**The Clerk who would see the Virgin**

Traduction française de Florence BOURNE, Maître de conférences, Université Paris-Sorbonne.  
Traduction en anglais moderne de Sheryl SAVINA, Maître de conférences honoraire, Université Paris-Sorbonne.

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<th>Manuscrit Auchinleck</th>
<th>Traduction française</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[An an]gel sche sent to him anon. {f.37vb}</td>
<td>Elle lui envoya aussitôt un ange.</td>
<td>Soon she sent him an angel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[He g]ret þe clerk wiþ milde steuen.</td>
<td>Il salua le clerc d’une voix douce.</td>
<td>He greeted the clerk with a soft voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Into] þe chamber when he gan gon,</td>
<td>Dans la chambre lorsqu’il entra.</td>
<td>When he came into the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[He was] bri3ter þan ani leuen.</td>
<td>Il brillait plus qu’un rayon de soleil.</td>
<td>He was brighter than any flash of lightning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leuen] no no sonnes bem</td>
<td>Aucun reflet ni rayon de soleil</td>
<td>Neither lightning flash nor sunbeam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[In so]mers day nas neuer so bri3t,</td>
<td>Ne brillait l’été davantage</td>
<td>On a summer’s day was ever as bright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[þan] þat angel, when he doun kem</td>
<td>Que cet ange, lorsqu’il descendit</td>
<td>As the angel when he came down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Into] þat hous about midni3t.</td>
<td>Dans cette demeure vers minuit.</td>
<td>Into that house around midnight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[He þo]u3t his hert schuld tospring,</td>
<td>Il crut que son cœur allait se briser</td>
<td>He thought his heart would burst,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Þo h]e gan on þat angel sen.</td>
<td>Lorsqu’il posa les yeux sur cet ange.</td>
<td>When he came to look at the angel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Þi] clerk, drede þe noþing,</td>
<td>« Mon clerc, n’aie pas peur,</td>
<td>‘My clerk, do not be afraid,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Grace] of God be oüs bitwen.</td>
<td>La grâce de Dieu nous unit.</td>
<td>The grace of God is with us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Tidan]des now y þe bring</td>
<td>Je t’apporte maintenant des nouvelles</td>
<td>I bring you now a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Fram M]arie, our heuen-queen;</td>
<td>De Marie, notre reine céleste ;</td>
<td>From Mary, our heavenly queen;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[I þe] telle certain tiding:</td>
<td>Je vais te dire une chose certaine :</td>
<td>I tell you, truly:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[If þou] wilt hir bodi sen,</td>
<td>Si tu souhaites la voir en personne,</td>
<td>If you wish to see her body,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[If sen] þou wilt þat leuedi bri3t,</td>
<td>Si tu veux voir cette illustre dame,</td>
<td>If you want to see our radiant Lady,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Dis p]enaunce þou most chesen:</td>
<td>Tu dois choisir ta pénitence :</td>
<td>You must choose your penance :</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Tu dois assurément, ou bien la vue  
Ou bien la vie y perdre."

"Le clerc commença à réfléchir :  
Je peux trouver essayer une ruse :
Je peux cligner de l’un de mes yeux
Et de l’autre regarder ;"

J’effectuerai ma pénitence
Jusqu’à ce que je puisse lire un livre
Et avoir assez à boire et à manger.
Il en retira grand réconfort.
Il y réfléchit soigneusement :
En vérité, mon œil unique peut me servir
À tout ce dont j’aurai besoin ;
Il me suffira jusqu’à ma mort.
Le clerc répondit en retour poliment
« Je me mets entièrement en son pouvoir."

"Fais savoir ce que je veux dire  
À Marie, comme je te le raconte.
J’ai longtemps été son serviteur ;
Je la prie désormais avec tout mon amour
De me laisser la voir une seule fois"

En face, avant ma mort.
Lorsque je mourrai, qu’elle m’accorde
De venir à elle en toute honnêteté,
Pour voir son corps et son visage. »

"Duciel à la chambre du clerc  
Juste au pied de son lit
L’ange se posa dignement
Et le salua courtoisement.
« Marie, qui porta notre sauveur,
dit-il, tu la verras bientôt. »

Avec lui vint une puissante odeur,
Il n’en était pas d’aussi douce de moitié.
Il n’était pas d’odeur aussi douce,

Make sure, for you will have to abandon
Either your eyesight or your life.’
At once the clerk began to think:
I still know another trick:
I shall wink with my one eye,
And look with my other one;
I shall obtain my protection
So that I can still read a book
And have sufficient food and drink.
Thus he comforted himself.
And so he considered the situation :
Indeed, a single eye may serve me
To do everything I need to do.
It will be enough until I die.
The clerk answered him courteously,
’I put myself entirely in her hands.
Tell Mary what I mean,
As I say to you.
I have long been her servant;
With all my love now I pray to her
That I might see her clearly
Face to face before I die.
When I die, may she give me the grace
To come to her with good intent ,
To see her body and her face.’
The angel returned to heaven.
From heaven back into the clerk’s abode,
Right down at the foot of his bed,
The angel alighted with great dignity,
And greeted him respectfully.
‘Soon,’ he said, ’you shall see
Mary, who bore our saviour,’
A wonderful fragrance accompanied him,
Never had there been a smell half so sweet.
So sweet a smell there never was,
Of rose no of no spicerie,  
As com into þat leueli won  
Befor þat leueliche compeynie.    
Wiþ angel song & miri play  
Our leuedi adoun sche liþt  
Into þe chaumber þer he lay,  
& seyd ‘clerk, drede þe nowiþt.’  
Þei a man bipouþt him ay,  
No schuld he reden a poin[t] ariþt  
Hennes vnto domesday  
Hou fair sche is, þat maiden briþt.  
Hou briþt sche is no tong may telle –  
Yblisced mot hye euer ben.  
Of heuen, of erþe & of helle  
Sche is emperice & quene.  
A mantel our leuedy vnfeld,  
Briþþer þan sonne þat schineþ schire.  
‘Clerk, drede þe nouþt, bot be novþeld,  
For þou schalt haþ þi desire;  
Þerwhileþouþ hast þine eþþen in weld,  
Avise þe wele of min atire,  
Aperlþiche þou me biþeld,  
Bodi & face, brest & swire.’  
Swire & al hir bodi he seiþe,  
When sche hadde to him spoken:  
He loked on hir wip his on eþþe –  
Þat oþer he held stille yloken.  
Oþain to heuen our leuedi went  
Wel stilleliþich out of þat clos.  
Þe clerk held him fouleþly schent,  
Amorwe, when þat he aros.  
His 3alu he here he halþ al torent,  
& in his hert sore him agros;  
Al þus he seyd & him biment  
‘Bis niþt y saued on of mi fos;
| Mi fo y spard,allas þat while! {f.38rb} | Mon ennemi est sauf, hélas ! | My enemy I spared, alas the day! |
| Sori icham & wele ich owe: | Je suis désolé et à juste titre : | I am full of sorrow and well I ought to be: |
| Mi eĩʒe dōp mi soule gile, & often bringeþ it ful lowe.’ | Mon œil trompe mon âme, Et souvent l’avilit. » | My eye beguiles my soul And often brings it down low.’ |
| Riʒt in his chaumber, per he stode, | Là dans sa chambre, où il se trouvait, | As he stood there in his room |
| Him þouʒt his liſf was him ful lōp, | Il lui parut que sa vie le dégoutait, He felt that his life had become loathsome to him, |
| He wepe sore wiþ dreri mode, & out of his chaumber he goþ. | Il sanglofa, enproie au désespoir, Et sortit de sa chambre. And he went out of his room. |
| ‘Pat me no deined, ich was wode, To loke wiþ min eĩʒen bope | « Je n’ai pas daigne — j’ai été fou — Regarder de mes deux yeux ‘I was reckless not to think it fit To look with both my eyes |
| Opon þat leuedi fair & gode; | Cette belle et bonne dame ; | Upon my Lady so lustrous and good; |
| Y wot þerfore þat sche is wroþ. | Je sais désormais que je l’ai fâchée. | I believe therefore that she is angry. |
| Wroþ sche is, & wele sche may, Wiþ me, þat am sinful chaitif, | Elle est fâchée, et à juste titre, Contre moi, qui suis un pauvre pécheur, Angry she is, and well should she be |
| þat y schuld hir so bitraye, | Car je l’ai ainsi trahie, | With me, who am a sinful wretch |
| þat ichaue loued in al mi liiſ. | Moi qui l’ai aimée toute ma vie. | To have betrayed her so, |
| Euer me may rewe þat ich while | À tout jamais je puis regretter, à tout moment, D’avoir sans crainte She whom I have loved all my life. |
| þat y schuld for ani drede | Ainsi m’être rendu coupable envers Marie. Hélas, que puis-je faire ? I will always regret what I did: |
| Do Marie þat gret gile. | Hélas, que puis-je faire ? | That because I was afraid I should |
| Allas, what schal to rede? | Mon âme est placée en grand péril. | Have done such great treachery to Mary. |
| Mi soule y brouȝt in gret periiil. | Oh, dame, au nom de ta pureté | Alas, what shall I do now? |
| A, leuedi, for þi maidenhed | Pardonne-moi mes infâmes péchés, Et aide-moi dans mon besoin. | I have put my soul in great danger. |
| Forʒiȝe me mi sinnes vile, & help me in þis muchel nede. | Sauve-moi dans ce besoin, | Ah, Lady, for your maidenhood |
| In þis nede þou me saue, | Pour que je ne sois plus perdu : | Forgive me my vile sins, |
| þat y no be neuer forlorn; | Accorde-moi ce que je recherche | And help me in my great need. |
| Graunt me þat y þe craue, | Pour l’amour de celui qui est né de toi. | In my trouble save me, |
| For his loue þat of þe was born. | Oh, dame, viens à moi | So that I will not be doomed; |
| A, leuedi, to me þou liþe, | Ou de chagrin mon cœur se brisera ; | Grant me what I beg of you, |
| For care min hert wil toriue; | De grand amour je t’aimerai | For the love of Him that you bore. |
| Michel loue ichil þe kîpe | Et adorerai tes cinq joies. | Ah, Lady, return to me, |
| & wœr∫chip þine ioies fiue. | Accorde-moi la grâce, à nouveau, | My heart will break from grief, |
| Lene me grace, anoþer siþe | De revoir ton corps sans entrave. | Great love shall I bring you |
| To se þi bodi wiþouten striue | Alors j’accepterai volontiers | And worship your five joys; |
| Bi so, ichil be bliþe | My enemy I spared, alas the day! |

My enemy I spared, alas the day!
I am full of sorrow and well I ought to be:
My eye beguiles my soul
And often brings it down low.’
As he stood there in his room
He felt that his life had become loathsome to him,
He wept bitterly with a doleful heart,
And he went out of his room.
‘I was reckless not to think it fit
To look with both my eyes
Upon my Lady so lustrous and good;
I believe therefore that she is angry.
Angry she is, and well should she be
With me, who am a sinful wretch
To have betrayed her so,
She whom I have loved all my life.
I will always regret what I did:
That because I was afraid I should
Have done such great treachery to Mary.
Alas, what shall I do now?
I have put my soul in great danger.
Ah, Lady, for your maidenhood
Forgive me my vile sins,
And help me in my great need.
In my trouble save me,
So that I will not be doomed;
Grant me what I beg of you,
For the love of Him that you bore.
Ah, Lady, return to me,
My heart will break from grief,
Great love shall I bring you
And worship your five joys;
Grant me the grace, one more time
Without delay to see your body.
With this, I will be content
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Original Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Latin Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To be blinde in al mi liue.  
In al mi liue ichil be glad  
Bi so þou graunt þat y þe bad:  
Efsones y mot þe sen.'  
Alday he was in sorwe strong;  
& afterward þat com þe niȝt;  
His white honden hard he wrong,  
He ne may for wo slepe nowiȝt.  
He herd þan a miri song {f.38va}  
Of angels þat were so briȝt;  
Our leuedi com hem among,  
& seyd ‘clerk, drede [þe] nowiȝt.’  
'Sche spac þe clerk so fair vntille  
'Ich forþiue þe al þi gil;  
Þi priayr y schal fulfille:  
Loke on me, 3iþ þat þou wilt.  
Þerwhileþ þat þou art hayl & quert,  
Biheld me wele euerich a bon.  
Bipenche in pine owhen hert  
Þat warisoun no hastow non;  
Þine axing sore schal þe smert,  
3iþ þou be blinde as ani ston;  
Þou most liue in gret pouert,  
[W]hen þou hast þine eijen forgon.  
'Then þou forgos þi warldes wele,  
& loue of frendes, fremed & sibbe,  
Angwis þat most suffri fele,  
In alle time þat þou schalt liber.'  
'Þe clerk answerd, & louȝ  
'Min hert is ful of gret solas;  
Icham bliþer þan brid on bouȝ  
Þat ich haue seyn þine holy face;  
Of al ioie ichaue anouȝ,  
Sende me now, leuedi, of þi grace –  
| De rester aveugle toute ma vie.  
Toute ma vie je me réjouirai  
D’accomplir cette pénitence,  
Accorde ce que je t’ai demandé :  
Il faut que je te voie bien vite. »  
Tout le jour il demeura en proie à ce cruel chagrin ;  
Ensuite quand vint la nuit  
Il tordit violemment ses blanches mains,  
Il ne pouvait dormir tant il était triste.  
Il entendit alors le beau chant  
D’anges éclatants ;  
Notre dame était venue avec eux  
Et dit « Clerc, ne crains rien. »  
Elle s’adressa fort courtoisement au clerc.  
« Je te pardonne ta faute ;  
J’accomplirai ta prière ;  
Regarde-moi si tu le souhaites.  
Tant que tu es vif et en bonne santé,  
Regarde-moi en entier.  
Sache en ton cœur  
Que tu n’as plus de pénitence ;  
Ta requête te fera souffrir,  
Quand tu seras aveugle comme une taupe ;  
Tu devras vivre dans une grande pauvreté  
Lorsque tu auras abandonné la vue.  
Lorsque tu abandonneras les biens de ce monde,  
L’amour de tes amis, de tes frères et de ta famille,  
Tu endureras de grandes souffrances,  
Durant toute ta vie durant. »  
Le clerc répondit en riant  
« Mon cœur est empli de douce consolation ;  
Je suis plus joyeux qu’un oiseau dans le taillis  
D’avoir contemplé ton saint visage ;  
J’ai suffisamment de joie,  
Tu peux me renvoyer de ta grâce —  
| To remain blind all my life.  
For all my life I shall be glad  
To do such penance.  
Therefore, grant me what I have asked of you :  
That I may soon see you once more.’  
All day he was in great sorrow;  
And afterwards when the night arrived  
He wrung his white hands hard,  
And he could not sleep at all for worrying.  
Then he heard a merry song  
Of angels so bright;  
Our Lady came among them  
And said, ‘Clerk, do not be afraid.’  
She spoke so sweetly unto the clerk  
‘I have forgiven you all your sins;  
Your prayer I shall fulfill:  
Look at me if you wish.  
While you are hale and hearty,  
Behold me well, every bone.  
In your heart know that  
You have yet to do penance.,  
Your request will cause you great pain;  
If you become as blind as a stone,  
You must live in great poverty  
When you have given up your eyes.  
When you give up your worldly riches,  
And love of family, both close and far removed,  
You will suffer cruel anguish  
For all the time that you shall live.’  
The clerk answered laughingly,  
‘My heart is filled with great comfort;  
I am happier than a bird on a branch  
Now that I have seen your holy face;  
This joy is enough,  
Give me now, Lady, your grace –  
|
To suffren wo mi body is touȝ,  
So that my body has the strength to suffer the calamity, 
Bi so ich mot hauen a place.  
And by this action may I have a place. 
A place graunt me, Marie,  
Grant me a place, Mary, 
Þat mi soule mot wone,  
So that my soul may live, 
Wiþ ioie & wiþ melodye;  
Before your beloved son in heaven, 
In heuen bifor þi swet sone.’  
Surrounded by joy and sweet music. 
Sche seyd ‘mi clerk, no wepe þou nouȝt,  
She said, ‘Clerk of mine, do not weep, 
No make no mornand chere.  
Nor make a mournful face. 
Þi bon þou hast me bisouȝt,  
The favour you have asked of me, 
Ich graunt þe in al maner;  
I grant it to you in its entirety. 
Into þat ioie þou schalt be brouȝt,  
When you have departed your life on earth, 
When þou hast laten þi liif here,  
You shall be brought into the joy 
Þat mi swete sone þap wrouȝt  
That my beloved son has prepared 
To hem þat ben him leue & dere.  
For those who are loved and dear to him. 
Dere þou art to me, ywis.  
And truly, you are dear to me 
Oȝain to heuoen now ich mot wende  
Now I must return again to heaven. 
Þou schalt com into þat blis,  
You shall come into that bliss 
When þou hast laten þi liues ende.’  
When you have finished the end of your life. 
Vp into heuoen anon sche steyȝe,  
Then immediately she ascended into heaven 
{f.38vb}  
Where she is queen and blessed Lady. 
Þer sche is quen & leuedi corn.  
The clerk shut his eyes tightly, 
Þe clerk his eiȝen fast he wreiȝe,  
He believed his sight was lost. 
He wende his siȝt were forlorn.  
When day arrived, he could still see 
When it was day, ful wele he seiȝe  
All the splendour of the world before him. 
Þis warldes pride al him biforn.  
‘Thank you, Lady,’ he cried to the heavens. 
‘Merci, leuedi’ he crid on heiȝe  
‘Happy be the moment when you were born. 
‘Wele be þe time þat þou were born.  
And truly, you are dear to me 
Þat þou were born of w o wiman,  
When you were born of a woman, 
Blisced be euer þe day.  
Blessed forever be that day. 
Þer liȝeþ no wȝȝþ þat telle can  
No living being can describe 
Þe ioie þat of þe springeþ ay.’  
The joy that springs from you continually.’ 
Leuedi, flour & fruit of lesse,  
Lady, flower and fruit of Jesse, 
Þou art maiden, gode & hendye,  
You are the Virgin, good and gracious, 
Godes moder, mild & fre;  
The mother of God, noble and mild; 
Michel þou helpest al mankende:  
You give all mankind great help: 
On þi seruaunt haue pite,  
Have pity on your servant,
& saue ous, lord, fram þe fende  
& graunt ous, ði ði wille be  
When we schul of þis warld wende  
When we schal wend out of þis liue.  
Here our prayer & our steuen:  
Bring ous, for þine ioies fiue,  
Into þe swete blis of heuen. Amen.  

| & saue ous, lord, fram þe fende  
& graunt ous, ði ði wille be  
When we schul of þis warld wende  
When we schal wend out of þis liue.  
Here our prayer & our steuen:  
Bring ous, for þine ioies fiue,  
Into þe swete blis of heuen. Amen.  |
|---|---|---|
| Sauve-nous, Seigneur, du démon,  
Et entends-nous, si telle est ta volonté,  
Lorsque nous devrions quitter ce monde  
Lorsque nous quitterons cette vie.  
Écoute-notre prière et notre voix :  
Amène-nous, pour l’amour de tes cinq joies,  
Dans la douce joie du ciel. Amen.  |
| And save us, Lord, from the devil  
And requite us, if it is your will,  
When we must take leave of this world,  
When we leave this life.  
Hear our prayer and our voice:  
Bring us, for the sake of your five joys,  
Into the sweet bliss of heaven. Amen.  |

Explicit