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, by Kenneth Sisam**

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# Fourteenth Century VERSE & PROSE

edited by

**KENNETH SISAM**



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## Transcriber's Note

Original spelling variants and punctuation have not been standardized. <Words> or l<e>tters enclosed in angle brackets < > are additions by the author to complete the manuscript; daggers †† indicate corrupt readings retained by the author. [See also](#) the Transcriber's Note at the end.

The companion volume,  
*A Middle English Vocabulary, designed for use with SISAM's Fourteenth Century Verse & Prose*, by J. R. R. Tolkien  
is available at PG #43737.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

Two periods of our early history promise most for the future of English literature—the end of the seventh with the eighth century; the end of the twelfth century with the thirteenth.

In the first a flourishing vernacular poetry is secondary in importance to the intellectual accomplishment of men like Bede and Alcuin (to name only the greatest and the last of a line of scholars and teachers) who, drawing their inspiration from Ireland and still more from Italy direct, made all the knowledge of the time their own, and learned to move easily in the disciplined forms of Latin prose.

During the second the impulse again came from without. In twelfth-century France the creative imagination was set free. In England, which from the beginning of the tenth century had depended more and more on France for guidance, the nobles, clergy, and entertainers, in whose hands lay the fortunes of literature, had a community of interest with their French compeers that has never since been approached. So England shared early in the break with tradition; and during the thirteenth century the native stock is almost hidden by the brilliant growth of a new graft.

Every activity of the mind was quickened. A luxuriant invention of forms distinguished the Gothic style in architecture. All the decorative arts showed a parallel enrichment. Oxford (at least to insular eyes) was beginning to rival Paris in learning, and to contribute to the over-production of clerks which at first extended the province of the Church, and finally, by breaking the bounds set between ecclesiastics and laymen, played an important part in the secularization of letters. The friars, whose foundation was the last great reform of the mediaeval Church, were at the height of their good fame; and one of them, the Franciscan Roger Bacon, by his work in philosophy, criticism, and physical science, raised the name of English thinkers to an eminence unattained since Bede. If among the older monastic orders feverish and sometimes extravagant reforms are symptoms of decline, the richness of Latin chronicles like those of Matthew Paris of St. Albans is evidence that in some of the great abbeys the monks were still learned and eloquent. Nor was Latin the only medium in which educated Englishmen were at home. They wrote French familiarly, and to some extent repaid their debt to France by transcribing and preserving Continental compositions that would else have perished.

Apart from all these activities, the manifestations of a new spirit in English vernacular works are so important, and the break with the past is so sharp, that the late twelfth century and the thirteenth would be chosen with more justice than Chaucer's time as the starting-point for a study of modern literature.

[xi] Then romance was established in English, whether we use the word to mean the imaginative searching of dark places, or in the more general sense of story-telling unhampered by a too strict regard for facts. Nothing is more remarkable in pre-Conquest works than the Anglo-Saxon's dislike of exaggeration and his devotion to plain matter of fact. Here is the account of the whales in the far North that King Alfred received from Ohthere (a Norseman, of course, but it is indifferent):—'they are eight and forty ells long, and the biggest fifty ells long'. Compare with this parsimony the full-blooded description of the griffins in *Mandeville*:—'But o griffoun hath the body more gret, and is more strong, þanne eight lyouns, of suche lyouns as ben o this half; and more gret and strongere þan an hundred egles suche as we han amonges vs, &c.', and you have a rough measure of the progress of fiction.

To take pleasure in stories is not a privilege reserved for favoured generations: but special conditions had transformed this pleasure into a passion. When Edward I became King in 1272, Western Europe had enjoyed a long period of internal peace, during which national hatreds burnt low. The breaking down of barriers between Bretons and French, Welsh and English, brought into the main stream of European literature the Celtic vein of idealism and delicate fancy. At the universities, in the Crusades, in the pilgrimages to Rome or Compostella, the nations mingled, each bringing from home some contribution to the common stock of stories; each gaining new experiences of the outside world, fusing them, and repeating them with embellishments. To those who stayed at home came the minstrels in the heyday of their craft—they were freemen of every Christian land who reported whatever was marvellous or amusing—and at second hand the colours of the rediscovered world seemed no less brave. It was an age greedy for entertainment that fed a rich sense of comedy on the jostling life around it; and to serve its ideals called up the great men of the past—Orpheus opening the way to fairyland, the heroes of the Trojan war, Alexander; Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and Merlin the enchanter; Charlemagne with his peers—or won back from the shadows not Eurydice alone, but Helen and Criseyde, Guinevere and Ysolde, Rymenhild and Blancheflour.

[xii] While she still claimed to direct public taste, the Church could not be indifferent to the spread of romance. A policy of uniform repression was no longer possible. Her real power to suppress books was ineffective to bind busy tongues and minds; popular movements were assured of a measure of practical tolerance when order competed with order and church with church for the goodwill of the people; and even if the problem had been well defined, a disciplined attitude unvarying throughout all the divisions of the Church was not to be expected when her mantle covered clerks ranging in character from the strictest ascetic to that older Falstaff who passed under the name of Goliath and found his own Muse in the tavern,—

*Tales versus facio quale vinum bibo;  
Nihil possum scribere nisi sumpto cibo;  
Nihil valet penitus quod ieiunus scribo,—  
Nasonem post calices carmine praeibo!*

So it came about that while some of the clergy denounced all minstrels as 'ministers of Satan', others made a truce with the more honest among them, and helped them to add to their repertories the lives of saints. Officially 'trifles and trotevales' were still censured: but it seemed good to mould the *chansons de geste* to pious uses,<sup>[1]</sup> and to purify the court of King Arthur, which popularity had led into dissolute ways, by introducing the quest of the Graal. And if Rolle preached sound doctrine when he ranked among the Sins of the Mouth 'to syng seculere sanges and lufe þam', their style and music were not despised as baits to catch the ears of the frivolous: when a singer began

Ase y me rod þis ender dai  
By grene wode to seche play,  
Mid herte y þohte al on a may,  
Suetest of alle þinge,—

[xiii] the lover of secular songs would be tempted to listen; but he would stay to hear a song of the Joys of the Virgin, to whose cult the period owes its best devotional poetry.

[1] For illustrations from Old French, see *Les Légendes Épiques* by Professor Joseph Bédier, 4 vols., Paris 1907-, a book that maintains the easy pre-eminence of the French school in the appreciation of mediaeval literature.

The power of the Church to mould the early growth of vernacular literature is so often manifested that there is a risk of underestimating the compromises and surrenders which are the signs of its wane. The figures of romance invaded the churches themselves, creeping into the carvings of the portals, along the choir-stalls, and into the historiated margins of the service books. Ecclesiastics collected and multiplied stories to adorn their sermons or illustrate their manuals of vices and virtues. In the lives of saints marvels accumulated until the word 'legend' became a synonym for an untrue tale. Though there are moments in the fourteenth century when the preponderance of the clerical over the secular element in literature seems as great as ever, by the end of the Middle Ages the trend of the conflict is plain. It is the Church that draws back to attend to her own defences, which the domestic growth of pious fictions has made everywhere vulnerable. But imaginative literature, growing always stronger and more confident, wins full

secular liberty.

Emancipation from the bondage of fact, and to some extent from ecclesiastical censorship, coincided with the acquisition of a new freedom in the form of English poetry. Old English had a single metre—the long alliterative line without rime. It was best suited to narrative; it was unmusical in the sense that it could not be sung; it had marked proclivities towards rant and noise; and like blank verse it degenerated easily into mongrel prose.

Degeneration was far advanced in the eleventh century; and about the end of the twelfth some large-scale experiments show that writers were no longer content with the old medium. In *Layamon*, the last great poem in this metre before the fourteenth century, internal rime and assonance are common. Orm adopted the unrimed *septenarius* from Latin, but counted his syllables so faithfully as to produce an intolerable monotony. Then French influence turned the scale swiftly and decisively in favour of rime, so that in the extant poetry of the thirteenth century alliteration is a secondary principle or a casual ornament, but never takes the place of rime.

[xiv]

The sudden and complete eclipse of a measure so firmly rooted in tradition is surprising enough; but the wealth and elaborateness of the new forms that replaced it are still more matter for wonder. It is natural to think of the poets before Chaucer as children learning their art slowly and painfully, and often stumbling on the way. Yet in this one point of metrical technique they seem to reach mastery at a bound.

That the development of verse forms took place outside of English is part of the explanation. Rimed verse had its origin in Church Latin. In the monastic schools the theory of classical and post-classical metres was a principal study; and the practical art of chant was indispensable for the proper conduct of the services. Under these favourable conditions technical development was rapid, so that in such an early example of the rimed stanza as the following, taken from a poem that Godescalc wrote in exile about the year 845,—

*Magis mihi, miserule,  
Flere libet, puerule,  
Plus plorare quam cantare  
Carmen tale iubes quale,  
Amor care.  
O, cur iubes canere?*<sup>[2]</sup>—

the arrangement of longer and shorter lines, the management of rime or assonance, and the studied grouping of consonant sounds, give rather the impression of too much than too little artifice.

[2] *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, vol. iii (ed. L. Traube), p. 731.

[xv]

From Church Latin rime passed into French, and with the twelfth century entered on a new course of development at the hands of the *trouvères* and the minstrels. The *trouvères*, or 'makers', studied versification and music as a profession, and competed in the weaving of ingenious patterns. Since their living depended on pleasing their audience, those minstrels who were not themselves composers spared no pains to sing or recite well the compositions of others; and good execution encouraged poets to try more difficult forms.

The varied results obtained in two such excellent schools of experience were offered to the English poets of the thirteenth century in exchange for the monotony of the long line; and their choice was unhesitating. In an age of lyrical poetry they learned to sing where before they could only declaim: and because the great age of craftsmanship had begun, the most intricate patterns pleased them best. Chaucer was perhaps not yet born when the over-elaboration of riming metres in English drew a protest from Robert Mannyng:<sup>[3]</sup> and when, after a period of hesitancy, rimed verse regained its prestige in Chaucer's prime, nameless writers again chose or invented complex stanza forms and sustained them throughout long poems. If *The Pearl* stood alone it might be accounted a literary *tour de force*: the York and Towneley plays compel the conclusion that a high standard of metrical workmanship was appreciated by the common people.

[3]

If it were made in *ryme couwee*,  
Or in strangere, or *enterlacé*,  
Pat rede Inglis it ere inowe  
Pat couthe not haf copped a kowe,  
Pat outhere in *couwee* or in *baston*  
Som suld haf ben fordon.

(*Chronicle*, Prologue,  
ll. 85 ff.)

[xvi]

Thus far, by way of generalization and without the *caveats* proper to a literary history, I have indicated some aspects of the preceding period that are important for an understanding of the fourteenth century. But it would be misleading to pass on without a word of reservation. There is reason to suppose that the extant texts from the thirteenth century give a truer reflection of the tastes of the upper classes, who were in closest contact with the French, than of the tastes of the people. But however this may be, they do not authorize us to speak for every part of the country. All the significant texts come from the East or the South—especially the western districts of the South, where an exceptional activity is perhaps to be connected with the old preference of the



court for Winchester. In the North and the North-West a silence of five centuries is hardly broken.

## II

Judged by what survives, the literary output of the first half of the fourteenth century was small in quantity; though it must be remembered that, unlike the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries which made a fresh start and depended almost entirely on their own production, the fourteenth inherited and enjoyed a good stock of verse, to which the new compositions are a supplement.

Our first impression of this new material is negative and disappointing. The production of rimed romances falls off: their plots become increasingly absurd and mechanical; the action, so swift in the early forms, moves sluggishly through a maze of decorative descriptions; and their style at its best has the pretty inanity of *Sir Thopas*. The succession of merry tales—such as *Dame Siriz*, or *The Fox and the Wolf*<sup>[4]</sup> where Reynard, Isengrim, and Chauntecleer make their first bow in English—is broken until the appearance of the *Canterbury Tales* themselves. To find secular lyrics we must turn to the very beginning or the very end of the century, and Chaucer himself does not recover the fresh gaiety of the earlier time.

[xvii]

[4] Both are in Bodleian MS. Digby 86 (about 1280), and are accessible in G. H. McKnight's *Middle English Humorous Tales*, Boston 1913.

The decline of these characteristic thirteenth-century types becomes less surprising when we notice that literature has changed camps. The South, more especially the South-West, is now almost silent: the North and the North-West reach their literary period. Minot and Rolle are Northerners, Wiclif is a Yorkshireman by birth, the York and Towneley Miracle cycles are both from the North, and with Barbour the literature of the Scots dialect begins; Robert Mannyng belongs to the North-East Midlands; while *Sir Gawayne*, *The Pearl*, and *The Destruction of Troy* represent the North-West. This predominance in the present volume rests on no mere chance of selection, since the Northern (Egerton) version of *Mandeville* might have been preferred to the Cotton; and if the number of extracts were to be increased, the texts that first come to mind—*Cursor Mundi* (about 1300),<sup>[5]</sup> *Prick of Conscience* (about 1340), *Morte Arthure* (about 1360), the Chester Plays—are Northern and North-Western.

[5] Early English Text Society, ed. R. Morris. Unless other editions are mentioned, the longer works which are not represented by specimens may be read among the Early English Texts.

It is impossible to give more than a partial explanation of the change in the area of production. But as the kinds of poetry that declined early in the fourteenth century are those that owed most to French influence, it is reasonable to assume that in the South the impulse that produced them had spent its force. The same pause is observable at the same time in France, where it coincides with the transition from oral poetry to more reflective compositions written for the eye of a reader. It is the pause between the passing of the minstrels and the coming of men of letters.

[xviii]

Such changes were felt first in the centres of government, learning, and commerce, whence ideas and fashions spread very slowly to the country districts. At this time the North, and above all the North-West, was the backward quarter of England, thinly populated and in great part uncultivated. An industrial age had not yet dotted it with inland cities; and while America was still unknown the western havens were neglected.<sup>[6]</sup> In these old-fashioned parts the age of minstrel poetry was prolonged, and the wave of inspiration from France, though it came late, stirred the North and North-West after the South had relapsed into mediocrity or silence.

[6] See p. 150.

So, about the middle of the century, imaginative poetry found a new home in the West-Midlands. As before, poets turned to French for their subjects, and often contented themselves with free adaptation of French romances. They accepted such literary conventions as the Vision, which was borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose* to be the frame of *Wynnere and Wastoure* (1352)<sup>[7]</sup> and *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*,<sup>[8]</sup> before it was used in *Piers Plowman* and *The Pearl* and by Chaucer. But time and distance had weakened the French influence, and the new school of poets did not catch, as the Southern poets did, the form and spirit of their models.

[7] Ed. Sir Israel Gollancz, Oxford 1920.

[8] Ed. Gollancz, Oxford 1915.

They preferred the unrimed alliterative verse, which from pre-Conquest days must have lived on in the remote Western counties without a written record; and for a generation rime is overshadowed. The suddenness and importance of this revival in a time otherwise barren of poetry will appear from a list of the principal alliterative poems that are commonly assigned to the third quarter of the century:—*Wynnere and Wastoure*, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, *Joseph of Arimathie* (the first English Graal romance), *William of Palerne*, *Piers Plowman* (A-text), *Patience*, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, *The Destruction of Troy*, *Morte Arthure*.

[xix]

At the time alliterative verse was fitted to become the medium of popular literature. Prose would not serve, because its literary life depends on books and readers. Up to the end of the century (if we exclude sermons and religious or technical treatises, where practical considerations reinforced a Latin tradition) the function of prose in English literature is to translate Latin or French prose;<sup>[9]</sup> and even this narrow province is sometimes invaded by verse. Yet it was not easy to write verse that depended on number of syllables, quantity, or rime. The fall of inflexions brought confusion on syllabic metres; there were great changes in the quantity and quality of vowels; and these disturbances affected the dialects unevenly.<sup>[10]</sup> It must have been

hard enough for a poet to make rules for himself: but popularity involved the recital of his work by all kinds of men in all kinds of English, when the rimes would be broken and the rhythm lost. It is perhaps unfair to call Michael of Northgate's doggerel (p. 33) to witness the misfortunes of rimed metres. But the text of *Sir Orfeo* from the Auchinleck manuscript shows how often Englishmen who were nearly contemporary with the composer had lost the tune of his verses. The more fortunate makers of alliterative poems, whose work depended on the stable yet elastic frame of stress and initial consonants, possessed a master-key to the dialects.

[9] Chaucer's prose rendering of the *Metra* of Boethius is an apparent exception, but Jean de Meung's French prose version lay before him.

[10] See the Appendix.

[xx]

Adaptability made easier the diffusion of alliterative verse: but its revival was not due to a deliberate choice on practical grounds. It was a phase of a larger movement, which may be described as a weakening of foreign and learned influences, and a recovery of the native stock. And the metrical form is only the most obvious of the old-fashioned elements that reappeared. In spirit, too, the authors of the alliterative school have many points of kinship with the Old English poets. They are more moderate than enthusiastic. Left to themselves, their imaginations move most easily among sombre shapes and in sombre tones. They have not the intellectual brilliance and the wit of the French poets; and when they laugh—which is not often—the lightness of the thirteenth century is rarer than the rough note of the comic scenes in the Towneley plays. It is hard to say how much the associations and aptitudes of the verse react on its content: but *Sumer is icumen in*, which is the essence of thirteenth-century poetry, is barely conceivable in Old English, where even the cuckoo's note sounded melancholy; and it would come oddly from the poets of the middle fourteenth century, who have learned from the French *trouvères* the convention of spring, with sunshine, flowers, and singing birds, but seem unable to put away completely the memory of winter and rough weather.

[xxi]

In the last quarter of the century the tide of foreign influence runs strong again; and the work of Gower and Chaucer discloses radical changes in the conditions of literature which are the more important because they are permanent. The literary centre swings back to the capital—London now instead of Winchester—which henceforth provides the models for authors of any pretensions throughout England and across the Scottish border. In Chaucer we have for the first time a layman, writing in English for secular purposes, who from the range and quality of his work may fairly claim to be ranked among men of letters. The strictly clerical writers had been content to follow the Scriptures, the Fathers and commentators, the service books and legendaries; and Chaucer does not neglect their tradition.<sup>[11]</sup> The minstrels had exploited a popular taste for merry tales 'that sownen into synne'; and he borrowed so gladly from them that many have doubted his repentance.<sup>[12]</sup> But his models are men of letters:—the Latin poets headed by Ovid, who was Gower's favourite too; French writers, from the satirical Jean de Meung to makers of studied 'balades, roundels, virelayes' like Machaut and Deschamps; and the greater Italian group—Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Dante. Keeping such company, he was bound to reject the rusticity of the alliterative school, and the middle way followed by those who added a tag of rime at the end of a rimeless series (as in *Sir Gawayne*), or invented stanzas in which alliteration remains, but is subservient to rime (as in *The Pearl* and the York plays). After his day, even for Northerners who wish to write well, there will be no more '*rum-ram-ruf*' by lettre'.<sup>[13]</sup>

[11]

And for to speke of other holynesse,  
He hath in prose translated Boece,  
And of the Wrechede Engendrynge of Mankynde  
As man may in pope Innocent ifynde,  
And made the Lyfe also of Seynt Cecile;  
He made also, gon ys a grete while,  
Origenes upon the Maudeleyne.

(*Legend of Good  
Women*, Prologue A, ll.  
424 ff.)

[12] *Parson's Tale*, at the end.

[13] *Prologue to Parson's Tale*, l. 43.

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### III

[xxii]

In outlining the main movements of the century, I have mentioned incidentally the fortunes of certain kinds of composition,—the restriction of the lyrical form to devotional uses; the long dearth in the records of humorous tales; the decadence of romances in rime, and the flourishing of alliterative romances. The popular taste for stories was still unsatisfied, and guided authors, from Robert Mannyng to Chaucer, in their choice of subjects or method of treatment. Translators were busier than ever in making Latin and French works available to a growing public who understood no language but English; and of necessity the greater number of our specimens are translations, ranging from the crude literalness of Michael of Northgate to the artistic adaptation seen in Gower's tales. But the chief new contribution of the century is the vernacular Miracle Play, with which the history of the English drama begins.

Miracle plays grew out of the services for the church festivals of Easter and Christmas.

Towards the end of the tenth century a representation of the Three Maries at the Sepulchre is provided for in the English Easter service. Later, the Shepherds seeking the Manger and the Adoration of the Magi are represented in the services for the Christmas season. In their early form these dramatic ceremonies consist of a few sentences of Latin which were sung by the clergy with a minimum of dignified action.

From the eleventh to the thirteenth century the primitive form underwent a parallel development in all parts of Europe. Records of Miracles in England are at this time scanty and casual:—Matthew Paris notes one at Dunstable because precious copes were borrowed for it from St. Albans, and were accidentally burnt; another, given in the churchyard at Beverley, is mentioned because a boy who had climbed to a post of vantage in the church, and thence higher to escape the sextons, fell and yet took no harm. But the scantiness of references before 1200 is in itself evidence of growth without active enemies, and the few indications agree with the general trend observable on the Continent. The range of subjects was extended to include the acts of saints, and the principal scenes of sacred history from the Fall of Lucifer to the Last Judgement. Single scenes were elaborated to something like the scale familiar in Middle English. By the end of the twelfth century French begins to appear beside or in place of Latin; the French verses were spoken, not sung; the plays were often acted outside the church; and it may be assumed that laymen were admitted as performers alongside the minor clergy, who seem to have been the staunchest supporters of the plays.

[xxiii]

The Miracle had become popular, and there is soon evidence of its perversion by the grotesque imaginings of the people. In 1207 masking and buffoonery in the churches at Christmas came under the ban of Pope Innocent III, and his prohibition was made permanent in the Decretals. Henceforth we must look for new developments to the Miracles played outside the church. To these freedom from the restraints of the sacred building did not bring a better reputation. Before 1250 the most influential churchman of the time, Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln, who was far from being a kill-joy, urged his clergy to stamp out Miracles; and later William of Wadington, and Robert Mannyng his translator, while allowing plays on the Resurrection and the Nativity if decently presented in the church, condemn the Miracles played in open places, and blame those of the clergy who encouraged them by lending vestments to the performers.<sup>[14]</sup>

[14] *Handlyng Synne*, ll. 4640 ff.

From the first three-quarters of the fourteenth century, which include the critical period for the English Miracles, hardly a record survives. The memoranda on which the history of the English plays is based begin toward the end of the century, and the texts are drawn from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century manuscripts. Hence it will be simplest to set out the changes that were complete by 1400 without attempting to establish their true sequence; and to disregard the existence, side by side with the fully developed types, of all the gradations between them and the primitive form that might result from stunted growth or degeneration.

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The early references point to the representation of single plays or small groups of connected scenes; and such isolated pieces survive as long as there are Miracles: Hull, for instance, specialized on a play of Noah's Ship. But now we have to record the appearance of series or cycles of plays, covering in chronological order the whole span of sacred history. Complete cycles were framed on the Continent as early as the end of the thirteenth century. In England they are represented by the York, Towneley (Wakefield), and Chester plays, and the so-called *Ludus Coventriae*.<sup>[15]</sup> There are also records or fragments of cycles from Beverley, Coventry, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Norwich. The presentation of the cycle sometimes occupied a day (York), sometimes two or three successive days (Chester), and sometimes a part was carried over to the next year's festival (*Ludus Coventriae*).

[15] These are not the Coventry plays, of which only two survive, but a cycle of plays torn from their local connexions (ed. J. O. Halliwell, Shakespeare Society, 1841). The title is due to a seventeenth-century librarian, who possibly had heard of no Miracle cycle but the famous one at Coventry.

The production of a long series of scenes in the open requires fine weather, and once the close connexion with the church services had been broken, there was a tendency to throw forward the presentation into May or June. The Chester plays were given in Whitsun-week—at least in later times. But normally the day chosen in fourteenth-century England was the Feast of Corpus Christi (the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday), which was made universal throughout the Church in 1311. So the Miracles get the generic name of 'Corpus Christi Plays'.

The feature of the Corpus Christi festival was its procession. As a result either of inclusion in this procession or of imitation, the cycles came to be played processionally: each play had its stage on wheels which halted at fixed stations in the streets, and at each station the play was reenacted. This was the usage at York, Wakefield, Chester, Coventry, and Beverley. The older practice of presentation on fixed stages was followed in the *Ludus Coventriae*.

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Our last records from the end of the thirteenth century indicated that the open-air Miracle had been disowned by the Church from which it sprang. Yet a century later processional performances appear on a scale that postulates strong and competent management. In the interim the control of the great cycles had passed from the clergy to the municipalities, who laid upon each guild of craftsmen within their jurisdiction the duty of presenting a play. Ecclesiastics still wrote Miracles, and occasionally performed them; but when Canterbury, London, Salisbury, Winchester, Oxford, which have no extant texts and few records of popular performances, are named against York, Wakefield, Chester, Coventry, Beverley, it is obvious that official Church influences were no longer the chief factor in the development of Miracles. For their growth and survival in England the cycles depended on the interest of powerful corporations, willing to undertake the financial responsibility of their production, and able to maintain them against the



attacks of the Lollards, or change of policy in the orthodox Church, or the fickleness of fashion in entertainment.

The steps by which the English guilds assumed the guardianship of the plays cannot now be retraced. We must be content to note that the undertaking called for just that combination of religious duty, civic patriotism, and pride of craft that inspired the work of the guilds in their best days. And the clergy had every reason to welcome the disciplining by secular authority of a wayward offspring that had grown beyond their own control. The York texts, which bring us nearest to the time when the corporations and guilds first took charge of the Miracles, are very creditable to the taste of the city, and must represent a reform on the irresponsible productions that scandalized the thirteenth century. The vein of coarseness in some of the comic scenes of the Towneley group seems to be due to a later recrudescence of incongruous elements.

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The last great change to be noted was inevitable when the plays became popular: they were spoken in English and in rimed verse, with only an occasional tag or stage direction or hymn in Latin to show their origin. The variety of the texts, and of the modes and purposes of their representation, make it impossible to assign a date to the transition that would be generally applicable; and its course was not always the same. There is an example of direct translation from Latin in the Shrewsbury fragments,<sup>[16]</sup> which contain one actor's cues and parts in three plays: first the Latin foundation is given in verse or prose, and then its expansion in English alternate rime. That translations were sometimes made from the French is proved by the oldest known manuscript of a Miracle in English—an early fourteenth-century fragment of a Nativity play, consisting of a speech in French followed by its rendering in the same stanza form.<sup>[17]</sup> But there is no reason to doubt that as English gained ground and secularization became more complete, original composition appeared side by side with translation.<sup>[18]</sup>

[16] Shrewsbury School MS. Mus. iii. 42 (early fifteenth century), ed. Skeat, *Academy*, January 4 and January 11, 1890. The fragments are (i) the part of the Third Shepherd in a Nativity play; (ii) the part of the third Mary in a Resurrection play; (iii) the part of Cleophas in *Pilgrims to Emmaus*. Manly, who reprints the fragments in *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama*, vol. i (1900), pp. xxvi ff., notes that these plays seem to have been church productions rather than secular.

[17] See *The Times Literary Supplement* of May 26 and June 2, 1921. The fragment comes from Bury St. Edmunds. The dialect is E. Midland.

[18] On the production of Miracle plays see L. Toulmin Smith, Introduction to *York Plays*, Oxford 1885; and A. F. Leach in *An English Miscellany presented to Dr. Furnivall*, pp. 205 ff.

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For one other kind of writing the fourteenth century is notable—its longer commentaries on contemporary life and the art of living. In the twelfth century England had an important group of satirical poets who wrote in Latin; and in the thirteenth there are many French and a few English satires. Their usual topic was the corruption of the religious orders, varied by an occasional attack on some detail of private folly, such as extravagance in dress or the pride of serving-men. These pieces are mostly in the early French manner, where so much wit tempers the indignation that one doubts whether the satirist would be really happy if he succeeded in destroying the butts of his ridicule.

This is not the spirit of the fourteenth century, when a darker side of life is turned up and reported by men whose eyes are not quick to catch brightness. The number of short occasional satires in English increases, but they are seldom gay. The greater writers—Rolle, Wiclif, Langland, Gower—were obsessed by the troubles of their time, and are less satirists than moralists. Certainly the events of the century gave little cause for optimism. The wane of enthusiasm throughout Europe and the revival of national jealousies are evident very early in the failure of all attempts to organize an effective Crusade after 1291, when the Turks conquered the last Christian outposts in Palestine. There was no peace, for the harassing wars with Scotland were followed by the long series of campaigns against France that sapped the strength of both countries for generations. The social and economic organization was shaken by the severest famines (1315-21) and the greatest pestilence (1349) in English history, and both famine and plague came back more than once before the century was done. The conflict of popes and anti-popes divided the Western Church, while England faced the domestic problem of Lollardry. There was civil revolt in 1381; and the century closed with the deposition of Richard II. A modern historian balances the account with the growth of parliamentary institutions, the improving status of the labouring classes, and the progress of trade: but in so far as these developments were observable at all by contemporary writers, they were probably interpreted as signs of general decay.

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In such an atmosphere the serene temper with which Robert Mannyng handles the sins and follies of his generation did not last long. Rolle tried to associate with men in order to improve their way of life: but his intensely personal attitude towards every problem, and the low value he set on the quality of reasonableness, made success impossible; and after a few querulous outbursts against his surroundings, he found his genius by withdrawing into pure idealism.

Wiclif was the one writer who was also a practical reformer. Having made up his mind that social evils could be remedied only through the Church, and that the first step was a thorough reform of the government, doctrine, and ministers of the Church, he acted with characteristic logic. The vices and follies of the people he regarded as secondary, and refused to dissipate his controversial energies upon them. His strength was reserved for a grim, ordered battle against ecclesiastical abuses; and while he pulled down, he did not neglect to lay foundations that outlasted his own defeat.

*Piers Plowman* gives a full picture of the times and their bewildering effect on the mind of a sincere and moderate man. Its author belonged to the loosely organized secular clergy who, by

reason of their middle position, served as a kind of cement in a ramshackle society. He has no new system and no practical schemes of reform to expound—only perplexing dreams of a simple Christian who, with Conscience and Reason as his guides, faces in turn the changing shapes of evil. He attacks them bravely enough, and still they seem to evade him; because he shrinks from destroying their roots when he finds them too closely entwined with things to which his habits or affections cling. In the end he cannot find a sure temporal foothold: yet he has no vision of a Utopia to come in which society will be reorganized by men's efforts. That idea brought no comfort to his generation who, standing on the threshold of a new order, looked longingly backward.

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Passing over Gower, whose direct studies of contemporary conditions were written in Latin and French, we come round again to Chaucer. He has not Rolle's idealism, or Wiclif's fighting spirit, or Langland's earnestness—in fact, he has no great share of moral enthusiasm. A man of the world with keen eyes and the breadth of outlook and sympathy that Gower lacked, he is at home in a topsy-turvy medley of things half-dead with things half-grown, and the thousand disguises of convention and propriety through which the new life peeped to mock at its puzzled and despairing repressors were to him a never-ending entertainment. *Ubiq̄ue iam abundat turpitudō terrena*, says Rolle in an alliterative flight, *vilissima voluptas in viris vacillat;... bellant ut bestiae; breviantur beati; nullus est nimirum qui nemini non nocet*. That was one side, but it was not the side that interested Chaucer. He had the spirit of the thirteenth-century poets grown up, with more experience, more reflection, and a mellowed humour, but not less good temper and capacity for enjoyment. He no longer laughs on the slightest occasion for sheer joy of living: but he would look elvishly at Richard Rolle—a hermit who made it a personal grievance that people left him solitary, a fugitive from his fellows who unconsciously satisfied a very human and pleasing love for companionship and admiration by becoming the centre of a coterie of women recluses. A world that afforded such infinite amusement to a quiet observer was after all not a bad place to live in.

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## IV

Chaucer, who suffers when read in extracts, is not represented in this book, although without him fourteenth-century literature is a body without a head. But in the choice of literary forms and subjects, I have aimed at illustrating the variety of interest that is to be found in the writings of lesser men.

It may be asked whether the choice of specimens gives a true idea of the taste and accomplishment of the age. This issue is raised by Professor Carleton Brown's Afterword in the second volume of his *Register of Middle English Religious and Didactic Verse*, a book that will be to generations of investigators a model of unselfish research. There he emphasizes the popularity of long poems, and especially of long didactic poems, as evidenced by the relatively great number of manuscript copies that survive. *The Prick of Conscience* leads with ninety-nine manuscripts, against sixty-nine of *The Canterbury Tales*, and forty-seven of *Piers Plowman*. What is to be said of a book that, impoverished by the exclusion of Chaucer, passes by also the most popular poem of his century?

I would rest an apology on the conditions under which manuscript copies came into being and survived; and begin with Michael of Northgate as he brings his *Ayenbyte* to an end in the October of 1340, before the short days and the numbing cold should come to make writing a pain. The book has no elegance that would commend it to special care, for Dan Michael is a dry practical man, as indifferent to the graces of style as to the luxury of silky vellum and miniatures stiff with gold and colour. But from his cell it goes into the library of his monastery—a library well ordered and well catalogued, and (as if to guarantee security) boasting the continuous possession of books that Gregory the Great gave to the first missionaries. We know its place exactly—the fourth shelf of press XVI. And there it remained safe until the days of intelligent private collectors, passing finally with the Arundel library to the British Museum. The course was not often so smooth, for of two dozen manuscripts left by Michael to St. Augustine's, Dr. James, in the year 1903, could identify only four survivors in as many different libraries. But the example is enough to illustrate a proposition that will not easily be refuted:—the chances of an English mediaeval manuscript surviving greatly depend on its eligibility for a place in the library of a religious house, since these are the chief sources of the manuscripts that have come down to us.

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The attitude of the Church towards the vernacular literature of the later Middle Ages did not differ materially from her attitude towards the classics in earlier times, though the classics had always the greater dignity. Literary composition as a pure art was not encouraged. Entertainment for its own sake was discountenanced. The religious houses were to be centres of piety and learning; and if English were admitted at all in the strongholds of Latin and French, a work of unadorned edification like *The Prick of Conscience* would make very suitable reading for those who craved relaxation from severer studies. There were, of course, individuals among the professed religious who indulged a taste for more worldly literature; but the surviving catalogues of libraries that were formed under the eye of authority show a marked discrimination in favour of didactic works.

In England the private libraries of fourteenth-century laymen were relatively insignificant. But Guy, Earl of Warwick, in 1315 left an exceptionally rich collection to the Abbey of Bordesley, which failed to conserve the legacy. The list was first printed in Todd's *Illustrations of Gower and Chaucer* (1810),<sup>[19]</sup> and (among devotional works and lives of saints that merge into religious

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romances like *Joseph of Arimathea and the Graal*, *Titus and Vespasian*, and *Constantine*) it includes most of the famous names of popular history:—Lancelot, Arthur and Modred; Charlemagne, Doon of Mayence, Aimery of Narbonne, Girard de Vienne, William of Orange, Thibaut of Arraby, Doon of Nanteuil, Guy of Nanteuil, William Longespée, Fierebras; with two Alexander romances, a *Troy Book*, a *Brut*; the love story of *Amadas e Idoine*; the romance *de Guy e de la Reygne 'tut enterement'*; a book of physic and surgery; and a miscellany—*un petit rouge livre en lequell sont contenuz mous diverses choses*. Yet even a patron so well disposed to secular poems did little to perpetuate the manuscripts of English verse. His education enabled him to draw from the fountain head, and most of his books were French.

[19] p. 161.

Neither in the libraries of the monasteries, nor in the libraries of the great nobles, should we expect to find a true mirror of popular taste. The majority of the people knew no language but English; and the relative scarcity of books of every kind, which even among the educated classes made the hearers far outnumber the readers, was at once a cause and a symptom of illiteracy: the majority of the people could not read. This leads to a generalization that is cardinal for every branch of criticism:—up to Chaucer's day, the greater the popularity of an English poem, the less important becomes the manuscript as a means of early transmission. The text, which would have been comparatively safe in the keeping of scribe, book, and reader, passes to the uncertain guardianship of memorizer, reciter, and listener; so that sometimes it is wholly lost, and sometimes it suffers as much change in a generation as would a classical text in a thousand years. Already Robert Mannyng laments the mutilation of *Sir Tristrem* by the 'sayers' (who could hardly be expected to avoid faults of improvisation and omission in the recitation of *so long a poem from memory*),<sup>[20]</sup> and his regret would have been keener if he could have looked ahead another hundred years to see how the texts of the verse romances paid the price of popularity by the loss of crisp phrases and fresh images, and the intrusion of every mode of triteness.

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I see in song, in sedgeyng tale  
Of Erceldoun and of Kendale,  
Non þam says as þai þam wroght,  
And in þer sayng it semes noght.  
þat may þou here in *Sir Tristrem*—  
Ouer gestes it has þe steem,  
Ouer alle þat is or was,  
If men it sayd as made Thomas:  
But I here it no man so say,  
þat of som cople som is away.

(*Chronicle*, Prologue,  
ll. 93 ff.)

Robert blames the vanity of the reciters more than their memories, on the excellence of which Petrarch remarks in his account of the minstrels: *Sunt homines non magni ingenii, magnae vero memoriae, magnaue diligentiae* (to Boccaccio, *Rerum Senilium*, Bk. v, ep. ii).

Of course manuscripts of the longer secular poems were made and used,—mean, stunted copies from which the travelling entertainer could refresh his memory or add to his stock of tales; fair closet copies that would enable well-to-do admirers to renew their pleasure when no skilled minstrel was by; and, occasionally, compact libraries of romance, like the Auchinleck manuscript, which must have been the treasure of some great household that enjoyed 'romanz-reding *on þe bok*'—the pastime that encouraged the rise of prose romances in the late Middle Ages. But as a means of circulation for popular verse, as distinct from learned verse and from prose, the book was of secondary importance in its own time, and was always subject to exceptional risks. The fates of three stories in different kinds, all demonstrably favourites in the fourteenth century, will be sufficient illustration: of *Floris and Blancheflour*, one of the best of the early romances in the courtly style, several manuscripts survive, but when all are assembled the beginning of the story is still wanting; of *Havelok*, typical of the homely style, one imperfect copy and a few charred fragments of another are extant; of the *Tale of Wade*, that was dear to 'olde wydwes',<sup>[21]</sup> and yet considered worthy to entertain the noble Criseyde,<sup>[22]</sup> no text has come down. Evidently, to determine the relative popularity of the longer tales in verse we need not so much a catalogue of extant manuscripts, as a census, that cannot now be taken, of the repertories of the entertainers.

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[21] Chaucer, *Merchant's Tale*, ll. 211 ff.

[22] Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. iii, l. 614.

If the manuscript life of the longer secular poems was precarious, the chances of the short pieces—songs, ballads, jests, comic dialogues, lampoons—were still worse. Since they were composed for the day without thought of the future, and were no great charge on the ordinary memory, the chief motives for writing them down were absent; and no doubt the professional minstrel found that to secure his proprietary rights against competitors, he must be chary of giving copies of his best things. Many would never be put into writing; some were jotted down on perishable wax; but parchment, always too expensive for ephemeral verse, was reserved for special occasions. In France, in the thirteenth century, Henri d'Andeli adds a touch of dignity to his poem celebrating the memory of a distinguished patron by inscribing it on parchment instead of the wax tablets he used for lighter verses.<sup>[23]</sup> In England in 1305, a West-Country swashbuckler, whom fear of the statute against *Trailebastouns* kept in the greenwood, relieves his offended dignity by composing a poem half apologetic, half minatory, and chooses as the

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safest way of publication to write it on parchment and throw it in the high road:—

*Cest rym fust fet al bois desouz vn lorer,  
La chaunte merle, russinole, e crye l'esperuer.  
Escrit estoit en parchemyn pur mout remembrer,  
Et gitté en haut chemyn, qe vm le dust trouer.*<sup>[24]</sup>

These loose sheets or tiny rolls<sup>[25]</sup> rarely survive, and the preservation of their contents, as of pieces launched still more carelessly on the world, depends on the happy chance of inclusion in a miscellany; quotation in a larger work; or entry on a fly-leaf, margin, or similar space left blank in a book already written.

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*Et icil clers qui ce trova ...  
Por ce qu'il est de verité,  
Ne l'apele mie flablel,  
Ne l'a pas escrit en tablel,  
Ainz l'a escrit en parchamin:  
Par bois, per plains et par chamins,  
Par bors, par chateals, par citez  
Vorra qu'il soit bien recitez.*

(*OEuvres*, ed. A.  
Héron, Paris 1881, p.  
40.)

[24] 'This rime was made in the wood beneath a bay-tree, where blackbird and nightingale sing and the sparrow-hawk cries. It was written on parchment for a record, and flung in the high road so that folk should find it.' *The Political Songs of England*, ed. T. Wright (London 1839), p. 236.

[25] A rare example of a roll made small for convenience of carrying is the British Museum Additional MS. 23986. It is about three inches wide and, in its imperfect state, twenty-two inches long, so that when rolled up it is not much bigger than one's finger. On the inside it contains a thirteenth-century *Song of the Barons* in French (T. Wright, *Political Songs*, 1839, pp. 59 ff.); on the outside, two scenes from a Middle English farce called *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* (Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, pp. 324 ff.) which, like so many happy experiments of the earlier time, appears to have no successor in the fourteenth century.

Most productive, though not very common in the fourteenth century, are the miscellanies of short pieces—volumes like Earl Guy's 'little red book containing many divers things'—in which early collectors noted down the scraps that interested them. A codex of West-Country origin, MS. Harley 2253 in the British Museum, preserves among French poems such as the complaint of the *Trailebastoun*, a group of English songs that includes *Lenten is Come* and *Alysoun*. Most of its numbers are unique, and the loss of this one volume would have swept away the best part of our knowledge of the early Middle English secular lyrics.

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Of survival by quotation there is an example in the history of the Letter of Theodric, which lies behind Mannyng's tale of the Dancers of Colbek; and the circumstances are worth lingering over both for the number of by-paths they open to speculation, and for the glimpse they give of Wilton in a century from which there are few records of the nunnery outside the grim, tax-gatherer's entries of Domesday.

In the year before the Conquest, Theodric the foreigner, still racked by the curse that was laid on Bovo's company, made his way from the court of Edward the Confessor to the shrine of St. Edith. As he walked through the quiet valley to Wilton in the spring of the year, we may be sure the thought came to him that here at last was the spot where a man wearied with wandering from land to land, from shrine to shrine, might hope to be cured and to set up his rest. From the moment he reaches the abbey it is impossible not to admire his feeling for dramatic effect. By a paroxysm of quaking he terrifies the peasants; but to the weeping nuns he tells his story discreetly; and, lest a doubt should remain, produces from his scrip a letter in which St. Bruno, the great Pope Leo IX, vouches for all. It is notable that at this stage the convent appear to have taken no steps to record a story so marvellous and so well authenticated; and had Theodric continued his restless wandering we should know of him as little as is known of three others from the band of carollers, who had preceded him at Wilton with a similar story. But when he obtains leave to sleep beside the shrine of St. Edith, and in the morning of the great feast of Lady Day wakes up healed, exalting the fame of their patron saint who had lifted the curse where all the saints of Europe had failed, then, and then only, the convent order that an official record should be made, and the letter copied: *Hec in presencia Brichtive ipsius loci abbatisse declarata et patriis litteris*<sup>[26]</sup> *sunt mandata*. Henceforth it exists only as a chapter in the Acts of St. Edith, and as such it lay before Robert of Brunne. Of the other communities or private persons visited by Theodric (who, whether saint or *faitour*, certainly did not produce his letter for the first and last time at Wilton) none have preserved his memory. It would be hard to find a better example of the power of the clergy in early times to control the keys to posterity, or of the practical considerations which, quite apart from merit or curiosity, governed the preservation of legends.

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[26] *Patriis litteris* according to Schröder and Gaston Paris means 'English language', but if it is not a mere flourish, it means rather the 'English script' in which the Latin letter was copied, as distinct from the foreign hand of Theodric's original letter. What 'English script' meant at Wilton in 1065 is a question of some delicacy. The spelling *Folcpoldus* for *Folcworldus* in some later copies of the Wilton text must be due to confusion of *p* and Anglo-Saxon *ƿ* = *w*. This would be decisive for 'Anglo-Saxon script' if it occurred anywhere but in a proper name.



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But it is the verses casually jotted down in unrelated books that bring home most vividly the slenderness of the thread of transmission. A student has committed *Now Springs the Spray* to solitary imprisonment between the joyless leaves of an old law book. The song of the Irish Dancer and *The Maid of the Moor* were scribbled, with some others from a minstrel's stock, on the fly-leaf of a manuscript now in the Bodleian. On a blank page of another a prudent man (who used vile ink, long since faded) has written the verses that banish rats, much as a modern householder might treasure up some annihilating prescription. To these waifs the chance of survival did not come twice, and to a number incalculable it never came.

It has been the purpose of this digression to bring the extant literature into perspective: not to raise useless regrets for what is lost, since we can learn only from what remains; nor to contest the value of statistics of surviving copies as a proof of circulation, provided the works compared are similar in length and kind, and are represented in enough manuscripts to make figures significant; nor yet to deny that didactic verse bulks large in the output of the fourteenth century: it could not be otherwise in an anxious age, when the scarcity of remains gives everything written in English a place in literary history, and when for almost everything verse was preferred to prose. It seemed better to redress the balance of chance by stealing from the end of the thirteenth century a few fragments that following generations would not forget, than to lend colour to the suggestion that ninety-nine of the men of Chaucer's century enjoyed *The Prick of Conscience* for every one that caught up the refrain of *Now Springs the Spray*, or danced through *The Maid of the Moor*, or sang the praises of Alison.

## V

However much a maker of excerpts may stretch his commission to give variety, it is in vain if the reader will not do his part; for it lies with him to find interest. Really no effective attack can be made on a crust of such diversified hardness until the reader looks at his text as a means of winning back something of the life of the past, and feels a pleasure in the battle against vagueness.

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The first step is to find out the verbal meaning. Strange words, that force themselves on the attention and are easily found in dictionaries and glossaries, try a careful reader less than groups of common words—such lines as

*Be fairest leuedi, for þe nones,*

*þat miȝt gon on bodi and bones* II 53-4

which, if literally transposed into modern English, are nonsense. Those who think it is beneath the dignity of an intelligent reader to weigh such gossamer should turn to Zupitza's commentary on the Fifteenth Century Version of *Guy of Warwick*,<sup>[27]</sup> and see how a master among editors of Middle English relishes every phrase, missing nothing, and yet avoiding the opposite fault of pressing anything too hard. For these tags, more or less emptied of meaning through common use, and ridiculous by modern standards, have their importance in the economy of spoken verse, where a good voice carried them off. They helped out the composer in need of a rime; the reciter on his feet, compelled to improvise; and the audience who, lacking the reader's privilege to linger over close-packed lines, welcomed familiar turns that by diluting the sense made it easier to receive.

[27] Early English Text Society, extra series, 1875-6.

Repeated reading will bring out clearly the formal elements of style—the management of rime and alliteration in verse, the grouping and linking of clauses in prose, the cadences in both verse and prose: and before the value of a word or phrase can be settled it is often necessary to inquire how far its use was dictated by technical conditions, compliance with which is sometimes ingenuous to the point of crudity. Where a prose writer would be content with *Mathew sayth*, an alliterative poet elaborates (VIII a 234) into:

*Mathew with mannes face mouthed þise wordis*

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and in such a context *mouthed* cannot be pressed. The frequent oaths in the speeches in *Piers Plowman* are no more than counters in the alliteration: being meaningless they are selected to prop up the verse, just as the barrenest phrases in the poem *On the Death of Edward III* owe their inclusion to the requirements of rime. Again, it will be easier to acquiesce in a forced sense of *bende* in

*On bent much baret bende* v 47

when it is observed that rime and alliteration so limit the poet's choice that no apter word could be used. Conversely, in the absence of disturbing technical conditions, a reader who finds nonsense should suspect his understanding of the text, or the soundness of the text, before blaming the author.

When the sense expressed and the methods of expression have been studied, it remains to examine the implications of the words—an endless task and perhaps the most entertaining of all. Take as a routine example the place where the Green Knight, preparing a third time to deliver his blow, says to Gawayne—

*Halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt,*

*And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may* v 229 f.

A recent translator renders very freely:



'but yet thy hood up-pick,

Haply 'twill cover thy neck when I the buffet strike'—

though the etiquette of decapitation, and the delicacy of the stroke that the Green Knight has in mind, require just the opposite interpretation:—Gawayne's hood has become disarranged since he bared his neck (v 188), and the Green Knight wants a clear view to make sure of his aim. An observation of Gaston Paris on the Latin story of the Dancers of Colbek will show how much an alert mind enriches the reading of a text with precise detail. From the incident of Ave's arm he concludes that the dancers did not form a closed ring, but a line with Bovo leading (l 55) and Ave, as the last comer (l 43-54), at its end, so that she had one arm free which her brother seized in his attempt to drag her away (l 111 ff.).

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Intensive reading should be combined with discursive. Intensive reading cultivates the habit of noticing detail; and it is a sound rule of textual criticism to interpret a composition first in the light of the evidence contained within itself. For instance, the slight flicker in the verse

*Sche most wip him no lenger abide* II 330

should recall as surely as a cross-reference the earlier line

*No durst wip hir no leng abide* II 84

and raise the question whether in both places in the original work the comparative had not the older form *leng*. Discursive reading is a safeguard against the dangers of a narrow experience, and especially against the assumption that details of phrase, style, or thought are peculiar to an author or composition, when in fact they are common to a period or a kind. A course of both will enable the reader to cope with a school of critics who rely on superficial resemblances to strip the mask from anonymous authors and attach their works to some favoured name. Whether *Sir Gawayne* and *The Destruction of Troy* are from the same hand is still seriously debated. Both are alliterative poems; but it is impossible to read ten lines from each aloud without realizing the wide gap that divides their rhythms. The differences of spirit are more radical still. The facility of the author of *The Destruction* is attained at the cost of surrender to the metre. Given pens, ink, vellum, and a good original, he could go on turning out respectable verses while human strength endured. And because his meaning is all on the surface, the work does not improve on better acquaintance. The author of *Sir Gawayne* is an artist who never ceases to struggle with a harsh medium. He has the rare gift of visualizing every scene in his story: image succeeds image, each so sharply drawn as to suggest that he had his training in one of the schools of miniature-painting for which early England was famous. It is this gift of the painter that, more than likeness of dialect or juxtaposition in the manuscript, links *Sir Gawayne* with *The Pearl*.

[xiii]

It cannot be too strongly urged that the purpose of a worker in Middle English should be nothing less than to read sensitively, with the fullest possible understanding. Of such a purpose many *curricula* give no hint. Nor could it be deduced readily from the latest activities of research, where the tendency is more and more to leave the main road (which should be crowded if the study is to thrive) for side-tracks and by-paths of side-tracks in which the sense of direction and proportion is easily lost.

That much may be accomplished by specialists following a single line of approach has been demonstrated by the philologists, who have burrowed tirelessly to present new materials to a world which seldom rewards their happiest elucidations with so much as a 'Well said, old mole!' The student of literature (in the narrower modern sense of the word) brings a new range of interests. He will be disappointed if he expects to find a finished art, poised and sustained, in an age singularly afflicted with growing pains; but there are compensations for any one who is content to catch glimpses of promise, and—looking back and forward, and aside to France—to take pleasure in tracing the rise and development of literary forms and subjects. It is still not enough. The specialist in language as a science, or in literature as an art, may find the Sixth Passus of *Piers Plowman* (VIII *a*) or the Wiclifite *sermon* (XI *b*) of secondary interest. Yet both are primary documents, the one for the history of society, the other for the history of religion.

There is no escape from a counsel of perfection:—whoever enters on a course of mediaeval studies must reckon as a defect his lack of interest in any side of the life of the Middle Ages; and must be deaf to those who, like the fox in Aesop that had lost its tail, proclaim the benefits of truncation. The range of knowledge and experience was then more than in later times within the compass of a single mind and life. And so much that is necessary to a full understanding has been lost that no possible source of information should be shut out willingly. It is an exercise in humility to call up in all its details some scene of early English life (better a domestic scene than one of pageantry) and note how much is blurred.

[xliii]

Every blur is a challenge. There are few familiar subjects in which a beginner can sooner reach the limits of recorded knowledge. The great scholars have found time to chart only a fraction of their discoveries; and the greatest could not hope or wish for a day when the number of quests worth the making would be appreciably less.

This book had its origin in a very different project. Professor Napier had asked me to join him in producing for the use of language students a volume of specimens from the Middle English dialects, with an apparatus strictly linguistic. The work had not advanced beyond the choice of texts when his death and my transfer to duties in which learning had no part brought it to an end. When later the call came for a book that would introduce newcomers to the fourteenth century, I was able to bring into the changed plan his favourite passage from *Sir Gawayne*, and to draw upon the notes of his lectures for its interpretation. It is a small part of my debt to the generous

and modest scholar whose mastery of exact methods was an inspiration to his pupils.

I am obliged to the Early English Text Society and to the Clarendon Press for permission to use extracts from certain of their publications; to the librarians who have made their manuscripts available, or have helped me to obtain facsimiles; to Mr. J. R. R. Tolkien who has undertaken the preparation of the Glossary, the most exacting part of the apparatus; and to Mr. Nichol Smith who has watched over the book from its beginnings.

[xlv]

## THE TEXTS

A single manuscript is chosen as the basis of each text, and neither its readings nor its spellings are altered if they can reasonably be defended. Where correction involves substitution, the substituted letters are printed in italics, and the actual reading of the manuscript will be found in the Footnotes (or occasionally in the Notes). Words or letters added to complete the manuscript are enclosed in caret brackets < >. Corrupt readings retained in the text are indicated by daggers †. Paragraphing, punctuation, capitals, and the details of word division are modern, and contractions are expanded without notice, so that the reader shall not be distracted by difficulties that are purely palaeographical. A final *e* derived from OFr. *é(e)* or *ie*, OE. *-ig*, is printed *é*, to distinguish it from unaccented final *e* which is regularly lost in Modern English.

The extracts have been collated with the manuscripts, or with complete photographs, except Nos. IV (Thornton MS.), VII, VIII *b*, XI *a*, XVII, the manuscripts of which I have not been able to consult. The Footnotes as a rule take no account of conjectural emendations, variants from other manuscripts, or minutiae like erasures and corrections contemporary with the copy.

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[28] Books primarily of reference are distinguished by an asterisk. Details relating to texts, manuscript sources, editions, monographs, and articles that have appeared in periodicals, will be found in the bibliographical manuals cited.

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## I

### ROBERT MANNYNG OF BRUNNE'S HANDLYNG SYNNE

#### A.D. 1303

What is known of Robert Mannyng of Brunne is derived from his own works. In the Prologue to *Handlyng Synne* he writes:

To alle Crystyn men vndir sunne,  
And to gode men of Brunne,  
And speciali, alle be name,  
Þe felaushepe of Symprynghame,  
Roberd of Brunne greteþ 3ow  
In al godenesse þat may to prow;  
Of Brunne wake yn Kesteuene,  
Syxe myle besyde Sympryngham euene,  
Y dwelled yn þe pryorye  
Fyftene 3ere yn cumpanye....

And in the Introduction to his *Chronicle*:

Of Brunne I am; if any me blame,  
Robert Mannyng is my name;  
Blissed be he of God of heuene  
Þat me Robert with gude wille neuene!  
In þe third Edwardes tyme was I,  
When I wrote alle þis story,  
In þe hous of Sixille I was a throwe;  
Dan3 Robert of Malton, þat 3e know,  
Did it wryte for felawes sake  
When þai wild solace make.

From these passages it appears that he was born in Brunne, the modern Bourn, in Lincolnshire; and that he belonged to the Gilbertine Order. Sempringham was the head-quarters of the Order, and the dependent priory of Sixhill was near by. It has been suggested, without much evidence,

that he was a lay brother, and not a full canon.

[002]

His *Chronicle of England* was completed in 1338. It falls into two parts, distinguished by a change of metre and source. The first, edited by Furnivall in the Rolls Series (2 vols. 1887), extends from the Flood to A.D. 689, and is based on Wace's *Brut*, the French source of Layamon's *Brut*. The second part, edited by Hearne, 2 vols., Oxford 1725, extends from A.D. 689 to the death of Edward I, and is based on the French *Chronicle* of a contemporary, who is sometimes called Pierre de Langtoft, sometimes Piers of Bridlington, because he was a native of Langtoft in Yorkshire, and a canon of the Austin priory at Bridlington in the same county. Mannyng's *Chronicle* has no great historical value, and its chief literary interest lies in the references to current traditions and popular stories.

*Handlyng Synne* is a much more valuable work. It was begun in 1303:

Dane Felyp was mayster þat tyme  
Pat y began þys Englyssh ryme;  
Þe 3eres of grace fyl þan to be  
A þousynd and þre hundred and þre.  
In þat tyme turnede y þys  
On Englyssh tunge out of Frankys  
Of a boke as y fonde ynne,  
Men clepyn þe boke 'Handlyng Synne'.

The source was again a French work written by a contemporary Northerner—William of Wadington's *Manuel de Pechiez*. The popularity of such treatises on the Sins may be judged from the number of works modelled upon them: e.g. the *Ayenbyte of Inwyt*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. Their purpose was, as Robert explains, to enable a reader to examine his conscience systematically and constantly, and so to guard himself against vice.

Two complete MSS. of *Handlyng Synne* are known: British Museum MS. Harley 1701 (about 1350-75), and MS. Bodley 415, of a slightly later date. An important fragment is in the library of Dulwich College. The whole text, with the French source, has been edited by Furnivall for the Roxburghe Club, and later for the Early English Text Society. It treats, with the usual wealth of classification, of the Commandments, the Sins, the Sacraments, the Requisites and Graces of Shrift. But such a bald summary gives no idea of the richness and variety of its content. For Mannyng, anticipating Gower, saw the opportunities that the illustrative stories offered to his special gifts, and spared no pains in their telling. A few examples are added from his own knowledge. More often he expands Wadington's outlines, as in the tale of the Dancers of Colbek. Here the French source is brief and colourless. But the English translator had found a fuller Latin version—clearly the same as that printed from Bodleian MS. Rawlinson C 938 in the preface to Furnivall's Roxburghe Club edition—and from it he produced the well-rounded and lively rendering given below.

[003]

Robert knew that a work designed to turn 'lewde men' from the ale-house to the contemplation of their sins must grip their attention; and in the art of linking good teaching with entertainment he is a master. He has the gift of conveying to his audience his own enjoyment of a good story. His loose-knit conversational style would stand the test of reading aloud to simple folk, and he allows no literary affectations, no forced metres or verbiage, to darken his meaning:

Haf I alle in myn Inglis layd  
In symple speche as I couthe,  
Þat is lightest in mannes mouthe.  
I mad noght for no disours,  
Ne for no seggers, no harpours,  
But for þe luf of symple men  
Þat strange Inglis can not ken;  
For many it ere þat strange Inglis  
In ryme wate neuer what it is,  
And bot þai wist what it mente,  
Ellis me thocht it were alle schente.

(*Chronicle*, ll. 72 ff.)

The simple form reflects the writer's frankness and directness. He points a moral fearlessly, but without harshness or self-righteousness. And the range of his sympathies and interests makes *Handlyng Synne* the best picture of English life before Langland and Chaucer.

[004]

## THE DANCERS OF COLBEK

MS. Harley 1701 (about A.D. 1375); ed. Furnivall, ll. 8987 ff.

Karolles, wrastlynges, or somour games,  
Whoso euer haunteþ any swyche shames

Yn cherche, oþer yn chercheþerd,  
 Of sacrylage he may be aferd;  
 Or entyrludes, or syngyngge, 5  
 Or tabure bete, or oþer pypyngge—  
 Alle swyche þyng forbodyn es  
 Whyle þe prest stondeþ at messe.  
 Alle swyche to euery gode preste ys lothe,  
 And sunner wyl he make hym wroth 10  
 Ðan he wyl, þat haþ no wyt,  
 Ne vndyrstondeþ nat Holy Wryt.  
 And specyaly at hygh tymes  
 Karolles to synge and rede rymys  
 Noght yn none holy stedes, 15  
 Þat myȝt dysturble þe prestes bedes,  
 Or ȝyf he were yn orysun  
 Or any ouþer deuocyun:  
 Sacrylage ys alle hyt tolde,  
 Þys and many oþer folde. 20  
 But for to leue yn cherche [for](#) to daunce,  
 Y shal ȝow telle a ful grete chaunce,  
 And y trow þe most þat fel  
[Ys](#) soþe as y ȝow telle;  
 And fyl þys chaunce yn þys londe, 25  
 Yn Inghland, as y vndyrstonde,  
 Yn a kynges tyme þat hyght Edward  
 Fyl þys chau<n>ce þat was so hard.  
 Hyt was vppon a Crystemesse nyȝt  
 Þat twelue folys a karolle dyȝt, 30  
 Yn wodehed, as hyt were yn cuntek,  
 Þey come to a tounne men calle Colbek.  
 Þe cherche of þe tounne þat þey to come  
 Ys of Seynt Magne, þat suffred martyrdome;  
 Of Seynt Bukcestre hyt ys also, 35  
 Seynt Magnes suster, þat þey come to.  
 Here names of alle þus fonde y wryte,  
 And as y wote now shul ȝe wyte:  
 Here lodesman, þat made hem glew,  
 Þus ys wryte, he hyȝte Gerlew. 40  
 Twey maydens were yn here coueyne,  
 Mayden Merswynde and Wybessyne.  
 Alle þese come þedyr for þat enchesone  
 Of þe prestes doghtyr of þe tounne.  
 Þe prest hyȝt Robert, as y kan ame; 45  
 Aȝone hyght hys sone by name;  
 Hys doghter, þat þese men wulde haue,  
 Þus ys wryte, þat she hyȝt Aue.  
 Echoune consented to o wyl  
 Who shuld go Aue oute to tyl, 50  
 Þey graunted echone out to sende  
 Boþe Wybessyne and Merswynde.  
 Þese wommen ȝede and tolled here oute  
 Wyþ hem to karolle þe cherche aboute.  
 Beu<u>ne ordeyned here karollyng; 55  
 Gerlew endyted what þey shuld syng.  
 Þys ys þe karolle þat þey sunge,  
 As telleþ þe Latyn tunge:  
 'Equitabat Beuo per siluam frondosam,  
 Ducebat secum Merswyndam formosam. 60

[005]



*Quid stamus? cur non imus?*

[006]

'By þe leued wode rode Beuolyne,  
Wyþ hym he ledde feyre Merswyne.  
Why stonde we? why go we noght?'  
þys ys þe karolle þat Grysly wroght;  
þys songe sunge þey yn þe chercheþerd—  
Of foly were þey no þyng aferd—  
Vnto þe matynes were alle done,  
And þe messe shuld bygynne sone.

65

þe preste hym reuest to begynne messe,  
And þey ne left þefore neuer þe lesse,  
But daunsed furþe as þey bygan,  
For alle þe messe þey ne blan.

70

þe preste, þat stode at þe autere,  
And herd here noyse and here here,  
Fro þe auter down he nam,  
And to þe cherche porche he cam,  
And seyð 'On Goddes [behalue](#), y 3ow forbede  
þat 3e no lenger do swych dede,  
But comeþ yn on feyre manere  
Goddes seruyse for to here,  
And doþ at Crystyn mennys lawe;  
Karolleþ no more, for Crystys awe!  
Wurschyppeþ Hym with alle 3oure myzt  
þat of þe Vyrgyne was bore þys nyzt.'

75

80

85

For alle hys byddyng lefte þey nozt,  
But daunsed furþ, as þey þozt.  
þe preste þarefor was sore agreued;  
He preyð God þat he on beleuyd,  
And for Seynt Magne, þat he wulde so werche—  
Yn whos wurschyp sette was þe cherche—  
þat swych a veniaunce were on hem sent,  
Are þey oute of þat stede were went,  
þat <[bey](#)> myzt euer ryzt so wende  
Vnto þat tyme tweluemonth ende;  
(Yn þe Latyne þat y fonde þore  
He seyþ nat 'tweluemonth' but 'euermore';)  
He cursed hem þere alsäume  
As þey karoled on here gaume.

90

[007]

95

As sone as þe preste hadde so spoke  
Euery hand yn ouþer so fast was loke  
þat no man myzt with no wundyr  
þat tweluemo<n>þe parte hem asundyr.

100

þe preste 3ede yn, whan þys was done,  
And commaunded hys sone A3one  
þat <[he](#)> shulde go swyþe aftyr Aue,  
Oute of þat karolle algate to haue.  
But al to late þat wurde was seyð,  
For on hem alle was þe veniaunce leyð.

105

A3one wende weyl for to spede;  
Vnto þe karolle as swyþe he 3ede,  
Hys systyr by þe arme he hente,  
And þe arme fro þe body wente.  
Men wundred alle þat þere wore,  
And merueyle mowe 3e here more,  
For, seþen he had þe arme yn hand,  
þe body 3ede furþ karoland,  
And noþer <[þe](#)> body ne þe arme

110

115

Bledde neuer blode, colde ne warme,  
 But was as drye, with al þe haunche, 120  
 As of a stok were ryue a braunche.  
 A3one to hys fadyr went,  
 And broght hym a sory present:  
 'Loke, fadyr,' he seyde, 'and haue hyt here,  
 Þe arme of þy doghtyr dere, 125  
 Þat was myn owne syster Aue,  
 Þat y wende y my3t a saue.  
 [008] Þy cursyng now sene hyt ys  
 Wyth veniaunce on þy owne flessh.  
 Fellyche þou cursedest, and ouer sone; 130  
 Þou askedest veniaunce,—þou hast þy bone.'  
 3ow þar nat aske 3yf þere was wo  
 Wyth þe preste, and wyth many mo.  
 Þe prest, þat cursed for þat daunce,  
 On some of hys fyl harde chaunce. 135  
 He toke hys doghtyr arme [forlorn](#)  
 And byryed hyt on þe morn;  
 Þe nexte day þe arme of Aue  
 He fonde hyt lyggyng aboute þe graue.  
 He byryed [<hyt>](#) on anouþer day, 140  
 And eft aboute þe graue hyt lay.  
 Þe þrydde tyme he byryed hyt,  
 And eft was hyt kast oute of þe pyt.  
 Þe prest wulde byrye hyt no more,  
 He dredde þe veniaunce ferly sore; 145  
 Ynto þe cherche he bare þe arme,  
 For drede and doute of more harme,  
 He ordeyned hyt for to be  
 Þat euery man my3t wyth ye hyt se.  
 Þese men þat 3ede so karolland, 150  
 Alle þat 3ere, hand yn hand,  
 Þey neuer oute of þat stede 3ede,  
 Ne none my3t hem þenne lede.  
 Þere þe cursyng fyrst bygan,  
 Yn þat place aboute þey ran, 155  
 Þat neuer ne felte þey no werynes  
 As many þbodies for goyng dost,  
 Ne mete ete, ne drank drynke,  
 Ne slepte onely alepy wynke.  
 [009] Ny3t ne day þey wyst of none, 160  
 Whan hyt was come, whan hyt was gone;  
 Frost ne snogh, hayle ne reyne,  
 Of colde ne hete, felte þey no peyne;  
 Heere ne nayles neuer grewe,  
 Ne solowed cloþes, ne turned hewe; 165  
 Þundyr ne ly3tnyng dyd hem no dere,  
 Goddys mercy ded hyt fro hem were;—  
 But sungge þat songge þat þe wo wro3t:  
 'Why stonde we? why go we no3t?'  
 What man shuld þyr be yn þys lyue 170  
[Þat](#) ne wulde hyt see and þedyr dryue?  
 Þe Emperoure Henry come fro Rome  
 For to see þys hard dome.  
 Whan he hem say, he wepte sore  
 For þe myschefe þat he sagh þore. 175  
 He ded come wry3tes for to make

Coueryng ouer hem, for tempest sake.  
 But þat þey wrought hyt was yn veyn,  
 For hyt come to no certeyn,  
 For þat þey sette on oo day 180  
 On þe touþer downe hyt lay.  
 Ones, twyys, þryys, þus þey wrozt,  
 And alle here makyng was for nozt.  
 Myght no coueryng hyle hem fro colde  
 Tyl tyme of mercy þat Cryst hyt wolde. 185  
 Tyme of grace fyl þurgh Hys myzt  
 At þe tweluemonth ende, on þe 3ole nyzt.  
 Þe same oure þat þe prest hem banned,  
 Þe same oure atwynne þey twned†;  
 Þat houre þat he cursed hem ynne, 190  
 Þe same oure þey 3ede atwynne,  
 And as yn twynkelyng of an ye  
 Ynto þe cherche gun þey flye,  
 And on þe pauement þey fyl alle downe  
 As þey had be dede, or fal yn a swone. 195  
 Þre days styl þey lay echone,  
 Þat none steryd oþer flesshe or bone,  
 And at þe þre days ende  
 To lyfe God graunted hem to wende.  
 Þey sette hem vpp and spak apert 200  
 To þe parysshe prest, syre Robert:  
 'Þou art ensample and enchesun  
 Of oure long confusyun;  
 Þou maker art of oure trauayle,  
 Þat ys to many grete meruayle, 205  
 And þy traueyle shalt þou sone ende,  
 For to þy long home sone shalt þou wende.'  
 Alle þey ryse þat yche tyde  
 But Aue,—she lay dede besyde.  
 Grete sorowe had here fadyr, here broþer; 210  
 Merueyle and drede had alle ouþer;  
 Y trow no drede of soule dede,  
 But with pyne was broght þe body dede.  
 Þe fyrst man was þe fadyr, þe prest,  
 Þat deyð aftyr þe doztyr nest. 215  
 Þys yche arme þat was of Aue,  
 Þat none myzt leye yn graue,  
 Þe Emperoure dyd a vessel werche  
 To do hyt yn, and hange yn þe cherche,  
 Þat alle men myzt se hyt and knawe, 220  
 And þenk on þe chaunce when [men](#) hyt sawe.  
 Þese men þat hadde go þus karolland  
 Alle þe 3ere, fast hand yn hand,  
 Þogh þat þey were þan asunder  
 3yt alle þe worlde spake of hem wunder. 225  
 Þat same hoppyng þat þey fyrst 3ede,  
 Þatdaunce [3ede](#) þey þurgh land and lede,  
 And, as þey ne myzt fyrst be vnbounde,  
 So efte [togedyr](#) myzt þey neuer be founde,  
 Ne myzt þey neuer come a3eyn 230  
 Togedyr to oo stede certeyn.  
 Foure 3ede to þe courte of Rome,  
 And euer hoppyng aboute þey nome,  
 †Wyth sundyr lepyst come þey þedyr,

[010]

[011]

But þey come neuer efte togedyr. 235  
 Here cloþes ne roted, ne nayles grewe,  
 Ne heere ne wax, ne solowed hewe,  
 Ne neuer hadde þey amendement,  
 Pat we herde, at any corseynt,  
 But at þe vyrgyne Seynt Edyght, 240  
 Pere was he botened, [Seynt](#) Teodryght,  
 On oure Lady day, yn lenten tyde,  
 As he slepte here toumbe besyde.  
 Pere he had hys medycyne  
 At Seynt Edyght, þe holy vyrgyne. 245  
 Brunyng þe bysshope of seynt Tolous  
 Wrote þys tale so merueylous;  
 Sepþe was hys name of more renoun,  
 Men called hym þe pope Leoun.  
 Þys at þe court of Rome þey wyte, 250  
 And yn þe kronykeles hyt ys wryte  
 Yn many stedys bezounde þe see,  
 More þan ys yn þys cuntré.  
 Parfor men seye, an weyl ys trowed,  
 'Þe nere þe cherche, þe fyrþer fro God'. 255  
 So fare men here by þys tale,  
 Some holde hyt but a troteuale,  
 Yn oþer stedys hyt ys ful dere  
 And for grete merueyle þey wyl hyt here.  
 A tale hyt ys of feyre shewyng, 260  
 Ensample and drede azens cursyng.  
 Þys tale y tolde 3ow to <make> 3ow aferde  
 Yn cherche to karolle, or yn cherche3erde,  
 Namely azens þe prestys wylle:  
 Leueþ whan he byddeþ 3ow be styлле. 265

- 21 [for \(2nd\)](#) om. MS. Bodley 415.  
 24 [Ys as sob](#) as þe gospel MS. Bodley.  
 78 [behalue](#)] halfe MS. Bodley.  
 94 [þey](#)] so MS. Bodley: om. MS. Harley.  
 106 [he](#)] so MS. Bodley.  
 118 [þe](#)] so MS. Bodley.  
 136-7 [forlorñ](#)... morñ MS.  
 140 [hyt](#)] so MS. Bodley: om. MS. Harley.  
 171 [þat](#)] þat hyt MS. Harley.  
 221 [men](#)] þey MS. Bodley.  
 227 [3ede](#)] wente MS. Bodley.  
 229 [togedyr](#)... neuer] my3t þey neuer togedyr MS. Bodley.  
 241 [Seynt](#) om. MS. Bodley.

## II

### SIR ORFEO

*Sir Orfeo* is found in three MSS.: (1) the Auchinleck MS. (1325-1350), a famous Middle English miscellany now in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh; (2) British Museum MS. Harley 3810 (fifteenth century); (3) Bodleian MS. Ashmole 61 (fifteenth century). Our text follows the Auchinleck MS., with ll. 1-24 and ll. 33-46 supplied from the Harleian MS. The critical text of O. Zielke, Breslau 1880, reproduces the MSS. inaccurately.

The story appears to have been translated from a French source into South-Western English at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It belongs to a group of 'lays' which claim to derive from Brittany, e.g. *Lai le Freine*, which has the same opening lines (1-22); *Emaré*; and Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*.

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice was known to the Middle Ages chiefly from Ovid (*Metamorphoses* x) and from Virgil (*Georgics* iv). King Alfred's rendering of it in his *Boethius* is

one of his best prose passages, despite the crude moralizing which makes Orpheus's backward glance at Eurydice before she is safe from Hades a symbol of the backslider's longing for his old sins. The Middle English poet has a lighter and daintier touch. The Greek myth is almost lost in a tale of fairyland, the earliest English romance of the kind; and to provide the appropriate happy ending, Sir Orfeo is made successful in his attempt to rescue Heurodis. The adaptation of the classical subject to a mediaeval setting is thorough. An amusing instance is the attempt in the Auchinleck MS. to give the poem an English interest by the unconvincing assurance that *Traciens* (which from 'Thracian' had come to mean 'Thrace') was the old name of Winchester (ll. 49-50).

[014]

<[We redyn ofte](#) and fynde ywryte,  
 As clerkes don us to wyte,  
 The layes that ben of harpyng  
 Ben yfounde of frely thing. 5  
 Sum ben of wele, and sum of wo,  
 And sum of ioy and merthe also;  
[Sum of](#) trechery, and sum of gyle,  
 And sum of happes þat fallen by whyle;  
 Sum of bourdys, and sum of rybaudry, 10  
 And sum þer ben of the feyré.  
 Of alle þing þat men may se,  
 Moost [o loue](#) forsoþe þey be.  
 In Brytayn þis layes arne ywryte,  
 Furst yfounde and forþe ygete, 15  
 Of aventures þat fillen by dayes,  
 Wherof Brytouns made her layes.  
 When þey myght owher heryn  
 Of aventures þat þer weryn,  
 Þey toke her harpys wiþ game, 20  
 Maden layes and ʒaf it name.  
 Of aventures þat han befalle  
 Y can sum telle, but nouʒt all.  
 Herken, lordyngys þat ben trewe,  
 And y wol ʒou telle of Sir Orphewe.> 25  
 Orfeo was a king,  
[In Inglond](#) an heiʒe lording,  
 A stalworþ man and hardi bo,  
 Large and curteys he was also.  
 His fader was comen of King Pluto,  
 And his moder of King Iuno, 30  
 Þat sum time were as godes yhold,  
 For auentours þat þai dede and told.  
 <[Orpheo](#) most of ony þing  
 Louede þe gle of harpyng;  
 Syker was euery gode harpoure 35  
 Of hym to haue moche honoure.  
 Hymself loued for to harpe,  
 And layde þeron his wittes scharpe.  
 He lernyd so, þer noþing was  
 A better harper in no plas; 40  
 In þe world was neuer man born  
 Þat euer Orpheo sat byform,  
 And he myʒt of his harpyng here,  
 He schulde þinke þat he were 45  
 In one of þe ioys of Paradys,  
 Suche ioy and melody in his harpyng is.>  
 Þis king soiournd in Traciens,  
 Þat was a cité of noble defens;  
[For Winchester](#) was cleped þo  
 Traciens wiþouten no. 50  
[þe king](#) hadde a quen of priis,

[015]



Pat was ycleped Dame Herodis,  
 Þe fairest leuedi, for þe nones,  
 Þat miȝt gon on bodi and bones,  
 Ful of loue and of godenisse; 55  
 Ac no man may telle hir fairnise.  
 Bifel so in þe comessing of May,  
 When miri and hot is þe day,  
 And oway beþ winter-schours,  
 And eueri feld is ful of flours, 60  
 And blosme breme on eueri bouȝ  
 Oueral wexeþ miri anouȝ,  
 Þis ich quen, Dame Heurodis,  
 Tok to maidens of priis,  
 And went in an vndrentide 65  
 To play bi an orchard side,  
 To se þe floures sprede and spring,  
 And to here þe foules sing.  
 Þai sett hem doun al þre  
 Vnder a fair ympe-tre, 70  
 And wel sone þis fair quene  
 Fel on slepe opon þe grene.  
 Þe maidens durst hir nouȝt awake,  
 Bot lete hir ligge and rest take.  
 So sche slepe til afternone, 75  
 Þat vndertide was al ydone.  
 Ac as sone as sche gan awake,  
 Sche crid and loþli bere gan make,  
 Sche froted hir honden and hir fet,  
 And crached hir visage, it bled wete; 80  
 Hir riche robe hye al torett,  
 And was [reuey<se>d](#) out of hir witt.  
 Þe tvo maidens hir biside  
 No durst wiþ hir no leng abide,  
 Bot ourn to þe palays ful riȝt, 85  
 And told boþe squier and kniȝt  
 Þat her quen awede wold,  
 And bad hem go and hir athold.  
 Kniȝtes vrn, and leuedis also,  
 Damisels sexti and mo, 90  
 In þe orchard to þe quen hye come,  
 And her vp in her armes nome,  
 And brouȝt hir to bed atte last,  
 And held hir þere fine fast;  
 Ac euer sche held in o cri, 95  
 And wold vp and owy.  
 When Orfeo herd þat tiding,  
 Neuer him nas wers for no þing.  
 He come wiþ kniȝtes tene  
 To chaumber riȝt bifor þe quene, 100  
 And biheld, and seyð wiþ grete pité:  
 'O lef liif, what is te,  
 Þat euer ȝete hast ben so stille,  
 And now gredest wonder schille?  
 Þi bodi, þat was so white ycore, 105  
 Wiþ þine nailes is al totore.  
 Allas! þi rode, þat was so red,  
 Is al wan as þou were ded;  
 And also þine fingres smale

[016]

[017]

Beþ al blodi and al pale. 110  
 Allas! þi louesom eyzen to  
 Lokeþ so man doþ on his fo.  
 A! dame, ich biseche merci.  
 Lete ben al þis reweful cri,  
 And tel me what þe is, and hou, 115  
 And what þing may þe help now.'  
 Þo lay sche stille atte last,  
 And gan to wepe swiþe fast,  
 And seyð þus þe king to:  
 'Allas! mi lord, Sir Orfeo, 120  
 Seþþen we first togider were,  
 Ones wroþ neuer we nere,  
 Bot euer ich haue yloued þe  
 As mi liif, and so þou me.  
 Ac now we mot delen ato; 125  
 Do þi best, for y mot go.'  
 'Allas!' quaþ he, 'forlorn icham.  
 Whider wiltow go, and to wham?  
 Whider þou gost, ichil wiþ þe,  
 And whider y go, þou schalt wiþ me.' 130  
 'Nay, nay, sir, þat nouzt nis;  
 Ichil þe telle al hou it is:  
 As ich lay þis vndertide,  
 And slepe vnder our orchard-side,  
 Þer come to me to fair kniȝtes 135  
 Wele y-armed al to riȝtes,  
 And bad me comen an heiȝing,  
 And speke wiþ her lord þe king.  
 And ich answerd at wordes bold,  
 Y durst nouzt, no y nold. 140  
 Þai priked oȝain as þai miȝt driue;  
 Þo com her king also bliue,  
 Wiþ an hundred kniȝtes and mo,  
 And damisels an hundred also,  
 Al on snowe-white stedes; 145  
 As white as milke were her wedes:  
 Y no seiȝe neuer ȝete bifore  
 So fair creatours ycore.  
 Þe king hadde a croun on hed,  
 It nas of siluer, no of gold red, 150  
 Ac it was of a precious ston,  
 As briȝt as þe sonne it schon.  
 And as son as he to me cam,  
 Wold ich, nold ich, he me nam,  
 And made me wiþ him ride 155  
 Opon a palfray, bi his side,  
 And brouȝt me to his palays,  
 Wele atird in ich ways,  
 And schewed me castels and tours,  
 Riuers, forestes, friþ wiþ flours, 160  
 And his riche stedes ichon;  
 And seþþen me brouȝt oȝain hom  
 Into our owen orchard,  
 And said to me þus afterward:  
 "Loke, dame, to-morwe þatow be 165  
 Riȝt here vnder þis ympe-tre,  
 And þan þou schalt wiþ ous go,

[018]

[019]

And liue wiþ ous euermo;  
 And 3if þou makest ous ylet,  
 Whar þou be, þou worst yfet, 170  
 And totore þine limes al,  
 Þat noþing help þe no schal;  
 And þei þou best so totorn,  
 3ete þou worst wiþ ous yborn."  
 When King Orfeo herd þis cas, 175  
 'O we!' quap he, 'allas, allas!  
 Leuer me were to lete mi liif,  
 Þan þus to lese þe quen mi wiif!  
 He asked conseyl at ich man,  
 Ac no man him help no can. 180  
 Amorwe þe vndertide is come,  
 And Orfeo hap his armes ynome,  
 And wele ten hundred kni3tes wiþ him  
 Ich y-armed stout and grim;  
 And wiþ þe quen wenten he 185  
 Ri3t vnto þat ympe-tre.  
 Þai made scheltrom in ich a side,  
 And sayd þai wold þere abide,  
 And dye þer euerichon,  
 Er þe quen schuld fram hem gon. 190  
 Ac 3ete amiddes hem ful ri3t  
 Þe quen was oway ytui3t,  
 Wiþ fairi forþ ynome;  
 Men wist neuer wher sche was bicomme.  
 Þo was þer criing, wepe and wo. 195  
 Þe king into his chaumber is go,  
 And oft swoned opon þe ston,  
 And made swiche diol and swiche mon  
 Þat nei3e his liif was yspent:  
 Þer was non amendement. 200  
 He cleped togider his barouns,  
 Erls, lordes of renouns;  
 And when þai al ycomen were,  
 'Lordinges,' he said, 'bifor 3ou here  
 Ich ordainy min hei3e steward 205  
 To wite mi kingdom afterward;  
 In mi stede ben he schal,  
 To kepe mi londes ouer al.  
 For, now ichaue mi quen ylore,  
 Þe fairest leuedi þat euer was bore, 210  
 Neuer eft y nil no woman se.  
 Into wildernes ichil te,  
 And liue þer euermore  
 Wiþ wilde bestes in holtes hore.  
 And when 3e vnderstond þat y be spent, 215  
 Make 3ou þan a parlement,  
 And chese 3ou a newe king.  
 Now doþ 3our best wiþ al mi þing.'  
 Þo was þer wepeing in þe halle,  
 And grete cri among hem alle; 220  
 Vnneþe mi3t old or 3ong  
 For wepeing speke a word wiþ tong.  
 Þai kneled adoun al yfere,  
 And praid him, 3if his wille were,  
 Þat he no schuld nou3t fram hem go. 225

'Do way!' quap he, 'it schal be so.'

Al his kingdom he forsoke;

Bot a sclauin on him he toke;

He no hadde kirtel no hode,

Schert, [<no>](#) no noþer gode.

230

Bot his harp he tok algate,

And dede him barfot out atte ȝate;

No man most wiþ him go.

[021]

O way! what þer was wepe and wo,

When he, þat hadde ben king wiþ croun,

235

Went so pouerlich out of toun!

Durch wode and ouer heþ

Into þe wildernes he geþ.

Noþing he fint þat him is ays,

Bot euer he liueþ in gret malais.

240

He þat hadde ywerd þe fowe and griis,

And on bed þe purper biis,

Now on hard heþe he liþ,

Wiþ leues and gresse he him wriþ.

He þat hadde had castels and tours,

245

Riuer, forest, friþ wiþ flours,

Now, þei it comenci to snewe and frese,

Þis king mot make his bed in mese.

He þat had yhad kniȝtes of priis

Bifor him kneland, and leuedis,

250

Now seþ he noþing þat him likeþ,

Bot wilde wormes bi him strikeþ.

He þat had yhad plenté

Of mete and drink, of ich deynté,

Now may he al day digge and wrote

255

Er he finde his fille of rote.

In somer he liueþ bi wild frut

And berien bot gode lite;

In winter may he noþing finde

Bot rote, grasses, and þe rinde.

260

Al his bodi was oway duine

For missays, and al tochine.

Lord! who may telle þe sore

Þis king sufferd ten ȝere and more?

His here of his berd, blac and rowe,

265

To his girdelstede was growe.

His harp, whereon was al his gle,

He hidde in an holwe tre;

And, when þe weder was clere and briȝt,

He toke his harp to him wel riȝt,

270

And harped at his owen wille.

Into alle þe wode þe soun gan schille,

Þat alle þe wilde bestes þat þer beþ

For ioie abouten him þai teþ;

And alle þe foules þat þer were

275

Come and sete on ich a brere,

To here his harping afine,

So miche melody was þerin;

And when he his harping lete wold,

No best bi him abide nold.

280

He miȝt se him bisides

Oft in hot vndertides

Þe king o fairy wiþ his rout

Com to hunt him al about,  
 Wiþ dim cri and bloweing; 285  
 And houndes also wiþ him berking;  
 Ac no best þai no nome,  
 No neuer he nist whider þai bicomē.  
 And oþer while he miȝt him se  
 As a gret ost bi him te 290  
 Wele atourned ten hundred kniȝtes,  
 Ich y-armed to his riȝtes,  
 Of cuntenaunce stout and fers,  
 Wiþ mani desplaid baners,  
 And ich his swerd ydrawe hold, 295  
 Ac neuer he nist whider þai wold.  
 And oþer while he seiȝe oþer þing:  
 Kniȝtes and leuedis com daunceing  
 In queynt atire, gisely,  
 Queynt pas and softly; 300  
 Tabours and trunpes ȝede hem bi,  
 And al maner menstraci.  
 And on a day he seiȝe him biside  
 Sexti leuedis on hors ride,  
 Gentil and iolif as brid on ris,— 305  
 Nouȝt o man amonges hem þer nis.  
 And ich a faucoun on hond bere,  
 And riden on haukin bi o riuere.  
 Of game þai founde wel gode haunt,  
 Maulardes, hayroun, and cormeraunt; 310  
 Þe foules of þe water ariseþ,  
 Þe faucouns hem wele deuisseþ;  
 Ich faucoun his pray slouȝ.  
 Þat seiȝe Orfeo, and louȝ:  
 'Parfay!' quaþ he, 'þer is fair game, 315  
 Þider ichil, bi Godes name!  
 Ich was ywon swiche werk to se.'  
 He aros, and þider gan te.  
 To a leuedi he was ycome,  
 Biheld, and haþ wele vndernome, 320  
 And seiþ bi al þing þat it is  
 His owen quen, Dam Heurodis.  
 ȝern he biheld hir, and sche him eke,  
 Ac noiþer to oþer a word no speke.  
 For messais þat sche on him seiȝe, 325  
 Þat had ben so riche and so heiȝe,  
 Þe teres fel out of her eiȝe.  
 Þe oþer leuedis þis yseiȝe,  
 And makēd hir oway to ride,  
 Sche most wiþ him no lenger abide. 330  
 'Allas!' quaþ he, 'now me is wo.  
 Whi nil deþ now me slo?  
 Allas! [wreche](#), þat y no miȝt  
 Dye now after þis siȝt!  
 Allas! to long last mi liif, 335  
 When y no dar nouȝt wiþ mi wiif,  
 No hye to me, o word speke.  
 Allas! whi nil min hert breke?  
 Parfay!' quaþ he, 'tide wat bitide,  
 Whider so þis leuedis ride, 340  
 Þe selue way ichil streche;

[023]

[024]



Of liif no deþ me no reche.'

His sclauain he dede on also spac,  
And henge his harp opon his bac,  
And had wel gode wil to gon,—  
He no spard noiþer stub no ston.  
In at a roche þe leuedis rideþ,  
And he after, and nouzt abideþ.

345

When he was in þe roche ygo  
Wele þre mile oþer mo,  
He com into a fair cuntray,  
As brizt so sonne on somers day,  
Smoþe and plain and al grene,  
Hille no dale nas þer non ysene.  
Amidde þe lond a castel he sizþe,  
Riche and real, and wonder heizþe.

350

Al þe vtmast wal  
Was clere and schine as cristal;  
An hundred tours þer were about,  
Degiselich, and bataild stout;  
þe butras com out of þe dicþe,  
Of rede gold y-arched riche;  
þe vousour was anow<rn>ed al  
Of ich maner diuers animal.

355

Wiþin þer wer wide wones  
Al of precious stones.  
þe werst piler on to biholde  
Was al of burnist gold.

360

Al þat lond was euer lizt,  
For when it schuld be þerk and nizt,  
þe riche stones lizt gonne,  
As brizt as doþ at none þe sonne.  
No man may telle, no þenche in þouzt,  
þe riche werk þat þer was wrouzt;  
Bi al þing him þink þat it is  
þe proude court of Paradis.

365

370

375

In þis castel þe leuedis alizt;  
He wold in after, 3if he mizt.  
Orfeo knobkeþ atte gate,  
þe porter was redi þerate,  
And asked what he wold haue ydo.  
'Parfay!' quaþ he, 'icham a minstrel, lo!  
To solas þi lord wiþ mi gle,  
3if his swete wille be.'

380

þe porter vndede þe 3ate anon,  
And lete him into þe castel gon.

385

þan he gan bihold about al,  
And seiþe †ful† liggeand wiþin þe wal  
Of folk þat were þider ybrouzt,  
And þouzt dede, and nare nouzt.  
Sum stode wiþouten hade,  
And sum non armes nade,  
And sum þurch þe bodi hadde wounde,  
And sum lay wode, ybounde,  
And sum armed on hors sete,  
And sum astrangled as þai ete,  
And sum were in water adreynt,  
And sum wiþ fire al forschreynt  
Wiues þer lay on childbedde,

390

395

Sum ded, and sum awedde; 400  
 And wonder fele þer lay bisides,  
 Riȝt as þai slepe her vndertides.  
 Eche was þus in þis world ynome,  
 Wiþ fairi þider ycome.  
 Þer he seiȝe his owen wiif, 405  
 Dame Heurodis, his [lef](#) liif,  
 Slepe vnder an ympe-tre:  
 Bi her cloþes he knewe þat it was he.

And when he hadde bihold þis meruails alle,  
 He went into þe kinges halle. 410  
 Þan seiȝe he þer a semly siȝt,  
 A tabernacle blisseful and briȝt,  
 Þerin her maister king sete,  
 And her quen fair and swete.  
 Her crounes, her cloþes, schine so briȝt, 415  
 Þat vnneþe bihold he hem miȝt.

When he hadde biholden al þat þing,  
 He kneled adoun bifor þe king.  
 'O lord,' he seyde, 'ȝif it þi wille were,  
 Mi menstraci þou schust yhere.' 420  
 Þe king answerde: 'What man artow,  
 Þat art hider ycomen now?  
 Ich, no non þat is wiþ me,  
 No sent neuer after þe;  
 Seþþen þat ich here regni gan, 425  
 Y no fond neuer so folehardi man  
 Þat hider to ous durst wende,  
 Bot þat ichim wald ofsende.'  
 'Lord,' quap he, 'trowe ful wel,  
 Y nam bot a pouer menstrel; 430  
 And, sir, it is þe maner of ous  
 To seche mani a lordes hous;  
 Þei we nouȝt welcom no be,  
 ȝete we mot proferi forþ our gle.'

Bifor þe king he sat adoun, 435  
 And tok his harp so miri of soun,  
 And tempreþ his harp, as he wele can,  
 And blisseful notes he þer gan,  
 Þat al þat in þe palays were  
 Com to him for to here, 440  
 And liggeþ adoun to his fete,  
 Hem þenkeþ his melody so swete.  
 Þe king herkneþ and sitt ful stille,  
 To here his gle he haþ gode wille;  
 Gode bourde he hadde of his gle, 445  
 Þe riche quen also hadde he.

When he hadde stint his harping,  
 Þan seyde to him þe king:  
 'Menstrel, me likeþ wele þi gle.  
 Now aske of me what it be, 450  
 Largelich ichil þe pay.  
 Now speke, and tow miȝt asay.'  
 'Sir,' he seyde, 'ich biseche þe  
 Þatow woldest ȝiue me  
 Þat ich leuedi, briȝt on ble, 455  
 Þat slepeþ vnder þe ympe-tre.'  
 'Nay,' quap þe king, 'þat nouȝt nere!

A sori couple of 3ou it were,  
 For þou art lene, rowe, and blac,  
 And sche is louesum, wiþouten lac; 460  
 A loþlich þing it were forþi  
 To sen hir in þi compayni.'  
 'O sir,' he seyde, 'gentil king,  
 3ete were it a wele fouler þing  
 To here a lesing of þi mouþe, 465  
 So, sir, as 3e seyde nouþe,  
 What ich wold aski, haue y schold,  
 And nedes þou most þi word hold.'  
 [028] Þe king seyde: 'Seþþen it is so,  
 Take hir bi þe hond, and go; 470  
 Of hir ichil þatow be bliþe.'  
 He kneled adoun, and þonked him swiþe;  
 His wiif he tok bi þe hond,  
 And dede him swiþe out of þat lond,  
 And went him out of þat þede,— 475  
 Rizt as he come þe way he 3ede.  
 So long he haþ þe way ynome,  
 To [Winchester](#) he is ycome,  
 Þat was his owen cité;  
 Ac no man knewe þat it was he. 480  
 No forþer þan þe tounes ende  
 For knoweleche <he> no durst wende,  
 Bot wiþ a begger y<n> bilt ful narwe,  
 Þer he tok his herbarwe,  
 To him and to his owen wiif, 485  
 As a minstrel of pouer liif,  
 And asked tidinges of þat lond,  
 And who þe kingdom held in hond.  
 Þe pouer begger in his cote  
 Told him euerich a grot: 490  
 Hou her quen was stole owy  
 Ten 3er gon wiþ fairy;  
 And hou her king en exile 3ede,  
 Bot no man nist in wiche þede;  
 And hou þe steward þe lond gan hold; 495  
 And oþer mani þinges him told.  
 Amorwe, o3ain nonetide,  
 He maked his wiif þer abide;  
 Þe beggers cloþes he borwed anon,  
 And heng his harp his rigge opon, 500  
 And went him into þat cité,  
 [029] Þat men mi3t him bihold and se.  
 Erls and barouns bold,  
 Buriays and leuedis him gun bihold.  
 'Lo,' þai seyde, 'swiche a man! 505  
 Hou long þe here hongep him opan!  
 Lo, hou his berd hongep to his kne!  
 He is yclongen also a tre!'  
 And as he 3ede in þe strete,  
 Wiþ his steward he gan mete, 510  
 And loude he sett on him a crie:  
 'Sir steward,' he seyde, 'merci!  
 Icham an harpour of heþenisse;  
 Help me now in þis destresse!'  
 Þe steward seyde: 'Com wiþ me, come; 515

Of þat ichaue þou schalt haue some.  
Euerich gode harpou is welcom me to,  
For mi lordes loue Sir Orfeo.'

In þe castel þe steward sat atte mete,  
And mani lording was bi him sete. 520  
Þer were trompou<s> and tabourers,  
Harpours fele, and crouders.  
Miche melody þai maked alle,  
And Orfeo sat stille in þe halle,  
And herkneþ. When þai ben al stille, 525  
He toke his harp and tempred schille,  
Þe bli<sse>fulest notes he harped þere  
Þat euer ani man yherd wiþ ere;  
Ich man liked wele his gle.

Þe steward biheld and gan yse, 530  
And knewe þe harp als bliue.  
'Menstrel,' he seyð, 'so mot þou þriue,  
Where hadestow þis harp, and hou?  
Y pray þat þou me telle now.'  
'Lord,' quæþ he, 'in vncouþe þede, 535  
Þurch a wildernes as y ʒede,  
Þer y founde in a dale  
Wiþ lyouns a man totorn smale,  
And wolues him frete wiþ teþ so scharp.  
Bi him y fond þis ich harp; 540  
Wele ten ʒere it is ygo.'

'O,' quæþ þe steward, 'now me is wo!  
Þat was mi lord Sir Orfeo.  
Allas! wreche, what schal y do,  
Þat haue swiche a lord ylore? 545  
A way! þat ich was ybore!  
Þat him was so hard grace yʒarked,  
And so vile deþ ymarked!  
Adoun he fel aswon to grounde.  
His barouns him tok vp in þat stounde, 550  
And telleþ him hou it geþ—  
It nis no bot of manes deþ.

King Orfeo knewe wele bi þan  
His steward was a trewe man  
And loued him as he auʒt to do, 555  
And stont vp and seyð þus: 'Lo,  
Steward, herkne now þis þing:  
ʒif ich were Orfeo þe king,  
And hadde ysuffred ful ʒore  
In wildernisse miche sore, 560  
And hadde ywon mi quen owy  
Out of þe lond of fairy,  
And hadde ybrouʒt þe leuedi hende  
Riʒt here to þe tounes ende,  
And wiþ a begger her in ynome, 565  
And were miself hider ycome  
Pouerlich to þe, þus stille,  
For to asay þi gode wille,  
And ich founde þe þus trewe,  
Þou no schust it neuer rewe: 570

Sikerlich, for loue or  
Þou schust be king after mi day.  
And ʒif þou of mi deþ hadest ben bliþe,

[030]

[031]

Pou schust haue voided also swiþe.'

Ðo al þo þat þerin sete

575

Þat it was King Orfeo vnderþete,  
And þe steward him wele knewe;

Ouer and ouer þe bord he þrewe,  
And fel adoun to his fet;

So dede euerich lord þat þer sete,

580

And al þai seyð at o criing:

'Ȝe beþ our lord, sir, and our king!'

Glad þai were of his liue.

To chaumber þai ladde him als biliue,

And baþed him, and schaued his berd,

585

And tired him as a king apert.

And seþþen wiþ gret processiou

Þai brouzt þe quen into þe toun,

Wiþ al maner menstraci.

Lord! þer was grete melody!

590

For ioie þai wepe wiþ her eiȝe

Þat hem so sounde ycomen seiȝe.

Now King Orfeo newe coround is,

And his quen Dame Heurodis,

And liued long afterward;

595

And seþþen was king þe steward.

Harpours in Bretaine after þan

Herd hou þis meruaile bigan,

And made herof a lay of gode likeing,

And nempned it after þe king;

600

Þat lay 'Orfeo' is yhote,

Gode is þe lay, swete is þe note.

Þus com Sir Orfeo out of his care.

God graunt ous alle wele to fare.

ll. 1-24 [from Harl. 3810: om. MS.](#)

ll. 7-8 [follow](#) ll. 9-10 *in Harl.*

12 [o loue](#)] to lowe *Harl.*

26 [In Inglond](#)] And in his tyme *Harl.*

33-46 [from Harl. 3810: om. MS.](#)

49-50 [om. Harl., Ashm.](#)

51 [þe king](#)] He *Harl.*: And *Ashm.*

82 [reueysed](#)] raused *Ashm.*: reueyd *MS.*: wode out *Harl.*

230 [no](#)] ne *Ashm.*: om. *MS.*

333 [wreche](#)] wroche *MS.*

406 [lef](#)] liif *MS.*

478 [Winchester](#)] Traciens *Ashm.*: Crassens *Harl.*

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### III

## MICHAEL OF NORTHGATE'S AYENBYTE OF INWYT

A.D. 1340.

Michael of Northgate was a monk of St. Augustine's, Canterbury. From a library catalogue of the monastery it appears that he was a lover of books, for he is named as the donor of twenty-five MSS., a considerable collection for those days. Their titles show a taste not merely for religious works, but for science—mathematics, chemistry, medicine, as they were known at the time. Four of these MSS. have been traced, and one of them, British Museum MS. Arundel 57, is Michael's autograph copy of the *Ayenbyte*. On folio 2 of the MS. are the words: *Bis boc is Dan Michelis of Northgate, ywrite an Englis of his oȝene hand, þet hatte 'Ayenbyte of Inwyt'; and is of the boc-house of Saynt Austines of Canterberi, mid þe lettres. CC.* 'CC.' is the press-mark given in the catalogue. A note at the end of the text shows that it was finished on October 27, 1340:

*Ymende þet þis boc is uolued ine þe eue of þe holy apostles Symon an Iudas [i.e. Oct. 27] of*

ane broþer of the cloystre of Sauynt Austin of Canterberi, in the yeare of oure Lhordes beringe 1340.

The *Ayenbyte* has been edited for the Early English Text Society by R. Morris. The title means literally 'Remorse of Conscience', but from the contents of the work it would appear that the writer meant rather 'Stimulus to the Conscience', or 'Prick of Conscience'. It is in fact a translation from the French *Somme des Vices et des Vertues*, compiled by Friar Lorenz in 1279 for King Philip le Hardi, and long held to be the main source of Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*. Caxton rendered the *Somme* into English prose as *The Royal Book*. It treats of the Commandments, the Creed, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Petitions of the Paternoster, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

[033] Dan Michael's purpose is stated in some doggerel lines at the end:

Nou ich wille þet ye ywyte  
Hou hit is ywent  
þet þis boc is ywrite  
Mid Engliss of Kent.  
þis boc is ymad uor lewede men,  
Vor uader, and uor moder, and uor oþer ken,  
Ham uor to berþe uram alle manyere zen,  
þet ine hare inwytte ne bleue no uoul wen.

His translation is inaccurate, and sometimes unintelligible, and the treatment is so barren of interest that the work seems to have fallen flat even in its own day, when the popular appetite for edification was keen and unspoiled. But if its literary merit is slight, linguistically it is one of the most important works in Middle English. It provides a long prose text, exactly dated and exactly localized; we have the author's autograph copy to work from; and the dialect is well distinguished. These circumstances, unique in Middle English, make it possible to study the Kentish dialect of the mid-fourteenth century under ideal conditions.

## HOW MERCY INCREASES TEMPORAL GOODS.

Hou Merci multipliþ þe timliche guodes, hyerof we habbeþ uele uayre uorbisnen, huerof ich wille hier zome telle. Me ret of Saint Germain of Aucerre þet, þo he com uram Rome, ate outgoinge of Melane, he acsede at onen of his diaknen yef he hedde eny zeluer, and he ansuerede þet he ne hedde bote þri pans, uor Say<n>t Germayn hit hedde al yeue to pouren. Þanne he him het þet he his ssolde yeue to þe poure, uor God hedde yno3 of guode, huerof he hise uedde uor þane day. Þe dyacne mid greate pine and mid greate grochinge yeaf þe tuaye pans, and ofhild þane þridde. Þe sergont of ane riche kni3te him bro3te ane his lhordes haf tuo hondred pans. Þo clepede he his dyacne, and him zede þet he hedde benome þe poure ane peny, and yef he hedde yeue þane þridde peny to þe poure, þe kni3t him hedde yzent þri hondred pans.

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[034]

Efterward me ret ine þe lyue of Ion þe Amoner, þet wes zuo ycleped uor þe greate elmesses þet he dede: A riche ientilman wes yrobbed of þieues, zuo þet him na3t ne blefte. He him com to playni to þe uorzede manne, and he him zede his cas. He hedde greate reuþe þerof, and het his desspendoure þet he him yeauue uytene pond of gold. Þe spendere, be his couaytise, ne yeaf bote vyf. An haste a gentil wymman wodewe zente to þe uoreyzede Ion uif hondred pond of gold. Þo he clepede his spendere, and him acsede hou moche he hedde yyeue to þe kni3te. He ansuerede 'vyftene pond.' Þe holy man ansuerede þet 'nay, he ne hedde bote vyf'; and huanne he hit wiste þe ilke zelue þet his hedde onderuonge, zuo zayde to his spendere þet yef he hedde yyeue þe viftene pond þet he hedde yhote, oure Lhord him hede yzent be þe guode wyfman a þouzond and vyf hondred pond. And huanne he acsede ate guode wyfman, þo he hedde hise ycleped, hou moche hi hedde him ylete, hi andzuerede þet uerst hi hedde ywrite ine hare testament þet hi him let a þousend and vyf hondred pond. Ac hi lokede efterward ine hare testament, and hi yze3 þe þousend pond defaced of hire write, and zuo ylefde þe guode wyfman þet God wolde þet hi ne zente bote vif hondred.

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Efterward Saint Gregori telþ þet Saint Boniface uram þet he wes child he wes zuo piteuous þet he yaf ofte his kertel and his sserte to þe poure uor God, þa3 his moder him byete ofte þeruore. Þanne bevil þet þet child yze3 manie poure þet hedden mezeyse. He aspide þet his moder nes na3t þer. An haste he yarn to þe gerniere, and al þet his moder hedde ygadered uor to pasi þet yer he hit yaf þe poure. And þo his moder com, and wyste þe ilke dede, hy wes al out of hare wytte. Þet child bed oure Lhorde, and þet gernier wes an haste al uol.

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[035]

Efterward þer wes a poure man, ase me zayþ, þet hedde ane cou; and yhyerde zigge of his preste ine his prechinge þet God zede ine his spelle þet God wolde yelde an hondreduald al þet me yeauue uor him. Þe guode man, mid þe rede of his wyue, yeaf his cou to his preste, þet wes riche. Þe prest his nom bleþeliche, and hise zente to þe oþren þet he hedde. Þo hit com to euen, þe guode mannes cou com hom to his house ase hi wes ywoned, and ledde mid hare alle þe prestes ken, al to an hondred. Þo þe guode man yze3 þet, he þo3te þet þet wes þet word of þe Godspelle þet he hedde yyolde; and him hi weren yloked beuore his bissoppe aye þane prest. Þise uorbisne sseweþ wel þet merci is quod chapuare,

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## IV

### RICHARD ROLLE OF HAMPOLE

#### D. 1349.

Richard Rolle was born at Thornton-le-Dale, near Pickering, in Yorkshire. He was sent to Oxford, already a formidable rival to the University of Paris; but the severer studies were evidently uncongenial to his impulsive temperament. He returned home without taking orders, improvised for himself a hermit's dress, and fled into solitude. His piety attracted the favour of Sir John and Lady Dalton, who gave him a cell on their estate. Here, in meditation, he developed his mystical religion. He did not immure himself, or cut himself off from human companionship. For a time he lived near Anderby, where was the cell of the recluse Margaret Kirkby, to whom he addressed his *Form of Perfect Living*. Another important work, *Ego Dormio et Cor Meum Vigilat*, was written for a nun of Yedingham (Yorks.). Towards the end of his life he lived in close friendship with the nuns of Hampole, and for one of them he wrote his *Commandment of Love to God*. At Hampole he died in 1349, the year of the Black Death. By the devout he was regarded as a saint, and had his commemoration day, his office, and his miracles; but he was never canonized.

He wrote both in Latin and in English, and it is not always easy to distinguish his work from that of his many followers and imitators. The writings attributed to him are edited by C. Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, 2 vols., London 1895-6. Besides the prose works noted above, he wrote, at the request of Margaret Kirkby, a *Commentary on the Psalms* (ed. Bramley, Oxford 1884), based on the Latin of Peter Lombard. A long didactic poem in Northern English, the *Prick of Conscience*, has been attributed to him from Lydgate's time onwards; but his authorship has recently been questioned, chiefly on the ground that the poem is without a spark of inspiration. It is not certain that he wrote *Love is Life*, which is included here because it expresses in characteristic language his central belief in the personal bond, the burning love, between God and man. The first prose selection shows that he did not disdain the examples from natural history that were so popular in the sermons of the time. The second is chapter xi of the *Form of Perfect Living*, which is found as a separate extract from an early date.

With Rolle began a movement of devotional piety, which, as might be expected from its strong appeal to the emotions, was taken up first among religious women; and signs of a striving for effect in his style suggest that the hermit was not indifferent to the admiration of his followers. He brings to his teaching more heart than mind. He escapes the problems of the world, which seemed so insistent to his contemporaries, by denying the world's claims. His ideas and temperament are diametrically opposed to those of the other great figure in the religious life of fourteenth-century England—Wiclif, the schoolman, politician, reformer, controversialist. Yet they have in common a sincerity and directness of belief that brushes aside conventions, and an enthusiasm that made them leaders in an age when the Church as a whole suffered from apathy.

#### A. LOVE IS LIFE.

**Cambridge University Library MS. DD. 5. 64, III (about 1400) f. 38 a.**

<L>uf es lyf þat lastes ay, þar it in Criste es feste,  
 For wele ne wa it chaunge may, als wryten has men wyseste.  
 Þe nyght it tournes intil þe day, þi trauel intyll reste;  
 If þou wil luf þus as I say, þou may be wyth þe beste.

Lufe es thoght wyth grete desyre of a fayre louyng;  
 Lufe I lyken til a fyre þat sloken may na thyng;  
 Lufe vs clenses of oure syn; luf vs bote sall bryng;  
 Lufe þe Keynges hert may wyn; lufe of ioy may syng.

Þe settel of lufe es lyft hee, for intil heuen it ranne;  
 Me thynk in erth it es sle, þat makes men pale and wanne;  
 Þe bede of blysse it gase ful nee, I tel þe as I kanne:  
 Þof vs thynk þe way be dregh, luf copuls God and manne.

Lufe es hatter þen þe cole; lufe may nane beswyke.  
 Þe flawme of lufe wha myght it thole, if it war ay ilyke?  
 Luf vs confortes, and mase in qwart, and lyftes tyl heuenryke;

[037]

[038]

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Luf rausches Cryste intyl owr hert; I wate na lust it lyke.

Lere to luf, if þou wyl lyfe when þou sall hethen fare;  
All þi thoght til Hym þou gyf þat may þe kepe fra kare:  
Loke þi hert fra Hym noght twyn, if þou in wandreth ware;  
Sa þou may Hym welde and wyn, and luf Hym euermare.

20

Iesu, þat me lyfe hase lent, intil Þi lufe me bryng!  
Take til Þe al myne entent, þat Þow be my ʒhernyng.  
Wa fra me away war went, and comne war my couaytyng,  
If þat my sawle had herd and hent þe sang of Þi louyng.

Þi lufe es ay lastand, fra þat we may it fele;  
Þarein make me byrnand, þat na thyng gar it kele.  
My thoght take into Þi hand, and stabyl it ylk a dele,  
Þat I be noght heldand to luf þis worldes wele.

25

If I lufe any erthly thyng þat payes to my wyll,  
And settes my ioy and my lykyng when it may comm me tyll,  
I mai drede of partyng, þat wyll be hate and yll:  
For al my welth es bot wepyng when pyne mi saule sal spyll.

30

Þe ioy þat men hase sene es lyckend tyl þe haye,  
Þat now es fayre and grene, and now wytes awaye.  
Swylk es þis worlde, I wene, and bees till Domesdaye,  
All in trauel and tene, fle þat na man it maye.

35

If þou luf in all þi thoght, and hate þe fylth of syn,  
And gyf Hym þi sawle þat it boght, þat He þe dwell within,  
Als Crist þi sawle hase soght, and þerof walde noght blyn,  
Sa þou sal to blys be broght, and heuen won within.

40

[039] Þe kynd of luf es þis, þar it es trayst and trew,  
To stand styll in stabylnes, and chaunge it for na new.  
Þe lyfe þat lufe myght fynd, or euer in hert it knew,  
Fra kare it tornes þat kyend, and lendes in myrth and glew.

[For now](#), lufe þow, I rede, Cryste, as I þe tell,  
And with aungels take þi stede: þat ioy loke þou noght sell!  
In erth þow hate, I rede, all þat þi lufe may fell,  
For luf es stalworth as þe dede, luf es hard as hell.

45

Luf es a lyght byrthen; lufe gladdes ʒong and alde;  
Lufe es withowten pyne, as lofers hase me talde;  
Lufe es a gastly [wyne](#), þat makes men bygge and balde;  
Of lufe sal he na thyng tyne þat hit in hert will halde.

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Lufe es þe swetttest thyng þat man in erth hase tane;  
Lufe es Goddes derlyng; lufe byndes blode and bane.  
In lufe be owre lykyng, I ne wate na better wane,  
For me and my lufyng lufe makes bath be ane.

55

Bot fleschly lufe sal fare as dose þe flowre in May,  
And lastand be na mare þan ane houre of a day,  
And sythen syghe ful sare þar lust, þar pryde, þar play,  
When þai er casten in kare til pyne þat lastes ay.

60

When þair bodys lyse in syn, þair sawls mai qwake and drede,  
For vp sal ryse al men, and answer for þair dede.  
If þai be fonden in syn, als now þair lyfe þai lede,  
Þai sal sytt hel within, and myrknes hafe to mede.

Riche men þair [hend](#) sal wryng, and wicked werkes sal by  
In flawme of fyre, bath knyght and keyng, with sorow schamfully.  
If þou wil lufe, þan may þou syng til Cryst in melody;  
Be lufe of Hym ouercoms al thyng, þarto þou traiste trewly.

65

[040] <I> sygh and sob, bath day and nyght, for ane sa fayre of hew!  
Par es na thyng my hert mai light, bot lufe þat es ay new.  
Wha sa had Hym in his syght, or in his hert Hym knew,  
His mournyng turned til ioy ful bryght, his sang intil glew.

70

In myrth he lyfes, nyght and day, þat lufes þat swete chylde;  
It es Iesu, forsoth I say, of al mekest and mylde.  
Wreth fra hym walde al away, þof he wer neuer sa wylde,  
He þat in hert lufed Hym þat day, fra euel He wil hym schylde.

75

Of Iesu mast lyst me speke, þat al my bale may bete;  
Me thynk my hert may al tobreke when I thynk on þat swete;  
In lufe lacyd He hase my thoght, þat I sal neuer forgete.  
Ful dere me thynk He hase me boght with blodi hende and fete.

80

For luf my hert es bowne to brest, when I þat faire behalde;  
Lufe es fair þare it es fest, þat neuer will be calde;  
Lufe vs reues þe nyght-rest, in grace it makes vs balde;  
Of al warkes luf es þe best, als haly men me talde.

Na wonder gyf I syghand be, and sithen in sorow be sette:  
Iesu was nayled apon þe tre, and al bloody forbette.  
To thynk on Hym es grete pyté—how tenderly He grette—  
Dis hase He sufferde, man, for þe, if þat þou syn wyll lette.

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Pare es na tonge in erth may tell of lufe þe swetnesse.  
Pat stedfastly in lufe kan dwell, his ioy es endlesse.  
God schylde þat he sulde til hell, þat lufes and langand es,  
Or euer his enmys sulde hym qwell, or make his luf be lesse.

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Iesu es lufe þat lastes ay, til Hym es owre langyng;  
Iesu þe nyght turnes to þe day, þe dawyng intil spryng.  
Iesu, thynk on vs now and ay, for þe we halde oure keyng;  
Iesu, gyf vs grace, as þou wel may, to luf þe withowten endyng.

95

45 [For now](#)] Forþi *MS. Lambeth 583*.

51 [wyne](#)] = *wynne MS.*

65 [hend](#)] *handes MS., apparently altered from hend.*

69 [I](#)] *so MS. Lambeth 583.*

[041]

## B. THE NATURE OF THE BEE.

(The Thornton MS. (before 1450); ed. Horstmann, vol. i, p. 193.)

### *Moralia Ricardi Heremite de Natura Apis.*

The bee has thre kyndis. Ane es þat scho es neuer ydill, and scho es noghte with thaym þat will noghte wyrke, bot castys thaym owte, and puttes thaym awaye. Anothire es þat when scho flyes scho takes erthe in hyr fette, þat scho be noghte lyghtly ouerheghede in the ayere of wynde. The thyrde es þat scho kepes clene and bryghte hire wynges.

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Thus ryghtwyse men þat lufes God are neuer in ydyllnes. For owthyre þay ere in trauayle, prayand, or thynkande, or redande, or othere gude doande; or withtakand ydill mene, and schewand thaym worthy to be put fra þe ryste of heuene, for þay will noghte trauayle here.

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Þay take erthe, þat es, þay halde þamselve vile and erthely, that thay be noghte blawene with þe wynde of vanyté and of pryde. Thay kepe thaire wynges clene, that es, þe twa commandementes of charyté þay fulfill in gud concyens, and thay hafe othyre vertus, vnblendyde with þe fylthe of syne and vnclene luste.

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Arestotill sais þat þe bees are feghtande agaynes hym þat will drawe þaire hony fra

thayme. Swa sulde we do agayne deuells, þat afforces thame to reue fra vs þe hony of poure lyfe and of grace. For many are, þat neuer kane halde þe ordyre of lufe [ynezce](#) þaire frendys, sybbe or fremmede. Bot outhire þay lufe þaym ouer [mekill](#), settand thaire thoghte vnryghtwysely on thaym, or þay luf thayme ouer lyttill, yf þay doo noghte all as þey wolde till þame. Swylke kane noghte fyghte for thaire hony, forthy þe deuelle turnes it to wormes, and makes þeire saules oftesythes full bitter in angwys, and tene, and besynes of wayne thoghtes, and oþer wrechidnes. For thay are so heuy in erthely frenchype þat þay may noghte flee intill þe lufe of Iesu Criste, in þe wylke þay moghte wele forgaa þe lufe of all creaturs lyfande in erthe. 20  
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Wharefore, accordandly, Arystotill sais þat some fowheles are of gude flyghyng, þat passes fra a lande to anothire. Some are of ill flyghyng, for heuynes of body, and for<þi> þaire neste es noghte ferre fra þe erthe. Thus es it of thayme þat turnes þame to Godes seruys. Some are of gude flyeghyng, for thay flye fra erthe to heuene, and rystes thayme thare in thoghte, and are fedde in delite of Goddes lufe, and has thoghte of na lufe of þe worlde. Some are þat kan noghte flyghe fra þis lande, bot in þe waye late theyre herte ryste, and delyttes þaym in sere lufes of mene and womene, als þay come and gaa, nowe ane and nowe anothire. And in Iesu Criste þay kan fynde na swettnes; or if þay any tyme fele oghte, it es swa lyttill and swa schorte, for othire thoghtes þat are in thayme, þat it brynges thaym till na stabylnes. 35  
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<F>or þay are lyke till a fowle þat es callede strucyo or storke, þat has wenges, and it may noghte flye for charge of body. Swa þay hafe vndirstandyng, and fastes, and wakes, and semes haly to mens syghte; bot thay may noghte flye to lufe and contemplacyone of God, þay are so chargede wyth othire affeccyons and othire vanytés. 50

22 [ynence](#)] ynesche *MS*.

23 [mekill](#)] *MS. follows with:* or thay lufe þame ouer lyttill, *caught up from below*.

## C. THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

(Chap. xi of *The Form of Perfect Living*; ed. Horstmann, vol. i, p. 196.)

Þe seuene gyftes of þe Haly Gaste, þat ere gyfene to men and wymmene þat er ordaynede to þe ioie of heuene, and ledys theire lyfe in this worlde reghtwysely. Thire are thay:— Wysdome, Undyrstandyng, Counsaile, Strenghe, Connyng, Peté, the Drede of God. Begynne we at Consaile, for þareof es myster at the begynnyng of oure werkes, þat vs myslyke noghte aftyrwarde. With thire seuene gyftes þe Haly Gaste [teches](#) sere mene sere ly. 55  
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Consaile es doynge awaye of worldes reches, and of all delytes of all thynges þat mane may be tagyld with, in thoghte or dede, and [par](#)with drawyng intill contemplacyone of Gode.

Undyrstandyng es to knawe whate es to doo, and whate es to lefe, and þat that sall be gyffene, to gyffe it to thaym þat has nede, noghte till oþer þat has na myster. 65

Wysdome es forgetyng of erthely thynges and thynkyng of heuen, with discrecyone of all [mens](#) dedys. In þis gyfte schynes contemplacyone, þat es, Saynt Austyne says, a gastely dede of fleschely affeccyones, thurghe þe ioie of a raysede thoghte. 70

Strenghe es lastyng to fullfill gude purpose, þat it be noghte lefte, for wele ne for waa.

Peté es þat a man be mylde, and gaynesay noghte Haly Writte whene it smyttes his synnys, whethire he vndyrstand it or noghte; bot in all his myghte purge he þe vilté of syne in hyme and oþer. 75

Connyng es þat makes a man of gude [hope](#), noghte ruysand hyme of his reghtewysnes, bot sorowand of his synnys, and þat man gedys erthely gude anely to the honour of God, and prow to oþer mene þane hymselfe. 80

The Drede of God es þat we turne noghte agayne till oure syne thurghe any ill eggyng. And [par](#) es drede perfite in vs and gastely, when we drede to wrethe God in þe leste syne þat we kane knawe, and flese it als venyme. 85

60 [teches](#)] *towches Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64.*

63 [par](#)] *þat MS. Thornton.*

69 [mens](#)] *so Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64 = mene MS. Thornton.*

79 [hope](#)] *from Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64: om. MS. Thornton.*

84 [pan](#)] *Cambridge MS. DD. 5. 64: þen MS. Arundel 507: þat MS. Thornton.*

## V

## SIR GAWAYNE AND THE GRENE KNIGHT

ABOUT 1350-75.

*Sir Gawayne* has been admirably edited by Sir F. Madden for the Bannatyne Club, 1839, and later by R. Morris for the Early English Text Society. It is found in British Museum MS. Nero A X, together with three other alliterative poems, named from their first words *Pearl*, *Patience*, and *Cleanness*. *Pearl* supplies the next specimen; *Patience* exemplifies the virtue by the trials of Jonah; *Cleanness* teaches purity of life from Scriptural stories. All these poems are in the same handwriting; all are in a West-Midland dialect; all appear to be of the same age; and none is without literary merit. For these reasons, which are good but not conclusive, they are assumed to be by the same author. Attempts to identify this author have been unsuccessful.

The story runs as follows:

King Arthur is making his Christmas feast with his court at Camelot. On New Year's Day he declares that he will not eat until he has seen or heard some marvel. The first course of the feast is barely served when a tall knight, clad all in green, with green hair, and a green horse to match, rides into the hall. He carries a holly bough and a huge axe, and tauntingly invites any knight to strike him a blow with the axe, on condition that he will stand a return blow on the same day a year hence. Gawayne accepts the challenge and strikes off the Green Knight's head. The Green Knight gathers up his head, gives Gawayne an appointment for next New Year's Day at the Green Chapel, and rides off.

[045]

The year passes, and Gawayne, despite the fears of the court, sets out in quest of the Green Chapel. On Christmas Eve he arrives at a splendid castle, and finding that the Green Chapel is close at hand, accepts an invitation to stay and rest until New Year's Day. On each of three days the knight of the castle goes hunting, and persuades Gawayne to rest at home. They make an agreement that each shall give the other whatever he gets. The lady of the castle makes love to Gawayne, and kisses him once on the first day, twice on the second day, thrice on the third day; and on the third day she gives him her girdle, which he accepts because it has the magic power of preserving the wearer from wounds. Each evening he duly gives the kisses to the knight, and receives in return the spoils of the hunting of deer and boar and fox. But he conceals the girdle.

The extract begins with Gawayne preparing on New Year's morning to stand the return blow at the Green Chapel.

The poem ends by the Green Knight revealing that he is himself the lord of the castle; that he went to Arthur's court at the suggestion of Morgan la Fay; that he had urged his wife to make love to Gawayne and try his virtue; and that he would not have harmed him at all, if he had not committed the slight fault of concealing the girdle. Gawayne returns to the court, bearing the girdle as a sign of his shame, and tells his story. The knights of the court agree in future to wear a bright green belt for Gawayne's sake.

*Sir Gawayne* is admittedly the best of the alliterative romances. It must have come down to us practically as it was written by the poet, for it is free from the flatness and conventional phrasing which is characteristic of romances that have passed through many popular recensions. The descriptions of nature, of armour and dresses, the hunting scenes, and the love making, are all excellently done; and the poet shows the same richness of imagination and skill in producing pictorial effects that are so noticeable in *Pearl*. He has too a quiet humour that recalls Chaucer in some of his moods.

[046]

## THE TESTING OF SIR GAWAYNE.

**British Museum MS. Nero A X (about 1400); ed. R. Morris, ll. 2069 ff.**

The brygge wat3 brayde doun, and þe brode 3ate3  
Vnbarred and born open vpon boþe halue.

Þe burne blessed hym bilyue, and þe brede3 passed;

Prayses þe porter bifore þe prynce kneled,

Gef hym God and goud day, þat Gawayn He saue,

And went on his way with his wy3e one,

Þat schulde teche hym to tourne to þat tene place

Þer þe ruful race he schulde resayue.

Þay bo3en bi bonkke3 þer bo3e3 ar bare;

Þay clomben bi clyffe3 þer clenge3 þe colde.

Þe heuen wat3 vp halt, bot vgly þer vnder,—

Mist maged on þe mor, malt on þe mounte3,

Vch hille hade a hatte, a myst-hakel huge.

Broke3 byled and breke bi bonkke3 aboute,

Schyre schaterande on schore3, þer þay doun schowued.

Wela wylle wat3 þe way þer þay bi wod schulden,

Til hit wat3 sone sesoun þat þe sunne ryses

þat tyde.

Þay were on a hille ful hy3e,

Þe quyte snaw lay bisyde;

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Þe burne þat rod hym by

Bede his mayster abide.

'For I haf wonnen yow hider, wyȝe, at þis tyme,

And now nar ȝe not fer fro þat note place

þat ȝe han spied and spurȝed so specially after.

Bot I schal say yow for soþe, syþen I yow knowe,

And ȝe ar a lede vpon lyue þat I wel louy,

Wolde ȝe worch bi my wytte, ȝe worþed þe better.

Þe place þat ȝe prece to ful perelous is halden.

Þer woneȝ a wyȝe in þat waste, þe worst vpon erþe,

For he is stiffe and sturne, and to strike louies,

And more he is þen any mon vpon myddelerde,

And his body bigger þen þe best fowre

þat ar in Arþureȝ hous, [Hector](#), oþer oþer.

He cheueȝ þat chaunce at þe chapel grene,

Þer passes non bi þat place so proude in his armes

þat he ne [dynȝeȝ](#) hym to deþe with dynt of his honde;

For he is a mon methles, and mercy non vses,

For he hit chorle oþer chaplayn þat bi þe chapel rydes,

Monk oþer masse-prest, oþer any mon elles,

Hym þynk as queme hym to quelle as quyk go hymseluen.

Forþy I say þe, as soþe as ȝe in sadel sitte,

Com ȝe þere, ȝe be kyllid, may þe, knyȝt, rede—

Trawe ȝe me þat trwely—þaȝ ȝe had twenty lyues

to spende.

He hatȝ wonyd here ful ȝore,

On bent much baret bende,

Aȝayn his dynteȝ sore

ȝe may not yow defende.

'Forþy, goude Sir Gawayn, let þe gome one,

And gotȝ away sum oþer gate, vpon Goddeȝ halue!

Cayreȝ bi sum oþer kyth, þer Kryst mot yow spede,

And I schal hyȝ me hom aȝayn, and hete yow fyrre

þat I schal swere bi God and alle His gode halȝeȝ,

As help me God and þe halydam, and oþeȝ innoghe,

þat I schal lelly yow layne, and lance neuer tale

þat euer ȝe fondet to fle for freke þat I wyst.'

'Grant merci,' quod Gawayn, and gruchyng he sayde:

'Wel worth þe, wyȝe, þat woldeȝ my gode,

And þat lelly me layne I leue wel þou woldeȝ.

Bot helde þou hit neuer so holde, and I here passed,

Founded for ferde for to fle, in fourme þat þou telleȝ,

I were a knyȝt kowarde, I myȝt [not](#) be excused.

Bot I wyl to þe chapel, for chaunce þat may falle,

And talk wyth þat ilk tulk þe tale þat me lyste,

Worþe hit wele oþer wo, as þe wyrde lykeȝ

hit hafe.

Þaȝe he be a sturn knape

To stiȝtel, [and](#) stad with staue,

Ful wel con Dryȝtyn schape

His seruaunteȝ for to saue.'

'Mary!' quod þat oþer mon, 'now þou so much spelleȝ

þat þou wylt þyn awen nye nyme to þyseluen,

And þe lyst lese þy lyf, þe lette I ne kepe.

Haf here þi helme on þy hede, þi spere in þi honde,

And ryde me doun þis ilk rake bi ȝon rokke syde

Til þou be broȝt to þe boþem of þe brem valay.

Þenne loke a littel on þe launde, on þi lyfte honde,

[047]

[048]

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And þou schal se in þat slade þe self chapel,  
 And þe borelych burne on bent þat hit kepeþ. 80  
 Now fareþ wel, on Godeþ half! Gawayn þe noble;  
 For alle þe golde vpon grounde I nolde go wyth þe,  
 Ne bere þe felazschip þurþ þis fryth on fote fyrrre.'  
 Bi þat þe wyþe in þe wod wendeþ his brydel,  
 Hit þe hors with þe helez as harde as he myþt, 85  
 Lepeþ hym ouer þe launde, and leueþ þe knyþt þere  
 al one.  
 'Bi Goddeþ self!' quod Gawayn,  
 'I wyl nauþer grete ne grone;  
 To Goddeþ wylle I am ful bayn, 90  
 And to Hym I haf me tone.'  
 Thenne gyrdeþ he to Gryngolet, and gedereþ þe rake,  
 Schowueþ in bi a schore at a schaze syde,  
 Rideþ þurþ þe roþe bonk ryþt to þe dale;  
 And þenne he wayted hym aboute, and wylde hit hym þoþt, 95  
 And seþe no syngne of resette bisydeþ nowhere,  
 Bot hyþe bonkkeþ and brent vpon boþe halue,  
 And ruþe knokled knarreþ with knorned stoneþ;  
 Þe skweþ of þe scowtes skayned hym þoþt.  
 Þenne he houed, and wythhylde his hors at þat tyde, 100  
 And ofte chaunged his cher þe chapel to seche:  
 He seþ non suche in no syde, and selly hym þoþt  
 Sone, a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit we<re>,  
 A balþ berþ bi a bonke, þe brymme bysyde, 105  
 Bi a forþ of a flode þat ferked þare;  
 Þe borne blubred þerinne as hit boyled hade.  
 Þe knyþt kacheþ his caple, and com to þe lawe,  
 Liþteþ doun luflyly, and at a lynde tacheþ  
 Þe rayne and his riche with a roþe braunche.  
 Þenne he boþeþ to þe berþe, aboute hit he walkeþ, 110  
 Debatande with hymself quat hit be myþt.  
 Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayþer syde,  
 And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,  
 And al watþ holþ inwith, nobot an olde caue,  
 Or a creuisse of an olde cragge, he couþe hit noþt deme 115  
 with spelle.  
 'We! Lorde,' quod þe gentyle knyþt,  
 'Wheþer þis be þe grene chapelle?  
 He<re> myþt aboute mydnyþt  
 Þe dele his matynnes telle! 120  
 'Now iwysse,' quod Wowayn, 'wysty is here;  
 Þis oritore is vgly, with erbeþ ouergrowen;  
 Wel bisemeþ þe wyþe wruxled in grene  
 Dele here his deuocioun on þe deueleþ wyse.  
 Now I fele hit is þe fende, in my fyue wytteþ, 125  
 Þat hatþ stoken me þis steuen to strye me here.  
 Þis is a chapel of meschaunce, þat chekke hit bytyde!  
 Hit is þe coreddest kyrk þat euer I com inne!'  
 With heþe helme on his hede, his launce in his honde,  
 He romeþ vp to þe rokke of þo roþ woneþ. 130  
 Þene herde he, of þat hyþe hil, in a harde roche,  
 Biþonde þe broke, in a bonk, a wonder breme noyse.  
 Quat! hit clatered in þe clyff, as hit cleue schulde,  
 As one vpon a gryndelston hade grounden a syþe;  
 What! hit wharred and whette, as water at a mulne; 135  
 What! hit rusched and ronge, rawþe to here.

[049]

[050]

Penne 'Bi Godde!' quod Gawayn, 'þat gere [as](#) I trowe  
Is ryched at þe reuerence me, renk, to mete  
bi rote.

Let God worche, we loo!

Hit helpeþ me not a mote.

My lif þaþ I forgoo,

Drede dotþ me no lote.'

Thenne þe knyzt con calle ful hyþe:

'Who stiztleþ in þis sted, me steuen to holde?

For now is gode Gawayn goande ryzt here.

If any wyþe ozt wyl, wynne hider fast,

Oþer now oþer neuer, his nedeþ to spede.'

'Abyde,' quod on on þe bonke abouen ouer his hede,

'And þou schal haf al in hast þat I þe hyzt ones.'

þet he rusched on þat rurde rapely a þrowe,

And wyth quettyng awharf, er he wolde lyzt;

And syþen he keuereþ bi a cragge, and comeþ of a hole,

Whyrlande out of a wro wyth a felle weppen,

A Deneþ ax nwe dyzt, þe dynt with <t>o þelde,

With a borelych bytte bende by þe halme,

Fyled in a fylor, fowre fote large,—

Hit watþ no lasse bi þat lace þat lemed ful bryzt,—

And þe gome in þe grene gered as fyrst,

Boþe þe lyre and þe leggeþ, lokkeþ and berde,

Saue þat fayre on his fote he foundeþ on þe erþe,

Sette þe stele to þe stone, and stalked bysyde.

Whan he wan to þe watter, þer he wade nolde,

He hypped ouer on hys ax, and orpedly strydeþ,

Bremly broþe on a bent þat brode watþ aboute,

on snawe.

Sir Gawayn þe knyzt con mete,

He ne lutte hym no þyng lowe;

þat oþer sayde 'Now, sir swete,

Of steuen mon may þe trowe.

'Gawayn,' quod þat grene gome, 'God þe mot loke!

Iwysse þou art [welcom](#), wyþe, to my place,

And þou hatþ tymed þi trauayl as truee mon schulde,

And þou knoweþ þe couenaunteþ kest vus bytwene:

At þis tyme twelmonyth þou toke þat þe falled,

And I schulde at þis nwe þere þeþly þe quyte.

And we ar in þis valay verayly oure one;

Here ar no renkes vs to rydde, rele as vus likeþ.

Haf þy helme of [þy](#) hede, and haf here þy pay.

Busk no more debate þen I þe bede þenne

When þou wypped of my hede at a wap one.'

'Nay, bi God' quod Gawayn, 'þat me gost lante!

I schal gruch þe no grwe for grem þat falleþ.

Bot styztel þe vpon on strok, and I schal stonde styllle

And warp þe no wernyng to worch as þe lykeþ,

nowhare.'

He lened with þe nek, and lutte,

And schewed þat schyre al bare,

And lette as he nozt dutte;

For drede he wolde not dare.

Then þe gome in þe grene grayþed hym swyþe,

Gedereþ vp hys grymme tole Gawayn to smyte;

With alle þe bur in his body he ber hit on lofte,

Munt as maþtyly as marre hym he wolde:

[051]

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Hade hit dryuen adoun as dreȝ as he atled,  
 Per hade ben ded of his dynt þat doȝty watȝ euer.  
 [052] Bot Gawayn on þat giserne glyfte hym bysyde,  
 As hit com glydande adoun on glode hym to schende,  
 And schranke a lytel with þe schulderes for þe scharp yrne.  
 Þat oþer schalk wyth a schunt þe schene wythhaldeȝ, 200  
 And þenne repreued he þe prynce with mony prowde wordeȝ:  
 'Þou art not Gawayn,' quod þe gome, 'þat is so goud halden,  
 Þat neuer arȝed for no here, by hylle ne be vale,  
 And now þou fles for ferde er þou fele harmeȝ!  
 Such cowardise of þat knyȝt cowþe I neuer here. 205  
 Nawþer fyked I ne flaȝe, freke, quen þou myntest,  
 Ne kest no kauelacion, in kyngeȝ hous Arthor.  
 My hede flaȝ to my fote, and ȝet flaȝ I neuer;  
 And þou, er any harme hent, arȝeȝ in hert;  
 Wherfore þe better burne me burde be called 210  
 þerfore.'

Quod Gawayn 'I schunt oneȝ,  
 And so wyl I no more;  
 Bot þaȝ my hede falle on þe stoneȝ,  
 I con not hit restore. 215

Bot busk, burne, bi þi fayth! and bryng me to þe poynt.  
 Dele to me my destiné, and do hit out of honde,  
 For I schal stonde þe a strok, and start no more  
 Til þyn ax haue me hitte: haf here my trawþe.'  
 'Haf at þe þenne!' quod þat oþer, and heueȝ hit alofte, 220  
 And wayteȝ as wroþely as he wode were.

He mynteȝ at hym maȝtyly, bot not þe mon ryueȝ,  
 Withhelde heterly h*>*s honde, er hit hurt myȝt.  
 Gawayn grayþely hit bydeȝ, and glent with no membre,  
 Bot stode styлле as þe ston, oþer a stubbe auþer 225  
 Þat rabeled is in roché grounde with roteȝ a hundreth.  
 Þen muryly efte con he mele, þe mon in þe grene:  
 'So now þou hatȝ þi hert holle, hitte me bihou*>*s.

Halde þe now þe hyȝe hode þat Arþur þe raȝt,  
 [053] And kepe þy kanel at þis kest, ȝif hit keuer may.' 230  
 Gawayn ful gryndelly with greme þenne sayde:  
 'Wy! þresch on, þou þro mon, þou þreteȝ to longe.  
 I hope þat þi hert arȝe wyth þyn awen seluen.'  
 'For soþe,' quod þat oþer freke, 'so felly þou spekeȝ,  
 I wyl no lenger on lyte lette þin ernde 235  
 riȝt nowe.'

Þenne tas [he](#) hym stryþe to stryke,  
 And frounses boþe lyppe and browe.  
 No meruayle þaȝ hym myslyke  
 Þat hoped of no rescowe. 240

He lyftes lyȝtly his lome, and let hit doun fayre,  
 With þe barbe of þe bitte bi þe bare nek,  
 Þaȝ he homered heterly, hurt hym no more,  
 Bot snyrt hym on þat on syde, þat seuered þe hyde;  
 Þe scharp schrank to þe flesche þurȝ þe schyre grece 245  
 Þat þe schene blod ouer his schulderes schot to þe erþe;  
 And quen þe burne seȝ þe blode blenk on þe snawe,  
 He sprit forth spenne fote more þen a spere lenþe,  
 Hent heterly his helme, and on his hed cast,  
 Schot with his schuldereȝ, his fayre schelde vnder, 250  
 Braydeȝ out a bryȝt sworde, and bremely he spekeȝ;—  
 Neuer syn þat he watȝ burne borne of his moder

Wat3 he neuer in þis worlde wy3e half so blyþe—  
 'Blynne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no mo!  
 I haf a stroke in þis stede withoute stryf hent, 255  
 And if þow rechez me any mo, I redyly schal quyte,  
 And 3elde 3ederly a3ayn—and þer to 3e tryst—  
 and foo.  
 Bot on stroke here me falle3—  
 Þe couenaunt schop ry3t so 260  
 <Schapen> in Arþure3 halle3—  
 And þerfore, hende, now hoo!'

[054] The habel heldet hym fro, and on his ax rested,  
 Sette þe schaft vpon schore, and to þe scharp lened,  
 And loked to þe leude þat on þe launde 3ede, 265  
 How þat do3ty, dredles, deruely þer stonde3  
 Armed, ful a3le3: in hert hit hym lyke3.  
 Þenn he mele3 muryly wyth a much steuen,  
 And wyth a ry<n>kande rurde he to þe renk sayde:  
 'Bolde burne, on þis bent be not so gryndel. 270  
 No mon here vnmanerly þe mysboden habbe<3>  
 Ne kyd, bot as couenaunde at kynge3 kort schaped.  
 I hy3t þe a strok and þou hit hat3; halde þe wel payed.  
 I relece þe of þe remnaunt of ry3tes alle oþer.  
 Iif I deliuer had bene, a boffet paraunter 275  
 I couþe wroþeloker haf waret,—to þe haf wro3t anger.  
 Fyrst I mansed þe muryly with a mynt one,  
 And roue þe wyth no rof sore, with ry3t I þe profered  
 For þe forwarde þat we fest in þe fyrst ny3t,  
 And þou trustyly þe trawþe and trwly me halde3, 280  
 Al þe gayne þow me gef, as god mon schulde.  
 Þat oþer munt for þe morne, mon, I þe profered,  
 Þou kyssedes my clere wyf, þe cosse3 me razte3.  
 For boþe two here I þe bede bot two bare myntes  
 boute scape. 285  
 Trwe mon trwe restore,  
 Þenne þar mon drede no waþe.  
 At þe þrid þou fayled þore,  
 And þerfor þat tappe ta þe.

For hit is my wede þat þou were3, þat ilke wouen girdel, 290  
 Myn owen wyf hit þe weued, I wot wel forsoþe.  
 Now know I wel þy cosses, and þy costes als,  
 And þe wowyng of my wyf: I wro3t hit myseluen.  
 I sende hir to asay þe, and sothly me þynkke3  
 On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote 3ede. 295  
 As perle bi þe quite pese is of prys more,  
 So is Gawayn, in god fayth, bi oþer gay kny3te3.  
 Bot here yow lakked a lyttel, sir, and lewté yow wanted;  
 Bot þat wat3 for no wylyde werke, ne wowyng nauþer,  
 Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame.' 300  
 Þat oþer stif mon in study stod a gret whyle,  
 So agreued for greme he gryed withinne;  
 Alle þe blode of his brest blende in his face,  
 Þat al he schrank for schome þat þe schalk talked.  
 Þe forme worde vpon folde þat þe freke meled: 305  
 'Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe!  
 In yow is vylany and vyse þat vertue disstrye3.'  
 Þenne he ka3t to þe knot, and þe kest lawse3,  
 Brayde broþely þe belt to þe burne seluen:  
 'Lo! þer þe falssyng! foule mot hit falle! 310

For care of þy knokke cowardyse me tazt  
 To acorde me with couetyse, my kynde to forsake,  
 Þat is larges and lewté þat longez to kny3tez.  
 Now am I fawty and falce, and ferde haf ben euer  
 Of trecherye and vntrawþe: boþe bityde sor3e 315  
 and care!  
 I biknowe yow, kny3t, here stille,  
 Al fawty is my fare;  
 Letez me ouertake your wylle  
 And efte I schal be ware.' 320

Thenn lo3e þat oþer leude, and luflyly sayde:  
 'I halde hit [hardily](#) hole, þe harme þat I hade.  
 Þou art confessed so clene, beknowen of þy mysses,  
 And hat3 þe penaunce apert of þe poynt of myn egge,  
 I halde þe polysed of þat ply3t, and pured as clene 325  
 As þou hade3 neuere forfeled syþen þou wat3 fyrst borne;  
 And I gif þe, sir, þe gurdel þat is golde-hemmed,  
 For hit is grene as my goune. Sir Gawayne, 3e maye  
 Þenk vpon þis ilke þrepe, þer þou forth þrynge3  
 Among prynces of prys; and þis a pure token 330  
 Of þe chaunce [at](#) þe grene chapel *of* cheualrous kny3tez.  
 And 3e schal in þis nwe 3er azayn to my wone3,  
 And we schyn reuel þe remnaunt of þis ryche fest  
 ful bene.'  
 Þer laþed hym fast þe lord, 335  
 And sayde 'With my wyf, I wene,  
 We schal yow wel acorde,  
 Þat wat3 your enemy kene.'  
 'Nay, for soþe,' quod þe segge, and sesed hys helme,  
 And hat3 hit of hendely, and þe haþel þonkke3, 340  
 'I haf soioined sadly; sele yow bytyde!  
 And He 3elde hit yow 3are þat 3arkke3 al menskes!  
 And comaunde3 me to þat cortays, your comlych fere,  
 Boþe þat on and þat oþer myn honoured ladye3,  
 Þat þus hor kny3t wyth hor kest han koyntly bigyled. 345  
 Bot hit is no ferly þa3 a fole madde,  
 And þur3 wyles of wymmen be wonen to sor3e,  
 For so wat3 Adam in erde with one bygyled,  
 And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson eftsone3  
 Dalyda dalt hym hys wyrde, and Dauyth þerafter 350  
 Wat3 blended with Barsabe, þat much bale þoled.  
 Now þese were wrathed wyth her wyles, hit were a wynne huge  
 To luf hom wel, and leue hem not, a leude þat coupe.  
 For þes wer forne þe freest, þat fol3ed alle þe sele  
 Exellently of alle þyse oþer vnder heuenryche 355  
 þat mused;  
 And alle þay were biwyled  
[With](#) wymmen þat þay vsed.  
 Þa3 I be now bigyled,  
 Me þink me burde be excused.' 360

34 [Hector](#)] Hestor *MS*.

37 [dynge3](#)] dynne3 *MS*.

63 [not](#)] mot *MS*.

69 [and](#)] & & *MS*.

137 [as](#)] at *MS*.

172 [welcom](#)] welcon *MS*.

179 [by](#) (1st)] þy þy *MS*.

237 [he](#)] he he *MS*.

## VI

### THE PEARL

#### ABOUT 1375.

The facts leading to the presumption that *Pearl* and *Sir Gawayne* are by the same author have been mentioned in the prefatory note to *Sir Gawayne*. But the poems are markedly different in subject and tone. *Pearl*, like Chaucer's *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, is an elegy cast in the vision form made popular by the *Roman de la Rose*. The subject is a little girl, who died before she was two years old, and the treatment is deeply religious. Her death is symbolized as the loss of a pearl without spot, that slipped from its owner's hand through the grass into the earth.

On a festival day in August, the poet, while mourning his loss, falls asleep on his child's grave. His spirit passes to a land of flowers and rich fruits, where birds of flaming hues sing incomparably, where the cliffs are of crystal and beryl, and a river runs in a bed of gleaming jewels. On the other side of the river, which is lovelier still, sits a maiden dressed all in white, with coronet and ornaments of pearl. The poet recognizes his lost child, but cannot call to her for wonder and dread, until she rises and salutes him. He complains that since her loss he has been a joyless jeweller. She rebukes him gently; she is not lost, but made safe and beautiful for ever. Overjoyed, he says he will cross the river and live with her in this paradise; but she warns him against such presumption, for since Adam's fall the river may be crossed only by the way of death. He is in despair to think that now that his Pearl is found, he must still live joyless, apart from her; but he is bidden to resign himself to God's will and mercy, because rebellion will avail him nothing.

[058]

At this point begins the argument on salvation by grace or salvation by works which is here reprinted.

The maiden then continues the discussion, explaining that 'the innocent are ay safe by right', and that only those who come as little children can win the bliss sought by the man who sold his all for a matchless pearl.

Next the poet asks whence her beauty comes, and what her office is. She replies that she is one of the brides of Christ, whom St. John in the Apocalypse saw arrayed for the bridal in the New Jerusalem. He asks to see their mansions, and by special grace is allowed to view the holy city from without. He sees it as St. John saw it, gleaming with gold, with its pillars of precious stone, its gates of pearl; its streets lighted by a divine radiance, so that there is no need of moon or sun. There is no church or chapel or temple there: God himself is the minister, and Christ is the sacrifice. Mortal eye could not bear the splendour, and he stood 'as styll as dased quayle'. At evening came the procession of the virgin brides of Christ, each bearing on her breast the pearl of perfect happiness. The Lamb leads them, in pearl-white robes, his side bleeding, his face rapt; while elders make obeisance, and angels sing songs of joy as He nears the throne of God.

Suddenly the poet sees his Pearl among her companions. Overcome with longing and delight, he tries to cross the river, only to wake in the garden where he fell asleep. Henceforth he is resigned to the pleasure of the Prince of Heaven.

The reader will be able to judge the author's poetical gift from the selection, which has been chosen as one of the less ornate passages. Even here the form distracts attention from the matter by its elaborateness. A difficult rime scheme is superimposed on the alliterative line; stanza is interlinked with stanza; each group of five stanzas is distinguished by a similar refrain, and bound to the preceding and following groups by repetition in the first and last lines. So too the close of the poem echoes the beginning. With such intricacy of plan, it is not surprising that the rime is sometimes forced, and the sense strained or obscure. It is rather a matter for wonder that, in so long a work, the author was able to maintain his marvellous technique without completely sacrificing poetry to metrical gymnastics.

[059]

The highly wrought, almost overwrought, effect is heightened when the poem is read as a whole. If *Piers Plowman* gives a realistic picture of the drabness of mediaeval life, *Pearl*, more especially in the early stanzas, shows a richness of imagery and a luxuriance in light and colour that seem scarcely English. Yet they have their parallels in the decorative art of the time—the elaborate carving in wood and stone; the rich colouring of tapestries, of illuminated books and painted glass; the designs of the jewellers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths, which even the notaries who made the old inventories cannot pass without a word of admiration. The *Pearl* reminds us of the tribute due to the artists and craftsmen of the fourteenth century.

The edition by C. G. Osgood, Boston 1906, is the handiest.

### THE PEARL, II. 361-612.

(MS. Cotton Nero A X (about 1400).)



Thenne demed I to þat damyselle:

'Ne worþe no wrathþe vnto my Lorde,  
If rapely <I> raue, spornande in spelle;  
My herte wat3 al wyth mysse remorde,  
As wallande water got3 out of welle.  
I do me ay in Hys myserecorde;  
Rebuke me neuer wyth worde3 felle,  
þa3 I forloyne, my dere endorde,  
Bot [kyþe3](#) me kyndely your coumforde,  
Pytosly þenkande vpon þysse:  
Of care and me 3e made acorde,  
þat er wat3 grounde of alle my blysse.

5

10

My blysse, my bale, 3e han ben boþe,  
Bot much þe bygger 3et wat3 my mon;  
Fro þou wat3 wroken fro vch a woþe,  
I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon.  
Now I hit se, now leþe3 my loþe;  
And, quen we departed, we wern at on;  
God forbede we be now wroþe,  
We meten so selden by stok oþer ston.  
þa3 cortaysly 3e carp con,  
I am bot mol and [mazere3](#) mysse;  
Bot Crystes mersy, and Mary, and Ion,  
þise arn þe grounde of alle my blysse.

15

[060]

20

'In blysse I se þe blyþely blent,  
And I a man al mornyf mate;  
3e take þeron ful lyttel tente,  
þa3 I hente ofte harme3 hate.  
Bot now I am here in your presente,  
I wolde bysech, wythouten debate,  
3e wolde me say in sobre asente  
What lyf 3e lede erly and late.  
For I am ful fayn þat your astate  
Is worþen to worschyp and wele, iwysse;  
Of alle my ioy þe hy3e gate  
Hit is, [and](#) grounde of alle my blysse.'

25

30

35

'Now blysse, burne, mot þe bytyde,'  
þen sayde þat lufsoum of lyth and lere,  
'And welcum here to walk and byde,  
For now þy speche is to me dere.  
Maysterful mod and hy3e pryde,  
I hete þe, arn heterly hated here.  
My Lorde ne loue3 not for to chyde,  
For meke arn alle þat wone3 Hym nere;  
And when in Hys place þou schal apere,  
Be dep deuote in hol mekenesse;  
My Lorde þe Lamb loue3 ay such chere,  
þat is þe grounde of alle my blysse.

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[061]

'A blysfyl lyf þou says I lede;  
þou wolde3 knaw þerof þe stage.  
þow wost wel when þy perle con schede  
I wat3 ful 3ong and tender of age;  
Bot my Lorde þe Lombe, þur3 Hys Godhede,  
He toke myself to Hys maryage,  
Corounde me quene in blysse to brede

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55

In lenghe of daye3 þat euer schal wage;  
And sesed in alle Hys herytage  
Hys lef is, I am holy Hysse;  
Hys prese, Hys prys, and Hys parage  
Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse.'

60

'Blysfyl,' quod I, 'may þys be trwe?—  
Dysplese3 not if I speke errour—  
Art þou þe quene of heuene3 blwe,  
Pat al þys worlde schal do honour?  
We leuen on Marye þat grace of grewe,  
Pat ber a barne of vyrgynflour;  
Be croune fro hyr quo mo3t remwe  
Bot ho hir passed in sum fauour?  
Now, for synglerty o hyr dousour,  
We calle hyr Fenyx of Arraby,  
Pat freles fle3e of hyr fador,  
Lyk to þe quen of cortaysye.'

65

70

'Cortayse Quen,' þenne s<a>yde þat gaye,  
Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,  
'Makele3 Moder and myryest May,  
Blessed Bygynner of vch a grace!  
Þenne ros ho vp and con restay,  
And speke me towarde in þat space:  
'Sir, fele here porchase3 and fonge3 pray,  
Bot supplantore3 none wythinne þys place.  
Pat emperise al heuene3 hat3,  
And vrþe and helle in her bayly;  
Of erytage 3et non wyl ho chace,  
For ho is quen of cortaysye.

75

80

[062]

'The court of þe kyndom of God alyue  
Hat3 a property in hytself beyng:  
Alle þat may þerinne aryue  
Of alle þe reme is quen oþer kyng,  
And neuer oþer 3et schal depryue,  
Bot vchon fayn of oþere3 hafyng,  
And wolde her coroune3 wern worþe þo fyue,  
If possyble were her mendyng.  
Bot my Lady, of quom Iesu con spryng,  
Ho halde3 þe empyre ouer vus ful hy3e;  
And þat dysplese3 non of oure gyng,  
For ho is quene of cortaysye.

85

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95

'Of courtaysye, as sayt3 Saynt Poule,  
Al arn we membre3 of Iesu Kryst;  
As heued and arme and legg and naule  
Temen to hys body ful trwe and t<r>yste,  
Ry3t so is vch a Krysten sawle  
A longande lym to þe Mayster of myste.  
Þenne loke what hate oþer any gawle  
Is tached oþer ty3ed þy lymme3 bytwyste:  
By heued hat3 nauþer greme ne gryste  
On arme oþer fynger þa3 þou ber by3e:  
So fare we alle wyth luf and lyste  
To kyng and quene by cortaysye.'

100

105

'Cortaysé,' quod I, 'I leue,

And charyté grete, be yow among, 110  
Bot my speche þat yow ne greue,

[063] Pysself in heuen ouer hy3 þou heue,  
To make þe quen þat wat3 so 3onge. 115  
What more honour mo3te he acheue  
þat hade endured in worlde stronge,  
And lyued in penaunce hys lyue3 longe,  
Wyth bodyly bale hym blysse to byye?  
What more worschyp mo3t [he](#) fonge,  
þen corounde be kyng by cortaysé? 120

'That cortaysé is to fre of dede,  
3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye;  
þou lyfed not two 3er in oure þede;  
þou cowþe3 neuer God nauþer plese ne pray,  
Ne neuer nauþer Pater ne Crede; 125  
And quen mad on þe fyrst day!  
I may not traw, so God me spede,  
þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away;  
Of countes, damysel, par ma fay!  
Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate, 130  
Aþer elle3 a lady of lasse aray;  
Bot a quene!—hit is to dere a date.'

'þer is no date of Hys godnesse,'  
þen sayde to me þat worþy wy3te,  
'For al is trawþe þat He con dresse, 135  
And He may do no þynk bot ry3t,  
As Mathew mele3 in your messe,  
In sothful Gospel of God Almy3t,  
In sample he can ful grayþely gesse,  
And lykne3 hit to heuen ly3te: 140  
"My regne," He sayt3, "is lyk on hy3t  
To a lorde þat hade a uyne, I wate.  
Of tyme of 3ere þe terme wat3 ty3t,  
To labor vyne wat3 dere þe date.

[064] "'þat date of 3ere wel knawe þys hyne. 145  
þe lorde ful erly vp he ros,  
To hyre werkmen to hys vyne,  
And fynde3 þer summe to hys porpos.  
Into acorde þay con declyne  
For a pené on a day, and forth þay got3, 150  
Wryþen and worchen and don gret pyne,  
Keruen and caggen and man hit clos.  
Aboute vnder, þe lorde to marked tot3,  
And ydel men stande he fynde3 þerate.  
'Why stande 3e ydel?' he sayde to þos; 155  
'Ne knawe 3e of þis day no date?'

""Er date of daye hider arn we wonne;'  
So wat3 al samen her ansvar so3t;  
'We haf standen her syn ros þe sunne,  
And no mon bydde3 vus do ry3t no3t.' 160  
'Gos into my vyne, dot3 þat 3e conne,'  
So sayde þe lorde, and made hit to3t;  
'What resonabele hyre be na3t be runne  
I yow [pay](#) in dede and þo3te.'

Pay wente into þe vyne and wro3te, 165  
And al day þe lorde þus 3ede his gate,  
And nw men to hys vyne he bro3te,  
Welne3 wyl day wat3 passed date.

"At þe [date of day](#) of euensonge,  
On oure byfore þe sonne go down, 170  
He se3 þer ydel men ful stronge,  
And sa<y>de to [hem](#) wyth sobre soun:  
'Wy stonde 3e ydel þise daye3 longe?'  
Pay sayden her hyre wat3 nawhere boun. 175  
'Got3 to my vyne, 3emen 3onge,  
And wyrke3 and dot3 þat at 3e moun.'  
Sone þe worlde bycom wel broun,  
þe sunne wat3 down, [and](#) hit wex late;  
To take her hyre he mad sumoun;  
þe day wat3 al apassed date. 180

[065]

"The date of þe daye þe lorde con know,  
Called to þe reue: 'Lede, pay þe meyny;  
Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem owe;  
And fyrre, þat non me may reprené,  
Set hem alle vpon a rawe, 185  
And gyf vchon [ilyche](#) a peny;  
Bygyn at þe laste þat stande3 lowe,  
Tyl to þe fyrste þat þou atteny.'  
And þenne þe fyrst bygonne to pleny,  
And sayden þat þay hade trauayled sore: 190  
'þese bot on oure hem con streny;  
Vus þynk vus o3e to take more.

"More haf we serued, vus þynk so,  
þat suffred han þe daye3 hete,  
þenn þyse þat wro3t not houre3 two, 195  
And þou dot3 hem vus to counterfete.'  
þenne sayde þe lorde to on of þo:  
'Frende no waning I wyl þe 3ete;  
Take þat is þyn owne and go.  
And I hyred þe for a peny agrete, 200  
Quy bygynne3 þou now to þrete?  
Wat3 not a pené þy couenaunt þore?  
Fyrre þen couenaunde is no3t to plete.  
Wy schalte þou þenne ask more?

"More weþer flouylyt is me my gyfte 205  
To do wyth myn quat so me lyke3?  
Oþer elle3 þyn y3e to lyþer is lyfte  
For I am goude and non hyswyke3?'  
'þus schal I,' quod Kryste, 'hit skyfte:  
þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat stryke3, 210  
And þe fyrst be laste, be he neuer so swyft;  
For mony ben calle<d>, þa3 fewe be myke3.'"  
þus pore men her part ay pyke3,  
þa3 þay com late and lyttel wore;  
And þa3 her sweng wyth lyttel atslyke3, 215  
þe merci of God is much þe more.

[066]

'More haf I of ioeye and blysse hereinne,  
Of ladyschyp gret and lyue3 blom,

Ben alle þe wyȝeȝ in þe worlde myȝt wyne  
By þe way of ryȝt to aske dome. 220  
Wheþer welnygh now I con bygynne—  
In euentyde into þe vyne I come—  
Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con mynne,  
I watȝ payed anon of al and sum.  
Ȝet oþer þer werne þat toke more tom, 225  
þat swange and swat for long ȝore,  
þat ȝet of hyre no þynk þay nom,  
Paraunter noȝt schal toȝere more.'

Then more I meled and sayde apert:  
'Me þynk þy tale vnresounable; 230  
Goddeȝ ryȝt is redy and euermore rert,  
Oþer Holy Wryt is bot a fable;  
In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte  
þat spekeȝ a poynt determynable:  
"Þou quyteȝ vchon as hys desserte, 235  
þou hyȝe Kyng ay pretermynable."  
Now he þat stod þe long day stable,  
And þou to payment com hym byfore,  
þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,  
And euer þe lenger þe lasse þe more.' 240

[067]

'Of more and lasse in Godeȝ ryche,'  
þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no ioparde,  
For þer is vch mon payed [ilyche](#),  
Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde, 245  
For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche;  
Queþersoouer He dele nesch oþer harde,  
He laueȝ Hys gyfteȝ as water of dyche,  
Oþer goteȝ of golf þat neuer charde.  
Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard  
To Hym þat matȝ in synne rescoghe; 250  
No blysse betȝ fro hem reparde,  
For þe grace of God is gret inoghe.

- 9 [kybeȝ](#)] lyþeȝ *MS*.  
22 [manereȝ](#)] marereȝ *MS*.  
36 [and](#)] in *MS*.  
112 [a line omitted in MS](#).  
119 [he](#)] ho *MS*.  
164 [pay](#)] pray *MS*.  
169 [date of day](#)] day of date *MS*.  
172 [hem](#)] hen *MS*.  
178 [and](#)] & & *MS*.  
186 [ilyche](#)] ilyche *MS*.  
243 [ilyche](#)] inlyche *MS*.

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## VII

### THE GEST HISTORIALE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TROY ABOUT 1375.

The Fall of Troy was one of the most popular subjects of mediaeval story. Lydgate wrote a *Troy Book* about 1420; fragments of another are attributed to 'Barbour', whose identity with the author of *The Bruce* has been questioned; a third version, anonymous, is known as the *Laud Troy Book*; and Caxton chose as the first work to be printed in English the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (about 1474). More famous than any of these full histories are two single stories detached from the cycle: Jason's Quest of the Golden Fleece, which is admirably told by Gower in the fifth

book of his *Confessio Amantis*; and the Love of Troilus and Cressida, which gave a theme both to Chaucer and to Shakespeare.

The *Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, from which our extracts are taken, is a free rendering of the prose *Historia Troiana* finished in 1287 by Guido de Columna (most probably the modern Terranova in Sicily). The translation, which appears to have been made in the North or North-West Midlands in the second half of the fourteenth century, is preserved only in an imperfect fifteenth-century MS. at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. In the Early English Text Society's print, edited by Panton and Donaldson, the text extends to over 14,000 lines.

[069] The table of contents prefixed to the MS. promises '*the nome of the knight þat causet it [sc. the story] to be made, and the nome of hym that translatid it out of Latyn into Englysshe*'; but the extant MS. does not fulfil the promise. The execution suggests a set task and a journeyman poet. Phrases are repeated carelessly; there is a great deal of padding; the versification is monotonous; and the writer is too often at the mercy of the alliteration to maintain a serious level. Yet he is not a slavish or a dull translator. The more romantic elements of the story, such as the matter of the *Odyssey*, had already been whittled away in his original, and he shows little desire or capacity to restore them. But he knew as well as the Old English poets the forcefulness of alliterative verse in scenes of violence, and describes with unflagging zest and vigour the interminable battles of the siege, and storms such as that which wrecked the fleet of Ajax.

The Prologue is a curious example of the pseudo-critical attitude of the Middle Ages. Homer is despised as a teller of impossible tales, and a partisan of the Greeks,—for Hector is the popular hero of the mediaeval versions. The narratives of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, products of the taste for fictitious history that spread westward from Greek-speaking lands in the fourth and following centuries, are accepted as reliable documents; and Guido de Columna as their authoritative literary interpreter. No mention is made of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, whose *Roman de Troie*, written in French about 1184, served as source to Guido, and, directly or indirectly, as inspiration to the whole body of Western writers who dealt with the 'Matter of Troy'. For these lapses the English translator need not be held responsible. On the merits of Homer, Dares, Dictys, and Guido de Columna, he probably accepted without question the word of his master Guido.

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## PROLOGUE.

Maistur in magesté, Maker of alle,  
Endles and on, euer to last!  
Now, God, of þi grace, graunt me þi helpe,  
And wysshe me with wyt þis werke for to ende  
Off aunters ben olde of aunsetris nobill, 5  
And slydyn vppon shlepe by slomeryng of age;  
Of stithe men in stoure, strongest in armes,  
And wisest in wer, to wale in hor tyme,  
þat ben drepit with deth, and þere day paste,  
And most out of mynd for þere mecull age. 10  
Sothe stories ben stoken vp, and straught out of mynde,  
And swolowet into swym by swiftenes of yeres,  
For new þat ben now next at our hond,  
Breuyt into bokes for boldyng of hertes,  
On lusti to loke with lightnes of wille, 15  
Cheuyt throughe chaunce and chaungyng of peopull;  
Sum tru for to traist, triet in þe ende,  
Sum feynit o fere and ay false vnder.  
Yche wegh as he will warys his tyme,  
And has lykyng to lerne þat hym list after. 20  
But olde stories of stithe þat astate helde  
May be solas to sum þat it segh neuer,  
Be writyng of wees þat wist it in dede,  
With sight for to serche of hom þat suet after,  
To ken all the crafte how þe case felle 25  
By lokyng of letturs þat lefte were of olde.

Now of Troy for to telle is myn entent euyn,  
Of the stoure and þe stryffe when it distroyet was.  
Pof fele yeres ben faren syn þe fight endid,  
And it meuyt out of mynd, myn hit I thinke, 30



Als wise men haue writen the wordes before,  
Left it in Latyn for lernyng of us.

But sum poyetis full prist þat put hom þerto  
With fablis and falshed fayned þere speche,  
And made more of þat mater þan hom maister were.

35

Sum lokyt ouer litle, and lympit of the sothe.  
Amonges þat menye, to myn hym be nome,

Homer was holden haithill of dedis

Qwiles his dayes enduret, derrist of other,

Pat with the Grekys was gret, and of Grice comyn.

40

He feynet myche fals was neuer before wroght,

And turnet þe truth, trust ye non other.

Of his trifuls to telle I haue no tome nowe,

Ne of his feynit fare þat he fore with:

How goddes foght in the filde, folke as þai were!

45

And other errors vnable, þat after were knowen,

That poyetis of prise have preuyt vntrew:

Ouyde and othir þat onest were ay,

Virgille þe virtuus, verrit for nobill,

Thes dampnet his dedys, and for dull holdyn.

50

But þe truth for to telle, and þe text euyn,

Of þat fight, how it felle in a few yeres,

Pat was clanly compilet with a clerk wise,

On Gydo, a gome þat graidly hade soght,

And wist all þe werks by wegghes he hade,

55

That bothe were in batell while the batell last,

And euper sawte and assembly see with þere een.

Thai wrote all þe werkes wroght at þat tyme

In letturs of þere langage, as þai lernede hade:

Dares and Dytes were duly þere namys.

60

Dites full dere was dew to the Grekys,

A lede of þat lond, and logede hom with.

The tother was a tulke out of Troy selfe,

Dares, þat duly the dedys behelde.

Aither breuyt in a boke on þere best wise,

65

That sithen at a sité somyn were founden,

After, at Atthenes, as aunter befell.

The whiche bokes barely, bothe as þai were,

A Romain ouerraght, and right hom hymseluyn,

That Cornelius was cald to his kynde name.

70

He translated it into Latyn for likyng to here,

But he shope it so short þat no shalke might

Haue knowlage by course how þe case felle;

For he brought it so breff, and so bare leuyt,

Pat no lede might have likyng to loke þerappon;

75

Till þis Gydo it gate, as hym grace felle,

And declaret it more clere, and on clene wise.

In this shall faithfully be founden, to the fer ende,

All þe dedis bydene as þai done were:

How þe groundes first grew, and þe grete hate,

80

Bothe of torfer and tene þat hom tide aftur.

And here fynde shall ye faire of þe felle peopull:

What kynges þere come of costes aboute;

Of dukes full doughty, and of derffe erles,

That assemblid to þe citie þat sawte to defend;

85

Of þe Grekys þat were gedret how gret was þe nowmber,

How mony knightes þere come, and kynges enarmede,

And what dukes thedur droghe for dedis of were;

[071]

[072]

What shippes þere were shene, and shalkes within,  
 Bothe of barges and buernes þat broght were fro Grese; 90  
 And all the batels on bent þe buernes betwene;  
 What duke þat was dede throughe dyntes of hond,  
 Who fallen was in fylde, and how it fore after.  
 Bothe of truse and trayne þe truthe shalt þu here,  
 And all the ferlies þat fell, vnto the ferre ende. 95  
 Fro this prologe I passe, and part me þerwith.  
 Frayne will I fer, and fraist of þere werkes,  
 Meue to my mater, and make here an ende.

EXPLICIT PROLOGUE.

## THE XXXI BOKE: OF THE PASSAGE OF THE GREKYS FRO TROY (II. 12463-12547).

Hyt fell thus, by fortune, þe fairest of þe yere  
 Was past to the point of the pale wintur. 100  
 Heruest, with the heite and the high sun,  
 Was comyn into colde, with a course low.  
 [073] Trees, thurgh tempestes, tynde hade þere leues,  
 And briddes abatid of hor brem songe;  
 The wynde of the west wackenet aboue, 105  
 Blowyng full bremly o the brode ythes;  
 The clere aire ouercast with cloudys full thicke,  
 With mystes full merke mynget with showres.  
 Flodes were felle thurgh fallyng of rayne,  
 And wintur vp wacknet with his wete aire. 110  
 The gret nauy of the Grekes and the gay kynges  
 Were put in a purpos to pas fro the toune.  
 Sore longit þo lordis hor londys to se,  
 And dissiret full depely, doutyng no wedur.  
 Þai counted no course of the cold stormys, 115  
 Ne the perellis to passe of the pale windes.  
 Hit happit hom full hard in a hondqwile,  
 And mony of þo mighty to misse of hor purpos.  
 Thus tho lordes in hor longyng laghton þe watur,  
 Shotton into ship mong shene knightes, 120  
 With the tresowre of þe toune þai token before,  
 Relikes full rife, and miche ranke godes.  
 Clere was the course of the cold flodis,  
 And the firmament faire, as fell for the wintur.  
 Thai past on the pale se, puld vp hor sailes, 125  
 Hadyn bir at þere backe, and the bonke leuyt.  
 Foure dayes bydene, and hor du nyghtis,  
 Ful soundly þai sailed with seasonable windes.  
 The fyft day fuersly fell at the none,  
 Sodonly the softe winde vnsobberly blew; 130  
 A myste and a merkenes myngit togedur;  
 A thoner and a thicke rayne þrublet in the skewes,  
 With an ugsom noise, noy for to here;  
 All flasshet in a fire the firmament ouer;  
 Was no light but a laite þat launchit aboue: 135  
 Hit skirmyt in the skewes with a skyre low,  
 [074] Thurgh the claterand clowdes clos to the heuyn,  
 As the welkyn shuld walt for wodenes of hete;  
 With blastes full bigge of the breme wyndes,  
 Walt vp the waghes vpon wan hilles. 140

Stith was the storme, stird all the shippes,  
 Hoppit on hegh with heste of the flodes.  
 The sea was unsober, sondrit the nauy,  
 Walt ouer waghes, and no way held,  
 Depertid the pepull, pyne to behold, 145  
 In costes vnkowthe; cut down þere sailes,  
 Ropis al torochit, rent vp the hacches,  
 Topcastell ouerturnyt, takelles were lost.  
 The night come onone, noye was the more!  
 All the company cleane of the kyng Telamon, 150  
 With þere shippes full shene, and þe shire godis,  
 Were brent in the bre with the breme lowe  
 Of the leymonde laite þat launchit fro heuyn,  
 And euyndrownet in the depe, dukes and other!  
 Oelius Ajax, as aunter befelle, 155  
 Was stad in the storme with the stith windes,  
 With his shippes full shene and the shire godes.  
 Thrifty and þriuaund, thretty and two  
 There were brent on the buerne with the breme low,  
 And all the freikes in the flode floterand aboue. 160  
 Hymseluyn in the sea sonkyn belyue,  
 Swalprit and swam with swyngyng of armys.  
 3et he launchet to londe, and his lyf hade,  
 Bare of his body, bretfull of water,  
 In the slober and the sluche slongyn to londe; 165  
 There he lay, if hym list, the long night ouer,  
 Till the derke was done, and the day sprang;  
[Pare](#) sum of his sort, þat soght were to lond  
 And than wonen of waghes, with wo as þai might,  
 Laited þere lord on the laund-syde, 170  
 If hit fell [hym](#) by fortune the flodes to passe.  
 Þan found þai the freike in the fome lye,  
 And comford hym kyndly, as þere kyd lord;  
 With worchip and wordes wan hym to fote.  
 Bothe failet hym the fode and the fyne clothes. 175  
 Thus þere goddes with gremy with þe Grekes fore,  
 Mighty Mynera, of malis full grete,  
 For Telamon, in tene, tid for to pull  
 Cassandra the clene out of hir cloise temple.  
 Thus hit fell hom by fortune of a foule ende, 180  
 For greuyng þere goddes in hor gret yre.  
 Oftsytthes men sayn, and sene is of olde,  
 Pat all a company is cumbrit for a cursed shrewe.

168-9 [transposed in MS.](#)

171 [hym](#)] hom *MS.*

[075]

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## VIII

### PIERS PLOWMAN

#### (1362-1400)

#### BY WILLIAM LANGLAND

Recent criticism of *Piers Plowman* has done more to weaken the hold of opinions once generally accepted than to replace them by others better founded. It is still most probable that 'Long Will', who is more than once mentioned in the text as the poet, was William Langland. The earliest external evidence of his home and parentage is given in a fifteenth-century note in MS. Dublin D 4. 1, of which both the matter and the vile Latinity bear the stamp of genuineness:

'Memorandum quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond, qui Stacius fuit generosus, et morabatur in Schiptone under Whicwode, tenens domini le Spenser in comitatu Oxon., qui praedictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman.' Shipton-under-Wychwood is near Burford in Oxfordshire. The poem shows familiarity with the Malvern Hills and the streets of London; but it is hard to say how much is fact and how much is fiction in the references to Long Will in the text itself, more especially the description of his London life added as the Sixth Passus in Version C, and reproduced here as the second extract.

Since Skeat's edition for the Early English Text Society, the many manuscripts have been grouped into three main types. The shortest, or A-text, appears from internal evidence to have been written about 1362. The B-text (about 1377) has the most compact manuscript tradition. It is distinguished by considerable additions throughout, and by the reconstruction and expansion of the visions of Dowel, Dobet, Dobest, which make up the second half of the poem. The C-text, the latest and fullest form, appears to have been completed in the last decade of the fourteenth century.

[077]

Until recently it has been assumed that these three versions represent progressive revisions by the author. But Professor Manly has found considerable support for his view that more than one writer—perhaps as many as five—had a share in the work. For the present, judgement on this question, and on the intricate problem of the relations of the different versions, is suspended until the results of a complete re-examination of all the MSS. are available. It would not be surprising to find that even when this necessary work is done differences of opinion on the larger questions remain as acute as ever.

It is impossible in short space to give an outline of the whole work, which describes no less than eleven visions. The structure is loose, and allegory is developed or dropped with disconcerting abruptness, for the writer does not curb his vigorous imagination in the interests of formal correctness.

The first part is the best known. On a May morning the poet falls asleep on the Malvern Hills and sees a 'Field full of Folk', where all classes of men are busy about their occupations, more particularly the nefarious occupations that engage the attention of the moralist. Holy Church explains that a high tower in the Field is the home of Truth; and that a 'deep dale' is the Castle of Care, where Wrong dwells with the wicked. She points out Falseness, who is about to marry Lady Meed (i.e. Reward, whether deserved reward or bribe). Lady Meed and her company are haled before the King, who, with Reason and Conscience as his guides, decides her case, and upholds the plea of Peace against Wrong.

The second vision is prefaced (in the C-text only) by the passage printed as the second selection. The poet falls asleep again, and sees Conscience preaching to the people in the Field. Representatives of the Seven Deadly Sins are vividly described. They are brought to penitence, and all set out in search of Truth. But no one knows the way. A palmer who wears the trophies of many pilgrimages to distant saints is puzzled by their inquiries, for he has never heard of pilgrims seeking Truth. Then Peter the Plowman comes forward and explains the way in allegorical terms. Here the first extract begins. The second vision closes with a general pardon given by Truth to Piers Plowman in this simple form:

[078]

Do wel, and haue wel, and God shal haue þi sowle;  
And do yuel, and haue yuel, hope þow non other  
But after þi ded-day þe Deuel shal haue þi sowle.

The several visions of the second part make up the lives of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. Piers Plowman is there identified with Christ, and the poem ends with Conscience, almost overcome by sin, setting out resolutely in search of Piers.

First impressions of mediaeval life are usually coloured by the courtly romances of Malory and his later refiners. Chaucer brings us down to reality, but his people belong to a prosperous middle-class world, on holiday and in holiday mood. *Piers Plowman* stands alone as a revelation of the ignorance and misery of the lower classes, whose multiplied grievances came to a head in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It must not be supposed that Langland idealized the labourers. Their indolence and improvidence are exposed as unsparingly as the vices of the rich; and Piers himself is not so much a representative of the English workman in the fourteenth century as a character drawn straight from the Gospels. Still, such an eager plea for humbleness, simplicity, and honest labour, could not fail to encourage the political hopes of the poor, and we see in John Ball's letter (p. 160) that 'Piers Plowman' had become a catchword among them. The poet himself rather deprecates political action. His satire is directed against the general slackening of the bonds of duty that marked the last years of an outworn system of society. For the remedy of abuses he appeals not to one class but to all: king, nobles, clergy, and workers must model their lives on the pattern of the Gospels.

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## A. FROM THE B-TEXT, PASSUS VI.

**Bodleian MS. Laud 581 (about 1400).**

'This were a wikked way, but whoso hadde a gyde  
That wolde folwen vs eche a fote:' þus þis folke hem mened.  
Quatz Perkyn þe plouman: 'Bi Seynt Peter of Rome!

I haue an half-acre to eryl bi þe heigh way.  
 Hadde I eried þis half-acre, and sowen it after,  
 I *wolde* wende with 3ow, and þe way teche.'

'Þis were a longe lettyng,' quod a lady in a sklayre;

'What sholde we wommen worche þerewhiles?'

'Somme shal sowe <þe> sakke,' quod Piers, 'for shedyng of þe whete;

And 3e, louely ladyes, with 3oure longe fynGRES,

þat 3e han silke and sendal to sowe, whan tyme is,

Chesibles for chapelleyneS, cherches to honoure;

Wyues and wydweS wolle and flex spynneth,

Maketh cloth, I conseille 3ow, and kenneth so 3owre dougtres;

þe nedy and þe naked, nymmeth hede how hii liggeth,

And casteth hem clothes, for so comaundeth Treuthe.

For I shal lene hem lyflode, but 3if þe londe faille,

Flesshe and bred, bothe to riche and to pore,

As longe as I lyue, for þe Lordes loue of heuene.

And alle manere of men þat þorw mete and drynke lybbeth,

Helpith hym to worche wigtliche þat wynneth 3owre fode.'

'Bi Crist!' quod a kny3te þo, 'he kenneth vs þe best;

Ac on þe teme trewly tau3te was I neuere.

Ac kenne me,' quod þe kny3te, 'and, bi Cryst! I wil assaye.'

'Bi seynt Poule!' quod Perkyn, '3e profre 3ow so faire,

þat I shal swynke, and swete, and sowe for vs bothe,

And oþer laboures do for þi loue al my lyf tyme,

In couenaunt þat þow kepe Holi Kirke and myselue

Fro wastoures and fro wykked men þat þis worlde struyeth;

And go hunte hardiliche to hares and to foxes,

To bores and to brockes þat breketh adown myne hegges,

And go affaite þe faucones wilde foules to kille,

For suche cometh to my croft, and croppeth my whete.'

Curteislich þe kny3te þanne comsed þise wordes:

'By my power, Pieres,' quod he, 'I plizte þe my treuthe

To fulfille þis forward, þow3 I fizte sholde;

Als longe as I lyue, I shal þe mayntene.'

'3e, and 3it a poynt,' quod Pieres, 'I preye 3ow of more;

Loke 3e tene no tenaunt, but Treuthe wil assent.

And þowgh 3e mowe amercy hem, late Mercy be taxoure,

And Mekenesse þi mayster, maugré Medes chekes;

And þowgh pore men profre 3ow presentis and 3iftis,

Nym it nau3te, an auenture 3e mowe it nau3te deserue;

For þow shalt 3elde it a3ein at one 3eres ende

In a ful perillous place, Purgatorie it hatte.

And mysbede nou3te þi bondemen, þe better may þow spede;

þowgh he be þyn vnderlyng here, wel may happe in heuene

þat he worth worthier sette and with more blisse:

*Amice, ascende superius.*

For in charnel atte chirche cherles ben yuel to knowe,

Or a knizte fram a knaue þere,—knowe þis in þin herte.

And þat þow be trewe of þi tonge, and tales þat þow hatie,

But if þei ben of wisdome or of witte, þi werkmen to chaste.

Holde with none harlotes, ne here nou3te her tales,

And nameliche atte mete suche men eschue,

For it ben þe deueles disoures, I do þe to vnderstande.'

'I assente, bi Seynt Iame!' seyde þe knizte þanne,

'Forto worche bi þi wordes þe while my lyf dureth.'

'And I shal apparaille me,' quod Perkyn, 'in pilgrimes wise,

And wende with 3ow I wil til we fynde Treuthe,

And cast on me my clothes, yclouted and hole,

My cokeres and my coffes, for colde of my nailles,  
 And hange myn hoper at myn hals, in stede of a scrippe,  
 A busshel of bredcorne brynge me þerinne,  
 For I wil sowe it myself; and sitthenes wil I wende 65  
 To pylgrymage, as palmers don, pardoun forto haue.  
 Ac whoso helpeth me to erie or sowen here, ar I wende,  
 Shal haue leue, bi owre Lorde, to lese here in heruest,  
 And make hem mery þeremydde, maugré whoso bigruccheth it.  
 And alkyn crafty men, þat konne lyuen in treuthe, 70  
 I shal fynden hem fode, þat feithfulliche libbeth.'...

(Dame 'Worche-whan-tyme-is' Pieres wyf hizte;  
 His douzter hizte 'Do-ri3te-so- or-þi-dame-shal-þe-bete';  
 His sone hizte 'Suffre-þi-souereynes- to-hauen-her-wille-,  
 Deme-hem-nou3te-, for-, if-þow-doste-, þow-shalt-it-dere-abugge.')

'Late God yworth with al, for so His worde techeth;  
 For now I am olde and hore, and haue of myn owen,  
 To penaunce and to pilgrimage I wil passe with þise other.  
 Forþi I wil, or I wende, do wryte my biqueste.

*In Dei nomine, amen*, I make it myseluen. 80  
 He shal haue my soule þat best hath yserued it,  
 And fro þe fende it defende, for so I bileue,  
 Til I come to His acountes, as my *Credo* me telleth,  
 To haue a relees and a remissioun on þat rental I leue.  
 Þe kirke shal haue my caroigne and kepe my bones, 85  
 For of my corne and catel he craued þe tythe;  
 I payed it hym prestly, for peril of my soule,  
 Forthy is he holden, I hope, to haue me in his masse,  
 And mengen in his memorye amonge alle Crystene.

My wyf shal haue of þat I wan with treuthe, and nomore, 90  
 And dele amonge my douztres and my dere children;  
 For þowgh I deye todaye, my dettes ar quitte;  
 I bare home þat I borwed, ar I to bedde zede.

And with þe residue and þe remenaunte, bi þe rode of Lukes!  
 I wil worschip þerwith Treuthe bi my lyue, 95  
 And ben his pilgryme atte plow, for pore mennes sake.  
 My plow-fote shal be my pyk-staf, and picche atwo þe rotes,  
 And helpe my culter to kerue, and clense þe forwes.'

Now is Perkyn and his pilgrymes to þe plowe faren;  
 To erie þis halue-acre holpyn hym manye. 100  
 Dikeres and delueres digged vp þe balkes;  
 Þerewith was Perkyn apayed, and preysed hem faste.  
 Other werkemen þere were þat wrouzten ful zerne;  
 Eche man in his manere made hymself to done,  
 And some, to plese Perkyn, piked vp þe wedes. 105

At heighe pryme Peres lete þe plowe stonde,  
 To ouersen hem hymself, and whoso best wrouzte  
 He shulde be huyred þerafter whan heruest-tyme come.

And þanne seten somme and songen atte nale,  
 And hulpen erie his half-acre with 'how! trollilolli!' 110

'Now, bi þe peril of my soule!' quod Pieres, al in pure tene,  
 'But ze arise þe rather, and rape zow to worche,  
 Shal no greyne þat groweth glade zow at nede;  
 And þowgh ze deye for dole, þe deuel haue þat reccheth!'

Tho were faitoures aferde, and feyned hem blynde; 115  
 Somme leyde here legges aliri, as suche loseles conneth,  
 And made her mone to Pieres, and preyde hym of grace:  
 'For we haue no lymes to laboure with, lorde, ygraced be ze!  
 Ac we preye for zow, Pieres, and for zowre plow bothe,

Pat God of His grace 3owre grayne multiplye, 120  
 And 3elde 3ow of 3owre almesse þat 3e 3iue vs here;  
 For we may nou3te swynke ne swete, suche sikenesse vs eyleth.'  
 'If it be soth,' quod Pieres, 'þat 3e seyne, I shal it sone asspye.  
 3e ben wastoures, I wote wel, and Treuthe wote þe sothe, 125  
 And I am his olde hyne, and hi3te hym to warne  
 Which þei were in þis worlde his werkemen appeyred.  
 3e wasten þat men wynnyn with trauaille and with tene,  
 Ac Treuthe shal teche 3ow his teme to dryue,  
 Or 3e shal ete barly bred and of þe broke drynke.  
 But if he be blynde, *or* broke-legged, or bolted with yrnys, 130  
 He shal ete whete bred and drynke with myselue,  
 Tyl God of his goodnesse amendement hym sende.  
 Ac 3e my3te trauaille as Treuthe wolde, and take mete and huyre  
 To kepe kyne in þe felde, þe corne fro þe bestes,  
 Diken, or deluen, or dyngen vppon sheues, 135  
 Or helpe make mortar, or bere mukke afelde.  
 In lecherye an in losengerye 3e lyuen, and in sleuthe,  
 And al is þorw suffrance þat veniaunce 3ow ne taketh.  
 Ac ancrs and heremytes, þat eten but at nones,  
 And namore er morwe, myne almesse shul þei haue, 140  
 And of my catel to cope hem with þat han cloistres and cherches.  
 Ac Robert Renne-aboute shal nou3e haue of myne,  
 Ne posteles, but þey preche conne, and haue powere of þe bisschop;  
 They shal haue payne and potage, and make hemself at ese,  
 For it is an vnresonable religioun þat hath ri3te nou3te of certeyne.' 145  
 And þanne gan a Wastoure to wrath hym, and wolde haue yfou3te,  
 And to Pieres þe plowman he profered his gloue;  
 A Brytonere, a braggere, abosted Pieres als:—  
 'Wiltow or neltow, we wil haue owre wille  
 Of þi flowre and of þi flessche, fecche whan vs liketh, 150  
 And make vs myrie þermyde, maugré þi chekes!'

[084] Thanne Pieres þe plowman pleyned hym to þe kny3te,  
 To kepe hym, as couenaunte was, fram cursed shrewes,  
 And fro þis wastoures wolues-kynnes, þat maketh þe worlde dere:  
 'For þo waste, and wynnyn nou3te, and þat ilke while 155  
 Worth neuere plenté amonge þe poeple þerwhile my plow liggeth.'  
 Curteisly þe kny3te þanne, as his kynde wolde,  
 Warned Wastoure, and wissed hym bettere,  
 'Or þow shalt abugge by þe lawe, by þe ordre þat I bere!'

'I was nou3t wont to worche,' quod Wastour, 'and now wil I nou3t bigynne', 160  
 And lete li3te of þe lawe, and lasse of þe kny3te,  
 And sette Pieres at a pees, and his plow bothe,  
 And manaced Pieres and his men 3if þei mette eftsonne.  
 'Now, by þe peril of my soule!' quod Pieres, 'I shal apeyre 3ow alle!'  
 And houped after Hunger, þat herd hym atte firste: 165  
 'Awreke me of þise wastoures,' quod he 'þat þis worlde schendeth!'

Hunger in haste þo hent Wastour bi þe mawe,  
 And wronge hym so bi þe wombe þat bothe his eyen wattered.  
 He buffeted þe Britoner aboute þe chekes,  
 Þat he loked like a lanterne al his lyf after. 170  
 He bette hem so bothe, he barste nere here guttes;  
 Ne hadde Pieres with a pese-lof preyed Hunger to cesse,  
 They hadde ben doluen bothe, ne deme þow non other.  
 'Suffre hem lyue,' he seyde 'and lete hem ete with hogges,  
 Or elles benes and bren ybaken togideres, 175  
 Or elles melke and mene ale;' þus preyed Pieres for hem.  
 Faitoures for fere herof flowen into bernes,



And flapten on with flayles fram morwe til euen,  
 That Hunger was nouzt so hardy on hem for to loke,  
 For a potful of peses þat Peres hadde ymaked. 180  
 An heep of heremites henten hem spades,  
 And ketten here copes, and courtpies hem made,  
 And wenten as werkemen with spades and with schoueles,  
 And doluen and dykeden to dryue aweye Hunger.

Blynde and bedreden were botened a þousande, 185  
 þat seten to begge syluer; sone were þei heled.  
 For þat was bake for Bayarde was bote for many hungry,  
 And many a beggere for benes buxome was to swynke,  
 And eche a pore man wel apayed to haue pesen for his huyre,  
 And what Pieres preyed hem to do as prest as a sperhauke. 190  
 And þereof was Peres proude, and put hem to werke,  
 And gaf hem mete as he myzte aforth, and mesurable huyre.

Panne hadde Peres pité, and preyed Hunger to wende  
 Home into his owne erde, and holden hym þere:  
 'For I am wel awroke now of wastoures, þorw þi myzte. 195  
 Ac I preye þe, ar þow passe,' quod Pieres to Hunger,  
 'Of beggeres and of bidderes what best be <to> done?  
 For I wote wel, be þow went, þei wil worche ful ille;  
 For myschief it maketh þei beth so meke nouthe,  
 And for defaute of her fode þis folke is at my wille. 200  
 Þey are my bloody bretheren,' quod Pieres, 'for God bouzte vs alle;  
 Treuthe tauzte me ones to louye hem vchone,  
 And to helpen hem of alle þinge ay as hem nedeth.  
 And now wolde I witen of þe what were þe best,  
 An how I myzte amaistrien hem, and make hem to worche.' 205

'Here now,' quod Hunger 'and holde it for a wisdom:  
 Bolde beggeres and bigge, þat mowe her bred biswynke,  
 With houndes bred and hors bred holde vp her hertis,  
 Abate hem with benes for bollyng of her wombe;  
 And gif þe gomes grucche, bidde hem go swynke, 210  
 And he shal soupe swettere whan he it hath deseruid.

And if þow fynde any freke, þat fortune hath appeyred  
 Or any maner fals men, fonde þow suche to cnowe;  
 Conforte hym with þi catel, for Crystes loue of heuene;  
 Loue hem and lene hem, so lawe of God techeth:— 215

*Alter alterius onera portate.*

And alle maner of men þat þow myzte asspye  
 That nedy ben and nauzty, helpe hem with þi godis;  
 Loue hem, and lakke hem nouzte; late God take þe veniaunce;  
 Theigh þei done yuel, late þow God aworthe:— 220

*Michi vindictam, et ego retribuam.*

And if þow wil be graciouse to God, do as þe Gospel techeth,  
 And bilow þe amonges low men; so shaltow lacche grace:—

*Facite vobis amicos de mamona iniquitatis.'*

'I wolde nouzt greue God,' quod Piers, 'for al þe good on grounde;  
 Mizte I synnelees do as þow seist?' seyde Pieres þanne. 225

'þe, I bihote þe,' quod Hunger, 'or ellis þe Bible lieth;  
 Go to Genesis þe gyaunt, þe engendroure of vs alle:—  
 "In sudore and swynke þow shalt þi mete tilye,  
 And laboure for þi lyflode," and so owre Lorde hyzte. 230  
 And Sapience seyth þe same, I seigh it in þe Bible:—  
 "Piger pro frigore no felde nolde tilye,  
 And þerfore he shal begge and bidde, and no man bete his hunger."

Mathew with mannes face mouthed þise wordis:—  
 þat *seruus nequam* had a nam, and for he wolde nouzte chaffare, 235

He had maugré of his maistre for euermore after,  
And binam <hym> his mnam, for he ne wolde worche,  
And 3af þat mnam to hym þat ten mnames hadde;  
And with þat he seyde, þat Holi Cherche it herde,  
"He þat hath shal haue, and helpe þere it nedeth,  
And he þat nou3t hath shal nou3t haue, and no man hym helpe;  
And þat he weneth wel to haue, I wil it hym bireue."

240

Kynde Witt wolde þat eche a wyght wrou3te,  
Or in dykyng, or in deluyng, or trauailyng in preyeres,  
Contemplatyf lyf or actyf lyf, Cryst wolde men wrou3te.  
Þe Sauter seyth in þe psalme of *Beati omnes*,  
Þe freke þat fedeth hymself with his feythful labour,  
He is blessed by þe boke, in body and in soule:—

245

*Labores manuum tuarum, etc.'*

'3et I prey 3ow,' quod Pieres, '*par charité!* and 3e kunne  
Eny leef of lechecraft, lere it me, my dere.  
For somme of my seruaunt3, and myself bothe,  
Of al a wyke worche nou3t, so owre wombe aketh.'

250

'I wote wel,' quod Hunger, 'what sykenesse 3ow eyleth;  
3e han maunged ouermoche, and þat maketh 3ow grone.  
Ac I hote þe,' quod Hunger, 'as þow þyne hele wilnest,  
That þow drynke no day ar þow dyne somewhat.

255

Ete nou3te, I hote þe, ar hunger þe take,  
And sende þe of his sauce to sauoure with þi lippes;  
And kepe some tyl sopertyme, and sitte nou3t to longe;  
Arise vp ar appetit haue eten his fulle.

260

Lat nou3t Sire Surfait sitten at þi borde....

And 3if þow diete þe þus, I dar legge myne eres  
Þat Phisik shal his furred hodes for his fode selle,  
And his cloke of Calabre, with alle þe knappes of golde,  
And be fayne, bi my feith, his phisik to lete,  
And lerne to labour with londe, for lyflode is swete;  
For morthereres aren mony leches, Lorde hem amende!  
Þei do men deye þorw here drynkes, ar Destiné it wolde.'

265

'By Seynt Poule!' quod Pieres, 'þise aren profitable wordis.  
Wende now, Hunger, whan þow wolt, þat wel be þow euere,  
For this is a louely lessoun; Lorde it þe for3elde!'

270

'Byhote God,' quod Hunger, 'hennes ne wil I wende,  
Til I haue dyned bi þis day, and ydronke bothe.'

'I haue no peny,' quod Peres 'poletes forto bigge,  
Ne neyther gees ne grys, but two grene cheses,  
A fewe cruddes and creem, and an hauer-cake,  
And two loues of benes and bran ybake for my fauntis;  
And 3et I sey, by my soule, I haue no salt bacoun  
Ne no kokeney, bi Cryst, coloppes forto maken.

275

Ac I haue percil, and porettes, and many koleplantes,  
And eke a cow and a calf, and a cart-mare  
To drawe afelde my donge þe while þe drought lasteth.  
And bi þis lyflode we mot lyue til Lammasse tyme;  
And bi þat I hope to haue heruest in my croft,  
And þanne may I dizte þi dyner as me dere liketh.'

280

285

Alle þe pore peple þo pesecoddes fetten,  
Benes and baken apples þei brou3te in her lappes,  
Chibolles and cheruelles and ripe chiries manye,  
And profred Peres þis present to plese with Hunger.  
Al Hunger eet in hast, and axed after more.

290

Þanne pore folke for fere fedde Hunger 3erne  
With grene poret and pesen—to poysoun Hunger þei þou3te.

By þat it neighed nere heruest, newe corne cam to chepyng; 295  
Panne was folke fayne, and fedde Hunger with þe best,  
With good ale, as Glotoun tauzte, and gerte Hunger go slepe.

And þo wolde Wastour nouzt werche, but wandren aboute,  
Ne no begger ete bred that benes inne were,  
But of coket, or clerematyn, or elles of clene whete, 300  
Ne none halpeny ale in none wise drynke,  
But of þe best and of þe brounest þat in borgh is to selle.

Laboreres þat haue no lande to lyue on but her handes,  
Deyned nouzt to dyne aday nyzt-olde wortes;  
May no peny-ale hem paye, ne no pece of bakoun, 305  
But if it be fresch flesch, other fische, fryed other bake,  
And that *chaude* or *plus chaud*, for chillyng of here mawe.  
And but if he be heighlich huyred, ellis wil he chyde,  
And þat he was werkman wrouzt waille þe tyme;  
Azeines Catones conseilie comseth he to iangle:—

*Paupertatis onus pacienter ferre memento.* 310

He greueth hym azeines God, and gruccheth azeines resoun,  
And þanne curseth he þe kyng, and al his conseilie after,  
Suche lawes to loke, laboreres to greue.  
Ac whiles Hunger was her maister, þere wolde none of hem chyde, 315  
Ne stryue azeines his statut, so sterneliche he loked.

Ac I warne 3ow, werkemen, wynneth while 3e mowe,  
For Hunger hide<r>ward hasteth hym faste,  
He shal awake with water wastoures to chaste.  
Ar fyue <3ere> be fulfilled suche famyn shal aryse, 320  
Thorwgh flodes and þourgh foule wederes frutes shul faille;  
And so sayde Saturne, and sent 3ow to warne:  
Whan 3e se þe sonne amys, and two monkes hedes,  
And a mayde haue þe maistrie, and multiplied bi eight,  
Panne shal Deth withdrawe, and Derthe be Iustice,  
And Dawe þe Dyker deye for hunger, 325  
But if God of his goodnesse graunt vs a trewe.

6 [wolde](#)] wil *MS.*

130 [or](#)] and *MS.*

## B. FROM THE C-TEXT, PASSUS VI, ll. 1-104.

### MS. Phillips 8231 (about 1400).

Thus ich awaked, wot God, wanne ich wonede on Cornehulle,  
Kytte and ich in a cote, cloped as a lollere,  
[And lytel y/ete by](#), leyue me for soþe,  
Among lollares of London and lewede heremytes; 5  
For ich made of þo men as Reson me tauhte.

For as ich cam by Conscience, wit Reson ich mette,  
In an hote heruest, wenne ich hadde myn hele,  
And lymes to labore with, and louede wel fare,  
And no dede to do bote drynke and to slepe:

In hele and in vnité on me aposede, 10

Romyng in remembraunce, thus Reson me aratede:—  
'Canstow seruen,' he seide, 'oþer syngen in a church,

Oþer coke for my cokers, oþer to þe cart picche,

Mowe, oþer mowen, oþer make bond to sheues,

Repe, oþer be a repereyue, and aryse erliche, 15

Oþer haue an horne and be haywarde, and liggen oute a nyghtes,

And kepe my corn in my croft fro pykers and þeeues?

Oþer shappe shon oþer cloþes, oþer shep oþer kyn kepe,

[089]

[090]

[<H>eggen](#) oþer harwen, oþer swyn oþer gees dryue, 20  
 Oþer eny kyns craft þat to þe comune nudeþ,  
 Hem þat bedreden be bylyue to fynde?  
 'Certes,' ich seyde, 'and so me God helpe,  
 Ich am to waik to worche with sykkel oþer with sythe,  
 And to long, leyf me, lowe for to stoupe,  
 To worchen as a workeman eny wyle to dure.' 25  
 'Thenne hauest þow londes to lyue by,' quath Reson, 'oþer lynage riche  
 That fynden þe þy fode? For an hydel man þow semest,  
 A spendour þat spende mot, oþer a spille-tyme,  
 Oþer beggest þy bylyue aboute ate menne hacches, 30  
 Oþer faitest vpon Frydays oþer feste-dayes in churches,  
 The wiche is lollarene lyf, þat lytel ys preysed  
 Þer Ryghtfulnesse rewardeþ ryght as men deserueþ:—  
*Reddit unicuique iuxta opera sua.*  
 Oþer þow ert broke, so may be, in body oþer in membre, 35  
 Oþer ymaymed þorw som myshap werby þow myzt be excused?'  
 [091] 'Wanne ich zong was,' quath ich, 'meny zer hennes,  
 My fader and my frendes founden me to scole,  
 Tyl ich wiste wyterliche wat Holy Wryt menede,  
 And wat is best for þe body, as þe Bok telleþ,  
 And sykerest for þe soule, by so ich wolle continue. 40  
 And zut fond ich neuere, in faith, sytthen my frendes deyden,  
 Lyf þat me lyked, bote in þes longe clothes.  
 Hyf ich by laboure sholde lyue and lyflode deseruen,  
 That labour þat ich lerned best [berwith](#) lyue ich sholde:—  
*In eadem uocatione qua uocati estis.* 45  
 And ich lyue in Londene and on Londen bothe;  
 The lomes þat ich laboure with and lyflode deserue  
 Ys *Paternoster*, and my Prymer, *Placebo* and *Dirige*,  
 And my Sauter som tyme, and my Seuene Psalmes.  
 Thus ich synge for hure soules of suche as me helpen, 50  
 And þo þat fynden me my fode vochen saf, ich trowe,  
 To be wolcome wanne ich come oþerwyle in a monthe,  
 Now with hym and now with hure; and þusgate ich begge  
 Withoute bagge oþer botel bote my wombe one.  
 And also, moreouer, me þynkeþ, syre Reson, 55  
 Men sholde constreyne no clerke to knauene werkes;  
 For by lawe of *Leuitici*, þat oure Lord ordeynede,  
 Clerkes þat aren crowned, of kynde vnderstondyng,  
 Sholde noþer swynke, ne swete, ne swere at enquestes,  
 Ne fyghte in no vauntwarde, ne hus fo greue:— 60  
*Non reddas malum pro malo.*  
 For it ben aires of heuene [alle](#) þat ben crowned,  
 And in queer [in churches](#) Cristes owene mynestres:—  
*Dominus pars hereditatis mee; & alibi: Clementia non constringit.*  
 Hit bycomeþ for clerkus Crist for to seruen, 65  
 And knaues vncrowned to cart and to worche.  
 [092] For shold no clerk be crowned bote yf he ycome were  
 Of franklens and free men, and of folke yweddede.  
 Bondmen and bastardes and beggers children,  
 Thuse bylongeþ to labour, and lordes children sholde seruen, 70  
 Bothe God and good men, as here degree askeþ;  
 Some to synge masses, oþer sitten and wryte,  
 Rede and receyue þat Reson ouhte spende;  
 And sith bondemenne barnes han be mad bisshopes,  
 And barnes bastardes han ben archidekenes, 75  
 And sopers and here sones for seluer han be knyghtes,

And lordene sones here laborers, and leid here rentes to wedde,  
 For þe ryght of þes reame ryden azens oure enemys,  
 In confort of þe comune and þe kynges worshep,  
 And monkes and moniales, þat mendinauns sholden fynde, 80  
 Han mad here kyn knyghtes, and knyghtfees purchase<d>,  
 Popes and patrones poure gentil blod refuseþ,  
 And taken Symondes sone seyntewarie to kepe.  
 Lyf-holynesse and loue han ben longe hennes,  
 And wole, til hit be wered out, or oþerwise ychaunged. 85  
 Forþy rebuke me ryght nouht, Reson, ich 3ow praye;  
 For in my conscience ich knowe what Crist wolde þat ich wrouhte.  
 Preyers of <a> parfyt man and penaunce discret  
 Ys þe leueste labour þat oure Lord pleseþ.  
*Non de solo,* 'ich seide, 'for soþe *uiuit homo,* 90  
*Nec in pane et pabulo,* þe *Paternoster* witnesseth:  
*Fiat uoluntas tua* fynt ous alle þynges.'  
 Quath Conscience, 'By Crist! ich can nat see this lyeth;  
 Ac it semeth nouht parfyt nesse in cytees for to begge,  
 Bote he be obediencer to pryour oþer to mynstre.' 95  
 'That ys soth,' ich seide 'and so ich byknowe  
 That ich haue tynt tyme, and tyme mysspended;  
 And 3ut, ich hope, as he þat ofte haueþ chaffared,  
 Pat ay hath lost and lost, and at þe *laste* hym happed  
 He bouhte suche a bargayn he was þe bet euere, 100  
 And sette hus lost at a lef at þe *laste* ende,  
 Suche a wynnyngge hym warth þorw wyrdes of hus grace:—  
*Simile est regnum celorum thesauro abscondito in agro, et cetera;*  
*Mulier que inuenit dragmam, et cetera;*  
 So hope ich to haue of Hym þat his almyghty 105  
 A gobet of Hus grace, and bygynne a tyme  
 Pat alle tymes of my tyme to profit shal turne.'  
 'Ich rede þe,' quath Reson þo 'rape þe to bygynne  
 Þe lyf þat ys lowable and leel to þe soule'—  
 '3e, and continue,' quath Conscience; and to þe churche ich wente. 110

3 [And a lytel ich let by](#) MS.

19 [Heggen](#)] Eggen MS.

44 [perwith](#)] perhwit MS.

62 [alle](#)] and alle MS.

63 [in churches](#)] and in kirkes *Ilchester* MS.

92 [tua](#)] tuas MS.

99 [laste](#)] latiste MS.

## IX

### MANDEVILLE'S TRAVELS

*Mandeville's Travels* were originally written in French, perhaps in 1356 or 1357. Their popularity was immediate, and Latin and English translations soon appeared. The English texts published show three forms. The first, imperfect, is the text of the early prints. The second, from Cotton MS. Titus C xvi (about 1400-25), was first printed in 1725, and is followed in the editions by Halliwell, 1839 and 1866, and by Hamelius, 1919. The third, from Egerton MS. 1982 (about 1400-25), has been edited for the Roxburghe Club by G. F. Warner, with the French text, and an excellent apparatus. Our selections follow the Cotton MS.

The *Travels* fall into two parts: (i) a description of the routes to the Holy Land, and an account of the Holy Places; (ii) a narrative of travel in the more distant parts of Asia. Throughout the author poses as an eyewitness. But in fact the book is a compilation, made without much regard to time or place. For the first part William de Boldensele, who wrote in 1336 an account of a visit to the Holy Land, is the main source. The second part follows the description of an Eastern voyage written by Friar Odoric of Pordenone in 1330. Other materials from the mediaeval encyclopaedists are woven in, and there is so little trace of original observation that it is doubtful

whether the author travelled far beyond his library.

In the preface he claims to be Sir John Mandeville, an Englishman born at St. Albans. The people of St. Albans were driven to desperate shifts to explain the absence of his tomb from their abbey; but until 1798 it was actually to be seen at the church of the Guillemins, Liège, with this inscription:

[095]

'Hic iacet vir nobilis Dom Ioannes de Mandeville, alias dictus ad Barbam, Miles, Dominus de Campdi, natus de Anglia, medicinae professor, devotissimus orator, et bonorum suorum largissimus pauperibus erogator, qui, toto quasi orbe lustrato, Leodii diem vitae suae clausit extremum A.D. MCCCLXXII, mensis Nov. die xvii.'

A Liège chronicler, Jean d'Outremeuse (d. 1399), who claims the invidious position of his confidant and literary executor, gives further details: Mandeville was 'chevalier de Montfort en Angleterre'; he was obliged to leave England because he had slain a nobleman; he came to Liège in 1343; and was content to be known as 'Jean de Bourgogne dit à la Barbe'.

Now Jean de Bourgogne, with whom Sir John Mandeville is identified by d'Outremeuse, is known as the writer of a tract on the Plague, written at Liège in 1365. Further, the Latin text of the *Travels* mentions that the author met at Liège a certain 'Johannes ad Barbam', recognized him as a former physician at the court of the Sultan of Egypt, and took his advice and help in the writing of the *Travels*.

Again, in 1322, the year in which Sir John Mandeville claims to have left England, a Johan de Burgoyne was given good reason to flee the country, because a pardon, granted to him the previous year for his actions against the Despensers, was then withdrawn. Curiously enough, a John Mandeville was also of the party opposed to the Despensers.

Nothing has come of the attempts to attach the clues—St. Albans, Montfort, Campdi, the arms on the tomb at Liège—to the English family of Mandeville. It seems likely that 'Sir John Mandeville' was an alias adopted by Jean de Bourgogne, unless both names cover Jean d'Outremeuse. The Epilogue to the Cotton version shows how early the plausible fictions of the text had infected the history of its composition.

It is clear that the English versions do not come from the hand of the writer of the *Travels*, who could not have been guilty of such absurdities as the translation of *montaignes* by 'pe hille of Aygnes' in the Cotton MS. But whoever the author was, he shows a courtesy and modesty worthy of a knight, begging those with more recent experience to correct the lapses of his memory, and remembering always the interests of later travellers, who might wish to glean some marvels still untold. He might well have pleaded in the fourteenth century that the time had not come when prose fiction could afford to throw off the disguise of truth.

[096]

## [THE VOIAGE AND TRAVAIL OF SIR IOHN MAUNDEVILE, KT.]

British Museum MS. Cotton Titus C xvi (about 1400-25).

From chap. xiv (xviii), f. 65 b.

Ethiope is departed in two princypall parties; and þat is in the Est partie, and in the Meridionall partie, the whiche partie meridionall is clept Moretane. And the folk of þat contree ben blake ynow, and more blake þan in the toþer partie; and þei ben clept Mowres. In þat partie is a well, þat in the day it is so cold þat no man may drynke þereoffe; and in the nyght it is so hoot þat no man may suffre hys hond þerein. And bezonde þat partie, toward the South, to passe by the See Ocean, is a gret lond and a gret contrey. But men may not duell þere, for the feruent brennyng of the sonne, so is it passyng hoot in þat contrey.

05

10

In Ethiope all the ryueres and all the watres ben trouble, and þei ben somdell salte, for the gret hete þat is þere. And the folk of þat contree ben lyghtly dronken, and han but litill appetyt to mete....

15

In Ethiope ben many dyuerse folk, and Ethiope is clept 'Cusis.' In þat contree ben folk þat han but o foot; and þei gon so blyue þat it is meruaylle; and the foot is so large þat it schadeweth all the body aȝen the sonne, whanne þei wole lye and reste hem.

20

In Ethiope, whan the children ben ȝonge and lytill, þei ben all ȝalowe; and whan þat þei wexen of age, þat ȝalownesse turneth to ben all blak. In Ethiope is the cytee of Saba, and the lond of the whiche on of the þre Kynges, þat presented oure Lord in Bethleem, was kyng offe.

[097]

25

Fro Ethiope men gon into Ynde be manye dyuerse contreyes. And men clepen the high Ynde 'Emlak'. And Ynde is devyded in þre princypall parties; þat is: the more, þat is a full hoot contree; and Ynde the lesse, þat is a full atempree contrey, þat stretcheth to the lond of Medé; and the þridde part, toward the Septentrion, is full cold, so þat for pure cold and contynuell frost the water becometh cristall.

30

And vpon tho roches of cristall growen the gode dyamandes, þat ben of trouble colour. Ȝalow cristall draweth <to> colour lyke oylle. And þei ben so harde þat no man may pollysch hem; and men clepen hem 'dyamandes' in þat contree, and 'hamese' in anoþer contree. Othere dyamandes men fynden in Arabye, þat ben not so gode; and þei ben more broun and more tendre. And oþer dyamandes also men fynden in the Ile of Cipre, þat ben

35

zit more tendre; and hem men may wel pollische. And in the lond of Macedoyne men fynden dyamaundes also. But the beste and the moste precyouse ben in Ynde. 40

And men fynden many tyme harde dyamandes in a masse, þat cometh out of gold, whan men puren it and fynen it out of the myne, whan men breken þat masse in smale peces. And sum tyme it happeneth þat men fynden summe as grete as a pese, and summe lasse; and þei ben als harde as þo of Ynde. 45

And all be it þat men fynden gode dyamandes in Ynde, zit natheles men fynden hem more comounly vpon the roches in the see, and vpon hilles where the myne of gold is. And þei growen many togedre, on lytill, another gret. And þer ben summe of the gretnesse of a bene, and summe als grete as an hasell-note. And þei ben square and poynted of here owne kynde, boþe abouen and benethen, withouten worching of mannes hond. 50 55

[098]

And þei growen togedre, male and femele. And þei ben noryscht with the dew of heuene. And þei engendren comounly, and bryngen forth smale children, þat multiplyen and growen all the 3eer. I haue often tymes assayed þat zif a man kepe hem with a lityll of the roche, and wete hem with May dew oftesithes, þei schull growe eueryche 3eer; and the smale wole wexen grete. For right as the fyn perl congeleth and wexeth gret of the dew of heuene, right so doth the verray dyamand; and right as the perl, of his owne kynde, taketh roundnesse, right so the dyamand, be vertu of God, taketh squarenesse. 60 65

And men schall bere the dyamaund on his left syde; for it is of grettere vertue þanne, þan on the right syde. For the strengthe of here growynge is toward the North, þat is the left syde of the world, and the left partie of man is, whan he turneth his face toward the Est. 70

And zif 3ou lyke to knowe the vertues of þe dyamand, as men may fynden in þe Lapidarye, þat many men knowen noght, I schall telle 3ou, as þei bezonde the see seyn and affermen, of whom all science and all philosophie cometh from. 75

He þat bereth the dyamand vpon him, it 3eueth him hardynesse and manhode, and it kepeth the lemes of his body hole. It 3eueth him victorye of his enemyes, in plee and in werre, zif his cause be rightfull; and it kepeth him þat bereth it in gode wytt; and it kepeth him fro strif and ryot, fro euyll sweuenes, from sorwes, and from enchauntementes, and from fantasyes and illusiouns of wykked spirites. And zif ony cursed wycche or enchauntour wolde bewycche him þat bereth the dyamand, all þat sorwe and myschance schall turne to himself, þorgh vertue of þat ston. And also no wyld best dar assaylle the man þat bereth it on him. Also the dyamand scholde ben 3ouen frely, withouten coueytynge, and withouten byggyng; and þan it is of grettere vertue. And it maketh a man more strong and more sad azenst his enemyes. And it heleth him þat is lunatyk, and hem þat the fend pursueth or trauayleth. And zif venym or poysoun be brought in presence of the dyamand, anon it begynneth to wexe moyst, and for to swete. 80 85 90 95

[099]

Þere ben also dyamandes in Ynde þat ben clept 'violastres',—for here colour is liche vyolet, or more browne þan the violettes,—þat ben full harde and full precyous. But zit sum men loue not hem so wel as the oþere. But in soth to me, I wolde louen hem als moche as þe oþere; for I haue seen hem assayed. Also þere is anoper maner of dyamandes þat ben als white as cristall, but þei ben a lityll more trouble; and þei ben gode and of gret vertue, and all þei ben square and poynted of here owne kynde. And summe ben six squared, summe four squared, and summe þre, as nature schapeth hem. 100 105

And þerfore whan grete lordes and knyghtes gon to seche worschipe in armes, þei beren gladly the dyamaund vpon hem. I schal speke a litill more of the dyamandes, allþough I tarye my matere for a tyme, to þat ende þat þei þat knowen hem not be not disceyued be gabberes þat gon be the contree, þat sellen hem. For whoso wil bye the dyamand, it is nedefull to him þat he knowe hem, because þat men counterfeten hem often of cristall þat is 3alow; and of saphires of cytryne colour, þat is 3alow also; and of the saphire loupe; and of many oþer stones. But, I tell 3ou, these contrefetes ben not so harde; and also the poyntes wil breken lightly; and men may esily pollische hem. But summe werkmen, for malice, wil not pollische hem, to þat entent to maken men beleue þat þei may not ben pollisscht. But men may assaye hem in this manere: First schere with hem, or write with hem, in saphires, in cristall, or in oþer precious stones. After þat men taken the ademand, þat is the schipmannes ston, þat draweth the nedle to him, and men leyn the dyamand vpon the ademand, and leyn the nedle before the ademand; and zif the dyamand be gode and vertuous, the ademand draweth not the nedle to him, whils the dyamand is þere present. And this is the preef þat þei bezonde the see maken. Natheles it befalleth often tyme þat the gode dyamand leseth his vertue, be synne and for incontynence of him þat bereth it. And þanne is it nedfull to make it to recoueren his vertue azen, or ell it is of litill value. 110 115 120 125 130

[100]

### Chap. xxvi (xxx), f. 112 a.

Now schall I seye 3ou sewyngly of contrees and yles þat ben bezonde the contrees þat I haue spoken of. Wherefore I seye 3ou, in passynge be the lond of Cathaye toward the high Ynde, and toward Bacharye, men passen be a kyngdom þat men clepen 'Caldilhe', þat is a full fair contré. And þere groweth a maner of fruyt, as þough it weren gowrdes; and whan þei ben rype, men kутten hem ato, and men fynden withinne a lityll best, in flesch, in bon, and blode as þough it were a lytill lomb, withouten wolle. And men eten bothe the frut and the best: and þat is a gret merueylle. Of þat frute I haue eten, allþough it were wondirfull: but þat I knowe wel, þat God is merueyllous in his werkes. And natheles I tolde hem of als gret a merueyle to hem, þat is amonges vs: and þat was of the Bernakes. For I tolde hem 135 140 145



þat in oure contree weren trees þat baren a fruyt þat becomen briddes fleeynge; and þo þat  
 fellen in the water lyuen; and þei þat fallen on the erthe dyen anon; and þei ben right gode  
 to mannes mete. And hereof had þei als gret meruaylle þat summe of hem trowed it were  
 an impossible thing to be. In þat contré ben longe apples of gode sauour, whereof ben mo  
 þan an hundred in a clustre, and als manye in another: and þei han grete longe leues and  
 large, of two fote long or more. And in þat contree, and in oþer contrees þere abouten,  
 grown many trees, þat beren clowe gylofres, and notemuges, and grete notes of Ynde, and  
 of canell, and of many oþer spices. And þere ben vynes þat beren so grete grapes þat a  
 strong man scholde haue ynow to done for to bere o clustre with all the grapes. In þat same  
 regioun ben the mountaynes of Caspye þat men clepen 'Vber' in the contree. Betwene þo  
 mountaynes the Iewes of ten lynages ben enclosed, þat men clepen Goth and Magoth; and  
 þei mowe not gon out on no syde. Pere weren enclosed twenty two kynges with hire peple,  
 þat dwelleden betwene the mountaynes of Syþhye. Pere Kyng Alisandre chacede hem  
 betwene þo mountaynes; and þere he thoughte for to enclose hem þorgh werk of his men.  
 But whan he saugh þat he myghte not don it, ne bryng it to an ende, he preyed to God of  
 Nature þat He wolde parforme þat þat he had begonne. And all were it so þat he was a  
 payneme, and not worthi to ben herd, 3it God of His grace closed the mountaynes togydre;  
 so þat þei dwellen þere, all faste ylokked and enclosed with high mountaynes alle aboute,  
 saf only on o syde; and on þat syde is the See of Caspye. Now may sum men asken: sith þat  
 the see is on þat o syde, wherfore go þei not out on the see syde, for to go where þat hem  
 lyketh? But to this questioun I schal answeere: þat See of Caspye goth out be londe, vnder  
 the mountaynes, and renneth be the desert at o syde of the contree; and after it streccheth  
 vnto the endes of Persie. And allþough it be clept a see, it is no see, ne it toucheth to non  
 oþer see; but it is a lake, the grettest of the world. And þough þei wolden putten hem into  
 þat see, þei ne wysten neuer where þat þei scholde arryuen. And also þei conen no langage  
 but only hire owne, þat no man knoweth but þei: and þerfore mowe þei not gon out. And  
 also 3ee schull vnderstonde þat the Iewes han no propre lond of hire owne, for to dwellen  
 inne, in all the world, but only þat lond betwene the mountaynes. And 3it þei zelden tribute  
 for þat lond to the queen of Amazoine, the whiche þat maketh hem to ben kept in cloos full  
 diligently, þat þei schull not gon out on no syde, but be the cost of hire lond. For hire lond  
 marcheth to þo mountaynes. And often it hath befallen þat summe of þe Iewes han gon vp  
 the mountaynes, and aualed down to the valeyes: but gret nombre of folk ne may not do so.  
 For the mountaynes ben so hye, and so streght vp, þat þei moste abyde þere, maugree hire  
 myght. For þei mowe not gon out, but be a litill issue þat was made be strengthe of men;  
 and it lasteth wel a four grete myle. And after is þere 3it a lond all desert, where men may  
 fynde no water, ne for dyggynge, ne for non other þing; wherfore men may not dwellen in  
 þat place. So is it full of dragounes, of serpentes, and of oþer venymous bestes, þat no man  
 dar not passe, but 3if it be be strong wynter. And þat streyt passage men clepen in þat  
 contree 'Clyron'. And þat is the passage þat the Queen of Amazoine maketh to ben kept.  
 And þogh it happene sum of hem, be fortune, to gon out, þei conen no maner of langage but  
 Ebrew, so þat þei can not speke to the peple. And 3it natheles, men seyn þei schull gon out  
 in the tyme of Antecrist, and þat þei schull maken gret slaughter of Cristene men. And  
 þerfore all the Iewes þat dwellen in all londes lernen allweys to speken Ebrew, in hope þat  
 whan the oþer Iewes schull gon out, þat þei may vnderstonden hire speche, and to leden  
 hem into Cristendom, for to destroye the Cristene peple. For the Iewes seyn þat þei knowen  
 wel be hire prophecyes þat þei of Caspye schull gon out and spreden þorghout all the  
 world; and þat the Cristene men schull ben vnder hire subieccioun als longe as þei han ben  
 in subieccioun of hem. And 3if þat 3ee wil wyte how þat þei schull fynden hire weye, after  
 þat I haue herd seye, I schall tell 3ou. In the tyme of Antecrist, a fox schall make þere his  
 †trayn†, and mynen an hole, where Kyng Alisandre leet make the 3ates: and so longe he  
 schall mynen and percen the erthe, til þat he schall passe þorgh towards þat folk. And  
 whan þei seen the fox, they schull haue gret merueyille of him, because þat þei saugh neuer  
 such a best. For of all oþere bestes þei han enclosed amonges hem, saf only the fox. And  
 þanne þei schulle chacen him and pursuen him so streyte, till þat he come to the same  
 place þat he cam fro. And þanne þei schulle dyggen and mynen so strongly, till þat þei  
 fynden the 3ates þat King Alisandre leet make of grete stones and passynge huge, wel  
 symented and made stronge for the maystrie. And þo 3ates þei schull breken, and so gon  
 out, be fyndynge of þat issue.

Fro þat lond gon men toward the lond of Bacharie, where ben full yuele folk and full  
 cruell. In þat lond ben trees þat beren wolle, as þogh it were of scheep; whereof men  
 maken clothes, and all þing þat may ben made of wolle. In þat contree ben many ipotaynes,  
 þat dwellen som tyme in the water, and somtyme on the lond: and þei ben half man and half  
 hors, as I haue seyde before; and þei eten men, whan þei may take hem. And þere ben  
 ryueres and watres þat ben fulle bytterre, pree sithes more þan is the water of the see. In  
 þat contré ben many griffounes, more plentee þan in any other contree. Sum men seyn þat  
 þei han the body vpward as an egle, and benethe as a lyoun: and treuly þei seyn soth þat  
 þei ben of þat schapp. But o griffoun hath the body more gret, and is more strong, þanne  
 eight lyouns, of suche lyouns as ben o this half; and more gret and strongere þan an  
 hundred egles, suche as we han amonges vs. For o griffoun þere wil bere fleynge to his nest  
 a gret hors, 3if he may fynde him at the poynt, or two oxen 3oked togidere, as þei gon at the  
 plowgh. For he hath his talouns so longe and so large and grete vpon his feet, as þough þei  
 weren hornes of grete oxen, or of bugles, or of ky3n; so þat men maken cuppes of hem, to  
 drynken of. And of hire ribbes, and of the pennes of hire wenges, men maken bowes full  
 stronge, to schote with arwes and quarell.

From þens gon men be many iourneyes þorgh the lond of Prestre Iohn, the grete  
emperour of Ynde. And men clepen his roialme the Yle of Pentexoire.

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### EPILOGUE.

Pere ben manye oþer dyuerse contrees and many oþer merueyles bezonde, þat I haue not  
seen: wherfore of hem I can not speke propurly, to tell 3ou the manere of hem. And also in  
the contrees where I haue ben, ben manye mo dyuersitees of many wondirfull thinges  
þanne I make mencioung of, for it were to longe thing to deuise 3ou the manere. And  
þerfore þat þat I haue deuysed 3ou of certeyn contrees, þat I haue spoken of before, I  
beseche 3oure worthi and excellent noblesse þat *it* suffise to 3ou at this tyme. For 3if þat I  
deuysed 3ou all þat is bezonde the see, another man peraunter, þat wolde peynen him and  
trauaylle his body for to go into þo marches for to encerche þo contrees, myghte ben  
blamed be my wordes, in rehercyng manye straunge thinges; for he myghte not seye no  
thing of newe, in the whiche the hereres myghten hauen ouþer solace or desport or lust or  
lykyng in the heryng. For men seyn allweys þat newe thinges and newe tydynges ben  
plesant to here. Wherfore I wole holde me stille, withouten ony more rehercyng of  
dyuersitee3 or of meruaylles þat ben bezonde, to þat entent and ende þat whoso wil gon  
into þo contrees, he schall fynde ynowe to speke of, þat I haue not touched of in no wyse.

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And 3ee schull vndirstonde, 3if it lyke 3ou, þat at myn hom comyng I cam to Rome, and  
schewed my lif to oure holy fadir the Pope, and was assoylled of all þat lay in my  
conscience, of many a dyuerse greuous poynt, as men mosten nedes þat ben in company,  
dwell yng amonges so many a dyuerse folk of dyuerse secte and of beleewe, as I haue ben.  
And amonges all, I schewed hym this tretys, þat I had made after informacioun of men þat  
knewen of thinges þat I had not seen myself; and also of merueyles and customes þat I  
hadde seen myself, as fer as God wolde 3eue me grace: and besoughte his holy fadirhode  
þat my boke myghte ben examyned and corrected be avys of his wyse and discreet conseil.  
And oure holy fader, of his special grace, remytted my boke to ben examyned and preued  
be the avys of his seyde conseil. Be the whiche my boke was preued for trewe; in so moche  
þat þei schewed me a boke, þat my boke was examynde by, þat comprehended full moche  
more be an hundred part; be the whiche the *Mappa Mundi* was made after. And so my boke  
(all be it þat many men ne list not to 3eue credence to no þing, but to þat þat þei seen with  
hire eye, ne be the auctour ne the persone neuer so trewe) is affermed and preued be oure  
holy fader, in maner and forme as I haue seyde.

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And I Iohn Maundevyll knyght aboueseyd, (alþough I be vnworthi) þat departed from  
oure contrees and passed the see the 3eer of grace 1322, þat haue passed many londes and  
manye yles and contrees, and cerched manye full strange places, and haue ben in many a  
full gode honourable companye, and at many a faire dede of armes, all be it þat I dide none  
myself, for myn vnable insuffisance; and now I am comen hom, mawgree myself, to reste,  
for gowtes artetykes þat me distreynen, þat diffynen the ende of my labour, azenst my will,  
God knoweth. And þus takyng solace in my wretched reste, recordyng the tyme passed,  
I haue fulfilled þese thinges and putte hem wryten in this boke, as it wolde come into my  
mynde, the 3eer of grace 1356 in the 34th 3eer þat I departede from oure contrees.  
Wherfore I preye to all the rederes and hereres of this boke, 3if it plese hem, þat þei wolde  
preyen to God for me, and I schall preye for hem. And alle þo þat seyn for me a *Paternoster*,  
with an *Aue Maria*, þat God for3eue me my synnes, I make hem parteneres and graunte  
hem part of all the gode pilgrimages, and of all the gode dedes þat I haue don, 3if ony ben  
to his plesance; and noght only of þo, but of all þat euere I schall do vnto my lyfes ende.  
And I beseche Almyghty God, fro whom all godenesse and grace cometh fro, þat He  
vouchesaf of His excellent mercy and habundant grace to fullfille hire soules with  
inspiracioun of the Holy Gost, in makyng defence of all hire gostly enemyes here in erthe,  
to hire saluacioun, bothe of body and soule; to worschipe and thankyng of Him þat is þree  
and on, withouten begynnynge and withouten endyng; þat is withouten qualitee good,  
withouten quantytee gret; þat in alle places is present, and all thinges conteynyng; the  
whiche þat no goodnesse may amende, ne non euell empeyre; þat in perfyte Trynytee  
lyueth and regneth God, be alle worldes and be all tymes. Amen, Amen, Amen.

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## X

### THE BRUCE

WRITTEN IN 1375 BY JOHN BARBOUR.

John Barbour was archdeacon of Aberdeen, an auditor of the Scottish exchequer, and a royal pensioner. Consequently a number of isolated records of his activities have been preserved. In 1364 he was granted a safe-conduct to travel with four students to Oxford. In 1365 and 1368 he had permission to travel through England so that he might study in France. The notices of his journeys, his offices, and his rewards point to a busy and successful life. He died in 1395.

According to Wyntoun, Barbour's works were (1) *The Bruce*; (2) *The Stewartis Oryginalle* (or *Pedigree of the Stewarts*), now lost; (3) a *Brut*, which some have identified with extant fragments of a Troy Book (see the prefatory note to No. VII), and others with (2) *The Stewartis Oryginalle*.

*The Bruce* is found in two late MSS., both copied by John Ramsay; the first, St. John's College, Cambridge, MS. G 23, in the year 1487; the second, now at the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, in 1489. It has been edited by Skeat for the Early English Text Society, and for the Scottish Text Society. The poem is valuable for the history, more especially the traditional history, of the period 1304-33. Barbour speaks of it as a romance, and the freedom and vividness of the narrative, with its hero-worship of Robert Bruce and Douglas, place it well above the ordinary chronicle. But far from disclaiming historical accuracy, Barbour prides himself that truth well told should have a double claim to popularity:

Storys to rede ar delitabill  
 Suppos that thai be nocht bot fabill:  
 Than suld storys that suthfast wer,  
 And thai war said on gud maner,  
 Hawe doubill plesance in heryng:  
 The fyrst plesance is the carpyng,  
 And the tothir the suthfastnes,  
 That schawys the thing rycht as it wes.

He did not misjudge the taste of his country, and *The Bruce*, with which the Scottish contribution to English literature begins, long held its place as the national epic of Scotland.

The specimen describes an incident in the unsuccessful siege of Berwick, 1319.

## THE BRUCE, Bk. xvii, ll. 593 ff.

St. John's College (Cambridge) MS. G 23 (A.D. 1487).

	Thai <that> at the sege lay, Or it wes passit the fift day, Had maid thame syndry apparale To gang eftsonis till assale.	5
	Of gret gestis ane sow thai maid That stalward heling owth it had, With armyt men enew tharin, And instrumentis als for to myne. Syndry scaffatis thai maid vithall That war weill hyar than the wall, And ordanit als that by the se The toune suld weill assalzeit be.	10
	And thai vithin that saw thame swa So gret apparale schap till ma, Throu <i>Crabbis</i> consale, that ves sle, Ane cren thai haf gert dres vp hye, Rynand on quhelis, that thai mycht bring It quhar neid war of mast helping. And pik and ter als haf thai tane, And lynt <and> hardis, with brynstane, And dry treis that weill wald byrne, And mellit syne athir othir in;	15 20
[109]	And gret flaggatis tharof thai maid, Gyrdit with irnebandis braid; Of thai flaggatis mycht mesurit be Till a gret twynnys quantité. Thai flaggatis, byrnand in a baill, With thair cren thocht thai till avail, And, gif the sow come to the wall, Till lat thame byrnand on hir fall, And with ane stark cheyne hald thame thar Quhill all war brint <vp> that ves thar.	25 30
	Engynys alsua for till cast Thai ordanit and maid redy fast, And set ilk man syne till his ward; And Schir Valter, the gude Steward,	35

With armyt men suld ryde about,  
And se quhar at thar var mast dout,  
And succur thar with his menꝝhe.

And quhen thai into sic degré  
Had maid thame for thair assaling,  
On the Rude-evyn in the dawning,  
The Inglis host blew till assale.  
Than mycht men with ser apparale  
Se that gret host cum sturdely.  
The toune enveremyt thai in hy,  
And assalit with sa gud will,—  
For all thair mycht thai set thartill,—  
That thai thame pressit fast of the toune.

Bot thai that can thame abandoune  
Till ded, or than till woundis sare,  
So weill has thame defendit thare  
That ledderis to the ground thai slang,  
And vith stanys so fast thai dang  
Thair fais, that feill thai left lyand,  
Sum ded, sum hurt, and sum swavnand.

[110]

Bot thai that held on fut in hy  
Drew thame away deliuerly,  
And skunnyrrit tharfor na kyn thing,  
Bot went stoutly till assalyng;  
And thai abovin defendit ay,  
And set thame till so harde assay,  
*Quhill* that feill of thame voundit war,  
*And* thai so gret defens maid thar,  
That thai styntit thair fais mycht.  
Apon sic maner can thai ficht  
Quhill it wes neir noyne of the day.

Than thai without, in gret aray,  
Pressit thair sow toward the wall;  
And thai within weill soyne gert call  
The engynour that takyne was,  
And gret manans till him mais,  
And swoir that he suld de, bot he  
Provit on the sow sic sutelté  
That he *tofruschy* hir ilke deill.  
And he, that has persaut weill  
That the dede wes neir hym till,  
Bot gif he mycht fulfill thar will,  
Thought that he all his mycht vald do:  
Bendit in gret hy than wes scho,  
And till the sow wes soyn evin set.  
In hye he gert draw the cleket,  
And smertly swappit out the stane,  
That evyn out our the sow is gane,  
And behynd hir a litill we  
It fell, and than thai cryit hye  
That war in hir: 'Furth to the wall,  
For dreid<les> it is ouris all.'

[111]

The engynour than deliuerly  
Gert bend the gyne in full gret hy,  
And the stane smertly swappit out.  
It flaw <out> quhedirand with a rout,  
And fell richt evin befor the sow.  
Thair hertis than begouth till grow,

Bot zeit than with thair mychtis all  
Thai pressit the sow toward the wall,  
And has hir set [tharto](#) iuntly.

95

The gynour than gert bend in hy  
The gyne, and swappit out the stane,  
That evin toward the lift is gane,  
And with gret wecht syne duschit doune  
Richt by the wall, in a randoune,  
That hyt the sow in sic maner  
That it that wes the mast summer,  
And starkast for till stynt a strak,  
In swndir with that dusche he brak.  
The men ran out in full gret hy,  
And on the wallis thai can cry  
That 'thair sow ferryit wes thair!'

100

105

Iohne Crab, that had his geir all 3ar,  
In his faggatis has set the fyre,  
And our the wall syne can thame wyre,  
And brynt the sow till brandis bair.

110

With all this fast assal3eand war  
The folk without, with felloune ficht;  
And thai within with mekill mycht  
Defendit manfully thar stede  
Intill gret auentur of dede.

115

The schipmen with gret apparale  
Com with thair schippes till assale,  
With top-castellis warnist weill,  
And wicht men armyt intill steill;  
Thair batis vp apon thair mastis  
Drawyn weill hye and festnyt fast is,  
And pressit with that gret atour  
Toward the wall. Bot the gynour  
Hit in ane hespyne with a stane,  
And the men that war tharin gane

120

125

[Sum dede](#), *sum* dosnyt, <come doun> vyndland.  
Fra thine furth durst nane tak vpon hand  
With schippes pres thame to the vall.

130

But the laiff war assal3eand all  
On ilk a syde sa egyrly,  
That certis it wes gret ferly  
That thai folk sic defens has maid,  
For the gret myscheif that thai had:  
For thair wallis so law than weir  
That a man richt weill with a sper  
Micht strik ane othir vp in the face,  
As eir befor tald till 3ow was;  
And feill of thame war woundit sare,  
And the layf so fast travaland war  
That nane had tume rest for till ta,  
Thair aduersouris assail3eit swa.

135

140

Thai war within sa stratly stad  
That thar wardane with [him](#) had  
Ane hundreth men in cumpany  
Armyt, that wicht war and hardy,  
And raid about for till se quhar  
That his folk hardest pressit war,  
Till releif thame that had mister,  
Com syndry tymes in placis ser

145

150

Quhar sum of the defensouris war  
 All dede, and othir woundit sare,  
 Swa that he of his cumpany 155  
 Behufit to leiff thair party;  
 Swa that, be he ane cours had maid  
 About, *of* all *the* men he had  
 Thair wes levit with him bot ane,  
 That he ne had thame left ilkane 160  
 To releve quhar he saw mister.

And the folk that assalzeand wer  
 At Mary-3et behevin had  
 The barras, and a fyre had maid  
 At the drawbrig, and brynt it doune, 165  
 And war thringand in gret foysoune  
 Richt in the 3et, ane fire till ma.  
 And thai within gert smertly ga  
 Ane to the wardane, for till say  
 How thai war set in hard assay. 170  
 And quhen Schir Valter Steward herd  
 How men sa stratly with thame ferd,  
 He gert cum of the castell then  
 All that war thar of armyt men,—  
 For thar that day assalzeit nane,— 175  
 And with that rout in hy is gane  
 Till Mary-3et, and till the wall  
 Is went, and saw the myscheif all,  
 And vmbethoucht hym suddandly,  
 Bot gif gret help war set in hy 180  
 Tharto, thai suld burne vp the 3et  
*With* the fire *he* fand tharat.

Tharfor apon gret hardyment  
 He suddanly set his entent,  
 And gert all wyde set vp the 3et, 185  
 And the fyre that he fand tharat  
 With strinth of men he put away.  
 He set hym in full hard assay,  
 For thai that war assalzeand thar  
 Pressit on hym with vapnys bair, 190  
 And he defendit with all his mycht.

Thar mycht men se a felloune sicht:  
 With staffing, stoking, and striking  
 Thar maid thai sturdy defending,  
 For with gret strynth of men the 3et 195  
 Thai defendit, and stude tharat,  
 Magré thair fais, quhill the nycht  
 Gert thame on bath halfis leif the ficht.

15 [Crabbis](#)] Craggis *MS.*: Crabys *MS.* *Edinburgh.*

63 [Quhill](#)] How *MS.*

64 [And](#)] þat *MS.*

75 [tofruschyt](#)] till frusche *MS.*

97 [tharto](#)] þar in *MS.*

129 [Sum dede dosnyt sum dede vyndland](#) *MS.*

146 [him](#)] þame *MS.*

158 [of](#)] to *MS.* the] to *MS.*

182 [With](#)] And *MS.* he fand] haffand *MS.*

# JOHN WICLIF

## D. 1384.

Like Richard Rolle, Wiclif was a Yorkshireman by birth. Of his career at Oxford little is known until 1360, when he is described as 'master of Balliol'. From Balliol he was presented to the living of Fillingham, and, after a series of preferments, he accepted in 1374 the rectory of Lutterworth, which he held till his death in 1384.

Wiclif's life was stormy. His acknowledged pre-eminence as a theologian and doctor in the University did not satisfy his active and combative mind. 'False peace', he said, 'is grounded in rest with our enemies, when we assent to them without withstanding; and sword against such peace came Christ to send.' He lacked neither enemies nor the moral courage to withstand them.

At first, under the powerful patronage of John of Gaunt, he entered into controversies primarily political, opposing the right of the Pope to make levies on England, which was already overburdened with war-taxation, and to appoint foreigners to English benefices. On these questions popular opinion was on his side.

He proceeded to attack the whole system of Church government, urging disendowment; rejecting the papal authority, which had been weakened in 1378 by the fierce rivalry of Urban VI and Clement VII; attacking episcopal privileges, the established religious orders, and the abuse of indulgences, pardons, and sanctuary. Still his opinions found a good deal of popular and political support.

[116]

Then in 1380 he publicly announced his rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation. From the results of such a heresy his friends could no longer protect him. Moderate opinion became alarmed and conservative after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Richard II was no friend of heretics. John of Gaunt, himself unpopular by this time, commanded silence. And in 1382 the secular party in Oxford were compelled, after a struggle, to condemn and expel their favourite preacher and his followers. Wiclif retired to Lutterworth, and continued, until struck down by paralysis in the last days of 1384, to inspire his 'poor preachers'—the founders of the Lollard sect which lived on to join forces with Lutheranism in the sixteenth century—and to develop in a series of Latin and English works the doctrines that later came to be associated with Puritanism.

His authorship is often doubtful. In the interests of orthodoxy the early MSS. of his writings were ruthlessly destroyed, as in the famous bonfire of his works at Carfax, Oxford, in 1411. And his followers included not only the simple folk from whom later the 'poor priests' were recruited, but able University men, trained in his new doctrines, bred in the same traditions, and eager to emulate their master in controversy. So his share in the famous Wiclif Bible (ed. Forshall and Madden, Oxford 1850) is still uncertain. Part of the translation seems to have been made by Nicholas of Hereford, and a later recension is claimed for another Oxford disciple, John Purvey. But Wiclif probably inspired the undertaking, for to him, as to the later Puritans, the word of the Bible was the test by which all matters of belief, ritual, and Church government must be tried; and he was particularly anxious, in opposition to the established clergy and the friars, that laymen should read it in their own language. Contemporaries, friend and foe, ascribe the actual translation to him. John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, who was martyred in 1416 for teaching Wiclif's doctrines, states that Wiclif 'translated all the Bible into English'. Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, is equally positive when he writes to the Pope in 1412 that 'the son of the Old Serpent filled up the cup of his malice against Holy Church by the device of a new translation of the Scriptures into his native tongue'.

The first selection, chapter xv of the *De Officio Pastoralis* (ed. Matthew, pp. 429 f.), states the case for translation. In the second (ed. Matthew, pp. 188 ff.) some essential points of Wiclif's teaching are explained.

[117]

In abuse of his opponents he maintains the sturdy tradition of controversy that still survives in Milton's prose. The style is rugged and vigorous; the thought logical and packed close. And it is easy to see the source of his strength. In an age whose evils were patent to all, many reprov'd this or that particular abuse, but the system as a whole passed unchallenged. Wiclif, almost alone in his generation, had the reasoning power to go to the root of the matter, and the moral courage not only to state fearlessly what, rightly or wrongly, he found to be the source of evil, but to insist on basic reform. It is difficult nowadays, when modern curiosity has made familiar the practice of mining among the foundations of beliefs, society, and government, to realize the force of authority that was ranged against unorthodox reformers in the fourteenth century. If the popular support he received indicates that this force was already weakening, Wiclif must still be reckoned among the greatest of those who broke the way for the modern world.

## A. THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

### *De Officio Pastoralis, chap. xv.*

#### MS. Ashburnham XXVII (15th century).

Ant heere þe freris wiþ þer fautours seyn þat it is heresy to write þus Goddis lawe in English, and make it knowun to lewid men. And fourty signes þat þey bringen for to shewe an heretik ben not worþy to rehearse, for nouzt groundiþ hem but nygromansye.



It semyþ first þat þe wit of Goddis lawe shulde be tauzt in þat tunge þat is more knowun, for þis wit is Goddis word. Whanne Crist seiþ in þe Gospel þat boþe heuene and erþe shulen passe, but His wordis shulen not passe, He vndirstondith bi His woordis His wit. And þus Goddis wit is Hooly Writ, þat may on no maner be fals. Also þe Hooly Gost 3af to apostlis wit at Wit Sunday for to knowe al maner langagis, to teche þe puple Goddis lawe þerby; and so God wolde þat þe puple were tauzt Goddis lawe in dyuerse tungis. But what man, on Goddis half, shulde reuerse Goddis ordenaunse and His wille?

[118]

And for þis cause Seynt Ierom trauelide and translatide þe Bible fro dyuerse tungis into Lateyn, þat it myzte be aftir translatid to opere tungis. And þus Crist and His apostlis tauzten þe puple in þat tunge þat was moost knowun to þe puple. Why shulden not men do nou so?

And herfore autours of þe newe law, þat weren apostlis of Iesu Crist, writen þer Gospels in dyuerse tungis þat weren more knowun to þe puple.

Also þe worþy reume of Fraunse, notwipstondinge alle lettingis, haþ translatid þe Bible and þe Gospels, wip opere trewe sentensis of doctours, out of Lateyn into Freynsch. Why shulden not Englizschemen do so? As lordis of Englund han þe Bible in Freynsch, so it were not azenus resoun þat þey hadden þe same sentense in Englizsch; for þus Goddis lawe wolde be betere knowun, and more trowid, for onehed of wit, and more acord be bitwixe reumes.

And herfore freris han tauzt in Englund þe Paternoster in Englizsch tunge, as men seyen in þe pley of 3ork, and in many opere cuntreys. Siþen þe Paternoster is part of Matheus Gospel, as clerkis knowen, why may not al be turnyd to Englizsch trowely, as is þis part? Specialy siþen alle Cristen men, lerid and lewid, þat shulen be sauyd, moten algatis sue Crist, and knowe His lore and His lif. But þe comyns of Englizschmen knowen it best in þer modir tunge; and þus it were al oon to lette sicke knowing of þe Gospel and to lette Englizsch men to sue Crist and come to heuene.

Wel y woot defaute may be in vntrewe translating, as myzten haue be many defaultis in turnyng fro Ebreu into Greu, and fro Greu into Lateyn, and from o langage into anoþer. But lyue men good lif, and studie many persones Goddis lawe, and whanne chaungyng of wit is foundun, amende þey it as resoun wole.

[119]

Sum men seyn þat freris trauelen, and þer fautours, in þis cause for þre chesouns, þat y wole not aferme, but God woot wher þey ben soþe. First þey wolden be seun so nedeful to þe Englizschmen of oure reume þat singularly in her wit layz þe wit of Goddis lawe, to telle þe puple Goddis lawe on what maner euere þey wolden. And þe secound cause herof is seyde to stonde in þis sentense: freris wolden lede þe puple in techinge hem Goddis lawe, and þus þei wolden teche sum, and sum hide, and docke sum. For þanne defaultis in þer lif shulden be lesse knowun to þe puple, and Goddis lawe shulde be vntreweliere knowun boþe bi clerkis and bi comyns. Þe þridde cause þat men asprien stondiþ in þis, as þey seyn: alle þes newe ordris dreden hem þat þer synne shulde be knowun, and hou þei ben not groundid in God to come into þe chirche; and þus þey wolden not for drede þat Goddis lawe were knowun in Englizsch; but þey myzten putte heresyne on men 3if Englizsch toolde not what þey seyden.

God moue lordis and bischops to stonde for knowing of His lawe!

## B. OF FEIGNED CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE.

### Corpus Christi College (Cambridge) MS. 296 (1375-1400), p. 165.

Of feyned contemplatif lif, of song, of þe Ordynal of Salisbury, and of bodely almes and worldly bysynesse of prestis; hou bi þes foure þe fend lettib hem fro prechyng of þe Gospel.—

First, whanne trewe men techen bi Goddis lawe wit and reson, þat eche prest owiþ to do his myzt, his wit, and his wille to preche Cristis Gospel, þe [fend](#) blyndiþ ypocritis to excuse hem by feyned contemplatif lif, and to seie þat, siþ it is þe beste, and þei may not do boþe togidre, þei ben nedid for charité of God to leue þe prechyng of þe Gospel, and lyuen in contemplacion.

[120]

See nowe þe ypocrisie of þis false seiynge. Crist tauzt and dide þe beste lif for prestis, as oure feiþ techiþ, siþ He was God and myzte not erre. But Crist preched þe Gospel, and charged alle His apostlis and disciplis to goo and preche þe Gospel to alle men. Þan it is þe beste lif for prestis in þis world to preche þe Gospel.

Also God in þe olde lawe techiþ þat þe office of a prophete is to schewe to þe peple here foule synnys. But eche prest is a prophete bi his ordre, as Gregory seyþ vpon þe Gospels. Þanne it is þe office of eche prest to preche and telle þe synnys of þe peple; and in þis manere schal eche prest be an aungel of God, as Holy Writt seiþ.

Also Crist and Ion Baptist leften desert and precheden þe Gospel to here deþ þerfore; and þis was most charité; for ellis þei weren out of charité, or peierid in charité, þat myzte not be in hem boþe, siþ þe ton was God, and no man after Crist was holyere þan Baptist, and he synned not for þis prechyng.

Also þe holy prophete Ieromye, halwid in his moder wombe, myzte not be excused fro

prechyng bi his contemplacion, but chargid of God to preche þe synnes of þe peple, and suffre peyne þerfore, and so weren alle þe prophetis of God.

A Lord! siþ Crist and Ion Baptist and alle þe prophetis of God weren nedid bi charité to come out of desert to preche to þe peple, and leue here sol<it>arie preiere, hou dore we fonnyd heretikys seie þat it is betre to be stille, and preie oure owen fonnyd ordynaunce, þan to preche Cristis Gospel?

Lord! what cursed spirit of lesyngis stirip prestis to close hem in stonys or wallis for al here lif, siþ Crist comaundiþ to alle His apostlis and prestis to goo into alle þe world and preche þe Gospel. Certis þei ben opyn foolis, and don pleylnly azenst Cristis Gospel; and, 3if þei meyntenen þis errour, þei ben cursed of <God>, and ben perilous ypocritis and heretikis also. And siþ men ben holden heretikis þat done azenst þe popis lawe, <and þe beste part of þe popis lawe> seiþ pleylnly þat eche þat comeþ to presthod takiþ þe office of a bedele, or criere, to goo bifore Domesday to crie to þe peple here synnes and vengauce of God, whi ben not þo prestis heretikis þat leuen to preche Cristis Gospel, and compelle oþere treue men to leue prechyng of þe Gospel? Siþ þis lawe is Seynt Gregoryes lawe, groundid opynly in Goddis lawe and reson and charité; and oþere lawes of þe peple ben contrarie to Holy Writt and reson and charité, for to meyntene pride and coueitise of Anticristis worldly clerkis.

But ypocritis allegen þe Gospel,—þat Magdaleyne chees to hereself þe beste part whanne she saat bisiden Cristis feet and herde His word. Soþ it is þat þis meke sittynge and deuout herynge of Cristis wordis was best to Magdeleyne, for sche hadde not office of prechyng as prestis han, siþ sche was a womman, þat hadde not auctorité of Goddis lawe to teche and preche opynly. But what is þis dede to prestis, þat han expresse þe comaundement of God and men to preche þe Gospel? Where þei wolen alle be wommen in ydelnesse, and suen not Iesu Crist in lif and prechyng þe Gospel, þat He comandip Hymself boþe in þe olde lawe and newe?

Also þis pesible herynge of Cristis word and brennyng loue þat Magdeleyne hadde was þe beste part, for it schal be ende in heuene of good lif in þis world. But in þis world þe beste lif for prestis is holy lif in keyynge Goddis hestis, and trewe prechyng of þe Gospel, as Crist dide, and chargid alle His prestis to do <þe same>. And þes ypocritis wenen þat here dremys and fantasies of hemself ben contemplacion, and þat prechyng of þe Gospel be actif lif; and so þei menen þat Crist tok þe worse lif for þis world, and nedid alle His prestis to leue þe betre and take þe worse lif; and þus þes fonnyd ypocritis putten errour in Iesu Crist. But who ben more heretikis?

Also þes blynde ypocritis alleggen þat Crist biddip vs preie euermore, and Poul biddip þat we preie wiþoute lettynge, and þan we prestis may not preche, as þei feynen falsly. But here þes ypocritis schullen wite þat Crist and Poul vnderstonden of preiere of holy lif, þat eche man doþ as longe as he dwellip in charité; and not of babelyng of lippis, þat no man may euere do wiþouten cessynge; for ellis no man in þis world myzte fulfille þe comaundement of Crist; and þis techip Austyn and oþere seyntis.

And siþ men þat fulfillen not Goddis lawe, and ben out of charité, ben not acceptid in here preiyng of lippis,—for here preiere in lippis is abhomynable, as Holy Writt seiþ bi Salomon,—þes prestis þat prechen not þe Gospel, as Crist biddip, ben not able to preie <God> for mercy, but disceyuen hemself and þe peple, and dispisen God, and stiren Hym to wrapþe and vengauce, as Austyn and Gregory and oþere seyntis techen.

And princpaly þes ypocritis þat han rentes, and worldly lordschipes, and parische chirchis appropid to hem, azenst Holy Writt boþe old and newe, by symonye and lesyngis on Crist and His apostelis, for stynkyng gronyngys and abite of holynesse, and for distroyng of Goddis ordynaunce, and for singuler profession maade to foolis and, in cas, to fendis of helle,—þes foolis schullen lerne what is actif lif and contemplatif bi Goddis lawe, and þanne þei myzten wite þat þei han neiþer þe ton ne þe toþer, siþ þei chargen more weyn statutis of synful men, and, in cas, <of> deuelys, þan þei chargen þe heste of God, and werkis of mercy, and poyntis of charité. And þe fende blyndip hem so moche, þat þei seyn indede þat þei moten neuere preie to p/lesyng of God, siþ þei vnablen hemself to do þe office of prestis bi Goddis lawe, and purposen to ende in here feyned deuocion, þat is blasphemye to God.

Also bi song þe fend lettip men to studie and preche þe Gospel; for siþ mannys wittis ben of certeyn mesure and myzt, þe more þat þei ben occupied aboute siche mannus song, þe lesse moten þei be sette aboute Goddis lawe. For þis stirip men to pride, and iolité, and oþere synnys, and so vnableþ hem many gatis to vnderstonde and kepe Holy Writt, þat techeþ mekenesse, mornynge for oure synnys and oþere mennus, and stable lif, and charité. And 3it God in all þe lawe of grace chargip not siche song, but deuocion in herte, trewe techynge, and holy spekyng in tonge, and goode werkis, and holy lastynge in charité and mekenesse. But mannus foly and pride stieþ vp euere more and more in þis weyn nouelrie.

First men ordeyned songe of mornynge whanne þei weren in prison, for techynge of þe Gospel, as Ambrose, as men seyn, to putte away ydelnesse, and to be not vnoccupied in goode manere for þe tyme. And þat songe and our<e> acordip not, for oure stirip to iolité and pride, and here stirip to mornynge, and to dwelle lenger in wordis of Goddis lawe. Þan were matynys, and masse, and euensong, placebo and dirige, and comendacion, and matynes of Oure Lady, ordeyned of synful men to be songen wiþ heize cryng, to lette men fro þe sentence and vnderstondynge of þat þat was þus songen, and to maken men wery,

and vndisposid to studie Goddis lawe for akyng of hedis. And of schort tyme þanne  
<weren> more veyn iapis founden: deschaunt, countre note, and orgon, and smale  
brekyng, þat stirþ veyn men to daunsynge more þan <to> mornynge; and herefore ben  
many proude lorelis founden and dowid wiþ temperal and worldly lordschippis and gret  
cost. But þes foolis schulden drede þe scharpe wordis of Austyn, þat seiþ: 'As oft as þe song  
likþ me more þan doþ þe sentence þat is songen, so oft I confesse þat I synne greuously.'

[124] And 3if þes knackeris excusen hem bi song in þe olde lawe, seiþ þat Crist, þat best kepte  
þe olde lawe as it schulde be aftirward, tauzt not ne chargid vs wiþ sich bodely song, ne ony  
of His apostlis, but wiþ deuocion in herte, and holy lif, and trewe prechyng, and þat is  
ynowþ3 and þe beste. But who schulde þanne charge vs wiþ more, oure þe fredom and  
liztnesse of Cristis lawe?

And 3if þei seyn þat angelis heryen God bi song in heuene, seiþ þat we kunnen not þat  
song; but þei ben in ful victorie of here enemys, and we ben in perilous *bataile*, and in þe  
valey of wepyng and mornynge; and oure song lettþ vs fro betre occupacion, and stirþ  
vs to many grete synnes, and to forzete vs self.

But oure flecshly peple haþ more lykyng in here bodely eris in sich knackyng and  
taterynge, þan in heryng of Goddis lawe, and spekyng of þe blisse of heuene; for þei  
wolen hire proude prestis and oþere lorelis þus to knacke notis for many markis and  
poundis. But þei wolen not 3eue here almes to prestis and children to lerne and teche  
Goddis lawe. And þus, bi þis nouelrie of song, is Goddis lawe vnstudied and not kepte, and  
pride and oþere grete synnys meyntenyd.

And þes fonnyd lordis and peple gessen to haue more þank of God, and <to> worschipe  
Hym more, in haldynge vp of here owen nouelries wiþ grete cost, þan in lernynge, and  
techyng, and meyntenynge of his lawe, and his seruauntis, and his ordynaunce. But where  
is more disceit in feiþ, hope and charité? For whanne þer ben fourty or fyfty in a queer, þre  
or foure proude lorellis schullen knacke þe most deuout seruyce þat no man schal here þe  
sentence, and alle oþere schullen be doumbe, and loken on hem as foolis. And þanne  
strumpatis and þeuys preisen Sire Iacke, or Hobbe, and Williem þe proude clerk, hou smale  
þei knacken here notis; and seyn þat þei seruen wel God and Holy Chirche, whanne þei  
dispisen God in his face, and letten oþere Cristene men of here deuocion and compunccion,  
and stiren hem to worldly vanyté. And þus trewe seruyce of God is lettid, and þis veyn  
knackyng for oure iolité and pride is praised abouen þe mone.

[125] Also þe Ordynalle of Salisbry lettþ moche prechyng of þe Gospel; for folis chargen þat  
more þan þe maundementis of God, and to studie and teche Cristis Gospel. For 3if a man  
faile in his Ordynale, men holden þat grete synne, and reprouen hym þerof faste; but 3if a  
preste breke þe hestis of God, men chargen þat litel or nouzt. And so 3if prestis seyn here  
matynes, masse, and euensong aftir Salisbry vsse, þei hemself and oþere men demen it is  
ynow3, þouþ þei neiþer preche ne teche þe hestis of God and þe Gospel. And þus þei wenen  
þat it is ynow3 to fulfille synful mennus ordynaunce, and to leue þe ri3tfulleste ordynaunce  
of God, þat He chargid prestis to performe.

But, Lord! what was prestis office ordeyned bi God bifore þat Salisbry vss was maad of  
proude prestis, coueitous and dronkelewe? Where God, þat dampneþ alle ydelnesse,  
*chargid* hem not at þe ful wiþ þe beste occupacion for hemself and oþere men? Hou doren  
synful folis chargen Cristis prestis wiþ so moche nouelrie, and euermore cloute more to, þat  
þei may not frely do Goddis ordynaunce? For þe Iewis in þe olde lawe haden *not so* manye  
serymonyes of sacrifices ordeyned bi God as prestis han now ri3ttis and reulis maade of  
synful men. And 3it þe olde lawe in þes charious customes mosten nedes cesse for fredom  
of Cristis Gospel. But þis fredom is more don awei bi þis nouelrie þan bi customes of þe  
olde lawe. And þus many grete axen where a prest may, wiþouten dedly synne, seiþ his  
masse wiþouten matynys; and þei demen it dedly synne a prest to fulfille þe ordynaunce of  
God in his fredom, wiþoute nouelrie of synful men, þat lettþ prestis fro þe betre  
occupacion; as 3if þei demen it dedly synne to leue þe worse þing, and take þe betre,  
whanne þei may not do boþe togidre.

[126] And þus, Lord! Þin owen ordynaunce þat Þou madist for Þi prestis is holden errour, and  
distroied for þe fonnyd nouelrie of synful foolis, and, in cas, of fendis in helle.

But here men moste be war þat vnder colour of þis fredom þei ben betre occupied in þe  
lawe of God to studie it and teche it, and not slou3 ne ydel in ouermoche sleep, and vanyté,  
and oþer synnes, for þat is þe fendis panter.

See now þe blyndnesse of þes foolis. Þei seyn þat a prest may be excused fro seiynge of  
masse, þat God comaundid Himself to þe substance þerof, so þat he here on. But he schal  
not be excused but 3if he seiþ matynes and euensong himself, þat synful men han ordeyned;  
and þus þei chargen more here owene fyndynge þan Cristis comaundement.

A Lord! 3if alle þe studie and traueile þat men han now abowte Salisbry vss, wiþ  
multitude *of* newe costly portos, antifeners, graielis, and alle oþere bokis, weren turned into  
makyng of biblis, and in studyng and techyng þerof, hou moche schulde Goddis lawe be  
forþered, and knowen, and kept, and now in so moche it is hyndrid, vnstudied, and vnkept.  
Lord! hou schulden riche men ben excused þat costen so moche in grete schapellis, and  
costy bokis of mannus ordynaunce, for fame and nobleie of þe world, and wolen not spende  
so moche aboute bokis of Goddis lawe, and for to studie hem and teche hem: siþ þis were  
wiþoute comparison betre on alle siddis, and ly3ttere, and sykerere?

But 3it men þat knowen þe fredom of Goddis ordynaunce for prestis to be þe beste, wiþ

[127] grete sorow of herte seyn here matynes, masse, and euensong, whanne þei schulden ellis be betre occupied, last þei sclaudren þe sike conscience of here breþeren, þat 3it knowen not Goddis lawe. God brynge þes prestis to þe fredom to studie Holy Writt, and lyue þerafter, and teche it oþer men frely, and to preie as long and as moche as God meueþ hem þerto, and ellis turne to oþere medeful werkis, as Crist and His apostlis diden; and þat þei ben not constrained to blabre alle day wiþ tonge and grete crynge, as pies and iaies, þing þat þei knowen not, and to peiere here owen soule for defaute of wis deuocion and charité! 240 245 250

Also bysynesse of worldly occupacion of prestis lettīþ prechyng of þe Gospel, for þei ben so besy <þer>aboute, and namely in herte, þat þei þenken litel on Goddis lawe, and han no sauour þerto. And seyn þat þei don þus for hospitalité, and to releue pore men wiþ dedis of charité. But, hou euere men speken, it his for here owen couetise, and lustful lif in mete and drynk and precious cloþis, and for name of þe world in fedyng of riche men; and litel or nouzt comeþ frely to pore men þat han most nede. 255

But þes prestis schulden sue Crist in manere of lif and trewe techyng. But Crist lefte sich occupacion, and His apostlis also, and weren betre occupied in holy preiere and trewe techyng of þe Gospel. And þis determinacion and ful sentence was 3ouen of alle þe apostlis togidre, whanne þei hadden resceyued þe plenteuous 3iftis of þe Holy Gost. Lord! where þes worldly prestis <ben> wisere þan ben alle þe apostlis of Crist? It semeth þat þei ben, or ellis <þei ben> foolles. 260 265

Also Crist wolde not take þe kyngdom whan þe puple wolde haue maad Him kyng, as Iones Gospel telleþ. But if it haade be a prestis office to dele aboute þus bodi<ly> almes, Crist, þat coude best haue do þis office, wolde haue take þes temperal goodis to dele hem among pouere men. But He wolde not do þus, but fley, and took no man of þe aposteles wiþ him, so faste He hiede. Lord! where worldly prestis kunnen bettere don þis partinge of worldly goodis [þan](#) Iesu Crist? 270 275

[128] And 3if þei seyn þat Crist fedde þe puple in desert with bodily almes, manye þousand, as þe Gospel saiþ: þat dide Crist by miracle, to shewe His godhede, and to teche prestes hou3 þei schulden fede gostly Cristene men by Goddis word. For so dide Cristis aposteles, and hadde not whereof to do bodily almes, whan þei mi3ten haue had tresour and iuelis ynowe of kynggis and lordis. 280

Also Peter saiþ in Dedis of Apostlis to a pore man þat to him neiþer was gold ne siluer; and 3it he performede wel þe office of a trewe prest. But oure prestis ben so bysye aboute worldly occupacioun þat þei semen bettere bailyues or reues þan gostly prestis of Iesu Crist. For what man is so bysy aboute marchaundise, and oþere worldly doyingis, as ben preostes, þat shulden ben ly3t of heuenly lif to alle men abouten hem? 285 290

But certes þei shulde be as bysy aboute studyng of Goddis lawe, and holy preyer, not of *Famulorum*, but of holy desires, and clene meditacioun of God, and trewe techinge of þe Gospel, as ben laboreris aboute worldly labour for here sustenaunce. And muche more bysie, 3if þei mi3ten, for þey ben more holden for to lyue wel, and <3eue> ensaumple of holi lif to þe puple, and trewe techinge of Holy Writ, þanne þe people is holden to 3yue hem dymes or offringis or ony bodily almes. And þerfore prestis shulde not leue ensaumple of good lif, and studyng of Holi Writ, and trewe techinge þerof, ne <for> bodily almes, ne for worldly goodis, ne for sauynge of here bodily lif. 295 300

And as Crist sauede þe world by writyng and techinge of foure Euaungelistis, so þe fend castēþ to dampne þe world and prestis for lettynge to preche þe Gospel by þes foure: by feyned contemplacioun, by song, by Salisbury vse, and by worldly bysynes of prestis. 305

God for His mercy styre þes prestis to preche þe Gospel in word, in lif; and be war of Sathanas disceitis. Amen. 310

7 [fend](#)] fendis *MS*.

66 [þe](#)] þo *MS*.

67 [pesible](#)] posible *MS*.

69 [world](#)] lif *MS*.

98 [on](#)] & *MS*.

100 [for](#) (1st)] fro *MS*.

105 [of](#) (1st)] & *MS*.

108 [plesynge](#)] preisyng *MS. altered later*.

126 [as](#) (2nd)] and *MS*.

128 [oure](#)] oþer *MS*.

154 [bataile](#)] baitale *MS*.

198 [chargid](#)] chargin *MS*.

202 [not so](#)] repeated *MS*.

228 [of](#)] & *MS*.

275 [þan](#)] of *MS*.

## XII

## D. 1408.

John Gower, a Londoner himself, came of a good Kentish family. Chaucer must have known him well, for he chose him as his attorney when leaving for the Continent in 1378, and, with the dedication of *Troilus and Criseyde*, labelled him for ever as 'moral Gower'. Gower's marriage with Agnes Groundolf, probably a second marriage, is recorded in 1398. Blindness came on him a few years later. His will, dated August 15, 1408, was proved on October 24, 1408, so that his death must fall between those two points. By his own wish he was buried in St. Saviour's, Southwark, the church of the canons of St. Mary Overy, to whom he was a liberal benefactor.

On his tomb in St. Saviour's Church, Gower is shown with his head resting on three great volumes, representing his principal works—the *Speculum Meditantis*, the *Vox Clamantis*, and the *Confessio Amantis*.

The *Speculum Meditantis*, or *Mirour de l'Omme*, is a handbook of sins and sinners, written in French.

The *Vox Clamantis*, written in Latin, covers similar ground. Opening with a vision of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, the poet passes in review the faults of the different grades of society—clergy, nobles, labourers, traders, lawyers—and ends with an admonition to the young King Richard II.

In his English work, the *Confessio Amantis*, he expressly abandons the task of setting the world to rights, and promises to change his style henceforth. Now he will sing of Love. The machinery of the poem is suggested by the great source of mediaeval conventions, the *Roman de la Rose*. On a May morning the poet, a victim of love, wanders afield and meets the Queen of Love (cp. the beginning of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*). She bids him confess to her priest Genius. Genius hears the confession, sustaining with some incongruity the triple rôle of high priest of Love, Christian moralist, and entertainer—for it is he who tells the stories which, woven about the frame work of the Seven Deadly Sins, make the real matter of the poem.

The first form of the *Confessio* was completed in 1390. It contains a Prologue in which the suggestion for the poem is ascribed to Richard II, and an Epilogue in his praise. In this version the Queen of Love at parting gives Gower a message for Chaucer:

And gret wel Chaucer whan ye mete,  
As mi disciple and mi poete:  
For in the floures of his youthe  
In sondri wise, as he wel couthe,  
Of ditees and of songes glade,  
The whiche he for mi sake made,  
The lond fulfild is overal.  
Wherof to him in special  
Above alle othre I am most holde.  
Forthi now, in hise daies olde,  
Thow schalt him telle this message,  
That he upon his latere age,  
To sette an ende of alle his werk,  
As he which is myn owne clerk,  
Do make his testament of love,  
As thou hast do thi schrifte above,  
So that mi Court it mai recorde.

In the final form, completed in 1392-3, Richard's name disappears from the Prologue; the dedication to his popular rival, Henry of Lancaster, is made prominent; the eulogy in the Epilogue is dropped; and with it the compliment to Chaucer. Whether this last omission is due to chance, or to some change in the relations between the two poets, is not clear.

In his own day Gower was ranked with Chaucer. His reputation was still high among the Elizabethans; and he has the distinction of appearing as Chorus in a Shakespearian play—*Pericles*—of which his story of *Apollonius of Tyre*, in Bk. viii of the *Confessio*, was the immediate source.

A selection gives a very favourable impression of his work. He has a perfect command of the octosyllabic couplet; an easy style, well suited to narrative; and a classic simplicity of expression for which the work of his predecessors in Middle English leaves us unprepared. Throughout the whole of the *Confessio Amantis*, more than 30,000 lines, the level of workmanship is remarkable, and almost every page shows some graceful and poetical verses.

Yet the poem as a whole suffers from the fault that Gower tried to avoid:

It dulleth ofte a mannes wit  
To him that schal it aldai rede.

One defect, obvious to a modern reader, would hardly be noticed by his contemporaries: he often incorporates in his poetry matter proper only to an encyclopaedia, such as the discourse on the religions of the world in Bk. v, or that on Philosophy in Bk. vii. Another is more radical: for all his wide reading, his leading ideas lack originality. It is hardly a travesty to say that the teaching of

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his works amounts to this: 'In the moral world, avoid the Seven Deadly Sins in the five sub-classifications of each; in the political world keep your degree without presuming'. Such a negative and conventional message cannot sustain the fabric of three long poems. Their polished and facile moralizing becomes almost exasperating if it be remembered that the poet wrote when a whole system of society was falling, and falling noisily, about him. Modern taste rejects Gower the moralist and political writer, and his claim to present as apart from historical value rests on the delightful single stories which served as embroidery to his serious themes.

The extracts are taken from the admirable edition by G. C. Macaulay: 'The Works of John Gower', 4 vols., Oxford 1899-1902.

## A. CEIX AND ALCEONE.

From Bk. iv, ll. 2927 ff.

This finde I write in Poesie:

Ceïx the king of Trocinie  
Hadde Alceone to his wif,  
Which as hire oghne hertes lif  
[132] Him loveth; and he hadde also 5  
A brother, which was cleped tho  
Dedalion, and he per cas  
Fro kinde of man forschape was  
Into a goshauk of liknesse;  
Wherof the king gret hevynesse 10  
Hath take, and thoghte in his corage  
To gon upon a pelrinage  
Into a strange regioun,  
Wher he hath his devocioun  
To don his sacrifice and preie, 15  
If that he mihte in eny weie  
Toward the goddes finde grace  
His brother hele to purchace,  
So that he mihte be reformed  
Of that he hadde be transformed. 20  
To this pourpos and to this ende  
This king is redy for to wende,  
As he which wolde go be schipe;  
And for to don him felaschipe  
His wif unto the see him broghte, 25  
With al hire herte and him besoghte  
That he the time hire wolde sein  
Whan that he thoghte come azein:  
'Withinne,' he seith, 'tuo monthe day.'  
And thus in al the haste he may 30  
He tok his leve, and forth he seileth,  
Wepende and sche hirsself beweileth,  
And torneth hom, ther sche cam fro.  
Bot whan the monthes were ago,  
The whiche he sette of his comynge, 35  
And that sche herde no tydinge,  
Ther was no care for to seche:  
Wherof the goddes to beseche  
[133] Tho sche began in many wise, 40  
And to Iuno hire sacrificise  
Above alle othre most sche dede,  
And for hir lord sche hath so bede  
To wite and knowe hou that he ferde,  
That Iuno the goddesse hire herde,  
Anon and upon this matiere 45  
Sche bad Yris hir messagere

To Slepeshous that <sc>he schal wende,  
And bidde him that he make an ende,  
Be swevene and schewen al the cas  
Unto this ladi, hou it was.

50

This Yris, fro the hihe stage  
Which undertake hath the message,  
Hire reyny cope dede upon,  
The which was wonderli begon  
With colours of diverse hewe,  
An hundred mo than men it knewe;  
The hevne lich unto a bowe  
Sche bende, and so she cam doun lowe,  
The god of Slep wher that sche fond;  
And that was in a strange lond,  
Which marcheth upon Chymerie:  
For ther, as seith the Poesie,  
The God of Slep hath mad his hous,  
Which of entaille is merveilous.

55

60

Under an hell ther is a cave,  
Which of the sonne mai nocht have,  
So that noman mai knowe ariht  
The point betwen the dai and nyht:  
Ther is no fyr, ther is no sparke,  
Ther is no dore, which mai charke,  
Wherof an yhe scholde unschette,  
So that inward ther is no lette.

65

70

And for to speke of that withoute,  
Ther stant no gret tree nyh aboute  
Wher on ther myhte crowe or pie  
Alihte, for to clepe or crie;  
Ther is no cok to crowe day,  
Ne beste non which noise may;  
The hell bot al aboute round  
Ther is growende upon the ground  
Popi, which berth the sed of slep,  
With othre herbes suche an hep.

75

80

A stille water for the nones  
Rennende upon the smale stones,  
Which hihte of Lethes the rivere,  
Under that hell in such manere  
Ther is, which 3ifh gret appetit  
To slepe. And thus full of delit  
Slep hath his hous; and of his couche  
Withinne his chambre if I schal touche,  
Of hebenus that slepi tree  
The bordes al aboute be,  
And for he scholde slepe softe,  
Upon a fethrebed alofte  
He lith with many a pilwe of doun.  
The chambre is strowed up and doun  
With swevenes many thousandfold.

85

90

95

Thus cam Yris into this hold,  
And to the bedd, which is al blak,  
Sche goth, and ther with Slep sche spak,  
And in the wise as sche was bede  
The message of Iuno sche dede.  
Ful ofte hir wordes sche reherceth,  
Er sche his slepi eres perceth;

100



With mochel wo bot ate laste 105  
 His slombrende yhen he upcaste  
 And seide hir that it schal be do.  
 Wherof among a thousand tho  
 Withinne his hous that slepi were,  
 In special he ches out there 110  
 Thre, whiche scholden do this dede:  
 The ferste of hem, so as I rede,  
 Was Morpheüs, the whos nature  
 Is for to take the figure  
 Of what persone that him liketh, 115  
 Wherof that he ful ofte entriketh  
 The lif which slepe schal be nyhte;  
 And Ithecus that other hihte,  
 Which hath the vois of every soun,  
 The chiere and the condicioun 120  
 Of every lif, what so it is:  
 The thridde suiende after this  
 Is Panthasas, which may transforme  
 Of every thing the rihte forme,  
 And change it in an other kinde. 125  
 Upon hem thre, so as I finde,  
 Of swevenes stant al thapparence,  
 Which other while is evidence,  
 And other while bot a iape.  
 Bot natheles it is so schape, 130  
 That Morpheüs be nyht al one  
 Appiereth until Alceone  
 In liknesse of hir housebonde  
 Al naked ded upon the stronde,  
 And hou he dreynte in special 135  
 These othre tuo it schewen al:  
 The tempeste of the blake cloude,  
 The wode see, the wyndes loude,  
 Al this sche mette, and sih him dyen;  
 Wherof that sche began to crien, 140  
 Slepende abedde ther sche lay,  
 And with that noise of hire affray  
 Hir wommen sterten up aboute,  
 Whiche of here ladi were in doute,  
 And axen hire hou that sche ferde; 145  
 And sche, riht as sche syh and herde,  
 Hir swevene hath told hem everydel:  
 And thei it halsen alle wel  
 And sein it is a tokne of goode.  
 Bot til sche wiste hou that it stode, 150  
 Sche hath no confort in hire herte,  
 Upon the morwe and up sche sterte,  
 And to the see, wher that sche mette  
 The bodi lay, withoute lette  
 Sche drowh, and whan that sche cam nyh, 155  
 Stark ded, hise armes sprad, sche syh  
 Hire lord flietende upon the wawe.  
 Wherof hire wittes ben withdrawe,  
 And sche, which tok of deth no kepe,  
 Anon forth lepte into the depe 160  
 And wolde have cawht him in hire arm.  
 This infortune of double harm

[135]

[136]

The goddes fro the hevene above  
 Behielde, and for the trowthe of love, 165  
 Which in this worthi ladi stod,  
 Thei have upon the salte flod  
 Hire dreinte lord and hire also  
 Fro deth to lyve torned so  
 That thei ben schapen into briddes  
 Swimmende upon the wawe amiddes. 170  
 And whan sche sih hire lord livende  
 In liknesse of a bridd swimmende,  
 And sche was of the same sort,  
 So as sche mihte do desport,  
 [137] Upon the ioie which sche hadde 175  
 Hire wynges bothe abrod sche spradde,  
 And him, so as sche mai suffise,  
 Beclipte and keste in such a wise,  
 As sche was whilom wont to do:  
 Hire wynges for hire armes tuo 180  
 Sche tok, and for hire lippes softe  
 Hire harde bile, and so ful ofte  
 Sche fondeth in hire briddes forme,  
 If that sche mihte hirself conforme  
 To do the plesance of a wif, 185  
 As sche dede in that other lif:  
 For thogh sche hadde hir pouer lore,  
 Hir will stod as it was tofore,  
 And serveth him so as sche mai. 190  
 Wherof into this ilke day  
 Togedre upon the see thei wone,  
 Wher many a dowhter and a sone  
 Thei bringen forth of briddes kinde;  
 And for men scholden take in mynde  
 This Alceoun the trewe queene, 195  
 Hire briddes 3it, as it is seene,  
 Of Alceoun the name bere.

## B. ADRIAN AND BARDUS.

From Bk. v, ll. 4937 ff.

To speke of an unkinde man,  
 I finde hou whilom Adrian,  
 Of Rome which a gret lord was,  
 Upon a day as he per cas  
 To wode in his huntinge wente, 5  
 It hapneth at a soudein wente,  
 [138] After his chace as he poursuieth,  
 Thurgh happ, the which noman eschuieth,  
 He fell unwar into a pet,  
 Wher that it mihte nocht be let. 10  
 The pet was dep and he fell lowe,  
 That of his men non myhte knowe  
 Wher he becam, for non was nyh  
 Which of his fall the meschief syh.  
 And thus al one ther he lay 15  
 Clepende and criende al the day  
 For socour and deliverance,  
 Til a3ein eve it fell per chance,

A while er it began to nyhte,  
 A povere man, which Bardus hihte, 20  
 Cam forth walkende with his asse,  
 And hadde gadred him a tasse  
 Of grene stickes and of dreie  
 To selle, who that wolde hem beie,  
 As he which hadde no liflode, 25  
 Bot whanne he myhte such a lode  
 To toune with his asse carie.  
 And as it fell him for to tarie  
 That ilke time nyh the pet,  
 And hath the trusse faste knet, 30  
 He herde a vois, which cride dimme,  
 And he his ere to the brimme  
 Hath leid, and herde it was a man,  
 Which seide, 'Ha, help hier Adrian,  
 And I wol 3iven half mi good.' 35  
 The povere man this understod,  
 As he that wolde gladly winne,  
 And to this lord which was withinne  
 He spak and seide, 'If I thee save,  
 What sikernesse schal I have 40  
 Of covenant, that afterward  
 Thou wolt me 3ive such reward  
 As thou behihtest nou tofore?'  
 That other hath his othes swore 45  
 Be hevene and be the goddes alle,  
 If that it myhte so befall  
 That he out of the pet him broghte,  
 Of all the goodes whiche he oghte  
 He schal have evene halvendel. 50  
 This Bardus seide he wolde wel;  
 And with this word his asse anon  
 He let untrusse, and therupon  
 Doun goth the corde into the pet,  
 To which he hath at þe ende knet 55  
 A staf, wherby, he seide, he wolde  
 That Adrian him scholde holde.  
 Bot it was tho per chance falle,  
 Into that pet was also falle  
 An ape, which at thilke throwe, 60  
 Whan that the corde cam doun lowe,  
 Al sodeinli therto he skipte  
 And it in bothe hise armes clipte.  
 And Bardus with his asse anon  
 Him hath updrawe, and he is gon. 65  
 But whan he sih it was an ape,  
 He wende al hadde ben a iape  
 Of faierie, and sore him dradde:  
 And Adrian eftsone gradde  
 For help, and cride and preide faste, 70  
 And he eftsone his corde caste;  
 Bot whan it cam unto the grounde,  
 A gret serpent it hath bewounde,  
 The which Bardus anon up drouh.  
 And thanne him thoghte wel ynouh  
 It was fantosme, bot yit he herde 75  
 The vois, and he therto ansuerde,

[139]

[140]

'What wiht art thou in Goddes name?'  
    'I am,' quod Adrian, 'the same,  
Whos good thou schalt have evene half.'  
Quod Bardus, 'Thanne a Goddes half  
The thridde time assaie I schal':  
And caste his corde forth withal  
Into the pet, and whan it cam  
To him, this lord of Rome it nam,  
And therupon him hath adresced,  
And with his hand ful ofte blessed,  
And thanne he bad to Bardus hale.  
And he, which understod his tale,  
Betwen him and his asse, al softe,  
Hath drawe and set him up alofte  
Withouten harm, al esely.

80

85

90

    He seith noght ones 'grant merci,'  
Bot strauhte him forth to the cité,  
And let this povere Bardus be.  
And natheles this simple man  
His covenant, so as he can,  
Hath axed; and that other seide,  
If so be that he him umbreide  
Of oght that hath be speke or do,  
It schal ben venged on him so,  
That him were betre to be ded.

95

100

    And he can tho non other red,  
But on his asse a3ein he caste  
His trusse, and hieth homward faste:  
And whan that he cam hom to bedde,  
He tolde his wif hou that he spedde.  
Bot finaly to speke oght more  
Unto this lord he dradde him sore.  
So that a word ne dorste he sein.

105

110

    And thus upon the morwe a3ein,  
In the manere as I recorde,  
Forth with his asse and with his corde  
To gadre wode, as he dede er,  
He goth; and whan that he cam ner  
Unto the place where he wolde,  
He hath his ape anon beholde,  
Which hadde gadred al aboute  
Of stickes hier and there a route,  
And leide hem redy to his hond,  
Wherof he made his trosse and bond.  
Fro dai to dai and in this wise  
This ape profreth his servise,  
So that he hadde of wode ynouh.

115

120

    Upon a time and as he drouh  
Toward the wode, he sih besyde  
The grete gastli serpent glyde,  
Til that sche cam in his presence,  
And in hir kinde a reverence  
Sche hath him do, and forth withal  
A ston mor briht than a cristall  
Out of hir mouth tofore his weie  
Sche let down falle, and wente aweie  
For that he schal noght ben adrad.  
Tho was this povere Bardus glad,

125

130

Thonkende God and to the ston 135  
He goth and takth it up anon,  
And hath gret wonder in his wit  
Hou that the beste him hath aquit,  
Wher that the mannes sone hath failed,  
For whom he hadde most travailed. 140

Bot al he putte in Goddes hond,  
And torneth hom, and what he fond  
[142] Unto his wif he hath it schewed;  
And thei, that weren bothe lewed,  
Acorden that he scholde it selle. 145  
And he no lengere wolde duelle,  
Bot forth anon upon the tale  
The ston he profreth to the sale;  
And riht as he himself it sette,  
The iueler anon forth fette 150  
The gold and made his paiement;  
Therof was no delaiement.

Thus whan this ston was boght and sold,  
Homward with ioie manyfold  
This Bardus goth; and whan he cam 155  
Hom to his hous and that he nam  
His gold out of his purs, withinne  
He fond his ston also therinne,  
Wherof for ioie his herte pleide,  
Unto his wif and thus he seide, 160  
'Lo, hier my gold, lo, hier mi ston!'  
His wif hath wonder therupon,  
And axeth him hou that mai be.  
'Nou, be mi trouthe! I not,' quod he,  
'Bot I dar swere upon a bok 165  
That to my marchant I it tok,  
And he it hadde whan I wente:  
So knowe I noght to what entente  
It is nou hier, bot it be grace.  
Forthi tomorwe in other place 170  
I wole it fonde for to selle,  
And if it wol noght with him duelle,  
Bot crepe into mi purs azein,  
Than dar I saufly swere and sein  
It is the vertu of the ston.' 175

The morwe cam, and he is gon  
[143] To seche aboute in other stede  
His ston to selle, and he so dede,  
And lefte it with his chapman there.  
Bot whan that he cam elleswhere 180  
In presence of his wif at hom,  
Out of his purs and that he nom  
His gold, he fond his ston withal.  
And thus it fell him overal,  
Where he it solde in sondri place, 185  
Such was the fortune and the grace.

Bot so wel may nothing ben hidd,  
That it nys ate laste kidd:  
This fame goth aboute Rome  
So ferforth that the wordes come 190  
To themperour Iustinian;  
And he let sende for the man,

And axede him hou that it was,  
And Bardus tolde him al the cas,  
Hou that the worm and ek the beste,  
Although thei maden no beheste,  
His travail hadden wel aquit;  
Bot he which hadde a mannes wit,  
And made his covenant be mouthe,  
And swor therto al that he couthe,  
To parte and ȝiven half his good,  
Hath nou forȝete hou that it stod,  
As he which wol no trouthe holde.

195

This Emperour al that he tolde  
Hath herd, and thilke unkindenesse  
He seide he wolde himself redresse.  
And thus in court of iuggement  
This Adrian was thanne assent,  
And the querele in audience  
Declared was in the presence  
Of themperour and many mo;  
Wherof was mochel speche tho  
And gret wondringe among the press.

200

205

210

[144]

Bot ate laste natheles  
For the partie which hath pleined  
The lawe hath diemed and ordeigned  
Be hem that were avised wel,  
That he schal have the halvendel  
Thurghout of Adrianes good.

215

And thus of thilke unkinde blod  
Stant the memoire into this day,  
Wherof that every wys man may  
Ensamplen him, and take in mynde  
What schame it is to ben unkinde;  
Aȝein the which reson debateth,  
And every creature it hateth.

220

225

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## XIII

### JOHN OF TREVISA'S TRANSLATION OF HIGDEN'S POLYCHRONICON

1387.

Ranulph Higden (d. 1364) was a monk of St. Werburgh's at Chester, and has been doubtfully identified with the 'Randal Higden' who is said to have travelled to Rome to get the Pope's consent to the acting of the Chester miracle plays in English.

His *Polychronicon*, so called because it is the chronicle of many ages, is a compilation covering the period from the Creation to 1352. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was the favourite universal history; and the First Book, which deals with general geography, has still a special interest for the light it throws on the state of knowledge in Chaucer's day.

Two English prose translations are known: Trevisa's, completed in 1387, and modernized and printed by Caxton in 1482; and an anonymous rendering made in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Both are printed, with Higden's Latin, in the edition by Babington and Lumby, Rolls Series, 9 vols., 1865-86.

John of Trevisa was a Cornishman. He was a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, from 1362 to 1365; and was one of those expelled from Queen's College for 'unworthiness' in 1379. He became vicar of Berkeley, and at the request of Sir Thomas Berkeley undertook the translation of the *Polychronicon*. In 1398 he brought to an end another long work, the translation of *Bartholomaeus de Proprietatibus Rerum*, the great encyclopaedia of natural science at this time. He died at Berkeley in 1402.

[146]

Trevisa was a diligent but not an accurate or graceful translator. He rarely adds anything from his own knowledge, though we have an example in the account of the reform of teaching at

## A. THE MARVELS OF BRITAIN.

### CHAP. xlii.

#### MS. Tiberius D. vii (about 1400), f. 39 a.

In Brytayne buþ hoot welles wel arayed and yhyzt to þe vse of mankunde. Mayster of þulke welles ys þe gret spyryt of Minerua. Yn hys hous fuyr duyreþ alwey, þat neuer changeþ into askes, bote þar þe fuyr slakeþ, hyt changeþ ynto stony clottes. 05

Yn Brytayne buþ meny wondres. Noþeles foure buþ most wonderfol. Þe furste ys at Pectoun. Þar bloweþ so strong a wynd out of þe chenes of þe eorþe þat hyt casteþ vp aze cloþes þat me casteþ yn. Þe secunde ys at Stonhenge bysydes Salesbury. Þar gret stones and wondur huge buþ arered an hyz, as hyt were zates, so þat þar semeþ zates yset apon oþer zates. Noþeles hyt ys nozt clerlych yknowe noþer parceyuet houz and wharfore a buþ so arered and so wonderlych yhonged. Þe þridde ys at Cherdhol. Þer ys gret holwenes vndur eorþe. Ofte meny men habbeþ ybe þerynne, and ywalked aboute wiþynne, and yseye ryuers and streemes, bote nowhar conneþ hy fynde non ende. Þe feurþe ys þat reyn ys yseye arered vp of þe hulles, and anon yspronge aboute yn þe feeldes. Also þer ys a gret pond þat conteyneþ þre score ylondes couenable for men to dwelle ynne. Þat pound ys byclypped aboute wiþ six score rooches. Apon euerych rooch ys an egle hys nest; and þre score ryuers eorneþ into þat pound, and non of ham alle eorneþ into þe se, bot on. Þar ys a pound yclosed aboute wiþ a wal of tyyl and of ston. Yn þat pound men wascheþ and baþeþ wel ofte, and euerych man feeþeþ þe water hoot oþer cold ryzt as a wol hymself. Þar buþ also salt welles fer fram þe se, and buþ salt al þe woke long forto Saturday noon, and fersched fram Saturday noon forto Moneday. Þe water of þis welles, whanne hyt ys ysode, turneþ into smal salt, fayr and whyyt. Also þar ys a pond þe water þerof haþ wondur worchyng, for þey al an ost stood by þe pond, and turnede þe face þyderward, þe water wolde drawe <hem> vyolentlych toward þe pond, and weete al here cloþes. So scholde hors be drawe yn þe same wyse. Bote zef þe face ys awayward fram þe water, þe water noyeþ nozt. Þer ys a welle <þat> non streem eorneþ þarfram noþer þerto, and zet four maner fysch buþ ytake þarynne. Þat welle ys bote twenty foot long, and twenty foot brood, and nozt deop bote to þe kneo, and ys yclosed wiþ hyz bankkes in euerych syde. 10 15 20 25

[147]

Yn þe contray aboute Wynchestre ys a den. Out of þat den alwey bloweþ a strong wynd, so þat no man may endure for to stonde tofor þat den. Þar ys also a pond þat turneþ tre into yre and hyt be þerynne al a zer, and so tren buþ yschape into whestones. Also þer ys yn þe cop of an hul a buryel. Euerych man þat comeþ and meteþ þat buriel a schal fynde hyt euene ryzt of hys oune meete; and zef a pylgrym oþer eny wery man kneoleþ þerto, anon a schal be al fersched, and of werynes schal he feeþe non nuy. 30 35 40 45

Fast by þe Ministre of Wynburney, þat ys nozt fer fram Bathe, ys a wode þat bereþ moche fruyt. Zef þe tren of þat wode falle into a water oþer grounde <þat> þar ys nyz, and lygge þar al a zer, þe tren teorneþ ynto stoones. 50

Vndur þe cité of Chestre eorneþ þe ryuer Dee, þat now todeleþ Engelond and Wales. Þat ryuer euerych monthe changeþ hys fordes, as men of þe contray telleþ, and leueþ ofte þe chanel. Bote wheþer þe water drawe more toward Engelond oþer toward Wales, to what syde þat hyt be, þat zer men of þat syde schal habbe þe wors ende and be ouerset, and þe men of þe oþer syde schal habbe þe betre ende and be at here aboute. 55 60

[148]

Whanne þe water changeþ so hys cours, hyt bodeþ such happes. Þis ryuer Dee eorneþ and comeþ out of a lake þat hatte Pimbilmere. Yn þe ryuer ys gret plenté of samon. Noþeles in þe lake ys neuer samon yfounde.

## B. THE LANGUAGES OF BRITAIN.

### CHAP. lix.

As hyt ys yknowe houz meny maner people buþ in þis ylond, þer buþ also of so meny people longages and tonges. Noþeles Walschmen and Scottes, þat buþ nozt ymelled wiþ oþer nacions, holdeþ wel nyz here furste longage and speche, bote zef Scottes, þat were som tyme confederat and wonede wiþ þe Pictes, drawe somewhat after here speche. Bote þe Flemmynges þat woneþ in þe west syde of Wales habbeþ yleft here strange speche, and spekeþ Saxonlych ynow. Also Englysch men, þeyz hy hadde fram þe bygynnyng þre maner speche, Souþeron, Norþeron, and Myddel speche in þe myddel of þe lond, as hy come of þre maner people of Germania, noþeles by comyxstion and mellyng, furst wiþ Danes and afterward wiþ Normans, in meny þe contray longage ys apeyred, and som vseþ strange wlaffyng, chyteryng, harryng, and garryng grisbittyng. Þis apeyryng of þe burþtonge ys bycause of twey þinges. On ys for chyldern in scole, azenes þe vsage and manere of al oþer nacions, buþ compelled for to leue here oune longage, and for to construe here lessons and here þinges a Freynsch, and habbeþ suþthe þe Normans come furst into Engelond. Also 05 10 15

gentil men children buþ ytauzt for to speke Freynsch fram tyme þat a buþ yrokked in here cradel, and conneþ speke and playe wiþ a child hys brouch; and oplondysch men wol lykne hamsylf to gentil men, and fondeþ wiþ gret bysynes for to speke Freynsch, for to be more ytold of.

[Pys manere was moche y-vsed tofore þe furste moreyn, and ys seþthe somdel ychaunged. For Iohan Cornwall, a mayster of gramere, chayngede þe lore in gramerscole and construccion of Freynsch into Englysch; and Richard Pencrych lurnede þat manere techyng of hym, and oþer men of Pencrych, so þat now, þe 3er of oure Lord a þousond þre hondred foure score and fyue, of þe secunde kyng Richard after þe Conquest nyne, in al þe gramerscoles of Engelond childern leueþ Frensch, and construeþ and lurneþ an Englysch, and habbeþ þerby avauntage in on syde, and desavauntage yn anoþer. Here avauntage ys þat a lurneþ here gramer yn lasse tyme þan childern wer ywoned to do. Disavauntage ys þat now childern of gramerscole conneþ no more Frensch þan can here lift heele, and þat ys harm for ham and a scholle passe þe se and trauayle in strange londes, and in meny caas also. Also gentil men habbeþ now moche yleft for to teche here childern Frensch.] Hyt semeþ a gret wondur hou3 Englysch, þat ys þe burþ tonge of Englysch men, and here oune longage and tonge, ys so dyuers of soon in þis ylond; and þe longage of Normandy ys comlyng of anoþer lond, and haþ on maner soon among al men þat spekeþ hyt aryzt in Engelond. [Noþeles þer ys as meny dyuers maner Frensch yn þe rem of Fraunce as ys dyuers manere Englysch in þe rem of Engelond.]

Also of þe forseide Saxon tonge, þat ys deled a þre, and ys abyde scarslych wiþ feaw vplondysch men, and ys gret wondur, for men of þe est wiþ men of þe west, as hyt were vnder þe same party of heuene, acordeþ more in sounyng of speche þan men of þe norþ wiþ men of þe souþ. Berfore hyt ys þat Mercii, þat buþ men of myddel Engelond, as hyt were parteners of þe endes, vndurstondeþ betre þe syde longages, Norþeron and Souþeron, þan Norþeron and Souþeron vndurstondeþ eyþer oþer.

Al þe longage of þe Norphumbres, and specialych at 3ork, ys so scharp, slyttyng, and frotyng, and vnschape, þat we Souþeron men may þat longage vnneþe vndurstonde. Y trowe þat þat ys bycause þat a buþ ny3 to strange men and aliens, þat spekeþ strangelych, and also bycause þat þe kynges of Engelond woneþ alwey fer fram þat contray; for a buþ more yturnd to þe souþ contray, and 3ef a goþ to þe norþ contray, a goþ wiþ gret help and strengthe.

þe cause why a buþ more in þe souþ contray þan in þe norþ may be betre cornlond, more people, more noble cytés, and more profytable hauenes.

## XIV

### POLITICAL PIECES

In the thirteenth century political poems were written chiefly in Latin or French. In the fourteenth century a steadily growing tendency to use English witnesses the increased interest of the people in politics and social questions. The fullest collections are those edited by T. Wright, *Political Songs of England* (John to Edward II), Camden Society, 1839; and *Political Poems and Songs* (Edward III to Richard III), Rolls Series, 2 vols., 1859-61.

The selections A and B are from the poems of Laurence Minot, of which the best edition is the third by J. Hall, Oxford 1914. Minot was a better patriot than a poet, and his boisterous contempt for the Scots and French reflects the spirit of England in the early days of Edward III's greatness.

The empty phrases in which the anonymous piece C abounds do not disguise a note of despair. The long war with France was becoming more and more hopeless. The plague that added to its miseries had carried off Henry, first Duke of Lancaster, in 1361. The Black Prince, to whom the nation looked for guidance, had died in 1376. The inglorious old age of Edward III ended in the following year. But there remained the hope, soon to be falsified, that the boy king Richard II would steer the ship of state to safety.

D is the earliest text of the letter which John Ball addressed to the Essex members of the Great Society of Peasants on the eve of the revolt of 1381. It shows how deep an impression the characters and allegorical form of *Piers Plowman* had made on the oppressed serfs and labourers, and it gives some idea of the vague and incoherent thinking that brought ruin on their enterprise. Ball, who had defied established authority all his life, was freed from prison by the rebels, became a ringleader, and preached to their assembly on Blackheath a famous sermon with the text:

When Adam dalf, and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?

A few weeks later he was executed by sentence of Lord Chief Justice Tressilian, who had been charged by the King to take vengeance on the rebels.

The distich E sums up briefly the history of a year which turned moderate men against Richard II. A fuller contemporary picture of the events that led to his deposition is found in the alliterative poem *Richard the Redeles*, attributed by Skeat to the author of *Piers Plowman*.



## A. ON THE SCOTS (ABOUT 1333).

BY LAURENCE MINOT.

MS. Cotton Galba E. ix (about 1425), f. 52 a.

*Now for to tell 3ou will I turn  
Of batayl of Banocburn*

Skottes out of Berwik and of Abirdene  
At þe Bannokburn war 3e to kene;  
Pare slogh 3e many sakles, als it was sene,  
And now has King Edward wroken it, I wene.  
It es wrokin, I wene, wele wurth þe while!  
War 3it with þe Skottes for þai er ful of gile!

5

Whare er 3e Skottes of Saint Iohnes toune?  
Þe boste of 3owre baner es betin all doune.  
When 3e bosting will bede, Sir Edward es boune  
For to kindel 3ow care, and crak 3owre crowne.  
He has crakked 3owre croune, wele worth þe while  
Schame bityde þe Skottes, for þai er full of gile!

10

[153]

Skottes of Striflin war steren and stout,  
Of God ne of gude men had þai no dout.  
Now haue þai, þe pelers, priked about,  
Bot at þe last Sir Edward rifild þaire rout.  
He has rifild þaire rout, wele wurth þe while!  
Bot euer er þai vnder bot gaudes and gile.

15

Rughfute riueling, now kindels þi care;  
Berebag with þi boste, þi biging es bare;  
Fals wretche and forsworn, whider wiltou fare?  
Busk þe vnto Brig, and abide þare.  
Þare, wretche, saltou won, and wery þe while;  
Þi dwelling in Dondé es done for þi gile.

20

Þe Skottes gase in Burghes and betes þe stretes;  
Al þise Inglis men harmes he hetes;  
Fast makes he his mone to men þat he metes,  
Bot fone frendes he findes þat his bale betes.  
Fune betes his bale, wele wurth þe while!  
He vses al threting with gaudes and gile.

25

30

Bot many man thretes and spekes ful ill  
Pat sum tyme war better to be stane—still.  
Þe Skot in his wordes has wind for to spill,  
For at þe last Edward sall haue al his will.  
He had his will at Berwik, wele wurth þe while!  
Skottes broght him þe kayes,—bot get for þaire gile.

35

## B. THE TAKING OF CALAIS (1347).

BY LAURENCE MINOT.

MS. Cotton Galba E. ix (about 1425), f. 55 b.

*How Edward als þe romance sais  
Held his sege bifor Calais.*

Calays men, now mai 3e care,

And murnin<n>g mun 3e haue to mede;  
 Mirth on mold get 3e no mare,  
 Sir Edward sall ken 3ow 3owre crede.  
 Whilum war 3e wight in wede  
 To robbing rathly for to ren;  
 Mend 3ow some of 3owre misdede:  
 3owre care es cumen, will 3e it ken.

5

Kend it es how 3e war kene  
 Al Inglis men with dole to dere.  
 Paire gudes toke 3e al bidene,  
 No man born wald 3e forbere.  
 3e spared noght with swerd ne spere  
 To stik þam, and þaire gudes to stele.  
 With wapin and with ded of were  
 þus haue 3e wonnen werldes wele.

10

15

Weleful men war 3e iwis,  
 Bot fer on fold sall 3e noght fare:  
 A bare sal now abate 3owre blis  
 And wirk 3ow bale on bankes bare.  
 He sall 3ow hunt, als hund dose hare,  
 þat in no hole sall 3e 3ow hide;  
 For all 3owre speche will he noght spare,  
 Bot bigges him right by 3owre side.

20

Biside 3ow here þe bare bigins  
 To big his boure in winter tyde,  
 And all bityme takes he his ines  
 With semly se<r>gantes him biside.  
 þe word of him walkes ful wide—  
 Iesu saue him fro mischance!  
 In bataill dar he wele habide  
 Sir Philip and Sir Iohn of France.

25

30

þe Franche men er fers and fell,  
 And mase grete dray when þai er dight;  
 Of þam men herd slike tales tell,  
 With Edward think þai for to fight,  
 Him for to hald out of his right,  
 And do him treson with þaire tales:  
 þat was þaire purpos, day and night,  
 Bi counsail of þe Cardinales.

35

40

Cardinales with hattes rede  
 War fro Calays wele thre myle;  
 þai toke þaire counsail in þat stede  
 How þai might Sir Edward bigile.  
 þai lended þare bot litill while  
 Till Franche men to grante þaire grace:  
 Sir Philip was funden a file,  
 He fled and faght noght in þat place.

45

In þat place þe bare was blith,  
 For all was funden þat he had soght.  
 Philip þe Valas fled ful swith  
 With þe bataill þat he had broght.  
 For to haue Calays had he thought  
 All at his ledeing, loud or still;  
 Bot all þaire wiles war for noght:

50

55

Edward wan it at his will.

Lystens now, and 3e may lere,  
Als men þe suth may vnderstand,  
þe knightes þat in Calais were  
Come to Sir Edward sare wepeand.  
In kirtell one, and swerd in hand,  
And cried, 'Sir Edward, þine <we> are.  
Do now, lord, bi law of land  
þi will with vs for euermare'.

60

[156]

þe nobill burgase and þe best  
Come vnto him to haue þaire hire.  
þe comun puple war ful prest  
Rapes to bring about þaire swire.  
þai said all: 'Sir Philip, oure syre,  
And his sun, Sir Iohn of France,  
Has left vs ligand in þe mire,  
And broght vs till þis doleful dance.

65

Our horses þat war faire and fat  
Er etin vp ilkone bidene;  
Haue we nowþer conig ne cat  
þat þai ne er etin, and hundes kene  
Al er etin vp ful clene—  
Es nowther leuid biche ne whelp—  
þat es wele on oure sembland sene,  
And þai er fled þat suld vs help.'

75

A knight þat was of grete renowne—  
Sir Iohn de Viene was his name—  
He was wardaine of þe toune  
And had done Inghland mekill schame.  
For all þaire boste þai er to blame,  
Ful stalworthly þare haue þai streuyn.  
A bare es cumen to mak þam tame,  
Kayes of þe toun to him er gifen.

85

þe kaies er 3olden him of þe 3ate,—  
Lat him now kepe þam if he kun.  
To Calais cum þai all to late,  
Sir Philip, and Sir Iohn his sun.  
Al war ful ferd þat þare ware fun,  
þaire leders may þai barely ban.  
All on þis wise was Calais won:  
God saue þam þat it sogat wan!

90

95

[157]

## C. ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD III, A.D. 1377.

**Bodleian MS. Vernon (about 1400), f. 4106.**

A! dere God, what mai þis be,  
þat alle þing weres and wastep awai?  
Frendschip is but a vanyté,  
Vnneþe hit dures al a day.  
þei beo so sliper at assai,  
So leof to han, and loþ to lete,  
And so fikel in heore fai,  
þat selden iseize is sone for3ete.

5

I sei hit not wiþouten a cause,  
And þerfore takes riht good hede,  
For 3if 3e construwe wel þis clause,  
I puit 3ou holly out of drede  
Pat for puire schame 3or hertes wol blede  
And 3e þis matere wysli trete:  
He þat was vr moste spede  
Is selden iseye and sone for3ete.

Sum tyme an Englisch schip we had,  
Nobel hit was and heih of tour,  
Þorw al Cristendam hit was drad,  
And stif wolde stande in vch a stour,  
And best dorst byde a scharp schour,  
And oper stormes, smale and grete.  
Now is þat schip, þat bar þe flour,  
Selden se3e and sone for3ete.

Into þat schip þer longed a roþur  
Pat steered þe schip and gouerned hit;  
In al þis world nis such anoþur,  
As me þinkeþ in my wit.  
[158] Whyl schip and roþur togeder was knit,  
Bei dredde nouþer tempest, druy3e nor wete;  
Nou be þei boþe in synder flit,  
Pat selden sey3e is sone for3ete.

Scharpe wawes þat schip has sayled,  
And sayed alle sees at auentur.  
For wynt ne wederes neuer hit fayled  
Whil þe roþur mihte enduir.  
Þou3 þe see were rouh or elles dimuir,  
Gode hauenes þat schip wolde gete.  
Nou is þat schip, I am wel suir,  
Selde iseye and sone for3ete.

Þis goode schip I may remene  
To þe [chiualrye](#) of þis londe;  
Sum tyme þei counted nou3t a bene  
Beo al Fraunce, ich vnderstonde.  
Bei tok and slou3 hem with heore honde,  
Be power of Fraunce, boþ smal and grete,  
And brou3t þe king hider to byde her bonde:  
And nou riht sone hit is for3ete.

Pat schip hadde a ful siker mast,  
And a sayl strong and large,  
Pat made þe gode schip neuer agast  
To vndertake a þing of charge;  
And to þat schip þer longed a barge  
Of al Fraunce 3af nou3t a clete;  
To vs hit was a siker targe,  
And now riht clene hit is for3ete.

Be roþur was nouþer ok ne elm,—  
Hit was Edward þe Þridde, þe noble kniht.  
Be Prince his sone bar vp his helm,  
Pat neuer scoumfited was in fiht.  
[159] The Kyng him rod and rouwed ariht;  
Be Prince dredde nouþur stok nor strete.

Nou of hem we lete ful liht:  
Dat selde is seze is sone forzete.

De swifte barge was Duk Henri,  
Dat noble kniht and wel assayed,  
And in his leggaunce worþili  
He abod mony a bitter brayd.  
3if þat his enemys ouzt outrayed,  
To chastis hem wolde he not lete.  
Nou is þat lord ful lowe ileyd:  
Dat selde is seze is sone forzete.

65

70

Bis gode Comunes, bi þe rode!  
I likne hem to the schipes mast,  
Pat with heore catel and heore goode  
Mayntened þe werre boþ furst and last,  
De wynd þat bleu3 þe schip wiþ blast  
Hit was gode prezers, I sei hit atrete.  
Nou is deuoutnes out icast,  
And mony gode dedes ben clen forzete.

75

80

Pus ben þis lordes ileid ful lowe:  
De stok is of þe same rote;  
An ympe biginnes for to growe  
And 3it I hope schal ben vr bote,  
To holde his fomen vnder fote,  
And as a lord be set in sete.  
Crist leue þat he so mote,  
Dat selden iseze be not forzete!

85

Weor þat impe fully growe,  
Dat he had sarri sap and piþ,  
I hope he schulde be kud and knowe  
For conquerour of moni a kiþ.  
He is ful lyflich in lyme and liþ  
In armes to trauayle and to swete.  
Crist leue we so fare him wiþ  
Dat selden seze be neuer forzete!

90

95

And þerfore holliche I ou rede,  
Til þat þis ympe beo fully growe,  
Pat vch a mon vp wiþ þe hede  
And mayntene him, boþe hei3e and lowe.  
De Frensche men cunne boþe boste and blowe,  
And wiþ heore scornes vs toþrete,  
And we beoþ boþe vnkuynde and slowe,  
Dat selden seze is sone forzete.

100

And þerfore, gode sires, takeþ reward  
Of 3or douhti kyng þat dyzede in age,  
And to his sone, Prince Edward,  
Dat welle was of alle corage.  
Suche two lordes of hei3 parage  
I not in eorþe whon we schal gete;  
And nou heore los biginneþ to swage,  
Dat selde iseze is sone forzete.

105

110

42 [chilualrye](#) *MS*.

110 [I](#) In *MS*.

## D. JOHN BALL'S LETTER TO THE PEASANTS OF ESSEX, 1381.

St. Albans MS. British Museum Royal 13. E. ix (about 1400), f. 287 a.

[161] Iohon Schep, som tyme Seynte Marie prest of 3ork, and now of Colchestre, greteth wel Iohan Nameles, and Iohan þe Mullere, and Iohon Cartere, and biddeþ hem þat þei bee war of gyle in borugh, and stondesth [togidre](#) in Godes name, and biddeþ Peres Plouzman go to his werk, and chastise wel Hobbe þe Robbere, and takeþ wiþ 3ow Iohan Trewman, and alle hiis felawes, and no mo, and loke schappe 3ou to on heued, and no mo. 05

Iohan þe Mullere haþ ygrounde smal, smal, smal;

Be Kynges sone of heuene schal paye for al. 10

Be war or [ye](#) be wo;

Knoweþ 3our freend fro 3our foo;

Haueth ynow, and seith 'Hoo';

And do wel and bettre, and fleth synne,

And sekeþ pees, and hold 3ou þerinne; 15

and so biddeþ Iohan Trewman and alle his felawes.

4 [togidre](#)] togidedre MS.]

11 [ye](#)] þe MS.]

## E. ON THE YEAR 1390-1.

St. John's College (Oxford) MS. 209, f. 57 a.

The ax was sharpe, the stokke was harde,

In the xiiii yere of Kyng Richarde.

## XV

### MISCELLANEOUS PIECES IN VERSE

Under this head are grouped a number of short poems, representing forms of composition that survive only by fortunate chance.

A is a curious little song, which has been printed from Hale MS. 135 by G. E. Woodbine in *Modern Language Review*, vol. iv, p. 236, and reconstructed by Skeat at vol. v, p. 105, of the same periodical.

B and C are the best-known lyrics of the important collection edited by Bøddeker, *Altenglische Dichtungen des MS. Harley 2253*, Berlin 1878. They are literary and rather artificial in form.

D and E are minstrels' songs found, among other popular snatches, on a fly-leaf of Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913, and edited by Heuser in *Anglia*, vol. xxx, p. 173. In E lines 14-16 and ll. 17-19 are to be expanded on the model of ll. 7-13.

All these songs are early, and have a lightness and gaiety that become rare as the fourteenth century advances.

F is one of several English scraps (ed. Furnivall in *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, E.E.T.S., pp. 249 ff.) that are found scattered through the Latin text of MS. Harley 7322. Most of the English pieces are without poetical merit, but in this one poem the writer has attained a perfect simplicity.

G, printed in Wright and Halliwell's *Reliquiae Antiquae*, 1845, vol. i, p. 144, has been recognized as the first of the English ballads. It is the only example before 1400 of the swift and dramatic movement, the sudden transitions, and the restrained expression, characteristic of the ballad style.

H, first printed in *Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. i, p. 240, is the latest of the short pieces. With onomatopoeic effects it gives a vivid if unfriendly picture of a blacksmith's forge on a busy night.

I is a charm edited by Furnivall at p. 43 of the E.E.T.S. volume in which F appears.

## A. NOW SPRINGS THE SPRAY.

Lincoln's Inn MS. Hale 135 (about 1300).

*Nou sprinkes þe sprai,*

*Al for loue icche am so seek*

*Pat slepen I ne mai.*

Als I me rode [þis endre](#) dai  
 O mi [playinge](#),  
 Seih I hwar a litel mai  
 Bigan to singge:  
 'Þe clot him [clingge](#)!  
 Wai es him i louue-longinge  
 Sal libben ai!' 10  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

Son icche herde þat mirie note,  
 Eider I drogh;  
 I fonde hire in an herber swot  
 Vnder a bogh,  
 With ioie inogh. 15  
 Son I asked: 'Þou mirie mai,  
 Hwi sinkestou ai?'  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

Þan answerde þat maiden swote  
 Midde wordes fewe:  
 'Mi lemman me haues bihot 20  
 Of louue trewe:  
 He chaunges anewe.  
 Yiif I mai, it shal him rewe  
 Bi þis dai.'  
*Nou sprinkes, &c.*

4 [þis endre](#) dai als I me rode *MS.*; *corr. Skeat.*

5 [playinge](#)] *indistinct.*

8 [clingge](#)] *clingges MS.*

## B. SPRING.

**MS. Harley 2253 (about 1325), f. 71 b.**

Lenten ys come wiþ loue to toune,  
 Wiþ blosmen and wiþ briddes roune,  
 Þat al þis blisse brynggeþ.  
 Dayesezes in þis dales,  
 Notes suete of nyhtegales, 5  
 Vch foul song singgeþ.  
 Þe þrestelcoc him þreteþ oo,  
 Away is huere wynter wo,  
 When woderoue springeþ.  
 Þis foules singgeþ ferly fele, 10  
 Ant wlyteþ on huere †wynter† wele,  
 Þat al þe wode rynggeþ.

Þe rose rayleþ hire rode,  
 Þe leues on þe lyhte wode  
 Waxen al wiþ wille. 15  
 Þe mone mandeþ hire bleo,  
 Þe lilie is lossom to seo,  
 Þe fenyl and þe fille.  
 Wowes þis wilde drakes;  
 †Miles† murgeþ huere makes, 20  
 Ase strem þat strikeþ stille.  
 Mody meneþ, so [dob](#) mo—  
 Ichot ycham on of þo,

For loue þat likes ille.

Þe mone mandeþ hire lyht; 25  
So doþ þe semly sonne bryht,  
    When briddes singeþ breme.  
Deawes donkeþ þe dounes;  
Deores wiþ huere derne rounes, 30  
    Domes for te deme;  
Wormes woweþ vnder cloude;  
Wymmen waxeþ wounder proude,  
    So wel hit wol hem seme.  
3ef me shal wonte wille of on,  
Þis wunne weole y wole forgon, 35  
    Ant wyht in wode be fleme.

22 [dob](#)] doh *MS*.

[165]

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## C. ALYSOUN.

**MS. Harley 2253, f. 63 b.**

Bytuene Mersh and Aueril,  
    When spray biginneþ to springe,  
Þe lutel foul haþ hire wyl  
    On hyre lud to synge. 5  
Ich libbe in loue-longinge  
For semlokest of alle þynge;  
He may me blisse bringe—  
    Icham in hire baundoun.  
    *An hendy hap ichabbe yhent;*  
    *Ichot from heuene it is me sent;* 10  
    *From alle wymmen mi loue is lent,*  
    *And lyht on Alysoun.*

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,  
    Hire browe broune, hire e3e blake;  
Wiþ lossun chere he on me loh, 15  
    Wiþ middel smal and wel ymake.  
Bote he me wolle to hire take,  
For te buen hire owen make,  
Longe to lyuen ichulle forsake,  
    And feye fallen adoun. 20  
    *An hendy hap, &c.*

Nihtes when y wende and wake,  
    Forþi myn wonges waxeþ won,  
Leuedi, al for þine sake  
    Longinge is ylent me on. 25  
In world nis non so wyter mon  
    Þat al hire bounté telle con;  
Hire swyre is whittore þen þe swon,  
    And feyrest may in toune.  
    *An hend<y hap>, &c.*

Icham for wowyng al forwake,  
    Wery so water in wore, 30  
Lest eny reue me my make,  
    Ychabbe y3yrned 3ore.  
Betere is þolien whyle sore



Ben mournen euermore.

Geynest vnder gore,

Herkne to my roun.

*An hendi <hap ichabbe yhent;*

*Ichot from heuene it is me sent;*

*From alle wymmen mi loue is lent,*

*And lyht on Alysoun>.*

35

40

[166]

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## D. THE IRISH DANCER.

**Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913.**

Icham of Irlaunde,

Ant of the holy londe

Of Irlande.

Gode sire, pray ich [pe](#),

For of saynte charité,

Come ant daunce wyt me

In Irlaunde.

4 [pe](#)] 3e MS.

5

[167]

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## E. THE MAID OF THE MOOR.

**Bodleian MS. Rawlinson D. 913.**

Maiden in the mor lay,

In the mor lay,

Seuenyst fulle, seuenist fulle,

Maiden in the mor lay,

In the mor lay,

Seuenistes fulle ant a day.

5

Welle [was](#) hire mete;

Wat was hire mete?

Þe primerole ant the,—

Þe primerole ant the,—

Welle was hire mete;

Wat was hire mete?—

The primerole ant the violet.

10

Welle <was hire dryng>;

Wat was hire dryng?

Þe chelde water of <þe> welle-spring.

15

Welle was hire bour;

Wat was hire bour?

Þe rede rose an te lilie flour.

7 [was](#)] wat MS.]

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## F. THE VIRGIN'S SONG.

**British Museum MS. Harley 7322 (about 1375), f. 135 b.**

Iesu, swete sone dere!

On porful bed list þou here,

And þat me greueþ sore;

For þi cradel is ase a bere,

Oxe and asse beþ þi fere:

Weepe ich mai þarfore.  
Iesu, swete, beo noth wroþ,  
Ðou ich nabbe clout ne cloþ  
    þe on for to folde,  
    þe on to folde ne to wrappe,  
For ich nabbe clout ne lappe;  
Bote ley þou þi fet to my pappe,  
    And wite þe from þe colde.

10

[168]

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## G. JUDAS.

**Trinity College (Cambridge) MS. B. 14. 39 (about 1300), f. 34 a.**

Hit wes upon a Scere Þorsday þat vre Louerd aros;  
Ful milde were þe wordes He spec to Iudas:

Iudas, þou most to Iurselem, oure mete for to bugge;  
Þritti platen of seluer þou bere upo þi rugge.

Þou comest fer i þe brode stret, fer i þe brode strete;  
Summe of þine cunesmen þer þou meist imete.

5

Imette wid is soster, þe swikele wimon:  
'Iudas, þou were wrþe me stende þe wid ston, (*bis*)  
For þe false prophete þat tou bileuest upon.'

'Be stille, leue soster, þin herte þe tobreke!  
Wiste min Louerd Crist, ful wel He wolde be wreke.'

10

'Iudas, go þou on þe roc, heie upon þe ston,  
Lei þin heued i my barm, slep þou þe anon.'

Sone so Iudas of slepe was awake,  
Þritti platen of seluer from hym weren itake.

15

He drou hymselfe bi þe top, þat al it lauede a blode;  
þe Iewes out of Iurselem awenden he were wode.

Foret hym com þe riche Ieu þat heiste Pilatus:  
'Wolte sulle þi Louerd, þat hette Iesus?'

'I nul sulle my Louerd for nones cunnes eiste,  
Bote hit be for þe þritti platen þat He me bitaiste.'

20

'Wolte sulle þi Lord Crist for enes cunnes golde?'  
'Nay, bote hit be for þe platen þat He habben wolde.'

In him com ur Lord gon, as is postles seten at mete:  
'Wou sitte ye, postles, ant wi nule ye ete? (*bis*)  
Ic am iboust ant isold today for oure mete.'

25

Up stod him Iudas: 'Lord, am I þat?  
I nas neuer o þe stude þer me þe euel spec.'

Up him stod Peter, ant spec wid al is miste:  
'Þau Pilatus him come wid ten hundred cnistes, (*bis*)  
Yet ic wolde, Louerd, for þi loue fiste.'

30

'Stille þou be, Peter! Wel I þe icnowe;  
Þou wolt fursake me þrien ar þe coc him crowe.'

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## H. THE BLACKSMITHS.

**British Museum MS. Arundel 292 (about 1425-50), f. 71 b.**

Swarte smekyd smeþes smateryd wyth smoke  
 Dryue me to deth wyth den of here dyntes.  
 Swech noys on nyghtes ne herd men neuer:  
 What knaue cry and clateryng of knockes!  
 Þe cammede kongons cryen after 'col, col!' 5  
 And blowen here bellewys, þat al here brayn brestes:  
 'Huf, puf!' seith þat on; 'haf, paf!' þat oper.  
 Þei spyttyn and spraulyn and spellyn many spellles;  
 Þei gnauen and gnacchen, þei gronys togydere,  
 And holdyn hem hote wyth here hard hamers. 10  
 Of a bole-hyde ben here barm-fellys;  
 Here schankes ben schakeled for the fere flunderys;  
 Heuy hamerys þei han, þat hard ben handled,  
 Stark strokes þei stryken on a stelyd stokke:  
 Lus, bus! las, das! rowtyn be rowe. 15  
 Swech dolful a dreme þe deuyt it todryue!  
 Þe mayster longith a lityl, and lascheth a lesse,  
 Twyneth hem tweyn, and towchith a treble:  
 Tik, tak! hic, hac! tiket, taket! tyk, tak!  
 Lus, bus! lus, das! swych lyf thei ledyn 20  
 Alle cloþemerys: Cryst hem gyue sorwe!  
 May no man for brenwaterys on nyght han hys rest!

## I. RATS AWAY.

**Bodleian MS. Rawlinson C. 288, f. 113 (15th-century writing, blurred).**

I comawnde alle þe ratones þat are here abowte,  
 Pat non dwelle in þis place, withinne ne withowte,  
 Thorgh þe vertu of Iesu Crist, þat Mary bare abowte,  
 Pat alle creatures owyn for to lowte, 5  
 And thorgh þe vertu of Mark, Mathew, Luke, an Ion,—  
 Alle foure Awangelys corden into on,—  
 Thorgh þe vertu of Sent Geretrude, þat mayde clene,  
     God graunte þat grace  
     Pat <non> raton dwelle in þe place 10  
 Pat here namis were nemeled in;  
 And thorgh þe vertu of Sent Kasi,  
 Pat holy man, þat prayed to God Almyty  
     For *skathes* þat þei deden  
     Hys medyn 15  
 Be dayes and be nyȝt,  
 God bad hem flen and gon out of euery manesse syȝt.  
*Dominus Deus Sabaot!* Emanuel, þe gret Godes name!  
 I betweche þes place from ratones and from alle oper schame.  
 God saue þis place fro alle oper wykked wytes,  
 Boþe be dayes and be nytes! *et in nomine Patris et Filii,* 20  
 &c.

<sup>13</sup> *skathes*] t altered from f (?) MS.

## XVI

### THE YORK PLAY 'HARROWING OF HELL'

The miracle play *Harrowing of Hell* is assigned to the craft of Saddlers in the York cycle, edited by Miss L. Toulmin-Smith, Oxford 1885, pp. 372 ff. This is the text reproduced below. It is also found, though in a less perfect form, among the *Towneley Plays*, ed. England and Pollard, E.E.T.S., 1897, pp. 293 ff.

All the mediaeval stories of Christ's Descent into Hell are based on the gospel of Nicodemus, which seems to date from the fourth century, though the legend is referred to nearly two centuries earlier. This apocryphal narrative was popular throughout the Middle Ages. There is a prose translation in late Anglo-Saxon, and a Middle English verse rendering supplies some of the phrases in the play.

Two points deserve notice for their bearing on the development of miracles. A trace of their origin in the services of the Church is seen in the use made of the Scriptural passage 'Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini portae aeternales, et introibit rex gloriae', the dramatic possibilities of which were recognized in ritual from an early date. And the growing taste for comic scenes is met, without prejudice to the serious characters, by the rudimentary buffoonery of the Devil and his companions.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ADAME  
EUA  
ISAAIAH  
SYMEON  
IESUS  
IOHANNES BAPTISTA  
MOYSES  
BELSABUB  
SATTAN  
DAUID  
BELLIAL  
MICHILL (Archangel)  
PRIMUS DIABOLUS  
SECUNDUS DIABOLUS

[SCENE I, *outside the gates of Hell.*]

1. <Jesus. M>anne on molde, be meke to me,  
And haue thy Maker in þi mynde,  
And thynke howe I haue tholid for þe  
With pereles paynes for to be pyned.  
The forward of my Fadir free  
Haue I fulfillid, as folke may fynde,  
Perfore aboute nowe woll I bee  
Pat I haue bought for to vnbynde.  
Be feende þame wanne with trayne,  
Thurgh frewte of erthely foode;  
I haue þame getyn agayne  
Thurgh bying with my bloode.

5

10

2. And so I schall þat steede restore  
Fro whilke þe feende fell for synne;  
Pare schalle mankynde wonne euermore  
In blisse þat schall neuere blynne.  
All þat in werke my werkemen were,  
Owte of thare woo I wol þame wynne,  
And some signe schall I sende before  
Of grace, to garre þer gamys begynne.  
A light I woll þei haue  
To schewe þame I schall come sone;  
My bodie bidis in graue  
Tille alle thes dedis be done.

15

20

3. My Fadir ordand on þis wise 25  
 Aftir His will þat I schulde wende,  
 For to fulfille þe prophicye<s>,  
 And als I spake my solace to spende.  
 My frendis, þat in me faith affies,  
 Nowe fro ther fois I schall þame fende, 30  
 And on the thirde day ryght vprise,  
 And so tille heuen I schall assende.  
 Sithen schall I come agayne  
 To deme bothe goode and ill  
 Tille endles ioie or peyne; 35  
 Þus is my Fadriss will.

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[SCENE II, *Hell*; at one side *Limbo*, enclosing the patriarchs and prophets; a light shines across.]

4. *Adame*. Mi bretheren, harkens to me here,  
 Swilke hope of heele neuere are we hadde.  
 Foure thowsande and sex hundereth þere  
 Hauē we bene heere [in þis steddet](#). 40  
 Nowe see I signe of solace seere,  
 A glorious gleme to make vs gladde,  
 Wherefore I hope oure helpe is nere,  
 And sone schall sesse oure sorowes sadde.  
*Eua*. Adame, my husband hende, 45  
 Þis menys solas certayne;  
 Such light gune on vs lende  
 In Paradise full playne.

5. [Isajah](#). Adame, we schall wele vndirstande;  
 I, Ysaias, as God me kende, 50  
 I prechid in Neptalym þat lande,  
 And ʒabulon, even vntill ende.  
 I spake of folke in mirke walkand,  
 And saide a light schulde on þame lende;  
 This lered I whils I was leuand, 55  
 Nowe se I God þis same hath sende.  
 Þis light comes all of Criste,  
 Þat seede, to saue vs nowe,  
 Þus is my poynte puplisshid.  
 But Symeon, what sais þou? 60

6. *Symeon*. Þhis, my tale of farleis feele,  
 For in þis temple His frendis me fande;  
 I hadde delite with Hym to dele,  
 And halsed homely with my hande.  
 I saide, 'Lorde, late thy seruauent lele 65  
 Passe nowe in pesse to liffe lastand,  
 For nowe myselfe has sene Thy hele,  
 Me liste no lengar to liffe in lande.'  
 Þis light Þou hast purueyed  
 To folkes þat liffis in leede, 70  
 Þe same þat I þame saide,  
 I see fulfillid in dede.

[174]

7. *Iohan. Baptista*. Als voyce criand to folke I kende  
 Þe weyes of Criste, als I wele kanne;  
 I baptiste Hym with bothe my hande 75  
 Euen in þe floode of flume Iordanne.  
 Þe Holy Goste fro heuene discende

Als a white dowue doune on Hym panne;  
The Fadir voice, my mirthe to mende,  
Was made to me euen als manne, 80  
'This is my Sone,' he saide,  
'In whome me paies full wele.'  
His light is on vs laide,  
He comes oure cares to kele.

8. *Moses*. Of þat same light lernyng haue I, 85  
To me Moyses He mustered his myght,  
And also vnto anodir, Hely,  
Wher we were on an hille on hight.  
Whyte as snowe was His body,  
And His face like to þe sonne to sight: 90  
No man on molde was so myghty  
Grathely to loke agaynste þat light;  
Þat same light se I nowe  
Shynyng on vs sarteyne,  
Wherfore trewly I trowe 95  
We schalle sone passe fro payne.

9. *i Diabolus*. Helpe! Belsabub! to bynde þer boyes,  
Such harrowe was neuer are herde in helle.  
[175] *ii Diab*. Why rooris þou soo, Rebalde? þou royis;  
What is betidde, canne þou ought telle? 100  
*i Diab*. What! heris þou noȝt þis vggely noyse?  
Þes lurdans þat in Lymbo dwelle,  
Þei make menyng of many ioies,  
And musteres grete mirthe þame emell.  
*ii Diab*. Mirthe? nay, nay, þat poynte is  
paste, 105  
More hele schall þei neuer haue.  
*i Diab*. Þei crie on Criste full faste,  
And sais he schal þame saue.

10. *Belsabub*. Ȝa, if he saue þame noght, we schall,  
For they are sperde in speciall space; 110  
Whils I am prince and principall  
Schall þei neuer passe oute of þis place.  
Calle vppe Astrotte and Anaball  
To giffe þer counsaile in þis case,  
Bele-Berit and Belial, 115  
To marre þame þat swilke maistries mase.  
Say to Satan oure sire,  
And bidde þame bringe also  
Lucifer louely of lyre.  
*i Diab*. Al redy, lorde, I goo. 120

11. *Iesus [Without]*. *Attollite portas, principes,*  
Oppen vppe, ȝe princes of paynes sere,  
*Et eleuamini eternas,*  
Youre yendles ȝatis þat ȝe haue here.  
*Sattan*. What page is þere þat makes prees, 125  
And callis hym kyng of vs in fere?  
*Dauid [in Limbo]*. I lered leuand, withouten lees,  
He is a kyng of vertues clere.  
A! Lorde, mekill of myght,  
And stronge in ilke a stoure, 130  
In batailes ferse to fight,

And worthy to wynne honnoure.

[176]

12. *Sattan*. Honnoure! in þe deuel way, for what dede?  
All erthely men to me are thrall;  
þe lady þat calles hym lorde in leede 135  
Hadde neuer zitt herberowe, house, ne halle.  
*i Diab*. Harke, Belsabub! I haue grete drede,  
For hydously I herde hym calle.  
*Belliall*. We! spere oure zates, all ill mot þou spede!  
And sette furthe watches on þe wall. 140  
And if he calle or crie  
To make vs more debate,  
Lay on hym þan hardely,  
And garre hym gang his gate.

13. *Sattan*. Telle me what boyes dare be so bolde 145  
For drede to make so mekill draye.  
*i Diab*. Itt is þe Iewe þat Iudas solde  
For to be dede, þis othir daye.  
*Sattan*. O we! þis tale in tyme is tolde,  
þis traytoure traues<es> vs alway; 150  
He schall be here full harde in holde,  
Loke þat he passe noght, I þe praye.  
*ii Diab*. Nay, nay, he will nozt wende  
Away or I be ware,  
He shappis hym for to schende 155  
Alle helle, or he go ferre.

14. *Sattan*. Nay, faitour, þerof schall he faile,  
For alle his fare I hym deffie;  
I knowe his trantis fro toppe to taile,  
He leuys with gaudis and with gilery. 160  
þerby he brought oute of oure bale,  
Nowe late, Lazar of Betannye,  
þerfore I gaffe to þe Iewes counsaile  
þat þei schulde alway garre hym dye.  
I entered in Iudas 165  
þat forwarde to fulfille,  
þerfore his hire he has,  
Allway to wonne here stille.

[177]

15. *Belsabub*. Sir Sattanne, sen we here þe saie 170  
þat þou and [þe](#) Iewes wer same assente,  
And wotte he wanne Lazar awaye,  
þat tille vs was tane for to tente,  
Trowe þou þat þou marre hym maye  
To mustir myghtis, what he has mente? 175  
If he nowe depriue vs of oure praye,  
We will ze witte whanne þei are wente.  
*Sattan*. I bidde zou be nozt abasshed,  
But boldely make youe boune  
With toles þat ze on traste,  
And dyngþe þat dastard doune. 180

16. *Iesus [Without]*. *Principes, portas tollite,*  
Vndo youre zatis, ze princis of pryde,  
*Et introibit rex glorie,*  
þe kyng of blisse comes in þis tyde.  
*[Enters the gates of Hell.]*

*Sattan.* Owte! harrowe <[what harlot](#)> is hee

185

þat sais his kyngdome schall be cryed?

*Dauid [in Limbo].* Þat may þou in my Sawter see

For þat poynte *I* prophicie<d>.

I saide þat he schuld breke

Youre barres and bandis by name,

190

And on youre werkis take wreke;

Nowe schalle 3e see þe same.

17. *Jesus.* Pis steede schall stonde no lenger stoken;

Opyne vppe, and latte my pepul passe!

*Diabolus.* Owte! beholdes, oure baill is brokynne,

195

And brosten are alle oure bandis of bras.

Telle Lucifer alle is vnlokynne.

*Belsabub.* What þanne, is Lymbus lorne? allas!

Garre Satan helpe þat we wer wroken;

Pis werke is werse þanne euere it was.

200

*Sattan.* I badde 3e schulde be boune

If he made maistries more;

Do dyng þat dastard doune,

And sette hym sadde and sore.

18. *Belsabub.* 3a, sette hym sore, þat is sone saide,

205

But come þiselffe and serue hym soo;

We may not bide his bittir braide,

He wille vs marre and we wer moo.

*Sattan.* What! faitours, wherfore are 3e ferde?

Haue 3e no force to flitte hym froo?

210

Belyue loke þat my gere be grathed,

Miselffe schall to þat gedlyng goo.

[*To Jesus.*] Howe! belamy, abide,

With al thy booste and bere,

And telle to me þis tyde,

215

What maistries makes þou here?

19. *Jesus.* I make no maistries but for myne,

þame wolle I saue, I telle þe now;

þou hadde no poure þame to pyne,

But as my prisoune for þer prow

220

Here haue þei soiorned, noght as thyne,

But in thy warde, þou wote wele howe.

*Sattan.* And what deuel haste þou done ay syne,

þat neuer wolde negh þame nere, or now?

*Jesus.* Nowe is þe tyme certayne

225

Mi Fadir ordand before

þat they schulde passe fro payne,

And wonne in mirthe euer more.

20. *Sattan.* Thy fadir knewe I wele be sight,

He was a write his mette to wyne,

230

And Marie me menys þi modir hight,

þe vttiremeste ende of all þi kynne.

Who made þe be so mekill of myght?

*Jesus.* Þou wikid feende, latte be thy dynne!

Mi Fadir wonnys in heuen on hight,

235

With blisse þat schall neuere blynne.

I am His awne sone,

His forward to fulfille;

And same ay schall we wonne,

[178]

[179]



21. *Sattan.* God<ys> sonne! þanne schulde þou be ful gladde,

Aftir no catel [neyd thowe craue!](#)

But þou has leued ay like a ladde,

And in sorowe, [as](#) a symple [knaue.](#)

*Jesus.* Pat was for hartely loue I hadde

245

Vnto mannis soule, it for to saue;

And for to make þe mased and madde,

And by þat resoune þus dewly to haue

Mi godhede here, I hidde

In Marie modir myne,

250

For it schulde noȝt be kidde

To þe, nor to none of thyne.

22. *Sattan.* A! þis wolde I were tolde in ilke a toune.

So, sen þou sais God is thy sire,

I schall þe proue, be right resoune,

255

Þou motes His men into þe myre.

To breke His bidding were þei boune,

And, for they did at my desire,

Fro Paradise He putte þame doune

In helle here to haue þer hyre.

260

And thyselve, day and nyght,

Has taught al men emang

To do resoune and right,

And here werkis þou all wrang.

23. *Jesus.* I wirke noght wrang, þat schal þow witte,

265

If I my men fro woo will wyne;

Mi prophetis playnly prechid it,

All þis note þat nowe begynne.

Þai saide þat I schulde be obitte,

To hell þat I schulde entre in,

270

And saue my seruauntis fro þat pitte,

Wher dampned saulis schall sitte for synne.

And ilke trewe prophettis tale

Muste be fulfillid in mee;

I haue þame boughte with bale,

275

And in blisse schal þei be.

24. *Sattan.* Nowe sen þe liste allegge þe lawes,

Þou schalte be atteynted, or we twynne,

For þo þat þou to wittensse drawes

Full even agaynste þe will begynne.

280

Salamon saide in his sawes

Þat whoso enteres helle withynne

Shall neuer come oute, þus clerkis knawes,

And þerfore, felowe, leue þi dynne.

Iob, þi seruaunte, also

285

Þus in his tyme gune telle,

Þat nowthir frende nor foo

Shulde fynde reles in helle.

25. *Jesus.* He saide full soth, þat schall þou see,

Þat in helle may be no reles,

290

But of þat place þan preched he

Where synffull care schall euere encrees.

And in þat bale ay schall þou be,

[180]

[181]

Whare sorowes sere schall neuer sesse,  
And for my folke þerfro wer free, 295  
Nowe schall þei passe to þe place of pees.  
Þai were here with my wille,  
And so schall þei fourthe wende,  
And þiselue schall fulfille  
Þer woove withouten ende. 300

26. *Sattan.* O we! þanne se I howe þou menys emang  
Some mesure with malice to melle,  
Sen þou sais all schall noȝt gang,  
But some schalle alway with vs dwelle. 305  
*Jesus.* Ȝaa, witte þou wele, ellis were it wrang,  
Als cursed Cayme þat slewe Abell,  
And all þat hastis hemselue to hange,  
Als Iudas and Archedefell,  
Datan and Abiron,  
And alle of þare assente; 310  
Als tyrantis euerilkone  
Þat me and myne turmente.

27. And all þat liste noȝt to lere my lawe,  
Þat I haue lefte in lande nowe newe,  
Þat is my comyng for to knawe, 315  
And to my sacramente pursewe,  
Mi dede, my rying, rede be rawe,  
Who will noȝt trowe, þei are noȝt trewe,  
Vnto my dome I schall þame drawe,  
And iuge þame worse þanne any Iewe. 320  
And all þat likis to leere  
My lawe, and leue þerbye,  
Shall neuere haue harmes heere,  
But welthe, as is worthy.

28. *Sattan.* Nowe here my hande, I halde me paied; 325  
Þis poynte is playnly for oure prowē;  
If þis be soth þat þou hast saide,  
We schall haue moo þanne we haue nowē.  
Þis lawe þat þou nowē late has laide  
I schall lere men noȝt to allowē. 330  
Iff þei it take, þei be betraied,  
For I schall turne þame tyte, I trowē.  
I schall walke este and weste,  
And garre þame werke wele werre.  
*Jesus.* Naye, feende, þou schall be feste, 335  
Þat þou schalte flitte not ferre.

29. *Sattan.* Feste! þat were a foule reasoune,  
Nay, bellamy, þou bus be smytte.  
*Jesus.* Mighill! myne aungell, make þe boune,  
And feste yone fende, þat he noȝt flitte. 340  
And Deuyll, I comaunde þe go doune  
Into thy selle where þou schalte sitte.  
[*Satan sinks.*  
*Sattan.* Owt, ay! herrowe! helpe Mahounde!  
Nowe wex I woode oute of my witte.  
*Belsabub.* Sattan, þis saide we are, 345  
Nowe schall þou fele þi fitte.  
*Sattan.* Allas! for [dole](#) and care,

I synke into helle pitte.

[*Falls into the pit.*]

- [183] 30. *Adame.* A! Iesu Lorde, mekill is Þi myght,  
That mekis Þiselffe in þis manere, 350  
Vs for to helpe, as Þou has hight,  
Whanne both forfette, I and my feere.  
Here haue we leuyd withouten light  
Foure thousand and six hundred 3ere;  
Now se I be þis solempne sight 355  
Howe Thy mercy hath made vs [clere](#).  
*Eue.* A! Lorde, we were worthy  
Mo turmentis for to taste,  
But mende vs with mercye,  
Als Þou of myght is moste. 360
31. *Baptista.* A! Lorde, I loue Þe inwardly,  
That me wolde make Þi messengere  
Thy comyng in erth for to crye,  
And teche Þi faith to folke in feere;  
And sithen before Þe for to dye, 365  
And bringe boodworde to þame here,  
How þai schulde haue Thyne helpe in hye:  
Nowe se I all Þi poyntis appere.  
Als Daudid prophete trewe  
Ofte tymes tolde vntill vs, 370  
Of þis comyng he knewe,  
And saide it schulde be þus.
32. *Dauid.* Als I haue saide, 3itt saie I soo,  
*Ne derelinquas, Domine,*  
*Animam meam <in> inferno,* 375  
Leffe noght my saule, Lorde, aftir Þe,  
In depe helle where dampned schall goo,  
Ne suffre neuere †saules fro Þe be†  
The sorowe of þame þat wonnes in woo  
Ay full of filthe, †þat may repley†. 380  
*Adame.* We thanke His grete goodnesse  
He fette vs fro þis place,  
Makes ioie nowe more and lesse;  
*Omnis.* We laude God of His grace.
- [184] 33. *Iesus.* Adame and my frendis in feere, 385  
Fro all youre fooes come fourth with me,  
3e schalle be sette in solas seere,  
Wher 3e schall neuere of sorowes see.  
And Mighill, myn aungell clere,  
Ressayue þes saules all vnto þe, 390  
And lede þame als I schall þe lere  
To Paradise with playe and plenté.  
[*They come out of Limbo.*]  
Mi graue I woll go till,  
Redy to rise vpperight,  
And so I schall fulfillle 395  
That I before haue highte.
34. *Michill.* Lorde, wende we schall aftir Þi sawe,  
To solace sere þai schall be sende,  
But þat þer deuelis no draught vs drawe,

Lorde, blisse vs with Þi holy hende.  
*Iesus*. Mi blissing haue ʒe all on rawe,  
 I schall be with youe, wher ʒe wende,  
 And all þat lelly luffes my lawe,  
 Þai schall be blissid withowten ende.  
*Adame*. To Þe, Lorde, be louyng,  
 Þat vs has wonne fro waa,  
 For solas will we syng,  
*Laus Tibi cum gloria*.  
 [Exeunt.

- 14 [Fro](#)] For *MS*.  
 40 [in þis stedde](#)] in darknes stad *Towneley*.  
 49 [Isaiah](#)] Isaac *MS*.  
 170 [þe](#)] ʒe *MS*.  
 185 [what harlot](#)] from *Towneley MS.: om. MS*.  
 188 [I](#)] of *MS*.  
 242 [neyd thowe craue](#)] þus þe I telle *first hand*.  
 244 [as](#)] added later *MS*.  
 244 [knaue](#)] braide *first hand*.  
 347 [dole](#)] dolee *MS*.  
 356 [clere](#)] clene *MS*.

## XVII

### THE TOWNELEY PLAY OF NOAH

#### Towneley MS. (about 1475), ff. 76 ff.

The Towneley Miracles, so called because the manuscript belonged in recent times to the library of Towneley Hall in Lancashire, are edited by England and Pollard, E.E.T.S., 1897. The cycle is a composite one—for instance it includes a later form of the York play *Harrowing of Hell* (No. XVI, above)—but it is distinguished by a group of plays and interpolated scenes which seem to have been specially composed for representation at Wakefield. Formally this group is marked by the use of a peculiar nine-lined stanza, riming a a a b c c c b, with central rimes in the first four lines. The rough vigour of the comic scenes is still more distinctive, and there can be little doubt that all are the work of one man. The specimen of his style most often reprinted is *The Second Shepherd's Play*, which has an original and purely secular comic plot. The *Play of Noah* is more typical of the English Miracle in its later development. This subject was always popular with early playwrights, for the Ark made a spectacle, and the traditional quarrels of Noah and his wife gave scope for contests in fisticuffs and rough raillery—the stuff of primitive comedy.

#### DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

NOE	PRIMUS FILIUS	PRIMA MULIER
DEUS	SECUNDUS FILIUS	SECUNDA MULIER
VXOR NOE	TERCIUS FILIUS	TERCIA MULIER

1. *Noe*. Myghtfull God veray, Maker of all that is,  
 Thre persons withoutten nay, oone God in endles blis,  
 Thou maide both nyght and day, beest, fowle, and fysh,  
 All creatures that lif may wroght Thou at Thi wish,  
     As Thou wel myght;  
 The son, the moyne, verament,  
 Thou maide, the firmament,  
 The sternes also full feruent  
     To shyne Thou maide ful bright.

5

[186]

2. Angels Thou maide ful euen, all orders that is,  
 To haue the blis in heuen; this did Thou, more and les,  
 Full mervelus to neuene; yit was ther vnkyndnes  
 More bi foldis seuene then I can well expres;  
     For whi?

10

Of all angels in brightnes 15  
God gaf Lucifer most lightnes,  
Yit proudly he flyt his des,  
And set hym euen Hym by.

3. He thocht hymself as worthi as Hym that hym made, 20  
In brightnes, in bewty, therfor He hym degrade,  
Put hym in a low degré soyn after, in a brade,  
Hym and all his menye, wher he may be vnglad  
For euer.

Shall thay neuer wyn away 25  
Hence vnto Domysday,  
Bot burne in bayle for ay;  
Shall thay neuer dysseuer.

4. Soyne after, that gracyous Lord to his liknes maide man, 30  
That place to be restord euen as He began,  
Of the Trinité bi accord, Adam and Eue that woman,  
To multiplie without discord, in Paradise put He thaym,  
And sithen to both  
Gaf in commaundement  
On the Tre of Life to lay no hend.

Bot yit the fals feynd 35  
Made Hym with man wroth,

5. Entysyd man to glotony, styrd him to syn in pride; 40  
Bot in Paradise, securly, myght no syn abide,  
And therfor man full hastely was put out in that tyde,  
In wo and wandreth for to be, in paynes full vnrid  
To knowe,

Fyrst in erth, *and* sythen in hell 45  
With feyndis for to dwell,  
Bot He his mercy mell  
To those that will Hym trawe.

6. Oyle of mercy He hus hight, as I haue hard red, 50  
To euery lifyng wight that wold luf Hym and dred;  
Bot now before His sight euery liffyng leyde,  
Most party day and nyght, syn in word and dede  
Full bold;

Som in pride, ire, and enuy, 55  
Som in coueteis and glotyny,  
Som in sloth and lechery,  
And other wise many fold.

7. Therfor I drede lest God on vs will take veniance, 55  
For syn is now alod, without any repentance.  
Sex hundreth yeris and od haue I, without distance,  
In erth, as any sod, liffyd with grete grevance  
Allway;

And now I wax old, 60  
Seke, sory, and cold,  
As muk apon mold  
I widder away.

8. Bot yit will I cry for mercy and call: 65  
Noe, Thi seruant, am I, Lord ouer all!  
Therfor me, and my fry shal with me fall,  
Saue from velany, and bryng to Thi hall  
In heuen;

And kepe me from syn  
This world within; 70  
Comly Kyng of mankyn,  
I pray The, here my stevyn!  
[*God appears above.*]

[188]

9. *Deus.* Syn I haue maide all thyng that is liffand,  
Duke, emperour, and kyng, with Myne awne hand,  
For to haue thare likyng, bi see and bi sand, 75  
Euery man to My bydyng shuld be bowand  
Full feruent,  
That maide man sich a creatoure,  
Farest of favoure;  
Man must luf Me paramoure 80  
By reson, and repent.
10. Me thocht I shewed man luf when I made hym to be  
All angels abuf, like to the Trynyté;  
And now in grete reprufe full low ligis he,  
In erth hymself to stuf with syn that displeases Me 85  
Most of all.  
Veniance will I take  
In erth for syn sake;  
My grame thus will I wake  
Both of grete and small. 90
11. I repente full sore that euer maide I man;  
Bi me he settis no store, and I am his soferan;  
I will distroy therfor both beest, man and woman,  
All shall perish, les and more; that bargan may thay ban  
That ill has done. 95  
In erth I se right noght  
Bot syn that is vnsoght;  
Of those that well has wrought  
Fynd I bot a fone.
12. Therfor shall I fordo all this medill-erd 100  
With floodis that shall flo and ryn with hidous rerd;  
I haue good cause therto; for Me no man is ferd.  
As I say shal I do—of veniance draw My swerd,  
And make end  
Of all that beris life, 105  
Sayf Noe and his wife,  
For thay wold neuer stryfe  
With Me, then Me offend.
- [189]
13. Hym to mekill wyn, hastly will I go  
To Noe my seruand, or I blyn, to warn hym of his wo. 110  
In erth I se bot syn reynand to and fro,  
Emang both more and myn, ichon other fo  
With all thare entent.  
All shall I fordo  
With floodis that shall floo; 115  
Wirk shall I thaym wo  
That will not repent.  
[*God descends and addresses Noah.*]
14. Noe, My freend, I thee commaund, from cares the to keyle,  
A ship that thou ordand of nayle and bord ful wele.  
Thou was alway well-wirkand, to Me trew as stele, 120

To My bydyng obediand: frendship shal thou fele

To mede.

Of lennthe thi ship be

Thre hundreth cubettis, warn I the,

Of heght euen thirté,

Of fyfty als in brede.

125

15. Anoynt thi ship with pik and tar, without and als within,

The water out to spar—this is a noble gyn;

Look no man the mar, thre [chese](#) chambres begyn;

Thou must spend many a spar this wark or thou wyn

To end fully.

Make in thi ship also

Parloures oone or two,

And houses of offyce mo

For beestis that ther must be.

130

135

[190]

16. Oone cubite on hight a wyndo shal thou make;

On the syde a doore, with slyght, beneyth shal thou take;

With the shal no man fyght, nor do the no kyn wrake.

When all is doyne thus right, thi wife, that is thi make,

Take in to the;

Thi sonnes of good fame,

Sem, Iaphet, and Came,

Take in also <t>hame,

Thare wifis also thre.

140

17. For all shal be fordone that lif in land, bot ye,

With floodis that from abone shal fall, and that plenté;

It shall begyn full sone to rayn vncessantlé,

After dayes seuen be done, and induyr dayes fourty,

Withoutten fayll.

Take to thi ship also

Of ich kynd beestis two,

Mayll and femayll, bot no mo,

Or thou pull vp thi sayll,

145

150

18. For thay may the avayll when al this thyng is wroght.

Stuf thi ship with vitayll, for hungre that ye perish noght.

Of beestis, foull, and catayll, for thaym haue thou in thoght,

For thaym is My counsayll that som socour be soght

In hast.

Thay must haue corn and hay,

And oder mete alway.

Do now as I the say,

In the name of the Holy Gast.

155

160

19. *Noe*. A! *benedicite!* what art thou that thus

Tellys afore that shall be? Thou art full mervelus!

Tell me, for charité, thi name so gracios.

*Deus*. My name is of dignyté, and also full glorius

To knowe.

I am God most myghty,

Oone God in Trynyty,

Made the and ich man to be;

To luf Me well thou awe.

165

[191]

170

20. *Noe*. I thank The, Lord so dere, that wold vowchsayf

Thus low to appere to a symple knafe.

Blis vs, Lord, here, for charité I hit crafe,

Certayn.

*Deus.* Noe, to the and to thi fry

My blyssyng graunt I;

Ye shall wax and multiply

And fill the erth agane, 180

21. When all thise floodis ar past, and fully gone away.

*Noe.* Lord, homward will I hast as fast as that I may;

My <wife> will I frast what she will say, [*Exit Deus.*]

And I am agast that we get som fray

Betwixt vs both; 185

For she is full tethee,

For litill oft angré;

If any thyng wrang be,

Soyne is she wroth.

*Tunc perget ad vxorem.*

22. God spede, dere wife, how fayre ye? 190

*Vxor.* Now, as euer myght I thryfe, the wars I thee see.

Do tell me belife where has thou thus long be?

To dede may we dryfe, or lif, for the,

For want.

When we swete or swynk, 195

Thou dos what thou thynk,

Yit of mete and of drynk

Haue we veray skant.

[192]

23. *Noe.* Wife, we ar hard sted with tythyngis new.

*Vxor.* Bot thou were worthi be cled in Stafford blew; 200

For thou art alway adred, be it fals or trew,

Bot God knowes I am led, and that may I rew,

Full ill;

For I dar be thi borow,

From euen vnto morow 205

Thou spekis euer of sorow;

God send the onys thi fill!

24. We women may wary all ill husbandis;

I haue oone, bi Mary that lowsyd me of my bandis!

If he teyn, I must tary, how so euer it standis, 210

With seymland full sory, wryngand both my handis

For drede.

Bot yit other while,

What with gam and with gyle,

I shall smyte and smyle, 215

And qwite hym his mede.

25. *Noe.* We! hold thi tong, ram-skyt, or I shall the still.

*Vxor.* By my thryft, if thou smyte, I shal turne the vntill.

*Noe.* We shall assay as tye. Haue at the, Gill!

Apon the bone shal it byte.

*Vxor.* A, so, Mary! thou smytis ill! 220

Bot I suppose

I shal not in thi det

Flyt of this flett!

Take the ther a langett

To tye vp thi hose! 225

26. *Noe.* A! wilt thou so? Mary! that is myne.



*Vxor.* Thou shal thre for two, I swere bi Godis pyne!

*Noe.* And I shall qwyte the tho, in fayth, or syne.

*Vxor.* Out upon the, ho!

*Noe.* Thou can both byte and whyne

With a rerd;

For all if she stryke,

Yit fast will she skryke;

In fayth, I hold none slyke

In all medill-erd.

230

27. Bot I will kepe charyté, for I haue at do.

235

*Vxor.* Here shal no man tary the, I pray the go to!

Full well may we mys the, as euer haue I ro;

To spyn will I dres me.

*Noe.* We! fare well, lo;

Bot wife,

Pray for me beselé

240

To eft I com vnto the.

*Vxor.* Euen as thou prays for me,

As euer myght I thrife.

[*Exit Vxor.*]

28. *Noe.* I tary full lang fro my warke, I traw;

245

Now my gere will I fang, and thederward draw;

I may full ill gang, the soth for to knaw,

Bot if God help amang, I may sit downe daw

To ken;

Now assay will I

How I can of wryghtry,

250

*In nomine patris, et filii,*

*Et spiritus sancti. Amen.*

29. To begyn of this tree my bonys will I bend,

I traw from the Trynyté socoure will be send;

It fayres full fayre, thynk me, this wark to my hend;

255

Now blissid be He that this can amend.

Lo, here the lenght,

Thre hundreth cubettis euenly;

Of breed, lo, is it fyfty;

The heght is euen thyrty

260

Cubettis full strenght.

30. Now my gowne will I cast and wyrk in my cote,

Make will I the mast or I flyt oone foote;

A! my bak, I traw, will brast! This is a sory note!

Hit is wonder that I last, sich an old dote,

265

All dold,

To begyn sich a wark!

My bonys ar so stark,

No wonder if thay wark,

For I am full old.

270

31. The top and the sayll both will I make,

The helme and the castell also will I take,

To drife ich a nayll will I not forsake,

This gere may neuer fayll, that dar I vndertake

Onone.

275

This is a nobull gyn,

These nayles so thay ryn

Thoro more and myn  
Thise bordis ichon.

32. Wyndow and doore, euen as He saide, 280  
Thre ches chambre, thay ar well maide,  
Pyk and tar full sure therapon laide;  
This will euer endure, therof am I paide;  
For why?  
It is better wroght 285  
Then I coude haif thoght.  
Hym that maide all of noght  
I thank oonly.
33. Now will I hy me, and no thyng be leder, 290  
My wife and my meneye to bryng euen heder.  
Tent hedir tydely, wife, and consider,  
Hens must vs fle, all sam togeder,  
In hast.  
[195] *Vxor.* Whi, syr, what alis you?  
Who is that asalis you? 295  
To fle it aualis you  
And ye be agast.
34. *Noe.* Ther is garn on the reyll other, my dame.  
*Vxor.* Tell me that ich a deyll, els get ye blame.  
*Noe.* He that cares may keill—blissid be His name!— 300  
He has <het> for oure seyll to sheld vs fro shame,  
And sayd  
All this warld aboute  
With floodis so stoute,  
That shall ryn on a route, 305  
Shall be ouerlaide.
35. He saide all shall be slayn, bot oonely we,  
Oure barnes that ar bayn, and thare wifis thre.  
A ship He bad me ordayn, to safe vs and oure fee;  
Therfor with all oure mayn thank we that fre, 310  
Beytter of bayll.  
Hy vs fast, go we thedir.  
*Vxor.* I wote neuer whedir,  
I dase and I dedir  
For ferd of that tayll. 315
36. *Noe.* Be not aferd, haue done, trus sam oure gere,  
That we be ther or none, without more dere.  
*Primus filius.* It shall be done full sone. Brether, help to bere.  
*Secundus filius.* Full long shall I not hoyne to do my devere,  
Brether sam. 320  
*Tercius filius.* Without any yelp,  
At my myght shall I help.  
*Vxor.* Yit, for drede of a skelp,  
Help well thi dam.
- [196] 37. *Noe.* Now ar we there as we shuld be; 325  
Do get in oure gere, oure catall and fe,  
Into this vessell here, my chylder fre.  
*Vxor.* I was neuer bard ere, as euer myght I the,  
In sich an oostré as this.  
In fath, I can not fynd 330  
Which is before, which is behynd.

Bot shall we here be pynd,  
Noe, as haue thou blis?

38. *Noe.* Dame, as it is skill, here must vs abide grace;  
Therfor, wife, with good will, com into this place. 335  
*Vxor.* Sir, for Iak nor for Gill will I turne my face,  
Till I haue on this hill spon a space  
On my rok.  
Well were he myght get me!  
Now will I downe set me; 340  
Yit reede I no man let me,  
For drede of a knok.
39. *Noe.* Behold to the heuen the cateractes all,  
That are open full euen, grete and small,  
And the planetis seuen left has thare stall. 345  
These thoners and levyn downe gar fall  
Full stout  
Both halles and bowers,  
Castels and towres.  
Full sharp ar these showers 350  
That renys aboute.
40. Therfor, wife, haue done, com into ship fast.  
*Vxor.* Yei, Noe, go cloute thi shone, the better will thai last.  
*Prima mulier.* Good moder, com in sone, for all is ouercast  
Both the son and the mone.  
*Secunda mulier.* And many wynd blast 355  
Full sharp.  
These floodis so thay ryn,  
Therfor, moder, come in.  
*Vxor.* In fayth, yit will I spyn;  
All in vayn ye carp. 360
41. *Tercia mulier.* If ye like ye may spyn, moder, in the ship.  
*Noe.* Now is this twyys com in, dame, on my frenship.  
*Vxor.* Wheder I lose or I wyn, in fayth, thi felowship  
Set I not at a pyn. This spyndill will I slip  
Apon this hill, 365  
Or I styr oone fote.  
*Noe.* Peter! I traw we dote.  
Without any more note  
Come in if ye will.
42. *Vxor.* Yei, water nyghys so nere that I sit not dry, 370  
Into ship with a byr therfor will I hy  
For drede that I drone here.  
*Noe.* Dame, securly,  
It bees boght full dere ye abode so long by  
Out of ship.  
*Vxor.* I will not, for thi bydyng, 375  
Go from doore to mydyng.  
*Noe.* In fayth, and for youre long taryyng  
Ye shal lik on the whyp.
43. *Vxor.* Spare me not, I pray the, bot euen as thou thynk,  
These grete wordis shall not flay me.  
*Noe.* Abide, dame, and drynk, 380  
For betyn shall thou be with this staf to thou stynk;  
Ar strokis good? say me.

*Vxor.* What say ye, Wat Wynnk?

*Noe.* Speke!

Cry me mercy, I say!

*Vxor.* Therto say I nay.

*Noe.* Bot thou do, bi this day!

Thi hede shall I breke.

385

44. *Vxor.* Lord, I were at ese, and hertely full hoyll,

Might I onys haue a measse of wedows coyll;

For thi saull, without lese, shuld I dele penny doyll,

So wold mo, no frese, that I se on this sole

Of wifis that ar here,

For the life that thay leyd,

Wold thare husbandis were dede,

For, as euer ete I brede,

So wold I oure syre were.

390

395

45. *Noe.* Yee men that has wifis, whyls they ar yong,

If ye luf youre lifis, chastice thare tong:

Me thynk my hert ryfis, both levyr and long,

To se sich stryfis wedmen emong.

Bot I,

As haue I blys,

Shall chastyse this.

*Vxor.* Yit may ye mys,

Nicholl Nedy!

400

405

46. *Noe.* I shall make þe still as stone, begynnar of blunder!

I shall bete the bak and bone, and breke all in sonder.

[*They fight.*]

*Vxor.* Out, alas, I am gone! Oute apou the, mans wonder!

*Noe.* Se how she can grone, and I lig vnder;

Bot, wife,

In this hast let vs ho,

For my bak is nere in two.

*Vxor.* And I am bet so blo

That I may not thryfe.

[*They enter the Ark.*]

410

47. *Primus filius.* A! whi fare ye thus, fader and moder both?

*Secundus filius.* Ye shuld not be so spitus, standyng in sich a woth.

*Tercius filius.* Thise <floodis> ar so hidus, with many a cold coth.

*Noe.* We will do as ye bid vs, we will no more be wroth,

Dere barnes!

Now to the helme will I hent,

And to my ship tent.

*Vxor.* I se on the firmament,

Me thynk, the seven starnes.

415

420

48. *Noe.* This is a grete flood, wife, take hede.

*Vxor.* So me thoght, as I stode; we ar in grete drede;

Thise wawghes ar so wode.

*Noe.* Help, God, in this nede!

As Thou art stereman good, and best, as I rede,

Of all;

Thou rewle vs in this rase,

As Thou me behete hase.

*Vxor.* This is a perlous case.

Help, God, when we call!

425

430

49. *Noe.* Wife, tent the stere-tre, and I shall asay  
The depnes of the see that we bere, if I may.  
*Vxor.* That shall I do ful wysely. Now go thi way, 435  
For apon this flood haue we flett many day  
With pyne.  
*Noe.* Now the water will I sownd:  
A! it is far to the grownd;  
This trauell I expownd 440  
Had I to tyne.
50. About all hillys bedeyn the water is rysen late  
Cubettis fyfteyn, bot in a higher state  
It may not be, I weyn, for this well I wate:  
This forty dayes has rayn beyn; it will therfor abate 445  
Full lele.  
This water in hast  
Eft will I tast.  
Now am I agast,  
It is wanyd a grete dele. 450
51. Now are the weders cest, and cateractes knyt,  
Both the most and the leest.  
*Vxor.* Me thynk, bi my wit,  
The son shynes in the eest. Lo, is not yond it?  
We shuld haue a good feest, were thise floodis flyt  
So spytus. 455  
*Noe.* We haue been here, all we,  
Thre hundreth dayes and fyfty.  
*Vxor.* Yei, now wanyd the see;  
Lord, well is vs!
52. *Noe.* The thryd tyme will I prufe what depnes we bere. 460  
*Vxor.* How long shall thou hufe? Lay in thy lyne there.  
*Noe.* I may towch with my lufe the grownd evyn here.  
*Vxor.* Then begynnys to grufe to vs mery chere;  
Bot, husband,  
What grownd may this be? 465  
*Noe.* The hyllys of Armony.  
*Vxor.* Now blissid be He  
That thus for vs can ordand!
53. *Noe.* I see toppys of hyllys he, many at a syght,  
No thyng to let me, the wedir is so bright. 470  
*Vxor.* Thise ar of mercy tokyns full right.  
*Noe.* Dame, thou counsell me, what fowll best myght,  
And cowth,  
With flight of wyng  
Bryng, without taryyng, 475  
Of mercy som tokynyng,  
Ayther bi north or southe?
54. For this is the fyrst day of the tent moyne.  
*Vxor.* The ravyn, durst I lay, will com agane sone;  
As fast as thou may, cast hym furth, haue done; 480  
He may happyn today com agane or none  
With grath.  
*Noe.* I will cast out also  
Dowfys oone or two.  
Go youre way, go, 485

God send you som wathe!

55. Now ar thise fowles flone into seyr countré;  
Pray we fast ichon, kneland on our kne,  
To Hym that is alone worthiest of degré,  
That He wold send anone oure fowles som fee 490  
    To glad vs.  
    *Vxor.* Thai may not fayll of land,  
The water is so wanand.  
    *Noe.* Thank we God Allweldand,  
    That Lord that made vs! 495
- [202] 56. It is a wonder thyng, me thynk, sothlé,  
Thai ar so long taryng, the fowles that we  
Cast out in the mornyng.  
    *Vxor.* Syr, it may be  
Thai tary to thay bryng.  
    *Noe.* The ravyn is a-hungrye 500  
    All way;  
He is without any reson;  
And he fynd any caryon,  
As peraventure may be fon,  
    He will not away.
57. The dowfe is more gentill, her trust I vntew, 505  
Like vnto the turtill, for she is ay trew.  
    *Vxor.* Hence bot a litill she commys, lew, lew!  
She bryngys in her bill som novels new;  
    Behald!  
It is of an olif tre 510  
A branch, thynkys me.  
    *Noe.* It is soth, perdé,  
    Right so is it cald.
58. Doufe, byrd full blist, fayre myght the befall! 515  
Thou art trew for to trist, as ston in the wall;  
Full well I it wist thou wold com to thi hall.  
    *Vxor.* A trew tokyn ist we shall be sauyd all:  
    For whi?  
The water, syn she com,  
Of depnes plom 520  
Is fallen a fathom  
    And more, hardely.
59. *Primus filius.* Thise floodis ar gone, fader, behold.  
*Secundus filius.* Ther is left right none, and that be ye bold.  
*Tercius filius.* As still as a stone oure ship is stold. 525  
    *Noe.* Apon land here anone that we were, fayn I wold,  
    My childer dere,  
Sem, Iaphet and Cam,  
With gle and with gam,  
Com go we all sam, 530  
    We will no longer abide here.
- [203] 60. *Vxor.* Here haue we beyn, Noy, long enogh  
With tray and with teyn, and dreed mekill wogh.  
    *Noe.* Behald on this greyn nowder cart ne plogh  
Is left, as I weyn, nowder tre then bogh, 535  
    Ne other thyng;  
Bot all is away;

Many castels, I say,  
Grete townes of aray,  
    Flitt has this flowyng.

540

61. *Vxor.* These floodis not afright all this world so wide  
Has mevid with myght on se and bi side.

*Noe.* To dede ar thai dyght, prowdist of pryde,  
Euerich a wyght that euer was spyde  
    With syn,  
All ar thai slayn,  
And put vnto payn.

545

*Vxor.* From thens agayn  
    May thai neuer wyn?

62. *Noe.* Wyn? No, iwis, bot He that myght hase  
Wold myn of thare mys, and admytte thaym to grace;  
As He in bayll is blis, I pray Hym in this space,  
In heven hye with His to purvaye vs a place,

550

    That we,  
With His santis in sight,  
And His angels bright,  
May com to His light:

555

    Amen, for charité.

*Explicit processus Noe.*

129 [chese](#)] chefe MS.

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## NOTES

### I

**Dialect:** North-East Midland of Lincolnshire.

**Inflexions:**—

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *hast* 131.

    3 sg. *stondeþ* 8.

    3 pl. *calle* 32, *seye* 254; beside *dos* 157 ([see note](#)).

imper. pl. *comeþ* 80, *dop* 82.

pres. p. *karoland* (in rime) 117, 150, 222.

strong pp. *wryte* 37, *fal* 195, *gone* 161.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: fem. nom. *she* 48; pl. nom. *þey* 32; poss. *here* 37; obj. *hem* 39.

The inflexions are very much simplified as compared with those of the Kentish *Ayenbyte* (III), but the verse shows that final unaccented *-e* was better preserved in the original than in our late MS., e.g.

*And specyaly at hygh<é> tymés* 13.

*For to see þys hard<é> dome* 173.

*And at þe þre<é> day<é>s endé* 198.

*þat noné myzt<é> leye yn graué* 217.

**Sounds:**  $\bar{o}$  is regular for OE.  $\bar{a}$ : *lothe* 9, *wroth* 10, &c.; but the only decisive rime is *also* (OE. *alswā*): *to* (OE. *tō*) 35-6, where  $\bar{o}$  after *(s)w* has become close  $\bar{o}$ ; see Appendix § 8. ii, note.

**Syntax:** the loose constructions, e.g. ll. 15 ff. (note), 134-5, 138-9, 216-19, are characteristic of the period.

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The history of this legend is traced by E. Schröder, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, vol. xvii, 1896, pp. 94 ff., and, more summarily, by Gaston Paris, *Les Danseurs maudits*, Paris 1900. The circumstances from which it sprang appear to belong to the year 1021. Kölbick, in Anhalt, Saxony, was the scene of the dance. In 1074 it is referred to as 'famous' by a German chronicler, who records the healing of one of the dancers in 1038 through the miraculous powers of St. Wigbert.

Mendicants who suffered from or could simulate nervous diseases like St. Vitus's dance, were quick to realize their opportunity, and two letters telling the story were circulated as credentials by pretended survivors of the band. Both are influenced in form by a sermon of St. Augustine of Hippo which embodies a similar story (Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. xxxviii, col. 1443). The first (Letter of Otbert), which claims to be issued by Peregrinus bishop of Cologne, spread rapidly through Western Europe. This was the version that Mannyng found in William of Wadington. The second (Letter of Theodric) makes Bruno bishop of Toul, afterwards Pope Leo IX, vouch for the facts. It was incorporated in the account of the miraculous cure of Theodric at the shrine of St. Edith of Wilton, and is known only from English sources. This was the text that Mannyng used. A later English version, without merit, is found in the dreary fifteenth-century *Life of St. Editha* (ed. Horstmann, ll. 4063 ff.).

1 ff. *games*: Dances and shows in the churchyard were constantly condemned by the Church in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1287 a synod at Exeter rules *ne quisquam luctas, choreas, vel alios ludos inhonestos in coemeteriis exercere praesumat, praecipue in vigiliis et festis sanctorum*. See Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, vol. i, pp. 90 ff.

6. *or tabure bete*: Note the use of *bete* infin. as a verbal noun = *betyng*; cp. xi b 184-5.

10-12. 'And he (*sc.* a good priest) will become angered sooner than one who has no learning, and who does not understand Holy Writ.'

15 ff. *noght... none*: An accumulation of negatives in ME. makes the negation more emphatic. Here the writer wavers between two forms of expression: (1) 'do not sing carols in holy places', and (2) 'to sing carols in holy places is sacrilege'.

25-8. *yn þys lond*, &c. The cure of Theodric, not the dance, took place in England. Brightgiva is said to have been abbess of Wilton at the time (1065), and 'King Edward' is Edward the Confessor (1042-66).

34-5. The church of Kölbigk is dedicated to St. Magnus, of whom nothing certain is known. The memory of St. Bukcestre, if ever there was such a saint, appears to be preserved only in this story.

36. *þat þey come to*: Construe with *hyt* in l. 35.

37 ff. *Here names of alle*: The twelve followers of Gerlew are named in the Latin text, but Mannyng gives only the principal actors. The inconsistency is still more marked in the Bodleian MS., which after l. 40 adds:—

*þe ouþer twelue here names alle*

*þus were þey wrete, as y can kalle.*

Otherwise the Bodleian MS. is very closely related to the Harleian, sharing most of its errors and peculiarities.

44. *þe prestes doghtyr of þe tounne*, 'the priest of the town's daughter'. In early ME. the genitive inflexion is not, as in Modern English, added to the last of a group of words: cp. xiv d 10 *þe Kynges sone of heuene* 'the King of Heaven's son'. The same construction occurs in viii a 19 *for þe Lordes loue of heuene* = 'for the love of the Lord of Heaven', and in viii a 214; but in these passages the genitive is objective, and Modern English does not use the inflexion at all (note to i 83). The ME. and modern expressions have their point of agreement in the position of the genitive inflexion, which always precedes immediately the noun on which the genitive depends. Cp. notes to ii 518, vi 23, and xiv d 1.

46. *Azone*: *z = z* here. The name is *Azo* in the Latin.

55. *Beu<u>ne*: (derived from the accusative *Beuonem*) = *Beuo* of l. 59 and *Beuolyne* of l. 62. The form is properly *Bovo* not *Bevo*. Considerable liberties were taken with proper names to adapt them to metre or rime: e.g. l. 52 *Merswynde*; l. 63 *Merswyne*; cp. note to l. 246. This habit, and frequent miscopying, make it difficult to rely on names in mediaeval stories.

65. *Grylsy*: An error for *Gerlew*, Latin *Gerleuus*, from Low German *Gērlēf* = OE. *Gārġāf*.

83. *for Crystys awe*: In Modern English a phrase like *Christ's awe* could mean only 'the awe felt by Christ'. But in OE. *Cristes ege*, or *ege Cristes*, meant also 'the awe of Christ (which men feel)', the genitive being objective. In ME. the word order *eie Cristes* is dropped, but *Cristes eie* (or *awe*, the Norse form) is still regular for '(men's) fear of Christ'. Hence formal ambiguities like *þe Lordes loue of heuene* viii a 19, which actually means '(men's) love of the Lord of Heaven', but grammatically might mean 'the Lord of Heaven's love (for men)'—see note to l. 44 above.

96-7. The Latin Letter of Theodric in fact has *ab isto officio ex Dei nutu amodo non cessetis*, but probably *amodo* is miswritten for *anno*.

127. *a saue*: lit. 'have safe', i.e. 'rescue'. *Saue* is here adj.

128-9. *ys: flessch*: The rime requires the alternative forms *es* (as in l. 7) and *fles(s)*. Cp. note to vii 4.

132. *ʒow þar nat aske*: 'There is no need for you to ask'; *ʒow* is dative after the impersonal *þar*.

156-7. *werynes: dos*. The rime is false. Perhaps Mannyng wrote: *As many body for goyng es* [*sc.* *wery*], and a copyist misplaced *es*, writing: *As many body es for goyng*. If *body es* were read as *bodyes*, a new verb would then be added.

169. Note the irony of the refrain. The Letter of Otbert adds the picturesque detail that they gradually sank up to their waists in the ground through dancing on the same spot.

172. *þe Emperoure Henry*: Probably Henry II of Germany, Emperor from 1014 to 1024. A



certain vagueness in points of time and place would save the bearers of the letter from awkward questions.

188-9. *banned: woned*. The rime (OE. *bannan* and *wunian*) is false, and the use of *woned* 'remained' is suspicious. Mannyng perhaps wrote *bende* 'put in bonds': *wende* (= *zede* l. 191) 'went'; or (if the form *band* for *banned(e)* could be evidenced so early) *band* 'cursed': *wand*, pret. of *winden*, 'went'.

195. *fal yn a swone*: So MS., showing that by the second half of the fourteenth century the pp. adj. *aswon* had been wrongly analysed into the indef. article *a* and a noun *swon*. Mannyng may have written *fallen aswone*. See Glossary, *s.v.* *aswone*.

234. *Wyth sundyr lepys*: 'with separate leaps'; but *Wyth* was probably added by a scribe who found in his original *sundryrlepys*, adv., meaning 'separately',—

*Kar suvent par les mains*

*Des malvais escrivains*

*Sunt livre corruput.*

240. *Seynt Edyght*. St. Edith (d. 984) was daughter of King Edgar, and abbess of Wilton. The rime is properly *Edit: Teodric*, for *t* and *k* are sufficiently like in sound to rime together in the best ME. verse; cp. note to XV *g* 27.

246. *Brunyng... seynt Tolous*: Latin *Bruno Tullanus*. Robert probably did not hesitate to provide a rime by turning Toul into Toulouse. Bruno afterwards became Pope Leo IX (1049-54).

254-5. *trowed: God*. Read *trōd*, a shortened form, revealed by rimes in North Midland texts. The identical rime occurs three times in Mannyng's *Chronicle* (ed. Hearne, p. 339; ed. Furnivall, ll. 7357-8, 8111-12); and, again with substitution of *troud* for *trod*, in *Havelok*, ll. 2338-9. Cp. note to XVII 56.

## II

**Dialect:** South-Western, with some admixture of Northern forms due to a copyist.

**Inflexions:**—

VERB: pres. ind. 1 sg. *ichaue*, &c. (see note to l. 129).

2 sg. *makest* 169, *worst* 170.

3 sg. *geb* (in rime) 238; contracted *fint* 239, *last* 335, *sitt* 443, *stont* 556.

2 pl. *ze bep* 582.

3 pl. *strikeþ* 252 (proved by rime with 3 sg. *likeþ*).

imper. pl. *make* 216, *chese* 217; beside *dop* 218.

pres. p. *berking* 286 (in rime with verbal sb.); *daunceing* (in rime) 298. The forms *kneland* 250, *liggeand* 388, are due to a Northern copyist.

strong pp. (various forms): *go* (: *wo*) 196, *ygo* (: *mo*) 349, *ydone* (: *-none*) 76, *comen* 29, *come* 181, *ycomen* 203, *yborn* 174, *bore* 210.

infin. Note *aski* (OE. *acsian*) 467 (App. § 13 vii).

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: fem. nom. *he* 408, 446, *hye* 337, beside *sche* 75, 77, &c.

pl. nom. *he* (in rime) 185, *hye* 91, beside *þai* 32, 69, &c.;

poss. *her* 'their' 87, 413, 415; obj. *hem* 69, &c.

NOUN: Note the plurals *honden* 79, *berien* 258.

The original text preserved final *-e* better than the extant MSS., e.g.

*And seyd<é> þus þe king<é> to* 119.

*þat noþing help<é> þe no schal* 172.

*Al þe vt<é>mast<é> wal* 357.

*So, sir, as ze seyd<é> nouþé* 466.

**Sounds:**  $\bar{o}$  for OE.  $\bar{a}$  is proved in rime: *biholde* (OE. *beháldan*): *gold* (OE. *góld*) 367-8 (cp. 467-8); and *yhote* (OE. *gehāten*): *note* (OFr. *note*) 601-2.

The rime *frut: lite* 257-8 points to original *frut: lut* (OE. *lýt*), with Western  $\bar{u}$ , from OE.  $\bar{y}$ , riming with OFr.  $\bar{u}$ .

1-22. These lines, found also in *Lai le Freine*, would serve as preface to any of the Breton lays, with the couplet ll. 23-4 as the special connecting link. In the Auchinleck MS., *Orfeo* begins on a fresh leaf at l. 25, without heading or capitals to indicate that it is a new poem. The leaf preceding has been lost. There is good reason to suppose that it contained the lines supplied in the text from the Harleian MS.

4. *frely*, 'goodly': *Lai le Freine* has *ferly* 'wondrous'.

12. MS. *moost to lowe*: means 'most (worthy) to be praised', and there are two or three recorded examples of *to lowe* = *to alowe* in this sense. But MS. Ashmole and the corresponding lines in *Lai le Freine* point to *most o loue* 'mostly of love' as the common reading. The typical 'lay' is a poem of moderate length, telling a story of love, usually with some supernatural element, in a refined and courtly style.

13. *Brytayn*, 'Brittany': so *Brytouns* 16 = 'Bretons'. Cp. Chaucer, *Franklin's Tale, Prologue*, beginning

*Thise olde gentil Britons in hir dayes  
Of diverse adventures maden layes  
Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge,  
Whiche layes with hir instrumentz they songe, &c.*

[209] 20. The curious use of *it* after the plural *layes* is perhaps not original. *Lai le Freine* has: *And maked a lay and yaf it name.*

26. *In Inglond*: an alteration of the original text to give local colour. Cp. ll. 49-50 and l. 478.

29-30. *Pluto*: the King of Hades came to be regarded as the King of Fairyland; cp. Chaucer, *Merchant's Tale*, l. 983 *Pluto that is the kyng of fairye*. The blunder by which Juno is made a king is apparently peculiar to the Auchinleck copy.

33-46. These lines are not in the Auchinleck MS., but are probably authentic. Otherwise little prominence would be given to Orfeo's skill as a harper.

41 ff. A confused construction: *In þe world was neuer man born* should be followed by *<þat> he <ne> schulde þinke*; but the writer goes on as if he had begun with 'every man in the world'. *And* = 'if'.

46. *ioy and* overload the verse, and are probably an unskilful addition to the text.

49-50. These lines are peculiar to the Auchinleck MS., and are clearly interpolated; cp. l. 26 and l. 478. Winchester was the old capital of England, and therefore the conventional seat of an English king.

57. *comessing*: The metre points to a disyllabic form *comsing* here, and to *comsi* in l. 247.

80. *it bled wete*: In early English the clause which is logically subordinate is sometimes made formally co-ordinate. More normal would be *þat (it) bled wete* 'until (or so that) it bled wet'; i.e. until it was wet with blood.

82. *reuey<se>d* or some such form of *ravished* is probably right. *reneyd* 'apostate' is a possible reading of the MS., but does not fit the sense. *N. E. D.* suggests *remeued*.

102. *what is te?*: 'What ails you?'; cp. l. 115. *Te* for *þe* after *s* of *is*. Such modifications are due either to dissimilation of like sounds, as *þ*: *s* which are difficult in juxtaposition; or to assimilation of unlike sounds, as *þatow* 165, for *þat þow*.

115. 'What ails you, and how it came about?'; cp. l. 102.

129. *ichil* = *ich wille*; and so *ichauē* 209, *icham* 382, *ichot* xv b 23. These forms, reduced to *chill*, *cham*, &c., were still characteristic of the Southern dialect in Shakespeare's time: cp. *King Lear*, IV. vi. 239 *Chill not let go, Zir*.

131. *þat nouzt nis*: 'That cannot be'; cp. l. 457 *þat nouzt nere*.

157-8. *palays: ways*. The original rime was perhaps *palys: wys* 'wise'.

170. 'Wherever you may be, you shall be fetched.'

201-2. *barouns: renouns*. Forms like *renouns* in rime are usually taken over from a French original.

[210] 215. The overloaded metre points to a shorter word like *wite* for *vnderstond*.

216. *Make 3ou þan a parlement*: *3ou* is not nom., but dat. 'for yourselves'. Observe that Orfeo acts like a constitutional English king.

241. *þe fowe and griis*: A half translation of OFr. *vair et gris*. *Vair* (Lat. *varius*) was fur made of alternate pieces of the grey back and white belly of the squirrel. Hence it is rendered by *fowe*, OE. *fāg* 'varicolor'. *Griis* is the grey back alone, and the French word is retained for the rime with *biis*, which was probably in the OFr. original.

258. *berien*: The MS. may be read *berren*, but as this form is incorrect it is better to assume that the *i* has been carelessly shaped by the scribe.

289. *him se*, 'see (for himself)', and similarly *slep þou þe* xv g 13. This reflexive use of the dative pronoun, which cannot be reproduced in a modern rendering, is common in OE. and ME., especially with verbs of motion; cp. note to xv g 24. But distinguish *went him* 475, 501, where *him* is accusative, not dative (OE. *wente hine*), because the original sense of *went* is 'turned', which naturally takes a reflexive object.

342. *me no reche* = *I me no reche*. The alternative would be the impersonal *me no recheþ*.

343. *also spac* = *also bliue* 142 = *also swiþe* 574: 'straightway', &c.

363. MS. *auowed* (or *anowed*) is meaningless here. *Anow<rn>ed*, or the doubtful by-form *anow<r>ed* 'adorned', is probably the true reading.

382. The line is too long—a fault not uncommon where direct speech is introduced, e.g. l. 419 and 178. Usually a correct line can be obtained by dropping words like *quath he*, which are not as necessary in spoken verse as they are where writing alone conveys the sense. But sometimes

the flaw may lie in the forms of address: l. 382 would be normal without *Parfay*; l. 419 may once have been:

*And seyð 'Lord, 3if bi wille were'.*

There is no task more slippery than the metrical reconstruction of ME. poems, particularly those of which the extant text derives from the original not simply through a line of copyists, but through a line of minstrels who passed on the verses from memory and by word of mouth.

388. The line seems to be corrupt, and, as usual, the Harleian and Ashmole MSS. give little help. *Ful* can hardly be a sb. meaning 'multitude' from the adj. *full*. Some form of *fele* (OE. *fela*) 'a great number' would give possible grammar and sense (cp. l. 401), but bad metre. Perhaps *ful* should be deleted as a scribe's anticipation of *folk* in the next line; for the construction *seyðe... of folk* cp. XVI 388; and *Hous of Fame*, Bk. iii, ll. 147 ff.

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433. *Bei we nouzt welcom no be*: Almost contemporary with *Sir Orfeo* is the complaint of an English writer that the halls of the nobles stood open to a lawyer, but not to a poet:

*Exclusus ad ianuam poteris sedere*

*Ipse licet venias, Musis comitatus, Homere!*

'Though thou came thyself, Homer, with all the Muses, thou mightst sit at the door, shut out!', T. Wright, *Political Songs* (1839), p. 209.

446. *hadde he*, 'had she'. For *he* (OE. *hēo*) = 'she' cp. l. 408.

450. 'Now ask of me whatsoever it may be'. The plots of mediaeval romances often depend on the unlimited promises of an unwary king, whose honour compels him to keep his word. So in the story of Tristram, an Irish noble disguised as a minstrel wins Ysolde from King Mark by this same device, but is himself cheated of his prize by Tristram's skill in music.

458. 'An ill-matched pair you two would be!'

479. The halting verse may be completed by adding *sum tyme* before *his*, with the Harley and Ashmole MSS.

483. *ybilt* of the MS. and editors cannot well be a pp. meaning 'housed'. I prefer to take *bilt* as sb. = *bild*, *build* 'a building'; and to suppose that *y* has been miswritten for *ȳ*, the contraction for *yn*.

495. *gan hold*, 'held'; a good example of the ME. use of *gan* + infinitive with the sense of the simple preterite.

515. An unhappy suggestion *home* for the second *come* has sometimes been accepted. But a careful Southern poet could not rime *home* (OE. *hām*) and *some* (OE. *sūm*). See note to VI 224.

518. *For mi lordes loue Sir Orfeo*, 'for my lord Sir Orfeo's love'. Logically the genitive inflexion should be added to both of two substantives in apposition, as in OE. *on Herodes dagum cyninges* 'in the days of King Herod'. But in ME. the first substantive usually has the inflexion, and the second is uninflected; cp. V 207 *kynges hous Arthor* 'the house of King Arthur'; and notes to I 44, VI 23.

544. *Allas! wreche*: *wreche* refers to the speaker, as in l. 333.

551. *hou it gep*—: The sense is hard to convey without some cumbrous paraphrase like 'the inexorable law of this world—'.

552. *It nis no bot of manes dep*: 'There is no remedy for man's death', i.e. violent grief will do no good. Note *it nis* 'there is (not)'. In ME. the anticipated subject is commonly *it* where we use *there*.

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565. *in ynome*: '<had> taken up my abode'; *in* 'dwelling' = NE. 'inn'.

599. *herof* overloads the line and is omitted in the Ashmole MS.

### III

**Dialect:** Pure Kentish of Canterbury.

**Inflexions** are well preserved, and are similar to those found in contemporary South-Western texts.

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *multipliþ* 1; contracted *ret* 3, 16.

1 pl. *habbeþ* 2.

strong pp. *yyeue* 25, *yhote* 29.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: the new forms *she*, *they*, *their*, *them* are not used.

3 sg. fem. nom. *hi* 32, *hy* 45;

poss. *hare* 33, beside *hire* 36;

pl. nom. *hi* 58.

Note the objective form *his(e)* = 'her' 32, 53 (twice); and = 'them' 7, 8, 28.

NOUN: plurals in *-en* occur: *uorbisnen* 2, *ken* 56. In *diaknen* 5, *-en* represents the dat. pl. inflexion.

ADJECTIVE: *onen* dat. sg. 4, *opren* dat. pl. 53, *pane* acc. sg. masc. 59, *bet* (*word*) nom. sg. neut. 57, show survivals rare even in the South at this date.

**Sounds:** Characteristic of the South-East is *ě* for OE. (West-Saxon) *ȝ*: *kertel* (OE. *cyrtel*) 39, *ken* (OE. *cȝ*) 56.

Old diphthongs are preserved in *greate* (OE. *grēat*) 9, *yeaf* 22. In *hyerof* 1, *yhyerde* 49, *hier* 2, *bieues* 18, *ye*, *ie* represent diphthongs developed in Kentish rather than simple close *ē*.

Initial *z* = *s* in *zome* 'some' 2, *zede* 'said' 12, *zuo* 'so' 17; and initial *u* = *f* in *uele* 2, *uayre* 2, *uram* 4, *bevil* 41, evidence dialectal changes which occurred also in the South-West.

**Syntax:** The constructions are distorted by slavish following of the French original; see note to ll. 48-60.

3. Saint Germain of Auxerre (MS. *Aucerne*) is famous for his missions to Britain in the first half of the fifth century. This particular story is found in the *Acta Sanctorum* for July 31, p. 229.

16. St. John the Almoner (d. 616) was bishop of Alexandria. For the story see *Acta Sanctorum* for January 23, p. 115.

27-8. *and huanne he hit wiste þe ilke zelue þet his hedde onderuonge*: an obscure sentence. Perhaps: 'and when he, the same who had received them (i.e. John, who had received the five hundred pounds), knew it' (sc. the truth).

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38. This tale of Boniface, bishop of Ferentia in Etruria, is told in the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, Bk. i, chap. 9. Its first appearance in English is in the translation of the *Dialogues* made by Bishop Wærferth for King Alfred (ed. Hans Hecht, Leipzig 1900, pp. 67 ff.).

48-60. The French original of the passage, taken from an elegant fourteenth-century MS., Cotton Cleopatra A.V., fol. 144 a, will show how slavishly Dan Michael followed his source:—

*Après il fu un poure home, sicom on dit, qui auoit une vache; e oi dire a son prestre en sarmon que Dieu disoit en leuangile que Dieu rendoit a cent doubles quanque on donast por lui. Le prodomme du conseil sa femme dona sa uache a son prestre, qui estoit riches. Le prestre la prist uolentiers, e lenuoia pestre auoec les autres quil auoit. Kant uint au soir, la uache au poure home sen uint a son hostel chies le poure homme, com ele auoit acoustume, e amena auoeques soi toutes les uaches au prestre, iukes a cent. Quant le bon home uit ce, si pensa que ce estoit le mot de leuangile que li auoit rendu; e li furent aiugiees deuant son euesque contre le prestre. Cest ensample moustre bien que misericorde est bone marchande, car ele multiplie les biens temporels.*

58-9. 'And they were adjudged to him before his bishop against the priest', i.e. the bishop ruled that the poor man should have all the cows.

The French *fabliau* 'Brunain' takes up the comic rather than the moral aspect of the story. A peasant, hearing the priest say that gifts to God are doubly repaid, thought it was a favourable opportunity to give his cow Blérain—a poor milker—to the priest. The priest ties her with his own cow Brunain. To the peasant's great joy, the unprofitable Blérain returns home, leading with her the priest's good cow.

## IV

**Dialect:** Northern of Yorkshire.

**Inflections:** are reduced almost as in Modern English.

VERB: pres. ind. 1 sg. *settes a* 30; beside uninflected *sygh a* 69, *sob a* 69.

3 sg. *lastes a* 1.

1 pl. *flese b* 86; beside *we drede b* 85.

3 pl. *lyse a* 61, *lufes b* 7, &c.; beside *þay take*, *þay halde b* 12, &c., which agree with the Midland forms.

pres. p. *lastand a* 25, *byrmand a* 26, riming with *hand*.

strong pp. *wryten a* 2.

Note the Northern and North Midland short forms *mase* 'makes' *a* 15, *tane* 'taken' *a* 53 (in rime).

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PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. *scho b* 1;

pl. nom. *þai a* 60;

poss. *þar a* 59 or *þair a* 65;

obj. *thaym b* 2.

The demonstrative *thire* 'these' at *b* 55, *b* 59 is specifically Northern.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* is regularly represented by *ā*, not by *ō* of the South and most of the Midlands: *wa a* 2, *euermare a* 20, *balde* 'bold' *a* 51; *bane* (in rime) *a* 54.

*ō* becomes *ū* (*ū?*) in *gud(e) b* 9, *b* 15; and its length is sometimes indicated by adding *y*, as in

a. This poem is largely a translation of sentences excerpted from Rolle's *Incendium Amoris*, cc. xl-xli (Miss Allen in *Mod. Lang. Review* for 1919, p. 320). Useful commentaries are his prose *Form of Perfect Living* (ed. Horstmann, vol. i, pp. 3 ff.), and *Commandment of Love to God* (ibid. pp. 61 ff.), which supply many parallels in thought and phrasing; see, for example, the note to l. 48 below.

a 1. *feste*. Not the adj. 'fast', but pp. 'fastened', and so in l. 82.

a 5. *louyng*, 'beloved one', here and in l. 56. This exceptional use of the verbal noun occurs again in *my zhernyng* 'what I yearn for', a 22; *my couaytyng* 'what I covet', a 23.

a 9-12. The meaning seems to be: 'The throne of love is raised high, for it (i.e. love) ascended into heaven. It seems to me that on earth love is hidden, which makes men pale and wan. It goes very near to the bed of bliss (i.e. the bridal bed of Christ and the soul) I assure you. Though the way may seem long to us, yet love unites God and man.'

a 24. *louyng*, 'praise' here and in XVI 405, from OE. *lof* 'praise'; quite distinct from *louyng*, *lufyng*, in ll. 5 and 56.

a 36. *fle þat na man it maye*, 'which no man can escape'. See Appendix § 12, Relative.

a 42. *styll*, 'always' rather than 'motionless'.

a 43-4. Apparently 'the nature of love (*þat kyend*) turns from care the man (*þe lyfe*) who succeeds in finding love, or who ever knew it in his heart; and brings him to joy and delight.'

a 48. Cp. *Form of Perfect Living*, ed. Horstmann, vol. i, pp. 39-40: *For luf es stalworth als þe dede, þat slaes al lyuand thyng in erth; and hard als hell, þat spares noght till þam þat er dede. In The Commandment of Love Rolle explains: For als dede slas al lyuand thyng in þis worlde, sa perfite lufe slas in a mans sawle all fleschly desyres and erthly couaytise. And als hell spares noght til dede men, bot tormentes al þat comes bartill, alswa a man þat es in þis [sc. the third, called 'Singular'] degré of lufe noght anly he forsakes þe wretched solace of þis lyf, bot alswa he couaytes to sofer pynes for Goddes lufe. (Ibid. p. 63.)*

[215] b 4. *scho takes erthe*: From the *Historia Animalium* attributed to Aristotle, Bk. ix, c. 21. This is the authority referred to at l. 18, and at l. 33 (Bk. ix, c. 9); but the citations seem to be second hand, as they do not agree closely with the text of the *Historia Animalium*.

b 21-2. 'For there are many who never can keep the rule of love towards their friends, whether kinsmen or not.' MS. *ynesche* has been variously interpreted; but it must be corrected to *ynence*.

b 47. *strucyo or storke*: the ostrich, not the stork, is meant. Latin *struthio* has both meanings. On the whole, fourteenth-century translators show a fair knowledge of Latin, but the average of scholarship, even among the clergy, was never high in the Middle Ages. In the magnificent Eadwine Psalter, written at Canterbury Cathedral in the twelfth century, Ps. ci. 7 *similis factus sum pellicano* is rendered by 'I am become like to the skin of a dog' (= *PELLI CANIS*), though an ecclesiastic would recite this psalm in Latin at least once every week. The records of some thirteenth-century examinations of English clergy may be found in G. G. Coulton, *A Medieval Garner* (London 1910), pp. 270 ff. They include the classic answer of Simon, the curate of Sonning, who, being examined on the Canon of the Mass, and pressed to say what governed *Te igitur, clementissime Pater, ... supplices rogamus*, replied '*Pater*, for He governeth all things'. As for French, Michael of Northgate, a shaky translator, is fortunate in escaping gross blunders in the specimen chosen (III); but the English rendering of Mandeville's *Travels* is full of errors; see the notes to IX.

b 60. *teches*: better *toches*, according to the Footnote.

## V

**Alliterative Verse.** The long lines in *Gawayne*, with *The Destruction of Troy*, *Piers Plowman*, and *The Blacksmiths* (xv h), are specimens of alliterative verse unmixed with rime, a form strictly comparable with Old English verse, from which it must derive through an unbroken oral tradition. While the detailed analysis of the Middle English alliterative line is complex and controversial, its general framework is describable in simple terms. It will be convenient to take examples from *Gawayne*, which shows most of the developments characteristic of Middle English.

1. The long line is divided by a caesura into two half lines, of which the second is the more strictly built so that the rhythm may be well marked. Each half line normally contains two principal stresses, e.g.

[216] *And wént on his wáy // with his wýze óne* 6.

*þat schulde téche hym to tóurne // to þat téne pláce* 7.

But three stresses are not uncommonly found in the first half line:

*Brókez býled and bréke // bi bónkkez abóute* 14;

and, even for the simpler forms in Old and Middle English, the two-stress analysis has its opponents.

2. The two half lines are bound together by alliteration. In alliteration *ch*, *st*, *s(c)h*, *sk*, and usually *sp*, are treated as single consonants (see lines 64, 31, 15, 99, 25); any vowel may alliterate with any other vowel, e.g.

*Pis óritore is úgly // with érbez ouergrówen* 122;

and, contrary to the practice of correct OE. verse, *h* may alliterate with vowels in *Gawayne*:

*Hálde þe now þe hýze hóde // þat Árpur þe rázt* 229.

*The háþel héldet hym fró // and on his áx résted* 263.

3. In correct OE. verse the alliteration falls on one or both of the two principal stresses of the first half line, and invariably on the first stress only of the second half line. This is the ordinary ME. type:

*þat schulde téche hym to tóurne // to þat téne pláce* 7;

though verses with only one alliterating syllable in the first half line, e.g.

*Bot Í wyl to þe chápel // for cháunce þat may fálle* 64,

are less common in ME. than in OE. But in ME. the fourth stress sometimes takes the alliteration also:

*þay clómben bi clýffeþ // þer cléngeþ þe cólde* 10.

And when there is a third stress in the first half line, five syllables may alliterate:

*Míst múged on þe mór // mált on þe móunteþ* 12.

In sum, Middle English verse is richer than Old English in alliteration.

4. In all these verses the alliteration of the first stress in the second half line, which is essential in Old English, is maintained; but it is sometimes neglected, especially when the alliteration is otherwise well marked:

*With héze hélme on his héde // his láunce in his hónde* (129; cp. 75),

where the natural stress cannot fall on *his*.

5. So far attention has been confined to the stressed syllables, around which the unstressed syllables are grouped. Clearly the richer the alliteration, the more freedom will be possible in the treatment of the unstressed syllables without undue weakening of the verse form. In the first two lines of *Beowulf*—

*Hwæt we Gárdéna // in géardágum*

*þéodcýninga // þrým gefrúnon—*

three of the half lines have the minimum number of syllables—four—and the other has only five. In Middle English, with more elaborate alliteration, the number of unstressed syllables is increased, so that the minimum half line of four syllables is rare, and often contains some word which may have had an additional flexional syllable in the poet's own manuscript, e.g.

*|| þe sélf<e> chápel* 79.

*|| árþeþ in hért<e>* 209.

The less regular first half line is found with as many as eleven syllables; e.g.

*And syþen he kéuereþ bi a crágge ||* 153.

6. The grouping of stressed and unstressed syllables determines the rhythm. In Old English the falling rhythm predominates, as in *|| Gáwayn þe nóble* 81; and historically it is no doubt correct to trace the development of the ME. line from a predominantly falling rhythm. But in fact, owing to the frequent use of unstressed syllables before the first stress (even in the second half line where they are avoided in the OE. falling rhythm) the commonest type is:

*|| and þe bróde záteþ* 1,

(× × ´ × ´ ×)

which from a strictly Middle English standpoint may be analysed as a falling rhythm with introductory syllables (× × | ´ × ´ ×), or as a rising rhythm with a weak ending (× × ´ × ´ | ×). A careful reader, accustomed to the usage of English verse, will have no difficulty in following the movement, without entering into nice technicalities of historical analysis.

7. *The Destruction of Troy* is more regular than *Gawayne* in its versification, and better preserves the Old English tradition. *Piers Plowman* is looser and nearer to prose, so that the alliteration sometimes fails altogether, e.g. Extract a 95, 138. Such differences in technique may depend on date, on locality, or on the taste, training, or skill of the author.

**Dialect:** West Midland of Lancashire or Cheshire. (There is evidence of local knowledge in the account of Gawayne's ride in search of the Green Chapel, ll. 691 ff. of the complete text.)

**Vocabulary.** *Sir Gawayne* shows the characteristic vocabulary of alliterative verse.

It is rich in number and variety of words—Norse, French, and native. Besides common words like *race* 8, *wylle* 16, *kyrk* 128, *aþ-* 267 (which displace native English forms *rēs*, *wylde*, *chyrche*, *eie*), Norse gives *mug(g)ed* 12, *cayreþ* 52, *scowtes* 99, *skayned* 99, *wro* 154, *broþe* 165, *fyked* 206, *snyrþ* 244, &c. French are *baret* 47, *oritore* 122, *fylor* 157, *giserne* 197, *kauelacion* 207, *frounses* 238, &c. *Myst-hakel* 13, *orpedly* 164 are native words; while the rare *stryþe* 237 and *rapeled* 226 are of doubtful origin.

Unless the alliteration is to be monotonous, there must be many synonyms for common words like *man*, *knizt*: e.g. *burne* 3, *wyze* 6, *lede* 27, *gome* 50, *freke* 57, *tulk* 65, *knape* 68, *renk* 138, most of which survive only by reason of their usefulness in alliterative formulae. Similarly, a number of verbs are used to express the common idea 'to move (rapidly)': *boþen* 9, *schowued* 15, *wonnen* 23, *ferked* 105, *romeþ* 130, *keuereþ* 153, *whyrlande* 154, &c. Here the group of



synonyms arises from weakening of the ordinary prose meanings; and this tendency to use words in colourless or forced senses is a general defect of alliterative verse. For instance, it is hard to attach a precise meaning to *note* 24, *gedereȝ* 92, *glodes* 113, *wruxled* 123, *kest* 308.

The *Gawayne* poet is usually artist enough to avoid the worst fault of alliterative verse—the use of words for mere sound without regard to sense, but there are signs of the danger in the empty, clattering line:

*Bremly brope on a bent þat brode watȝ aboute* 165.

**Inflexions:** The rime *wape: ta þe* 287-9 shows that organic final *-e* was sometimes pronounced in the poet's dialect.

VERB: pres. ind. 1 sg. *haf* 23; *leue* 60.

2 sg. *spelleȝ* 72.

3 sg. *prayses* 4; *tas* 237.

2 pl. *ȝe han* 25.

3 pl. *han* 345.

imper. pl. *gotȝ* (= *gōs*) 51, *cayreȝ* 52.

pres. p. normally *-ande*, e.g. *schaterande* 15; but very rarely *-yng*: *gruchyng* 58.

strong pp. *born* 2, *wonnen* 23; *tone* (= *taken*) 91.

The weak pa. t. and pp. show occasional *-(e)t* for *-(e)d*: *halt* 11, *fondet* 57, &c.

Note that present forms in *-ie(n)* are preserved, and the *i* extended to the past tense: *louy* (OE. *lufian*) 27, *louies* 31; *spuryed* 25.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. nom. *þay* 9; poss. *hor* 345, beside *her* 352; obj. *hom*, beside *hem* 353.

**Sounds:** *ō* for older *ā* is common, and is proved for the original by rimes like *more: restore* (OFr. *restorer*) 213-15, *þore: restore* 286-8. But *a* is often written in the MS.: *snaw* 20, 166 (note rimes), *halden* 29, &c.

*u* for OE. *y*, characteristic of Western dialects, is found especially in the neighbourhood of labial consonants: *spuryed* (OE. *spyrian*) 25; *muryly* 268, 277; *mun* vb. 194 and sb. 282; beside *myntes* 284, *lyfte* 78, *hille* 13.

*u* for OE. *eo* (normal ME. *e*) is another Western feature: *burne* 3, 21, &c., *urde* 151.

*aw* for OE. *ēow* (normal ME. *ew*, *ow*) as in *tawe* 44, *tawþe* 219, *rawþe* 136, is still found in some Northern dialects.

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**Spelling:** *ȝ* (= *z*) is commonly written for final *s*: *bredeȝ* 3, &c.; even when the final *s* is certainly voiceless as in *forȝ*, 'force', 'torrent' 105, *(aȝ-)leȝ* 'fear-less' 267. *tȝ* is written for *s* in monosyllabic verbal forms, where it indicates the maintenance of voiceless final *s* under the stress (see rimes to *hatȝ* 'has', VI 81): *watȝ* 'was' 1, *gotȝ* 'goes' 51, &c. In early Norman French *z* had the sound *ts*, and so could be written *tz*, as in *Fitz-Gerald* 'son (Mod. Fr. *fil*) of Gerald'. But later, French (*t*)*z* fell together with *s* in pronunciation, so that the spelling *tz* was transferred to original *s*, both in fourteenth-century Anglo-French and in English.

*qu-* occurs for strongly aspirated *hw-* in *quyte* 'white' 20, *quat* 'what' 111; but the alliteration is with *w*, not with *k(w)*, e.g.

*And wyth quettyng awharf, er he wolde lyȝt* 152.

The spelling *goud* 5, 50, &c., for *gōd* 'good' may indicate a sound change.

Notable is the carefully distinguished use of *ȝ* in *ȝe*, but *y* in *yow*, e.g. at ll. 23-6.

3. *blessed hym*, 'crossed himself'; cp. XII *b* 86.

4-6. 'He gives a word of praise to the porter,—<who> kneeled before the prince (i.e. Gawayn) <and who> greeted him with "God and good day," and "May He save Gawayn!"—and went on his way, attended only by his man, who, &c.' Clumsiness in turning direct speech into reported speech is a constant source of difficulty in Middle English. For the suppressed relative cp. note to XIII *a* 36.

11. 'The clouds were high, but it was threatening below them.' *Halt* for *halet* pp. 'drawn up'.

16. 'The way by which they had to go through the wood was very wild.' Note the regular omission of a verb of motion after *shall*, *will*, &c. Cp. l. 64 *I wyl to þe chapel*; l. 332 *ȝe schal... to my woneȝ*, &c.

28. 'If you would act according to my wit (i.e. by my advice) you would fare the better.'

34. *Hector, oper oper*, 'Hector, or any other'. Hector is quoted as the great hero of the Troy story, from which, and from the legends of Arthur, the Middle Ages drew their models of valour.

35. 'He brings it about at the green chapel <that>', &c.

37. *dyngȝeȝ*: for MS. *dynneȝeȝ*; Napier's suggestion.

41. 'He would as soon (lit. it seems to him as pleasant to) kill him, as be alive himself.'

43. 'If you reach that place you will be killed, I may warn you, knight.' Possibly *I, y*, has fallen out of the text after *y* of *may* (cp. vi 3), though there are clear instances in Old and Middle English where the pronominal subject must be understood from the context, e.g. I 168, VIII a 237, 273. Note the transitions from plural *ȝe* to singular *þe* in ll. 42-3; and the evidence at l. 72 f. that *bou* could still be used in addressing a superior.

44. *Trawe ȝe me þat: trow* has here a double construction with both *me* and *þat* as direct objects.

56. 'That I shall loyally screen you, and never give out the tale that you fled for fear of any man that I knew.'

64. *for chaunce þat may falle*, 'in spite of anything that may happen'.

68-9. 'Though he be a stern lord (lit. a stern man to rule), and armed with a stave'. The short lines are built more with a view to rime than to sense.

72-4. 'Marry!' said the other, 'now you say so decidedly that you will take your own harm upon yourself, and it pleases you to lose your life, I have no wish to hinder you.'

76. *ryde me*: an instance of the rare ethic dative, which expresses some interest in the action of the verb on the part of one who is neither the doer of the action nor its object. Distinguish the uses referred to in the notes to II 289, XV g 24.

86. *Lepez hym*, 'gallops'. For *hym*, which refers to the rider, not the horse, cp. note to XV g 24.

92. *Gryngolet*: the name of Gawayn's horse. *gedereȝ þe rake* seems to mean 'takes the path'. No similar transitive use of 'gather' is known.

95. *he wayted hym aboute*, 'he looked around him'. Cp. l. 221 *wayteȝ*, and note to l. 121.

99. 'The clouds seemed to him grazed by the crags'; i.e. the crags were so high that they seemed to him to scrape the clouds. I owe to Professor Craigie the suggestion that *skayned* is ON. *skeina* 'to graze', 'scratch'.

102-4. 'And soon, a little way off on an open space, a mound (as it appeared) seemed to him remarkable.'

107. *kacheȝ his caple*, 'takes control of his horse', i.e. takes up the reins again to start the horse after the halt mentioned at l. 100.

109. *his riche*: possibly 'his good steed'. The substantival use of an adjective is common in alliterative verse, e.g. l. 188 *þat schyre* (neck); 200 *þe schene* (axe); 245 *þe scharp* (axe); 343 *þat cortays* (lady). But it has been suggested that *brydel* has fallen out of the text after *riche*.

114. 'And it was all hollow within, nothing but an old cave.'

115 f. *he couþe hit noȝt deme with spelle*, 'he could not say <which it was>'. For *deme* 'to speak', &c., cp. vi 1, xv b 29-30.

118. *Wheþer* commonly introduces a direct question and should not be separately translated. Cp. vi 205 and note to XI a 51.

121. *wysty is here*, 'it is desolate here'. Note *Wowayn* = *Wauwayn*, an alternative form of *Gawayn* used for the alliteration. The alternation is parallel to that in *guardian: warden; regard: reward* XIV c 105; *guarantee: warranty; (bi)gyled* 359; *(bi)wyled* 357; *werre* 'war' beside French *guerre*; *wait* 'watch' (as at l. 95) beside French *guetter*; and is due to dialectal differences in Old French. The Anglo-Norman dialect usually preserved *w* in words borrowed from Germanic or Celtic, while others replaced it by *gw*, *gu*, which later became simple *g* in pronunciation.

125. *in my fyue wytteȝ*: construe with *fele*.

127. *þat chekke hit bytyde*, 'which destruction befall!' *þat... hit* = 'which'. *chekke* refers to the checkmate at chess.

135. Had we not Chaucer's Miller and *The Reeves Tale*, the vividness and intimacy of the casual allusions would show the place of the flour-mill in mediaeval life. Havelok drives out his foes

*So dogges ut of milne-hous;*

and the Nightingale suggests as fit food for the Owl

*one frogge*

*þat sit at mulne vnder cogge.*

These are records of hours spent by the village boys amid the noise of grinding and rush of water, in times when there was no rival mechanism to share the fascination of the water-driven mill.

137-43. 'This contrivance, as I believe, is prepared, sir knight, for the honour of meeting me by the way. Let God work His will, Lo! It helps me not a bit. Though I lose my life, no noise causes me to fear.' It has been suggested that *wel o<r w>oo* 'weal or woe' should be read instead of the interjection *we loo!* But Gawayn's despair (l. 141) is not in keeping with ll. 70 f., 90 f., or with the rest of his speech. The looseness of the short lines makes emendation dangerous. Otherwise we might read *Hit helpeȝ þe not a mote*, i.e. whatever happens, mere noise will not help the Green Knight by making Gawayn afraid; or, alternatively, *hermeȝ* 'harms' for *helpeȝ*.

151. 'Yet he went on with the noise with all speed for a while, and turned away <to proceed> with his grinding, before he would come down.' The nonchalance of the Green Knight is marked throughout the poem.

155. *A Deneȝ ax*: the ordinary long-bladed battle-axe was called a 'Danish' axe, in French *hache*



*danoise*, because the Scandinavians in their raids on England and France first proved its efficiency in battle.

158. *bi þat lace*, '<measured> by the lace'. In *Gawayne* (ll. 217 ff. of the full text) the axe used at the first encounter is described. It had:

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*A lace lapped aboute, þat louked at þe hede,  
And so after þe halme halched ful ofte,  
Wyth tryed tasselez þerto tacched innoghe, &c.*

'A lace wrapped about <the handle>, which was fastened at the <axe's> head, and was wound about the handle again and again, with many choice tassels fastened to it', &c.

159. *as fyrst*, 'as at the first encounter', i.e. when he rode into Arthur's hall. His outfit of green is minutely described at ll. 151 ff. of the full text.

162. *Sette þe stele to þe stone*: i.e. he used the handle of the axe as a support when crossing rough ground. *stete* = 'handle', not 'steel'.

164. *hypped... strydez*: note the frequent alternation of past tense and historic present. So ll. 3-4 *passed... praysez*; 107-8 *kachez... com... liztez*; 280-1 *haldez... gef*, &c.

169 f. 'Now, sweet sir, one can trust you to keep an appointment.'

175. *þat þe falled*, 'what fell to your lot', i.e. the right to deal the first blow.

177. *oure one*, 'by ourselves'. To *one* 'alone' in early ME. the dative pronoun was added for emphasis, *him one*, *us one*, &c. Later and more rarely the possessive pronoun is found, as here. *Al(l)* was also used to strengthen *one*; so that there are six possible ME. types: (1) *one*, e.g. ll. 6, 50; (2) *him one*; (3) *his one*; (4) *al one* = *alone* l. 87; (5) *al him one*, or *him al one*; (6) *al his one*, or *his al one*.

181. *at a wap one*, 'at a single blow'.

183. 'I shall grudge you no good-will because of any harm that befalls me.'

189-90. 'And acted as if he feared nothing: he would not tremble (*dare*) with terror.'

196. 'He (Gawayn) who was ever valiant would have been dead from his blow there.'

200. It must not be supposed that the chief incidents of *Sir Gawayne* were invented by the English poet. The three strokes, for example, two of them mere feints and the third harmless, can be shown to derive from the lost French source, which has Irish analogues. See pp. 71-4 of *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight* (London 1916), by Professor Kittredge, a safe guide in the difficult borderland of folklore and romance.

207. 'Nor did I raise any quibble in the house of King Arthur.' On *kynges hous Arthor* see note to II 518.

222. *ryuez*: the likeness of *n* and *u* in MSS. of the time makes it impossible to say whether the verb is *riue* 'to cleave', which is supported by l. 278, or *rine*, OE. *hrīnan*, 'to touch'.

230. 'And look out for your neck at this stroke, <to see> if it may survive.'

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233. *I hope*: here, and often in ME., *hope* means 'believe', 'expect'.

250. Gawayn appears to have carried his shield on his back. By a movement of his shoulders he lets it fall in front of him, so that he can use it in defence.

258. *foo*, 'fiercely', adv. parallel with *zederly*.

269. *ry<n>kande*, 'ringing'; Napier's suggestion for MS. *rykande*.

271-2. 'Nobody here has ill-treated you in an unmannerly way, nor shown you <discourtesy>': the object of *kyd* being understood from *vnmanerly mysboden*. *habbez* for MS. *habbe* is Napier's reading.

278-9. 'And cleft you with no grievous wound, <which> I rightly <merely> proffered you, because of the compact we made fast', &c. It is better to assume a suppression of the relative, than to put a strong stop after *rof* and treat *sore* as sb. object of *profered*. This latter punctuation gives *sore* the chief stress in the line, and breaks the alliteration and rhythm, which is correct as long as *sore* is taken with *rof*, so that its stress is subordinated.

286-7. 'Let a true man truly repay—then one need dread no peril.'

291. *weued*: perhaps not a weak pa. t. of *weave-woven*, but rather means 'to give', from OE. *wæfan*, 'to move'; *weue* in this sense occurs in *Gawayne* l. 1976.

294-5. 'And truly you seem to me the most faultless man that ever walked on foot.' The ME. construction, *on þe fautlest*, where *on* 'one' strengthens the superlative, is found in Chaucer, *Clerk's Tale* 212:

*Thanne was she oon the faireste under sonne,*

and still survives in Shakespeare's time, e.g. *Henry VIII*, II. iv. 48 f. *one the wisest prince*. It has been compared with Latin *unus maximus*, &c. In modern English the apposition has been replaced, with weakening of the sense: *one of the (wisest)*, &c.

298. *yow lakked... yow wonted*: impersonal, since *yow* is dative, 'there was lacking in you'.

319. 'Let me win your good-will', 'Pardon me'.

331. I have transposed MS. *of þe grene chapel at cheualrous knyztez*, because such a use of *at* is hardly conceivable. A copyist might easily make the slip. Cp. l. 35.

344. *Boþe þat on and þat ober*: Besides the Green Knight's young wife, there was a much older

lady in the castle, 'yellow', with 'rough, ronkled chekez', and so wrapped up

*þat noʒt watʒ bare of þat burde bot þe blake broʒes,  
þe tweyne yʒen, and þe nase, þe naked lyppez,  
And þose were soure to se, and sellyly blered.*

Gawayne ll. 961-3.

[224]

350-1. 'And David afterwards, who suffered much evil, was <morally> blinded by Bathsheba.'

352-6. 'Since these were injured with their wives, it would be a great gain to love them well, and not believe them—for a man who could do it [cp. note to XI b 209]. For these (Adam, Solomon, &c.) were of old the noblest, whom all happiness followed, surpassingly, above all the others that lived beneath the heavens.' *mused* 'thought' is used for the rime, and means no more than 'lived'. ll. 354-6 amount to 'above all other men'.

## VI

**Dialect:** West Midland, like *Gawayne*.

The metre occasionally gives clear evidence that final flexional *-e* of the original has not always been preserved in the extant MS., e.g.

*Þaʒ cortaysly ʒe carp<é> con* 21.

The most noteworthy verbal forms are:

- pres. ind. 1 sg. *byswykez* 208 (once only, in rime);
- 2 sg. *þou quytez* 235;
- 3 sg. *lepez* 17; *totʒ* (= *tōs* = *tās* = *takes*) 153 (note).
- 1 pl. *we leuen* 65; *we calle* 70;
- 3 pl. *temen* 100 (and cp. ll. 151-2); *knawe* 145; but *þay gotʒ* 150, *pykez* 213 (both in rime).
- imperative pl. *dysplesez* 62; *gos, dotʒ* 161.
- pres. p. *spornande* 3.
- pp. *runne* (in rime) 163, beside *wroken* 15, &c.

Characteristic Western forms are *burne* 37 (OE. *beorn*); *vrþe* 82 (OE. *eorþe*).

5. 'Like bubbling water that flows from a spring', i.e. his wild words rise from a heart that can no longer contain its affliction.

11-12. 'You, who were once the source of all my joy, made sorrow my companion.'

15. 'From the time when you were removed from every peril'. The child died before she was two years old (l. 123).

22. 'I am but dust, and rough in manners.' The MS. has *marerez mysse*, which has been rendered 'botcher's waste'; but the poet is contrasting his own ill-mannered speech with the Pearl's courtesy.

23. 'But the mercy of Christ and of Mary and of John'. The genitive inflexion is confined to the noun immediately preceding *mersy*, while the two following nouns, which are logically genitives with exactly the same construction as *Crystes*, remain uninflected. For analogies see note to II 518.

36. *and*: MS. *in*. The sign for *and* is easily mistaken for *ī* = *in*. Cp. note to XVII 42.

48. *þat*, 'who'.

65. *þat... of*, 'from whom'; the later relative form *of quom* occurs at l. 93.

70. *Fenyx of Arraby*: the symbol of peerless perfection. Cp. Chaucer, *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, ll. 980-3

*Trewly she was to myn ye  
The soleyn Fenix of Arabye,  
For ther lyveth never but oon,  
Ne swich as she ne knew I noon.*

71. 'which was faultless in form'; *fleze* 'flew' is used with weakened sense because a bird is normally thought of as on the wing.

74. *folde vp hyr face*, '<with> her face upturned'; *folde* is pp.

91-2. 'And each would wish that the crowns of the others were five times as precious, if it were possible to better them.'

97. *Poule*: the common OFr. and ME. form, as at VIII a 25, 270, XI b 80. But the rime with *naule* 'nail' (ON. *nagl*) points to the form *Paule* for the original. The reference is to 1 Corinthians vi. 15 and xii. 12 ff.

100. *hys body*, 'its body', 'the body'. *tyste*: for *tyzte* 'tight', like l. 102 *myste* for *myzte* 'might'. The rimes with *Kryst*, *gryste*, *lyste* show that *st* and *ʒt* were very similar in pronunciation. See Appendix § 6 (end).

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106. 'Because you wear a ring on arm or finger.'

109-11. 'I <well> believe that there is great courtesy and charity among you.' The construction of the next line (which conveys an apology, cp. l. 62) is not clear owing to the following gap in the MS.; nor is it easy to guess the missing rime word, as *emong* can rime with OE. *-ung-* (e.g. with *zonge*, ll. 114, 175), or with OE. *-ang-*; see the note to XVII 400.

116. *stronge* may be adj. 'violent' with *worlde*, but is more likely adv. 'severely'.

124-5. Note the cumulation of negatives. *cowþez* has a double construction: 'You never knew how to please God nor pray to Him, nor <did you know even> the Paternoster and Creed.' The Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed were prescribed by the Church as the elements of faith to be taught first to a child.

137. Matthew xx. 1-16.

139. 'He represented it very aptly in a parable.'

141. *My regne... on hyȝt*, 'My kingdom on high'.

145. *bys hyne*: the labourers. *This*, *these* are sometimes used in early English to refer to persons or things that have not been previously mentioned, but are prominent in the writer's mind. Cp. xv b 4, 19; and the opening of Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Franklin's Tale* quoted in the note to II 13.

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150. *pené*: in ME. the final sound developed from OFr. *-é* (*e*) fell together with the sounds arising from OE. *-ig*, OFr. *ie*, &c. Hence *pené* or *peny* 186 (OE. *penig*); *reprené* 184 for *repreny*; *cortaysé* 120, 121, beside *cortaysye* 72, 84, 96. The acute accent is editorial.

153. 'At midmorning the master goes to the market.' *totȝ* (= *tōs*) = *tās*, contracted form of *takes* 'betakes himself'; cp. *tone* = *taken* v 91. The spelling and rimes with *o* (which cannot develop normally from *ā* lengthened in open syllables because this lengthening is everywhere later than the change *ā* > *ō*) are usually explained as artificial. It is assumed that as Northern *bān* corresponded to Midland *bōn*, so from Northern *tá* 'take' an unhistorical Midland *tō* was deduced. But it is possible that the contraction of *tāke(n)*, and consequent lengthening *tā(n)*, is older than the ordinary lengthening *tāke* > *tāke*, and also older than the development of *ā* to *ō* in North Midland.

164. *I yow pay*: note the survival of the old use of the present to express future tense.

176. *þat at ȝe moun*, 'what you can'. *At* as a relative appears usually to be from Old Norse *at*, with the same sense, and it is not uncommon in Northern English. But *þat at* here is more likely the normal development of *þat þat* > *þat tat* (note to II 102) > *þat at*.

179. *sumoun* is infin. not sb.: 'he had (them) summoned'; cp. note to VIII a 79.

192. 'It seems to us we ought to receive more.' *Vus bynk* is a remnant of the old impersonal construction of *bynceþ* 'it seems'. In this phrase, probably owing to confusion with *we bynk(en)*, the verb often has no flexional ending; cp. l. 192. *vus oȝe* is formed by analogy, the verb being properly personal; cp. *must vs* XVII 292, 334.

200. *And*, 'If'.

205-8. *More*, which is necessary for the metrical form, is best taken as conj. 'moreover', 'further'; *wep̄er* introduces a direct question (note to v 118). *louyly* is perhaps miswritten for *lauly* 'lawful', as the *Pearl-Gawayne* group often show the converse *au*, *aw* for normal *ou*, *ow*, e.g. *bawe* for *bowe*, *trawþe* for *trowþe*. 'Further, is my power to do what pleases me with my own lawful?' The meaning is fixed by Matthew xx. 15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?'

212. *mykeȝ*. In the few recorded examples *mik*, *myk* seems to mean 'an intimate friend'. Here it is used for the sake of rime in an extended sense 'chosen companion of the Lord'.

221 f. *Wheþer*, &c., 'Although I began <only> just now, coming into the vineyard in the eventide, <yet>', &c.

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224. Note the rime (OE. *sūm*) with ON. *blóm(i)*, OE. *dōm*, *cōm*. Such rimes occur occasionally in Northern texts of the fourteenth century—never in the South.

233. Psalm lxii. 12 'Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for Thou renderest to every man according to his work.'

237-40. Loosely constructed. 'Now, if you came to payment before him that stood firm through the long day, then he who did less work would be more entitled to receive pay, and the further <it is carried>, the less <work>, the more <claim to be paid>.'

249-51. On the meaning of these lines there is no agreement. Gollancz and Osgood interpret: 'That man's privilege is great who ever stood in awe of Him (God) who rescues sinners. From such men no happiness is withheld, for,' &c. Yet it is difficult to believe that even a poet hard pressed would use *dard to Hym* to mean 'feared Him'. One of several rival interpretations will suffice to show the ambiguities of the text: 'His (God's) generosity, which is always inscrutable (lit. lay hidden), is abundant to the man who recovers his soul from sin. From such men no happiness is withheld', &c. The sense and construction of *dard* (for which the emendation *fard*, pret. of *ferē* 'to go', has been suggested, the rest of the interpretation following Gollancz), and the obscurity of the argument, are the chief obstacles to a satisfactory solution.

**Dialect:** Irregular, but predominantly North-West Midland; cp. v and vi.

**Inflexions:**—

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *warys* 19, *has* 20.

3 pl. *ben* 11, *sayn* 182, *haue* 31.

pres. p. *claterand* 137, *bruaund* 158, *leymonde* 153; beside *blowyng* 106, *doutyng* 114.

strong pp. *slydyn* 6, *stoken* 11.

The weak pp. and pa. t. have *-it*, *-(e)t* for *-(e)d*: *drepit* 9, *suet* 24.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. nom. *pai* 45; poss. *hor* 8, beside *pere* 9, 10; obj. *hom* 24.

**Sounds and Spelling:** Northern and North Midland forms are *qwiles* (= *whiles*) 39, *hondqwile* 117; and *wysshe* 4 (note). West Midland indications are *buernes* 'men' 90, 91 = OE. *beorn* (but *buerne* 'sea' 159 = OE. *burn-* is probably miswritten owing to confusion with *buern* 'man'); and perhaps the spelling *u* in unaccented syllables: *mecull* 10, *watur* 119, *wintur* 124.

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4. *wysshe* = *wisse* 'guide'. In the North final *sh* was commonly pronounced *ss*; cp. note to I 128-9, and the rimes in XVII 1-4. Conversely etymological *ss* was sometimes spelt *ssh*.

7-8. *strongest... and wisest... to wale*, 'the strongest... and wisest... that could be chosen' (lit. 'to choose').

15. *On lusti to loke*, 'pleasant to look upon'.

21 ff. A typical example of the vague and rambling constructions in which this writer indulges: apparently 'but old stories of the valiant <men> who <once> held high rank may give pleasure to some who never saw their deeds, through the writings of men who knew them at first hand (?) (*in dede*), <which remained> to be searched by those who followed after, in order to make known (*or* to know?) all the manner in which the events happened, by looking upon letters (i.e. writings) that were left behind of old'.

45. Benoît de Sainte-Maure says the Athenians rejected Homer's story of gods fighting like mortals, but charitably explains that, as Homer lived a hundred years after the siege, it is no wonder if he made mistakes:

*N'est merveille s'il i faillit,*

*Quar onc n'i fu ne rien n'en vit.*

*Prologue*, ll. 55-6.

53-4. 'That was elegantly compiled by a wise clerk—one Guido, a man who had searched carefully, and knew all the actions from authors whom he had by him.' See Introductory note, pp. 68 f.

66-7. Cornelius Nepos was supposed to have found the Greek work of Dares at Athens when rummaging in an old cupboard (Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Prologue*, ll. 77 ff.).

157. Note the slovenly repetition from l. 151. So l. 159 repeats l. 152.

168-9. I have transposed these lines, assuming that they were misplaced by a copyist. Guido's Latin favours the change, and the whole passage will illustrate the English translator's methods:

*Oyleus uero Ajax qui cum 32 nauibus suis in predictam incidit tempestatem, omnibus nauibus suis exustis et submersis in mari, in suis uiribus brachiorum nando semiuiuus peruenit ad terram; et, inflatus pre nimio potu aque, uix se nudum recepit in littore, vbi usque ad superuenientis diei lucem quasi mortuus iacuit in arena, [et] de morte sua sperans potius quam de uita. Sed cum quidam ex suis nando similiter a maris ingluuie iam erepti nudi peruenissent ad littus, dominum eorum querunt in littore [et] si forsitan euasisset. Quem in arena iacentem inueniunt, dulcibus uerborum fouent affatibus, cum nec in uestibus ipsum nec in alio possunt subsidio refouere.* (MS. Harley 4123, fol. 117 a—the bracketed words are superfluous.)

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178. *Telamon* was not at the siege, and his name appears here and in l. 150 as the result of a tangle which begins in the confusion of Oyleus Ajax with Ajax the son of Telamon. In classical writers after Homer it is Oyleus Ajax who, at the sack of Troy, drags Cassandra from the temple of Minerva. This is the story in Dictys. Dares, like Homer, is silent. In Benoît de Sainte-Maure's poem (ll. 26211-16), the best MSS. name Oyleus Ajax as Cassandra's captor, but others have '*Thelamon Ajax*', i.e. Ajax, the son of Telamon. Guido read Benoît in a MS. of the latter class, and accordingly makes *Telamonius Ajax* do the sacrilege. With the English translator this becomes *Telamon* simply (Bk. xxix, ll. 11993-7). So when later, in Bk. xxxi, he comes to describe the shipwreck, he replaces Guido's *Ajax* by *Telamon*, and spoils the story of Minerva's vengeance on the actual violator of her sanctuary.

## VIII

**Dialect:** South Midland, with mixture of forms.

a. VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *seist* 226, *wilnest* 256.

3 sg. *comaundeth* 16.  
1 pl. *haue* 118, *preye* 119.  
2 pl. *han* 11, *wasten* 127.  
3 pl. *liggeth* 15, &c.; beside *ben* 50, *waste* 155.

imper. pl. *spynneth* 13.

pres. p. (none in *a*); *romynge* *b* 11.

strong pp. *bake* 187, *ybake* 278, *ybaken* 175.

Infinitives in *-ie* (OE. *-ian*) are retained: *erye* 4, *hatie* 52, *tilye* 229 (OE. *erian*, *hatian*, *tilian*).

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. nom. *bei* 126, &c., beside *hii* 15; poss. *her* 54; obj. *hem* 2.

**Sounds:** OE. *y* often shows the Western development, as in *huyre(d)* 108, 133, &c.; *abugge* 75, 159; beside *bigge* 275. So *Cornehulle* *b* 1. But such forms were not uncommon in the London dialect of the time.

*b.* The second extract has a more Southern dialectal colouring. Note especially the gen. pl. forms *lollarene* 31, *knauene* 56, *lordene* 77, continuing or extending the OE. weak gen. pl. in *-ena*; and *menne* 29, 74, retaining the ending of the OE. gen. pl. *manna*.

[230] The representation of unaccented vowels by *u* in *hure* (= 'their') 50, (= 'her') 53; (*h*)*us* 'his' 60, 101; *clerkus* 65, is commonest in Western districts. *h(w)* is no longer aspirated: *wanne* 1, *werby* 35, MS. *eggen* 19; and conversely *hyf* 'if' 43, *his* 'is' 105.

*a* 9. *for shedyng*, 'to prevent spilling'; and so *for colde* 62 'as a protection against cold'; *for bollyng* 209 'to prevent swelling'; *for chillyng* 306, &c.

*a* 11. *Pat ze han silke and sendal to sowe*: The construction changes as if Piers had begun: *Ich praye zow*, which is the reading in the C-text. The difficulty of excluding modern ideas from the interpretation of the Middle Ages is shown by the comment of a scholar so accomplished as M. Petit-Dutaillis: 'Il attaque les riches peu miséricordieux, les *dames charmantes aux doigts effilés*, qui ne s'occupent pas des pauvres' (*Soulèvement*, p. lxii). But there is no hint of satire or reproach in the text. The poet, always conventional, assigns to high-born ladies the work which at the time was considered most fitting for them. So it is reported in praise of the sainted Isabella of France, sister of St. Louis: *Quand elle fust introduicte des lettres suffisamment, elle s'estudioit à apprendre à ouurer de soye, et faisoit estolles et autres paremens à sainte Eglise*—'When she was sufficiently introduced to letters, she set herself to learn how to work in silk, and made stoles and other vestments for Holy Church.' (Joinville, *Histoire d. S. Louys*, Paris 1668, pt. i, p. 169.)

*a* 19. *for þe Lordes loue of heuene*: cp. l. 214, and notes to I 44, I 83, II 518.

*a* 23. *on þe teme*, 'on this subject'; *teme* 'theme' is a correct form, because Latin *th* was pronounced *t*. The modern pronunciation is due to the influence of classical spelling.

*a* 32. *affaite þe*, 'tame for thyself'; cp. l. 64 (*I shal*) *brynge me* = 'bring (for myself)', and the note to II 289.

*a* 40-1. 'And though you should fine them, let Mercy be the assessor, and let Meekness rule over you, in spite of Gain.' This is a warning against abuse of the lord of the manor's power to impose fines in the manorial court with the object of raising revenue rather than of administering justice. Cp. Ashley, *Introduction to English Economic History*, vol. i (1894), pt. ii, p. 266. For *maugré Medes chekes* cp. 151.

*a* 49. Luke xiv. 10.

*a* 50. *yuel to knowe*, 'hard to distinguish'.

*a* 72-5. These clumsy lines, which are found in all versions, exemplify the chief faults in *Piers Plowman*: structural weakness and superfluous allegory.

[231] *a* 79. *I wil... do wryte my biqueste*, 'I will have my will written'; *make(n)*, *ger (gar)*, and *lete(n)* are commonly used like *do(n)* with an active infinitive, which is most conveniently rendered by the passive; so *do wryte* 'cause to be written'; *dyd werche* 'caused to be made' I 218; *mad sumoun* 'caused to be summoned' VI 179; *gert dres vp* 'caused to be set up' X 16; *leet make* 'caused to be made' IX 223, &c.

*a* 80. *In Dei nomine, amen*: A regular opening phrase for wills.

*a* 84. 'I trust to have a release from and remission of my debts which are recorded in that book.' *Rental*, a book in which the sums due from a tenant were noted, here means 'record of sins'.

*a* 86. *he*: the parson, as representing the Church.

*a* 91. *douztres*. In l. 73 only one daughter is named. In the B-text, Passus xviii. 426, she is called *Kalote* (see note to *b* 2 below).

*a* 94. *bi þe rode of Lukes*: at Lucca (French *Lucques*) is a Crucifix and a famous representation of the face of Christ, reputed to be the work of the disciple Nicodemus. From Eadmer and William of Malmesbury we learn that William the Conqueror's favourite oath was 'By the Face of Lucca!', and it is worth noting that the frequent and varied adjurations in Middle English are copied from the French.

*a* 114. 'May the Devil take him who cares!'

*a* 115 ff. *faitoures* (cp. ll. 185 ff.), who feigned some injury or disease to avoid work and win the

pity of the charitable, multiplied in the disturbed years following the Black Death. Statutes were passed against them, and even against those who gave them alms (Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life*, pp. 261 ff.). But the type was long lived. In the extract from *Handlyng Synne* (No. 1), we have already a monument of their activities.

a 141. 'And those that have cloisters and churches (i.e. monks and priests) shall have some of my goods to provide themselves with copes.'

a 142. *Robert Renne-aboute*. The type of a wandering preacher; *posteles* are clearly preachers with no fixed sphere of authority, like the mendicant friars and Wiclif's 'poor priests'. Against both the regular clergy constantly complained that they preached without the authority of the bishop.

a 186. *Pat seten*: the MS. by confusion has *pat seten to seten to begge*, &c.

a 187. *pat was bake for Bayarde*: i.e. 'horse-bread' (l. 208), which used to be made from beans and peas only. *Bayard*, properly a 'bay horse', was, according to romance, the name of the horse given by Charlemagne to Rinaldo. Hence it became the conventional name for a horse, just as *Reynard* was appropriated to the fox. Chaucer speaks of *proude Bayard* (*Troilus*, Bk. i. 218) and, referring to an unknown story, *Bayard the blynde* (*Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, 860).

a 221. *Michi vindictam*: Romans xii. 19.

a 224. Luke xvi. 9.

a 229. Genesis iii. 19.

a 231. *Sapience*: the Book of Wisdom, but the quotation is actually from Proverbs xx. 4.

a 234. *Mathew with mannes face*. Each of the evangelists had his symbol: Matthew, a man; Mark, a lion; Luke, a bull; John, an eagle; and in early Gospel books their portraits are usually accompanied by the appropriate symbols.

a 235 ff. Matthew xxv. 14 ff.; Luke xix. 12 ff.

a 245. *Contemplatyf lyf or actyf lyf*. The merits of these two ways of life were endlessly disputed in the Middle Ages. In xi *b* Wiclif attacks the position of the monks and of Rolle's followers; and the author of *Pearl* (vi 61 ff.) takes up the related question of salvation by works or by grace.

a 246. Psalm cxxviii. 1.

a 264. Jusserand gives a brief account of the old-time physicians in *English Wayfaring Life*, pp. 177 ff. The best were somewhat haphazard in their methods, and the mountebanks brought discredit on the profession. Here are a few fourteenth-century prescriptions:

*For hym that haves the squynansy ['quinsy']:*—

Tak a fatte katte, and fla hit wele and clene, and draw oute the guttes; and tak the grees of an urcheon ['hedgehog'], and the fatte of a bare, and resynes, and feinygreke ['fenugreek'], and sauge ['sage'], and gumme of wodebynde, and virgyn wax: al this mye ['grate'] smal, and farse ['stuff'] the catte within als thu farses a gos: rost hit hale, and geder the grees, and enoynt hym tharwith. (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. Wright and Halliwell (1841), vol. i, p. 51.)

*3yf a woud hund hat ybite a man:*—

Take tou<n>karsyn ['towncross'], and pulyole ['penny-royal'], and seþ hit in water, and 3ef hym to drynke, and hit schal caste out þe venym: and 3if þou miste ['might'] haue of þe hundys here, ley hit þerto, and hit schal hele hit. (*Medical Works of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. G. Henslow, London 1899, p. 19.)

*A goud oynement for þe goute:*—

Take þe grece of a bor, and þe grece of a ratoun, and cattys grece, and voxis grece, and hors grece, and þe grece of a brok ['badger']; and take feþeruoye ['feverfew'] and eysyl ['vinegar'], and stampe hem togedre; and take a litel lynnesed, and stampe hit wel, and do hit þerto; and meng al togedre, and het hit in a scherd, and þerwith anoynte þe goute by the fuyre. Do so ofte and hit schal be hol. (Ibid., p. 20.)

a 284. *Lammasse tyme*: August 1, when the new corn (l. 294) would be in. On this day a loaf was offered as firstfruits: whence the name, OE. *hlāf-mæsse*.

a 307 ff. Owing to repeated famines, the wages of manual labour rose throughout the first half of the fourteenth century. A crisis was reached when the Black Death (1349) so reduced the number of workers that the survivors were able to demand wages on a scale which seemed unconscionable to their employers. By the Statute of Labourers (1350 and 1351) an attempt was made to force wages and prices back to the level of 1346. For a day's haymaking 1*d.* was to be the maximum wage; for reaping 2*d.* or 3*d.* Throughout the second half of the fourteenth century vain attempts were made to enforce these maxima, and the penalties did much to fan the unrest that broke out in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

a 309-10. From Bk. i of the *Disticha* of Dionysius Cato, a collection of proverbs famous throughout the Middle Ages.

a 321. Saturn was a malevolent planet, as we see from his speech in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, 1595 ff.

a 324. *Deth*: the Plague.

b 1. *Cornehulle*. Cornhill was one of the liveliest quarters of fourteenth-century London, and a haunt of idlers, beggars, and doubtful characters. Its pillory and stocks were famous. Its market



where, if *The London Lickpenny* is to be credited, dealing in stolen clothes was a speciality, was privileged above all others in the city. See the documents in Riley's *Memorials of London*.

b 2. *Kytte*: In the B-text, Passus xviii. 425-6, *Kytte* is mentioned again:

*and rȳt with þat I waked*

*And called Kitte my wyf and Kalote my douȳter.*

b 4. *lollares of London*: The followers of Wiclif were called 'Lollards' by their opponents; but the word here seems to mean 'idlers' as in l. 31. *lewede heremytes*: 'lay hermits': hermits were not necessarily in holy orders, and so far from seeking complete solitude, they often lived in the cities or near the great highways, where many passers would have opportunity to recognize their merit by giving alms. See Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, pp. 93 ff.

b 5. 'For I judged those men as Reason taught me.' Skeat's interpretation—that *made of* means 'made verses about'—is forced. The sense is that the idlers and hermits thought little of the dreamer, and he was equally critical of them.

b 6. *as ich cam by Conscience*: 'as I passed by Conscience', referring to a vision described in the previous Passus, in which Conscience is the principal figure.

b 10 f. *In hele and in vnité*, 'in health and in my full senses', and *Romyngne in remembraunce* qualify *me*.

b 14. *Mowe oper mowen*, 'mow or stack'. For these unrelated words see the Glossary.

b 16. *haywarde*: by derivation 'hedge-ward'. He watched over enclosures and prevented animals from straying among the crops. Observe that ME. nouns denoting occupation usually survive in surnames:—Baxter 'baker', Bow(y)er, Chapman, Dyer, Falconer, Fletcher 'arrow-maker', Fo(re)ster, Franklin, Hayward, Lister (= litster, 'dyer'), Palmer, Reeve(s), Spicer, Sumner, Tyler 'maker or layer of tiles', Warner 'keeper of warrens', Webb, Webster, Wright, Yeoman, &c.

b 20-1. 'Or craft of any kind that is necessary to the community, to provide food for them that are bedridden.'

b 24. *to long*, 'too tall': cp. B-text, Passus xv. 148 *my name is Longe Wille*. Consistency in such details in a poem full of inconsistencies makes it probable that the poet is describing himself, not an imagined dreamer.

b 33. Psalm lxii. 12.

b 45. 1 Corinthians vii. 20.

b 46 ff. Cp. the note to xi b 131 f. The dreamer appears to have made his living by saying prayers for the souls of the dead, a service which, from small beginnings in the early Middle Ages, had by this time withdrawn much of the energy of the clergy from their regular duties. See note to xi b 140 f.

b 49. *my Seuene Psalmes*: the Penitential Psalms, normally vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii, in the numbering of the Authorised Version. The *Prymer*, which contained the devotions supplementary to the regular Church service, included the Placebo, Dirige, and the Seven Psalms: see the edition by Littlehales for the Early English Text Society.

b 50. *for hure soules of suche as me helpen*: combines the constructions *for þe soules of suche as me helpen*, and *for hure soules þat me helpen*.

b 51. *vochen saf*: supply *me* as object, 'warrant me that I shall be welcome'.

b 61. 1 Thessalonians v. 15; Leviticus xix. 18.

b 63. *churches*: here and in l. 110 read the Norse form *kirkes* for the alliteration, as in a 28, 85. But the English form also belongs to the original, for it alliterates with *ch* at a 12, 50.

b 64. *Dominus*, &c.: Psalm xvi. 5.

b 83. *Symondes sone*: a son of Simon Magus—one guilty of simony, or one who receives preferment merely because of his wealth.

b 90. Matthew iv. 4.

b 103-4. *Simile est*, &c.: Matthew xiii. 44. *Mulier que*, &c.: Luke xv. 8 ff.

## IX

**Dialect:** South-East Midland.

**Vocabulary:** A number of French words are taken over from the original, e.g. *plee* 81, *ryot* 83, *violastres* 97, *saphire loupe* 116, *gowrdes* 139, *clowe gylofres* 157, *canell* 158, *avaled* 195, *trayne* (for *taynere*?) 222, *bugles* 256, *gowtes artetykes* 314, *distreynten* 315.

**Inflexions:** Almost modern.

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *schadeweth* 19, *turneth* 23.

3 pl. *ben* 4, *han* 14, *wexen* 22, *loue* 100.

pres. p. *fle(e)ynge* 148, 252; *recordynge* 317.

strong pp. *zouen* 90, *begonne* 171.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* becomes *ō*: *hoot* 11, *cold* 31.

OE. *y* appears as *y* (= *i*): *byggynge* 90, *kyzn* 'kine' 256; except regular *left* (hand) 69, 71, 72, where Modern English has also adopted the South-Eastern form of OE. *lyft*.

21-3. The French original says that the children have white *hair* when they are young, which becomes black as they grow up.

24-5. The belief that one of the Three Kings came from Ethiopia is based on Ps. lxxviii. 31: 'Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.' In mediaeval representations one of the three is usually a negro.

27. *Emlak*: miswritten for *Euilak*, a name for India taken from *Havilah* of Genesis ii. 11.

28. *pat is: be more*: *Ynde* has probably fallen out of the text after *is*.

34-5. *3alow cristall draweth <to> colour lyke oylle*: the insertion of *to* is necessary to give sense, and is supported by the French: *cristal iaunastre trehant a colour doile*. (MS. Harley 4383, f. 34 b.)

36-7. The translation is not accurate. The French has: *et appelle homme les dyamantz en ceo pais 'Hamese'*.

64 ff. It was supposed that the pearl-bearing shell-fish opened at low tide to receive the dew-drops from which the pearls grew.

74. *zif 3ou lyke*, 'if it please you', impersonal = French *si vous plest*.

75. *be Lapidarye*, Latin *Lapidarium*, was a manual of precious stones, which contained a good deal of pseudo-scientific information about their natures and virtues, just as the *Bestiary* summed up popular knowledge of animals. A Latin poem by Marbod bishop of Rennes (d. 1123) is the chief source of the mediaeval lapidaries, and, curiously enough, there is a French prose text attributed by so intimate an authority as Jean d'Outremeuse to Mandeville himself. Several Old French texts have been edited by L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires Français du Moyen Âge*, Paris 1882. Their high repute may be judged from the inclusion of no less than seven copies in the library of Charles V of France (d. 1380); and it is surprising that no complete ME. version is known. But much of the matter was absorbed into encyclopaedic works like the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomaeus, which Trevisa translated.

97. Mistranslated. The French has: *qi sont violastre, ou pluís broun qe violettes*.

100-1. *But in soth to me*: French: *Mes endroit de moy*, 'but for my part'; the English translator has rendered *en droit* separately.

108. *perfore*: the context requires the sense 'because', but the translator would hardly have used *perfore* had he realized that ll. 108-9 correspond to a subordinate clause in the French, and do not form a complete independent sentence. He was misled by the bad punctuation of some French MSS., e.g. Royal 20 B. x and (with consequent corruption) Harley 4383.

136. *Cathaye*: China. See the classic work of Colonel Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 2 vols., London 1866. The modernization of the Catalan map of 1375 in vol. i gives a good idea of Mandeville's geography.

142. *withouten wolle*: the story of the vegetable lamb is taken from the Voyage of Friar Odoric, which is accessible in Hakluyt's *Voyages*. Hakluyt's translation is reprinted, with the Eastern voyages of John de Plano Carpini (1246) and of William de Rubruquis (1253), in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. A. W. Pollard, London 1900. The legend probably arose from vague descriptions of the cotton plant; and Mandeville makes it still more marvellous by describing as without wool the lamb which had been invented to explain the wool's existence.

143-4. *Of pat frute I haue eten*: This assertion seems to be due to the English translator. The normal French text has simply: *et cest bien grant merueille de ceo fruit, et si est grant oure [=oeuvre] de nature* (MS. Royal 20 B. x, f. 70 b).

147. *the Bernakes*: The barnacle goose—introduced here on a hint from Odoric—is a species of wild goose that visits the Northern coasts in winter. It was popularly supposed to grow from the shell-fish called 'barnacle', which attaches itself to floating timber by a stalk something like the neck and beak of a bird, and has feathery filaments not unlike plumage. As the breeding place of the barnacle goose was unknown, and logs with the shell-fish attached were often found on the coasts, it was supposed that the shell-fish was the fruit of a tree, which developed in the water into a bird. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica*, I. xv, reproves certain casuistical members of the Church who ate the barnacle goose on fast-days on the plea that it was not flesh; but himself vouches for the marvel. The earliest reference in English is No. 11 of the Anglo-Saxon *Riddles*, of which the best solution is 'barnacle goose'. For a full account see Max Müller's *Lectures on the Science of Language*, vol. ii, pp. 583-604.

157. *grete notes of Ynde*, 'coco-nuts'.

163-4. *Goth and Magoth*: see Ezekiel xxxviii and xxxix. The forms of the names are French.

170. *God of Nature*: Near the end of the *Travels* it is explained that all the Eastern peoples are Deists, though they have not the light of Christianity: *bei beleeven in God pat formede all thing and made the world, and clepen him 'God of Nature'*.

191-2. *pat bei schull not gon out on no syde, but be the cost of hire lond*: the general sense requires the omission of *but*, which has no equivalent in the original French text: *qils ne<nt>*



*issent fors deuers la coste de sa terre* (MS. Sloane 1464, f. 139 b). But some MSS. like Royal 20 B. x have *fors qe deuers*, a faulty reading that must have stood in the copy used by the Cotton translator. Cp. note to l. 108.

199-200. *a four grete myle*: renders the French *iiii grantz lieus*. There is no 'great mile' among English measures.

209 ff. In the Middle Ages references to the Jews are nearly always hostile. They were hated as enemies of the Church, and prejudice was hardened by stories, like that in the text, of their vengeance to come, or of ritual murder, like Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. England had its supposed boy martyrs, William of Norwich (d. 1144), and Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1255) whom the Prioress invokes:

*O yonge Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also  
With cursed Jewes, as it is notable,  
For it is but a litel while ago,  
Preye eek for us, &c.*

Religion was not the only cause of bitterness. The Jews, standing outside the Church and its laws against usury, at a time when financial needs had outgrown feudal revenues, became the money-lenders and bankers of Europe; and with a standard rate of interest fixed at over 40 per cent., debtors and creditors could hardly be friends. In England the Jews reached the height of their prosperity in the twelfth century, so that in 1188 nearly half the national contribution for a Crusade came from them. In the thirteenth century their privileges and operations were cut down, and they were finally expelled from the country in 1290 (see J. Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England*, 1893). The Lombards, whose consciences were not nice, took their place as financiers in fourteenth-century England.

222. *trayne*: read *taynere*, OFr. *taignere* 'a burrow'.

[238] 237-8. The cotton plant has already given us the vegetable lamb (l. 142). This more prosaic account is taken from the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*: '*in Bactriacen... penitus ad abditos Seres, quod genus hominum foliis arborum decerpando lanuginem ex silvestri vellere vestes detexunt*' (Julius Valerius, ed. B. Kübler, p. 194). From the same text come the hippopotami, the bitter waters (Kübler, p. 195), and the griffins (Kübler, p. 217). The *Letter of Alexander* was translated into Anglo-Saxon in the tenth century.

254 ff. *talouns* etc.: In the 1725 edition there is a reference to 'one 4 Foot long in the Cotton Library' with the inscription, *Griphi Unguis Divo Cuthberto Dunelmensi sacer*, 'griffin's talon, sacred to St. Cuthbert of Durham'. This specimen is now in the Mediaeval Department of the British Museum, and is really the slim, curved horn of an ibex. The inscription is late (sixteenth century), but the talon was catalogued among the treasures of Durham in the fourteenth century.

260. *Prestre Iohn*: Old French *Prestre Jean*, or 'John the Priest', was reputed to be the Christian ruler of a great kingdom in the East. A rather minatory letter professing to come from him reached most of the princes of Europe, and was replied to in all seriousness by Pope Alexander III. Its claims include the lordship over the tribes of Gog and Magog whom Alexander the Great walled within the mountains. Official missions were sent to establish relations with him; but neither in the Far East nor in Northern Africa, where the best opinion in later times located his empire, could the great king ever be found. The history of the legend is set out by Yule in the article *Prester John* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

261. *Yle of Pentexoire*: to Mandeville most Eastern countries are 'isles'. *Pentexoire* in the French text of Odoric is a territory about the Yellow River (Yule, *Cathay*, vol. i, p. 146).

262 ff.: For comparison the French text of the Epilogue is given from MS. Royal 20 B. x, f. 83 a, the words in < > being supplied from MS. Sloane 1464:

'Il y a plusours autres diuers pais, et moutz dautres meruailles par de la, qe ieo nay mie tout veu, si nen saueroye proprement parler. Et meismement el pais en quel iay este, y a plusours diuersetes dont ieo ne fais point el menciou, qar trop serroit long chose a tout deuiser. Et pur ceo qe ieo vous ay deuisse dascuns pais, vous doit suffire quant a present. Qar, si ieo deuisoie tout quantqez y est par de la, vn autre qi se peneroit et trauailleroit le corps pur aler en celles marches, et pur sercher la pais, serroit empeschez par mes ditz a recompter nuls choses estranges, qar il ne purroit rien dire de nouvelle, en quoy ly oyantz y puissent prendre solaces. Et lem dit toutdis qe choses nouvelles pleisent. Si men taceray a tant, saunz plus recompter nuls diuersetes qi soyent par de la, a la fin qe cis qi vourra aler en celles parties y troeue assez a dire.

[239] 'Et ieo, Iohan Maundeuille dessudit, qi men party de nos pais et passay le mer lan de grace mil cccxxiide; qi moint terre et moint passage et moint pays ay puis cerchez; et qy ay este en moint bone compaignie et en molt beal fait, come bien qe ieo <ne fuisse dignes, et> ne feisse vncqes ne beal fait ne beal emprise; et qi maintenant suy venuz a repos maugre mien, pur goutes artetikes qi moy destreignont; en preignan solacz en mon cheitif repos, en recordant le temps passe, ay cestes choses compilez et mises en escript, si come il me poet souuenir, lan de grace mil ccc.lvime, a xxxiiiite an qe ieo men party de noz pais.

'Si pri a toutz les lisauntz, si lour plest, qils voillent Dieu prier pur moy, et ieo priera pur eux. Et toutz cils qi pur moy dirrount vne *Paternoster* qe Dieu me face remissioun de mes pecches, ieo les face partenens et lour otroie part dez toutz les bons pelrinages et dez toutz les bienfaitz qe ieo feisse vnqes, et qe ieo ferray, si Dieu plest, vncqore iusques a ma fyn. Et pry a Dieu, de qy toute bien et toute grace descent, qil toutz les lisantz et oyantz Cristiens voille de sa grace reemplir, et lour corps et les almes sauuer, a la glorie et loenge de ly qi est trinz et vns, et saunz comencement et saunz fin, saunz qualite bons, saunz quantite grantz, en toutz lieus present et

toutz choses contenant, et qy nul bien ne poet amender ne nul mal enpirer, qy en Trinite parfite vit et regne par toutz siecles et par toutz temps. Amen.'

274. *blamed*: The Old French verb *empescher* means both 'to hinder, prevent', and 'to accuse, impeach'. But here *empeschez* should have been translated by 'prevented', not 'blamed'.

284-306. This passage, which in one form or another appears in nearly all the MSS. in English, has no equivalent in the MSS. in French so far examined: and, as it conflicts with ll. 313 ff., which—apart from the peculiarities of the Cotton rendering—indicate that the *Travels* were written after Mandeville's return, it must be set down as an interpolation.

The art of forging credentials was well understood in the Middle Ages, and the purpose of this addition was to silence doubters by the *imprimatur* of the highest authority, just as the marvel of the Dancers of Colbek is confirmed by the sponsorship of Pope Leo IX (I 246-9). The different interpretation of the latest editor, Hamelius, who thinks it was intended as a sly hit at the Papacy (*Quarterly Review* for April 1917, pp. 349 f.) seems to rest on the erroneous assumption that the passage belonged to the French text as originally written.

The anachronism by which the author is made to seek the Pope *in Rome* gives a clue to the date of the interpolation. From the beginning of the fourteenth century until 1377 Avignon, and not Rome, was the seat of the Pope; and for another thirty years there was doubt as to the issue of the conflict between the popes, who had their head-quarters at Rome and were recognized by England, and the antipopes, who remained at Avignon and had the support of the French. The facts were notorious, so that the anachronism would hardly be possible to one who wrote much before the end of the century, even though he were a partisan of the Roman court.

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From internal evidence it would seem that the interpolation first appeared in French. The style is the uniform style of translation, with the same tags—*and zee schull vndirstonde = et sachiez; zif it lyke zou = si vous plect*; and the same trick of double rendering, e.g. *of dyuerse secte and of beleeve; wyse and discreet; the auctour ne the persone*. More decisive is an example of the syntactical compromise explained in the note to l. 329: **be the whiche the Mappa Mundi was made after**. With so many French MSS. of Mandeville in use in England, an interpolation in French would have more authority than one that could not be traced beyond English; and it can hardly be an insuperable objection that no such French text exists to-day, since our knowledge of the Cotton and Egerton versions themselves depends in each case on the chance survival of a single MS.

The point has a bearing on the vexed question of the relations of the English texts one to another. For brevity we may denote by D the defective text of the early prints and most MSS., which is specially distinguished by a long gap near the beginning; by C the Cotton text (ed. Halliwell, Pollard, Hamelius); by E the Egerton text (ed. Warner). Nicholson (in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) and Warner give priority to D, and consider that C and E are independent revisions and expansions of D by writers who had recourse to the French original. Their argument seems to be this: There is precise evidence just before the gap that D derives direct from a mutilated French text (see *Enc. Brit.*), and if it be granted that a single translation from the French is the base of C, D, and E, it follows that C and E are based on D.

A fuller study by Vogels (*Handschriftliche Untersuchungen über die Englische Version Mandeville's*, Crefeld 1891) brings to light a new fact: the two Bodleian MSS., E Museo 116 and Rawlinson D 99, contain an English translation (say L) made from a Latin text of the *Travels*. Vogels also shows that E is based on D, because the characteristic lacuna of D is filled in E by a passage which is borrowed from L and is not homogeneous with the rest of E. So far there is no conflict with the view of Nicholson and Warner. But, after adducing evidence in favour of the contention that C, D, and E are at base one translation, Vogels concludes that D derives from C, arguing thus: There is good evidence that C is a direct translation from the French, and if it be granted that a single translation from the French is the base of C and D, it follows that D derives from C.

In short, the one party maintains that C is an expansion of D, the other that D is an abridgement of C; and this flat opposition results from the acceptance of common ground: that C and D represent in the main one translation and not two translations.

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To return to our interpolation:

(1) Vogels's first piece of evidence that C, D, and E are at base one translation is the appearance in all of this interpolation, which is absent from the MSS. in French. But a passage so remarkable might spread from one to the other of two independent English texts; or if the interpolation originated in England in a MS. of the French text since lost, it might be twice translated.

(2) Vogels assumes that the interpolation first appeared in type C. But C is the form in which it would be least likely to originate, because here the contradiction of statement is sharpest owing to the rendering at ll. 313-14: *and now I am comen hom*, which is peculiar to C (see the French).

(3) If, in order to eliminate individual peculiarities, we take two MSS. of the D type—say Harley 2386 and Royal 17 C. xxxviii—we find that their text of the interpolation is identical with that of E. This is consistent with Vogels's finding that the body of E derives from D; and it confirms the evidence of all the defective MSS. that the interpolation in this particular form was an integral part of the D type.

(4) But between the text of the interpolation in D and that in C there are differences in matter, in sentence order, and in phrasing, which, while they do not exclude the possibility of interdependence, do not suggest such a relation. In D the passage is a naked attempt at

authentication; in C it is more artfully though more shamelessly introduced by the touch of piety conventional in epilogues. And as the signs of a French original that appear in C are absent from D, it is unlikely that the text of the interpolation in C derives from D.

(5) Again, in D and E the addition follows the matter of ll. 307-20. Unfortunately, though the balance of probability is in favour of the order in C, the order intended by the interpolator is not certain enough to be made the basis of arguments. But such a difference in position is naturally explained from the stage when the interpolation stood in the margin of a MS., or on an inserted slip, so that it might be taken into the consecutive text at different points. And an examination of the possibilities will show that if the interpolation originated in French, the different placing is more simply explained on the assumption that C and D are independent translations than on the assumption that one of them derives from the other.

To sum up: the central problem for the history of the English texts is the relation of C and D. Taken by itself the evidence afforded by the text of the interpolation is against the derivation of C from D; it neither favours nor excludes the derivation of D from C; it rather favours independent translation in C and D.

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For the relations of the rest of the text these deductions afford no more than a clue. Against independent translation of C and D stands the evidence adduced by Vogels for basic unity. Much of this could be accounted for by the coincidences that are inevitable in literal prose translations from a language so near to English in vocabulary and word order; and a few striking agreements might be due to the use of French MSS. having abnormal variants in common, or even to reference by a second translator to the first. The remainder must be weighed against a considerable body of evidence in the contrary sense, e.g. several places where the manuscripts of the French text have divergent readings, of which C translates one, and D another.

It is unlikely that any simple formula will be found to cover the whole web of relationships: but any way of reconciling the conclusions of the authorities should be explored; and the first step is an impartial sifting of all the evidence, with the object of discovering to what extent C and D are interdependent, and to what extent independent translations. The chief obstacle is the difficulty of bringing the necessary texts together; for an investigator who wished to clear the ground would have to face the labour of preparing a six-text *Mandeville*, in the order, French, C, D, E, L, Latin.

301. *Mappa Mundi*: OFr. and ME. *Mappemounde*, was the generic name for a chart of the world, and, by extension, for a descriptive geography of the world. It is not clear what particular *Mappa Mundi* is referred to here, or whether such a map was attached to the manuscript copy of the *Travels* in which this interpolation first appeared.

329. *fro whom all godenesse and grace cometh fro*: cp. 24-5 *the lond of the whiche on of the bre Kynges... was kyng offe*; 76-8 *pei... of whom all science... cometh from*; and 301-2 *be the whiche the Mappa Mundi was made after*. The pleonasm is explained by the divergence of French and ME. word order. In French, as in modern literary English, the preposition is placed at the beginning of the clause, before the relative (*de qui, dont, &c.*). ME. writers naturally use the relative *that*, and postpone the preposition to the end of the clause: e.g. *þat all godenesse cometh fro*. The translator compromises between his French original and his native habit by placing the preposition both at the beginning and at the end.

## X

**Dialect:** Northern (Scots): the MS. copy was made in 1487 more than a century after the poem was composed.

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**Vocabulary:** Note *till* 'to' 4, 77 (in rime); *syne* 'afterwards' 35, 112; the forms *sic* 'such' 135, *begouth* 94, and the short verbal forms *ma* (in rime) 'make' 14, *tane* (in rime) 'taken' 19.

### Inflexions:

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *has* 76.

3 pl. *has* 52, *mais* 72; but *thai haf* 16.

pres. p. *rynand* 17, *vyndland* 129 (in rime).

strong pp. *gane* 84, *drawyn* 124.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. nom. *scho* (in rime) 80; pl. *thai* 1: *thair* 28; *thame* 3.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* remains: *brynstane* (in rime) 20, *sare* 51.

OE. *ō* (close *ō*) appears as *u* (*ū*?): *gude* 36, *fut* 57, *tume* 143.

Unaccented *-(e)d* of weak pa. t. and pp. becomes *-(i)t*: *passit* 2, &c.

**Spelling:** *i* (*y*) following a vowel indicates length: *weill* 10, *noyne* 'noon' 67.

OE. *hw-* appears as *quh-* (indicating strong aspiration): *quhelis* 'wheels' 17, *quhar* 18.

*v* and *w* are interchanged: *vithall* 9, *behevin* 163, *in swndir* 106.

Book xvii of *The Bruce* begins with the capture of Berwick by the Scots in March 1318. Walter Stewart undertakes to hold the city, and is aided in preparing defences by a Flemish engineer,

John Crab. Next year King Edward II determines to recapture the stronghold by an attack from both land and sea. He entrenches his forces and makes the first assault unsuccessfully early in September 1319. In this battle the Scotch garrison capture a clever engineer (see note to l. 71 below). King Robert Bruce meanwhile orders a raid into England as a diversion, and on 20 September 1319, an English army, led by the Archbishop of York, is disastrously defeated by the invaders at Mitton. Our extract gives the story of the second assault on Berwick, which was also fruitless. The fortress fell into English hands again as a result of the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333: see XIV a 35-6.

5-6. 'They made a sow of great joists, which had a stout covering over it.' The *sow* was essentially a roof on wheels. The occupants, under shelter of the roof, pushed up to the walls of the besieged place and tried to undermine them. For an illustration see Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages*, Pt. VI, chap. vi, where other military engines of the time are described.

15. *Crabbis consale*: John Crab was the engineer of the garrison. He is no doubt the same as the John Crab who in 1332 brought Flemish ships round from Berwick to attack the English vessels at Dundee. There was an important Flemish colony at Berwick from early times.

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36. *Schir Valter, the gude Steward*: Walter Steward, whose surname denotes his office as Steward of Scotland, was the father of Robert II, the first king of the Stuart line.

42. *Rude-evyn*: September 13, the eve of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

49. *thame... of the toune*, 'the defenders of the town'.

51. *or than*, 'or else'.

71 ff. *The engynour*: an English engineer captured by the garrison in the previous assault and forced into their service.

80. *scho*, 'she', some engine of war not previously referred to: apparently a mechanical sling.

123 ff. The boats were filled with men and hoisted up the masts, so as to overtop the walls and allow the besiegers to shoot at the garrison from above. The same engine that proved fatal to the sow was used to break up the boats.

146. *thar wardane with him had*, 'their warden <who> had with him'; cp. note to XIII a 36.

158-61. A confused construction. The writer has in mind: (1) 'Of all the men he had there remained with him only one whom he had not left to relieve', &c.; and (2) 'There were no members of his company (except one) whom he had not left', &c.

## XI

**Dialect:** South Midland.

**Inflexions:** *u* for inflexional *e*, as in *knowun a 2*, *seun a 51*, *aʒenus a 29*, *mannus b 114* is found chiefly in West Midland.

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *madist b 214*.

3 sg. *groundiþ a 4*.

3 pl. *seyne a 1*, *techen b 5*.

pres. p. *brennynge b 67*.

strong pp. *knowun a 2*, *ʒouen b 264*, *take b 271*.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. *þey*, *þei*, *a 3*, *b 9*; possessive usually *þer* in *a 1*, *23*, &c.; but *her a 52*, and regularly *here* in *b 25*, *36*, &c.; objective *hem a 4*, *b 3*.

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* appears regularly as *o*, *oo*: *more a 7*, *Hooly a 10*, *toolde a 65*.

OE. *y* appears as *y*, *i*: *synne a 61*, *stiren b 93*.

The form *pouþ* (= *pouʒ b 190* probably indicates sound-substitution; and in *ynowþʒ* (= *ynouʒ*) *b 149* there is wavering between the two forms.

*a 12. Wit Sunday*: the first element is OE. *hwīt* 'white', not 'wit'.

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*a 25* ff. Translations of the Bible were common in France at this time. No less than six fine copies survive from the library of John, Duke of Berry (d. 1416). About the middle of the fourteenth century King John of France ordered a new translation and commentary to be made at the expense of the Jews, but it was never finished, although several scholars were still engaged on it at the end of the century. The early French verse renderings, which incorporate a good deal of mediaeval legend, are described by J. Bonnard, *Les Traductions de la Bible en Vers Français au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1884); the prose by S. Berger, *La Bible Française au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1884). Of the surviving manuscripts mentioned in these excellent monographs several were written in England.

*a 28* ff. In earlier times, when most of those who could read at all were schooled in Latin, the need for English translations of the Scriptures was not so pressing, and the partial translations that were made were intended rather for the use of the clergy and their noble patrons than for the people. Bede (d. 735) completed a rendering of St. John's Gospel on his death-bed. Old

English versions of the Gospels and the Psalms still survive. Abbot Aelfric (about A.D. 1000) translated the first five books of the Old Testament; and more than one Middle English version of the Psalms is known. Wiclif was perhaps unaware of the Old English precedents because French renderings became fashionable in England from the twelfth century onwards, and he would probably think of the Psalter more as a separate service book than as an integral part of the Bible. But the prologue to the Wiclifite version attributed to John Purvey quotes the example of Bede and King Alfred; and the Dialogue on Translation which, in Caxton's print, serves as preface to Trevisa's translation of Higden, emphasizes the Old English precedents. Both may be read in *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, ed. A. W. Pollard, London 1903, pp. 193 ff. The attitude of the mediaeval Church towards vernacular translations of the Bible has been studied very fully by Miss M. Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and other Medieval Biblical Versions*, Cambridge 1920.

a 34. *pe pley of 3ork*. The York Paternoster Play has not survived, but there are records from 1389 of a Guild of the Lord's Prayer at York, whose main object was the production of the play. It seems to have been an early example of the moral play, holding up 'the vices to scorn and the virtues to praise', and it probably consisted of several scenes, each exhibiting one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The last recorded representation was in 1572. See Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, p. 154. The association of the friars with the production of religious plays is confirmed by other writings of the time. They were quick to realize the value of dramatic representation as a means of gaining favour with the people, and their encouragement must be reckoned an important factor in the development of the Miracle Play.

a 51. *wher*, 'whether'; cp. b 207. In ll. 197, 266, 274, it introduces a direct question; see note to v 118.

b 20. *Gregory*, Gregory the Great. See his work *In Primum Regum Expositiones*, Bk. iii, c. 28: *praedicatorum autem Sanctae Ecclesiae... prophetarum ministerio utuntur* (Migne, *Patrologia*, vol. lxxix, col. 158).

b 44. <God>. Such omissions from the Corpus MS. are supplied throughout from the copy in Trinity College, Dublin, MS. C. III. 12.

b 79-80. Cp. Luke xxi. 36 and 1 Thessalonians v. 17.

b 89-91. Proverbs xxviii. 9.

b 126. *as Ambrose*: In 386 St. Ambrose, besieged in the Portian Church at Milan by Arian sectaries, kept his followers occupied and in good heart by introducing the Eastern practice of singing hymns and antiphons. See St. Augustine's *Confessions* Bk. ix, c. 7.

b 131-2. *placebo*. Vespers of the Dead, named from the first word of the antiphon, *Placebo Domino in regione vivorum* (Psalm cxiv. 9).

*dirige*. Mats of the Dead, named from the first word of the antiphon, *Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam* (Psalm v. 9). Hence our word *dirge*.

*comendacion*: an office in which the souls of the dead are commended to God.

*matynes of Oure Lady*: one of the services in honour of the Virgin introduced in the Middle Ages.

The whole question of these accretions to the Church services is dealt with by our English master in liturgical study, the late Mr. Edmund Bishop, in his essay introductory to the Early English Text Society's edition of the *Prymer*, since reprinted with additional notes in his *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford 1918), pp. 211 ff.

b 137 f. *deschaunt, countre note, and orgon, and smale brekyng*. The elaboration of the Church services in mediaeval times was accompanied by a corresponding enrichment of the music. To the plain chant additional parts were joined, sung in harmony either above or below the plain chant. *Descant* usually means the addition of a part above, *organ* and *countre-note* (= counterpoint) the addition of parts either above or below. All these could be composed note for note with the plain chant. But *smale brekyng* represents a further complication, whereby the single note in the plain chant was represented by two or more notes in the accompanying parts.

b 140 f. The abuse is referred to in *Piers Plowman*:

*Persones and parsheprests pleynede to the bisshop  
That hure parshens ben poore sitthe the pestelence tyme,  
To haue licence and leue in Londone to dwelle,  
And synge ther for symonye, for seluer ys swete.*

*Prologue* ll. 81-4.

and by Chaucer in his description of the Parson:

*He sette nat his benefice to hyre,  
And leet his sheepe encombred in the myre,  
And ran to Londoun, unto Seint Poules,  
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules.*

*Prologue* ll. 507-10.

b 183. *Ordynalle of Salisbury*. An 'ordinal' is a book showing the order of church services and ceremonies. In mediaeval times there was considerable divergence in the usage of different churches. But after the Conquest, and more especially in the thirteenth century, there was developed at Salisbury Cathedral an elaborate order and form of service which spread to most of

the English churches of any pretensions. This was called 'Sarum' or 'Salisbury' use.

*b* 209. *bei demen it dedly synne a prest to fulfille*, &c. For this construction, cp. Chaucer, *Prologue* 502 *No wonder is a lewed man to ruste*; Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V. iv. 108 f. *It is the lesser blot... Women to change their shapes*, &c. The same construction, where we now insert *for*, is seen in *Gawayne* (v. 352-3) *hit were a wynne huge... a leude, þat coupe, to luf hom wel*, &c.

*b* 221-3. 'They say that a priest may be excused from saying mass, to be the substance of which God gave Himself, provided that he hears one.'

*b* 228 f. *newe costly portos, antifeners, graielis, and alle opere bokis*. *Portos*, French *porte hors*, represents Latin *portiforium*, a breviary convenient for 'carrying out of doors'. The *antifener* contained the antiphons, responses, &c., necessary for the musical service of the canonical hours. The *graiel*, or *gradual*, was so called from the gradual responses, sung at the steps of the altar, or while the deacon ascended the steps of the pulpit: but the book actually contained all the choral service of the Mass.

*b* 230. *makyng of biblis*. Wiclif in his *Office of Curates* (ed. Matthew, p. 145) complains of the scarcity of bibles. *But fewe curatis han þe Bible and exposiciouns of þe Gospelis, and litel studien on hem, and lesse donne after hem. But wolde God þat euery parische chirche in þis lond hadde a good Bible!* &c.

*b* 234. At this time books, especially illuminated books, were very dear. The Missal of Westminster Abbey, which is now shown in the Chapter-house, was written in 1382-4 at a cost of £34 14s. 7d.—a great sum in those days, for the scribe, Thomas Preston, who took two years to write it, received only £4 for his labour, 20s. for his livery, and board at the rate of 21s. 8d. the half year. The inscription in British Museum MS. Royal 19 D. II, a magnificently illustrated Bible with commentary, shows that it was captured at Poitiers with King John of France, and bought by the Earl of Salisbury for 100 marks (about £66). Edward III gave the same sum to a nun of Amesbury for a rich book of romance. In France John, Duke of Berry, paid as much as £200 for a breviary, and the appraisalment of his library in 1416 shows a surprisingly high level of values (L. Delisle, *Le Cabinet des Manuscrits*, vol. iii, pp. 171 ff.). These were luxurious books. The books from the chapel of Archbishop Bowet of York (d. 1423) sold more reasonably: £8 for a great antiphonar and £6 13s. 4d. *pro uno libro vocato 'Bibill'*, were the highest prices paid; and from his library there were some fascinating bargains: 4s. for a small copy of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*; 5s. *pro uno libro vocato 'Johannes Andrewe', vetere et debili*, which would probably turn out to be a dry work on the Decretals; and 3s. 4d. for a nameless codex, *vetere et caduco*, 'old and falling to pieces'. (*Historians of the Church of York*, ed. J. Raine, vol. iii, pp. 311, 315.)

But the failing activity of the monastic scriptoria, and the formation of libraries by the friars and by rich private collectors, made study difficult for students at the universities, where at this time a shilling per week—a third of the price of Bowet's most dilapidated volume—was reckoned enough to cover the expenses of a scholar living plainly. The college libraries were scantily supplied: books were lent only in exchange for a valuable pledge; or even pawned, in hard times, by the colleges themselves.

These conditions were not greatly improved until printing gave an easy means of duplication, and for a time caused the humble manuscripts in which most of the mediaeval vernacular literature was preserved to be treated as waste paper. As late as the eighteenth century Martène found the superb illuminated manuscripts left by John, Duke of Berry, to the Sainte Chapelle at Bourges serving as roosting places to their keeper's hens (*Voyage Littéraire*, Paris 1717, pt. i, p. 29).

*b* 261-3. The reference is to Acts vi. 2, 'It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.'

*b* 266. *wisere þan*. After these words the Corpus MS. (p. 170, col. i, l. 34 mid.), without any warning, goes on to the closing passage of an entirely unrelated 'Petition to the King and Parliament'. By way of compensation, the end of our sermon appears at the close of the Petition. Clearly the scribe (or some one of his predecessors) copied without any regard for the sense from a MS. of which the leaves had become disarranged.

*b* 285. Cp. Acts iii. 6.

## XII

**Dialect:** London (SE. Midland) with Kentish features.

**Inflexions:**

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *loveth a* 5; contracted *stant a* 74.

3 pl. *schewen a* 136, *halsen a* 148, *be* (in rime) *a* 92.

pres. p. *growende a* 80.

strong pp. *schape* (in rime) *a* 130, beside *schapen a* 169.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. nom. *sche a* 32; pl. *thei a* 148; *here a* 144; *hem a* 112.

Unaccented final *-e* is treated as in Chaucer, having its full value in the verse when it



represents an inflexion or final vowel in Old English or Old French, e.g.

*And for he scholdé slepé softé* a 93

*An apé, which at thilké throwé* b 5

**Sounds:** *e* appears as in Kentish for OE. *y*: *hell* 'hill' a 65, 79, 86; *keste* 'kissed' a 178; note the rimes *unschette*: *lette* a 71-2; *pet* 'pit': *let* b 9-10; and less decisive *pet*: *knet* (OE. *knyttan*) b 29-30, 53-4; *dreie*: *beie* b 23-4.

**Spelling:** *ie* represents close  $\bar{e}$ : *flietende* a 157, *hier* b 34; *diemed* b 216.

**Syntax:** The elaborate machinery of sentence connexion deserves special attention; and many turns of phrase are explained by Gower's fluency in French.

a 1. Gower follows Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk. xi. Chaucer tells the story of Ceix and Alcyone in his *Death of Blanche the Duchess*, ll. 62 ff. This is presumably the early work to which the Man of Law refers:

*I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn  
But Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly  
On metres and on rymyng craftily,  
Hath seyde hem, in swich Englissh as he kan,  
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man;  
And if he have noght seyde hem, leve brother,  
In o book, he hath seyde hem in another;  
For he hath toold of loveris up and down  
Mo than Ovide made of mencioun  
In his Epistelles, that been ful olde.  
What sholde I tellen hem, syn they ben tolde?  
In youthe he made of Ceys and Alcione, &c.*

(Link to *Man of Law's  
Tale*, ll. 46 ff.)

Gower's rendering is the more poetical.

a 2. *Trocinie*. Ovid's *Trachinia tellus*, so called from the city of Trachis, north-west of Thermopylae.

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a 23. *As he which wolde go*: otiose, or at best meaning no more than 'desiring to go'. Cp. *b* 25 *As he which hadde* = 'having' simply; and similarly *b* 37, 203. It is an imitation of a contemporary French idiom *comme celui qui*.

a 26. *and*: the displacement of the conjunction from its natural position at the beginning of the clause is characteristic of Gower's verse. Cp. l. 152 *Upon the morwe and up sche sterte* = 'and in the morning she got up', and *a* 45, 49, *b* 121, 124, 135, 160, 182. See notes to ll. 32, 78 f.

a 32. Editors put a comma after *wepende*, and no stop after *seileth*: but it is Alceon who weeps. The displacement of *and* is exemplified in the notes to l. 26 and ll. 78 f.

a 37. 'One had not to look for grief'; a regular formula of understatement, meaning 'her grief was great'.

a 53. *Hire reyny cope*, &c.: the rainbow, which was the sign or manifestation of Iris.

a 59 ff.

*Prope Cimmerios longo spelunca recessu,  
Mons cavus, ignavi domus et penetralia Somni.*

(*Metamorphoses* xi.  
592-3.)

Much of the poetry of Gower's description is due to Ovid.

a 78 f. Editors put no stop after *may* and a comma after *hell*. Hence *The New English Dictionary* quotes this passage as an isolated instance of *noise*, transitive, meaning 'disturb with noise'. But *noise* is intransitive, *hell* is governed by *aboute round*, and the position of *bot* is abnormal as in l. 105. Cp. notes to ll. 26, 32, and render 'But all round about the hill'.

a 105. For the word order see notes to ll. 26, 32, 78 f.

a 117. *The lif*, 'the man', cp. IV a 43.

a 118. *Ithecus*: for *Icelos*. According to Ovid 'Icelos' was the name by which he was known to the gods, but men called him 'Phobetor'.

a 123. *Panthatas*: Ovid's *Phantasos*.

a 152. See note to l. 26.

a 197. The halcyon, usually identified with the kingfisher, was supposed to build a floating nest on the sea in midwinter, and to have power to calm the winds and waves at that season, bringing 'halcyon weather'.

b 2. *I finde*. Matthew Paris in his *Chronica Maiora* (ed. Luard, Rolls Series, vol. ii, pp. 413 ff.) gives a similar story, which, he says, King Richard the First often told to rebuke ingratitude. In this version, Vitalis of Venice falls into a pit dug as a trap for wild beasts. The rescued animals

are a lion and a serpent; the rescuer is nameless, and the gem given to him by the serpent has not the magic virtue of returning whenever sold. Nearer to Gower is the story told in Nigel Wireker's *Speculum Stultorum*, a late twelfth-century satire in Latin verse, which, from the name of its principal character Burnellus the Ass, who is ambitious to have a longer tail, is sometimes called *Burnellus*; cp. Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, l. 492:

*I have wel rad in Daun Burnel the Asse*

*Among his vers, &c.*

The poem is printed in T. Wright's *Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century* (Rolls Series, 1872), vol. i. At the end the Ass returns disappointed to his master Bernardus (= Bardus). Bernardus, when gathering wood, hears Dryanus (= Adrian), a rich citizen of Cremona, call from a pit for help. The rescued animals are a lion, a serpent, and an ape. The gem given by the serpent in token of gratitude always returns to Bernardus, who, with more honesty than Gower's poor man shows, takes it back to the buyer. The fame of the marvellous stone reaches the king; his inquiries bring to light the whole story; and Dryanus is ordered to give half his goods to Bernardus.

Gower probably worked on a later modification of Nigel's story.

*b* 86. *blessed*, 'crossed (himself)'.  
*b* 89. *Betwen him and his asse*, i.e. pulling together with the ass. The ass is, of course, the distinguished Burnellus.

*b* 116. *his ape*: for *this ape* (?).

*b* 191. *Justinian*, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (d. 565), was best known for his codification of the Roman Law, and so is named here as the type of a lawgiver.

### XIII

**Dialect:** South-Western, with some Midland forms.

**Inflexions:**

VERB: pres. ind. 3 sg. *bloweþ a* 7, *casteþ a* 8.

3 pl. *bup a* 10, *habbeþ a* 15.

pres. p. *slytтыng, froтыng b* 59.

strong pp. *yknowe a* 12, *ysode a* 30.

NOUN: Note the plural in *-(e)n*, *tren* 'trees' *a* 44, 51, 53; *chyldern b* 16 is a double plural.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. *hy a* 17; *here a* 61; *ham a* 23.

Note the unstressed 3 sg. and 3 pl. form *a*, e.g. at *a*13, 27.

**Sounds:** There is no instance of *v* for initial *f*, which is evidenced in the spelling of early South-Western writers like Robert of Gloucester (about 1300), or of *z* for initial *s*, which is less commonly shown in spelling. *u* for OE. *y* occurs in *hulles* 'hills' *a* 18 (beside *bysynes b* 24, where Modern English has *u* in spelling but *i* in pronunciation; and *lyft* (OE. *lyft*) *b* 39, where Modern English has the South-Eastern form *left*).

*a* 2-3. *Mayster... Minerua... hys*: Trevisa appears to have understood 'Minerva' as the name of a god.

*a* 6-49. Higden took all this passage from Book i of the twelfth-century Annals of Alfred of Beverley (ed. Hearne, pp. 6-7). The *Polychronicon* is a patchwork of quotations from earlier writers.

*a* 7. *Pectoun*. Higden has *ad Peccum*, and Alfred of Beverley *in monte qui vocatur Pec*, i.e. The Peak of Derbyshire. *cc* and *ct* are not distinguishable in some hands of the time, and Trevisa has made *Peccum* into *Pectoun*.

*a* 14. *Cherdhol*. Hearne's text of Alfred of Beverley has *Cherole*; Henry of Huntingdon (about 1150), who gives the same four marvels in his *Historia Anglorum*, has *Chederhole*; and on this evidence the place has been identified with Cheddar in Somerset, where there are famous caves.

*a* 22. *an egle hys nest*: cp. *b* 23 *a child hys brouch*. This construction has two origins: (1) It is a periphrasis for the genitive, especially in the case of masculine and neuter proper names which had no regular genitive in English; (2) It is an error arising from false manuscript division of the genitive suffix *-es*, *-is*, from its stem.

*a* 36. <*pat*> here and in l. 52 is inserted on the evidence of the other MSS. Syntactically its omission is defensible, for the suppressed relative is a common source of difficulty in Middle English; see the notes to v 4-6, 278-9; x 146; xiv c 54; xvii 66.

*a* 50. *Wynburney*. Wimborne in Dorset. Here St. Cuthburga founded a nunnery, which is mentioned in one of Aldhelm's letters as early as A.D. 705. The information that it is 'not far from Bath', which is hardly accurate, was added by Higden to the account of the marvel he found in the *Topographia Hibernica* of Giraldus Cambrensis (vol. v, p. 86 of the Rolls Series edition of his



works).

a 54-64. Higden took this passage from Giraldus, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, Bk. ii, c. 11 (vol. vi, p. 139 of the Rolls edition).

a 60-1. *be at here aboue*, 'be over them', 'have the upper hand'.

a 63. *Pimbilmere*: the English name for Lake Bala.

b 6-7. *be Flemmynges*. The first settlement of Flemings in Pembrokeshire took place early in the twelfth century, and in 1154, Henry II, embarrassed alike by the turbulence of the Welsh, and of the new host of Flemish mercenaries who had come in under Stephen, encouraged a further settlement. They formed a colony still distinguishable from the surrounding Welsh population.

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b 11-12. The threefold division of the English according to their Continental origin dates back to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. But the areas settled by Bede's three tribes do not correspond to Southern, Northern, and Midland. The Jutes occupied Kent, whence the South-Eastern dialect; the Saxons occupied the rest of the South, whence the South-Western dialect; and the Angles settled in the Midlands and the North; so that the Midland and Northern dialects are both Anglian, and derive from the same Continental tribe or tribal group.

b 26. *be furste moreyn*: the Black Death of 1349. There were fresh outbreaks of plague in 1362, 1369, 1376.

b 26-42. The bracketed passage is an addition by Trevisa himself, and is of primary importance for the history of English and of English education. See the valuable article by W. H. Stevenson in *An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall*, pp. 421 ff.

b 27-8. *Iohan Cornwall, a mayster of gramere*. A 'master of grammar' was a licensed teacher of grammar. Mr. Stevenson points out that in 1347-8 John of Cornwall received payment from Merton College, Oxford, for teaching the boys of the founder's kin. His countryman Trevisa probably had personal knowledge of his methods of teaching.

b 39-40. *and a scholle passe be se*, 'if they should cross the sea'.

b 47-8. The bracketed words are introduced by Trevisa.

b 50 f. *and ys gret wondur*: *and* is superfluous and should perhaps be deleted.

b 58-65. Though still often quoted as a fourteenth-century witness to the pronunciation of Northern English (e.g. by K. Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, 1914, pp. 40 f.), this passage, as Higden acknowledges, comes from the Prologue to Book iii of William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum*, completed in the year 1125: see the Rolls Series edition, p. 209.

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## XIV

a 2. *Bannockburn*. Minot's subject is not so much the defeat of the English at Bannockburn in 1314, as the English victory at Halidon Hill on 19 July 1333, which he regards as a vengeance for Bannockburn.

a 7. *Saint Iohnes toun*: Perth, so called from its church of St. John the Baptist. It was occupied by the English in 1332 after the defeat of the Scots at Dupplin Moor.

a 13. *Striflin*, 'Stirling'.

a 15. Hall suggests that this refers to Scotch raids on the North of England undertaken to distract Edward III from the siege of Berwick.

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a 19 f. *Rughfute riueling... Berebag*: nicknames for the Scots, the first because they wore brogues (*riuelings*) of rough hide; the second because, to allow of greater mobility, each man carried his own bag of provisions instead of relying on a baggage train.

a 22. *Brig* = *Burghes* l. 25, 'Bruges'. At this time Scots, English, and French had all close connexions with the Netherlands. Observe that John Crab, who aided the Scots in the defence of Berwick (note to x 15), was a Fleming.

a 35. *at Berwik*. Berwick fell as a result of the battle of Halidon Hill which the Scots fought with the object of raising the siege. For an earlier siege of Berwick, in 1319, see No. x.

a 36. *get*, 'watch', 'be on the look out' (ON. *gæta*).

b 5-6. Calais was at this time a convenient base for piracy in the Channel.

b 19. *A bare*: Edward III, whom Minot often refers to as 'the boar'.

b 24-6. In preparation for the long siege Edward III had built a regular camp beside Calais.

b 32. *Sir Philip*. Philip de Valois, Philip VI of France (1293-1350). His son, John Duke of Normandy (1319-64), who succeeded him in 1350, is of good memory as a lover of fine books. Two are mentioned in the notes to xi a 25 ff. and xi b 234. A splendid copy of the *Miracles de Notre Dame*, preserved until recently in the Seminary Library at Soissons, seems also to have been captured with his baggage at Poitiers, for it was bought back from the English by King Charles V. Another famous book produced by his command was the translation of Livy by Bersuire, with magnificent illuminations. The spirit of the collector was not damped by his captivity in England from 1356-60, for his account books show that he continued to employ binders and miniaturists, to encourage original composition, and to buy books, especially books of romance. See *Notes et Documents relatifs à Jean, Roi de France, &c.*, ed. by Henry of Orleans, Duc d'Aumale (Philobiblon Soc., London 1855-6).

*b 40. þe Cardinales.* Pope Clement VI had sent cardinals Annibale Ceccano bishop of Frascati, and Etienne Aubert, who became Pope Innocent VI in 1352, to arrange a peace between France and England. But the English were suspicious of the Papal court at Avignon, and accused the cardinals of favouring the French cause.

*b 82. Sir John de Viene.* Jean de Vienne, seigneur de Pagny (d. 1351), a famous captain in the French wars.

*c 5 f.* 'They (friends) are so slippery when put to the test, so eager to have <for themselves>, and so unwilling to give up <to others>.'

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*c 14. And,* 'if'.

*c 47.* King John of France was captured at Poitiers in 1356 and held in England as a prisoner until the Treaty of Bretigny in 1360. See note to XIV *b 32*.

*c 54.* Note the omission of the relative: 'which recked not a cleat for all France', and cp. ll. 43-4, XIII *a 36* (note).

*c 59. his helm,* 'its helm'—the bar by which the rudder was moved.

*c 61.* 'The King sailed and rowed aright'; on *him*, see note to xv *g 24*.

*c 83. An ympe:* Richard II.

*c 90. sarrī:* not in the dictionaries in this sense, is probably OFr. *serré, sarré*, in the developed meaning 'active', 'vigorous', seen in the adv. *sarrément*.

*c 103-4.* 'If we are disloyal and inactive, so that what is rarely seen is straightway forgotten.'

*c 108.* 'Who was the fountain of all courage.'

*c 111. los,* 'fame'.

*d 1. SCHEP:* here means 'shepherd', 'pastor', a name taken by Ball as appropriate to a priest.

*Seynte Marie prest of Ȝork,* 'priest of St. Mary's of York' (cp. note to I 44), a great Benedictine abbey founded soon after the Conquest; see Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. iii, pp. 529 ff. *Marie* does not take the *s* inflexion, because it has already the Latin genitive form, cp. *Mary-ȝet* x 163.

*d 2. Iohan Nameles,* 'John Nobody', for *nameless* has the sense 'obscure', 'lowly'.

*d 6. Hobbe þe Robbere.* *Hob* is a familiar form for *Robert*, and it has been suggested that *Hobbe þe Robbere* may refer to Robert Hales, the Treasurer of England, who was executed by the rebels in 1381. But *Robert* was a conventional name for a robber, presumably owing to the similarity of sound. Already in the twelfth century, Mainerus, the Canterbury scribe of the magnificent Bible now in the library of Sainte-Geneviève at Paris, plays upon it in an etymological account of his family: *Secundus* (sc. *frater meus*) *dicebatur Robertus, quia a re nomen habuit: spoliator enim diu fuit et praedo*. From the fourteenth century lawless men were called *Roberts men*. In *Piers Plowman* Passus v (A- and B-texts) there is a confession of 'Robert the Robber'; and the literary fame of the prince of highwaymen, 'Robin Hood', belongs to this period.

*d 14. do wel and bettre:* note this further evidence of the popularity of *Piers Plowman*, with its visions of *Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest*.

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## XV

*a 8. Þe clot him clingge!* 'May the clay cling to him!' i.e. 'Would he were dead!'

*a 12. Þider.* MS. *Yider*, and conversely MS. *Þiif* 23 for *Yiif* 'if'. *y* and *þ* are endlessly confused by scribes.

*b 1. Lenten ys come... to toun.* In the Old English *Metrical Calendar* phrases like *cymeð... us to tune Martius reðe*, 'fierce March comes to town', are regular. The meaning is 'to the dwellings of men', 'to the world'.

*b 3. Þat:* construe with *Lenten*.

*b 7. him þreteþ,* 'chides', 'wrangles' (ON. *þræta*?). See the thirteenth-century debate of *The Thrush and the Nightingale* (*Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. i, pp. 241 ff.), of which the opening lines are closely related to this poem.

*b 11. Ant wlyteþ on huere wynter wele,* 'and look at their winter happiness (?)'. This conflicts with *huere wynter wo* above; and the explanation that the birds have forgotten the hardships of the past winter and recall only its pleasures is forced. Holthausen's emendation *wynne wele* 'wealth of joys' (cp. l. 35) is good.

*b 20. Miles:* a crux. It has been suggested without much probability that *miles* means 'animals' from Welsh *mīl*.

*b 28. Deawes donkeþ þe dounes.* Of the suggestions made to improve the halting metre the best is *þise* for *þe*. The poet is thinking of the sparkle of dew in the morning sun; cp. *Sir Gawayne* 519 f.:

*When þe donkande dewe dropez of þe leuez*

*To bide a blysfyl blusch of þe bryzt sunne.*

*b 29-30.* 'Animals with their cries (*rounes*) unmeaning to us (*derne*), whereby they converse (*domes for te deme*).' For the weakened sense of *deme* (*domes*) see note to v 115.

c 30. *Wery so water in wore*: the restless lover (l. 21) has tossed all night like the troubled waters in a *wore*; cp. *I wake so water in wore* in another lyric of the same MS. It has been suggested that *wore* = Old High German *wuor* 'weir'; but the rimes in both passages show that the stem is OE. *wār*, not *wōr*.

d 2. *the holy lond*: because Ireland was *par excellence* 'the Land of the Saints'.

f. I am obliged to Professor Carleton Brown for the information that this poem is found, with two additional stanzas, in MS. 18. 7. 21 of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh; and that the full text will be published shortly in his *Religious Lyrics of the Fourteenth Century*.

f 4. *bere* (OE. *bȳr*) riming with *ferē* (OE. (*ge*)*fēra*) indicates a South-Eastern composition.

g 1. *Scere Þorsday*: Maundy Thursday, the eve of Good Friday.

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g 1-2. *aros*: *Judas*: the alternative form *aras* may have given the rime in the original, but it is not justifiable to accept this as certain and so to assume an early date of composition for the poem. Morsbach, *ME. Grammatik*, § 135, n. 4, quotes a number of parallel rimes with proper names, and the best explanation is that *o* in *aros* still represented a sound intermediate between *ā* and *ō*, and so served as an approximate rime to *ā* in proper names.

g 6. *cunesmen*: as *c* and *t* are hard to distinguish in some ME. hands, and are often confused by copyists, this reading is more likely than *tunesmen* of the editors—Wright-Halliwell, Mätzner, Child, Cook (and *N. E. D.* s.v. *townsman*). For (1) *tunesman* is a technical, not a poetical word. (2) In a poem remarkable for its terseness, *tunesmen* reduces a whole line to inanity, unless the poet thinks of Judas quite precisely as a citizen of a town other than Jerusalem; and in the absence of any Biblical tradition it is unlikely that a writer who calls Pilate *þe riche Ieu* would gratuitously assume that Judas was not a citizen of Jerusalem, where his sister lived. (3) Christ's words are throughout vaguely prophetic, and as Judas forthwith *imette wid is soster*—one of his kin—*cunesmen* gives a pregnant sense. [I find the MS. actually has *cunesmen*, but leave the note, lest *tunesmen* might appear to be better established.]

g 8. The repetition of ll. 8, 25, 30 is indicated in the MS. by 'ii' at the end of each of these lines, which is the regular sign for *bis*.

g 16. 'He tore his hair until it was bathed in blood.' The MS. has *top*, not *cop*.

g 24. *In him com ur Lord gon*. In the MS. *c'ist* = *Crist* has been erased after *Lord*. Note (1) the reflexive use of *him*, which is very common in OE. and ME. with verbs of motion, e.g. *Up him stod* 27, 29; *þau Pilatus him com* 30; *Als I me rode* xv a 4; *The Kyng him rod* xiv c 61; cp. the extended use *ar þe coc him crowe* 33, and notes to II 289, v 86: (2) the use of the infinitive (*gon*) following, and usually defining the sense of, a verb of motion, where Modern English always, and ME. commonly (e.g. *zede karoland* I 117; *com daunceing* II 298), uses the pres. p.: 'Our Lord came walking in'.

g 27. *am I þat?* 'Is it I?', the interrogative form of *ich hit am* or *ich am hit*. The editors who have proposed to complete the line by adding *wrech*, have missed the sense. The original rime was *þet*: *spec*, cp. note to I 240.

g 30. *cnistes*: for *cniste* = *cnihte* representing the OE. gen. pl. *cnihta*. On the forms *meist* 6, *heiste* 18, *eiste* 20, *bitaiste* 21, *iboust* 26, *miste* 29, *cnistes* 30, *fiste* 31, all with *st* for OE. *ht*, see Appendix § 6 end.

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h 17-18. Difficult. Perhaps 'The master smith lengthens a little piece [sc. of hot iron], and hammers a smaller piece, twines the two together, and strikes [with his hammer] a treble note'.

h 21-2. *cloþemerys... brenwaterys*: not in the dictionaries, but both apparently nonce names for the smiths: they 'clothe horses' (for by the end of the fourteenth century a charger carried a good deal of armour and harness), and 'burn water' (when they temper the red-hot metal).

i 4. *þat*: dat. rel. 'to whom'; cp. VI 64. But *lowte* is sometimes transitive 'to reverence'.

i 6. This line, at first sight irrelevant, supplies both rime and doctrine. See in Chaucer's Preface to his *Tale of Melibeus* the passage ending:

*I meene of Marke, Mathew, Luc and John—  
Bot doutelees hir sentence is all oon.*

An erased *t* after *Awangelys* in the MS. shows that the scribe wavered between *Awangelys* 'Gospels' and *Awangelystes*.

i 7. *Sent Geretrude*: Abbess of Nivelles (d. 659), commemorated on March 17. She is appropriately invoked, for one or more rats make her emblem.

i 11. *Sent Kasi*. I cannot trace this saint, or his acts against the rats. But parallels are not wanting. St. Ivor, an Irish saint, banished rats from his neighbourhood *per imprecationem* because they gnawed his books; and the charm-harassed life of an Irish rat was still proverbial in Shakespeare's day: 'I was never so berhymed' says Rosalind (*As You Like It*, III. ii) 'since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat'. In the South of France the citizens of Autun trusted more to the processes of the law, and brought a suit against the rats which ended in a victory for the defendants because the plaintiffs were unable to guarantee them safe conduct to the court (see Chambers, *Book of Days*, under Jan. 17). Even in such little things the Normans showed their practical genius:—A friend chancing to meet St. Lanfranc by the way inquired the cause of the strange noises that came from a bag he was carrying: 'We are terribly plagued with mice and rats', explained the good man, 'and so, to put down their ravages, I am bringing along a cat' (*Mures et rati valde nobis sunt infesti, et idcirco nunc affero catum ad comprimendum furorem illorum*). *Acta Sanctorum* for May 28, p. 824.

## XVI

**Dialect:** Yorkshire.

**Inflexions:**

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *pou royis* 99, *pou is* 360; beside *pou hast* 69.

3 sg. *bidis* 23, *comes* 57.

1 pl. *we here* 169.

2 pl. *ȝe haue* 124.

3 pl. *þei make* 103, *þei crie* 107, *dwelle* (rime) 102 ; beside *musteres* 104, *sais* 108.

imper. pl. *harkens* 37, *beholdes* 195; but *vndo* 182.

pres. p. *walkand* 53 (in rime); beside *shynyng* 94.

strong pp. *stoken* 193, *brokynne* 195, &c.

Contracted verbal forms are *mase* pres. 3 pl. (in rime) 116, *bus* pres. 2 sg. 338, *tane* pp. 172.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: pl. nom. *þei* 21; poss. *thare* 18, *þer* 20; obj. *þame* 9; but *hemselue* 307.

The demonstrative *þer* 'these' 97, 399, is Northern.

**Sounds:** *ā* remains in rimes: *are: care* 345-7, *waa: gloria* 406-8, *lawe: knawe* 313-15, *moste* (for *māste*): *taste* 358-60; but *ō* is also proved for the original in *restore: euermore: were* (for *wōre*): *before* 13 ff.

**Spelling:** In *fois* (= *fōs*) 30, the spelling with *i* indicates vowel length.

17. *were*: rime requires the alternative form *wōre*.

39. *Foure thowsande and sex hundereth ȝere*. I do not know on what calculation the writer changes 5,500, which is the figure in the Greek and Latin texts of the Gospel of Nicodemus, in the French verse renderings, and the ME. poem *Harrowing of Hell*. Cp. l. 354.

40. *in þis stedde*: the rimes *hadde: gladde: sadde* point to the Towneley MS. reading *in darknes stad*, 'set in darkness', as nearer the original, which possibly had *in þister(nes) stad*.

49. *we*: read *ȝe* (?). For what follows cp. Isaiah ix. 1-2.

59. *puplisshid*: the rime with *Criste* shows that the pronunciation was *puplist*. Similarly, *abasshed: traste* 177-9. In French these words have *-ss-*, which normally becomes *-sh-* in English. It is hard to say whether *-ss-* remained throughout in Northern dialects, or whether the development was OFr. *-ss-* > ME. *-sh-* > Northern *-ss-* (notes to I 128, VII 4).

62. *þis*: read *His* (?) *frendis*: here 'relatives', 'parents' (ON. *frændi*); see Luke ii. 27.

65-8. Luke ii. 29-32.

73-82. Matthew iii. 13-17, &c.

75. *hande*: the rime requires the Norse plural *hend* as at l. 400; cp. xvii 255, IV a 65 (Footnote).

86 ff. Cp. Matthew xvii. 3 ff., Mark ix. 2 ff.

113. *Astrotte*: cp. 2 Kings xxiii. 13 'Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians'. I cannot identify *Anaball* among the false gods.

115. *Bele-Berit*: Judges viii. 33 'the children of Israel... made Baal-Berith their god'. For *Belial* see 2 Cor. vi. 15.

122-4. A common misrendering for 'Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors', Psalm xxiv. 7.

125 ff. postulate a preceding *et introibit rex glorie*, which the writer has not been able to work into the frame of his verse.

128. *a kyng of vertues clere = dominus virtutum*, rendered 'Lord of Hosts' in Psalm xxiv. 10.

154-6. *ware: ferre*: the rime indicates some corruption. *ware* probably stands for *werre* 'worse'. The Towneley MS. has *or it be war*.

162. John xi.

165. John xiii. 27.

171 ff. 'And know he won away Lazarus, who was given to us to take charge of, do you think that you can hinder him from showing the powers that he has purposed (to show)?' But it is doubtful whether *what* is a true relative. Rather 'from showing his powers—those he has purposed (to show)'.  
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188. *I prophicied*: MS. *of prophicie* breaks the rime scheme.

190. Psalm cvii. 16 'For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.'

205 ff. The rimes *saide: braide: ferde: graithed* are bad. For the last two read *flaide* = 'terrified', and *graid*, a shortened form of *graihted*.

208. *and we wer moo*, 'if we were more', 'even if there were more of us'.

220. *as my prisoune* might be taken closely with *here*: 'in this place as my prison'. The Towneley MS. has *in* for *as*. Better would be *prisoune*<*s*> 'prisoners'.

240. *wolle*: read *wille* for the rime.

241. *God*<*ys*> *sonne*: MS. *God sonne* might be defended as parallel to the instances in the note to xvii 88.

256. Apparently, 'you argue his men in the mire', i.e. if Jesus is God's Son, the souls should remain in hell because God put them there. But the text may be corrupt.

267 ff. Cp. Ezekiel xxxi. 16, &c.

281 ff. *Salamon saide*: Proverbs ii. 18-19 taken with vii. 27 and ix. 18. It was hotly disputed in the Middle Ages whether Solomon himself was still in hell. Dante, *Paradiso*, x. 110, informs a world eager for tidings that he is in Paradise: but Langland declares *Ich leyue he be in helle* (C-text, iv. 330); and, more sweepingly, coupling him with Aristotle: *Al holy chirche holden hem in helle* (A-text, xi. 263).

[261] 285-8. Perhaps a gloss on Job xxxvi. 18 'Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.'

301. *menys*, the reading of the Towneley MS. is better than *mouys*, which appears to be a copyist's error due to the similarity of *n* and *u*, *e* and *o*, in the handwriting of the time.

308. Judas hanged himself, according to Matthew xxvii. 3-5; Acts i. 18 gives a different account of his end. *Archedefell*: Ahithophel who hanged himself (2 Samuel xvii. 23) after the failure of his plot against David.

309. *Datan and Abiron*: see Numbers xvi.

313-16. 'And all who do not care to learn my law (which I have left in the land newly, and which is to make known my Coming), and to go to my Sacrament, and those who will not believe in my Death and my Resurrection read in order—they are not true.'

338. *pou bus*, 'you ought'; *bus*, a Northern contracted form of *behoves*, is here used as a personal verb, where *þe bus*, 'it behoves thee', is normal. See note to xvii 196.

360. *moste*: read *maste* to rime with *taste*.

371. *Of þis comyng*: the Towneley MS. reading *of Thi commyng* is possible.

378-80: Corrupt. The copy from which the extant MS. was made seems to have been indistinct here. The Towneley MS. has:

*Suffre thou neuer Thi sayntys to se  
The sorow of thaym that won in wo,  
Ay full of fylth, and may not fle,*

which is more intelligible and nearer Psalm xvi. 10:

*Nec dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem.*

405. *louyng*: 'praise', cp. IV a 24 (note).

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## XVII

**Dialect:** Late Yorkshire.

**Vocabulary:** Northern are *then* 108 (note), and *at* 'to' 235.

**Inflections:**

VERB: pres. ind. 2 sg. *thou spekis* 206.

3 sg. *ligis he* 84; *he settis* 92; (*God*) *knowes* 202.

1 pl. *we swete or swynk* 195.

2 pl. *ye carp* (in rime) 360.

3 pl. *thay ryn* (in rime) 277, 357; beside *has* 345, *renys* 351.

pres. p. *liffand* 73, *bowand* 76, *wirkand* 120 (all in rime); beside *lifyng* 47, 48; *standyng* 416; *taryyng* 497.

strong pp. *rysen* 442; *fon* 'found' 503 is a Northern short form.

PRONOUN 3 PERS.: sg. fem. nom. *she* 186; pl. *thay* 27; *thare* 75; *thaym* 31. (MS. *hame* 143 is miswritten for *thame*.)

**Sounds:** OE. *ā* appears as *ō* in rime: *old*: *cold*: *mold* (OE. *móld*) 60-2, and probably *dold*: *old* 266-70; *sore*: *store*: *therfor*: *more* 91-4; but elsewhere remains *ā*, e.g. *draw* (OE. *drāgan*): *knaw* 245-6. The spelling with *o* is the commoner.

See notes on *emong* 400; *grufe* 463.

**Spelling:** Note the Northern spellings with *i*, *y* following a vowel to indicate length: *moyne* 'moon' 6, *bayle* 'bale' 26, *leyde* = *lede* 48; and conversely *fares* 'fairest' 79, *fath* 'faith' 330.

The maritime associations of the play of *Noah* made it a special favourite with the Trinity House

guild of master mariners and pilots at Hull; and some of their records of payments for acting and equipment are preserved, although the text of their play is lost (Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, vol. ii, pp. 370-1):

- anno 1485*. To the minstrels, 6d.  
To Noah and his wife, 1s. 6d.  
To Robert Brown playing God, 6d.  
To the Ship-child, 1d.  
To a shipwright for clinking Noah's ship, one day, 7d.  
22 kids for shoring Noah's ship, 2d.  
To a man clearing away the snow, 1d.  
Straw for Noah and his children, 2d.  
Mass, bellman, torches, minstrels, garland &c., 6s.  
For mending the ship, 2d.  
To Noah for playing, 1s.  
To straw and grease for wheels, ¼d.  
To the waits for going about with the ship, 6d.
1494. To Thomas Sawyr playing God, 10d.  
To Jenkin Smith playing Noah, 1s.  
To Noah's wife, 8d.  
The clerk and his children, 1s. 6d.  
To the players of Barton, 8d.  
For a gallon of wine, 8d.  
For three skins for Noah's coat, making it, and a rope to hang the ship in the kirk, 7s.  
To dighting and gilding St. John's head, painting two tabernacles, beautifying the boat and over the table, 7s. 2d.  
Making Noah's ship, £5. 8s.  
Two wrights a day and a half, 1s. 6d.  
A halser [i.e. hawser] 4 stone weight, 4s. 8d.  
Rigging Noah's ship, 8d.

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10. *is*: read *es* for the rime. Cp. note to I 128-9.
42. *and sythen*: MS. *in sythen*. Cp. note to VI 36.
49. *syn*: 3 pl. because *euery liffyng leyde* is equivalent to a plural subject 'all men'.
52. *coueteis*: MS. *couetous*.
56. *alod*: a shortened form of *allowed*, apparently on the analogy of such words as *lead* infin., *led* pa. t. and pp. For a parallel see note to I 254-5.
57. *Sex hundreth yeris and od*: the *od* thrown in to rime, as Noah was exactly 600 years old according to Genesis vii. 6.
66. *and my fry shal with me fall*: 'and the children <that> I may have' (?).
88. *for syn sake*: 'because of sin'. Until modern times a genitive preceding *sake* usually has no *s*, e.g. *for goodness sake*. The genitive of *sin* historically had no *s* (OE. *synne*), but the omission in a Northern text is due rather to euphony than to survival of an old genitive form. Cp. *for tempest sake* I 177.
108. *then*: 'nor', a rare Northern usage, which is treated as an error here in England and Pollard's text, though it occurs again at l. 535. Conversely *nor* is used dialectally for *than*.
109. *Hym to mekill wyn*: 'to his great happiness'.
137. *take*: 'make', and so in l. 272.
- 167-71. *knowe*: *awe*. The rime requires *knāwe* or *ōwe*.
191. 'The worse <because> I see thee.'
196. *what thou thynk*: 'what seems to you best', 'what you like'; *thou thynk* for *thee thynk*—the verb being properly impersonal; see notes to XVI 338 and VI 192.
200. *Stafford blew*: from the context this line might mean 'you are a scaremonger', for blue is the recognized colour of fear, and it might be supposed that 'Stafford blue' represents a material like 'Lincoln green'. But Mätzner is certainly right in interpreting the line 'you deserve a beating'. *Stafford blew* would then be the livid colour produced by blows. The reference, unless there is a play on *staff*, is obscure.
202. *led*: 'treated'.
211. *sory*: the rime requires *sary*.
220. *Mary*: the later *marry!* = 'by (the Virgin) Mary!' cp. l. 226. So *Peter!* 367 = 'by St. Peter!'
246. *to knaw*: 'to confess'.
- 247-8. *daw to ken*: 'to be recognized as stupid', 'a manifest fool'.



272. *castell*: note the rime with *sayll*: *nayll*: *foyll*, which may be due to suffix substitution on the analogy of *catail* beside *catel* 'cattle'. For *take* see note to 137.

281. *chambre*: the rime points to a by-form *chamb(o)ur*, but the uninflected form is awkward. Cp. *thre chese chambres* 'three tiers of chambers' 129, where the construction is the same as the obsolete *three pair gloves*.

289-92. Read *lider*, *hider*, *togider*.

292. *must vs*: cp. l. 334 and note to VI 192.

298. 'There is other yarn on the reel', i.e. there is other business on hand.

320. *brether sam*: 'brothers both'. Some editors prefer to read *brother Sam* 'brother Shem'.

336 ff. Chaucer refers to the quarrels of Noah and his wife in the *Miller's Tale* (ll. 352 ff.):—

*'Hastou nat herd', quod Nicholas, 'also*

*The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe*

*Er that he myghte brynge his wyf to shipe?*

*Hym hadde be levere, I dar wel undertake,*

*At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,*

*That she hadde had a shipe hirself allone.'*

The tradition is old. In the splendid tenth-century Bodleian MS. Junius 11, which contains the so-called Caedmon poems, a picture of the Ark shows Noah's wife standing at the foot of the gangway, and one of her sons trying to persuade her to come in.

370. *Yei* is defensible; cp. l. 353. *þe* 'the' has been suggested.

383. *Wat Wynk*: an alliterative nick-name like *Nicholl Nedy* in l. 405.

400. *emong*: OE. *gemang*, here rimes as in Modern English with *u* (OE. *iung*: *tunge*: *lungen*), cp. note to VI 109 ff.; but in ll. 244-7 it rimes with *lang*: *fang*: *gang*—all with original *a*.

417. <*floodis*>. Some such word is missing in the MS. Cp. ll. 454 f. and 426.

461. *How*: MS. *Now*. The correction is due to Professor Child. Initial capitals are peculiarly liable to be miscopied.

463. *grufe*: a Northern and Scottish form of the verb *grow*. The sb. *ro* 'rest' 237 sometimes has a parallel form *rufe*.

525. *stold*: for *stalled* 'fixed'. Note the rime words, which all have alternative forms *behold*: *bald*: *wald*.

## APPENDIX

### THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

§ 1. GENERAL. Gower's work shows that at the end of the century Latin and French still shared with English the place of a literary language. But their hold was precarious.

Latin was steadily losing ground. The Wiclifite translation of the Bible threatened its hitherto unchallenged position as the language of the Church; and the Renaissance had not yet come to give it a new life among secular scholars.

French was still spoken at the court; but in 1387 Trevisa remarks (p. 149) that it was no longer considered an essential part of a gentleman's education: and he records a significant reform—the replacement of French by English as the medium of teaching in schools. After the end of the century Anglo-French, the native development of Norman, was practically confined to legal use, and French of Paris was the accepted standard French.

English gained wherever Latin and French lost ground. But though the work of Chaucer, Gower, and Wiclif foreshadows the coming supremacy of the East Midland, or, more particularly, the London dialect, there was as yet no recognized standard of literary English. The spoken language showed a multiplicity of local varieties, and a writer adopted the particular variety that was most familiar to him. Hence it is almost true to say that every considerable text requires a special grammar.

Confusion is increased by the scribes. Nowadays a book is issued in hundreds or thousands of uniform copies, and within a few months of publication it may be read in any part of the world. In the fourteenth century a book was made known to readers only by the slow and costly multiplication of manuscripts. The copyist might work long after the date of composition, and he would then be likely to modernize the language, which in its written form was not stable as it is at present: so of Barbour's *Bruce* the oldest extant copies were made nearly a century after Barbour's death. Again, if the dialect of the author were unfamiliar to the copyist, he might substitute familiar words and forms. Defective rimes often bear witness to these substitutions.

Nor have we to reckon only with copyists, who are as a rule careless rather than bold innovators. While books were scarce and many could not read them, professional minstrels and amateur reciters played a great part in the transmission of popular literature; and they, whether from defective memory or from belief in their own talents, treated the exact form and words of their author with scant respect. An extreme instance is given by the MSS. of *Sir Orfeo* at ll. 267-

- Auchinleck MS.: *His harp, whereon was al his gle,  
He hidde in an holwe tre;*
- Harley MS.: *He takeþ his harpe and makeþ hym gle,  
And lyþe al nyzt vnder a tre;*
- Ashmole MS.: *In a tre þat was holow  
þer was hys haule euyn and morow.*

If the Ashmole MS. alone had survived we should have no hint of the degree of corruption.

And so, before the extant MSS. recorded the text, copyists and reciters may have added change to change, jumbling the speech of different men, generations, and places, and producing those 'mixed' texts which are the will-o'-the-wisps of language study.

Faced with these perplexities, beginners might well echo the words of Langland's pilgrims in search of Truth:

*This were a wikked way, but whoso hadde a gyde  
That wolde folwen vs eche a fote.*

There is no such complete guide, for the first part of Morsbach's *Mittelenglische Grammatik*, Halle 1896, remains a splendid fragment, and Luick's *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*, Leipzig 1914-, which promises a full account of the early periods, is still far from completion. Happily two distinguished scholars—Dr. Henry Bradley in *The Making of English* and his chapter in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i, Dr. O. Jespersen in *Growth and Structure of the English Language*—have given brief surveys of the whole early period which are at once elementary and authoritative. But for the details the student must rely on a mass of dissertations and articles of very unequal quality, supplemented by introductions to single texts, and, above all, by his own first-hand observations made on the texts themselves.

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Some preliminary considerations will be helpful, though perhaps not altogether reassuring:

(i) A great part of the evidence necessary to a thorough knowledge of spoken Middle English has not come down to us, a considerable part remains unprinted, and the printed materials are so extensive and scattered that it is easy to overlook points of detail. For instance, it might be assumed from rimes in *Gawayne*, *Pearl*, and the Shropshire poet Myrc, that the falling together of OE. *-ang-*, *-ung-*, which is witnessed in NE. *among* (OE. *gemang*), *-monger* (OE. *mangere*), was specifically West Midland, if the occurrence of examples in Yorkshire (XVII 397-400) escaped notice. It follows that, unless a word or form is so common as to make the risk of error negligible, positive evidence—the certainty that it occurs in a given period or district—is immeasurably more important than negative evidence—the belief that it never did occur, or even the certainty that it is not recorded, in a period or district. For the same reason, the statement that a word or form is found 'in the early fourteenth century' or 'in Kent' should always be understood positively, and should not be taken to imply that it is unknown 'in the thirteenth century' or 'in Essex', as to which evidence may or may not exist.

(ii) It is necessary to clear the mind of the impression, derived from stereotyped written languages, that homogeneity and stability are natural states. Middle English texts represent a spoken language of many local varieties, all developing rapidly. So every linguistic fact should be thought of in terms of time, place, and circumstance, not because absolute precision in these points is attainable, but because the attempt to attain it helps to distinguish accurate knowledge from conclusions which are not free from doubt.

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If the word or form under investigation can be proved to belong to the author's original composition, exactness is often possible. In the present book, we know nearly enough the date of composition of extracts I, III, VIII, X, XI *a*, XII, XIII, XIV; the place of composition of I, III, X, XI *a*, XII, XIII, XVI, XVII (see map).

But if, as commonly happens, a form cannot be proved to have stood in the original, endless difficulties arise. It will be necessary first to determine the date of the MS. copy. This is exactly known for *The Bruce*, and there are few Middle English MSS. which the palaeographer cannot date absolutely within a half-century, and probably within a generation. The place where the MS. copy was written is known nearly enough for IV *b*, *c*, XII, XIV *e*, XV *b*, *c* (possibly Leominster), XVI, XVII; and ME. studies have still much to gain from a thorough inquiry into the provenance of MSS. Yet, when the extant copy is placed and dated, it remains to ask to what extent this MS. reproduces some lost intermediary of different date and provenance; how many such intermediaries there were between the author's original and our MS.; what each has contributed to the form of the surviving copy—questions usually unanswerable, the consideration of which will show the exceptional linguistic value of the *Ayenbyte*, where we have the author's own transcript exactly dated and localized, so that every word and form is good evidence.

Failing such ideal conditions, it becomes necessary to limit doubt by segregating for special investigation the elements that belong to the original composition. Hence the importance of rimes, alliteration, and rhythm, which a copyist or reciter is least likely to alter without leaving a trace of his activities.

§ 2. DIALECTS. At present any marked variation from the practice of educated English speakers might, if it were common to a considerable number of persons, be described as dialectal. But as there was no such recognized standard in the fourteenth century, it is most convenient to



consider as dialectal any linguistic feature which had a currency in some English-speaking districts but not in all. For example, *þat* as a relative is found everywhere in the fourteenth century and is not dialectal; *bire* 'these' is recorded only in Northern districts, and so is dialectal. Again,  $\bar{o}$  represents OE.  $\bar{a}$  in the South and Midlands, while the North retains  $\bar{a}$  (§ 7 b i): since neither  $\bar{o}$  nor  $\bar{a}$  is general, both may be called dialectal.

If a few sporadic developments be excluded because they may turn up anywhere at any time, then, provided sufficient evidence were available,<sup>[29]</sup> it would be possible to mark the boundaries within which any given dialectal feature occurs at a particular period: we could draw the line south of which *bire* 'these' is not found, or the line bounding the district in which the Norse borrowing *kirke* occurs; just as French investigators in *L'Atlas linguistique de la France* have shown the distribution of single words and forms in the modern French dialects.

<sup>[29]</sup> Sufficient evidence is not available. If in the year 1340 at every religious house in the kingdom a native of the district had followed the example of Michael of Northgate, and if all their autograph copies had survived, we should have a very good knowledge of Middle English at that time. If the process had been repeated about every ten years the precision of our knowledge would be greatly increased. For the area in which any feature is found is not necessarily constant: we know that in the pres. p. the province of *-ing* was extending throughout the fourteenth century; that the inflexion *-es* in 3 sg. pres. ind. was a Northern and North-Midland feature in the fourteenth century, but had become general in London by Shakespeare's time. And though less is known about the spread of sound changes as distinct from analogical substitutions, it cannot be assumed that their final boundaries were reached and fixed in a moment. There is reason to regret the handicap that has been imposed on ME. studies by the old practice of writing in Latin or French the documents and records which would otherwise supply the exactly dated and localized specimens of English that are most necessary to progress.

Of more general importance is the fixing of boundaries for sound changes or inflexions that affect a large number of words, a task to which interesting contributions have been made in recent years on the evidence of place-names (see especially A. Brandl, *Zur Geographie der altenglischen Dialekte*, Berlin 1915, which supplements the work of Pogatscher on the compounds of *street* and of Wyld on the ME. developments of OE. *y*). For example, on the evidence available, which does not permit of more than rough indications, OE.  $\bar{a}$  remains  $\bar{a}$ , and does not develop to  $\bar{o}$ , north of a line drawn west from the Humber (§ 7 b i); *-and(e)* occurs in the ending of the pres. p. as far south as a line starting west from the Wash (§ 13 ii); farther south again, a line between Norwich and Birmingham gives the northern limit for *Stratton* forms as against *Stretton* (§ 8 iv, note).<sup>[30]</sup> The direction of all these lines is roughly east and west, yet no two coincide. But if the developments of OE. *y* (§ 7 b ii) are mapped out, *u* appears below a line drawn athwart from Liverpool to London, and normal *e* east of a line drawn north and south from the western border of Kent. Almost every important feature has thus its own limits, and the limits of one may cross the limits of another.

<sup>[30]</sup> The evidence of place-names does not agree entirely with the evidence of texts. *Havelok*, which is localized with reasonable certainty in North Lincolnshire, has (*a*)*dradd* in rimes that appear to be original, and these indicate a North-Eastern extension of the area in which OE. *stræt*, *drædan* appear for normal Anglian *strēt*, *drēda(n)*. This evidence, supported by rimes in Robert of Brunne, is too early to be disposed of by the explanation of borrowing from other dialects, nor is the testimony of place-names so complete and unequivocal as to justify an exclusive reliance upon it.

What then is a ME. dialect? The accepted classification is

Southern	{ South-Western	=	OE. West Saxon
	{ South-Eastern	=	OE. Kentish
Midland	{ East Midland }	=	OE. Mercian
	{ }		
	{ West Midland }		
Northern		=	OE. Northumbrian

with the Thames as boundary between Southern and Midland, and the Humber between Midland and Northern. And yet of five actual limiting lines taken at random, only the first coincides approximately with the line of Humber or Thames.

Still the classification rests on a practical truth. Although each dialectal feature has its own boundaries, these are not set by pure chance. Their position is to some extent governed by old tribal and political divisions, by the influence of large towns which served as commercial and administrative centres, and by relative ease of communication. Consequently, linguistic features are roughly grouped, and it is *a priori* likely that London and Oxford would have more features in common than would London and York, or Oxford and Hull; and similarly it is likely that for a majority of phenomena York and Hull would stand together against London and Oxford. Such a grouping was recognized in the fourteenth century. Higden and his authorities distinguish Northern and Southern speech (XIII *b*); in the Towneley *Second Shepherds' Play*, ll. 201 ff., when Mak pretends to be a yeoman of the king, he adopts the appropriate accent, and is promptly told to 'take outt that Sothren tothe'. In the *Reeves Tale* Chaucer makes the clerks speak their own Northern dialect, so we may be sure that he thought of it as a unity.

But had Chaucer been asked exactly where this dialect was spoken, he would probably have replied, *Fer in the North,—I kan nat telle where*. A dialect has really no precise boundaries; its borders are nebulous; and throughout this book 'Southern', 'Northern', &c., are used vaguely, and not with any sharply defined limits in mind. The terms may, however, be applied to precise

areas, so long as the boundaries of single dialect features are not violently made to conform. It is quite accurate to say that *-and(e)* is the normal ending of the pres. p. north of the Humber, and that *u* for OE. *y* is found south of the Thames and west of London, provided it is not implied that the one should not be found south of the Humber, or the other north of the Thames. Both in fact occur in *Gawayne* (Cheshire or Lancashire); and in general the language of the Midlands was characterized by the overlapping of features which distinguish the North from the South.

From what has been said it should be plain that the localization of a piece of Middle English on the evidence of language alone calls for an investigation of scope and delicacy. Where the facts are so complex the mechanical application of rules of thumb may give quick and specious results, but must in the end deaden the spirit of inquiry, which is the best gift a student can bring to the subject.

§ 3. VOCABULARY. The readiness of English speakers to adopt words from foreign languages becomes marked in fourteenth-century writings. But the classical element which is so pronounced in modern literary English is still unimportant. There are few direct borrowings from Latin, and these, like *obit* XVI 269, are for the most part taken from the technical language of the Church. The chief sources of foreign words are Norse and French.

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(a) **Norse.** Although many Norse words first appear in English in late texts, they must have come into the spoken language before the end of the eleventh century, because the Scandinavian settlements ceased after the Norman Conquest. The invaders spoke a dialect near enough to OE. to be intelligible to the Angles; and they had little to teach of literature or civilization. Hence the borrowings from Norse are all popular; they appear chiefly in the Midlands and North, where the invaders settled; and they witness the intimate fusion of two kindred languages. From Norse we get such common words as *anger*, *both*, *call*, *egg*, *hit*, *husband*, *ill*, *law*, *loose*, *low*, *meek*, *take*, *till* (prep.), *want*, *weak*, *wing*, *wrong*, and even the plural forms of the 3rd personal pronoun (§ 12).

It is not always easy to distinguish Norse from native words, because the two languages were so similar during the period of borrowing, and Norse words were adopted early enough to be affected by all ME. sound changes. But there were some dialectal differences between ON. and OE. in the ninth and tenth centuries, and these afford the best criteria of borrowing. For instance in ME. we have *þouz*, *þof* (ON. *þōh* for *\*pauh*) beside *þei(h)* (OE. *þē(a)h*) II 433; *ay* (ON. *ei*) 'ever' XVI 293 beside *oo* (OE. *ā*) XV *b* 7; *waik* (ON. *veik-r*) VIII *b* 23, where OE. *wāc* would yield *wōk*; the forms *wōre* XVI 17 (note) and *wāpin* XIV *b* 15 are from ON. *várum*, *vāpn*, whereas *wēre(n)* and *wēppen* V 154 represent OE. (Anglian) *wēron*, *wēpn*. So we have the pairs *awe* (ON. *agi*) I 83 and *ay* (OE. *ege*) II 571; *neuen* (ON. *nefna*) 'to name' XVII 12 and *nem(p)ne* (OE. *nemnan*) II 600; *rot* (ON. *rót*) II 256 and *wort* (OE. *wyrt*) VIII *a* 303; *sterne*, *starne* (ON. *stjarna*) XVII 8, 423 and native *sterre*, *starre* (OE. *steorra*); *systyr* (ON. *systir*) I 112 and *soster* (OE. *sweostor*) XV *g* 10; *werre*, *warre* (ON. *verri*) XVI 154 (note), 334 and native *werse*, *wars* (OE. *wyrsa*) XVI 200, XVII 191; *wylle* (ON. *vill-r*) V 16 and native *wylde* (OE. *wilde*) XV *b* 19.

Note that in Norse borrowings the consonants *g*, *k* remain stops where they are palatalized in English words: *garn* XVII 298, *giue*, *gete* (ON. *garn*, *gefa*, *geta*) beside *zarn*, *ziue*, *for-zete* (OE. *gearn*, *giefan*, *for-gietan*); *kirke* (ON. *kirka*) beside *chirche* (OE. *cirice*). Similarly OE. initial *sc*-regularly becomes ME. *sh*-, so that most words beginning with *sk*-, like *sky*, *skin*, *skyfte* VI 209 (English *shift*), *skirte* (English *shirt*), are Norse; see the alliterating words in V 99.

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There is an excellent monograph by E. Björkman: *Scandinavian Loan-Words in Middle English*, 1900.

(b) **French.** Most early borrowings from French were again due to invasion and settlement. But the conditions of contact were very different. Some were unfavourable to borrowing: the Normans, who were relatively few, were dispersed throughout the country, and not, like the Scandinavians, massed in colonies; and their language had little in common with English. So the number of French words in English texts is small before the late thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. Other conditions made borrowing inevitable: the French speakers were the governing class; they gradually introduced a new system of administration and new standards of culture; and they had an important literature to which English writers turned for their subject-matter and their models of form. Fourteenth-century translators adopt words from their French originals so freely (see note at p. 234, foot), that written Middle English must give a rather exaggerated impression of the extent of French influence on the spoken language. But a few examples will show how many common words are early borrowings from French: nouns like *country*, *face*, *place*, *river*, *courtesy*, *honour*, *joy*, *justice*, *mercy*, *pity*, *reason*, *religion*, *war*; adjectives like *close*, *large*, *poor*; and verbs *cry*, *pay*, *please*, *save*, *serve*, *use*.

Anglo-French was never completely homogeneous, and it was constantly supplemented as a result of direct political, commercial, and literary relations with France. Hence words were sometimes adopted into ME. in more than one French dialectal form. For instance, Late Latin *ca*-became *cha*- in most French dialects, but remained *ca*- in the North of France: hence ME. *catch* and (*pur*)*chase*, *catel* and *chatel*, *kanel* 'neck' V 230 and *chanel* 'channel' XIII *a* 57. So Northern French preserves initial *w*-, for which other French dialects substitute *g(u)*: hence *Wowayn* V 121 beside *Gawayn* V 4, &c. (see note to V 121). Again, in Anglo-French, *a* before nasal + consonant alternates with *au*:—*dance* : *daunce*; *chance* : *chaunce*; *change* : *chaunge*; *chambre* XVII 281 : *chaumber* II 100. English still has the verbs *launch* and *lance*, which are ultimately identical.

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As borrowing extended over several centuries, the ME. form sometimes depends on the date of adoption. Thus Latin *fidem* becomes early French *feid*, later *fei*, and later still *foi*. ME. has both *feip* and *fay*, and by Spenser's time *foy* appears.

The best study of the French element in ME. is still that of D. Behrens: *Beiträge zur Geschichte*

*der französischen Sprache in England*, 1886. A valuable supplement, dealing chiefly with Anglo-French as the language of the law, is the chapter by F. W. Maitland in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i.

§ 4. HANDWRITING. In the ME. period two varieties of script were in use, both developed from the Caroline minuscule which has proved to be the most permanent contribution of the schools of Charlemagne. The one, cursive and flourished, is common in charters, records, and memoranda; see C. H. Jenkinson and C. Johnson, *Court Hand*, 2 vols., Oxford 1915. The other, in which the letters are separately written, with few flourishes or adaptations of form in combination, is the 'book hand', so called because it is regularly used for literary texts. Between the extreme types there are many gradations; and fifteenth-century copies, such as the Cambridge MS. of Barbour's *Bruce*, show an increasing use of cursive forms, which facilitate rapid writing.

The shapes of letters were not always so distinct as they are in print, so that copyists of the time, and even modern editors, are liable to mistake one letter for another. Each hand has its own weaknesses, but the letters most commonly misread are:—

*e* : *o* e.g. *Beuo* for *Bouo* I 59; *wroche* for *wreche* II 333; *teches* IV *b* 60, where *toches* (Footnote) is probably right; *pesible* (MS. *possible*) XI *b* 67.

*u* : *n* (practically indistinguishable) e.g. *menys* (MS. *mouys*) XVI 301; *skayned* (edd. *skayued*) V 99; *ryue3* or *ryne3* V 222 (note). This is only a special case of the confusion of letters and combinations formed by repetition of the downstroke, e.g. *u*, *n*, *m*, and *i* (which is not always distinguished by a stroke above). Hence *dim* II 285 where modern editors have *dun*, although *i* has the distinguishing stroke.

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*y* : *þ* e.g. *ye* (MS. *þe*) XIV *d* 11; see note to XV *a* 12. Confusion is increased by occasional transference to *þ* of the dot which historically may stand over *y*. *3* for *þ* initially, as in XVI 170, is more often due to confusion of the letters *þ*: *y* and subsequent preference of *3* for *y* in spelling (§ 5 i) than to direct confusion of *þ*: *3*, which are not usually very similar in late Middle English script.

*þ* : *h* e.g. *dop* (MS. *doh*) XV *b* 22; and notes to XII *b* 116, XVI 62.

*b* : *v* e.g. *vousour* (edd. *bonsour*) II 363.

*c* : *t* e.g. *cunesmen* (edd. *tunesmen*) XV *g* 6 (note); *top* (edd. *cop*) *ibid.* 16; see note to XIII *a* 7.

*f* : *f* (= *s*) e.g. *slang* (variant *flang*) X 53.

*l* : *f* (= *s*) e.g. *al* (edd. *as*) II 108.

*l* : *k* e.g. *kyþe3* (MS. *lyþe3*) VI 9.

§ 5. SPECIAL LETTERS. Two letters now obsolete are common in fourteenth-century MSS.: *þ* and *3*.

*þ* : 'thorn', is a rune, and stands for the voiced and voiceless sounds now represented by *th* in *this*, *thin*. The gradual displacement of *þ* by *th*, which had quite a different sound in classical Latin (note to VIII *a* 23), may be traced in the MSS. printed (except X, XII). *þ* remained longest in the initial position, but by the end of the fifteenth century was used chiefly in compendia like *þe* 'the', *þt* 'that'.

*3* : called '3o3' or 'yogh', derives from <*g*>, the OE. script form of the letter *g*. It was retained in ME. after the Caroline form *g* had become established in vernacular texts, to represent a group of spirant sounds:

(i) The initial spirant in *3oked* IX 253 (OE. *geoc-*), *3ere* I 151 (OE. *gēar*), where the sound was approximately the same as in our *yoke*, *year*. Except in texts specially influenced by the tradition of French spelling, *y* (which is ambiguous owing to its common use as a vowel = *i*) is less frequent than *3* initially. Medially the palatal spirant is represented either by *3* or *y*: *e3e* (OE. *ē(a)3-*) XV *c* 14 beside *eyen* VIII *a* 168; *ise3e* (OE. *gesegen*) XIV *c* 88 beside *iseye* XIV *c* 16. The medial guttural spirant more commonly develops to *w* in the fourteenth century: *awe* (ON. *agi*) I 83, *felawe* (ON. *fēlagi*) XIV *d* 7, *halwes* (OE. *halg-*), beside *a3-* V 267, *fela3-* V 83, *hal3-* V 54.

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(ii) The medial or final spirant, guttural or palatal, which is lost in standard English, but still spelt in *nought*, *through*, *night*, *high*: ME. *no3t*, *þur3*, *ny3t*, *hy3*: OE. *noht*, *þurh*, *niht*, *hēh*. The ME. sound was probably like that in German *ich*, *ach*. The older spelling with *h* is occasionally found; more often *ch* as in *mycht* X 17; but the French spelling *gh* gains ground throughout the century. Abnormal are *write* for *wrighte* XVI 230, *wytes*, *nytes* for *wy3tes*, *ny3tes* XV *i* 19 f.

(iii) As these sounds weakened in late Southern ME., *3* was sometimes used without phonetic value, or at the most to reinforce a long *i*: e.g. *Engli3sch* XI *a* 28, 37, &c.; *ky3n* 'kine' IX 256.

N.B.—Entirely distinct in origin and sound value, but identical in script form, is *3*, the minuscule form of *z*, in *A3one* (= *Azone*) I 105, *cllyffe3* 'cliffs' V 10, &c. It would probably be better to print *z* in such words.

§ 6. SPELLING. Modern English spelling, which tolerates almost any inconsistency in the representation of sounds provided the same word is always spelt in the approved way, is the creation of printers, schools, and dictionaries. A Middle English writer was bound by no such arbitrary rules. Michael of Northgate, whose autograph MS. survives, writes *diaknen* III 5 and *dyacne* 9; *vyf* 22, *uif* 23, *vif* 37; *þouzond* 30 and *þousend* 34. Yet his spelling is not irrational. The comparative regularity of his own speech, which he reproduced directly, had a normalizing influence; and by natural habit he more often than not solved the same problem of representation in the same way. Scribes, too, like printers in later times, found a measure of consistency convenient, and the spelling of some transcripts, e.g. I and X, is very regular. If at first ME. spelling appears lawless to a modern reader, it is because of the variety of dialects represented in literature, the widely differing dates of the MSS. printed, and the tendency of copyists to mix

their own spellings with those of their original.

The following points must be kept in mind:

(i) *i* : *y* as vowels are interchangeable. In some MSS. (for instance, 1) *y* is used almost exclusively; in others (VIII *a*) it is preferred for distinctness in the neighbourhood of *u*, *n*, *m*, so that the scribe writes *hym*, but *his*.

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(ii) *ie* is found in later texts for long close  $\bar{e}$ : *chiere* XII *a* 120, *flietende* XII *a* 157, *diemed* XII *b* 216.

(iii) *ui* (*uy*), in the South-West and West Midlands, stands for  $\bar{u}$  (sounded as in French *amuser*): *puit* XIV *c* 12; *vnkuynde* XIV *c* 103. The corresponding short  $\bar{u}$  is spelt *u*: *hull* 'hill', &c.

(iv) Quite distinct is the late Northern addition of *i* (*y*), to indicate the long vowels  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\bar{e}$ ,  $\bar{o}$ : *neid* x 18, *noyne* 'noon' x 67.

(v) *ou* (*ow*) is the regular spelling of long  $\bar{u}$  (sounded as in *too*): *hous*, *now*, *founden*, &c.

(vi) *o* is the regular spelling for short *u* (sounded as in *put*) in the neighbourhood of *u*, *m*, *n*, because if *u* is written in combination with these letters an indistinct series of downstrokes results. Hence *loue* but *luf*, *come* infin., *son* 'son', *dronken* 'drunk'. In *Ayenbyte* *o* for  $\bar{u}$  is general, e.g. *groching* III 10. In other texts it is common in *bote* 'but'.

(vii) *u* : *v* are not distinguished as consonant and vowel. *v* is preferred in initial position, *u* medially or finally: *valay* 'valley', *vnder* 'under', *vuel* (= *üvel*) 'evil', *loue* 'love'. (Note that in XII the MS. distinction of *v* and *u* is not reproduced.)

(viii) So *i*, and its longer form *j*, are not distinguished as vowel and consonant. In this book *i* is printed throughout, and so stands initially for the sound of our *j* in *ioy*, *iuggement*, &c.

(ix) *c* : *k* for the sounds in *kit*, *cot*, are often interchangeable; but *k* is preferred before palatal vowels *e*, *i* (*y*); and *c* before *o*, *u*. See the alliterating words in v 52, 107, 128, 153, 272, 283.

(x) *c* : *s* alternate for voiceless *s*, especially in French words: *sité* 'city' VII 66, *resayue* 'receive' v 8, *vyse* 'vice' v 307, *falce* v 314; but also in *race* (ON. *rás*) v 8 beside *rase* XVII 429.

(xi) *s* : *z* ( $\beta$ ) are both used for voiced *s*, the former predominating: *kyssedes* beside *raztez* v 283; *pouzond* III 30 beside *pousend* III 34. But  $\beta$  occasionally appears for voiceless *s*: (*a3*-) *lez* 'awe-less' v 267, *for3* 'force' 'waterfall' v 105.

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(xii) *sh* : *sch* : *ss* are all found for modern *sh*, OE. *sc*: *shuld* I 50; *schert* II 230; *sserte* III 40; but *sal* 'shall', *suld* 'should' in Northern texts represent the actual Northern pronunciation in weakly stressed words.

(xiii) *v* : *w*: In late Northern MSS. *v* is often found for initial *w*: *vithall* x 9, *Valter* x 36. The interchange is less common in medial positions: *in swndir* x 106.

(xiv) *wh*- : *qu(h)*-: *w*-:—*wh*- is a spelling for *hw*-. In the South the aspiration is weakened or lost, and *w* is commonly written, e.g. VIII *b*. In the North the aspiration is strong, and the sound is spelt *qu(h)*-, e.g. *quhelis* 'wheels' x 17. Both *qu*- and *wh*- are found in *Gawayne*. The development in later dialects is against the assumption that *hw*- became *kw*- in pronunciation.

See also § 5.

The whole system of ME. spelling was modelled on French, and some of the general features noted above (e.g. ii, iii, v, vi, x) are essentially French. But, particularly in early MSS., there are a number of exceptional imitations. Sometimes the spelling represents a French scribe's attempt at English pronunciation: *foret* in xv *g* 18 stands for *forþ*, where *-rþ* with strongly trilled *r* was difficult to a foreigner; and occasionally such distortions are found as *knith*, *knit*, and even *kint* (*Layamon*, *Havelok*) for *knizt*, which had two awkward consonant groups. More commonly the copyist, accustomed to write both French and English, chose a French representation for an English sound. So *st* for *ht* appears regularly in xv *e*: *seuenist* 'sennight', and xv *g*: *iboust* 'bought', &c. The explanation is that in French words like *beste* 'bête', *gist* 'gît', *s* became only a breathing before it disappeared; and *h* in ME. *ht* weakened to a similar sound, as is shown by the rimes with *Kryste* 'Christ' in vi 98-107. Hence the French spelling *st* is occasionally substituted for English *ht*. Again, in borrowings from French, *an* + consonant alternates with *aun*: *dance* or *daunce*; *change* or *chaunge* (p. 273); and by analogy we have *Irlande* or *Irlaunde* in xv *d*. Another exceptional French usage, *-tz* for final voiceless *-s*, is explained at p. 219, top.

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§ 7. SOUND CHANGES. (a) **Vowel Quantity.** No fourteenth-century writer followed the early example of Orm. Marks of quantity are not used in fourteenth-century texts; doubling of long vowels is not an established rule; and there are no strictly quantitative metres, or treatises on pronunciation. Consequently it is not easy to determine how far the quantity of the vowels in any given text has been affected by the very considerable changes that occurred in the late OE. and ME. periods.

Of these the chief are:

(i) In unstressed syllables original long vowels tend to become short. Hence  $\bar{u}$ s (OE.  $\bar{u}$ s), and  $\bar{ö}$ te (OE.  $\bar{b}\bar{u}$ tan) 'but', which are usually unstressed.

(ii) All long vowels are shortened in stressed close syllables (i.e., usually, when they are followed by two consonants): e.g. *kēpen*, pa. t. *kēpte*, pp. *kēpt*; *hūband* beside *hous*; *wimmen* (from *wif-men*) beside *wif*.

*Exception.* Before the groups *-ld*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-rð*, *-mb*, a short vowel is lengthened in OE. unless a third consonant immediately follows. Hence, before any of these combinations, length may be retained in ME.: e.g. *fēnd* 'fiend', *bīnden*, *chīld*; but *children*.

(iii) Short vowels *ǣ*, *ĕ*, *ǫ* are lengthened in stressed open syllables (i.e., *usually*, when they are followed by a single consonant with a following vowel): *tǣ/ke* > *táke*; *mĕ/te* > *méte* 'meat'; *brǫ/ken* > *bróken*. To what extent *ī* and *ū* were subject to the same lengthening in Northern districts is still disputed. Normally they remain short in South and S. Midlands, e.g. *drīuen* pp.; *lōuen* = *lūven* 'to love'.

There are many minor rules and many exceptions due to analogy; but roughly it may be taken that ME. vowels are:

*short* when unstressed;

*short* before two consonants, except *-ld*, *-nd*, *-rd*, *-rð*, *-mb*;

*long* (except *i* (*y*), *u*) before a single medial consonant;

otherwise of the quantity shown in the Glossary for the OE. or ON. etymon.

(b) **Vowel Quality.** The ME. sound-changes are so many and so obscure that it will be possible to deal only with a few that contribute most to the diversity of dialects, and it happens that the particular changes noticed all took effect before the fourteenth century.

[280] (i) OE. and ON. *ā* develop to long open *ō* (sounded as in *broad*), first in the South and S. Midlands, later in the N. Midlands. In the North *ā* (sounded approximately as in *father*) remains: e.g. *bane* 'bone' IV a 54, *balde* 'bold' IV a 51. The boundary seems to have been a line drawn west from the Humber, and this approximates to the dividing line in the modern dialects. There are of course instances of *ō* to the north and of *ā* to the south of the Humber, since border speakers would be familiar with both *ā* and *ō*, or would have intermediate pronunciations; and poets might use convenient rimes from neighbouring dialects.

(ii) OE. *ȳ* (deriving from Germanic *ū* followed by *i*) appears *normally* in E. Midlands and the North as *ī* (*y*): e.g. *kȳn*, *hill* (OE. *cȳ*, *hyll*). In the South-East, particularly Kent, it appears as *ē*: *kēn*, *hell*. In the South-West, and in W. Midlands, it commonly appears as *u*, *ui* (*uy*), with the sound of short or long *ū*. London was apparently at a meeting point of the *u*, *i*, and *e* boundaries, because all the forms appear in fourteenth-century London texts, though *ū* and *ē* gradually give place to *ī*. The extension of *ū* forms to the North-West is shown by *Gawayne*, and a line drawn from London to Liverpool would give a rough idea of the boundary. But within this area unrounding of *ū* to *ī* seems to have been progressive during the century. N.B.—It is dangerous to jump to conclusions from isolated examples. Before *r* + consonant *e* is sometimes found in all dialects, e.g. *schert* II 230. *Church*, spelt with *u*, *i*, or *e*, had by etymology OE. *i*, not *y*. And in Northern texts there are a number of *e*-spellings in open syllables, both for OE. *y* and *i*.

(c) **Consonants:**

(i) *f* > *v* (initial): this change, which dates back to OE. times, is carried through in *Ayenbyte*: e.g. *uele uayre uorbisnen* = Midland 'fele fayre forbisnes'. In some degree it extended over the whole of the South.

(ii) *s* > *z* (initial), parallel to the change of *f* to *v*, is regularly represented in spelling in the *Ayenbyte*: *zome* 'some', &c. Otherwise *z* is rare in spelling, but the voiced initial sound probably extended to most of the Southern districts where it survives in modern dialect.

[281] § 8. PRONUNCIATION. One of the best ways of studying ME. pronunciation is to learn by heart a few lines of verse in a consistent dialect, and to correct their repetition as more precise knowledge is gained. The spelling can be relied on as very roughly phonetic if the exceptional usages noted in § 6 are kept in mind. Supplementary and controlling information is provided by the study of rimes, of alliteration, and of the history of English and French sounds.

**Consonants.** Where a consonant is clearly pronounced in Modern English, its value is nearly enough the same for ME. But modern spelling preserves many consonants that have been lost in speech, and so is rather a hindrance than a help to the beginner in ME. For instance, the initial sounds in ME. *knizt* and *nizt* were not the same, for *knizt* alliterates always with *k*- (v 43, 107) and *nizt* with *n*- (VII a 149); and initial *wr*- in *wringe*, *wrizte* is distinct from initial *r*- in *ring*, *rizt* (cp. alliteration in VIII a 168, v 136). Nor can *wrizte* rime with *write* in a careful fourteenth-century poem. In words like *lerne*, *doghter*, *r* was pronounced with some degree of trilling. And although there are signs of confusion in late MSS. (IV a, XVI, XVII), double consonants were generally distinguished from single: *sonne* 'sun' was pronounced *sūn-ne*, and so differed from *sonne* 'son', which was pronounced *sū-ne* (§ 6 vi).

**Vowels.** Short vowels *ǣ*, *ĕ*, *ī*, *ǫ*, *ū* (§ 6 vi) were pronounced respectively as in French *patte*, English *pet*, *pit*, *pot*, *put*. Final unstressed *-e* was generally syllabic, with a sound something like the final sound in *China* (§ 9).

The long vowels *ā*, *ī*, *ū* (§ 6 v) were pronounced approximately as in *father*, *machine*, *crude*. But *ē* and *ō* present special difficulties, because the spelling failed to make the broad distinction between open *ō* and close *ō*, open *ē* and close *ē*—a distinction which, though relative only (depending on the greater or less opening of the mouth passage), is proved to have been considerable by ME. rimes, and by the earlier and subsequent history of the long sounds represented in ME. by *e*, *o*.

(i) Open *ō* (as in *broad*) derives:

(a) from OE. *ā*, according to § 7 b i: OE. *brād*, *bāt*, *báld* > ME. *brōd*, *bōt*, *bōld* > NE. *broad*, *boat*, *bold*. The characteristic modern spelling is thus *oa*.

(b) from OE. *ǫ* in open syllables according to § 7 a iii: OE. *brǫcen* > ME. *bróke(n)* > NE. *broken*.

NOTE.—In many texts the rimes indicate a distinction in pronunciation between  $\bar{o}$  derived from OE.  $\bar{a}$  and  $\bar{o}$  derived from OE.  $\bar{o}$ , and the distinction is still made in NW. Midland dialects.

- (ii) Close  $\bar{o}$  (pronounced rather as in French *beau* than as in standard English *so* which has developed a diphthong *ou*), derives from OE.  $\bar{o}$ : OE. *gōs, dōm, gōld* > ME. *gōs, dōm, gōld* > NE. *goose, doom, gold*. The characteristic modern spelling is *oo*.

NOTE.—(1) After consonant + *w*,  $\bar{o}$  often develops in ME. to  $\bar{ō}$ : OE. (*al*)*swā, twā* > ME. (*al*)*sō, twō* > later (*al*)*sō, twō*.

- (2) In Scotland and the North  $\bar{o}$  becomes regularly a sound (perhaps  $\bar{u}$ ) spelt *u*: *gōd* > *gud, blōd* > *blud, &c.*

Whereas the distribution of  $\bar{o}$  and  $\bar{o}$  is practically the same for all ME. dialects, the distinction of open  $\bar{e}$  and close  $\bar{e}$  is not so regular, chiefly because the sounds from which they derive were not uniform in OE. dialects. For simplicity, attention will be confined to the London dialect, as the forerunner of modern Standard English.

- (iii) South-East Midland open  $\bar{e}$  (pronounced as in *there*) derives:

- (a) from OE. (Anglian)  $\bar{æ}$ : Anglian *dǣl* > SE. Midl. *dē̄l* > NE. *deal*;  
 (b) from OE.  $\bar{e}a$ : OE. *bēatan* > ME. *bēte(n)* > NE. *beat*;  
 (c) from OE.  $\bar{e}$  in open syllables according to § 7 a iii: OE. *mēte* > ME. *mēte* > NE. *meat*.

The characteristic modern spelling is *ea*.

- (iv) South-East Midland close  $\bar{e}$  (pronounced as in French *été*) derives:

- (a) from OE. (Anglian)  $\bar{e}$  of various origins: Anglian *hēr, mēta(n), (ge)lēfa(n)* > SE. Midl. *hēre, mēte(n), lēue(n)* > NE. *here, meet, (be)lieve*.  
 (b) from OE.  $\bar{e}o$ : OE. *dēop, bēof* > ME. *dēp, bēf(pief)* > NE. *deep, thief*.

The characteristic modern spellings are *ee*, and *ie* which already in ME. often distinguishes the close sound (§ 6 ii).

NOTE.—The distinction made above does not apply in South-Eastern (Kentish), because this dialect has ME. *ea, ia, ya* for OE.  $\bar{e}a$  (iii b), and OE.  $\bar{e}$  for Anglian  $\bar{æ}$  (iii a). Nor does it hold for South-Western, because the West Saxon dialect of OE. had *geliefan* for Anglian *gelēfa(n)* (iv a). West Saxon also had *strǣt, -drǣdan*, where normal Anglian had *strēt, -drēda(n)*, but the distribution of the place-names *Stratton* beside *Stretton*, and of the pa. t. and pp. *dradd(e)* beside *drēdd(e)* (p. 270 and n.), shows that the  $\bar{æ}$  forms were common in the extreme South and the East of the Anglian area; so that in fourteenth-century London both  $\bar{e}$  and  $\bar{e}$  might occur in such words, as against regular West Midland and Northern  $\bar{e}$ .

In NE. Midland and Northern texts some  $\bar{e}$  sounds which we should expect to be distinguished as open and close rime together, especially before dental consonants, e.g. *zēde* (OE. *ēode*): *lēde* (Anglian *lǣda(n)*) I 152-3.

§ 9. INFLEXIONS. Weakening and levelling of inflexions is continuous from the earliest period of English. The strong stress falling regularly on the first or the stem syllable produced as reflex a tendency to indistinctness in the unstressed endings. The disturbing influence of foreign conquest played a secondary but not a negligible part, as may be seen from a comparison of some verbal forms in the North and the N. Midlands, where Norse influence was strongest, with those of the South, where it was inconsiderable:

	Normal OE.	Early Sth. ME.	Early Nth.and N. Midl.	Old Norse
Infin.	<i>drifan</i>	<i>driue(n)</i>	<i>driue</i>	<i>drífa</i>
Pres. p.	<i>drifende</i>	<i>driuinde</i>	<i>driuande</i>	<i>drífandi</i>
Pp. strong	<i>gedrifēn</i>	<i>ydriue</i>	<i>driuen</i>	<i>drifenn</i>

and although tangible evidence of French influence on the flexional system is wanting (for occasional borrowings like *gowtes artetykes* IX 314 are mere literary curiosities), every considerable settlement of foreign speakers, especially when they come as conquerors, must shake the traditions of the language of the conquered. A third cause of uncertainty was the interaction of English dialects in different stages of development.

The practical sense of the speakers controlled and balanced these disruptive factors. There is no better field than Middle English for a study of the processes of vigorous growth: the regularizing of exceptional and inconvenient forms; the choice of the most distinctive among a group of alternatives; the invention of new modes of expression; the discarding of what has become useless.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the inflexional endings are: *-e; -en; -ene* (weak gen. pl.); *-er* (comparative); *-es; -est*; with *-eþ, -ede (-de, -te), -ed (-d, -t), -ynge (-inde, -ende, -ande)*, which are verbal only.

NOTE.—(a) Sometimes one of these inflexions may be substituted for another: e.g. when *-es* replaces *-e* as the Northern ending of the 1st sg. pres. ind. Such analogical substitutions must be distinguished from phonetic developments.

- (b) In disyllabic inflexions like *-ede, -ynge (-ande)*, final *-e* is lost early in the North. In polysyllables it is dropped everywhere during the century.

- (c) The indistinct sound of flexional *-e* covered by a consonant is shown by spellings with -

*i-, -y-*: *woundis* x 51; *madist* xi b 214; *blyndiþ* xi b 7; *fulfillid* xvi 6; *etin* xiv b 76; *brokynne* xvi 195. And, especially in West Midland texts, *-us, -un (-on)* appear for *-es, -en*: *mannus* xi b 234; *foundun* xi a 47; *laghton* vii 119. Complete syncope sometimes occurs: *days* i 198, &c.

Otherwise all the inflexions except *-e, -en*, are fairly stable throughout the century.

**-en**: In the North *-en* is found chiefly in the strong pp., where it is stable. In the South (except in the strong pp.) it is better preserved, occurring rarely in the dat. sg. of adjectives, e.g. *onen* iii 4, dat. pl. of nouns, e.g. *diaknen* iii 5, and in the infinitive; more commonly in the weak pl. of nouns, where it is stable, and in the pa. t. pl., where it alternates with *-e*. In the Midlands *-en*, alternating with *-e*, is also the characteristic ending of the pres. ind. pl. As a rule (where the reduced ending *-e* is found side by side with *-en*) *-e* is used before words beginning with a consonant, and *-en* before words beginning with a vowel or *h*, to avoid hiatus. But that the preservation of *-en* does not depend purely on phonetic considerations is proved by its regular retention in the Northern strong pp., and its regular reduction to *-e* in the corresponding Southern form.

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**-e**: Wherever *-en* was reduced, it reinforced final *-e*, which so became the meeting point of all the inflexions that were to disappear before Elizabethan times.

*-e* was the ending of several verbal forms; of the weak adjective and the adjective pl.; of the dat. sg. of nouns; and of adverbs like *faste, deepe*, as distinguished from the corresponding adjectives *fast, deep*.

That *-e* was pronounced is clear from the metres of Chaucer, Gower, and most other Southern and Midland writers of the time. For centuries the rhythm of their verse was lost because later generations had become so used to final *-e* as a mere spelling that they did not suspect that it was once syllabic.

But already in fourteenth-century manuscripts there is evidence of uncertainty. Scribes often omit the final vowel where the rhythm shows that it was syllabic in the original (see the language notes to I, II). Conversely, in *Gawayne* forms like *burne* (OE. *beorn*), *race* (ON. *rás*), *hille* (OE. *hyl*) appear in nominative and accusative, where historically there should be no ending. The explanation is that, quite apart from the workings of analogy, which now extended and now curtailed its historical functions, *-e* was everywhere weakly pronounced, and was dropped at different rates in the various dialects. In the North it hardly survives the middle of the century (IV a, x). In the N. Midlands its survival is irregular. In the South and S. Midlands it is fairly well preserved till the end of the century. But everywhere the proportion of flexionless forms was increasing. It may be assumed that, in speech as in verse, final *-e* was lost phonetically first before words beginning with a vowel or *h*.

§ 10. NOUNS: Gender, which in standard West Saxon had been to a great extent grammatical (i.e. dependent on the forms of the noun), was by the fourteenth century natural (i.e. dependent on the meaning of the noun). This change had accompanied and in some degree facilitated the transfer of nearly all nouns to the strong masculine type, which was the commonest and best defined in late OE.:

	OE.	ME.
Sg.	<i>cniht</i>	<i>knizt</i>
nom.		
acc.		
gen.	<i>cnihtes</i>	<i>kniztes</i>
dat.	<i>cnihte</i>	<i>knizte</i>
	OE.	ME.
Pl.	<i>cnihtas</i>	<i>kniztes</i>
nom.		
acc.		
gen.	<i>cnihta</i>	<i>kniztes</i>
dat.	<i>cnihtum</i>	<i>kniztes</i>

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In the North final *-e* of the dat. sg. was regularly dropped early in the fourteenth century, and even in the South the dat. sg. is often uninflected, probably owing to the influence of the accusative. In the plural the inflexion of the nom. acc. spreads to all cases; but in early texts, and relatively late in the South, the historical forms are occasionally found, e.g. gen. pl. *cniste* (MS. *cnistes*) xv g 30 (note), dat. pl. *diaknen* iii 5.

**Survivals:** (i) The common mutated plurals *man: men, fot: fet, &c.*, are preserved, and in VIII b a gen. pl. *menne* (OE. *manna*) occurs; *ky* pl. of *cow* forms a new double pl. *kyn*, see (iii) below; *hend* pl. of *hand* is Norse, cp. xvi 75 (note).

(ii) Some OE. neuters like *shep* 'sheep' VIII b 18, *zer* 'year' II 492, *þing* II 218, *folk* II 389, resist the intrusion of the masculine pl. *-es* in nominative and accusative. Pl. *hors* II 304, XIII a 34 remains beside *horses* xiv b 73; but *deores* 'wild animals' occurs at xv b 29, where Modern English preserves *deer*.

(iii) In the South the old weak declension with pl. *-en* persists, though by the fourteenth century the predominance of the strong type is assured. The weak forms occur not only where they are historically justified, e.g. *eyzen* (OE. *ēagan*) II 111, but also by analogy in words like *honden* (OE. pl. *honda*) II 79, *tren* (OE. pl. *trēo*) XIII a 51, *platen* (OFr. *plate*) xv g 4. The inflexion still survives



in three double plural formations: *children* VIII *b* 70 beside *childer* (OE. pl. *cildru*); *bretheren* VIII *a* 201 beside *brether* XVII 320 (OE. pl. *brōþor*); and *kyzn* IX 256 for *ky* (cp. (i) above). The OE. weak gen. pl. in *-ena* leaves its traces in the South, e.g. *knauene* VIII *b* 56, XV *h* 4, and unhistorical *lordene* VIII *b* 77.

(iv) The group *fader*, *moder*, *broþer*, *doghter* commonly show the historical flexionless gen. sg., e.g. *doghtyr arme* I 136; *moder wombe* XI *b* 29 f.; *brother hele* XII *a* 18; *Fadir voice* XVI 79.

(v) The historical gen. sg. of old strong feminines remains in *soule dede* (OE. *sāwle*) I 212; but *Lady day* (OE. *hlǣfdigan dæg*) I 242 is a survival of the weak fem. gen. sg.

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§ 11. ADJECTIVES. Separate flexional forms for each gender are not preserved in the fourteenth century; but until its end the distinction of strong and weak declensions remains in the South and South Midlands, and is well marked in the careful verse of Chaucer and Gower. The strong is the normal form. The weak form is used after demonstratives, *the*, *his*, &c., and in the vocative. As types *god* (OE. *gōd*) 'good' and *grene* (OE. *grēne*) 'green' will serve, because in OE. *grēne* had a vowel-ending in the strong nom. sg. masc., while *gōd* did not. The ME. paradigms are:

Singular.		Plural.
Strong	Weak	Strong and Weak
<i>god</i>	<i>god</i>	<i>godé</i>
<i>grené</i>	<i>grené</i>	<i>grené</i>

Examples: Strong sg. *a gret serpent* (OE. *grēat*) XII *b* 72; *an unkindé man* (OE. *uncynde*) XII *b* 1; *a stillé water* (OE. *stille*) XII *a* 83. Weak sg. *The greté gastli serpent* XII *b* 126; *hire oghné hertes lif* XII *a* 4; *O lef liif* (where the metre indicates *leué* for the original) II 102. Strong pl. *þer wer widé wones* II 365. Weak pl. *the smalé stones* XII *a* 84.

Note that strong and weak forms are identical in the plural; that even in the singular there is no formal distinction when the OE. strong masc. nom. ended in a vowel (*grēne*); that monosyllables ending in a vowel (e.g. *fre*), polysyllables, and participles, are usually invariable; and that regular dropping of final *-e* levels all distinctions, so that the North and N. Midlands early reached the relatively flexionless stage of Modern English.

**Survivals.** The *Ayenbyte* shows some living use of the adjective inflexions. Otherwise the survivals are limited to set phrases, e.g. gen. sg. *nonés cunnes* 'of no kind', *enes cunnes* 'of any kind', XV *g* 20, 22. That the force of the inflexion was lost is shown by the early wrong analysis *no skynnes*, *al skynnes*, &c.

**Definite Article.** Parallel to the simplification of the adjective, the full OE. declension *sē*, *sēo*, *þæt*, &c., is reduced to invariable *þe*. The *Ayenbyte* alone of our specimens keeps some of the older distinctions. Elsewhere traces appear in set phrases, e.g. neut. sg. *þat*, *þet* in *þat on* 'the one', *þat oþer* 'the other' v 344, and, with wrong division, *þe ton* XI *b* 27, *the toþer* IX 4; neut. sg. dat. *þen* (OE. *þēm*), with wrong division, in *atte nale* (for *at þen ale*) VIII *a* 109.

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§ 12. PRONOUNS. In a brilliant study (*Progress in Language*, London 1894) Jespersen exemplifies the economy and resources of English from the detailed history of the Pronoun. In the first and second persons fourteenth-century usage does not differ greatly from that of the Authorized Version of the Bible. But the pronoun of the third person shows a variety of developments. In the singular an objective case replaces, without practical disadvantages, the older accusative and dative: *him* (OE. *hine* and *him*), *her(e)* (OE. *hīe* and *hiere*), (*h*)*it* (OE. *hit* and *him*). The possessive *his* still serves for the neuter as well as the masculine, e.g. *þat ryuer... chaungeþ hys fordes* XIII *a* 55 f.; though an uninflected neuter possessive *hit* occasionally appears in the fourteenth century. In the plural, where one would expect objective *him* from the regular OE. dat. pl. *him*, clearness is gained by the choice of unambiguous *hem*, from an OE. dat. pl. by-form *heom*.

But as we see from *Orfeo*, ll. 408, 446, 185, in some dialects the nom. sg. masc. (OE. *hē*), nom. sg. fem. (OE. *hēo*), and nom. pl. (OE. *hīe*), had all become ME. *he*. The disadvantages of such ambiguity increased as the flexional system of nouns and adjectives collapsed, and a remedy was found in the adoption of new forms. For the nom. sg. fem., *s(c)he*, *s(c)ho* (mostly Northern), come into use, which are probably derived from *siē*, *seō*, the corresponding case of the definite article. The innovation was long resisted in the South, and *ho*, an unambiguous development of *heō*, remains late in W. Midland texts like *Pearl*.

In the nom. pl. ambiguous *he* was replaced by *þei*, the nom. pl. of the Norse definite article. This is the regular form in all except the Southern specimens II (orig.), III, XIII. And although the full series of Norse forms *þei*, *þeir*, *þe(i)m* is found in Orm at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Chaucer and other Midland writers of the fourteenth century as a rule have only *þei*, with native English *her(e)*, *hem* in the oblique cases. (For details see the language note to each specimen.)

The poss. pl. *her(e)*, beside *hor(e)*, was still liable to confusion with the obj. sg. fem. *her(e)*, cp. II 92. Consequently this was the next point to be gained by the Norse forms, e.g. in VII 181. In the Northern texts X, XVI, XVII, all from late MSS., the Norse forms *þai*, *þa(i)r*, *þa(i)me* are fully established; but (*h*)*em*, which was throughout unambiguous, survived into modern dialects in the South and Midlands.

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Note the reduced nominative form *a* 'he', 'they' in XIII; and the objective *his(e)* 'her', 'them' in III, which has not been satisfactorily explained.

**Relative:** The general ME. relative is *þat*, representing all genders and cases (note to XV *i* 4). Sometimes definition is gained by adding the personal pronoun: *þat... he* (*sche*) = 'who'; *þat... it*



= 'which'; *þat... his* = 'whose'; *þat ... him* = 'whom', &c.; e.g. *a well, þat in the day it is so cold* IX 5-6, cp. v 127 (note); *oon That with a spere was thirled his brest-boon* 'one whose breast-bone was pierced with a spear', *Knight's Tale* 1851. For the omission of *þat* see note to XIII a 36.

In later texts, *which*, properly an interrogative, appears commonly as a relative, both with personal and impersonal antecedents, e.g. *Alceone... which... him loveth* XII a 3 ff.; *þat steede... fro whilke þe feende fell* XVI 13 f. Under the influence of French *lequel*, &c., *which* is often compounded with the article *þe*, e.g. *a gret serpent... the which Bardus anon up drouh* XII b 72 f.; *no thing of newe, in the whiche the hereres myghten hauen... solace* IX 275 f. Further compounding with *þat* is not uncommon, e.g. *the queen of Amazoine, the whiche þat maketh hem to ben kept in cloos* IX 190 f.

More restricted is the relative use of *whos*, *whom*, which are originally interrogatives, though both are found very early in ME. as personal relatives. Examples of the objective after prepositions are: *my Lady, of quom...* VI 93; *God, fro whom ...* IX 328 f.; *my Sone... in whome* XVI 81 f. The possessive occurs in *Seynt Magne... yn whos wurschyp* I 90 f.; *I am ... the same, whos good* XII b 78 f.; and, compounded with the article, in *Morpheüs, the whos nature* XII a 113. The nominative *who* retains its interrogative meaning, e.g. *But who ben more heretikis?* XI b 77 f.; or is used as an indefinite, e.g. *a tasse of grene stickes... to selle, who that wolde hem beie* XII b 22 ff.; but it is never used as a relative; and probably *what* in XVI 174 is better taken as in apposition to *myghtis* than as a true relative.

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§ 13. VERB. Syntactically the most interesting point in the history of the ME. verb is the development of the compound tenses with *have*, *be*, *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *mun*, *can*, *gan*. But the flexional forms of the simple tenses are most subject to local variation, and, being relatively common, afford good evidence of dialect. Throughout the period, despite the crossings and confusions that are to be expected in a time of uncertainty and experiment, the distinction between strong and weak verbs is maintained; and it will be convenient to deal first with the inflexions common to both classes, and then to notice the forms peculiar to one or the other.

(i) **The Infinitive** had already in Northumbrian OE. lost final *-n*: *drīfa* 'to drive'. Hence in ME. of the North and N. Midlands the ending is *-e*, which becomes silent at varying rates during the fourteenth century; e.g. *dryue* I 171, *to luf* IV a 17. In the South and S. Midlands the common ending is *-e*, e.g. *telle* III 3, which usually remains syllabic to the end of the century; but *-(e)n* is also found, especially in verse to make a rime or to avoid hiatus: e.g. *sein* (: *azein*) XII a 27; *to parte and ziven half his good* XII b 201.

(ii) **The Present Participle** (OE. *drīfende*) in the North and N. Midlands ends in *-and(e)*, though *-yng(e)*, *-ing(e)* is beginning to appear in V, VII, XVI, XVII. In S. Midlands the historical ending *-ende* still prevails in Gower; but Chaucer has more commonly *-yng(e)*; and in IX, XI, both late texts, only *-yng(e)* appears. In the South *-yng(e)* is established as early as the beginning of the century, e.g. in II.

N.B. Carefully distinguish the verbal noun which always ends in *-yng(e)*. Early confusion resulted in the transference of this ending to the participle.

(iii) **Present Indicative.**

(a) Singular: OE. 1 *drīfe*, 2 *drīf(e)s(t)*, 3 *drīf(e)ð* (late Northumbrian *drīfes*).

In ME. *-e*, *-est*, *-eþ* are still the regular endings for the South and most of the Midlands. Shortened forms like *fint* = *findeþ* II. 239; *stant* = *standeþ* XII a 74 are commonest in the South, where in OE. they were a feature of West Saxon and Kentish as distinguished from Anglian. Distinct are the Northern and N. Midland *mas(e)* 'makes', *tas* 'takes', with contracted infinitives *ma*, *ta*; and *bus* 'behoves', which Chaucer uses in his imitation of Northern English, *Reeves Tale* 172.

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In N. Midlands the modern 3rd sg. *-(e)s* is common (V, VI, but not in earlier I). Farther North it is invariable (IV, X, XVI, XVII). The distribution of *-es* as the ending of the 2nd sg. is the same, and it is extended even to the 1st person.

(b) Plural: OE. *drīfað* (late Northumbrian *drīfas*).

Only Southern ME. retains the OE. inflexion as *-eþ* (II, III, XIII). The Midland ending, whence the modern form derives, is *-e(n)*; though in the N. Midlands *-es* occasionally appears. Northern has regularly *-es*, unless the personal pronoun immediately precedes, when the ending is *-e*, as in the Midlands, e.g. *þei make* XVI 103.

N.B. In applying this test, care must be taken to exclude inversions, which are subject to special rules; to distinguish the subjunctive (e.g. *falle* XIII a 52, *drawe* XIII b 6) from the indicative; and, generally, to choose examples that are syntactically free from doubt, because concord of number is not always logical in ME.

SUMMARY.

	OE.
1.	drīf-e
sg.	
2.	drīf-es(t)
3.	drīf-eð (Nth. - es)
pl.	drīf-að (Nth. - as)

	ME. South	S. Midl.	N. Midl.	North
1. sg.	-e	-e	-(e)	-(e) or -(e)s
2.	-est	-est	-es(t)	-es
3.	-eþ	-eþ	-eþ or -es	-es
pl.	-eþ	-e(n)	-e(n) or -es	-es or -(e)

(iv) **The Imperative Plural** might be expected to agree with the pres. ind. pl. In fact it has the ending *-eþ* not merely in the South, but in most of the Midlands, e.g. I, VIII, Gower and Chaucer. Northern and NW. Midland (v, vi, xiv b, xvi) have commonly *-es*. But Chaucer, Gower, and most late ME. texts have, beside the full inflexion, an uninflected form, e.g. *vndo* XVI 182.

(v) **Past Tense.**

(a) Strong: The historical distinctions of stem-vowel were often obscured in ME. by the rise of new analogical forms, the variety of which can best be judged from the detailed evidence presented in the *New English Dictionary* under each verb. But, for the common verbs or classes, the South and S. Midlands preserved fairly well the OE. vowel distinction of past tense singular and plural; while North and N. Midlands usually preferred the form proper to the singular for both singular and plural, e.g. *þey bygan* I 72; *þey ne blan* I 73; *þai slang* x 53, where OE. has sg. *gan*: *gunnon*; *blan*: *blunnon*; ON. *slong*: *slungu*.

(b) Weak: In the South and Midlands the weak pa. t. 2nd sg. usually ends in *-est* (N. Midland also *-es*): *hadest* II 573; *cursedest* I 130; *kyssedes*, *razteþ* v 283. In the North, and sometimes in N. Midland, it ends in *-(e)*: *þou hadde* XVI 219. The full ending of the pa. t. pl. is fairly common in the South, S. Midlands, and NW. Midlands: *wenten* II 185, *hedden* III 42, *maden* XII b 196, *sayden* VI 174.

(vi) **Past Participle (Strong):** OE. *(ge)drifen*.

In the North and N. Midlands the ending *-en* is usually preserved, but the prefix *y-* is dropped. In the South the type is *y-driue*, with prefix and without final *n*. S. Midland fluctuates—for example, Gower rarely, Chaucer commonly, uses the prefix *y-*.

(vii) **Weak Verbs with -i- suffix:** In OE. weak verbs of Class II formed the infinitive in *-ian*, e.g. *acsian*, *lufian*, and the *i* appeared also in the pres. ind. and imper. pl. *acsiað* and pres. p. *acsiende*. In ME. a certain number of French verbs with an *-i-* suffix reinforced this class. In the South and W. Midlands the *-i-* of the suffix is often preserved, e.g. *aski* II 467, *louy* v 27, and is sometimes extended to forms in which it has no historical justification, e.g. pp. *spuryed* v 25. In the North and the E. Midlands the forms without *i* are generalized.

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## CORRIGENDA

### To Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*

- p. xlv, l. 7: *for carat read caret*
- p. xlvii: *for Jessop read Jessopp*
- p. 21, l. 259: *for be read he*
- p. 28, l. 493: *for enn read en*
- p. 43, Foot-note to l. 69: *omit 'for:'*
- p. 62, l. 100: *for tyste read t<r>yte (Morris); and adjust note at p. 225.*
- p. 103, l. 254: *for largeand read large and*
- p. 175, l. 1: *for Daib. read Diab.*

p. 214, note to a: *for* 'The best... are' *read* 'This poem is largely a translation of sentences excerpted from Rolle's *Incendium Amoris*, cc. xl-xli (Miss Allen in *Mod. Lang. Review* for 1919, p. 320). Useful commentaries are'

p. 226, note to l. 153: in l. 8 for *t̄o* read *t̄ō*

p. 243, n. to ll. 5-6: *for* 'external covering' *read* 'covering over it'

p. 291, table, last column, 1 sg.: for '-e or (e)s' read '-(e) or -(e)s'

#### Transcriber's Note

([See also](#) the Transcriber's Note at the beginning of this e-text.)

The CORRIGENDA to Sisam's *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose* (see above) has been moved here from the end of the accompanying vocabulary volume. All items listed have been corrected, except

p. 62, l. 100: [...] *and adjust note at p. 225* which remains unadjusted.

A number of editorial corrections are without Footnotes or Notes. The manuscript readings for these are here supplied by the transcriber from the editions of Hamelius and England & Pollard:

IX	166	Sythe] Sychye <i>MS.</i>
IX	270	it] is <i>MS.</i>
IX	287	greuous] grouous <i>MS.</i>
XVII	85	displeases] displeasse <i>MS.</i>
XVII	472	thou] thi <i>MS.</i>

The line numbering has been regularised to multiples of 5. Lines of prose have their line numbers at the right side of the text, or in some reading devices, line numbers will appear in {braces} within the text.

The companion volume,  
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