns of phrase foreign to the original. This experiment prompted him to delve further into the subject and to write a little "archaic novel" around it, which is available in English under the title of *The Holy Sinner*. For this his chief source was the *Gregorius* of Hartmann, translated into modern German expressly for Mann by Samuel Singer of Berne. Secondarily he used medieval sources, Wolfram's *Parzival* and Gottfried's *Tristan*, besides some Old French material, and in addition *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter* by Gregorovius.

Superficially considered, Mann's novel retells the plot of Hartmann's legend and even echoes some of his phrasing. But closer examination shows not only much elaboration and embroidery in Mann, but also an entirely different point of view. As usual, Mann's work has two levels. It is a tale of transfiguration by divine mercy, but also a vehicle for a wealth of good-natured spoofing of medieval superstition and chivalry. Hartmann's moralizing introduction and conclusion are to a considerable degree omitted or parodied. The early phases of the story are expanded, especially the courtly setting, the per-

¹ *Three Greek Tragedies in Translation*. Chicago, 1942, p. 86.

sonality of the parents, and the intimate life of the children. The father's attitude toward his son is described as one of jealousy. The cohabitation of the children is depicted in pun-
gently naturalistic detail, with a touch of what Weigand calls surrealism. Many other details are brought out with psychological finesse, for instance the girl's grief over her brother's death. While Hartmann is very sparse with names of places and persons, Mann's account abounds with them.

The abbot, likable enough in Hartmann, becomes a more lifelike person in Mann. Mann dwells upon the antagonism of Gregorius and his foster-brother. The hero's winning of his mother (in Bruges) is told with much independent elaboration, and the incestuous union does not remain childless, as in Hartmann. Gregorius' seventeen years on the rock are not glossed over. Here Mann gives full play to his humor when he slyly "proves" that a man can live for almost two decades on the "milk of the earth," although he may shrink in size until he can again partake of normal food. However, Gregorius' mental anguish during his long trial is not stressed, as in Hartmann, and the hero loses no time in self-effacement once he becomes aware that God has called him to the papacy. Another clever touch is added by Mann when he has the mother confess that she had known her son's identity all the while. But the picture of Rome which Mann limns is not of the time of Hartmann. It is essentially the Rome left in ruins by the Vandals in the fifth century, as described by Gregorovius. But when we reach the end, there is no doubt that we have returned to the sophistication of our own time.

Mann, then, supplants the spirit of naive poetry pervading Hartmann's tale with smiling condescension, sly humor, and the worldly-wise attitude of present-day western civilization. Irony and banter are his means of coping with a theme that our modern scientific age can no longer accept at face value. As he tells us himself in *Doctor Faustus*, he was attracted to the story by its quaintness; it aroused his sense of the comic and stimulated his parodistic vein. To these attractions Weigand adds the lightness of the theme as Mann sees it, the challenge of transmuting such an old narrative into a personal product, the motif of incest, and the opportunity that the tale offered of achieving new

linguistic effects by the use of medieval and modern French, archaic German, and a peculiar hybrid of modern German contaminated by American speech.

5. Hartmann von Aue, His Life and Works

In *Tristan und Isolt*¹ his contemporary, Gottfried von Strassburg, calls the poet *Hartman der Ouwaere* (l. 4619), or simply *der Ouwaere* (ll. 4634, 4652), but nowadays he is always referred to as Hartmann von Aue. Wolfram von Eschenbach, the author of *Parzival*,¹ and Walther von der Vogelweide, the lyricist,¹ were also his contemporaries. He lived at the height of the Middle High German classical period and together with them is considered one of its noblest representatives. He was born shortly before 1170 somewhere in Swabia in southwestern Germany. Ouwe, a green, marshy meadow, was a common place name. He died between 1210 and 1220. Apparently he received a monastic education and was a ministerial, *i.e.* an administrative household officer, in the service of the Swabian family of von Aue. His liege lord died about 1195. Hartmann seems to have taken part in a crusade in 1197. No other important facts about his life are known. However, he has left a larger number of major writings than any of his contemporaries whom we have mentioned. Produced, it seems, between approximately 1190 and 1204, they are, in the usually accepted chronological order, 1. a so-called *Büchlein* or rhymed disputation between body and soul, written in honor of a lady and expounding his doctrine of *minne*, or love,² 2. an Arthurian romance of chivalry known by

¹ See *The Tristan and Isolde of Gottfried von Strassburg*, translated in rhyming couplets with connecting summaries by Edwin H. Zeydel, Princeton University Press, 1948. The passage in question is however not included because it is a digression in the story.

Also *The Parzival of Wolfram von Eschenbach*, translated in rhyming couplets with connecting summaries by Edwin H. Zeydel in collaboration with B. Q. Morgan. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, No. 5. Chapel Hill, 1951.

Also *Poems of Walther von der Vogelweide*. Thirty New English Renderings in the Original Forms, with an Introduction by Edwin H. Zeydel and Bayard Quincy Morgan. Thrift Press, Ithaca, N. Y., 1952.

² A second *Büchlein* that used to be ascribed to him has, since 1898, been considered a spurious work by a later imitator.

the name of its hero, *Erec*, and adapted from a work by the French *trouvère* Crestien of Troyes, 3. *Gregorius*, 4. *Der arme Heinrich*, a legend on the theme of vicarious sacrifice written to teach humble submission to God's will and purportedly derived from the family history of his liege lords, the von Aues, and 5. a second chivalric romance, *Iwein*, again adapted from a work of Crestien.³

In addition Hartmann has left lyrics: some mostly melancholy minnesongs, or love lyrics, a widow's lament, and four poems about a crusade, all to be found in the Lachmann-Haupt edition of *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, 5th edition revised by Friedrich Vogt, 1930.

The 176-line Prolog with which Hartmann prefaces *Gregorius* and which the German critic Hermann Schneider believes suggested to Wolfram many of the ideas that he expresses less lucidly in his prolog to *Parzival*,⁴ presents one problem to those concerned with the chronological sequence of Hartmann's works. Here (ll. 1-5) he regrets the worldly works which he has already written. This has led some writers to call *Gregorius* his last work—following the worldly *Iwein*. Internal evidence, however, points to an earlier composition, as was indicated above. The truth seems to be that in the Prolog to *Gregorius* he was thinking of his first worldly romance, *Erec*, of the *Büchlein*, and of some of his love lyrics, and that later he experienced a change of heart and in *Iwein* turned once more to a worldly subject.

Depth of feeling, strong moral fibre, and a sense of artistic

³ Of these works only *Der arme Heinrich* has up to now been made available in English. Five versions are known: An adaptation by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (*Henry the Leper, a Swabian Miracle-Rhyme*, 1846-47), in Rossetti's *Collected Works*, 1897, II, 420 ff.; a retelling in Longfellow's *Golden Legend*; a translation by Margaret Schlauch in *Medieval Narrative*, 1928; another by C. H. Bell in *Peasant Life in Old German Epics*, 1931 (Records of Civilization XIII), and a third in *Two Moods of Minnesong* by Charles M. Lancaster, John G. Frank, and Carl Hammer, 1944 (Vanderbilt University). Most of Hartmann's works have been translated into modern German. Two German translations of *Gregorius* have appeared, one by S. O. Fistes (pseudonym for G. A. Weiske), 2nd ed., 1855, and another by K. Pannier (Reclam series), 1883.

⁴ *Parzival-Studien*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1944-46. Heft 4, 1947.

form characterize all of Hartmann's works. In a famous passage already alluded to, Gottfried praises him in the highest terms for his skillful treatment of subject matter, his clarity, purity, and grace of style. Both Wolfram and Gottfried seem to have profited by reading him, although their styles are different. While Wolfram is more profound but not as crystal-clear, he must have admired the terse, crisp style of Hartmann and his rugged, independent handling of the Middle High German verse (discussed in our Preface), as well as his stern Christian faith and morality. Gottfried may well have acquired his penchant for scintillating word-play from Hartmann (see for instance *Gregorius*, ll. 606-626). The 750 intervening years have not dimmed Hartmann's reputation.

In one important respect Hartmann became an innovator in *Gregorius*. As Hermann Paul has said, it is the first work of its kind to reveal a reaction of the spiritual interests to worldly chivalry on the part of the representatives of chivalry itself. It is the first courtly legend (as *Erec* seems to be the first Arthurian romance) and as such blends the spiritual and worldly spheres, as Wolfram did a few years later in *Parzival* and as numerous less gifted imitators attempted to do. Worldly chivalry thus becomes a prefiguration of the Knight's struggle for a God. The legend of the *Childhood of Jesus* by Konrad von Fussesbrunnen (about 1210) and those of his contemporary Konrad von Heimesfurt on the Virgin Mary and on Christ's passion and resurrection proved to be by no means sporadic phenomena in the years to come. A generation later Rudolf von Ems carried this tendency further in such a work as *Barlaam and Josaphat*.

Five complete, or fairly complete, manuscripts of *Gregorius* have been preserved: a parchment manuscript of the thirteenth century in the Vatican Library (known as A), three paper manuscripts in Vienna (E), Berne (J), and Constance (K), and a nineteenth-century copy of a Strassburg manuscript destroyed in 1870 (B). A, B, and E lack the prolog. A manuscript in Erlau, or Eger, in Hungary (G) is incomplete. Five others are fragmentary. Of the more complete manuscripts, A and J are the best. Of some value for textual criticism are also the German prose version and the Latin translation of Arnold of Lübeck.

As a basis for our English translation we have used the eighth edition of Paul-Leitzmann referred to in our Preface. The notes to the introduction of that edition contain a rich bibliography. Further bibliography and materials on Hartmann and *Gregorius* will be found in the standard work of Gustav Ehrismann, also referred to in the Preface, and in H. Spaarnay, *Hartmann von Aue. Studien zu einer Biographie*, 2 volumes, 1933-1938. However, Professor Paul Gleis of Catholic University does not agree with Ehrismann's explanation of the origin of the legend. Gleis traces it to pagan mythology or to astral religion and refers to the *Acta Sanctorum*, the *Historia Albani Martyris*, and the legend of St. Brandan for parallels of martyrs chained to a rock. The name Gregorius may represent the Greek *georgos*, husbandman, he believes.

1. PROLOG

PROLOG^{*1}

Oft my heart's been forcing
My tongue to keep discoursing
Of things whereof it pays to speak
If one would worldly plaudits seek.
So judged my heart immature.*
Now of this I'm wholly sure:
Whoe'er, by Satan lured,
In youth should feel assured
To let sins surround him
As youth's temptations hound him, 10
So that he lightly says,
'I'm still mid youthful days:
The wrongs I may do now
Don't matter, I'll know how
In age to make all things good,'
He thinks other than he should.
Such thoughts maybe will leave him,
For there will come to grieve him
Unavoidable distress,
When grim death with bitterness 20
Vengefully ends his thinking
And causes life's sinking
Swiftly and forever.
Devoid of Heaven's favor,
He has chosen ways of sin.
But were he even Adam's kin,
Brother too of Abel,*
So his soul were stable
In holding to the sinless way
Till the dread Judgment Day, 30
Too much he'd not have given
For lasting life in Heaven,
Which began not of yore
And will end nevermore.
Therefore readiness I'd show,
Speaking truth, to let men know:

¹ The asterisks throughout refer to the notes, pp. 139 ff.

God's will can ne'er abate,
 Whence that heavy weight
 Of sin, soul-distressing,
 Might grow less oppressing, 40
 Which I by inactivity
 With words have brought down on me.
 For of this I have no doubt:
 As in a man God pointed out
 And proved it for us all to heed:
 Never was a man's misdeed
 In the world so very great
 But he could throw off all its weight,
 Provided he will rue it
 And nevermore renew it. 50
 He of whom I'll now relate,
 So heavy was his sin and great,
 It might be over hard to hear,
 Save that wisdom makes it clear
 That none may keep it hidden:
 By it men are bidden
 (All those upon the sinful way,
 Whom the devil led astray,
 Now to hell proceeding)
 To give ear to pleading 60
 And join God's children here,
 And once again that course to steer
 Which takes them to salvation,
 Shunning vacillation
 That leads 'oft to perdition.
 Whoso by volition
 A major sin would commit
 And other sins must admit,
 God's command he'd disobey
 And throw trust in God away, 70
 Spurning all endeavor
 To seek Heaven's favor,
 In doubt of resurrection.
 Doubts lose him the protection
 Of bounties of contrition.
 This is faith's true mission,

The faith that he on God should pin:
 Confess and then atone for sin.
 But bitter sweetness forces
 His feet upon courses 80
 Promising the common way;*
 No stone nor steep his footsteps stay,
 Mire, mount, nor forest grim;
 'Tis not too hot nor cold for him;
 It strains nor muscles nor his breath,
 But leads him to eternal death.
 The blessed road *we* treasure
 Is to a certain measure
 Both rough and cramped.
 Its whole length must be tramped, 90
 Plodding, uphill questing,
 Waters wading, breasting,
 Till it leads the pilgrim where
 Wider grows the way he fare,
 This wretched scene disdaining
 And a sweeter end attaining.
 Upon this road chanced a man:*
 Just in time off he ran
 From his murderers' power.
 They held him for an hour: 100
 Then indeed they struck him down
 And cruelly stole both renown
 And his spirit's raiment,
 Giving him in payment
 Wounds that martyrs have to bear.
 In that hour full of care
 Dire his soul's poverty.
 Thus they left him, naked he
 And half dead lying.
 But God, not denying 110
 The pity that He always knew,
 Sent him these garments two:
 Fear and hope impassioned
 Which God himself fashioned,
 Protection to tender
 Him and each offender:

Fear of extermination,
 Hope he'd escape damnation.
 Fear let him lie not where he'd lain,
 Yet he had fallen once again, 120
 Save the hope that buoyed him
 To such extent joyed him
 That there he sat, swaying:
 Now strength he found, displaying
 To God his devotion
 And a rueful emotion.
 These did the man much good
 And purified his blood.
 They bathed his wounds malign
 In soothing oil and wine: 130
 This salve is mild, yet the wound feels raw,
 For oil is mercy, wine is the law.
 These the sinner must receive,
 These his illness can relieve.
 'Twas thus God's Mercy took his hand,
 Raised him up off the land
 Upon her shoulder generous
 And kindly bore him homeward thus.
 There his every wound
 So skillfully was bound 140
 That free of scars health was won
 And he became a champion
 O'er all Christianity.
 Still you've not heard from me
 What sort of wounds were contrived
 So that he secretly survived,
 How such wounds he received,
 How of them he was relieved,
 Yet eternal death could shun.
 This must be heard by everyone 150
 And should be well heeded
 By all who are impeded
 By guilt of mountain heaviness:*
 Maybe some nonetheless
 Will haste to seek God's grace,
 Whom gladly He'll embrace.

His mercy is so great
 That one thing He must hate,
 And this He has indeed forbid,
 That any crime a person did
 Should make man's doubt in Him persist. 160
 There are no sins that exist
 That we by hearty ruing
 Can't shed, our souls renewing,
 Becoming fair and pure,
 Save doubt, if that endure.
 That is a death- dealing gall,
 Causing the everlasting fall:
 True sweetness none can lend it
 Nor unto God defend it. 170

This story, who disclosed it
 In German and composed it,
 Hartman von Ouwe, I am he.
 Things that wondrous seem to me
 I'll tell, the tale beginning
 Of a man, good through sinning.*

**2. THE PARENTS OF GREGORIUS AND
THEIR SIN**

2. THE PARENTS OF GREGORIUS AND THEIR SIN

A land Romanic known to fame
Is Aquitania by name,
Near the *ocean* is its station.*
The ruler of this nation 180
Was by his wife presented
With twins unprecedented,
Their loveliness surpassed by none,
A little daughter and a son.
Their mother left the earth*
When she had given them birth.
When the children then
Had reached the age of ten,
The father too had to die.*
As death to him was coming nigh 190
And was about his guide to be,
When he in his infirmity
Of Death's coming knew,
He did what wise men do:
The best among his vassals
He called from their castles,
On whom he depended.
To these he commended
His soul and children tender.
When duty they would render, 200
Kin, serving folk and men,
He eyed his twins then,
So like one another,
Each handsome like the other
In features and in shapeliness,
That stern women would confess,
With smiles one must greet them
When eyes chanced to meet them.
That caused the father's heart
Much grief and bitter smart. 210
So great was his lordship's pain
That from his eyes flowed the rain
Down upon the cover.
"No help I can discover,"

He said, "I must leave you.
 I'd hoped not to grieve you
 But spend with you happy years
 And reach old age free of tears.
 Such solace must forsake me
 Death wants to take me." 220

He took their hands, commending
 Them to those hither wending
 And thus fealty keeping.
 One heard a deal of weeping.
 Their loyal lamentation
 Grew out of tribulation.
 In all there collected
 Such conduct one detected
 As good vassals will reveal
 Fain for a dear master's weal. 230

When he saw the twins cry,
 The father spoke and said, "Why,
 Son, shed these tears of woe?
 You'll inherit, as you know,
 My lands and much power.
 My fears in this hour
 Are great for your sister fair.
 It fills me with grief and care,
 And now too late I lament
 That through the days I have spent 240
 Better I've not supplied her:
 Bad father, poor provider!"

He took them both by the hand:
 "Son, my words take as command.
 Never cease heeding
 The last solemn pleading
 Your sire for you has ready.
 Be loyal and be steady,*
 Be humble and be generous,
 Be kindly, yet valorous. 250
 Good breeding keep well in mind,
 With lords be firm, to poor men kind.
 With homage treat your kin,
 All strangers strive to win.
 Seek the sage's company

And shun the dolt where'er he be.
 Most of all love God with awe,
 Judge according to His law.
 I commend my soul to you,
 This fair child, your sister, too: 260
 All your care be for her good
 And treat her as a brother should.
 Thus you both well may fare.
 God, whose pity I would share,
 Keep you in His blessing."
 Therewith an end distressing
 Was put to speech and beating heart:
 The company had to part
 Which his soul and body kept.
 Here men and women wept. 270
 Obsequies so were planned
 As fit the lord of a land.
 Since high-born girl and brother
 Had lost sire and mother,
 The youthful lord took care
 Of his sister everywhere
 With zeal unabated,
 As loyalty dictated,
 Fulfilling her moods
 With action and goods. 280
 No act of his dimmed her brow,
 He treated her (I'll tell you how)
 So that he naught protested
 Of all she requested
 Of dresses or of pleasure.
 They were in full measure
 Companions and at one
 And seldom alone.
 At every hour of day
 They went the same way 290
 (With this they were elated);
 They were unseparated*
 At meals and every other place.
 Between their beds was scant space,
 They could *see* each other lying.
 There could be no denying:

He cared for her as best he could,
 As a loyal brother should
 The sister he held dear.
 Still stronger that sincere 300
 Love for her that he enjoyed.
 Bliss they felt unalloyed.

Now when the world's enemy
 Saw this joy and harmony*—
 Who for envy and for pride
 Locked in hell must abide—
 He grudged the fate they'd won
 (He thought it overdone)
 And fell into his normal state:
 Now as then he's moved to hate 310
 When good to anyone occurs.
 From this he evermore demurs,
 Forever bent on foiling.

So he began despoiling
 Joy and fame they had earned.
 With basest zeal now he turned
 Their joy in a wrong direction.
 Brotherly affection
 He changed to gross desire,
 Till the youthful squire 320
 Let good devotion go astray
 On a false, sinful way.

One thing was love's fire
 That changed his desire,
 Next was his sister's charm,
 Third was the devil's harm;
 Fourthly, 'twas a childish whim
 Helped the devil conquer him,
 Till at last he spurred him
 And with desire stirred him 330
 With her to spend the night.
 O God, what woe and fright!
 Out upon this hound of hell
 Who casts on men such a spell!
 Why does God let the devil
 Wreak so much evil
 On His human creatures

Who bear our Maker's features?

When, by the fiend made blind,

The lad made up his mind

340

To go this sinful way,

Both by night and day

More love to her he bore

Than was his wont before.

Of course the girl was blind

To love of sinful kind.

In innocently simple wise*

This child failed to realize

How not to be behaving,

Did not resist his craving.

350

The devil rested not until

Of her the lad had his will.

He waited yet, till one night

He knew the maid, sleeping tight,

On her bed was lying.

Her brother, sleep denying,

Unwisely then arose

And crept on his toes

To find the maid in her bed

And lifted up the bedspread,

360

But so much caution showing

That she slept on unknowing,

Till under it he faced her

And, coming close, embraced her.

O why had he beset her?

Alone he'd lain much better.

Now neither girl nor lad

In any dress was clad,

The single sheet excepted.

On waking, unexpected

370

She found him at her breast;

Her lips and cheeks were pressed

To his, held as close and tight

As when the Fiend would win his fight.

Now he caressed her more

Than was his wont before

Or in the public view.

Let intimacy not increase:
 Oft comes a shame degrading
 Which one were fain evading. 420

Such a transformation
 The youth of high station
 Seeing in his sister dear,
 He murmured in her private ear,
 "Dearest sister, tell me true,
 You are sad, what troubles you?
 In you I've detected
 Proof that you're dejected.
 I'm not wont to see you grieved."
 Thereupon a sigh she heaved 430
 From her heart upwelling.
 The anguish it was telling
 Appeared in her eye.

She said, "I'll not deny
 I must bear sorrow dread.
 Brother, I am twice dead,
 Dead in body, dead in soul.
 Wretched me, how great my dole,
 Wherefore was I born?

Through you I'm forlorn, 440
 Gainst God and man pitted.*
 The sin we've committed,
 Which so far we've not told,
 No more we can withhold.

To keep silence I take care,
 And yet the child that I bear
 Soon will make its presence known."
 Now the brother had to moan
 And shared her grief oppressive:
 His woe was more excessive. 450

In this unhappy hour
 Dame *Minne* showed her power*
 To let her grievous custom reign:
 After pleasure follows pain.
 They knew the upward surging
 Of honey and gall merging.
 He fell to bitter weeping,

His *head* on his *hand* keeping,
 By grief sore afflicted
 As one to care addicted. 460

Though his honor was at stake,
 He grieved for his sister's sake,
 More by her woe affected
 Than by his own dejected.

Eyeing her brother, she began:

"Come, behave like a man!*

Stop this woman's wailing

(For us 'tis unavailing)

And think what can be done

That through the sin begun 470

Of God's grace we be not shorn,

Lest our child still unborn

Be lost with us eternally

And this our fall extend to three.

Often we have heard it told:*

For a father's sin one cannot hold

His baby to accounting.

God's mercy, all surmounting,

From this child shall not be torn,

Although for hell we were born. 480

For it has had no sort of blame

For that which brought us to shame."

His heart began to waver,

This thought, now that found favor.

He sat in silence for a while,

Then said, "Sister, you may smile.

Upon a scheme I have hit

Which, I hope, may permit

Concealment of our shame and stain.

I have a man in my domain 490

Experienced and wise:

Some help he can devise.

Of him too did my father speak,

Saying his counsel I should seek:

This he said ere he died,

For on this man he too relied.

Let's ask him what to do

(Well I know he's true),
 From his advice not swerving,
 Thus our good name preserving." 500

In this the girl took pleasure,
 Rejoicing in such measure
 As suited now her state of mind.
 Full joy no more could she find.
 That which caused her sadness
 When she was all gladness,
 Therein her best joy now lay:
 She wept by night, wept by day.
 To this advice she agreed:
 "He who'd help us in our need, 510
 Brother, quickly for him send,
 For my time soon will end."*

Swiftly went the messenger
 To fetch him so they could confer:
 A welcome kind they proffered,
 Withdrawal then they offered
 To a private cabinet,
 Where his counsel they might get.
 The youth addressed him thus:
 "No trivial thing for us 520
 Prompts me to call you here.

Neither far nor near
 Dwells a man in my view
 Whom I trust as much as you.
 Since God your life must prize
 (He made you true and wise),
 From this we seek a blessing,
 Frankly to you confessing
 A thing we've secreted,
 Which, woefully completed, 530
 Will cause our good name to fade,
 Unless you help (with God's aid)
 To save our reputation."
 Thus with supplication
 And tears both fell on their knees.
 He answered, "Lord, humble pleas
 Would not befit me to hear

Even if I were your peer.
 Master, rise, in Heaven's name,
 And your will to me proclaim, 540
 Which I never will transgress,
 And put an end to this distress.
 Speak, what caused this sighing?
 My fealty's undying.
 I'll counsel you as best I may:
 Never doubt what I say."

They told him that affair.
 At once he joined them there
 In tears of deep emotion
 (Toward both he felt devotion) 550
 And comfort to them he expressed
 As one should help friends distressed
 By woe that none can assuage.
 The youth then pleaded with the sage:
 "Sir, do find for us a way,
 As is our greatest care today
 (For sister's time is near when she
 Must enter on maternity),
 How she can be a mother
 Yet we the scandal smother. 560
 Methinks, if some other clime
 I seek, during the sister's time,
 Visiting some foreign place,
 Then our shame, our disgrace,
 Can better be concealed from view."

Said he, "Then I counsel you:
 Your lords who have the power,
 Of old and young the flower,
 Summon to court, one and all,
 Your sire's advisers also call. 570
 To all of them then declare
 On a pilgrimage you'd fare
 For God, the Sepulchre to see.
 Beseech us all earnestly
 To swear the maid a loyal oath
 (Surely, none will be loath),
 Saying that she shall rightly reign

Till you're safe home again.
 While there, of sins be shriven;
 This order God has given. 580
 Your body broke His command,
 In penance before Him let it stand.
 If far from home you should die,
 On that oath we can rely:
 She'll rule as our defender.
 To my good care commend her
 Within the nobles' hearing,
 No displeasure fearing
 (My life has been the longest,
 I'm wealthiest and strongest): 590
 So to my home I'll take her
 And such comfort make her
 That she'll have her delivery
 And not a soul the wiser be.
 May God speed your returning:
 My hope in Him's discerning.
 But should you not come back
 God's blessing you'll not lack.
 But this advice you should heed:
 Let not your sister for her deed 600
 Flee from habitation
 And live in segregation.
 If she abide in her place,
 For her sins and for disgrace
 She may atone the better,
 Greeting the poor as debtor
 With goods and generous moods,*
 By staying with her goods.
 If she have lack of goods,
 She'll only have the moods: 610
 And what avail her moods
 If not backed up with goods?
 What boot the moods lacking goods
 Or goods without the generous moods?
 Moods will do without the goods,
 Best are goods plus the moods.
 Hence methinks this is good,

That she retain goods and mood.
 Then she can with goods
 Satisfy her moods, 620
 Appeasing God with moods,
 With body and with goods.
 And you should show the selfsame mood."
 Both called this counsel good
 And followed in a trice
 The sage's sound advice.

When the princes of that land,
 Called before the court to stand,
 Now came forward, weighing
 The words their lord was saying, 630
 Readily they all obeyed.
 That vassal old then he prayed
 To take his sister by the hand.
 Thus he thought to leave his land.
 His father's legacy,
 She shared it equally.

Thus they separated,*
 With grievous sorrow weighted.
 Had fear of God not in them stirred,
 The world's disdain they had preferred 640
 To such a separation.
 With deepest lamentation
 Their hearts were overflowing.
 I hope I'll ne'er be knowing
 Such vast, bitter care
 As smote this loving pair
 When time had come for parting.
 Joy, in their bosoms smarting,
 Was just as hard to find
 As ice with fire combined. 650
 A sweet exchange took place*
 When parting they must face:
 His heart with her abode,
 Hers followed down his road.
 This needful parting caused them pain:
 They saw each other ne'er again.

3. THE SECRET BIRTH AND EXPOSURE OF GREGORIUS

3. The Secret Birth and Exposure of Gregorius

The wise old man did not stay
But led his lady young away :
To his home he took her, where
She enjoyed the best of care. 660
The vassal good had a wife
Who to God all her life
Body and soul was giving.
None knew a better living.
She helped them with loyal zeal
Her ladyship's distress conceal,
As well her kind soul became,
And thus the birth brought no shame,
For of it no one was aware.
It was a son that she bare. 670
'Twas the holy sinner,
Who is the true beginner
Of the tale now to be told.
The lad was fair to behold.
When the child's birth occurred,
Never witness saw or heard
Of it save these women two.
The host was called the child to view :
Of this boy catching sight,
He said the women both were right : 680
The world never yet
So fair a child had met.
All three straightway debated
And long deliberated
How 'twas best to hide it.
They could not well abide it,
Should this fair child be forlorn.
But since the boy had been born
In greatest sinfulness,
God would no will express, 690
So that, for all their quest,
They knew not what was best.
To God they left the decision,
That He by wise provision

Keep them from evil deed.
 In this they must succeed:
 For no one ever goes astray
 Who trusts by faith in God alway.

Now the thought struck them straight: 700
 Naught would be more fortunate
 Than if they set the child adrift.
 Delay was brief, action swift.

The host clandestinely
 Procured in secrecy
 A strong and sturdy chest,
 Of all the very best
 That ever could be made.
 The pretty child was laid
 Into it while tears were shed.

Under and over him were spread 710

Silk robes of richest kind,
 None better could one find.
 The chest they also freighted—
 To me 'twas thus related—
 With twenty marks of gold to pay
 Its care and rearing some day,
 If God should haply deign
 To land the child again.

A tablet now was sought
 And to the mother brought, 720

Of ivory, ornate
 And fine, as sources state,
 With precious stones and gold:

I never did behold
 One to rank with it.
 On this the mother writ
 The fullest narration
 Of her baby's situation.

This hope she cherished,
 That God, ere it perished, 730
 Would bring it into people's hands
 Who'd see therein His commands.

On the tablet one could read
 It was sprung of noble seed

And the baby's mother
 Was its aunt, none other.
 Its father was its uncle, then.
 To hide this sinfulness from men
 The boy was set afloat.
 Besides this she wrote 740
 Baptized he should be some day
 And reared with gold that by him lay.
 She added, if the finder
 Were Christian, this reminder:
 'Add to his wealth a measure
 And teach him books to treasure;*'

The tablet, do not lose it,
 That he may peruse it,
 When later he is grown,
 And all to him be known 750
 Of these deeds naughty,
 Lest he grow haughty;
 If he in goodness grow,
 Turning to God, and show
 Him his whole devotion,
 He will, through such emotion,
 Forgiveness be winning
 For his father's sinning.

Thus too his memory will not dim
 Of her who's given birth to him— 760
 For both a guarantee
 'Gainst death eternally.'
 The tablet named not the name
 Of folk or land whence he came,
 Nor birth nor home was revealed:
 'Twas better they should be concealed.

This inscription made,
 The tablet then was laid
 By him in the chest,
 And then they thought it best 770
 If caution they should exercise
 That no occasion might arise
 For injury or pain
 Caused by wind or rain

Or ocean billows pounding
 While on the main he's bounding
 For two entire days or three.
 They bore the chest secretly,
 Taking it at night to shore.
 This was not possible before. 780
 A sturdy boat they spied there,
 'Twas masterless and tied there.
 In this with loud wailing
 They let the babe go sailing.
 For him sweet Christ now speeded
 (His mercy's not exceeded)
 The very breeze on which they doted:
 They pushed, away the infant floated.

Well you know that anyone
 Who ne'er has yet undergone 790
 Joy and grief unspared,
 His lips are not prepared
 To speak of grief or joy endured
 As one who is to them inured.
 Since neither one I share
 I stand between the pair:
 Neither has e'er attacked me,
 Nor joy nor grief has racked me.
 I live not sad, I live not glad,
 So I cannot, as I'm bade, 800
 Describe the lady's feeling,
 In words her woe revealing;
 In sorrows that surround her*
 A thousand hearts would flounder.

Of sorrows there were three*
 Which this poor ladye
 Now suffered all alone,
 Whereof a single one
 Were enough for a woman's heart.
 She had to bear one painful smart 810
 Born of sin committed
 With the brother she had quitted.
 Her illness was another,
 When she became a mother.

The third was her anxiousness
 Caused by motherly distress
 For her darling child—
 Sent where tempests wild
 Cross the sea—not sharing
 The knowledge how he's faring, 820
 If he's well or if he's dead.
 For deep distress she was bred.
 More anguish she must borrow
 Beyond this triple sorrow.
 Not many days now went
 Before bad news was sent,
 Of miseries the worst
 By which her life was cursed:
 Her brother died of grief, it said,
 Through yearning grief the man was dead. 830
 When she to him said adieu,
 As that wise friend told them to,
 Illness quickly found him
 (Love's fetters bound him).
 He could not reach the Holy Land,
 As for God's sake he'd planned;
 So strongly was that yearning
 For his sister burning
 That nothing men told him
 Gave comfort or consoled him. 840
 They saw his body waste away.
 Deeper is woman's love, they say,
 Than man's can ever grow.
 This proves it isn't so:
 For woe that caused him smart,
 When spread upon his heart,
 Was less than his sister's fate—
 His love alone was so great
 And killed this hapless lover—
 From *four* did *she* recover. 850
 Thus yearning woe filled him,
 His broken heart killed him.
 She heard this tale of woe
 As she to church would go*—

Three days before her going.
 She went, deep sorrow showing,
 Her brother-husband to inter.
 When the land belonged to her
 And this report reached every ear
 In all the lands far and near, 860
 Many a lord of high degree,
 Wheresoe'er his home might be,
 Craved her hand in marriage.
 In birth and build and carriage,
 In youthfulness and dower,
 Beauty and virtue's power,
 In gentleness and rearing,
 With temperament endearing,
 She'd fitly been a good man's bride,
 But all her wooers were denied. 870
 He whom her love picked out
 (God knows, a hero stout),
 He deserved the greatest fame
 That ever graced a hero's name.
 For him she groomed herself with skill,
 As a loving woman will
 And for a worthy man should do
 If she would have him love her too.
 Though our customs ban
 Woman courting man, 880
 This lady wooed One constantly
 At every opportunity.
 Her heart at every hour,
 Her tongue proclaimed His power:
 I mean the Lord, in mercy great.
 Since the devil's spiteful hate
 Had robbed her of His favor,
 This loss such terror gave her
 That happiness and peace of mind,
 God's boon of mercy, she resigned 890
 And night and day endured distress
 With such a troubled restlessness
 As humans scarce can bear.
 With sleepless nights and prayer,

With alms and fasting ever
 Her body rested never.
 Thus true repentance she revealed,
 Whereby of sins a soul is healed.

A neighbor-lord resided
 Not far from where she bided, 900
 Like her in wealth and station
 Of blameless reputation.

This lord his zeal applied
 To win her as his bride.
 Now when he'd done his wooing
 By herald and personal suing,
 As fitted and behooved him,
 And when she disapproved him,
 He deemed he might win her yet
 By using war, using threat. 910

Her country he invaded
 And all her land raided.
 Her best towns he gained,
 Her strongest forts obtained;
 He drove her back till she, bereft,
 Had almost no possessions left,
 Except her leading city.
 Here too he showed no pity,
 Beleaguering it every day.
 Unless God in His kindly way 920
 And grace should this attack repel,
 She needs must lose that town as well.

**4. THE MIRACULOUS RESCUE OF THE CHILD AND ITS
EDUCATION IN A CONVENT**

4. The Miraculous Rescue of the Child and its Education in a Convent

Now we'll leave this tale behind
And tell in what a state we find
This noble lady's child
Whom the tempests wild
Where'er God willed were blowing,
Or life or death bestowing.
Lo, kindness on it heaping,
He held it in His keeping, 930
Whose mercy too Jonah felt
When in the sea once he dwelt,
For days and nights three,
From rolling billows free,
In a fish immersed.
Now God the child nursed
Until He sent it where it found
Harborage, safe and sound.

Two nights besides a single day
The child survived the billows' spray, 940
Then ashore it landed
Where God had commanded.
A convent by the shore stood:
The abbot, saintly he and good,
Had told two fishermen to sail
Out to sea and without fail
To catch fish ere dawn of day.
The weather brought them dismay.
The wind blew so fierce a squall,
No single fish large or small 950
They caught: fishing was in vain,
So they made for home again.
Homeward them betaking,
They found mid waves breaking
The boat in which the child lies.
The fishers saw it with surprise:
How came it here—such a boat
Without a passenger, afloat?
Around it they hovered

Until they discovered 960
 The little chest that in it lay.
 The fishermen took this away :
 Into their boat 'twas lifted.
 Away the skiff drifted.

The squall took such a furious turn
 That on the sea they felt concern.
 They found no opportunity
 To look into their find and see
 What lay hidden in the chest.
 Nor had they great interest 970
 Because it was their thought
 That once to shore 'twas brought
 They could with more leisure
 Investigate the treasure.
 Their coats upon the chest they laid
 And straight for the shore they made.

With this they saw the sun's ascent.
 The abbot from the convent went
 To stroll for pastime by the sea
 With no one to accompany. 980
 The fishers he awaited,
 If they to luck were fated,
 When suddenly the men neared.
 Too early this to him appeared :
 "How have you been faring?
 What catch, men, are you bearing?"
 Said they, "Beloved master,
 We nearly met disaster
 By venturing too far from shore.

We never met such squalls before : 990
 From death we were not far away,
 We barely saved our lives today."
 He said, "The fish forget,*
 Thank God you're living yet
 And landed safe and well!"
 The abbot bade them tell,
 Asking what that signified.
 He meant the chest he had spied,
 O'er which their coats were laid.

The question them dismayed. 1000
 They said, "What lord or squire
 So strictly would inquire
 Into the business of the poor?"
 To cause their discomfiture
 Now with his cane he made essay
 To push the men's clothes away
 And saw the chest standing there.
 He said, "How did you get it? where?"
 They thought to play the liar,
 Deceive the goodly prior, 1010
 And thus the truth deny him,
 And they'd have gotten by him,
 But he was made aware
 By Heaven's loving care.
 More questioning about to spurn,
 Back to the cloister he thought to turn:
 The babe to cry aloud was moved
 And thus informed the Lord's beloved
 That in the chest 'twas lying. 1020
 The good man burst out, crying,
 "There is a child in there.
 If love to God you bear,
 Tell me where you got it,
 How did you come to spot it?
 Trust me, this I have to know."
 They resolved to him to show
 The truth I've related,
 How the skiff with it was freighted.
 He bade them lift it to the land
 And take from it each iron band. 1030
 There, lying in the chest, he saw
 A wondrous find that roused his awe—
 A baby which, his heart confessed,
 Of all he'd seen was loveliest.
 This poor orphaned stranger,*
 By no sense of danger
 Visited or frightened,
 Its face to sweetness brightened
 And smiled upon the prior.

Now that learned sire* 1040
 Read on the tablet every word
 Of how the baby's birth occurred.* 1042
 This he managed to conceal. 1045
 To God he was fain to kneel,
 To heaven in secret raising
 His hands and eyes, and praising
 God through whom he'd found
 This baby safe and sound. 1050
 The child, as it happed,
 In silken cloth was wrapped,*
 In Alexandria 'twas wrought.
 Save these three no man knew aught:
 'Twas not disseminated.
 Now this too is related:
 The fishers standing there
 Were children of one pair.
 He now demanded of them both
 With pledge of loyalty and oath 1060
 That to their word they'd be true
 And tell no man what they knew.
 These brothers differed in their lot:
 One was poor, the other not.
 The poor one lived near the convent's door,
 The rich one dwelt a mile or more
 Away from where the convent stood.*
 The poor one had a numerous brood,
 The rich man no child had bred
 Save one daughter, who was wed. 1070
 The abbot now disclosed to them
 A scheme that he proposed to them:
 The poorer of the brothers should*
 Add the baby to his brood
 And with his own rear it well;
 This lie to those he should tell
 Who might at any hour
 The man with questions shower
 As to whence the baby came:
 That it had come, void of blame, 1080
 From the daughter of his brother

(He could fabricate no other
 Tale, the truth so well to cover) ;
 And that they'd bring the child over
 After breaking bread*
 And after mass was read,
 When they the prior would request
 To make his kindness manifest,
 Baptize the child himself, obtain
 The grace of God, and thus gain
 Their willing attitude. 1090
 This plan was shrewd and good.

The abbot took the child's store:
 The gold, the silk clothes it wore,
 And handed to the poor man,
 Who now to rear the child began,
 Two marks in compensation
 For rearing and education.
 One mark he gave his brother,
 That he the truth should smother, 1100
 The rest the abbot carried hence.
 This man of high excellence
 Kept it with solicitude,
 As well as any man could:
 The gold at interest he lent,
 Thus the money to augment.

The poor fisher did not fail
 To let his lord's will prevail.
 When was come the mid of day,
 Babe in arm, he took his way — 1110
 With him went his wife perforce,
 As is deemed the proper course—
 To the convent, where they spied
 The abbot mid his friars. He cried,
 "Lord, this child to you is sent
 By those whose love to you is meant,
 My brother's daughter and her lord,
 They believe, with one accord,
 If *you* baptize it now,
 The child you will endow 1120
 With happiness and heavenly joy.

Deign your name to give the boy!"

The monks mocked this plea as odd.*

They said, "See (so help you God)

This crude rustic peasant,

How skilled his words and pleasant."

The abbot called his words good,

As any humble man should.

When on the child his eyes he laid,

To the assembled monks he said:

1130

"This baby is so beauteous;

Since these folk belong to us,

Their plea we should not despise."

He bade them the child baptize.

He sponsored it himself, and thus

Gave it his name: Gregorius.

When the boy was christened there

The abbot spoke: "Since I bear

Godfatherly relation,

For my soul's salvation

1140

Henceforth he shall regarded be

(He is endowed so happily)

As if adopted as my lad."

With much tenderness he bade

The fisherman to lend

All zeal, the child to tend.

He said, "If well your care endures

My gratitude will e'er be yours."

With great help the child was blessed

By those two marks that it possessed:

1150

The better was the baby's care.

Besides, such days were very rare

When he would fail to come and see

What the child's condition be.

Thus the fisher and his wife

Over the darling baby's life

A careful watch maintained

Till the *age* of six it gained.

From them the prior then sought him

And to the convent brought him,

1160

Giving him such a habit

As suits a monk or abbot,
 And had him taught reading.
 Loyalty, honor, breeding,*
 Quest for competence and skill—
 The boy embraced these with a will.
 No punishment he needed,
 His teacher he gladly heeded.
 He found it no forbidding task
 Questions manifold to ask 1170
 Of things 'tis well to learn,
 As gifted boys discern.

Boys who three years had been
 Under a teacher's discipline,
 These in wit he so surpassed
 That e'en the teacher swore at last:
 He'd never seen such youthful wit,
 In every kind of virtue fit.
 He was (I tell you simple truth)
 In wit a man, in years a youth. 1180

When he had reached eleven*
 No one under heaven
 Was better as *grammaticus**
 Than the child Gregorius.
 Ere three years more had passed
 His mind had grown so fast
 That now to him *divinitas*
 Transparent grew like to glass.
 This science deals with heaven. 1190
 The knowledge he was given,
 To body and soul of interest,
 Of all this he acquired the best.
 Thereon he read in *legibus*.*
 The boy in time developed thus
 In law and legal science
 Expertness and reliance.
 With law this subject is concerned.
 Even more he would have learned,
 Had he not been frustrated.
 To you 'twill be related. 1200

The fisherman was harassed,

By poverty embarrassed.
 His acres lay on the sea,
 That oft caused him misery
 Because he'd scarce subsisted,
 And with his brood resisted
 The bitter hunger every day
 With gain such as came his way,
 Until the boy he'd won.

But from this hour on 1210
 His plight was much relieved,
 For when he'd received
 Two marks of gold as fee,
 Improvements one could see
 In all his affairs:
 In comfort and in wares.

His wife, on folly's quest,
 Would never let him rest,
 But questioned him forever.
 At traps she was clever. 1220
 She used her cunning powers
 In late and early hours
 To see if she might learn
 How he that gold could earn.
 Many an oath she had to swear
 Before her man told where
 The gold he had gained.
 This knowledge you've obtained.

When the wife was shown 1230
 That to no soul 'twas known
 Who Gregorius might be,
 She kept her peace faithfully
 And bravely too that's the truth,
 Till fifteen years old was the youth.

Dame Fortune, whence our blessings rise,
 Had stamped him in every wise
 With imprints that endure long:
 The boy was fair, he was strong.
 And loyal too and good,
 And was of patient mood. 1240
 In skills he was exceeding,

In fitness and good breeding.
 Unseemly wrath he could suppress,
 In its place was gentleness.
 Every day new friends he won,
 The while he never lost one.
 His sorrow and his pleasure
 He bore in proper measure.
 Of teaching he was always glad,
 Freely giving all he had, 1250
 Bold where'er he should be.
 Shy where'er he would be;
 Although a child in fact,
 With wisdom he could act.
 His words were free of deviation,
 His deeds were based on meditation.
 He did as wisdom urged,
 By shame never scourged
 For any deed he'd wrought.
 Counsel and grace he sought 1260
 Of God and never veered.
 To God's law he adhered.
 God his Genius had allowed*
 That body and mind be endowed
 To gain the highest worth.
 Whatever on the earth
 Makes human praise our lot,
 This stripling lacked it not.
 His Genius made him so well grown
 That it was proud the lad to own. 1270
 Naught had it overlooked that's good.
 It had done better, if it could.
 The people all cried*
 When the lad they spied,
 No fisherman on earth
 Had ever given birth
 To such a glorious lad.
 'Twould be extremely bad
 If one had no intent
 To praise his good descent; 1280
 And people said with certainty

That were he of nobility
A strong and prosperous nation
Would suit his noble station.

**5. THE KNIGHTLY SPIRIT OF GREGORIUS AND HIS
DEPARTURE FROM THE CONVENT**

5. The Knightly Spirit of Gregorius and his
Departure from the Convent

One day things happened thus:
The boy Gregorius
With playmates came that day
To where they wished to play.
Then occurred a strange event
(This was not his intent): 1290
He hurt— this he'd never done*—
His foster-father's little son.
The boy to cry began
And screaming off he ran.
When the mother, hearing
Her crying boy nearing,
She hurried out to meet him
And turbulently greet him:
"Look, why do you weep thus?"*
"He hit me, Gregorius." 1300
"Why did he hit you, pray?"
"Mother, I cannot say."
"Had you harmed him in aught?"
"Mother, I swear, in naught."
"Where is he now?" "By yonder weir."
"O woe is me, poor wife, o dear!
The stupid dolt, misguided brat,
Have I brought him up for that,
That my children he should clout,
Who have so many friends about? 1310
Your friends will give me their hate*
If such a wrong I tolerate,
Done by a child of sin
Who here lacks kith and kin.
That thus to beat you he should dare
Who strayed to us from God knows where,
Amiss this thing I'll always take.
If we bore it for God's sake,
We'd have to stand it endlessly.
Why, no one knows who he may be.* 1320
Woe, what fills his thought? 1333

He's by the devil brought
 To be a plague to me.*
 His bold design I see:
 This foundling none would bless,
 So he'd have us suppress
 His shameful mysteries,
 And have a life of ease. 1340

A curse upon the silly fish
 Who ate him not as dainty dish
 When he into the sea was laid.
 A lucky pilgrimage he made
 In coming hither to the prior.
 Had he not ta'en him from your sire
 To be his foster-father,
 He would, by Heaven, rather
 Be serving me and mine,
 And our kine and swine 1350
 Be driving here and thence.
 Your father showed no sense:
 He found him in that cold
 On waters uncontrolled,
 Yet listened to the abbot's claim
 Instead of holding fast his game,
 Making him, as was his right,
 Be his slave or serving-wight!"

Gregorius, when he'd hit the lad,
 Was quite rueful that he had 1360
 And after him he scurried.
 For reasons good he hurried:
 His fear ran high
 The lad might nullify
 The love his foster-mother bare.
 Now he overheard her there
 Scolding in angry mood.
 In the street he stood
 Till through her ranting he'd discerned
 Some things he'd rather not have learned, 1370
 Of which he'd had no ken:
 He was an alien
 In this country seated

(His name she oft repeated).

Off flew his happiness
Amid this new distress.

With great concern he wondered
Whether the things she'd pondered
Were truth or lying pother
Spoke by his foster-mother,
And hastened to the abbey, where
He sought the abbot, full of care.
He led the man of faithful word
Away, so they would not be heard.

1380

He said, "O lord, beloved by me,
I cannot tell you properly
In words the gratitude
That if I only could
I'd willingly express.

From this I'll not digress:

1390

Until the day I die
I'll pray to Him on high,
Who never leaves a good deed
Lacking of its proper meed,
That as reward be given
To you the crown of heaven
(My reasons are the best of all),
Because you took me, exiled thrall,
A child, carried in a chest,
And picked me out from all the rest
To have special rearing.

1400

I'm not, so I've been hearing,
The one I thought to be.
Dear lord, this is my plea,
That I with God away be sent.
For I shall and must be bent
On dread and hardship (that is right)
As an exiled, serving wight.

My foster-mother bared it
(In anger she declared it)

1410

That I'm a foundling, parentless.
My heart and soul and consciousness
Had I my shame to hear,

Were taken from me sheer.
 God knows, I'll hear it ne'er again
 Since no longer I'll remain.
 To a land I'll strive to go
 Where no living soul will know
 How I came to be and whence.
 I've knowledge and intelligence, 1420
 I'll survive, should God decree.
 I'm so afraid of mockery,
 I'd rather be where none abide
 Than tarry for a longer tide
 Within this land to stay.
 The shame drives me away.
 Women like to tattle,
 If but to one she prattle,
 'Twill not be long before
 'Tis known to three or four, 1430
 And then to all residing here."
 The abbot said, "Dear child, give ear,
 You shall have counsel good,
 As my dear nurseling should,
 Whom I have reared from infancy.
 God's treated you benignantly.
 With love He has assigned
 In body and in mind
 Free choice to you by giving
 You power to shape your living, 1440
 Turning your life to suit your aim—
 To ignominy or to fame.
 Now you must decide
 In these days, at this tide,
 Between these two,
 As seems best to you.
 Whatever is your mission,
 Salvation or perdition,
 Be that a goal for you.
 Son, to yourself be true, 1450
 My counselling respect
 (Thus virtue you'll select
 And honor, never sin or scorn),

Lest, by your boyish anger torn,
 So hasty will be all your doing
 That later you'll have cause for ruing.

You are a youth by fortune blest,
 All your affairs are at their best.
 Very well you have begun,
 The people's favor you have won
 Who in this country dwell.

1460

Dear child, now hear me well:
 Priestly ways are known to you,
 'Twere wrong if you from them withdrew.
 Through books you're growing sage.
 I am gray with age.

My life is almost over:
 My purpose I'll uncover
 And vouch for it: That I will try
 To get the friars (when I die)

1470

Who live here in the fold,
 The young and old,
 To choose you as their prior.
 How can you take with ire
 A silly woman's yelping?
 I'm confident of helping:
 Henceforth her lips shall ne'er again
 Repeat the words that caused you pain."

"Lord," Gregorius said,
 "Great honor you have paid
 To God through me of humble station
 And thus enhanced your own salvation.
 You showed the best of sense.

1480

My inexperience
 Is so with swollen anger stirred,
 'Twill let me not accept your word.

Three things drive me away
 To my own dismay
 From this place:

One is my disgrace
 Caused by her ranting blind;
 The second's of a kind
 That also forces me to flee.

1490

I know now it cannot be
 That from this fisher I am sprung.
 What if my forbears were among
 The men of noble race
 So I could win a place
 As knight, had I but the bent*
 And knighthood's full accoutrement? 1500
 God knows, 'twas e'er my aspiration:
 Had I the means and noble station.
 Knighthood is my fondest dream.
 Bitter doth sweet honey seem
 For any man to savor
 Who can't enjoy its flavor.
 The fairest life the world can know
 God's grace on you did bestow.
 Who, pleasing God, has chosen this,
 Is born to live in heavenly bliss. 1510
 Perhaps I'd stay here still
 If I possessed the will.
 I've lost all such desire.
 To knighthood I aspire."
 "Son, you say not well, I find:
 In Heaven's name change your mind!
 Who'er for priesthood trained
 Makes his relations strained
 With God, to be a knight,
 He must, through evil's might, 1520
 Lose soul and body's life.
 Whatever man or wife
 From God would turn his face
 Thereby incurs disgrace
 And is to hell assigned.
 Son, I had in mind
 To make God's child of you.
 If e'er I find this true,
 Great happiness I shall have won."
 Gregorius said thereupon, 1530
 "Ah, what a life to be a knight!
 The man who lives this life aright,
 No man will better live than he.

God's knight he can more gladly be
 Than live a cloisterer undone."
 "I fear for you in this, son.
 Of knighthood naught you know.
 Should men see you so,
 Riding awkwardly,
 You'd suffer endlessly 1540
 From other knights' derision.
 Please God, change your decision."
 "Lord, I am a youthful man
 And learn to do what others can.
 Things to which my mind I'll turn,
 Much of these I quickly learn."

This discussion between the abbot and Gregorius continues.* The abbot argues that his charge would not be fit for knighthood after his long exposure to monastic life. Gregorius replies that he has always dreamt of knighthood; he is fond of books, but even while occupied with them, tourneys and jousts have been uppermost in his mind. He longs more for the sword than for the pen. Riding and tilting the lance are his fondest aspirations.

The abbot expresses surprise. Certainly, he exclaims, Gregorius could not have acquired this unnatural preference for knighthood from his monastic teacher. "I see," he continues, "that you are not a 'monastery man' in spirit, and so I will not try to dissuade you any more. Good luck to you as a knight!"

At the abbot's behest Gregorius is now given worldly garments and assisted as much as possible in achieving his ambition. In due time he becomes a knight. Shrewdly, however, the abbot for the time being conceals from him all knowledge of his tablet and his money, hoping to keep him in this vicinity. He promises to find him a wealthy bride because, he says, as a knight Gregorius would have reason to be ashamed of his poverty. It would be better for him to remain here, he adds, because abroad he would be a friendless stranger.

Gregorius proudly replies that he does not prefer comfort to honor. Ease and riches, he says, are bad for a man's character. One must win his place and respect in the world by deeds. Poverty is no disgrace, but cowardice is. More praise will come

to a man for what he achieves by himself than for what his father may have bequeathed to him. "What more," asks Gregorius, "could I desire? I have horses, squires, and accoutrement enough. Nothing can hold me back. I am going out into the world as a knight."

The abbot, now convinced that Gregorius is in earnest, promises to raise no further objections and offers to show him the rest of his rightful possessions. (Lines 1547-1738)

The loyal man with many a tear*	1739
Led the youth away from here	
Into a room aside*	
Copiously supplied	
With silken clothing, and	
Placed into his hand	
His tablet, till he read	
Just how he was bestead.	
This made him sad and glad.	
He showed he was sad,	
As I shall tell you here:	
He shed many a tear*	1750
Over his sinful birth.	
And yet he had no dearth	
Of joyfulness healthy	
At being noble and wealthy,	
Of which till now he never knew.	
Then the man of friendship true,	
Who'd been his mentor, said:	
"Son, now you've read	
What hitherto I've concealed.	
This your tablet has revealed.	1760
I've administered your gold	
Faithfully, as I was told	
By what your mother writ.	
I've added more to it—	
God helped me to be thrifty.	
Marks one hundred fifty	
We've earned for your possession,	
Though poor at this profession,	
Augmenting it from seventeen	

Since hereabout you first were seen. 1770
 I gave them three, no more,
 Who brought you to the shore.
 So great is your property.
 You'll thus have sufficiency,
 To add other gain
 If but you use your brain."
 With many tears Gregorius
 Responded to his master thus:
 "Sire beloved, woe!
 For I am sunk so low 1780
 Without a single fault of mine.
 How can I earn grace divine
 In spite of that misdeed
 Of which here I read?"
 "Dear son, this I say to you.
 Credit me, it is true:
 If you insist on being knight,*
 Mark me, you'll increase the might
 Of wrong you'll daily do. 1790
 Then there's no hope for you.
 This folly then forsake
 Which on yourself you take,
 And with us serve the Lord.
 Service He's ne'er ignored.
 Son, let Him judge your ways,
 And give your short earthly days
 That you fore'er may live.
 This counsel will I give."
 "Alas, beloved sire,
 Still more grows my desire 1800
 To know the world than e'er before.
 I shall rest nevermore*
 And shall unceasing fare
 Till God in me bare
 Where and by whom I was begat."
 "Let God Himself tell you that
 Who made and shaped you in His mold,
 Since my advice leaves you cold."
 For him a ship was sought;

Into it were brought 1810
Supplies for wants the body knows :
Food, his gold, and all his clothes.
While toward the ship the young man hied
The prior was always at his side
Till he the ship could reach.
Thus he left the beach.
Though men the differences stress*
Of youth and age in worthiness,
Yet these twain were taking
A leave with hearts nigh breaking. 1820
Neither could help but fix his glance
Upon the other's countenance
Until through distance from the shore
They could not see each other more.

**6. GREGORIUS' PROWESS AS A KNIGHT AND HIS
MARRIAGE TO HIS MOTHER**

6. Gregorius' Prowess as a Knight and his
Marriage to his Mother

The poor, homeless wretch
Did heart and hand outstretch
To heaven, on his knees
Praying that God might please
To send him into any land
Where he would have a right to stand. 1830
The sailors he instructed
By winds to be conducted,
However these wished to blow:
The men should let the ship go
Where'er winds would veer it,
And elsewhere never steer it.
A strong wind blew for them,
Remaining true for them;
Then a storm rose and blew
The ship in days short and few 1840
To reach his mother's lands,
So sacked, so scorched with brands,
As I have told you once before,
That she controlled nothing more
Except her capital city,
Beset by grief and pity.
When the town there he spied
To the mariners he cried
To turn the sails that way
And land without delay. 1850
When the burghers saw the ship
Come up at such a clip,
With an armed band
A stout defence they planned.
Now the homeless wretch*
Did peaceful hands outstretch
And asked the men who neared
What it was they feared.
They found it most surprising,
The question thus arising, 1860
And wondered from what distant home

This traveler to them had come,
 Since of this he had no ken.
 One of the best among the men
 Told him fully about their woe,
 As I told *you* a while ago.
 On learning of their plight,
 He said, "I've come aright,
 For this with God I've always plead,
 That by His grace I should be led
 To where some usefulness appears,
 Lest I should spend my youthful years
 Idly doing naught
 While war is being fought.
 If my lady deems it right,
 I'll gladly serve her as her knight."

1870

Now as the folk surveys him
 They see 'tis meet to praise him
 For strength and riches too.
 With willing kindness true
 They gave him haven there and rest.
 The dame was gladdened by the guest,*
 Though him she had not seen as yet.
 Herein the guest was fortunate:
 The host they designated,
 As good he was rated,
 One of the best the city had.
 Whate'er the guest desired or bade,
 'Twas carried out to suit his moods.
 For this he recompensed with goods.
 He spent so lavishly,
 Yet in such right degree,
 By no lack was he oppressed:
 Thus he became a welcome guest.

1880

1890

When he heard the story
 Of this young lady's glory,
 So fair and still unmarried,
 Yet by warfare harried,
 By the duke's ill will abused
 Because his suit she had refused;
 And since she had said

1900

That she would never wed,
 He would have liked the dame to see;
 How this thing could come to be
 Without dishonor undesired,
 This the guest now inquired.
 To her he was reported
 As stanch and well comported:
 She wanted him to meet her.
 Few guests were known to greet her. 1910
 This was her wonted way,
 Revealing day by day
 What grief in her had wrought
 (Joy to her meant naught) :
 If poor or rich he were,
 Native or foreigner—
 She never let a man come near,
 Except when she would appear
 In church, with prayers occupied,
 Which she did at every tide, 1920
 E'en sacrificing food and rest.
 Now thus the host advised the guest:
 Her steward he would sue
 To take him to her pew,
 Where he might see the lady.
 He found the steward ready.
 One day as early mass was read
 This steward good the stranger led
 Into the chapel, where
 She was engaged in prayer, 1930
 And let him look on her well.
 The steward broke the silent spell:
 "Lady, greet this knight,
 He'll serve you well with might."
 She greeted her child as stranger,
 His heart saw no danger,
 For to him 'twas unknown
 That she had borne him as her own.
 Much greater heed to him she paid
 Than she would e'er have displayed 1940
 To any man before;

She eyed the clothes he wore.
 When searching eyes on these she laid,*
 In secret to herself she said:
 That silken stuff well wrought
 Which her own hand had brought
 And laid beside her babe of yore
 And the clothes this stranger wore
 Seemed quite identical to be
 In color and in quality: 1950
 They were the selfsame clothes, she thought,
 Or anyway by one hand wrought:
 These he wore and those.
 All this revived her woes.
 He liked her womanhood,
 As any man should
 In one so richly blest;
 She too liked the guest
 Better than any she could name.
 The devil's schemes were to blame 1960
 Who also tempted Eve
 God's laws to spurn and leave.
 The good dame commended him
 To her steward, who tended him,
 And then they went apart.
 With her he left his heart
 And more he strove anew
 For praise and honor too,
 Because the lady he had seen;
 So sweet to him this had been, 1970
 His joy, he thought, knew no bound.
 Day by day the people found
 Knights near the city thronging,
 As his heart was longing,
 Some walking, some on horse.
 Hence came his action's course.
 This quickly heightened his renown.
 Whene'er the burghers of the town
 Met the enemy,
 Whate'er their injury, 1980
 He rarely let a chance go by

Some bold activity to try
 That won him high acclaim:
 Outstanding was his name.

This he carried on
 Until he had won
 Knighthood's desired reward
 With spear and with the sword.
 When of this art he'd gained command
 By daily practice with his hand,
 And when he knew by test
 That he was the best
 (With courage and strength imbued,
 With knightly aptitude),
 More powerful became his vim.
 Distress could not discourage him.
 On enemies he fell like hail,
 A head in chasing, in flight a tail.*

1990

Now that marauding Roman
 Famed as valiant foeman—
 The duke who'd sacked these lands
 Laid waste by firebrands—
 Was stronger far than other men.
 Also, in fighting now as then
 He'd met with such success
 That people would confess
 Of all the knights anywhere
 He was the best beyond compare.
 This practice frequently he showed:
 Alone upon his horse he rode
 Before the gate to joust,
 And fought with knightly gust.
 Whatever doughty knight
 In knightly spirit might
 Come forth, engaging him in fray,
 As captive he was led away
 Before the burghers' eyes.
 He feared them in no wise.
 Such victories so oft he'd gained
 That no more knights now remained
 Against this foe to ride.

2000

2010

2020

Yet oft to fight he tried.

Now shame beset Gregorius
 That one fighting man had thus
 A mighty host laid low
 With no defence to show.
 Like this his thinking often ran:
 "I often see that a man
 Who thinks the gaming board is fun,*
 When funds enough he has won
 With which his luck he will try—
 In case the odds are not too high—
 Will deem himself most fortunate.
 But even if the odds are great
 He'll risk all on a lucky throw.
 A gambler's choice here I know.
 If but I have courageousness
 To risk the little I possess
 Against such opulent treasure,
 I'll gain an ample measure
 Of riches and acclaim,
 If I win the game.
 I am a man of praises bare,
 Yet that has caused no such despair
 But that each day my thoughts begin
 Of how to fortune I may win,
 That all men will praise my name.
 I don't know how to reach this aim.
 Unless for this I risk my life
 I'll seem no better than a wife,
 Of honor I'll be cheated.
 Can this duke be defeated
 By me with God's helpfulness?
 Well I know that I possess
 Strength and courage, that is sure.
 I'll stake these gifts however poor
 On this competition.
 Who'll grieve at my perdition
 If by him I shall be slain?
 But if I the victory gain,—
 Highly honored I will be

2030

2040

2050

2060

Ever and eternally.
 Be that made known to man and wife:
 I had rather that my life
 Find in fight a fitting end
 Than that in shame my days I spend.
 Gregorius resolved on this:
 Not a day he would miss
 In mere procrastination.
 For God and reputation* 2070
 Either his life should ended be
 Or the guiltless dame he'd free
 From the invader's hand
 Who had stolen her land.
 He told this to but One
 Who could urge him on
 Or who might halt his scheme:
 The Lord who rules supreme.
 To no one else he'd tell his aim.
 Next morning when daybreak came 2080
 An early mass he shared
 And then himself prepared,
 As if to leave the town behind.
 Now he told the host his mind,
 Who helped him out of town to steal.
 His host heard a strong appeal:
 Whene'er the knight should return
 He the fact should discern
 And let the warrior in,
 With loss or with a win. 2090
 So good Gregorius
 In valor glorious
 Rode o'er the plain, bent
 On reaching that tent
 In which he knew the duke was biding.
 The valiant man saw him riding
 And armed for the test,
 Just he and not the rest.
 All his other fighters there
 Gave orders quickly to prepare 2100
 His steed to ride to the fray.

The duke feared he'd get away.
 Gregorius, when he saw the man
 Approach, formed a clever plan.
 From him he seemed to flee—
 But this was strategy—
 And neared his men near the gate.
 Here the duke he would await,
 Hoping to see him distressed,
 For the duke, if hard pressed, 2110
 Men to help could not call.
 The breastworks and the city wall
 Were full of knights and ladies fair
 Bent on seeing how they'd fare
 And who would win the day.
 The youth caused no delay.
 Each got ready on his horse
 For a long jousting course.
 Each would at the other joust.
 Swiftly then the spears they thrust 2120
 Under their arms; with speed
 Forward rushed each steed.
 The spears were short and stout
 And put the fighters out.
 So mighty was each stroke
 The spear in splinters broke,
 Yet neither knight took a fall.
 How well did each of them recall
 The sword that hung at his side!
 Look, in fighting now they vied, 2130
 These two, in vigor peers,
 Who'd never learned of fears
 Or unbecoming cowardice
 (In truth let me tell you this),
 That had the substance of a hair.
 So in the fighting of this pair*
 The duel's outcome in the end
 On skill or fortune must depend.
 When each with his sword
 Enough blows had scored, 2140
 Gregorius mightily

So beset his enemy
 That taking captive man and horse,
 Both he led away by force
 Toward the city's outer gate.
 As yet 'twas in its bolted state,
 Nor could he soon enter then.
 All the duke's fighting men
 Saw what was occurring
 And with vigor stirring 2150
 Rushed to their master's side.
 When this the burghers spied,
 The city's gates they open flung.
 Outside into action sprung
 The mightiest affray
 Before or since that day
 By such numbers fought.
 Gregorius' hold was taut
 Upon his captive of the day
 Whom he as knight brought away. 2160
 The gates were slammed shut again.
 From the plain the duke's men
 Made a desperate attack
 But tired of this and soon turned back.
 The fortune-blessed Gregorius
 Had that day acquired thus
 The highest reputation,
 Freeing of tribulation
 All his mother's land
 With his doughty hand. 2170
 E'en before, so great his fame
 That no man risked any blame
 Who gave him honor due,
 But now his glory grew.
 Also, the lady and her land,
 By virtue of his helpful hand,
 No longer bore their cross.
 Great as was her loss,
 For it she fully was repaid,
 Just as she'd desired and prayed, 2180
 And from him got a guarantee

That he would do no injury
 To her henceforth forever.
 In this he wavered never.

When this land of sorrow
 Found a cloudless morrow,
 Enjoying peace as before,
 The native lords worried sore
 At every daily dread
 Which their misgivings bred, **2190**
 That in the same way they'd be racked
 If they were once again attacked
 By any powerful hand.
 They said this spacious land
 In woman's hand had no defence
 Against unrighteous violence:
 "Had we a lord to guide us
 No trouble would betide us."

And so these lords with speed
 Among themselves agreed **2200**
 The lady to request—
 (Pressing their case with zest)
 That she a consort should select
 Whom as their lord they would respect.
 That would in every way be good.
 They knew well her attitude,
 With God's approval born,
 That men she had forsworn
 And would forswear them evermore.
 This was an error to deplore. **2210**

Her life would be poorly spent
 If to this land so opulent
 She'd become a bane,
 Leaving no heir to reign.
 This counsel they would proffer:
 Better service she'd offer
 To man and Heaven too
 (And to God's laws be true)
 If she would wed and bear
 A son to be her heir. **2220**
 Such counsel was the best:

For rightful marriage blest,*
 That is the life of greatest worth
 That God has granted us on earth.

When so much truthful thought
 Before her had been brought,
 She did their bidding and praying—
 God's law she was obeying
 And promised she'd be married.

In this their will carried.

2230

In this advice did all concur:
 That the choice be left to her
 To take whome'er she would.
 Since that advice seemed good,
 The woman true and kind
 Often searched her mind
 Whom she knew as suitor
 That would better suit her
 Than that very one

(Earnest thoughts she spun)

2240

Whom God had placed in her hand
 To free herself and her land:
 Her son, Gregorius by name,
 The selfsame one who now became
 His mother's spouse without delay.
 In this the devil had his way.

When to her lords she confessed

Which man would suit her best,
 No other man so high they prized.

Him as their lord they recognized.

2250

No greater rapture e'er was sensed

Than what this pair experienced

When they together bided,

For they were well provided

With joy in great faithfulness;

Behold, it ended in distress.

A good lord he was named,

For generosity famed.

Of all the boons a life of worth

Can offer men here on earth,

2260

He had the fullest choice of all;

All that took a headlong fall.

His lands and marches wide

So well he fortified,

Who an attack contrived,

Him this man deprived

Of goods and reputation.

He had determination:

Had God not made him spurn such things,

All must have been his underlings

2270

Who lived in any neighbor state.

But he would fain be moderate,

God to honor and adore.

He hoped and prayed for nothing more

Than ways to serve his Lord.

All else this man ignored.

The tablet constantly

He kept in secrecy

In his castle concealed,

To no one revealed.

2280

'Twas found with him, as I have said.

In it every day he read

His inborn sinfulness—

This caused his eyes distress—

His life's first beginning

And the load of sinning

That his parents bore.

God he did implore

That He have mercy on the two.

But of that sin naught he knew

2290

That on his shoulders lay

And that he night and day

Together with his mother wrought.

Thus offence to God he brought.

7. THE RECOGNITION AND SEPARATION

7. The Recognition and Separation

Now there was at court a maid,
Very clever, so 'tis said;
His sorrow's reason soon she knew,
As I shall now report to you.
For that room she served and swept
Where the tablet he had kept. 2300
Each day some time he spent
In sorrowful lament.
That time he'd never miss.
The maiden noticed this:
Every time she let him in,
He would laugh at her or grin,
But saddened every day
Red-eyed he went away.

The maid strove, and ever
With heartfelt endeavor 2310
To find the explanation
For his lamentation
And in she stole with him one day
When again, as was his way,
He came to vent his gloom.
The maid was in the room
And hid until she'd fully viewed
The man in gravely troubled mood
Reading the tablet anew,
As was his wont to do. 2320
When this repeatedly he'd read,
While prayers he spoke and tears he shed,
He dried his eyes of weeping,
Thinking that he was keeping
His secret from the world about.
Now the maid had found it out.
Quickly she also traced
Where he the tablet placed.

When with wailing he was done,
Swift the maid began to run 2330
To her lady, speaking so:
"Lady, what may be the woe

That gives my lord grief so grim,
 Grief you don't share with him?"
 The lady said, "What do you say?
 An hour ago he went away
 From us and was light-hearted.
 What news, since he departed,
 Could reach the master's ears
 And sadden him to tears? 2340
 Such things, when to him told,
 From me he'd not withhold.
 Naught could his weeping waken,
 I'm sure you were mistaken."
 "Alas, 'tis the truth I say.
 Lady, I saw him there today
 By melancholy clutched,
 So that my heart was touched."
 "Now look, you're always so inclined.
 Thus you have caused my mind 2350
 Much solicitude:
 You ne'er bring news that's good.
 'Tis better to keep still
 Than such a lie to spill
 And make me suffer such a hurt."
 "Lady, no lie do I assert.
 I have no greater woe, in sooth,
 Than that I have to speak this truth."
 "Come, do you really mean it so?"
 "Indeed, that he is sad I know. 2360
 I'd thought you'd know it better still.
 Lady, what can be this ill
 Which thus from you he will conceal
 Yet fails not all things to reveal?
 Truly, lady, whate'er it be,
 He suffers dreadful agony.
 Yes, more than that I saw
 And this conclusion draw:
 A mighty grief he must bear,
 In this he's let no one share. 2370
 Since o'er this land he first held sway
 He's never skipped a single day:

Alone and undetected,
 Each morning he's directed
 His feet into this room
 With not a sign of gloom.
 As happy as he's always come,
 So sorrowful was he and glum
 When he went away.
 As clearly as today 2380
 I've never noticed it before.
 Seeing him go through the door,
 With him I stole my way inside
 And found a place there to hide:
 To watch how he acted.
 I saw him quite distracted,
 Grieving in no manly way;
 There right before him lay
 An object whereon words were writ.
 As he looked and read in it, 2390
 His breast he 'gan to pound
 And sank upon the ground
 With many a genuflection
 And looks in heaven's direction.
 No one did e'er I see
 Weeping so bitterly.
 Thus I well could know
 His heart is full of woe.
 For this I surely cannot doubt,
 Considering a man so stout: 2400
 When such a man to tears gives way,
 As I saw him weep today,
 Great must be his distress."
 The lady spoke in dolefulness:
 "Dear my lord, O woe!
 What can grieve him so?
 That he was sad I never knew,
 For he is young and healthy too
 And high-born in good measure.
 Besides I'll always treasure 2410
 The will to obey him, as I should.
 This I find very good,

For he can well reciprocate.
 If no wife has a better mate,
 This fact in truth I'll not mourn.
 God knows, no better was ever born.
 Woe is me, poor wife,
 Never in my life
 Has any good occurred for me,
 Nor will hereafter come to be, 2420
 Save by his goodness, his alone.
 What grief can he in youth have known
 To cause such tears to well
 As I have heard you tell?
 Come, to me some counsel yield,
 Since he has kept this thing concealed:
 How find out his pain
 And yet his love retain?
 I fear that if I make him tell
 I'll lose the man I love so well. 2430
 I know, whatever it may be
 (Grief or adversity),
 That comes to him and can be told—
 This from me he'll not withhold.
 Now I've no wish to pry until
 I learn some thing against his will,
 Except that in this case I deem
 I have to know by some scheme
 If his grief reputed
 Is so constituted 2440
 That he my help could borrow
 To rid him of his sorrow.
 That he from me keep anything—
 If joy or sorrow it should bring—,
 This I've ne'er endured,
 And so I'm well assured,
 This thing he'd fain leave unsaid."
 "I counsel you," said the maid,
 "How you'll find out his distress
 And keep his favor none the less. 2450
 When I saw him standing there,
 Wailing at grief he has to bear,

I marked the place with zeal
 Which I will now reveal.
 When he enough had cried
 And beat his breast beside,
 The object that before him lay,
 He put it speedily away
 High in an aperture.
 Of this spot I made sure. 2460
 If for a while you'll bide
 (On a hunt he means to ride),
 Thither, lady, the way I'll lead
 To point it out, and you can read
 What the writing there may show.
 You can recognize it so.
 This much is clear:
 There is written here
 Something that has distressed,
 Which he has thus suppressed. 2470
 When, as was his wont,
 He sought the woods to hunt,
 The lady, not delaying,
 Followed the maiden's saying,
 Found the tablet, and in it
 Recognized in a minute
 The selfsame one without a doubt
 That you have been told about,
 As earlier 'twas said,
 Which with the babe she laid. 2480
 When the tablet she rehearsed,
 And again was immersed
 Deep in billows pounding
 Of mortal sins abounding,
 She deemed herself enough oppressed,
 With her hands beat her breast,
 And tore her lovely hair, too.
 She thought it surely must be true
 That she for hell was born
 And God looked with scorn 2490
 Upon her heartfelt ruing
 That she was e'er renewing

Of that misdeed of old
 Which has to you been told,
 Since He allowed the devil
 Again to work his evil,
 So that she'd fallen, as of yore,
 Into the depths of sin once more.

Her joyful sun grew bedight*
 With dark, deathly, dismal night. 2500
 I believe her heart

Had not survived the smart,
 Had not hope however brief
 Given her mind some relief
 And solace to her brought.
 'Suppose my spouse,' she thought,
 'Received this tablet otherwise
 Than up to now I could surmise?
 If God my son has spared,
 Landing him unimpaired, 2510
 The one who found the baby
 Sold clothes and tablet maybe
 To him whom I have wed.
 By this hope I'll be led
 Until the truth I've been taught.'
 For her a messenger was sought
 To find if he could
 Her husband in the wood.

The messenger ran around
 Until his lord had been found. 2520
 He spoke to him thus:

"Duke Gregorius,
 If you'd again lay your eyes
 Upon my lady ere she dies,
 Go now and do not wait,
 Or else 'twill be too late.
 I left her mightily distressed."
 Gregorius, by this request
 Saddened and in spirits low,
 Cried "Friend, why speak you so? 2530
 This hour I quit her company
 And left her well, of worry free."

“Sir, of that I have no doubt,
This very hour it came about.”

In woods no more did they bide,
Toward home they made a speedy ride.

I tell you true when I say
They ne'er dismounted on the way,
Until his course he'd wended

To where his joy ended,

2540

For he perforce must see

A sight of misery

When eyes on his beloved he laid.

Misfortune from her cheeks had made

The pink color disappear,

Made her skin dull and sere.

He found her there deathly pale,

Hence his joy began to fail.

Loud wailing rent the air,

For greater lovers ne'er

2550

Were seen by eye of man.

The sinner good began :

“You're acting strangely lady, why?”

Scarcely could she make reply.

Her words, with sobbing spoken,

Were uttered half broken :

“Sir, there's cause for me to pine.”

“What troubles you, dear lady mine?”

“So great, sir, is this bane,

To God I would complain

2560

That I into the world was born.

Dame Fortune treats me with scorn.

Accursed was the hour—

God spoke that word of power —

When I first saw the light.

Misfortune vowed me spite

And firmly to her oath adheres

Because a thousand woes and tears

To each joy have come my way.

Sir, I beg you now to say

2570

In what land your cradle stood.

Long ere now it had been good

To ask you as now I do.
 I think the question's overdue."
 "Lady, I know well why you grieve.
 Someone has led you to believe
 That my birth was low.
 If I could only know
 Who saddened you with such a tale
 Resolve in me would never fail 2580
 Until I struck him dead.
 He'd better hide his head!
 Whoe'er he is, he's been a liar.
 Of ducal lineage was my sire.
 I'm positive of this.
 Pray take it not amiss
 If now this matter we ignore
 I can tell you nothing more."
 The lady answered thus:
 "Sir, 'tis erroneous. 2590
 God knows that man would never
 Get laughter from me ever
 Who'd say about you to me
 Things with which you'd not agree:
 With harsh words I'd send him hence.
 I fear your provenience
 Is mine as well without a doubt."
 She sought the tablet, took it out.
 "Are you the man," she cried,
 "(Seek not these things to hide) 2600
 Whose fate is here recited?
 Then by the Fiend we're spited,
 Destroyed our soul's and body's life.
 I am your mother and your wife."
 Now tell me how reacted
 This sinner good distracted.
 He was o'ercome with woes,
 And wrath 'gainst God arose.
 He said: "This long I've wanted
 That I by God be granted 2610
 Such felicity
 That I with joy might see

My mother whom I love,
 Good mighty God above,
 This Thou hast conceded,
 But not as I had pleaded.
 I always craved it in my mind
 As something very sweet and kind.
 I've seen her now, but so
 That I'll have only woe; 2620
 Better to see her not at all
 Than thus to share her sinful fall."

Judas, I know 'tis true,
 Never felt more rue
 When he for grief himself hung
 Than these whom fate together flung.
 David too was not stirred
 More to grieving when he heard
 Messengers saying 2630
 News about the slaying
 Of Jonathan and Saul
 And Absalom's fall,
 His son, the fairest of the fair
 That any mother ever bare.

Who would their tale of grief extend,
 Telling their woe unto the end,
 Wiser than I he must be.
 I don't believe that possibly
One tongue could unfold to you 2640
 All that must be told to you.
 'Twould almost seem death abstained
 From taking what he could have gained:
 For had he sought these souls oppressed,
 They would have welcomed him as a guest.
 They both had dole
 Of body and soul,
 The selfsame suffering intense.
 Could man or woman ever sense
 Any kind of grief
 So bare of all relief, 2650
 As dire woe as e'er befell?
 Their souls feared the fire of hell,

While they were broken-hearted
 Because they must be parted.
 God's power had created
 A pair that were mismated
 And yet to part were loath
 In soul and body both.
 What bodies feel as gainful
 To souls is seen as baneful; 2660
 And yet the soul's salvation
 Is the body's tribulation.
 In both respects they suffered dole:
 They died in body, died in soul.

The woman, of this woe aware,
 Gave expression to despair:
 "Accursed woman, woe is me!
 Some let the body burdened be
 To free the soul of its distress,
 And this they manage with success. 2670

Others again the soul reject
 To show the body more respect,
 Enjoying this world's plenitude.
 Now I neither can nor should
 Grant my body aught
 That cheer to it has brought.
 But if my soul as well has scath,
 Then indeed God's burning wrath
 O'er my head has burst,
 As o'er all those accursed. 2680

I wonder, after all the shame
 For which my body bears the blame,
 That earth will still endure me.
 O lord son, do assure me
 (Of books you've read full many) :—
 Granted amends, if any,
 Are possible for such misdeeds,
 If there's no help but I must needs
 (As I believe full well)
 Go to live in hell, 2690
 How can I gain some leniency,
 That hell might to a small degree

Treat me more tolerantly than some
Who like myself to hell have come?"

"Mother," said Gregorius,
"Never again be speaking thus.
God's edicts it offends.
Despair not of God's ends.
You *shall* still find salvation.

2700

I've read of consolation,
That God will true repentance heed
As penance for each evil deed.
Your soul will never be so ill
But that, when once your eyes fill
With tears of deep, heartfelt grief,
You're cured; let that be your belief.
Seek not from your own land to fare.
In what you eat and what you wear
You must be abstinent.

Shun comfort and content.

2710

You never should believe
That aught you can achieve
Through any worldly rank and fame,
But all the more should you aim
To make amends to God with good.
Worse is that man's attitude
Who well might choose a worthy life
But gives it up without a strife,
Than his who has to do without
A thing he never knew about.

2720

You are a woman of guiltiness:
Let your body make redress
By penance done every day,
So your flesh you'll gainsay
Its fondest aspiration:
Thus keep it for its duration,
By deep repentance banned.
The income from your land,
Share it with the neediest.

With God's compassion you'll be blest.
Your landed properties provide
In ways your wise men decide

2730

With convents rich (that is good),
And thus placate His wrathful mood
Whom we have filled with anger grim.
Penance I too will do for Him.
Lady, mother, dear to me,
These the last words shall be
That I shall e'er address to you.
I'm sure we'll yet make it true 2740
That God as final sequel
Will make us blest and equal.
Again I'll see you nevermore:
We should have parted long before.
This land and my goods
And all worldly moods,
Let them be this day denied."
He laid his costly clothes aside
And parted, shabbily arrayed,
From the land where he had stayed. 2750

**8. GREGORIUS' SEVENTEEN YEARS OF PENANCE
ON THE LONELY ROCK**

8. Gregorius' Seventeen Years of Penance on the Lonely Rock

The wealthy man, now in need,
Every mercy lacked indeed,
Save that all his distress
He bore with ready willingness.
He craved in his mind
That God, the good and kind,
Would send him to some savage spot
Where penance then would be his lot
Till death should take him away.
He bore these trials as in play. 2760
He shunned with utmost care
Man and thoroughfare
And all open spaces.
Toward wild, deserted places
Walked the poor sinner good.
He forded streams where bridges stood.
With tender feet, unshod,
The woods and swamps he trod;
So that he only thought to pray,
Nor ate until the third day. 2770
Now led downhill a narrow trail
Past a sea into a vale.
This trail the lifelorn man now took
And followed it, till in a nook
A little hut he discerned.
There for rest the poor man turned.
A fisherman was dwelling there
Who knew of no place anywhere
Where fishing better were repaid.
The penitent of him prayed 2780
In God's name a roof till morn.
He suffered from that fisher's scorn
More than he was wont to do.
When the fisher got a view
Of this handsome man, well fed,
He wagged his head, as he said:
"Ah yes, you gross deceiver!*"br/>Were I your believer

And let my folly keep you,
 You glutton, here to sleep you, 2790
 No doubt, you hulking peasant,
 You'd find it not unpleasant,
 While I'd be sleeping and my wife,
 Tonight to rob us of life,
 Just to get our property.
 O my, how bad the world can be
 Since people will tolerate
 Damages so very great,
 And many a useless man beside,
 In whom our Lord can ne'er take pride 2800
 And who is prone to pillage.
 A big field for tillage
 Good labor to your arms would yield.
 Far better that your hands should wield
 A mattock and a goad
 Than that you walk the road.
 A wholesome, useful bread
 (The devil strike you dead!)
 You gluttonous fellow waste.
 Your strength you have debased! 2810
 Leave this dwelling straight."
 Now it was very late.
 The sinner heard this railing
 Without a trace of quailing,
 In a laughing frame of mind.
 Hence his words were good and kind:
 "Sir, the truth you've told to me.
 Whoever good security
 Would seek to gain, is right."
 He wished them both good night 2820
 And laughing left their side.
 This man without a guide
 Gladly heard such mockery
 And offered praise to God that He
 Brought him humiliation.
 Contempt and tribulation,
 Whate'er to him was meted,
 These with joy he greeted.

If this man lowly born
 Hard blows of wrath and scorn 2830
 Had showered on his back,
 He'd welcomed every thwack,
 Hoping his weight of sinfulness
 Might become a trifle less.

The evil fisher's wife began*
 To feel pity for the man,
 In her heart believing
 That he was not deceiving.
 Her husband's scolding of their guest
 Because of such a meek request 2840
 Made her burst out crying.
 She said, "There's no denying
 This is a very good man;
 I see it as his face I scan.
 May God not make you pay for this:
 Your scolding was so much amiss,
 It perils your salvation.

This house's situation
 You know: 'tis hard for men to find.
 Supposing God had designed 2850
 That thoughts of bliss you'd renew
 And sent His messenger to you,
 To him you should be kinder,
 And ponder this reminder:
 No needy man to you has come
 Since we took this hut as home,
 Save this poor devil
 Who little gained but evil.

Whatever man day by day
 Must by fishing make his way, 2860
 As you have done in dubious wise,
 Should keep God before his eyes.
 Please do that still, I counsel you.
 God help you and permit me too
 To call the man back again.
 His journey must cause him pain.
 Fast as his foot progresses,
 He'll lodge in wildernesses.

Should wolves not eat him in the wood,
 Whereof there's a likelihood, 2870
 Without food he must lie
 And find no mercy nigh.
 O let me have the right
 To shelter him this night."

Thus with kindness soothing
 The fisher's temper smoothing,
 She won him to her plea
 So she could instantly
 Seek the helpless sinner's track,
 Find the man and call him back. 2880

When she had brought him back at last,
 The fisher's evening repast
 Was ready to be eaten.
 The insults she would sweeten
 Hurl'd without the slightest need
 At this poor wight of noble breed;
 Amends she thought to proffer
 And hence began to offer
 The choicest foods that she had:
 These the homeless man forbade, 2890
 No matter how she plead.
 A crust of oatmeal bread*
 Was all he would let her bring
 Besides water from a spring.
 He told this wife good
 His sinful body would
 Scarce let food be served him.

The fisherman observed him
 Eating the meager crust of bread
 And taunted him again and said, 2900
 "O my, that I this should see!
 Charlatans are known to me
 And their deceptions crude.
 Such meager starveling food
 You've never had before this day.
 Your healthy cheeks do not betray
 Thirst or hunger's dread:
 They are so full and red.

No man or woman e'er surveyed
 A form that was more finely made. 2910
 This you'll not be owing
 To bread or springs clear-flowing.
 That you're well fed you'll not deny:
 Your thighs are sleek, your arches high,
 Your toes are long and set aright,
 Your nails are neatly kept and white.
 Your feet, were they abused,
 Would be spread out and bruised,
 As pilgrim's feet have to be.
 Looking at your thighs, I see 2920
 No fall or kick disclosed.
 They've not been long exposed.
 How well they've been protected:
 Frost and wind directed
 At *them* made a vain attempt!
 Smooth and not at all unkempt
 Your hair appears, while your build
 Is like a glutton's amply filled.
 Your arms and hands, I see,
 Of blemishes are free. 2930
 They're so smooth, they're so white:
 Other care you gave them, quite,
 Where at home you stay
 Than is your feigned way.
 I have no need to worry:
 Tomorrow in a hurry
 You'll make up for privations
 And find better rations
 Where you can purchase some
 And easily overcome, 2940
 God knows, all the need you dread,
 Since this meager oatmeal bread
 And this drink from the spring
 No pleasure to your palate bring."
 The good man, thus reviled,
 Heard and merely smiled:
 God he would propitiate
 By suffering scorn and hate

From such a lowly knave.
 No reply he gave 2950
 Until there came the hour
 When the host would shower
 His guest with questions free
 What kind of man he be.

“Sir, I am a man,” he said,*
 “Who cannot estimate the dread
 And burden of my guilt and sin.
 I seek (God’s grace thus to win)
 A spot in this solitude
 Where now and evermore I could 2960
 Atone until I’m dead
 With pain that bodies dread.
 Three days now are spent
 Since I the world forwent
 And sought the wilds unkind.
 I never thought to find
 Houses, or men to meet.
 Since today my feet

Have led me, on my way, to you,
 For help and for advice I sue. 2970
 Should you know anywhere close by
 A spot my quest to satisfy,
 Wild rock or cave for my need,
 Show it to me as a kindly deed.”

This answer spoke the fisher’s voice:
 “Since this you wish, friend, rejoice.
 I’ll take you where you would stay,
 There is a cliff not far away,
 A little piece above the sea,
 Where you may well find misery. 2980

As soon as we do it
 And guide your feet to it,
 You may by means of heavy days
 Bewail the grief that on you preys.
 It’s wild enough for you.
 If you have told me true
 That you have rue in your heart,
 To you good counsel I’ll impart.

A shackle iron-wrought is here
 Which I have kept many a year: 2990
 I'll give you this to make it sure
 Your sojourn really will endure
 Upon this cragged rock.
 Your leg shall have a lock.
 If later on you change your mind,
 Against your will you will find,
 You must stay where you are:
 It is so perpendicular
 That even if your feet were free
 You'd not descend easily. 3000
 If earnest purpose in you lies,
 Then go to sleep and early rise.
 Take the shackle for your feet,
 In my skiff then have a seat,
 When I go fishing before the day.
 For your sake I'll turn that way
 And help you up the rock
 And round your ankles lock
 The shackle's iron hold,
 That there you must grow old, 3010
 And that you certainly,
 Long as on earth you be,
 Will never trouble me again.
 No fear of that will cause me pain."
 However much the fisher jeered,
 By such advice the guest was cheered,
 For this was what he wanted,
 If wishes might be granted.
 Now the fisherman unkind
 Had stubbornly made up his mind 3020
 No comfort him to cede
 Nor shelter for his need:
 He might not stay inside.
 In vain the goodwife tried
 To sway her spouse with all her skill,
 In this she could not change his will:
 No shelter in the house was given.
 Like a dog the guest was driven

Into the yard before the door;
As he went a smile he wore. 3030

When night had come he lay
Against his wonted way
In a hut so crude,
It could not be more rude.
No roof, the walls were falling,
The hut was so appalling
That it would give no joy
To the prince's kitchen boy.
In it no furnishings he saw,
No bedding and not even straw. 3040

Yet, the goodwife did supply
Some rushes on which he could lie.
'Twas there that he laid
His shackle of iron made,
And placed his tablet there behind,
That this at daybreak he should find.

How little all that night he lay!
He thought of naught but to pray
Till exhaustion o'er him crept.
Then when finally he slept, 3050
It was not long until the dawn.
The fisher would for fish be gone.

Quite early he was ready,
As was his custom steady.
He called his guest, so deep
However was his sleep,
Which from exhaustion came about,
The man failed to hear his shout.
Again he called the guest to wake:
He said, "I knew 'twas a mistake: 3060
This man is fraudulent,
Has no sincere intent.

I will call you nevermore."
With that he hastened to the shore.

The kindly wife, who this espied,
Aroused him from his sleep and cried:
"Good man, would you fare today,
You'll lose your chance by delay.

My man down to sea has gone."
 No more waiting now was done. 3070
 He feared in sorrow great
 That he would come too late.
 On the *other* hand his sadness
 Was lightened by the gladness
 Of being thither led
 Where the *fisherman* had said.
 His sorrow and elation
 Afford the explanation
 (And his haste to leave the spot)
 Why the tablet he forgot, 3080
 Which he, whate'er betide,
 Carried at his side.
 He seized the shackle as he ran
 In haste to catch the fisherman.
 "In Heaven's name," he shouted, "wait!"
 The fisher ferried him with hate
 To that inclement cliff.
 His legs he locked stiff
 In the *shackle's* iron hold :
 "Here you must grow old. 3090
 Unless with cunning evil
 You're brought hence by the devil,
 Of this rock you'll ne'er be free."
 He tossed the key into the sea
 And said, "No doubt is in my mind :
 If this key I ever find
 From out the billowy sea,
 Of sin you will be free,
 And I will call you holy, too."
 There he left him and withdrew. 3100
 Poor Gregorius*
 Now remained thus
 Upon the cliff forlorn,
 Of all mercy shorn.
 No other home was his own,
 The heavens were his roof alone.
 No other shield did he know
 Gainst the frost, gainst the snow,

Gainst the rain or tempests blowing,
 Than the love from Heaven flowing. **3110**
 Of clothing he was bare,
 Save for a shirt of hair.
 His legs and arms were nude.
 What he ate of food
 (In this I'm telling you aright)
 Would not have during one fortnight
 Kept him from starvation,
 Had he lacked consolation
 That from Christ's spirit flowed,
 To whom his life he owed, **3120**
 Who saved him from famishment.
 With this food he was content:
 At the cliff peeping,
 He saw some water seeping:
 Under this a hollow sink
 He dug which slowly filled with drink.
 So weak the flow that sources say:
 'Twixt the night and the day
 This hole he dug could scarce fill.
 Here he drank whose hope was nil. **3130**
 In seventeen years no change he knew.*
 Now many deem the tale untrue.
 I say that they are wrong;
 God in power is strong
 Whate'er He will to consummate.
 For God no miracle's too great.

**9. THE RELEASE OF THE PENITENT AND HIS
ELEVATION TO THE PAPACY**

9. The Release of the Penitent and his Elevation to the Papacy

When the man, of mercy bare,
Had occupied the lone cliff there
For years ten and seven
And God had forgiven 3140

His sin—none could be graver —,
Restoring him to favor,
Then the Pope there in Rome
Died (I read it in a tome).
As soon as he had died
Every Roman tried,
Favoring some kinsman's name
(For sake of benefice and fame),
The papal Chair to win and hold.
Their struggle was so manifold 3150
That angry jealousy
And avid jealousy

Let them simply not decide
Who as pope should preside.
They concurred as one:
The choosing should be done
By God in heaven above.
His command and love
Should show which person He
Would wish as pope to see. 3160

Service to God was thought about
Which thereon was carried out
With prayers, with charity.*
God wrought graciously
Who always counsels right.
One night He showed the light
To wise Romans two
So completely true
To verity and troth,
Their word was like an oath. 3170

When each in bed was resting,
In prayer his faith attesting,
They heard the voice of God say
That early on the next day

The Roman people they should call
 And make it known to them all
 Who by God's will
 The papal Chair should fill,
 Saying there lived alone
 On a bleak ledge of stone 3180
 In Aquitania, where
 None knew that he was there,
 A man since seventeen years ago;
 'Twas he, the voice said, they should know,
 Who was the papal Chair to claim;
 It said Gregorius was his name."
 The fact that both by God were stirred
 Meant that a single mortal's word
 Will bear too little weight
 In things of import great.* 3190
 Now neither man knew
 This to be true:
 That each at night was given
 The same command from heaven—
 Till one met the other
 And they told one another.
 As soon as both did
 What God to do had bid,
 When the one concurred
 With the other's word, 3200
 The Romans were elated
 To trust what was narrated.
 To God they showed they were joyed.
 The two old men were employed
 To go with messages in hand
 To Aquitania, the land,
 Seeking this man of excellence
 And, finding him, to bring him thence.
 This caused them some dismay:
 The rock of his long stay 3210
 To them had not been pointed out.
 They traveled thither full of doubt.
 With diligence they sought
 Where'er their feet were brought,

But no one could direct them.
Grief started to affect them.
Heartfelt their pleas to Him who heeds
Each man who heavenly guidance needs.
God put this thought in their mind:
If him they ever hoped to find **3220**
They would have to seek
In places wild and bleak.
Hence they quickly hied
Where mountain chains were spied,
Into the wilds near the sea.
'Twas doubt caused their misery,
Since there was no telling
Where the man was dwelling.
As led by solitude,
They went from mead to wood. **3230**
O'er pathless ground they roved
As by their spirit moved,
Astray until the third day.
Then at last they struck a way
Free of hoof-prints; they were glad
Later at this luck they had.
The grassy path scarce trod before
Led them far to a shore,
Where the fisher by the sea
Dwelt, as you have heard from me, **3240**
Who that man of blessing
In fashion so distressing
Greeted in his need,
And with evil deed
Fastened him, moved by hate,
At the place where still he sate,
On the dry, savage rock,
There his legs fast to lock
In the iron hold.
When these seekers old **3250**
Espied the little cot
They gloried in their lot.
Since they, exhausted, now at length
This night could regain their strength.

Food they had brought
 (This was a happy thought)
 Enough all their wants to meet.
 Wine to drink, bread to eat,
 And besides anything
 That was good for them to bring. 3260
 Therefore the fisher's joy
 Was mixed with no alloy
 When greeting guests so well-to-do.
 He saw clearly and he knew
 That through them he'd be gaining,
 And so without complaining
 He lodged them to their full content,
 Seeing they were opulent,
 And moved more by their affluence
 Than by his own benevolence. 3270
 More pleasantly he made them live
 Than him who had no wealth to give,
 Gregorius, the man of worth:
 Useless he deemed that total dearth.
 When comfort they had found and rest,
 The fisher thus them addressed:
 "I have been fortunate
 Since here I have met
 Men so very excellent.
 Fate today to me has sent 3280
 A fish of finest quality."
 Upon the board for all to see
 Before the gentlemen 'twas laid.
 No untruth he had said:
 The fish was long, also fat.
 He got a profit out of that
 In copper pennies, chiefly.
 Now they bargained briefly.
 They paid him for the fish,
 Expressing this wish: 3290
 The host its gall should remove.
 So he began his skill to prove
 While over him they hovered.
 The covetous man discovered*

The key that in the stomach lay,
Of which before you've heard me say:
With this he'd locked Gregorius
In ill will opprobrious,
And seventeen years since then had passed.
The key into the sea he'd cast, 3300
Saying that if ever he
Again should find the same key
And from the waters bring it in,
He'd know the man was free of sin.
Now when the key came to view,
Immediately the fisher knew
How savagely he'd acted.
He seized his head, distracted,
And with his hands tore his hair.
Could I have been present there, 3310
In helping him I'd have engaged,
Much as I am by him enraged.
When enough he'd torn his hair
And beat his breast in despair,
The gentlemen asked him
What vexation tasked him
To cause such fervent sorrowing.
Now he told them everything
About Gregorius, his guest;
They learned it all, naught was suppressed. 3320
Methinks 'twould be a useless feat
If all my story I'd repeat
And tell it once again
In words complete and plain.
One tale would then turn into two.*
Much joy the emissaries knew,
For when they heard, assurance came:
The fisher's victim was the same
To whom the Lord turned their hope
And designated as their pope. 3330
When he before the two
In fashion frank and true
Confession full had said,
He grasped their feet and plead

For counsel in his sorry plight,
 His great misdeed to set aright.
 When they beheld him ruing,
 With pious fervor suing—
 This wretch who there before them knelt—,
 Pity for the man they felt, 3340
 Assuring him that he
 Would much more readily
 Of all his sins be bare
 If he with them would fare
 To see the cliff tomorrow.
 The graybeards saw for sorrow
 His eyes overflowing,
 And tears his fervor showing
 Were falling on his beard of gray.
 “What use to go?” they heard him say. 3350
 “I’ll gladly guide you to the place;
 But vain it is in any case.
 Well I know he’s long been dead.
 I left him by such woes bestead
 Upon the savage rock alone,
 That were but one such his own,
 No living soul could survive.
 That we should find him there alive,
 For this you may not hope nor long.
 Had not the cold winds and strong 3360
 With frost forever chilled him,
 Starvation would have killed him.”
 But God’s power they found to be
 So strong, to work so variously,
 If God would show him favor,
 His blessing would forever
 The man from every peril shield.
 To the fisher they appealed
 With them the journey brief to make.
 He pledged at once the trip to take. 3370
 Next morn ere dawn had risen
 They sought the rocky prison,
 With labor unabating
 The thickets penetrating*

To find the precipice
And acknowledge gain of this:
Where Gregorius might be—
The real living martyr he—:
A man of handsomeness,*
Displaying no distress 3380
Of hunger or of cold,
Or poverty untold,
Whom dainty things adorn
On clothes and body worn,
So that nobody owns
In gay and precious stones,
In gold and silk of highest grade
Stuff that could be better made,
Wrought to suit the wearer's taste,
Who with smiles and laughter graced 3390
And happy eyes would meet them
And as dear friends would greet them,
With tresses of a golden light,
So that you would take delight
In catching sight of him,
With beard shorn neat and trim,
Handsome in every way withal,
As if to dance at a jolly ball,
With gaiters fitting tightly,
In all the world most sightly— 3400
No such man they sighted there.
He might have tarried elsewhere.
I'll tell you now what they found.
When they gan to look around
On the cliff where he stood,
This man undefiled and good
Swiftly got to see them.
He felt the urge to flee them.
He was ashamed beyond compare
Because his limbs were nude and bare. 3410
He could not take to flight,
His fetters held him tight,
Gripping his legs as in a lock.
Headlong he fell upon the rock,

Hoping thus from them to hide.
 Seeing them approach his side,
 With greens his loins he covered.
 God's friend they thus discovered,
 A needy man upon the earth,
 To God a man of highest worth, 3420
 Whom people might despise,
 But pleasing in Heaven's eyes.

This poor man crouching there*
 Was overgrown with hair;
 Upon the skin 'twas flatted,
 Both head and beard were matted.
 Curly had been his tresses,
 Now sooty from distresses.
 His cheeks in days of yore*
 With pink were covered o'er 3430
 Mixed with whiteness fair,
 And plump with proper care;
 Now swarthy, sunken, fallow,
 His visage worn and sallow.

Of old his eyes had been
 Of bright and sparkling sheen,
 His mouth of cheerful mold;
 'Twas pallid now and cold.
 His eyes, deep-set, red, and dim—
 Caused by privation grim— 3440
 Had brows grown so strong
 That they were rough and long.*
 His flesh, once copious enow,
 On every limb was wasted now
 Down to the very bone.
 So thin had he grown
 In arms as well as thighs—
 A pity in God's eyes!

Where the shackle lay
 By night and by day, 3450
 Hard against his foot it pressed,
 Chafed the flesh and gave no rest—
 Down to the bone it wore:
 The clamp was covered o'er

With blood that could not end
From wounds that ne'er would mend.
This was pain hard to bear
Besides other woes and care.
This comparison is meet:
He could be likened to a sheet 3460
That over thorns is laid.
One need not be dismayed
To try to count the bones in him,
The heavy ones and the slim,
Through his skin's transparency.
Much as God's devotee
Had changed in conformation
By suffering privation,
Yet the Holy Ghost
Had acted as his host 3470
So fully and so featly,
His mind was saved completely.
Skills in which he'd been adept
All these years he had kept:—
His reading and his speaking.
They who a pope were seeking,
When they now beheld the man,
As my story to you ran,
So bare of strength and worn,
By pity they were torn 3480
So much that their tears like rain
O'er their clothing poured amain.
In God's name they assured him,
By God's command conjured him
To tell them truthfully
If he Gregorius be.
On being thus admonished,
He told the men astonished
He truly was Gregorius.
They told the tale marvellous 3490
Why they'd come out this way,
As you have now heard me say,
How they in the night
Through God had seen the light,

How the Lord had named him,
 Chosen and proclaimed him,
 Making him judge and head
 On the earth in God's own stead.

When this news he heard,
 How his heart was stirred! 3500

Before God's majesty
 He bowed submissively.

With many a tear they heard him say,
 While he looked the other way:

"Today, if you are Christians good,*

Honor God as you should

By leaving me with speediness,

For honor I do not possess

Nor merit such heavenly grace

That any good man I should face 3510

With eyes so cursed with sin.

Well known to God has been

How foul the flesh I call my own,

So that it's meet I be alone

And stay alone until I'm dead.

That over everlasting dread

My soul may gain the victory,*

I suffer earthly misery.

Were I among them now,

Good men their heads must bow, 3520

Atoning for the crime I share.

So monstrous is the guilt I bear.

The trees and grass on the ground

And all the greenery around

Would wither from the accents wild

Of this voice I've defiled,

And from the loathsome beat

Of my unshodden feet.

That this sweet atmosphere

That mortals thrive on here 3530

And the benign blessing

Of rain's and wind's caressing

Were boons for me to claim

As if I bore no shame,

That the *sun*, its brightness sending,
 Should be so condescending
 As fully upon me to shine
 As on all other men divine—
 I am not worthy of such grace.
 Your wish I take the pope's place, 3540
 'Tis mockery deliberate.
 Alas, it is the wrathful hate
 Of God I merit more
 By far for deeds of yore
 Than that He shower on me
 Mercy and dignity
 Which give a pope his excellence.
 In Rome they can with me dispense:
 I should not bring you success.
 Behold my body in distress! 3550
 'Tis so loathsome to the eye,
 Unsuitable for honors high.
 If once I knew a noble's lot,
 Right now all that has been forgot.
 To humankind unused I've grown,
 'Twill suit them I be left alone.
 You gentlemen, upon me gaze:
 I've been transformed, in many ways,
 My body, habitudes, and mind
 Are not what rightly are designed 3560
 With great, worldly powers to cope.
 I am not fit to be a pope.
 Most righteous men, I pray,
 May it today
 To my soul's good redound
 That I by you here was found,
 And pity vouchsafe
 To me, poor waif,
 When 'fore God in prayer you stand.
 This we've learned from His command: 3570
 He who prays for a sinner's soul,
 Himself will gain salvation's goal.
 But now 'tis time we said adieu,
 For what avail is this to you?

In me you glad the devil's mood.
 For me this pastime's far too good.
 Upon this rock I've been
 Years fully seventeen
 And seen no human being here.
 The thrill of joy and ease, I fear, 3580
 Afforded me by talks with you
 Will bring on penance I must do
 To Him who wrongs small or great
 Unatoned won't tolerate."

Then he arose and would depart.*
 These two men with all their heart
 Besought him by the Lord
 And by His fearful word
 To pause a while and calmly stay
 And hear what more they had to say. 3590

He received from both
 With pledges and with oath
 Such strong assurance that they meant
 The message they would fain present,
 That he could better credit that.
 He said, "I was a full vat
 Of sin-begotten shame
 When these bonds—the same
 You see here—chained me to this rock
 And ever since my legs lock.* 3600

No one's sin is so great 3609
 But He whose might burst hell's gate
 More mercy can accord.

If God, our gracious Lord,
 To my manifold misdeeds
 Oblivion by His grace concedes,
 And if I now am pure,
 Of this he should assure
 Us three, some sign extending,
 Else will my life be ending
 Upon this rocky shore.
 To me He must restore 3620
 The key with which I've been
 So firmly locked in,

Or this spot I'll never flee."

The fisher now fell on his knee,
And many tears distressed him.
"My dear lord," he addressed him,
"I am that same sinful man
With whom this wrong here began.
I was the wretch forlorn,
Who greeted you with scorn.
My hospitality was dead,
I gave you scolding more than bread.
The drink I poured for you with zeal
Was ill will I did not conceal.
I housed you then just one night
Unworthily, with noisy spite.
Now I've aged, as you see,
Of this, though, I've ne'er been free.
It still gives my soul no peace:
Unless this trip bring release
Which dutiful I've hither made,
My debt must still be repaid.
'Tis true I did your pleading,
But mocked you in acceding:
I brought you hither to this rock,
And round your legs placed a lock.
The key into the sea I threw
And ne'er again thought of you
Till yesterday my sinful hand
Key and fish brought to land.
In truth, this caught these men's eye,
As they must help me testify."

3630

3640

3650

The fetters he unfastened.
The aged men then hastened
With him their priestly robes to share,
And when he was no longer bare,
They led the man away
On whom no sin now lay,
Abandoning this cliff bleak.
Alas, his frame was very weak,
His body's vigor slight.
Thereon they spent the night

3660

At the fisher's dwelling.
 His sorrow was compelling.
 Atonement and release he sought
 In this great wrong he had wrought,
 Against the man committed
 Whom he in scorn had twitted.
 Now his true devotion,
 His rueful emotion, 3670
 His tears of lamentation
 Washed away damnation,
 And thus his soul recovered.

What time Gregorius hovered
 In sin's mighty hold,
 As to you I've told,
 And left his power and fame
 And to the fisher came
 Who gave him in his home so poor
 A welcome and a treatment dour 3680
 As there that night he spent,
 When he next morning went
 And his tablet there forgot—
 Through years that on the cliff he sat
 Nothing grieved him so
 As did this single woe.
 Now of this again he thought
 And the fisherman besought:
 "Pray, by Heaven's will be bound,
 And if the tablet you have found 3690
 The same to me restore."
 He hoped the sins he bore
 Might grow the less thereby.
 The fisher made reply:

"I'm sorry, but I've seen it not.
 Where did you leave it? Name the spot.
 Or how did you forget it thus?"
 "I left it," said Gregorius,
 "In the hut where I was housed.
 When next morning I was roused 3700
 I felt a terror great
 That I had waked too late.

Startled from sleep toward you I scurried,
And so perturbed, alas, I hurried
That the tablet I forgot.”

The fisher said, “That helps us not.
What use to seek it? Where it lay
It’s rotted now this many a day.

Alas, dear master good,
Not twelve weeks stood

3710

The hut where you were woken
Until by me ’twas broken.

I have burned it all,
Roof as well as wall.

Toward you so sullen was my mood
That had this hut at all been good
Against the wind or rain,
In it you’d not have lain.

Where once the hut stood alone
Worthless grass now has grown,
Weeds with nettles high.”

3720

God’s loved one heaved a sigh!
He prayed for God’s grace,
Nor e’er would leave the place
Unless the tablet he had traced.
Now they went there and with haste
They worked with fork and rake,
Endeavoring to break

The matted weeds and dung away.

And God, whose mercy lives for aye,
Showed in good Gregorius’ case

3730

A token of His fullest grace:
He found his tablet unimpaired,
As though but now it had fared*
From its maker’s hand, brand-new.

Reverent awe and pleasure too
Came to them who witnessed it.

Weeping, they must admit
That this man was heaven-blest.

Truth profound they confessed.

3740

When next morn they started
And for Rome departed,

Oft they noticed as they went
 God's blessing evident
 That on this pure man lay,
 Active night and day:
 Whichever way they turned,
 No danger they discerned.
 For them food so abundant flowed
 That all their casks a plenty showed, 3750
 However much they drained them.
 Till Rome at last detained them.
 A heavenly grace I proclaim.
 Three days before the party came,
 All Rome by clamor loud was stirred.
 Bells on every side were heard
 That by themselves from every steeple
 Told the news to the people
 That of the coming pope*
 There was instant hope. 3760
 Men and women equally
 Sensed in this his sanctity
 And went to meet him in a band
 Toward the Aquitanian land;
 Three days they marched on foot,
 And a divine repute
 Swept the land, their ranks before.
 Their sacrament on they bore,
 Barefoot, in woollen garments dressed.
 Greetings kind he heard expressed, 3770
 Finding a welcome ringing*
 With praises and with singing.
 By the roadside lay
 Many sick that day.
 They came to be assured by him
 And of their illness cured by him.
 Many whom he blessed
 Were cured as he progressed.
 Whom *he* touched as he neared,
 Wherever he appeared, 3780
 With hand or kindliness,
 By word or with his dress,

That man soon found release:
This made his trouble cease.

Rome, the city famed,
Its pope and lord proclaimed
In a joyous mood.
This did the city good;
Never pope had been known
To sit on the Roman throne
Better fit than he to heal
The wounds a human soul can feel.

3790

He could act properly:
A man of moderation he,
As by the Holy Spirit taught.
Righteousness he keenly sought.
Humility's a proper shield
For all men who power wield
(This helps the poor survive),
Yet those who crimes contrive
Their prince quells by fear of God,
Humbling with a righteous rod
Who fights the right with evil.
Should children of the devil
The priestly stole fail to heed,
Authority must intercede.

3800

Both ways of ruling men are good:
They teach the right, check haughty mood.
One should seek relief
For the sinner's grief
And gentle penance mete
That his regret be sweet.

3810

The right may show such rigor
That, smit with too much vigor,
A sinner cannot well endure
The punishment designed to cure.
If someone is on pardon bent
And gets a heavy punishment,
How easily he may despair,
Renouncing God and Heaven's care,
Again to be the devil's wight.
Hence mercy goes ahead of right.

3820

Thus he set moderation
O'er men of priestly station,
Hence sinners wickedness withstood
And the good continued good.
To his strong teachings owing
God's glory e'er was growing
With powers that overwhelm
Throughout the Roman realm.

3830

**10. THE MOTHER'S ABSOLUTION AND REUNION
WITH HER SON**

10. The Mother's Absolution and Reunion with her Son

His mother now, his aunt, his wife*
(These three were but a single life),
When in her Aquitanian home
She heard of this pope in Rome
That he so thoroughly
Sinners of grief could free,
To get advice him she sought
For that misdeed she had wrought.
That she, of sinful fardels grim
Might be relieved thanks to him. 3840
When eyes on him she laid
And her confession made,
This woman good and true
Nothing at all knew
About this pope's family
And that her son he could be.
Now she on herself had ta'en
So much of travail, rue, and pain,
Since she and he had parted,
That, being broken-hearted, 3850
The strength and color were effaced
That formerly her body graced,
So that he knew her not at all
Till her name she let fall
And to Aquitaine referred.
When her confession he had heard,
(She'd told him of that thing,
That selfsame happening—
And long he'd known it too),
Straight of course he knew 3860
That here his mother stood.
This man loyal and good
To God expressed his joy in awe
That she submitted to His law
To such a full extent.
He realized she meant
Her penitence and ruefulness.
With ever-ready kindness

Greetings to her he voiced
 And heartily rejoiced 3870
 That blessedness should him betide
 To let him see her ere she died,
 And that *her* he could honor
 When old age was upon her,
 Priestly counsel giving
 For soul and earthly living.

As yet no consciousness she bore
 That she had seen him e'er before.
 He spoke to her with subtlety:
 "In God's name, lady, tell to me, 3880
 Since then have you tidings none
 Where your son might have gone,
 His living or his dying?"
 Perforce she fell to sighing.

She answered: "Sir, I know it not.
 I know he shouldered such a lot
 Of sorrow born of ruth,
 That though I lack the truth,
 I do believe he must be dead."
 "If by God's providence," he said, 3890
 "It ever came to be
 That him again you'd see,
 Do you believe, tell me true,
 Would he be recognized by you?"
 "Unless my senses me betrayed,
 I'd know if eyes on him I laid."

He said: "Speak as I've bade you.
 Tell me, would it glad you,
 Or would you doleful be,
 If him again you'd see?" 3900
 She said, "You have observed today
 That from me I have put away
 Every sort of treasure
 Along with joy and pleasure,
 Like any poor wife.
 There could not in this life
 Another joy come to me
 Save this, that him I might see."

He said, "Then be you of good cheer,
 For good news I can tell you here. 3910
 'Tis lately that to me he came
 And swore to me in God's name:
 No other friend than you,
 So constant and so true,
 He loved more tenderly."
 "Have mercy, sir," said she.
 "Does he still live?" "He does." "But how?"
 "He's doing well and is here now."
 "Sir, can I see him here?"
 "Indeed you can, he's near." 3920
 "O sir, my son then let me see."
 "Lady, yes, that can well be.
 Since to behold him you are fain,
 From this you need no more refrain.
 Beloved mother, look at me:
 Your son and husband, I am he.
 However heavy and how great
 May once have been my sin's weight,
 God has all that forgot,
 And now it is my lot 3930
 As Pope in Rome to stand.
 This came by His command,
 That I was sought and hither brought,
 And thus I've given Him, as I ought,
 My soul and all my body's life."
 Thus was that mercy-seeking wife
 Of woe set completely free.
 God joined them wondrously,
 Both of them elated.
 Ne'er were they separated, 3940
 Till in one death united.
 When her he once had plighted:
 On penance she should be bent
 (As from their native land he went)
 In person and in goods,
 Unswerving in such moods,
 All this she fully had achieved
 Nor was thereby at all aggrieved.

Whate'er they did in years to come,
After their union there in Rome,
They gave themselves solely
To God, and so wholly
That evermore the two were known
As God's children, as His own.
His foster-father too he bade*
To share the heavenly seat he had;
Its joy is ever sweet.
He's blest who's held that seat.

3950

11. EPILOG

11. Epilog

From this glad story*
Of these sinners' glory, 3960
How after great sin
God's favor they could win,
Now let no one dare
Who sins himself might bear
By evil thoughts be taken,
If God he has forsaken,
To himself declaring,
"Be cheerful, ne'er despairing.
How could *I* e'er be undone?
Since *they* eternal life have won 3970
After their terrible misdeed,
For me too help is guaranteed,
And if salvation I'm to gain,
Salvation surely I'll attain."
Who thus, by Satan driven,
Would sin, yet hope for Heaven,
That man by Satan has been downed
And in his power he is bound.
And even if his sin is slim
This thought will return to him 3980
And misdeed follow on misdeed:
His plight will not be remedied.
Here he whose sins are ample
Should see a blest example:
Howe'er he has been sinning,
Still grace he can be winning,
If he will show the proper rue
And penance suitable will do.
Hartmann, who did not shirk
In labor on this work 3990
For love of God and you,
He has this gain in view,
That you will let befall,
As his reward from all
Who hear this tale or read,
A chance for them to plead

For him, and seek the special bliss
That he may meet you after this
And all in Heaven end.
And hence, I pray you, send
That good sinner innocent
To plead for suffering's banishment,
That we in misery here
May find such end with cheer
As they found there and then.
God grant us this. Amen.

4000

Notes

Prolog. The first 176 lines constitute the prolog (see the introductory lines 1-84 of the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, written soon after) and state the theme: "Man is prone to sin, especially in his youth, but true repentance will save him; doubt of God's mercy is the most destructive of all sins. The hero of the tale illustrates the truth of this teaching." Finally, in ll. 171-176, Hartmann mentions his own name, as he frequently does, and characterizes his work as being *von dem guoten sündære*—"of a man good through sinning." At the end of the poem he restates the moral more concisely (ll. 3959 ff.) and also repeats his name as author (l. 3989). The Prolog is complete only in two manuscripts, J and K (see Introduction).

Line 5. For the bearing of this on the chronological sequence of Hartmann's works see Introduction, p. 9. On the space after *heart* and similar spaces throughout, see Preface.

Line 27. Abel, according to legend, wears a twofold heavenly crown for his martyrdom and his chastity.

Line 81. The word is *gemeinlichen*, common, travelled by the masses.

Lines 97-143. Here Hartmann waxes allegorical, using the theme of the good Samaritan as the basis for a sermon-like exegesis on the subject of sin and forgiveness. See 10 Luke 30 ff. Hartmann does not often become involved in such allegories, although they are common in the literature of the time.

Line 153. The word is *bercswaer*; it reappears in the spurious 2. *Büchlein*, l. 162. Sometimes the 2. *Büchlein* takes over entire lines or couplets from *Gregorius* practically unchanged.

Line 176. *Gregorius* is thus referred to again in ll. 671, 2552, 2606, and 4001. The French poem (Luzarche edition) has a very similar passage: *or escotez, por deu amor, la vie d'un bon pecheor*. The words *guot* and *bon* often refer to a saintly man, *bon homme* being the French designation of the paraclete among the Cathars.

Line 179. *ocean* is italicized to indicate that it bears the first of three stresses: Near the *océan* is its *státion*.

Line 185. In the French romance: *de ces enfans morut li mere*.

Line 189. In the French: *e enpres prist la mors al pere*.

Lines 248 ff. These are all qualities befitting knighthood.

Lines 292-295. Here again there is verbal agreement between Hartmann and the French.

Line 304. Not they themselves, nor the Greek *moira*, but the devil is to blame. See also below, ll. 328 ff., 339, 351, 1960, 2495, 2602, and 3975.

Line 347. *diu reine tumb* reminds one of *Parzival*.

Line 393. One is reminded of *Parzival's* struggle with *Jeschute* in *Parzival* 131, 19.

Line 441. Man has obligations both to God and to mankind. See also ll. 2070 and 2217.

Line 452. *minne* is love, often personified.

Line 466. Hartmann is fond of contrasts. The girl has fortitude, her

brother not. See also ll. 1064 (one brother is rich, the other poor), 2835 ff., 2887 ff., and 3065 ff. (again the woman is more level-headed). Much of this may stem from his source.

Lines 475 ff. Here the child is not held responsible for the sins of its parents. But ll. 753 ff. express a different point of view. See also ll. 1782 ff.

Line 512. Hartmann is close to the French: *quar mi jors est molt après.*

Lines 607 ff. This play on *guot—muot* continues through l. 624. *guot* means both goodness and goods. Similar play on words is found in *Iwein*. The practice reminds one of Gottfried von Strassburg, who is fond of the device and uses it especially in his introduction to *Tristan und Isolt*. See *The Tristan and Isolde of Gottfried von Strassburg*, translated by Edwin H. Zeydel, Princeton, 1948, p. 21 f.

Lines 637 ff. One is reminded of Gottfried's style.

Line 651. The identical line occurs in *Erec*, l. 2362 (Leitzmann edition). Middle High German poets did much by ear. The following lines are in the style which Gottfried used ten years later.

Line 746. Perhaps the books of the Bible are meant.

Lines 797 ff. This is probably more a gesture of modesty than a confession that his life was uneventful. Hartmann was, however, completely in harmony with his time.

Lines 803 ff. Again (see l. 466 and note) Hartmann admires womanly fortitude.

Lines 805 ff. As often, Arnold of Lübeck translates quite faithfully: *tripliciter erat languidus/ huius mulieris animus.*

Line 854. As a young mother she was expected to attend a church service. Mann gives her the name of Sibylla.

Lines 993 f. Arnold of Lübeck translates: *Ad hoc ille: 'de piscibus/ iam nil quaeratur amplius,/ sed nunc laudetur dominus/ quod salvos vos recepimus.'*

Lines 1035 ff. The innocent baby's smile is a fine human touch.

Line 1040. Any monk or priest who could read or write was called 'learned' in the Middle Ages.

Lines 1043 f. These lines are spurious.

Line 1052. In the French version the child is also wrapped in *paille alesandrin*.

Line 1067. The old continental mile was several times as long as our mile.

Lines 1073 ff. Arnold of Lübeck: *pauperior ut parvulum educandum suscipiat.*

Line 1085. The French: *après disner.*

Line 1123. The haughtiness of the monks expresses their unbecoming class feeling.

Lines 1164 f. This is one of the numerous passages in *Gregorius* that Konrad von Fussesbrunnen (see Introduction, p. 10) imitates in his *Childhood of Jesus*.

Lines 1181 ff. The passage throws light on medieval education.

Line 1183. Reading, writing, and general knowledge of Latin are meant.

Line 1193. Roman law.

Line 1263. The word is *Wunsch* (literally 'wish'), a supernatural creative power which endows man with desirable qualities.

Lines 1273 ff. The French: *De lui dient petit et grand/ que molt iert ja bel enfant:/ onques mais fils a pecheor/ ne nasqui de si grant valor.*

Lines 1291 f. Thomas Mann in *The Holy Sinner* describes it as a fist fight.

Lines 1299 ff. Hartmann succeeds well in conveying the excitement of the speakers.

Line 1311. She is proud, though poor and lowly, thinking Gregorius still meaner.

Lines 1321-1332. These lines are spurious, merely repeating what has just been said and anticipating what follows. They are lacking in the better manuscripts.

Line 1335. The word is *harnschar* (*harm*, torture; *schar*, forced labor). The Old High German is *haramscara*, which looks temptingly like our *harum-scarum*.

Lines 1499 ff. As was pointed out in the Introduction, Hartmann blends spiritual and chivalric elements in his work. Here the latter element is stressed.

Lines 1573 ff. In this passage the interesting remark is made by Gregorius that he never thought of being a knight of the Bavarian or Franconian kind (at that time still crude in bearing), but would rather emulate the knights of the Lowlands, whence more polished French chivalry entered Germany. Could this remark have affected Hartmann's relations to Wolfram, who, himself a Bavarian in the broader sense, may be retaliating in *Parzival* 121, 7 ff., when he says that the Valois are even more stupid (*toerscher*) than Bavarians? This is made more likely by the fact that in general Wolfram is wont to take an ironical, testy attitude toward Hartmann and the characters in his works (see *Parzival* 143, 21 ff., 253, 10 ff., and possibly also 583, 29 ff., and 826, 29 f.). We owe this suggestion to Professor H. J. Weigand. See Zeydel in *Euphorion* 48, 210 ff.

Line 1739. The abbot is the most likable character in the entire work.

Lines 1741 ff. Arnold translates: *perduxit in cubiculum/ rebus ornatum variis/ cum indumentis sericis.*

Lines 1750 f. This 'sin' is also referred to in ll. 756 ff., but in ll. 475 ff. it was denied. In ll. 1780 f. it is called innocent guilt.

Line 1787. The fact that he becomes a knight leads to the catastrophe that is to follow.

Lines 1802 ff. The French has: *repos n'aurai/ deci atant que je saurai/ de quel lignaje je fu nes.*

Lines 1817 ff. Another fine touch.

Line 1855 f. A clever variation of ll. 1825 f.

Line 1882. The same line, with *der künec* as subject, in *Erec*, l. 4580.

Lines 1943 ff. The mother had laid silk robes into the chest, which were now worn by the grown man. The good quality made it possible to use the cloth for years. This incident attracts Thomas Mann's attention.

Lines 1998 f. Arnold: *fit primus persequentium,/ novissimus fugentium.*

Lines 2029 ff. Such games of chance were popular in the Middle Ages.
Line 2070. See l. 441 above, and 2217 below.

Lines 2136 f. The identical idea is expressed in *Erec*, ll. 4385 ff. in somewhat different words, but with the same rhyme: *beiden—scheiden*.

Lines 2222 ff. Imitated by Konrad von Heimesfurt in his poem on the Virgin.

Lines 2499 f. These lines are imitated in the spurious 2. *Büchlein*, ll. 18 ff.

Lines 2787 ff. The fisherman, who plays an important part in the action from this point on, is more than the conventional proletarian, as the Middle High German poets saw him—mean, petty, and often grasping (see *Parzival* 142, 15 ff.). He embodies the skepticism of the world with regard to the genuineness of the suffering and redemption of Gregorius. Figuratively, he is a doubting Thomas who does not believe until he sees (ll. 3305 ff.). Then his ruefulness knows no end (ll. 3626 ff.). In the *Gesta* he is more cooperative.

Lines 2835 ff. Hartmann, always fond of contrasts, makes this fisherman's wife kind and soft-hearted; the earlier one embodied precisely the opposite traits (ll. 1306 ff.). This was no doubt suggested by his source, but Hartmann makes as much as possible of it.

Lines 2892 ff. In the French version he *asks* for such food.

Line 2955. See *Parzival* 456, l. 30.

Lines 3101 ff. In *The Holy Sinner* Mann devotes much more space to Gregorius' seventeen years of penance, but he treats the matter with sly sophistication.

Line 3131. In the Latin hexameter version the period is cut down to fourteen years, but Arnold follows Hartmann.

Line 3163. *Iwein*, l. 1410, is identical. See note to l. 651.

Line 3190. See 18 Matthew 16.

Line 3294. In his *Childhood of Jesus* Konrad von Fussesbrunnen has the identical line.

Line 3325. This would be a criticism of the French source, if Hartmann used it, because there the story is repeated.

Line 3374. Our reading is *die boume zuo bereiten*. The reference may be to undergrowth. Greith's arbitrary reading is *barke*; the reference would then be to preparing the fisherman's boat. But this seems too easy a solution.

Lines 3379 ff. Compare the similar passage in *Erec*, ll. 366 ff. Hartmann teases the reader by describing Gregorius in a condition in which he was *not* found.

Lines 3423 ff. Mann describes him as a warty, horny creature shrunk to the size of a hedgehog.

Lines 3429 ff. Another of Hartmann's striking contrasts.

Lines 3442 ff. One is reminded of Wolfram's description of Cundrie in *Parzival* 313, 24, and of Malcreatiure, *ibid.*, 517, 27.

Lines 3505 ff. Mann's Gregorius indulges in no such self-recrimination.

Line 3517. Konrad von Fussesbrunnen copies this line, too.

Line 3585. In his excitement he forgets that he is chained.

Line 3601. Lines 3601-3608 are spurious.

Lines 3734 f. Arnold; *nam sunt inventae tabulae/ intactae et tam splendidae,/ ac si fuissent subito/ raptae de artificio.*

Line 3759. Arnold calls him simply *antistes*, head priest.

Lines 3771 f. Again Konrad von Fussesbrunnen copies.

Line 3831. In the French: *Ele fu sa tante e sa mere,/ fiz fu d'une suer e d'un frere/ e après se fu ses mariz.* Arnold: *pater, uxor et amita/ persona erat unica.*

Line 3955. His friend, the kind abbot. It is a fine touch that he, who had once vainly advised Gregorius to become a man of God, should now share his spiritual glory.

Line 3959. See the first note to the Prolog.

