

Hermit Songs (1953)

i. At Saint Patrick's Purgatory

Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!
O King of the churches and the bells
bewailing your sores and your wounds,
But not a tear can I squeeze from my eyes!
Not moisten an eye after so much sin!
Pity me, O King!
What shall I do with a heart that seeks only its own ease?
O only begotten Son by whom all men were made,
who shunned not the death by three wounds,
pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg
and I with a heart not softer than a stone!

Anonymous Poet, 13th Century

ii. Church Bell At Night

Sweet little bell, struck on a windy night,
I would liefer keep tryst with thee
Than be
With a light and foolish woman.

Anonymous Poet, 12th Century

iii. Saint Ita's Vision

"I will take nothing from my Lord," said she,
"unless He gives me His Son from Heaven
In the form of a Baby that I may nurse Him".
So that Christ came down to her
in the form of a Baby and then she said:

"Infant Jesus, at my breast,
Nothing in this world is true
Save, O tiny nursling, You.
Infant Jesus at my breast,
By my heart every night,
You I nurse are not
A churl but were begot
On Mary the Jewess by Heaven's Light.
O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!"

“Infant Jesus at my breast,
what King is there but You who could
Give everlasting good?
wherefor I give my food.
Sing to Him, maidens, sing your best!
There is none that has such right
To your song as Heaven's King
Who every night
Is Infant Jesus at my breast.”

Text attributed to Saint Ita, 8th Century

iv. **The Heavenly Banquet**

I would like to have the men of Heaven in my own house;
with vats of good cheer laid out for them.
I would like to have the three Marys, their fame is so great.
I would like people from every corner of Heaven.
I would like them to be cheerful in their drinking.
I would like to have Jesus sitting here among them.
I would like a great lake of beer for the King of Kings.
I would like to be watching Heaven's family
Drinking it through all eternity.

Text attributed to Saint Brigid, 10th Century

v. **The Crucifixion**

At the cry of the first bird
They began to crucify Thee, O Swan!
Never shall lament cease because of that.
It was like the parting of day from night.
Ah, sore was the suffering borne
By the body of Mary's Son,
But sorer still to Him was the grief
Which for His sake
Came upon His Mother.

Text from *The Speckled Book*, 12th Century

vi. Sea-Snatch

It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
The wind has consumed us, swallowed us,
as timber is devoured by crimson fire from Heaven.
It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!

Anonymous Poet, 8th-9th Century

vii. Promiscuity

I do not know with whom Edan will sleep,
but I do know that fair Edan will not sleep alone.

Anonymous Poet, 8th-9th Century

viii. The Monk And His Cat

Pangur, white Pangur,
How happy we are
Alone together,
Scholar and cat.
Each has his own work to do daily;
For you it is hunting, for me study.
Your shining eye watches the wall;
my feeble eye is fixed on a book.
You rejoice when your claws
Entrap a mouse;
I rejoice when my mind
Fathoms a problem.
Pleased with his own art,
Neither hinders the other;
Thus we live ever
Without tedium and envy.
Pangur, white Pangur,
How happy we are
Alone together,
Scholar and cat.

Anonymous Poet, 8th or 9th Century

ix. The Praises Of God

How foolish the man
Who does not raise
His voice and praise
With joyful words,
As he alone can,
Heaven's High King.
To Whom the light birds
With no soul but air,
All day, everywhere
Laudation sing.

Anonymous Poet, 11th Century

x. The Desire For Hermitage

Ah! To be all alone in a little cell with nobody near me;
beloved that pilgrimage before the last pilgrimage to Death.
Singing the passing hours to cloudy Heaven;
feeding upon dry bread and water from the cold spring.
That will be an end to evil when I am alone
in a lovely little corner among tombs
far from the houses of the great.
Ah! To be all alone in a little cell,
to be alone, all alone:
Alone I came into the world,
alone I shall go from it.

Anonymous Poet, 8th-9th Century