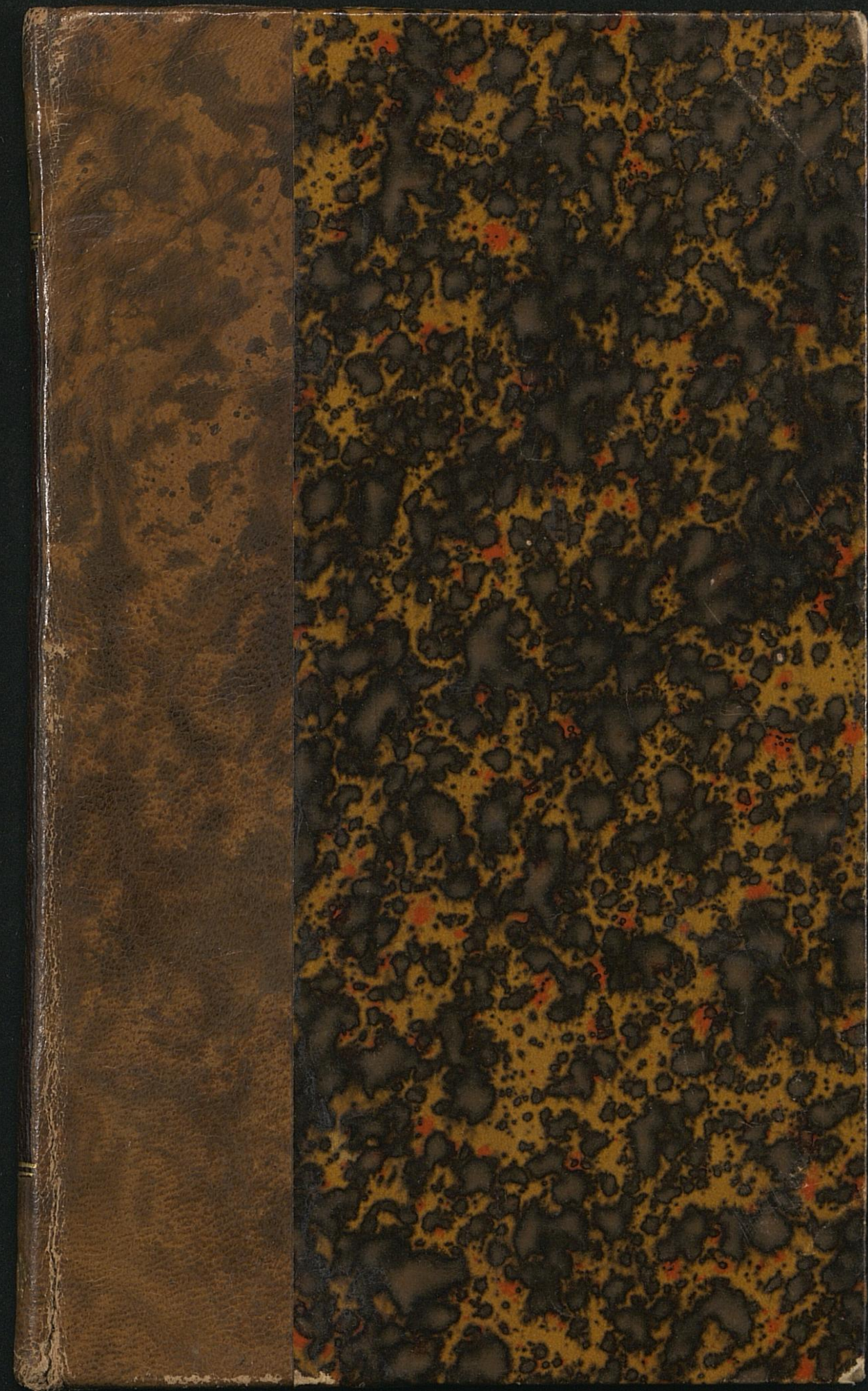


453 SOUTHEY. A.Ms. WITH MANY CORRECTIONS. ROPRECHT THE
ROBBER. 19 pp., 8vo. Bound in half calf. \$75.00

Long narrative poem in the ballad form, where Southey was at his best, with many changes throughout. The little manuscript was presented by Bryan Inglis Southey to a friend in 1913. From the library of Charles Whibley.



Sum Caroli Whibley

(19)

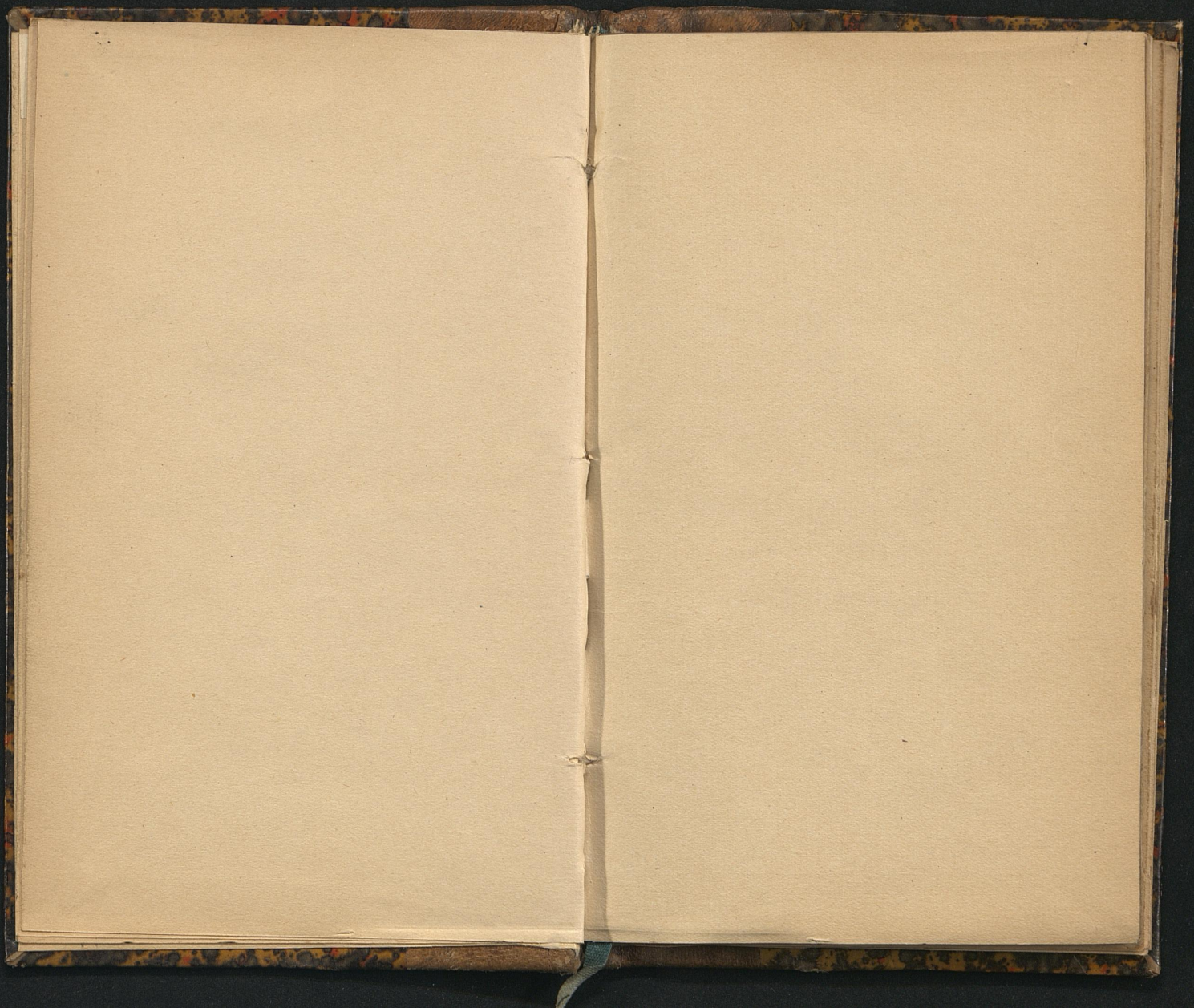
80 / Frank Bond

in remembrance of
a view over Paris

24 March 1913

from

Bryan Hughes Southey



Robert Southey

Roprecht the Robber

Rooprecht the Robber.

Rooprecht the Robber is taken at last;
In Cologne they have him fast.
Trial is over, & sentence past;
And hopes of escape were vain he knew,
For the Gallows now must have its due.

But the pardon ^{can} not here be bought.
It may for the other world he thought:
And so to his comfort, with one consent
The Friars assured their penitent.

Money, they teach him, when rightly given,
Is put out to account with Reason.
For ruffragas therefore his plunder went,
Sinfully gotten, but proudly spent.

All Saints whose shrines are in that city,
They tell him, will on him have pity.
Seeing he hath liberally paid
In this time of need for their food aid.

In the Three Kings they bid him confide.
Who there in Cologne lie ride by ride;
And from the Eleven Thousand Virgins eke
Intercession for him will they bespeak.

And also a sharer he shall be
In the merits of their Community;
All which, they promise, he need not fear,
Thro Purgatory will carry him clear.

Tho the furnace at Babylon could not compare
With the terrible fire that rages there,
Yet they their part will so zealously do
That he shall but frizzle as he flies thro.

And they will help him to die well;
And he shall be hang'd with book & bell.
And moreover with holy water they
Will sprinkle him ere they turn away.

For buried Reprecht must not be.
He is to be left on the triple-tree;
That they who pass along may spy
Where the famous Robber is hanging on high.

Seen in that Gibbet far & wide
From the Rhine, & from the ^{Duynhoff} eastern side;
And from all roads which cross the sand,
North, south & west, in that level land.

It will be a comfortable sight
To see him there by day & by night;
For Roprecht the Robber many a year
Had kept the country round in fear.

To the Friars assigned, by special grace,
With book & bell, to the fatal place;
And he was hang'd on the triple tree
With as much honour as man could be.

In his suit of iron he was hung;
They sprinkled him then, & their psalm they sung;
And turning away when his duty was paid,
They said what a goodly end he had made.

The crowd broke up & went their way;
All were gone by the close of day;
And Roprecht the Robber was left there
Hanging alone in the moonlight air.

The last who look'd back for a parting sight
Saw him there in the clear moonlight;
But the first who look'd when the morning show
Saw in dismay that Reprecht was gone.

2.

The stir in Cologne is greater to day
Than all the bustle of yesterday.
Hundreds & thousands went out to see;
The iron & chain as well as he
Were gone, but the rope was left on the tree.

A wonderful thing! for every one said
He had hung till he was dead, dead, dead;
And on the gallows was seen from noon
Till ten o'clock, in the light of the moon.

Moreover the hangman was ready to swear
He had done his ^{office} part with all due care.
And that, certainly, better hang'd than he
No one ever had been, or ever could be.

Neither kith nor kin to bear him away,
And funeral rites in secret pray,
Had he; & none that pains would take
To risk of the law for a strangers sake.

So 'twas thought because he had died so well
He was taken away by miracle.
But would he again alive be found?
Or had he been laid in holy ground?

If in holy ground his relics were laid,
Some marvellous sign would show, they said,
If restored to life, & Truer he would be,
Or a holy Hermit certainly,
And die in the odour of sanctity.

That this ^{it would prove, they} ~~would be~~ ^{not} could ^{not} doubt
Of a man whose end had been so devout.
And to disputing then they fell
About who had wrought this miracle.

Had the Three Kings this mystery shown
Who were the pride & honour of Cologne?
Or was it an act of proper grace
From the army of virgins of British race
Who were also the glory of that place?

Parson, some said, they might presume
Being a Kingly ^{act} ~~power~~ from the King must come.
But Others maintain'd that St Ursulas heart
Would never be mov'd to the merciful part.

There was ^{who} thought his aid divine
Came from the other bank of the Rhine.
For Roprecht here too had for favour apply'd
Because his birth-place was on that side.

To Dusseldorff then the praise
The praise then to Dusseldorff might belong,
Thro its Army of Martyrs, ten thousand strong,
But he for a Dusseldorff man was known;
And no one would listen to him in Cologne,
Where the people would have the whole wonder
their own.

The Friars who help'd him to die so well
Put in their claim to the miracle.
Greater things than this, as their sands ^{fall} cast,
The stock of their merits for sinful men
Had done before, & would do again.

That a whole weeks wonder in that great town
And in all places up the river & down.

But a greater wonder took place of it than,
For Roprecht was found on the gallows again!

3

With that the whole city flocked out to see;
There Roprecht was, on the triple tree,
Dead past all doubt, as dead could be;
But fresh he seem'd, as if spells had charm'd him,
And neither wind nor weather had harm'd him.

While ^{multitude} the beholders stood in a muse,
One said, 'I am sure he was hang'd in shoes!
In this the hangman & all concurr'd;
And that so he had been, they all assur'd;
But the Roberer now, ^{behold!} he
was boot'd & spur'd.'

Plainly therefore it was to be seen,
That somewhere on horseback he had been;
And at this the people marvel'd more
Than at any thing which had happen'd before.

For not in riding trim was he
When he disappear'd from the triple tree;
And his suit of iron he still was in
With the collar that clipt him under the chin.

With that his second thought befell,
That Perhaps he had not died so well;
Nor had Saints perform'd the miracle;
But rather there was cause to fear
That the foul Fiend had been busy here.

Approacht the Robber had long been their curse
And hanging had only made him worse;
For bad as he was ^{they thought} ~~above~~, they said,
They had rather meet him alive than dead.

What a horse must it be such he had ridden!
No earthly beast could be so bestriden!
And when by a Hell-horse a dead Rider was carried
The whole Land woud be fearfully harried.

So some were for digging a pit in the place,
And burying him there with a stone on his face,
And that hard on his body the earth should be prest
And worms should be sent for to lay him at rest.

But others whose Knowledge was greater, opin'd
That this Corpse was too strong to be so confin'd:
No weight of earth such they could lay,
Would ^{hold} ~~press~~ him down a single day,
If he chose to get up & ride away.

There was no keeping Vampires underground:
And bad as a Vampire he might be found,
Against those fiends, ^{against whom} it was understood
Exorcism never had done any good..

But fire, they said, had been proved to be
The only infallible remedy.
So they were for burning the body outright
Which would put a stop to his riding by night.

Others were for searching the mystery out,
And setting a guard the gallows about,
Who should keep a careful watch & see
Whether Witch or Devil it might be,
That help'd him down from the triple tree.

For that there were Witches in the land,
Was what all by this might understand,
And they must not let the occasion slip
For detecting that cursed fellowship

Some were for this, & some for that,
And some they could not tell for what;
And never was such a commotion known
In that great city of Cologne.

Pieter Inoye was a boor of good renown,
 Who doct ^{about an hour & a half} not very far from the town:
 And he while the people were all in debate,
 Went quietly in at the city gate.

For Father Kijf he sought about,
 His Confessor; till he found him out.
 But the Father Confessor wondered to see
 The old man & what his errand might be.

The good Priest did not wonder less
 When Pieter said he was come to confess.
 Why Pieter how can this be so?
 I confess thee ^{some ten days} ~~only~~ ~~to~~ ~~back~~ ago!

Thy conscience methinks may be well at rest,
 An honest man among the best:
 I would that all my flock like thee,
 Kept clear accounts with Heaven & me.

Always before, without confusion,
Being sure of easy absolution,
Pieter his little slips had cum'd;
But he ~~facter'd~~^{hesitated} now, & he had'd & hum'd.

And something is strange the Father saw
In Pieter's look & his hum & his haw,
That he began to ~~facter~~^{doubt if} hear something more
Than a trifle omitted in last week's score.

At last it came out that in the affair
Of Roprecht the Robber, he had come there.
The Confessor then gave a start in fear,
'God grant there have been no witchcraft here!'

Pieter Snoye who was looking down
With something between a smile & a frown,
Felt that suspicion move his bile,
And look'd up with more of a frown than a smile;

'Fifty years, I, Pieter Snoye,
Have lived in this country, men & boy;
And have always paid the Church her due,
And kept short scores with Heaven & you.'

The Devil himself, tho' Devil he be,
Would not dare impute that ^{sin} crime to me;
He might charge me as well with heresy;-
And if he did here, in this place,
I'd call him liar, & spit in his face!

He saw that the Father ^{he saw cast a} ~~with~~ gracious eye
Look'd, when he heard him the Devil defy;
The wrath of which he had cast his mind
Left a comfortable ^{part of} ~~rest~~ ^{of} comfort behind:

Like what a cheerful cup will impart
In a social hour to an honest man's heart;
And he add'd, 'for all the witchcraft here
I shall presently make that matter clear.

Tho' I am, as you very well know, Father King,
A peaceable man, & keep clear of strife,
It's a queerish business, that was I've been in;
But I can't say that it's much of a sin

However it needs must be confest;
And as it will set this people at rest
To come with it at once was best:
Moreover if I delay I thought
That some might perhaps into trouble be brought

Under the seal I tell it you;
And you will judge what is best to do,
That no hurt to me & my son may ensue.
No earthly harm have we intended
And that was ill done, has been well mended.

I & my son Piet Pieterzoon,
Were returning home by the light of the moon
On ^{from this good city of Cologne}
After the ~~the~~ night of the execution day,
And hard by the gibbet was our way.

About midnight it was we were passing by,
My son Piet Pieterzoon & I,
When we heard a moaning as we came near
Which made us quake at first for fear.

But the moaning was presently heard again,
And we knew it was nothing ghostly then:
'Loth help us father, Piet Pieterzoon said,
Koprecht for certain is not dead!

So under the gallows our cart we drove,
And sure enough the man was alive;
Because of the iron that he was in
He was hanging not by the neck, but the chin.

Piet Pieterszoon & I had ^{been} rather out
Full a lateish hour at a christenay bod.
And ^{perhaps} he were ^{perhaps} as ^{perhaps} you may think,
And a little tender too, with drink.
1871 or so

The reason why things had got thus wrong
Was that the rope had been left too long, -
The hangman's fault, ... a clumsy rogue,
He is not fit to hang a dog!

Now Kopracht as long as the people were there
Never stir'd hand or foot in the air:
But when at last he was left alone
By that time so much of his strength was gone
That he could do little more than groan.

Father Kijf I ^{we} could not bear
To leave him hanging in misery there;
And 'twas an act of mercy I must say
To get him down & take him away.

And as you know, all people said
What a goodly end that day he had made.
So we thought for certain, Father Kijf,
That if he were saved he wou'd mend his life.

My son Piet Pieterszoon & I
We took him down, seeing none was nigh.
And we took off his suit of iron with care
When we got him home & we hid him there.

* A passage to be inserted here, which
will be found at the end.

The secret, as you may guess, was known
To Alit my ^{wife} ~~daughter~~, but to her alone;
And never sick man I dare aver
Was better tended than he was by her.

Good advice moreover as god could be
He had from Alit my ^{wife} ~~daughter~~ & me;
And no one could promise fairer than he;
So that we & Piet Pieterzoon our son
Thought that we a very good deed had done.

* ^{well & true, he}
We kept him ~~long~~ at bed & board
Till his neck was cured, & his strength restored.
And we should have sent him off this day
With something to help him on his way.

But this wicked Propraecht what did he?
Tho he had been saved thus mercifully,
Saying had done him so little good
That he took to his old ways as soon as he ^{could}.

Last night when we were all asleep,
Out of bed did this Gallows-bird creep.
Piet Pieterzoon's boots & spurs he put on,
And stole my best horse, & away he was gone.

Now Alit my ^{wife} ~~house~~ did not sleep so hard
But she heard the horses feet in the yard:
And when she jogg'd me & bade me awake
My mind misgave me as soon as she spake.

To the window my good woman went
And watch'd which way his course he bent:
And in such time as a peep can be let,
Our horses were ready with bridle & bit.

Away as fast as we could lie
We went, Piet Pieterzoon & I,
And still on the plain we had him in sight;
The moon did not shine for nothing that night.

Knowing the ground & riding fast,
We came up with him at last.
And woud you think it, Father Kijf?
The ungrateful wretch woud have taken my life
If he had not mis'd his stroke with ^{his} knife.

The struggle in no long time was done,
Because you know he were two to one:
But yet all our strength we were faine to try,
Piet Pieterzoon, my son & I.

When we had got him on the ground,
We fasten'd his hands, & his legs we bound,
And across the horse we laid him then,
And brought him back to the house again.

We have robb'd the Gallows; & that was all done,
Said I to Piet Pieterzoon my son,
And restitution he must make
To that same Gallows for justice sake!

In his suit of wron the ropus we array'd,
And once again in the cart he was laid,
Night not yet so far was spent
But there was time enough for our intent,
And back to the triple-tree we went.

For our rope was ready there;
To measure the length we took good care,
And the job which the bungling hangman began
This time I think was properly done
By me & Piet Pieterzoon my son.

to be inserted three pages back.

You may well think we laugh'd in our sleeves
At what the people seem'd then to believe,
Dearer enough it was to hear them say
That the Three Kings look'd Roprecht away.

Or that St Ursula who is in bliss
With her army of virgins had done this.
The 3 Kings & St Ursula ~~had done this too~~
I warrant had something better to do.

That Peterborough my son & I
We heard ^{him} ~~at~~ ^{talk} ~~then~~ as we stood by
And he look'd at us with a counsel eye
We thought him fool, but as you shall see
Not our wise ourselves were so.

For I must tell you Father Kij's
That when we told this to Alit my wife
She at the notion perk'd up with delight
And said she beheld the people were right.

Had not Roprecht put in the Countess his wife
And she had they could have any head the rope

When they saw that no one could intend
To make at the gallows a better end?

Yes, she said, it was perfectly clear
That there ^{must have} been a great miracle here,
And so had the happiness to be in it,
Having been brought there just at the minute

And therefore would become us to make
An offering for this favour sake,
To the Three Kings & the Virgin too
Who ^{could not} be seen but certain to stand it in due

For greater honour there could be none
Than that in this business the Saints had done
To us, & Piet Pieterszoon our son.
She talked me over, Father Kijf,
With that tongue of hers, did what my wife

God forgive us! as if they ^{could} not die,
To come & help such a rogue in prison!
~~That was the only reason because~~
~~that they were the successors of our advent~~
~~unless they had had her halter put.~~

mercy

That would have made one hanging do,
Which ^{is a happy reason for his} was in his case a proper cure;
And have said some words as you will see
To our son Piet Pieterszoon & me



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