

4122 LIVES OF SAINTS

Vellum, $5 \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ in., 169 ff., single column, 12 lines to the page. XV cent., excellent hand; the verse written continuously but the first letter of each ^{couplet or stanza} line in red or blue alternately; red headings, blue capitals flourished in red, on f. 6 a small initial (showing ~~the~~ St. Margaret seated on the dragon) and border of conventional foliage in gold and colour (quite good work, somewhat rubbed).
5 flyleaves, a-e⁸ u¹⁰, 2 flyleaves. Catchwords and signatures.
Original binding of white skin over bevelled oak boards, to 4 bands; single clasp, now lost.

2^o f^o was his.

6-38b (1) Here begynnes þe lyfe of saynte Margarete. Olde and zounge
I þou praye þoure folys for to lette — for saynte Margaretes loue
on us haue mercy. Amen. 3g is blank.

A more modern form of the poem found in Cambridge, Trinity College B. 14.39 (323) and printed by C. Horstmann, Altenglische Legenden, neue Folge (Heilbronn 1881) pp. 489-98. IMEV 2672 no. 3.

39b-145 (2) Here begynnes a tretys of Our Ladye howe sche was wedded.
Ladye allowed in Goddys lawes For mayden and moder of sofaste
sawes — At Coleyn her bodyes er graued And her soules in heven be
sawed. Amen.

Life of the Virgin in about 825 couplets, from her birth to the visit of the Three Kings. IMEV 1835, the only known copy.

145b-66b (3) [Life of St Dorothy] O glorious virgyne and martyre Dorothee whos
fader was called Dorotheus — Cryste graunte us grace wip hem to be feede
In þe presence of þe holye Trinite. Amen. 167 blank.
Printed (without knowledge of this MS) by C. Horstmann, Sammlung altenglischer
Legenden (Heilbronn 1878) pp. 191-97. IMEV 2447 no. 1.

From the library of Richard Heber; lot 858 in part II of the Heber sale at Evans's, February 1836 (an extract from the catalogue is pasted in the lower cover; the price was £7.17.6). Lot in the John Fuller Russell sale at Sotheby's, 26 June 1885; his name is on the flyleaf. Offered by Quaritch (no. 240 in his catalogue of Sept. 1885) for £10.10.0, and bought of him by S. Sanders 11 Nov. 1885, [SSS. 20.6]. who bequeathed it to the Library in 1894 [SSS. 20.6].

172.
Edwin Wilfred Gardner

B.A., St. John's College
LL. B., St. John's University School of Law
M.A., New York University
Ph. D., Fordham University

Add 4122.

A Tretys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded

This dissertation presents an edition of the fifteenth century A Tretys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded, which is representative of the type of popular devotional writing current during the Middle English period. In eight hundred and thirty-nine rhymed couplets, in more or less regular iambic tetrameter lines, is told the story of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It does not claim to be a complete narration of Mary's life from birth to dormition. The author's patent purpose is to make a selection of certain portions of her life, either on the basis of those which appealed to him, or those which were contained in the works which he consulted and followed. Thus we find the story of Joahim and Anne, the parents of Mary, who had been childless for twenty years. The circumstances immediately preceding her birth are told as are the details of her birth and early training. Following these come the espousal to Joseph, the Annunciation, and the Nativity of Jesus Christ. The story concludes with the visit and adoration of the Magi.

The events of this narrative are based on the Apocryphal gospels as their remote source, with portions of the Legenda Aurea such as the Nativity of Mary, the Nativity of Our Lord, and the Circumcision of Our Lord being the immediate models. The author does interpolate on several occasions exegetical material and literary digressions which are apparently his own composition and invention. In the main, however, he contents himself with rendering a chronological narration of Mary's life. The work possesses intrinsic literary values which justify its being brought to the attention of modern eyes. The simple charm of expression renders it most agreeable to the reader, while the contents are absorbing in their revelation of the interests of the age. The poem also assumes additional value in that it gives a clue to the background and mind of the cultivated man, religious or lay, during the mediaeval period. A final merit of the poem lies in the presentation of the story of the nativity of Mary and subsequent events in her

life with such simplicity and sincerity that a feeling of great devotion and spiritual uplift is enkindled.

To our present knowledge, the poem exists in a single manuscript, Add. 4122, in a volume entitled Lives of Saints, in the University Library, Cambridge, England. Inasmuch as this is, according to our information and belief, the first transcription of A Troys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded, it was the aim of the author of the present edition to reproduce the text in a manner approximating as closely as possible the form of the original manuscript, although the grouping of the verses in their form and the numbering of the lines are the additions of the editor. The manuscript is listed in the Index of Middle English Verse by Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945) as item #1835. It is described in a catalogue of the auction sale of Richard Heber's library in February, 1836 (Bibliotheca Heberiana - Catalogue of the Library of the Late Richard Heber, Esq., Part II, IV, 89). It later appeared in the John Fuller Russell sale at Sotheby's in June, 1885, and in Quaritch's Catalogue of September, 1885. The manuscript was purchased by Samuel Sandars in November 11, 1885, who bequeathed it to the Library in 1894.

Besides an edition of the work, it was deemed profitable to make a study of its provenance, its place in the devotional literary tradition, and its own worth, and to supply the necessary background material which would render it more meaningful to the reader and would enable him to regard it in its proper perspective with relation to other works of the genre. Introductory material in the form of chapters on the contents of the manuscript, Mariology, the tradition of popular devotional writing, the style and language was added as were notes to explain allusions in the text and a bibliography to provide for further readings.

It was felt that it would be profitable to attempt to ascertain the possible sources of the author's material. This would point up certain facts about the writer - his background of education, his interests, his skill and artistry, and his method of handling his materials. One source was immediately apparent -

the Books of the Bible itself. Other sources had to be uncovered through delving into books which were contemporary with the Tretys or books which were the usual material upon which writers of the period were accustomed to draw. Upon comparisons with many works, the editor came to the conclusion that A Tretys ofoure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded drew heavily upon the Legenda Aurea of Jacopo da Varagine, Archbishop of Genoa, written about the year 1260. To substantiate this conclusion, the editor paralleled large portions of the Tretys with the Legenda Aurea and these were found to be almost an exact versification in English of the Latin prose text. Comparisons with other mediaeval writings such as the Cursor Mundi, stanzaic versions of the Life of St. Anne, the Speculum Sacerdotale, A Stanzaic Life of of Christ, Mirk's Festial, and many others revealed that, although stories of Mary and the Birth of Christ were present in these works, there were substantial differences in the relation of events, while the Legenda Aurea was practically identical in content with the Tretys in the portions which were utilized. That similarities with the Tretys in content should be found in other contemporary works is to be expected inasmuch as books at the disposal of mediaeval writers were rather limited and constant. Since one very fruitful source was the apocryphal gospels such as the Protevangelium or Book of James, the so-called Gospel of Thomas, the Pseudo-Matthew, and the De Nativitate Mariae, it would be a natural corollary that stories contained in these should reappear in the writings of the men of the era. This accounts for the fact that many mediaeval writings contain similar stories of the life of Mary and the Nativity of Christ.

The editor also thought it of value to include a chapter on Mariology and the tradition of popular devotional writing in order to illustrate the fact that the Tretys was only one of many literary works in this genre. The first reason ascribed for Mary's popularity was that her role as a mediatrix appealed to the imagination of those existing under the rigors of feudal society. Then, too, the extreme interest in apocryphal writings, brought back from the Orient by pilgrims and missionaries, stimulated writers to expatiate on this theme. The entire courtly love tradition, carried over from the secular into the religious

writings, also effected an output of literature about Mary as did the controversy concerning the introduction in 1140 of the feast of the Immaculate Conception into the choir by the canons of Lyons Cathedral, in support of which cause many stories on the subject of Mary were adduced. The emergence and the evolution of popular devotional writing is traced from its secular origins in the folk song through its transitional period derived from the ecclesiastical liturgy. The added impetus of the exempla of the religious preaching orders and of the influence of apocryphal writings is also mentioned in addition to some stress being laid upon the work of the Fifteenth Century, the particular period of the Tretys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded.

As further introductory material, some treatment is included on the style and language of the poem. The conscious techniques employed by the author of the Tretys to endow the story with literary characteristics are discussed, and the devices used to present the narration vividly and dramatically are presented in some detail. In addition to the purely technical aspects of versification, the attempts of the author to produce a lively narrative are cited. A portion of this chapter is also devoted to an analysis of the structure and form of the language in which the Tretys is written. The dialect of the poem is East Midland, in particular that of the standard London English of the end of the Fourteenth Century. In support of this contention, there is a discussion of the vocabulary and the morphology of the Tretys of Oure Ladye.

Inasmuch as the actual reading of the text presents few problems of intelligibility to the modern reader, it was the feeling of the editor that the main function of the accompanying notes should be that of enrichment. Accordingly, notes were included to point up similarities or differences between the story as told in the Tretys and the story as contained in other works on the same topic. Items in the text which would be further clarified by explanatory material were likewise treated. Certain of the notes were designed to explain background or to focus attention on ideas current in the literature of the period. Finally, references to other authors and to material mentioned in other works were annotated. The

inclusion of this section of the edition of the Tretys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded was designed to make the reading a more meaningful experience. Lastly, the bibliographical portion includes the listing of works which were consulted by the editor or which were deemed valuable to the reader should he wish to read further in the period.

The sincere thanks of the editor are given to the librarians of the University Library, Cambridge, England. They were most cooperative in furnishing the editor with a complete description of the physical appearance and a summary of the content of the Tretys of Oure Ladye Howe Sche Was Wedded, facts which were subsequently corroborated by personal observation.