An Excelente Balade of Charitie:

As wroten bie the gode Prieste Thomas Rowley,[1] 1464.

In Virgyne the sweltrie sun gan sheene,
And hotte upon the mees[2] did caste his raie;
The apple rodded[3] from its palie greene,
And the mole[4] peare did bende the leafy spraie;
The peede chelandri[5] sunge the livelong daie;
'Twas nowe the pride, the manhode of the yeare,
And eke the grounde was dighte[6] in its moste defte[7] aumere.[8]

The sun was glemeing in the midde of daie,
Deadde still the aire, and eke the welken[9] blue,
When from the sea arist[10] in drear arraie
A hepe of cloudes of sable sullen hue,
The which full fast unto the woodlande drewe,
Hiltring[11] attenes[12] the sunnis fetive[13] face,
And the blacke tempeste swolne and gatherd up apace.

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[1] **Thomas Rowley, the author, was born at Norton Mal-Reward in Somersetshire, educated at the Convent of St. Kenna at Keynesham, and died at Westbury in Gloucestershire**
[2] **meads.** Bailey, MEES, Old French
[3] **reddened, ripened.** Bailey, RODE, complexion, Old English
[4] **soft.** Bailey, TO MOLLIFY, to make soft, supple, tender, Latin
[5] **pied goldfinch.** Bailey, PIED, spotted or speckled, French. Bailey, CHELANDRY, a goldfinch, Chaucer.
[6] **drest, arrayed.** Bailey, DIGHT, dressed, Old English.
[7] **neat, ornamental.** DEFT, neat handsome, spruce, trim, Saxon.
[8] **a loose robe or mantle.** Bailey, AUMERE, welt, skirt, or mantle, Old English.
[9] **the sky, the atmosphere.** Bailey, THE WELKIN, the firmament or sky, Saxon.
[10] **arose.** Speght, ARIST, arose, Old English
[11] **hiding, shrouding**. Bailey, HYLTED, hid, Old English
[12] **at once.** Bailey, ATTENES, at once, Old English
[13] **beauteous.** Bailey, FETIS, handsome, spruce, Old English

Beneathe an holme, faste by a pathwaie side,
Which dide unto Seyncte Godwine's covent[14] lede,
A hapless pilgrim moneynge did abide.
Pore in his newe, ungentle[15] in his weede,
Longe bretful[16] of the miseries of neede,
Where from the hail-stone coulde the almer[17] flie?
He had no housen theere, ne anie covent nie.

Look in his glommed[18] face, his sprighte there scanne;
Howe woe-be-gone, how withered, forwynd,[19] deade!
Haste to thie church-glebe-house,[20] asshrewed[21] manne!
Haste to thie kiste,[22] thie onlie dortoure[23] bedde.
Cale, as the claie whiche will gre on thie hedde,
Is Charitie and Love aminge highe elves;
Knightis and Barons live for pleasure and themselves.

The gatherd storme is rype; the bigge drops falle;

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[14] **It would have been *charitable*, if the author had not pointed at personal characters in this Ballad of Charity. The Abbot of St. Godwin's at the time of the writing of this was Ralph de Bellomont, a great stickler for the Lancastrian family. Rowley was a Yorkist.**
[15] **beggarly.**
[16] **filled with.** Bailey, BRETFUL, top-ful, Old English
[17] **beggar**
[18] **clouded, dejected. A person of some note in the literary world is of the opinion, that glum and glom are modern cant words; and from this circumstance doubts the authenticity of Rowley's Manuscripts. Glum-mong in the Saxon signifies twilight, a dark or dubious light; and the modern word *gloomy* is derived from the Saxon *glum*.** Bailey, GLOOMY, dusky, dark, cloudy, Saxon.
[19] **dry, sapless.** Bailey, FORWINED, withered, Old English.
[20] **the grave.**
[21] **accursed, unfortunate.** Bailey, SHREWD, to bewitch, bewitched, impious, vile, wicked, Chaucer.
[22] **coffin.** Bailey, KYSTE, a Chest, or Coffin for Burial of the dead, Old English.
[23] **a sleeping room.** Bailey, DORTURE, the common room where all the Friars of one Convent sleep a Nights, French

The forswat[24] meadowes smethe,[25] and drenche[26] the raine;
The comyng ghastness do the cattle pall,[27]
And the full flockes are drivynge ore the plaine;
Dashde from the cloudes the waters flott[28] againe;
The welkin opes; the yellow levynne[29] flies;
And the hot fierie smothe[30] in the wide lowings[31] dies.

Liste! now the thunder's rattling clymmynge[32] sound
Cheves[33] slowlie on, and then embollen[34] clangs,
Shakes the hie spyre, and losst, dispended, drown'd,
Still on the gallard[35] eare of terroure hanges;
The windes are up; the lofty elmen swanges;
Again the levynne and the thunder poures,
Again the levynne and the thunder poures,And the full cloudes are
braste[36] attenes in stonen showers.

Spurreynge his palfrie oere the watrie plaine,
The Abbote of Seyncte Godwynes convente came;

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[24] **sun-burnt.** Bailey, FORSWAT, over-sweat, sun-burnt, Spenser.
[25] **smoke.** Bailey, SMOTHER, a great vapour or smoke, Saxon.
[26] **drink.** Bailey, TO DRENCH, to drink, to water, to give a Drench; also to bathe or soak, Saxon.
[27] ***pall*, a contraction from *apall* to fright.**
[28] **fly.** Bailey, FLOTING, whistling, piping, Old English.
[29] **lightning.** Bailey, LEVIN, lightning from Spenser
[30] **steam or vapours.** Bailey, SMOTHER, a great vapour or smoke, Saxon
[31] **flames.** Bailey, A LOWE, a flame, North Country word.
[32] **noisy.** Bailey, Clymbe, noise, Old English
[33] **moves.** Bailey, TO CHEVE, to thrive, Old English
[34] **swelled, strengthened.** Bailey, BOLLEN, swollen or swelled, Old English.
[35] **frightened.** Bailey, TO GALLO, to fright, from Shakespeare.
[36] **burst.** Bailey, BRAST, burst, broke, Old English

His chapournette[37] was drented with the reine,
And his pencte[38] gyrdle met with mickle shame;
He aynewarde tolde his bederoll[39] at the same;
The storme encreasen, and he drew aside,
With the mist[40] almes craver neere to the holme to bide.

His cope[41] was all of Lyncolne clothe so fyne,
With a gold button fasten'd neere his chynne;
His autremete[42] was edged with golden twynne,
And his shoone pyke a loverds[43] mighte have binne;
Full well it shewn he thoughten coste no sinne:
The trammels of the palfrye pleasde his sighte,
For the horse-millanare[44] his head with roses dighte.

"An almes, sir prieste!" the droppynge pilgrim saide,
"O! let me waite within your covente dore,
Till the sunne sheneth hie above our heade,
And the loude tempeste of the aire is oer;
Helpless and ould am I alas! and poor;
No house, ne friend, ne moneie in my pouche;

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[37] **a small round hat, not unlike the shapournette in heraldry, formerly worn by Ecclesiastes and Lawyers.** Bailey, CHAPOURNET, a little hood, the figure of which heralds take for the being of a coat of arms, French.
[38] painted.
[39] **He told his beads backwards; a figurative expression to signify cursing.** Bailey, BEDES, almsmen, who prayed for their Benefactors and Founders.
[40] **poor, needy.** Bailey, MISTER, Need, Want, Old English
[41] **a cloke.** Bailey, A COPE, a priest's vestement, fastened with a Clasp before, and hanging down from the Shoulders to the heels; also a Cloak, Chaucer.
[42] **a loose white robe, worn by Priests.** Bailey, AUTREMITE, another attire, Chaucer.
[43] **A lord.** Bailey, LOVERED, a Lord, Old English.
[44] **I believe this trade is still in being, though but seldom employed.**

All yatte I call my owne is this my silver crouche."

"Varlet," replyd the Abbatte, "cease your dinne;
This is no season almes and prayers to give;
Mie porter never lets a faitour[45] in;
None touch mie rynge who not in honour live."
And now the sonne with the blacke cloudes did stryve,
And shettynge on the grounde his glairie raie,
The Abbatte spurrde his steede, and eftsoones roadde awaie.

Once moe the skie was blacke, the thunder rolde;
Faste reyneynge oer the plaine a prieste was seen;
Ne dighte full proude, ne buttoned up in golde;
His cope and jape[46] were graie, and eke were clene;
A Limitoure he was of order seene;
And from the pathwaie side then turned hee,
Where the pore almer laie binethe the holmen tree.

"An almes, sir priest!" the droppynge pilgrim sayde,
"For sweete Seyncte Marie and your order sake."
The Limitoure then loosen'd his pouche threade,
And did thereoute a groate of silver take;
The mister pilgrim dyd for halline[47] shake.

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[45] **a beggar or a vagabond.** Bailey, FAYTOURS, idle fellows, vagabonds, Old English.
[46] **A short surplice, worn by Friars of an inferior class, and secular priests.** Percy, JUPE, an upper garment.
[47] **joy.** Bailey, HAILES, happiness, Chaucer

“Here take this silver, it maie eathe[48] thie care;
We are Goddes stewards all, nete[49] of oure owne we bare.

“But ah! unhailie[50] pilgrim, lerne of me,
Scathe anie give a rentrolle to their Lorde.
Here take my semecope,[51] thou arte bare I see;
Tis thyne; the Seynctes will give me mie rewarde.”
He left the pilgrim, and his waie aborde.
Virgynne and hallie Seyncte, who sitte yn gloure,[52]
Or give the mittee[53] will, or give the gode man power.

[48] **ease.** Bailey, EATH, easy, Old English
[49] **nought.** Bailey, NOUGHT, not at all, nothing, no wit, nothing worth, Saxon.
[50] **unhappy.** Bailey, HAILES, Happiness, Chaucer.
[51] **a short under-cloke.** Bailey, SEMICOPE, a short Cloak, Old English.
[52] **Glory.** Bailey, GLORY (GLOIRE), honour, renown, reputation; or the Joys of Heaven, the Majesty of God considered with infinite Power and all other divine Perfections.
[53] **mighty, rich.** Bailey, MITTLE, might, Old English.