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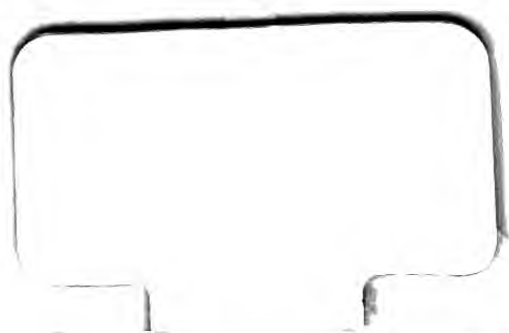


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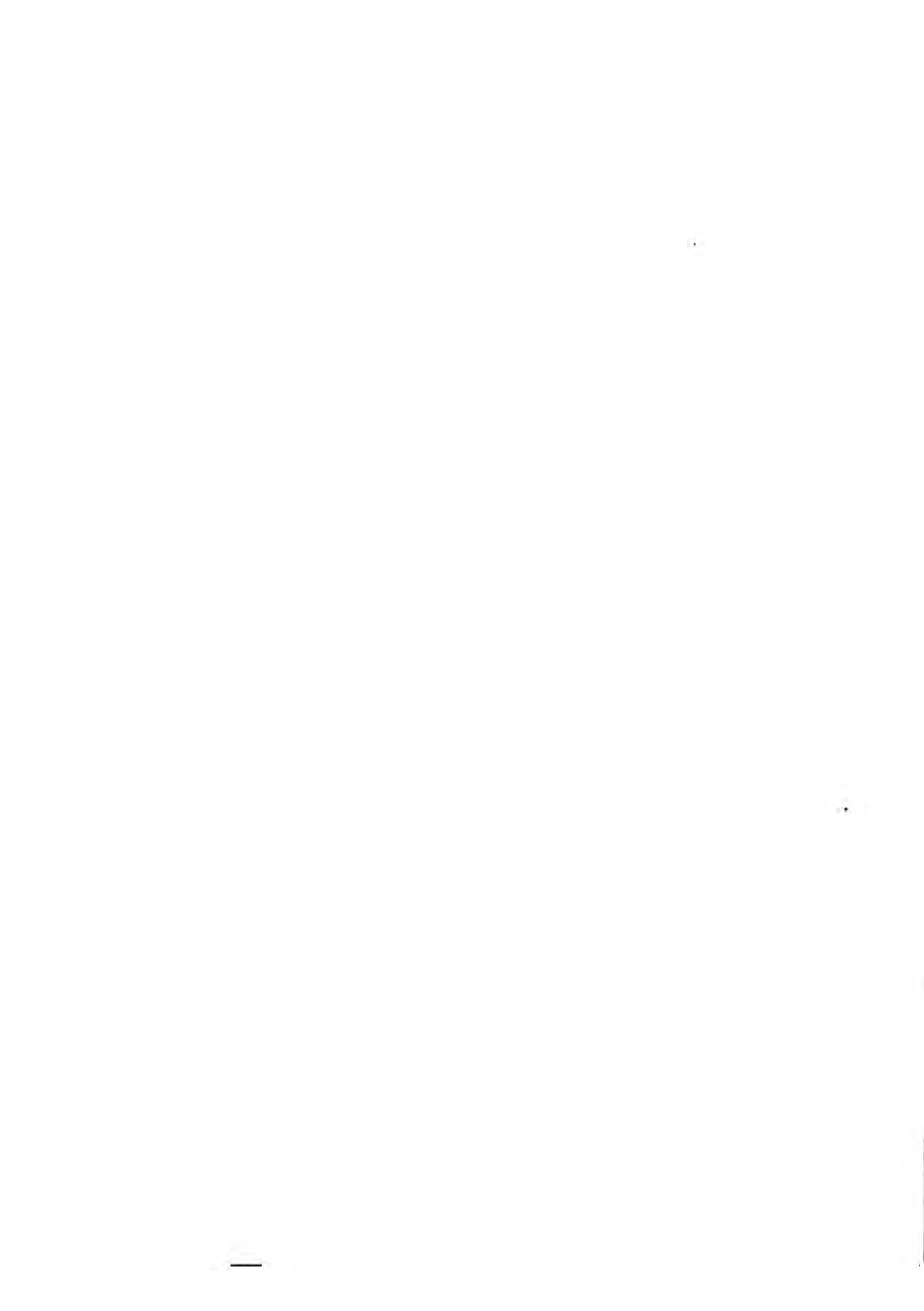
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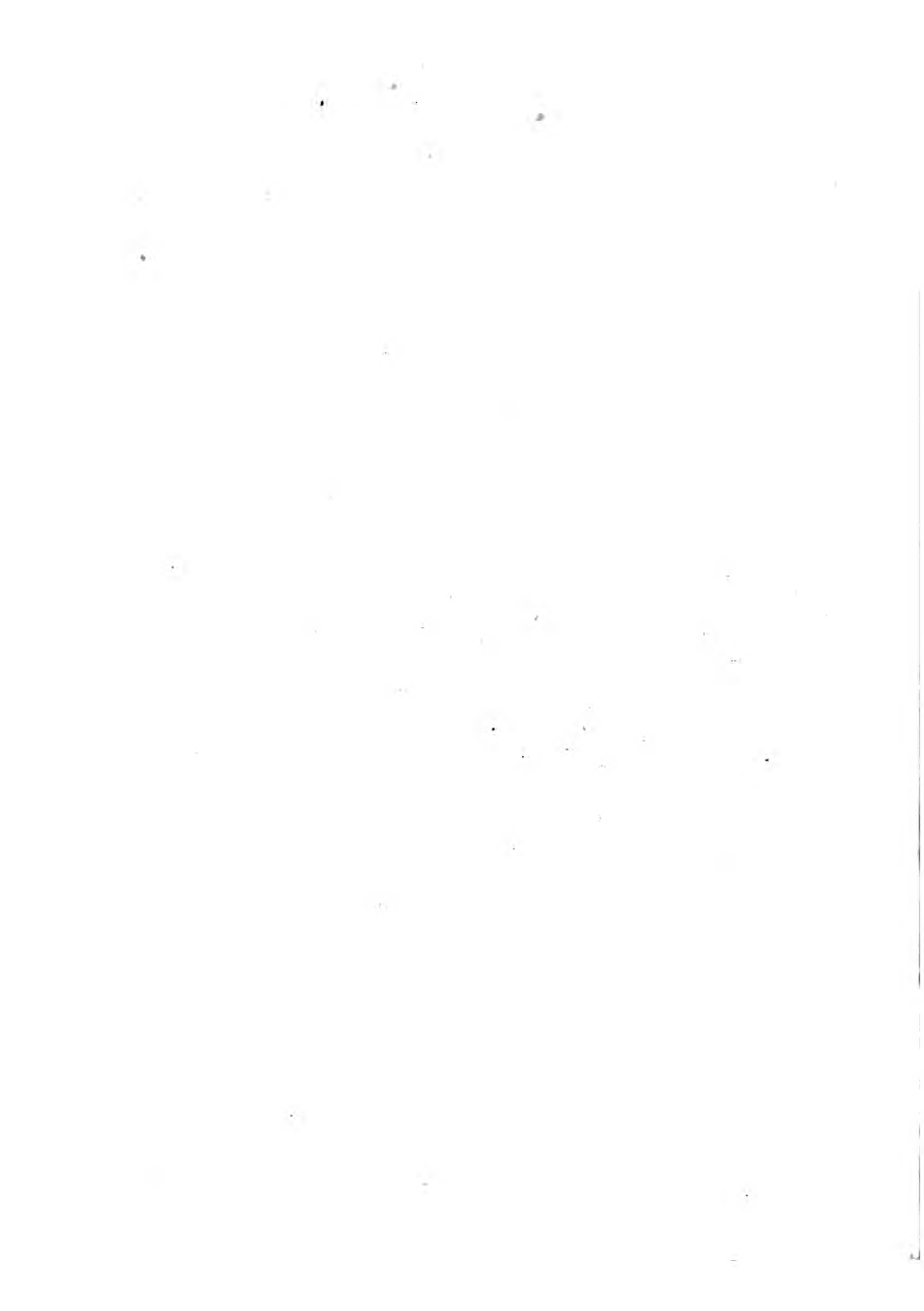


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The Life of Our Lady.





EARLY ENGLISH RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.—II.

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THE

Life of Our Lady.

by John Lydgate.

PART I.

EDITED FROM MSS. IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

BY

CHARLES EDWARD TAME,

AUTHOR OF "THE SUPREMACY OF THE HOLY SEE,"

"THE CHURCH'S LAW," ETC.



With Glossary and a Biographical Notice of the Author.

London :

R. WASHBOURNE, 18, PATERNOSTER ROW.

Sancte et Individue Trinitati
Jesu Crisli crucifixi humanitati gloriose beate Marie Virgini
sit sempiterna gloria
ab omnia creatura
per infinita seculorum secula.
Amen.





BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

“ Chaucer, floure of rethoryke eloquence,
Compyled bookes plesaunt and mervayllous ;
After hym noble Gower, experte in scynce,
Wrote moralytees harde and delycyous ;
But Lydgates workes are fruyteful and sentencyous,
Who of his bookes hathe redde the fyne
He wyll hym cal a famous rethorycynne.”
Prologue, *FEYLDIS Controversye betuene a Lover and a Faye.*

“ O mayster Lydgate, the most dulcet sprynge
Of famous rethoryke, wyth balade ryall
The chefe orygnal.”

STEPHEN HAWES, *Pastyme of Pleasure.*

DAN JOHN LYDGATE, the accomplished author of the “Life of Our Lady,” the “Story of Thebes,” the “History of Troy,” and upwards of 250 miscellaneous pieces and ditties, was, as he himself tells us, “borne in Lydegate” (Harl. MS. 2251, fol. 283), a small village in the county of Suffolk, a few miles from St. Edmundsbury, but in what year this event took place our author omits to tell us. We may, however, with the assistance of the registers containing the entries of the dates of his consecration to the successive orders in the Church, arrive at a satisfactory solution of the doubt as to the time of his birth, which we may with certainty place in the year 1368, or thirty-two years before the death of “my master Chaucer,” as Lydgate calls him. There is extant a very remarkable autobiographical tract of Lidgate, entitled his “Testament,” which, while giving a very graphic

description of the author's childhood, is evidently a faithful index of the time in which Lydgate lived. Our extracts are from the Harl. MS. 2255, fol. 47—66, a very fair MS.; other copies are Harl. MS. 218; Jes. Coll. Camb. MS. Q 1 8; Bib. Reg. MS. 18 D 11, a later copy. From this "Testament" it does not appear that Lydgate while a child showed any signs of precocity, or of that brilliant genius which afterward developed in him. He describes himself at this period as being—

Voyde of resoun ; yove to wilfulnesse ; 81
 Froward to vertu ; of thrift gafe litil heede ;
 Loth to lerne ; lovid no besynesse
 Sauf play or merthe ; straunge to spelle or reede ;
 Folwyng al appetites, longyng to childheede ;
 Lihly tournyng, wylde and seelde sadde,
 Weepyng for nouhte, and anoon offtir glad.

For litil wroth to stryve with my felawe 82
 As my passiouns did my bridil leede ;
 Of the yeerde somtyme I stood in awe,
 To be scooryd, that was al my dreede,—
 Loth toward scole, lost my tyme indeede ;
 Lik a yong colt that ran withoute brydil
 Made my freendys ther good to spende in ydil.

I hadde in custome to come to scole late, 83
 Nat for to lerne, but for a contenance ;
 With my felawys reedy to debate ;
 To jangle and jape was set al my plesaunce,
 Wherof rebukyd this was my chevisaunce,
 To forge a lesyng and therupon to muse,
 Whan I trespassid mysilven to excuse.

To my bettre did no reverence, 84
 Of my sovereyns gafe no fors at al,
 Wex obstinat by inobedience,
 Ran into gardyns, applys ther I stal ;
 To gadre frutys sparyd hegg nor wal :
 To plukke grapys on othir mennys vynes
 Was moor reedy than for to seyn matynes.

Biographical Notice.

v

My luste was al to scorne folke and jape, 85

Shrewde tornys evir among to use,
To skoffe and mowe lyk a wantoun ape,
Whan I did evil othre I did accuse,
My wittys five in wast I did abuse,
Rediere chirstonys for to tell
Than gon to chirche or heere the sacry belle.

Loth to ryse, lother to bedde at eve, 86

With unwassh handys reedy to dyner,
My Pater noster, my crede, or my beleeve
Cast at the cok ; lo ! this was my maneere ;
Wavyd with eche wynd as dothe a reed spere,
Snybbyd of my frendys suche techechys for t' amende
Made deffe ere lyst nat to them attende.

A child resemblyng which was nat lyk to thryve, 87

Froward to God, rekless in his servise,
Lothe to correccioun, slouhe mysylfe to shrive,
Al good thewys reedy to despise ;
Cheef bellewedir of feyned truaundise ;
This is to meene, mysilf I cowde feyne
Syk lyk a truaunt felte no maneere peyne.

My poort, my pas, my foot alwey unstable ; 88

My look, myn eyen, unsure and vagabounde,
In al my werkys sodeynly chaungable :
To al good thewys contrary I was founde ;
Now ovir sad, now moornyng, ne jocounde,
Wilful, rekles, mad stertyng as an hare ;
To folwe my lust no man wolde I spare.

Our author states that he remained in this lamentable condition until he was "yeeris accountyd ful fifteene," and although he had become a religious :—

Duryng the tyme of this sesoun Ver, 80

I meene the sesoun of my yeerys greene,
Gynnyng fro childhood stretchithe up so fere
To the yeerys accountyd ful fifteene,
B' experience, as it was weel seene,
The gerisse sesoun straunge of condiciouns,
Dispoosyd to many unbridlyd passiouns.

Entryng this tyme into religioun
 Unto the plouhe I putte forth myn hoond,
 A yeer compleet made my profession,
 Considryng litil charg of thilke bond ;
 Of perfectioun ful good exauple I foond,
 The techyng good in me was al the lak,
 With Lootys wyff I lookyd ofte bak.

89

He was taught discipline by virtuous masters, and to follow "blyssid Benyt" in doctrine. The rule was read and expounded to him by "vertuous men religious and sad"; but of all this, though he "herd al weel . . . of that they taughte," he took but little heed. He wore a black habit of religion "oonly outward as by apparence." To follow that change he "savouryd but ful lite, sauf by maneer countirfet pretence." He feigned false humbleness so covertly "when folkys were present, when ascending the ladder of the nine degrees of vertuous meeknesse, called in the rule grees of humilitee," as to deceive everyone. "While here in contemplaciouns I found but smal comfort,

Holy histories did to me no cheer,
 I savouryd mor in good wyn that was cleer.

But a change for the better was at hand, for
 Witheyne fifteene holdyng my passage,
 Mid of a cloistre depict upon a wal
 I sauhe a crucifix, whos woundys were nat smal,
 With this word VIDE writen ther besyde,
 "Beholde my meeknesse, O child, and lefe thy pride."

A circumstance to which our author attributes his reformation, and of this word VIDE he, in his "last age taking the sentence,"

Gan to write with humble reverence,
 In remembraunce of Cristis passioun,
 This litil dite, this contemplacioun,

which is entitled "Lyk a lambe offryd in sacrifice." From this period he seems to have seriously devoted himself to study and to the service of the Church. We find that he was shortly after sent from the monastery of St. Edmundsbury to

Gloucester Hall, Oxford (MS. Ashm. 59 ii.), it being the practice of the monastery to send all students for Oxford there ; while those intended for Cambridge were sent to Gonville and Caius College. Before the foundation of Gloucester College the Benedictines had no recognized college in the University for their novices, who were dispersed about in Houses. This Gloucester Hall was originally the property and residence of Gilbert Clare, Earl of Gloucester, from whom it passed to the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, and subsequently from them to the Benedictines. The College was supported by the contributions of the Abbeys of St. Edmundsbury, Glastonbury, and thirteen others, together with two priories, each of which, according to its position, sent two or three novices, who were maintained until they had graduated, and then returned to their monastery to teach their brethren. It was while staying at the University that Lydgate attracted attention as a poet, his translation of the fables of Æsop, entitled "Ysopus Ethiopus, in balade, by Dan John Liedegate, made in Oxenford" (MS. Ashm. 186) and many of his smaller pieces and ditties being written while there. On his return to the monastery of St. Edmundsbury he received his ordination. The Registry of Richard Braybrooke, Bishop of London, gives May 13, 1388, as the date of his receiving the four minor orders in the church of Hadham. The dates of his consecration to the Offices of Subdeacon (17 Dec. 1389), Deacon (12 May, 1392), and Priest (4 April, 1397), are given in the Registry of William Cratfeild, abbot of the monastery. (MS. Cott. Tiberius B ix. fols. 1, 35, 52. This MS. unfortunately nearly perished in the fire at Westminster in 1730, when so many of the Cottonian MSS. were either seriously damaged or entirely destroyed.) According to the custom of the time, Lydgate, in order to finish his education, left this country on a tour through France and Italy, but the precise date of his departure cannot be ascertained.

I have been ofte in dyvers londys
 And in many dyvers regiouns,
 Have eskapyd fro my foois hondys,
 In cities, castellys, and in tons,
 Amonge folke of sundry naciouns,
 Wente aye forthe and took noon hede,
 I askyd no manere protection
 God was myn helpe ageyn al drede. (MS. Harl. 2255)

While abroad he made good use of his time, studying with diligence both the language and literature of France and Italy. On his return to England he opened in his monastery a school for teaching the youth of the nobility the arts of versification, &c. His mastery of the French language caused him to translate from that tongue into English verse a great number of well known pieces, which considerably enriched our literature, while causing the translator to make those amplifications to the English language for which he is regarded as a worthy successor of Chaucer. The Ashmolean Museum possesses his "Devowte Invocaton made by Lydegate to saunt Denys at the request of Charles the Frenshe kynge to let it be translated out of Frenshe in to Englishe," and is also rich in the possession of other of his works. His oft quoted "Dance of Death" is derived from the same source.

Out of the Frensh I dwight it of entent,
 Not word by word, but folwing in substance.

That he occupied a high position in the minds of the people at this period is proved by the titles prefixed to the various transcripts of his writings, as "that approbate poet," "that filosofre, Lidegate dann John," "that solempne religious Lidegate," "that vertuous Lydigate," "that solempne clerk," "the religious manne," &c. We find that he was still residing at the monastery in 1415, his name being mentioned in the register at this date in connection with the election of a new abbot—William of Excetre—Abbot Cratfeild having died in 1414.

But in June, 1423, he left the Abbey, being elected Prior of Hatfield Brodhook, Essex; in the following year, however, he had leave to return to his monastery again, preferring the quiet of his old cell to the more important position of prior. (Cott. Tib. B ix). Of the brilliancy of his genius and the depth of his learning there can be no doubt, for a slight glance at his voluminous writings will show that he was not only a good theologian and poet, in the true sense of the word, but a philosopher, geometrician, astronomer, and a logician.

In the Prologue of his "Story of Thebes"—which was intended as a continuation of "The Canterbury Tales" which had been left incomplete by the death of Chaucer—we have an interesting picture of him in his riper years. He says he travelled to visit the town of Canterbury

In a cosse of blacke and not of green,
On a palfrey slender, long slene,
With rusty bridle made not for the sale,
My man to foine with a void male.

He went "by fortune" to the inn where Chaucer's pilgrims had lodged, and the host addresses him thus:—

Ye be welcome newly into Kent
Though your bridle have nother boos ne bell,
Beseeching you that ye will tell
First of your name and what countre,
Without more, shortly, that ye be,
That look so pale, all devoid of blood,
Upon your head a wonder threadbare hood,
Well arrayed for a ride late.

He answered,

My name was Lydgate,
Monke of Burie, nie fifty yeare of age.

It appears that he more than attained the allotted three score and ten, for in the Harl MS. 2255 we have a metrical translation by him of the "De Profundis," to be hung against the walls of

the Abbey Church, for the use of the monks, which he undertook at the command of Abbot Curteys, who died in 1446.

Late charchyd in myne oolde days
By William Curtys,
Which gave comaundement
That I shulde graunte myn assente. (MS. Harl. 2255)

In his "Philomela" he mentions the death of an Earl of Warwick who also died in 1446. This brings our author to the age of seventy-eight, after which date little mention of him is anywhere made.

It is asserted on good authority that Lydgate was buried at St. Edmundsbury, and in MS. Harl. 116, fol. 170, occurs the following epitaph, written probably soon after his decease, but whether it is the same as that which graced his tomb is open to doubt.

EPITAPHIUM JOHANNIS LIDGATE, MONACHI DE BYRI.

Lidgate Cristoticon Edmundum Maro Britannis,
Boccasiousque viros psallit, et hic cino est.

Hæc tria præcipua opera fecit : vij libros de Christo, librum de vita Sancti Edmundi, et Boccasium de viris illustribus, cum multis aliis.

This epitaph, however, does not agree with that given by quaint old Fuller, which is as follows :—

Mortuus seculo superis superstes,
Hic jacet Lydgate tumulatus urnâ,
Qui fuit quondam celebris Britannæ
Famæ Poesis.

And which has thus been rendered :

Dead to the world, living above the sky,
Intombed in this urn doth Lydgate lie,
In former times famed for his poetry
All over England.

The assertion that "he was famed in former times" seems to imply that this epitaph was not written till a much later date than the year of his death.

In Vol. iv., p. 131, of the *Archæologia* appears an account of the discovery among the ruins of the Abbey of St. Edmundsbury of two fragments of coarse, soft stone with portions of an inscription upon them in which the name of Lydgate very clearly appears. An illustration of these interesting relics is given in the same volume. It is very probable that these pieces are portions of the original tomb of Lydgate, but the fragments of words that are upon them in no way coincide with any part of the epitaphs we have just quoted. This discovery, instead of putting an end to all doubts, only adds to our perplexity as to which must be regarded as the original inscription.

In the short sketch which we have given of the life of this illustrious monk we have purposely refrained from any criticism on his numerous works, our purpose being to notice these separately; but we will close this short biographical memoir by quoting the opinions of Fuller and the poet Gray upon his writings. The former says:—"If Chaucer's coin was of greater weight for deeper learning, Lydgate's were of a more refined standard for purer language, so that one might mistake him for a modern poet." Gray says: "I pretend not to set him on a level with Chaucer, but he certainly comes the nearest to him of any contemporary writer I am acquainted with. His choice of expression and the smoothness of his verse far surpass both Gower and Occleve. He wanted not art in raising the more tender emotions of the mind."





The Life of Our Lady.

THIS booke was compiled by dan John Lidgate, monke of Burpe, at the excitacion and steryng of oure worshipful pryncce Kyng Harry the ffithe, in thonoure, glorie, and reberence of the birthe of our most blessyd Lady, maide, wife, and moder of oure Lord Ihu Criste, chapitred and markyd after this table.

ffirst a Prologue.

The Natibite of Oure Lady	capitulo primo
How Oure Lady was offerid in to the Temple	if
Of the cond'sacion of Oure Lady in the Temple	iiif
How Oure Lady receybed the biif gistes of the Holy Goost	ib
How Oure Lady praied to God for biif peticiouns	b
How Abiathar that was bishop of the lawe the peere that Oure Lady was weddid to Joseph wolde have hadde Oure Lady weddyd to his sone	bi
How Oure Lady answerid to the bishoppis that came from Abiathar	biif

How Joseph was weddid to Oure Lady	cap. biiij
How Joseph aft' he hadde weddid Oure Lady wente to Bedleme and usid the crafte of carpentrye	ix
How Oure Lady is sette for ensauple of alle bir- ginite	x
How Mercy and Pees Rigitwitnessse and Trouthe dis- putiden for the redempcioun of mankynde	xi
How Mercy and Pees broughte in this plee before the hige Juge	xij
How God the Fadir of hevene answerid to Mercy and Pees	xiiij
How the Fader of hevene ooned these iiij sustryn	xib
How the Fader of hevene tolde these iiij sustryn how hys oone childe sholde take mankynde	xb
How Gaubriel the aungel was sente to Oure Lady	xvi
A Lamentacioun of sente Bernerd	xviij
A recapitulacioun of the wordys of Gaubriel to Oure Lady	xviiij
How holy men of debyne lyknesse wrote of Oure Lady in comendacioun of hir	xix
Autentyke conclusiouns agenst unbyleful men that seyn that Criste mygt not be borne of a maide	xx
How Oure Lady wente to sente John Baptistes moder	xxi
How Oure Lady made Magnificat	xxij
How Oure Lady aft' the byrthe of seinte John Bap- tyst torned to Nazareth	xxiiij
How Joseph torned to Nazareth and was in manne doughtful whan he seye Marie gret with childe	xxv
How the maydens that weren attendaunt to Oure Lady comfortyd Joseph	xxv

How the aungel warnyd Joseph to abyde with Oure Lady	cap. xxvi
How the byshoppis dide doo somen Joseph for Oure Lady was with childe	xxviij
How Joseph answerd the Bisshop excusyng him and Oure Lady	xxviiij
How the Bisshop made Joseph and Oure Lady to taste water to prebe hem by	xxix
How Oure Lady was brougte afore the Bisshop to taaste the water of jelousye	xxx
How Oure Ladies frendys wailid and mornyd whane the Bisshoppis made so stronge a preef of hir birginite	xxxi
How Oure Lady praied to God to shewe her bir- ginite	xxxiij
How the Bisshoppis and peple dreden hem ful sore of the greet preef and assaie that was doune to Oure Lady	xxxiiij
A comendacioun of Chaucers	xxx b
How Criste was borne after the makynge of the world fibe thousand an hundred four score and xix yeere	xxxb
How Joseph and Oure Lady wente to Bedleme to paie tribute	xxxbi
How Joseph wente to seche a mydwyf to Oure Lady	xxxbij
A deboute praier that Oure Lady maide whane Criste was borne	xxxbiiij
How the mydwyf durste not entre with Joseph unto the hows for a greet soden ligh apperyd with yune	xxxiix
How Balaam p'phesied of the sterre that shewyd Cristes birthe	xl

How Oure Lady reyseibed the mydwibes	cap.	xl
How the hande and the aarme of Salame wax drpe for she without drede and reb'ence touchid Criste		xliz
How the aungel apperyd to the Shepherdys and tolde of the birthe of Criste		xliiz
How the Shepherdys foudyn Criste with Oure Lady		xliib
How God wolde not be bore but of a maide, moder, and wyf		xliib
How Issak p'phesied the birthe of Crist by touchyng the clothes of his sone Jacob		xliib
How the garnet appil ys likned to Oure Lady		xliiiz
How Joseph figuryd the birthe of Criste		xliiiz
How nature obeyed to birginite		xliix
How the chief Temple of Rome felle the nygt of Cristes birthe, and othir wondirfule tokenys		l
How the nygt of Cristis birthe a welle in Rome ran oyle		li
How the Senatys of Rome wolde habe holden Octa- byan theyre Emp'our as for theyre God		liiz
How bynes shedde balwe in stede of wyne the nygt of Cristis birthe		liiiz
How the Romayns whan they hadde dominacioun ob' alle the worlde maden to hem a ymage and called hit theyr goddesse		liib
How wise Sibille tolde to the Senatys of Rome the birthe of Criste		liib
How the p'phetes p'phecieden the birthe of Criste		liib
A question assoiled wiche ys worthiest of kynge, wyne or woman		liiiz
How Oure Lady ougte worthely to be comendyd and honoured for the birthe of Criste		liiiz

Of liknessis of Our Lady in comendacioun of hir	cap.	lix
How Crist was circumcisyd		lx
How in iiij man' of wisys Crist was circumcysyd		lxi
How Crist sufferith circumcision in his chosen peple		lxij
How Crist shedde his bloode fife tymes		lxiiij
How the peple of God that duc Josue hadde in gob'- nance were sabyd by the stedfast belcbe of the name of Ihesus		lxv
How the name of Ihesus is moost sob'eyn medicyne agens alle man' of maladye		lxv
How the name of Ihesus is likenyd to iiij stremes that refressheth alle reawmes		lxvi
How p'phetes and martirs suffereden dethe for the name of Ihesus		lxviij
How p'phetes, prestys, and mygty men were anoyntyd		lxviij
How Criste Ihesu was botye p'p'ete, prest, kyng, and mygty champion		lxix
How by the name of Ihu synners be made rightful		lxx
How by the p'p'hecy of Balaam watche was made upon a hille to aspye the styrre that shewid Cristys birthe		lxxi
How the iiij kynges came to Jerhu and asked where Criste was bore		lxxij
How kyng Heroude sent for the iiij kynges to enquire of Cristys birthe		lxxiiij
As a serpent cob'ith hem und' flourys for to styng and shede his benym whom he may herie, so false Heroude shewid false taynyd wordys to have disseybyd thise kynges		lxxv

Of the ioye that the iij kynges hadde whan they founde Criste cap.	lxxb
How the offeryng of thise iij kynges shall be undir- stoude goostly	lxxbi
Of vertuous poberte and mekenesse of Oure Lady .	lxxbij
How the aungel warnyd the iij kynges to passe nought by Heroude but by a nother waye	lxxbiij
A notable declaracioun of the iij gefres of thise iij kynges	lxxix
How we shulde praye to God to doo this offeryng goostly	lxxx
How Oure Lady was purefyed	lxxxi
How Symeon resseibed Crist of Oure Lady in the Temple	lxxxiij
How, where, and whan Symeon made Nunc Dimittis	lxxxiiij
Of the ioye that Anna the dougter of Phanes made whan Criste was offeryd in to the Temple	lxxxib
A prouffitable declarascioun of the p'p'eteis of the Turtile and the Dove	lxxxv
How Candilmasse daye tirst tooke the name	lxxxvi





The Life of Our Lady.

Prologue.



THOUGHTFUL herte, plonged in distresse,
With slombre of slouthe this longe wynt's nygt,
Out of the slepe of mortall hevynesse
Awake anone and looke upon the lygt
Of thilke sterre that with hire bemes brygt
And with the shynyng of hire stremes merye
Ys wonte to glade al oure emysperye ;
And to oppresse the derknesse and the doole 2
Of hevyn hertes that sorowyn and sighen ofte :
I mene the sterre of the brygte poole
That with hire bemys whane she is alofte
May all the trouble aswagen and assofte
Of worldly wawys whych in this mortall see
Hath be bysette wyth grete adversite,
The rage of wiche is so tempestyous 3
That whane the calme is moste blandeschynge
Thane is the storme of deth most perilous,
Iff that he wante the lygte of hire shynyng,
And butt the sigte allas of hire lokynge,
From dethis brynke make us to ascape,
The havene of lyffe of us may nougt betake:

The Life of Our Lady.

This sterre in beaute passeth Pliades, 4
 Both of shynynge and of stremes clere,
 Bootes Arcturus, and also Iades,
 And Esperus whane it doth appere,
 For this is Spica with hire brygte spere
 That toward evene, at mydnyght, and at morowe
 Downe from the hevене adaweth all our sorowe:
 Whose brygte bemes shynen fro so ferre, 5
 That clowdes blake may the ligt nought steyne,
 For this of Jacob is the faire sterre
 That vnder wawes nevere doth declyne ;
 Whos cours is nought undir the eclipytyke line,
 But evere liche of beaute may be sene
 A myddes the arke of our meredene ; 6
 And dryeth up the bitter teres wete,
 Of Aurora after the morowe graye,
 That she in wepyng doth on floures flete
 In lusty Aprill and in fresshe May ;
 And causeth Phebus the brygte som's daye,
 With his wayne golde-borned brygte and fayre,
 To enchace the mystis of our cloudy ayre.
 For this is the sterre that bare the brigte sonne 7
 Which holdith ye septre of Juda in his honde,
 Whos stremes ben out of Jesse ronne
 To shede hire ligte both on see and londe ;
 Whos glad bemys withoute eclipsynge stonde
 Estward to us in the Orient full shene,
 With lygt of grace to voyde all oure tene.
 Now faire sterre, O sterre of sterrys alle, 8
 Whos ligt to see angeles delite,
 So lete the golde dewe of thy grace falle
 In to my breste lyk scalis faire and whyte,
 Me to enspire of that I wolde endite,
 With thilke bawme sente downe by miracle
 Whane the holy gost the made hys habitacle.

The Life of Our Lady.

3

And the sycour of thy grace shede
In to my penne to illumyne this dite,
Thourg thy supporte that y may p'cede
Sum what to seie in laude and pris of the ;
And first I thinke of thy nativitie,
So that thyne helpe fro me nought twynne,
Benygne lady, anone for to begynne.

9

The Nativitie of Our Lady.

Cap. i



FLOURE of vertew, full longe kepte in clos 10 a

Full mony a yeere with holsome leeves sote, b

Only by grace upon the stalke aros, c

Out of Jesse spryngynge from the rote ; d

Of God ordeyned to be refuyte and bote e

Unto mankynde, oure trouble to determine, f

Full longe biforn by prescience divine : g

The whiche flour p'serveth man fro deth 11

Unto the vertew whoso lyste take hede,

That in a gardyn a mydde of Nazareth

So faire som tyme gan to sprynge and sprede,

That thourg the worlde bothe in lengthe and brede

The fresshe oodour and also the swetnesse

Hertis comforteth of all hire hevynesse.

O Nazareth, wyth Bedleme the besyde, 12

This flour thou makyth of name more royalle

Than either Rome, elate and full of pryde,

Or mygty Troye, with the stordy walle,

Whos renoun holdith to be peregalle

In honor, prys, fame, or rev'ence,

Unto your passynge worthi excellence.

If for the fruyte comendyd be the tre, 13
 Thowe hast more laude and comendacion
 For thilke floure that sprong out of the
 Than hath Aufrik, or worthy Scipyon,
 Or Rome, or Cezar, or of Fabyon,
 Thoug hire names were somtyme grave in golde,
 Hir ydell fame to thyn may nought be tolde.
 Therefore reioyse and be rigt gladde and brygt 14
 O Nazareth, of name most flouryngge,
 For out of the a floure most fayr of sygt,
 Most full of grace, somtyme dide sprynge,
 Of the whych fully remembryngge
 So longe agon spake holy Ysaye
 Whane that he seyde in his prophecye
 That on this floure playnly shulde reste 15
 The Holy Gost for his chosyn place,
 As for the fayreste and also for the beste
 That evere was, and most ful of grace,
 Whos passyng beaute no stormes may deface,
 But evere ylik contynueth fresshe of hewe
 Withouten fadyngge, the colour ys so trewe.
 For this is the floure that God hym selfe behelde, 16
 The whyte lylve of the chosyn vale,
 The swete rose of the fayr felde,
 Wiche of colour wexith never pale,
 The violet, our langour to avale,
 Purpul hewyd showith mercy and pite
 To socoure all that in myschief be.
 And frome the stocke of Joachym and Anne 17
 This holy floure hadde hir original,
 To him a forne by signe y-shewid whan
 The Aungel tolde hem plainly that ther shall
 Of hem be borne a mayde in speciall
 Chosen of God, moost cheffe of her allye,
 And for hire mekenesse hoote shal marye.

The Life of Our Lady.

5

And whan the Aungel at the gate of golde 18
Hadde of this maide the birthe prophesyde,
And alle the manere of hem bothe tolde
In bookes olde as it is specified,
Hom to her hous anon thei hem hiked,
And she conseyveth, this faithful trewe wife,
By Joachim the holy fruyte of life ;
Oute of the wiche gan growe alle oure grace, 19
Oure olde sorowes oonly for to fyne,
The bytter galle pleynty to enchace
Of the venym callyd serpentyne,
For whan that Anna hadde monthes nyne
Boorne this fruyt so holy and entiere,
Thourg the grace of God anon hit dyde appere
In the Oryent, to gladde alle mankynde 20
With dedly errour oppressyd of the nygt
With clowdes blake, and with skies blynde,
Tile they were cleyed with fayrenesse of the ligt
Of the wiche the Aungel somtyme hadde a sigt
With Jacob wrastlyng from him as he breide
So longe aforne to hym whan he seide
Lete me departe w^t outen more affray 21
Agens me and make noo resistence,
The nygt is passid, loo the morowe graye,
The fresshe Aurora, so faire in apparence,
Hir ligt daweth to voide all offence
Of wynter nygtis ful longe and tedious
With newe apperyng so glad and gracious.
This is to seye, the holy dawyngge 22
Of this mayde at hire nativyte
The nignt gan voide of oure oolde mornyngge,
As the Aungel in fygure dide see
With such a touch made Jacob bee
Sore in his sinewes lych as it is founde
In thilke membre wher luste dothe moost hab'nde :

In figure oonly, that ther shulde sprynge 23
 Doune by dissent oute of his kynrede
 A clene mayde in wille and in worchyng,
 Pure of entent bothe in thought and dede,
 Whiche as Aurora, with hire rewis rede,
 The nygt avoideth wth hir copys donne
 Afore the uprist of the brygt sonne,
 Rigth so this maiden at hire nativitie 24
 The nygt of dethe devoyded hathe awaye,
 And brigte kalendys, moost lusty for to see,
 Of Phebus uprist, with owte more delaye,
 For she is Aurora, sothely this is to saye,
 Oute of the wiche, as prophetys gan devyse,
 The sune of life to us gan first aryse,
 Of whose birthe ful many a day aforne 25
 Albumazar rowte in speciall,
 And seide a maide sothely shale be borne
 Under the signe above celestiaall
 That callyd is the signe Virginall,
 The wiche maide, as he eke telle canne,
 Shal bere a chylde with oute spot of manne.
 And as Mynerva, moder of prudence, 26
 Is houlde a mayde, rigth so this heavenly quene
 Bare in her wombe the Faders sapience,
 And modre was and a mayde clene,
 Of God p^rvidede pleynty for to beene
 Socour to man and helpe in all oure neede,
 Whan she was borne, this floure of womanhede.

How Our Lady was Offered in to the Temple.

Cap.
ij



AND aft' thre yeere, as was the usage, 27
Her moder pappys she lefte as in sowkyng,
And than anoon, in her tendir age,
Un to the Temple devoutly they her brynge,
And un to God they made offeryng
Of this maide, for to abyde there
With other maidens that in the Temple were.
And note with stondyng her passing tendirnesse, 28
Her grene yowthe, but of yeeres three,
Thourg Goddys helpe this braunche of holinesse
With outen helpe wente upe, gree by gree,
Fyften alofte, that alle mygten see,
To fore that auter of so grete an higte ;
And whane her moder therof hadde a sigt,
For verre ioye anoon she felle adoune, 29
And seid thus, that alle mygten heere :
God from above hathe herde my orison
Of his godenesse, and grauntyd me my preiere,
And recomfortyd myn opp'ssid chere
In sigte of hem that loughen at my peyne,
And of malice gan at me disdeyne.
Now hathe he be my singuler refuyte, 30
To my trestisse consolacioun,
For he hathe made the bareyn to bere fruyte
Thourg his mygty visitacioun,
And made clere my confusioun,
And alle my woo for to ov'goon
Only by grace amidde alle my foon ;

And thourg his migt the hertis hathe bowyd 31
 Of hem that gan to chace at me by pryde,
 Wherfor she hathe unto God avowyd
 That hir dougt' shale in the Temple abyde,
 The Hooly Gost for to beene hir guyde,
 For ev'more by Goddis purviance
 Thourg hir mekenesse him to do plesance.
 Forthe alle hire lyff there to slepe and wake, 32
 Him for to serve with humble parfitnesse
 That alle maydens mygte ensample take
 Of her allone to live in clennessse,
 And specialy of hir devoute mekenesse,
 Benigne poorte, countenance, and chere,
 If that hem list of hire they mygte lere.
 Fulle of vertue, devoyde of alle outrage, 33
 Her herte was, that God to dwelle in chese ;
 And day by day, rigt as she wexe in age,
 Rigt so in vertue gan she to encrese,
 And nygt ne day wolde she never cese
 To exclude slouthe and vices to werrey,
 With honde to worch, or w^t mouthe to prey ;
 For but in God her herte nougt deliteth, 34
 So uppon him entirely was her thought ;
 And from above with grace he hire vesiteth
 That ev'y thing but hym she sette atte nougt ;
 Of worldly luste sche hathe so litell rougt
 That oute of mynde she lete it ev' slyde,
 That nougt but God may in her abyde.

Of the Conb'sacion of Oure Lady in the Temple.

- Cap.** **iii}** **A**ND whane that she v. yere dide atteyne 35
She was so sadde in conv'sacioun,
And as demure, sothely for to seyne,
From alle childhede and dissolucioun,
In gov'nance and in discrescioun,
And in talkyng as wise and as sage
As any mayde of thritty yeere of age ;
And of her rule this was her usance 36
From day to day, this hooly maide entere,
From pryme at morowe by continuance
Tille thre of the belle to be in her prayere ;
And tille the sonne was at mydday spere
On golde, and silver, and wolles softe,
With her hondys she wolde worche ofte ;
And ever at noone to brynge hir her fode 37
From God above ther was an aungel sente,
Wiche that she tooke as for her lifelode,
Thankyng him ay withe alle her hoole entente ;
And aft' meete anoon this maide is wente
Agen to preye til Phebus went to weste,
And ever at evene w^t hym she toke her reste.
This life she ledde, and this cours she gothe, 38
In whom was nev' yitt founde offence ;
And nev' man sawe this mayd oute wrothe,
But ev' meke, and fule of pacience,
Of hert clene, and pure of concience ;
This lyf she ledde, and as bookes teche
Of wordys fewe, and wondir softe of speche.

The meet also that was to hir brought 39
 Out of the Temple, for her sustinance,
 With hert glad and a parfigt thought
 To poore and nedý, that lyvyd in penance,
 To give it frely was alle her plesance ;
 And who that ev' of her hadde a sigt
 Of alle dissese was made gladde and ligt.
 And ev'ry wigte greved w^t sekenesse, 40
 A touche of her made hem hoole anoone,
 And thei that were in thougte and in distresse
 Whan thei her seye hire malyce was a goone ;
 And thus she was un to ev'ychone
 Of alle meschief refuyte and remedye,
 With a beholdyng of her goodly eye.
 And of this maide, eke as it is tolde, 41
 Here goodly face was so fulle of ligt
 That noo man mygt susteyn to beholde,
 For it was clerer than the sune brig^t ;
 That the crowne, in the wynt's nygt,
 Of Adrian, ne of the sterrys sevene,
 To her fairnesse ne bene nogt for to nevene.
 Yitt nev' man temptyd was with synne 42
 While he behelde on her goodly face,
 The Holy Goost so holy was her withynne
 That al enviroun sprede gan his grace
 Where that she was p'sente in the place ;
 For all weie God gaf to hire p'sence
 So fulsome ligt of hevenly influence.
 Ne noon so faire was nevere founde in Rewme 43
 As was this maide of Juda and of Sione,
 The dougter chosen of Jerusaleme,
 Of David sede, to be sette aloone ;
 Of alle maidens, to reken hem ev'ychone,
 She bare the prise as well in fairnesse
 As she excelled in v'tue and in goodnesse.

The Life of Our Lady.

11

Lete be thou Grece, and speak not of Eleyne, 44
Ne thou Troie, of yonge Pollicene,
Ne Rome, of Lucesse with her eyen tweyne,
Ne thou Cartage, of the fresshe quene
Dido, that was some tyme so faire' to sene,
Let be your boste, and take of hem noon heede,
Whos beaute failleth as floure in frosty meede.
Hestir was meke but not to hir mekenesse, 45
And Judith wise, but she did yet excelle,
And Bersabe of grete semelynesse,
And Rachel fair, Jacob can you telle,
But she aloone of womanhede the welle
Of bounte beaute that nev'e fade may,
Nougt liche a floure that florisseth but in May.
Passeth echoone, bothe ny and ferre, 46
Bothe in fairnesse and in p'fecioun,
Rigt as the sonne dothe a litel sterre ;
And as the ruby hathe the renoun
Of stonys alle, and dominacioun,
Rigt so this maide, to speke of holinesse,
Of women alle is lady and mastresse.
Of whom spake some tyme wise Salamon, 47
In Sapience who so liste to seeke,
That she was chosen for her self allon,
This white dove, w^t her eyen meke,
Whos chekes weren her beaute for to eke
With lilies meynte, and fresshe rooses red.
This is to sey, who so can take hede, 48
First with the roose of womanly sufferance,
And with the faire lilie next of chastite,
She was ennewid, to give her suffisance
As wel in goodnesse as in beaute ;
And as he seith, sche fairer was to see
Than other Phebus, Platly, or Lucyne,
With hornes ful of heven whcne thei shyne.

And of this maide, as seint Anselme seith 49
 In hys wrytyng, hir beaute to termyne,
 Of face faire, but fairer yett of faithe
 He seith she was, this holy pure virgine,
 Whos chaste herte to nothing dide enclyne
 For alle hir beaute but to holinesse ;
 Of whom also this autor seith exp'sse,
 That she was dougt' of David bi dissent 50
 Sterre of the sea, and Goddys owne ancylle;
 Quene of this worlde, al weie of oon entent,
 And Goddys spouse, his hestis to fulfille,
 And ev'e redy for to doo his wille ;
 Cristis temple, and also receptakle
 Of the Holy Goost and chosen tabernakle ;
 The Gate of Heven, and also the fairnesse 51
 Of women alle who so loke a rigt,
 Of maidenhede lady and princesse ;
 Oone of the fyve that bare her laumpys ligt
 Redy to mete with her spouse at nigt,
 Ful prudently awaiting at the gate
 That for noo slouthe she come nogt to late.
 In figure eke the chaundelabre of golde 52
 That soome tyme bare vij laumpes shene,
 This is to seye, the ressert and the holde
 Of God p'servyd, for she was so clene,
 Thourg her merite endowed for to bene
 By grace of hym that is of power mooste
 With the seven giftes of the Holy Gooste.

How Oure Lady receibed the biȝ Giftes of the Holy Goost.

Donum timoris Domini.

Cap.
iiiȝ



HE firste gifte was the gifte of drede 53
To eschewe eche thing that shuld God displese.

Donum caritatis.

The next, pite of verre womanhede
To rewe on alle that she sawe in disese.

Donum scientiæ.

The thrid, konnyng God, and man to plesse.

Donum fortitudinis.

The ferthe, strengthe thourg her stedfastnesse
Oonly by v'tue alle vices to oppresse.

Donum consilij.

Of conseilie eke sche hadde excellence 54
To kepe hir pure in virginite,
For ay with conseilie alied is prudence,
For God himself chese with hire to be.

Donum intellectus.

Of vnderstondynge eke the gifte hadde she.

Donum sapientiæ.

And of wisdom, so God list hire avance,
To know ev'y thing that was to his plesance.

Sche was the trone voyde of synne 55
That stant so ryalle in Goddys owne sigt,
To fore which sevene laumpis brenne
With hevenly fire, so spirituall of ligt,
That nevere waste but ylyk brigth
Contenewen in oone liche above in hevne ;
By wych trone and the lampes sevene

Is undirstonde this maide moost entere, 56
 With sevene vertewes that in hire were founde,
 That some tyme weren with goostly ligh so clere
 Thourg ligh of vertue inwardly iocounde,
 Only thourg grace that dide in hir abounde ;
 And alle thei weren groundid on mekenesse
 Hire ligh to God more plesauntly to dresse ;
 For faithe in hir hadde a grounde so stable 57
 That it was voide of alle doubilnesse :
 Hire hope of triste was also mayntenable,
 Rootyd in God by parfit sekirnesse,
 Whos charite so large gan him dresse
 That up to God hastyd ranne the fire
 With hert of clenness to alle by desire. 58
 Stronge in vertue, prudent in gov'nance,
 She hadde also conveied with clenness,
 And soveraynly she hadde attempance
 In alle her werkys w^t grace of visenesse
 And evere anexed vnto the rigtwitnesse.
 With yn her herte of womanly bounte
 She hadde of custome mercy and pite,
 Sothefaste ensample also of chastite, 59
 As seithe Ambrose, sche was in thougte and dede,
 And trewe mirrour of virginite ;
 Of poort benigne, fule of lowelyhede,
 Ay humble of chere, and femynyn of drede,
 Prudent of speche of what she list to shew,
 Large of sentence and but of wordes fewe.
 To preie and rede that was evere her lyfe, 60
 Of herte waker by devocioun,
 To God alle weie with thought contemplatif
 Full fervent evere in hire entencioun,
 And ydel nevere frome occupacioun,
 And especially un to almes dede
 Her honde was evere reedy at the nede ;

The Life of Our Lady.

15

And fule she was of compassioun 61

To rewe on alle that felte woo or smerte,

Wel willid ev' with hoole affectioun

To ev'y wigte, so lovyng was her herte.

Sadde w^t alle this that hire nevere asterte

A loke amys of here eyen faire,

So close of sigt was this debonaire.

And in psalmes of holy p'phecie 62

To loke and reede she founde moste delite,

And whan she sawe and founde in Issaie

Of Cristis birthe howe he dide write,

To God she lifte hir tendir handis white

Besechyng hym that she mygt abide and see

The blesfule day of his nativite.

And in the booke of Elizabeth 63

That titillid is of her avisious,

I fynde howe this maide of Nazareth

Seide ev'y day sevene orisouns,

That callid ben her peticiouns ;

With humble herte this yonge blisfule maide,

Ful lowely knelyng, evene thus she saide :

How Oure Lady prayed to God for Seben Peticiouns.

Prima Peticio.

Cap.
b



BLISFUL lorde, that knowist the entent 64

Of ev'y herte in thyne et'nal sigt,

Geiv me grace the firste comaundement

To fulfille as it is skylle and rigt ;

And graunt also, with herte, wille, and mygt,

And alle my soule, and alle my knowynge,

The for to love above alle othir thing.

Secunda Peticio.

AND geiv me mygte plainly to fulfille 65
 The nexte bidding liche to thi plesance,
 And for to love with herte and alle my wille
 My neigbore in dede and countinace
 Rigt as my self, with ev'y circumstance,
 And here with alle, for ioye, woo, or smerte,
 What thou lovest to love with alle myn herte.

Tertia Peticio.

THE thridde precepte graunte eke, that y maie 66
 Fulfille also bothe erly and late
 In suche manere as is moost to thi paie,
 Benigne lorde, and make me for to hate
 Mankyndes foo, for he made first debate
 In kynde of man, and made him to trespace
 Agenis the, and to lese his grace.

Quarta Peticio.

AND, lord, graunte me for thi migte digne 67
 Above alle thinge to have mekenesse,
 And make me humble, sufferant, and benigne,
 With patience and inward myldenesse
 Of alle vertues gev me eke largesse,
 To be accepted the to queme and serve,
 To fyn oonly thi grace y may disserve.

Quintia Peticio.

AND also, lord, with quakyng hert and drede 68
 Mekely y preie unto thi deietee
 Me for to graunt of thi goodlihede
 The gracious oure for to abyde and see
 In wiche the holy chosen maiden free
 Into this worlde here aftir shal be born
 Liche as p'phetis hav written here biforn ;

The Life of Our Lady.

17

Howe that sche shal by thyn election 69

Be mayde and modir vnto thi sonne dere :

Nowe, good lorde, heere myn orison,

To kepe myn eyen and my sigt entere

That y may see her hooly halowid chere,

Her sacrid beaute and holy co'ntinance,

If thou of grace liste me so moche avance.

And kepe myn eren that I may also

70

Here hire speche and her daliaunce,

And with my tunge speke that mayden to

Paciently thourg her sufferaunce ;

Of worldly ioye this were my suffisaunce ;

And hire to love lyk as I desire.

Benigne lord, sette myn herte a fire.

And lord, also on me save thou vouche,

71

Thourg I ther to have no worthinesse,

That holy maide for to handel and touche,

(Myne owene lady and my mastresse)

And that y may w^t humble buxumnesse

Vpon my fete, in al my beste wise

Goo vnto hir for to doo servyse.

And to that flour of virginite

72

Graunte also, lord, that y may have space

Mekely to bowe and knele vpon my kne,

Undir supporte oonly of her grace,

And to honour the goodly yonge face

Of her sone. as she dothe hym wrappe

In clothis softe liggyng in her lappe.

And love him best pleynly to my laste

73

With alle myne herte and myn hoole servyse,

With oute chaunge while my lif may laste,

Rigt as thi self, lord, canst best devyse,

So that I may in feithfull humble wise

In all this worlde no more grace atteigne

Than love him beste with all my mygte and peyne.

Sexta Peticio.

AND to thi grace, lord, also I preie 74
 To graunte me to fulfille in dede
 Hooly the statutys, and mekely to obeye
 Within thi Temple, as y here hem rede,
 For but thou helpe y may no thing spede
 As of my selfe, and therfor vn to the
 Alle y comytte as thou liste it be.
 The observaunces and the p'ceptes alle 75
 That to thi Temple, o lorde, ben p'tinent,
 So lete thi grace by mercy on me falle
 That y may doo hem w^t alle my hoolle entent ;
 And every biddyng and comaundement
 That thi mynysters assigne vnto me
 Make me fulfille with alle humilite.

Septima Peticio.

AND thi Temple and thi holy house, 76
 Benigne lord, kepe me from damage,
 And make thi peple to be v'tuose
 To thi plesance of ev'y maner age,
 The for to serve with herte and hoolle corage ;
 And whan thei erre, lord, on any syde,
 Er thou do rigt lete mercy ben hire gyde.

How Abiathar, that year Bisshop of the lawe, wolde
 have had Oure Lady weddid to his sone.

Cap. **A**ND thus this maide al wey day be day 77
 bi **A** In the Temple maketh her praiers,
 To plesse God what she can or may,
 The chief resorte of alle her desires,
 Tille she atteine to fourteen yerees,
 With hert avowid bothe in thougte and dede
 For to continue in her maydenhede.

The Life of Our Lady.

19

Of whos entent God wote ful unware 78

Weren some of hem that in the Temple abide,

Of wiche a bisshop callid Abiathar

Caste him fully for to sette aside

Hire purpos pleinely, and for to provide

That hire avowe made of chastite

Shulde nougt holde, but vterly that she

Shulde be weddyd sothely yif he migt 79

Un to his sone of heig affectioun,

For that she was in ev'ry wigtis sigt

So passyng good of condicioun ;

And to fulfille his entencioun

Abithar behoteth bothe goolde and rent

To the bisshoppis to make her assent

To this purpos, and to her thay gon, 80

And what they may thei gane her to excite

And to afferme to her everychon,

With suggered tunges of many wordis white,

That God above dothe him more delite

In birthe of children than in virginite,

Or eny such avowyd chastite ;

And more in children is honouryd in certeine, 81

And more in hem hathe he his plesance,

Than in suche as ben not but barreine

With oute fruyte thourg mysgov'nance,

And hooly writte maketh remembrance

That noo man was, sothely for to telle,

With oute seede blessid in Israelle.



**How Oure Lady answered the Bisshopps that she
wolde not be weddyd.**

Cap. **bi** **O** whom anon, w^t loke down cast and chere, 82
 Benignely and in ful humble wise
 This holy maide seide as ye shulle here :
 Certis, quod she, yf ye wel you avise,
 Wiche in yourself so prudent ben and wise,
 And wel adv^rte in your discreessyoun,
 That Abel somtyme had a doubil crowne,
 Oon for his faithfulle trewe sacrificise 83
 Offrynge to God of humble herte and free,
 And another as y shale devyse,
 For he his body kepte in chastite
 And holy eke, as ye may rede and see,
 For he in herte was a maiden clene,
 He was ravysshid above the sterrys sevene,
 Body and alle, in a chare of fire, 84
 For he hym kepte frome al corrupcioun ;
 Therefore in veyne is plainly your desyre
 To speke with me of this opynyon,
 For God wel knoweth myn entencion,
 How I have vowyd as it to hym is couthe
 To be a mayde fro my tendyr youthe,
 And alle my life so forthe to p[']sev'e 85
 For life or deth oonly for his sake,
 From wiche purpos y shale not dissev'e,
 Thourg his grace, whether y slepe or wake,
 To kepe and houlde y have undertake
 Mi maidenhede sithen yoo ful yore,
 Agen wiche ne speketh to me noo more.

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21

And whan thei seyen her hert not mutable, 86

But ever stedfast of oon affection,

And ev'yliche as any centre stable,

Thay have made a convocacion

Of alle the kynredis in conclusion

The eigte day to come in fere

By oon assente to trete of this matier.

This is to seye that of oolde usage, 87

Of custome kept for a memorialle

That ev'y maide xiiij yeere of age,

Riche and poore, of the stocke rialle,

In the Temple no lenger dwelle shalle,

But by statute shale be take and maryed

By the lawe and noo lenger taryed.

And whan thei were assemblid alle in oon 88

Isacar in open audience

Ganne to p'nounce afore hem ev'ychone

Fulle prudently the some of his sentence,

And seid, Siris, with your patience

So it youre eeris offende not ne greve,

Declare y shale my menyng w^t your leve.

Yif ye remembre sithe Salamon the kyng 89

In Israell cepter bare and crowne,

In this Temple so rialle in bildyng

Have yonge maidens bi devocion

Of custome hadde here conv'sacion,

Bothe kynges dougters and p'phetys eke,

As ye may fynde yif ye liste to seke,

Vn to the age of fourteen yeere 90

Abiden here, and noo lenger of space

As ye wel knowe, w^t oute any were,

And than ben removed from her place

And in her stede other dide pace,

As custome was, and eche in her lynage

Deliv'ed was vn to mariage.

And as a lawe it hathe be kept ful trewe 91
 Vnto this tyme in hie and lowe astate,
 But nowe Marie hathe founde an order newe
 To kepe her clene and inviolate,
 Agens wiche ther helpeth noo debate
 For of free choise and hertly volunte
 She hathe to God avowed chastite.
 Wherfor me seemeth it were rigt wel sitting 92
 To this purpose by good discrecion
 Firste that we mygte fully have knowyng
 Of Goddis wille in this opinion,
 For then it were more p'feccion
 Her clene entent as semeth me
 And eke the strengener of autoryte.

—♦—

How Ioseph was weddyd to Oure Lady.

Cap. **F**IRST that we mygte knowe v'rely 93
 bitz **F**IRST that we mygte knowe v'rely
 To whos kepyng she shale co'mytted be:
 And thai assenten here to v'rely
 Withouten more of hige and lowe degree;
 And of accorde and of oon unite
 The prestys alle bigonnen to p'cede
 To caste lotte downe by eche kynrede,
 The wiche lotte felle on Juda anoon, 94
 As I suppose thurg Goddis purviance.
 And Ysacar amonge hem ev'ychone
 Pourposed hathe a newe ordinance,
 That ev'ry wigte of that alliaunce
 That wifles were w^t oute more delay
 Shulde brynge a yeerd agen the nexte day.

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23

And to the bisshop, higest of echoone
Everiche of hem dide his yeerde brynge,
Amonge wiche Joseph hadde brought oone
Thoug he were oolde and paste his likyng,
And he anon made his offeryng
To God above and a sacrifice
In the oolde lawe suche as was the guyse.
And God to him did anon appere, 95
And w^t the yerdis bade that he shulde goon
And put ev'rychone in feere,
In sancta sanctoru' liggyng oon bi oon,
And on the morowe to come agen echon
Ev'iche his yerde to resseme agen,
And upon wiche openly were seyne
A dove appere, and up to heven flee, 97
He shal have, w^t oute moore obstacle,
Marie in kepyng, so faire upon to see,
As it is rigte, for the hige miracle :
And whan thay come to the tabernacle
As ye have herde, the bisshop devoutly
Ev'iche his yerde deliv'ed by and by,
But utterly upon noon of them alle 98
At thilke tyme was ther noo thing seyne,
For Goddys heeste was nought yit yfalle
Of her desire to putte hem in certeyne :
Wherfor the bisshop with newe fire ageyne
Entrid is in to the seyntuarye.
And while that he a while gan there tarye,
Goddys aungel apperith to him newe 99
Doune fro heven by miracle sent,
And tolde playnly the heeste of God was trewe,
And howe himself was some what negligent
For to delivre by comandement
Ev'y man his yerde as he ougt.
And whan the bisshop arigt him bethoug

He gan remembre plainly in his mynde That of disdeine and wilfulle negligence The yerde of Joseph was lefte behynde, Wherby he knewe that he hadde done offence, And gan anon to brynge it in p'sence, And toke it Joseph devoutly in his honde Amonge hem alle ther thei dyde stande.	100
Alle behinde, dissev'ed from the prees, With humble cheere in the lowist place, And of his yeerde in manere recheles, Fulle stille of porte, with a dredful face ; And whan he dide with his honde embrace His yerde agein, fule debonaire of looke, For innocence of humble drede he quoke.	101
And sodenly thourg grace above divine, Alle openly in ev'y wigtis sigte, Vpon the yerde of Joseph ful benigne Was seene a dove, of fetheris lilie white, That toward heven evene toke the fligt, And with oon voyse the peple thoo abreide And vn to Joseph alle at onys seyde :	102
Blessid art thou and blessid ys thi chaunce, Thy face blessid, and thine aventure ; And blessid is thi humble attendaunce, And thou art blessid so longe to endure For to possede so faire a creature, So good, so holy, now in thi passing age, So gracious, so benigne, so wise and sage.	103
And she anon by preestys of the lawe Assigned was vn to his gov'nance, But sely Joseph gan him thoo w ^t drawe With humble chere and shamfast continance, And seid, Certis, ther is noon accordance Bitween her youthe, flouryng in fairnesse And me whom age with unlust dothe oppresse,	104

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25

For she is faire and fresshe as rose in May,
And wel y wote also a maiden clene ;
And y am oolde, w^t white lockes graye,
Passid ful ferre my tendir yeeres grene ;
Wherfor y praie you to consider and seene
To accorde discordant seith to me no more
Bitween her beaute and my lockes hoore.

105

And whan the bisshop sawe the humble entent
Of this Joseph and the innocence,

106

And how that he to take her nolde assente,
To him he seid in open audience :

Joseph, he seide, take heed to my sentence,
And be wel ware that thou the not excuse
Ageyn the wille of God for to refuse

This hooly maide assigned vn to the
By opyne signe whiche alle the peple seye,
Thourg Goddis grace and mygti volunte,
Agen wiche be ware to disobeye,

107

And thenke howe he some tyme made to deye
Abiron and Dathan oonly for the offence
Doon vnto him of inobediencie.

Quod Joseph, that wile y not in noo thing
To Goddys wille ne bidding be contrarye,
But her accepte in to my kepyng,

108

For whom God hathe shewid signes faire,
Whiche is so good, benygne, and debonaire,
That y to her wole servant be and guyde
Til God for her list bet to provyde.

And as the custome of the lawe hem bonde
So made was the confirmacion

109

By heest of wedlok bytween hem honde in honde,
And he her toke to his possessioun
With hert clene and meke affectioun ;
But while he wente to Bedleme the citee
Mary abode stille in Galilee,

How Joseph aft' he hadde weddid Oure Lady wente to
Bedleme and bside the crafte of carpentrye.

Cap.
ix



AT Nazareth, in her faders house, 110
Liche her avowe of hert alweye in oone.
And fyve maidens the moost vertuous
Of the Temple were chosen oute anoon
Of the bisshope w^t here for to goone
To wayte on her by humble attendaunce
In what thei canne to serve and do plesaunce,
Of wiche the firste callyd was Rebecca, 111
And Scephea the secunde as y fynde,
Susanna, Gabel, and Abigea
The tother thre, as bookes make mynde,
Wiche wolde nev' thourg slouthe be behynde,
But ay in oone, as hit is specified,
In werke and praier were occupied.
And vn to hem, as is made mencion, 112
That of lyvyng so feithfulle were and trewe
And diligent in occupacioun,
Deliv'ed was silke of sondry hewe
For to make div's werkys newe
In the Temple of intencioun
Oonly to be in mynystracion.
And as it is putte in remembraunce, 113
Evr'che her silke toke by aventure
Liche as her honde fel ther on by chaunce ;
But Mary, as thoo God shope her evre,
The purpil silke toke in her care
Of gracious happe of soorte with oute sigte,
The whiche colour of custome and of rigte

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27

To noon estate is kyndely fittyng, 114

Of duete to speke in special,
But to the state oonly of a kyng,
So that no wigt but of the stocke rialle
By statute oolde this colour vse shalle,
For by oolde tyme ye sholde noo man seen
In purpil clad but outhur kyng or quene.

Wherfor the sorte ful rigtfully ys falle 115

Verrely by dewe disposicioun
Vpon Marye that before hem alle
By lyne rigt is dissendid don
Of blode riale, and bi election

Of God above was chosen for to been
For her merite of heven and erthe queen, 116
And moder eke, as ye shal after here,

Of thilke kyng that clad was alle in reede
Of purpul hewe, both face and chere,
Doun to the foote fro his blessid heede,
Whane he of purpil dide his baner sprede
On Calvarye abroode vpon the roode
To save man kynde whan he ther shedde his bloode.

And of this purpul that y speke of to forne, 117

I fynde pleynty how that Marye wrougte
Thilke vayle that was on tweyne torne
The same houre whan he so dere vs bougte,
Loo how that God in his eternal thoughte
Provydid hathe by iust purveaunce
The purpul silke to his moderis chaunce.



**How Oure Lady ys sette for an ensample of
birginte.**

Cap. **B**UT now y leve this blessid maide dere 118
 x In Nazareth amonge her frendys to dwelle,
 Ledyng a life more parfite and entiere
 Than any tounge suffice may to telle,
 For evyn like as a fulsome welle
 Shedith hir stremys in to the rivere
 Rigth so Marye an ensamplere cleere
 Gave vnto alle by plenteuous largesse 119
 Oonly vertu vppon ev'ry syde ;
 O wel were thei to whom thou were mastresse
 And blessid eke that mygt on the abide
 To have by exauple so virtuous a gide ;
 And blessid was that holy companye
 That daye by daye the seien with her eye ;
 And blessid was the paleis and the house 120
 In wiche thou haddyst thi holy mansion
 Fortuned wel and wonder gracious,
 So humble was thi conv'sacion ;
 And blessid was also al the ton
 There thou abode, and blest be the village,
 O hooly maide, where thou haddist hostage ;
 And blessid was the worthi table riche 121
 Where day be day thou wentist vn to boorde,
 For in sothenesse the ioye was not liche
 Of Cersus kynge, for alle his riche hoorde ;
 And blessid be thay that herden worde by worde
 Of thi speche ; and blessid the houre and tyme
 Of alle thi life from evene til the prime.

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29

O weelful eke and gracious the sigt 122

Of hem that mygten vpon the beholde,
For wel thei oute to be glad and ligt
That were with the alweye whan thei wolde ;

And blessid weren yonge and oolde
That weren reioiced with thi excellence
Whan that hem liste of the hige p'sence.

Of the joie whoo coude telle arigt 123

Of thine hevenly meditaciouns,
Assendyng vp above the sterrys brigt
In thine ynward contemplaciouns ;

Or the hooly visitaciouns
Who can reherse, brigt as sunne or levene,
So ofte sente don to the fro hevene.

Or who can telle thi hooly slepys softe, 124

With God alweie fule in thi memorye,
For love of whom thou sigedist ful ofte
Whan thou were soole in thine oratorye ;
Or who can telle the melodie and glorie
That aungels hav made in the place
For the ioye thei hadde to looke in thi face.

I am to rude to rehersen alle 125

For vnkunnyng and for lake of space,
The mater is so inly spiritual
That y dare not so hige a stile pace ;
But ladye myne y putte all in thi grace,
This first boke compilid for thi sake
Of my symplenesse, and thus an ende y make,

Besechyng alle to have pite and routhe 126

That therof shullen have any inspection
Yf ougte be lefte of necligence or slouthe
Or seide to myche of p'sumpcion,
And putte it mekely to her correction,
And aske mercy of my trespase
Ther as y erre, and putte me in her grace.

And thourg her benigne supportacion
 So as y canne forthe y wole p'cede
 With alle myn herte and hoole entencion,
 Prayng that maide of so goodly hede
 Croppe and roote to helpe in this nede,
 Whom y nowe leve in Nazareth soiourne,
 And to my mater y wole agein retourne.

127

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.



**How Mercy and Pees, Rightwitnessse and Trowth dispu-
 tiden for the redempcion of man kynde.**

Cap. **W**HO that is bounde and feteryd in prison 128
 xi Thenketh longe after deliverance?
 And he that felith payne and passion
 Desireth sore after allegiaunce?

And who that is in sorowe and penaunce
 Little wondre of hertly hevynesse,
 Thourg he coveyte relese of his distresse?
 And who that lyveth in langour or in woo 129
 Fer in exile and prescripcioun,
 And is with sette w^t many a cruel foo,
 And can noo gyvve to his salvacioun
 To ascape dethe w^t oute greete raunson,
 Ful longe he thenketh of ful litil space
 While he in bondys abideth after grace

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31

And yitte to recorde of oolde felicite 130

In soothfastnesse encresith moore his payne
Than alle the constreynt of his adv'site,
And causeth him more to sige and playne,
For ioye passid can hertys more constrayne
Here welthe aforne to bywepe and waile
Than alle torment that dothe hem assaile.

O who coude ever sith the worlde bygan 131

Of more ioye or of gladnesse telle
That some tyme coude the worthy kynde of man
That shapen was in Paradise to dwelle
Till he, alas ! was banished in to helle,
Fer in exile from his possession,
And ther to abyde stocked in prison.

And he hathe lost his richnesse and honour, 132

His myrthe, his ioye, and his oolde welfare,
His force, his mygte, and hooly his socour,
And was of vertu nakyd made and bare,
And lay fule sike languisshing in care,
So far p'scripte oute of his cuntre
That by the lawe ther may no recov'e be :

Whos necke opp'ssid with so stronge a chene 133

Lay plunged downe w^t oute remedye,
That whan M'cy wolde have bene amene
Rigtwitnessse anoon gan it denie :

And whan that Pees for recov'e gan to crye,

Came Trouthe forthē with a sterne face

And seide platly that he gete noo grace ;

For Pees and Mercy to gider assemblid were 134

Fulle longe agoon to trete of this matiere,

And Rigtwitnessse with them was eke there,

And Trouth also with a denyous chere :

And whan thai weren all foure in feere,

As ye hav herde, and ganne to entrete,

Than furste of alle cruelly to threte

Trouthe began, al mooste in a rage 135
 Of cruel ire and of malencolye,
 And seide shortly that man for his outrage
 Of verre rigt moste nedys dye.
 And thus began the controu'sye
 Betwene the Sustren, and Trouthe alwey in oone
 Seide plainly that recure was ther noone,
 For I, quod Trouthe, at his creacioun 136
 Telde him the perelle affore his offence,
 But he me putte oute of his bandon
 And gave to me no man'e audience.
 And I, quod Rig, with alle my diligence,
 Wolde him have rulyd, but he ne toke noon hede,
 Wherfore of me he gete noon helpe at need :
 And whan he gave credence to the snake, 137
 He made his querelle even agens Rig,
 And agen Trouthe he falsly gan to take
 Whan he her putte clene oute of his sigt :
 And agen Pees began a quarelle to figt
 Whan he from hym Mercy sette aferre,
 Brekyng the trewer and wolde algate have warre.
 Therfor, quod Rig, pletyth for him no more, 138
 But lette him have as he hathe deservyd,
 Ye doo grete wronge yif ye wile him restore
 That hathe his heest to you not conservyd.
 A yis, quod Mercy, Nature hath reservyd
 To Pees my sustre plainly and to me
 On wretche ever to have pitee,
 And he offendid hathe of ignorance 139
 More than of malyce, y wys, quod M'cy, thoo.
 Ye for alle that he moste have his penance,
 Quod Rig anon, liche as he hathe doo.
 A thenke, quod Pees, that toward Jerico
 He was dispolid amonge his cruelle foone
 For lacke of helpe whan he lefte him alloone.

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33

That was, quod Trouthe, for he was recheles 140
To goo the waye I taugte him of resoun.
Quod Mercy, than the mortal too of Pees,
The oolde serpente, roote of all tresoun,
Of false envie and indignacioun,
Lay in a wayte to brynge him in a trayne
Whan he to him falsly dide fayne
That yif he eate of the forboden tree 141
The faire fruyte in Paradise p'sente,
He shulde like vn to goddys bee,
Of good and yvele to have the entendement :
And for my sustir Trouthe was absent,
And ye yourself also Rigtwitnesse,
He was betrayed slyly bi falsnesse.
Wherfor, quod Mercy, y purpose vtterly 142
Him to releve yif y can or may ;
And y, quod Pees, wole helpe faithfully
The grette ire and rancour to allay
Of Judgment to putte it in delay ;
And here vpon, to finde ful refuge,
I wolde p'cede afore the hige Juge.

**How Mercy and Pees brougte this Plee befor the
Hige Juge.**

Cap. **A**ND rigt forth with befor the kynge of glorie 143
xi; Mercy and Pees the cause brougte anoon,
And in the hige hevenly consistorye
Pees seide thus amonge hem ev'ychone :
O blessid Lorde, that art bothe thre and oone,
So plese it The benignely to here
What y wole seye, and my sustir dere.

Remember, Lord, amonge thy werkys alle 144
 How thou madist Mercy sovereigne,
 That whan that ever vn to the she calle
 Thou maist nought of rigt her praier disdeyne,
 And specially whan that we bothe tweyne
 To thine higenesse for any thing requyre,
 Thou muste of grace fulfilleoure praier.

Is nought thi mercy greet above the hevene, 145
 Thine oune dougter cheef of thin allie,
 And hathe her place above the sterres sevene
 With the orders of every ierachye,
 Whom, day by day, thou canst so magnifie
 Amonge thi werkys to make her empresse
 To helpe wretchys whan thei been in distresse?

Thi mercy eke abideth ever w^t the 146
 Liche thi gretnesse and thi magnificence,
 And who that dothe mercy and pitee
 Dothe sacrifice hige in thy p'sence ;
 And is not mercy of more excellence,
 Liche as the Sawter wel reherse can,
 Vpon the erthe thanne the life of man?

Thi selfe also, as it is playnly couthe, 147
 Avisely who so taketh hede therto,
 Seist opynly with thyne owne mouthe
 That to a thousand thou canst thi mercy doo ;
 And holy David recordith eke also
 With his harpe above alle thinge
 That he thi mercyes eternally shale synge.

And hou mygte eke any creature 148
 Vpon erthe, in any maner kynde,
 Without mercy any while endure ?
 For alle were goon yif mercy were behynde.
 Wherfor, Lord, on mercy have thi mynde
 The woofule caityf to take vn to thi grace
 That so longe hathe be sev'yd from thi face.

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35

And thoug that y be humble, meke, and free 149
Forsothe, Lord, of duete and of rigt,
Yit evere in oone my dwellyng is with the
For seelde or nevere y parte oute of thi sigt,
Pees is my name, that power hathe and mygt
Thourg my konnyng hem that ben mortall foone
By the helpe of the to accorde in to oone.
And also, Lorde, as holy writte can telle, 150
That of thi pees ther may non ende be,
And eke thi pees dothe ev'ry wigte excelle
And art thi selfe of verre duete
Callyd the prince of pees and vnyte,
And yit behoteth wretches to releve,
That is mankynde, and shal nev' from them meve :
And Joob recordeth the holsomest fruyte 151
Of alle this worlde spryngeth oute of pees.
Now, Lord, sithe y am made to be refuite
And to the wofule comferte and encrees,
Graunte of thi grace nowe a fulle relees
That y and Mercy may the foone confounde
Of thilke caitif that lieth in prison bounde
So that he may have liberte 152
To goo at large, and have remission
Of this thraldome and captivitie,
And be deliv'yd oute of his prisoun
So that ther may be made redempcion
For his servage and a finall pay
Lord of thi mersy w^t out more delay.
And whan thei hadde hire mater ful purposyd 153
Mercy and Pees with ful hige sentence,
Touchyng man with synne so envoisid,
The juge gave benigne audience ;
And whan he hadde longe kepte silence
For alle the skilles to him that thei laide,
Yet at the laste to hem thus he seide :

**How God the fader of heben answerd to Mercy
and Pees.**

Cap. **M**YNE owne dougtir next to myne allie, 154
 xiiij Thoug youre requeste come of tendir herte
 Ye mote consider with a prudent ye
 Of Rigtwinesse it may not me astate,
 Liche youre axinge by favour to adv'te
 Vnto the cause that ye rep'sente,
 But Rig and Trouthe fully wolde assente,
 Withouten whom y may not p'cede 155
 To execute any maner iugement,
 Wherefore lete calle hem in this greeete nede,
 For y moste werche by hire avisement.
 And whan thei were come and p'sent
 Thanne Trouthe anon touching this matier
 Seiden opynly that alle mygten here :
 Yf it so be this man that hathe trespass 156
 Ne be not dede for his iniquite
 Than vtterly the fraunchise is depast
 Bothe of my sister Rigtwinesse and me,
 And fynally oure bothe liberty
 Gothe vnto nought and oure jurediction
 But he be punnysshed for his transgression.
 The worde of God, that pleynly may not erre, 157
 Telde him atorne withoute any drede
 The grete perelle of this mortall werre,
 Eteynge the appill that he mote be dede,
 But he of slouthe toke ther to noon hede,
 Wherfor he must. as rigt list p'yde,
 With owt m'cy the doome of dethe abide.

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37

And thoug that Pees be of pite mevyd 158

Man to deliv'e with a zeele of routhe,
Rigtwitnesse wolde than be agreved
With me to consente that am callid trouthe,
And as me semyth it were to greeete a slouthe
Dooome or cause plee or any sute

With ouden us tweyn to ben execute,
Me seemeth eke my suster Pees dothe wronge 159

To foster a Man and holde agen us tweyne,
That hathe ben co'versaunt so longe,
Amonge us discorde to restreyne.

Therfor, quod Pees, now wole y not feyne
To do myn office rigt to modefyne
That she of rigour cause him not to dye.

Than, quod Rig, of necessite 160

Hit muste folowe thoug he were my brother
That he mote dye by doome of equite
Or in his name mote be dede some other :
So of my schippe guyd ys the rothir
That I ne may erre for wawe or for wynde
More than the anker of trouthe wole me bynde.

Certys, quod M'cy, so it not displese 161

Un to youre wise and noble prudence,
His dethe to you may be littl eese
For holy writte reherseth in sentence,
Yif ye consider in youre advertence,
That deeth of synners the hige God to queme
Is werste of dethis yif ye of rigt list deme,

For synful blode ys noo sacrifice 162

To God above that every thing may seyne :
Than muste ye the dethe of oon devyse
That is of synne innocent and clene,
And as y troue undir the sune shene
Thourg oute the worlde, to reherse al mankynde,
Hit were fulle hard suche oone to fynde,

For ruste with ruste may not scouryd bee 163
 Ne foule with filthe may be purified,
 And who is soild with dishoneste
 To wasshe a nother as it is not aplied
 Blak in to white may not be undied,
 Ne bloode infecte with corrupcion
 To God for synne ys noon oblacion.
 Figure herof yee may behoulde and see, 164
 As the Bible maketh mencion,
 How that a lamb of spotte and filthe free
 Some tyme was take by eleccion
 And offerid up in satissfaccion
 To God for synne, for to signifie
 That who that shulde for manys raunson dye
 Muste be clene, pure, and innocent 165
 Rigth as a lambe from ev'y spotte and blame :
 And trewly undir the firmament
 Ther was noone suche sithe Adam dide ataine
 The fruite to eete for either halt or lame
 In sov'eigne vertue is al the kynde of man.
 Wherfor, quod Mercy, the beste rede that y can
 That Pees my sustir sese this discorde 166
 And alle the strife that is bitwene,
 And that we prei our juge and mygty lord
 To this matier benignely to seene
 And of his grace to shape suche a mene
 For Truth and Rigth so prudently ordeyne
 That Pees ne y have cause to pleyne.
 And this request is nougt agens Rigth 167
 Ne un to Trouthe pleynly noon offence
 Yif that oure juge of his grete mygt
 Ordeyne so in his providence
 To shape a weie thourg his sapience
 That Trouthe and Rigth be not displesid
 Thourg Pees and me thoug man be holpe and esid.

Howe the Fader of hevene oonyd thise lill Sustrenne.

- Cap. **A**ND whan that she had by reson fined 168
rib That groundyd was plainly vpon skylle
The hige Juge by Mercy is enclined
To condescende of grace to her wille,
And in oudre wise her axynge to fulfille,
That Rigt be servyd and Trouthe not dismaied,
That Pees and she shullen eke be wele apaied.
And by sentence anoon diffinitif 169
The Juge seide for conclusion :
An innocent pure and clene of life
Shale mekely dye to paie the raunson
For mannes gilte and transgression,
And he so frely shale the dethe obeie
In al his peyn that he noo word shal seie.
And thus shale Rigt in alle man'e thinge 170
Have her desire and Trouthe shalle not faile
To execute fully her axynge
Finally to stynte this bataille.
And for that Pees so moche may availe
And Mercy eke shale not be agrevyd
Her bothe axinge shale also be achevyd.
To finde a man that shale undirtake 171
This migti querel of mercy and pitee
To suffer dethe oonly for manys sake,
Uncompellyd freely of volunte,
That as a lambe with oute spotte shal be,
And with his blode shalle wasshe vndefoulyd
The gilte of man with ruste of synne y-moulyd

Howe the Fader of hebene tolde these iiii sustryn how
hys oone childe sholde take mankynde.

Cap. **B**UT for to wote of what stock he shal sprynge, 172
xb Of what kynrede and of what astate,
My sothfast worde eternally lyvyng,
Myne owne sonne with me increate,
Shalle don be sente to be Incarnate,
And wrappe him selfe in the mortal kynde
Of man for love so that he may finde
A clene grounde his paleice on to bilde 173
In alle the erthe, nother of lyme ne stoon,
But in a maide debonaire and mylde,
The humble dougtir of Juda and Sion,
And vnto her shalle Trouthe and M'cy goone
By oone accorde sente afore my face
Liche my devyse to chese me a place,
And seie to her in alle man'e thinge 174
Her tabernacle that she make faire
Agen the comynge of her mygty kyng,
Whiche is my sonne and myne owne aire,
That in her breste shale have his repaire,
Where Trouthe and Mercy shulle to gyder mete
By oone assente and her rancour lete,
And ther shal Pees kisse Rigtwitnessse, 175
And alle the sustirs accorde in oon place,
And Rigt shalle leve alle her sturdynesse,
And Trouthis swerde shalle no more manace,
And finally Mercy shalle purchase
A charter of pardoun liche as this maide clene,
And whiche for man be so goode a mene

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That he shalle nowe ascape daungerlees 176
Amid the forest free from ev'y trappe,
While the maide that causeth alle this pees
Hathe the vnicorne slepyng in her lappe,
That thourg mekenesse shal his horne so wrappe
Ther it was wont to slee by violence.
Thourg dethe it shal agen dethe be diffence,
Agenis venym more holsome than triacle, 177
Every poyson asofte and asswage,
Whan the lyon maketh his habitacle
Wyth in a maide but of tendir age,
And Gaubriel shalle goon on message
To her anoon, myne owne secretarye,
With new tydynges, and noo lenger tarye.

Howe Gaubriel was sente to Oure Lady.

Cap. **A**ND rigt forth w^t the aungel taryeth not, 178
rbi But hilde his weie from the see of glory
Vn to this maide clene in wille and thought,
Where as she sate in her oratorye
With hert ententif and w^t hoole memorye
Erecte to God and alle her fule mynde,
To whom the aungelle whan he dide her fynde
Benignely with alle humilite 179
Seide vnto her anoon as ye shullen here :
Heile, ful of grace, our Lorde is with the,
Ne drede the nougt but be rigt glad of chere
That art to God so acceptable and deere,
That hoole his grace is vpon the falle
To be moste blessid amonge women alle.

And with that worde, thourg grace of Goddys mygt, 180
 Al hoole the sunne of the deite,
 That from heven his blissful bemys bright
 Shadde on the erthe of oure humanite,
 Whan in the breste of a maiden free
 The Holy Goost by free election
 For her mekenesse hathe made his mansion.
 For whan that Bernard some tyme gan beholde 181
 With thought uplifted by contemplacion,
 The brigte sune in hert he gan to colde,
 Inly astonyed in his aspection,
 And ful devoutely in a meditacion,
 Thereof remembryng as he gan take hede,
 Seide even thus quakyng in a drede :

—◆—

A Lamentacion of Seint Bernard.

Cap. **A** LORDE, quod he, y am a gryside, 182
rbif **A** And sore a dredde to loke on this clernesse,
 And yit wel more with feere y am supprised
 For to beholde for myne unwirthinesse
 Any worde to write or to expresse
 Of this misterye and great privitee,
 Benigne Lorde, lest thou seie to me
 What, art thou bolde or darst in any wise 183
 My Rigtwinesse to telle or to wrighte,
 Or to presume so hardely to devyse
 Mi testament with thi mouthe endyte :
 That certys Lord, but yif thou respyte
 My wretchednesse by supporte of thi grace
 I greetly drede of dethe for my trespase.

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But wolde God thourg his greet mygt 184
And his goodnesse liche to my desire
That from auter that brenneth in his sigt
Noo litil sparkle but a flamme of fire
Wolde don dissende my herte to enspire
For to consume with his fervent heet
The rusty filthe that in my mouthe dothe flete.
And all unclennesse cankered ther of oolde 185
To make clene and to scoure aweie,
That thourg his grace y durst be so bolde
Other to write other some worde to saye
That was rehersyd vppon the blissfulle daye
Whan Gaubriel and Mary mette
In Nazareth, and humbly her grette.
But sithen this man so parfite of lyvyng, 186
This holy Bernard, so good and gracious,
So dredfulle was this matier in writyng
That was of life so inly vertuouse,
How dare y thanne be p'sumptuous,
I, woful wretche, in any maner wise
To take on me this parfite hie emprise,
My lippis polute, my mouth w^t synne ysoilid, 187
My herte vnclene and fulle of cursidnesse,
My thougte also with alle vicys foylid,
My breste rescette and chest of wretchidnesse,
That me to write of any parfitnesse
Not oonly drede of p'sumpcion,
But for to encurre the indignacion
Of God above for my greet offence, 188
That y am bolde or hardy in his sigte
To dare presume the grete excellence
For to discribe of her that was so brigte ;
But undir hope that mercy passeth rigt,
And that disdeine my stile not nor werrey,
With humble herte thus to him y prey :

**A Recapitulacion of the Wordys of Gaubriel to
Oure Lady.**

Cap.
xbiiij



LORDE, whos mercy gothe not to decline, 189
 But ev'y liche stondyth hoole in oone,
 That some tyme sentyst don fro' Seraphyn
 To Isaie an aungel with a stoon
 Wherw^t he began to touche his mouthe anoon
 To purge his lippis frome alle pollucion,
 So lete thi grace to me dissende a don
 My rude tounge to explite and speke 190
 Some what to seie in comendacion
 Of her that is welle of womanhede,
 And thourg her helpe and mediacion
 Be to my stile fulle direction ;
 And lette thi grace alweye be p'sente
 This booke to further after myne entent,
 For of my selfe to vndirtake 191
 To speke or write in so devoute matere,
 Litel wonder thourg y tremble or quake
 And change bothe continance and chere,
 Sithen this maide of vertue tresorere
 Pturbyd was in looke and in visage
 Of Gaubriel to here the message,
 And ful demurly stille gan abide, 192
 And in her herte castyng up and don
 Fulle prudently vpon ev'y syde
 The maner of this salutacion,
 And howe it mygte in conclusion
 In any wise fully p'formyd be,
 She stondyng hoole in her virginite.

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And whan the aungel sawe her lowlyhede, 193

And the hooly reednesse also in her face,
He seide, Marie, for noo thinge that thou drede,
For to fore God thou hast founde grace,
And shalt conseve within a litel space

And in thy wombe a sone of alle vertu,
And shalte him calle whane he is borne Ihu,
That shale be grete and namyd sothefastly 194

Sone of the highest that ever was of mygt,
And God to him shalle give seete ful iustly
The se of David, his oone fadirs rigt,
And he shal reigne in ev'y wigtis sigt
In the house of Jacob eternally by lyne
Whos kyngdom ev'e shale laste and nev'e fyne.

And thoug his heeste were passyng of rennon, 195

Surmountyng eke as in excellence,
That vtwardly gaf so m'veilous a son
And wondirfulle to her audience,

Yit she ful mekely of grete rev'ence,
And looke doncaste of her yen clere,
Benygnely the aungel gan enquere 196

In what maner shale this thing betyde

Sithen y noo man knowe in noo degree.

Quod Gaubriel, within thi blessid syde

The Holy Goost shale y thronyd bee

And alle the vertue of the Trinite,

Enclose shale in thi breste so clene

The sune of life with alle his bemes shene.

Wherfor this childe that shal of the be borne 197

Shalle callyd be Goddys sone entere.

Beholde and see a litel here to forne

Elisabeth, thin owne cosyn deere,

Conseyved hathe sithen goon half yeere,

Thoug she for age wente to have be bareyn,

And is w^t childe to putte alle in certeyn

That to God is no thing impossible 198
 But as him liste may ev'y thing fulfille
 Vnto whos worde be fully nowe credible.
 Biholde, quod she, of God the meek ancille
 With alle my herte obeying to his wille
 In ev'ry thing rigt as him liste it be
 And liche thi worde falle it vn to me.
 Loo she that was chosen for to been 199
 Of alle the worlde lady and emp'esse,
 Of heven and erthe allone to be quene,
 And Goddys moder for her holynesse,
 Loo for alle this howe lowely w^t mekenesse
 She alle comitteth vn to Goddys wille
 And as he ordeyneth redy to fulfille,
 And nolde calle her selfe noon other name 200
 But Goddys handmaide in fulle lowe man'e.
 O where is all the transitorie fame
 Of pompe and pride and surquedrie in fere,
 Where is youre boste or daren ye appere
 With youre forblowyng vanyte,
 Sithen that a maide thurg her humilite
 Of pride hathe nowe wonne the victorie 201
 And openly hathe given him a falle
 Thourg whoos lownesse the hige kyng of glorie
 Within her wombe hathe made in specialle
 His dwellyng place and his hospitalle,
 And with oon worde of the maide y-spoke
 The Hooly Goost ys in her breste y-loke.



Howe hooly men of dibine licnessys wrote of **O**ure
Lady in comendacion of her.

Cap.
xix



AND whan the aungel fro her dep'tyd was, 202
And she allone in her tabernacle,
Rigt as the sune percith thourg the glas,
Thourg the cristal birell of spectacle,
Withouten harme, rigt so bi miracle
In to her closet the faders sapiencie
Entrid ys withouten violence
Or any weme vn to her maidenhede 203
On any side in party or in alle,
For Goddys sone takyng our manhede
In her hathe bilte his paleis principal,
And vndir pigte this mansion rial
With seven pillers as made in memorie,
And therin sette his reclinatorie,
Wich is p'formyd al of pure golde, 204
Oonly to us for to signifie
That he alle hooly made hathe his holde
Within this maide that callyd is Marie;
And seven pillers that shulden this maide gie
Been sevene spiritis, so as y can disseerne,
O God above, this maide to governe,
For alle the tresour of his sapiencie, 205
And alle the wisdom of hevne and erthe ther to,
And alle the richnesse of spiritual science,
In her were shitte and closid eke also,
For she is the toure, withoute wordys mo,
And house of ivor in wiche Salamon
Shitte alle his tresour in his possession.

She was the castelle of the cristalle walle 206
 That nev' man mygt yit uncloze,
 In wiche the kyng that made and causeth alle
 His dwellyng chefe by grace gan dispose.
 And liche as dewe dissendith on the roose
 With silver droppis, and of the leves faire
 The fresshe beaute ne may nogt appeire,
 Ne as the rayne in April or in May 207
 Causeth the vertue to renne oute of the roote,
 The greeete fairnesse ne appeire may
 On violettys and on herbis soote,
 Rigth so this grace of alle oure grevous boote,
 The grace of God amydde the lely white,
 The beaute causeth to be of more delite.
 And as the cockle w^t heavenly dewe so clene 208
 Of kynde engendreth white peerlys rownde,
 And hathe noo cherisshyng but the sune shene
 To his fostryng, as it is plainly founde,
 Rigth so this maide of grace moste abounde
 A peerle hathe closid with in her brestys white
 That from the dethe mygt alle oure rannson quyte.
 She was eke the gate w^t the loke brigth 209
 Sette in the northe of hige devocion,
 Of wiche some tyme the p'phete had a sigt,
 Ezechiel in his avisioun,
 Whiche stode ev' close in his conclusion,
 That nev'e man entre shale ne passe,
 But God him self to make his dwellyng place.
 And yit in sothe, as y reherse canne, 210
 So as the flyse of Gedeon was wette,
 Tofore he fawte with hem of Madian,
 With heavenly dewe enviroon alle by sette,
 In signe oonly he spede shalle the bette,
 Rigth so hathe God on her his grace shewid
 With the Hooly Goost whan she was al be dewyd,

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In token playnly she shulde socoure be 211

Vnto mankynde manly for to fygt

Agen the devyle that hathe in his pouste

Alle Madian with his felle mygte,

And thourg the helpe of this maiden brigte,

And thurg the dewe of her hevenly grace,

We shulle this serpente from our bondes chace.

She was also of golde the riche urne 212

Kepyng the man of oure salvacion,

That alle oure woo may to joie turne

With holsome foode of p'fection ;

And eke she was in signification

The yeerde of Aaron w^t fruite and leves lade,

Of vertu most to comferte vs and glade.

She was the auter of cedre, golde, and stone, 213

Stedfast and trewe of p'fection,

And as the cedre conservyng ay in oone

His body clene from alle corrupcion,

And for to make a fulle oblacion

Of ev'y vertue to God in chastite,

She shone as golde by parfite charite.

And on this auter she made her sacrifice 214

With fire of love brennyng as brigte

To God and man in ev'y man'e wise

As doon the sterrys in the frosty nygt ;

Her frankensense gaft so clere a ligt

Thourg good ensauple that the parfite levne

Of her lyvyng raugte unto hevne.

She was the trone where that Salamon 215

For worthinesse sette his rialle see,

With golde and ivor that so brigte shone

That al aboute the beaute men may see,

The golde was love, the ivor chastite,

And twelfe lyonns so grete huge and large,

That of this werk bare up the charge,

Of the oolde lawe weren p'phetes twelwe 216
 That longe biforne gan behoulde and see
 That Salamon, Goddys sone him selfe,
 Shulde in this maide beholde his riall see,
 So that in sothe her clene virginite
 To be a modir shulde noo thing lette,
 Amydde her brest he his troone sette.
 She was also the woman that seint John 217
 Sawe in hevne so richely appere,
 Cladde in a sune, the wiche brigter shoone
 That Phebus dothe in his large speere ;
 And twelwe sterres that passingly were clere,
 So as to him plainly dide seme,
 Weren sette above in her diademe.
 And as him thoughte at her feete ther stode 218
 A large mone brigt and no thing pale,
 In figure oonly that she that is so good
 To swage the bitter of our oolde bale,
 The svnne of life made to avale
 Dovne to the erthe to gov'ne vs and guyde.
 And eke the moone to us dothe signifie
 Alle hooly chirche large to biholde, 219
 Whiche in this maide hadde hir originall,
 Whan finally with his rightis oolde
 The sinagoge of Jewys hadde a falle,
 For in this maide the firste faithfule walle
 Of hooly chirche God gan first to bilde
 Whan w^t his sone he made her goo w^t childe.
 And to reforme the rudenesse vtterly 220
 Of blynde folkys that konne not parceyve
 Howe that Marie mygt kyndely
 A maide be and a childe conseyye,
 That yif him liste resoun to conseyye
 That may examplis rigt y nowe fynde
 Of this mater accordynge vn to kynde.

**Autik conclusions agenis unbileful men that seten that
Crist mygte not be borne of a maide.**

Cap.
xx



BLYNDE man that thurg thin inquite 221

Why haste thou loste thi reson and thi sigt,

That thou of malyce list not for to see

How Crist Ihu thurg his greet mygt

To his disciples helde the weye rigt

Thourg the gatis shitte by greet deffence

Without brekyng or any violence ?

Whi mygt he nougt of his magnificence

222

Within a maide make his mansion,

And she yit fonde in hige excellence

Of maidenhede from all corrupcion ?

Ye ben to blynde in youre descrescion

That liste not see also how he roose

From dethe to life and his sepulture close.

And here w^t alle thou maist also adv'te

223

Howe he fulle graciously of his mygty grace

Made Peter oute of prison sterte,

And where him liste freely for to pace,

And yit the dorys were shitte of the place.

What wondir than thoug that God by miracle

Within a maide made his habitacle,

And beyng cloos and parfitly shitte

224

With alle the boundys of clene virginite,

So sothefastly her clenness was not lette

Vpon noo side ne her chastite

But incresid and fairer for to see

That Goddys sone liste to ligte a don

Within this maide to make his mansion.

Eke Hildefone telleth of a tree 225
 In stede of fruite that berith briddys smale
 From yere to yere by kynde as men may see
 Without medlyng of female or of male,
 This verrely is sothe playnly and noo tale;
 Than wonder not thoug Criste were borne bitwen
 The chaste sydys of a maiden clene.

Eke certeyn bryddys called vultures 226
 Without medlyng conseiven by nature,
 As bookes seyn w^t oute any leese,
 And of her life an c yeere endure;
 Than the lorde of every creature
 That causeth alle noo wondir thoug y seide
 Thoug that he were conseived of a maide.

And Plunius in bookis natural 227
 Write of a roche grete and large also
 That will remeve w^t a fynger smale,
 But yit a man doo alle his mygt therto
 Hit wole not steere nether to ne froo,
 Rigt so this maide that is of vertue moost
 With a fynger of the Hooly Goost,

And with a touche of his mygti grace, 228
 Conseived hathe stedfast God and man,
 That nev' mygt remeve from her face
 Of thilke avowe that she first began
 To be a maide as ferforthe as she can
 In hert and wille as any roche stable
 That from his grounde is not remeveable.

This clerk also, this wise Plunius, 229
 Seithe in Tauriche ther is an erthe founde
 That of nature is so vertuous
 That wole cure ev'y man'e wounde,
 Rigt so Marie was the erthe sounde
 That God oute chese bi eleccion
 To bere the fruyte of oure redempcioun,

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That shulde be helthe and also medecyne 230
To alle oure woundes whan thei ake or smerte,
And oure greves and oure hurtys fyne,
From dethe to make vs to asterte
With holsome bawme p'ceyng to the herte,
That shale to helthe sodeynly restore
Our festryd soorys that thei shulde ake no more.
And fourther more, this auctour can eke telle, 231
Within his booke who so loke a rigt,
To Jubiter sacred is a welle
That whan it hathe queynte the brondis brig
That este agen it gevith hem a newe ligt,
Who liste assaie sothe he shalle hit fynde.
What wondir than thoug the God of kynde
Amyddis the welle from filthe of synne coolde 232
Fulle of vertue w^t faire stremys clere
His loggyng toke and his mygty houlde,
And thourg his grace sette it newe afeere
With the Holy Goost that w^t outen were
She brente in love hatter than the glede
Thoug she were coolde from alle fleshlyhede.
And in Ffalisco, as him liste to writte, 233
Is a welle that causeth eke of newe
Whan ther drinken oxen to be white
And sodeinly for to change her hewe,
What mervayle than thoug the welle trewe,
The welle of helthe and of life eterne,
The lorde of alle, so as y can disserne,
His stremes shedde into this maide free 234
To make her whigtest as in holynesse,
That bothe shulde maide and modir be,
And ev' in oone kepe her clenness
Withouten change, so that her whigtresse
Ne fadeth never in beaute ne coloure,
Of maidenhede to bere bothe leef and floure.

And who that wolde dispute in this matier 235
 I houlde him madde or els oute of mynde,
 For yif he have his ygon hoole and cleere
 He shale nowe see preefs y vowe be kynde,
 For he that made bothe leef and cynde,
 And with a worde this waste worldys wilde,
 Migte make a maide for to goo w^t childe.
 And he that made the hige cristal hevene, 236
 The firmament, and also ev'y speere,
 The golden axtre and the sterres sevene,
 Citherea so lusty for to appere,
 And rede Marce w^t his sterne chere,
 Migte he not eke oonly for oure sake
 Within a maide of man the kynde take ?
 And he that causith foulis in the aire 237
 In her kynde to waxe and multiplie,
 And fische eke with fynnes silver faire
 In deep wawes to gov'ne hem and guyde,
 And dothe on lyve and an othir deie,
 And giveth beestis her foode vpon the grounde,
 And in her kynde dothe hem to abounde,
 Sithen he is lorde and causeth alle thinge 238
 To have beyng, yif y shale not fane,
 And is the prince and the worthy kynge
 That alle embrasith in his mygty cheyne,
 Why mygt he nogt by power sov'eigne
 At his free chois, that alle may save and lese,
 To his modir a clene maide chese ?
 Who causeth the fruite of the harde tree, 239
 By vertu oonly that spryngeth from the roote,
 To growe and wexe, liche as men may see,
 With levys grene and newe blossomes soote,
 Is it not that lorde that for our alther bote
 Wolde of a maide, as y reherse can,
 Mekely be borne w^t oute touche of man ?

The Life of Our Lady.

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For he that dothe the tendir braunchis sprynge 240
And fresshe flourys in the grene mede,
That weren in wynter deede and eke droupinge,
Of baume voide and of lustihede,
Migte he not make his greyn to growe and sede
Within her breste that was bothe maide and wife,
Wherof is made the sothefast brede of life ?
And he that graveth of his greete mygt 241
Withoute poyntel in the harde stone
And in the tabullys w^t letters clere and brig^t
His ten p'ceptys and biddyngis ev'ychone,
The same lord of his power allone
Hathe made this maide here in erthe lowe
A childe conseve and no man to knowe.
And he that made the bushys to appere 242
Alle on flawme w^t feery sparcles shene,
And whan Moisis gan to approche nere,
And yit noon harme come to the bowis grene,
The same lorde hathe conservyd clene
His habitacle and his herber swete
In this maide from alle fleshly hete.
And he that made the yerde of Moises 243
Of a serpente to take the liknesse
In the halle amonge alle the prese,
Where Pharao the pepul dide opp'sse ;
And in the disert, the bibul berith witsesse,
The ryver made renne oute of the stone
The thriste to staunche of the pepul anoon :
And over this for to verefie 244
His grete mygt, Sampson the stronge man,
As Judicum dothe plainly specifie,
Dranke the water that from the chawle ranne :
And he that made the floodys of Jordan
To turne agein for love of Josue,
That alle his pepul cleerly mygt see,

And howe wawys a sondre gan breke 245
 And liche an hille to stande hige alofte :
 And he that made the asse for to speke
 To Balaam for he roode so softe,
 Whi mygt he not by power p'vyd ofte,
 Sithe he the yren made in the watir hove,
 Be of a maide borne for mannys love ?
 And he that made an aungel for to take 246
 Abucuk by a litille heere
 And sodenly brynge him to the lake
 In Babilome which was so ferre :
 And to vesitte, lyggyng in his feere,
 Danyel amonge the bestys rage,
 Til he to him brougte the potage, 247
 The dourys shitte of the stronge prison,
 For to aswage of hunger alle his payne,
 And in a moment to his mansion
 Fulle sodenly restoryd him agene :
 Why mygt he not as wel in certyn
 The same lord of a maide than
 Take flesshe and bloode and bicomme man ?
 And he that made the svnne at Gabaon 248
 To stonde and shyne vpon the brigte shilde
 Of Josue, and toward Achalon
 The moone also, as the hoost bihelde
 The longe day thei faugte in the feelde
 Agenn the kynges of mygty Ammorre,
 That his peple clerly mygt see ;
 And he that made the shade to retourne 249
 In the Orlage of kyng Ezechie
 By ten degrees oonly to parforme
 By heest ymade to him of Issaie,
 Whi migt he not, this lorde that alle shal guye,
 Of a maide by the same skille
 Freely he borne atte his owne wille ?

The Life of Our Lady.

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And he that fedde w^t v lovys smale 250

Five thousand in solitarie place,
Ffer in deserte sitting in a vale,
Thurg the foison and plente of his grace,
The same lorde, why mygt he not purchase
Within a maide duryng her maidenhede,
Whan that him liste to take his manhede ?

For as the bee bothe wexe and hony shede 251

At the hyve, who taketh hede ther to,
Rigt so Marie, flouryng in maidenhede,
Bare in her wombe God and man also
And yit in sothe she was bothe twoo
I dare afferme in oon p'sone in feere
A maide clene and Cristis modir dere.

And as the Beeme shynyng from so fer 252

Shedith his ligt as men may wel espie
Withouten harme or hyndryng of the sterre,
And so as Manna fel don fro the skye,
Rigt so this floure that callyd is Marie
With wombe halowid in to chastite
Conseivid hathe in her virginite.

And as the Bernake in the hard tree 253

Of kynde bredith and the vyne flour,
Causeth the wyne florre for to be,
Thurg Bachus mygte as grapes gov'nour,
Rigt so in sothe mankyndis savyour,
As the barnak and floure oute of the vyne,
Spronge of Marie she beyng virgine ;

And as a worme vndir the hard stoon 254

Of the erthe cometh w^t oute engendrure ;
And as the ffenix, of wiche ther is but oon,
To ashes brent renueth by nature,
Rigt so this lorde that alle hathe in his cure
Oure kynde agein from synne to rennewe
Toke flesshe and blode in this maide trewe.

And as the snowe from Jubiter dothe falle 255
 Thurg the force of Sagitarius bowe,
 And Zepherus dothe the flowris shale
 On white blossomys whan she dothe blowe,
 Rigth so in sothe the grace aligte alowe
 Of the Holy Goost, like a wynde cherisshyng,
 Amidde the maide to make his dwellyng,
 And to the floure did noo duresse 256
 But parfitly conservyd hir beaute
 From ev'y storme of fleshly lustinesse,
 I liche fresshe of fairnesse for to see
 As by examples moo than two or thre,
 As ye toforne have herde devyse,
 Whiche as me semyth ougte ynow suffise
 To alle that ben groundyd in the feithe 257
 Agens falthede to stonde at diffence.
 And yit in sothe, as seint Gregorie seith,
 Feithe hathe noo meryte where as evydence
 Or manys reson geveth experience,
 But he that leveth and fyndeth noo reson
 Ne kynde accordyng is worthi more guerdon,
 But if that any be nowe in this place 258
 That hathe doute or ambiguite
 Thurg false errorr that dothe his hert embrace,
 Either of malice or of iniquite,
 For to accuse the virginite
 Of Marie, pleinely this is my boone.
 But yif so be that he amende soone
 And axe m'cy for his grete offence 259
 Of her that is of m'cy grownde and welle,
 That he of vengeance have exp'ience
 With Ixion don depe in helle,
 And that the clappere of his distuned belle
 May cancre sone, I mene his fals tunge
 Be doumbe for ever and nev'e este be runge,

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With hym I am no bet in charite 260
Than ye have herde, at even and at morowe,
For here my trouthe he get no more of me
Save Cerberus y take him to borowe
What ever he bee and leve him w^t sorowe
To Tantalus his hunger to appese,
At fewe wordis passe over is an ese.

How Our Lady went to John Baptists modir.

Cap.
xxi



FOR what in sothe vpon any syde 261
Is Phebus chare aperrid of his ligt,
Thoug ygen rawe may not abide
For to behold agenis his bemys brig,
Rigt so pleylnly thourg the gowndy sigt
Of eritekes may not susteine
For to beholde the clenness of this quene,
May in noo wise sothely disencrece 262
Her clere ligt ne her parfit brigtnesse
Whos faire stremys shullen never sese
Without eclips to shine in clenness,
For of this maide as bookes seyn exp'sse
Whan Gaubriel to hevne drowe the coost
She replenisshid of the Holy Goost
Roos up anoon, and oute of Nazareth 263
Toward the mounteyns faste gan her hyee,
And ther she salweth mekely Elizabeth,
Within the house of trewe Zacharie ;
And rigt forth with whan she dide espie
Of Marie the meke salutacion,
And thourg her eris whan passed was the son,

Within her wombe, pleynty this no tale, 264
 For verrey ioye and spiritual gladnesse
 The yonge Infaunte with his lymes smale
 Reioisid him, the Gospelle dothe exp'sse ;
 And sche fulfillid in verre sothfastnesse
 With the Hooly Goost lowde gan to crye
 And evene thus seide vnto Marie :
 Blessid art thou amonge women alle, 265
 And of thi wombe blessid the fruite also,
 And howe to me of happe is nowe bifalle
 Mi lordis modir for to come me to,
 For verrey ioie y not what y may doo,
 For sothefastly thi gretyng as y heere
 Within my wombe my litil child nowe here
 Reioiseth him for gladnes as he can, 266
 That of alle woo myne herte it dothe releve.
 And blissid art thou that first this ioie began
 The worde of God so faithfully to byleve,
 Nowe be rigt glad and thin herte meve
 For alle thinges shale p'formyd bee
 That been of God behestid vn to thee.
 Marie than with a devoute entent, 267
 With looke benyngne and ful humble chere,
 The same houre being ay p'sente
 Elizabeth, her owne cosyn deere,
 With alle her herte anoon as ye shale heere,
 And alle the accorde and hoolle melodie
 Of the Holy Goost, seide in hir armonye :


How Oure Lady made Magnificat.

Cap. **W**ITH laude and price my soule magnifieth 268
xxij Eternal lorde, both oon, two, and three,
That alle athe made and ev'y thing nowe gieth,
Wiche of his mygt and bountevous pite,
Of his goodnesse and hige benignite,
Oonly of m'cy liste to have plesaunce
For to consider and graciously to see
To my mekenesse and humble attendaunce;
Mi spirit also with hert and thought in feere 269
Reioisyd hathe with fulsome habundance
In God that is my sov'eigne herte entere,
And alle my ioye and alle my suffisaunce,
Mi hole desire and alle my sustinaunce,
Within my thought so depe he is grave
That but in him with oute variaunce
In alle this worlde y can noo gladnesse have,
For he from heven goodly hathe biholde 270
Of his handmaide the humilitee,
Wherof in sothe al oonly for he wolde
Alle kynredys shalle blessid calle me,
Of wiche the thanke, O lorde, be vnto the
With preise and honour of ev'y voice and tunge,
Thurg armonie of sothfast vnite,
For this allone be to thi name soung,
For he to me hathe doo thinges grete 271
Of hige renoun and passyng excellence;
His grace made so fully to me flete,
For he is mygty of his magnificence,
His name hooly and most of rev'ence,
That while I leve it shalle me nev'e sterte
With alle my trewe faithful diligence
To thanke him of alle myn hoole herte.

And he his m'cy moost passyngly famous 272
 From kyn to kyn, and so don to kynrede,
 Shale thurg his grace be so plenteuous
 Perpetuelly that it shale p'cede,
 And specially to hem that louen and drede
 Mine owne lorde with herte wille and mynde,
 To suche his pitee shale ever sprynge and sprede
 Of dewe rigt and nev' be byhynde ;
 He hathe his arme enforcid and made stronge 273
 His dredfule mygte that men may see and knowe,
 And proude men thei reigne not ful longe,
 He seuerid hathe and made hem falle lowe,
 With alle his herte don of the whele hem throwe
 For to abate hir sirquidrie and pride,
 Or thay were ware her pompe was al ov'throwe
 Ful sodeynly and leide her boste aside,
 And mygty tyrauntis from her rialle see 274
 He athe avallid and y-putte a downe,
 And humble and meke for her humilitee
 He hathe enhaunsid to fulle hige renon,
 For he can make a transmutacion
 From lowe to hige, as it is seyn ful ofte,
 And whan him liste the dominacion
 Of worldly pompe to falle ful vnsofte ;
 He hathe fulfillid and fostrid in her nede 275
 With the goodis of plenteuous largesse
 Hem that weren hungry and indigent in drede,
 And hem relevyd of alle her wretchidnesse ;
 And he the riche hathe raugt from his richesse
 Fulle wilde and waste to walke vpon the pleine,
 And sodenly him ploungid in distresse
 Al solitarie and lefte him ligge in veyne,
 For he his childe chosen of Israel 276
 Benignely hathe taken to his grace,
 And of his mercy is remembrid welle
 To voide oonly vengeance from his face,

And humble pees shale occupie his place,
And pite shal be feffd in his stalle,
And trouthe shale his rigt so embrace
To sette mercy above his werkys alle,
As he hathe spoken and faithfully bihigte 277
To oure fadirs that hav ben her to foore,
To Abraham and to his sede of rigte,
That his mercy shal laste ev'more,
For nere his mercy alle the worlde were lore,
Vn to the wiche to make man atteyne
He hathe made m'cy oure kynde to restore,
And of alle his werkys to be sov'eigne.

**How Oure Lady aft' the byrthe of seinte John Bap-
tyst torned to Nazareth.**

Cap.  ND whan this blessid ditee 278
xxiiij Was seide to God devoutely of Marie,
I fynde after playnly howe that she
Stille in the house aboode of Zacharie

Thre monthes, the Gospel may not lye,
And after that y reede in certeyn
To Nazareth that she wente agein
And ther aboode in contemplacioun, 279
In her praiers alle wey day by daye,
With many an hooly meditacioun,
To queme her lord in what she can or may,
From whom her thought went nev' away,
Her ful mynde, ne her remembrance,
For but in him she hathe noo plesance

In alle this worlde of noo man' thinge 280
 For alle her ioye was on him to thenk,
 What ev'e she dide preiying or worchyng,
 Noo thing but he mygte in her herte synke,
 For finally whethir she wake or wynke
 Amydde her hert he was al weie p'sente
 So fixe on him was sette her hoole entent.
 And day by day this holy life she ladde, 281
 This parfite maide thurg hige devocion,
 So feruent love vn to God she hādde,
 Ther may be made noo division
 For she sequestrid her opinion
 From alle the worlde and lette it pleynty goon
 So hoole to God she gafe her herte allone
 For ever in love she brente more and more 282
 Toward God in his hige servyse
 Was alle her luste w^t herte sette so soore
 Alle erthely thing she fully dothe dispise,
 And day by day her wombe gan to rise
 Thurg the fulfilling of the Hooly Goost
 Therin by loke whom she loved moste.





GLOSSARY.

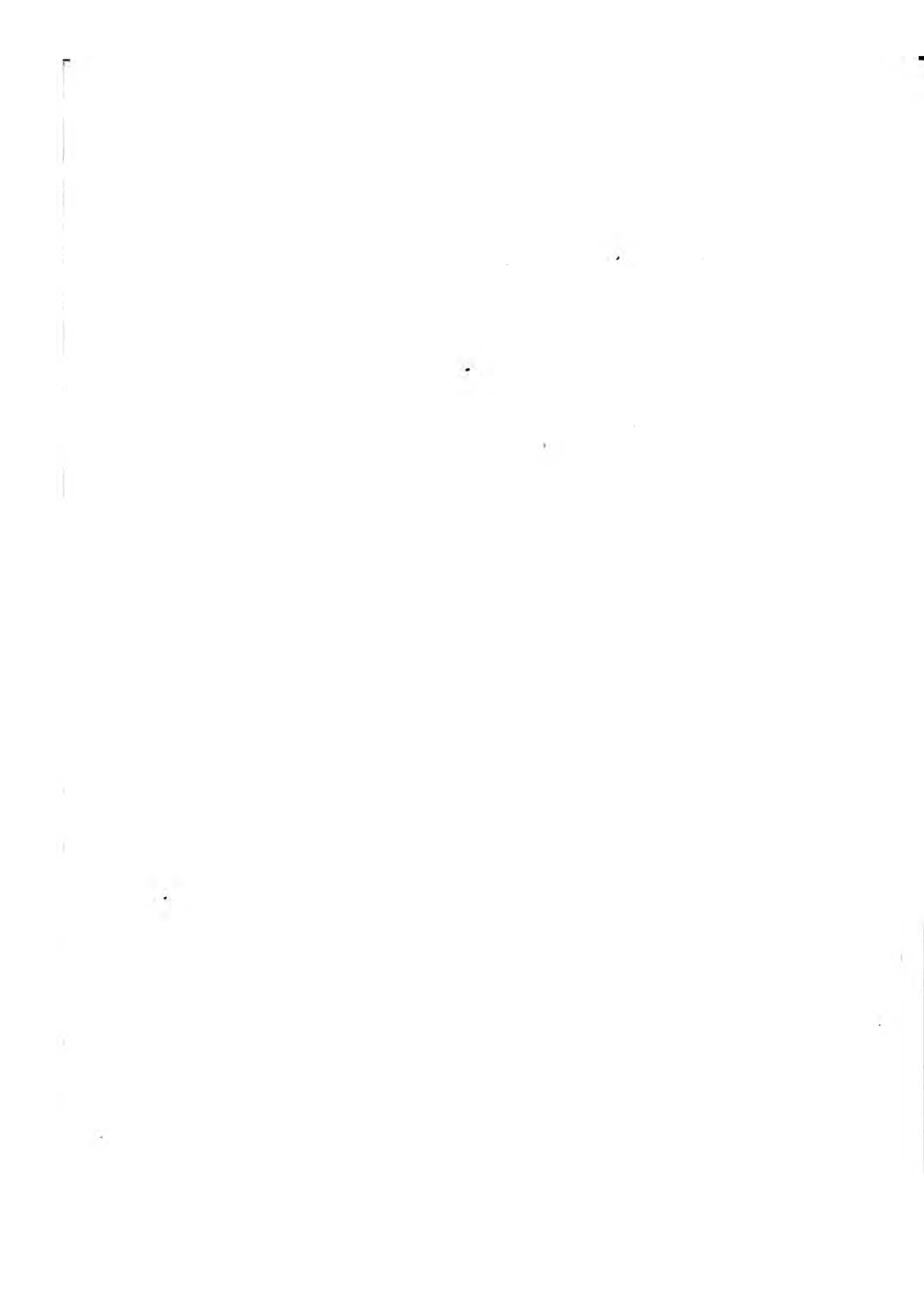
Abreide, A.S., to awake, to start	Autentyk, powerful
Abroode, A.S., abroad	Autik, authentic, reliable
Adaweth, A.S., awakeneth	Autoryte, A.N., authority; a text of Scripture or some recognised writer
Aforne, A.S., before	Avance, A.N., to advance, to profit, advancement
Aire, heir	Avallid, A.N., to cover, to let down
Albumazar, an Arabian astronomer of the 9th century (?)	Avise, advice, counsel
Algate, A.S., always, although	Ay, A.S., ever
Alther bote, greatest good	Bale, A.S., mischief, sorrow
Anoon } by and bye	Bandon, A.N., dominion, power, subjection
Anoone } by and bye	Behoteth, to become, to be the duty of
Ancille } LAT., maidservant	Beform } A.S., before
Ancylle } LAT., maidservant	Biforn } A.S., before
Aspection, sight	Biforne } A.S., before
Assofte, to soften	Ben, A.S., inf. m. to be; pr. t. pl. are; p.p. been
Astoneyd, A.S., confounded, astonished	Bernake, the barnacle goose
Asswage } A.S., to assuage, to	Bersabe, Bathsheba
Asswagen } sweep away	Bette, adv. com. for better
Asterte, A.S., to escape, to release, to alarm	Bihigte, called, promised
At, that	Bigonnen, A.S., p.p. begun
Attempance, temperance	
Auter, altar	
Autor } A.N., author	
Auctour } A.N., author	

Bootes Arcturus, the brightest star of the constellation Ursa Major	Eche, A.S., each, every
Bote, medicine, remedy	Echon } each one
Brede, a board, broad, width	Echoone } each one
Breide, attack	Eke, A.S., also
Bounte, bounteous	Eleyne, Helen
Brenne, burn	Enlumine, A.N., to illuminate, to enlighten
Bryddis, birds	Envoisid, comforted, encouraged
Cercus, Crœsus, king of Lydia	Enviroun, A.N., around, to beset
Chawle, a jaw	Entent, A.N., intention
Chese, A.S., to choose	Ennew } to paint, to put on
Citherea, the star Venus	Ennewed } the last colours
Conclusyon, determination, judgment	Entendement, understanding
Conveied, recovered	Ensample } example
Coost } NORTH. loss or risk, to	Ensaumple } example
Cost } tempt	Emysperye, the hemisphere
Copys } A.N., a cloak, a vest-	Er, A.S., before, before that
Cope } ment	Eritekes, heretics
Couthe, pa. t. of conne, knew, was able ; p.p. known	Esperus, the evening star
Cynde, A.S., natural, kind	Eterne, LAT., everlasting
Daliaunce, toying, wantonness	Ev' } every
Dan (LAT. Dominus), lord, a title common to monks	Ev'y } every
Debonaire, A.N., gentle, courteous	Even, of Efen, A.S., evening
Digne, A.N., worthy, disdainful, proud, dignity	Ev'iche, A.S., each one, every one
Dissense, strife, quarrelling	Ev'yliche } ever the same,
Div's, divers, several, sundry	Evereliche } always alike
Doole, A.S., sorrow	Everylik } always alike
Donne, A.S., of a dun colour	Ev'ychone, every one
Dougt', daughter	Explite, accomplish, perform
Duresse, hardness or hardship, severity, confinement	Fabyon, Fabius
Eclptyke, the ecliptic, or great circle of the heavens	Ferthe, fourth
	Feere, A.S., a companion ; in fere, together, in company ; fear, to terrify
	Feffid, obtruded, placed
	Flete, drop
	Florre, flower
	Flyse, fleece
	Foison, A.N., abundance

Forne, A.S., before, sooner	Lees { A.S., to gather ; to se-
Foone, foes	Lese { lect ; to lose ; to deli-
Forblowyng, A.S., blown up, swollen	ver ; to lie, falsehood
Flyse, Fleece	Levene, A.S., lightning
Glede, a burning coal, a spark of fire	Liche, A.S., like
Gold-borned, burnished with	Lifelode, A.S., living, state of life
Gothe, goeth [gold	Lere, A.S., learn
Golden axtre, of the sun	List, A.S., to please
Gree by gree, A.S., step by step	Liggyng, A.S., lying down
Gryside, of gryfed, A.S., grieved	Loggyng, lodging
Hem, very ; them ; he or him	Loughen, laughed
Her	Lore, A.S., lost, knowledge
Here } pron. their	Male, A.N., portmanteau
Hir }	Malencolye, illwill
Heste } A.S., command, pro-	Marce, the star Mars
Heeste } mise	Meredene, meridian
Hire, Her ; obj. case of she, is often put for herself, and with- out the usual preposition	Meint, A.S., mixed
Herber, A.S., lodging	Morowe } A.S., morning, morrow
Hildeforne, S. Ildefonso	Morwe }
Hove, A.S., to stop, or hover ; to lift ; to move, &c.	Me, A.S., not, nor
Holpe } Help, helped	Nolde, A.S., would not
Holpyn }	Nevene, A.S., to name, to speak
Hondys, A.S., hands	Oo, one, aye, ever
Hoote, A.S., hotly, eagerly	Ov'goon, A.S., overgo, to pass
I- or y-loke, locked up	Parfigt } A.N., perfect [over
Iades, Pleiades	Parfite }
Iliche, alike	Peregalle, equal
Iocounde, A.N., joyous, pleasant	Peine, A.N., penalty, grief
Judicum, the Book of Judges	Platly, A.N., flatly, plainly
Jurdection } A.N., jurisdiction	Plete } A.N., to plead
Jurediction }	Pletyth }
Kynrede, A.S., kindred	Plinius, Pliny the elder
Konne } A.S., bold, boldness ;	Possede, possess
Konnyng } to know, knowing	Pouste, A.N., power
	Purviance, providence, foresight
	Poyntel, a pencil for writing
	Queme } A.S., to please
	Quemme }
	Raught, reached, snatched away

Reclinary, a resting-place	Thoug, though
Rede, counsel	Thourg, through
Rewe, A.S., to pity or regret	Thrid, A.S., third
Rewis, beams or rays	Thritty, A.S., thirty
Routhe, A.S., pity, compassion	To fore } A.S., before
Rothir, A.S., rudder	To forn } A.S., before
Sapience, the Book of Wisdom	To fyn, A.N., to end
Sawter, the psalter	Tresorere, A.N., treasure
Scephea, Sophia	Trestisse, trusty, trusting
Sekeness, sickness	Trewer, A.N., truce
Sekirnesse, A.S., security, surety	Triacle, a remedy, an antidote ;
Selde, seldom	there was anciently a medi-
Serpentyne, pertaining to the	cine of this name, which seems
serpent	to be the allusion meant
Sirquidrie } O.N., presumption,	Trowe, A.S., to believe, to think
Surquedrie } arrogance, conceit	Twynne, to separate, to divide
Sith } A.S., since	Undirpigte, A.S., propped up
Sithen } A.S., since	Verrey, A.N., true
Skylle, A.S., reason	Waker, A.S., watcher
Smerte, pain	Wawe, woe
Son, sound	Wawes } A.S., seas, waves
Sote } sweet	Wawys } A.S., seas, waves
Sote } sweet	Weme, A.S., corrupt
Sootte } sweet	Weren, were
Sowkyng, sucking	Werrey, to make war, worry
Spica, a star in the left hand of	Worch
Virgo	Worche } to work, working
Sterre, A.S., a star	Worchynge } to work, working
Sufferant, A.N., forbearing	Wote, A.S., to know
Suffisaunce, sufficient	Ye } A.S., eye, eyes
Swage, to assuage, to lessen	Yen } A.S., eye, eyes
Tauriche, Lesser Tartary	Yfalle, fallen
Thilke, A.S., this same, that same	Ysage, wise
Thoo, A.S., then, when	





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