

The
Harrowing of Hell,

A MIRACLE-PLAY

WRITTEN IN THE REIGN OF EDWARD THE SECOND,

Now first published from the original Manuscript

in the British Museum,

WITH AN
INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION, AND NOTES.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THOSE who take a real interest in the theatrical representations of our country, will willingly be at the pains to peruse the earliest existing dramatic composition in the English language. Such is the “Harrowing of Hell,” set forth in the following pages,—a most singular specimen of the difference between the taste of our ancestors of the fourteenth century and our own. What the readers of modern comedy will say to the miserable doggerel of the contest between Jesus and Satan, I know not; but its extreme curiosity and intrinsic historical value ought to place the consideration of its poetical beauties entirely out of the scale; and I venture to hope that the modern version which accompanies this most interesting relic of our forefathers, will contribute its mite to render the history of the stage interesting, at least, to performers themselves, if not to the public at large.

It is unnecessary to enter here at length into the history of this species of dramatic poetry, and the more especially as the wide circulation of Mr. Collier’s admirable work on the subject has left nothing to be wished for, save the discovery of fresh documents.* Suffice it to mention, that different portions of the Old and New Testament, and of the apocryphal writings, were made the subject of popular dramatic exhibition, in more ancient times by the priests themselves, and afterwards by trading laymen. The sacred nature of the subject was, in itself, an attraction for the ignorant spectators in times of intellectual slavery; and the ridiculous poetry which graces or disgraces the several scripture characters in all these early dramas, is one proof among many of the lamentable state of mind among the large majority of the people of those days. Let us take, for instance, the following dialogue between Noah and his wife, when he is trying to persuade her to enter into the ark, which occurs in the series of miracle-plays formerly acted at Chester†:—

NOAH.

Wife, come in! Why standest thou there?
Thou art ever forward, I dare well swear.
Come in, in God’s name, half time it were,
For fear lest thou should’st drown.

* A very curious relic—an ancient interlocutory poem—was communicated by Sir Frederick Madden to the fourth number of the *Reliquiæ Antiquæ* (pp. 145-7), from a MS. roll of the 14th century.

† MS. Harl. 2013. I have given these extracts, as much as possible, in modern phraseology.

NOAH'S WIFE.

Yea, sir, set up your sail,
And row forth with evil hail;
For, without fail, I will not out—
 Out of this town.
Unless I have my gossips every one,
One foot farther I will not go—
They shall not drown, by Saint John!
 If I may save their life.
They loved me full well, by Christ!
And if thou wilt not let them go into that chest,
Go forth, Noah, wherever you like,
 And get thee a new wife.

NOAH.

Son Shem, lo! thy mother is near;
By God, such another I do not see.

SHEM.

Father, I will fetch her in, I trow,
 Without any fail.
Mother, my father after thee sends,
And prays thee to go into yonder vessel.
Look up, and see the wind;
 For we be ready to sail.

NOAH'S WIFE.

Shem, go again to him. I say
I will not go therein to-day.

NOAH.

Come in, wife, in twenty devil's way,
Or else stand there all day.

HAM.

Shall we all fetch her in.

NOAH.

Yea, sons, for Christ's sake and mine,
I would ye do it quickly,
For of this flood I am in doubt.

NOAH'S WIFE.

The flood comes flowing in full fast,
On every side that spreads full far;
For fear of drowning I am aghast:
Good gossips let us draw near.

And let us drink ere we go
For ofttimes we have done so;
For at a draught thou drinkest a quart,
And so will I do ere I go.

Here is a bottle full of malmsey good and strong,
It will rejoice both heart and tongue:
Though Noah think us never so long,
Yet we will drink alike.

JAPHAT.

Mother, we all of us beseech you—
For we are here, your own children—
Come into the ship for fear of the weather,
For his sake that died for you.

NOAH'S WIFE.

That will I not for your call,
Unless I have my gossips all.

SHEM.

In faith, mother, thou shalt,
Whether thou wilt or not.

NOAH.

Welcome, wife, into this boat.

NOAH'S WIFE.

Take that for thy note!
(*Slaps his face.*)

NOAH.

Ha! ha! Marry, this is hot.—
It is good for to be still.

Can anything more grotesque or absurd be imagined? And yet this is a genuine specimen of what were the leading and grand tragedies of the time,—spectacles that served to impart to the populace some idea of those divine histories, from the perusal of which they were precluded owing to their ignorance of the Latin language.

The legend of the descent of Christ into hell to rescue thence the souls of the good,—founded upon the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus,—was a very favourite subject for illustration throughout the middle ages; and we, accordingly, find that it forms one of almost every known series of miracle-plays, generally under the title of the “Harrowing of Hell.” On this legend the following play is founded. In the Townley mysteries a similar performance is entitled “*Extractio Animarum ab Inferno*,” and, as this differs altogether from the other, a short analysis of it will not be irrelevant in this place.*

Christ descends to the gates of hell, stating the object of his visit,—“to chalange that is myne.” Adam perceives the “gleme” of his coming, and announces it to Eve and the prophets, who sing for joy,—“*et cantent omnes Salvator Mundi*.” Rybald, one of the demons and porter of hell, is in great alarm, and calls out to Beelzebub to prepare for resistance:—

“Since first that hell was made and I was put therein,
Such sorrow never ere I had, nor heard I such a din!
My heart begins to start, my wit waxes thin;
I am afraid we can’t rejoice—these souls must from us twin [go].
Ho, Beelzebub! bind these boys, such noise was never heard in hell.”

The terror becomes general, and “Astarot and Anaball, Berith and Belyall,” together with Satan and Lucifer, are summoned, while watches are set on the walls. Satan threatens to beat out Beelzebub’s brains for disturbing him. The devils refuse to open the gate, and Christ exclaiming,

“*Attollite portas, principes, vestras et elevamini, portæ æternales, et introibit rex gloriæ*,” they burst; Beelzebub exclaiming,—

“Harro! our gates begin to crack;
In sunder, I trow, they go,
And hell, I trow, will together shake.
Alas! what am I, wo!”

Satan, from below, orders his fiends to “dyng the dastard downe;” and Beelzebub replies, “that is soon said.” Satan ascends from the pit of hell, and Christ tells him that he is come to fetch his own, and that his father sent him. Satan answers, that he “knew his father well by sight;” and reasons with Christ on the impolicy and injustice of releasing those already damned. Argument failing, he entreats Christ to take him out of hell also; to which our Saviour replies, that he will leave him some company, Cain, Judas, Achitophel, Cato, and some others who had destroyed themselves: he adds, that such as obey his laws shall never come to hell; which rejoices Satan, as he congratulates himself that hell will soon be fuller than ever, intending to walk east and west in order to seduce mankind from obedience. Christ replies,—

* Collier’s History, ii. 214-6. At p. 213, Mr. Collier has given a short analysis of our miracle-play of the “Harrowing of Hell.”

“Nay, fiend, thou shalt be fast,
So that thou shalt not stir.”

Satan then sinks “into hell pyt,” and Jesus frees Adam, Eve, Moses, David, Isaias, and others, who conclude by singing *Te Deum laudamus*.

Of a similar nature with the above is the exceedingly curious collection of Latin mysteries published by Mr. Wright in 1838, which belong to the twelfth century. “They afford us,” observes the learned editor, “by far the earliest specimen of a series of consequent plays founded on subjects of Scripture history, and are, doubtlessly the first draughts of what afterwards produced such collections as the Towneley, the Coventry, and the Chester Mysteries.” In simplicity, indeed, they are respectable colleagues with the play we are now editing, and form a very remarkable chain in the history of our stage at that remote period. In the play of the “Resurrection,” the two angels at the sepulchre address Mary Magdalene,—

Mulier, quid ploras?

MARIA.

Quia tulerunt Dominum meum,
Et nescio ubi posuerunt eum.

ANGELUS.

Noli flere, Maria! resurrexit Dominus.
Alleluia!

MARIA.

Ardens est cor meum desiderio
Videre Dominum meum;
Quæro et non invenio
Ubi posuerunt eum.
Alleluia!

*Interim veniat quidem præparatus in similitudinem
hortulani, stansque ad capud sepulchri, dicat:—*
Mulier, quid ploras? quern quæris?

MARIA.

Domine, si tu sustulisti eum, dicito mihi ubi posuisti eum, et ego eum tollam.

Et ILLE.

Maria!

Atque procedens ad pedes ejus, MARIA dicat:—
Rabboni!

At ille subtrahat se, et quasi tactum ejus devitans dicat:—

Noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum, Dominum meum et Dominum vestrum.

Sic discedat Hortulanus, MARIA vero, conversa ad populum, dicat:—

Congratulamini mihi omnes qui diligitis Dominum, quia quem quærebam apparuit mihi; et dum flerem ad monumentum, vidi Dominum meum. Alleluia!

Tunc DUO ANGELI exeant ad ostium sepulcri, ita ut appareant foris, et dicant:—

Venite et videte locum ubi positus erat Dominus.

Alleluia!

Nolite timere vos;

Vultum tristem jam mutate:

Jesum vivum nunciate:

Galileam jam adite:

Si placet videre, festinate:

Cito euntes dicite discipulis quod surrexit Dominus.

Alleluia!

Tunc Mulieres discedentes a sepulcro dicant ad plebem:—

Surrexit Dominus de sepulcro,

Qui pro nobis pependit in ligno.

Alleluia!

Hoc facto, expandant sindonem, dicentes ad plebem:—

Cernite vos, socii, sunt corporis ista beati

Lintea, quæ vacuo jacuere relictæ sepulcro.

This extract is sufficient to give the reader some idea of the nature of these earliest of modern dramas. The similarity of style between them and our "Harrowing of Hell," will be at once perceived, and is one proof of the high antiquity of the latter. The simplicity too is very remarkable, and is sufficient of itself to show that the stage was quite in its infancy at the representation of either one or the other.

The play now printed occurs in a well-known manuscript on vellum, of the time of Edward II, preserved in the Harleian collection in the British Museum, No. 2253, fol. 55, v^o. a-56, v^o. b.

In 1836, Mr. Collier printed twenty-five copies of it for private distribution among his friends; and a similar number were printed by Mr. Laing from a rather more modern copy of the same play, preserved in the Auchinleck manuscript at Edinburgh. I have now the pleasure of placing before the notice of the public the first *published* edition of this interesting relic; and my editorial labours have been greatly facilitated by the kind loan of the latter work by the Rev. A. Dyce, without the use of which many important variations now introduced among the notes would have been wanting.

The Harrowing of Hell.

PROLOGUE

LET every one listen to me now!
I will tell you a contest
Between Jesus and Satan
When Jesus went to hell
To bring thence his own, 5
And lead them to paradise.
The devil was so powerful
That every one went to hell:
Nor was there a prophet so holy,—
Since Adam and Eve eat the apple,— 10
If his life were finished,
That could escape from the pain of hell;
Nor would one have been released
Had it not been for the Son of God.
This was revealed to Adam and Eve, 15
Who were beloved of God;
And also to Abraham,
Who was a soothfast holy man;
And also to King David,
From whom Christ was descended; 20
And to John the Baptist,
Who baptized our Saviour;

The Harrowing of Hell.

PROLOGUE

A LLE herkneth to me nou!
A strif wolle y tellen ou
Of Jhesu ant of Sathan,—
Tho Jhesu wes to helle y-gan
Forte vacche thenne hys, 5
Ant bringen hem to parays.
The Devel hevede so muche poust ,
That alle mosten to helle te;
Nas non so holy prophete
Seththe Adam and Eve then appel ete, 10
Ant he were at this worldes fyne,
That he ne moste to helle pyne;
Ne shulde he never thenne come,
Nere Jhesu Christ, Godes sone.
Vor that wes seid to Adam ant Eve, 15
That were Jhesu Christ so leeve;
Ant so wes seyde to Habraham,
That wes sothfast holy man;
And so wes seid to Davyd the kyng,
That wes of Christes onne ofspryng; 20
Ant to Johan the Baptist,
That folewede Jhesu Christ;

And to the holy Moses,
To whom the law was confided;
And to many other pious men, 25
More than I can enumerate.
These were all in greater pain
Than I can easily describe.
Jesus Christ pitied them exceedingly,
And resolved to bring them thence: 30
He descended from on high
To the house of Saint Mary.
He was born for us,
In this world, in poverty;
In this world he died, 35
To deliver us from the evil one.
When Jesus had shed his blood
For us, upon the cross,
In his divinity he proceeded
Towards the gates of hell; 40
When he came there he spake
As I shall now tell you.

CHRIST.

Difficulties have I encountered;
Many sorrows have I undergone:
Thirty-two years and a half 45
Have I dwelt in this world;
Nearly as much time has passed
Since I first became man;
I've since borne and known
Heat, cold, hunger, and thirst; 50
Men have put me to shame enough
In their error, with word and deed;

Ant to Moyses, the holy whyt,	
The hevede the lawe to 3eme ryht;	
Ant to mony other holy mon,—	25
Mo then ich telle con.	
That weren alle in more wo,	
Then i con ou telle fro.	
Jhesu Christ arew hem sore,	
Ant seide he wolde vacche hem thore.	30
He lyhte of ys he3e tour	
Into Seinte Marie bour;	
He wes bore for oure nede,	
In this world, in pore wede;	
In this world he wes ded,	35
Forte losen us from the qued.	
Tho Jhesu hevede shed ys blod,	
For oure neode, upon the rod;	
In Godhed toke he then way	
That to helle gates lay;	40
The he com there, tho seide he	
Asse i shal nouthe telle the.	

DOMINUS.

Hard gates havy gon,—	
Sorewen soffred mony on:	
Thritty wynter and thridde half yer.	45
Havy woned in londe her;	
Almost ys so mucche agon,	
Seththe y bycom furst mon;	
Ich have seththe tholed ant wyst	
Hot, cold, hunger, ant thirst;	50
Mon hath do me shome y-noh,	
Wyth word, ant dede, in heore woh.	

Bound and beaten, my blood flowed,
They condemned me to die upon the cross:
For Adam's sin, full truly, 55
I have borne all this.
Adam! thou hast paid for it dearly,—
I will not suffer it any longer.
Adam! thou hast paid heavily
For thine unbelief in me. 60
I shall rescue thee from the pain of hell,
And with thee all my people.

SATAN.

Who is this that I hear there?
I advise him to say no more,
Else by chance he happen 65
To be brought unto us
To be our companion,
And try how we amuse ourselves here.

CHRIST.

Thou mightest know in thy lay,
That I will have my people away. 70
Knowest thou never what I am?
Nearly have thirty years expired
Since thou hast tempted me
To discover my nature.
Thou never couldst find sin 75
In me as in other man;
And thou shalt now be convinced
That I will have my people away.
When thou hast none but thine own left
Then may'st thou weep and groan. 80

Bounden ant bueten, y-ron of blode,
Demeden me to de³e on rode;
Fore Adames sunne, fol y-wis, 55
Ich have tholed al this.
Adam! thou havest aboht sore,—
I nul soffre that no more;
Adam! thou hast duere aboht
That thou levedest me noht. 60
Y shal the bringe of helle pyne,
Ant wyth the alle myne.

SATHAN AIT.

Who ys that ych here thore?
Ich him rede speke na more,
For he may so muche do 65
That he shal us come to,
Forte buen oure fere,
Ant fonden hou we pleyen here.

DOMINUS AIT.

Thou miht wyten in thy lay
That mine wolly have away. 70
Wost thou never whet ycham?
Almost ys thritti wynter gan,
That thou hast fonded me
Forte knowe wet y be.
Sunne fond thou never non 75
In me, as in other mon;
Ant thou shalt wyte wel to day,
That mine wolle y have away.
Wen thou bilevest al thyn one,
Thenne myht thou grede ant grone. 80

SATAN.

By my faith! I consider mine

Every one in this place:

I will give you an argument

Thou canst not disprove.

Whoever purchases anything,

85

It belongs to him and to his children.

Adam, hungry, came to me,—

I made him do me homage:

For an apple, which I gave him,

He and all his race belong to me.

90

CHRIST.

Satan! it was mine,—

The apple thou gav'st him;

The apple and the apple tree,

Both were made by me.

How mightest thou in any manner

95

Dispose of other men's goods?

As he was purchased with my property,

With reason will I have him.

SATAN.

Well do I know thee, Christ!

That's a source of heavy grief to me,—

100

Thou art Lord over all:

Woe to him that shall not know thee!

Heaven and earth take to thyself,—

Leave souls in hell to me.

Let me possess and keep these,—

105

What thou hast thou may'st keep

SATHAN.

Par ma fey! ich holde myne
Alle tho that bueth heryne.
Resoun wol y telle the
Ther a³eyn myht thou nouht be.
Whose buyth any thyng,
Hit is hys ant hys ofspryng:
Adam hungry com me to,—
Monrade dude y him me do.
For on appel ich ³ef hym,
He is myn ant al hys kun.

85

90

DOMINUS.

Sathanas! hit wes myn,—
The appel that thou ³eve hym;
The appel ant the appel tre,
Bothe were maked thourh me.
Hou myhtest thou, on eny wyse,
Of other monnes thyng make marchandise?
Seththe he wes boht wyth myn,
Wyth resoun wolle ich haven hym.

95

SATHAN.

Jesu, wel y knowe the!
That ful sore reweth me.
Thou art loverd over al—
Wo ys him that the knowe ne shal!
Heovene ant erthe tac to the—
Soules in helle lef thou me.
Let me haven hem ant helde—
That thou havest wel mote thou welde

100

105

CHRIST.

Be quiet, Satan!

Thou art defeated.

Thinkest thou I died for nought?

By my death is mankind bought.

110

They that have served me,

With me shall be in heaven:

Thou shalt live in more pain

Than any that be herein.

SATAN.

No one can make me more wretched

115

Than I have been hitherto:

I have had so much woe

That I care not where I go.

If thou bereavest me of mine,

I shall bereave thee of thine;

120

I shall go from man to man,

And bereave thee of many a one.

CHRIST.

I shall certainly converse with thee,

And make thee keep peace;

So securely shall I bind thee,

125

Of little shalt thou bereave me;

Thou shalt be in bondage for ever,

Till the coming of domesday;

Thou shalt never be set free

To ruin mankind,

130

For wert thou among men,

Thou wouldst bereave me of many of them.

DOMINUS.

Stile be thou, Sathanas!
The ys fallen *ambes aas*.
Wendest thou ich were ded for noht?
Thourh my deth ys monkune boht. 110
They that haved served me,
Wyth me he shulen in hevene be.
Thou shalt buen in more pyne,
Then eny that ther is heryne.

SATHANAS.

Ne may non me worse do, 115
Then ich have had hiderto.
Ich have had so mucche wo,
That y ne recche whyder y go.
3ef thou revest me of thyne;
Y shal reve the of thyne; 120
Y shal gon from mon to mon,
And reve the of mony on.

DOMINUS.

God wot y shal speke the wyht,
Ant do the to holde gryht.
So faste shal y bynde the; 125
Lutel shalt thou reve me.
Thou shalt buen in bondes ay,
O that come domesday.
Thou shalt never out wende,
Monkunne forte shende: 130
For were thou among men,—
Thou woldest me reven moni of hem.

The inferior fiends, that have not much power,
Shall go among men,
Those that will not withstand them 135
I deliver up to their power.
I now come to the gates of hell,
And I command them to be opened.
Where is now the porter?
I think he is a coward. 140

PORTER.

I have heard powerful words,
Nor dare I remain here longer.
Keep the gates—whoever can,
I leave them and fly.

CHRIST.

Hell gates will I beat down, 145
And take out all my people.
Satan, I bind thee,—here shalt thou lay
Until the coming of doomsday.

ADAM.

Welcome, Lord God of the world!
God's son and God's messenger! 150
Welcome, Lord, may thou needs be,
That thou wilt come to visit us.
Lord, now thou art come to us,
Take us from this hateful habitation;
Bring us out of this hateful land, 155
Lord, hence into thine own care.
Lord, knowest thou who I am?
Thou madest me of earth—Adam.

The smale fendes that bueth nout stronge,
He shulen among men yonge;
Thilke that nulleth a³eyn hem stonde, 135
Ichulle he habben hem in honde.
Helle gates y come nou to,
Ant y wole that heo undo.
Wer ys nou this ³ateward?
Me thuncheth he is a coward. 140

JANITOR.

Ich have herd wordes stronge;
Ne dar y her no lengore stonde.
Kepe the gates,—whose may:
Y lete hem stonde ant renne away.

DOMINUS.

Helle gates wolle y falle, 145
Ant out taken myne alle.
Sathanas, y bynde the, her shalt thou lay,
O that come domesday.

ADAM.

Welcome, loverd God of londe!
Godes sone, ant Godes sonde! 150
Welcome loverd mote thou be,
That thou wolt us come ant se,
Loverd, nou thou art come to us,
Bring ous of this lothe hous,
Bryng us of this lothe lond, 155
Loverd, henne into thyn hond.
Loverd, wost thou whet ycham?
Thou me shuptest of eorthe, Adam:

Because I kept not thy command,
I have here dearly paid the penalty. 160
Have mercy on us, Son of God!
Let us dwell here no longer.
All that herein are
Have long yearned after thee.
We expect entirely through thy coming 165
To have assistance from our sins.

EVE.

Lord, know that I am Eve.
I and Adam were dear to thee:
Thou leddest us to Paradise—
We requited it like fools; 170
We disobeyed thine command
When we ate of the apple:
We have been so long here
That we have paid dearly for our sin.
Lord God! grant us permission— 175
Adam, and I his wife Eve—
To depart from this hateful place
To the bliss of heaven's kingdom.

CHRIST.

Adam, I have given my life
For thee and for Eve thy wife. 180
Thinkest thou I died for nought?
By my death was mankind bought.

ABRAHAM.

Lord Christ, I am he
Thou namedst Abraham.

For y thyn heste hued noht,
Duere ich habbe hit her aboht. 160
Have merci of us, Godes sone!
Let ous no more her wone.
Alle that herynne be
3ore haveth 3yrned after the.
We hopeth wel thourh thy comyng, 165
Of oure sunnes haven froryng.

EVA.

Knou me, loverd, icham Eve;
Ich ant Adam the were so leove:
Thou laddest ous to Parays—
We hit forgulten ase unwys; 170
We thin heste dude forleten,
Tho we then appel eten;
So longe we haveth buen herynne,
Deore have we aboht ur synne.
Loverd God! 3ef us leve,— 175
Adam ant me ys wyf Eve
To faren of this lothe wyke,
To the blisse of hevene ryke.

DOMINUS.

Adam, ich have 3eve mi lyf
For the ant for Eve thi wyf. 180
Wendest thou ich were ded for noht?
For my deth wes monkune y-boht.

HABRAHAM.

Loverd Christ, icham
That thou calledest Habraham.

Thou told'st me that of my offspring 185
Should a child be born,
Who should rescue us from pain,—
Me, and with me all mine.
Thou art the child, thou art the man,
Who has sprung from Abraham! 190
Fulfil now your promise to me—
Bring me to heaven up with thee.

CHRIST.
Abraham, I well know
Everything thou sayest:—
That my beloved mother was
Born and formed of thine.

DAVID.
Lord, I am King David,
And born of thy kindred.
Act as thou promised
Through the law and the prophet: 200
Now thou art come to us,
Carry us from this wretched abode.

CHRIST.
David, thou wast born of my kin.
For thy virtue art thou mine,—
More for thy virtue
Than for any kindred.

JOHN.
Lord Christ, I am John,
Who baptized thee in Jordan's stream.

Thou me seidest that of me
Shulde suche a child ybore be,
That us shulde brynge of pyne,—
Me, ant wyth me alle myne.
Thou art the child, thou art the man,
That wes y-bore of Habraham!
Do nou that thou byhihstes me—
Bring me to hevene up with the.

DOMINUS.

Habraham, ych wot ful wel
Wet thou seidest everuchdel;—
That mi leve moder wes
Boren and shaped of thi fleys.

DAVID.

Loverd, icham David the Kyng,
That bore was of thyn ofspring.
Do me as thou bihete,
Thourh the lawe of the prophete.
Nou thou art come to ous,
Bring us from this dredful hous.

DOMINUS.

David thou were bore of my kyn
For thi godnesse art thou myn
More for thi godnesse
Then for eny sibnesse

JOHANNES.

Loverd Christ, icham Johan,
That the folewede in flum Jordan.

A year has past
Since I suffered martyrdom. 210
Thou sentest me the right way
Into hell, to announce
That thou, Christ, Son of God,
Should soon come to hell,
To release from its torture 215
All thou holdest thine.
Now thou art come, do
That which thou hast promised.

CHRIST.
John, John, I well know
Every thing thou sayest. 220
Thou shalt see me perform
What I have said.

MOSES.
Lord, thou hast perfect knowledge of
The law of Mount Sinai.
I am the prophet Moses, 225
Who kept the laws, to whom thou promisedst
That thou, Jesus, Son of God,
Wouldst come to hell;
And that thou wouldst come to heal,
The sins which Adam thought sweet. 230

CHRIST.
Moses, what I commanded thee
In the Old Law, thou didst for me.
And all others that are mine
Shall come with me to happiness;

Tuelfmoneth is agon,
That y tholede martirdom. 210
Thou sendest me the ryhte wey
Into helle, forte sey,
That thou, Christ, Godes sone,
Sone shuldest to helle come,
For to lesen of helle pyne, 215
Alle that thou holdest thyne.
Nou thou art come, nou thou do
That thou seidest fer ant tho.

DOMINUS.

Johan, Johan, ich wot ful wel
Whet thou seidest everuchdel. 220
Thou shalt seo whet y shal do
That y seyde er the to.

MOYSES.

Loverd, thou knowest al wyth skyl
The lawe of Synay upon the hyl.
Icham Moyses the prophete, 225
That hued the lawes, that thou byhete
That thou Jhesu, Godes sone,
Woldest to the helle come;
Ant that thou woldest come to bete,
The sunnes that Adam thohte suete. 230

DOMINUS.

Moyeses, that I hihte the
In the old lawe, thou duest me.
Ant alle the other that mine buen,
Shule to blisse with me tuen.

They that would not trust to me
Shall remain with Satan:
There shall they certainly dwell
Till the coming of doomsday. 235

[*epilogue*]

May God, for the love of his mother,
Let us never go thither. 240
Lord, by thy great mercy,
Grant us a place in heaven.
Let us never be ruined
By any sin,—Christ's chosen.
Oh! bring us out of the pain of hell, 245
Lord, us and all thine.
And give us grace to live and die
In thy service, and to heaven wend. AMEN.

They that nolden on me leven,
Shule with Sathanas bileven:—
Ther hue shulen wonen ay,
O that come domesday.

235

[*epilogue*]

God, for is moder love,
Let us never thider come!
Loverd, for thi muchele grace,
Graunte us in heovene one place!
Let us never be forloren
For no sunne, Christ y-coren.
Ah! bring us out of helle pyne,
Loverd, ous ant alle thyne.
Ant 3ef us grace to libbe ant ende
In thi service, ant to hevene wende.

240

245

AMEN!

NOTES.

Page 13, line 1. The first thirty lines are wanting in the Auchinleck manuscript, but there are the two following additional lines which do not occur in the other MS., and may be placed after line 28:—

“Until Christ looked thaim unto,
As man ought to prisouns do.”

It may as well be added that in the series of Chester Plays, the “Descent into Hell,” was acted by the Cooks and Innkeepers. See *Retrospective Review*, i. 332.

Page 15, lines 39, 40. These lines are thus in the Auchinleck manuscript:—

“He nam him the right way
Unto helle, forsothe to say.”

Page 15, line 45. The *thridde healf* in Saxon and Middle-English signifies *two and a half*. The *healf* as a numeral is generally placed after the ordinal which it diminishes by half; the reason of which is plain, for if we take a series of numbers commencing with zero, as follows,—

0 ½ 1 1½ 2 2½ 3 3½ &c.

the law of the halves is at once seen, and, as in this instance, the third half is 2½.

Page 15, line 52. Two additional lines follow here in the Auchinleck manuscript:—

“Thai tok me withouten sake—
Thai bond min honden behinde mi bac.”

Page 17, line 62. This line is as follows in the Auchinleck manuscript:—

“Adam, the and all thine.”

Page 17, lines 79, 80. Thus in the Auchinleck manuscript.

“And y schal the leve here,
In sorwe among thine fere.”

Page 23, line 139. In the Chester plays we have,—

“Open up hell gates yet I say,
Ye Princes of pain that be present!
And let the King of Bliss this way,
That he may fulfil his intent.”

In MS. Cotton. Tiberius, C.vj. fol. 14, r°. of the eleventh century, is a curious drawing, entitled “Christus infernum despoliat,” and representing the cowardly porter in the last extremity of fear. Cf. *Piers Plowman*, edit. Wright.

Page 29, line 209. “*Now a good while*,” in the Auchinleck manuscript.

Page 29, line 225. The remainder of the play commencing with this line is wanting in the Auchinleck manuscript. There are other variations which I have not considered sufficiently important to notice; and the text we have chosen is decidedly more pure than that of the Auchinleck manuscript.

THRIGCURIAL NOTE.

“Dicam vobis quia,” says an anonymous writer of the fifteenth century, given in the *Reliquæ Antiquæ*.
I, for one, know the vanity of the men of this generation:—

“Goddis halidays *non observantur honest* ,
For unthryfty pleyis *in eis regnant manifest* .”

FINIS.

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