Queen Eleanor's Confession

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Queen Eleanor was a sick woman and sick just like to die
And she has sent for two friars of France to come to her speedily

The King called down his nobles all, by one, by two, by three
Earl Marshall, I'll go shrive the Queen and thou shalt wend with me

A boon, a boon, quoth Earl Marshall, and fell on his bended knee
That whatsoever the Queen may say, no harm thereof may be

Oh, you put on a grey friar's gown and I'll put on another
And we will away to fair London town like friars both together

Oh no, oh no, my Liege, my King, Such things can never be
For if the Queen hears word of this hanged she'll cause me to be

I swear by the sun, I swear by the moon, and by the stars so high
And by my scepter and my crown, the Earl Marshall shall not die
The King's put on a grey friar's gown; the Earl Marshall's put on another
And they were away to fair London town like friar's both together

When that they came to fair London town and came into Whitehall
The bells did ring, the choirs sing, and the torches did light them all

And when they came before the Queen, they knelt down on their knee
What matter, what matter, our gracious Queen, you've sent so speedily

Oh, if you are two friars of France, it's you that I wished to see
But if you are two English lords, you shall hang on the gallows tree

Oh we are not two English lords, but two friars of France we be
And we sang the Song of Solomon as we came o'er the sea

Oh, the first vile sin I did commit, tell it I will to thee
I fell in love with the Earl Marshall, as he brought me o'er the sea
Oh, that was a great sin, quoth the King, but pardoned it must be
Amen, amen, said the Earl Marshall, with a heavy heart spake he

Oh the next sin that I did commit, I will to you unfold
Earl Marshall had my virgin dower beneath his cloth of gold

Oh that was a vile sin, quoth the king, May God forgive it thee
Amen, amen, groaned the Earl Marshall, and a very frightened man was he

Oh the next sin that I did commit, tell it I will to thee
I poisoned a lady of noble blood for the sake of King Henry

Oh that was a great sin, said the King, but pardoned it shall be
Amen, amen, said the Earl Marshall, and still a frightened man was he

Oh the next sin that I ever did, tell it I will to thee
I have kept strong poison these seven long years to poison King Henry

Oh that was a great sin, said the King, but pardoned it must be
Amen, amen, said the Earl Marshall, and still a frightened man was he

Oh don't you see two little boys playing at the football
Oh yonder is the Earl Marshall's son and I like him best of all

Oh don't you see yon other little boy playing at the football
Oh that one is King Henry's son and I like him worst of all

His head is like black bull's head, his feet are like a bear
What matter, what matter, cried the King, He's my son and my only heir

The King plucked off his friar's gown and stood in his scarlet so red
The queen, she turned herself in bed and cried that she was betrayed

The King looked over his left shoulder and a grim look looked he
Earl Marshall, he said, but for my oath, thou hadst swung on a gallows tree

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Child
Collected by Motherwell in 1827.
Eleanor of Aquitaine was a colorful character, but these accusations are unlikely to be true. She was not a virgin when she came to Henry: she was the mother of a daughter by her first husband, the King of France. The "noble lady" would be Rosamund Clifford, a long time mistress of Henry.
Child #156
SOF

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