NOTES ON LATE MEDIEVAL GERMAN TALES IN PRAISE OF DOCTA IGNORANTIA.¹

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1. IN this article I have endeavoured to characterise a 'type' of story which appears to have been extremely popular in Germany at the close of the Middle Ages. Some of the texts discussed have been published; two others, which seem to raise special problems, I have printed below. I wish to emphasise that I have not conducted the thorough investigations which would permit me to say anything final about the 'type'

¹ [I am grateful to the editor of the BULLETIN for his kindness in publishing these notes. They are a translation of an article with the title, 'Zu den Gesprächen zwischen Beichtvater und Beichttochter in der erbaulichen Literatur des ausgehenden deutschen Mittelalters', which I wrote, and which was accepted for publication by the editor of the Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, in the Spring of 1937. The editor promised that the article would finally appear in the fourth number of the 1938 volume of his journal; it never appeared, and now I have withdrawn it, to avoid further delay. To this article I have already referred in my account 'A German Mystic Miscellany, etc.' (cited below as Miscellany) in the BULLETIN of October, 1938, p. 476, note 2. In § 9 of Miscellany I summarised and supplemented the findings of the article, which is here presented in translation. I could wish now that the summary (which was written on the assumption that readers of the BULLETIN would not wish to be troubled by cross-references to an article appearing in another, foreign, journal) had been less comprehensive; certain of the following paragraphs will now seem to be repetition of what appeared a year ago, but this is, in the circumstances, unavoidable. I would like to point out (1) that the contents of Miscellany, p. 476, note 2, were, in the German version, embodied in a Addendum which is not here reproduced. (2) The erroneous view which, at one time, I held on the origin of the Priamel (see below)—the nature of which is indicated, Miscellany, p. 480, note 2, was later amended in the German text and does, of course, not occur here. (3) Notes in square brackets are recent additions to my text. For all these complications, my sincere apologies.]
of story, and that my observations even on the special problems
raised by the texts which I have myself published are not neces-
sarily accurate. Here, a word of explanation is called for. The
texts considered belong, one and all, to popular, even sub-literary,
genres; they are: exempla, various redactions of a mosaic tract,
a doggerel didactic poem and a religious ballad; they are all of
unknown authorship, and of roughly the same date—the latter
half of the fifteenth century. The methods proper to the
examination of such material are those of the folklorist, who will,
or should, make no pronouncement even on the contents of a
given tale, until he has ascertained and compared all its possible
versions; such methods could not be employed; yet I have not
hesitated to speak of the relative chronology of my texts and
occasionally to suggest that one may be derived from the other.
My conclusions must, therefore, be considered tentative. In
defence I may add that I believe I have consulted a reasonable
number of sources, and that I feel that the special problems which
I have indicated and attempted to clarify are truly relevant.

The 'type' of story which I wish to examine has the following
basic outline: a Confessor (alternatives are, a hermit, a monk,
two monks, a Mother Superior) questions a woman (almost in-
varamly a woman) concerning the nature of her devotions; the
tone of the enquiry is frequently challenging. The devotions
described by the person thus questioned are in some cases rather
'works' but more frequently mystic 'contemplations'—they
are usually called 'Übungen' and, as described, reflect natural
piety rather than strict orthodox practice. At the end of the
interview the Confessor concludes in the following style: 'Go
pray for me, a poor sinner; your life is more godly than mine'
or, 'With all my learning, I have never reached such perfection'.
This type of tale must be familiar to anyone acquainted with
the popular mystic literature of the later Middle Ages in Germany.
But it is naturally to be found in other contexts: it may well be an
evergreen theme in religious writings that a simple layman may,
in respect of true piety, excel one in holy orders. Essentially the
same story, though the setting may be different, is that of
Macarius and the two pious women.¹ Tales of this type are,

¹ Cf. Miscellany, p. 478, note 1, and Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, xxii, p. 194.
however, so numerous in writings of the fifteenth century in Germany that one is tempted to see in them evidence of widespread anti-clerical views, of the success of the principle of docta ignorantia—hardly, however, to point excitedly to Karsthans and Hans Sachs’ Disputation zwischen einem Chorherren und Schuchmacher for there is, after all, nothing of the unrest and polemic of the Reformation pamphlet in these simple stories: they were written by nuns in convents.

2.

Turning now to specific German versions, we find a close parallel to ‘Macarius’ in the story of the two Dominicans and the miller’s wife, Die fromme Müllerin. More or less of the same type are those in which a hermit, or monk, prays God to show him the person whose life is most pleasing to him, and whom he should emulate—here emphasis is laid on the fact that the enquirer is well versed in theological matters. The prayer is answered; God guides the monk to such a person, who is discovered to be a beggar or a naked child; or perhaps a nun whose way of life and devotions have been so unostentatious that she has passed unnoticed amongst her fellows (this latter variant occurs under the title St. Bernhards Tochter). The person is interrogated and the questioner concludes with an admission of


2 [I believe I interpret Professor Spamer (Beiträge zur Gesch. d. deutschen Sprache und Lit., xxiv, pp. 403 sqq.) correctly, in stating that he considers this group of tales grew up around the real or the legendary Meister Eckhart. In the examples, Pfeiffer, Deutsche Mystiker, ii, pp. 623 sqq., the enquirer is Meister Eckhart or ein höher lesemeister; it is possible that the meister der göttlichen geschrift in our texts (below) is also Eckhart. See also Miscellany, p. 477. It is expected that Professor Spamer will deal with all stories of the type under discussion under the heading, Die geistliche Hausmagd, an example of which tale is to be found in MS. Harley 2430, f. 1a, Priebsch, Deutsche Handschriften in England, ii, 12.]

3 E.g. Borchling, Reisebericht, iii, pp. 30, 52, 158 (‘Das Stück findet sich in den Wolfenbüttler Hss. ungemein häufig’—ibid., p. 30); Priebsch, Heilige Regel, exemplum No. 28 (Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, xvi).
his own inferiority. The idea embodied in such stories was evidently so familiar that it could take the form of a simple aside:

Ein hoher wiser lesmeister der sach ein vil guotes arnes swesterlin vor im gan Do sprach er sol mir nit we tuon das ich so recht gros wisheit und erkantnisse han. Und ob dis arne mensche mer minne hat zegot denn ich han das es denne got indem himelrich me wirt erkennende denn ich mit aller miner wisheit.¹

The aim of this essay is not, however, to record all the possible variations on the basic theme. I wish rather to single out two, for more detailed consideration, which I propose to call ‘The Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’ and ‘The pious Beguine’.

3.

‘The Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’ has not previously been published. It occurs in numerous miscellanies of popular mystic writings, in High and Low German regions, until the seventeenth century. My observations on the story are based on the examination of five such manuscript versions; others, which could not be consulted, are noted below. The character whom, in the general account, we have called the interrogator is here again a Doctor of Divinity (meister van der gotheit, maister göttlicher geschritft). To him there comes a young married woman—whose age is variously given as 21, 22, 51—seeking advice in spiritual matters; she wishes to know the way to the highest degree of spiritual perfection to which a (mere) woman can attain. The Doctor of Divinity, who is ‘wont to be questioned

¹ Wackernagel, Altdeutsche Predigten und Gebete, Basel, 1876, p. 603. [This is, of course, in reality, a summary of the typical Eckehart legend, as Spamer sees it.]

² [From p. 123, note 2, it will be clear that Spamer will possibly not consider these as representative as ‘Die geistliche Hausmagd’ and the Eckehart legends; only from a reference to the Berlin MS. oct. 328 (loc. cit., p. 406, end of footnote), do I gather that (one text of) the ‘Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’ is known to him; I find no reference to my exemplum, ‘The pious Beguine’. The material under consideration is so extensive that perhaps more than one focal point should be recognised.]

³ For permission to have photographs made of the four texts in Berlin MSS. I have to thank the Director of the Preußische Staatsbibliothek. For permission to consult the Rylands German MS. 11, and for constant helpfulness, I again wish to thank the Librarian of the John Rylands Library, and Dr. F. Taylor.
rather by learned theologians and students than by worldly women', enters reluctantly into conversation with her, and questions her concerning her state, and her devotions (Übungen). She replies that she fulfils her duties as parent and mistress of her household; she has three 'inward' (inwendige) and three 'outward' (auswendige) devotions which, here, are not orthodox 'works' or practices or habits, but mystic 'contemplations'. In the end the theologian concludes, 'For fifty years I have worn the cloth and am called a Doctor of Divinity, but myself never reached such perfection; praise be to God who thus bounteously bestows his grace'. A comparison of the five texts which I was able to consult shows that one must recognise two versions, which I have called A and B, and printed separately.

THE YOUNG WOMAN OF TWO-AND-TWENTY.

A.¹

Eyn meister van der gotheit quam yn eyn stat. Dar quam eyn Junffrauwe van xxii iaren Vnd begerde, den meister an zu sprechen. Do der meister die Junffrowe gesach, Er nam is in vnwerdicheit, dat yme die Junffrauwe zo sprechen

¹ The text of Version A is based on MS. germ oct 328, f. 221r-223r (Degering iii, p. 106; 16th cent., Middle Franconian dialect). Relevant variants from the following are given below: MS. germ oct 120, f. 27r-29r (ibid., p. 50; the MS. contains 16th and 17th cent. Dutch writings; Rubric to the exemplum: Dit is een dewote leere); MS. germ quart 1584, f. 60r-62r, (Degering, ii, p. 293; 16th cent. Alsatian dialect). The key letters for these three MSS. (of the Preußische Staatsbibliothek) are a, b, and c. (Versions of the story which could not be consulted are referred to in Borchling, Reisebericht, i, p. 106, and iii, p. 111; Priebsch, Deutsche Hss., etc., ii, p. 49.) Abbreviations are, in the text above, expanded; inwendig, oßwendig, inzetzen and tzuveralais are written, against the MS., each as one word. The young woman is called vroukë (b), frewlin (c), and addressed as vroukt (c), Jungfrow, frouw (c).

3f. nam — sprechen wolde] da n. hy dat in groter onwaerdë d. hem dat vroukë sp. w. b, das was jm vnner mit jm zü reden c. 4 meisten] aller grösten c; om hé vraechdë b, sichten an zü sprechen c. 5 seer onwonderdëlik b, vnwersamlich c. 7 volt.] clairheit a. 7f. ond tzu — warheit ÷ a. 8 gerne werre ÷ c; als verre ÷ a; frauwen] menschen c; vercr.] vercr. eñ tote komen b, komen c. 9 gode te hebbë b. 10 weltlich ere c. 13 mich — gevoeg] mi g. dat toe heeft gevoegt b, mir das g. hat zü gef. e; halde] hadde . . . gescicket b, het c. 18 Die — oeffenunge ÷ b. 20 ander ÷ bo. 21 ich beste] verre als ic arbe diepste b, ich aller tiefest e (cf. 1.39). 21 recht ungl. be. 22 vader ind' godheit b. 23 ewiger a; geberte] bereit heeft be; metdel. ÷ b, jungfreulichen c. 23f. Vnd in hatte — gehinder] Vnd en hette in däs m. etc. a, vnd wer do von ouch des m. s. nit geh. worden, after gewant c. 26in loutere rejnë hartë b, einem r. h. c.
wolle, Want er was is bas gewaen, dat yn die meisten studenten frageden dan s<ulch frauw. Do sprach der meister vnwerdenclichen: , Frauwe, wat wiltu? Syl antwort oitmodeclichen: , O meister l wat hoert eyme tzu oeffenen, der (2214) tzu der aller hoester volkomenheit vnd tzu der aller hoester vnd clarisater warheit gerne werre?—als verre als is frauwen moegelich ist, tzu vercrigen tzu eyner sicher frunschaft myt gode. Do sprach der meister: , Frauwe, was ist uwer staat? Syl ir in der ee, Vnd hait ir geut vnd ere der werelt? , Ja here, sprach sye, ., ich byn in der ee gebunden, Aber in were ich neit dar, Ich en queme neit dar in vmb eyn gulden werelt. Want ich nu dar in byn, so han ich gantzen gelouben, dat mich got dar tzo gevoget vor dat aller beste; Want ich halden myne guet gerne tzu allen goeden dingen, Vnd ich leren myne kynder dogent, Wa ich kan vnd mach. 


Do sprach der meister: , O guede frauwe, synt das vre vßwendige oeffenunge, So sagen vns auch vmb got die inwendige oeffenunge, die ir alle dage doet. Do sprach sye: , Die eirste inwendige oeffenunge, die ich alle dage doen, Dat ist, Dat ich mych alle dage scheiden van allen creaturen. Also dat ich myt kyner creatures tzu doen in hain tzu der tzýt, tzu dat der dyenste godes ober alle gedaen ist. Dat ander ist: ich ledigen myn hertz van allen vnnutzen ingetzogen hynnderlichen dyngen, (2234) So dat neit hynderlichs enblyue in tuschen gode vnd myner selen. Die dryte oeffenunge ist: So warmer ich in die kyrche komen, Vnd tzwen fuße rumes kryegen kan, so vereynigen ich mich myt gode, Dat mych duncket, dat dar nyeman en is dan Got vnd ich alleyn.

27 After oeffenunge, wtwendelic b, usserlich c. 28 roetuerwigë b, ÷ a. 29 toewerllaet b, zjuersicht c; gebristet c. 30 in myr ÷ bc. 31 oeffenëg die ghi alle dage doet heb, habent bc. 33 alle dage ÷ c. 35 tzu dat] also lang bis c. 36 ingetz.] vmbztiehende c. 39 Vnd = kan ÷ c; so vereynigen - gode] soe sinkce ic mì so diepe in gode bc. 42f. in d. gotheit] vand? g. b, von der gotlichen kunst c. 43 nyenan a; Vort] furbasser c. 44 gebeneditet a; con allë menschë b.
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Do sprach der meister: "O goede frauwe, ir sjit in dem rechten wege. Ich han die kappe gedragen wail funfftzich iare lanck, Vnd heissen eyn meister in der gotheit, aber ich in quam noch nye tzo dieser volkomenheit." Vort sprach er: "Gebenediet sy der here, der synge genade aus myldenlichen geben kan."  

B.¹

Ain maister göttlicher geschriif kam in ain stat. Da kam ain frow von xxj. jaren vnd fraget nach dem maister. Do der maister die frowen sach, da wass im die frow etwas vnwerd, wan er wass nit gewunlich, dz die frowen nach im fragten. Er wz vil baß gewun, dz die höchsten studenten oder maister nach im fragten, die in der schül warend. Doch sprach der maister vnwürdiklich:  

Do sprach der maÿster der göttlichen geschriif: "Frow, waß wend ir mein?" Do sprach (103v) die frow gar demütiglichen:  

Do sprach der meister: "Frow, honnd ir kain inwendig übung?" Do sprach (104r) dz fröwlin:  

Do sprach der maister: "Frow, sagend mir durch Got, was seind eiiwer inwendig übung." Do sprach die frow gar demiitigklich: "Here, die erst inwendig übung ist, dz ich mich

¹ Version B is based on MS. germ oct 571, f. 103v-107v (Degering, iii, p. 206, 16th cent.). Relevant variants are given from the text in German MS. 11 of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, f. 199v-203r (latter half of the 15th cent., Bavarian dialect). To these the key-letters d and R are given. Abbreviation signs are expanded only where they have independent value, e.g. not the n-stroke over n; the er-hook over r is given as e. ä, ü and the y-like symbol for ü are given uniformly as ü.
alltag ainest schaid von allen creaturen, dz ain ougenblick zu tond hat mit keiner creature also lang biß aller gotz Dienst vff erdtrich volbracht würt. So gon ich zi der andern üebung, Vnd (104°) entledig mein hertz von allen ingezognen bilden vnd von allen vnutzen gedencken, dz der kainer belib zwischen mir vnd Got. Do sprach der maister : , Frow, seint dz eüwer vßwendig üebungen, so sagent mir durch Got, was sind eüwer inwendig üebungen ? ' Do sprach dz fröwlin gar demütigklichen : , Here, die erst inwendig üebung ist, dz ich alle (105°) tag siche, wie dan Got der vatter sein ewig wort erhöcht hat in dem künschen lib siner lieben muter Maria, da er inn ist gelegen .viiiij. monat. Het es die gehorsami seines himelschen vatter nit geton vnd het es des menschen säligkeit nit gehindret, er wer lieber darin geweßen tâusent jar dan .viiiij. monat. Noch hundert malen lieber wonet er in einem rainen hertzen gaistlich dan in siner lieben muter leiplich. Die ander üebung (105°) ist, dz ich mich besich in dem spiegel vnd in dem gebenedicthen namen meins süssen Heren Jhesu vnd sich sin gerechtigkait vnd sin barmherzigkait, also tieff all3 ich imer kan vnd mag. So gon ich dan zii der dritten üebung vnd bad vnd wâsch mich in den blütigen roßen farben wunden meines süßen herren, vnd hab das ain gantz zuversicht vnd ain gantzen vollküm goben : alles das, dz noch mir (106') gebrist, dz Got der here an mir mit einen hailigen leyden erfüllen will.‘


Wen ich dz alles gethon hon vnd in die kirchen kem vnd ain stättlin gehaben mag, dz als weit ist, dz ich baid fuß gesetzten mag, so senck ich mich (107°) also tieff in Gott, dz ich main, dz nymand leb in der zit dan Christus vnd ich allain.‘

Da sprach der maister : , Frow, jr sind in ainem rechten weg. Bittend Gott für mich armen brüder, der sin kor kappen hat getragen finfzigjar vnd hait ain maister göttlicher kunst, vnd chan noch nie zii der vollkumenhait. Ich haub auch grosse sorg vnd angst, das manger sj geganen in ainer sächinen kor kappen finfzig jar nach dem brött, der auch nimer me zii der vollkümen- (107°) hait kempt, Nun Sehent ! dz was nun ain fröwlin in der .e. der stat. Nu schöwent auch jr junckfröwlin, die jr hertz in der welt er vnd gütt kerent. Nit mer ist mir wissenlich von den edlen .e. fröwlin zu schreiben, den : ain jegeliche .e. fröw besser sich dar ab nach irem höchsten vermügen ; dz ist mein rat mit gantzen vertrüwen.

This story, like the works in whose midst it is to be found, is a typical instance of late fifteenth-century popular mystical literature in Germany; it is a product of the period in which
‘der Tauler’ and ‘der Süß’ had become generic terms for collections of pious storyettes, sentimental tracts and Büchlein dealing with the infinite love of God; it represents mysticism on the decline.¹ We shall therefore not be surprised to discover that, according to the evidence of the textual variants, it appears to be a matter of indifference whether a given devotion is described as being ‘inward’ or ‘outward’: of the three ‘outward’ devotions of text A two appear in B as ‘inward’ and the third has no rubric; the three ‘inward’ devotions of A come under the heading ‘outward’ in B. The devout souls who read such literature would not be versed in the technicalities of speculative mysticism; none of the devotions listed—with the possible exception of church-going—would to them appear to be ‘outward’, so that the classification of the six in two groups of three must be considered a popular, formal, rather than a logical arrangement.² I believe that I can show that the rubrics ‘outward’ and ‘inward devotions’ were, in fact, borrowed from a related story in which entirely different ‘Übungen’ were described. One would like to know what those same pious readers understood by such phrases as, ‘bathe oneself in the rose-red wounds of Christ’;³ ‘mirror oneself in the blessed name of Christ’. Could even the writer of such lines at this period have explained their meaning? More important than the original sense of such inherited formulations were their sound and associations, the imagery, and the voluptuous thrill which they were still able to provoke. ‘The Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’ we may label the popular mystical variant of the story-type under discussion; more particularly it reflects the post-Suso sentimental mysticism of the convents.

With this simple tale I propose now to compare a considerably longer work, which has been published and which is quite well known; this is the tract Swester Katrei, Meister Ekehartes tohter von Strázburc,⁴ which was long considered to be a work of...

¹ [An attempt to assess the literature of ‘Mysticism on the decline’ positively, see Miscellany, §§ 1, 3 and passim.]
² It is purposeless to speculate on the relative merits of the arrangements in versions A and B, but it would appear that A is the older—B is evidently drawn from some letter or Büchlein and has a garbled text.
⁴ Pfeiffer, ii, pp. 448 sqq.
Meister Eckehart himself. To anyone who has not recently read *Schwester Katrei*, and who has only its main outline in mind, the ‘Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’ will have sounded familiar; he will, intuitively, have recognised the essential affinity of the two works.

3.

*Schwester Katrei* (SK) is not now accepted as a work of Eckehart; it was composed by a zealous emulator and is, moreover, almost certainly a mosaic tract made up of gleanings from speculative mystic writings. Simon has already shown that certain long digressions—an interpretation of the two loaves and five fishes and a disquisition on faith—were added later: they do not occur in the earlier MSS. of SK. The rest of the tract comprises (four or) five dialogues between a confessor and his spiritual child (Pfeiffer, ii, p. 452, 11-33; 455 (below)-458, 35; 460, 35-462, 18 and 463, 15 f., whereby a long and more recent digression, 465, 19-467, 27, splits the fourth into two). It is particularly, but not exclusively, the section 467, 27 sqq., which is recalled by the exemplum. With II. 6-9 of Text A, above, compare:

Si sprichet, herre, wisent mich den nêhsten wec zuo miner èwigen sælîkeit' (Pfeiffer, ii, p. 456, 1). Er sprach, niht ennim dich des an, ez ist vrouwen niht gegeben' (ibid., l. 18).

In SK the young woman has already followed the advice of her confessor and had communion with God before he asks her what have been her devotions (‘Übungen’), and to what causes she attributes her state of grace. She then describes (467, 27 sqq.) ten ‘outward’ ‘Übungen’ (ôuzzerr übungun)—which, indeed, deserve the names ‘outward’, and ‘Übung’, for they describe her mode of life and her dealings with her fellows. He continues, ‘Nû hâstû mir geseit von ôuzzerr üebunge : nû sage mir von inrer üebunge’ (468, 16 sqq.). She describes one which she calls ‘inward’: whilst in the state of grace she dwelt in heaven and moved about amongst heavenly beings. The rubrics which we

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1 Otto Simon, *Überlieferung und Handschriftenverhältnis des Traktates S. K.*, Diss. Halle, 1906. (This work was consulted before the present article was prepared and has not since been available.)
know from the exemplum are here used with some meaning. Commenting on his own unworthiness, the confessor uses the following expressions which resemble those of his counterpart in the simpler tale:

\[\text{ach mich armen man, wie mac ich mich so wol schamen vor den ougen gotes, dass ich so lange geistlichen schun hän gehabt und ich so wënic bevunden hän göttlicher heimlichkeit} (463, 37-40);\]
\[\text{wizzet, diz (her state of grace) ist allen menschen fremde, unde wære ich niht ein solich pfafe, dass ich ez selber gelesen hete von göttlicher kunst, so wëre ez mir auch fremde} (464, 32-34).

We have, in the exemplum and SK, two almost contemporary versions of the same story of the penitent whose life is more godly than that of her confessor—the naïve and the sophisticated variants. In the latter the basic theme is made the framework for a mass of theological argument. Beside the simple housewife of the exemplum we have the blue-stocking who ousts her confessor in subtle debate, turns the tables on him and becomes his instructor—incidentally ruining the point of the story, which is that a simple woman shall triumph over a competent theologian.

The elaborate trappings of SK were, however, not an adequate disguise; a number of collectors recognised that it was, fundamentally, of the same stock as such stories as Die fromme Müllerin and St. Bernhards Tochter, and proceeded to reduce it again to its simple basic formula. One such revised version of SK, based in fact on one of the longer texts which Simon has called Fassung II, is to be found in the John Rylands German MS. 11, where it immediately precedes ‘The Young Woman of Two-and-twenty’.

It is thus composed:


Within the excerpted passages the idiom is simplified and certain mystic metaphors (e.g. ‘he came to her in a foreign land’) are given a literal sense. The new version begins with the (fourth or) fifth of the SK dialogues, in which the young woman’s ‘Übungen’ are discussed. Certain passages from other dialogues are included, in which purification through suffering and the importance of avoiding contact with one’s fellows—themes
dealt with in every mystic sermon and tract—are discussed. By main force the five dialogues have here been reduced to one, and the contents popularised and simplified.

The adapter responsible for this version of SK must have recognised the tract's ancestry; that he or she failed to discover a passage which could easily have been modified to supply the customary conclusion in stories of the same stock ('Go and pray for me, a poor sinner')—see Miscellany, p. 478, note 2. However unsatisfactory the adaptation may be, one cannot but be impressed by the trouble which the writer responsible has taken to recover the simple tale. Other adapters of SK proceeded more rigorously. Spamer, listing MSS. of SK, notes certain versions which transmit only the one dialogue in which 'Übungen' are discussed. In the Melk MS. 371 in 2°, f. 319vb, for instance, the text of Pfeiffer 467, 30—468, 15 is preceded by the simple introductory phrase, Ein andächtige Junkfräuw ward in hahe volchömenhait tzogen. dý fragt ir peichtuater, was sj am meisten zw irer sölchen sölchait tzogen hiet.¹ One cannot know more about the SK texts—whether Fassung I or Fassung II—which were used in these cases. It is clear that several writers felt that SK called for simplification, and for the removal of accretions.

In an earlier cast of this article I adduced, as evidence to prove that SK had been known in a form considerably shorter than that published by Pfeiffer, a late Middle High German Priamel (a doggerel didactic genre, consisting, normally, of a series of precepts) to be found in a Wolfenbüttel MS. (published in Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters xiv, as Nr. 609). After a rubric, Ein peicht vater fragt eyn sel, was sein peicht kint, warumb si wes selig worden auf erden, and the introductory couplet, Ein beich-vater ain nacht zas / und fragt ein sel die sein peicht kint was, we find a rhymed version of that same dialogue from SK which deals with the ten 'outward' and the one 'inward' 'Übungen'. It seemed to me inconceivable that the Priamel should be an adaptation of the tract as I knew it from Pfeiffer. It would now appear that it is merely a rhymed version of the one dialogue.

¹ Beiträge, xxxiv, p. 367 (with further references).
and that its immediate source was an excerpt ¹ of the type referred to above.

Dependent on SK are therefore the Rylands redaction, the excerpted single passages and, consequently, the *Priamel*—the latter two need not go back to the full-length text edited by Pfeiffer. My reasons for believing that at least the rubrics ‘inwendige übungen’, ‘auswendige übungen’, ² in the actual dialogue of ‘The Young Woman of Two-and-twenty ’ are derived from the tract I have summarised in *Miscellany*, pp. 479 sqq. The text of SK used by the author of the exemplum may have been an early, simple, or late, simplified form of the tract: the naïve version is dependent on, and later than, the sophisticated one.

4.

I wish now to examine one special variation on the theme common to all the stories under consideration; I find it in one exemplum, which I have printed below, and in the stanzas 56-91 of a medieval Dutch religious ballad known as the *Beghinchen von Paris*.³ The person interrogated is, in both cases, a Beguine; the interrogator is in the one case a village priest (setting: a village church, confession), in the other a Mother Superior (scene: a Beguines’ convent). The latter challenges the Beguine and demands to know why she ‘goes to church only on the

¹ [I am still convinced that an expert student of the literature of the German Mystics would be able to prove that SK is a mosaic-tract, and that it is, moreover, none too skilfully composed. As it stands, it will not bear close analysis. See, further, *Miscellany*, p. 479, and p. 480, note 2.]

² A possible source of the actual formulations given under the rubrics may be such a gnomic compilation of devotions as the following entry seems to indicate: Hildesheim MS. 724b, f. 123a, Dusse worde sprac broder Hinrick van Loeven. De mensche de godes wil syn, deme behoven to holden ses stucken, der syn dri van buten vnd dri van bynnen, Strauch, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, xli, p. 21.

³ The most convenient text of this poem is in Schade, *Geistliche Gedichte vom Niederrhein*, Hanover, 1854, p. 333 f. Through the good offices of the University Librarian in Copenhagen I was able to consult, in the summer of 1936, R. Segebrecht, *Von dem Beghinchen zu Paris. Vergleichung der überlieferten Fassungen und Herstellung eines kritischen Textes*. Diss. in typescript, Hamburg, 1921. The only emendation in the critical text which is relevant to the present study is noted below.
Sabbath 'never goes to church'. She explains that on Monday she cannot, on Tuesday she cannot—on no day but the Sabbath can she go to church, for she is 'busy'; the 'business' of each day is described, and is the contemplation of some phase of Christ's Passion. The interrogator admits that the Beguine's piety is adequate and that her way of life is more pleasing in the eyes of God than that of her critic.

Von ainer säligen pegeinen.

Es was ains mals ain salige pegein, Vnd die kam jn ain dorf Vnd peichtet ainem priester. Vnd jn andacht sy furtt ain hailig leben, Aber sy gieng jn der gantzen wochen nit zw kirchen den an dem suntag. Da fragt sy der priester, was sy da mit mainte, Das sy nit zw kirchen gieng in der wochen.


Do sprach der herre: ,Was hettest Du an dem erctag tân, das du nit zw der kirchen komen pist?' Do sprach sy: ,Ich pin zeratt gangen, Vnd han (256v) wetachtet, wie die Juden vnseren Herren habent verraten.'

Do sprach er: ,Was hast du dan an der mitwochen getan?' Do sprach sy: ,Do han ich flaisch gekauft.' Do sprach er: ,Wie hast dw flaisch kaft?' Do sprach sy: ,Do han ich betrachtett, wie vnser Herre Jhesus Xristus, das vnschuldig plutt Vnd länplein, verkafh ist worden von seinem jungeren Judas, das ich nit kunde kumen zw der kirchen.'

Do sprach er: ,Was hast dw dan an dem pfindstag getan, das dw nit zw der kirchen komen pist?' (256v). Do sprach sy:

I have not succeeded in discovering a second text of this exemplum; it is reproduced here from the John Rylands Germ. MS. 11, f. 225v-258v.


What answer preceded the allegorical interpretation? Perhaps, Do ich in dem markt gewessen.
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'Do pin ich jn dem pad gewessen.' Do sprach er: 'Wie pist 25 dw jn dem pad gewessen?' Do sprach sy: 'Do han ich be-

trachtett Den pluttigen schwäiβ, den vnser Herre an dem Ölperg
geschwitzt hatt, Vnd pin so vnmussig gewessen mit dem be-

trachten des leydens vnser Herren, das ich jm gedanckt
han der grossen liebe, die er zw mir gehabt hatt, Das er mich
so willigkleich erlost hatt von dem ewigen tod. Vnd do han ich

geschwitzt jn der betrachtung, Als war ich (257r) im pad gewe-

sen. Vnd dar vm pin ich so vnmussig gewesen in der wetrach-

tung, Das ich nicht zw der kirchen komen mocht.'

Do sprach er: 'Was tetzt du an dem freytag?' Do sprach 35

sy: 'Do han ich ainem siechen seines endes geartt.' Do

sprach er: 'Wie hast du den ainem gewarttet? Nu ist doch

jn meiner pfar nyemant kranck noch siech gewesen.' Do sprach

sy: 'Do pin ich vnder dem creutz gestanden jn meiner betrach-

tung, Vnd pin gatanden pey Maria Vnd han ir geholffen klagen

ir kind, (257r) das ich nit mocht zw der kirchen komen.

Do sprach er: 'Was hettest dw am samstag tan, do du nit

zw der kirchen komen pist?' Do sprach sy: 'Ich pin pey der

grebnüβ gewesen, das ich zu der kirchen nicht komen mocht.'

Do sprach er: 'Pey was grebnüβ pist dw gewesen?' Do sprach 45

sy: 'Do han ich trachtet die wegrebnüβ Jhesu Xristi, das ich

dw der kirchen nit mocht komen. Nu pin ich an dem suntag

dw der kirchen komen.'

Do sprach der herre: 'Nu gang hin; dein leben ist säliger
dann das mein. (258r) Ich frag dich furpas nymer war vm du

50 nit zw der kirchen gast xc.'

What is common to the Beghinchen stanzas and our exemplum

was indicated in the outline given above. The resemblance is so

striking that the dependence of the one text on the other seems

likely. The sources of the Beghinchen is a problem which has

not been attacked hitherto.1 I am encouraged by the fact that

the last third of the ballad seems to have its own independent

source in a popular allegorical tract, De speghel denes hertin,2

1 According to the article on the work in Stammler, Verfasserlexikon, i,
cols. 183-185, no source is known.
2 Cf. Borchling, Reisebericht, i, p. 258; iii, pp. 31, 52, 158.
to advance that the middle section, with which we are now concerned, has its own source, which may well have been a version of our exemplum. The present differences between the story according to the exemplum and according to stanzas 56-91 of the Beghinchen seem to me to be explainable by reference to the Beguine’s pre-history in the ballad version, i.e. to be consequential modifications in the latter.

It is said in the Dutch ballad that the Beguine was the daughter of a Parisian family of rank; that, in order to become a Beguine, she had renounced family, wealth, and worldly honour (Schade, stanzas 1-38). Though she had given the oath of obedience, she now steadfastly refuses to go to Church, to sew and to spin:

Jesus hat min herz geraicht
soe vast mit siner minnen,
dat ich zo kirchen niet gain enmach
noch neien noch wirken noch spinnen. (Stanza 48)

The latter couplet embodies the central theme of the ballad, and occurs before the point where the adaptation of the exemplum story begins. The consequential modifications are: (1) The priest of the exemplum had asked the pegein why she did not go to church; the Superior of the ballad, endeavouring to persuade the Beghinchen to obedience, suggests that she should go to church; (2) The Beghinchen can no more go to church on the Sabbath than on any other day. (3) The ‘business’ which kept the pegein occupied was first described as being a normal worldly activity (‘I had to weed my garden’, ‘I attended a dying person’, etc.) and then interpreted allegorically. The allegorical statement is dropped in the ballad, because its verbal content would clash with the assertion ‘ich . . . enmach noch neien noch wirken noch spinnen’. (The pegein’s allegorical statement and interpretation would seem—but perhaps my construction is too modern—to recommend a compromise between the vita activa and the vita contemplativa; the Beghinchen emulates Mary and

1 According to Schade’s text the Superior suggests for whom, or for what boon, she should pray (stanzas 66, 72, 87). This feature is not to be found in the exemplum, but the couplets in which these suggestions are made are altered in Segebrecht’s critical text to hebdi eene dach begonnen / hi brocht den andern in (which occurs only in stanza 59 in Schade).
not Martha and the allegory is dropped, in spite of the fact that the ballad contains a good deal of allegory). (4) — is consequential on 2: the 'contemplations' assigned to each day, and which keep the *pegein* 'vnnussig' and the *Beghinchen* 'unledich', do not always correspond in the two texts. This is possibly because the exemplum did not provide a 'contemplation' for the Sabbath—the day on which the *pegein* went to church to confess. It is worth while noting that gnomic compilations of 'contemplations of the Passion, arranged for the days of the week' or 'arranged for the canonical hours' are one of the commoner recurring entries in descriptive catalogues of fifteenth-century manuscripts; the adaptor, having dropped the allegorical figure, would not feel bound to follow his source on this point.¹ The *Beghinchen* stanzas may, therefore, well be an adaptation of the exemplum story.

There my juggling with imponderables must cease. The material discussed raises numerous further questions which I could formulate but which I am not equipped to answer; there are doubtless many others whose existence I have simply not recognised. If my notes provoke others to publish the material which they consider relevant, and to reassess, if necessary, the value of what I have made known, I shall have achieved my purpose.

¹ Short gnomic compilations of 'contemplations of the Passion' are necessarily stereotyped: the sequence of the scenes contemplated is that of the events of the actual Passion Week. There is not absolute uniformity in the selection of scenes and events to be contemplated, however, nor in the allocation of the scenes to given days, for the events of Thursday to Sunday had to provide the material for seven days' or seven hours' contemplations. [I note that certain connected accounts of the Passion have been provided, by copyists, with marginals to indicate what sections should be read at the different hours, e.g. the version in the Cues MS. of *Christi Leiden in einer Vision geschaut* (ed. Priesch, Heidelberg, 1936).]