

Pilgrimage

by Anne of Ockham
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based on The Colloquies of Erasmus †

Cornelius, a pilgrim
Margery †, his friend
A Monk
A Nun
the Announcer

Cornelius is dressed in worn and stained traveling clothes. He is wearing several pilgrim's tokens. Margery is wearing clean, new, high quality clothes. She is obviously well off. The Monk and Nun are dressed as appropriate for their ranks. The Announcer is also wearing several pilgrim's tokens.

SCENE 1

In front of a church

(The Announcer Enters)

Announcer: *(Holds up his various tokens in turn)* I got this one in Jerusalem *(a token in the shape of a palm leaf)*. This one's from Rome *(a sheet of tin with a portrait stamped on it)*. Compostela *(a scallop shell)* and Canterbury *(a lead coin)*, *(holds up a small bottle)* Walsingham, no wait, *(finds another bottle)* this one is Walsingham. Or maybe this one ... or this one ... or ... *(he has about a dozen small bottles)* never mind. Cope!

(Announcer exits)

(Cornelius enters Right and loiters about, waiting for the tour to start. Margery enters Left, she spots Cornelius and heads over to him.)

Margery: Cornelius, my friend, is that really you?

Cornelius: It is indeed. But why are you so surprised?

Margery: You've been gone so long, we'd given you up for lost. Where have you been all this time?

Cornelius: In hell.

Margery: Well given your appearance, I'm inclined to believe you!

Cornelius: Actually, I've just returned from pilgrimage.

Margery: What set you on such a journey?

Cornelius: What drives countless others?

Margery: Folly, if I'm not mistaken.

Cornelius: So, I'm not the only one ...

Margery: Was there anything worth seeing in those distant lands?

Cornelius: No.

Margery: What about all the relics and holy sites?

Cornelius: Fakes.

Margery: All of them?

Cornelius: Nearly all, at least. I don't think they even know where the ancient sites really are.

Margery: If you're so disillusioned, why come here?

Cornelius: I have faith in my country men.

Margery: That their relics are genuine?

Cornelius: That they'll do a better job of faking them.

(The Monk comes out of the church)

Margery: Shh, here comes our guide.

Monk: Welcome, gentles, to this humble house. If you would follow me, I will show you what small wonders we hold here.

(The Nun enters and stands by a small door. She is carrying a collection box.)

Monk: Let me first call your kind attention to this gate. *(Indicates door the Nun is near.)*

Margery: Is there a story attached to it?

Cornelius: There must be, the sister has a collection box handy.

Monk: *(Ignoring Cornelius)* There was once a noble knight fleeing his enemies. They were on the point of overtaking him. In despair, he prayed for assistance. And lo, he suddenly found himself, still a-horse, on the other side of this small portal. His frustrated enemies were stuck on the outside.

Margery: Can such a wondrous tale be believed?

Cornelius: I warrant they'll have proof for you.

Nun: Indeed, my lord, if you but step closer and examine this plaque.

Margery: What proof is that?

Nun: It shows the very likeness of that worthy knight.

Cornelius: *(Moving in for a good look)* It's true my friend, he is even dressed in the fashion of old.

Margery: There can be no doubt then

(The Nun, hearing her cue, holds out the collection box. Margery drops a coin in.)

Monk: Come, gentles, there are many other wonders to behold.

(They all follow him off, with the Nun bringing up the rear.)

SCENE 2 Behind the church, near a small cottage.

(Enter Monk, Margery, Cornelius & Nun)

Monk: This small structure was, on a winter's eve, miraculously brought here from far away. It houses a well that is filled with healing waters.

Cornelius: How long ago was it brought here?

Monk: *(Not really paying attention to him)* Some ages.

Nun: *(To Margery)* Would you care to sample this marvelous water?

Margery: I would indeed.

(The Nun goes off to fetch a cup for her.)

Cornelius: The walls don't look very old.

(The Monk shrugs.)

Cornelius: Even these posts don't look old.

Monk: They had to be replaced.

(The Nun returns with a cup of water.)

Cornelius: The roof and thatch seem rather recent.

(Margery reaches for the cup, but the nun pulls it back and holds out the collection box.)

Monk: Last summer.

(Margery puts coin in the box and the nun hands him/her the cup. She drinks.)

Cornelius: Even the crossbeams and the rafters look new.

(The Monk nods.)

Cornelius: But, if no part of the building has survived, how do you know that this is the 'miraculous' cottage?

(The Nun retrieves the empty cup.)

Monk: *(Affronted)* Can you not see this ancient bearskin fastened to the side posts? That is the proof!

Margery: Trust you to miss the obvious, Cornelius.

Cornelius: *(Sarcastically)* How was the water?

Margery: Quite refreshing.

Monk: Gentlemen, there is more to see inside.

(He leads them off.)

SCENE 3 Inside the church

(There is a table center stage with a lump of white crystal on it. Next to the table is a small chest. Everyone enters in the same order as before.)

Monk: Here, my lord and lady, is our greatest prize.

Margery: What is it?

Nun: Nothing less than the very milk of Mary, herself!

Cornelius: Encased in crystal?

Nun: To protect it, of course.

Cornelius: Of course. And, no doubt you have proof of its authenticity as well.

(The Monk shoots him a dirty look – he's had about enough of Cornelius.)

Margery: Please, forgive my friend, *(She gives the Monk a coin, which is passed to the Nun, who puts it in the box)* we just want to know how to answer our doubting friends when we tell them of our -- most enjoyable -- visit here.

Monk: All the proof needed is contained on that plaque *(he points up quite high)*.

Cornelius: *(Squinting)* What is it?

Monk: The record of how the milk made its way to this humble spot.

Margery: Cornelius, I'm no Lynceus, so far as eyes are concerned, can you read it?

Cornelius: It's too far for my eyes as well.

Nun: *(She never even glances at the plaque – she's got it memorized)* It says that William, a holy man and collector of relics, came to Constantinople –

Monk: *(He doesn't need to look, either)* Where his brother was bishop.

Nun: Before he left, he learned –

Monk: From his brother –

Nun: That a certain nun of that city had the milk in her possession.

Monk: All the other relics he had thus far collected were nothing compared to this.

Nun: He would not rest until he won a portion of it for himself.

Margery: And he succeeded?

Cornelius: Evidently.

Nun: He hurried home, but fell fatally ill on the way.

Monk: He summoned a fellow pilgrim –

Nun: And swearing him to secrecy, entrusted the milk to him.

Monk: To make a long story short –

Cornelius: *(Under his breath)* Too late.

Monk: William is buried, and his friend hurries on.

Cornelius: I hope they waited for William to die first.

Margery: Shhh!

Nun: But disease takes this second pilgrim too.

Monk: In despair he gives the milk to a companion.

Nun: After getting his word that he would deliver it to this church –

- Monk: And this he did do, and here it sits as proof of our tale.
- Margery: And an excellent tale it is.
- Cornelius: The tale proves the milk, the milk proves the tale – convenient.
- Monk: *(To Cornelius)* What did you say?
- Margery: *(Gives him another coin – which makes its way to the box)* Ignore him, he’s always mumbling something.
- Monk: I can see, madam, that you at least are a woman of refinement. There is one more thing I would like to show you.
- Margery: Please, do so.
- (The Monk pulls the small chest out from beside the table.)*
- Monk: This chest contains several saints’ relics.
- Cornelius: Of what sort, bones?
- Nun: Oh, nothing of the grave, sir. These are relics of their lives.
- Margery: You make me curious.
- Monk: Then we will tease you no longer.
- (The Monk opens the chest with a flourish. Inside it is a pile of dirty rags. Cornelius snickers, and Margery seems underwhelmed.)*
- Nun: They may not look like much, gentles, but these are truly most holy relics.
- Margery: What, exactly, are they?
- Monk: These humble cloths were used by various saints while they yet lived.
- Cornelius: Well used by the look of them.
- Nun: The holy men used these simple squares of linen to wipe the sweat from their brows –
- Monk: Or the dirt from their noses –
- Nun: Or, indeed, whatever other kinds of filth human bodies have.
- (Margery is disgusted but trying not to show it.)*
- Cornelius: Remarkable.

Monk: Indeed, for they remind us that once the saints were mortal men.

(The Nun leans over and whispers to the Monk.)

Monk: Yes, I think that would be appropriate.

Nun: *(To Margery)* Madam, you have been most kind in your attention today.

Monk: And we wish to repay your generosity with a small gift.

Margery: How kind.

(The Nun picks out one of the nastier looking rags and hands it to the Monk, he hands it to Margery. Margery takes it, gingerly, between thumb and fore-finger.)

Cornelius: Well, my friend, isn't that a handsome gift. Your very own relic!

Margery: Indeed. *(She fishes out one last coin.)* My thanks.

(While they deal with getting the coin into their box, Margery surreptitiously tosses the rag back into the chest.)

Margery: Come, Cornelius, I believe we should leave now.

Cornelius: Yes. *(To the Monk & Nun)* Thank you for a most – entertaining – afternoon.

(Margery and Cornelius exit. As soon as they're gone, the Monk opens up the collection box and starts dividing the spoils, while he and the Nun exit in the other direction.)

Monk: One for you, one for me, one for you ...

SCENE 4

Outside the church again.

(Margery and Cornelius enter)

Cornelius: So, will you be going on any other pilgrimages?

Margery: I think not, there doesn't seem to be anything to gain from it.

Cornelius: Ah, that's where you're wrong. Pilgrimages can be very rewarding.

Margery: How? Tell me.

Cornelius: Whenever I like, I can have the vast pleasure of impressing both myself and others at meetings or parties, by telling lies about my travels.

Margery: Yes, you're not far wrong there.

Cornelius: And I'll take equal pleasure in hearing other men lie about things they never heard or saw.

Margery: Great fun. You haven't spent your time and trouble for nothing, I see.

Cornelius: When convenient, we'll arrange a little drinking party. We can invite other pilgrims and compete in lying. We'll have a good time by taking turns telling whoppers.

Margery: All right, let's do it!

(They exit, arm in arm.)

THE END

NOTES:

* From the collection The Colloquies of Erasmus, this play is based on two different Colloquies: "Rash Vows" (*De visendo loca sacra or De votis temere susceptis*) and "A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake" (*Peregrinatio religionis ergo*). The author (of the play) states that if any are interested, she can obtain publication data ...

The opening and closing bits with Margery and Cornelius talking pretty much come from "Rash Vows". The details of the relics, etc., are from "A Pilgrimage ...".

* The character of Margery was written originally as Arnold, but casting in the Golden Stag Players requires that we be flexible, based on people's schedules. At this time the only two opportunities we've had to perform this play, the character has been played by Joanna Melissa Ronsivalle, so we changed the name to Margery (*and references to feminine*).