

MEDIEVAL STUDENTS' SONGS, C. 12TH CENTURY

The Goliards were primarily students from universities in France, Germany, Italy, and England who challenged authority by protesting against the corruption of the Church. Their chosen vehicle of expression was the student song, which combined poetry with performance. In many ways, the Goliards were the student activists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

[The first is a tenth century-piece, marked by an element of tenderness in sentiment which is essentially modern. It is the invitation of a young man to his mistress, bidding her to a little supper at his home.]

*Come therefore now, my gentle fere,
Whom as my heart I hold full dear;
Enter my little room, which is
Adorned with quaintest rarities:
There are the seats with cushions spread,
The roof with curtains overhead:
The house with flowers of sweetest scent
And scattered herbs is redolent:
A table there is deftly dight
With meats and drinks of rare delight;
There too the wine flows, sparkling, free;
And all, my love, to pleasure thee.
There sound enchanting symphonies;
The clear high notes of flutes arise;
A singing girl and artful boy*

*Are chanting for thee strains of joy;
He touches with his quill the wire,
She tunes her note unto the lyre:
The servants carry to and fro
Dishes and cups of ruddy glow;
But these delights, I will confess,
Than pleasant converse charm me less;
Nor is the feast so sweet to me
As dear familiarity.*

*Then come now, sister of my heart,
That dearer than all others art,
Unto mine eyes thou shining sun,
Soul of my soul, thou only one!
I dwelt alone in the wild woods,
And loved all secret solitudes;
Oft would I fly from tumults far,
And shunned where crowds of people are.
O dearest, do not longer stay!
Seek we to live and love to-day!
I cannot live without thee, sweet!
Time bids us now our love complete.*

[The next is a begging petition, addressed by a student on the road to some resident of the place where he was temporarily staying. The supplication for alms, in the name of learning, is cast in the form of a sing-song doggerel.]

*I, a wandering scholar lad,
Born for toil and sadness,
Oftentimes am driven by
Poverty to madness.*

*Literature and knowledge I
Fain would still be earning,
Were it not that want of pelf
Makes me cease from learning.*

*These torn clothes that cover me
Are too thin and rotten;
Oft I have to suffer cold,
By the warmth forgotten.*

*Scarce I can attend at church,
Sing God's praises duly;
Mass and vespers both I miss,
Though I love them truly.*

Oh, thou pride of N—,
By thy worth I pray thee
Give the suppliant help in need,
Heaven will sure repay thee.

Take a mind unto thee now
Like unto St. Martin;
Clothe the pilgrim's nakedness
Wish him well at parting.

So may God translate your soul
Into peace eternal,
And the bliss of saints be yours
In His realm supernal.

[The following jovial Song of the Open Road throbs with exhilaration and even impudence. Two vagabond students are drinking together before they part. One of them undertakes to expound the laws of the brotherhood that binds them together. The refrain is intended apparently to imitate a bugle call.]

We in our wandering,
Blithesome and squandering,
Tara, tantara, teino!

Eat to satiety,

Drink to propriety;

Tara, tantara, teino!

Laugh till our sides we split,

Rags on our hides we fit;

Tara, tantara, teino!

Jesting eternally,

Quaffing infernally:

Tara, tantara, teino!

Craft's in the bone of us,

Fear 'tis unknown of us;

Tara, tantara, teino!

When we're in neediness,

Thieve we with greediness:

Tara, tantara, teino!

Brother catholical,

Man apostolical,

Tara, tantara, teino!

*Say what you will have done,
What you ask 'twill be done!
Tara, tantara, teino!*

*Folk, fear the toss of the
Horns of philosophy!
Tara, tantara, teino!*

*Here comes a quadruple
Spoiler and prodigal!
Tara, tantara, teino!*

*License and vanity
Pamper insanity:
Tara, tantara, teino!*

*As the Pope bade us do,
Brother to brother's true:
Tara, tantara, teino!*

*Brother, best friend, adieu!
Now, I must part from you!*

Tara, tantara, teino!

When will our meeting be?

Glad shall our greeting be!

Tara, tantara, teino!

Vows valedictory

Now have the victory:

Tara, tantara, teino!

Clasped on each other's breast,

Brother to brother pressed,

Tara, tantara, teino!

[Here is a song entitled *The Vow to Cupid.*]

Winter, now thy spite is spent,

Frost and ice and branches bent!

Fogs and furious storms are o'er,

Sloth and torpor, sorrow frore,

Pallid wrath, lean discontent.

Comes the graceful band of May.

*Cloudless shines the limpid day,
Shine by night the Pleiades;
While a grateful summer breeze
Makes the season soft and gay.*

*Golden Love! shine forth to view!
Souls of stubborn men subdue!
See me bend! what is thy mind?
Make the girl thou givest kind,
And a leaping ram's thy due!*

*O the jocund face of earth,
Breathing with young grassy birth!
Every tree with foliage clad,
Singing birds in greenwood glad,
Flowering fields for lovers' mirth!*

[Here is another song of exceedingly delicate sentiment. It is entitled *The Love-Letter in Spring*.]

*Now the sun is streaming,
Clear and pure his ray;
April's glad face beaming
On our earth to-day.*

*Unto love returneth
Every gentle mind;
And the boy-god burneth
Jocund hearts to bind.*

*All this budding beauty,
Festival array,
Lays on us the duty
To be blithe and gay.
Trodden ways are known, love!
And in this thy youth,
To retain thy own love
Were but faith and truth.*

*In faith love me solely,
Mark the faith of me,
From thy whole heart wholly,
From the soul of thee.
At this time of bliss, dear,
I am far away;
Those who love like this, dear,
Suffer every day!*

[Next to love and the springtime, the average student set his affections principally on the tavern and the wine-bowl. From his proneness to frequent the tavern's jovial company of toppers and gamesters naturally sprang a liberal supply of drinking songs. Here is a fragment from one of them.]

Some are gaming, some are drinking,

Some are living without thinking;

And of those who make the racket,

Some are stripped of coat and jacket;

Some get clothes of finer feather,

Some are cleaned out altogether;

No one there dreads death's invasion,

But all drink in emulation.

—

Frederick Austin Ogg, *A Sourcebook of Medieval History* (New York: American Book Company, 1907), pp. 353–59.