

# WIFE OF BEITH

Reformed and Corrected.

Giving an Account of her Death, and of her Journey to Heaven; how on the road she fell in with Judas, who carried her to the Gate of Hell, and what conversation she had with The DEVIL, who would not let her in.

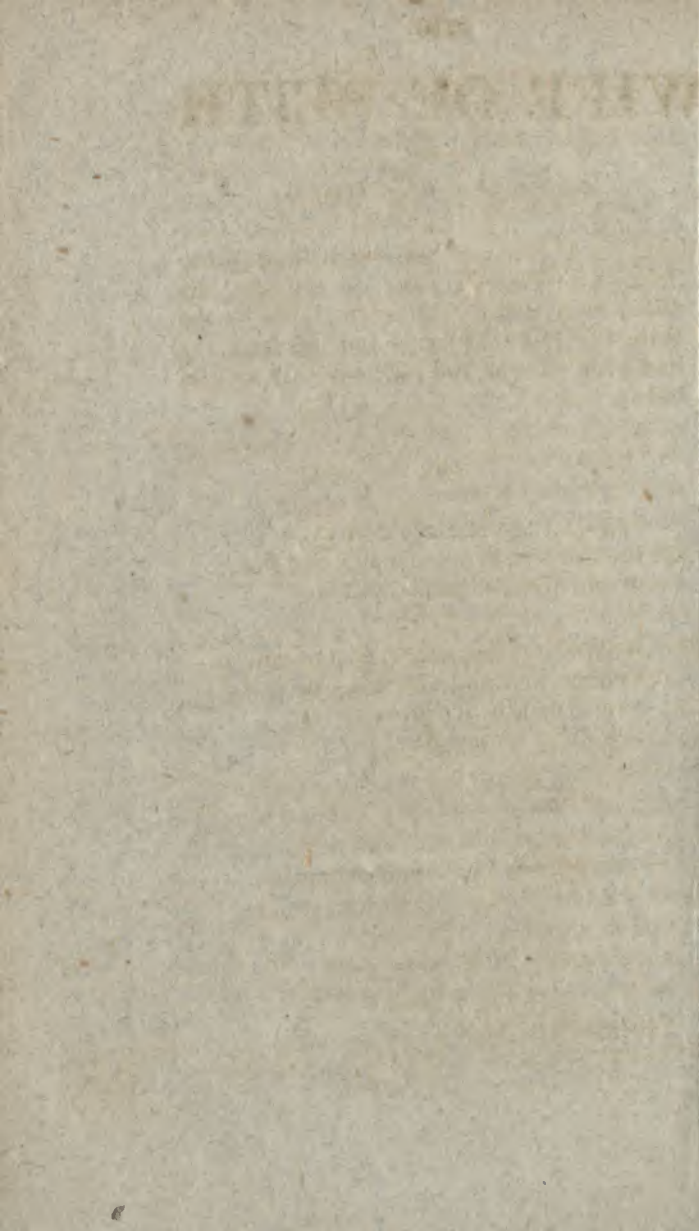
ALSO,

How at last she got to heaven,  
and the difficulties she encounter'd before  
she got admittance there.

The whole being an allegorical DIALOGUE,  
containing nothing but that which is  
recorded in Scripture for our  
example.

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THE  
WIFE OF BEITH

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IN Beith once dwelt a worthy wife,  
Of whom brave Chaucer mention makes,  
She lived a licentious life,  
And namely in venereal acts,  
But death did come for all her cracks,  
When years were spent and days out-driven  
Then suddenly she sickness takes,  
Deceas'd forthwith, and went to heaven

But as she went upon the way,  
There followed her a certain guide,  
And kindly he to her did say,  
Where means you dame for to abide?  
I know you are the Wife of Beith,  
And would not them that you go wrong,  
For i'm your friend, and will be leath  
That you go through this narrow throng,  
This way it broadair; go with me,  
And very pleasant is the way:  
I'll bring you there, where you would be,  
Come with me, friend, say me not nay.

She look'd on him and then did speer,  
I pray you, Sir what is your name;  
Show me the way how you came here,  
To tell to me it is no shame,  
Is that a favour 'bout your neck;  
Or what is that upon your side?  
It is a bag, or silver sack?  
What are you then? Where do you dide?

I was a servant unto Christ;  
And Judas likewise is my name.

I know you by your colour first,  
Forsooth indeed you are to blame;  
Your master did not you betray?  
And hang yourself when you had done:  
Where'er you bide I will not stay,  
Go then, you knave, let me alone.

Whatever I be I'll be your guide,  
Because you know not well the way;  
Will ye but once in me confide,  
I'll do all friendship that I may.  
What would you me Where do you dwell?  
I have no will to go with thee;  
I fear it is some lower cell,  
I pray thee therefore let me be.

This is a stormy night and cold,  
I'll bring you to a warm inn;  
Will ye go forward and be bold,  
And mend your pace till we win in.

I fear your inn will be too warm,  
For too much hotness is not best:  
Such hotness there may do me harm,  
And keep me that I do not rest.  
I know my way it is to hell,  
For you are none of the eleven:  
Go haste you then unto your cell,  
My way is only unto heaven.

Thy way is by the gates of hell,  
If you intend there for to go,  
Go dame, I will not you compel,  
But I with you will go also.

Then down they went a right steep hill  
 Where smoke and darkness did abound,  
 And pitch and sulphur burned still;  
 With yells and cries hills did rebound,  
 The fiend himself came to the gate.  
 And asked him where he had been?  
 Do ye not know, or have forgot,  
 Seeking this wife could not be seen.

Good dame, he said, would you be here,  
 I pray you then tell me your name?

The wife of Beith, since that youspier,  
 But to come in I were to blame.

I will not have you here, good dame,  
 For you are mistress of the flyting;  
 If once within this gate you come,  
 I will be troubled with your biting:  
 Cummer go back and let me be,  
 Here are too many of your rout,  
 For woman lewd like unto thee,  
 I cannot turn my foot about.

Sir Thief she says, I shall bide out,  
 But gossip thou wast ne'er to me,  
 For to come in I'm not so stout,  
 And of my biting thou'lt be free.  
 But Lucifer what's that on thee?  
 Hast thou no water in this place?  
 Thou look'st so black, it seems to me  
 Thou ne'er dost wash thy ugly face.

If we had water here to drink,  
 We would not care for washing them;  
 Into those flames and filthy stink  
 We burn with fire unto the doom.

Unbraid me then, goodwife, no more,  
For first when I heard of my name,  
I know thou hadst such words in store,  
Would make the devil to think shame  
Forsooth, Sir Thief you are to blame,  
If I had time now to abide.

Once you were well, but my think shame,  
That lost heaven for rebellious pride :  
Who, traiter like, fell with the rest,  
Because you would not be content ;  
And now of bliss are dispossest,  
Without all grace for to repent ;  
Thou mad'st poor Eve long since consent  
Toest of the forbidden tree ;  
When we her daughters, may repent)  
(And make us always like to thee ;  
But God be blest, who pass'd thee by,  
And did a Saviour provide  
For Adam's whole posterity,  
All those who do in him confide.  
Adieu false fiend, I may nat longer stay,  
With thee I may not longer stay,  
My God in death he is my guide,  
O'er hell I'll get the victory

Then up the hill the poor wife went,  
Opprest with stinking flames and fear,  
Weeping right fore with great relent,  
For to go else she wist not where  
A narrow road with thorns and briars,  
And full of mires was her before ;  
She sighed oft with sobs and tears,  
The poor wife's heart was wond'rous fore.

Tir'd and torn she went on hill,  
 Sometimes she sat and sometimes fell,  
 Ay till she came to a high hill,  
 And then she lookd back to hell  
 When she had climbed up the hill,  
 Before her was a goodly plain,  
 Where she did rest and weep her fill ;  
 Then rose and to her feet again,  
 Her heart was glad the way was good,  
 Up to the hill she hied with haste ;  
 The flowers were peazent to her taste.

Then she behold Jerusa'em,  
 On Sion's mount were that it stood ;  
 Shining with bright gold as the sun,  
 Her silly soul was very glad.  
 The ports of orient pearls bright,  
 Were very glorios to behold,  
 The prcious stone gave a pure light,  
 The walls were of transparent gold.  
 High were the walls, the gate were shut,  
 And long she sought for to be in ;  
 But then for fear : of biding out,  
 She knocked hard and made some din,

To knock and cry she did not spare,  
 Till father Adam did her hare :  
 Who it's that raps so rudley there,  
 Heaven cannot well be won by weir.

The Wife of Beith, since that you spier,  
 Hath stood thise two hours at gate :

Go back, quoth he, thou must forbear,  
 Here may no sinners entrance get.

Adam quoth, she, I shall be in  
 In spite of all such churls as ther,  
 Thour't the original of all sin,  
 For eating of the forbidden tree ;  
 For which thou art not flying free,  
 But for thy soul offences fled.

Adam went back and let her be,  
 Looking as if his nose had bled.

Then Mother Eve did at him speer  
 Who was it there that made such din ?  
 He said a woman would be here ;  
 For me I durst not let her in.

I'll go, said she, and ask her will  
 Her company I would have fain.

But aye she cried and knocked still  
 And is no ways she would refrain.

Daughter, said Eve, you will do will  
 To come again another time :  
 Heaven's not won by sword nor steel,  
 Nor none that's guilty of a crime.

Mother said she, the fault is thine  
 That knocking here so long I stand ;  
 Thy guilt is more than that of mine  
 If thou wilt rightly understand,  
 Thou wast the cause of all our sin  
 Whercin we were born and conceived,  
 Our misery did first begin ;  
 By thee thy husband was deceived.

Eve went back where Noah was,  
 And told him how she was blam'd  
 Of her great sin and first trespass,  
 Whereof she was so much a sham'd.



Then Noah said, I will go down  
 And will forbid her that she knock.  
 Go back he said, you drunken lown,  
 You're none of the celestial flock.

Noah, she said, hold thou thy peace,  
 Where I drank ale thou didst drink wine  
 Discover'd was to they disgrace  
 When thou wast drunken like a swine ;  
 If I did drink I learn'd at thee,  
 For thou'rt the father and the first  
 That other's taught, and likewise me,  
 To drink although we had no thirst.

Then Noah turned back with speed,  
 And told the patriarch Abraham then,  
 How that the carling made him dread,  
 And how she all his deeds did ken,  
 Abra'am then said Now get ye gone  
 Let us hear no more of your din,  
 No lying wife as I suppose,  
 May enter here these gates within.

A bram, she said will ye but spare,  
 I hope you are not flyting free ;  
 You of yourself had such a care,  
 Denied your wife and made a lie.  
 O then I pray you let me be,  
 For I repent of all my sin,  
 Do thou but ope the gates to me,  
 And let me quietly come in,

Abra'am went back to Jacob then,  
 And told his nephew how he sped,  
 How that of her he nothing wan,  
 And that he thought the carling mad.

Then down came Jacob tho' the close,  
And said Go backward down to hell.

Jacob. quoth she, I know thy voice,  
That gate pretains unto thyself, ;  
Of thy old trumperies I can tell,  
Thou with two sisters lea'it thy life,  
And the third part of the tribes twelve  
Thou didst get with maid's besides thy wife  
And stole thy father's benison,  
Only by fraud they father frae ;  
Gave thou not him for venison  
A baken kid. instead of rae.

Jacob himself was tickled so,  
He went to Lot where he was lying,  
And to the prayed him to go,  
To staunch the carling of her crying.

Lot says, Fair dame make less ado,  
And come again another day,

Old harlot carl, and drunkard too,  
Thou with thine owntwo daughters lay,  
Of thine untimely feed I say,  
Proceeded never good but ill.

Poor Lot for shame then stole away,  
And left the wife to clack her fill.

Mee! Moses then went down at last,  
To pacify the carling then ;  
Now dame, said he, knock not so fast.  
Your knocking will not let you in.  
Good Sir, she said, I am aghast,  
Whene'er I look you in the face ;  
If your law until now did last,  
Then surely I had ne'er got grate.

But Moses, Sir, now by your leave,  
 Although of heaven ye're possest,  
 For all you saw did not believe,  
 But you in Horeb once transgrest,  
 Wherefore by all it is confest,  
 You got but up the land to see,  
 And in the mount was put to rest,  
 Yea buried there, were you did die.

Moses meekly turned back,  
 And told his brother Aaron there,  
 How the old carling did so crack,  
 And in no ways did him forbear;

Then Aaron said, I will not sware,  
 But I'll conjure her as I can  
 And I will make her to forbear,  
 So that she shall not rap again.

Then Aaron said, You whorish wife,  
 Go get you gone and rap no more ;  
 With idols you have led your life.  
 Therefore you shall repent it sore.

Good Aaron priest, I know you well,  
 The golden calf you may remember,  
 Which made the people plagues to see ;  
 This is of you recorded ever,  
 Your priesthood now is nothing worth,  
 Christ is my only priest, and he,  
 My Lord, that will not keeo me forth,  
 So I'll get in in spite of thee.

Up started Samson at the last,  
 Into the gate apace came he,  
 To drive away the wife with strength,  
 But all in vain, it would not de,

Samson, queth she, the world my see  
 Thou was't a judge that prov'd unjust.  
 Those precious gifts which God gave thee,  
 Thou lost by thy licentious lust.  
 From Delilah thy wicked wife,  
 Thy secrets chief could not contain  
 She daily sought to take thy life,  
 Thou lost thy lock and then was slain,  
 Though thou wast strong it was in vain ;  
 Haunting with harlots here and there,  
 Ther Samson turned back again,  
 And with the wife would mell nae mair,  
 Then said king David knock nae mair,  
 We are all troubled with your cry.

David, said she, how cam'it thou there  
 Thou might'ft bide out as well as I :  
 Thy deed's no ways thou canst deny,  
 Is not thy sin far worse than mine,  
 Who with Uriah's wife did lie,  
 And cause him to be murder'd syne.

Then Judith said, Who's there that knocks  
 And to our neighbours gives these notes ?

Madam, she said, let be your mocks,  
 I am net heare for cutting throats ;  
 I am a sinner full of blots,  
 Yet through Christ's blood I shall be clean :  
 If you and I be judg'd by votes,  
 The thing you did was worse than mine,

Then said the sapient Solomon,  
 Thou art a sinner all men say,  
 There our Saviour I suppose,  
 Thee heavenly entrance with deny

Mind, quoth she, thy latter days,  
 What idol gods thou didst upset;  
 And wast so lewd in Venus plys,  
 Thou didst thy Maker quite forget.

'Then Jonas saic, Fair dame, content you  
 If you intend: o come to grace,  
 You must dree penance and repent you,  
 Ere you can come within this place.

Jonas, quoth she, how stands the case,  
 How come you here to be with Christ,  
 How dare you look him in the face  
 Considering how you broke your tryft.  
 To God's errand thou withstood'st him,  
 And held'st his counsel in disdain,  
 'The corby messenger thou play'd him,  
 And brought no message back again;  
 With mercy thou wast not content,  
 When God the Ninevites did spare,  
 Although the city did repent,  
 It grieved thee, thy heart was fair.  
 Let me alone and speak no more,  
 Go back a again unto the whale,  
 But now my heart is also sore,  
 But yet I hope I shall prevail.

Good Jonas said, Crack on your fill  
 For here I may no longer tarry,  
 Yet knock as long as e'er you will,  
 And go into a firay farry.

Jonas. she says ye do miscarry  
 As I have done in former time;  
 You're not Saint Peter nor Saint Mary,  
 Your blot's as black as ever mine.

So Jonas then was aſham'd,  
 Becauſe he was not flyting free ;  
 Of all his faults ſhe had him blam'd,  
 He left the wife and let her be

Saint Thomas ther. I counſel thee,  
 Go ſpeak unto you wicked wife,  
 She ſhames us all, and as for me,  
 Her like I never heard in life.

Thomas then ſaid, you make ſuch ſtrife  
 When you are out and meikle din,  
 If you were here I'll lay my life  
 No peace the ſaints would get within.  
 It is your trade ſtill to be flyting,  
 As one that in a fever raves ;  
 No marvel though you wive be biting,  
 Your tongues were made of aſpen leaves.

Thomas, quoth ſhe, let be your taunts,  
 You play the pick thank I preceive,  
 Though you be brother'd mong the ſaints,  
 An unbelieving heart you have ;  
 You bring the Lord unto his grave,  
 But would no more with him remain,  
 And were the laſt of all the lave,  
 That did believe he roſe again.  
 There might no doctrine do thee good,  
 Nor miracles made thee conſide.  
 Till thou beheld Chriſt's wounds and blood  
 And put thy hand into his ſide.  
 Didſt thou not daily with him bide,  
 And ſee the wonders which he wrought ;  
 But bleſt are they who do conſide,  
 And do believe, yet ſaw him nought.

Thomas, she says, will ye but spier,  
 If that my sister Magdalene,  
 Will come to me if she be here?  
 For comfort sure ye gie me here.

He was so blythe he turned back,  
 And thanked God that he was gone,  
 He had no will to hear her crack,  
 But told it Mary Magdalene.

When that she heard her sister's mocks  
 She went unto the gate with speed,  
 And asked her Who's there that knocks?

'Tis I, the Wife of Beith indeed,  
 She said. good mistress you must stand,  
 Till you be tried by tribulation.

Sister, quoth she, give me your hand,  
 Are we not both of one vocation?  
 It is not through your occupation  
 That you are placed so divine;  
 My faith is fixed on Christ's passion,  
 My soul shall be as safe as thine.

Then Mary went away in haste,  
 The carlin made her so asham'd,  
 She had no will of such a guest,  
 To lose her pains and so be blam'd,

Now good St Paul, said Magdalene,  
 Because you are a learned man,  
 Go and convince this woman then,  
 For I have done all that I can;  
 Sure if she were in hell I doubt  
 They would not keep her longer there,  
 But to the gate would put her out,  
 And send her back to be elsewhere.

Then went the good apostle Paul,  
 To put the wise in better tune  
 Wash off the guilt that files thy soul,  
 Heaven's gates shall then be open'd soon.

Remember Paul, what thou hast done,  
 For all th' epistles thou didst compile,  
 Though now thou sittest up aboon,  
 Thou persecuted Christ a while.

Woman, he said, thou art not right,  
 That which I did I did not know ;  
 But thou didst sin with all thy might,  
 Although the preachers did thee shew

Saint Paul, she said, it is not so,  
 I did not know so will as you ?  
 But I will to my Saviour go,  
 Who will his favour shew to me,  
 You think you are of flyting free,  
 Because thou art wrapt up above ;  
 But yet it was Christ's grace to thee,  
 And matchlessnes of his dear love

Then Paul she said let Peter come,  
 If he be lying let him arise,  
 To him I will confesse my sin,  
 And let him quickly bring the keys  
 Too long I stand he'll let me in,  
 For why I cannot longer tarry.  
 Then shall ye all be quiet of din,  
 For I most speak with good Saint Mary,

The good apostle discontent  
 Right suddenly did turn back,  
 For he did very much repent,  
 To hear the carlin proudly crack.



But at the last the Lord arose,  
 Environed with angels bright,  
 And to the wife in haste he goes,  
 Desir'd her to pass out of sight,

O Lord, quoth she, cause do me right,  
 But not according to my sin,  
 Have you not promis'd day and night  
 When sinners knock to let them in?

He said, thou wrests the scripture wrong,  
 The night is come, thou spent'st the day,  
 In whoredom thou hast lived long,  
 And to repent thou didst delay.  
 Still my commandments thou abus'd  
 And vice committed busily;  
 Since now my mercy thou refus'd,  
 Go down to hell eternally.

O Lord, my soul doth testify  
 That I have spent my life in vain,  
 And made a wandering sheep of me,  
 And bring me to thy flock again.

Think'st thou there is no court to crave  
 Of all these gifts in thee was planted,  
 I gave thee beauty bove the lave,  
 A pregnant wit thou never wanted.

Master, quoth she, it must be granted,  
 My sins are great—grant me contrition,  
 The forlorn son when he repented,  
 Obtain'd his father's full remission.

I spar'd my judgments many times,  
 And spiritual pastors did thee send,  
 But thou renew'd thy former crimes,  
 Aye more and more to offend.

Thou mightest then have turned wrath, ]  
 To mercy then, and mercy got,  
 But now the Lord is very loath,  
 And all thy cries not worth a jot.  
 Ah Peter then what shall I do,  
 He will not hear me, as I fear,  
 Shall I despair of mercy too,  
 No, no, I'll trust in mercy dear,  
 And if I perish, here I'll stay,  
 And never go from heaven bright,  
 I'll ever hope and always pray,  
 Until I get my Saviour's fight.

I think indeed now you are right,  
 If ye had faith ye would win in ;  
 Importune then with all your might,  
 Faith is the feet wherewith ye come,  
 It is the hands will hold him fast :  
 But weak faith never may presume,  
 'I will let you sink, and be aghast,  
 Strongly believe, or you're undone.

But good St Peter let me be.  
 Had you such faith ? did it abound  
 When you did walk upon the sea,  
 Were you not likely to be drown'd?  
 Had not your Saviour helped thee,  
 Who came and took thee by the hand,  
 So can my Lord do unto me,  
 And bring me to the promis'd land.  
 Is my faith weak ? yet he is still  
 The same, and ever shall remain ;  
 His mercies last, and his good-will  
 To bring me to his flock again ;

He will me help, and me relieve,  
 And will increase my faith also,  
 If weakly I can but believe,  
 But from this place I'll never go.

But Peter said, How can that be,  
 How dar'st thou look him in the face?  
 Such horrid sinners even as thee,  
 Can have no courage to get grace.  
 Here none come in but they that's stout,  
 And suffer'd have for the good cause,  
 Like unto thee are keep'd out,  
 For thou hast broke all Moses' laws

Peter, she said, I do appeal,  
 From Moses and from thee also,  
 With him and you I'll not prevail,  
 But to my Saviour I will go.  
 Indeed of old you were right stout,  
 When you did cut off Malchus' ear,  
 But after that ye went about,  
 And a poor maiden did you fear.  
 Take home the whiffel of your groat,  
 Was it your own or Paul's good sword,  
 When that your courage was so keen,  
 You were right stout upon my word,  
 When you would fain at fishing been,  
 For ere the crowing of the cock,  
 You did deny your master thrice,  
 For all your stoutness turn'd a block,  
 Now flyte no more if you be wise.

Paul says, good brother now arise,  
 And make an end of all this din,  
 And if so be ye have the keys,  
 Open and let the carlin in.

The Apostle Peter rose at last.  
 And to the gate with speed he hies,  
 Carlin quoth he, knock not so fast  
 You cumber Mary with your cries.

Peter she said let Christ arise,  
 And grant me mercy in my need,  
 For why I ne'er denied him thrice,  
 As thou thyself hast done indeed.

Thou carlin bold, what's that to thee  
 I got remission for my sin,  
 It cost many sad tears to me  
 Because I enter'd here within,  
 It will not be thy meikle din,  
 Will cause heaven's gates opned be ;  
 Thou must be purified from sin,  
 And of all trespasses made free.

Saint Peter then no thanks to you,  
 That so you were rid of your fears,  
 It was Christ's gracious look I trôw.  
 That made you weep those precious tears  
 The door of mercy is not clos'd.  
 I may get grace as well as ye ;  
 It is not so fare as ye suppos'd,  
 I will be in in spite of thee.

But wicked wife it is too late,  
 Thou should'st have mourned upon death  
 Repentance now is out of date,  
 It should have been before thy death.

My Lord, quoth she, I do amend,  
Lamenting for my former vice.  
The poor thief at the latter end,  
For one word went to paradise,

The thief heard never of my teachings,  
My heavenly precepts or my laws,  
But thou was daily at my preachings,  
Both heard and saw, and yet misknows.

Master, quoth she. the scripture shews  
The Jewish woman who played the loom,  
Conform unto the Hebrew laws,  
Was brought to thee to be put down.  
But nevertheless thou let her go,  
And made the Pharisees afraid.

Indeed says Christ it was right so,  
And that my bidding was obey'd.  
Woman, said he, I may not cast  
The childrens bread to dogs like thee.  
Although my mercies still do last,  
There's mercy here, but none for thee.

But, loving Lord, may I presume,  
Poor worm I am, to speak again,  
The dogs for hunger were undone,  
And of the crumbs they were right fain,  
Grant me one crumb that then doth fall  
From the blest childrens table, Lord,  
That I may be refresh'd withal,  
It will me help enough afford.

The gates of mercy now are clos'd,  
And thou canst hardly enter in;  
It is not so as ye suppos'd  
For thou art deadly sick in sin,

'Tis true indeed, my lord most meek,  
 My fore and sickness I do feel;  
 Yet thou the same did truly seek,  
 Who lay long at Bethesda's pool,  
 Of many that thee never sought,  
 Such as the poor Samaritan,  
 Whom thou into thy fold has brought,  
 Even as thou didst the widow of Nain,  
 Most gracious God, didst thou not bid  
 All that were weary come to thee?  
 Behold I come, even overload,  
 With sin; have mercy upon me.

The issues of thy soul are great,  
 Thou art both leprous and unclean,  
 To be with me thou art unfit,  
 Go from me then, let me alone,

Let me thy garments once but touch,  
 My bloody issue shall be whole,  
 It will not cost thee very much  
 To save a poor distressed soul.

Speak thou the word, I shall be whole,  
 One look of thee shall do me good,  
 Save now, good Lord, my silly soul,  
 Bought with thine own most precious blood

Let me alone, none of my blood  
 Was ever shed for such as thee,  
 It was my mercy, patience good,  
 Which from damnation made thee free.

It is confessed thou hadst been just  
 Although thou hadst condemned me,  
 But O thy mercies still do last,  
 To save the soul that trusts in thee.

Let me not then condemned be,  
Most humbly. Lord. I thee request,  
Of sinners all, none like to me,  
So much the more thy praise shall last.

Thy praising me is not perfitte,  
My faints shall praise me evermore,  
In sinners I have no delight,  
Such sacrifice I do abhor.

Then she unto the Lord did say,  
At footstool of thy grace I'll lie.  
Sweet Lord my God, say me not nay,  
For if I perish here I'll lie.

Poor silly woman, say no more,  
Thy faith, poor soul, hath saved thee,  
Enter thou into thy gloire,  
And rest through all eternity.

How soon our Saviour these words said,  
A long white robe to her was given,  
And then the angels did her lead  
Forthwith within the gates of heaven.  
A laurel crown set on her head,  
Spangled with rubies and with gold;  
A bright white palm she also had,  
Glorious it was for to behold;  
Her face did shine like to the sun,  
Like threads of gold her hair hung down,  
Her eyes like lamps unto the moon,  
Of precious stones rich was her crown,  
Angels and saints did welcome her,  
The heavenly quoir did sing, Rejoice  
King David with his harp was there,  
The silver bells made a great noise.

Such music and such melody  
 Was never either heard or seen;  
 When this poor saine was placed on high,  
 And of all sins made freely clean;  
 And then when thus she was possess'd,  
 And looked back on all her fears,  
 And that she was come to her rest,  
 Freed from her sins and all her tears:  
 She from her head did take the crown,  
 Giving all praise to Christ on high,  
 And at his feet she laid it down,  
 Because the Lamb had made her free.  
 Now she doth sing for evermore,  
 And shall rejoice triumphantly,  
 With lasting pleasures laid in store,  
 O'er death and hell victoriously.

FINIS.