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978-1-107-41592-8 - The Lyfe of Saynt Radegunde
Edited by F. Brittain
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I.

❶ *The prologe of the translatur in the
lyfe of mayden Radegunde | quene
and princesse.*

WHan the feruent heate / of the somer season
Was almost endyd by course of nature
And Phebus entred þ^e signe of Scorpion
Passing þ^e equinoctial than ye may be sure,
The day decreced / þ^e nyght dyd long endure
Cold frosty mornynge / and euintydes withall
Began to approche / a long space continuall.

That season lyueries ben vsed of duety
Ryght at the solempne feast of all Halomas
By the gentylnesse of England / and curtesy
To gladd theyr gwestes / in euery lordes place
And to theyr company to be great solace
To passe the euentide / after good humanite
In myrthes / in disportes / and liberalite

Than I reuolued with due circumstaunce
The gentyll maners / and discrete behauour
Of seculer people vsyng temperaunce
How they dispend the tyme / the day / the houre
Some in great policy for wordly honoure
Some in marchaundise for lucre and wynnynge
And some in chialry / great fame opteynynge

Some other gyuen to wanton company
To wordly pleasours / and singuler affeccyon
Some to distemperaunce and vile glotony
And some to Christes / labour / and occupacion

than, then lyueries, entertainments, banquets of duety, ac-
cording to custom after good humanite, in acts of kindness

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The Prologue

yet some be disposed to contemplacion
 To prayer to study / of theyr goodnesse
 And some (the more pitie) to slouth / and ydelnesse

Now syth that I am lowest of degre
 A man of holy church by true profession
 Consydering the condicions of people worldly
 (As afore is sayd) my fully entencion
 By diuine grace and gostly supportacion
 Is for to wryte the lyfe historiall
 Of Radegunde the princesse quene and moniall

After my reason me thynke more conuenient
 To spende wynter nyghtes in suche besynesse
 For drede of temptation and causles insolent
 Rather than to lose suche tyme in ydelnesse
 Whiche to all vyce / is rote and maistresse
 Enuy to vertue / a stepmother to study
 Occasyon of ruyne / and mycle malady.

A secondary cause / mouyng me thereto
 To write the lyfe of this virgyn glorious
 Was the instant desyre / and peticyon also
 Of speciall frendes / honest and vertuous
 Whiche lately requyred me full memorious
 With synguler request / and humble instaunce
 This lyfe to discrybe / with due circumstaunce

To whome I graunted / vnder this condicyon
 That of their wysedom / they wolde excuse me
 And take this poore dede / of no presumption
 Nor done for vauntage / auoyding vaynglore
 But alonly to content theyr mynde and satisfy
 Where they knowe well my insufficiencie
 My great ignoraunce / and also negligencie

moniall, nun

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The Prologue

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The thyrd cause mouyng moste principally
 Is for to extolle / the glorious name
 Of this holy virgyn / and gracious lady
 With honour / reuerence / and excellent fame
 To the comen people / desiryng the same
 Whose lyfe hath ben kept scilent many a day
 Knowen to fewe persons within this countray
 Therefore I require / and pray you euerychone
 That this litell treatyse shall reed or se
 To accept my mynde with your discrecion
 And it to correct after your charite
 Amende the mater / where is necessite
 For syth it is knowen / that I am no clarke
 Under protestacion / I procede to warke
 And where I unworthy / this treatyse begyn
 I humble beseke our blessed sauour
 His mother also mary the virgyn
 To be my helpe / comfort / and succoure
 Now sweete Radegunde / of virgins the floure
 Make supplicacion / vnto the trinite
 And direct my penne to describe thy stori

11.

¶ *Of the progeny of saynt Radegunde and howe she
 was taken in batell and maryed to Lothary
 a kynge of Fraunce.*

THe yere of our sauour by full computacion
 Fyue hundreth fully from the natiuite
 As dyuers auctors makyn discripcion
 Reynd in Fraunce in honour and ryalte
 Two noble kynges / Childebert / and Lothary
 Euery kyng knowing his parte and regyon
 To them belonging / by ryght and custome
Childebert, third son of Clovis, died 558

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6 The Progeny of Saint Radegund

At the same season / as sayth the history
 A noble prince / reyned in Affrica
 Named in cronicles kyng Berengary
 Borne at a citie named Thorynga
 Within the sayde kyngdome now called Barbarea
 Which prince whylom [was]¹ famous in renowne
 Tyll that dame fortune vnfrendly put hym downe.

Whiche forsayd prince kyng Berengarius
 Had in succession a noble princesse
 A deuout lady / and a virgyn glorious
 Nominat Radegunde / a gemme of holynesse
 A floure of vertu / and a myrour of mekenesse
 Whose gostly gouernaunce enduryng her lyfe
 Unto all people may be a perspectyfe

This kynge Berengary by mysfortune in batell
 Was piteously subdued / by kynges of Fraunce
 His realme conqueryd / piteously to tell
 Losing his honour / lande / and gouernaunce
 And Radegunde taken / suche was her chaunce
 By power remoued / from her land naturall
 Amonge strangers to be continuall

Whan the kyng and the realme subdued were
 And mayde Radegunde taken for a pray
 Than the kynges of Fraunce for her in fere
 Entended batell / whiche shulde haue the may
 For she was beauteous and pleasant verray
 Humble / gentyll / courtese / and moste fayre truly
 yet she by lot fell / vnto kynge Lothary

For if Radegunde had nat delyuerd be
 Great cruelte / besynesse / and vexacion

¹ Omitted by FYNSON

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Her Captivity

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Had fortunèd among kynges thre
 Through great disdeyn / pryde / and ambicyon
 For the realme of Fraunce in a triniall kyndome
 Than was deuided cronicles do expresse
 As the sequence of saynt Martyn doth reherse

This lady Radegunde / thus taken away
 And by chaunce delyuered to kyng Lothary
 Was brought with worship in to a countray
 Callyd Veromandensis vnto the kynges cite
 Nominat Atheras / to be kept in suertie
 There to be norished / and haue refeccion
 Doctryne and disciplyne / with hie discrecyon

¶ Kyng Lothary considering her gentilnesse
 Her vertue / pacience / and proued wysdome
 Her great humilite / constauce / and sobernesse
 Dayly encreasyng with augmentation
 Entended to mary spedely and soone
 Lady Radegunde / and virgyn serene
 To make her his spouses and louely quene

Unto this mariage and feast there was
 Made great preparacion / and rialtie
 The halles were hanged / with clothes of arras
 Rychely embrodered / in ryall Imagery
 The xii apostelles well set in degre
 Martyrs / confessours / and virgyns withall
 Were theyr purtered / with crowne victoriall

Ouer the syde tables curiously were wrought
 Auncient histories of auctorite
 Of patriarkes / and prophetes wisely outsought
 Of the olde and newe testament set properly

Veromandensis, Vermandois, the district round St Quentin
 and Noyon *Atheras*, Athies, near Péronne

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8 Preparations for her Marriage

Histories were paynted of poetrie
 Chambers were strawed with floures fragrant
 Well dect with hangynges / fresshe / fayre / and vernant

This princesse was clad in clothes of golde
 In sylkesse / veluettes / and tyssues fyne
 A coronall was ordeyned richely to be holde
 And crowned therewith / as christall dyd shyne
 Set with ryall stones / the sapher celestyne
 The diamont / the diadeke / the ruby / the topas
 The carbuncle / the emerall / the perle theyr was

Lordes of the lande were redy present
 Dukes / erles / barons / and knyghtes doughty
 The commons assembled euer delygent
 To gyue attendaunce as was theyr duety
 The day was apoynted / of the matrimony
 The chapell enowrned with mycle rychesse
 The clergy attending at an houre expresse

¶ Kyng Lothary passed from his ryall palace
 With many myghty peres and lordes of his lande
 Radegunde hym folowed a princesse full of grace
 With ladies many one the fearest coude befounde
 They came to the chapell as we vnderstande
 All thyng was prepared to that solempnite
 Ornamentes and vestures of great ryaltie

The byssshop was redy / with his ministers all
 To execute his office / of the said matrimony
 The obseruauntes was done with honour ryall
 The masse was songe / with mycle melody
 With belles / and orgons / and solempne minstrelsy
 The sacrament of spousage / was celebrat that day
 With reuerence and worsshyp / in theyr best aray

**diadeke*, a jewel resembling the beryl *enowrned*, adorned

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Her Marriage

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From thens they departed / to the kynges palace
 The sayd kyng and quene / the lordes / and clergy
 All things well ordered (as afore sayd was)
 To attende in the hall marshalles were redy
 Of meates and drinkes / theyr was great plentie
 Veneson wildfoule mycle aboundaunce
 The condites of wyne ranne with great pleasaunce

But for all this ryaltie / and wordly pleasure
 Whiche was prepared / at this solempnite
 The quene Radegunde passyng course of nature
 Moste dredfull in hert / was for her virginite
 Desyred our sauour of his endlesse charite
 As he for vs all suffred bitter¹ passion
 To preserue her body from all corrupcion

III.

¶ *Of the vertuous lyuing of saynt Radegund
 undre spousage | and howe she con-
 tynued a pure virgyne*

WHan the day declyned & come was the nyght
 And all people passyd echone to his lodgyng
 The hert of Radegunde was litell of myght
 yet priuatly she went to her chamber wepyng
 Made great lamentacion dolefully sighing
 Required our lorde to helpe of his pytie
 To whome she had offred afore her virginite

Alas what tong can playnly expresse
 Or hert may thynke / the dredfull Ieopardy
 This lady Radegunde feared doutlesse
 When her lorde was laid her swete body by

¹ FYNSON, *better*

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Her Virtuous Living

Her soule was rapt / her mynde in an extasy
 Plonged in heuenes / wo and penalite
 More leuer to be deed / than lose her chastite

But as scripture sayth / our blessed sauour
 Is euer redy in extreme necessite
 To helpe his seruantes both day and houre
 Whan they do call / with pure humilite
 He saued saynt Agnes / saynt Lucie / saynt Cecilie
 With many other mo / from all corrupcion
 Ryght so he preserued Radegunde that season

For whan Lotharias desired to supplie
 Naturall pleasure and voluptuous entention
 By diuine power and by myracle sothlie
 His feruent desyre with carnall affeccion
 Were clerly extincted for aboue reason
 Suche frayle concupiscence of loue entyre
 Soone seased as water quenchem the fyre

Other sondry seasons / whan the sayd kyng
 Was moued at wyll / to haue his desiderye
 The quene founde remedy / at her owne likyng
 Sometyme feynyng sickenesse / and infirmite
 Sometyme nat disposed to such fragilite
 Sometyme occupied / in labours diligent
 Other tyme obiectyng / the tyme nat conuenient

Thus by the grace / of her spouse Iesu
 She euer preserued her true chastite
 Geuyng her selfe / to prayer and to vertue
 Lowyng our lorde / of his benigne
 And his mother Mary / floure of virginite
 Whiche of his mercy / and infinite goodnesse
 Hath her preserued / in all distresse

for, far *desiderye, desire*