

FOREWORD.

THE little book now laid before the few, who turn their eyes lovingly upon the history and records of their own language, aims at being a critical edition of the short piece, which stands first in order of time; partly to show that the English of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is not a mere corruption and contemptible, and partly because the critical study of the Greek and Latin authors gives the mind a bias to a like treatment of the English.

The text according to the true theory of a critical edition should have been made as perfect as possible, whether by collation or emendation. But the present generation of English scholars has not advanced to that point. They expect an adherence to the manuscript, and will condemn deviations from it. Yielding therefore to circumstances I have rarely altered the text of MS. R., and when I have so done, it has been on the authority of MS. B. Suggestions for improvement of the text so resulting will be found in the notes.

An alliterative text should, many will pronounce, have been printed in short verses, as poetry. The manuscripts, however, write straight away from end to end of the ruled lines, and this was done in the earlier times, as in the original copy of *Cædmon*. To abide by the example of our forefathers in printing their compositions seemed most fair and proper. The only advantage of the other course is to bring out the versification more distinctly. To do that would in a few instances have led to a constraint upon my conviction, that the writer has in some instances come very near to prose. Sir F. Madden in turning *Layamon* from the skinbook shape to the broken verses of the printed edition has considered the sign ‘*’* to be wholly metrical, as perhaps in the fourteenth century it often was. He says (vol. iii. p. 440), “It may here be as well to state, that in commencing the work, the editor proposed to follow the punctuation of the MS. in every case, but on proceeding further the errors of the scribe became so frequent and so obvious in this respect, that it was resolved to adopt an uniform punctuation throughout, of half pause and full pause.” Mr. Hardwick made the same complaint: “The dots or points by which Anglo-Saxon verse is mainly distinguishable, have disappeared or been misplaced through the negligence of the scribes; on which account as well as for greater distinctness, the sentences are now broken into their

subordinate clauses, by the use of modern punctuation" (St. Cath. p. 21.) My remarks upon this matter will concern only the piece I have printed; I do not criticise either of these gentlemen: it has been my wish to print everything as I found it as much as might be, and more than in all cases seemed best; yet the stop ' was not purely metrical, it in early times indicated a pause in the sense, and is found in prose; thus it appears in a landboc of Eadweard in 1045 A.D. (cod. dipl. dcelxxxi.) It is also found in Domesday Book about 1085 A.D. In one place of St. Marherete it is evidently (fol. 41. a. 15) intended to point out that the writer desired to read the adverb *ȝeomerliche* with the verb *ȝerdede* and not with *ȝeide*.

The alliteration used is not of that elaborate kind of which Conybeare, Rask and others have treated, and on which they have quarrelled, but of that easy negligent sort which seemed good enough when the battle lay of Brunanburh was written: it pleases the ear and is never allowed to interfere with the sense or the poetic diction, unless Rondin (fol. 42. a. 3) be somewhat forced.

The volume MS. Reg. 17. A. xxvii. is a small quarto on vellum transcribed, if I rightly quote Sir F. Madden, about A.D. 1230. It contains a fanciful piece on the text, *Si sciret paterfamilias* (fol. 1 to 11. b.); the lives of St. Catherine (fol. 11. b. to 37), St. Marherete, St. Juliana (fol. 56. to 70. b.), and ends with a leaf of the *Oreisun* of St. Mary, imperfect. At the end of the first piece are the following words, *Par feinte charité biddeð a pater nost' for iohan þat þeof boc wrat*; which doubtless convey only the name of the scribe. The Bodleian MS. is described as beginning on the first leaf with a rubricated title, which is almost entirely obliterated; then begins the text of St. Catherine, "*Costentin ant Maxence*," and then St. Margaret. The collation of this MS. was forwarded to me from Oxford, and I have had no opportunity of seeing the volume.

Sir F. Madden (*Layamon*, vol. iii. p. 350) has stated that the piece was probably composed about 1200 A.D., and as it seems in some respects a few years older than the printed earlier text of *Layamon*, it will be as well to acquiesce in that opinion. Sir Frederic is well able to maintain any opinion he forms: but if compared with the text of the last entries in the *Chronicle*, written soon after 1154 and before 1177, the language of St. Marherete might be put thirty or forty years earlier. All deductions from the

mode of forming characters, and often even from the inflexions and phrases, furnish only the downward limit; for transcribers altered their originals.

Several Latin equivalents of this legend are to be found; among these attention may be specially directed to MS. Harl. 5327 a small volume backed as of the eleventh century, and to MS. Harl. 2801 lettered as of the thirteenth. An earlier English equivalent, the date of which I dare not too closely determine, has been printed by me in *Narratiunculæ*. That the present tale did not proceed from the Saxon English is evident by comparing *hpupny* (fol. 73. b. 1) with *Ruffin* (fol. 47. b. 11) and *lmeȝ ƿeolb* (fol. 74. b. 5) with *Caplimet* (fol. 53. a. 5). The Latin (2801) has in the last place *decapoli et armenia ciuitate* (fol. 64. d.).

It was of no consequence whatever to fix on the Latin from which the tale is taken. The wooing scene between "a clean man and a clean woman" occurs in no other version of the legend that I have seen, and it shows that the English maker was a proficient in his art.

The contractions of the bookfell have mostly been interpreted, there was no difficulty, and to leave them in the text would have been irksome to most readers. With that exception I have attempted to give such a facsimile of the original writing as the printers means allowed, and they have resources beyond most others. The shape of the letters, the alternations of long f and crooked s are found in the ancient copy.

St. Catherine's life and martyrdom out of the same volume and by the same hand has been printed for the Abbotsford Club by the Rev. James Morton, London, 1841, but the book cannot be bought, so exclusive are the rules of that club. In the publications of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (No. xv.) may be found, "An Historical Inquiry touching St. Catharine of Alexandria, to which is added, A Semi-Saxon Legend, by Charles Hardwick, M.A., fellow and chaplain of St. Catharine's Hall, Cambridge. 1849."

In the Glossary have been cited frequently certain pieces nearly cotemporary with the *Liflade ant te passiuu of Seinte Marherete*. *Layamon* is well known from the careful editing of Sir Frederic Madden. The *Ormulum* edited by Dr. White is also well known. The *Ancren Riwe* has been printed with an interpretation for the Camden Society by the Rev. James Morton, who had previously

published the Legend of St. Catherine. It will be a sufficient measure of the scholarship of this gentleman to mention, that having found Wumme, which is the reading of all three manuscripts, and being unable to interpret it, he printed Wummen and explained as Women. Wumme means Wo is me! The compositions I have called Si sciret from its first words, Hali Meidenhad from its subject, The Wooing of our Lord or Wohung of ure Louerd, from its own hint, are yet confined to the original parchments. As cotemporary pieces they were closely searched, and lent me much aid in illustrating and understanding the legend now printed.

The second poem in this collection is from an Harleian skin book containing a large number of saints lives, executed, it may be, about 1330. The histories of St. Brandan and St. Thomas Beket have been given in the volumes of the Percy Society. Several other lives are in print, and on the point of publication by another Society. The language is easily read by all who know anything of these times, and may be soon understood by a beginner with the help of one of the glossaries.

The third comes from Hickes, who obtained it from an original in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. Hickes has made some staring blunders, and I had hoped to have corrected both these and the uncertain shapes of his letters by a reference to the codex. Circumstances, however, put an obstacle in the way.

A later text has been printed in "The Lyvys of Seyntys translated into Englys be a Doctour of Dyuynite cleppd Osbern Boke-nam Frer Austyn of the Convent of Stokelare," London, 1835. The editor considers the composition to date about 1460. Among them occurs Vita Scæ Margaretæ Virginis et Martiris. It commences thus :—

Whylom as the story | techeth us
 In Antioche | that grit cyte
 A man ther was | clepyd Theodosius
 Wych in gret state stood | and dignyte
 For of paynymrye | the patriark was he
 And had the reule | and al the governaunce
 To whom all prestys | dede obeyaunce.

MS. Arundel, 327. The peculiarities were not such as seemed to deserve room here.

London, July 1862.