



As its bells the Angelus did begin.  
He knocked at the door and they let him in.

*(Choral music)*

The monks in that place were men of parts,  
Learned in the sciences and the arts: 30  
The Abbot could logically define  
The place of all creatures in the Scheme Divine.

Brother Maurice then wrote down all that he said  
In a flowing script that it might be read,  
And Brother Alexander adorned the book 35  
With pictures that gave it a beautiful look.

There were brothers there who could compose  
Latin Sequences in verse and prose,  
And a brother from Picardy, too, who sung  
The praise of Our Lady in the vulgar tongue. 40

*(Choral music)*

Now Barnaby had never learned to read,  
Nor *Paternoster* knew nor *Creed*;  
Watching them all at work and prayer,  
Barnaby's heart began to despair.

Down to the crypt at massing-time 45  
He crept like a man intent on crime:  
In a niche there above the altar stood  
A statue of Our Lady carved in wood.

'Blessed Virgin,' he cried, 'enthroned on high,  
Ignorant as a beast am I: 50  
Tumbling is all I have learnt to do;  
Mother-of-God, let me tumble for You.'

Straightway he stripped off his jerkin,  
And his tumbling acts he did begin:  
So eager was he to do Her honor 55  
That he vaulted higher than ever before.

*(Ballet music)*

The French Vault, the Vault of Champagne,  
The Vault of Metz and the Vault of Lorraine,  
He did them all till he sank to the ground,  
His body asweat and his head in a swound. 60

Unmarked by him, Our Lady now  
Steps down from her niche and wipes his brow.  
'Thank you, Barnaby,' She said and smiled;  
'Well have you tumbled for me, my child.'

From then on at the Office-Hours 65  
Barnaby went to pay Her his devoirs.  
One brother thought to himself: 'Now where  
Does Barnaby go at our times of prayer?'

And so next day when Barnaby slipped  
Away he followed him down to the crypt. 70  
When he saw how he honored the Mother-of-God,  
This brother thought: 'This is very odd.'

'It may be well: I believe it is,  
But the Abbot, surely, should know of this.'  
To the Abbot he went with reverent mien 75  
And told him exactly what he had seen.

The Abbot said to him: 'Say no word  
To the others of what you have seen and heard.  
I will come to-morrow and watch with you  
Before I decide what I ought to do.' 80

Next day behind a pillar they hid,  
And the Abbot marked all that Barnaby did.  
Watching him leap and vault and tumble,  
He thought, 'This man is holy and humble.'

*(Ballet music)*

'Lady,' cried Barnaby, 'I beg of Thee 85

To intercede with Thy Son for me!',  
Gave one more leap, then down he dropped,  
And lay dead still, for his heart had stopped.

Then grinning demons, black as coal,  
Swarmed out of Hell to seize his soul: 90  
'In vain shall be his pious fuss,  
For every tumbler belongs to us.'

*(Ballet music)*

But Our Lady and Her angels held them at bay,  
With shining swords they drove them away,  
And Barnaby's soul they bore aloft, 95  
Singing with voices sweet and soft.

CHORUS: *Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

1969

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